

The Book of the City of Ladies Study Guide

The Book of the City of Ladies by Christine de Pizan

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Plot Summary

"The Book of the City of Ladies" by Christine de Pizan is a novel that acts as a defense against the common notions of women as immoral. With the help of Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice, Christine de Pizan constructs an allegorical city through the use of stories of women whose lives refute the common misconceptions about women. "The Book of the City of Ladies" serves as a partly historical and partly mythological collection of stories praising women and contradicting common beliefs about them.

As Christine de Pizan reads a slim book by Matheolus, she falls into despair at the harsh portrayal of women as immoral and begins to mourn being a woman. A flash of light fills the room, and three ladies, Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice appear. They tell Christine that she will build a city of ladies and populate it with noble and accomplished women. The city will be a safeguard against the cruel accusations of men as well as a reminder of the true and virtuous nature of women.

Reason takes Christine to the Field of Letters where Christine must use her pen to excavate the land and lay the foundations for the City of Ladies. Reason relates stories about the lives of exemplary women in order to build a strong foundation for the city. She begins with military and political women, then proceeds to learned women. Once the foundation and walls are completed, Lady Reason turns the building over to her sisters' instruction.

Rectitude helps Christine complete and enclose the palaces, mansions and houses where the residents of the City of Ladies will reside. She discusses prophetesses and focuses on faithful wives and daughters. Rectitude celebrates the benefits that women have brought to the world and argues that women should have equal access to education as men. She also focuses on the importance of chastity and condemns the horrors of rape. Rectitude claims that men are more likely to be fickle in love. She argues that integrity, honesty and generosity earn more distinction for women than physical attractiveness. With the edifices completed, Rectitude turns the completion of the city over to Lady Justice.

Lady Justice helps Christine complete the City of Ladies by adding roofs, doorways and gates. She introduces the Virgin Mary to reign as queen of the city. Justice tells stories of the women that were tortured and martyred because of their faith in Jesus Christ and Christianity. Many of these martyred women are saints who compose the princesses of the City of Ladies. After the City of Ladies is complete, Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice relinquish the city to Christine de Pizan. Christine rejoices in their accomplishments and declares the city a refuge from the harsh criticisms of men. She reminds the women to stay strong and uphold the virtues that made it possible to build the City of Ladies



Section 1, I/1-I/9

Section 1, I/1-I/9 Summary and Analysis

"The Book of the City of Ladies" by Christine de Pizan is a novel that acts as a defense against the common notions of women as immoral. With the help of Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice, Christine de Pizan constructs an allegorical city through the use of stories of women whose lives refute the common misconceptions about women. "The Book of the City of Ladies" serves as a partly historical and partly mythological collection of stories praising women and contradicting common beliefs about them.

In Part I, "Here begins the Book of the City of Ladies, the first chapter of which explains why and for what purpose the book was written," Christine de Pizan reads a book by Matheolus, but she puts it aside due to the slanderous remarks about the immorality of women. She wonders why all men talk about women as lacking virtue. Although she is unable to support the negative view of females from her own experience, Christine yields to the authority of the male writers. Questioning God for making such a vile creature, she thinks herself unfortunate to have been born a woman. In "Christine tells how three ladies appeared to her, and how the first of them spoke to her and comforted her in her distress." As Christine bows her head in disgrace, a light shines and three women appear. The first lady chides Christine for believing books, pointing out that authority is often proven wrong at a later date. She advises Christine to turn negatives to positives since maybe that is the way things should be read. "Christine recounts how the lady who had spoken to her told her who she was, what her function and purpose was, and how she prophesied that Christine would build a city with the help of the three ladies" begins with Christine looking at the three ladies, wondering who they are but being afraid to ask. The first lady tells Christine that they are the daughters of God, sent to restore order and justice, answering Christine's unasked question. Her task is to bring people back when they drift away from the straight and narrow. The three ladies appear to Christine to reassure her in her sad and dejected state due to her efforts at knowledge, as well as prevent other women from falling into the same error. Christine will build a walled city for virtuous ladies.

In "How, before the lady revealed her name, she spoke at greater length about the city which Christine was destined to build, and explained that she was entrusted with the task of helping her to construct the enclosure and external walls," the ladies assure Christine that they will provide the materials for the impenetrable city, which will never fall or be taken. The first lady introduces herself as Lady Reason. "Christine tells how the second lady gave her name, explained what her role was, and revealed how she would help Christine to lay out the buildings of the City of Ladies" introduces the second lady, Lady Rectitude, whose duty is to protect the rights of the innocent and prevent the wicked from abusing their power. Whoever follows Lady Rectitude's yardstick cannot go astray as it strikes down all those who do evil; it is also a rod of peace, and Christine will use it to lay out the interior of the city. In "Christine tells how the third lady revealed her name and outlined what her role was, then explained that she would help to finish off



the high turrets of the towers and palaces and would bring Christine a queen for her city accompanied by a host of noble ladies," Lady Justice, the third lady and the most beloved of God's daughters, explains that her duty is to judge and repay everyone according to their just desserts. She carries a measuring cup with which to mete out rewards and punishments. She will fill the city with worthy ladies and bring a queen after Christine fortifies the city.

In "Christine tells how she replied to the three Ladies," Christine throws herself at the ladies' feet, thanking them for their goodness. Despite her female weakness, she trusts God and promises to obey the ladies' commands. In "Christine explains how Reason instructed her and helped her to begin digging up the ground in order to lay the foundation," Reason directs Christine to the location for the city, and Christine begins excavating. When Christine asks the reason that authors slander women, Reason explains that men fall into the clutches of depraved and corrupt women want to warn other men and do so with good intentions. Christine asks if this is right to do since they have good intentions, but Reason argues that there is no excuse for ignorance. Besides, some men criticize women due to envy or a natural delight in slander, which goes against reason and nature. Reason refers to "On Philosophy." Christine asks about Ovid's derogatory remarks about women in "How Christine dug over the earth: in other words, the questions which she put to Reason and the answers she received from her," and Reason explains that Ovid's many affairs were ended when he was castrated, causing him to be bitter. Christine learns that Cecco d'Ascoli was wicked and asks about "On the Secrets of Woman" claiming that the female body is flawed and defective. Reason refuses to attribute these lies to Aristotle. She also assures Christine that the idea that female children result from a deficiency or weakness in the womb is irrational since God made women and men equally noble and virtuous. Although Cicero claims that women are inferior to men, Reason argues that the most virtuous individual is superior. To Cato's claim that men would converse with gods if not for women, Reason clarified that men would converse with pagan gods, which are devils; mankind gains more from Mary than was lost through Eve.



Section 2, I/10-I/18

Section 2, I/10-I/18 Summary and Analysis

In "More questions and answers on this subject," Christine mentions Cato's claim that attractive women are like roses with thorns underneath, but Reason replies that the thorns represents their contrition and fear of doing wrong. She also assures Christine that few women are prone to overindulgence with liquor, women are pious and charitable, and children like women because of their gentleness and kindness. She refers to Jesus Christ calling the little children unto him. Reason informs Christine that God endows women with speech in order to serve him and lead many to salvation, such as Mary Magdalene spreading the news of Jesus Christ's resurrection. In "Christine asks Reason why women aren't allowed in courts of law, and Reason's reply," Reason states that women do not participate in court because God creates different divisions of labor for men and women, and court goes against women's natural modesty. Women are intelligent enough to participate in court, as has been proven by their ability to excel in more difficult disciplines. In "About the Empress Nicula," the unmarried Empress Nicula ends the primitive way of life that her people practices by establishing laws and customs and bringing civilization to her people. She is so well versed in the arts and sciences that even the Bible speaks of her abilities. In "About a queen of France called Fredegunde, and other French queens and princesses," Queen Fredegunde of France rules after her husband's death until Clotar, her son, is old enough for her to crown him herself. Queen Blanche rules France until St. Louis, her son, comes of age, at which point she remains his head adviser and even goes to battle with him. Queen Jeanne is praised for living virtuously and exercising justice at court. After her husband's death, the duchess of Anjou regains the servants' loyalty and obedience, ruling until her children come of age. Many widows are capable of maintaining their lands as well as their husbands did.

In "More discussion and debate between Christine and Reason," Reason disputes the idea that women's weak bodies make them inferior and undermines moral qualities. When Nature makes a body less perfect, she compensates by giving the body a larger quantity of something greater, a virtuous disposition in women's case. Not all women are weak though. The trench is prepared, and now it is time for Christine to lay the stones in the trench to form the foundation; Reason tells Christine to take up her pen and begin building. "About Queen Semiramis" discusses King Ninus conquering Babylon, Assyria and many other lands. When he dies, Semiramis, his wife who excels in arms, seizes power of the kingdom, conquers Ethiopia and India, and rebuilds and fortifies Babylon. When one territory rebels, Semiramis attacks with such ferocity that none ever dare revolt against her again. The first stone of the City of Ladies is in place.

In "About the Amazons," all the noble males in Scythia are killed, and the women forbid men to enter their kingdom, now known as the Amazons. They leave their country to get pregnant, keeping their daughters and sending sons to their fathers. Lampheto and Marpasia are crowned queens together, and they seek vengeance against their



enemies for their husbands' deaths. The Amazons subjugate many kingdoms through Europe and Asia and found the city of Ephesus. When Marpasia dies in battle, her daughter, Synoppe, is crowned queen, and Synoppe avenges her mother's death by killing the whole population of her mother's murderer's country. In "About the Amazon queen, Thamiris," King Cyrus of Persia attacks the Amazons. When Queen Thamis learns of his intent, she sets up ambushes and captures King Cyrus and his troops in the mountain passes. The Amazons kill King Cyrus and his barons. Reason refers to Christine's books "Book of the Mutation of Fortune" and "Letter of Othea to Hector." In "How the mighty Hercules and his companion Theseus came from Greece to attack the Amazons with a great army and fleet of ships, and how the two maidens Menalippe and Hippolyta brought them down, horses and all, in a big heap," Hercules and Theseus invade the Amazons because they fear them. Queen Orithyia prepares her troops when the Greeks invade her lands. Menalippe and Hippolyta are the first to arm, and they rush to battle; Menalippe attacks Hercules, while Hippolyta attacks Theseus, and all four are knocked from their horses. Menalippe and Hippolyta recover first, but eventually Hercules and Theseus win and take the two Amazon women captive, especially gratified by their captives' beauty. Queen Orithyia is distressed and offers a ransom for the return of Hippolyta and Menalippe which the Greeks agree to in exchange for an alliance. Theseus begs to marry Hippolyta, and Queen Orithyia grants him permission. Hippolyta marries Theseus and bears him a son, Hippolyta. Peace reigns between the Amazons and the Greeks.



Section 3, I/19-I/27

Section 3, I/19-I/27 Summary and Analysis

In "About Queen Penthesila and how she went to the rescue of the city of Troy," the intelligent, courageous and virtuous Queen Penthesila secedes Orithyia. She falls in love with Hector of Troy when she hears of his many courageous feats and travels to see him. When Queen Penthesila arrives in Troy and learns of Hector's death, she promises vengeance and attacks the Greeks, nearly killing Achilles' son, Pyrrhus. When Pyrrhus recovers, he kills Queen Penthesila, causing the Amazons to mourn. They never have a better queen though their empire lasts eight hundred years. In "About Zenobia, Queen of Palmyria," Zenobia marries the King of Palmyria who is ambitious to conquer the entire East and the surrounding empires. Zenobia joins him in battle, subjugating Mesopotamia and capturing the Persian ruler, Sapor. When the king is killed by his ambitious relatives, Zenobia thwarts the usurper and rules Palmyria until her children come of age. "About the noble Queen Artemisia" describes how Artemisia, the Queen of Caria, governs Caria after her husband's death, thwarting an attack by Rhodes, killing the Rhodian princes and subjugating the country. She also defeats Xerxes when he attacks her allies, the Lacedaemonians.

In "About Lilia, mother of the valiant knight Theodoric," Theodoric, a powerful prince at the court of the emperor of Constantinople, is sent to Rome when Odoacer attacks. He flees when Fortune turns against him. Lilia, his mother, sees his retreat and chides him. Shamed, Theodoric returns to battle, winning a great victory, though the honor should belong to Lilia. "More about Queen Fredegunde" details how, after her husband's death, Fredegunde, the Queen of France, leads her troops to attack their enemy, with her son, Clotar, in her arms. She instructs the army to hold boughs from trees so the enemy thinks that the forest is near when they wake. Using this tactic, Queen Fredegunde defeats her enemy. In "About the virgin Camilla," Metabus, the King of Volsciano, is overthrown and flees with his daughter, Camilla who he raises in the woods. When Camilla reaches adulthood, she learns about Metabus being overthrown, takes up arms and wins his throne back. She also aids Turnus when Aeneas lands in Italy.

In "About Queen Berenice of Cappadocia," King Ariarathes dies, and his brother wages war to disinherit Queen Berenice and her children, killing two of Berenice's sons. Queen Berenice kills King Ariarathes' brother in vengeance. "About the brave Cloelia" describes how Cloelia and other high-born Roman virgins are sent as hostages to an enemy king as part of a treaty. There, Cloelia tricks the guard and leads the other hostages back to their families in Rome. The enemy king is highly amused with Cloelia's bravery, and she earns great honors for her feat. In "Christine asks Reason if God has ever blessed a woman's mind with knowledge of the highest branches of learning, and Reason's reply," Christine asks if God gives women an aptitude for learning. Reason replies to this by saying that women's minds are sharper though they are less educated due to the unique roles of men and women. Nature makes women perfect in mind and body, though some men and women are more naturally endowed with intelligence.



Section 4, I/28-I/36

Section 4, I/28-I/36 Summary and Analysis

In "Reason begins to speak about ladies who were blessed with great learning, starting with the noble maiden Cornificia," Cornificia is sent to school with her brother due to her parents' clever trick. She composes several distinguished works which are praised by St. Gregory and Boccaccio. "About Proba the Roman" details how Proba excels in seven liberal arts and becomes a remarkable poet, reworking Virgil's "Bucolics," "Georgics" and "Aeneid" to put the Bible into verse in a book called "Cento" which Boccaccio praises. Though Sappho is familiar with others' writing and treatises, she composes her own works, even inventing new forms of poetry, praised by Boccaccio, in "About Sappho, who was an extremely fine poet and philosopher." In "About the maiden Manto," Christine learns about Manto who has complete knowledge of pyromancy, or divining the future, causing many to believe she can conjure spirits. After Thebes is destroyed, Manto moves to Asia where she builds a temple to Apollo, though she dies in Italy where the city of Mantua is named in her honor. In "About Medea, and another queen named Circe," Medea surpasses all women in learning; she is able to control the weather and also helps Jason acquire the Golden Fleece. Circe, the Queen of her island, is well versed in casting spells and changes Ulysses' men into swine.

In "Christine asks Reason if any woman has ever invented new forms of knowledge," Christine wonders if women have invented new branches of knowledge and learns that Nicostrata is so intelligent that many claim she is loved by the god, Mercury. Due to upheavals in her native land, Nicostrata sails up the River Tiber where she names Mount Palatine after her father. Gifted with prophecy, Nicostrata sees the city she will build, later known as Rome, as the greatest in the world. She creates the Latin alphabet, and Italians refer to themselves as Latins in her honor. "About Minerva who invented countless sciences, including the art of making arms from iron and steel" tells of how Minerva, so intelligent that many declare she is the goddess of arms, warfare and wisdom, invents Greek characters and numbers, the art of making wool and cloth, carts and chariots, as well as forging armor for knights. Also, Minerva discovers how to extract oil from olives and juice from fruits. In "About Queen Ceres, who invented agriculture and many other arts," Ceres invents science and the techniques of agriculture, including taming cattle. She also encourages men to eat a more noble diet, bringing mankind out of a primitive state and teaching him a civilized way of life in towns. Ceres is worshiped as the goddess of corn. In "About Isis, who discovered the art of making gardens and growing plants," Isis and her brother go to Egypt where they teach the Egyptians gardening and set up an established law. Isis invents the Egyptian alphabet and her extensive knowledge of horticulture causes the Egyptians to worship her as a goddess. There is an allusion to Christine de Pizan's "Letter of Othea to Hector" in this subsection.



Section 5, I/37-I/48

Section 5, I/37-I/48 Summary and Analysis

In "About all the great good that these ladies have brought into the world," Christine asks about men saying that women know nothing, and Reason calls such men full of ingratitude; God gives women the capacity to grasp knowledge and to invent new knowledge. "More on the same topic" contains Christine's questions about knights failing in their duty by slandering women. "About the maiden Arachne, who invented the arts of dyeing wool and of weaving fine tapestries, as well as the art of growing flax and making it into cloth" tells about Arachne inventing the use of flax, hemp, nets, traps, snares, the art of fishing and the art of trapping wild animals. Boccaccio praises Arachne. Reason says that God bestows gifts upon mankind, but it is mankind's fault if the gifts are misused. In "About Pamphile, who discovered the art of gathering silk from worms, dyeing the thread and making it into cloth," Pamphile creates silk and dyes it to create clothes. In "About Thamaris, who was a supremely gifted painter, as well as another great artist called Irene, and Marcia the Roman," the Ephesians commission Thamaris to paint a portrait of Diana. Irene outshines her master, Cratinus. Marcia is a better painter than the men of her time, and her best work is a self-portrait. Christine notes that women of the past are held in higher esteem for their genius; she also mentions Anastasia, a modern expert at decorative borders and floral motifs. "About Sempronia of Rome" tells of Sempronia's ability to reverse people's emotions and exhort men to perform courageous feats.

In "Christine asks Reason if women are naturally endowed with good judgment, and Reason replies to her question," Christine wonders if women are capable of good judgment, and Reason distinguishes between good judgment and learning; those with both deserve praise, but learning is better since it can benefit mankind for all of eternity instead of just during one's lifetime. Women's naturally good judgment is proven by their ability to run their households diligently and meticulously. "The 'Epistle of Solomon' from the Book of Proverbs" refers to the Epistle of Solomon in the Book of Proverbs in the Bible which states that a husband who finds a wife with sound judgment lacks nothing. In "About Gaia Cirilla," Gaia Carilla is prudent and virtuous and hates idleness. The Romans honor her by newlywed wives claiming the desire to change their name to Gaia after crossing their husband's threshold in order to signify their desire to emulate Gaia Carilla. In "About the good sense and cleverness of Queen Dido," Reason defines good judgment as carefully weighing what one wishes to do and working through it. Belus has two children, Pygmalion and Elissa. After Belus' death, Pygmalion rules, and Elissa marries Sychaeus who Pygmalion kills in greed, coveting his riches. Elissa flees, but Pygmalion pursues her for her fortune. Elissa gives Pygmalion's men a fake treasure. She sacrifices on the island of Cyprus before arriving in Africa where she convinces the natives to sell her a plot of land the size of a cowhide. She tricks them by cutting the hide into pieces and tying them together with a rope, obtaining a large piece of land, which she names Carthage. Elissa assembles an army, finishes the city and establishes laws. She is renamed Dido which means virago, a woman with the virtue and valor of a



man. In "About Opis, Queen of Crete," Opis marries Saturn who dreams that his son will kill him, causing him to order his sons' deaths. Opis saves her sons, Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto who are worshiped as gods because they are wiser than other men of the era. Opis is also worshiped as a goddess. In "About Lavinia, daughter of King Latinus," an oracle tells Latinus that his daughter, Lavinia, should be given to a Trojan prince, so when Aeneas arrives in Italy and asks permission to enter Latinus' lands, he is given Lavinia's hand in marriage without regard to Lavinia's engagement to Turnus. A war ensues between Aeneas and Turnus, resulting in Turnus' death. While Lavinia is pregnant, Aeneas dies. Fearing Ascanius, Aeneas' oldest son, Lavinia gives birth to Julius Silvanus in the woods. She later manages to win Ascanius' affection and rules skillfully until her son comes of age. Julius Silvanus' descendants are Romulus and Remus who found Rome. Reason finishes with her evidence that God never criticized females more than males; now it is time for her two sisters to help Christine finish building the City of Ladies.



Section 6, II/1-II/6

Section 6, II/1-II/6 Summary and Analysis

Part II, "Here begins the second part of the Book of the City of Ladies which recounts how and by whom the houses and buildings were constructed inside the enclosure walls and how the City was filled with inhabitants," begins with "The first chapter tells of the ten Sibyls" where Rectitude announces that it is time to build the houses in the city. Rectitude has prepared and cut stones of great value which Christine must arrange in the order that Rectitude dictates. The highest rank is the wise sibyls upon whom God bestows the gift of prophecy, as sibyl means one privy to the thoughts of God, despite the fact that all of the sibyls are pagans. The sibyls' names are Persica, Libica, Delphica, Cimeria, Herophile, Samia, Cumana, Hellespontina, Phrygica and Tiburtina. Herophile, also known as Erythrea, prophesies the fall of Troy, while Phrygica prophesies the coming of the Antichrist, and Tiburtina, also called Albunea, prophesies the birth of Jesus Christ. All of the sibyls repudiate paganism and accept God. "About the sibyl Erythrea" discusses how Erythrea tells the Greeks of their struggles and battles. Her accounts are so accurate that they read like a history. She also foretells the birth and life of Jesus Christ and describes the Day of Judgment. Boccaccio states that her talents are proof that she is loved by God.

In "About the sibyl Almathea," Almathea's gift of prophecy causes some to claim that Phoebus loves her, which Rectitude interprets as meaning that Almathea is loved by God and her talents and longevity are gifts from God. Almathea carries nine books to King Tarquin in Rome, but he refuses to pay the price she asks. She burns three of the books, threatening to burn three more the next day and causing King Tarquin to pay the price asked for all nine books. The books are accounts of the deeds that the Romans will accomplish in the future, and King Tarquin stores the books safely. Virgil mentions Almathea in one of his books. In "About several prophetesses," God grants the gift of prophecy to the Jewish women, Deborah, Elizabeth and Anna, as well as pagans, such as the Queen of Sheba. The Queen of Sheba hears of King Solomon's wisdom and journeys to see him, testing his wisdom and giving him many gifts. When the Queen of Sheba walks across a wooden plank, she prophesies that the man who dies upon that tree will destroy the Jewish faith; the same tree is used to make the cross upon which Jesus Christ is crucified.

In "About Cassandra and Queen Basine, as well as more about Nicostrata," Nicostrata prophesies that Rome will be built on Mount Palatine and is the first to lay a founding stone. Cassandra predicts the Fall of Troy and is beaten for madness. Queen Basine prophesies that her husband, the King of Thuringia, will receive a vision if he remains chaste on his wedding night; his vision represents the three successive generations of his descendents that are French princes. In "About Antonia, who became empress of Constantinople," Justinian is the keeper of coffers and treasures for Emperor Justin. His lover, Antonia, predicts that Justinian will be emperor and evokes a promise from him to marry her when it comes to pass. Shortly after, Justin dies and Justinian becomes

emperor. Emperor Justinian defeats the Persian and returns to the palace. Disguised, Antonia approaches Justinian, asking for justice concerning her betrothal, and Justinian rules in her favor. When Antonia reveals herself, Justinian marries her.



Section 7, II/7-II/15

Section 7, II/7-II/15 Summary and Analysis

In "Christine addresses Lady Rectitude," Christine asks why parents prefer having sons to daughters, and Rectitude explains that parents worry about the cost of a dowry, though educating sons is as expensive, as well as innocent ladies being misled, though sons cause parents stress from their depraved habits. Daughters are more likely to care for their aging parents, while sons wish their parents dead to obtain their inheritance. In "Here begins a series of daughters who loved their parents, the first of whom is Drypetina," Queen Drypetina of Laodicea is loyal to her father, King Mithradates, following him into battle rather than reveling in luxury in her own land. When Pompey defeats King Mithradates, Queen Drypetina takes care of her father. "About Hypsipyle" tells the story of Hypsipyle, whose father, Thoas, is King of Lemnos. Rebels advance to kill King Thoas, but Hypsipyle hides him in a trunk and convinces the rebels that he has fled. She becomes Queen and sends her father overseas to safety. When her subjects discover her deception, they take pity on her devotion rather than kill her. In "About the virgin Claudine," the vestal virgin Claudine's father returns to Rome for a triumphal procession, but his enemies attack him. Claudine saves her father and receives high honors. In "About a woman who breastfed her mother in prison," a woman's mother is imprisoned and condemned to starvation. The woman visits her daily and breastfeeds her. When this is discovered, the judge releases the mother to the woman. Griselda works hard to earn a living for her old, sick father and herself. Devoted sons and daughters deserve praise, according to Rectitude.

In "Here Rectitude explains that the houses of the city have been completed and that it is time they were filled with inhabitants," Rectitude explains that the buildings are finished and it is time to fill the city with virtuous and honorable citizens for the new realm of femininia that is at hand. After the citizens fill the city, Lady Justice will bring the queen and the princesses. In "Christine asks Lady Rectitude if it's true what men and books say about the institution of marriage being unbearable because women are so impossible to live with. In her reply, Rectitude begins by discussing the great love that women have for their husbands," Christine asks if marriage is unbearable because women are impossible to live with, referring to "Letter of Valerius to Ruffinus." Rectitude discusses the many women subject to abusive marriages; men are not dominated by their wives, and few wives are unreasonable and willful. She begins filling the story with Queen Hypsicratea, who is married to King Mithradates. "About Queen Hypsicratea" tells of how King Mithradates rules many lands and has many concubines, yet Queen Hypsicratea devotedly loves her husband and joins him in battle. When Pompey defeats King Mithradates, Queen Hypsicratea stays at his side, cheering him and saving him from feeling his exile. In "About the Empress Triaria," Empress Triaria loves her husband, the Roman Emperor Lucius Vitellius. When he wages war against Vespasian, she fights at his side to ensure the victory. Boccaccio praises this demonstration of her love.



Section 8, I/16-1/24

Section 8, I/16-1/24 Summary and Analysis

In "More about Queen Artemisia," Artemisia honors her husband in death as well as life by swallowing his ashes and building a magnificent sepulcher to him which becomes known as one of the seven wonders of the world and is called a mausoleum because it is dedicated to King Mausolus. In "About Argia, daughter of King Adrastus," when Argia hears of Polynices', her beloved husband, death, she ignores King Creon's edict forbidding burial, finds the body and places it on a funeral pyre before avenging her husband's death. In "About the noble lady Agrippina," Tiberius puts Germanicus to death out of envy, and Agrippina grieves to death despite Tiberius' efforts to prolong her life. "Christine addresses Rectitude, who replies to her with several examples, telling her about the noble lady Julia, daughter of Julius Caesar and wife of the prince Pompey" begins with Christine mentions the claim that women hate their husbands when they are old and scholarly. Rectitude cites the example of Julia, daughter of Julius Caesar and wife of Pompey in dissent. Pompey spills blood on his robes while offering sacrifice and sends a servant to fetch a new robe. Seeing Pompey's bloody robes, Julia loses her will to live and dies, causing war between Julius Caesar and Pompey. In "About the noble lady Tertia Aemilia," Tertia Aemilia loves her husband, Scipio Africanus Elder, so much that she does not criticize or slur his reputation when she discovers his affair with a servant. Christine praises the Countess of Coemen.

"About Xanthippe, wife of the philosopher Socrates" describes Xanthippe's love for Socrates, her husband, despite his age. Xanthippe grieves when the Athenians sentence Socrates to death for worshiping idols. She enters the room as Socrates is about to drink his poison and knocks it from his hand, but he chides her. Xanthippe grieves the remainder of her life. In "About Pompeia Paulina, Seneca's wife," Pompeia Paulina, upset at Emperor Nero sentencing Seneca, her husband, to death, scream obscenities at Emperor Nero in a vain attempt to receive the same sentence as her husband. Christine praises the wife of lord Bertrand du Guesclin. In "About the noble Sulpicia," Lentulus Cruscillio is exiled, and his wife, Sulpicia, joins him in exile, calling to Christine's mind the women who follow their husbands to lepers' colonies. In "About several ladies who, together, saved their husbands from execution," the knights who help Jason obtain the Golden Fleece settle in Lacedaemonia and marry local ladies. They are thrown into prison when they plot against the Lacedaemonian rulers. Their wives cover themselves, visit their husbands in prison and trade clothes, allowing their husbands to escape. The wives are pitied and released when they are discovered.



Section 9, II/25-II/33

Section 9, II/25-II/33 Summary and Analysis

In "Christine speaks to Lady Rectitude about those who claim that women cannot keep a secret. In her reply, Rectitude talks about Portia, Cato's daughter," Christine asks about women being able to keep secrets, and Rectitude says that some men and some women are indiscreet but uses Portia, Brutus' wife, as an example of a discreet woman. In "On the same subject: about the noble lady Curia," Curia, upon learning that her husband has been condemned to death for a crime, convinces Quintus Lucretius to hide in her bed rather than leave town like the other criminals that he acts with. By acting grieved when the search party arrives, Curia manages to save her husband from exile and death. In "More on this subject," a group of men meet at a trusted woman's house to plot against Nero; when a spy informs Nero, the woman is questioned and tortured, but she refuses to betray the conspirators.

In "Proof against those who claim that only an idiot takes his wife's advice or puts his trust in her. Christine asks some questions to which Rectitude replies," Christine is shocked at the men who claim trusting their wives is foolish. Rectitude says that though not all women are wise, men with wise wives are foolish not to take their wives' advice. Examples of this are Julius Caesar ignoring his wife foretelling his death, Portia warning Brutus against conspiracy, Pompey ignoring Cornelia's warnings, and Hector of Troy disregarding Andromache's foresight of his death in battle the next day. In "About various men who did well to trust their wives' advice," Emperor Justinian's barons convince him that his companion-in-arms, Belisarius, intends to assassinate him. Justinian sends Belisarius on an impossible mission, and Belisarius mourns because he knows that he has fallen out of favor. Antonia, Belisarius' wife, advises him to trust God and he will win. His victory causes Belisarius to receive Justinian's greater favor. The barons next strip Belisarius of his military rank and overthrow Justinian, but at Antonia's advice, Belisarius restores Justinian to the empire. When King Alexander learns that his servants poison him, he intends to throw himself into the river, but his wife wisely convinces him to talk to his barons and give his last orders to retain his honor.

In "Christine talks about all the good that women have brought into the world, both now and in the past," Rectitude resents the claim that women bring only evil to the world since no man can match the great services of women, especially the Virgin Mary. Also, Thermutis, King Pharaoh's daughter, nurses Moses from whom such good comes to the Jews. In "About Judith, the noble widow," Holofernes rules the Jews. He cuts off their water supply, and their food stocks are nearly exhausted so people begin praying. Judith goes to Holofernes' camp, and he is entranced with her beauty and intelligence. Judith falsely promises to join him in bed at midnight, causing him to send his guards away. Judith enters and beheads Holofernes, allowing the Jews to defeat his troops. In "About Queen Esther," Haman rouses King Ahasuerus' anger so that the king decrees the deaths of the Jews. When Queen Esther, his Jewish wife, learns of this, she dines with him for three days. King Ahasuerus, very pleased with his wife, offers her anything;



she requests that he stop killing her kin, and he repeals his order. In "About the Sabine women," Romulus and Remus hold a joust to obtain wives and invite the neighboring countries. They abduct women and marry them. Romulus takes the Sabine king's daughter. After five years of war, the women gather and stand betwixt their husbands and kinsmen, initiating peace.



Section 10, II/34-II/42

Section 10, II/34-II/42 Summary and Analysis

In "About Veturia," Marcius, also known as Coriolanus, controls Rome due to a military victory until the Romans exile him, fearing his supreme power. Marcius rebels against the Romans until the Romans ask his mother, Veturia, to intercede. When Veturia begs Marcius to make peace, he informs his mother that she should not beg but command him. In "About Clotilde, Queen of France," Clotilde pleads with her husband, King Clovis of France, to accept God. When King Clovis is losing a battle, he promises to serve God if he is victorious and wins. It is ordered for the bodies of St. Denis, St. Rusticus and St. Eleutherius to be cast into the river, but the widow Catulla replaces the bodies with pigs' bodies, and she buries the saints. In "Against those who claim that it is not good for women to be education," Christine expresses amazement at the discontent with the idea of educating daughters. Rectitude argues for female education since education often assists in moral thinking. She mentions the case of Hortensia, the educated daughter of Quintus Hortensius, who wins a legal case against taxing women's valuables. Also mentioned is Novella, the educated daughter of Giovannia Andrea, who relieves her father of some of his duties and in whose honor Andrea writes "La Novella." Rectitude considers the main problem to be that many men do not want women to be more intelligent than they are.

In "Christine addresses Rectitude, who gives examples to contradict those who claim that few women are chaste, beginning with Susanna," Christine complains about the idea that few women are chaste, but Rectitude says the opposite is true. Rectitude cites the example of Susanna who two old priests try to tempt to sin, but Susanna refuses, causing the priests to denounce her. Sentenced to death, Susanna begins on her way to her execution when the prophet Daniel cries out that the accusations are false. Susanna is retried and found innocent, and the two priests are punished. "About Sarah" tells about Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who chastely refuses the advances of Pharaoh; when God sends plagues on Egypt, Pharaoh lets Sarah return to her husband. "About Rebecca" discusses Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, who God favors with the twins, Jacob and Esau, despite the fact that she is old and infertile. In "About Ruth," Ruth is so chaste in marriage and widowhood that she lives with her mother-in-law after her husband's death. "About Penelope, Ulysses's wife" tells of Penelope's faithfulness to Ulysses during the siege of Troy and the following ten years that Ulysses is gone, despite the fact that he could have perished at sea; when Ulysses returns to his home, he does not hear any defamatory remarks about Penelope. "Against those who assert that there are very few chaste and attractive women: the example of Mariamme" tells how Mariamme hates Herod Antipater but remains faithful throughout her unhappy marriage.



Section 11, II/43-II/51

Section 11, II/43-II/51 Summary and Analysis

In "More on this subject: the example of Antonia, wife of Drusus Tiberius," after Emperor Nero kills her husband, Drusus Tiberius, Antonia lives a chaste widowhood for which Boccaccio praises her. In "In order to contradict those who claim that women want to be raped, here begins a series of examples, the first of which is Lucretia," Christine mentions the claim that women want to be raped which Rectitude quickly disputes since rape is the worst possible thing imaginable for chaste women. Rectitude provides the example of Lucretia who is raped by Tarquin the Proud and commits suicide in shame the next day after telling her husband and father of the outrage. Due to the outrage over Lucretia's rape, Romans create a law sentencing rapists to death. In "On this same subject: the example of the queen of the Galatians," when the Romans imprison King Ortiagon and his wife, a Roman general rapes the queen. When the ransom money arrives, she offers it to the general and, as he is counting the money, kills him. In "Still on this same subject: the examples of the Sicambrians, and of several virgins," Hippo is kidnapped and throws herself overboard to avoid being raped. The wives of the Sicambrians take up arms against Rome and, when defeated, the survivors commit suicide to avoid rape. Virginia also commits suicide to avoid being raped by Claudius. After being defeated, the Lombardy women tuck dead chickens under their breasts; the stench prevents the victors from raping them.

In "Proofs to refute the view that women are lacking in constancy: Christine asks questions, to which Rectitude replies with various examples of emperors who were unreliable and inconsistent," Rectitude refutes the common claim that women are inconstant, asserting that men are less constant. Men scheme against women, and then blame women's innate weakness. Although men are more guilty of inconstancy, they expect more from women. Rectitude refers to Christine "Letter of the God of Love." "About Nero" tells of Nero's tendency to yield to his carnal desires and kill those who object to his gluttony, including Seneca. "About the Emperor Galba, as well as others" tells of the other emperors who emulate Nero: Galba, Otho and Vitellius. They are contrasted to the few chaste emperors: Julius Caesar, Octavian, Trajan and Titus. Popes and men of the church also yield to their carnal desires. Adversely, few women are equally perverse; Rectitude lists only Athalian, Jezebel and Brunhilde while citing Judas and Julian the Apostate as examples of extremely immoral men.

In "About Griselda, the marchioness of Saluzzo, a woman of unfailing virtue," Marquis Saluzzo promises his barons that he will take a wife. He marries Griselda, the daughter of a poor man. When Griselda gives birth to a daughter, Marquis Saluzzo decides to test her constancy and pretends that her daughter must be killed to appease his barons. Griselda does not complain. When she has a son, the same ruse is used; Griselda offers herself as an additional sacrifice to appease the barons. Finally, Marquis Saluzzo tells Griselda that he must disregard her and take another wife. Griselda asks only for a slip to compensate for her lost virginity and returns to her father's home. Marquis



Saluzzo pretends to marry another maiden, and Griselda offers her congratulations. Marquis Saluzzo, convinced of Griselda's fidelity and constancy, apologizes and ends his tests. In "About Florence of Rome," the Roman Emperor goes to war and leaves Florence, his wife, in the charge of his brother. The emperor's brother tries to seduce Florence in vain, and he defames Florence when the emperor returns, causing her to flee. Florence takes up a position as a nanny in another land where the prince vainly attempts to seduce her. Unable to succeed, he kills the child in her charge, and Florence is exiled. Florence is summoned when the prince is sick and tells him that he must confess his sins to be healed. When the prince admits to killing the child, Florence receives a pardon. Florence is summoned to Rome when the emperor's brother suffers from leprosy. He too must admit his sins, causing the emperor to be outraged. Florence reveals her true identity, reconciles the emperor to his brother, and is restored to empress.



Section 12, II/52-II/60

Section 12, II/52-II/60 Summary and Analysis

In "About the wife of Bernabo the Genoese," Rectitude recounts Boccaccio's "Decameron". When Bernabo praises his wife, Ambrose bets that he can seduce her. Ambrose steals her belt and purse, claiming it is a gift of her favor, and Bernabo orders a servant to kill his wife. She escapes and disguises herself as a male servant for Senor Ferant, named Sagurat. When she joins Senor Ferant in a visit to the sultan, the sultan hires Sagurat as his chief steward. On an errand for the sultan, Sagurat encounters Ambrose with her purse and learns of his betrayal. Sagurat asks the sultan to summon Bernabo and have Ambrose retell his story. Bernabo grieves as he hears of the betrayal, but his wife reveals herself. Ambrose is killed, and Bernabo and his wife are rejoined. In "After Rectitude has finished talking about women who were steadfast, Christine asks her why it is that all these worthy ladies of the past didn't refute men and books who slander the female sex. Rectitude gives her answer," Christine wonders why intelligent women do not argue against the infamy that books give them, and Rectitude states that it is Christine's task to challenge these ideas. When Christine claims that the majority of women are not virtuous, Rectitude states that women will attain perfection when men do.

In "Christine asks Rectitude if it's true what certain men have said about how few women are faithful in love, and Rectitude gives her reply," Christine asks about women being unfaithful in love, and Rectitude replies that women are as faithful in love as men. "On the subject of women's constancy in love: the example of Dido, Queen of Carthage" recounts how Queen Dido of Carthage falls in love with Aeneas and commits suicide when he sneaks away in the middle of the night. "About Medea in love" tells of Jason breaking his promise to marry Medea, causing her to despair for the rest of her life. In "About Thisbe," Thisbe's mother disapproves of Thisbe's love for Pyramus and confines her daughter. Thisbe finds a crack in their adjoining palaces and enlarges it so that she can still talk to Pyramus. Thisbe and Pyramus run away, but Thisbe arrives first and is scared away by a lion who eats and vomits her veil. When Pyramus finds the veil, he commits suicide, and Thisbe kills herself when she discovers her love's corpse. In "About Hero", Hero and Leander keep their love a secret. Leander routinely swims across Hellespont to visit Hero, but he drowns when he attempts it one particularly dangerous night. When Hero sees Leander, she jumps into Hellespont and drowns holding his corpse.

In "About Ghismonda, daughter of the prince of Salerno," Ghismonda marries the count of Campania, but when he dies, Tancredi, her father and a prince of Salerno, refuses to allow her to remarry. Ghismonda takes her father's young squire, Guiscardo, as a lover. One day, while Ghismonda walks through the garden, Tancredi falls asleep on her sofa where he later awakes to hear a Ghismonda with her lover. Tancredi arrests Guiscardo and threatens to have him killed. Ghismonda begs that her father kill her instead. When Tancredi kills Guiscardo and sends his heart to Ghismonda, Ghismonda poisons



herself. In "About Lisabetta, and other women in love," Lisabetta of Messina falls in love with a servant, Lorenzo. When her three brothers discover this, they kill Lorenzo. Lisabetta, suspecting foul play, finds the body, and plants Lorenzo's severed head in a pot with basil. Lisabetta weeps at the pot daily until her brothers steal the pot and refuse to return it. Lisabetta dies of grief asking for the pot. Other faithful women include dame de Fayel, chatel aime de Vergi, Isolde and Deianira.



Section 13, II/61-II/69

Section 13, II/61-II/69 Summary and Analysis

In "About Juno, and some other famous ladies," Juno is worshiped by the Romans as the goddess of wealth and marriage, while Europa is famous because Jupiter fell in love with her. Jocasta is renowned for her terrible misfortune, and Medusa, Helen and Polyxena are famous for their beauty. In "Christine addresses Rectitude who, in her reply, refutes the view of those who claim that women use their charms to attract men," Christine objects to women dressing elegantly in order to attract men's attention, but Rectitude says that, though it is wrong to dress above one's station, some people have a natural taste for fine clothing, such as Saint Bartholomew. "About the Roman woman Claudia" discusses Claudia whose delight in finery compromises her reputation. When the sailors are unable to bring a ship to harbor, Claudia prays to the goddess Pessinus to witness her chastity and allow her to tow the ship to harbor with her belt; Claudia succeeds. In "Rectitude explains that some women are loved more for their virtue than others are for their attractiveness," Rectitude insists that some men love women for their virtue rather than their appearance, such as Tarquin with Lucretia. In "About Queen Blanche, mother of Saint Louis, and other honest and decent ladies who were loved for their virtue," Queen Blanche of France captivates King Saint Louis with her virtue. King Saint Louis loves her for life and writes poems singing her praises, despite the impossibility of having his love returned.

In "Christine addresses Rectitude who, in her reply, refutes the opinion of those who claim that women are by nature mean," Christine discusses the idea that women are avaricious, but Rectitude states women are less avaricious than men; wives manage household money and are generous in alms giving. Christine recalls many instances of women's generosity. Rectitude alludes to the time that Roman ladies compile their funds when Rome needs money. In "About a generous and wealthy woman named Busa," Rectitude alludes to "Faits des Romains" and the story about Busa caring for Roman soldiers after their battle with Hannibal. When Marguerite de la Riviere notices a famous knight missing from a ball, she asks for him and, upon learning that he is imprisoned for debt, Marguerite pays his debt. In "About the princesses and ladies of France," Christine recalls virtuous women of her day and asks if they will be included in the city. Rectitude lists the following women as citizens for the City of Ladies: Queen Isabeau of Bavaria, duchess of Berry, duchess of Orleans, duchess of Burgundy, countess of Clermont, duchess of Holland, countess of Hainault, duchess of Bourbon, countess of Saint-Pol, and Anne, the daughter of late count of La Marche. The city will be filled with ladies of all different ranks. Rectitude finishes her part of building the City of Ladies, and Justice arrives to finish the city. In "Christine addresses princesses and all other ladies," Christine welcomes the citizens to the city.



Section 14, III/1-III/9

Section 14, III/1-III/9 Summary and Analysis

Part III, "Here begins the third part of the Book of the City of Ladies, which explains how and by whom the high turrets of the towers were finished off, and which noble ladies were chosen to dwell in the great palaces and lofty keeps," begins with "The first chapter recounts how Justice brought the Queen of Heaven to live in the City of Ladies" where Justice brings the Virgin Mary to the City of Ladies and asks her to reign as queen; Mary agrees. In "About Our Lady's sisters and Mary Magdalene," Mary Magdalene and other blessed sisters join the Virgin Mary in the City of Ladies. In "About Saint Catherine," Catherine chides Emperor Maxentius for sacrificing to the gods. His philosophers argue with her, but they are converted and martyred. After attempts to woo St. Catherine fail, Emperor Maxentius threatens and tortures her, but angels succor her. When the emperor's wife is converted, she is tortured and beheaded for criticizing her husband. After St. Catherine rejects Emperor Maxentius' proposal, he orders her decapitation, but milk flows from her wounds instead of blood. Angels retrieve St. Catherine's body and carry it to Mount Sinai. In "About Saint Margaret," Emperor Olybrius imprisons St. Margaret for rejecting his advances. Feeling temptation, St. Margaret asks God to show her the devils pursuing her; she defeats a dragon and a dark apparition. The emperor tortures her more, but witnesses are converted since angels protect St. Margaret. Finally, she is beheaded, and angels carry her soul to heaven.

In "About Saint Lucy," King Aucejas kidnaps St. Lucy, wanting to rape her, but he is converted. St. Lucy lives with King Aucejas for a long time, but she returns to Rome to be martyred because she has a vision that she must do so. King Aucejas joins her as her servant, and when she reveals her Christianity and is martyred, he announces that he is also a Christian and suffers the same fate. In "About the blessed virgin Martina," the emperor wants to marry the blessed virgin Martina, but she reveals her Christianity. Idols crack when the emperor attempts to force her to worship them. Witnesses convert as Martina is tortured. When she is stripped naked and her body cut, milk flows instead of blood. Angels beat the torturers with chains. Martina is burnt with oil and thrown in prison, but she is whole when revealed the next day, causing many to convert. Lions will not eat her, fire will not burn her, and the emperor cutting her hair causes her to prophesy the death of his kingdom. After the emperor locks Martina in his temple and returns to find the idols smashed and Martina playing with angels, he orders her throat cut, and God calls Martina home, though the emperor dies the same day.

In "About another Saint Lucy who was a virgin, as well as some other saints who were virgin-martyrs too," St. Lucy of Syracuse prays to St. Agatha for her mother's cure, but St. Agatha tells St. Lucy she can do it herself. When St. Lucy is sent to a brothel to be raped as punishment for her faith, she becomes too heavy to be moved. St. Benedicta and a host of twelve virgins travel and convert people. St. Fausta is tortured by Emperor Maximian, but many converts follow her at death. In "About Saint Justine and other



virgins," Justine's attempted suitor hires a necromancer to summon a devil to harass Justine, but Justine dodges the devil and converts her suitor and the necromancer. Eulalie is imprisoned and martyred for refusing to stop talking about Jesus Christ. Macra and St. Euphemia are tortured, while St. Foy is crowned by angels. Marcia is beaten for destroying idols, but God creates a wall to prevent a priest from raping her. In "About the virgin Theodosina, Saint Barbara, and Saint Dorothy," Theodosina has a debate with the judge Urban and is beaten. She is stripped naked, but a cloud covers her; the leopards released to kill her only dance around her. She is finally beheaded, but Theodosina appears to her parents the next day, crowned in glory. Emperor Maximian tortures Barbara, and Theophilus mocks Dorothy, but he later converts and is martyred as well.



Section 15, III/10-III/19

Section 15, III/10-III/19 Summary and Analysis

In "About the life of Saint Christine the virgin," St. Christine, the daughter of Urban, is locked in a tower with other maidens because of her beauty. Though the other maidens urge her to worship their idols, Christine refuses, incurring her father's reproaches. Urban beats his daughter when she breaks an idol and gives gold to starving Christians. Angels protect Christine when her father tortures her. When she is thrown into the sea, angels save her, and Jesus Christ baptizes her. St. Christine is returned to prison and tortured, but over three thousand witnesses convert. God joins her at the end of her martyrdom and takes St. Christine to heaven. In "About several saints who saw their children being martyred in front of them," Felicity sees her seven children tortured and martyred before being martyred. Similarly, Julitta watches her young son die first, and Blandina watches her fifteen year old daughter be martyred. In "About Saint Marina the virgin," a layman leaves his young daughter, Marina, with relatives when he takes order, but worrying about her, he sends for his "son," Brother Marinus who also joins the monastery. A young pregnant girl in the nearby town accuses Brother Marinus of being the father, but Brother Marinus does not dispute her. She serves a five year penance and raises the child as her son, returning to the monastery eventually to do dirty jobs. When Brother Marinus dies, her sex is discovered. The abbot feels much grief for punishing St. Marina, and many miracles occur near her corpse.

In "About the blessed virgin Euphrosyna," Paphnutius wants Euphrosyna, his daughter, to marry, but she runs away, disguised as a boy, and joins the monastery. Paphnutius searches for her in vain. He visits the monastery where the abbot takes Paphnutius to Brother Smaragdus, Euphrosyna's alias. Brother Smaragdus assures her father that he will see his daughter again before dying. Paphnutius visits the monastery often since it is the only peace he finds. Brother Smaragdus dies with a letter in her hand to her father, revealing her identity. Paphnutius joins the monastery. In "About the blessed lady Anastasia," Anastasis sells her belongings and devotes herself to aiding Christian martyrs. In "About the blessed Theodota," Theodota is sent to St. Anastasia to keep her company during her arrest. Both are tortured and martyred. In "About the noble and holy Nathalia," Nathalia comforts her husband, Adrian, while he is imprisoned and martyred for his conversion to Christianity; following a vision, she buries martyrs' bodies in Constantinople until her husband calls her to heaven in a dream. In "About Saint Afra, a repentant prostitute who turned to God," a former prostitute, St. Afra, is judged and sentenced to death for refusing to sacrifice to gods. She appeals to Jesus Christ, who was crucified for the corrupt. In "Justice talks about several noble ladies who served the Apostles and other saints and gave them shelter," Justice gives the few examples of immoral women in the Bible: Drusiana, Susanna, Maximilla, Ephigenia, Helen, Plautilla and Basissa, before handing the City of Ladies to Christine. In "The end of the book; Christine addresses all women," Christine addresses all of the citizens, telling them that they have every reason to rejoice and begging them not to abuse their legacy. They

should be alert and on guard against those who seek to attack their honor and virtue. Christine prays God grants them everlasting joy.



Characters

Christine de Pizan

Christine de Pizan is the author of "The Book of the City of Ladies," as well as the primary narrator. She is a successful scholar and a writer. Christine is upset by the accusations that male authors make against women and mourns being a woman, even questioning God for making such a vile creature. Three ladies, Reason, Rectitude and Justice, approach Christine and tell her that, with their help, she will build a City of Ladies to honor virtuous and wise ladies throughout time. Christine configures this allegorical city by compiling the stories that the three ladies tell her about historical and mythological ladies of renown throughout the ages.

Christine's presence unites the various examples of women's virtues as she asks questions which lead to Reason, Rectitude and Justice telling the stories about the many women they praise. Her character willingly appears more ignorant than the three ladies as she allows them to praise the women while appearing dubious herself, allowing her tone to justify her position and give Reason, Rectitude and Justice the authority in the novel, thus avoiding preaching at her readers. Christine's questions lead to a dialogue between herself and each of the ladies in turn, throughout which the ladies manipulate the story by providing examples of ladies of intelligence, courage, virtue, and religion.

Lady Reason

Lady Reason is one of the three ladies who approach Christine de Pizan. Her duty is to bring people back when they drift from the straight and narrow path they should follow. She is one of God's daughters. Lady Reason is the narrator of the majority of Part I and helps Christine lay a foundation for the City of Ladies and construct the exterior walls. She discusses women who have distinguished themselves intellectually or through military and political achievements. Lady Reason's stories help to dispel the insecurity and ignorance that clouds Christine's mind concerning women.

Lady Reason oversees the construction of the City of Ladies and helps Christine with excavating the land. She uses Christine's questions to refute the common beliefs about women as immoral, using examples from history and mythology as evidence for her defense of women. Each story functions as a brick building the City of Ladies. Lady Reason mentions women from the past, as well as the present, in order to dispel the notion that honorable women are a thing of the past.

Lady Rectitude

Lady Rectitude is one of the three ladies who approach Christine de Pizan. Her duty is to protect the rights of the innocent. She is one of God's daughters. Lady Rectitude is



the narrator of the majority of Part II and helps Christine construct the buildings of the City of Ladies and fill the city with its inhabitants, virtuous ladies. Her stories center around prophets, wives and daughters. She also praises chastity and condemns the injustice of rape.

Lady Rectitude uses her stories about virtuous women to construct the buildings and populate the city. She uses Christine's questions to refute the common beliefs about women as immoral, using examples from history and mythology as evidence for her defense of women. Rectitude strengthens and expands Reason's defenses for women, adding shape, character and life to the city through her stories. Lady Rectitude bridges the gap between earth and heaven with stories of women who follow God's laws. She is a messenger of God's goodness and attempts to inspire and exhort mankind to just conduct.

Lady Justice

Lady Justice is one of the three ladies who approach Christine de Pizan. Her duty is to judge and repay mankind according to their just desserts. She is one of God's daughters. Lady Rectitude is the narrator of the majority of Part III and helps Christine finish the roofs, doorways and gates of the City of Ladies. She also ushers in the Virgin Mary to reign as queen in the city and simultaneously introduces religious women to the population as princesses.

Lady Justice completes her part of the city using stories of women martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ and Christianity. Her tales tend to be darker and use women's bodies as a target of degradation and abuse; however, their aggressors' actions are met with just retribution. Lady Justice represents the side of God's love that deals with punishments for sinners. Her presence serves as a reminder of the fate awaiting those who are ruled by cruel and misogynistic acts.

Boccaccio

Boccaccio is an inactive figure that repeatedly appears throughout the novel. His job as an author gives him authority which he uses to praise many of the women that Reason, Rectitude and Justice use as examples of virtuous women.

Artemisia

Artemisia is the Queen of Caria. She is praised for her moral insight and wisdom. She is also known for her strength as a leader and on the battlefield. Artemisia conquers the Rhodians and defeats Xerxes and the Persians in order to defend her Spartan allies. She erects a mausoleum in honor of her husband, King Mausolus, which becomes one of the seven wonders of the world.



Dido

Dido is the Queen of Carthage. She is originally known as Elissa. She flees her cruel brother, Pygmalion, after he has her husband killed due to his greed. She founds Carthage in North Africa. Dido is known for her cunning, nobility and physical prowess. She welcomes and falls in love with Aeneas, but she commits suicide when he leaves secretly in the middle of the night.

Fredegunde

Fredegunde is the Queen of France. She rules France after her husband's death until her son is old enough to rule. Fredegunde takes Clotar, her infant son, with her to battle in order to urge her men to fight for their future king. She camouflages her army with branches in order to approach and invade the enemy camp.

Medea

Medea is the daughter of the King of Colchis. Her extensive knowledge of herbs allows her to control the elements and provoke spontaneous combustion. Medea falls in love with Jason and helps him obtain the Golden Fleece. When Jason leaves her for another woman, Medea mourns for the rest of her life.

Sappho

Sappho is a Greek poet and scholar. She is beautiful, intelligent and articulate. She wins praise for her literary talents and invents new forms of poetry. Sappho is honored with a bronze statue.

Virgin Mary

The Virgin Mary is the Queen of the City of Ladies. Jesus' mother is brought to the city by Lady Justice. She is the most renowned and honored of all of the women in the City of Ladies.



Objects/Places

City of Ladies

The City of Ladies is built by Christine de Pizan through the instruction of Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice. She builds it by telling the stories of good women of the past and present. It is inhabited by wise and virtuous women. The Virgin Mary reigns as Queen.

Bible

Many of the stories that are told come from the Bible. Examples of good women from the Bible are the Virgin Mary, Ruth, Esther and Mary Magdalene. Jezebel is used as an example of an immoral woman.

Pagans

Many pagans are used of examples of good women, especially in the instance of their conversion to Christianity.

France

France is the setting of the story. Christine de Pizan lives in France which is where the City of Ladies is built.

Heaven

Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice live in Heaven with their father, God.

Justice's Vessel of Gold

Justice's Vessel of Gold is a gift from God. From it, Justice serves each person their rightful portion. It is inscribed with the fleur-de-lis, or lily, which signifies the Trinity.

Reason's Mirror

Reason's Mirror is a source of wisdom, clarity and self-knowledge. Christine uses the mirror for direction and certainty in order to pursue the truths about women.



Rectitude's Ruler

Rectitude's Ruler represents the necessity for Christine to measure her words carefully while building the city. Rectitude uses the ruler as a staff of judgment, dividing good and evil. It is also used as a rod of peace which supports the just and punishes the unjust.

Matheolus' Book

Christine de Pizan reads Matheolus' book in the beginning of the novel. The derogatory comments about the immorality of women make Christine ashamed to be female.

Foundation

Reason helps Christine excavate the land and build the foundation for the City of Ladies. The foundation is made of stories of women who excel in intellectual, political and military pursuits.

Buildings

Rectitude helps Christine erect building in the City of Ladies through stories celebrating prophetesses, wives, daughters and chastity.

Population

Rectitude helps Christine populate the City of Ladies with virtue women. Justice introduces the Queen and the princesses through her stories of martyrs and holy women.

Prison

Many of the martyrs in Justice's stories find themselves in prison for their belief in Jesus Christ and Christianity.

Field of Letters

The Field of Letters is a fertile plain where the City of Ladies is built.

Themes

Misrepresentation

There are many misrepresentations about women that are addressed throughout the book. Male authors constantly slander women, and Reason, Rectitude and Justice provide the reasons for this and argue against the injustice. Women are seen as naturally gluttonous, weak-minded, childish, unintelligent, inferior and incapable of good judgment. Authority also claims that female children result from a weakness in the mother's womb. Women are seen as avaricious, gossips, inconstant and unfaithful. Claims are made that women dress for attention as well as that marriage is unbearable because wives hate old, scholarly husbands. Few women are chaste supposedly, and women only bring evil to the world.

Reason, Rectitude and Justice contradicts these misconceptions with stories about women whose lives prove contrary to the vicious lies that male authors tell about women. Reason insists that God never criticized females more than males. Rectitude claims that women will be perfect when men are perfect. Justice proves the value of women to God by crowning the Virgin Mary as Queen of the City of Ladies. Each of the stories in the book serves to contradict the ideas about women and to prove to Christine and her readers that women are equal to men.

Chastity

Chastity is mentioned repeatedly throughout the novel. Most of the women who are praised for other attributes are additionally praised for their chastity. Men's claims that women are unchaste and that chaste women want to be raped are contradicted with the stories that Reason, Rectitude and Justice tell of chaste women and women who commit suicide after being raped or to avoid rape. Rape is seen as a subjection that allows men to release their anger towards superior women. Women are often defamed as unchaste when men are unable to control them.

Besides the many saints and martyrs that are mentioned as chaste, there is a long list of women whom Reason, Rectitude and Justice cite as examples of chastity. Penthesila, Zenobia, Artemisia, Camilla, Cloleia, Gaia Carilla, Lavinia and Cassandra are all praised for their chastity. In addition, there are Drypetine, Hypsipyle, Claudine, Tertia, Aemilia, Xanthippe, Clotilde, Penelope, Mariamne, Antonia, Lucretia and Virginia. Chaste women from the Bible are mentioned as well, being Susanna, Rebecca, Sarah and Ruth. Despite men's claims that few women are chaste, Reason, Rectitude and Justice provide a long list of chaste women with whom to populate the City of Ladies. The few immoral women that are mentioned are Drusiana, Jezebel, Maximilla, Ephigenia, Helen, Plautilla and Basilissa.



Religion

Religion is a key theme in this text. Primarily, Reason, Rectitude and Justice are daughters of God and represent fundamentals of Christianity. Due to this paternal relationship, their function in the story is to prove that God honors women equally with men. Honorable women follow God's laws, even when they do not necessarily know of God and his love, such as in the examples of the many pagans who are praised as virtuous ladies. God honors several pagans with the gift of prophecy; they are known as the sibyls, one who knows the thoughts of God. The sibyls' names are Persica, Libica, Dephica, Cimeria, Herophile, Samia, Cumana, Hellespontina, Phrygica and Tiburtina. Another pagan prophetess is Almathea. Christian prophetesses mentioned are Deborah, Elizabeth and Anna. The Queen of Sheba also prophesies, as do Nicostrata, Antonia and Cassandra.

Many women serve as martyrs due to their belief in Jesus Christ and Christianity. They are able to endure the physical torments of martyrdom due to their close relationship with God. Some of the martyrs are saints; the saints that Justice mentions are St. Catherine, St. Margaret, St. Lucy of Rome, St. Lucy of Syracuse, St. Christine, St. Anastasia, St. Marina and St. Afra. Other martyrs are the blessed virgin Martina, the blessed virgin Justine, Theodosina, Barbara, Dorothy, Nathalia and Theodota, along with her three sons. Several women are forced to watch their children being martyred before being killed themselves. Felicity's seven children, Julitta's son, and Blandina's fifteen year old daughter are all tortured and killed before their mothers. Rectitude insists that women gained more through the Virgin Mary than they ever lost through Eve's fall. Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, is crowned Queen of the City of Ladies.

Style

Perspective

The perspective of the story is told through Christine de Pizan as the main narrator. She tells the story through a first person point of view. Also, Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice narrate large portions of the story using a first person point of view in their quotations, though Christine de Pizan remains the actual narrator. In their stories, Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice use the third person point of view to describe the lives of the women who they use to build the City of Ladies, though they often interject their opinions into their stories.

Christine de Pizan is a female author in France. She writes *The Book of the City of Ladies* as a defense for women against the many books published in the past and present that make derogatory remarks about women. Her main audience is other women, and her objective is to inspire self-confidence and assure them that the comments made about women by men are not always true by citing examples to the contrary. Throughout the book, Christine de Pizan attempts to disprove the negative notions society holds of women.

Tone

Christine de Pizan reflects meekness, disbelief and uncertainty about the status of women throughout the novel, whereas Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice are more passionate and emotional in their defense of the virtue of women. Using this tone of incredulity, Christine de Pizan allows her character as a narrator to become more objective; this allows her to emulate the female readers who may believe what they have always heard of the negative qualities of women. By allowing Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice to convince her of the virtues of women, Christine de Pizan avoids being the person who is attacking the male authority of books that claim women are immoral.

Additionally, the use of examples of immoral women serves to contrast with the good women in terms of showing how much better these women are as well as by admitting that not all women are virtuous. Comparatively, Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice also cite examples of immoral men to enforce the idea of equality; though some women are immoral, some men are immoral as well. Because the tone allows the book to appear impartial as opposed to a tyrannical, fanatical rant, it makes it more likely that readers will heed what they read.

Structure

The novel is divided into three parts. The first part contains forty-eight subsections. The second part contains sixty-nine subsections, and the third part contains only nineteen



subsections. Each subsection is titled to describe the actions that occur in that individual subsection. Throughout the book, Christine de Pizan poses a question regarding common beliefs about women, and the three ladies refute the belief by citing examples of women that speak to the contrary of said belief. Unfortunately, this format can tend to get a bit repetitious as many of the stories within one of the three parts of the book are very similar.

In the first part, Lady Reason builds the foundation through the use of stories about women who excel intellectually or in political or military pursuits. In the second part, Lady Rectitude finishes the buildings and brings the majority of the population to the City of Ladies. She does this through stories celebrating prophetesses, wives, daughters and chastity. In the third part of the book, Lady Justice introduces the queen and the princesses of the City of Ladies through the use of stories of martyrs and holy women.



Quotes

"My mind became flooded with an endless stream of names as I recalled all the authors who had written on this subject. I came to the conclusion that God had created a vile thing when He created woman. Indeed, I was astounded that such a fine craftsman could have wished to make such an appalling object, which as these writers would have it, is like a vessel in which all the sin and evil of the world has been collected and preserved. This thought inspired such a great sense of disgust and sadness in me that I began to despise myself and the whole of my sex as an aberration in nature." Christine de Pizan, Part I: 1. Here begins the Book of the City of Ladies, the first chapter of which explains why and for what purpose the book was written, p. 6-7

"Let me tell you that those who speak ill of women do more harm to themselves than they do to the women they actually slander." Lady Reason, Part I: 2. Christine tells how three ladies appeared to her, and how the first of them spoke to her and comforted her in her distress, p. 9

"There is no excuse for plain ignorance. If I killed you with good intentions and out of stupidity, would I be in the right? Those who have acted in this way, whoever they may be, have abused their power. Attacking one party in the belief that you are benefiting a third party is unfair. So is criticizing the nature of all women, which is completely unjustified, as I will prove to you by analogy. Condemning all women in order to help some misguided men get over their foolish behavior is tantamount to denouncing fire, which is a vital and beneficial element, just because some people are burnt by it, or to cursing water just because some people are drowned in it. You could apply the same reasoning to all manner of things which can be put to either good or bad use. In none of these cases should you blame the thing in itself if foolish people use it unwisely." Lady Reason, Part I: 8. Christine explains how Reason instructed her and helped her to begin digging up the ground in order to lay the foundation, p. 17-18

"It is because of woman that man sits side by side with God. As for those who state that it is thanks to a woman, the lady Eve, that man was expelled from paradise, my answer to them would be that man has gained far more through Mary than he ever lost through Eve. Humankind has now become one with God, which never would have happened if Eve hadn't sinned. Both men and women should praise this fault of Eve's since it is because of her that such an honour has been bestowed on them. If human nature is fallen, due to the actions of one of God's creatures, it has been redeemed by the Creator Himself. As for conversing with the gods if womankind hadn't been invented, as this Cato claims, his words were truer than he knew. Being a pagan, he and those of his faith believed that both heaven and hell were ruled by the gods. But the ones in hell are what we call devils. So it's definitely true to say that men would be conversing with gods of hell if Mary had not come into the world!" Lady Reason, Part I: 9. How Christine dug over the earth: in other words, the questions which she put to Reason and the answers she received from her, p. 23



"Every decent, upright woman who leads a virtuous life is, and should be, one of the loveliest things to behold. Yet the thorn represents both her fear of doing wrong and her contrition, which are lodged deep in the heart of such a woman and make her reserved, cautious and prudent in order to protect herself." Lady Reason, Part I: 10. More questions and answers on this subject, p. 24

"Though some women are undeniably silly, there are many others who have more intelligence, sensitivity and shrewdness than a whole group of men put together. If these women's husbands trusted them or had as much sense of their wives, they would be much better off." Lady Reason, Part I: 13. About a queen of France called Fredegunde, and other French queens and princesses, p. 33

"Yet, there's no doubt that Nature made them as perfect in mind and body as the cleverest and most learned men to be found in towns and cities. All this comes down to their lack of education, though don't forget what I said before about some men and women being more naturally endowed with intelligence than others. I'll now go on to prove to you that the female sex is just as clever as the male sex, by giving you some examples of women who had fine minds and were extremely erudite." Lady Reason, Part I: 27. Christine asks Reason if God has ever blessed a woman's mind with knowledge of the highest branches of learning, and Reason's reply, p. 58

"God has given every woman a good brain which she could put to good use, if she so chose, in all the domains in which the most learned and renowned men excel. If women wished to study, they are no more excluded from doing so than men are, and could easily put in the necessary effort to acquire a good name for themselves just as the most distinguished of men delight in doing." Lady Reason, Part I: 28. Reason begins to speak about ladies who were blessed with great learning, starting with the noble maiden Cornificia, p. 59

"Believe me, many crucial and worthy arts and sciences have been discovered thanks to the ingenuity and cleverness of women, both in the theoretical sciences which are expressed through the written word, and in the technical crafts which take the form of manual tasks and trades." Lady Reason, Part I: 33. Christine asks Reason if any woman has ever invented new forms of knowledge, p. 64

"Now can you understand the terrible ingratitude of those men who say such things? It's as if they're enjoying all the benefits without having any idea of where they come from or whom they should thank for them. You can clearly see how God, who does nothing without good cause, wanted to show men that they should no more denigrate the female sex than they should their own sex. He chose to endow women's minds with the capacity not simply to learn and grasp all kinds of knowledge but also to invent new ones by themselves, discovering sciences which have done more good and have been more useful to humanity than any others." Lady Reason, Part I: 37. About all the great good that these ladies have brought into the world, p. 70

"I've now realized the full extent to which those men who attack women have failed to express their gratitude and acknowledgment. They have absolutely no grounds for



criticizing women: it's not just that every man who is born of woman receives so much from her, but also that there is truly no end to the great gifts which she has so generously showered on him." Christine de Pizan, Part I: 38. More on the same topic, p. 72

"Note too that good judgment does not come from learning, though learning can help perfect it in those who are naturally that way inclined, since, as you know, two forces moving in the same direction are stronger and more powerful than a single force moving on its own. Therefore, in my opinion, anyone who has naturally good judgment or good sense and who also manages to attain learning is thoroughly deserving of praise. But, as you yourself have pointed out, some have one but not the other: one is a gift from God and is an innate quality, whereas the other is only acquired after much study. Both, however, are good." Lady Reason, Part I: 43. Christine asks Reason if women are naturally endowed with good judgment, and Reason replies to her question, p. 78-79

"Good judgement consists of weighing up carefully what you wish to do and working out how to do it." Lady Reason, Part I: 46. About the good sense and cleverness of Queen Dido, p. 82

"My dear Christine, I mustn't hang back from performing my duty: together we must construct the houses and buildings inside the walls of the City of Ladies which my sister Reason has now put up. Take your tools and come with me. Don't hesitate to mix the mortar well in your inkpot and set to on the masonry work with great strokes of your pen. I'll keep you well supplied with materials. With the grace of God, we'll soon have put up the royal palaces and noble mansions for the glorious and illustrious ladies who will come to live in this city for evermore." Lady Rectitude, Part II: 1. The first chapter tells of the ten Sibyls, p. 91

"However, the main reason why [parents of daughters] are unhappy is because they worry how much it's going to cost them to marry off their daughters since they will have to pay for it out of their own pockets. Others, though, are dismayed because they're afraid of the danger that a young and innocent girl can be led astray by the wrong sort of people. Yet neither of these reasons stand up to scrutiny." Lady Rectitude, Part II: 7. Christine addresses Lady Rectitude, p. 101

"My dear friend, as you are aware, not all women are necessarily very wise and neither are all men. Therefore, if a man has any sense, he should judge for himself if his wife is trustworthy and well-meaning before he tells her anything in confidence, because it could have dangerous consequences. Any man who knows that his wife is dependable, careful and discreet can rest assured that there is not other creature in the world whom he can trust more implicitly nor on whom he can rely so completely." Lady Rectitude, Part II: 25. Christine speaks to Lady Rectitude about those who claim that women cannot keep a secret. In her reply, Rectitude talks about Portia, Cato's daughter, p. 123

"No man can match the great services that women have done and continue to do for humanity." Lady Rectitude, Part II: 30. Christine talks about all the good that women have brought into the world, both now and in the past, p. 130



"There are absolutely no grounds for assuming that knowledge of moral disciplines, which actually inculcate virtue, would have a morally corrupting effect. Indeed, there's no doubt whatsoever that such forms of knowledge correct one's vices and improve one's morals. How could anyone possibly think that by studying good lessons and advice one will be any the worst for it? This view is completely unthinkable and untenable." Lady Rectitude, Part II: 36. Against those who claim that it is not good for women to be education, p. 140

"I'll show you just how unreasonable it is for men to criticize women for being inconstant and capricious. Their argument goes like this. First, they all assume that women are by nature weak. Then, having accused women of weakness, they presumably think themselves to be constant, or at least that women are not as constant as they are. Yet it's undeniable that they expect far greater constancy from women than they themselves can muster. Though they consider themselves to be so strong and to be made of such noble stuff, they're unable to stop themselves from falling prey to some awful vices and failings. Nor is this by any means always out of ignorance. Indeed, it's often down to deliberate bad intentions, because they're well aware that they're committing a sin. But they then excuse themselves, saying that to err is to be human. However, should a woman fall into error, usually thanks to a man's incessant scheming, lo and behold, they declare this to be due to women's innate weakness and inconstancy." Lady Rectitude, Part II: 47. Proofs to refute the view that women are lacking in constancy: Christine asks questions, to which Rectitude replies with various examples of emperors who were unreliable and inconsistent, p. 151

"You should realize from what I've already told you that the virtuous ladies I've discussed with you were each involved in different types of activity and didn't all work towards the same end. This task of constructing the city was reserved for you, not them. These women's works alone were enough to make people of sound judgment and keen intelligence appreciate the female sex fully without their having to write anything else. As for the fact that the men who attacked and criticized women haven't yet been challenged, let me tell you that there's a time and a place for everything in the eternal scheme of things." Lady Rectitude, Part II: 53. After Rectitude has finished talking about women who were steadfast, Christine asks her why it is that all these worthy ladies of the past didn't refute men and books who slander the female sex. Rectitude gives her answer., p. 169

"You can't define something as being for the common good of a city, country or any other community of people, if it doesn't contribute to the universal good of all. Women as well as men must derive equal benefit from it. Something which is done with the aim of privileging only one section of the population is called a private or an individual good, not a common good. Moreover, something which is done for the good of some but to the detriment of others is not simply a private or an individual good. In fact, it constitutes a type of injury done to one party in order to benefit the other: it thus only profits the second party at the expense of the first." Lady Rectitude, Part II: 54. Christine asks Rectitude if it's true what certain men have said about how few women are faithful in love, and Rectitude gives her reply, p. 172



"Wearing clothes that aren't fitting to one's station in life is particularly reprehensible. However, whilst I've no intention of condoning such a vice, neither do I want anyone to think that they have the right to lay more blame than is strictly necessary on those who makes themselves beautiful in this way. I can assure you that not all women who do this are interested in seducing men. Some people, not just women but also men, have a legitimate taste and natural bent for taking pleasure in pretty things and expensive, elaborate clothes, as well as in cleanliness and fine array. If it is in their nature to behave like this, it's very difficult for them to resist, though it would be greatly to their credit if they did." Lady Rectitude, Part II: 62. Christine addresses Rectitude who, in her reply, refutes the view of those who claim that women use their charms to attract men, p. 188

"Justice, my son's dearly beloved, I will gladly come to live amongst these women, who are my sisters and friends, and I will take my place at their side. This is because Reason, Rectitude, you Justice and even Nature, have all persuaded me to do so. Women serve, honour and praise me without end, thus I am now and ever shall be the head of the female sex. God Himself always wished this to be so and it was predestined and ordained by the Holy Trinity." Queen Virgin Mary, Part III: 1. The first chapter recounts how Justice brought the Queen of Heaven to live in the City of Ladies, p. 202

"Most honourable ladies, praise be to God: the construction of our city is finally at an end. All of you who love virtue, glory and a fine reputation can now be lodged in great splendour inside its walls, not just women of the past but also those of the present and the future, for this city has been founded and built to accommodate all deserving women." Christine de Pizan, Part III: 19. The end of the book; Christine addresses all women, p. 237

"In short, all you women, whether of high, middle or low social rank, should be especially alert and on your guard against those who seek to attack your honour and your virtue. My ladies, see how these men assail you on all sides and accuse you of every vice imaginable. Prove them all wrong by showing how principled you are and refute the criticisms they make of you by behaving morally." Christine de Pizan, Part III: 19. The end of the book; Christine addresses all women, p. 239



Topics for Discussion

Why do Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice visit Christine?

Explain the reason for building the City of Ladies.

What are the individual functions of Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice?

Does Christine actually believe what she has read about women? Explain your position.

How do Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude and Lady Justice explain their use of pagan women as examples of virtue and honor?

Who is the Queen of the City of Ladies and why is she elected Queen?

Describe the manner in which the city is built.