



NOTE ON THE TEXT

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The French Text

In the French text reproduced here we have attempted to provide as accurate a reading as possible of the manuscript Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique/Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (ms 10366), which is the basis of our English translation.

The critical edition by Charity Cannon Willard, produced before the autograph manuscripts of Christine's works had been identified (see "Description of the Manuscripts"), has a number of problems,¹ which made it necessary to establish a correct text on which to base the English translation. We have chosen to use the Brussels manuscript as the basis of our text, on the grounds of the authority conferred by its autograph status, although, as noted by Tania Van Hemelryck, some readings of the Paris manuscript seem to indicate that Christine modified an earlier state of the text to produce the Brussels version.

What we have provided is not, therefore, a critical edition of the French text, with full discussion of variants. This is a task that must remain for the future. Our purpose has been rather to allow the reader to see the original we have translated and to have access to a text produced by Christine herself. Although we do not systematically record the variant readings of the Paris manuscript, we have followed Willard in noting those occasions where we have used it to supply a word that is missing in the Brussels version or drawn on it to correct an obvious copying error. The passages where the two manuscripts diverge (discussed above in the description of the Brussels manuscript) have also been noted.

At the same time, to allow a modern reader to refer easily to the text, we have made a number of modifications that mean it is not, technically

1. See, for example, the review by Kathleen Chesney, *Medium Aevum* 29 (1958): 44–46.

speaking, a diplomatic edition. The use of *v* and *u*, and *i* and *j*, have been standardized in the usual way, and abbreviations expanded. We have added accents, following the accepted conventions for Old and Middle French texts.² We have used the apostrophe in contractions and provided modern punctuation. While trying to remain as faithful as possible to the clause boundaries represented by punctuation in the manuscript, in some cases extra intra-sentence breaks have been added for ease of reading. The punctuation of Christine's many citations has been a difficult question. The boundary between her words and those of her source is not marked in the manuscript, except in the case of the Latin quotations, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between direct and indirect speech. Many editions of Old and Middle French prose (including Willard's edition of the *Livre de paix*) do not use quotation marks, simply marking the beginning of a citation with a colon. Because we have used modern conventions for representing direct speech in the English translation, however, we have thought it better to reflect the decisions we have made about quotation boundaries in the French text. There are, of course, some instances where for stylistic reasons we have turned what is probably direct speech in the French text into indirect speech in the translation. Capitalization has been another difficult area, particularly in relation to the names of the virtues. In some cases Christine is clearly treating the virtue as a personification, while in others referring to it simply as an attribute. In the former case we have given an initial capital, in the latter not. There are inevitably cases that are not clear-cut and some readers will probably question our choice.

The English Translation

It has been noted that Christine's style in her prose works on matters of good government is characterized by sentences that are long, complex, dense, and sometimes obscure, close to the Latinate style of chancery writing.³ For us as translators, this has posed the question of how far to attempt to reflect that style in our English text. We have tried to steer a middle way between preserving the serious tone that we feel this style is intended to lend to the

2. Alfred Foulet and Mary Blakely Speer, *On Editing Old French Texts* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1979).

3. Angus J. Kennedy, introduction to *Le Livre du corps de policie*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy (Paris: Champion, 1998), xxxix.

work and making the text accessible to a modern reader. This has generally meant that the first aim has often been pursued through vocabulary choice, which has tended toward the formal and is sometimes a little archaic, while for the second we have worked more through breaking the long, complex periods into shorter units. Our approach overall has been conservative: we have tried to preserve as much of Christine's meaning as we possibly could.

