

Taking Exception

they will harm us; let them burn in hell
- Christine de Pizan

Taking exception, taking personally
the smutty misogyny on page after page
of the most popular *roman* of the day
she entered the fray called *Le Querelle de la Rose*
as victim advocate, argued the case
so well she was appointed advisor to the Queen
and later augmented her argument at length
in her *magnum opus La Cité de Dames*,
reviving the legends of *feminae exemplares*
preserved in Hesiod, Ovid, Livy and Boccaccio
to provoke urban culture ever after
with the unrebuttable case for equity,
dignity and intelligence of women
though women unlike men are ever tormented to know
whether their love is fully reciprocated.

No she said all is not fair in love and war
though tongues dripping with treachery, rumor and envy
imperial both, and mutual obligation,
loyalty and respect are due both,
for lovers are as duty bound to honor their beloved
and the God of Love as nobles to honor their King
though the beloved be too often absent
of body and mind. Yet most surely it is wrong
to equate honor with acquisition and force
(as men unlike women are wont to do) —
resorting to armed battles, killing people,
setting things on fire. For *certes* it is in
the order of nature for nobles to submit to their King
and ladies to their lord as she herself took pains
to make clear she honored her departed husband.