



LOVE AS A THREAT: CHRISTINE DE PIZAN'S REFLECTIONS ON COURTLY LOVE IN *THE BOOK OF THE DUKE OF TRUE LOVERS*

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Abstract

This study analyzes a Medieval woman writer's, Christine de Pizan's opinions on the courtly love and her counter arguments by focusing on her *The Book of the Duke of True Lovers*. As an intellectual, de Pizan crusades against the dominant misogyny in her day through her works which function as an answer to the other male writers underlining women's secondary status in the Medieval period. Since de Pizan argues the wrongness of misogyny by means of literature's soft power, she does not only gain respect from educated circles and aristocracy in her time but also finds an appropriate agency in order to spread her own ideas to large masses despite illiteracy widespread in the Middle Ages. Although to apply such a modern concept as 'feminism' to a medieval woman writer is quite problematic, it can be said that de Pizan developed an idiosyncratic perception of feminism in her time by combining her devoutness of Catholic teachings to the defence of women's position in her society. In other words, she does not blame the religious teachings for the degraded position of the women in her time. On the contrary, she puts blame on the immoral examples and advice encouraging women to be considered as the representatives of Satan and doers of evil deeds. *Duke of True Lovers*, in this respect, solidifies her attitude towards the negative influence of courtly love towards women. The study tries to demonstrate in what way *Duke of True Lovers* differentiates from the conventional romances by concentrating on de Pizan's evaluation of love as a concept by referring to certain characters, Duke, The Lady and her confidante in the tale. The study concludes that de Pizan's definition of love is based on her moral values and Christian belief. Conventions of the courtly love lead to a wrong perception of love. Although de Pizan does not disregard love as a whole, she deduces that it should be balanced and controlled in accordance with the rules of society since even a 'true' love can be harmful to the women in the medieval period.

Keywords: Christine de Pizan, Courtly Love, The Duke of True Lovers, Medieval Literature, Romance, Misogyny.

1. Introduction

Christine de Pizan (1365-1430) is a prolific author and polemicist of the Middle Ages. She had access to a high education due to her intellectual impetus and probably thanks to her father, Tomasso de Pizzano, an astrologer and a university teacher in Pisa. She got a scholastic education based on the annotation tradition of the medieval times. Thus, for de Pizan, the previous authors and especially the classical ones formed her starting point. Since her father was very close to the royal circles (he was invited to the court of Charles V of France), she could experience and observe the lifestyle of the court members and their deeds, which was used as a raw material in her works.

In the misogynist atmosphere of the Middle Ages, Christine de Pizan was regarded as an intellectual who gained both respect and authority. She could overcome the traditionally assumed borders separating the spheres of man and woman. Accordingly, the social structure of the medieval times was founded upon certain value systems and responsibilities mostly shaped by feudal and clerical authorities, in such a system the women subjects were positioned as the inferior ones and the less integrated people in the social matters. Their duties were not varied and generally based on household and childcare. Since they were not allowed to have an equal formal education with the men, the areas of science, philosophy, literature and theology were under the monopoly of men. But de Pizan rejected such limitations by both writing books on politics and military operations and the ones defending women in a hostile environment.

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Christine de Pizan was a devout Catholic and did not see a conflict between being pious and supporting women's rights at same time. She does not blame the religious teachings for the degraded position of the women in her time but the immoral examples encouraging women to be considered as the representatives of Satan and doers of evil deeds. One of these social and cultural impediments is the issue of love according to her. de Pizan is a moralist who does not reject love totally but evaluates it within the boundaries of basic Christian teachings of chastity, prudence, lust and adultery. In this respect, de Pizan regards courtly love as an instrument through which woman's position deteriorates since it contradicts with the virtue of chastity and never stays as platonic as the supporters of courtly love allege.

Another point de Pizan underlines about courtly love is that man's gains are much more than that of a woman. Moreover, a woman does not gain anything other than pain, dishonour and criticism. As Collette puts, similar to de Pizan, Chaucer warns his reader with various tales "about trust betrayed and the perils of loving" with a special focus on "the moments when loves fails, on how the correlative losses to the woman who is faithful are extreme" (2017: 21). Accordingly, as de Pizan's work, *The Book of the Duke of True Lovers* deals with, the issue of secret love brings not happiness but a persistent anxiety which harasses both of the lovers. Thus, this paper tries to demonstrate to what extent de Pizan employs the conventions of courtly love in order to subvert it and clarify its destructive influences on the Duke and his beloved, the Lady.

de Pizan's reactions to the famous romance of her time, *Romance of the Rose*, delineate her attacks on the courtly love and woman as a love object. As Laennec points out, "When in 1403 she was the only woman to participate in the 'Debate of the Romance of the Rose,' (La Querella de la Rose) her adversaries in this literary exchange complained of her unfair tactics," that is, de Pizan's use of antiphrasis, a literary device for alluding something else from the apparent meaning similar to irony (1993: 47). Moreover, as Baird and Kane suggest ". . . although she can be airily and wittily humorous in defense of her views, as in her delightful adaptation of the humility formula at the end of her first letter" (1974: 299), such a functional allegory allowed her to maintain a style both defending women's rights and criticizing male dominant political structure without irritating the royal circles.

Christine de Pizan tried to annul the negative representation of women in the romances by going beyond the stereotypes with her treatises and works in verse form such as *L'Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*, *Le dit de la Rose*, and *Epistres du debat sur le Roman de la Rose*, written against the romance tradition and the mentality cherished by the followers of the genre. As Critten points out, "the *Epistre* is a witty but trenchant attack on men who mistreat and misrepresent women" against such works as Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and de Meun's *Le Roman de la Rose*" (2015: 681).

In *The Duke of True Lovers*, de Pizan leaves aside her direct tone in the above-mentioned books and explains why the courtly love process is destructive corporeally and from a psychological perspective by presenting the experiences of a duke falling in love with a married princess in which an "aristocratic medieval life," in Fenster's words, is depicted by means of a "secret love-drama of the Duke and his Lady, played out against a backdrop of public spectacle" (1991: 10). Thus, de Pizan also emphasizes the irony between the popularity of romances and the actual reaction of the public opinion¹ without any confirmation for the acts of lovers.²

2. Love as a Threat to the Lady

In the structure of *The Duke of True Lovers*, de Pizan combines the narrative form with letters and ballades written either for expressing the current mood of the lover or the degree of love they felt mutually at those moments of excitement. At the beginning of the book, de Pizan writes a short introduction to the tale as if she is excusing for such an issue by uttering that she could not decline the duke's proposal about penning his love experience since "he is a lord I am bound to obey" and he trusted her by sharing his secret experience when there were many other options for it (1991: 47). The book can also be regarded a compilation of lyrical poems and letters introduced by short narrations setting the background for the poem. Within the framework of a meta-narrative, de Pizan recounts the duke's (whose name is omitted at his request) deeds and adventures while following his love. But on the surface of a romantic diegesis, Christine de Pizan takes Love as an allegorical figure, not a friend of lovers but an enemy who diabolically plots on the lovers besides Fortune, another allusion to the courtly love convention.

¹ Such a paradox continues in contemporary societies. For instance, Iris Murdoch occasionally parodies extra-marital relationships and marks the influence of public ethics as a pressure group in her fiction. Her 1973 novel, *The Black Prince* is one of the most noticeable examples of the above situation.

² For one of the most recent studies of the parodic interpretation of love letters incorporated in the main narrative to be manipulated by the narrator see Mete 133-39; "Manipulation of the Reader's Empathy in Iris Murdoch's First-Person Narrative."



In the opening lines, the words, "I was young and much the child when I first set my efforts towards becoming a lover. Because I had heard lovers praised more than other people and considered more gracious and better-taught, I wanted to be one," (1991: 48) problematize the protagonist's perception of love by implicating a logical failure of the courtly love. Love is not a means for binding the two people on a reciprocal sharing of powerful feelings but an end on its own which offers a social acknowledgement (renewal) and personal development for the man. Then to put it in different words, the lover does not glorify his beloved as he alleges but the Love itself as a concept, which is "revitalized by Christine as her narrator deplores, rather than celebrates, the ethos of courtliness for what she sees as its inherent hypocrisy" (Margolis, 1991: 42). What is told in prose form in the tale is followed by ballades, rondeaus and virelais to poeticize the similar issue in verse form. Thus the Duke clarifies his yearning for a romantic love by praying to God of Love and Venus as follows,

True God of Love, who are to lovers lord,
And you, Venus, goddess most amorous,
Please take my heart and make it over as
Fit to love, then I desire nothing more.
So that to bravery I'm drawn forward,
Provide me a lady and a mistress,
True God of Love, who are to lovers lord. (de Pizan, 1991: 48)

In chivalric code, having an unreachable mistress is as crucial as participating to the battles or tournaments in order to prove one's bravery, generosity and loyalty. In other words, heroic code stresses the capacity to experience a love affair as one of the major criteria for being a knight. When the old meaning of the word 'mistress' is taken into consideration as 'the woman who has sovereignty over others,' the master-slave relation in conventional courtly love is implicated since the Duke wishes a woman for whom he can perform chivalric codes and thus can realize himself as a man of nobility and valour.

However, through the tale, the traditional interaction between the lovers is challenged due to the fact that his Lady also suffers from the separation and feels the same powerful feelings towards the Duke, which means each figure becomes the slave of love and Love stands for master. The same idea is maintained in the lines "But now it has come for me to relate how the painful malady began which, because I was in love, caused me to endure many bitter moments" (de Pizan, 1991: 51). Because, love is regarded as a "malady" and there is no way of curing it, which is an image of courtly romance and Latin poets such as Ovid (Fenster, 1991: 16). Love as "the playful archer" shoots him with the "arrow of Sweet Look" and he tries to gain the Lady's compassion to heal his wounds (de Pizan, 1991: 53). Thus, the theme of love as a disease is sustained through the tale. The Duke's words, "Just as the moth to the candle or the small bird in lime are caught, so I was caught; nor did I take heed" retell de Pizan's argument of courtly love on the level of imagery by referring to the boundedness and the trap set by Love to destroy the serenity he feels in his previous life (53). But, he is conscious of his incurable situation by uttering "Love taught me how to live differently" in the new chaotic and always changing series of ambivalent moods and actions (de Pizan, 1991: 57). In the ballade after the first rondeau, the Duke refers to the conventional chivalry and the beloved as the angelic and the supernatural, which would evolve into an earthly one later on as follows,

. . . To have a lady with whom I could place
My service, my time, the most joyous thoughts
My heart could hold; through whom, in every space
I'd be jolly and gay, obey Love's laws . . .
. . . that her sweet face
And its gaze, which all my ills can efface,
Gently through pity, upon me might dwell;
No more I ask of her, who has no flaws. (de Pizan, 1991: 57)

As it happens in a traditional romance, the god of love or Cupid imposes his rules over the lover and decides on his fate with the goddess of fortune in the lines above. As Cohen puts it, "by the code of Amor, a knight owed fealty and undying service to his lady" (1956: 26). The Duke feels a kind of psychological lag since he cannot arrange his life according to an organizing principle and thus he gladly accepts the heavy procedure of Love in order to shape his personality or to consolidate his nobility. Similar to another theme in the courtly love convention, Love as an abnormality to be healed, the Duke searches for a remedy with "her sweet face and its gaze" (57). While he is attributing divine powers onto his noble Lady, the Duke also



concentrates on the physical beauty of the lady, which denotes courtly love does not merely continue on a platonic level but a carnal one. In the lines "Ah, God of Love, before I end my days,/ Grant that I might suffice and thus compel/ Her to see I'm her sole friend to embrace," (de Pizan, 1991: 59) the Duke reflects the physical desire for the beloved one, but he also demonstrates that he will monopolize the Lady's love in a narcissistic way. In other words, the idea of love precedes the actual occurrence of love.

The common sense of the tale, according to de Pizan, Dame de Tour, points to the shortcomings of such an idealized and illegal love affair by emphasizing the mere fact that love damages the woman, not the man involved, due to the social context through her arguments. By finding a suitable lady for his love, the Duke implements the requirements of a chivalric love by finding a motto and emblem, "hav[ing] chargers for jousting" and arranging a tournament to amuse his lady and for the chance to speak with her (de Pizan, 1991: 58). After the festival, the Lady stays in the castle of the Duke's father. There the Duke tries to reach his aim with certain advances towards his lady. In the following ballade,

Exalted, powerful, much-praised princess!
To love you I mastered from the first day;
Improved am I-I'll do my humble best,
To serve you for all of my mortal stay. (de Pizan, 1991: 59)

The Duke gains praise and valour through his love for the lady, thus he does not "master" on coping with the forbidden love, but on the lady. Her words "you are giving yourself a great deal of trouble, my friend" (60) foreground her own troubles that she will undergo with the appearance of Jealousy and Danger, two courtly love stereotypes standing for the husband and the gossips about the love between the Duke and the Lady.

Christine de Pizan, as the most active opponent of the courtly love tradition, points to the fact that the platonic love between the lovers is just a cover for their carnal relation. In her "anti-courtly courtly romance" work, *The Duke of True Lovers*, de Pizan focuses on the physicality occupying a great place in the so-called safe emotions interchanged between the lovers (Fenster, 1991: 16). In a rondeau, "Laughing grey eyes, whose impression I bear/ Within my heart in pleasant memory,/ How this flash of memory gladdens me/ About you, sweet one, who hold me in fear" the Duke describes his fantasies unleashed with "laughing grey eyes" by balancing his emphasis on the physical beauty of his lady with the romantic essence of his feelings. In-between lines, de Pizan also draws the attention to the destructive influence of his love on the lady with "sweet one, who hold me in fear," since she, not the Duke, will be subject to such pressures from her family, kinsmen as sentencing her to house imprisonment and a general suspicion about her (de Pizan, 1991:65). The Duke's words below delineate the eroticism in the courtly love, which degrades the position of women and reflect the misogynist reception of woman as the source of lust as it happens in *The Romance of the Rose*,

One day I ordered baths and had the water heated and the tubs placed in an attractive spot inside white pavilions. I had to go there just when my lady was in the bath, which didn't sadden me a bit! Rather my joy was complete I saw her form and her skin as white as the lily flower. That gave me great delight, as you can fully imagine, you who hear this being told!

One day we went game hunting, another we rode down to the river to hunt for birds. In that way taking many a happy path, we passed that entire month. (de Pizan, 1991: 70)

The Duke's word "I had to go there," reveals that his arrangement of baths is a pretext for his voyeuristic desire to see his lady's body. "Which didn't sadden me a bit," denotes how he materializes his love and this sentence conveys a double meaning. On the surface meaning, he gets what he expects, so he is not disappointed. But on the other hand, the act of pretending to drop by does not trouble his conscience at all. "That gave me great delight" consolidates his yearning for an adulterous relation with his lady. "Game hunting" and "hunt[ing] for birds" metaphorize the Duke as the predator and the Lady as the prey because the Duke actually hunts for the Lady's love. Since de Pizan "implores all women to be wary of falling into the snares 'fol' amor,'" she herself takes the role of "bird catcher" in order to protect women from the traps of men through her works against the courtly love (Brown-Grant, 2003: 178-179).

Arden states that "the grief comes from two kinds of obstacles that separate the lover from the beloved (for in the courtly lyric there are always obstacles), either social barriers due to her status which is higher than the lover's or barriers set up by the aloofness or coldness of the lady herself" (1987: 22-23). Accordingly, the Duke seems to overcome these obstacles exemplified with the events that he escorts to the Lady's litter by talking to her, she stays in his father's mansion and they enjoy their time together with some popular sports of the Middle Ages. Thus, "coldness of the lady" (Arden, 1987: 23) never appears in *The Duke*



of *True Lovers*, which evolves the one-sided love into a mutual one. So, due to the Lady's marital position, both lovers suffer and the idealized love in courtly romances, according to de Pizan only leads to greater troubles and loneliness for both parts. For that reason, women, according to de Pizan's opinion, should protect their honours and behave in accordance with rectitude and reason as she describes in *The City of Ladies* in order to defeat the enemies of women and the wrong impression about them.

The Lady has to leave the castle because of the gossips about the Duke and herself, which is poeticized with the lines "Vile gossips! You've wrought this work from malice/ And you've forged on an anvil's space" (de Pizan, 1991: 75). Hence, with the Duke's words, "thus far I have related how I first desired to be in love and how in that sweet state Love wounded me with the dart from which my heart will never regain its health," another phase commences in the Duke's life (de Pizan, 1991: 77). Similar to a conventional romance, the helpers and antagonists of their love begin to function either to carry the letters and poems of the Duke to the Lady or to hinder any communication. In this respect, his cousin as a close friend or a 'confidant,' suggests him to write a letter to the Lady to express his true feelings towards her and promises him to give the letter to the Lady. Then, the Duke writes a letter in which he explains how powerfully he loves her and that any refusal will be enough to kill him. The Lady's first letter gives the impression of an experienced and sensible woman answering to a young lover. But she does not refuse him in a certain tone; rather, she wants to learn whether his intention is 'true' or just a whim. On one hand, her words "know truly that should you ask me or should I perceive that you might intend something that could turn to dishonor or to evil reproach, that is a goal you would never achieve" and "I would rather die than diminish my honor for any living soul" (de Pizan, 1991: 93) definitely express her red lines and clarify her decisiveness at the beginning of their relation. On the other hand, she pities his melancholy and sadness and wishes him to be "happy, gay and joyful" by balancing it with the words "with what power is mine, I forbid you to have the custom common to many of your age," that is, speaking too proudly about his lady's love for him (93). At this point, she does not feel the pressure of love on her acts and thus, speaks the language of the morality dominant in her time but when they share their love mutually, she takes greater risks that would endanger her reputation.

After having a positive remark from his lady, the Duke sent his cousin for arranging a date with the Lady. Since her husband (Jealousy) and his spy (Danger) set off for three days, she called him to her own mansion in "the costume of a page" (de Pizan, 1991: 104). There two lovers meet and confess their love to each other. However, the Lady demands a guarantee for their love to remain intact of bodily desire and lust by uttering "... even though I may embrace you and kiss you, do not believe that ever, any day of my life, I have the will or desire to commit a base act that might leave me open to every kind of reproach," (de Pizan, 1991: 102) which reflects her ambivalent emotions between keeping her moral stance and carnal desire for the lover. She maintains that "but as for all the other pleasures that a lover may take from a lady, I wish to refuse none and you may dispose of them at will" (102). Her words indicate what de Pizan means by the hypocrisy of the courtly love, and in a way moralize the adulterous relation to a more acceptable degree since the connection between the lovers never stays on a spiritual level.

Christine de Pizan subverts the conventional positioning of the lover as the slave and the lady as the sovereign. Accordingly, the Lady confesses that "since Love has thus put us in one prison, no longer is it necessary to ask whether you love me or whether I love you. I believe that Love claims us, or can proclaim us both, his servants, which does not grieve me" (de Pizan, 1991: 101). So they share the sufferings together but, Love's influence is more painful for the Lady with the degrading looks and gossips on her. Unlike the Duke, who blames Love in hard times with such lines as "Ah, Love! Well, you've betrayed me:/first to trick me, seemed my friend/ So kind, then my enemy," and "you've two modes: one can scorn send/ While the other's angel faced [because it represents the beloved one and originates from the love for her], by accusing it with the lines "Love won't just give away/ Ways to gain solace, which will my course stay" (de Pizan, 1991: 82-83-91), and praises Love in the happy hours with "my blaming Love was without ground" and "Love's shown me where/ The path goes" (106-107), The Lady believes that Love deserves the ultimate acclaim with the lines below, which draw the image of a more powerful person than the Duke himself, "... That I conveyed/all my love. Friend, no better gift I may./ For this I praise love, who did this contrive,/ Since from it most perfect joy I derive" (109).

Fortune, "who is ready to destroy lovers when she can" according to the Duke, spoils their love by creating different causes in every occasion (de Pizan, 1991: 109-110). The woman who knows the secret of the Duke and the Lady had to leave the court due to some problems in her lands and since she was mediating between the lovers, they could not meet together until the Lady tried to find another trustable woman. So,



the Lady remembered another lady (Dame de la Tour) who served her before, she wrote a letter re-inviting the old lady to the court with the implications of what she was expected to do there.

Her friend, Dame de la Tour's letter warns the Lady with many pieces of advice against what the Lady is in. Up to Dame de Tour, almost every element of courtly love appears in the text. But she is not regarded as Danger for both lovers, although she hinders or impedes their love affair. Dame de la Tour criticizes what the Duke performs by refuting the arguments of courtly love. In other words, she functions as Reason or Rectitude appearing in the room of Christine to show her the 'right' way and console her troubles in *The City of Ladies*. After excusing that she will not come due to her daughter's illness, she says that she has heard many rumours about her and she is ruining her name by pursuing an unladylike attitude. Dame de la Tour enumerates the features of a high lady such as being "moderate in her amusements and not noisy," "speaking with restraint" and choosing noble "costume and ornaments" but not "overdone" (de Pizan, 1991: 112). However, she adds that "and though these qualities and manners suiting a high ranking princess may have been yours in the past, you are at present completely changed, according to what people say," which means "your heart has, somewhere, fallen into love" (113). Sebile de Monthault, Dame de la Tour, starts rereading the courtly love in a style brings to mind Christine de Pizan's own reflections.

The primary argument of Dame de la Tour is about the idea that 'a true love is without harm' is wrong. Dame de la Tour's words, "That one lives more happily because of it and in doing this one makes a man more valorous and renowned forevermore" criticize the chivalric love and its so-called contribution to the man (de Pizan, 1991: 114). She maintains that there are many noble women who did not sin in any way but in such a love issue, whose children "reproached for it and less esteemed," which means such an act does not destroy only the ones involved in it but also their relatives and family. In other words, unlike the pink world of romances, the social pressure always plays a crucial role and the woman becomes defenceless to the attacks of misogynists. When the person in question is a princess, according to Dame de la Tour, the issue becomes more serious since such a rumour is "known throughout foreign countries," and her children will rule the country in the future, it causes a "great misfortune" that "they may not be the legitimate heirs" (114).

The other issues Dame de la Tour satirizes are about the pleasure of love and servitude of the knight to a noble lady. "There is a hundred thousand times more grief, searing pain and perilous risk, especially on the ladies' side, than there is pleasure" and women pay for their pleasure heavily with "fear of losing honor" (de Pizan, 1991: 116). As it comes to servitude to the lady, he cannot render his service to her since he cannot dare to disclose himself in the case of a danger threatening her "for fear of her dishonor" and thus "they serve themselves" (116).

Dame de la Tour continues that if the lady does not find the happiness and pleasure from her husband, she can devote herself for the development of her children by supplying them with a good education and in this way, saves herself from melancholy and boredom. If she does not have a child, she can pass her time with handiwork because "such occupations" "prevent a person from thinking idle thoughts" (de Pizan, 1991: 117).

Last and the most critical argument of Dame is that love causes the lady to fall into the hands of her servants. Since they are always involved, they know all the secrets of their lady. Moreover, through the time, they become the masters and the lady cannot oppose to them with the fear of that they reveal her secrets. Dame de la Tour rebuts as "thus the ladies put themselves freely in bondage, and there you see the result of their love service!" (de Pizan, 1991: 119). The servants often pursuit and promote the love affair "in order to gain gifts, offices and other emoluments" (120). At the end of her letter, Dame de la Tour prophesies that if the Lady does not refuse such a pursuit, "greater evil" she will experience and so "it is much better sooner than later, later better than never" (120).

With the influential letter of Dame de la Tour, The Lady rejects the Duke's love by adding the old lady's letter to her own. Her beginning to the letter with the words "my fair friend, it is indeed true that Foolish Love, who deceives many, and the unguarded pity that I had for your laments, have led me to forget what I should keep in mind unceasingly: my soul and my honor" demonstrates how the perception of love changes radically for her (de Pizan, 1991: 122). de Pizan's old lady unlike the Old Lady in *The Romance of the Rose*, from whom guidance and "comfort him for this young man and make him a present of warm salute" are demanded, only brings separation to the lovers (de Lorris and de Meun, 1995: 217). The Duke's reaction expresses the hostility he feels for the old woman as "If I didn't curse the old woman who had send it! I would gladly have drowned her, would that act have eradicated this situation" (de Pizan, 1991: 123). But after a short time, the Lady cannot withstand from her passion for the Duke and they return to their previous harassing relation since the fear of gossip and disclosure of their love affair are always involved.



The Duke's ending words, ". . . for ten years I suffered hardships and troubling thoughts. Nor has that same love passed away, nor will it disappear before we die" (de Pizan, 1991: 131) bring the tale to an unconsummated point in which both lovers have to face the insults of their immediate surroundings, but the woman gets hurt much more than her lover by reason of that "I saw her receive dishonor because of me, since everyone was whispering about the situation" and "she had been brought to such blame on my account" (131). Thus, the Duke stops communicating with her in order to "guard her honor and peace," not his own (131).

3. Conclusion

Christine de Pizan underlines the difference between the love maintained through the "code of Amor" and the obedience or honour in the "Christian and feudal codes" (Cohen, 1956: 26). According to de Pizan, the love triggered by the God of Love only leads to further sorrows and since it is accepted as illegal by the society, the lovers cannot experience the gains of love wholly. She does not reject love but for her, it "ought to be based on honor, respect and above all, the desire for a worthy object" (Brown-Grant, 2003: 15). What she opposes to the courtly love in this respect, is not the love felt for a deserving lady, but its adulterous nature and its legalizing attitude towards a relation out of marriage. To conclude, Christine de Pizan challenges the courtly love tradition by combining her moralistic stance and Christian doctrines. But above all, by writing a tale as *The Duke of True Lovers* undermining the courtly love's pillars from within, she attempts to delineate its dangers to women in an age misogyny is cherished.

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