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Karen Green

Constant J. Mews *Editors*

Virtue Ethics for Women 1250–1500

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Note on the Text

Unless otherwise indicated, all English translations of foreign language quotations within the text are the authors' own, with editorial emendations due to Alan Crosier.

Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed a significant resurgence of interest in virtue ethics, not just within philosophy in general, but within the history of ideas. Yet while increased attention has been given in recent years to the originality of medieval discussion of the virtues in ethical and political writings, there has so far been little examination of that part of the literature addressed to women, and even less of that written by women, in either the medieval period or the Renaissance. This is a striking omission, given that inquiry into the nature and centrality of the virtues in ethical theory has attracted a great deal of attention, particularly from female authors.¹ One is therefore somewhat surprised that medieval women are absent from the discussion of the history of virtue ethics. The present collection helps to fill this gap, obliging us to consider the role of gender in discussions of ethics, and in shaping the feminine subject between 1250 and 1550.

The original inspiration for the collection derived from an observation, made by one of the editors, which related to a rather later period than that covered here. In writing a history of women's political ideas from the late medieval period to the enlightenment, it initially seemed to her and her co-author, Jacqueline Broad, difficult to identify women who were writing distinctively political texts.² Women seemed to be interested in virtue—the virtues generally, and the virtues as they relate differently to men and women. But from the perspective of post-enlightenment political theory, in which political questions are framed in terms of rights, sovereignty,

¹One of the most influential works has of course been Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1981). Important works on the virtues by women include: Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978); Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralist View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Julia Driver, *Uneasy Virtue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Martha Nussbaum, *Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Christine McKinnon, *Character, Virtue Theories, and the Vices* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1999). Nearly half the articles reprinted in Roger Crisp and Michael Slote, eds., *Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) are by women.

²The result of that attempt is Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

political legitimacy, and power, these women's texts seemed surprisingly apolitical. Only when it became evident that these authors were operating within a tradition of virtue ethics shaped by Aristotle, the Stoics, and a complex interaction between the reading of these authors and Christian texts, did the political nature of these women's writings become manifest. Writers as diverse as Christine de Pizan, Marguerite de Navarre, Laura Cereta, and Madeleine de Scudéry framed the question of the equality of men and women in terms of their equal capacity for virtue.³ They understood the common good as including the moral as well as the physical well-being of members of a community. Alisdair MacIntyre, whose book *After Virtue* helped bring the importance of the virtues in medieval political thought to the world's attention, commented that "on the particular ancient and medieval view which I have sketched political community not only requires the exercise of the virtues for its own sustenance, but it is one of the tasks of parental authority to make children grow up to be virtuous adults."⁴ Christine de Pizan's feminist works apply an analogous principle to women. She argues that the common good includes the good of all the community's members, female as well as male, and opposes misogyny because of the bad effects that it has on women's capacity for virtue, in so far as women are discouraged by misogynists from thinking of themselves as virtuous agents. Although she does not believe in full social equality, she does believe that men and women are equally made in God's image and that, since women are not a species apart, the promotion of women as virtuous subjects is as much the goal of political life as the attainment of virtue by men. Just as she frames the political texts that she directs at princes and knights in terms of the virtues necessary for fulfillment of their practical obligations to the community, so she frames her didactic works directed at women in terms of the demands of prudence—the Latin descendant of Aristotle's fundamental practical virtue, *phronesis*.⁵ At the same time, she does not clearly distinguish the virtue of prudence from the gift of wisdom, itself

³For a fuller discussion of the theme of virtue in women's political thought see Karen Green, "Virtue Ethics and the Origins of Feminism: The case of Christine de Pizan," in *Feminist History of Philosophy: The Recovery and Evaluation of Women's Philosophical Thought*, ed. Eileen O'Neill and Marcy P. Lascano (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011).

⁴MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 195.

⁵Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des trois vertus*, ed. Charity Cannon Willard and Eric Hicks (Paris: Champion, 1989); Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, trans. Sarah Lawson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985); Karen Green, "Phronesis feminised, prudence from Christine de Pizan to Elizabeth I," in *Virtue, Liberty, and Toleration: Political Ideas of European Women, 1400–1800*, ed. Jacqueline Broad and Karen Green (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007); Karen Green, "On Translating Christine de Pizan as a Philosopher," in *Healing the Body Politic: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Karen Green and Constant J. Mews (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005); Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, trans. Kate Forhan, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre du corps de policie*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998); Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*, trans. Sumner Willard (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Christine de Pizan, *Epistre Othea*, ed. Gabriella Parussa (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1999); Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Peace*, trans. Karen Green, Constant J. Mews, and Janice Pinder (University Park: Penn State, 2008).

included by Christian tradition among the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit suggested in Isaiah 11:2—wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. Her representation of the virtues is grounded in a synthesis of Christian and classical authors, mediated by texts such as Martin of Braga's *Formula vitae honestae*, which she glossed in her *Livre de prudence*, along with Alan of Lille's *De virtutibus et de vitiis et de donis Spiritus sancti*.

Given that Christine's treatment of the princely virtues in writings such as her *Prudence*, *Book of the Body Politic*, and *Book of Peace* belongs to a well-established tradition of mirrors for the prince, the question became whether Christine was completely original in discussing the relevance of virtues to the situation of women, or whether she was following an established trend. Recent work on the princely virtues throws little light on the extent to which queens and princesses were represented during this period as ideally conforming to the same virtues as male rulers.⁶ Thus it seemed to be a worthwhile enterprise to examine the literature of moral advice available to women in Christine's milieu, to develop a just appreciation of both her originality and her indebtedness to earlier texts and traditions. As well as being interested in the influences on Christine, we have also addressed her influence on later authors, especially concerning the virtue of women. The essays in this collection constitute a first attempt to throw some light on these issues, though they by no means exhaust what turns out to be a rich area of inquiry.

Research into possible influences on Christine led us to one text of particular significance: the *Miroir des dames*, a French translation of the *Speculum dominarum* of Durand de Champagne. This work, attested in the libraries of at least four of Christine's female contemporaries mentioned in her *City of Ladies*, suggested itself as an excellent starting point for our researches, even though it had been little studied in its own right.⁷ Written for Jeanne de Navarre (ca. 1271–1305), wife of Philip IV of France, probably in the last years of the thirteenth century, it was first translated a few years later. This first vernacular rendering was to be the work's most successful version. A later translation from the Latin was made for Marguerite de Navarre; but thereafter, the *Speculum* sank into obscurity.⁸ The dates of its diffusion nevertheless appeared to us to offer a relevant time-span within which to examine developments of the tradition of virtue ethics applied to the case of women and addressed to women—by male authors, and more importantly by female authors.

At the beginning of the period in question, Christian scholars were still coming to terms with the impact of Aristotle's ethics on conceptions of virtue. Augustine,

⁶For recent discussion of the literature on virtues directed at princes see István P. Bejczy and Cary J. Nederman, eds., *Princely Virtues in the Middle Ages 1200–1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

⁷For a discussion of these women and their libraries see Green, "What Were the Ladies in the *City of Ladies* Reading? The Libraries of Christine de Pizan's Contemporaries," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 36 (2010), pp. 77–100, and "Isolated Individual or Member of a Feminine Courtly Community? Christine de Pizan's Milieu," in *Communities of Learning: Networks and the Shaping of Intellectual Identity in Europe, 1100–1500*, eds. Constant Mews and John Crossley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 229–250.

⁸Ysambert de Saint-Léger, *Le Miroir des dames* (Lecce: Milella, 1978).

following St Paul, had taught that there was no virtue without faith.⁹ Many of the works written consisted in compilations of definitions of the virtues and their parts, interspersed with exempla. From Cicero, who was relaying the Stoic tradition with roots in Aristotle and ultimately Plato, authors standardly adopted the four cardinal virtues: prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. After the twelfth century it became standard to add the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. St Benedict had taught that discernment (*discretio*) was mother of the virtues, while Abelard and some of his followers interpreted Cicero as implying that prudence was not itself a virtue but “the mother of the virtues”. It was more usual, however, to count prudence as first among the cardinal virtues. When these were discussed there was a tendency to make the seven virtues themselves gifts of God, or alternatively dependent on such gifts. One issue relevant to the question of grace was the relationship of these seven virtues to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned earlier: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. For early scholastics, who adhere to Augustine’s anti-Pelagianism, “the gifts are graces which make possible the acquisition of virtue.”¹⁰ Alan of Lille argues that the gifts are themselves virtues.¹¹ Aquinas discusses various past doctrines concerning the relationship of the virtues to the gifts, and ultimately concludes that the gifts are a higher perfection in man than the natural virtues, and that the gifts are given to dispose us to divine inspiration.¹² As Bonnie Kent has argued, the years following the death of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) saw exceptionally vital discussion of virtue ethics, as a range of thinkers debated the contrasting early attitude epitomised by Augustine (for whom there could be no true virtue without grace and an act of assent by the will) and the implications of the absorption of Aristotle (who emphasised that a rational virtuous agent should be guided by a conception of the greatest good, and possess virtuous dispositions or habits, acquired through the intellect). Many different attempts to reconcile Aristotle and Augustine were developed, of which Aquinas’s has become the best known.¹³

Vernacular ethical texts, which were in the main more accessible to female readers than Latin, tend not to convey all the sophistication of the Latin debate on virtuous free choice, weakness of will, and the conflict between intellectualism and

⁹István P. Bejczy, “The Problem of Natural Virtue,” in *Virtue Ethics in the Twelfth Century*, ed. István P. Bejczy and Richard G. Newhauser (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 133. The most comprehensive account of twelfth and thirteenth century accounts of virtue is found in volumes 2 and 3 of Odon Lottin, *Psychologie et Morale aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, 6 vols (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1949–60).

¹⁰Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 60 vols. (London: Blackfriars, 1974), vol. 24. Appendix 3, p. 101.

¹¹Odon Lottin, “Le Traité d’Alain de Lille sur les vertus, les vices et les dons du Saint-Esprit,” *Mediaeval Studies* 12 (1950), pp. 20–56. Alain notes that the gifts can be spoken of in a narrower or a broader sense, but argues that the gifts are virtues. In particular he represents wisdom as a species of prudence, p. 54.

¹²Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 24, p. 9.

¹³See Bonnie Kent, *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

voluntarism. One such vernacular text often owned by women was the *Somme le Roi*, translated into English as *The Book of Vices and Virtues*.¹⁴ It had been compiled in 1279 by Laurent d'Orléans (d. ca. 1325), Dominican friar and confessor of the French King Philip III and his children. A group of illuminated manuscripts of this text were commissioned during the 1290s, and circulated in the court of Philip IV.¹⁵ While it contains a large section organised around the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and includes definitions of the cardinal and theological virtues, it does not explore the relationship between gifts and virtues, being more practical in orientation. Similarly, the *Miroir des dames* tends to quote authoritative definitions of the virtues without a great deal of reflection. It also demonstrates that the early view of virtues as gifts of God was still current during the period, for Durand quotes Augustine's definition of virtue, saying that

[...] vertuz est bonne qualite et bonne perfection de lame par la quele en peut vivre droitement. Et de la quele on peut vivre droitement. Et de la quele nul ne use mauvement. La quele perfection diex cause et meit en nous senz nous. Et est vertuz une bonne qualite, quar elle est donnee de dieu, qui est bonte souveraine.

[... virtue is good quality and perfection of the soul by means of which one can live righteously. And of which one can live righteously. And of which one cannot make bad use. Which perfection is caused and placed in us by God despite us. And virtue is a good quality, for it is given by God, who is the greatest good.]¹⁶

While this would seem to imply that we depend on God's grace for the possession of virtue, Durand also distinguishes the theological virtues, which he says make us divine, from the cardinal virtues, which he considers natural.¹⁷

Nevertheless, a pale reflection of the debate over our capacity to deserve salvation through the exercise of the virtues is evident in conflicting attitudes towards the nature of the good life. On the one hand, the life of contemplation and withdrawal from the world is suggested by the doctrine that we cannot acquire grace through good works; on the other, for those whose ideas of virtue have been influenced by Aristotle, virtuous habits have a this-worldly active orientation. Aristotle was particularly useful to those interested in advising the prince, and Giles of Rome made extensive use of his political thought in the influential *De regimine principum*, written for Jeanne de Navarre's husband Philip IV. But with the rise in influence of Aristotelian conceptions of the virtues, Aristotelian misogyny was also introduced

¹⁴Laurent d'Orléans, *La Somme le Roi*, ed. Edith Brayer and Anne-Françoise Leurquin-Labie (Paris: Société des textes français modernes, 2008); *The Book of Vices and Virtues: A Fourteenth Century English Translation of the Somme le Roi of Lorens d'Orléans*, ed. W. Nelson Francis (London: Oxford University Press, 1942; reprinted 1968).

¹⁵See Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, "Illiterati et uxorati", *Manuscripts and their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris 1200–1500* (London and Turnhout: Harvey Miller, 2000), pp. 145–172.

¹⁶*Miroir des Dames*, Cambridge, Corpus Christi MS 324, f. 122v.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, f. 139r.

into political thought, and with it the claim that women's capacity for prudent judgement is defective, as well as many other arguments drawn from both biblical and classical sources that attempted to justify limiting the political power of women. Nevertheless, the re-emergence of classical texts with their Pelagian implications led to an assumption that virtue leading to salvation can be acquired through acts, an assumption never made explicit by Christine, but implicit in her exhortations to both men and women that they should learn from Roman examples and pay tribute to the virtuous in order to promote their own and others' virtuous activity.

This collection is the result of inviting a number of scholars with expertise in medieval virtue ethics, or in the writings of medieval and Renaissance women, to contribute to a series of symposia at the annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (ANZAMEMS) held at the University of Tasmania in December 2008. The papers in this collection are mostly derived from the talks offered there. Many have benefited considerably from the interactions between the participants and editors since that symposium, and we now present an overview of the surprisingly rich and diverse models of the virtuous behaviour of women developed for and by women in a period embracing the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

A number of commentators have seen the rise of the universities, and in particular the growing dominance of clerical Aristotelianism in the universities during the thirteenth century, as inimical to women's position in medieval society.¹⁸ The first paper in this collection, by István Bejczy, tends to confirm this impression. He argues that a survey of Latin texts discussing the virtues, by early Christians committed to the doctrine that there is no genuine virtue without grace, demonstrates little conception of a difference in male and female capacity for virtue. It is with the establishment of the Aristotelian corpus and the use of Aristotle's *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* as authoritative texts that late medieval authors more consistently represent women as incapable of fully acquiring virtue, though even at this period there are some authors who anticipate Christine's arguments for women's full and complete capacity to exercise all the virtues.

The three following papers introduce us to various aspects of the *Speculum dominarum*. In his contribution Constant J. Mews provides an overview of the context of its production and the life and influence of Durand de Champagne. He also discusses other even earlier works of moral advice directed towards women. He argues that the earlier works, such as the *Speculum virginum*, written during the twelfth century for religious women, and the *Miroir de l'Ame* produced for Blanche of Castile, concentrate on virginity and on the inner life. The second, in particular, belongs to a group of texts that offer "a gendered conception of virtue: public moral activity is presented as the domain of the king; an interior spiritual life as that of the queen." One might take this to reflect the consequences of the difference in orientation between

¹⁸Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman. Vol. 2: The Early Humanist Reformation, 1250–1500* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Erdmans Publishing, 2002); Éline Viennot, *La France, les femmes et le pouvoir: L'invention de la loi salique* (Paris: Perrin, 2006), pp. 106–294.

Christian and classical ideas concerning virtue (argued for by Bejczy) for conceptions of the nature of the virtuous life for women. As Christians, women are expected to participate in the spiritual life, and the interior Christian virtues are particularly appropriate to them. But at least at this stage there is little perceived need, according to the clerics who wrote for them, for women to acquire the political virtues necessary for active government. In contrast to this the *Speculum dominarum*, with its French translation the *Miroir des dames*, has a foot in both camps. Written by a Franciscan, it develops the theme of contempt for the world (*contemptus mundi*) yet also it also offers practical advice on how the queen ought to behave: how she should govern her household, and how she should intervene to promote justice in a realm in which, Durand hints, justice is not being well served.

Mews also points out that the *Speculum dominarum* was written when the Inquisition was active in Languedoc, and that Durand was without doubt a conduit through which Bernard Délicieux attempted to influence the queen, in the hope that she would intervene to put a stop to the persecutions there. Rina Lahav, in her contribution, develops this insight by examining the ways in which Durand's discussion of justice both echoes and goes beyond that found in other treatises directed at a male prince. It is particularly striking that Durand represents the queen as having an active role in ensuring that justice is maintained in the realm. Lahav speculates that, as well as being intended to function as a justification for the queen's activity in protecting elements who were being persecuted, the treatise also served as a means whereby the Franciscans could promote their point of view within the court, and potentially influence the king. It is interesting to note that this work was written just before the position of women in the French realm was significantly diminished: when Jeanne de Navarre's granddaughter, also called Jeanne, was passed over in the succession of the French crown, displaced by her uncle Philip V, thus setting in train a series of female disinheritances that ultimately resulted in the faked legitimacy of the Salic Law.¹⁹ The earliest surviving manuscript of the French translation of the *Speculum*, Cambridge Corpus Christi College 324, belonged to Jeanne d'Evreux, sister-in-law of the disinherited Jeanne de Navarre, whose son Charles the Bad of Navarre would contest the Valois claim to the French crown.²⁰ In having this text copied she was in some measure keeping alive past traditions in which French queens were expected to intervene actively in the administration of justice.

Janice Pinder's contribution includes detailed examination of a triplet of manuscripts, dating from the second half of the fourteenth century, in which the *Miroir des dames* is copied along with a number of other texts that serve as a kind of continuation of it. These additions tend to emphasize the contemplative and interior aspects of the original. Although Pinder does not herself make this point, it is interesting to note that these collections were assembled at a time when the capacity of women to wield public power was being seriously contested as part of the post hoc justification for excluding women from the French succession. In these

¹⁹Viennot, *La France, les femmes et le pouvoir: L'invention de la loi salique*, pp. 294–341.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 311–312.

collections elements of the *Miroir* that emphasise the pursuit of the interior spiritual life are reinforced, as against those pertaining to active public engagement.

In her paper on visual representations of the queen's virtues, Cécile Quentel-Touche shows how, in images such as manuscript illuminations confectioned for Charles V, Jeanne de Bourbon is usually represented as expressing the passive virtues of listening and learning. Nevertheless, there is a development in such images during Charles's reign, particularly when he decided to invest his wife with the regency if he were to die while his heir was not of age. Jeanne's position in these later pictures conveys greater authority and independence. The virtuous queen remains an important part of the reigning family, and she is portrayed as a significant force both in mediating disputes and reinforcing moral education.

The next paper, by Earl Jeffrey Richards, examines the difference in attitudes towards women's virtues in the works of Jean Gerson and Christine de Pizan, and it too throws light on the consequences for women of the situation described by Bejczy. Owing to their equal position with men in relation to God's grace, women were not excluded from the contemplative life, even by quite conservative prelates like Gerson; but the active life, which involves the exercise of virtuous habits as described by Aristotle, was represented by Gerson as beyond their capacity. This is particularly so when the activity extends to claiming authority to teach. Gerson does not consider that his sisters are incapable of virtue; but the virtues he prescribes for them are directed towards the contemplation of Christ and the prospect of salvation in the next life. In order to teach them virtue, he offers a simplified path, to be pursued humbly in the private sphere. Any thought that women might teach or preach in public is rejected. The Pauline injunction that women should be silent in church is here reinforced by Aristotelian claims that silence is woman's special virtue. Against this background, Christine's claim to speak as an authoritative guide on the virtues to both princes and women is already a provocation. Richards nevertheless also argues that, despite the very great difference in their conception of the role of a virtuous woman in society, there is evidence of a friendship between Jean Gerson and Christine de Pizan.

The next paper, by Karen Green, develops a direct comparison of the *Miroir des dames* and Christine de Pizan's *Livre des trois vertus*. It argues that there is no great difference between Christine's prescriptions for a virtuous life and those elaborated at great length by Durand de Champagne. However, whereas Durand's text has a foot in each of two camps, seeming to require both the contempt of the world and an active role in it, Christine argues clearly and explicitly for the worth of the active life and its value as a way to manifest one's love of God. There is one aspect of her idea of activity, however, which seems a regression from Durand. Christine sees the princess as playing a mediating role, but always through the influence that she has over her husband, whereas Durand presupposes that the queen can act as an authority in matters of justice in her own right. On the other hand, Christine goes beyond Durand, and most other earlier sources that we are aware of, in placing an emphasis on the importance of renown and honour. Thus her conception of virtuous activity has a somewhat humanist cast and foreshadows the more worldly concept of *virtù* that will develop during the Renaissance.

Tracy Adams also discusses Christine de Pizan's *Livre des trois vertus* and shows how the importance of a woman's reputation, and the demands of the established model of feminine virtue which emphasises modesty and humility, led to a discussion by Christine of *juste hypocrisie*: an ambiguous virtue which is also implicitly endorsed by Anne of France in her *Les Enseignements d'Anne de France, duchesse de Bourbonnais et d'Auvergne, à sa fille Susanne de Bourbon* (ca. 1505). In order to wield power, from a contested position in which their reputation is always subject to attack, women need to develop strategies of dissimulation. Their *juste hypocrisie* is an aspect of cunning intelligence, a kind of virtue that has the capacity to descend into vice, but which it is nevertheless important for a woman to master, if she is to bring about the good. Adams demonstrates that despite appearing to be rather conventional manuals of good behaviour, these two texts offer sophisticated psychological observations and realistic strategies for women, who need to be virtuous in the traditional sense, but at the same time aspire to govern their households, estates, and principalities well, and need to learn to impose their will in an environment where they are constantly in danger from calumny and deceit.

The virtuous Penelope serves often as an example of both proper wifely devotion and cunning intelligence, as she weaves and unweaves a shroud for the father of her husband the equally cunning Ulysses, whose return she awaits. In the next paper in our collection Natasha Amendola examines the uses Laura Cereta (1469–1499) makes of this trope in her Latin letters (written while she was a young wife soon to be widowed), along with the related images of weaving applied to texts, elaborate embroidery, and female arts of adornment. Cereta's letters, many of which are concerned with the nature of true virtue, provide a fascinating insight into the complexity of a feminine virtuous subject's self-authoring during the Renaissance. Though she attempts to domesticate her writing and legitimate her appropriation of the masculine pen, by elaborating on the metaphor of the text and embroidery, she ultimately turns her back on the Renaissance pursuit of learning and renown in favour of a life combining usefulness and Christian contemplation.²¹ While Christine hoped that women could choose the active life and seek fame and distinction while remaining truly virtuous, Laura Cereta, for all her cunning use of textual metaphors, seems ultimately to have renounced worldly glory and reconnected with the more thoroughly Christian conception of virtue through grace, leading to salvation.

Carolyn James's discussion of the correspondence and three-way relationship between Margherita Cantelmo, her cousin Agostino Strozzi (the author of a work written at her behest, the *Defensione delle donne*), and Mario Equicola (author of *De mulieribus*, also written for Margherita) continues on the same theme: the tension between traditional concepts of female virtue and the aspirations of a Renaissance woman to achieve excellence equally with the virtuous man. These works, and the associated correspondence, also bring forth new themes: the importance of

²¹ Broad and Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400–1700*, pp. 48–57.

education as a means of acquiring the classical virtues, and the possibility of friendship between the sexes, modelled on the Aristotelian or Ciceronian conception of true friendship, which is possible only among those who are equally virtuous. Nevertheless, Strozzi in particular is far happier to construe women's equality in virtue as an equal capacity to understand God and achieve the heights of Christian contemplation, rather than equality in public political influence. This is perhaps not surprising, since as a cleric he had set aside worldly ambitions. While his attitude is an improvement on Gerson's towards his sisters, in that he encourages his cousin to study even difficult material, he still sees her aspirations to virtue in terms of contemplation. As James comments, it seems unlikely that Cantelmo herself wished to retire from the world as Strozzi advised. Nevertheless, his text does argue vigorously for women's equality with men as virtuous subjects.

In her contribution Catherine Müller demonstrates how two mother-daughter pairs writing during the Renaissance managed to combine the traditional concept of female virtue—virginity and obedience to parents—with the classic Renaissance concept of virtue as manifest in excellence, strength, and honour. The pairs she discusses are Marguerite de Navarre and her daughter Jeanne d'Albret, and Madeleine and Catherine des Roches. It is worth noting that Marguerite's mother, Louise of Savoy, had been brought up at the court of Anne of France. Fifty years after Anne wrote her own advice to her daughter, Marguerite had forged for herself a very strong public persona, which promoted love of the Creator over love of the creature; yet at the same time she fused this Christian orientation with a definite sense of this-worldly moral obligation. Marguerite wrote on the eve of the Reformation; her daughter Jeanne d'Albret would side with the Protestants in the wars of religion. Marguerite de Navarre looks back to an earlier Christianity infused with love of God, which she finds in Marguerite Porete's *Mirror of the Simple Soul*; but taking something from Renaissance neo-Platonism she also makes human love, when it conforms with society's requirements, a step on the ladder to the higher love of God.²² Müller discusses some little-known epistolary poems sent between Marguerite and her daughter, which are deeply infused with the notion of virtuous love, and the love that binds mother and daughter in the manner of lord and vassal.

Müller's second pair, Madeleine des Roches and her daughter Catherine, appear to have completely left behind the tension between worldly renown and traditional conceptions of Christian womanhood which had resulted in many women aspiring to more socially acceptable virtue through private contemplation, rather than public renown. The virginity of her daughter is extolled by Madeleine as the guarantee of her autonomy, and each takes the other as muse and guide. Perhaps because they had each other to fortify their resolve, mother and daughter both unashamedly aspire to worldly glory and lasting renown for their intellectual accomplishments.

The concluding paper, by Anne-Marie Legaré, returns us to images, and the way virtues thought appropriate for a princess were represented in a manuscript that records the entry of Joanna of Castile (1479–1555), wife of Philip the Fair, into

²²Broad and Green, *A History of Women's Political Thought in Europe, 1400–1700*, pp. 68–86.

Brussels in December 1496. She was greeted by *tableaux vivants* showing the nine *preuses*, in this case all Amazons, unaccompanied (contrary to tradition) by any male *preux*. These heroines suggest that Joanna is to embody valour and strength. A tableau depicting Paris and the three Goddesses is interpreted by Legaré as indicating that wisdom, sensual love, and economic prudence should all inform the character of the princess. And a last tableau seems to be pointing to her role in maintaining a harmonious domestic environment. Represented here is a far richer conception of what is expected of a princess in the way of virtue than is sometimes supposed. Boccaccio, Christine de Pizan, and Martin le Franc had all looked back to the Amazons as examples of noble women, and in the late fifteenth century Amazons often appear in pro-women texts as evidence that women are capable of governing. Although we do not know exactly what they comprised, tapestries based on Christine de Pizan's *City of Ladies* were produced in Tournai a few years after the date of the procession that Legaré describes, and were presented to Joanna's sister-in-law Marguerite of Austria in 1513.²³ An earlier set had belonged to Anne of Brittany as early as 1491.²⁴ It seems plausible that the *tableaux vivants* which greeted Joanna when she entered Brussels showed similar scenes to those depicted on these tapestries, and similarly reflect the active virtue of a princess as laid out in Christine's work. The images that have been preserved illustrating Joanna's entry are evidence that the conception of a princess encouraged by Christine was alive and well, in Flanders and northern France in the late fifteenth century.

The essays in this collection provide a perspective on the discourse concerning virtue in the late medieval and Renaissance period that differs from the usual. Ruth Kelso's formidable and influential *Doctrine for a Lady of the Renaissance*, for instance, is dominated by male texts prescribing for women the virtues of chastity, silence, obedience, and concern with domestic life.²⁵ But our study, by including women's writing, shows that more complex, if inherently contradictory, conceptions of the virtuous women were being developed. It seems that women fought back against the Aristotelian trend to assign them a lesser capacity for virtue, and built on the Christian tradition of women's equality as virtuous subjects, in order to lay claim to equality in active political and intellectual virtues as well as capacity for grace. But this enterprise was not without conflicts and tensions. Indeed, many of the more interesting texts written by women during this period are explicitly or implicitly asking the questions *What is virtue? What is the nature of the good life? How should I live as a virtuous subject? Through arguing for their equality as virtuous agents and asking What is a virtuous subject?* women in the medieval and Renaissance period paved the way for later women who would come to frame women's equality as social beings in terms of the demand for equal rights.

²³Susan Groag Bell, *The Lost Tapestries of the City of Ladies: Christine de Pizan's Renaissance Legacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 42, 72–73.

²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 96, 109.

²⁵Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

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Catherine M. Müller has published on two late thirteenth-century French mystics (*Marguerite Porete et Marguerite d'Oingt de l'autre côté du miroir*, Peter Lang, 1999), as well as an edition of Catherine d'Amboise's *Poésies* (Montréal, CERES, 2002), and co-edited a volume on Christine de Pizan. She specialises in early modern French literature written or translated by women. Among her numerous articles, she has written pioneering works on literary circles, patronage, and writings by ladies of power (such as Margaret of Scotland, Marie of Clèves, Margaret of Austria, and Jeanne d'Albret), as well as her groundbreaking research on translations written by Anne de Graville, Camille de Morel, and Antoinette de Loynes. She has taught at the universities of Lausanne, Zürich, Osnabrück, Fribourg, and Geneva, and was the recipient of several prestigious grants from Purdue University and the Swiss National Foundation for Scientific Research. She presently teaches French at the University of Geneva.

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List of Abbreviations

- AL *Aristoteles Latinus*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello et al., *Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi* (Brussels: Desclée De Brouwer; Leiden: Brill, 1953–)
- CCCM *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966–)
- CCSL *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954–)
- CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1866–)
- PL *Patrologiae Cursus Completus . . . Series Latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–1855)
- PMLA *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (New York, 1886–)