

Hanne Berg Envik

Virtues in the eyes of Christine de Pizan

Master's thesis in MLHIST

Supervisor: Erik Opsahl

November 2020

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Historical Studies



Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Hanne Berg Envik

Virtues in the eyes of Christine de Pizan

Master's thesis in MLHIST
Supervisor: Erik Opsahl
November 2020

Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Historical Studies

Abstract

The research question for this thesis is as follows: *Which female virtues were the most important to Christine de Pizan based on the female examples included in The Book of the City of Ladies?* A hypothesis of that the virtues Christine deems as most important are the ones found in the Christian female examples is also central for this research. This thesis is supported by various literature on Christine de Pizan, Christianity and women in the Middle Ages, with additional literature on Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti. A biography by Arienti called "De Margarita Regina de Scotia" is examined in addition to *The Book of the City of Ladies* to provide this thesis with a secondary perspective by a male author on female virtues.

The main methods for this thesis are close reading and source criticism. The data material for the analysis is collected through close reading of the primary source *The Book of the City of Ladies*, and "De Margarita Regina de Scotia". Both the book and the text are English translations of the original manuscripts, and will first be examined individually before a comparison of the two text is conducted.

In the examination of the *City of Ladies* it becomes clear that Christine de Pizan values many virtues. The large number of female examples included in her book gives a nuanced picture of the women in her book, and it strengthens Christine's arguments in the defence of women; Christine de Pizan writes *City of Ladies* mainly as a defence of women from misogynist authors, and theirs and others negative opinions on the female sex.

As Christine herself explicitly states, and becomes evident through the analysis of the primary sources, it is the virtue "chastity" Christine establishes as the most important. Although other virtues are mentioned, the statement from Christine about "chastity" being "the supreme virtue" leaves little doubt about what virtue she believes is the most important for a woman to possess. But the presence of the other virtues in the last chapter in *City of Ladies* leads me to conclude that a number of other virtues are also very important to Christine de Pizan.

Sammendrag

Problemstillingen for denne masteroppgaven er som følger: *Hvilke kvinnelige dyder var viktigst for Christine de Pizan basert på de kvinnelige eksemplene inkludert i The Book of the City of Ladies?* En hypotese om at det er de mest kristne eksemplene som er viktigst for Christine er også sentral for forskningen. Denne oppgaven underbygges av forskjellige litteratur om Christine de Pizan, Kristendommen og kvinner i Middelalderen, med ekstra litteratur om Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti. En biografi av Arienti kalt «De Margarita Regina de Scotia» undersøkes i tillegg til *The Book of the City of Ladies*, og formålet er at biografien skal gi et sekundært perspektiv på kvinnelige dyder fra ståstedet til en mannlig forfatter.

Hovedmetoden i denne oppgaven er nærlesing og kildekritikk. Datamaterialet som skal anvendes i analysen innhentes gjennom nærlesing av primærkilden *The Book of the City of Ladies*, og «De Margarita Regina de Scotia». Både boken og biografien er engelske oversettelser av de originale manuskriptene, og vil først undersøkes individuelt før de sammenlignes.

I undersøkelse av *City of Ladies* kom det tydelig fram at Christine de Pizan verdsetter mange dyder. Det store antallet kvinnelige eksempler som er inkludert i boken gir et nyansert bilde av kvinner i boken hennes, og det styrker argumentene til Christine som forsvarer kvinner; Christine de Pizan skrev *City of Ladies* hovedsakelig som et

forsvar for kvinner fra kvinnehatene forfattere, og deres og andres negative oppfatninger om kvinner.

Som Christine de Pizan selv skriver, og som kommer fram gjennom analysen av primærkilden, er det dyden «kyskhhet» Christine etablerer som den viktigste. Det at Christine etablerer «kyskhhet» som den viktigste dyden ved å skrive at «kyskhhet» er «the supreme virtue» gjør at det er liten tvil knyttet til hvilken dyd hun mener er den aller viktigste for en kvinne. Men tilstedeværelse av en rekke andre dyder i det siste kapittelet av *City of Ladies* fører til at jeg også konkluderer med at det er flere andre dyder som også er viktige for Christine.

Preface

Despite a challenging year my master thesis has been completed. If you had told me how bizarre and strange my last terms of MLHIST would be, I do not think I would have believed a single word. With the extra challenges the year 2020 brought on I am even more grateful for the help I have received. I would therefore like to take a moment to thank those who helped me finish my master thesis.

Thank you, Erik Opsahl for being a supportive supervisor through the work with this thesis. Without your guidance, suggestions in literature and corrections I would not have made it far in this research process.

Thank you to my fellow students of MLHIST. Your warmth and support have not only made my time at NTNU incredibly special, but our discussions and coffee breaks has more than once brought me out of a slump.

A special thanks to Kasper Hage Stjern, who not only took the time to read through my thesis, but gave tips on corrections, grammar and structure. Without your assistance this thesis would have been a hot mess.

Finally, thank you to my family and close friends for the endless support and positive encouragements.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 INTRODUCTION OF THESIS, RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES.....	9
1.1.1 <i>Why Christine de Pizan and The Book of the City of Ladies?</i>	9
1.1.2 <i>The thesis' structure</i>	10
1.2 METHODOLOGY.....	10
1.2.1 <i>"Representation analysis"</i>	11
1.2.2 <i>Empiricism</i>	11
1.2.3 <i>Scientific method (source criticism)</i>	12
1.3 PRIMARY SOURCES, LITERATURE AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON CHRISTINE DE PIZAN.....	12
1.3.1 <i>Primary sources</i>	12
1.3.2 <i>Translation</i>	13
1.3.3 <i>Previous research on Christine de Pizan</i>	14
1.4 RELEVANCE FOR FUTURE OCCUPATION (TEACHER).....	15
CHAPTER 2: HISTORIOGRAPHY	17
2.1 CONTEXT: DELIMITATION OF TIME, SPACE, AND THE AUTHORS OF THE PRIMARY SOURCES.....	17
2.1.1 <i>France in the fourteenth and fifteenth century</i>	17
2.1.2 <i>Christine de Pizan: Italy and France</i>	18
2.1.3 <i>Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti: Italy and Scotland</i>	19
2.1.4 <i>A note on spelling and abbreviations</i>	20
2.2 KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS.....	21
2.2.1 <i>"Virtue", "role" and "feminism"</i>	21
2.2.2 <i>"Power" and "religion"</i>	22
CHAPTER 3: CHRISTINE DE PIZAN	26
3.1 ORIGINS.....	26
3.2 PENMANSHIP.....	28
3.2.1 <i>Creating the writer</i>	28
3.2.2 <i>Characteristics of Christine's works</i>	29
3.3 CHRISTINE AND HER DEFENCE OF WOMEN.....	29
3.3.1 <i>The Book of the City of Ladies</i>	30
CHAPTER 4: CHRISTINE'S CITY OF LADIES	32
4.1 THE VIRTUES IN <i>THE BOOK OF THE CITY OF LADIES</i>	32
4.1.1 <i>PART I: Reason</i>	33
4.1.2 <i>PART II: Rectitude</i>	36
4.1.3 <i>PART III: Justice</i>	38
4.2 TRADITIONAL ROLES AND THE ABILITY OF WOMEN IN <i>THE BOOK OF THE CITY OF LADIES</i>	40
4.2.1 <i>Christian influence</i>	41
CHAPTER 5: A SECONDARY EXAMPLE AND VIEWPOINT	43
5.1 «DE MARGARITA REGINA DE SCOCIA»: AN ITALIAN LIFE OF MARGARET.....	43
5.2 SIMILARITIES BETWEEN <i>CITY OF LADIES</i> AND «DE MARGARITA REGINA DE SCOCIA».....	48
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	50
REFERENCES	53
PRIMARY SOURCES.....	53
SECONDARY LITERATURE.....	53

Chapter 1: Introduction

My dear daughter, don't be afraid, for we have not come to do you any harm, but rather, out of pity on your distress, we are here to comfort you. Our aim is to help you get rid of those misconceptions which have clouded your mind and made you reject what you know and believe in fact to be the truth just because so many other people have come out with the opposite opinion.¹

1.1 Introduction of thesis, research question and hypotheses

I always knew I wanted to write my thesis on a subject related to or about women. What that subject would be, on the other hand, more of a challenge to determine. Would my thesis and research lead me to an archive in search of relics telling the story of a noblewoman? Or would I find a primary source written by a woman herself? My thesis would develop from the latter: one book written by the female author Christine de Pizan called *The Book of the City of Ladies*. I had never heard of her or the book before stumbling across them in a book during the beginning of my research. I also wanted to include a second book by Christine de Pizan called *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* as these books are often seen in correlation to one another. Due to limitation of space in this thesis *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* is not included, but it would make for an interesting continuation of this thesis.

After long deliberation, and many changes, my research question for this thesis is as follows: *Which female virtues were the most important to Christine de Pizan based on the female examples included in The Book of the City of Ladies?* A natural addition to my research question is the existence of roles in her narration; the female's role in society and personal life are indicators of virtues, and while virtues remain as the main focus in this thesis, I believe the concept of "role" is worth mentioning and contribute with insight about Christine's idealised characteristics for a woman.

I hypothesise that it is virtues found in the newest and/or most Christian examples Christine deems most valuable, I base this claim on the unavoidable influence of Christianity, which was a foundation for culture and society in France and the rest of Europe. Latin Christendom had been a strong and influential power for more than a millennium by the time Christine de Pizan wrote her book, and its integration in political as well as cultural spheres is what supports my hypothesis.

I hope my thesis can assist in spreading knowledge about Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* and her opinion on female virtues to a new audience.

1.1.1 Why Christine de Pizan and *The Book of the City of Ladies*?

My interest in Christine de Pizan can be described as a chance meeting that developed into something more. In the early stages of research I stumbled upon her name in a book by Fiona Downie.² Though my intentions at the time was to incorporate Christine de Pizan into my paper in a more limited matter, my growing interest after reading the first part of her book *The Book of the City of Ladies* changed that plan. The vast number of

¹ Christine de Pizan (1405). *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Rosalind Brown-Grant (1999). London: Penguin Books. Page 8.

² Downie, F. (2006). *She is but a woman: Queenship in Scotland 1423-1463*. Edinburgh: John Donald.

women included in the book, female examples from ancient civilisations up until her present time, irreversibly piqued my interest.

As *The Book of the City of Ladies* was the first work by Christine de Pizan that I read, I wanted it to be the core of my thesis. Awed by the way she wrote about women and so openly defended the female sex, reading the book was as surprising as it was inspiring. The sheer number of women Christine includes in her book reveals her dedication in thoroughly defending women, and the book consists of enough material, in my opinion, to adequately write a lektor master thesis.

1.1.2 The thesis' structure

This thesis will be divided into 7 chapters, including the introduction and the conclusion. The main focus in chapter 1 is to discuss the methodology used in this thesis, as well as analyse previous research on this topic. Christine de Pizan, and her works of literature, forms the core of the discussion in this chapter.

In chapter 2 the main goal is to form a theoretical backdrop which is needed to fully explore the main research question in subsequent chapters. Knowledge about certain terms and concepts, fourteenth and fifteenth century French and Italian history, societal norms, and Latin Christendom is a necessity for fully understanding the culture and society in which Christine lived.

Chapter 3 explores Christine de Pizan's early life and career. This chapter will provide a deeper and more complete understanding of Christine, her motivation for writing, and what societal and personal context motivated and inspired her to write her book. The chapter will also include a short summary of and introduction to the primary source of this thesis; *The Book of the City of Ladies*.

Chapter 4 uses these points as the foundation for further analysis of the primary source *The Book of the City of Ladies*. This chapter analyses the primary sources' three parts to find how Christine de Pizan describes the female examples, and examines what virtues can be found in relation to the examples in each part. In 4.2 the hypotheses about Christian influence will be examined through Christine's inclusion of traditional roles, examples of Christian females and The Virgin Mary.

In chapter 5, a second text called "De Margarita Regina de Scotia" will be explored. The text is from a manuscript called *Gynevera de le clare donne* by Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti, and the virtues used in this text is of particular interest due to Arienti's stand as a male author compared to a Christine de Pizan's more vulnerable stand as a female author. Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti was a Bolognese writer who worked for the noble family Bentivoglio and the noble family d'Ercole from around 1471 until his death in 1510, and the *Gynevera* is a collection of female biographies. The chapter concludes with a comparison between the virtues Arienti includes in his text, and the virtues Christine de Pizan includes in her book *The Book of the City of Ladies*.

The last chapter, chapter 6, is the conclusion. Here I sum up my research and my results about which virtue(s) were the most important to Christine de Pizan, and whether there were any similarities between her and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti, a male author.

1.2 Methodology

My methodology is qualitative empirical. The results of the analysis will be presented in an orderly and scientifically sound manner through the steps of close reading the primary sources, sourcing information found in the primary sources, contextualising the primary sources, and analysing the results retrieved from the examples found in the primary

sources.³ The primary source, *The Book of the City of Ladies* by Christine de Pizan, will be referred to as a "book" rather than a manuscript. This distinction is made to avoid confusion with Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's manuscript *Gynevera de le clare donne*, and because this thesis uses a translation rather than the original manuscript. The excerpt from Arienti's manuscript will be referred to as a "text".

There are mainly three approaches utilized in the thesis to ensure scientific quality and accuracy. All three will be utilized in coherency with each other; all are vital in the process of researching, analysing and writing. The three approaches are "representation analysis", empiricism and source criticism.

1.2.1 "Representation analysis"

"Representation analysis" is a method in which the language of one or more sources is analysed to understand how different concepts and ideas are presented to the reader. More specifically, the purpose of "representation analysis" is to understand how concepts and ideas are constructed and given meaning.⁴ In the context of Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies*, representation analysis will assist in determining what virtues the female examples in the book possess. To answer the thesis question about which virtue(s) were the most important to Christine de Pizan, the question will be explored by closely reading *The Book of the City of Ladies*, and finding the descriptive words concerning virtues, character and ability. The description of the women in the *City of Ladies* is the main focus of this thesis, as virtues is understood as characteristics, abilities and behaviour exercised by women. |

1.2.2 Empiricism

The second important part of my methodology is empiricism. This is an important and theory, like most historians do: it is through experience and/or observation that we can acquire knowledge and facts. The aspect of trustworthiness and authority is also essential; it is important to be able to show where information is collected from and facts must be verifiable.⁵

For this thesis the empirical data is collected from Christine de Pizan's book *The Book of the City of Ladies*, and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's text "De Margarita regina de Scotia". The data will be discussed through the use of the terms "virtue", "role", "power" and "religion", alongside the context the secondary literature provide of the time period, society, religion, and the authors Christine and Arienti. More on the different terms and historiography in chapter 2.

The selection of secondary literature has been done with the intention of providing thorough context for the authors and the primary sources. Personal reflections will be grounded in factual statements and theories from other historians and their research. The secondary literature used in this thesis consists of books concerning late medieval society in France and Italy, books about women's studies, theology, and Christianity and its influence in late medieval Europe. Articles discussing the concept of "virtue", "roles" and "power" are also an important part of the secondary literature. Without contextual knowledge about the period and knowledge about related terms this thesis cannot be concluded with any substantial results. A wide variety of literature and research has

³ Contextualization of the primary source focuses on the context of the individual, here the author, and cultural, social, and situational context.

⁴ Melve, L. & Ryymin, T. (editors). (2018). *Historikerns arbetsmåter*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. Pages 57-61.

⁵ Davies, S. (2003). *Empiricism and history*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Pages 1-9.

therefore been collected on the topic of Christine de Pizan and female virtues. This is further detailed in chapter 2.

1.2.3 Scientific method (source criticism)

The third approach, or methodology, is source criticism and must be applied in the process of locating and assessing the secondary literature, to investigate their quality and credibility. Source criticism is a methodical necessity to ensure that the contextual information from the secondary literature is accurate. The previous research conducted on topics explored and analysed in this thesis is part of the secondary literature, and it will provide the knowledge needed to understand the primary sources, and their cultural and societal context. It is a prerequisite to know what other researchers have written about the applicable topics; mainly about Christine de Pizan, Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti, *The Book of the City of Ladies* and the *Gynevera de le clare donne* for this thesis. This is to both to be aware of previous works produced by other researchers, and to be able to build on these works. Source criticism will help establish objective facts and history, or as objective as possible. All secondary literature is comprised of different levels of subjectivity, as personal opinions and choices made by the author, whether intentional or unintentional, will always be present. Due to this, it is especially important to critically chose what literature my empirical data consists of due to the level of subjectivity found in the primary sources. Language (one of the main focal interests in the primary sources) is subjective by default through the authors' personal choices, making it all the more important to consequently chose objective resources when analysing the data collected. In addition, if unassessed empirical data are used in an analysis, it would be very difficult to have any sort of control over the quality and credibility of the end result.⁶

Great effort has been applied in the research process to find useful material that covers the necessary fields of interests. The empirical data chosen and used to form the contextual fundament for the research about Christine de Pizan, female virtue and fourteenth and fifteenth century France and Italy, is diverse both in regard to the author(s) and the topics of the chosen literature. Literature concerning fourteenth and fifteenth century France and Italy has been utilized so that contextual knowledge about the time and location Christine de Pizan lived in can be applied to the exploration of the primary source material; literature exploring anthropological topics concerning women and religion has been utilized to broaden my understanding about terms such as "virtue", "power" and "role"; and books and articles written specifically about Christine de Pizan and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti have been utilized to understand better who they were, what could have influenced them and how their work can most skilfully be explored from their point of view and social reality.

1.3 Primary sources, literature and previous research on Christine de Pizan

1.3.1 Primary sources

This thesis primary source is the book *The Book of the City of Ladies* (originally *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*) by Christine de Pizan.⁷ Finished in the years 1405-06, *The Book of the City of Ladies* is a book written in defence of women, citing a vast number of female

⁶ Melve & Tyymin (2018). Pages 39-43.

⁷ Christine de Pizan (1405) *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Translated and with an introduction and notes by Rosalind Brown-Grant (1999). London: Penguin Books

examples and discussing several male authors works and misogyny. The book is academically styled and defends women's ability, moral, capability, and persona through an idealistic world. Christine's aim was "[...] both to refute the misogynist equation of womankind with sinfulness and to instil a sense of self-worth in her female readers".⁸

In addition to the primary source by Christine de Pizan, a second primary source by Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti is used to add a broader and different perspective on female virtues in the fifteenth century. In 1492 Arienti presented a manuscript called *Gynevera de le clare donne* to Ginevra, the wife of Giovanni Bentivoglio. The manuscript contains a text called "De Margarita regina de Scotia", a biography about Queen Margaret, queen to James III of Scotland.⁹

Originally, the works of Christine de Pizan and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti were manuscripts. As mentioned earlier, this thesis does not use the originals; here translations are used, and they are in the form of a book and an article, hence the use of the terms "book" when referring to *The Book of the City of Ladies* and "text" when referring to "De Margarita regina de Scotia". The choice of this terminology is based on the fact that a manuscript (often) contains more information besides the written text. Illustrations and other visual elements can influence the readers intake and opinion of the sources. As these elements are not available for analysis in this thesis, it is more correct to separate the two versions of Christine de Pizan and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's texts.

1.3.2 Translation

The translated version of *The Book of the City of Ladies* is the main source of this thesis, and this is an aspect of the thesis which raises some questions regarding the nature of the sources. Working with translations of primary sources induces some questions, criticism, and doubt. One question is about the nature of the source. Can the source be classified as a primary source (a source which "originate(s) in the time period historians are studying,") if it has been interpreted by another person?¹⁰ In the process of translating literary works, the translator is faced with choices regarding phrasing and utilizing conceptually similar wording. The translator can easily change the meaning of a text with a few selected words, changing the entire purpose of a literary work by manipulating what the reader both explicitly read and the implicit meaning that are obtained by reading between the lines. As such, some would perhaps say that it is more accurate to describe this thesis "primary" sources as "secondary" sources. But, due to the lack of competence regarding reading and understanding French and Italian, Cristine de Pizan and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's languages of choice respectively, the only option is to rely on the translated works available, and the translated versions of *The Book of the City of Ladies* and *Gynevera de le clare donne* are therefore considered as primary sources in this thesis.

The Book of the City of Ladies has been subjected to alterations as a result of it being translated from its original language, "fifteenth-century Middle French".¹¹ Rosalind Brown-Grant is the woman whose translation of *The Book of the City of Ladies* is used in this thesis. She remarks in her notes that Christine de Pizan (and other intellectuals in France) wrote in vernacular French, but added linguistic aspects of Latin to it in an

⁸ Brown-Grant (1999). Page xviii.

⁹ She is often referred to as "Margaret of Denmark" due to her land of origin.

¹⁰ Storey, W.K. (2016). *Writing History: a guide for students* (5th ed.). New York: Oxford University Press. Page 32.

¹¹ Brown-Grant (1999). Page xxxviii.

attempt to make it more advanced and more prestigious. These additions also make the text "torturous" to read, and Brown-Grant has therefore chosen to alter word order, shorten sentences, and remove words when Christine used two (or more) words that are near identical in meaning.¹² But Brown-Grant reassures the reader that she has "attempted to remain faithful to the legalistic style of her original text and to render as much of its polemical tone as possible."¹³ and makes a special remark about words concerning gender. Brown-Grant observes that,

[...] Christine is careful to distinguish between, on the one hand, the specific term '*les hommes*', meaning simply the male sex, and, on the other hand, generic terms such as '*les gens*', which refer to both sexes, or sex-neutral terms such as '*la personne*', which can indicate either sex.¹⁴

In the analysis for virtues and other important traits shown in Christine de Pizan's writing, it is very important that Brown-Grant has made an effort to stay true to the original wording and meaning of the text. In addition to the prologue, where she explains her choices concerning her translation, she has identified what Christine de Pizan is referencing in her text (example; specific parts of the Bible which she quotes or reference) and compiled this in her "notes" at the end of the book.¹⁵ She also provides a glossary on characters, places and books mentioned by Christine de Pizan in *The Book of the City of Ladies*.¹⁶ With these additions, Brown-Grant's detailed explanation of choices regarding the translation, and transparent bibliography the credibility and quality of the translation is good enough to be used as one of this thesis primary sources.

Concerning the reliability of the translation, there seems to be no reason to believe that their meaning has been altered in any way or form. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Brown-Grant says in her introduction that she only strived to make the book easier to read in the hope that the book would reach a larger audience. The simplification of Christine de Pizan's syntax does not compromise the quality of the translation and does not alter the meaning; it simplifies the language, not Christine de Pizan's arguments and thoughts. The translation in Stephen Bernard Chandler's article is a bit more difficult to judge, as it is not made clear whether Chandler himself translated Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's work, or if it was translated by someone else and simply added to the article. While there is no explicit statement in the article that the translation was done by him, there are also no references to another translator. With Chandler having a Ph.D. in Italian, obtained through a thesis on Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti, and teaching Italian at the University of Toronto, it seems very plausible that Chandler has translated the text himself.

1.3.3 Previous research on Christine de Pizan

The research conducted for this thesis reveals that out of all of Christine de Pizan's works it is *The Book of the City of Ladies* that has garnered the most attention from scholars. The interest in her other works has increased the last years, much in correspondence with the fact that international interest in Christine de Pizan has grown; "[...] interest in Christine de Pizan has grown in a way that could hardly have been predicted. Both

¹² Brown-Grant (1999). Page xxxviii.

¹³ Brown-Grant (1999). Page xxxviii.

¹⁴ Brown-Grant (1999). Page xxxix.

¹⁵ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 7, 241-243.

¹⁶ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 244-278.

scholars and general readers have discovered her and her world. The availability of her texts has changed radically".¹⁷ Her books are more accessible through new and modern translations, like the one by Brown-Grant, and her authorship is discussed and featured regularly on scholarly conferences about medieval literature or women's studies, according to Sarah Lawson who has translated Christine de Pizan's book *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*.¹⁸

Tracy Adams writes in her article about Christine de Pizan that "her modern celebrity resulted from her perceived proto-feminism" (a form of early feminism, an analytical term used to analyse the past rather than being a contemporary term used by Christine de Pizan for example).¹⁹ But she also highlights that "[M]ore recently, scholars have begun to appreciate the full range of Christine's literary output."²⁰ Adams' article is a thorough and enlightening evaluation of recent research on Christine de Pizan. The article also discusses how scholars are researching her and which of her works are or was the most popular. The aforementioned "proto-feminism" is ascribed to Christine de Pizan by the study of and interest in her book *The Book of the City of Ladies* and later by the increased interest in her public debate over *Roman de la rose*. Adams expects the interest in Christine de Pizan's role in this debate to continue its momentum as "recent social and historical contextualization of her role in this regard has yielded interesting new results" and for the interest in Christine's authorship to continue to grow with the new additions of translations and editions of her texts.²¹

1.4 Relevance for future occupation (teacher)

How is my thesis relevant for my future career as a history teacher? There are a number of ways my thesis' topic that can be made relevant for teaching, even more so with the new educational plan for upper secondary school, "Kunnskapsløftet 2020".²² In the new educational plan there is a stronger emphasis on empathy as one of the core elements compared with the old plan. Empathy for other people, and in this case for historical people, can be realised through different tasks connected to Christine de Pizan and her book *The Book of the City of Ladies*. By actualizing Christine and the female examples in the book, pupils can achieve a higher realisation and deeper understanding about the fact that people of the past were real people like us.

Christine's book and my primary source is a useful resource for giving the pupils insight into the world and mentality of a person living in France during the fifteenth century. Being able to critically assess primary sources is one of the competency aims. Through the work with this thesis I have become a proficient historian with knowledge of methodology and the skills necessary for working with historical sources. I can convey

¹⁷ Christine de Pizan (1406). *The Treasure of the City of Ladies or The Book of the Three Virtues*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Sarah Lawson (2003). Revised Edition. London: Penguin Books. Page xxviii.

¹⁸ Lawson (2003). Page xxviii.

¹⁹ Adams, T. (2017) Christine de Pizan. *French Studies*, Volume 71, Issue 3, July 2017, Pages 388–400, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/knx129>. Page 388.

Proto-feminism; a concept I have chosen to not include in this study due to limitation of research time and the extent of this thesis. It would be a very interesting aspect to examine at a later date.

²⁰ Adams (2017). Page 388

²¹ Adams (2017). Page 394.

²² Utdanningsdirektoratet (2020). *Læreplan i historie – fellesfag i studieforberedende utdanningsprogram* (HIS01-03). Retrieved as a PDF from <https://data.udir.no/kl06/v201906/laereplaner-1k20/HIS01-03.pdf?lang=nob>.

these skills and this knowledge to my pupils, and guide them towards achieving greater methodology competence and increasing their own historical awareness.

A competency aim for pupils in their second year (Vg2) sounds like this: "utforske fortiden ved å stille spørsmål og innhente, tolke og bruke ulikt historisk materiale for å finne svar".²³ With an entire book and knowledge about this book at my disposal I am able to create varied and numerous tasks for the pupils to increase their knowledge about women in the late Middle Ages, and increase their empathy for other people. Historical awareness, another competency aim for both Vg2 and Vg3, is cultivated through working with historical and primary sources. Erik Lund writes that historical awareness is cultivated through work with primary sources and the necessary source criticism related to working with primary sources as well as other sources of information.²⁴ This thesis' work with Christine de Pizan's book can be utilized as an example in such work, and the numerous female examples provides the pupils with a woman's view on religion and societal roles, an example of didactic argumentation of women's virtues, abilities and capabilities, and historical facts that needs to be critically examined and sourced.

²³ Utdanningsdirektoratet (2020). Page 5.

²⁴ Lund, E. (2016). *Historiedidaktikk*. (5th ed.). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget. Pages 22-30, 96-106.

Chapter 2: Historiography

I repeat – and don't doubt my words – that if it were the custom to send little girls to school and to teach them all sorts of different subjects there, as one does with little boys, they would gasp and learn the difficulties of all the arts and sciences just as easily as the boys do. Indeed, this is often the case because, as I mentioned to you before, although women may have weaker and less agile bodies than men, which prevents them from doing certain tasks, their minds are in fact sharper and more receptive when they do apply themselves.²⁵

2.1 Context: delimitation of time, space, and the authors of the primary sources

The relevant period of time for this thesis is the period between 1360 and 1500, with particular focus on the years surrounding the year of completion of *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405) and *Gynevera de le clare donne* (1492). As all historians know, there exists a challenge in writing history due to the distance in both time and space between the events in question and the study of these events. This thesis is written 500-600 years after the relevant people lived and the relevant events for this thesis occurred. In this part the foundation of historical context and the social context needed to critically and successfully conduct the analysis will be created.

This thesis requires contextual information about several topics. These topics include historical timeframe, geographical position, major parties of power and other relevant factors that might have influenced Christine de Pizan or Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti in any significant way. The context is established through a selection of secondary literature. Just like today the huge spectre of different values, cultures and attitudes makes it impossible to write a few pages about "how it was in Europe in the fifteenth century". Only vague, overlaying concepts can be described when discussing so many different countries or areas.

Section 2.1.1 addresses the delimitation of time and space for this thesis, while section 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 addresses the authors Christine de Pizan and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti respectively. In section 2.1.4 a short note about the special abbreviations used in this thesis will be made. Relevant terms and concepts will be outlined in section 2.2.

2.1.1 France in the fourteenth and fifteenth century

Christine de Pizan arrived in France some time in the latter part of the 1360s, a time of great social, political, and religious upheaval. At the time, Charles V was the king of France, and he ruled until the year 1380 when he was succeeded by his son, Charles VI. Charles V and Charles VI ruled a fragmented France, ravaged by war and several conflicts. One major conflict, or rather series of conflicts, was The Hundred Years' War. The Hundred Years' War erupted in 1340 between France and England over the right of succession to the French throne. In some periods the conflict was stable with no large battles, while in others it caused great civil unrest.²⁶ The war affected the overall welfare of the French populace; rural France suffered the consequences of sporadic periods of warfare, and while organised warfare "was not omnipresent" it did affect the populace in terms of disruption of trade, famine and disease.²⁷ The royal family and the nobility that supported the kings were at the heart of the conflict. Some through the direct

²⁵ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 57.

²⁶ Small, G. (2009). *Late medieval France*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Pages 95-102.

²⁷ Small (2009). Pages 56-57.

involvement in warfare, and others through the close proximity to the king and his court.²⁸ Another conflict was of a religious nature, namely The Great Schism (1378-1417). It affected the relationship between France and Italy in particular due to the division of the Church, brought on by the appointment of two popes instead of one as is traditionally done in Latin Christendom. The Great Schism also caused international factionalism by dividing Europe based on which pope the country supported; either the pope residing in Avignon, or the pope in Rome. This conflict had a demoralizing effect on Christians and theologians. The division of the Church, and questions surfacing from the conflict of having two popes, made many question what was the correct thing to do and who should decide that.²⁹

When Christine arrived in France in 1368/1369 there was no uniform France like we know the country today.³⁰ Rural France was dominated by free tenants and the feudal lords whose land the tenants worked. Large parts of France had abolished serfdom by the fifteenth century, but it had not disappeared completely. In addition to tenants working a lord's land another form of agriculture arose: sharecropping. Here peasant and lord agreed on a contract, and the peasant's cultivated the lord's land for a temporary period (most commonly four years). The lord and the peasant shared the expenses of hired help, investments in seeds, livestock or vines. The harvest was divided between the lord and the peasants, and this method of agriculture resulted in a more equal relationship between landholder (the lord) and the agriculturist (the peasant).³¹

The nobility exercised power in rural France through the ownership of land and their authority was ingrained through their rights and monopolies concerning a peasant's income and "the payment of peasant dues".³² The nobility belonged to the political society of kings and lords, and the alliances between them governed political interests.³³ But the nobility was not the only landowners in late medieval France. The Church owned a great deal of land. This was a result of centuries of donations, a policy of territorial acquisition and careful management. The church's presence in rural (and urban) France ensured Latin Christendom's influence in society. They were visible in everyday life and although different branches of Christianity existed together in France, it is Latin Christendom as a collective concept that was France's religion in the fifteenth century.³⁴

2.1.2 Christine de Pizan: Italy and France

A book by Nadia Margolis has been invaluable when researching Christine de Pizan; it outlines Christine de Pizan's life as well as her literary works and has therefore also been an excellent guide when exploring *The Book of the City of Ladies*. This part will only give a brief summary of who the historical Christine was as her life and career will be outlined in more detail in Chapter 3.

Christine de Pizan (or as Margolis claim her name would have been spelled: Cristina da Pizzano) was born in 1364 or 1365 to astrologer Tommaso da Pizzano and his wife (seemingly only known as the daughter of Tommaso Mondino da Forlì). The Pizzano family, later known as Pizan, were descendants of rural nobility, and with Tommaso da

²⁸ Small (2009). Pages 130-131.

²⁹ Margolis, N. (2012). *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press. Page 4.

³⁰ Margolis (2012). Pages 1-3.

³¹ Small (2009). Pages 59-70.

³² Small (2009). Pages 82-83.

³³ Small (2009). Page 83.

³⁴ Small (2009). Pages 84-93.

Pizzano's attendance at the university of Bologna, and his appointment as court astrologer and physician by Charles V of France it seems safe to deduce that they lived a comfortable life. After her father's appointment the family moved to France, and it is from this point on the family adopts the French version of their name: Pizan. It appears their first names, or given names, also change somewhat; from Tommaso to Thomas, and from Cristina to Christine. It is uncertain whether her mother altered her name, and it is also uncertain whether Christine's two brothers, Paolo and Aghinolfo, altered theirs, as Margolis made no note on the matter.³⁵

While Charles V was alive their family lived in comfort, and France became a beloved adoptive country, visible in her literary works like "*Livre des Fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*" ("the mirror of princes, a manual of virtuous principles as well as practical advice for a ruler"³⁶ where King Charles V is the sole example) and in other works like "*Livre du Prudence*" given to Queen Isabeau. Christine married a royal notary named Étienne de Castel when she was 15 years old. The marriage is described by Margolis to have been a happy one, and the death of Étienne influences Christine's work in addition to being the reason (alongside her father's death and her brothers return to Italy) why she enters the male-dominated workforce of scribes and copyists. Christine's career as a writer of independent work began around 1394. Her most productive period was that of 1399-1405, but she continued to produce literary works all up until her death in around 1431. She lived her last years in self-proclaimed exile, most likely with her daughter at the abbey in Poissy.³⁷

In chapter 3 Christine's life will be outlined and discussed in further detail.

2.1.3 Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti: Italy and Scotland

The author of my third primary source is Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti. He was born in Bologna around the year 1445 to a barber. Arienti originates from the same city and the same university as Christine de Pizan's father Thomas, which makes it plausible to entertain the thought that they have been influenced by some of the same thoughts and ideals, even with a century separating them. Arienti was from his youth employed at the Bentivoglio court as secretary. The Bentivoglios were the ruling family of Bologna in the period 1410-1506. It was during his time employed by Count Andrea Bentivoglio that he wrote "*Le porretane*", and the work consisting of sixty-one *novelle*, and was finished in 1483.³⁸

Arienti remained with the Bentivoglio family until 1491 when his main employer Count Andrea Bentivoglio passed away, according to Carolyn James, or until 1506 when the Bentivoglio family had to leave Bologna, according to Sienna Hopkins.³⁹ Both might be correct, as I believe they mean two slightly different things when also including S.B. Chandler's article. He writes that Arienti's income from his position as secretary for Andrea Bentivoglio did not suffice, and the date 1491 might indicate the time when Arienti became employed by the Duke of Ferrara, Ercole d'Este in addition to still being

³⁵ Margolis (2012). Pages 1-4.

³⁶ Margolis (2012). Page 100.

³⁷ Margolis (2012). Pages 5-27.

³⁸ James, C. (1996). *Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti: A literary career*. Leo S. Olschki Editore. Pages 20-25.

³⁹ James (1996). Page 58-59.

Hopkins, S. (2016). *Female Biographies in Renaissance and Post-Tridentine Italy*. UCLA. ProQuest ID: Hopkins_ucla_0031D_14990. Merritt ID: ark:/13030/m5km40mf. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8q24s3xs>. Page 102.

employed or supported by the Bentivoglio family. The duke's daughter, Isabella d'Este; Marchioness of Mantua, later became a benefactor to Arienti as well. It might have been their support and patronage which resulted in Isabella receiving a second copy of the manuscript "*Gynevera de le clare donne*". Isabelle was the only other person to receive a copy of the manuscript of the *Gynevera* alongside Ginevra Bentivoglio, the main inspiration and also one of Arienti's patrons.⁴⁰ "*Gynevera de le clare donne*", Arienti's work examined in this thesis, was completed in during the years 1490-1493.⁴¹ The manuscript was presented to Ginevra Sforza Bentivoglio in 1492 according to Chandler, and a second copy to Isabella d'Este. Other than these two copies, the *Gynevera* was not printed during Arienti's lifetime. It was first published in 1881 by Corrado Ricci.⁴²

The *Gynevera* contained thirty-two biographies, most were of women living in Italy during the fifteenth century. It was inspired by Giovanni Boccaccio's "*De claris mulieribus*", but as Hopkins puts it, it is "an attempt to set forth a female ideal within the Signoria construct, for which contemporary (and real) women were a necessary subject choice".⁴³ The "Signoria construct" refers to a woman in power or with a role of high status in the Italian City states, the same role or position Ginevra Bentivoglio inhabited, the receiver of the *Gynevera*. Hopkins also believes that in addition to this being a manuscript honouring women by speaking of them in a positive way and highlighting their good qualities and abilities, the biographies were intended to inspire Ginevra Sforza Bentivoglio to improve herself. Hopkins bases this claim on the choice of words, phrasing and information included in Ginevra's own biography in the manuscript.⁴⁴

For this thesis it is not the biography of Ginevra that will be used, it is the biography of Queen Margaret, wife of James III of Scotland that will be examined in later chapters and used as a second viewpoint on female virtue. Queen Margaret (originally princess of Denmark and Norway) was one of two foreign women included in the *Gynevera* by Arienti, and it is this fact, alongside her Scandinavian origin, that piqued my interest and led to the inclusion in this thesis.⁴⁵ Another interesting aspect of this biography is that Arienti decided to write about Queen Margaret after meeting her father, King Christian I of Denmark and Norway. Arienti never met Queen Margaret himself; instead he relied on oral sources to give him the information he needed.⁴⁶ Her entry is called "*De Margarita regina de Scotia*", translated by Chandler to "An Italian life of Margaret".⁴⁷

2.1.4 A note on spelling and abbreviations

There are some differences in the secondary literature concerning names and their spelling. Some authors use a variation that is closer to the original version of the name, while others choose to use an English "translation" or anglicized version.⁴⁸ The versions used in this thesis are the ones most frequently used in the notes of the primary sources

⁴⁰ Chandler, S. (1953). An Italian Life of Margaret, Queen of James III. *The Scottish Historical Review*, 32(113), 52-57. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/25526183. Page 52.

⁴¹ Chandler (1953) claims the manuscript was completed by the end of 1490, James (1996) in 1492, and Hopkins (2016) writes it was completed in 1493.

⁴² Chandler (1953). Page 52.

⁴³ Hopkins (2016). Page 104.

⁴⁴ Hopkins (2016). Pages 104-105, 108-111.

⁴⁵ Chandler (1953). Page 52.

⁴⁶ Chandler (1953). Pages 53-54.

⁴⁷ Chandler (1953). Page 55.

⁴⁸ The anglicized version of the names might occur at a higher frequency than others due to the lack of standardization of spelling in the fifteenth century compared to today.

and in the secondary literature. What Brown-Grant and Lawson uses is the largest influence, as they have worked with translating the original source material on Christine de Pizan's two books.

Therefore, a quick note on some of the spelling and abbreviations used in this thesis is needed, even though most of them have already been implemented in this thesis. The authors mentioned most frequently in this thesis, Christine de Pizan and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti, will be referred to as "Christine" or "Arienti". The reason for "Christine" and not "Pizan" is based on three reasons: the first is the fact that Pizan refers to her place of origin, and while still important to know it is not the most relevant information to include; second is the possible confusion with her father Thomas de Pizan; and third is that Brown-Grant, Lawson and Margolis all choose to use her given name.

Arienti, however, will be referred to by his last name. Whether this alludes to a place or if it is a family name is unsure, but it is how Hopkins refers to him throughout her doctoral thesis and it is the same way chosen for this thesis as it felt the most natural. It is worth noting that S.B. Chandler refers to Arienti as "Sabadino" instead, which means he might occur under different names depending on the author and work.

The abbreviation for Christine's book will be *City of Ladies*. The shortening is mostly based on Brown-Grant, Lawson and Margolis. I see no reason to not do the same, as the change would only confuse the reader when comparing this thesis and the secondary literature.

2.2 Key Concepts and Terms

A successful analysis and discussion need tools to execute it properly. In this section some vital terms for this thesis will be presented in a short and precise manner so that everyone knows what definitions is utilized in this thesis. The definitions of the terms are based on definitions found in Collins COBUILD dictionary.⁴⁹ My analysis will therefore base itself on the modern understanding of these term, not necessarily Christine and Arienti's contemporary understanding of the terms. There has been an effort in the research process to understand the historical context to these terms, however, and the definitions found in the dictionary come across as relevant and not too modernized. It is still important to be aware of the possibility of inaccuracies this might cause.

2.2.1 "Virtue", "role" and "feminism"

"Virtue" is the most important term to establish for this thesis, and in this thesis, the term is understood as a good or admirable quality a person possesses or a way of behaving. When referring to virtues in plural or in a more general manner it is this definition that applies. If, however, if Christine describes someone with having "virtue", the meaning changes slightly to specifically mean "thinking and doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong".⁵⁰

Regarding the term "role", this thesis concerns itself with two important types of roles: gender roles and traditional roles. When using the term "gender roles" it refers to specific norms, attitudes and expectations related to one's gender. This thesis works with a simplified system of "female" and "male" as the given genders. As for "traditional roles", this term refers to roles a person takes on or are given which has existed for a specific group of people over a longer period of time. "Traditional" implies that this role has been in practice or has existed for two, perhaps three generations; it is repetitive,

⁴⁹ Collins COBUILD advanced learner's English dictionary (8th ed.). (2015). Glasgow: HarperCollins.

⁵⁰ Collins (2015). Page 1749.

and it is established. An example of this is the traditional role of motherhood; women were traditionally expected to have children and expected to care for them. In contrast, a traditional male role could be that of the provider; men were expected to go to work and make money for the family to live off.

The final term is "feminism". I have chosen to not make feminism a large part of this thesis, mainly because of the limitation of time and space available for this thesis, and not because it does not hold any research value. Feminism is, however, an important aspect of Christine's writing and will therefore be mentioned throughout the thesis without it getting too much emphasis. The Collins dictionary's definition of "feminism" is: "Feminism is the belief and aim that women should have the same rights, power, and opportunities as men".⁵¹ Christine's defence of women in *City of Ladies* has caught the interest of many feminist scholars. It is a very early example of a female author, as well as a female author striving to equalize men and women by removing negative opinions, beliefs and stigmas placed on the female sex. As *City of Ladies* is such an old source and was created before the term "feminism" became a common term to use, some, like Tracy Adams, uses the term "proto-feminism" about Christine's works. The book did not contain large amounts of endorsement of change, either.

2.2.2 "Power" and "religion"

Another concept and term in need of clarification before starting the analysis of the primary sources is "power"; in particular the terms "hard power" and "soft power". Downie explores many interesting topics in her book, like those of "power" versus "authority": "The medieval queen was excluded from authority but she clearly possessed power".⁵² To possess power, but then having to fight to be believed, taken serious, or considered can seem paradoxical. But when considering the different definitions of the two terms it makes more sense. "Authority", Downie writes, is predominantly something men possess (in this instance a King).⁵³ Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo provides this definition of "authority": "Authority is, in the abstract, the right to make a particular decision and to command obedience...".⁵⁴ Both alludes to "authority" being a right a person is born with which is recognised, but not contested by others. "Power" is attained by both sexes, only in different variations, according to Downie.⁵⁵ "Power is the ability to act effectively on persons or things, to make or secure favourable decisions which are not of right allocated to the individuals or their roles" is the definition provided by Rosaldo.⁵⁶ "Power" does not have to be inherited, although it is in many instances, and can be direct or indirect; "direct power" is often equalized with force, "indirect power" is often equalized with influence. There is also "formal power" and "unformal power"; "formal power" is power sanctioned and legitimized through laws, and "unformal power" is power is ingrained in social and cultural influence.

Downie has utilized the terms «hard power» and «soft power» in her book on the Scottish queens Joan of Beaufort and Queen Mary of Guelders. A king embodies "hard power" (which here signifies public power; a power more obvious to others and with a more direct influence), while a woman or a queen embodies "soft power" (which here

⁵¹ Collins (2015). Page 577.

⁵² Downie (2006). Page 3.

⁵³ Downie (2006). Page 3.

⁵⁴ Rosaldo, M., & Lamphere, L. (1974). *Woman, culture, and society*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press. Page 21.

⁵⁵ Downie (2006). Page

⁵⁶ Rosaldo & Lamphere (1974). Page 21.

signifies power that is meant to go unnoticed; it happens in more private settings, away from everyone and more quietly. "Soft power" is less of a direct force and more tact and patience). Both Queens survived their husbands (James I and James II respectively) and lived as a widow and mother to the heir for a period. An interesting observation Downie makes is the change in both the possession of power and their increase in authority during their widowhood. While their husbands lived, the men were expected to be the one in power (both literally as Kings, but also more figuratively as the dominant part in the marriage). When widowed, Downie theorises that women got more freedom, but only to a certain extent. Joan of Beaufort only kept her newfound "hard power" a few months before she was replaced by a lord from one of the more powerful and influential families in Scotland. The "image" created of women did not coexist well with the "hard power" needed by a king. The notion of a female ruler was not something everyone opposed completely however, and for a time both Queen Joan and Queen Mary of Guelders worked with the lords as respected queens.

Downie writes in her book about both the ability and the capability to rule as a sovereign monarch without their husbands, even if Queen Joan and Queen Mary only ruled for a short time. This also illustrates the dependency women had on their husband; even though they possessed power as individuals, it was a challenge (near impossible) to stay in the position of authority and undertake a role that included ruling and exercising "hard power" over others. It is worth noting that widows enjoyed legal and economic independency after the deaths of their husbands, entering a second virginity at this stage in life and as a result an increased status within the Church.⁵⁷ While not impossible, the factors of having few examples of female leadership to help the queens normalise independent female rule made the situation very difficult.

The church maintained considerable power and authority. The church influenced both the public and the private domain, dictating what to do in both secular and religious life. Its influence branched from the highest classes to the lowest, from the pope and the king, to the laity. In Europe, Latin Christendom reigned as the strongest and most influential religion; there was essentially no other religion to speak of during the late middle ages in Europe, through presence or influence. Being ever present in everyday life, it influenced people's mindset and identity.

In their book, Andersson and Zinsser have investigated how religion (in this case Christianity) affected women and the way they were perceived by both fellow women and men.⁵⁸ Andersson and Zinsser present several interesting propositions about women and religion, of which three will be considered here. The first is that the misogyny and suppression of the female sex is a cultivated tradition, taken from ancient texts and texts from the early years of Christianity. This meant that these traditions were rooted deep into European society by the fifteenth century.⁵⁹ The second proposition is that of the "good woman" and the "bad woman"; judged by their sexuality, women were either categorized as "good" or "bad", "proper" or "improper".⁶⁰ If a woman was deemed "improper", her life (and perhaps her family as well) would be jeopardised. She would become an outcast of society. Controlling how women could behave by creating the "rules", gave the Church enormous power. This was the Church's way of controlling the

⁵⁷ Downie (2006). Pages 145-149.

⁵⁸ Anderson, B.S. & Zinsser, J.P. (1989). *A History of Their Own*. Volume 1. United States of America: Perennial Library.

⁵⁹ Andersson & Zinsser (1989). Pages 26-31.

⁶⁰ Sexuality in this context refers to a woman's sexual act, not sexual orientation which is the common modern terminology.

female half of the population; making them fit a certain mould and damning them if they did not follow the rules. Women had to follow the rules or face the consequences determined by men in positions of power and authority. This is not to say that men were not controlled as well; like women, men were expected to behave according to moral and religious rules and expectations set by the Church.⁶¹ The third is women's supposed natural subordination to men due to the creation of the first woman: Eve. Created from one of Adam's ribs, theologians used this as proof that women cannot exist alone. Eve's betrayal of God by eating the forbidden fruit and convincing Adam to eat it as well was used as proof for women's lack of honesty and their sinfulness. Snippets like this was used by theologians to support their own arguments and further indoctrinate their agenda into the society. The fact that the majority of people who could read and write in the Middle Ages were men created an imbalance of power from the start, creating a barrier and a large hindrance for women to be able to fight back. Eve became the personification of the "improper" or "bad" woman, with the Virgin Mary becoming the epitome of "good" or "proper".⁶²

There were exceptions to the subordinating view of women, which is important to mention or else the view of the past becomes too one-dimensional and to a lesser degree correct. Found in ancient texts are traditions of empowering women through stories about Goddesses, Warriors and Queens. Strong, female characters that could serve as inspiration to women, that is, if they were told. Andersson and Zinsser do question how much attention these stories got, meaning if they were told, in what context they were told, and if the stories had enough impact as to rival the strong propaganda about female subordination. For commoners with close to no education, if any at all, it is understandable that they would believe what was being preached to them when it came from a place of authority; that being the church or the nobleman ruling their land.⁶³

Saints created a sort of idealized female character which the church could promote as an ideal for women to both look up to and strive to become. Certain characteristics were glorified: virtuousness, holiness, pureness, kindness, being loving. Andersson and Zinsser describe a growing wish from the female populace for an increase in female representation within the church.⁶⁴ If correct, this reveals an awareness to their subordination and how male-dominated the society was. Women noticed and questioned it to the extent they dared. As mentioned previously, there was barely anything resembling balance in the power dynamics between women and men. The demands for increase female representation did result in changes; the Virgin Mary gained merit and estimation, increasing her worship and importance within the church and solidifying her position as a role model.⁶⁵ Women strove to live by the Virgins example and be as "perfect" as possible.⁶⁶ What was considered "perfect" was clarified by priests, the pope, the clergy, and while meeting the demands of the people through promoting the Virgin's to a respectable role model, they also worked on their own agenda.

⁶¹ Andersson & Zinsser (1989). Pages 31-49.

Klapisch-Zuber, C. (editor). (1992). *A History of Women in the West: 2: Silences of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Pages 82-84.

⁶² Klapisch-Zuber (1992). Pages 19-21, 27.

⁶³ Andersson & Zinsser (1989). Pages 52-66.

⁶⁴ Andersson & Zinsser (1989). Pages 214-217.

⁶⁵ Referred to as: «The Virgin», "The Virgin Mary", "Queen of Heaven", "Blessed Virgin Mary" (through Andersson & Zinsser and Fitch)

⁶⁶ Andersson & Zinsser (1989). Pages 215-224.

Both Andersson & Zinsser and Klapisch-Zuber discusses the paradox of purity and virtuousness combined with the duties with being a good wife and mother.⁶⁷ If the safest way to heaven and salvation was to remain a virgin, why should women first and foremost get married and become mothers? Through the Virgin Mary they found a compromise; "Strive to be like the mother of our saviour, Jesus Christ. Follow in her footsteps". The influence of the Virgin stretched from the lowest classes in society to the very highest.⁶⁸

The influence of religion, saints, and The Virgin are important elements when analysing *City of Ladies*. They can be found in many of the female examples, with The Virgin being one of the examples in the latter part of the book, and knowledge about them is therefore necessary when embarking on the in-depth examination of *City of Ladies* in chapter 4.

⁶⁷ Andersson & Zinsser (1989). Page 215.

Klapisch-Zuber (1992). Pages 79-81.

⁶⁸ Audrey-Beth Fitch's article discuss in detail the range of influence these saintly ideals had on Queens and their subjects for those interested in further reading:

Fitch, A.-B. (2006). Maternal mediators: saintly ideals and secular realities in late medieval Scotland. *Innes Review*, 57(1), 1-34. <https://doi.org/10.3366/inr.2006.57.1.1>

Chapter 3: Christine de Pizan

*Kissing the ground they stood on, I adored them as if they were great goddesses, praising them with these words: 'Oh noble and worthy ladies, light of the heavens and of the earth, fountains of paradise bringing joy to the blessed, how is it that you have deigned to come down from your lofty seats and shining thrones to visit me, a simple and ignorant scholar, in my dark and gloomy retreat? How could one ever thank you enough for such graciousness? The sweet rain and dew of your words have already sunk into my arid mind, refreshing and replenishing my thoughts which are now ready to take seed and to put forth new shoots which will bear fruit of great virtue and delicious flavour.'*⁶⁹

With this chapter I aim to describe and discuss Christine de Pizan's life before she wrote her book *City of Ladies*. This is essential to the analysis in chapter 4. I am relying heavily on the secondary literature *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan* by Nadia Margolis as a source of sufficient information about Christine de Pizan. Although a brief guide, as Margolis describes the book herself, the book gives an explanatory chronology over persons and events that were important for or in relation to Christine de Pizan. Margolis provides context about Christine's early life, works, sources and influences, and a glossary. It is a well-structured book and therefore a good guide when establishing the context pertaining Christine and her work.

3.1 Origins

Christine de Pizan was born in Venice in 1364.⁷⁰ Her father was Tommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzano, and through his work as a judicial astrologer, Thomas, Christine, her mother and two brothers moved from Venice to Paris around the year 1368.⁷¹ Her origins from the northern Italian city state Venice, and her connection to the town Pizzano and city of Bologna, where her father both taught as a professor of astrology and got his degrees in medicine and law, can explain several interesting aspects about her as a person, her upbringing and her works later in life.⁷²

Christine de Pizan enjoyed an unusual education for her gender; her curriculum consisted of liberal-arts, including Latin according to Margolis.⁷³ Christine's proficiency in Latin is more uncertain, as she wrote her personal works in French and relied on French or Italian translations of classical sources.⁷⁴ If Thomas de Pizan had not met another

⁶⁹ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 15-16.

⁷⁰ Or 1365, depending on the source. Rosalind Brown-Grant, Susan Gorag Bell and Joshua J. Mark states in their various works (see notes at the end of the chapter) that the year of birth of Christine de Pizan was 1364, but Tracy Adams and Nadia Margolis claims the correct year for Christine's birth was 1365. This thesis will use 1364 as the year of Christine's birth, since Nadia Margolis writes 1364 as a possibility in the book *An introduction to Christine de Pizan*, and by doing so the majority claim the year 1364 to be correct.

⁷¹ Margolis, N. (2012). *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. Pages xix, 1-3.

"Judicial astrologer": explained by Margolis (2012) as "one consulted to predict the outcome of wars, natural disasters, and the like" on page 3.

⁷² Margolis (2012). Page 2.

⁷³ Margolis (2012). Page 3.

⁷⁴ This argument is based on multiple sources;

Christine de Pizan (1405) *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Translated and with an introduction and notes by Rosalind Brown-Grant (1999). London: Penguin Books. Pages xxiv-xxv.

scholar whose daughter were highly educated and a lecturer at the University of Bologna, would Thomas have taught his daughter as much as he did?⁷⁵ Living examples are powerful sources of inspiration and action, and meeting a woman of such capability and public role as a lecturer might have inspired Thomas to teach all of his children what he was taught.⁷⁶ Although it cannot be proven with absolute certainty that Thomas Pizan personally met the female lecturer, they can be placed at the same University in the same period of time.⁷⁷ Furthermore, when reflecting on the education Thomas gave Christine, despite his wife protesting that Christine should concern herself with womanly pursuits, it appears Thomas was inspired to be more progressive about Christine's education.⁷⁸ Numerous elements might have influenced the da Pizzano family, but the probability of Thomas not having heard about this female lecturer, at the very least, is arguably slim to none. He was part of the academic environment in Bologna, and the new addition of a woman teaching at a University must have been known to those attached to the University. Thomas made an active, cognitional choice when educating Christine. He saw Christine's potential because he knew women were capable of learning the same way as men.

Thomas' characteristics as a learned man, scholar and professor, and, as speculated, his meeting with a female scholar seems to have shaped Christine as a person and shaped her upbringing. "Christine would come to idolize her father as a fount of wisdom and enlightenment."⁷⁹ She, like her father, would eventually dedicate her life to scholarly pursuits. It is important here to note that Christine belonged to the privileged upper class of society. Christine was among the minority of women who got an education, and with low literacy amongst the general populace her books were read by a selected number of privileged persons. The low literacy does not, however, diminish her work's value. Traditions of oral narration could have resulted in Christine's works spreading to the populace lacking the means of reading the books for themselves.

Her father was, as mentioned earlier, appointed royal judicial astrologer by the French king Charles V, and according to Sarah Lawson Thomas was also appointed physician to the king.⁸⁰ Thomas' appointment was the reason for Christine and her family's relocation to Paris, leaving behind Venice and the Italian city states. But she did move on completely from her Italian heritage:

Christine de Pizan (1406). *The Treasure of the City of Ladies or The Book of the Three Virtues*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Sarah Lawson (2003). Revised Edition. London: Penguin Books. Page xv.

Bell, S.G. (1976). Christine de Pizan (1364-1430): Humanism and the Problem of a Studious Woman. *Feminist Studies*, 3(3/4), 173-184. Retrieved from JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177735>. Page 175.

⁷⁵ Margolis (2012). Page 2.

⁷⁶ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 140-141. Christine mentions the legist (Giovanni Andrea) and his daughter (Novella) in her book *City of Ladies*, confirming that she knew of how Novella was taught and lectured at the University of Bologna. The inclusion of Novella in *City of Ladies* classifies her as a good and worthy example in her defence of the female sex.

⁷⁷ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 140-141.

⁷⁸ Margolis (2012). Page 2.

⁷⁹ Margolis (2012). Page 2.

⁸⁰ Margolis (2012). Page 3.

Lawson (2003). Page xv.

Although she would mature into the most patriotic of French citizens, she never forgot her Italian origins as an essential facet of her personal and writerly self. Her name, like her father's, was rendered into French, and she would later sign her works as Christine de Pizan.⁸¹

Her upbringing shaped her both as a person and as an author. Christine's connection to both her Italian heritage and French upbringing is evident in her authorship; it influenced who she dedicated her works to, and it influenced who she referenced and spoke to or against in her works.

3.2 Penmanship

The two main causes for Christine de Pizan's decision to become a writer occurred in 1390. The first cause was the deaths of Christine's father, Thomas de Pizan, and her husband, Etienne de Castel, in 1389 and 1390. As a result of these two deaths, Christine became the main source of income for her family consisting of her three children, her mother, and a niece.⁸² The second cause pushing Christine to enter the male-dominated workforce was the deprivation of her inheritance "[...] because of bias against her gender: "more by custom than by law," as she explains it."⁸³

3.2.1 Creating the writer

The hardships Christine experienced in the years after the death of her father and her husband influenced her way of writing and her view of the world. As Margolis writes; Christine went from a protected and sheltered lifestyle with her husband where her duties was to raise their children and maintain the house to fighting against powerful men to reclaim money and land so as to provide for her family.⁸⁴ She had more education than most women of her age, but it seems that the most prominent part of her identity focused on her as a daughter, wife and mother; traditional female roles that mostly kept women bound to the house, and not the outside world.⁸⁵ These elements of traditional female roles are visible in her works, as she often includes "widowhood" and "widows" in her texts, referring to her own hardships and her way forward into a "new widowhood".⁸⁶

Margolis believes that Christine might have worked as a copyist to beginning with; making copies of different works for money.⁸⁷ In another work Margolis makes the distinction between Christine's earliest works and those she wrote from around 1394 and onwards: "[...] she turned to study and writing, first for consolidation and then as a means of earning a living."⁸⁸ Christine did not immediately start working as a writer in her own right, building up to it until, perhaps, her financial situation was more stable and not as much of a threat to her family.

From around 1394 Christine started producing lyric poetry.⁸⁹ She drew heavily on her own experiences; the difficult period after her husband's death, hardships as a

⁸¹ Margolis (2012). Page 3.

⁸² Margolis (2012). Pages 7-8.

⁸³ Margolis (2012). Page 8.

⁸⁴ Margolis (2012). Pages 8-9.

⁸⁵ Anderson & Zinsser (1989). Pages 26-51, 440-444.

⁸⁶ Margolis (2012). Page 8.

⁸⁷ Margolis (2012). Page 9.

⁸⁸ Margolis (2012). Page xx.

Margolis (1986). Page 362.

⁸⁹ Margolis (1986). Page 362.

widow, and happier moments from her married life.⁹⁰ By 1399 she was able to support her family financially solely on her authorship and patronages from the nobility, and she continued her success until her withdrawal from court to a convent around 1418.⁹¹

3.2.2 Characteristics of Christine's works

Christine de Pizan explored a vast number of genres: lyric poetry, biographies, courtesy books, letters, poems, ballads, and a genre similar to the modern novel.⁹² Tracy Adams has examined many of Christine's works and the general interest in the author.⁹³ Adams notes that Christine was "[...] an innovative lyric poet, composer of courtesy books, political theorist, and religious writer."⁹⁴ Christine seems to have had the ability to not only use the set and strict standards of writing, but she also managed to make it her own and add something new to it; something distinctly *Christine*. Margolis notes this is one of the crucial elements that consolidated Christine's success as a writer in an environment which did not favour the arts in the same way it had under king Charles V.⁹⁵ But Christine manages to secure patronage, and Margolis goes as far as to say that "None of her male contemporaries could equal her at this."⁹⁶

Christine's literary work reflects her intelligence, knowledge and cognitive awareness about the treatment and portrayal of women. Christine was not afraid to write prose, poetry, ballades, and more that challenges the views and works of other male writers, even if it increased the chance of potentially losing patrons or not capturing their attention. She could just as easily appeal to romantic feelings as write a charismatic text showing a high level of competence on rhetoric. She also adhered to scholastic thought, where reason and logical thought and explanations was applied to everything. Margolis labels Christine's systematic and scientific approach of applying reason to events and knowledge as Christine's "encyclopedism", seeking to educate readers and give them evidence, arguments and solutions they could use for their own enlightenment.⁹⁷

The most distinct characteristics of Christine's text is not, however, as much about their content; it is about Christine herself. As a female writer she stands out amongst the other writers by being who she is; a female in a male-dominated world and profession. She was able to make a living of her literary work, and that made her unique in this period: very few women was able to infiltrate the group able to make a living of their authorship, or the group working as clergy; groups primarily consisting of men.⁹⁸

3.3 Christine and her defence of women

In 1405 Christine de Pizan finished one of her most famous works: *The Book of the City of Ladies*. *City of Ladies*, with its witty and intelligently constructed content, and its bold topics which has been subject to scholarly inquisitiveness by many.⁹⁹ The book has an

⁹⁰ Margolis (2012). Page 14.

⁹¹ Margolis (2012). Page xxxiv.

⁹² Brown-Grant (1999). Pages xxiv-xxxv.

⁹³ Adams (2017). Pages 388-400.

⁹⁴ Adams (2017). Page 389.

⁹⁵ Margolis (2012). Pages 14-15.

⁹⁶ Margolis (2012). Page 14. In reference to Christine's ability and skills in adding new and fresh elements to the arts.

⁹⁷ Margolis (2012). Pages 28-29.

⁹⁸ Brown-Grant (1999). Page xvii.

⁹⁹ Adams (2017). Page 388.

educational purpose and focuses on teaching women's history as well as contesting the negative views contemporary male authors of her had.¹⁰⁰

Her experience as a literate woman making her way in the real world in a man's profession, together with her readings about women's negative role in history, largely written by typically misogynist clerical authors, inspired Christine to defend women by re writing their history in the *City of Ladies* (1404-5).¹⁰¹

3.3.1 *The Book of the City of Ladies*

The Book of the City of Ladies (originally: *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*) is an ambitious work considering the number of females included in the book, and equally impressive work of literature considering Christine's goal was to defend the entire female population, and based on she succeeded. In this book Christine discussed the predominant perceptions of women which she did not agree with, criticized misogyny, used authoritative sources (by male authors), gave examples of morally sound women and sought to persuade the reader through eloquent rhetoric that her defence of women was justified and needed. She used Giovanni Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus* as her major source for PART I and II, leaning into the biographical catalogue genre herself.¹⁰² In PART III Christine used the historical sections of Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Maius* (begun after 1240), translated into French by Jean de Vignay in *Miroir historial* (1333). The *Speculum Maius* is described by Brown-Grant as "a vast encyclopedia", which is understood through Margolis as a compilation of "the suddenly abundant knowledge acquired during the so-called twelfth-century Renaissance".¹⁰³

The way Christine managed citations and references in her book was a clear sign of her intelligence and reflective insight into societal and academical matters.¹⁰⁴ Margolis points to another brilliant part of Christine's *City of Ladies*: Christine wrote this prose more as a historiography rather than a ballade or a romance. While both disciplines were dominated by men, historiography (especially chronicles) was much more objective in its stylisation. The objectivity granted to Christine through the use of the stylisation of a historiography meant that compared to a romance, where women were primarily the "object" and "types", Christine could assume the role of narrator and promote her ideology and her intentions "without totally upsetting the genre of medieval historiography".¹⁰⁵

Just as writing novels offered tremendous opportunities for self-examination and defense and even for attacking social oppression, so did historiography provide a convenient and powerful framework upon which Christine could build a different story of humanity, as in her *Cité des Dames* (1405), a very literal example of her concept.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Bell (1976). Page 176.

¹⁰¹ Margolis (2012). Page 20.

¹⁰² Margolis (2012). Pages 70, 138.

Brown-Grant (1999). Page xviii.

De Claris Mulieribus by Giovanni Boccaccio was written like a catalogue, or a list, of women.

Boccaccio wrote about the life women from antiquity in a generally positive manner.

¹⁰³ Brown-Grant (1999). Page xviii.

Margolis (2012). Page 198.

¹⁰⁴ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages xxx-xxxii.

¹⁰⁵ Margolis (1986). Page 365.

¹⁰⁶ Margolis (1986). Page 364.

Throughout the book Christine maintained a levelled and civil tone, in order to establish her authority and utilized persuasive arguments that would be accepted by men and women, while still maintaining her own values and goals for the book.¹⁰⁷ She managed to remain polite even when out, by name, male authors' negative view on women; *City of Ladies* starts with Christine reading a book by Matheolus which she found negative and depressing, something she states in the first chapters in *City of Ladies*.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Margolis (1986). Page 361.

¹⁰⁸ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 5-9.

As Margolis (2012) describes it «Her vision was triggered by reading a work known as Matheolus's *Lamentations* against women." (page 70). Disheartened by his "lamentations", or grieving, of the female sex, she was inspired to write her own defence, a positive view, of women to contrast what the text she had read.

Chapter 4: Christine's *City of Ladies*

*For this reason, we three ladies whom you see before you have been moved by pity to tell you that you are to construct a building in the shape of a walled city, sturdy and impregnable. This has been decreed by God, who has chosen you to do this with our help and guidance. Only ladies who are of good reputation and worthy of praise will be admitted into this city. Those lacking in virtue, its gates will remain forever closed.*¹⁰⁹

This chapter focuses on the book *The Book of the City of Ladies*. My main focus will be on the different virtues Christine displays through her examples of women. This text is the main source for exploring my research question: *Which female virtues were the most important to Christine de Pizan based on the female examples included in The Book of the City of Ladies?* The women in her books is the core in establishing which virtues was the most important to Christine; where Christine chose to place them in her city and what that placement insinuated what virtues were highlighted, and how or if she identified with any of them.

4.1 The Virtues in *The Book of the City of Ladies*

In her book *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine included women from various time periods. She was meticulous in her selection of women by including different types of women so as to showcase all the qualities, abilities and virtues she found acclamable for a woman to possess. It is therefore logical to deduce that Christine found qualities in all of the women she deemed worthy of inclusion in her defence of women. Defending women to the extent she did could only have been done by choosing the examples, the content surrounding the examples, and the composition of her arguments with the utmost care.

Her intentions were for *City of Ladies* to be read, most probably motivating her to finesse her arguments and examples to the highest possible quality. To motivate possible readers of her book she made sure to include women still alive at the time of production of the manuscript and gave copies to ladies of high rank. Yet she did not dedicate *City of Ladies* to one particular patron unlike her other work, as Margolis points out.¹¹⁰ Susan Gorag Bell described *City of Ladies* as "a history of women", inspired by Boccaccio's *De Mulieribus Claris*: "the *Cité des Dames*, used hundreds of biographical sketches to illustrate Christine's three-fold aim: to prove women's capabilities, to educate other women by example, and to write women's history."¹¹¹

The Book of the City of Ladies is divided into three parts, respectively named "PART I", "PART II" and "PART III".¹¹² The three parts are also divided into smaller chapters; 48 chapters in PART I, 69 chapters in PART II, and 19 chapters in PART III.

¹⁰⁹ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 11.

¹¹⁰ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 195-197.

Margolis (2012). Page 70.

¹¹¹ Bell (1976). Page 176.

¹¹² Complete name of PART I is simply "PART I".

Complete name of Part II is "PART II: *Here begins the Second Part of the Book of the City of Ladies which recounts how and by whom the houses and builders were constructed inside the enclosure walls and how the City was filled with inhabitants.*" Brown-Grant (1999), page 89.

Complete name of Part III is "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 places and lofty keeps.*" Brown-Grant (1999), page 199.

The different natures of the women Christine exemplify create an interesting and diverse base material for this thesis' analysis concerning virtues. Some women contrast each other greatly, while others complement each other. The different types and the different virtues found among the women is present in all three parts of the book. The women have therefore not been divided by the different types and natures, but rather divided according to which part they appear in. This might seem simple and narrow, but it needs to be for this thesis. By dividing the women and by correlation chapter 4.1 into three parts (like the *City of Ladies*) allows for a structured and organized analysis of the virtues found in the female examples, and whether the women's placement in Christine's city is of any importance.¹¹³

In section 4.1.1 PART I will be examined. In this part the female examples are of non-Christian women. In section 4.1.2 PART II will be examined, and the female examples are here a mix of non-Christians and early Christians. In section 4.1.3 PART III will be examined. The female examples are in this part dominantly saints, martyrs and virgins. Traditional roles and the ability of women in the *City of Ladies* will be examined in section 4.2. The influence of Latin Christendom will be examined in section 4.2.1.

4.1.1 PART I: Reason

In PART I the three ladies *Reason*, *Rectitude* and *Justice* are introduced. They guided Christine throughout her book as she built her figurative city and defended the female sex. The reason lady Reason accompanied Christine in this part can be explained by the nature of the phenomenon Christine sought to explore. Christine tried to make sense of the criticism of the female sex, and the term "reason" means an explanation either of a situation or a circumstance. "Reason" can also allude to the ability to think and make sensible judgements.¹¹⁴ The personification of Reason can therefore be explained as an analytical and literary tool in the first part of the book where Christine tried to make sense of the criticism women receive. Christine and the lady Reason worked in PART I to lay the foundation and build the wall which would defend the city.

The examples discussed by Christine, while she built and strengthened the foundation and the walls of her city together with *Reason*, was a collection of women who lived before the introduction of Christianity. The women originated in myths or antiquity, and they were pagans or females who lived in the very early stages of a Christian Europe.¹¹⁵ Many of these women did not share Christine's Christian beliefs, yet she still used them as positive examples of the female sex. The inclusion of these non-Christian women is interesting for two reasons: the first reason is that Christine appears to be selective in what "parts" of these women's identity and abilities are included. The second reason is that Christine defended some of the women with the argument that these women did not know better as pagans, and that is why they committed some of the transgressions that they did:

¹¹³ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 7-16.

¹¹⁴ Collins (2015). Page 1291.

¹¹⁵ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 16.

It is true that some authors have criticized Semiramis – and rightly so, if she had been a Christian – for having married her own son whom she had borne to her husband, the lord Ninus. [...] There's no doubt that, since she was so proud and honourable, if she had thought she was doing something wrong or that she might be subject to criticism for her actions, she would have refrained from doing as she did.¹¹⁶

Queen Semiramis was the queen regent of the Assyrian Empire after the death of her husband, King Ninus. She ruled from 811 to 805 BCE.¹¹⁷ The excerpt above about this queen Semiramis highlights the duality in Christine's description of these women.¹¹⁸ These women were both paragons of virtue in one area, while also exhibiting negative aspects. The negative aspects could, however, be outweighed by their virtue, as they did not know better. The duality in Christine's descriptions could also be found in another description of Semiramis. The entry started by praising Semiramis as "a truly heroic woman who excelled in the practice and pursuit of arms."¹¹⁹ In the next sentence Christine made a note that the queen's people "were all pagans" before she continued to describe the queen's positive traits and admirable actions.¹²⁰ Christine then called attention to critique other authors have made about Semiramis; Christine acknowledged the critique, yet, at the same time she defended Semiramis: "It's true that some authors have criticized Semiramis – and rightly so, if she had been a Christian".¹²¹ In acknowledging the critique, Christine did three things: she pre-empted possible critique of the *City of Ladies* and her authorship, acknowledged the flaws of her example, and contemporized Semiramis in order to utilize her as an example of important qualities. Additionally, the example of Semiramis substantiates Christine's defence of women as this example, this queen, were not only positive, but also old, and authoritative through its lengthy existence.

The non-Christian women, while not ideal to Christine, possessed qualities and characteristics Christine seemed to value. Certain descriptive words are repeated throughout *City of Ladies*, words that Christine then effectively used to build her desired female identity and showcase her desired virtues. One of these virtues Christine wrote highly of is "strength". In some instances, it is physical strength that is being praised, like with Queen Semiramis on page 35:

Semiramis was a truly heroic woman who excelled on the practice and pursuit of arms. Because of her great military prowess, the people of the time – who were all pagans – said that she was so invincible both on land and sea that she must be the sister of the great god Jupiter and the daughter of the old god Saturn whom they regarded as rulers of these two domains.¹²²

Highlighting physical strength and military prowess is interesting, not only because it is an ability or quality not often applied to women, but also because Christine lamented about this in the beginning of the book. At the end of the process of introducing the three ladies *Reason*, *Rectitude* and *Justice*, Christine expressed doubts about her "weak female

¹¹⁶ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 36-37.

¹¹⁷ Mark, J. J. (2014, August 18). "Semiramis". *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/Semiramis/>

¹¹⁸ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 35.

¹¹⁹ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 35.

¹²⁰ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 35.

¹²¹ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 36.

¹²² Brown-Grant (1999). Page 35.

body" and how she did not think she was physically capable of doing the work set out for her (building the city) by the ladies and God. She A women's nature was described by Christine as "timid, meek and pure", virtues contrasting greatly with physical strength and military prowess.¹²³ However, Christine also expressed trust in the ladies and God, and that she was willing to do anything with their guidance. In the first seven chapters of PART I Christine expressed personal doubts about the female sex and negative attitudes articulated by male authors. By raising doubt about the negative attitudes towards women, Christine established a foundation upon which she could mount her defence; she explicitly tells the reader which negative perspectives on female nature and habits, presented by philosophers, poets and orators are concerning her. While a part of her is certain about these perspectives are lies, another part of her believes the opinions of the male authors since she regards them to come from persons with high authority, great intelligence and insight.¹²⁴ The concerns regarding these negative perspectives are brought up throughout the rest of the book, and are used to defend women. Through explaining and showing how the negative perspectives were wrong, and by presenting arguments and evidence of positive and good virtues exhibited by women, Christine used the negativity to defend women by contesting them and proving them wrong. In the example of Queen Semiramis Christine provided evidence of a woman possessing and exhibiting great physical strength, contesting both her own negative thoughts about having a weak female body and the male writers.

In addition to physical strength, mental strength among women was also defended and praised. Having "wisdom" and being "wise" was a virtue Christine continuously used as an example, and their inclusion reveals their importance to her. "Wise", "wisely" and "wisdom" occurs more than 40 times in various examples throughout the book, and this indicates strongly towards "wisdom" and being "wise" being a virtue Christine held in high regard, and, as mentioned, a virtue of importance.

Christine continued to defend bodily and spiritual strength in later parts of her book. The Amazons were some of the examples.¹²⁵ The Amazons were female warriors from classical mythology.¹²⁶ With the Amazons, Christine continued to exemplify the existence of intelligence and strength in women, and she also described them as being courageous, brave, valiant, noble, and, in the case of Queen Penthesilea, pure.¹²⁷ While showcasing the Amazonians' abilities for warfare (which was the activity Christine most often connected with "strength", "courage" and "bravery" in this part), she also balanced the narrative with virtues and abilities which spoke more on how the queens acted and behaved with care and thought. One example of Christine's balancing act was the aforementioned queen Penthesilea, who was described as "pure", "noble", and even with the word "virtue" which eludes to excellent moral and not a good or admirable quality. These virtues did not undermine the others, but rather helped create multidimensional characters. The balancing act could, at the same time, be a didactic move by Christine; the mixing virtues of different natures could have been an attempt to include the virtues she considered to be of greatest importance, starting the cognitive process of readers to recognise these virtues as desirable from the beginning.

¹²³ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 18.

¹²⁴ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 6.

¹²⁵ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 37-46.

¹²⁶ Margolis (2012). Page 158.

¹²⁷ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 43.

Penthesilea participated in the Trojan war alongside other Amazonian warriors.

In the remaining chapters of PART I Christine continued to focus on women's ability for intelligence and wisdom.

4.1.2 PART II: Rectitude

The second part of *City of Ladies* included examples from ancient Greece and the Roman Empire, and it was in this part that Christine and the lady *Rectitude* built the housing in the city and filled the city with inhabitants. The word "rectitude" means a "quality or attitude that is shown by people who behave honestly and morally according to accepted standards".¹²⁸ The examples and topics in this part reflect this change in companion. Women's behaviour and the motivation behind their behaviour formed the focus of PART II, rather than other qualities and abilities as in part 4.1.1. In a way, virtues are more prominent here compared to PART I. While Christine discussed and gave examples of virtues in PART I, PART I was more focused on qualities and abilities. In PART II it is virtues that are most important, and these virtues are an instrument in her defence, as well as a rhetorical metaphor correlating strengthening the buildings and presenting what virtues the inhabitants display with Christine's opinion on important virtues.

As in PART I, the virtue of being «wise» was important in PART II. The word "wise" and "wisdom" (which for me cohere) are mentioned a total of 19 times in PART II, substantiating the premise established in PART I about "wisdom" and the mental capacity of being "wise" is a virtue endorsed by Christine. In PART II she further expanded the nature or situation where this virtue is observed in women. Whereas "wisdom" and being "wise" was understood as physical strength and military prowess in PART I, in PART II these virtues were understood as part of mental abilities. Christine strove to prove that women could be strong of body (like queen Semiramis discussed in 4.1.1.) and of mind. The psychological wisdom first appeared in the first chapter of PART II: "Amongst the highest rank of ladies of great renown are the wise sibyls who were extraordinarily knowledgeable".¹²⁹ The sibyls were "wise" and "knowledgeable", supporting Christine's claim that women were capable of learning and retaining knowledge, and at the same time revealing the status of this virtue; as it was still being mentioned, this indicated the significance of the virtue.

Other examples showcasing "wisdom" correlating to the psychological can be seen throughout the rest of PART II. In chapter 25, Christine wrote of Portia, daughter of Cato:

Knowing how wise and virtuous she was, her husband did not hesitate to tell her that he and Cassius, another Roman nobleman, planned to kill Julius Caesar in the senate. However, foreseeing that this deed would have terrible repercussions, the sensible lady did her best to dissuade her husband from carrying out his plan.¹³⁰

In addition to being "wise", Portia was also described as "sensible". Being "sensible" was a recurring virtue in PART II. Already on the next page a lady named Curia is described

¹²⁸ Collins (2015). Page 1300.

¹²⁹ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 91.

Margolis (2012). Page 195: The sibyls were prophetic women with origins in ancient myths.

¹³⁰ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 123.

Portia was the daughter of the Roman orator Marcus Porcius Cato, and was the wife of Marcus Junius Brutus (one of the men who assassinated Julius Caesar on 15th of March 44 BCE.) Wasson, D. L. (2015, May 15). "The Murder of Julius Caesar". *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/article/803/>

as giving "sensible advice".¹³¹ And in relation to the virtue "sensible", women are described as having "good sense" by making good, morally sound and clever decisions. All of these virtues ("wisdom", "sensible" and "good sense") can be seen in the example of the wife of Bernabo the Genoese.¹³² This "steadfast and wise" lady was beautiful, with good senses and "exemplary chastity".¹³³ And even though there was an attempt on her life following falsely being accused of infidelity, and she consequently was forced to flee from her home, had to disguise herself as a man, and ended up in the employment of the sultan of Babylon, she remained "sensible and resolute" when facing adversity.¹³⁴ As mentioned before, there was no coincidences regarding Christine's description of the women in *City of Ladies*. If she decided to describe women as "wise" and "sensible" it was because she believed these were virtues essential to a female's character and nature. And by giving proof of the positive sides of women with and through these virtues as rhetorical tools she revealed the value and importance of these virtues.

In chapter 37 Christine explicitly challenged the negativity spread by male authors about women's chastity. This virtue "chastity" has been mentioned earlier in the book; for example, In PART I chapter 13 the duchess of Anjou (Marie of Blois) is described to be "as chaste as she was wise".¹³⁵ The matter of "chastity" was to have a more explicit importance in PART II where the topic was discussed in chapters 37-47. Christine made it from the start very clear what her opinion was about the virtue:

As far as I can see, my lady, all forms of goodness and virtue can be found in the female sex. So why is it that these men say so few women are chaste? If this were true, all their other qualities would be worthless, because chastity is the supreme virtue in a woman.¹³⁶

Chastity was not only important, but one of *the most* vital virtues a woman should possess. To substantiate her opinion and argument that the men who has said that women are not chaste are wrong, Christine has utilized several examples. The first four women were from the Holy Scripture: Susanna, wife of Joachim; Sarah, wife of Abraham; Rebecca, wife of Isaac the patriarch; and Ruth, ancestor to the prophet David.¹³⁷ All of them were praised by Christine for their chastity. Christine included nine examples of pagan women and women of antiquity to further prove that women were chaste.¹³⁸ As with the four women from the Holy Scripture, these nine examples were praised for their chastity. A person's faith inevitably influences the subjectivity with which decisions are made and opinions are shaped, and while Christine's Christian faith shapes her narration and work, she does not limit herself to examples only within the bible. This enhances Christine's arguments by adding nuances and variation to the female examples

¹³¹ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 124.

Curia lived in the latter part of the century BCE. She was married to the Roman consul Quintus Lucretius Vespillo.

¹³² Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 163-168.

The wife of Bernabo the Genoese was most likely Zinevra di Genova, written about in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

¹³³ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 164.

¹³⁴ Brown Grant (1999). Page 166.

¹³⁵ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 32.

Marie of Blois, Duchess of Anjou, lived from 1345 to 1404. She was married to Louis I, Duke of Anjou.

¹³⁶ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 141.

¹³⁷ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 141-144.

¹³⁸ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 144-150.

in *City of Ladies*. Furthermore, it conveys the message that Christine truly intends to defend ALL women, no matter origin, religion or imperfections.

4.1.3 PART III: Justice

After finishing the foundation, the walls, the houses, and welcoming the inhabitants into the city, the examples Christine presents to the reader becomes Christian. The examples were dominated by female saints and religious queens, and it was these women that was meant to govern and rule the city. As mentioned in the previous section, the women presented while Christine and the three ladies built the walls and the buildings were for the most part, non-Christian. The women she had described throughout *City of Ladies* were all invited to live in the city, but the most virtuous and exemplary women were to be introduced in PART III, and these were the women most befitting to rule the city she had built. The examples in Part III is viewed by Christine to be the best, the most perfect of all women; their entire character is presented as an example, contrasting with the selectiveness in the previous parts.

In the third part the third lady, Lady Justice, was to help Christine. "Justice" can mean "fairness in the way people are treated" and the administration of what is correct based by law.¹³⁹ "Justice" can also refer to the second Cardinal Virtue of Christianity. The cardinal virtues are the foundation of natural morality, and "Justice" is "the constant and permanent determination to give everyone his or her rightful due".¹⁴⁰ The definitions are similar, and can therefore all be used when examining PART III. Yet, the nature of the female examples in this part indicates that Christine's Lady Justice is the personification of the second Cardinal Virtue; the women are Christian saints, virgins and martyrs. The holy roles of the female examples, alongside Christine's personal religious faith, makes a compelling argument that it was the Cardinal Virtues who were assisting her. Nevertheless, the overall understanding of "justice" as treating people with fairness is fitting for this part through the appointed ruler of the city; the Queen of Heaven, the Virgin Queen Mary.

The Queen of Heaven, The Virgin Queen Mary, was chosen to rule the city by Christine. "Save us, Our Lady, and intercede on our behalf with your son who refuses you nothing" Christine writes, and this, again, supports her choice (and bolsters our understanding) of why Lady Justice was the one present in this part. She called on the Virgin to make sure justice was given to the women in the city, and the female sex in general. In addition to the role of protector and defender, Christine intended for the Virgin to be a role model for women; "Let them drink deep from the fountain of virtues which flows from you and may they quench their thirst so fully that they learn to abhor all forms of vice and sin".¹⁴¹ This quotation from chapter one in PART III shows Christine's opinion of the Virgin; the Virgin was so virtuous that by following her example and absorbing the Virgin's knowledge and virtue women would recoil from sin and immoral behaviour.

With the Virgin representing everything good and positive, it is reasonable to assume that the women chosen as her companions were of the same caliber. A reflected evaluation had been conducted by Christine when choosing her female examples, and these choices, and her narration of them, revealed what *virtues* females ideally should emulate. Most of the virtues mentioned in PART III had been used by Christine in the previous parts. "Intelligence", "chastity", "good sense", "patience", "steadfast",

¹³⁹ Collins (2014). Page 855.

¹⁴⁰ Richter (2019).

¹⁴¹ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 202.

“constancy”, “kind”, “strength”, and “humble” had been presented in various examples, but their inclusion in this final part verify their importance again.

The last two pages of *City of Ladies* is of particular interest. When speaking of the Virgin again, Christine connected being virtuous with being “meek” and “mild”: “[...] since it is true that the more virtuous someone is, the more this makes them meek and mild, this city should make you conduct yourselves in a moral fashion and encourage you to be meritorious and forbearing”.¹⁴² “Meek” was part of a woman’s nature, something she mentioned in chapter 8 in PART I. The aforementioned quote therefore had two possible meanings: (1) that being “virtuous” enhanced a woman’s inherent nature, or (2) that “meek” and “mild” was understood and meant as virtues on their own. Based on the definition of the word “virtue” as a good or admirable quality a person possesses or a way of behaving, both meanings can be deemed as correct. “Meek” and “mild” were understood as virtues, and being virtuous enhanced women’s nature. The two meanings made “mild” and “meek” two important virtues for Christine; they were mentioned in other parts of the book, they were part of a women’s nature, and they were mentioned through an example with the Virgin.

Further on Christine also offered specific advice regarding women’s behaviour, qualities and virtues: “So, my ladies, be humble and long-suffering and the grace of God will be magnified in you. [...] It was Saint Gregory who said patience is the key to paradise and the way of Jesus Christ”.¹⁴³ “Humble” and “patience” were once again presented as important virtues by Christine. Both virtues hints to that the most important power a woman possessed was “soft power”, the quiet, behind the scenes actions that more easily went unnoticed by people. However, soft power was not less important than others.

The rest of Christine’s advice was also about virtues focusing on a more subdued nature and “soft power”. She encouraged girls who were “young virginal maidens” to be “pure”, “modest”, “timid” and “steadfast”, and to “[a]rm yourselves with strength and virtue”.¹⁴⁴ Widows she encouraged to be “devout”, “prudent”, “patient”, “strong”, “resilient”, “unassuming” and “charitable”.¹⁴⁵ When “strong” is interpreted to refer to having a strong mind or character all of the aforementioned virtues is about just that; it is about the mind and one’s character, instead of being focused on physical abilities and aspects, and “hard power”.

There is one virtue missing in the last paragraph, and that is “chastity”. Mentioned several times in both PART I and PART II, and being claimed as “the supreme virtue in a woman” it would be surprising if Christine did not mention it in her advice at the end of *City of Ladies*.¹⁴⁶ The virtue was included, with an additional emphasis on its importance: “Drive back these treacherous liars who use nothing but tricks and honeyed words to steal from you that which you should keep safe above all else: your chastity and your glorious good name.”.¹⁴⁷ This last mention of “chastity” further substantiates “chastity” as one of, if not the, most important virtues in *City of Ladies*.

¹⁴² Brown-Grant (1999). Page 238.

¹⁴³ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 238.

¹⁴⁴ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 239.

¹⁴⁵ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 239.

¹⁴⁶ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 141.

¹⁴⁷ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 239.

4.2 Traditional roles and the ability of women in *The Book of the City of Ladies*

Christine praised unconventional roles and behaviour of women by including examples of such females in her book. Though Christine did recommend that women assume the traditional roles of their time, she did not insinuate that women could not occupy other roles. Rather, Christine appears to have seen the limitations of the world she lived in, had felt them personally through her widowhood and academical pursuits, and believed that women, for the time being, was better off remaining in the traditional roles preached and implemented by the patriarchal society.

One example of such a traditional female role was the *wife*. The virtues "loyalty", "steadfastness", "kindness" and "constancy" were often brought up by Christine when the topic turned to marriage. In PART II, chapter 13, she contended the notion of women making marriage unbearable that some male authors championed. Christine denounced this claim by stressing that it was the husband who was the master of the wife, and as the dominant part in the marriage such negative behaviour should not have been tolerated. If both husband and wife were "sensible", "kind" and "gentle" they would live together in peace. And while Christine did admit that not all women were sensible, kind and gentle, these were a minority and went against their own nature.¹⁴⁸ It is evident that it was the virtues "loyalty", "steadfastness", "kindness" and "constancy" Christine valued the most in marriage, and that these virtues were visible in "the good wife": "No matter what it is they find out, they carry on loving their husbands and being pleasant to them [...]".¹⁴⁹ Remaining with their husbands was portrayed as a duty as well as a part of the virtues. Because marriage was an expected role for women to take on, the last four virtues mentioned increases in importance due to the number of women that should strive to adopt them.

Another traditional role Christine challenged was that of the scholar. Christine asked the ladies about several matters concerning women's mental abilities and ability to learn, all relating to the virtues of "wisdom", "intelligence" and "good sense". Through various examples exhibiting the important virtues, Christine refutes the negative opinion of women's mental ability:

God has given every woman a good brain which she could put to good use, if she 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 distinguished of men delight in doing.¹⁵⁰

Even though Christine stressed that women have the capability, she did not promote it. She defended women's ability for wisdom and intelligence in the sense that women were just as smart as men. But because there had been no tradition of giving girls the same education and opportunity to gather knowledge from experiences and activities as men, women were perceived as less intelligent. On the other hand, when Christine wrote "it's not necessarily for the public good for women to go around doing what men are supposed to do" the importance of the virtues "wisdom" and "intelligence" decreased.¹⁵¹ The virtues were important as abilities, but less so as virtues which should be cultivated. Was this adherence to traditional roles a result of her not believing that society was

¹⁴⁸ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 109-110.

¹⁴⁹ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 119.

¹⁵⁰ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 59.

¹⁵¹ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 57-58.

ready for women to step out of these roles? She herself had felt the negative consequences her choices had resulted in – the isolation of being in a male-dominated career and role forced her away from most women in her nearest proximity and limited the number of persons with whom she could relate to and talk to about her experiences.

The women in a similar position to Christine were the ones in a position of power, like empresses, queens, princesses, and duchesses. These women in power struggled to claim power, authority and an identity beyond the traditional social structure and roles set as examples during the fourteenth and fifteenth century. While the lower classes should not be excluded from this discussion, they did not have the same assets as the nobility, making it less plausible that they could act on the thought of “breaking free” of the set norms of the society. At the same time, the lower classes had less norms to adhere to, making it less of a problem to no being able to free oneself from societal norms. A peasant woman could find herself in the role of wife, mother, farmer and labourer in the space of a morning. But the lack of norms coincided with the lack of rights, possibly triggering a want for change.

The lower classes did not possess the same tools and knowledge as the educated higher classes, and without these tools it would be much harder to break away from the norms enforced so strongly by the rulers of the patriarchal society and pave a new way with new norms and philosophies.¹⁵² Because of the aforementioned realities it was not necessarily a lack of desire to make the virtues important, but rather a society where that was not yet as easily achievable.

4.2.1 Christian influence

In the introduction a hypothesis was proposed: that it is virtues found in the newest and/or most Christian examples that Christine deems as most valuable to her. During the examination of *City of Ladies*, a considerable amount of evidence supports this hypothesis. That the traditional roles are rooted in Christian tradition is also supported, alongside Christianity’s strong influence on Christine.

As exemplified in the previous subchapters, Christian values and ideas had a large influence on the *City of Ladies*. Many of the women in *City of Ladies* were “good Christians”, saints or virgins, and the book was connected to Christianity through the explicit mention of “God”, “our lord” or “Him”. One example was Clotilde, Queen of France, about whom Christine uses descriptive words like “holy”, “good Christian”, “good” and “saintly” to present.¹⁵³ Clotilde has been credited with bringing Christianity to the French monarchy, she was presented as an advocate of Christianity and she was used as an example of someone who brought forth “marvellous benefits” in the spiritual domain; “Though [the king] persistently refused to do so, this lady never left off praying to God, with tears, fasts and acts of devotion, to shine the light of faith into her husband’s heart. She prayed to Him so fervently that eventually Our Lord took pity on her anguish”.¹⁵⁴

The influence of religious texts and beliefs in Christine de Pizan’s book *City of Ladies* appear quite prominent and obvious. These continuous religious elements are nothing less than what be expected when the correct historical context is applied to this book. In Western Europe during the fifteenth century, Christianity was the very centre of

¹⁵² I am using «educated» quite liberally here, as there was no set standard on the level and quality of the education women received, and to what extent they were educated.

¹⁵³ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 138.

Clotilde lived from 470 to 548. She was a Frankish queen married to King Clovis, and was granted sainthood for converting her husband to Christianity. Margolis (2012), page 167.

¹⁵⁴ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 138.

society; its influence was seen and felt everywhere. To not have elements of Christianity and religion in a medieval text would have been far more ground-breaking considering the Church's power and influence in both religious and secular matters.¹⁵⁵ It must be noted here that it is dangerous to speak of the medieval society in too much of a general manner, as there will always be nuances that creates differences and variation. It is therefore important to include the different nuances found within culture and society, and most importantly beware the dangers generalisation creates.

In *City of Ladies*, examples from the Holy Scripture were used alongside female figures from ancient Greek and Roman texts and contemporary female figures. The "brave" and "wise" Amazonian queen Themiris was described in *City of Ladies*, whose goal was to defend women, together with The Virgin Mary.¹⁵⁶ In *City of Ladies*, even when speaking of "pagans", Christine "redeems" them by saying it was Gods intention and that they did not know better. Another example of this were the sibyls. Christine described them as "wise", "knowledgeable" and "noble" ladies, all of whom were blessed with foresight by God and where all were great prophets.¹⁵⁷ She made it explicitly clear that it was God, the Christian God, who had bestowed gifts like this. Christine also made it abundantly clear that the sibyls were pagans; some even lived before the birth of Christ and the development of the Christian belief and the Church, and yet she projects Christian virtues like chastity onto the sibyls.¹⁵⁸

The greatest evidence of Christian influence can be found in PART III in *City of Ladies*. While it is evident throughout the book, the introduction of the Queen of Heaven, The Virgin Mary, as the ideal queen and woman thoroughly prove the influence of Christianity. The Virgin was a popular focus for worship, prayer and meditation in the latter part of the Middle Ages. By presenting the Virgin as "the most noble queen", "blessed amongst all women" and "second only to her one begotten son whom she conceived of the Holy Spirit" Christine authenticated the Virgin as the most desirable role model for women.¹⁵⁹ By calling on the Virgin to rule and govern the city the virtues related to her grew in authority and importance; women were encouraged to be like the Virgin, act like the Virgin, and to look to her as a role model.¹⁶⁰ Christine's aspiration for the book was to educate women as well as defend them. She defends so many different types of women both to make sure she brings to the light all the accusations towards women, but also so that her influence extends farther into society; either by reading or verbal communication of the book. The book has a didactic aspiration, and this dimension increases the importance of using the right instruments for Christine.

¹⁵⁵ Woodhead, L. (2004). *An Introduction to Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pages 123-127.

¹⁵⁶ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 38.

Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 201-202.

¹⁵⁷ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 91-92.

¹⁵⁸ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 91-95.

¹⁵⁹ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 201-202.

¹⁶⁰ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 201-202.

Chapter 5: A secondary example and viewpoint

Neither should we forget the holy virgin Saint Margaret, whose legend is very well known. [...] Before she died, she offered up a prayer for all those who would remember her martyrdom and would invoke her name in their hour of need, especially pregnant women and those in labour. The angel of the Lord came and told her that her prayer had been heard: she could go to claim her palm of victory in the name of God. She proffered her neck to be decapitated and her soul was carried off to heaven by the angels.¹⁶¹

In the previous chapter different virtues and values found in *The Book of the City of Ladies* were explored through female examples in the book. Whether the same idealised virtues can be found in a text written by a male author, some 90 years after Christine de Pizan finished her manuscript in 1405, will be examined in the first part of this chapter. *Gynevera de le clare donne* was written by Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti. In this manuscript and there is a short text about a Nordic queen: Queen Margaret (princess of Denmark and Norway), married to James III of Scotland in the years 1469-1486. Arienti met Queen Margaret's father, Christian I of Denmark and Norway, on the king's way to visit the Pope in Rome in 1474.¹⁶² The meeting with the king seems to be the main reason for Arienti's inclusion of Queen Margaret in a collection of predominantly Italian biographies. Is the biography therefore composed on virtues he himself and the others surrounding him deemed most important? This seems to be the case that Arienti never met Queen Margaret, but rather relied on information from a Scotsman who was at the University of Bologna.¹⁶³

The manuscript was dedicated specifically to Ginevra, the wife of the Italian nobleman Giovanni II Bentivoglio, with the manuscript being named after her: *Gynevera de le clare donne*.¹⁶⁴ According to S.B. Chandler, the manuscript was intended as a way for Arienti to maintain favour and his position with the Bentivoglio family.¹⁶⁵ In addition to gaining favour, Hopkins presents the theory that the *Gynevera* was meant as instructions to Ginevra on how to be a better ruler, or woman in a high position of power, by including various examples of (what he considered) good leadership and behaviour by other women in a similar position as Ginevra. Effectively, Arienti implicitly called to attention her shortcomings and pleaded for monetary patronage with the same manuscript.¹⁶⁶ This chapter will examine the roles and virtues Arienti dictates onto Queen Margaret. If the manuscript was intended to be instructional and inspirational to Ginevra Bentivoglio, as Hopkins claim, Arienti would have chosen the virtues and descriptions of Queen Margaret with care for didactical purposes. Just like Christine de Pizan did in *City of Ladies*.

5.1 «De Margarita regina de Scotia»: An Italian Life of Margaret

The biography of Margaret of Denmark, Queen to James III of Scotland, is one of two biographies in *Gynevera de le clare donne* dedicated to and on a foreign woman. Aside from Margaret and Jeanne d'Arc, all the other biographies were of women native to or

¹⁶¹ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 206-207.

¹⁶² Chandler (1953). Page 53.

¹⁶³ Chandler (1953). Pages 53-54.

¹⁶⁴ Hopkins (2016) writes the name a little differently. Instead of *Gynevera de le clare donne*, Hopkins writes *Gynevera delle clare donne* (page 102). I will be using *Gynevera de le clare donne* in future reference.

¹⁶⁵ Chandler (1953). Page 52.

¹⁶⁶ Hopkins (2016). Pages 119, 125, 127-128.

living in an Italian city-state or in the surrounding area. The manuscript can be seen as an attempt by Arienti to give Ginevra Bentivoglio instructions on how to better care for her family and the Signoria.: "Arienti's praise of these women places Ginevra's irascible governance in relief, while also hopefully setting forth a model for her to follow in the future".¹⁶⁷ Considering this, it would imply that Arienti thought Margaret was a good example for his intended purpose of the manuscript, or that he could *make her* to be a good example.

Both of the implied theories are plausible, but it is impossible to discern whether Arienti has fabricated parts of Margaret's biography to suit his own agenda or if he has based the biography on sound, oral sources. For this thesis it must remain an unanswered question as it is other aspects that are the focus in this thesis. Although interesting, and important in other contexts, the manuscript's historical accuracy pertaining Margaret of Denmark is not the main concern, but rather Arienti's formulation of the text, how he chooses to describe Margaret, and what abilities he includes when writing about what he deemed a good female example.

The first element of the analysis of Arienti's description of Margaret is the adjectives he used to describe her: "gentle", "forbearing" and "devoted" is found in the first paragraph, followed by "extremely religious".¹⁶⁸ Arienti seems to establish that women should be careful and considerate in and about all their actions; think before they make decisions in order to not make rash and untimely decisions. "Gentle" and "patient" are used later in the text as well.¹⁶⁹ These descriptions gives the impression that Margaret was both seen as someone who (and are expected to) treat matters and people with great care, and that this was one of her most important tasks. Her task, described by Arienti with words like "gracious", "patience", and "affectionate", as a woman, queen, and mother was more focused on "soft power", in contrast to the man, king, and husband whose power is executive and "hard". It seems that these descriptions aim to paint a picture of a woman who actively takes on the role of a mediator and soother; handling and exerting soft power, like diplomacy, building alliances, friendship, operating behind the scenes in less obvious and forceful manners, and letting the king take on the dominant role in public.

The subordinate role created by Arienti through his descriptive words reinforces the social hierarchy created through theology and philosophy where women were subordinated to men, here described through possessing qualities regarded as less powerful and less dominant, even if said qualities are deemed important and positive. This "hallowed tradition" of subordination, as Andersson and Zinsser put it, which gained great authority in the Middle Ages limited a women's role and function.¹⁷⁰ While subordination was a tradition that could be traced back to antiquity, it still lingered in the mentality, theology and academics of fifteenth century Italy, the period in time when Arienti wrote "De Margarita de regina Scotia". The re-emerging works of antiquity, seen in this period we now call the Renaissance, would very likely have added to this mindset.

In the book *Virtue Ethics for Women 1250-1500*, István P. Bejczy discusses whether gender can be applied to virtues and discusses it in the light of the scholastic debate, and about the Aristotelian philosophy he says as follows: "[...] for Aristotelian

¹⁶⁷ Hopkins (2016). Page 127.

¹⁶⁸ Chandler (1953). Page 55.

¹⁶⁹ Chandler (1953). Page 56.

¹⁷⁰ Andersson & Zinsser (1989). Pages 26, 27-51.

virtue ethics, there can be little doubt that it is sexually biased".¹⁷¹ Aristotelian virtue ethics is based on what Aristotle wrote in *Nicomachean Ethics* and in *Politics*. Here he states that to be virtuous a person would have to be a citizen, which to him meant Greek, male and free as Bonnie Kent notes, and in *Politics* Aristotle states that "the virtues of rulers (political leaders and male heads of families) are superior to those of the ruled (slaves, women, and children)".¹⁷² By contrast, Christian theology sees virtue as something bestowed by God, and everyone is in theory equal on the level of grace, the only place virtue can exist.¹⁷³

Sexual bias was present in Christian theology in the Middle Ages, creating a contrasting mix of teachings. Some, like the radical Aristotelian Engelbert, abbot of Admont in Austria, argued "that the three moral cardinal virtues do not apply to all people in the same degree: justice is necessary for everyone, but fortitude (understood as military courage) pertains to men rather than women, whereas temperance is useful for women and young people in particular, prone as they are to sensual pleasure".¹⁷⁴ Nicholas of Vaudémont, a fourteenth century commentator, argued against women's ability of fully developing both intellectual and moral virtues, despite the sporadic occurrence which would imply otherwise. But there was also a defence of women and female virtues. Parisian master John Buridan, one with great influence on this matter, argued that the four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) were necessary, and available for all.¹⁷⁵

Arienti seems to establish Margaret, and by extension other women and particularly women in power, as a soft and gentle creature, alluring to the "pro-feminine" attitude that both women and men were receptive to virtues and that virtues exist in both sexes. Yet, at the same time, Arienti's choice when describing Margaret instils a conception of her as submissive and quiet rather than rowdy. This is not an altogether negative role to have, but it was a subordinate role, with its limiting expectations; women should fit this template or make themselves fit it.

The second element of the analysis of Arienti's book is the nouns and phrases he used to describe Margaret. Some of the nouns and phrases have a distinct notion of Christianity about them; they are values or descriptions used by the Catholic Church to guide, but also control the female population. Several were used in this excerpt:

She was a woman of such lofty and wonderful virtue, chastity and prudence that she deserves to be ranked above all the women of that region in excellence of reputation; she brought to the worlds a beauty, a modesty and a prudence, unequalled in their glory and splendour.¹⁷⁶

"Wonderful virtue, chastity and prudence" signal different categories of behaviour. "Virtue" refers to morally strong qualities, a person who considers her options and

¹⁷¹ Bejczy, I.P. (2011). Does Virtue Recognise Gender? Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies* in the Light of Scholastic Debate. In Green, K. & Mews, C.J. (editors) *Virtue Ethics for Women 1250-1500* (p. 1-11). Dordrecht: Springer. Retrieved from Springer, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0529-6>. Page 2.

The scholastic debate was the debate between the scholastics, who agreed with Aristotle's virtue ethics, and Christian theologians who believed virtue was achievable for both genders.

¹⁷² Bejczy (2011). Page 2,

¹⁷³ Bejczy (2011). Page 2.

¹⁷⁴ Bejczy (2011). Page 6.

¹⁷⁵ Bejczy (2011). Pages 5-6.

¹⁷⁶ Chandler (1953). Page 55.

chooses the right and morally sound answer. The adjectives "gentle" and "patient" discussed in the previous paragraph substantiate this virtue. "Chastity" was a virtue expected by a woman of high standards and high morals; it was a core value which the Church preached to its members. Sexuality was a tool for the Church, and for men outside the ranks of the Church, to control the female sex, and the subordination of woman has been closely linked to the sexual aspect of women.

The late medieval Church was greatly influenced by the theology of the early Church, basing doctrine and ideology of women on "two extremes", as Fiona Downie puts it.¹⁷⁷ One of the extremes was Eve, the temptress. The other was Mary, the Virgin Queen. Eve, with her temptation of Adam, possessed the negative qualities and were as such the representative of what women should not obtain. Mary, with her virtues, her motherhood and acceptance of her submissive role represented everything women should seek to emulate and be, according to the Church. "Chastity" was thus in direct connection with the *Virgin Mary*.

Virginity was praised as the ultimate and purest state for a woman, but few could remain virginal. Through marriage women would be seen as "a good sexually active woman", meaning that the Church had found a solution to the paradox of promoting both chastity and reproduction (motherhood).¹⁷⁸ "Chastity" then became an important quality for limiting sexual activities, while still finding a compromise so women could maintain the sexual duties of a wife.

Arienti praised Margaret several times on her chastity. He plainly wrote that Margaret took comfort "[...] from not living in mortal sin and from never violating in any way the sanctity of marriage" and that "she was a woman of such chastity and modesty that it was understood she would have no relations with her husband except for the procreation of children, [...]".¹⁷⁹ The description of Margaret from Arienti's descriptions reveal a great deal about what Arienti deemed as important qualities for a woman of high rank and standards to possess. As did the last adjective: "prudence". "Prudence is care and good sense that someone shows when making a decision or taking action."¹⁸⁰ Someone who is prudent is sensible and careful, someone who is wise enough to consider different possibilities, and possible consequences.

"Wisdom" was mentioned a little further down in the same paragraph on page 55:

She was much more loved and revered by the people than was the King, since she possessed more aptitude for ruling the Kingdom; she governed the people and the state with justice and integrity, as though she were a Numa Pompilius.¹⁸¹

This excerpt contrasts to the other examples examined up until this point. Here, Margaret is not praised for her chastity, or gentle nature, but she is being compare to a legendary Roman King, and she is complimented on her skills as a good leader.¹⁸² Arienti wrote that Margaret was a better and more loved ruler than the King, and that she ruled with justice and integrity. I would argue that these descriptions used by Arienti contrasts with the normative roles intended for women, implemented by societal traditions and the

¹⁷⁷ Downie (2006). Pages 8-10.

¹⁷⁸ Anderson & Zinsser (1989). Page 33.

¹⁷⁹ Chandler (1953). Page 56.

¹⁸⁰ Collins (2006). Page 1249.

¹⁸¹ Chandler (1953). Page 55.

¹⁸² The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2020, March 03.). Numa Pompilius. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Numa-Pompilius>

Church. The description of Margaret as a better ruler than the King also contrasts with the descriptions of Margaret written by Arienti in the text, examined in the previous paragraphs.

Arienti's description of Margaret favoured «executive power» instead of «soft power», and an aptitude to seize and utilize this sort of power when needed. Arienti was close to giving Margaret authority, something medieval queens was excluded from, as authority was bestowed upon a select few and power can, in a sense, be claimed and exercised by anyone.¹⁸³ Authority was bestowed upon men, as traditional teachings subordinated women¹⁸⁴ and placed men higher up in the hierarchy built by the patriarchal society. Nevertheless, Arienti did place Margaret in a position of clear power (and capable of executing the role), and an example like this substantiates Arienti's agenda of providing Ginevra Bentivoglio with examples of women who applied their individual qualities to become good leaders as well as persons.

However, Arienti made sure to describe Margaret in a more "fitting", or normative, manner, in accordance with the Church's ideology on women. Two other aspects of the legendary King Numa Pompilius from the aforementioned excerpt was that he was a peaceful and a devoted man of religion. King Numa is credited with the founding of Rome's early religious institutions, marking him as a man devoted to religion. Although it is not Christianity he is devoted to, religious devotion seems like a plausible attribute Arienti would want Margaret to possess.

After praising Margaret as a competent ruler, Arienti proceeds to acclaim Margaret with qualities befitting a subordinate woman whose main role was to stay loyal to her husband and devote herself to religion. "Despite his imprisonment, the Queen wished always that the State should be governed in the name of her husband, the true King".¹⁸⁵ Margaret might be capable of ruling, and rule in a competent way, but her main purpose was to support her husband and do so as a loving wife and mother.

She had three very fine sons. She was a woman of such chastity and modesty that it was understood she would have no relation with her husband except for the procreation of children, behaving towards him in such a way that, when she knew conception had occurred, she declined relations until after the birth, despite his demands, curbing his unseemly desires by good sense and restraint. O holy marriage of this Queen, how worthy you are of praise and how worthy she of the celestial garland of chastity, who observed the divine rule that matrimonial intercourse was only for the creation of offspring!¹⁸⁶

Again, Arienti used words like "chastity" and "modesty" when describing Margaret, establishing her as someone who was muted, calm and in control of herself. Her chaste and reserved actions towards her husband might not, based on heterosexual marriage standards of the 21st century, encourage affection and love between husband and wife, but that might not have been her, or Arienti's, main focus or goal. Margaret would have played the hand she had been dealt, and while in a position of power, it was established through her husband and his position as King:

¹⁸³ Downie (2006). Pages 2-3.

¹⁸⁴ Anderson & Zinsser (1989). Pages 26-51.

¹⁸⁵ Chandler (1953). Page 55.

¹⁸⁶ Chandler (1953). Page 56.

Because almost every woman is perceived to be under the authority of some man [...] who sponsors her participation in social and political life, women's efforts to control their own and others' actions necessarily disrupts men's efforts to exercise their socially legitimated authority.¹⁸⁷

At least, that Margaret would have played the hand she was dealt is what the collected and analysed data from Arienti's biography of Margaret of Denmark indicates. These examples endorse that Margaret's most defining, and important attributes is her sensibility, Christian faith and wisdom. She possessed the needed qualities to be more authoritative and capable of handling executive power, but Arienti had her, in the end, conforming mainly to the traditional role of wife and mother. Arienti's description of Margaret created a female identity based on Christian virtues like chastity, virtue, prudence and motherhood. Her identity was linked to her husband and King, yet she was also given strong, individual characteristics building a personal identity of someone competent in the domestic and public sphere.

There is no doubt that Arienti's description of Margaret was intended to be a positive example of a pious and wise Queen and mother well deserving of praise, and for Margaret to be a role model whose purpose for Arienti was to inspire Ginevra Bentivoglio.

5.2 Similarities between *City of Ladies* and "De Margarita regina de Scotia"

After examining Christine de Pizan's book *The Book of the City of Ladies*, and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's biography "De Margarita regina de Scotia" in the *Gynevera de le clare donne*, a number of similarities has become evident. Several virtues are mentioned by both authors; some of them are "patience", "chastity", "gentle", "modesty", "prudence", "wisdom" and "good sense".

Just like Christine's examples in the first part of *City of Ladies*, Margaret is praised by Arienti for her capability to rule and govern. And in relation to this capability both authors promote women's capability of wisdom and strong mental capacity. As discussed in 4.1.1 and 4.1.2, "wisdom" or being "wise" seem to be a virtue held in high regard for Christine. The virtue was used throughout *City of Ladies*, and she contested the opinions of the male authors which claimed that women were not able to learn, be educated, give advice or rule at length. While Arienti described Margaret as having the aptitude for ruling the kingdom of Scotland, it seems that he was more inclined towards the second "version" of understanding wisdom discussed previously in 4.1.2; that "wisdom" can also refer to the psychological, not only the physical. He wrote "[...] although her wisdom and hope of reward in God enabled her to bear every discomfort with patience".¹⁸⁸ Margaret's "wisdom" was evident through the virtue of "patience", meaning "wisdom" was used to moderate and control herself, not exercise physical power or other physical actions. Virtues like this were reappearing in both Christine's book and Arienti's text, substantiating that virtues that were less forceful and domineering were more desirable by them both. For women, "soft power" was more important than "executive/hard power", and the virtues "patience", "gentleness", "prudence", "good sense" and "wisdom" are examples of "soft power".

On the topic of Arienti being a male author and whether this affected his writing or not; there are no clear evidence of misogyny affecting "De Margarita Regina de Scotia". Hatred and prejudice against women would undermine his intentions for the *Gynevera de le clare donne*. Language and descriptions that are downgrading and negative would not

¹⁸⁷ Rosaldo & Lamphere (1974). Page 91.

¹⁸⁸ Chandler (1953). Page 55.

serve as a good example for Ginevra Bentivoglio, and since the manuscript was intended for Ginevra specifically and Arienti's intentions were specifically to inspired *good* behaviour, it would be unwise to write egregious examples. It is, however, possible that Arienti wrote misogynistically in other parts of the *Gynevera*. This thesis only examines one out of thirty-two biographies, and it is therefore impossible to establish here that Arienti wrote objectively without apparent misogyny. Carolyn James writes that "there is more than a hint of traditional misogyny" in one of the "generic portraits" in *Gynevera*.¹⁸⁹ But there is no evidence of this in "De Margarita Regina de Scotia".

Since *City of Ladies* and *Gynevera* was constructed for a purpose, the placement of the virtues was not coincidental. When Arienti described Margaret by using "virtue, chastity and prudence" as the first descriptive words, he signified that they were important. He wrote "She was a woman of such lofty and wonderful virtue, chastity and prudence that she deserves to be ranked above all the women of that region in excellence of reputation", so in addition to these virtues being the first he mentioned he also established his opinion that the woman possessing them "deserves to be ranked above all women".¹⁹⁰ This supports these virtues as important and valued by Arienti. The virtue "chastity" was also important to Christine; very important, in fact, as mentioned before. She explicitly stated that "chastity is the supreme virtue in a woman" and "[...] that which you should keep safe above else: your chastity and your glorious good name".¹⁹¹ In this, Christine and Arienti seem to be in an agreement, even if Arienti does not explicitly state that "chastity" is the most important or "supreme" virtue.

¹⁸⁹ James (1996). Page 75.

¹⁹⁰ Chandler (1953). Page 55.

¹⁹¹ Brown-Grant (1999). Pages 141, 239.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

*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.*¹⁹²

The main research question in this thesis was: *Which female virtues were the most important to Christine de Pizan based on the female examples included in The Book of the City of Ladies?* Through the examination of Christine de Pizan's book, there is one virtue in particular that stood out from the rest, and that was "chastity". The reason it stood out was because Christine herself explicitly labelled the virtue as the most important for a woman. As shown in chapter 4 and in chapter 5, the virtue "chastity" or "being chaste" was described by Christine as the supreme virtue and the virtue a woman should protect at all costs. "Chastity" appeared several times in *City of Ladies*, supporting the conclusion that it was indeed the most important virtue for Christine. But other virtues were also mentioned repeatedly throughout the book, making it challenging to determine the most important virtue based on these virtues appearance in *City of Ladies*.

In addition to how many times a virtue is mentioned, the situation in which the virtue(s) was used or mentioned must also be assessed. The situation contributes important information and aspects when identifying the most important virtues. As discussed in 4.1.3, at the end of *City of Ladies* Christine spoke to the women inhabiting her new city. The last chapter was called "The end of the book: Christine addresses all women" and the situation that transpired was Christine giving the women a final message. The fact that this was the final chapter and the last opportunity for Christine to instruct or guide women towards the most important virtues forced Christine to be precise and only include the most essential elements. Therefore, the virtues included in this chapter had very likely been selected by Christine due to their importance; limited space results in the inclusion of only the most essential parts. The empirical data collected from the last chapter in *City of Ladies* is therefore perhaps the most important based on the relative importance of the virtues in the last chapter. The number of virtues Christine has chosen to include elicit the conclusion that it was the similar nature of these virtues that was the crucial element here. The majority of these projects the importance of good moral behaviour, "soft power" and strong character. These virtues, "pure", "modest", "patient", "strong", "resilient", "virtue", "humble" and "charitable" to mention some, focused on the person, on the character, and spirit of the woman. And it is interesting that Christine moralizes so many virtues until the end as it reveals the complexity of which Christine views women and why her defence is so extensive, both in regard to the number of female examples in the book and topics she explores.

In contrast to the placement and the importance of all these virtues is the last mention of "chastity": "Drive back these treacherous liars who use nothing but tricks and honeyed words to steal from you that which you should keep safe above all else: your chastity and your glorious good name".¹⁹³ For the second time she explicitly stated that "chastity" was the most important, something you have to treasure and guard no matter what. This determines that "chastity" must be named as a singular virtue, separate from the other, important virtues; "chastity" has an elevated importance for Christine.

¹⁹² Brown-Grant (1999). Page 237.

¹⁹³ Brown-Grant (1999). Page 239.

In conclusion, these virtues with the virtue "chastity" at the core is what the empirical data collected from *The Book of the City of Ladies* shows is the most important virtue.

While there have been studies conducted on Christine de Pizan and *The Book of the City of Ladies* before, I hope this thesis increases the knowledge we have about her work. This thesis adds to previous research done the *City of Ladies*, and it adds to the understanding of women as complex participants in history. Christine de Pizan was an active participant in the medieval, French workforce of academics and her books provides valuable insight on what a woman would and could write about. Christine is an example of capability, and it is important to showcase examples like this to our contemporaries. As a future teacher, a female example of a capable and intelligent women in the Middle Ages is very important; to inspire my pupils, to teach how nuanced history as a subject is, and to create more gender equality within the subject.

The previous research this thesis is based on is largely focused on Christine de Pizan as an early feminist and humanist. Although these were not the focus for this thesis, the evidence these studies base themselves on have become evident in the results for this thesis. Christine defends women from misogynist authors and their attack on the female sex with both atypical and typical examples of women for someone living in a Christian country in Late Medieval Europe. Atypical examples like strong warrior queens and pagans reveal Christine's serious approach to this topic; she wanted to exhibit a varied and thorough collection of females to contest the misogynist statements made about women. This also disclose that Christine was able to see positive sides in women even when others had labelled them as "bad" or "improper". Typical examples like The Virgin Mary, saints and good wives contrasts with the atypical examples, but they also complement each other, adding a sense of reflection and dedication from Christine. The nature of the examples adds to the claim of Christine being an early feminist through the defence and inclusion of all women and not only the ones possessing the perfect amount of virtue or were deemed perfect by other authors.

Christine being a humanist can be deduced from the inclusion of pagan women from ancient Greece and Rome. As humanists celebrated and embraced anew classical arts and literature these examples can be seen as such, an embracement of women from classical myths and literature.

Based on this thesis it would be interesting to examine what virtues Christine encourages women to cultivate in *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*. This book is often seen in correlation with *The Book of the City of Ladies*, but contrasts with each other in the sense that the book *Treasure* is more of an etiquette book that explicitly describes how women should behave in everyday life, while *City of Ladies* has a theoretical approach. It would be interesting to analyse the book *Treasure* to find out how Christine expresses and handles the aspect of virtues in an everyday life setting.

A complete examination of the *Gynevera de le clare donne* by Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti would also be of interest. Both an examination of the other biographies, and a comparison between *Gynevera* and *The Treasure of the City of Ladies* have potential to give more insight on which virtues women were encouraged to cultivate in the late Middle Ages. With the period of "re-birth", or renaissance, overlapping with the production of these works, it would be interesting to explore the books in order to evaluate if the re-established interested in Antiquity and the growing influence of humanism in Italy and France influenced Christine de Pizan and Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti.

A final note on further research is the relation of Christine de Pizan and Christianity. As evident through the research in this thesis, Christianity influenced

Christine's writing. With more time and more space this topic would have been very interesting to explore. Bonnie A. Birk has conducted a study that resulted in the book *Christine de Pizan and Biblical Wisdom: a feminist-theological point of view*.¹⁹⁴ Due to COVID-19 this book arrived too late for me to include it in this thesis, but given the chance the biblical aspect together with a feminist approach would be very interesting for further study. With a focus on female virtues as well a study inspired by Birk's book would both build on this thesis and the feminist studies previously conducted of *The Book of the City of Ladies*.

¹⁹⁴ Birk, B.A. (2005). *Christine de Pizan and Biblical Wisdom: a feminist-theological point of view*. Marquette University Press.

References

Primary sources

Chandler, S.B. (1953). An Italian Life of Margaret, Queen of James III. *The Scottish Historical Review*, 32(113), 52-57. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/25526183

Christine de Pizan (1405) *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Translated and with an introduction and notes by Rosalind Brown-Grant (1999). London: Penguin Books.

Secondary literature

Adams, T. (2017) Christine de Pizan. *French Studies*, Volume 71, Issue 3, July 2017, Pages 388–400. Retrieved from Oxford Academic, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fs/knx129> .

Anderson, B.S. & Zinsser, J.P. (1989). *A History of Their Own*. Volume 1. United States of America: Perennial Library

Bejczy, I.P. (2011). Does Virtue Recognise Gender? Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies* in the Light of Scholastic Debate. In Green, K. & Mews, C.J. (editors) *Virtue Ethics for Women 1250-1500* (p. 1-11). Dordrecht: Springer. Retrieved from Springer, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0529-6>

Bell, S.G. (1976). Christine de Pizan (1364-1430): Humanism and the Problem of a Studious Woman. *Feminist Studies*, 3(3/4), 173-184. Retrieved from JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177735>

Boccaccio, G., Wright, H., & Morley, H. (1943). *Forty-six lives* (Vol. 214, Early English Text Society. Original series). London: Published for the Early English Text Society by Oxford Univ. Press.

Christine de Pizan (1406). *The Treasure of the City of Ladies or The Book of the Three Virtues*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Sarah Lawson (2003). Revised Edition. London: Penguin Books.

Collins COBUILD advanced learner's English dictionary (8th ed.). (2015). Glasgow: HarperCollins.

Davies, S. (2003). *Empiricism and history*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Downie, F. (2006). *She is but a woman: Queenship in Scotland 1423-1463*. Edinburgh: John Donald.

Klapisch-Zuber, C. (editor). (1992). *A History of Women in the West: 2: Silences of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Fitch, A.-B. (2006). Maternal mediators: saintly ideals and secular realities in late medieval Scotland. *Innes Review*, 57(1), 1–34. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3366/inr.2006.57.1.1>

Hopkins, S. (2016). *Female Biographies in Renaissance and Post-Tridentine Italy*. UCLA. ProQuest ID: Hopkins_ucla_0031D_14990. Merritt ID: ark:/13030/m5km40mf. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8q24s3xs>

James, C. (1996). *Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti: A literary career*. Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore.

Kristensen, B.E. (2007). *Historisk metode*. Hans Reizels Forlag.

Lund, E. (2016). *Historiedidaktikk*. (5th ed.). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Margolis, N. (2012). *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press.

- Margolis, N. (1986). Christine De Pizan: The Poetess as Historian. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 47(3), 361-375. Retrieved from JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2709658>
- Mark, J. J. (2019, March 26). "Christine de Pizan". *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from https://www.ancient.eu/Christine_de_Pizan/
- Mark, J. J. (2014, August 18). "Semiramis". *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/Semiramis/>
- Melve, L. & Ryymin, T. (editors). (2018). *Historikerens arbeidsmåter*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Richter, S.P. (2019, January 3rd). What Are the 4 Cardinal Virtues? Retrieved from <https://www.learnreligions.com/the-cardinal-virtues-542142>
- Rosaldo, M., & Lamphere, L. (1974). *Woman, culture, and society*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
- Small, G. (2009). *Late medieval France*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Storey, W.K. (2016). *Writing History: a guide for students* (5. ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2020, March 3rd). Numa Pompilius. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Numa-Pompilius>
- Wasson, D. L. (2015, May 15). "The Murder of Julius Caesar". *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <https://www.ancient.eu/article/803/>
- Woodhead, L. (2004). *An Introduction to Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

