THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AND SOCIAL LIFE AS VIEWED BY MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE IN THE HEPTAMERON AND HER SECULAR DRAMA

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Biography and Background

In a year which was to mark the discovery of a new and unexplored world -- an event which would significantly change the history of mankind -- the house of Angoulême saw the birth of a child who would do much to change the intellectual, political and social history of her native land. She, with her younger brother, would later be rulers of the Renaissance courts of France. Brantôme tells us that Marguerite was born "soubs le 10 degré d'Aquarius, que Saturne séparoit de Vénus par quaterne aspect." [1] Thus in 1492, Louise de Valois gave birth to her first child and two years later delivered the son who would be king of France. Though their beginnings were inauspicious -- a father who was but poorly favored politically and a mother whose origins were humble -- fortune would smile on these two. The route to the throne would not be direct and would prove frought with anxiety to the ambitious Louise for she knew that "if his [François'] cousin Louis XII were to die without male heir, her son would succeed to the throne. . . . And even when the future seemed assured -- after Queen Anne had passed away -- . . . everything was once more thrown into doubt when Louis remarried, this time to the beautiful Mary of England,

[1] Lucien Febvre, Amour sacré amour profane (Paris, 1944), p.21.

sister of King Henry VIII. Providence, however, intervened once again, and Louis died before the new marriage could bear fruit." [2]

However the king did die without heirs and the prophecy of an old hermit, made to Louise before the birth of her son, was to come true. Her first year of marriage had been childless and in desperation she had made a pilgrimage to the retreat of François de Paule, the holy man whom Louis XI had installed in a hermitage at Plessis-les-Tours. His prayers were said to ensure that barren women bore children and to her joy he had promised that she would bear a son, and still more. For her private ear he prophesied that this son would one day be king. [3]

From events as unpretentious as the marriage of Louise to a man who really did not love her and as important as the king's dying without issue, were to come a new kind of king and, more important, a new kind of queen.

Lucien Febvre says of Marguerite:

> . . . il y a en elle, foncièrement, de la parvenue, de l'irrégulière, de l'imprévue et, dans une certaine mesure, de la déclassée: car on se déclasse par en haut aussi bien que par en bas. Comme il y a de "nouveaux riches", il y a de "nouveaux rois" dans l'histoire. François I, en ce sens, est un "nouveau roi" et Marguerite, soeur aimée de François, une "nouvelle reine". . . . Car rien, quand ils sont nés

[2] Anne Deneuil-Cormier, A Time of Glory (New York, 1968), p.69.

[3] Dorothy Moulton Mayer, The Great Regent (New York, 1966), p.17.

> l'une et l'autre, rien ne pouvait faire présager à leurs parents l'étonnante fortune qu'ils devaient connaître. 4

This new kind of queen was, from her earliest childhood, surrounded by enticements to learn. An ambitious mother, a brother who would one day be king -- these and other factors made Marguerite's youth different from other young girls of her time.

From the start, Louise de Savoie was solicitous of her children's education. Passionately interested in education herself, her circle of courtiers . . . was made up of men of learning, including more than one prominent cleric. Among the scholars may be mentioned Guillaume Cap, François Vatable, a renowned Hebrew student, and Marguerite's preceptor, Robert Hurault, Abbot of St. Martin d'Autun.[5] Driven by the early prophecy, Louise left nothing to chance. Her son would be king -- of this she was convinced and, therefore, began his grooming as soon as he was able to grasp what was being taught. This truly was a great boon to his older sister since she, too, shared his educational experiences.

> Elle eut de bon maîtres et trouva dans la belle bibliothèque de son grand-père, Jean d'Angoulême, enrichie par son père et par sa mère (qui avait pris pour devise Libris et Liberis) de quoi satisfaire sa passion du savoir. Elle retira de ses études et de ses lectures une bonne connaissance de l'Antiquité et des grands textes de Moyen Age

[4] Febvre, op. cit., pp.20-1.

[5] Samuel Putnam, Marguerite of Navarre (New York, 1935), p.52.

> tout en partageant avec son cadet des passe-temps violents et virils, sous la surveillance du Maréchal de Gié. 6

Overseen by her uncle, her education continued to burgeon. A brother who would be king was her entrée to intellectual circles ordinarily closed to females. Her presence in these circles would insure a witty, intellectually stimulating court at both Alençon and Navarre. In his biography of Marguerite, Samuel Putnam notes of this time: "Marguerite at this period was already developing those qualities of gentle graciousness, kindliness and good will for which, as the charity-dispensing Duchess of Alençon and later as the Queen of Navarre she was to be known." [7] From the start she exhibited a keener intellect than her brother's. Her love of learning pleased her mother who saw to it that her daughter was given every opportunity to hone her razor sharp mind. As a member of the "trinity" -- Louise, François and Marguerite -- the princess was being prepared constantly to take her place at the pinnacle, the side of the King of France. Her biographer, Pierre Jourda, says of her: "Elle ose à peine écrire qu'elle fait partie de la trinité royale, simple "ombre" qu'elle est de son frère et de sa mère." [8]

Her thirst for knowledge was insatiable and this made her the tutor's dream. In her book on the French Renaissance, Edith Sichel

[6] Yves Giraud et al, La Renaissance (Paris, 1972), p.225.

[7] Putnam, op. cit., p.53.

[8] Pierre Jourda, Marguerite d'Angoulême (Paris, 1930), p.1009.

describes Marguerite's early education:

> At first she shared her brother's tutor; later she had one to herself. She soon outstripped Francis in scholarship, learned Spanish, Italian, Greek and Latin at an early age, and studied Hebrew with the great teacher, Paul Paradis. Her mother . . . prized the girl's gifts and made the most of them. She surrounded her with long-robed Scholars and gave her philosophers for servants. . . . At twelve Marguerite visited the Court, where she graduated in the art of conversation. . . . 9

Unqualifiedly her education was a superior one, surpassing that of most young men of her time and out of the question for her feminine contemporaries. At that point in history women were still being "educated" to assume the role destiny had assigned them -- the overseer of domesticity and the means by which the lord was assured of heirs. Further training was thought of by most to be unnecessary and, in some measure, dangerous. Speaking of the education of women in the Renaissance, Hannelore Sachs notes: "The number of women educated according to Humanist ideals was small and only a few were enabled through their social standing fully to develop their personalities. But they breached the conventional barriers which had for centuries restricted a woman's life." [10]

In Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance we read: "Opposition to educating girls on the same level as boys was thus based on

[9] Edith Sichel, Women and Men of the French Renaissance (New York, 1970), p.87.

[10] Hannelore Sachs, The Renaissance Woman (New York, 1971), p.37.

occupational grounds. All of which is in accord with renaissance belief in the freedom conferred by studies. A mind liberally trained is not easily subdued to the will of another, or shut within a narrow round of interests. Open the window and the bird is almost certain to fly out." [11]

Without doubt Marguerite's position in society secured for her the education she received. However, the use to which she put this education sprang from her capabilities, her eagerness to disseminate as well as accumulate knowledge. Because of her training she became one of the most illustrious women of Renaissance France and aided in making her country a center of learning and culture. Of her contributions Miss Sachs remarks: "The development of Humanism and Renaissance culture in France was due to a great extent to his [Francis I] sister Margaret, the wife of the King of Navarre. She was fluent in several languages, studied the philosophy of the Ancients, wrote poetry and became the center of the intellectual life of France, dedicated as it was to Neo-Platonism. Her court was, next to that of the King, the rallying point for all representatives of progressive ideas." [12]

Her visits to the court of François were always noteworthy and she was fussed over by those present because "she knew a number of

[11] Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (Illinois, 1956), p.60.

[12] Sachs, op. cit., p.16.

languages, could write verse, quote Dante and Bocaccio and, most distressing of all, discuss politics and the state of affairs in the Church." [13]

Abel Lefranc speaks of Marguerite:

> Sans doute le désir insatiable qu'elle eut toute sa vie d'étendre ses connaissances dans les directions les plus diverses était inné chez elle. Saint-Marthe insiste sur la place considérable qu'elles [les études de Marguerite] occupèrent, jusqu'à la fin, dans la vie intellectuelle de sa souveraine. Saint-Marthe la représente comme 'souverainement perfecte en poésie, docte en philosophie, consommée en l'Escriture saincte, voire jusques à en rendre les plus scavants fort émerveillés. 14

Her interests were as varied as the people with whom she surrounded herself and her own literary talent continued to grow. Woman of great capability, she managed to do many things simultaneously. Frequently on the move, she did much of her writing in transit and carried her écritoire with her all her journeys. Brantôme, informed by his mother, Anne de Vivonne and grandmother, Françoise de Vivonne, both of whom were members of her household, describes Marguerite's method of writing as being done at a "portable writing desk, which one of her ladies-in waiting would hold for her while the Dutchess jotted down a poem or a tale." [15]

[13] Putnam, op. cit., p.87.

[14] Abel Lefranc, Grands écrivains français de la Renaissance (Paris, 1914), p.144.

[15] Putnam, op. cit., p.87.

He tells us in his work, Les Dames Galantes: "Mais aujourd'hui nos dames françoises surpassent tout. A la reine de Navarre elles en doissent ce grand merci." [16]

Marguerite was very involved in the literary world of her day. Her writings were diverse and prolific and her eagerness to help others who wished to write is evident when one thinks of all whom she employed. Their titles were varied, but the Queen's intent was obvious -- the encouragement and protection of literary talent. A Renaissance historian says of her: "She protected many of the early Reformers, but was also a patroness of letters and found places at her court for poets like Marot and Désperiers." [17]

In a book on one of those poets we read: "Elle était très mêlée au mouvement littéraire; tout écrivain, poète ou érudit la considérait comme sa souveraine et sa protectrice naturelle. Elle recevait beaucoup de dédicaces, et donnait volontiers de ses vers aux faiseurs d'anthologies. Elle aimait les beaux livres et avait ses enlumineurs. Elle aimait aussi les jeux du théâtre, avec ses amis et ce peu de gens qui composait sa maison, elle organisait des représentations, pour lesquelles elle a écrit ses Comédies." [18]

But authors and their literary endeavors were not the only ones toward whom Marguerite directed her attention. Truly a Renaissance

[16] Brantôme, Dames Galantes (Paris, 1967), p.156.

[17] Laurence Bisson, A Short History of French Literature (London, 1945), p.37.

[18] Clément Marot, Marot et son temps (Paris, 1941), p.xxxii.

woman, she involved herself in all life's facets and served the needs of many through her varied activities. One of her biographers writes of her early adulthood:

> We find the Princess Marguerite throwing herself with avidity into devotional and philanthropic activities, the endowment and reform of hospitals and monasteries, the regulation of poor laws, etc. -- activities many of which would to-day come under the head of "social work" or "social service" . . . we find her becoming more and more immersed in the dawning doctrine of Plato which was to have an incalculable effect upon the French Renaissance and the intellectual history of France as well as upon the destinies of her sex. 19

Thoroughly interested as well as active in a great many things, she won the admiration of those who knew her. Her talents and goodness only increased her charm. In speaking of Marguerite, Yves Giraud states: "Elle séduisait par ses libéralités, mais aussi par la franchise et la pénétration de son esprit, sa largeur de vues, son avidité de connaissance et l'étendue de sa culture." [20]

Ranked among the "Dames Illustres" of Brantôme, Marguerite, with her interests and accomplishments is described thus:

> Ce fut donc une princesse de très grand esprit et fort habille, tant de son naturel que de son acquisitif, car elle s'adonna fort aux lettres en son jeune âge; et les continua tant qu'elle vescut, aimant et conversant du temps de sa grandeur, ordinairement à la cour, avec les

[19] Putnam, op. cit., p.89.

[20] Giraud, op. cit., p.126.

> gens les plus scavans du royaume de son frère. Aussi tous l'honoroient tellement, qu'ils l'appeloient leur Moecenas; et la plupart de leurs livres qui se composaient alors, s'adressoient au roy son frère, qui estoit bien scavant, ou à elle. 21

Educated, talented, capable and concerned, Marguerite gave freely of her time and energy. Equally at home conversing with a poet or an ambassador, she did much to make her era one of intellectual excitement. The art of conversation flourished under her auspices and the topics discussed did much to make the sixteenth century the bright spot it was on the horizon of civilization.

[21] Pierre de Brantôme, Vie des dames illustres (Paris, 1967), p.275.

CHAPTER II

MARGUERITE'S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

Although this sixteenth century marked a re-kindling of interest in Antiquity and a new perspective on the merits of its contribution to the growth of civilization, opinions were by no means universal. Certain topics still provoked much discussion and among them was the role of women. The "fair sex" found both champions and attackers among the enlightened ranks of Renaissance leaders. Paramount among the issues was that of education which in turn led to the place of women in society and government. Naturally an uneducated individual was unsuited to assume any role of importance and there were many who felt that this was "as it should be" since education was the prerogative of the male and consequently closed to those of the opposite sex. One need only read the works of writers such as Gratien du Pont, Acidalius Valens or Rabelais to discover that woman's education was not high on the list of priorities of many forward thinking luminaries of the time. In his works, Valens claims that woman is not of man's nature and whoever says she is knows more than God. His translator, Meunier de Querlon, substantiates these theories with a translation of a later anonymous treatise whose author claims that although women have souls, these souls are not immortal and therefore "l'homme seul fut créé d'abord, tout ce qui l'environnoit étoit

soumis. . . . Dieu créa alors la femme pour perpetuer la race d'Adam et pour l'aider . . . et comme Dieu avoit créé l'homme pour lui il créa la femme pour l'homme." [1]

Many of the early sixteenth century writers were continuing the quarrel launched by the author of the Roman de la Rose, Jean de Meun. The inferiority of women, their basic wickedness and their general unworthiness to share in the classification "homo," provided grist for the mill of many writers and caused great diatribes to be launched by supporters and detractors of the cause of women.

A literary historian writes:

> Au même moment les anti-féministes trouvaient un porte-parole rude et souvent grossier, en la personne du poète toulousain Gratien Dupont. Dans un poème en trois chants, intitulé "Controverses des sexes masculin et féminin," il entassait toutes les accusations imaginées contre les femmes, par les misogynes de tous les temps, avec une virulence haineuse et une verve parfois obscène. Le fait que, malgré sa valeur littéraire, cet ouvrage ait été réédité en 1537 et en 1541 prouve bien que la thèse, dont il apportait l'illustration, trouvait encore des partisans, et que la cause féministe ne triomphait pas complètement. 2

Marguerite's eulogist, Charles de Sainte-Marthe, apparently took exception to these anti-feminists. In a book of poems written by Sainte-Marthe is found this verse addressed to detractors such as Dupont:

[1] Lula Richardson, The Forerunners of Feminism in French Literature of the Renaissance (Paris, 1929), p.146.

[2] Auguste Bailly, La vie littéraire sous la Renaissance (Paris, 1952), p.87.

Aux détracteurs du sexe féminin

Est-ce bien fait, malignes Gents
D'ainsy mesdire de la Femme?
Dieu deffend de mal parler dame,
Vous lui estes contredisants
Vous faites actes non duisants,
Et mettez sur elle le blasme,
Est-ce bien fait?
Vous taschez par motets plaisants,
D'attirer à vous quelque Dame
Et puis par vostre lourde game
En derrière estes medisants
Est-ce bien fait? 3

Opinions were truly divided and poets and authors all took sides, expressing opinions in prose and in verse. What they wrote was either in support or criticism of the manner in which their medieval ancestors had treated women in their works.

In Medieval times this quarrel was one about women rather than of women. Many currents of thought were responsible for this condition. Among them one can cite:

- disdain for things of the world
- superiority of celibacy over marriage
- the vogue of "courtly literature"
- the asceticism as well as the naturalism of an author such as Jean de Meun
- the mocking spirit of the French race.

3 Caroline Ruutz-Rees, Charles de Sainte-Marthe (New York, 1910), p.533.

All of these attitudes resulted in woman's being the victim but not the source of what later was to become a real literary quarrel. What existed in Medieval times was in reality a dispute among students and scholars and not among people in general.

Christine de Pisan was vehement in her attacks against de Meun and all who, in her estimation, belittled women, offering arguments based on the history of creation to prove women's superiority. That these arguments were not conclusive is ably demonstrated by the fact that the "other side" used them just as effectively in combatting Christine's efforts. Many writers followed her theory and continued the so-called battle. Therefore, the sixteenth century's attitude toward women was not, in any sense of the word, a settled one. One may then safely assume with Miss Richardson that "like many other important currents of modern thought, feminism began in reality in the sixteenth century, and has continued in an uninterrupted development until the present day . . . it is none the less true that from the time of the Renaissance the problem has been put before us in all its essential features." [4]

In the first part of the sixteenth century several authors emphasized the fact that both sexes were alike as far as the soul is concerned, (the ever-present influence of the Church) and that the only differences between them were physical ones. Even this is a

[4] Richardson, op. cit., p.9.

step forward since many Medieval scholars disputed the fact of woman's having a soul. It is interesting to note, however, that several of those who, in this period, advocated education for women did not think it should be the same for all women, but should be determined by their social position and needs.

Agrippa d'Aubigné extols the merits of education for women in a letter to his daughters, but differentiates the degree of education to be given in proportion to their estate. In his opinion, advanced knowledge is suitable only for those in high rank since it tends to encourage in those of lower station a contempt for their associates including their husbands and indifference to their household duties: "Je dirai encore qu'une élévation d'esprit desmesurée hausse le coeur aussy, dequoy j'ay veu arriver deux maux, le mépris du ménage et la pauvreté, celui d'un mary qui n'en fais pas tant, et de la dissension. Je conclus oinsy que je ne voudrois aucunement inciter au labeur des lettres autres que les princesses qui sont par leurs conditions obligées au soin, à la cognoissance, à la suffisance, aux gestions et auctoritez des hommes. . . . [5]

In his attitude toward education, d'Aubigné greatly resembles Erasmus who, in his writings, differentiated between the training of a wealthy noblewoman and that of a girl of lower social rank. However, attitudes were changing and there were those who were disturbed

[5] Agrippa d'Aubigné, Œuvres complètes (Paris, 1873-1892), vol. I, p.449.

by the "status quo" of the times. In her work on the Renaissance, Ruth Kelso says: "Doubts however were stirring in the minds of renaissance men and women as to the eternal fitness of things as they were, and stout protest was finding expression against injustice in the accepted rule of man over woman." [6]

Miss Richardson reduces the attitudes of the times to these two essential questions: [7]

- is there an inferiority in the moral and intellectual resources of woman? (if answered negatively -- then, is not society unjust when it refuses to women those facilities to develop her mind and character which are freely recorded to men?)

- is it not flagrantly unjust to maintain a double standard of morality ?

The resolution of these two issues would seem to be the answer to the difficulties existing at this period in history. Many undertook to do this and among them was the Queen of Navarre. More subtle in her approach than some, she nonetheless entered the lists in the "Querelle des Femmes" of the sixteenth century.

Literary historians of the time, among them Emile Telle, divide the Querelle des Femmes into four currents of thought:

[6] Ruth Kelso, op. cit., p.18.

[7] Richardson, op. cit., p.9.

1. le courant polémique

2. le courant social

3. le courant philosophique

4. le courant religieux or le courant mariage. [8]

M. Telle offers an explanation of each of these four "courants" and ventures the opinion that the Queen of Navarre both assiduously followed their developments and made them topics of conversation in her circle of followers.

The "courant polémique" dealt with the customs and attitudes of Medieval times in regard to the role of women. The attitudes contained in the "comédies" and "farces" of the preceding centuries were lauded by some, attacked by others but discussed and evaluated by all.

The "courant social" concerned the "new place" at Court as well as in society achieved by the women of this era. Castiglione's Il Cortigiano played a preponderant role here -- creating a new code of manners and granting women a new role in their application. Marie de Gournay, chronologically a member of the Seventeenth Century but philosophically attached to the Sixteenth Century, points to Castiglione as an example of those who opposed the maligners of the female sex. She numbers him among the men of great learning who manifested

[8] Emile Telle, L'oeuvre de Marguerite d'Angoulême et la querelle des Femmes (Paris, 1937), pp.90-1.

themselves as their partisans by claiming that they have an aptitude for any office. [9]

The "courant philosophique" was reserved to an "elite" who understood the philosophy of love of Marsilio Ficino, a Florentine neo-Platonist. [10]

At the Court, especially, the discussions centered around the psychology of love, idea inspired by works of Italian authors. There was at this time no dearth of translations of Italian works on the subject of love. One of her biographers tells us that sometime after 1546 Marguerite read Ficino's Platonic Commentaries in its French translation. [11] Although this theory of Platonism exalted love, it did not at the same time exalt the concept of women. She was to be loved as an expression of the supreme beauty found perfected in God. Therefore, this love was to be purified of everything sensual. However, this adoration of her in the abstract did little or nothing to elevate her in the minds of those who in reality had nothing for her in her physical form but contempt.

The fourth current, "le courant religieux," dealt with those works which treated the subject of marriage. There were at this time

[9] Marie de Gournay, L'Egalité des hommes et des femmes (Paris, 1622), p.15.

[10] It was Ficino's intent to reconcile Christianity and Platonism, in his two works, Theologica Platonica de immortalitate animorum (composed 1469-1470) De christiane religione (published 1475) he contends that Plato is essentially Christian and Christianity is essentially Platonic.

[11] Putnam, op. cit., p.282.

many who were anxious to rehabilitate the institution of marriage which had been denigrated by writers of the Middle Ages. Obligations of both partners were stressed and the fact that each played an important role in the marriage contract was underlined in works by authors such as Erasmus, Agrippa d'Aubigné and others of the period.

Marguerite's theatre and especially her Heptaméron grapple with all these questions and treat all the subjects discussed openly and argued vehemently in the sixteenth century. The Queen of Navarre had two principal ends in the production of her literary works: to amuse and to instruct. The purpose of instruction was as important, if not more so, than that of amusement.

The Heptaméron's principal theme is the relationship between man and woman. In this century of reawakening interest in Platonism, one could hardly avoid this topic and so had to speak of theories on love.

In great measure this renewed interest was due to the Queen of Navarre. A literary historian says: "L'honneur d'avoir provoqué et dirigé ce mouvement de rénovation philosophique devait revenir, pour la plus grande part, à la femme supérieure dont l'influence s'est fait sentir, sous des formes si diverses, sur la civilisation tout entière de l'époque, à la reine Marguerite de Navarre." [12]

The train of thought of the Queen of Navarre is easy to follow

[12] Abel Lefranc, op. cit., p.139.

because the book is constructed of a series of tales and contains "arguments" after each tale which reflected sixteenth century ideas and opinions. This book is considered by many as the first essays in our literature which concern primarily the relations between the two sexes.

In the "nouvelles" of the Heptaméron, Marguerite depicts women as victims of a society created by men and to their advantage. In this attitude she precedes Madame de Staël who, in the eighteenth century, evinced the same opinion. Although she defends her sex and consequently castigates the males, she does not advocate revolt or demand absolute equality. She does, however, extol the virtue of chastity as a basis for a good and wholesome society and lays the burden of its observance equally on both sexes. There is nothing heated in her arguments. Rather they display the coolness and logic of the cartesian method a century before its presentation by Descartes. She spares neither men not women but does lean more favorably towards her sex. She sings their praises at every opportunity and implies that it is because of the role of women that men remain chaste.

It is one of the first times in literature that a woman has listed her grievances against men and given them the reproach they seem to deserve, but with complete absence of polemics. In the eyes of the Queen all are equal before God. There are good and bad in both sexes and one must examine actions and intentions before judging merit. The tone of her work is polite, the conversations and

discussions far from heated. It was with this work that Marguerite appeared to enter the Querelle but her role as sister to the King precluded her taking a more active part. She attempts to present an impartial view of the weaknesses and strengths of both sexes and for this reason the work is an important one in the history of feminism. Since her works all had two objectives -- amusing and instructing, one finds in these tales an effort to present to all classes a religious lesson -- a lesson of "savoir vivre" -- in which all are recognized as creatures of God, equal in His sight and capable of both good and evil.

In his book on the "Querelle des Femmes," Emile Telle describes the feminist contributions of the Queen of Navarre:

> C'est là le point de départ et la raison d'être de son féminisme, qui est d'autant plus vrai qu'elle n'avait pas l'intention de faire l'éloge des femmes ou d'invectiver contre les hommes, d'autant plus précieux pour la postérité qu'elle a su se garder des extrêmes où tombaient ses contemporains. Quand elle s'exprimait sur les qualités ou les défauts de l'homme ou de la femme, elle n'imite personne. A cette impartialité on peut ajouter sa sincérité [13] dont il y avait beaucoup de témoins à cette époque. [14]

Abel Lefranc says further: "L'Heptaméron pourrait nous fournir, grâce aux discussions et aux moralités si instructives qui terminent chacune des soixante-douze nouvelles, certains témoignages précieux."[15]

[13] The term 'sincérité' should be here interpreted in the Latin sense, i.e. purity, rather than the modern interpretation of 'frankness.'

[14] Telle, op. cit., p.358.

[15] Abel Lefranc, Les Idées religieuses de Marguerite de Navarre (Paris, 1898), p.8.

Since Marguerite, like others of her time, could not foresee women lawyers, women doctors or women in other careers at that time open only to men, one must judge her part in the Querelle based on the point of view of her era. Hers was a different type of feminism countering the prevailing masculine prejudices of the sixteenth century. Among these prejudices may be cited:

1. Woman is weak (both in body and in spirit).
2. She is more subject to vice than man.
3. There is no need for her to be educated.
4. Love and christian marriage are incompatible since love implies sensuality.
5. A wife must ignore the peccadillos of her husband but adultery by a woman is a mortal offense, one in which her name is ruined.
6. A woman once widowed should not remarry.

Although all of these ideas are treated by Marguerite, one must be quick to recognize that this does not signify acceptance of things as they were. The Queen respected the fact that these customs existed, but wished to change the abuses therein and refine the relations between the two sexes. The changes that she saw necessary she wished to be evolutionary, not revolutionary. In this she was not unlike Erasmus who was also opposed to violent and radical change.

Marguerite admits to the fragility of her sex, but only in a physical sense, never in the moral or spiritual one. Frequently the thrust of her works tend directly to the idea of the superiority of

the woman in her capacity to love and her capability of remaining closer to God because of her chasteness. Her insistence on women's right to read and interpret the Bible as well as other works and their rights to be educated is evident in all of her secular works.

Edith Sichel says of Marguerite: "Her eloquence converted her financier to Women's Rights. 'It is blindness -- a very ditch of error,' he exclaims, 'to object to the study of philosophy for women. Why on earth should we forbid them to read the same books as men?'"[16]

For a woman such as the Queen of Navarre, intelligent and of noble birth, the cares of the household, sewing, tapestry-making, music and the like were far from enough. She had an immense desire for knowledge, not for knowledge's sake, but for a better understanding of self. Not content with achieving this solely for herself she continued to advocate that every woman had this right. She showed by her example as well as in her literature that knowledge was not the exclusive property of man.

In his funeral oration for the Queen of Navarre, Charles de Sainte-Marthe praised the role she had played in the advancement of the education of women and lauded her contributions to all aspects of their instruction.

A woman whose education had been so advanced for her era, Marguerite wanted others to have equal opportunities. Aware of the value of an educated society, she worked tirelessly to assure that

[16] Edith Sichel, op. cit., p.173.

such a society would exist someday. She did not believe that education was the prerogative of the privileged any more than she believed it was the prerogative of either sex.

Superiority, to her, was not an accident of birth. An intelligent woman, she realized that it was a matter of capability and that capability could be trained and nurtured. She allowed reason to be her guide and was neither swayed by nor responsible for emotional arguments advanced either to elevate or to denigrate the role of woman.

Emile Telle says of Marguerite's role in the famous sixteenth century debate: "Pour la première fois, la Raison apparaît dans le débat entre hommes et femmes, et il fallait que ce fût une femme, la Marguerite des Princesses qui enseignât cette leçon aux hommes de son siècle." [17]

The court of Francis I, seat of Renaissance culture in France, owed much of its reputation to the presence of the Queen of Navarre. Telle says of her presence and influence: "La cour de François Ier aussi bien que la sienne à Pau ou à Nérac devint une école de savoir-vivre. La Reine dont la tâche était facilitée par la faveur dont elle jouissait à la cour de son frère, employa tout le poids de son influence pour civiliser les courtisans qui devaient donner l'exemple à toute la France." [18]

A new type of society, peopled by a new type of individual, was

[17] Telle, op. cit., p.147.

[18] Ibid., p.300.

developing throughout Europe. The courtisan or "l'homme de cour" became an integral part of the Renaissance way of life. Castiglione describes him in his work, Il Cortigiano. Translated into many languages, this work became a manual for those who frequented royal circles. The pace of living was changing and so was its manner. A literary historian says of the France of this period: "In the sixteenth century, the reading public and the narrower circle of writers, both predominantly clerical in the past, widened to include gentlemen, ladies and even members of the third estate . . . the French nobility began to define themselves more in terms of their manners and education, to change from chevaliers into gentilshommes. Ladies too began to take more interest in literature. . . . Behind the rise of modern French literature lies a movement of social change." [19]

Most noticeable in this movement of social change was the radical about-face that woman's role was undergoing. René Doumic describes it in this way: "Car la femme n'admet plus que ce soit son devoir de s'humilier et de se sacrifier. Elle aussi, elle est une personne et elle a le droit de développer sa personnalité. Placée à côté de l'homme, elle est son égale, et sa destinée ne se confond pas dans celle d'un mari. Elle a son rôle qui lui appartient. Ce rôle consiste justement à dégager de toutes les choses la part de beauté qu'elles

[19] Cruickshank, ed., French Literature and Its Background (London, 1968), p.45.

enferment, à spiritualiser la matière, à introduire l'art dans la vie."[20]

Woman's role in high society, particularly in the life of the court, was undergoing radical changes and credit for this was due in no small part to the sister of the King. From childhood she had shared in his pursuits and she never desisted in her desire to do all in her power to make his court as well as all of his kingdom the center of all things cultural. To this end she saw to it that the royal court was always populated by people of great learning and talent. These people, in turn, did not fail to acknowledge their indebtedness and shared their knowledge freely. Her role has been described as: "Dans la vie comme dans l'Heptaméron, elle organisa des cours d'amour où chacun était récompensé selon ses chefs-d'oeuvre, elle fut un centre gracieux autour duquel gravitaient les talents et les coeurs dans une course ordonnée vers des réalisations parfaites. Elle fut la douce fée de la Renaissance béarnaise et de la Renaissance française." [21]

Not only Francis' court but, also that of his sister served as centers for the dissemination of Renaissance thought and culture. Felix Frank describes Nérac: "Pendant quelques années la petite cour de Nérac brilla d'un éclat extra-ordinaire. L'historien Olhagaray exalte Marguerite qui 'avoit esté l'oeillet précieux dans le parterre de ceste maison, et de qui l'odeur avait attiré en Béarn, comme le

[20] René Doumic, "Le Féminisme au temps de la Renaissance," Revue des deux-mondes, vol. CXLIX, p.925.

[21] M. Ducla, Commémoration, p.32.

thym les mouscheś à miel, les meilleurs esprits de l'Europe.'" [22]

Thus Marguerite, prompted by her love of knowledge as well as by her desire to share it with others, exerted a great cultural influence in the lives of the royal citizenry of the first half of the sixteenth century. However, Marguerite's respect for knowledge and her conviction that all were entitled to learn was to carry further her desire to make education accessible to those who wished to receive it. She spent much of her income in educating poor scholars and always found a place for those whose learning and character made them ready targets for the bigotry of the Sorbonne. The men of the Sorbonne had, up to this time, a monopoly on learning,clinging stubbornly to the old, recognizing Latin, but refusing to admit the value of learning Greek or Hebrew. This refusal automatically excluded the reading of masterpieces of Antiquity, made more readily available by the invention of the printing press.

Recognizing the need for scholars to breathe freely, Marguerite again gave of her talents and energy in providing a new avenue of learning , the Collège de France. Eight years of quiet preparation preceded the actual founding, but Marguerite's persistence made it a reality. Tactfully she made her brother believe it was his idea since, after all, he was the king. All was done in his name and with his consent. However, the ever-present hand of his sister can be discerned in every step of the operation. "Il faut voir là surtout

[22] Felix Frank, ed., Les marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses (Paris, 1873), p.vii.

la main de Marguerite," says Frank in his introduction to Les Marguerites. [23]

In his biography of Marguerite, Neely describes the same event:

> My body served me ill in bearing heirs;
> In lieu of progeny I leave to France
> The College of its name which I did found,
> (I always let dear Francis think 'twas his.) [24]

Once established, the College was in need of faculty. Again it is Marguerite, with her contacts with scholars throughout Europe, who suggests individuals and guides her brother in his appointments. In 1529 the title "collège universitaire" was applied rather than university and there were but two chairs, Greek and Hebrew. In 1530 there were five chairs and by 1545 there were eleven. Both Marguerite and her brother desired that Erasmus be the first principal of their educational undertaking, but he declined. However, the King did endow the collège with an annual grant of 50,000 crowns, again at the urging of his sister. Her influence upon her brother's actions in this educational innovation are described by Felix Frank in this way: "Mais s'agit-il de choisir les hommes qui devront occuper les chaires du collège royal, ou bien d'apprécier la valeur de Guillaume Postel, par exemple, linguiste consommé dans la connaissance des idiomes orientaux, c'est Marguerite qui guide son frère et qui juge." [25]

[23] Frank, op. cit., p.xvii.

[24] Rae Neely, Marguerite the Sister and the Wife of Kings (Georgia, 1939), p.75.

[25] Frank, op. cit., xviii.

The men of the Sorbonne well knew that it was Marguerite who guided and they were not willing to forget and even less willing to forgive. Their attacks upon this woman who had dared invade their province of education persisted. Not even the fact that she was the sister of the King saved her from their virulence, but her dedication to the defense of those who dared think for themselves never lagged. Because of her persistence and her love of learning France now had another way of gaining knowledge. Samuel Putnam describes her contribution in this way: "Modern education, a free modern university, had been launched, and the major credit must go to the faithful, intelligent and untiring efforts of the Queen of Navarre." [26]

Thus it is obvious that the King of France relied often on the advice of his sister who gave willingly and unselfishly of her time and talent. No task was too small or demeaning nor, on the other hand, too demanding. Her brother was her sovereign in every sense of the word but, by the same token, he leaned heavily upon the arm of his gifted sister. Cormier says of their relationship:

> Always there when needed, always available and eager to listen and to understand, to make allowances, to lend an amused ear to the most hair-raising confidences of an adventurous brother, Marguerite exerted, by means of her devotion and intelligence, a great influence over the king. Undoubtedly, it was she who was the real queen of France, at least during the first half of the reign before her religious views and her compromising friendships with

[26] Putnam, op. cit., p.292.

> the Huguenots took her to Nérac or Pau in the domains of her husband, the King of Navarre. [27]

Although Marguerite's passionate interest in reform separated her physically from her brother, they remained in constant touch by letter. The volume of Francis' correspondence could come nowhere near that of his sister but, he did, on occasion, answer her letters. These replies she considered relics and gave them an almost fanatical religious veneration. She treasured them and their contents as a continued link to the one person who meant all to her. A Christmas gift of a crucifix, accompanied by some verses Francis had composed, caused Marguerite to reply in her letter of thanks that he was her other Christ. It is also important to realize that much of this correspondence was carried on under all types of uncomfortable positions -- traveling or waiting, as Francis' emissary, to meet someone. Edith Sichel remarks of Marguerite's peripatetic correspondence:

> Now she is posting hither and thither as escort to one of his ladyloves; now awaiting her arrival and catching a chill in a draughty inn by the roadside. When the war breaks out in Provence and Picardy, she becomes as she says herself, "Penthilsea, Queen of the Amazons"; reviews his armies, first in one province then in another; and examines the fortifications in the North. "Would to God," she writes, "that the Emperor would try to cross the Rhone whilst I am here! I would wager my life that, woman though I be, I could prevent him from doing so." [28]

[27] Anne Cormier, A Time of Glory (New York, 1968), p.72.

[28] Sichel, op. cit., p.174.

Obviously the King trusted his sister and recognized her ability to judge and advise. Her discretion must have been most appealing to him since he so often enlisted her aid in his amorous escapades. However, he did not stop at this type of assistance. Her capabilities lay in many directions, from reviewing armies to judging the strength of fortifications. Perhaps if he had a brother, Francis would have turned to him for these tasks. He did not, however, look to another male relative to supply this lack. He trusted his sister with these missions not because there was no one else but because she was, without doubt, completely competent and able to carry them out successfully. Others at the Court noticed the trust and confidence displayed in Marguerite. We read in a collection of Marot's works: "Chacun savait qu'elle avait sur son frère une grande influence: c'était à elle que les diplomates étrangers s'efforçaient à plaire." [29]

Francis' confidence in his sister earned him a devotion which he did not always merit. However, her devotion was unwavering and served greatly to the benefit of the King of France. Because of her presence at his court, it was frequented by scholars, poets, playwrights and even by those whose religious beliefs might have denied them entrance were it not for the gracious Queen of Navarre. Those who visited Marguerite at Pau and Nérac followed her to the court on her frequent trips and made of all these places brilliant scenes of conversation, debate and discussion. Putnam says of her contri-

[29] Marot, op. cit., p.xxvii.

bution to the social life of the times: "It is Marguerite of Navarre who with Margaret of Scotland must share the honor of being the founder of that characteristically French institution, one that was to attain such proportions a few centuries later, the modern salon." [30]

Thus Marguerite fostered the growth of things cultural in France, helping to transform the court and all that surrounded it from a hunting lodge to a place of refinement and gentility. Her own talents were of great importance in this development for they enabled her to discern like abilities in others. Her Comédies entertained the members of the court as did works of her protégés, both secular and religious. In a homage paid to Marguerite in Béarn on the occasion of the fourth centenary of her death, one of the participants described her thusly:

> Elle ne fut pas de ces femmes de plume qui ne songent qu'à s'étaler, elle chercha autour d'elle les talents, elle en inventa presque comme ceux de Mellin de Saint Gelais, Heroet, Bonventure des Périers, elle fit briller ceux qui s'affirmaient, et on l'imagine, tenant sa cour à Pau ou à Nérac prolongement gascon de la terrasse paloise, pour y présider à des joutes d'esprit et de poésie, avec ses secrétaires, écrivains, seigneurs et belles dames, animant les uns, encourageant les autres, donnant à tous envie de lui plaire en composant de belles oeuvres. [31]

Marguerite never failed to encourage others to exercise their talents and in so doing enabled France to become a country of culture

[30] Putnam, op. cit., p.273.

[31] M. Ducla, op. cit., p.31.

and learning and one of the outstanding centers of the Renaissance. She herself is described by one author as the foremost feminine figure of the French Renaissance. [32] Accomplished author and poet, she produced numerous works that are still read and enjoyed today. Not the least of these is her Heptaméron, a French Decameron which is one of the major literary creations of the sixteenth century. Holding a place of honor among authors such as Erasmus and Rabelais, Marguerite again proves that woman is equally as capable as man of exercising the gifts bestowed upon her. That both Erasmus and Rabelais shared these sentiments is evidenced by the fact that Erasmus wrote a letter of praise to the Queen and Rabelais dedicated his Tiers Livre to the "spirit of the Queen of Navarre." Erasmus wrote: "For a long time, I have admired and cherished all the many excellent gifts that God has bestowed on you: prudence worthy of a philosopher, chastity, moderation; piety; an invincible strength of soul, and a marvelous contempt for all the vanities of this world." [33] To Rabelais she is "O abstract spirit so heavenly and rapt. . . ." [34] This is indeed an encomium for it comes before the anti-feminist tract in which women fare so badly at the hands of the clever Rabelais. However, his admiration of the Queen is expressed despite not because of her sex. Both he and Erasmus are addressing Marguerite as a colleague,

[32] Emil Reich, Woman Through the Ages, Vol I (London, 1908), p.261.

[33] Putnam, op. cit., p.85.

[34] Ibid., p.272.

a fellow author and neither is condescending in his tone.

Thus Marguerite contributed to the cultural growth as well as political advancement of one of the most powerful countries of Renaissance Europe. Aware of the need of refinement, she employed her womanly talents to accomplishing this end. That she was successful in her endeavors is supported by the opinion of Emile Jourda who says: "Et je ne crois pas qu'il y ait au seizième siècle une personne qui ait mieux compris que Marguerite de Navarre la nature des défauts de la société de son temps et le rôle civilisateur des femmes." [35]

Marguerite's life was one of involvement in the affairs of the court of her brother, in the conduct of her own court at Navarre and in the political-religious upheavals affecting her country and its neighboring kingdoms. Never one to avoid responsibility, she assumed her roles graciously and fulfilled them remarkably well. An English biographer says of Marguerite's role: "The influential position occupied by the Queen of Navarre entailed upon her labors and anxieties of no feeble description. She stood, to speak figuratively, on the steps of her brother's throne -- the medium through which the majority of his subjects applied for his royal grace and favor. It pleased Francis that his sister 'La Marguerite des Marguerites,' should occupy this proud position. [36]

[35] Jourda, op. cit., p.300.

[36] Martha Walker Freer, The Life of Marguerite d'Angoulême, Vol.II (London, 1856), p.317.

Another biographer of French women describes Marguerite in this manner: "For some years after the accession of Francis, Margaret reigned as virtual Queen of France. Poor, quiet, submissive Claude was quite in the background." [37]

Marguerite was frequently called upon to be of assistance to her beloved brother but her greatest trial came after the crushing defeat at Pavia which resulted in the capture of the king of France and his ignominious imprisonment at the hands of the Spaniards. The responsibility of maintaining the leaderless kingdom as well as that of negotiating the return of the King fell upon Marguerite and her mother, Louise of Savoy -- the two remaining members of the trinity. Louise, now Regent, knew that she had an able ally and trustworthy administrator in her daughter. Between them they would manage to bring France out of this devastating blow to her nationalistic pride. Mrs. Fawcett writes: "Sustained by her daughter, she [Louise] set herself to preserve for her adored sovereign all that was left to him of his kingdom, and to retrieve the disasters which had overwhelmed it." [38]

Although these two women were all but crushed by the terrible defeat of Francis and his armies, they rallied to the task confronting them and set about doing what was required. A literary histo-

[37] Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Five Famous French Women (London, 1905), p.76.

38 Ibid., p.109.

rian writes of this time: "Après la défaite de Pavie, Marguerite se rapprochera de sa mère, Louise de Savoie, qu'elle secondera dans ses dûres tâches de gouvernement. C'est elle qui ira à Madrid négocier avec Charles-Quint la libération de son frère prisonnier." [39]

Going to Madrid was a dangerous undertaking and Marguerite realized fully the import of the task she so willingly assented to fulfill. A second member of the royal family would be a welcome addition to the one already in Spanish hands and safe-conduct, although guaranteed, was not always what it seemed to be. No thought, however, was given to this since it was essential that Francis be returned to his throne and it was incumbent upon his sister to accomplish this feat. The captivity of Francis catapulted Marguerite to an even more prominent political role than ever. Widowed (though not bereaved) as a result of the battle of Pavia, she now set out to right the wrongs her country and, above all her brother, had suffered. The king would be returned and France would once more have its rightful sovereign on the throne. In a book about one of her contemporaries, Marguerite's role is described thusly:

> La captivité de François Ier après la bataille de Pavie voulut soudain à Marguerite un rôle politique de tout premier plan. Elle était devenue veuve peu de temps après la bataille. . . . Elle fit le voyage de Madrid pour soigner son frère qui souffrait autant de langueur et de chagrin que de maladie et pour prendre part aux négotiations, que les prétentions démesurées de Charles-Quint

[39] Frédéric Boyer, Le XVIe siècle: la Renaissance (Paris, 1964), p.81.

> rendaient fort difficiles. Elle sauva certainement le roi, et aida à son mariage avec Eléonore de Portugal, soeur de Charles-Quint. A son retour en France, elle faisait figure d'héroïne et quand le roi rentra enfin, elle eut à la cour plus d'influence que jamais. [40]

The negotiations were long and wearisome and Marguerite's actions were watched by many. It was a herculean task to reconcile by treaty two men so capricious as her brother and the Emperor, but her efforts never lagged. Samuel Putnam writes of Marguerite and her actions at this time: "The Princess was almost daily receiving letters from the wise and learned of Europe, commending her conduct and exhorting her to steadfastness." [41] He says further of her negotiations: "Whatever assistance she may have had . . . she showed herself a good diplomat. Her documents are well drawn, her attitude invariably the only one, it would seem, that could effectively be assumed under the circumstances." [42]

Negotiating this treaty was a job for the most astute of negotiators and Marguerite again rose to the occasion, utilizing her talents and abilities to accomplish a job. The fact she was a woman never entered the minds of either the Princess or her mother. There was a need and the need was fulfilled. Some of the terms were not pleasing to the French, but it is questionable whether another negotiator could have secured what Francis' loving sister was able to

[40] Marot, op. cit., p.xxviii.

[41] Putnam, op. cit., p.250.

[42] Ibid., p.244.

achieve.

As with most treaties, this agreement left something to be desired. Terms were not always met and the two principals were not always true to their words. France's two young princes were left in exchange for their father and it was still necessary to secure their release. Once again, the two female members of France's trinity saw the obligation facing them and set about fulfilling it. Once again, seconded by her daughter, Louise of Savoy began plans for concluding the agreement at Cambrai. She and her daughter would represent France and Marguerite of Austria, Charles-Quint. This famous Ladies' Peace, concluded at Cambrai, completed the treaty of Madrid and resulted in the return of the princes to France. Marguerite did more than negotiate in this instance. The ransom for the two princes was high and credit of the king of France very low. All sources were tapped and Marguerite once more showed herself more than generous. Fawcett says: "When he [Francis]was at his wit's end to pay the ransom of his sons to Charles V, in 1530, his sister Marguerite gave with both hands and sacrificed all her gold and silver plate." [43]

An asset in many ways, Marguerite was recognized as such by her severest critic, her mother. Louise felt more confident in her dealings with the representatives of Charles because of the presence of her daughter: "The Regent did not even think of failure, she too was assembling her batallions. First there was her daughter, her

[43] Fawcett, op. cit., p.62.

strongest ally, because her nearest and most devoted, whose elegance, gaiety and charm would serve to temper the acerbities of argument; then too her experience at Toledo would be valuable in dealing with the rigours of Hapsburg inflexibility." [44]

The treaty was concluded and the young princes were returned to France. The credit for its conclusion must be awarded to the women involved. Once again, no notice was taken of their sex. They represented their countries, argued for their country's welfare and undeniably spoke for their sovereigns. They were not bypassed because they were women. They were the logical choices because of their abilities as well as their rank and therefore they were delegated negotiating authority.

Francis showed his pleasure at the conduct of his mother and sister by granting them rewards as he did to all who had faithfully served him during his captivity. "His mother was always to have her seat at his council table. Marguerite was made, in addition to her other dignities, Countess of Armagnac in her own right." [45]

The role of women as negotiators and administrators was by no means limited to the kingdoms of France and Spain. A historian writes of Italian women of this period: "Ailleurs, le rôle de la femme, pour avoir été plus discret, n'en fut moins considérable. Elles

[45] Fawcett, op. cit., p.127.

administraient fort bien elles-mêmes leurs Etats quand besoin était, comme le prouvèrent Caterina Sforza, Isabella d'Este et Giulia Gonzaga et valaient souvent mieux que leurs époux. Alexandre VI confiait la direction du Saint-Siège à Lucrezia Borgia lorsqu'il s'éloignait de Rome." [46]

Thus one can see that women played a great role in the political milieu because of their station. They were not relegated to the rear ranks because of their sex but rather called upon to fulfill exacting roles in the conduct of the affairs of state. Much of this attitude was due to the fact that women acquitted themselves well in these tasks. They were as capable as any man and were not hesitant to demonstrate it. One must admit that Marguerite of Navarre occupies a place of honor in the ranks of these accomplished women. Ambassadors and other visitors to the court of France were always more than favorably impressed by the political astuteness of the sister of the King. Brantôme says: "Pour parler encore du scavoir de ceste reigne, il estoit tel que les ambassadeurs qui parlaient à elle en étaient grandement ravis, et en fasoient de grands rapports à ceux de leur nation à leur retour." [47]

Another historian says of her: "Conseillère écoutée elle joua un rôle non négligeable autant dans les affaires intérieures du

[46] E. Rodocanachi, La Femme italienne, avant, pendant et après la Renaissance (Paris, 1922), p.287.

[47] Brantôme, Les Dames Galantes, p.279.

royaume que dans les tractations avec l'Empire." [48]

Marguerite and several of her contemporaries played an extremely important role on the political scene. This was because of her skill in matters diplomatic and not because of feminine wiles or machinations. That she was part of an "avant-garde" is evidenced by the fact that women of today are struggling to regain that political recognition they once enjoyed. Contemporary feminist literature constantly attacks present-day politics and politicians and urges the exercise of woman power in political involvement. One author says: "For thousands of years people had many other and better things to think about, give their loyalty to, further and cherish than the state. Only in our day, in which the individual feels increasingly helpless, has the state assumed so unique a position. But woman power is likely to help return it to its place, not just in the fabric of society, but even more importantly, in the minds of -- particularly men. That will perhaps be the outstanding effect by women power on politics in the coming decades." [49]

This political activism on the part of women, as well as their part in softening the harshness of some political realities was a role Marguerite naturally assumed and her influence was felt strongly throughout the kingdom.

[48] Giraud, op. cit., p.226.

[49] Konrad Kellen, The Coming of Age of Woman Power (New York, 1972), p.204.

Although a trusted advisor to the King and prominent figure at Court, Marguerite was, in her own right, a queen. Her marriage to Henri d'Albret placed her on the throne of Navarre and again gave her the opportunity to demonstrate her ability to rule.

A striking contrast to the Duke of Alençon, Henri of Navarre was a dashing figure, described by Charles V as the only man in France save the King himself.[50] Marguerite was immediately attracted to him and it seemed that -- at last -- here was the happiness she had longed for. Unfortunately the marital bliss was fleeting, but nonetheless Marguerite, with her husband, proved an able administrator -- one truly worthy of the title Queen. She took her queenly responsibilities seriously and did much to improve conditions within her realm. Always conscious of the needs of others, she instituted many reforms -- both social and political -- which ameliorated living in the kingdom of Navarre. The King and Queen of Navarre had a high regard for their subjects and that attitude was returned by the people of Navarre. In writing of women and men of the Renaissance, Edith Sichel says of this pair: "Her capricious husband, as we know, was not capricious in works of public spirit. He had begun them without her and they continued them together. They imported labour from the Berri and Sologne, and planted vineyards all over the kingdom. Marguerite went a step further and urged civic reform. She devoted her energies to her town of Pau, giving it a Parliament

[50] Putnam, op. cit., p.260.

and an Exchequer, and maintaining order by means of her private purse."[51]

Bent on improving conditions politically as well as economically, Marguerite gave herself enthusiastically to the tasks confronting her. Never severing her ties with Francis' court, she did however manage to make hers a refuge for art and learning, dining in public as was the custom in France and surrounding herself with men of learning. Henri at first admired these traits in his wife and did not disparage them as had the Duke of Alençon. The welfare of her subjects was her guiding force and she spent much time in getting to know their needs.

> Elle et son mari administraient avec soin leur petit royaume et s'attachaient à en développer les ressources. Souvent elle se promenait dans Nérac, visitait les habitants, s'enquérait de leurs affaires privées, et parlait dans la rue, au seuil des boutiques, avec les gens du peuple. Elle trouvait là l'occasion de menues réformes et de nombreuses charités. Chez elle la culture de l'esprit devait nécessairement aboutir à la pratique du bien, et à cette suprême vertu, la bonté. [52]

Not content with reforms of an economic and civic nature, Marguerite turned to another segment of the population -- the children. She founded, in 1535, the Hôpital des Enfans Rouges. This institution, which the Queen richly endowed, was an asylum for orphans. [53]

[51] Sichel, op. cit., p.193.

[52] Marot, op. cit., p.xxxii.

[53] Freer, op. cit., Vol.II, p.517.

Though her married life was not always a happy one, her times at Navarre were fruitful and gave her much pleasure. She did much of her writing here and kept two secretaries employed -- one to handle the voluminous correspondence to her many friends and the other to copy the verses she dictated. [54]

A true woman of the Renaissance, Marguerite never neglected her devotion to the arts and her court was always open to poets, scholars, theologians and politicians. Her intellectual pursuits advanced side by side with her duties as queen. Always united in spirit with the court of her brother, she made her sojourns away from him ones of peace, prosperity and progress.

> A plusieurs reprises Marguerite fit d'assez longs séjours en Navarre. Comme jadis dans son duché d'Alençon, elle prenait à coeur son métier de souveraine, et ajoutant ces soucis d'administration de bienfaisance à ses préoccupations spirituelles et littéraires, elle y menait une vie riche et diverse, faite à sa véritable ressemblance. Ses résidences étaient Pau, Nérac, Mont-de-Marsan. Nul apparat et un train qui parassait fort modeste auprès de la cour de France; mais Marguerite y avait de quoi satisfaire son goût pour l'art et pour certaines formes raffinées de luxe. [55]

The mountainous region of Béarn also came under the watchful eye of the Queen of Navarre. Improvement of economic conditions, the protection of life and property for its citizens -- both these factors were paramount in the Queen's plans for reforms. "The reform of the

[54] Fawcett, op. cit., p.148.

[55] Marot, op. cit., p.xxi.

laws, suppression of brigandage and acts of violence against life and property -- always more difficult in a mountainous country than elsewhere -- met with her active support, and she advised her husband to call the estates of Béarn together to devise a means for the improvement and regulation of the finances." [56]

Marguerite, too, did not neglect the duchy of Alençon, undertaking there religious reforms and revising the "assistance publique" of the city of Alençon. All of these efforts have prompted her biographer, Samuel Putnam, to characterize Marguerite as the "prototype of the modern woman in social service." [57]

Perhaps a commemorative statement made at the observation of the four-hundredth anniversary of the death of the Queen of Navarre best summarizes her role: "A Pau comme partout où elle a passé la reine s'est occupée de littérature, de beaux arts, de bonnes oeuvres." [58]

Among the good works with which the queen is credited may be listed her untiring solicitude for the members of the Reformation movement which was widespread throughout western Europe. A religious woman, Marguerite was very much interested in reform in the Church, but never completely espoused the cause of the reformers. Passionately convinced of the necessity of freedom of thought she did, however,

[56] Fawcett, op. cit., p.129.

[57] Putnam, op. cit., p.278.

[58] M. Charles Dartigue Peyron, Commémoration du IVe Centenaire de la mort de Marguerite d'Angoulême (Pau, 1949), p.48.

go to the great lengths to protect the reformers' rights to exercise this privilege. Her court always gave shelter to those fleeing persecution and, more than once, a pleading letter from Marguerite to her brother saved an alleged heretic from the stake. Because of her role, Marguerite more than once ran afoul of the Sorbonne, a powerful arm of the Church. In her book on Renaissance woman Hannelore Sachs remarks: "The Reformation could repeatedly rely on the active assistance of women. . . . In France itself Marguerite of Navarre stood up for the reformation and the protection of its adherents, though she personally remained faithful to the Roman Catholic religion. The pedantic professors of the Sorbonne therefore accused her of heresy." [59]

This attack upon the sister of the King aroused Francis' ire, but not support, and for this reason Marguerite remained untouched. However, it did cause her to become more cautious and prevented her from more overtly participating in the movement for reform.

A biography in verse describes Marguerite's feelings in this way:

> I cleared myself, but never won the King
> To what I meant by Reformation in and not
> without the Church. [60]

Her own religious convictions were firm, but she never hesitated

[59] Sachs, op. cit., p.47.

[60] Neely, op. cit., p.80.

to listen with an open mind. A true woman of the Renaissance, she was tolerant of the ideas of others. Her biographers generally agree that she did not admit of compromise on established teachings of the Church, but did wish to see abuses corrected.

In speaking of Marguerite's religious ideas, Abel Lefranc concludes: "En maitère de dogme, les convictions de la soeur de François Ier n'ont été ni timides, ni incertaines, ni déconcertantes. Elle s'est nettement séparée des humanistes purs et des dilettantes, en un mot de ceux qu'on allait grouper, un peu plus tard, sous l'appelation de politiques. Dans toutes les questions capitales ou brûlantes . . . elle n'a point connu de compromis." [61]

The infamous "Affaire des Placards" in 1534 shook the kingdom of France and caused the king to become disenchanted with his sister's efforts at reform. The placards attacking all the major doctrines and placed strategically in all the major places -- including the palace at Blois -- resulted in the Queen's withdrawal to Nérac. There, in the relative safety of her own kingdom, she continued her patronage of those who struggled for reform. Felix Frank writes: "Marguerite d'Angoulême patronna donc les partisans de la Réforme tantôt ouvertement et le front levé, tantôt en se cachant sous le coup d'une nécessité impérieuse, mais elle les patronna sciemment."[62]

[61] Lefranc, Les Idées religieuses, p.123.

[62] Felix Frank, ed., Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses (Paris, 1893), p.li.

Clément Marot, implicated in the Affaire des Placards, knew to whom he could turn for protection. "Puisqu'il n'alloit pas vers le roi, de quel côté pouvait-il espérer la sauvegarde puissante qu' exigeait le péril? Il n'hésita pas et se dirigea tout droit vers sa première protectrice, Marguerite, soeur du roi." [63]

Among those whom the Queen protected may be listed Lefèvre, given refuge at Nérac and Pau, Berquin, who finally met death at the stake despite Marguerite's efforts to save him, Marot who more than once was the recipient of this favor, and many others. She recognized in these men individuals of great intelligence and of expression. A literary historian describes Marguerite's attitude in these words: "For tolerance was one of the key-notes of her religion, and towards the end of her life she gave shelter at her Court to the two leaders of the sect known as the "Spiritual libertines," Poque and Quantin, and paid no regard to Calvin's remonstrances on the subject."[64]

True to the convictions, but nonetheless filled with a sense of righteousness, this Renaissance queen showed utmost sympathy to leaders of the Reformation and extended every possible aid on innumerable occasions. A humanist in the true sense of the word, she interested herself in man in all his aspects -- his desire for knowledge, his search for truth and his need to express himself to all who would

[63] Marot, op. cit., p.xxvi.

[64] Arthur Tilley, The Literature of the French Renaissance, Vol.I (New York, 1959), p.103.

listen. Attacked by the Sorbonne, censured by her brother and looked on as suspect by many, she still continued to exercise her freedom of judgement and to allow others to do the same. Frank says of the actions of the queen: "De son palais et de sa ville d'Alençon, qui lui dut le repos au milieu de la tourmente religieuse, Marguerite agit en faveur de ceux qui souffrent et combattent pour la liberté de conscience." [65]

Thus one can see that Marguerite's involvement in political and religious affairs was by no means a narrow one. She believed in her own capabilities and she believed in the capabilities of women. In her book on feminism in literature, Lula Richardson discusses Marguerite's appraisal of women as a political being:

> Marguerite de Navarre composed a book of letters "pour défendre son sexe contre d'injustes mépris." These are now lost, but Pierre de l'Escale in La défense des femmes, 1612, gives an analysis of it. According to her, woman is the masterpiece of God since she was formed after man, as his last work. She is more intelligent than man, possessing "le transcendent des choses créées." Marguerite is thus the first author to recognize the intuitive powers of women. Woman is able to command and can claim political equality as the logical consequence of historical and natural laws, for she is the most intelligent, as well as the most reasonable being and therefore the most capable of ruling justly. In the first civilized society "les femmes commandèrent, jusqu'au moment où l'homme usurpa leur pouvoir." In other words, Marguerite establishes the theory of the matriarchate. [66]

[65] Frank, op. cit., p.ix.

[66] Richardson, op. cit., p.112.

Perhaps there are some who would disagree with Marguerite's appraisal, but her ideas seem strangely reminiscent of feminist arguments printed in today's books, delivered from speaker's platforms and heard on television talk-shows. Although not a political activist in the truest sense of the term, Marguerite did much which can serve as examples to contemporary womankind.

Marguerite's opinion of woman's capabilities is mirrored as much in her fiction as it was in her actions. Although most of her theatre contains religious overtones, other aspects of her thoughts are evident throughout. Her Heptaméron, strangely secular in comparison to her theatre, openly espouses the cause of women and boldly points out their equality with, and often their superiority to, men. A woman of letters as well as a superb administrator, Marguerite showed by her literary output the things she believed women to be capable of doing. Much of her literature was looked on unfavorably by the Church for it was an age of intolerance and intense feeling. It is for this reason that Marguerite, as well as her contemporaries, favored religious themes as backdrop for their theatrical productions. In writing of the theatre of the time, Margot Berthold says: "While the leading representatives of the school drama were thus engaged in an aggressive crossing of swords, for home consumption its practitioners retreated to more neutral confessional ground. As by secret accord, not infrequently even by direct mutual emulation, themes from the

Old Testament cropped up as favorites throughout Europe." [67]

True they served as themes, but authors were able, by means of skillful use of dialogue, to disseminate other ideas. Marguerite, truly representative of the Renaissance, managed to blend sacred and secular and thus transmit to both readers and spectators her opinions on the issues she considered so pressing -- the validity of woman's advice, the fact that she was no more guilty of the world's ills than man, and, more important, her ability to play an active rather than passive role in her political milieu.

[67] Margot Berthold, A History of World Theatre (New York, 1972), p.378.

CHAPTER III

HER THEATRE AND HEPTAMERON

Interpretation of Women

On examining the Comédie du Parfait Amant one can see traces of the Queen's feminist leanings. The heroine is a woman, wise and well traveled, who wishes to fulfill a mission. Like Diogenes in search of a truthful man, she travels from place to place in search of the perfect lover upon whom she will bestow the crown of reward. She is astute and able to answer all arguments. She has traveled long and far in the effort to conscientiously discharge her task. She herself says:

> Mille ans y a que je suis vagabonde
> Sans nul trouver qui me donne allégence.
> Desja cent fois j'ay circuict le monde,
> Cherché partout avecque diligence . . .

Entrusted with the power of bestowing the "chappeau," she has not been able to do so because no one has been found who qualifies. In her judgement, the world does not seem to contain too many serious people.

> Mais j'ay trouvé tant de légèretté
> Que mon corps n'est en nul lieu arresté.

Her quest is a serious one and the dialogue is indicative of this fact. Marguerite allows her to pass a judgement on her situation

and in it we can see an echo of the Queen's own sentiments. "Porte-parole" of the Queen of Navarre, la Femme does her utmost to convey to her audience the condition of her present day world.

It speaks well of the Queen's opinion of women that la Femme is permitted to act in this manner. Quests were usually undertaken by males -- Diogenes for the honest man, Galahad for the Holy Grail, Jason for the Golden Fleece -- but here we find a woman. Her search is as lofty since it is imperative that the world contain true and constant lovers if it is to endure.

Another aspect of the Queen's feminism can be found in her refutation of the theory of the basic wickedness of woman -- so prevalent in her time and in preceding historical periods. Marguerite presents the foibles and strengths of both sexes objectively. Feminism not withstanding, truth prevails in the Queen's attitude. She is objective in her judgement -- neither sex has priority on wickedness. The magnanimity of la Fille in insisting that l'Homme, and not she, deserves the crown due the "Parfait Amant" belies the prevailing conception of woman as grasping and selfish. To the explanation of la Femme's:

> c'est qu'a nul n'appartient
> Si Loyauté en amour il ne tient

la Fille replies:

> Madame, donc, sans plus vous travalier, luy
> Veulliez luiy, non pas a moy, ballier,

Car j'ay tant faict de luy l'experience
Que impossible est racompter sa constance.

Undoubtedly this same instance in the farce or fabliau would have had the young woman grasping for the crown and eager to downgrade the qualifications of others. The attitude towards woman as an object of ridicule is characteristic of the literature of the Middle Ages. The attitude of Marguerite differs greatly. She sees the obligation of love binding upon both parties. She condones neither the frivolous woman nor the inconstant lover. Both must be faithful to the commitment love involves. Complete fidelity as well as self-abnegation bind all who love. In his introduction to Le Parfait Amant, Saulnier writes of Marguerite's conception of human love: "La fermeté constante n'est que l'exigence élémentaire de l'amour véritable: il exige bien plus, une dévotion totale à l'objet aimé, qui fait que l'amant s'oublie tout en lui." [1]

The constancy of these two lovers is apparent in their eagerness to assure la Femme that the other is the worthier of the two. In fact, their insistance is so marked that the woman cannot discern any weaknesses in their arguments. Although she has very easily dismissed the earlier young women and has, like a judge, passed sentence on their behavior, she halts before this picture of faithful love. Reflecting the Queen's thesis of the obligations of both

[1] V.L. Saulnier, Marguerite de Navarre: Théâtre profane (Paris, 1963), p.328.

parties to fidelity, she judges them both worthy and therefore will seek advice before bestowing the crown. Jupiter and his Juno will be consulted. Once again it must be noted that a woman will be given a role in the final decision. Jupiter will not decide alone but rather in consultation with Juno.

Marguerite remains objective in her presentation of this comédie. In the final verses both man and woman appear constant and loving -- deserving of the reward which la Femme can bestow. The fact that the decision is not rendered accentuates the Queen's lack of bias. Just as she refuses to admit that woman is inferior to man, she also refuses to grant her superiority.

Emile Jourda, in his work on Marguerite, discusses her purpose in authoring these works: "La comédie profane autant que la comédie sacrée n'est pour la Reine qu'un moyen d'instruire et de répandre ses idées. . . . Si l'intrigue et l'action y comptent peu, la peinture des caractères et des moeurs est un peu plus poussée. L'essentiel reste le développement des idées que Marguerite veut défendre."[2]

The Queen of Navarre does in fact develop and defend her ideas in Le Parfait Amant. All are obliged to constancy, all must suffer the consequences of failure to meet this obligation and all who are faithful to what is expected of them will be rewarded. The fact that it is woman who seeks out those to be rewarded as well as the inclu-

[2] Emile Jourda, Marguerite d'Angoulême (Paris, 1930), pp.487-8.

sion of Juno as a vital factor in the final decision, demonstrate not the Queen's feminist bias but rather her conviction that the members of her sex are equally as capable as their male counterparts. This attitude may strike the modern day reader as far from radical but, placed in the context of the century of its origin, it is truly a departure from current thinking.

Almost fifty years later, in 1596, Antoine de Montchrétien has one of his characters discuss women and the attitude is far from progressive. Scipio appears as the mouthpiece of the adversaries of women and utters the following diatribe:

> O sexe détestable, embusche de douleur!
> Tousiours tu nous produis quelque nouveau malheur.
> Si Pandore iamais ne fust entrée au monde,
> On n'eust connu les maux dont sa tasse est feconde.
> Tout ennui, tout discord, tout meurtre vient par toy
> Tu romps comme il te plaist les saincts noeuds de la foy;
> Tu pousses à tout mal l'indiscrette ieunesse;
> Tu desbauches en fin la prudente vieillesse;
> Ton esprit violent, cruel, iniurieux,
> Tousiours, tousiours medite aux actes furieux. [3]

Far more indicative of the prevailing attitude toward women, Montchrétien holds them responsible for errors of youth and old age, and considers them ready to produce trouble since the first appearance of Pandora and her box. It is highly unlikely he would ever assign her the task of la Femme for he would surely consider her incapable of fulfilling it.

[3] Antoine de Montchrétien, Les Tragédies (Paris, 1891), p.145.

However, the Queen of Navarre apparently sees no reason why a woman cannot be entrusted with so lofty a mission and proves it by portraying her as successfully carrying it out. To Marguerite, woman was no more responsible than man for the world's ills. Each bore the guilt equally and each was capable of great things.

The idea that woman was not only a worthy choice, but perhaps a better one for this mission is a radical departure from prevailing attitudes. That the Queen was far ahead of her time in recognizing the power of feminine thought is indicated in the following excerpt from a twentieth-century book on the power of women: "If women could only gain confidence in the fact that their way of thinking is much better. . . . Well, they are still intellectually unencumbered enough so that they probably will see it soon, now that they have begun to doubt the entire mode of masculine thought." [4]

The fact that women still need to be reminded of the role they can play and the influence they can yield makes one less prone to think little of the Queen's efforts in this direction.

The Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan, written one year before the Parfait Amant, provides another interesting insight into the thinking of the Queen. Although it is more religious in its overtones, it is still indicative of Marguerite's attitude toward women. All its characters are female and they portray the admirable as well as the

[4] Konrad Kellen, The Coming Age of Woman Power (New York, 1972) p.225.

undesirable characteristics found in members of that sex. A debate between la Mondainne and la Supersticieuse is interrupted by the arrival of la Sage, who shows both that there are errors in the arguments they are advancing. Neither one is completely wrong nor is either completely correct. One should not totally reject the world (the body) any more than one should totally ignore the spirit (the soul). La Mondainne, wise in the ways of the world, but ignorant in those of the spirit, must mitigate her love of the corporal and follow the counsels of la Sage:

> Voila trop bestialle amour;
> Si vous y faictes long sejour,
> Par cest amour deviandrez folle.

La Supersticieuse, on the other hand, must lessen her contempt for the flesh for:

> Premier voulez le corps destruire
> Que votre âme en vertu instruire:
> C'est ruiner tout l'édifice.

In both of these counsels one can discern Marguerite's beliefs. The attitudes of both characters are extreme and each must, therefore, yield slightly to the opinion of the opposite side. La Mondainne is not totally wicked, any more than la Supersticieuse is totally good. It is therefore the role of la Sage to demonstrate, by means of wise advice, the path that both should follow.

She is recognized for her wisdom by la Mondainne, who says:

Mais allons à elle en courant,
Et luy declairons toute chose
A la veoir il est apparent
Qu'elle entend la rime et la proze.

La Supersticieuse seconds the opinion by noting that even the appearance of la Sage evokes confidence:

Ca, Madame, à vous veoir de loing,
Seullement à vostre apparence,
Nous semble qu'à nostre besoing
Nous debvez donner allegence

Recognized by both as capable of resolving their differences, la Sage does not modestly demur, but instead admits her capability and places herself in the position of judge and arbiter:

Or, parlez, car j'ay esperance,
En me monstrant comme advocas
Ce dont estes en difference,
Que je douray ordre à voz cas.

The dialogue which follows represents a clear presentation of the views of both parties with counter-explanations and admonitions administered by la Sage. She guides both toward a change in attitude, offering Holy Scripture as a guide to living:

Pour vous mettre toute à délivre,
Je vous faictz present de ce livre:
C'est la loy et vieille et nouvelle.
En luy verrez ce qu'il faut faire
Et qui pour vous peult satisfaire,
Pour vous metre en vie eternelle.

The advice is sound for, according to the Queen, all that is

necessary to formulate rules for living can be found there. It condemns only inordinate love of pleasure, not the seeking of enjoyment of the benefits life can give us. An intelligent, well-rounded woman, the Queen recognized the fact that taking pleasure in what was given to enjoy is not wrong, but rather sensible. K.H. Hartley says of Marguerite in this regard: "Marguerite was a woman who saw no contradiction between fearing God and loving life." [5]

Continuing her arguments in favor of open-mindedness and tolerance, the Queen has la Sage tell us:

> Ignorance, des folz marrastre,
> A sapience pour emplastre,
> Bon sens, raison, entendement.

Combatting ignorance with the wisdom of the Scriptures will cause both women to be happier and to find more meaning in their lives since the Bible, according to la Sage:

> C'est le mirouer qui esclaire
> Voz cueurs, et (puis) qui les descouvre.
> Grande joye j'ay de vos deux
> Veoir lire en ces livres si neufz,
> Que neufves serez en ceste euvre.

The Sage's wise admonitions are interrupted by the appearance of la Bergère, whose interests appear completely other-worldly to all three of the women who have been debating. None of them understands

[5] K.H. Hartley, Bandello and the Heptameron (New York, 1960), p.5.

her complete disdain of what to them is important and her absolute contentment with loving and being loved. To la Mondainne's query,

> N'avez vous d'autre vie envie?

she replies:

> Chanter et rire est ma vie,
> Quant mon amy est près de moy.

This reply puzzles both la Supersticieuse and la Sage. La Supersticieuse responds, "J'oy d'elle ce que croire n'oze." While la Sage remarks, "En sa fasson ny chant je n'entend rien."

Mystified by the shepherdess' complete disinterest in things material as well as by her apparent contentment with doing nothing which seems constructive, the three continue to ply her with questions. In the ensuing dialogue, Marguerite's esteem for knowledge and learning is apparent. Concerned by the fact that others may judge the girl harshly, la Sage tells the shepherdess:

> Mais plustost vous juge ignorante,
> Qui s'esjouict sans savoir quoy.

It is unfathomable to the wise woman that someone can be content to lack learning. Even if one were to be of such a bent, the opinion of others and the danger they might think ill of such lack of ambition should coerce one into learning.

La Mondainne expresses such concern in the lines:

Las! j'ay cheminé par sa voye,
Mais aultre chemin fault à prendre.

La Bergère questions what road it is necessary to follow and it is la Sage who replies:

C'est ce beau chemin de science,
Que chascum doibt tant estimer.

All three are unable to comprehend the response of the shepherdess and continue to express their bewilderment at her attitude. Although the underlying message conveyed by the shepherdess is one of a love which is other than earthly, one can detect in the dialogue of this scene the fact that Marguerite felt that learning was important. It was not to be neglected, but rather combined with all other aspects of life. Not denying the need of things spiritual, but rather showing their perfect compatability with learning, Marguerite says by means of la Sage:

L'amour de Dieu faict l'homme saige,
Prudent, de bonne conscience,
Estudiant en sapiance
Jour et nuict et matin et soir.

None who loved learning as much as Marguerite did could possibly admit that there was no need of it. Deeply religious in her convictions she nonetheless saw the value of knowledge and did not condemn a thirst for it in others. She was a deep believer in humanity. Her views were broad and tolerant and admitted of the secular as well as the sectarian.

In a book on women, Mary Beard says of Marguerite:

> Marguerite d'Angoulême . . . was the first indigenous genius of the French Renaissance. . . . Marguerite was brilliantly qualified to be the patron of a critical regime. . . . But her age was rough and she was of her age. Still she was more than her age, for she had poetic genius and dared to indulge it in a vivid caricature of the society in which she moved and had her being. Though not a heretic, she was tolerant of free thought and as long as she enjoyed the protection of her brother, the King, she befriended those who differed from her in their views of life, notably d'Etaples, Budé, Marot, Rabelais, Des Periers and Dolet. In keeping with her generosity towards the opinion of others, in harmony with her willingness to listen to new ideas, was her belief in the fundamental virtue of humanity. [6]

Marguerite was really a woman of her time for the women of her time. Although her ideas and beliefs are far from radical they are advanced for the period in which she lived and wrote. Women, according to Marguerite, were capable of debating, settling arguments and exploring new ideas. They did not have to yield to men any more than they had to be superior to them.

In his introduction to the comedy, Saulnier enumerates several correspondences between Marguerite and la Sage. Among these may be cited the attitude of respect toward the body. He says: "Le culte de l'âme ne doit pas faire mépriser l'aspect complémentaire de l'homme. Dieu lui-même nous le défend, 'n'ayans desdaing de nostre chaire mortelle.' " [7]

[6] Mary Beard, On Understanding Women (New York, 1931), p.430.

[7] Saulnier, op. cit., p.264.

Lines such as those uttered by la Mondainne near the beginning of the play display feminist traits as well as advance the Queen's view on the compatibility of the worldly and the spiritual.

> Je lève ma teste,
> Et mon corps honneste
> A chascun je monstre;
> Il est beau et doux,
> Et tenu de tous
> Pour bonne rencontre.

The woman's pride in her body, echoed in these lines, is a step towards progress. Those who read feminist literature of today will find that women are still trying to encourage other women to take pride in their physical selves and become aware of their potential. Four hundred years after Marguerite's lines were penned, women are still struggling. If this were not so, lines such as those found in a recent feminist publication would no longer be necessary:

> Our bodies are the physical bases from which we move out into the world; ignorance, uncertainty -- even, at worst, shame -- about our physical selves create in us an alienation from ourselves that keeps us from being the whole people that we could be. . . . Learning to understand, accept, and be responsible for our physical selves, we are freed of some of these preoccupations and can start to use our untapped energies. Our image of ourselves is on a firmer base, we can be better friends and better lovers, better people, more self-confident, more autonomous, stronger and more whole. [8]

[8] Boston Women's Health Book Collective, Our Bodies, Ourselves (New York, 1976), p.13.

As has been said, there is a religious lesson to be drawn from this work. § Peace can be found in union with God as the shepherdess tells us in describing her union with her lover. However, there are secular lessons to be learned as well. Work is necessary, knowledge is desirable and life is of great value -- all of these are both implicitly and explicitly contained in the lines of this play. Marguerite has used this as well as her other works to convey her sentiments to those who would see or read her works. Woman is a capable creature, fit for tasks far more elevated than those frequently allotted to her. This capability makes her worthy of assuming roles heretofore envisioned only for men. She possesses much more than the vices so frequently assigned her by authors of the times. She is intelligent, able, and willing to assume a more important place in the world in which she moves. Using her plays as a platform, the Queen expounds constantly on these ideas. Jourda says of her comedies: "Mais, plus encore que dans les comédies pieuses, on sent, tout au long des pièces profanes, la volonté de faire du théâtre un moyen de propagande." [9]

Marguerite has found a truly efficacious means of disseminating her ideas. What better vehicle than fiction since truth can lie buried in it or be discovered as the need arises.

.....

§ For a further analysis of this work see Gelernt's World of Many Loves, pp.19-30.

[9] Jourda, op. cit., p.493.

Le Mallade, one of Marguerite's early farces, shows woman in the role of giver of advice. In keeping with her style of juxtaposition, Marguerite presents two women -- one giving bad advice, one giving good. However, in the final analysis, it is woman whose advice and suggestions provides the cure for the patient.

Le Mallade, suffering acutely, turns to his wife for solace and comfort:

> Ma femme, que je suis mallade!
> Je sens au cousté grant doulleur.
> J'ay le goust amer, le cueur fadde.

His wife, however, is unable to arrive at a solution which suits him. Suggesting first eating, then taking to his bed and finally superstitious cures, she fails to provide the answer he is earnestly seeking. To all her advice he replies:

> Allez bien tost, ne tardez poinct,
> Ung bon médecin me quérir.

Against her better judgement, the wife hastens to comply with her husband's wishes:

> Car, si seullement voulliez boire
> Cinq germes d'oeulz seullement
> Vous verriez bien changer l'histoire,
> Et guary seriez seurement

She is not altogether confident that a doctor is the right answer and is still trying to insinuate her own ideas.

The patient, convinced he is dying, bemoans his fate while the maid enters the scene. In la Chambrière we have the model of wise giver of advice. The wife's remedies all smack of superstition and do not convince the patient of their efficacy. A doctor is his only hope, or so he thinks until he listens to the advice of la Chambrière. She proceeds to tell him:

> Si je osoys la vérité dire,
> Et qu'il vous pleust engre la prandre
> Bien tost seriez hors de martire,
> Sans au médecin vous attendre.

Mystified by the maid's solution, the patient questions her as to whom she means. In a long reply, she tells him to put his trust in God who is all-powerful and able to restore his health. Although this solution is not in keeping with the best of medical practice, the patient decides to follow it.

The doctor arrives after having received from the wife detailed accounts of the husband's symptoms and complaints. The ensuing conversation again reflects Maeguerite's ability to combine both worldly and spiritual and show the merits of each. Obviously the husband's apparent cure before the arrival of the doctor defies logical explanation. The doctor argues that such a cure is ephemeral and only those ascribed to proper treatment are lasting. It is God, says he, who has given to the doctors the ability to diagnose and cure. His arguments, however, fail to convince the patient who dismisses his pleas and continues to place himself in the hands of

Providence as the maid has advised him. It is not inconceivable that Marguerite gave such advice to her brother when, prisoner of the Spaniards, he lay ill and close to death. A true believer, Marguerite would not hesitate to implore Divine intercession. A realist as well, she engaged the services of physicians.

Although this play, like the majority of Marguerite's works, contains a spiritual message, there are feminist characteristics present. It is a woman, not the doctor, who discovers the secret of his return to health to the patient. Her advice is sound -- for it works. It is interesting to note that it is the maid, and not the wife, who furnishes the solution. Member of the lower social class, she still is endowed with powers of discernment and capable of wise advice. To Jourda this presents somewhat of a problem for he feels that the maid would not have been so eloquent or convincing since those of her station lacked the training to be so. He says: "La chambrière, au contraire, parle avec une habileté qui paraît au-dessus de sa condition; elle est éloquente pour les besoins de la cause qu'elle défend et sa dialectique persuasive étonne dans la bouche d'une servante. Qu'elle soit acquise aux idées nouvelles on ne saurait s'en étonner; on sait combien la propagande réformée eut de succès parmi les humbles. Elle pourrait s'exprimer plus naïvement. Le ton trop soigné du petit prêche qu'elle adresse à son maître semble peu vraisemblable. [10]

[10] Jourda, op. cit., p.489.

Regardless of the fact that the maid's language seems too elevated for her profession, it is the ideas she conveys that counts. Again the Queen places on the lips of a woman the dialogue which reflects her views. In this play woman is used as an agent of good, a giver of sound advice and an educator as well. All of these are roles that Marguerite herself played superbly and was convinced that others of her sex could play equally as well.

Frequently called on as protectress of the persecuted, advisor to the King or consultant in the launching of educational projects such as the Collège de France, Marguerite always rose to the occasion and gave willingly of time and talent.

It is not inconceivable that a woman whose interests and abilities were so varied would assign the role of problem-solver to one of a lower social standing. It only serves to accentuate her democratic leanings and her recognition of individual worth. Neither the learned doctor nor the upper-class wife arrives at a solution which is obvious to a servant, but Marguerite does not make either of these characters appear ridiculous. Reason always rules and the arguments are logical, deliberate and, in the case of la Chambrière, convincing. The spiritual overtones are apparent, but once again, other elements are present. Among these elements is the power of woman as giver of advice and agent for good. The Queen of Navarre is emphasizing the qualities that the modern-day women's movement is still striving to convince women they possess. In this respect, one has to award the Queen a prominent place in the vanguard of the feminist movement and

acknowledge her contributions to its advancement in her time. Convinced of the importance of woman's contribution to society, Marguerite continues in her fiction to assign them roles of prominence which guarantee maximum exposure. Maurice Telle says of her: "Et je ne crois pas qu'il y ait au seizième siècle une personne qui ait mieux compris que Marguerite de Navarre la nature des défauts de la société de son temps et le rôle civilisateur des femmes." [11]

Just as her theatre contains women who advise so too does the Heptaméron, Marguerite's collection of tales based on Bocaccio's Decameron of which she was so fond. The Heptaméron's ten narrators, five men and five women, introduce a remarkable series of stories which give an excellent idea of the way of life pursued by members of Renaissance society. It is clear that the queen wishes to teach by this work since morals are succinctly drawn in the discussions which follow each tale. An editor of the Heptaméron remarks: "The Heptaméron is essentially a didactic work. The didactic purpose is most clearly reflected in the discussions in the course of which Parlamente and her friends examine the moral implications of the stories." [12]

Parlamente, protagonist from the outset of the work, has been identified by Yves Giraud as representative of Marguerite herself.[13]

[11] Telle, op. cit., p.300.

[12] H.P. Clive, ed., Marguerite de Navarre: Tales from the Heptameron (London, 1970), p.6

[13] Giraud, op. cit., p.236.

From the outset Marguerite gives woman a prominent role and makes her, in the Prologue, the wise giver of advice and the one to whom all turn for help. The reader is introduced almost immediately to Oisille, "une dame veufve, de longue expérience," [14] who, though trapped by the rising waters of the mountainous region of Béarn, deliberates, reasons and arrives at a means of escape. She does not hysterically seek help of others but, by her own resources, manages to protect herself. That she is highly regarded is evident when, further in the Prologue, it is announced that she is safe the company is overjoyed. "Quant toute la compaignye oyt parler de la bonne dame Oisille, eurent une joye inestimable." [15] Again, when a means of passing the time is sought, it is to Oisille that Parlamente turns for a solution. It is she whom they regard as able to advise them as to how best spend the hours they must wait before the bridge is safely constructed. Says Parlamente, "Madame, je m'esbahys que vous qui avez tant d'experience et qui maintenant à nous, femmes, tenez lieu de mère, ne regardez quelque passetemps pour adoulcir l'ennuy que nous porterons durant notre longue demeure." [16]

She is confident that Oisille, in her wisdom, will arrive at a solution and her confidence is supported by the rest of the members of the party. Oisille, however, knows that her solution,

[14] Marguerite de Navarre, L'Heptaméron (Paris, 1967), p.2.

[15] Ibid., p.5.

[16] Ibid., p.6.

that of reading the Scriptures, will not prove satisfactory. Therefore, she decides to "remettre ceste affaire à la pluralité des opinions." [17] True diplomat, she does not wish to impose her will on others but instead seeks a way pleasing to at least the majority, if not all, of those present. This is truly an admirable quality in one who rules and one which many believed absent in females. Marguerite, by giving Oisille this opportunity to direct, shows again her belief that woman can and should play roles in decision-making.

It is now Hircan's turn to speak. Husband of Parlamente, he proposes his wife as capable of solving the dilemma which faces them all. Again a woman is placed in a prominent role and again she is accepted as capable. The reaction to Hircan's suggestion is unanimous, "A quoy toute la compaignie s'accorda." [18] Parlamente graciously accepts the charge and recommends the narration of short tales, alluding to Bocaccio's Decameron and suggesting that perhaps their tales will give France its own Decameron. At the conclusion of her recommendation, she offers to withdraw it if another can suggest something more pleasing to all. However, this is not necessary since, "Mais toute la compaignie respondit qu'il n'estoit possible d'avoir mieulx advisé et qu'il leur tardoit que le lendemain fut venu pour commencer." [19]

[17] Ibid., p.8.

[18] Ibid., p.9.

[19] Ibid., p.10.

Thus from the outset woman is to play an important role in this outstanding work of the Queen of Navarre. Her ability to give advice, to solve problems and assume command are stressed in the Heptaméron's prologue. These tasks, all capably performed by Marguerite, are now assigned by her pen to others, showing her confidence in their ability to accept them. Yves Giraud says of Marguerite's work: "L'oeuvre littéraire de Marguerite de Navarre est le prolongement fidèle des pensées, la traduction sincère des convictions intimes."[20]

Truly in the case of the Heptaméron, we must agree with this evaluation.

The work is replete with stories of human nature -- faithful and unfaithful spouses, loyal and disloyal servants, worthy and unworthy clergy -- and gives an excellent opportunity to study the life and customs of the time. However, the woman's role is never subordinated and, in tale after tale, her ability to cope with distressing situations becomes increasingly apparent.

In the thirty-eighth nouvelle, related by Longarine, an indefatigable feminist, a woman's solution of an unpleasant circumstance -- without resort to violence or hysterics -- evidences the queen's esteem of her sex's power and abilities.

The tale concerns a bourgeois woman who, despite the treatment she has received at the hands of her unfaithful husband, treats him so kindly that he abandons his illicit love and returns to his wife.

[20] Giraud, op. cit., p.241.

In introducing the story, Longarine professes to extol the patience of woman -- all the more praiseworthy since it is found in a woman not of the nobility. Once again we are given evidence of Marguerite's assessment of woman in general. Ability to rule, to decide or to deal with situations is not something reserved to the nobility but common to all women.

The story begins with a narration of the situation -- a woman whose husband frequently leaves their home in Tours and, upon his return, is always in a run-down condition. The wife, fearing for her husband's health, visits the young girl upon whom he is bestowing his favor and is appalled at the conditions she finds -- the quarters are unsanitary and the serving vessels disreputable. Instead of gloating over the fate of a faithless husband, the wife refurbishes the quarters, sending a new bed, supplies of food and luxuriant serving vessels. The husband is so moved by his wife's consideration that he returns to her, abandoning his former life forever.

In the situation narrated, one finds a woman faced with the need to make a decision. Her decision is not a hasty one since it is obvious that she has surveyed the situation and weighed the possibilities of choices. She investigates first and does not send others to do it for her or rely on hearsay for her information. Once the facts are known she acts upon them. Although she is obviously disturbed, her first concern is not revenge but the welfare of the husband to whom she is loyal. She does not rail jealously at the

"other woman," making idle threats which could not be carried out. Rather she seeks to remedy conditions and, in so doing, causes the remorse of a disloyal spouse. The husband knows there is but one recourse, "Luy, voyant la grande bonté de sa femme, que, pour tant de mauvais tours qu'il luy avait faicts, lui rendoit tant de biens, estimant sa faulte aussy grande que l'honneste tour que sa femme luy avait faict." [21] He returns to his wife and "depuis vesquirent en bonne paix, laissant entierement la vie passée." [22]

In the discussion which follows the queen draws a moral which demonstrates once more her firm religious beliefs. Although all do not agree that the woman's actions were completely unselfish (Hircan accuses her of having affairs of her own, Simontault questions the wisdom of her decision), the general conclusion is that the mercy of God extends to all and as He forgives so must we. Marguerite's ideas on marriage can be seen here also. She believed the obligation of fidelity was common to both parties and decried the double standards of the time which overlooked the so-called "pecadillos" of the erring husband but judged a faithless wife with cruel injustice. In presenting a woman who could deal calmly with a marital problem, realize its consequences and take action to resolve it favorably, Marguerite has again shown her belief in woman's capabilities. She is a working partner in the union and consequently shares the respon-

[21] Ibid., p.271.

[22] Ibid., p.271.

sibility for its success rather than carries the burden entirely. Giraud says of Marguerite's theories: "Le mariage n'a ni prestige ni valeur, puisque souvent l'amour y fait défaut; mais on cherche malgré tout à le réhabiliter en montrant que le rôle de la femme doit y être égal à celui du mari et que l'idéal demeure une union de type conjugal." [23]

Marguerite often assigns the role of championing the woman to Longarine and she is frequently seconded by Ennasuyte. One critic describes them: "Among the ladies, Ennasuyte and Longarine are staunch feminists who delight in provoking male interlocutors by their unfavorable comments on masculine behavior." [24]

Earlier in her work, Marguerite presents Ennasuyte as a narrator of a tale in which a princess extricates herself from a situation which could have sullied her honor and, upon the advice of her lady-in-waiting, refrains from taking the revenge to which she has a right. The Queen of Navarre has been identified by Brantôme as the heroine of this tale. [25]

Ennasuyte has as her purpose in narrating this tale to defend the reputation of woman and show her as able to judge and act wisely. Another aspect of this tale is, again, the role as woman as a giver of sound advice.

[23] Giraud, op. cit., p.238.

[24] Clive, op. cit., p.11.

[25] The Heptameron, p.453 n.125.

The story concerns a friend of the King and the rashness with which he seeks to force his affections on the sister of the King. He reveals his desire to the princess and is rebuffed in a kindly fashion. "Et combien que sa responce fust telle qu'il appartenoit à une princesse et vraye femme de bien, si est-ce que, le voyant tant beau et honneste comme il estoit, elle lui pardonna sa grande audace." [26] This pardon, however, was misplaced since the gentleman later devolved a clever scheme by which he would secure what he desired. Having invited the King and his family to his home, the gentleman set about putting his plan in operation. The quarters for the royal party are so arranged that the princess is lodged in a room directly below that of the gentleman. An ingenious trap-door will supply the access she has already denied him. That evening he seeks to carry out his plan but the wily princess is more than ready for him. When he enters her bed she begins scratching and clawing at him, all the while calling her trusted lady-in-waiting to come to her aid. The gentleman is more than frightened at this reception and manages to regain his room by the same means he had left it. However, his face is disfigured as a result of the princess' scratchings. Unable to face his guests, he decides to feign illness and profess an inability to stand light or the sound of voices. The princess, well aware of the condition of the gentleman who has just left her chamber, wishes to reveal his indiscretion to her brother. Her prudent lady-

[26] Ibid., p.28.

in-waiting counsels her otherwise: "Si vous desirez estre rengée de luy, laissez faire a l'amour et a la honte, qui le scauront mieulx tormenter que vous." [27] The princess' honor will thus remain intact since, upon revealing the actions of the gentleman she would expose herself to inquiries and doubts from other members of the court. Her silence will insure not that the man go unpunished, but rather that his punishment will be all the more severe since he alone knows he has lost her esteem, will have no one with whom to commiserate and, by her conduct towards him at court, will be certain the rupture is irreparable. The sage advice of the lady-in-waiting calms the princess' anger and allows her to retire peacefully. "La princesse deliberee de croire le counseil de sa dame d'honneur, s'endormit aussy joieusement que le gentil homme veilla de tristesse." [28]

The gentleman is unable to face his guests the following morning and is prevented from returning to court until his wounds are healed. Upon his return, the disfavor of the princess is far greater wound than those inflicted by her on that ill-fated night.

Thus by heeding the advice of her trusted friend, the princess avoided exposing herself to ridicule and succeeded in seeing her honor avenged. The lady-in-waiting, a wise and experienced woman, gives sound and practical advice. The princess demonstrates her wisdom by following this advice. It is found unnecessary to refer the matter

[27] Ibid., p.31.

[28] Ibid., p.33.

to the King since the women themselves have arrived at a solution. Marguerite once more shows the members of her sex in a favorable light by portraying them as people capable of dealing with an unpleasant situation rather than as helpless victims, unable, by themselves, to resolve any sort of difficulty. The fact that the story has a basis in truth as well as that its narrator is Ennasuyte makes it all the more worthy of the place in the collection of tales.

In a later tale narrated by Nomerfide, Marguerite again presents a woman faced with a perplexing problem to which she finds an agreeable solution. The story concerns a woman's wise disposal of the terms of her husband's will, interpreting his intentions to her and her children's benefit. A rich merchant of Saragossa, realizing his end is near, wishes to make amends for past sins by a small gift to God in the person of his poor. However, in so doing he will deprive his wife and children of the means to survive. According to his will, his prize horse is to be sold and whatever it brings is to be given to the poor. After his death, his wife, "qui n'estoit non plus sotte que les Espanolles ont accoustumé d'estre," [29] determines to fulfill the conditions laid down by her husband and still see to it that she and his children are not left destitute. She sets about methodically to carry out his instructions -- "Parquoy j'ay advisé que nous ferons ce qu'il a ordonné par sa mort, et encores mieulx

[29] Ibid., p.345.

ce qu'il eust faict, s'il eut vescu quinze jours davantaige." [30] She does not bemoan her fate nor does she seek pity or help from others. Rather she instructs her servants to sell the horse, as her husband wishes. However, the price of the horse will be one ducat to the purchaser since he must also purchase a ninety-nine ducat cat in order to consummate the agreement. The buyer is well satisfied with the terms and the one ducat from the sale of the horse is given to the poor while the widow keeps the remainder to provide for herself and her children. Marguerite does not permit her narrator to describe the widow as helpless or ignorant in the ways of the world or of civil affairs. Although not a lawyer she intelligently operates within the parameters allowed by the will and still manages to remedy what she considers her husband's injustice in failing to provide for his dependents.

The queen reinforces her already obvious opinion of the capabilities of her sex by allowing Parlamente to add, in the discussion, ". . . elle qui cognoissoit son intention, l'avoit voulu interpreter au proffict des enfans: dont je l'estime tres saige." [31] In answer to Geburon's praise of the man's desire to aid the poor, she replies, ". . . mais de faire aulmosne du bien d'aultruy, je n'estime pas à grand sapience." [32] Spokesman for Marguerite herself, Parlamente

[30] Ibid., p.345.

[31] Ibid., p.346.

[32] Ibid., p.346.

is not pleading that women become lawyers or that they are more clever than men but rather that their abilities are equal. Telle describes the feminism of Parlamente in this way: "C'est une grande victoire du féminisme de Parlamente: non contente de mettre en jugement les hommes, elle veut qu'ils plaident coupables." [33]

In the vein of culpability, Marguerite relates many stories in which the wickedness as well as the infidelity of men is emphasized. The queen truly wishes that they plead guilty and does her utmost to underline their failure to fulfill their obligations. Among the stories related on the "première journée" of the enterprise suggested by Parlamente is found that of the boatwoman of Coullon who, while preserving her honor, revealed to the world the wickedness of two lustful friars. The story is interesting from many points of view. In this tale the Queen assigns to a woman an occupation usually pursued by men. She offers no explanation as to why a woman is engaged in ferrying passengers across the river. She has not taken over the occupation of her husband since he is mentioned in the story. It is simply the story of a woman who happens to be a boatwoman, but more important, who happens to be one of intelligence and capability. Marguerite describes her as "sage et fine." [34] Faced with an extremely unpleasant situation, she manages by courage and ingenuity, to solve her dilemma and emerge both victorious and

[33] Telle, op. cit., p.120.

[34] The Heptaméron, p. 35.

virtuous. The reprehensible thoughts and conduct of the two friars indicate the degree of corruption in the clergy of that period. The manner in which the Queen describes their conduct shows her disapproval and substantiates her real-life desire for reform within the Church. Her choice of adjectives is interesting as is her description of the state of mind of the two culprits when they realize they are outwitted. By contrast with the woman who is wise and good, they are described as "folz et malitieux." Aware that all will know their guilt, the two culprits are seized with fear. In the words of the Queen, "La honte meit leur péché devant leurs oeilz, et la craincte d'estre pugniz les faisoit trembler si fort, qu'ilz estoient demy mortz." [35] And well they might be afraid, considering the reaction of the villagers who have learned of their actions. "Ces beaulx pères qui nous preschent chasteté, et puis la veullent oster à nos femmes . . . sont sépulchres par dehors blanchiz, et par dedans plains de mort et pourriture." [36]

The magistrate assures the villagers that these men will be punished and only then do they cease their remonstrances. It is quite probable that the boatwoman is a well-known and respected citizen since it is a large group of people who are present at the apprehension of the friars and who decry the attempt to abuse the woman.

[35] Ibid., p.36.

[36] Ibid., p.36.

Geburon, the narrator of this tale, remarks at its conclusion that the obligation to remain chaste lies heavily upon woman and the responsibility is proportionate to her rank. "Je vous prie, mes dames," says Geburon, "pensez, si ceste pouvre bastelliere a eu l'esperit de tromper l'esperit de deux se malitieux hommes, que doyvent faire celles qui ont tant leu et veu de beaulx exemples, quant il n'y auroit que la bonté des vertueuses dames qui ont passé devant leurs oielz. . . ." [37]

Longarine, the indomitable feminist, counters the arguments of Geburon with her contention that the friars are impossible to love and therefore it is of no great credit to resist them. "Il me semble, Geburon," says Longarine, "que ce n'est pas grand vertu de refuser un Cordelier, mais que plus tost seroit chose impossible de les aymer." [38] Nomerfide cannot resist the temptation to rebut Geburon and her impassioned avowal of preferring to throw herself in the river than to yield to a friar is countered by Oisille's teasing reply that she hopes the young lady can swim. In the repartee that follows Oisille acknowledges Nomerfide's desire to speak. In introducing her "nouvelle," Nomerfide echoes the belief of the Queen of Navarre that the responsibility for virtuous living is an individual thing and each man is accountable for his own actions. The behavior of one man or woman neither honors nor dishonors that of his fellow

[37] Ibid., p.37.

[38] Ibid., p.37.

human beings, ". . . car, tout ainsy que la vertu de la batteliere ne honore poinct les aultres femmes si elles ne l'ensuyvent, aussi le vice d'une aultre ne les peut deshonorer. . . ." [39]

In a book about women, Susan Groag Bell cites this tale as revelatory of the society of the first half of sixteenth-century France. She remarks that the occupation of the woman in the story would today be considered a masculine trade. She isolates as themes the dissoluteness of monastic orders and the general feeling of Western Europe against the abuses perpetuated by the Church and monastic orders. [40]

Miss Bell does not hesitate to call these stories crude but adds that they are indicative of Marguerite's reformatory spirit since she describes in a lively as well as literary form the abuses of the Church and the monasteries. Her admiration of Marguerite as well as recognition of her worth is obvious in her choosing to cite Brantôme's opinion: "Marguerite d'Angoulême was older than her brother Francis, and according to Brantôme, the sixteenth-century courtier, she would have been the better king. In his memoirs Brantôme deplored the law that excluded women from the succession to the French crown and described how Marguerite on many occasions dealt successfully with statesmen and ambassadors on her brother's behalf." [41]

[39] Ibid., p.38.

[40] Susan Groag Bell, Women: From the Greeks to the French Revolution (California, 1973), p.212.

[41] Ibid., p.198.

In a later tale, related by Ennasuyte, Marguerite again cites the capability of women to deal with unpleasant situations and resolve them with the least inconvenience to all. A woman's feint causes the ignominious exposure of an ungrateful secretary to a master who had treated him with nothing but respect.

The wife, again a woman of repute whose reputation was untainted, chose, by a subtle maneuver, to expose this unsavory gentleman and reveal to her husband the ingratitude of the man. "Elle, conznoissant la meschante volunte du secretaire, aymant mieulx par une dissimulation declairer son vice que par ung soubdain refuz le couvrir, feit semblant de trouver bons ses propos." [42]

Pretending to yield to his lecherous desires and bidding him precede her upstairs, she suddenly calls loudly to him asking his permission to have her husband accompany them. In complete consternation he begs her to remain silent so as not to destroy the friendly relationship he maintains with her husband. She is prepared for this entreaty and answers him: "Je suis seure que vous l'aymez tant, que vous ne me vouldriez dire chose qu'il ne peust entendre. Parquoy, je luy voys dir." "Ce qu'elle feit," continues Marguerite, "quelque priere ou contraincte qu'il voulsist mectre au devant." [43]

Her clever way of coping pleases her husband as much as does her constancy and he considers the shame of his secretary sufficient

[42] The Heptaméron, p.222.

[43] Ibid., p.223.

punishment for his actions. He does not seek legal redress as did the husband of the boatwoman but it is quite probable that the secretary came from a family of prestige and therefore knowledge of his action would indeed be punishment enough.

This story, though extremely short, has many interesting points for consideration. Here the Queen demonstrates the virtue of woman, the wickedness of man and insinuates the idea that sometimes knowledge that one is discovered in an evil deed far outstrips any legal action by which the crime could be punished.

It is surely a Renaissance tale, for a century before it would have been slanted completely differently. The woman in this tale is shown as deliberately deceiving the man but her motive for so doing is beyond reproach. Her virtue is never in question as it would have been in a medieval tale. Her husband is not portrayed as a bungling, stupid individual, too blind to see the intentions of his guest, but rather as a generous and trusting host. It is implied that he is an intelligent human being and that the tale's villain has completely taken advantage of the trust placed in him by this host.

Unlike an earlier tale in the collection, there is no servant to counsel the woman. She arrives at a means of discovery and punishment completely through her own ingenuity. The tale in which many believe that Marguerite herself was the protagonist ascribes the same type of punishment to the perpetrator but the decision is arrived at by the women with the wise counsels of her faithful lady-in-waiting. Perhaps if the Queen had wished to prolong the tale she would have

introduced other characters. In this case, however, it would have been out of keeping with the heroine's station to have solicited the advice of serving woman since her relationship with the servants would not have been the same as the Queen's with her ladies-in-waiting. She is, nonetheless, a very capable individual and solves her dilemma with equanimity, remaining gracious and composed -- a true lady of the Renaissance.

Inherent in Renaissance thought is the conception of woman as fully equal to man and thus endowed with gifts of mind and body. Poles apart from medieval thought with its denigration of the feminine mental powers, the Renaissance brought a liberalising movement breaking down restrictive barriers, and thus prepared the way for the emergence of the Renaissance lady. [44]

This Renaissance lady is further described as being endowed with many fine characteristics -- among them -- she was highly educated and extremely able in the management of affairs. [45]

Truly this description fits the author of the nouvelle as well as it does its protagonist. Throughout her writings Marguerite illustrates the conduct expected in women of her era in all walks of life. The faithful wife, the virtuous young woman, the chaste religious -- all people her stories. They are only some of the societal categories treated by the Queen in her famous tales or in the dramas and comedies

[44] Evelyn Acworth, The New Matriarchy (London, 1965), p.100.

[45] Ibid., p.112.

she wrote for presentation at Court. Since it has long been established that events in the Heptaméron are based on fact, one must accept the notion that Marguerite is truly portraying life as it was in the early part of the sixteenth century. Her narration, as well as the comments contained in the discussions which follow each story, frequently betray her feelings and attitudes in regard to these mores of Renaissance society. A literary historian says: "From the Heptaméron too we learn not only what the people of the day thought, but how they dressed and generally managed their social life. The delicate touches by means of which these features are brought before us, so utterly unlike the laboured inventories of the naturalist school testify to Marguerite's woman-like power of observation." [46]

It is quite possible that Marguerite would take exception to the inclusion of the adjective "woman-like," since she strove so ardently to eradicate the idea that either sex had priority on particular talents. However, the evaluation is nevertheless valid.

That she frequently chooses members of the aristocracy as protagonists and takes pains in her descriptions to make the reader aware of this is another facet in the Queen's descriptions. "She is a queen writing for her peers and describing the life and thoughts of aristocratic society," says Bisson. [47] The characters in her stories move

[46] Tilley, op. cit., p.111.

[47] Lawrence Bisson, A History of French Literature (London, 1945), p.38.

easily in their social circles and their conduct is obviously in keeping with or directly opposed to societal norms.

Another author remarks:

> Marguerite is not averse from the witty thumb-nail sketch, but it is in her analysis of the mind's workings that she excels, questions of style apart. She possesses a sure sense of motives, sometimes conflicting, that lead to action; she is well aware of the "intermittences du coeur" and of the instability of human feeling. Here her religious outlook, so far from obscuring her vision, lends added shrewdness, and we are given as revealing a tableau of human behavior as we can expect before Montaigne. [48]

This "tableau of human behavior" included acts less than laudatory on the part of the clergy. Ever conscious of the need for reform, Marguerite did not spare her readers from her indictments of the conduct of those to whom people should have been able to look for example and leadership. In the twenty-second nouvelle, Marguerite recounts the deeds of a prior of Saint Martin-des-Champs who, bacause of his lustful desires, comes perilously close to ruining the life of a chaste young religious. The characters in the story are identified by the editor as contemporaries of Marguerite, Etienne Gentil, prior of Saint-Martin-des-Champs and Marie Héroet, sister of the author of "La Parfaicte amy." [49]

The prior, repulsed by the young religious, conspires to create

[48] S.D. McFarlane, A Literary History of France - Renaissance France (New York, 1974), p.248.

[49] The Heptaméron, p.469.

a situation more favorable to his aims. Since the abbess of the monastery is the aunt of the young Marie, the priest knows he cannot find an ally in her. Feigning concern for the welfare of the religious, he persuades the convent's founder to replace the abbess. Given free reign in his choice of a successor, he does not hesitate to install one more favorably disposed to be of assistance.

"Le prieur de Sainct-Martin, qui avoit en sa main les voix de toute la religion, feit élire à Gif une abesse à sa dévotion. Et, apres ceste eslection, il s'en alla au dict lieu de Gif essayer encores une autre fois si, par prier ou par doulceur, il pourrait gagner seur Marie Heroet." [50]

Marie, however, is most faithful to the promises she made at her entry into religion and the wicked prior is once more thwarted in his lustful plans. Adamant in her refusal of his advances, she demands to be faced by her accusers. The prior, who evidently believed her to be timid and shy, is taken aback by this resistance and uses the only means left to him -- revenge. Determined now to disgrace her, the prior sentences Marie to three years of isolation, a diet of bread and water and the lowliest place among the religious. The young nun deplores this injustice but accepts it with strength and courage, secure in the knowledge that she is innocent of what she is accused. Forbidden to communicate with or receive visits from her family for these three years, she refrains from protesting since

[50] Ibid., p.180.

she has been warned by one of her fellow religious that such action could lead to perpetual imprisonment. Completely aware of the injustice of her punishment as well as the heinous conduct of her persecutor, she nonetheless complies since this is what is expected of her.

However, her compliance does not prevent her from taking measures to see that her lot improves should the opportunity present itself. She is,therefore, not taken unawares when a visit from her brother provides the occasion for relief. Concerned because his sister has not communicated with her family the young man presents himself at the abbey and demands to see Marie. The latter, aware of being watched lest she break the injunction of being forbidden to speak, has written a lengthy description of the sufferings she has undergone.

"De quoy elles [inhabitants of the abbey] eurent si grande paour, qu'elles liu admenerent sa seur à la grille, laquelle l'abbesse tenoit de si près qu'elle ne povoit dir à son frere chose qu'elle n'entendist. Mais, elle, qui estoit saige, avoit mis par escript tout ce qui est icy dessous. . . ." [51]

Again Marguerite uses the appelation "saige" to describe the actions of a woman dealing with an adverse situation. As in many of her other stories there is not a single individual upon whom the protagonist can rely for assistance and must, therefore, cope with her dilemma by the only means at her disposal, her own intelligence.

[51] Ibid., p.183.

Her foresight in preparing written documentation of her plight enables her to finally secure assistance when her brother arrives. Had she not been prepared, she would never have had the time to do so upon his unexpected appearance.

The authenticity of this story and Marguerite's admiration of the young woman's ability to act is substantiated by the fact that Marguerite identifies herself as the ultimate rescuer of the unfortunate young woman. Marie's distraught mother has made her daughter's plight known to Marguerite who acts immediately to remedy the situation. The evil prior, because of his age, is allowed to retire but not before the young religious is completely exonerated and restored to her rightful position of respect among her fellow religious.

The story is illustrative of Marguerite's compassion as well as her sense of justice. The prior is not allowed to go completely unpunished since he knows he has been discovered, but his punishment lies more in his own personal ignominy than in public disgrace. This type of punishment can frequently be far worse than public exposure since it lasts so much longer when one is his own judge and jury. The story's conclusion is faintly reminiscent of an earlier nouvelle in which Marguerite rids herself of an unwanted suitor by making it impossible for him to face his guests or appear at court while still assuring that his indiscretion is not made public.

Her resolution of the question is one which sees justice done but done with discretion. It again demonstrates the queen's ability and her recognition of that ability in others. Had she not believed

that the conduct of the young woman was beyond reproach, the author of the Heptaméron would probably have either omitted this nouvelle or shown the prior in a more favorable light. Her inclusion of the description of the wisdom of the young woman in preparing a written account of her mistreatment and unjust condemnation reiterates her belief in the capabilities of women as problem solvers. Unable to secure aid from any quarter, she is not helpless but rather astute and able to finally extricate herself from what would appear a hopeless situation. In this circumstance which has a religious setting, Marguerite illustrates for her readers the behavior expected of members of a religious society while demonstrating "what not to do" as well. As has been said, her tales provide us with descriptions of all strata of Renaissance society and religious life was not exempt from these descriptions.

Unlike her medieval predecessors she turned these tales of debauchery and hypocrisy into lessons in morality. True the tales amuse but, nonetheless, they instruct. Miscreant monks and friars people many of her plots but their fate makes it clear to the reader that the Queen neither sanctioned not congratulated their escapades. Had these same men been protagonists of the stories of the preceding century, the reader would have been confronted with a buffoon whose bungling antics obscured the fact that what he did was not funny but rather categorically unacceptable behavior. The debates and discussions of her narrators as well as the tone of the stories transmit to the readers the Queen's respect for righteousness and disdain for

wrong-doers in any walk of life.

Her descriptions in this tale as well as the remarks of the other characters at the end of the story show the Queen as an intelligent, reasoning Christian. Respectful of the position of the clergy in the administration of the Church, she nonetheless questions their behavior when the need arises. Unlike many Christians of the time who blindly accepted actions as well as doctrines, she admonishes and chides those whose conduct warrants it. Without blatantly moralising, she manages to proffer an opinion, insinuate judgement and at the same time, hold the attention of her readers. What Jourda says of Marguerite's art can certainly be applied to this nouvelle: "la nouvelle n'a plus pour but exclusif de faire rire ou de moraliser didactiquement: un art original se fait jour qui se propose de tirer de la nouvelle des effets nouveaux, de faire d'elle oeuvre intellectuelle, et qui, dans cette intention, puise ses thèmes, non plus dans une série banale de sujets toujours identiques, mais dans l'observation intégrale de la vie." [52]

[52] Jourda, op. cit., p.921.

CHAPTER IV

OPINIONS OF OTHERS - PAST AND PRESENT

It is obvious that Marguerite's deeds and words had an overall influence on the life and times of her age. Attitudes and opinions concerning many pertinent issues are reflected in her literary output as well as her activities at Court -- both her own and her brother's. Renaissance thought was making progress in many areas and the Queen of Navarre did her share in contributing grist for this intellectual mill.

Among the many topics treated by Renaissance writers was that of marriage, its importance and the roles and responsibilities involved in the state. Opinions varied concerning woman's place in the marriage union. Renaissance man's Medieval ancestors did not find it difficult to presume woman's inferiority and consequently her position in the marital state was denigrated both in literature and life. In a book on the fabliaux, ribald tales reflecting Gallic humor, the authors describe the treatment of women: "They [women] are, almost without exception, unscrupulous, lecherous, lustful, inconstant, quarrelsome, gluttonous, shameless, and treacherous, and resort to the most ingenious shifts and stratagems to deceive their husbands or take revenge on them . . . the women of the fabliaux are treated without compassion, as necessary evils who, left

unguarded for a moment, will bring shame on their husbands." [1]

The fabliaux depict a panorama of medieval society and thus represent an important source of knowledge concerning life and customs of this era. Other important sources are found in Church and feudal customs.

While the Church subordinated woman to her husband, feudalism subordinated her to her feif. All feudal marriages of convenience were dictated by interests of land. . . . In this way both Church and Aristocracy combined to establish the doctrine of the woman's subjection, a doctrine which was apt to be linked with the notion of her essential inferiority. [2] True, there were those such as Christine de Pisan who in her Livre des Trois Vertus, took a stand against the prevalent denigration of women. However, women such as Christine were rare in medieval times and it remained for their Renaissance followers to heighten the efforts to dispel notions of essential inferiority of one particular sex. There was a new element in Renaissance society which pointedly illustrated the fact that woman would match wits with men and emerge victorious. This new element was the courtesan. Graceful, charming and, above all, intelligent, she gave the lie to the theory that woman was man's inferior. Chamberlain describes her thusly:

[1] Robert Hellman and Richard O'Gorman, trans., Fabliaux (New York, 1965), p.188.

[2] Eileen Power, Medieval Women (New York, 1975), p.19.

> The courtesan had arrived -- the beautiful accomplished woman who, for a fee, would grace any occasion. Many of them were widely educated, able to hold their own in any conversation, and frequently kept their own courts where the great of society could find refreshment and distraction from affairs of state among their own kind. The courtesan did not displace, but supplemented the wife. Marriage continued to be by arrangement; no sensible family would allow the possession of valuable lands and property to be jeopardized by casual alliances. The young noble, for his part, having performed his duty by a marriage alliance with someone he may have never met before, saw no reason why he should not find his pleasures elsewhere. Society agreed with him. Nevertheless, the slightly better education which women were receiving enabled them to play a more active part in society, and the wife stepped out of the background she had long occupied. [3]

It was this wife who was stepping out of the background whom Marguerite sought to give her rightful place in the matrimonial union. While managing to overlook her brother's vagaries in the matrimonial arena, she treated the place of woman in many of her writings and in this capacity did much to further the cause of her equality.

Opinions concerning woman's role in the union as well as the necessity of the matrimonial state were divergent among Renaissance writers and thinkers. However, since they were generally ambivalent or positive, they were better than the Middle Ages.

Erasmus was of the opinion that few men would marry if they had foreknowledge of what it would be like but he proffers the same opinion concerning women. He himself never married, but in his colloquy

[3] E.R. Chamberlain, Everyday Life in Renaissance Times (New York, 1965), p.57.

"Courtship," he implies that marriage is preferable to virginity. [4] This same attitude of superiority of marriage to virginity was advanced by Thomas Bacon. In medieval times these views would have been heretical, not merely controversial. Medieval ecclesiastical writers rated matrimony among the lower conditions of life. The sole argument of St. Jerome could find in its favor was that it served to provide the world with virgins. [5]

Francis Bacon criticized the institution but married nevertheless. It was his opinion that the best works proceeded from unmarried or childless men since they had the least obligations and therefore the most time to devote to great works. He did, however, cite the danger that being single could lead to self-centeredness and to blatant disregard of one's responsibilities toward society and the future. [6]

Another contemporary of Marguerite, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, argued that in considering the purpose of marriage one should add that of companionship. To his mind, companionship was the most lasting and enjoyable reason for marriage: "Even men who were somewhat aged, yes and to those that be decrepite, and in who there is no power of generation, no hope left of propagacion, it is nevertheless lawful to marry, and (if a man may say it) oftimes necessary,

[4] D. Erasmus, The Colloquies of Erasmus (London, 1878), p.150.

[5] Power, op. cit., p.16.

[6] Bernard I. Murstein, Love, Sex and Marriage through the Ages (New York, 1974), p.176.

whereby they maie passe for the later dates of their life, in the company of their well-beloved wyfe with more joye, suritie and less care." [7]

In his advice is an implication that a wife is something more than a piece of property or merely necessary for procreation.

A Renaissance figure who had much to say concerning marriage was Martin Luther. His arguments were more theological than social since his purpose in commenting was to attack the Church's role as law-giver. In his eyes the Church was a usurper, attempting to impose its own laws and rules as if they were God's will. His quarrel lay with the licentiousness of the clergy and the sacramental nature of marriage. The first he hoped to combat by negating the value of celibacy and recommending marriage for all and the second by showing that the existence of marriage among non-believers as well as believers contradicts the notion that it is the exclusive possession of the Church. His attempts to wrest jurisdiction from the Church in matters concerning marriage and place these matters in the hands of the government made inroads upon the influence of the Church. He did however, concede that the clergy could serve as advisers in marriage cases when "officials and jurors become confused about whether violations exist." [8]

[7] Murstein, op. cit., p.177.

[8] Martin Luther, The Christian in Society, Vol.III (Philadelphia, 1967), pp.318-9.

Another sixteenth century thinker who was greatly influenced by Luther's views was John Calvin. Calvin frequently corresponded with Marguerite and was one of the Reformers for whom she at times interceded with her brother. Like Luther, his arguments were mostly theological, but it did serve to cause people to examine individual roles in matrimony as well as consider in whose jurisdiction lay the rules governing it. Like Luther he married and like Luther he attacked the Church's right to make laws governing the state of matrimony. In his Institutes of the Christian Religion, he decried the Church's use of St. Paul's Epistle to the Esphesians as a proof of a sacramental nature of marriage. It is Calvin's contention that the Church only wished to be able to control matrimony in order to increase its hold on its members.

> For once they obtained this (jurisdiction over marriage), they took over the hearing of matrimonial cases; as it was a spiritual matter, it was not to be handled by secular judges. Then they passed laws by which they strengthened their tyranny, laws in part openly impious toward God, in part most unfair toward men. [9]

The theological aspects of attitudes toward marriage assumed a more sophisticated stance in the Renaissance. The humanistic stress on the importance of the individual worked to the advantage of the woman. Gradually people began to realize that compatibility was

[9] John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol.II (Philadelphia, 1960), p.1484.

achievable in marriage -- a death blow to the ideal of courtly love -- and not only was it achievable, it was now considered a prerequisite. Because of this change in attitude, a re-examination of laws governing adultery which were highly prejudicial to women was undertaken. Even in the more profound theological considerations one can perceive inklings of an awareness that women had been exploited.

However, all did not change dramatically during this period. It was one of transition and examination and not everyone was ready to accept changes. People were beginning to look upon marriage as a contract that should be entered into without coercion and a relationship that could be severed under severely trying circumstances.

The Queen of Navarre was also examining attitudes toward marriage, but from the point of view of the mutual roles of the marriage partners. Although not a theologian, Marguerite was a profoundly religious woman who always remained loyal to the Church. Her loyalty however, did not prevent her from seeing faults and working to correct them. The subject must have been frequently discussed since most of the Reformers at one time or other sought protection at Nérac or Pau.

Deeply respectful of human life, she could not bear to see men on the pyre because of ideas. These men whom she protected shared their ideas with her. Her writings reflect her attitude toward what she heard and read during her lifetime.

Marguerite was concerned with the prevailing theories on marriage and with the necessity of their reform. She saw in marriage a mystical signification and cited often the epistle of Saint Paul to the

Ephesians: "Wives, be submissive to your husbands as to God. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave his life for it. Because of this, a man will leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife and the two will become one being." [10] It is interesting to note that this is the same Epistle chosen by Calvin to refute the Church's claim that marriage is a sacrament. The Queen of Navarre never looked on marriage as anything but a sacrament since she never separated herself from the teachings of the Church.

Because she was christian as well as woman, she addressed herself frequently to this question of marriage and the obligations incumbent upon both partners in this union. Unlike the writers of the period of courtly love, she believed that love and marriage were compatible. The love that Marguerite conceived of was an innate one. To her the mark of a gentleman or woman of noble birth was fidelity. Having herself suffered at the hands of an unfaithful husband she could well define what she wished true marital love to be.

Many of her biographers and literary critics have discussed Marguerite's marital problems and shown that they were not a well kept secret. Her husband's political intrigues, as well as his amorous pursuits, caused Marguerite much unhappiness.

One author says: "Meanwhile Henri d'Albret's tireless infidelity and his erratic loyalty to François, whose failure to win back

[10] St. Paul, Ephesians 5:21, 25, 31. The Jerusalem Bible (New York ,1966).

Navarre for him either by treaty or force of arms led to unseemly flirtations with the Emperor, increasingly taxed Marguerite's endurance, but she never seemed to have completely lost affection for him, even at the end when relations were so bad as to be the subject of gossip." [11]

Febvre describes the situation thusly:

> A trente-neuf ans, elle était une vieille femme. Lui [Henri] cependant avait trente ans. Jeune, fort, sanguin, brutal, il s'amusait, oubliait avec la première venue, au hasard de ses rencontres, la vieille dame aux cheveux gris qui l'irritait avec ses continuelles lectures, ses méditations, ses conversations de théologie ou d'esthétique avec des gens de rien. Des scènes violentes secouaient le ménage. Brèves, car Henri ne pouvait, en maltraitant Marguerite, courir le risque d'irriter François. Mais l'atmosphère était lourde pour la reine de Navarre. [12]

Platonism, so in vogue at the time, became her most powerful auxiliary, especially in the cause of the "Malmariées." Religious reforms, both Catholic and Protestant, were bringing new influences of morality. The philosophical reform (Platonism) was re-introducing the question of love and the influence of these two reforms made themselves widely felt throughout France.

Lévi says of this period: "It is difficult not to see the production of the translations of the dialogues [Plato's] among the

[11] A.J. Krailsheimer, ed., Three Sixteenth Century Conteurs (New York, 1966).

[12] Febvre, op. cit., p.218.

protégés of Marguerite de Navarre as corresponding to the need to support not only her religious views but also the feeling that emotional love might be morally enriching with its corollary that women too were capable of intellectual and spiritual activity, perhaps even on a par with men." [13]

She never insists on the duties of one sex and not the other but rather imposes the obligations equally upon both. In many of the nouvelles of the Heptaméron she insists both men and women have the same obligations before and during marriage and therefore should suffer the same consequences for infidelity. In Nouvelle 15, related by Longarine, she advances her views of "equal punishment." A biographer of Marguerite's daughter has described Longarine in this manner:

> Longarine is the "femme raisonnable," full of common sense, realistic about human nature, but not soured by her disappointments. Gay and forthright, she has a reputation for making people laugh and for telling the truth. She has high standards of fidelity, and she says at one time that if her husband were unfaithful she would kill him and herself. . . . Jourda says of Longarine, "life has tested her but she knew how to avoid pessimism and keep her gaiety; she reminds us a bit of the Marquise de Sévigné." [14]

Again in Nouvelle 21, related by Parlamente, we find her insistence on equal rights and equal duties.

[13] A.H.T. Lévi, Humanism in France (New York, 1970), p.240.

[14] Nancy Lyman Roelker, Queen of Navarre: Jeanne d'Albret (Cambridge, 1968), p.23.

Marcel Tetel says of this nouvelle: "Not only does this combined weight-scale-balance image accentuate the precariousness of man - woman relationship with a suggested criticism of the proverbial double standard of the sexes, it also reveals a certain malaise, a constant suffering." [15]

From her personal correspondence as well as other historical and biographical documents, it is evident that Marguerite knew this suffering and was therefore concerned with others who shared her experience.

That the Queen did not agree with the prevailing prejudice against widows re-marrying is obvious. After the death of her first husband, Charles d'Alençon, she married the King of Navarre, Henri d'Albret. Therefore, she taught by both word and example and helped to dispell the prevailing prejudices of her time.

Always the diplomat, she suggests rather than insists, she insinuates rather than stating directly. She introduces her ideas without imposing them and thus greatly contributes in liberating both her contemporaries and their posterity from the preconceived ideas that weighed so heavily upon them by giving women as an example to men.

Truly Marguerite did much to improve attitudes towards woman's position in the marriage partnership. However, she, like many of her

[15] Marcel Tetel, Marguerite de Navarre's Heptaméron: Themes, Language and Structure (North Carolina, 1973), p.13.

contemporaries, still continued the practice of arranged marriages. Many great figures of this period, such as Montaigne, Erasmus, Rabelais, Marguerite de Navarre, and Luther, subscribed to the concept that marriage should be primarily determined by other than the self-interest of the participants. [16]

Although she traveled in illustrious company, it appears odd that Marguerite would sanction such an arrangement since she insisted so strongly on the fact that love was an essential component in the matrimonial mix. In her case it can probably be explained by her inordinate love of her brother, Francis, for whom the marriage of his niece was expedient. Sisterly love prevailed in this case over motherly love and even, one might guess, over better judgement. Francis, who saw no reason to sacrifice wealth of family gain for such uncertain commodities as passion, beauty or virtue, simply made his wishes known. His sister, to whom wish was synonymous to command, simply fulfilled them. To most this would seem strange since Marguerite's stance appears to be one of justice as well as independence in her dealings with others as well as in her recounting of others' behavior in her Heptaméron and theatre. This blind submission to her brother's every whim constitutes the major flaw in the amazing tapestry of Marguerite's make-up. Fierce independence is no match for blind loyalty and, in this instance, it was Marguerite's

[16] Murstein, op. cit., p.179.

daughter who was to suffer as a result. The incident created an almost irreparable breach in the relations between mother and daughter. It was not until Jeanne's marriage was later annulled that the relationship improved. One can be sure that the mother must have regretted this unfortunate incident and, had the author of the marital dictum been other than her brother, the marriage probably never would have occurred. To those who would fault the Queen for her "subservient" behavior we need only enumerate her many political, intellectual and social contributions which indicate a far from subservient posture. Everyone, even a queen, has his blind spot. §

Another attitude reflected in Marguerite's writings was that of need of reform among the clergy. Like so many of her contemporaries, the Queen perceived the need of change within the Church and its existing structure. Less vituperous in her attacks than many, she nonetheless depicts unworthy clergymen in many of her tales. Although fictitious, these tales frequently had basis in fact and were, as has been said, indicative of behavior and customs of the time. A deeply religious woman, the Queen of Navarre had contact with many priests who personified the true Christian ideals, among them Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux, Lefèvre d'Etaples and her spiritual director, Michel d'Arande, an Augustinian monk. Perhaps it was from them that she learned of the errant behavior of some of their fellows. Perhaps,

§ For an interesting analysis of Marguerite's motives, see M. Cazaux's article in Appendix D.

too, these deviations came to light at various courtly gatherings, when the conversation was free and flowing. Regardless of how she discovered them, Marguerite was aware of their existence and did not hesitate to portray them nor in the discussions following each nouvelle, to condemn them. Concerned with many aspects of reform, she used these examples to arouse interest and provoke investigation. Hers was a concern of an interested Church member and centered on morals rather than doctrine. Her contemporaries, on the other hand, took a different tack. Priests or former priests, they assailed the teachings and organization of the Church. Rabelais' coarse, satirical Gargantua mirrored his hatred of hypocrisy and, above all, of traditions and inherited institutions. His famous "Fais ce que tu voudras" of Thélème clearly illustrates his opinion of monastic rules and way of life.

Luther's famous condemnation of the Church's teaching on indulgences echoed his belief that "The Pope had made a merit of contrition, had made confession a monopoly of the clergy, and hindered the regeneration of man by burdening satisfaction with all sorts of meritorious works, even granting absolution before demanding satisfaction." [17]

Calvin's disdain of the clergy was based on his belief that they had intruded in matters over which they really had no jurisdiction.

[17] Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era: 1500-1650 (New York, 1966), p.135.

In his Institutes of Christian Religion he condemns many of the Church's positions and, in one section congratulates himself for having "partly pulled the lion's skin from these asses." [18]

All three of these men included in their ideas on marriage the right of the clergy to marry. The doctrine of celibacy was, to them, unnecessary and unwise. The Queen of Navarre did not attack this doctrine directly but was quick to point out the hypocrisy of those who preached it but did not practice it.

What, then, of the Queen's position on the clergy? To Marguerite they were a segment of society as were the lords and ladies of the Court. Like the latter, religious also were expected to conform to certain norms of behavior. Just as she was quick to point out lapses on the part of her peers so too did she hasten to indicate those of the clergy. She was aware of the need of reform in all strata of society. She gives examples to follow as well as those to shun. In her stories there are those who, by their actions, demonstrate what not to do in a given situation and those whose conduct provides a manual of how to cope as well as how to act. Perhaps by her diplomatic way of introducing these ideas as a form of fiction the Queen did more to aid the cause of both societal and religious reform than did her contemporaries with their heated diatribes directed at various segments of Church and State. Just as conscious as her colleagues of needed changes in attitudes, she endeavored to cause them to come

[18] Calvin, Vol.II, op. cit., p.1484.

about in a far more diplomatic way. That is not to say, however, that she hid behind her fiction in expressing her ideas. Marguerite did not hesitate to come forward when need arose. She spoke as Queen of Navarre, sister of the King, as well as author of fictitious religious and profane drama and prose. The presence of so many of the persecuted among her coterie of friends and admirers as well as her unflinching confrontation of the Sorbonne in the founding of the Collège de France give ample evidence of her fearlessness in the face of opposition. Women need not hesitate to point to her as an example of fortitude as well as forthrightness. No apology need be made for her attitudes since she was, in almost every instance, objective, frank and sincere. Hers were tactics of diplomacy, of insinuation rather than imposition of ideas and the old adage of "catching more flies with honey than vinegar" is most apt in describing her methods. Although direct and forthright when dealing with people or issue, she tempered this attitude with her innate refinement and knew how to render a "doux nenny avec un doux sourire." [19] The efficacy of these tactics is aptly demonstrated by the fact that she was able to remain on friendly terms with so many people of divergent thought, as well as by the concrete evidence of her accomplishments. The founding of the Collège de France, the negotiation of the Treaty of Cambrai, her economic and political reforms at Pau and Nérac, her constant striving for intellectual and religious excellence in the

[19] Putnam, op. cit., p.353.

Church -- are but a few of the many as well as varied attainments of the Queen of Navarre. Without doubt her attitudes left lasting influences on her era.

For the most part, the attitudes and accomplishments of the Queen of Navarre were looked on with favor by her contemporaries. Her brother, the king, stood in admiration at what she achieved. Scholars dedicated books to her, diplomats courted her favor so as to assure success with her brother, religious and literary renegades sought protection and solace at her court and, what is more, acknowledged their debt to her. True, not everyone agreed with the opinions of the Queen's followers but she received these jibes with equanimity. Although condemned by the University of Paris as "heretical," she remained fiercely loyal to the Church. When her efforts at reform incurred her brother's disapproval, she judiciously withdrew from the Court to spare further embarrassment. This withdrawal did not indicate abandonment of her efforts but rather a relocation of her campaign headquarters. She took her obligations seriously and did not waver in her course once the goal was established. Behavior such as this would of necessity, arouse hostility as well as admiration.

Among those whom one could classify as admirers might be found the poet, Clément Marot. This man, chosen valet de chambre by Marguerite in 1519, owed her debt beyond repayment. Were it not for her, he most certainly would have found himself at best exiled at worst

executed on account of his religious belief. A man of no small accomplishment himself Marot recognized in Marguerite all of which she was capable and summarizes it in this dizain:

> Ma Maîtresse est de si haulte valeur,
> Qu'elle a le corps droict, beau, chaste
> et pudique.
> Son cueur constant n'est pour heur ou
> malheur
> Jamais trop gay, ne trop mélancolique.
> Elle a au chef un esprit angélique,
> Le plus subtil qui onc aux cieulx vola.
> O grand merveille! on peult veoir par
> cela
> Que je suis serf d'un monstre fort estrange:
> Monstre, je dy, car, pour tout vray, elle a
> Corps femenin, cueur d'homme et teste d'ange. [20]

For Marot, Marguerite defies categorization. She possesses phenomenal qualities and therefore deserves to be ranked as both terrestrial and celestial. This is but one example of his esteem for a literary historian tells us: "Marot ne cessait de louer Marguerite dans ses vers. Il enfin employait à louer et à exalter sa noble protectrice toutes les ressources poétiques que son génie lui fournissait." [21]

Another prodigy of this great century, François Rabelais, dedicated his Tiers Livre to the Queen of Navarre, imploring her to leave the lofty heights of contemplation and come back to earthly matters.

[20] Clément Marot, Poésies Choisies (Paris, 1969), p.26.

[21] Jules Jolly, Histoire du mouvement intellectuel au seizième siècle (Geneva, 1969), p.7.

He gently chides the Queen with her spiritual preoccupations and points to more mundane solution to man's quest:

> ... Yet let a kindly fate
> Restore you to our midst, compassionate,
> Making your eyes to range, your thoughts to dwell
> On this, which is the third book to relate
> The Joyous Feats of Good Pantagruel. [22]

This dedication reflects far more than perfunctory homage addressed to a leading lady of France. It contains advice given in a manner which indicates a more lateral than subordinate relationship. Rabelais regarded her as a literary peer and so felt free to address her in this manner. The fact that he was able to do so as well as the fact that the Queen accepted these dedicatory verses even though they appeared in such a controversial work says much for the mutual esteem and respect in which each must have held the other.

To these must be added the name of Erasmus who, in 1525 at the urging of her admirers, wrote to her from Bale. It was after the defeat at Pavia and the words of this scholar must, no doubt, have buoyed her spirits tremendously.

> . . . For I have admired and loved you this long while because of the many and goodly gifts that God has bestowed upon you: the prudence of a philosopher, purity, moderation, piety, and invincible force of soul and a marvelous contempt of all the vanities of the world. Who would not admire in a great King's sister the qualities which are rare in priests and monks? . . . many men of excellent parts have painted your mind in their letters to me, more

[22] Marcel Tetel, Rabelais (New York, 1967), p.125.

> faithfully than any painter. . . . I praise you because I know you, and I do not flatter your power, for I want nothing from you except a return of affection. [23]

It was not only in the realm of literature that Marguerite's admirers abounded. Diplomats, courtiers and even kings admired the traits of this remarkable woman. Matteo Dandolo, the Venetian ambassador to the court of Francis I, said of Marguerite: "I believe her to be the wisest, not only among the women but among the men of France; on questions of state policy you could not wish for sounder remarks than hers." [24]

This opinion was undoubtedly not an isolated one since we know from history that Marguerite took part in all the councils of the kingdom and that her judgement was heavily relied on. "Many ambassadors," says Sichel, "lost themselves in admiration of her parts and enlarged upon them in their dispatches." [25]

At the time of her negotiations with him for the release of her brother, Charles described her as being more of a prodigy than a woman. Even the great Emperor had to admit he had met his match.

Among the members of her own sex who recognized the Queen's gifts and valued her contributions may be listed Hélisenne de Crenne. Writing of the Queen she says:

[23] Sichel, op. cit., p.129.

[24] Tilley, op. cit., p.103.

[25] Sichel, op. cit., p.152.

> Je n'estime point qu'au passé jamais ne fust ne pour l'avenir peult estre personne de plus excellent et hault esprit, que la très illustre et magnanime princesse ma dame la Reyne de Navarre, c'est une chose toute notoire qu'en sa Royalle excellente et sublime personne, réside la divinité Platonique, la prudence de Caton, l'éloquence de Circéron et la Socratique raison: et à brief parler sa sincérité est tant accomplie que la splendeur d'icelle à la condition féminine donne lustre. . . . [26]

Of Hélisenne de Crenne, Reynier says: "Ses oeuvres suffiraient d'ailleurs à nous convaincre qu'elle avait entretenu un long commerce avec l'antiquité, tant par les allusions que par les emprunts indiscrets qu'elle a faits au latin pour enrichir son vocabulaire. Il faut ajouter son nom à celui des femmes très cultivées qui furent la parure de notre Renaissance."

Dans une de ses lettres elle réclame pour les dames la liberté de "monstrer leurs louables oeuvres." [27]

Referring to Hélisenne and Marguerite and their conception of love in their writings, Bédier and Hazard say: "Deux femmes, Hélisenne de Crenne et Marguerite de Navarre, presque en même temps, sont les premières à voir dans l'amour autre chose que le contact de deux epidermes. Elles inaugurent un genre nouveau." [28]

Hélisenne's reference to "la condition féminine" reflects her

[26] Hélisenne de Crenne, "Epistres invectives" (quoted in Telle, op. cit., p.359).

[27] Gustave Reynier, Le roman sentimental avant l'Astrée (Paris, 1908), p.101.

[28] Joseph Bédier et Paul Hazard, Littérature Française (Paris, 1948), p.201.

praise for what Marguerite had done for members of her sex as much as the rest of the quotation illustrates her deep regard for the Queen's intellectual and political accomplishments. It is high praise coming from another woman who writes and illustrative of the esteem in which Marguerite was held at the time by all who knew or knew of her.

Hélisenne de Crenne's opinion is mirrored by many others of the era. Authors and poets of different schools of thought were influenced by this woman and showed it in their works. Bailly remarks in his book on French literature:

> A la même époque, en 1544, l'un des plus brillants représentants de l'école poétique lyonnaise, Maurice Scève, faisait apparaître sa Délie dont le pétrarquisme s'associait à une inspiration platonicienne que l'on discerne présente dans l'oeuvre entière. Nous avons ici encore la preuve que la personnalité de Marguerite de Navarre n'exerçait pas un moindre prestige sur les poètes du groupe lyonnais que ceux qui fréquentaient sa cour, puisque nous voyons l'édition originelle des Marguerites, publiée en 1547 à Lyon, s'ouvrir par un sonnet du même Maurice Scève dédié à la reine de Navarre, de même que l'était par un autre sonnet la première partie du recueil.[29]

It was this appeal to so many as well as her own nobility of thought that prompted Sainte-Marthe to eulogize Marguerite thusly: "C'est à moi de vous monstrer ici que Marguerite a tellement respondu à la noblesse de son sang qu'elle l'a surpassée par la noblesse

[29] August Bailly, La vie littéraire sous la Renaissance (Paris, 1952), p.80.

de ses moeurs." [30]

During her lifetime, Marguerite's efforts were not always greeted with enthusiasm by all segments of the population. The condemnation of her "Miroir" by the Sorbonne as well as the university's subsequent attacks because of her involvement in the founding of the Collège de France aptly demonstrate the fact that even royalty is not exempt from the barbs of those who would disagree.

Richardson says of this: "Not everyone approved of the great thirst for learning manifested by this princess, and a certain amount of raillery and even of malevolent criticism was directed against her for occupations so unfitted to her sex as the reading of books of philosophy and indulging in physical exercise." [31]

It must be admitted, however, that her detractors, though powerful, were in the minority.

That Marguerite's ideas and opinions were not universally accepted is also illustrated by Montaigne's chiding of the Queen in his essays. He is critical of her praising the young prince of Nouvelle 25 for never failing to stop at church to pray on his way to and from his trysts with the wife of the attorney. The essayist's contention that women should not meddle in matters theological is bolstered by the

[30] Oraison funèbre de Marguerite de Navarre, in Le Roux de Lincy et Anatole Montaiglon, L'Heptaméron des Nouvelles de très haute et très illustre princesse Marguerite d'Angoulême (Paris, 1880), p.33.

[31] Richardson, op. cit., p.113.

Queen's seeming praise of this princely indiscretion. He says: "Mais ce n'est pas par cette preuve seulement qu'on pourrait vérifier que les femmes ne sont guieres propres à traiter les matières de la Théologie." [32]

It should be noted, too, that it is not with the Queen's literary ability that Montaigne takes exception but rather with what he considers as excusing an action he believes hypocritical. In the discussion following the story, however, the Queen does bow to the theologians by saying, "Laissons ces disputes aux théologiens, à fin que Longarine donne sa voix à quelqu'un." [33] Therefore one must surmise that perhaps Montaigne was a bit too hasty in his judgement.

To her contemporaries, Marguerite was an example of all that was good in their era. Intelligent, capable, willing to give of her talents and time, she epitomized that period we have come to call the Renaissance. In his book on the Renaissance, Taylor characterized Marguerite in this manner: "And she [Marguerite] herself represented the intellectual expansion of her land and time. She even represented that incipient and temperate religious Reform, which proceeded as much from the basis of enlarged learning and the accompanying clearer discrimination between fact and foolishness, as from disgust with the corruptions and superstitions of the Church. Religious reform, carried out in the spirit of Marguerite, would not

[32] Michel de Montaigne, Essais (Paris, 1580), p.310.

[33] The Heptaméron, p.207.

have loosed the Furies upon France." [34]

All of Marguerite's life was a search for values -- not just rules -- to live by. Taylor's appraisal is apt and, had more people followed Marguerite's example, much bitterness could most certainly have been avoided. Eclectic in her tastes, capable of such works as "La Navire" as well as les Nouvelles, she personified the tolerant, open woman. It was the very ability to be all this that, says Gelernt, "places the Queen of Navarre squarely in the stream of the broad European cultural tradition known as Christian Humanism." [35]

The attitude of present day critics as well as those of Marguerite's time indicates the respect for her accomplishments in the field of living as well as in the field of literature. All cite her contributions to the flow of civilization simultaneously with those to the growth of literature.

Girard says: "Beyond the fact that philosophical and religious poetry in France goes back to Marguerite, that she is the first mystical poet in our literature, we owe her something more precious and greater still: a scrupulous attention, honest unswerving, to the movements of consciousness, the appearance of the "moi" [the self] in literature." [36]

[34] H.O. Taylor, Thought and Expression in the Sixteenth Century, Vol.I (New York, 1920), p.316.

[35] Jules Gelernt, World of Many Loves - The Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre (North Carolina, 1966), p.18.

[36] Girard, op. cit., vol.I, p.242.

This revelation of self is apparent in all of her works. Her thoughts are voiced by her characters in her theatre and her nouvelles and her opinions are easily discernable in their utterings. Her presence is not intrusive, though, and does not interfere with the story's flow. One is conscious of her presence but the characters still prevail. The reader's enjoyment is never spoiled by the obvious intrusion of the author. This makes Marguerite's works all the more enjoyable and increases the value of their contribution to the growth of literature.

In discussing the contributions of women writers to French literature, Germaine Brée says of Marguerite:

> In her handling of the traditional conte, she modified its intent and structures, giving it new depth and significance. She was a studious and deeply meditative woman with a broad and often trying experience of life in a society where high-born women were pawns in a political power game. In the humanistic learning of the time she sought a personal understanding of life and of the Christian religion. Underlying her work is her personal spiritual odyssey. She was drawn to the new philosophical trends, the Neoplatonism which was to bring about a reassessment of the doctrines of the Church. [37]

Again the emphasis is on the fact that it was because of what she was as well as what she did that Marguerite deserves a place in the annals of literature. Her experiences aided rather than stunted her growth as an author as well as a woman.

[37] Germaine Brée, Women Writers in France (New Jersey, 1973), p.23.

Of her position among writers, Tilley comments: "Whatever Marguerite's character, her influence upon the thought and literature of the French Renaissance was of the first importance. Michelet's happy phrase,"the aimiable mother of the Renaissance," expresses a literal truth. . . . If the Grand Parangon belongs in character to the Middle Ages, there is no single book which is more inspired by the spirit of the Renaissance in the form which it assumed in France than the Heptaméron of Marguerite of Navarre." [38]

It is evident from the opinions of literary historians and critics through the ages that Marguerite's contributions are two-fold. Had she never written a line, she would be remembered for her many and varied activities outside the literary arena. However, she did write and, in so doing, added a dimension to her contributions unrivaled by others of her time.

Perhaps a citation from the village of Pau's commemoration of the fourth centenary of her death best summarizes the feeling of the French, as well as the contributions of the Queen:

> Lorsque, le 13 décembre, 1920, à la veille de la commémoration du tricentenaire de l'union du Béarn et de la Navarre à la France, l'éminent historien Franz Funck-Brentano, vint à Lescar joindre sa voix à la nôtre pour honorer, sur l'initiative d'un poète, Marguerite de Navarre, il se plut à rappeler l'opinion, entre toutes autorisée de son ami M. Abel Lefranc, Professeur de ce collège de France dont la création est due à Marguerite:

[38] Tilley, op. cit., vol.I, p.104.

"Quand on songe, a écrit celui-ci, que la même personne qui a dicté des considérants empreints d'une tendresse si éclairée à l'égard de l'enfonce a aussi composé l'Heptaméron et les chansons spirituelles, défendu Rabelais, Marot, Des Périers, Lefèvre d'Etaples, Calvin et les Vaudois, deviné un Amyot, un Anzo, compris une Renée de France et une Vittoria Colonna, gouté un Cellini, un Serlio, un Clouet, protégé les premiers lecteurs en grec et en hébreu, sans parler de tant de hardis imprimeurs et de doux poètes, quand on songe qu'elle a, durant trente ans, pris une part aussi active que salutaire à la politique extérieure d'un des plus grands royaumes de la chrétienté -- n'oublions pas que François Ier l'avait fait entrer au Conseil de Roi -- suggéré plusieurs des réformes les plus fécondes du règne de son frère qu'elle soutint et conseilla au fond des prisons de Madrid et enfin ramené la prospérité économique et une stricte justice dans son propre royaume, on comprend qu'il soit permis d'affirmer qu'il n'y a pas dans toute la Renaissance de figure plus admirable ni plus digne d'être aimée. [39]

[39] Ducla, Commémoration, p.29.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

When the actions of Marguerite de Navarre are examined closely and impartially one cannot help but stand in awe at their import. It is not unreasonable to say that history was changed because of them. One can go further and add society and customs to the changes.

Had she not the skill of a negotiator and the tact of a diplomat much would have been different in Renaissance France. The recalcitrant Charles might not have been so supple in the hands of another envoy and Francis might have languished a good deal longer in Spanish prisons and, indeed might never have returned to his people. Marguerite's presence was a decisive factor in his regaining his health and returning to the vigorous person he was before his ignominious defeat. Her encouragements and, one could guess, admonishments as well, reminded him of what was expected of rulers and helped him to draw himself up to kingly stature once more. He made the necessary promises to Charles (albeit he never meant to keep them) and became once more a ruling sovereign. It must have pained Marguerite to acquiesce to the substitution of her nephews as replacements for her brother but her nimble intellect was probably already at work seeking ways and means to insure that all members of the royal family would soon be on French soil.

Having acquitted herself of duties concerning the return of her sovereign, Marguerite next turned her attention to ransoming those

nephews she was forced to leave behind. Hapless victions of the vagaries of war and treaties, Francis' two young sons had found themselves conscripted as their father's replacement in the hands of the Spanish. The capable and cool-headed dealing of their aunt and grandmother resulted in their ultimate return to their native soil. Had those two remained in Spanish captivity, the line of succession would have changed and perhaps passed from the hands of the family Marguerite struggled so valiantly to protect. Had the future Henri II not suffered at the hands of the Spaniards, things might have gone differently for the Emperor Charles-Quint. Never forgetting his treatment in Spanish prisons, the French king was ultimately responsible for the division of Charles' empire and the eventual termination of the long struggle between France and the Empire to the decided advantage of France. Metz, Toul and Verdun, as well as Calais came into French hands. The country was growing and heading towards finalization of its territorial formation. If young Henry had not acceded to the throne, all of this might never have happened. True, someone else might have secured his release but it was nonetheless his aunt, Marguerite, who succeeded in accomplishing it. Thus, as has been the case so often in history, a country owes a great deal of its historical development to the capable and intelligent political moves of a woman. One might conjecture that it all would have happened anyway but Marguerite's instrumentality cannot be denied.

Just as the failure to ransom either the king or later the princes would have influenced the political tides of France, so would they

have touched it socially. Perhaps another ruler would not have had the attraction toward the arts that Francis had. It could have denied France a da Vinci as well as some of her beautiful chateaux.

Had these chateaux not existed, life at court would have been altered considerably. Things would have been more stationary and lack of traveling from one place to another would have depleted the topics of conversation considerably. A King who had no desire to travel, to acquire beautiful things and to show them off might have been France's lot had the negotiations of his sister to secure the release of the king and his sons not been successful. All these factors would certainly have made France different socially from what she was.

It was not only Marguerite's political astuteness that embellished the picture of Renaissance France, however. A true woman of culture, she was interested in a great many things and transmitted this interest to those around her. The royal court was a fascinating place to visit since one could always find interesting people with whom to share experiences, exchange ideas or discuss timely topics. The presence of these interesting people was due in large measure to the magnetic charm of the king's sister. The "badinage" of a Marot was mingled with the philosophical and religious arguments of men such as Berquin. The court was a veritable pot-pourri of culture and refinement. The topics of conversation were pertinent and the conversationalists well informed. Truly the quality of life had a softer tone about it than that of the pre-Renaissance era. The "hunting-lodge mentality" was replaced by one of a much broader

as well as broadening outlook. The horizon was enlarged and man's myopic vision of his own small universe spread to that wider world which was gradually being discovered. All of these changes were brought about, to a greater or lesser degree, by the Queen of Navarre. Having opened her own court to the scholars and religious dissidents of France, she set an example to others. Her influence on her brother was undeniable and it was this influence that accounted for the presence of those who frequented Pau and Nérac at the larger and more prestigious court of Francis I. Both formal and informal gatherings were enhanced by their presence. Table talk took a turn for the better and, one can surmise, so did table manners. Crudity was being supplanted by refinement in every facet of life at the court as well as in gatherings among the nobility and aristocracy. Gracious living was rapidly becoming the life style. There was more time for genteel diversions and there were more people interested in pursuing them. These courtly gatherings can aptly be named as ancestors of the following century's oft-frequented salons. Repartee sharpened the wits of the participants and one can be certain that the Queen of Navarre did much to insure the quality of what was discussed. Her interests were varied but all truly worthwhile. The presence of a person such as she was an added incentive to those around her to maintain the high standards she set.

Although Marguerite's presence was strongly felt, it was never imposed. A genuinely unselfish person, she allowed others to dominate conversations, choose topics and, in general, steal the lime-

light. Her own literary pursuits never caused her to denigrate the talents of others. The presence of so many dedicatory verses attests to the fact that her fellow artists saw in her a most gracious protectress as well as a literary equal. Creativity was encouraged -- never discouraged -- by the Queen of Navarre. Ever solicitous of the welfare of those whose talents might otherwise go unnoticed, she created posts at court -- both hers and her brother's -- where they might perform sometimes minor duties but still have both the time and the protective atmosphere to compose and create. Often the beliefs of those whom she protected were contrary to her own, but she was able to separate objective and subjective reality. If there had been more like her, religious differences might never have created the problems they did in France. They would probably have been settled in a much more civilized and far less bloody manner than they were. Had her conciliatory pose been adopted by others, fewer pyres would have illuminated France's horizons and more consciences would have remained at rest. Her attitude even more than her actions teaches a worthwhile lesson to those who would study it. In most instances far more can be accomplished when an air of tolerance is maintained. Perhaps today's world would be a less chaotic place were each of us to really listen to what our brothers have to say. Marguerite was willing to listen and, having heard, proffer her opinion of what was said. This opinion was just as likely to be an agreement as a rebuttal. Regardless of its nature, however, it was given in an understanding way. Her talent lay in creating an aura of acceptibility

and thereby encouraging exchange of ideas. What she did was appreciated by those who sought a forum as well as by those who wished just to converse. Her tactics, though not original, were refreshing in an era where intolerance was commonplace if ideas ran contrary to the opinion of those who believed they had a monopoly on learning.

Undaunted by obstacles such as obstinate people, Marguerite changed not only social customs but educational ones as well. Since its conception, the Sorbonne's grip on the educational process grew ever tighter. The narrow-minded bigotry of its leaders kept Latin as the sole language of scholarship and hindered all who would read the great works of Greek and Hebrew authors. Knowing full well that the professors of the Sorbonne would never yield on this point caused Marguerite to avidly pursue the idea of the founding of a college where true freedom of learning was the rule. Thus was she instrumental in the establishment of the Collège de France and the provision of an option to scholars who wished to explore the works of Antiquity. Educational patterns were drastically changed by this move. The monopoly on learning, so long held by the University of Paris, had been ended forever. Men could now choose to pursue avenues of learning other than those vaunted by the University as being "respectable." Had this new vista not opened, perhaps much of Renaissance scholarship would have been lost. The poets of the Pléiade were among its staunchest supporters and the first Greek classes boasted such scholars as Calvin, Rabelais and Ignatius Loyola. Men of such divergent opinions would never have been able to pursue the

common goal of learning in the rigid atmosphere of the University of Paris. Again one might say that such a center for learning would have eventually appeared since interest in Antiquity was increasing. However, it cannot be denied that it appeared at this time and, in a very large measure, because of the efforts of the Queen of Navarre. Despite opposition, accusations and direct attacks by members of the University's faculty and student body, this courageous woman pursued her task of providing an alternative to what was then the only means of obtaining a higher education.

These unflagging efforts of a cultured woman to secure the scholars' position in society provided stimulus for other proponents of increased educational opportunities for women as well as for men. The pattern of France's educational process was changing but it did not stop there. Students at the Collège de France were not all Frenchmen and therefore this newly founded seat of learning helped contribute to the dissemination of ideas throughout western Europe. When one thinks of what could have been lost had this Collège not come into being, the extraordinary insight and courage of Marguerite inspires gratitude and admiration.

All of this was done without fanfare since what the Queen was seeking was not her own gratification nor recognition by others but rather the provision of a new and exciting way to travel for the scholar. That scholars found this way attractive is proven by the fact that the Collège de France is still in existence. It has nurtured some of the finest literary talent in the world and boasts

some of the greatest intellectuals in history. Names such as Renan, Michelet, Valéry and, in our day, Abel Lefranc grace the roster of its lecturers. A school where lectures are accessible to all, where opportunity to learn is not hampered by requirements, tests or ultimate degrees provides the relaxed atmosphere that makes learning a joy and creativity a definite possibility. Surely this can be counted as one of her greatest contributions and must be acknowledged as forerunner to many educational reforms.

Truly one can identify Marguerite as a moving force in thought and feeling -- opening the minds of those around her and making them willing to embrace new ideas. She was in truth a progressive woman and her influence on her era, as well as on ensuing generations, cannot be denied.

Had she stopped there, Marguerite's influence would still remain monumental. However, her efforts went further and her contributions were extended to include the field of literature. There are those who would say that her literary efforts were of no great significance but they do not equal the number of those who view her output with respect and admiration.

Marguerite's religious poetry testifies to a profound regard for Christian convictions as well as an unapologetic admiration of the thoughts of Antiquity. In her religious works, she does much to attempt to bridge the conflict between the two ideas. How unfortunate that the leading educators of the time could not see this in the "Miroir de l'âme pecheresse." Their condemnation of this work as

"Protestant" testifies to their lack of tolerance and unwillingness to accept and examine new ideas. A deeply spiritual woman, Marguerite could not be disloyal to the teachings of the Church. She was, however, an intelligent, sensitive and well-educated humanist endeavoring to mediate a religious controversy which grew ever more vehement.

Anyone reading "Le Navire" cannot help but be impressed by the deep religiosity of its content. Perhaps her critics resented a woman's treading on their theological turf as much as they resented her ideas. Nonetheless, their literary merit cannot be ignored and their contribution to the growth of mystical poetry must be acknowledged.

In the same vein as her poetry, her drama must also help class her among religious writers of her time. An extremely accomplished writer, she was able to combine the sacred and profane in such a way as to continue the purpose of the drama to instruct as well as entertain. However, she managed to go further since her character interpretation took a more sophisticated stance than did her predecessors'. She has managed to preserve the air of naïveté of the plays of the preceding centuries but has incorporated a more penetrating analysis of motives and intentions. Although her dramas are not staged, they convey to their readers the dramatist's progress toward careful consideration of the "why" of an action as well as the description of the action itself.

Continuing the tradition of morality and miracle-type plays, Marguerite provided a transition to Renaissance theatre through her

character treatment as well as through her portrayal of women. In her plays, the medieval shrew has disappeared. Men are not being pursued by broom-wielding women nor being hoodwinked by conniving wards or spouses.

Marguerite bestows a new dignity on woman, presenting her as a giver of advice, a problem-solver and, overall, an extremely capable individual. This interpretation of woman by a woman must also be classed among the Queen's contributions. Just as she helped shape new customs in actual society so did she help shape new conceptions in literary interpretation.

Extending her deep and introspective style found in her poetry and drama, Marguerite gave to France its own Decameron and to the world an extremely amusing as well as penetrating collection of stories and tales. Anxious that her country have a work similar in scope to that of Bocaccio, the Queen of Navarre undertook the task and accomplished it admirably. Again her contributions extend far beyond that of giving France its own version of a Renaissance best-seller. Her nouvelles contain the same penetrating analysis found in her drama. Her female personnages have assumed new literary stature and emerge as astute analysts of human behavior and capable judges of the actions of man. Her adeptness at character interpretation gives to this work a psychological side not often found before then. The fact that the characters being analysed are often real representatives of the society of Marguerite's day serves only to increase the value of the literary contribution of the Heptaméron.

It is a delightful portrayal of life as it was becoming in that transitional period between the Middle ages and the modern world. For its style and its content posterity must be grateful to the author of the Heptaméron. It was she who continued and refined the art of story-telling found in works such as Bocaccio's and provided that form of expression which made the human comedy an integral part of the literary scene.

The virtues and characteristics demonstrated by Marguerite during her lifetime are truly those to which all, but particularly women, can point with pride. She had an openness which made her receptive to the ideas of others as well as able to express her own thoughts and opinions. Her intellectual curiosity prompted her to examine new ideas and, in so doing, to learn new things. Her example in this area is one which all women could follow. Most will never reach the relative position in society that Marguerite enjoyed in her lifetime, but that does not preclude the opportunity of imitating the way she lived in that position.

To paraphase the Scriptures -- there is a time for a woman like Marguerite to whom all can look for guidance and example -- that time was then -- it is now -- and it will be in years to come.

APPENDIX A

The Many Roles of Marguerite de Navarre

The Many Roles of Marguerite de Navarre

Activities	Political Results	Social Results
Treaties: Toledo	Ransom of their ruler restored morale of French people who were saddened by defeat of their King. Strengthened Marguerite's role as advisor and confidante of the King.	Returned to the throne a King who was interested in learning and culture. Architecture, art and literature all prospered under his patronage
Cambrai	Return of princes assured unbroken line of succession. Accession of Henri II to throne led eventually to demise of political power of Charles-Quint (memories of treatment at hands of Spaniards).	Restoration of rightful rulers made Marguerite's presence at Court a certainty. Guaranteed frequenting by leaders -- political and social. A new type of society was emerging.

Activities	Political Results	Social Results
Protection of Reformers	Minimized loss of life by her intercession with King. Could have led to quiet, bloodless reforms had her attitude of tolerance and understanding been adopted by others.	Fostered continuity of literary output of authors such as Marot and Des Périers. Made the Court an intellectually attractive place by presence of so many gifted individuals. Beginning of Salons and development of art of conversation and refined living traceable to these times.

Activities	Political Results	Social Results
Founding of Collège de France	Proved King was more powerful than intellectual leaders of Sorbonne who opposed the venture. Inspired enmity, in particular for Marguerite, of those who felt learning and teaching were prerogatives of the University of Paris.	Provided another avenue of intellectual pursuit. Allowed scholars access to otherwise outlawed studies (Hebrew, Greek, etc.). Broadened outlooks and enriched contributions to development of literature and philosophy.
Administration of Pau and Nérac	Strengthened borders of Kingdom, making it less vulnerable to attack. Increased guarantee of invulnerability, encouraged citizens, providing more loyal, satisfied following for rulers of Navarre.	Constituted beginnings of social work system. Helped maintain social and economic structure by assuring citizenry of assistance when needed.

Activities	Political Results	Social Results
Publication of: Religious Poetry	Aroused ire and opposition of University of Paris. Queen's allegiance to Church's teachings questioned by religious leaders.	Religious involvement made it necessary for her to leave Paris. Caused reformers and those under her protection to follow her to Pau making her court a center of culture and learning.
Profane Drama	Ideas in some plays attacked by Church leaders. Attacks on Queen caused King to rise to her protection. Her position as sister of King saved her from excommunication.	Miracle and Morality type plays continued Medieval theatre while providing a transition to Renaissance theatre through different interpretation of character. Showed women in different light from preceding century.

Activities	Political Results	Social Results
l'Heptaméron	This, like her other works, made her suspect in eyes of religious leaders. Tone of work was considered mocking and irreverent. Ties of Church and State were such that to appear to attack one was to attack the other.	Gave France its own Decameron. Furthered literary contributions of the Queen. Served to identify her as one of Renaissance's outstanding authors and assured her position in annals of France's literary history.

APPENDIX B

Correspondence

Ambassade de France

ML/YF
SERVICES
DU CONSEILLER
CULTUREL

972 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021
(212) 737-9700

No 296 DOC

June 8, 1977

Dear Mrs. MORRIS,

I have received your request concerning a brochure on Marguerite de Navarre which you would like to use.

Since the copy you sent me does not show the name of the publisher, it is quite impossible for me to tell you to whom you should write concerning the copyrights. However, since this publication has been done with the Société des Gens de Lettres de France, I suggest that you write directly to this organization. The address is: Hôtel de Massa, 38 Faubourg Saint-Jacques, 75014, Paris. The president is Mr. Yves CAZAUX.

Hoping that this will help you, I remain

Sincerely

p.p. Le Conseiller Culturel
Représentant Permanent des Universités
Françaises aux Etats-Unis

Mrs. Patricia A. MORRIS
Molloy College
Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11570

Molloy College
ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NEW YORK 11570

142

le 21 juin,1977

M.Yves Cazaux,Président
Société des Gens de Lettres de France
Hôtel de Massa
38 Faubourg Saint-Jacques
75014,Paris

Monsieur:

Je suis en train d'écrire une thèse sur Marguerite de Navarre.Je suis étudiante de City University of New York.Pendant une visite à la Bibliothèque du Congress à Washington,D.C.,j'ai trouvé un petit volume dédié à Marguerite à l'occasion du quatrième centenaire de sa mort et publié par la ville de Pau.Je voudrais inclure des citations de ce volume dans ma thèse et j'aimerais demander la permission nécessaire de les employer.Le Conseiller Culturel de l'Ambassade de France à New York m'a dit de vous écrire pour l'obtenir.J'espère que vous pourrez m'aider parce que les éloges de la reine montrent les opinions contemporaines et je veux les employer dans mon oeuvre.

Je vous remercie d'avance.

Veuillez accepter,Monsieur,mes meilleurs sentiments.

S. Patricia Morris

S.Patricia Morris
Assistant Professor of French
Molloy College
Rockville Centre,New York

19, QUAI DE CONTI VI

Mademoiselle

Tant au nom de la Société des Gens de Lettres qu'au nom de mon ami et compatriote Toulousain Louis Ducla je vous donne volontiers l'autorisation que vous me demandez par votre lettre du 21 Juin.

J'y ajoute un dire à part qui me paraît de nature à vous intéresser et qui constituera ma contribution à l'étude que vous faites en ce moment.

Je vous souhaite heureux succès, avec mes hommages et mes sympathies.

Jean Cassou

Et voudriez-vous soumettre l'influence de l'hermétisme sur la pensée et l'œuvre de Marguerite de Navarre, notre grande poète. Son ardeur à Guillaume Postel, à Agrippa de Nettesheim, à Bonaventure

notations sur Postel (Revi della Vida :)
(Recherches sur les plus anciens fonds
des manuscrits orientaux) –
Et les actes du colloque de Sommières
de 1974 : Aspects du Libertinisme au
XVI^e siècle.

Bon courage

APPENDIX C

A Program in Honor of the Fourth Centenary of her Death

PORTRAIT DE
MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE
PAR BELLIARD

COMMÉMORATION
DU IVe CENTENAIRE DE LA MORT
DE
MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE

22 - 23 - 24 SEPTEMBRE 1949

Sous le Patronage de la Direction Générale des Arts et Lettres et de la Société des Gens de Lettres de France

Présidents d'Honneur : M. J. Jaujard, Directeur Général des Arts et Lettres de France ; M. Fernand Gregh, Président de la Société des Gens de Lettres.

Comité d'Honneur : MM. Louis Sallenave, Maire de Pau ; Delaunay, Préfet des Basses-Pyrénées ; Inchauspé, Président du Conseil Général ; Gaston Chaze, Errecart, Guy Petit, Tinaud, Députés ; Biatarana, Cassagne et de Menditte, Sénateurs ; Etchart, Vice-Président du Conseil Général ; Delpey, Conseiller Général ; Touzanne, Maire de Lescar.

Léon Bérard, de l'Académie Française ; Jacques Duron, Chef du Service des Lettres au Ministère de l'Education Nationale ; René Ancely, Président de la Société des Sciences, Lettres et Arts ; Simin Palay, Président de l'Escole Gastou-Febus ; Louis Ducla, Président de l'Association Régionaliste du Béarn ; Paul Casassus, Vice-Président de la Fédération des Groupes Folkloriques de France ; de Laprade, Conservateur du Château de Pau ; Gabriel Andral, Architecte en Chef des Bâtiments de France.

Comité d'Organisation : Président, M. Louis Ducla ; Vice-Président, M. Georges Suberbie ; Secrétaire, M. André Sarrail ; Trésorier, M. Pégot.

MEMBRES : MM. Etienne Boudon, Secrétaire de la Fédération des Sociétés Académiques et Savantes de la région Gascogne-Adour ; Pierre Bayaud, Archiviste départemental ; Henri Bayaud ; Paul Blanchardet, Directeur du Casino Municipal ; Docteur Paul Casassus, Président du groupe « Lou Ceü de Pau » ; Dérozier, Professeur de Lettres ; Gérard Douan, Conservateur de la Bibliothèque Municipale ; Chanoine Laborde ; Jean Loubergée, Professeur d'Histoire ; Majesté, Président du Comité des Fêtes ; Docteur Raoul Marque, Secrétaire Archiviste de l'Association Régionaliste ; V. Nafilyan, Président de la Radio *Pyrénées-Océan* ; Théodore, Président du Syndicat d'Initiative ; Jean Maurice Valmier, Artiste décorateur ; les représentants de la presse locale et régionale.

INDEX CHRONOLOGIQUE DES CÉRÉMONIES

I. — Jeudi 22 Septembre à 21 heures, à la Mairie de Lescar :

Conférence par M. Etchart, Vice-Président du Conseil Général : La Vie de Marguerite de Navarre.

II. — Vendredi 23 Septembre à 16 heures, à Lescar :

A LA CATHEDRALE : Dépôt d'une gerbe sur la dalle devant laquelle a été apposée par l'Association Régionaliste du Béarn, le 11 Décembre 1920, la plaque commémorative de l'inhumation de Marguerite de Navarre.

CEREMONIE RELIGIEUSE avec concert spirituel de musique ancienne d'orgue par M. l'Abbé Marrimpouey :
a) Dialogue - Grigny (1671-1703) ; *b*) Toccata per l'elevazion - Frescobaldi (1583-1643) ; *c*) Récit de Tierce - Grigny ; *d*) choral - Scheidt (1587-1654) ; *e*) Récit de tierce en taille - Grigny ; *f*) Dialogue sur les grands jeux - Grigny.

A LA MAIRIE : Réception, par M. Touzanne, Maire de Lescar et allocution de M. Etchart.

III. — Samedi 24 Septembre à 11 heures, au Château de Pau :

(*1er étage, entrée par l'escalier du Musée Béarnais*)

Inauguration de l'*Exposition iconographique et bibliophilique de Marguerite de Navarre* (Portraits, gravures, médailles, éditions princeps, autographes, documents divers). Présentation par M. Gabriel Andral, Architecte en Chef des Bâtiments de France.

IV. — Samedi 24 Septembre à 15 heures, dans la Salle des Etats du Château de Pau :

COMMEMORATION SOLENNELLE

1° Fanfare du Rallye-Gélos et musique ancienne par l'Orchestre Municipal, sous la direction de M. Albert Torfs.
Airs de Clément Janequin : *Chantons, sonnons, trompettes ; J'atens le temps, ayant ferme espérance ; Sy celle-la qui oncques ne fut myenne* et *Ouvrez-moi l'huis* (édités en 1530, 1540 et 1543). ;

2° DISCOURS :

a) de M. Louis Ducla, Président de l'Association Régionaliste du Béarn et Président du Comité d'Organisation : Marguerite de Navarre, Reine des Inspiratrices ;
b) de M. René Ancely, Président de la Société des Sciences, Lettres et Arts de Pau : Marguerite de Navarre et Jeanne d'Albret : L'affection d'une mère pour une fille ;

3° Intermèdes de chœurs béarnais anciens, par le Groupe Folklorique « Lou Ceü de Pau ».

Présentation par le Docteur Paul Casassus, Vice-Président de la Fédération des Sociétés Folkloriques de France. Texte dialogué interprété par Mlle Paulette Monsarrat et M. Jean Pucheu :
a) Aqueres Mountines (soliste M. Crouzet) ;
b) Quoan lou rey parti de France ;
c) Nouste daune dou cap dou poun ;
d) Vive Henri IV.

4° DISCOURS :

a) de M. Charles Dartigue-Peyrou, Professeur d'Histoire du Sud-Ouest, à la Faculté des Lettres de Bordeaux. Le rôle politique et religieux de Marguerite de Navarre pendant ses séjours en Béarn (1546-1549) ;
b) de M. Francis Ambrière, Délégué de la Société des Gens de Lettres de France ;

5° Musique ancienne par l'Orchestre Municipal sous la direction de M. Albert Torfs. Airs de Roland de Lassus : *O temps divers ; Sçais-tu dir' l'Ave ? Petite folle êtes-vous pas contente. En m'oyant chanter* (édités en 1576) ; Fanfares du Rallye-Gélos.

V. — Samedi 24 Septemre à 21 heures, au Casino Municipal :

GALA THEATRAL

au profit du Bureau de Bienfaisance

PREMIERE PARTIE

A) *Ouverture :* Musique ancienne par les musiciens du Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux. Chef d'Orchestre, M. Lucien Mora, du Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux ;

B) Causerie par M. FRANCIS AMBRIERE, Prix Goncourt, Directeur de l'Université des Annales ;

C) AU TEMPS DE MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE.

Texte de présentation de Jean Lagénie. Mise en scène de Gil Dulout, avec le concours des Comédiens de *La Nouvelle Compagnie* de Bordeaux :

1er comédien : Jean d'Artix ; 1re comédienne : Jacqueline Feydieu ; 2e comédien : Robert Sadran ; 2e comédienne : Suzanne Iriel :

1° Poème de Louis Ducla, en l'honneur de Marguerite de Navarre ;
2° Deux sonnets de Mellin de Saint-Gelais ;
3° Les Roses, de Bonaventure des Périers ;
4° Eglogue de Clément Marot ;
5° *Œuvres de Marguerite de Navarre :*
a) deux dizains ;
b) Rondeau du Seul Sauveur ;

APPENDIX D

Sur la Santé de Marguerite de Navarre

by

Yves Cazaux

Société des Sciences Lettres et Arts de Pau

4e série — Tome VII

EXTRAIT

PAU
IMPRIMERIE COMMERCIALE DES PYRÉNÉES
IMPRIMERIES DE NAVARRE
—
1972

Pour Mademoiselle Patricia Norris en souhaitant Brillant succès à sa thèse
Y. Cazaux 3·7·77

DU NOUVEAU SUR LA SANTE DE MARGUERITE REINE DE NAVARRE

(Février-Mai 1541)

Dans le tissu des conjectures où l'historien s'efforce de puiser, toujours au plus profond, les matériaux de ses connaissances, la pathologie n'est pas à négliger. S'il en était besoin, Marc Bloch et Lucien Febvre sauraient nous le rappeler. Or, peu de personnages du passé ont été plus sensibles aux vicissitudes de leur santé que les deux avant-dernières reines de Navarre, Marguerite d'Angoulême et sa fille Jeanne d'Albret.

Quand Marguerite de Navarre entre dans sa cinquantième année, c'est-à-dire dans les premiers mois de 1541, aux approches du mariage de Jeanne d'Albret avec le duc de Clèves, elle est atteinte d'une maladie qu'elle nomme *catharre*. A cette époque, le mariage de sa nièce constitue pour François Ier l'une des principales affaires de son règne. L'important c'est d'abord de ne pas la laisser épouser l'infant d'Espagne don Philippe : car il faut empêcher l'Espagne d'installer une tête de pont en Gascogne. A cette considération négative sont substituées, dès, 1539-1540, des intentions offensives : pour retirer le duc de Clèves du camp impérial et s'en faire un allié, en vue d'une vaste manœuvre d'encerclement de son vieil ennemi Charles-Quint, le roi de France lui offre la main de sa nièce. François Ier lisait ainsi l'heure à son clocher tandis que Henri d'Albret entendait la prendre ailleurs. Le roi de Navarre s'était donné en effet la double mission de recouvrer son royaume et de marier sa fille au prince le plus puissant du temps ; l'infant d'Espagne répondait à cette double ambition. Entre son mari et son frère, Marguerite avait donc un arbitrage à rendre. Après avoir hésité elle s'était ralliée à la politique de son mari car c'était l'intérêt de sa fille comme celui de la maison royale à laquelle elle appartenait désormais.

Aussi, quoi qu'ils aient consenti au contrat de mariage entre Jeanne d'Albret et Guillaume de Clèves, le 16 juillet 1540, les souverains navarrais s'étaient-ils rétractés peu après. Or d'où vient-il qu'ils aient à nouveau changé d'avis en mai 1541, jusqu'à consentir sans plus de retard à l'accomplissement des cérémonies ? Le report de la consommation du mariage à deux ans, pour ménager la santé de la jeune fille, ne pouvait

être la seule raison décisive de ce revirement. Certains historiens ont fait reproche à la reine Marguerite d'avoir oublié, pour ceux de son frère, les intérêts de sa fille, au point de la contraindre par des sévices corporels à épouser le duc de Clèves. D'où la légende de Jeanne d'Albret la mal aimée et la mal aimante.

Dans la mesure où l'historien constate une exacte coïncidence entre l'état de santé de la reine de Navarre et l'acquiescement que celle-ci donne au mariage de sa fille, il est conduit à s'interroger sur le mal qu'elle invoque et le rapport qui pourrait exister entre les deux faits. Quand et où est-elle atteinte ? Quelle est la nature exacte de la maladie ? Est-ce prétexte ou réalité ? Quelles conséquences sommaires en déduire, ou plutôt à proposer aux recherches? Tel est l'objet de cette communication.

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Une lettre de Marguerite au duc de Clèves, nous fournit la première information certaine sur le mal imprécis dont elle se plaint, un peu avant le mariage de sa fille : *Pour ce que jay toute ma vie parlé à vous franchement et vous hay trouvé prince plain de tant donneur et de vérité, je ne craindray à vous escripre le mal et la paine où je suis vous pryant bien fort le tenir secret cest que quant à ma personne comme vous dira ce porteur il mest tombé un caterre sus la mytié du cors quy me contrainct demeurer au list mes jespère par layde du grant medecin que jen eschaperé combien que jusques ycy ny voy guères damandemant l'autre mal que jay cest en lesperist à cause de lestrangetté que despuis le moys de février jay trouvé en votre embasadeur car au lieu de guaigner le Roy de Navarre a trouver bon ce maryage il a fait tout le contraire comme sy par force vous pretandiés davoir notre fylle sans chercher notre amytié ny alience...* (1)

Cette lettre n'est pas datée. Lui assigner une date aussi précise que possible est notre premier souci. Dans la « fourchette » la plus large, le délai *ad quem* nous est donné par la réponse que le duc a faite le 30 avril de Fontainebleau à sa future belle-mère (2). Le délai *a quo* résulte d'une observation de la reine elle-même dans le cours de sa lettre quand elle use de cette expression : *despuis le moys de février*. Marguerite écrit donc en mars ou en avril.

Si l'on veut rechercher une datation plus fine, le raisonnement doit se faire plus ténu.

Il est établi que le duc de Clèves ayant quitté Dusseldorf le 11 avril, est arrivé à Paris le 20 avril et loge incognito à l'abbaye de Saint-Ger-

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(1) Lettre autographe de Marguerite de Navarre aux Arch. de Dusseldorf, Jülich-Berg - 19 40 f° 452 ; publiée par A. DE RUBLE, *Le Mariage de Jeanne d'Albret*, p. 289.

(2) RUBLE, op. cit p. 289 note 1 : Arch. Dusseldorf Jülich-Berg - 19 40 f° 431.

main-des-Prés chez le cardinal de Tournon (3). Mais la reine de Navarre écrivant de Pau ne peut pas encore en être informée ; d'ailleurs elle le fait entendre, puisqu'elle conseille à son correspondant : *Faites vos afaires d'Alemaigne.* Si le porteur de sa lettre est allé jusqu'à Dusseldorf — par des chemins détournés, ne l'oublions pas, pour tromper les espions de l'Empereur — il n'a pas mis moins de vingt jours depuis Pau. Vingt jours auxquels il faut ajouter au minimum dix jours pour le trajet de retour de Dusseldorf à Fontainebleau. Si cette hypothèse était exacte la lettre de la reine daterait de la dernière décade de mars.

Est-ce admissible au regard des autres considérations à prendre en compte, notamment de l'itinéraire de la reine ? L'on sait communément que les souverains de Navarre quittent brusquement la cour de France, en février 1541 ; ils veulent échapper à l'extrême pression qu'exerce sur eux François Ier pour les faire consentir au mariage de leur fille. L'ambassadeur de Venise, Matteo Dandolo, consigne leur départ dans une dépêche au Doge du 23 février : « Le roi et la reine de Navarre vont dans leur pays pour en tirer, de l'argent à dépenser pour les noces de leur fille... » (4).

Mieux informé quelques jours plus tard, le 12 mars, le même ambassadeur précise que Madame Marguerite n'est pas encline à accorder son enfant, aussi vite qu'il le désire, au duc de Clèves, cette princesse étant encore d'âge tendre : « *...Madama Margherita piu atta a condergli presto la prole che lui desidera, essendo ancor molto tenera essa principessa..*(5). Voici donc le 23 février les Navarrais quittant Blois et emmenant leur fille à Tours, où ils vont la laisser avant de poursuivre leur voyage vers le Béarn. Mais ils s'attardent auprès de leur fille qui tombe grièvement malade entre Blois et Tours.

Matteo Dandolo nous l'apprend en ces termes : « *...essa principessa stata ancho questi giorni amalata di flusso alla morte sul viaggio che facea con la Serenissima Soa Madre, la quale la ha lasciata in Tors guarita* ». Le mois de mars est donc pour le moins entamé quand Marguerite de Navarre se sépare, à Tours, de sa fille enfin guérie de sa dangereuse hémorragie. Si l'on en croit l'agent espagnol Juan d'Ezcurra, elle quitte Tours le 2 mars (6). Henri d'Albret prend les devants pour faire une inspection des défenses béarnaises au pied des Pyrénées (7). On sait que

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(3) Chronique du docteur Olisleger et différentes sources aux Arch. de Dusseldorf utilisées par Alph. de Ruble, op. cit., pp. 83 et 84. Voir également Michel FRANÇOIS, *Le cardinal de Tournon*, p. 180.

(4) *Dispacci degli Ambasciatori Veneziani.* - Dépêche de Matteo Dandolo au Doge datée de Blois le 23 février 1541. - B.N. Ms Fds italien 1715, f° 44.

(5) *Dispacci...*, dépêche de Matteo Dandolo au Doge, Blois le 12 mars. - Ms Fds italien 1715, f° 55 et 56.

(6) *Mémoire de Juan d'Ezcurra à Charles Quint*, K 1492 N° 14 (Arch. Nationales) ; cité par Alph. DE RUBLE, *Le mariage...*, p. 79, note 1.

(7) DARTIGUE-PEYROU, *La vicomté de Béarn sous le règne d'Henri d'Albret*, Appendice I. - Résidences et itinéraires d'Henri d'Albret, p. 488.

les souverains se retrouvent à Mont-de-Marsan : ce ne peut être au plus tôt qu'à la mi-mars.

Marguerite est fatiguée ; sa santé n'est pas brillante, écrit-elle à François Ier (8). Pour se faire *plus saine, et pour le garder d'ennuyer*, elle projette d'accompagner Henri d'Albret, qui se ressent lui-même d'une chute de cheval, aux eaux de Cauterets, en mai. Elle espère s'y reposer *car tant que l'on est aux bains il faut vivre comme un enfant sans nul souci.*

Quelques jours plus tard, le roi et la reine sont à Pau, si l'on en croit Raymond Ritter dont l'exactitude historique est rarement en défaut (9). C'est donc à Pau que la reine tombe malade. C'est donc de Pau qu'elle écrit au duc de Clèves la lettre que nous cherchons à dater. Elle est au lit ; mieux, elle y demeure, selon ses propres termes. La crise a été grave, et elle se plaint d'une guérison lente : *jusques ycy ny vois guères damandement.* Si l'on considère les délais de route depuis le 23 février, la grave maladie de Jeanne, l'arrêt même bref, à Mont-de-Marsan et le temps de la crise qui a terrassé la reine Marguerite, celle-ci ne peut pas écrire au duc de Clèves avant le mois d'avril,

Pourtant, Marguerite et son mari seront à Bordeaux la journée du 10 mai (10), séjourneront du 11 au 14 mai à Saint-André près de Cubzac, avant de retrouver, le 21 mai à Poitiers, le duc de Clèves et d'entrer avec celui-ci à Chatellerault, le 22 mai, pour assister au mariage qui aura lieu le 14 juin. Un tel itinéraire prouve que les projets dont elle fait part à son futur gendre seront abandonnés et les pronostics des médecins déjoués : *...sy toust que Dieu me donnera santé et force, je ne faudray de retourner devers le Roy. Mes au mieux que les médecins me prometent c'est que après avoir pris les baings naturels quy sont en ce païs ils espèrent que je gueriray. Y sera la fin de May prevoyée que jaye parcheué toutes leurs ordonnances* ».

Une chose est certaine : les souverains de Béarn ne prirent pas les eaux cette année-là. La cure durait un mois. Comment en auraient-ils trouvé le temps alors que Marguerite n'était pas encore en convalescence au début d'avril ? Raymond Ritter a raison d'évidence contre Pierre Jourda (11).

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(8) *Lettres de Marguerite d'Angoulême*, S.H.F. tome II, p. 198.

(9) Raymond RITTER, *Les solitudes de Marguerite de Navarre*, Paris 1953, pp. 59 à 61 y compris la longue note 57 p. 198. L'auteur y cite différentes sources aux Arch. des Pyrénées-Atlantiques qui attestent la présence à Pau ces souverains de Navarre aux dates des 6, 7, 20 et 21 avril.

(10) R. RITTER, op. cit., pp. 61 et 62 et la note 58 p. 198. L'auteur se fonde sur la chronique de Jean de Mellvier, I, p. 358. Il est d'ailleurs probable qu'Henri d'Albret ne rejoignit sa femme à Bordeaux qu'au moment d'en repartir.

(11) Comparer R. RITTER, op. cit., pp. 60, 61, 198 (la démonstration de la note 57) avec Pierre JOURDA, *Marguerite d'Angoulême*, tome I, p. 258.

Mais pour donner une date, même approximative, à la lettre de Marguerite de Navarre que nous voici embarrassés ! Nos deux méthodes d'approche aboutissent à une contradiction. Les considérations d'acheminement suggèreraient une date aussi antérieure que possible à la fin mars. L'itinéraire de la reine repousse franchement cette date en avril, guère pourtant après le dix ou le douze de ce mois puisque la malade devra faire un minimum de convalescence avant d'affronter les fatigues d'un nouveau voyage. Il faut donc que le courrier porteur de la lettre ne soit pas allé jusqu'à Dusseldorf. Arrivant à Paris ou aux abords de Paris, après le 20 avril, il a dû apprendre la présence du duc de Clèves, soit à Saint-Germain-des-Prés, soit à Fontainebleau. Ce n'est là qu'une hypothèse mais on est contraint d'y recourir pour rester logique. En attendant de nouvelles sources d'information, il paraît rationnel de dater à quelques jours près, du 8 au 12 avril, la lettre au duc de Clèves.

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De quel mal mystérieux la reine de Navarre est-elle atteinte ? Mystérieux puisqu'elle prie le duc, son correspondant, *bien fort le tenir secret*. N'est-ce qu'un prétexte diplomatique pour retarder son voyage ? Est-ce au contraire une maladie sérieuse ? Félix Frank, dans sa précieuse étude sur le *Dernier voyage de la reine de Navarre... aux bains de Cauterets* a tenté d'expliquer ce que pouvait être son *catarrhe*. Il a pris franchement position : « *Le Catarrhe de Marguerite « sus la mytié du cors », en 1541 n'est évidemment qu'un rhumatisme et non selon la définition actuelle un flux morbide par une muqueuse. Ce mot avait trois sens autrefois : 1° celui que nous avons conservé ; 2° celui d'apoplexie ; 3° celui de rhumatisme. Quand Brantôme parle du « caterrhe » dont la reine Marguerite mourut avec la bouche « un peu de travers », il s'agit bien du mal qui emporta Charles VIII. Mais quand elle et son mari traitent leurs catarrhes articulaires, il s'agit de ce qu'Ambroise Paré définit ainsi : « Aucuns l'appellent descente, rhume ou catarrhe parce que le nom de goutte est odieux* ». (12).

Pour sa part, Pierre Jourda, dans sa thèse monumentale n'attache pas d'importance particulière au mal qui tourmente Marguerite et il adopte l'opinion de Frank: « *La princesse n'avait pas entrepris son voyage sans raisons sérieuses. Elle gagnait le Béarn pour aller à Cauterets soigner des rhumatismes qui, chaque jour, la tourmentaient davantage* (13).

Avec une réserve de bon aloi Raymond Ritter ne prend pas position : mais il s'interroge : « *La maladie alléguée par Marguerite était-elle si grave ou n'en arguait-elle que pour gagner du temps ? On ne le saura jamais* ».

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(12) Félix FRANK : *Dernier voyage de la reine de Navarre, Marguerite d'Angoulême, sœur de François Ier, avec sa fille Jeanne d'Albret aux bains de Cauterets* (1549). Toulouse - Paris 1897 - appendice p. 106.

(13) Pierre JOURDA, *Marguerite d'Angoulême*. Paris 1930, tome I, p. 257.

Pourtant, on le sait aujourd'hui. Cette maladie que la reine de Navarre a voulu cacher était grave, de celles en tous cas qui frappaient d'inquiétude, parce qu'elle atteignait l'être en ses sources vitales et le menaçait de récidive mortelle. C'est une dépêche, jusqu'ici demeurée inaperçue, de Dandolo, ambassadeur de Venise, au Doge, datée du 2 mai 1541 à Amboise, qui nous la révèle avec toute la précision désirable :

« *Mi diede Sua Maesta licentia chio avisasse la Celsitudine Vostra delle nozze di questo Duca nella Principessa di Navarra, per le quali si aspetta tanto piu presto a questa Corte che pero non potranno essere presti, essendo in questi giorni sopragiunto ad essa Serenissima Regina di Navarra uno accidente di apoplessia per il quale resto persa tutto da un lato et della vista dell'occhio di quello, dal quale dubita Sua Maesta la stentera a recuperarla, se ben del resto del lato pare che sy gia quasi che recuperata* » (14).

« Sa Majesté m'a donné licence d'avertir Votre Grandeur des noces de ce duc avec la Princesse de Navarre pour lesquelles on attend à la Cour (le roi et la reine de Navarre) d'autant plus impatiemment que sans doute ils ne pourront être rapides, un accident d'apoplexie étant arrivé à la Sérénissime Reine de Navarre, ces jours passés, à cause de quoi elle a perdu (l'usage de) tout un côté et la vision de l'œil de ce même côté, dont Sa Majesté craint qu'elle ait du mal à la récupérer bien que l'usage du côté soit déjà quasi retrouvé ». Ainsi la rupture d'un vaisseau sanguin au cerveau a provoqué chez Marguerite une hémiplégie. Aucun doute n'est plus permis : ce catarrhe qui lui est tombé *sus la mytié du cors*, comme elle l'écrit en confidence, est une congestion cérébrale et non un rhumatisme. Et c'est François Ier personnellement qui autorise l'ambassadeur de Venise à en faire part au Doge.

Mieux encore, le 24 mai, à Chatellerault, où la cour vient de s'installer et où viennent d'arriver les souverains de Navarre accompagnés depuis Poitiers par le duc de Clèves, Matteo Dandolo fait une visite à la reine de Navarre, dont il rend aussitôt compte au Doge en ces termes : « *Io volevo andare a visitare la Serenissima Regina di Navarra, si come io feci, quale trovai molto ben restituta alla pristina* (sic) *sanita eccetto che Sua Majesta si lamenta della vista maxime di un occhio* » (15). « J'ai tenu, et ainsi l'ai-je fait, à rendre visite à la Sérénissime Reine de Navarre, laquelle j'ai trouvée très bien rétablie dans sa santé hormis que Sa Majesté déplore (de n'avoir pas retrouvé) la vision maximale d'un œil ». Renseigné par François Ier et par la reine de Navarre elle-même, l'ambassadeur Dandolo est irrécusable.

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(14) *Dispacci degli Ambasciatori Veneziani* - Matteo Dandolo au Doge de Venise. - Amboise 2 mai 1541. - B.N. Ms. Fds italien 1715 f° 86-87.

(15) *Dispacci degli Ambasciatori Veneziani* - Dandolo au Doge - Simil. 24 di Maggio 1541. - B.N. Ms. Fds italien 1715, f° 98.

Ainsi s'explique que Marguerite n'ait pas fait d'entrée solennelle à Bordeaux mais, arrivant par la voie d'eau, soit descendue devant le château Trompette où elle allait résider et n'y ait reçu qu'une simple délégation réduite des corps constitués (16). Certes, on est confondu par l'énergie qu'il a fallu à cette femme pour vaincre sa fatigue et sa crainte et se jeter sur les routes quatre à cinq semaines après un aussi grave accident. Et comment douter qu'elle soit sincère quand elle écrit au duc de Clèves au début de mai : « *Et quant à la maladie, elle ne sauroit estre sy grande quelle scust passer le désir que jay d'estre le plus toust qu'il me sera possible devers le Roy, où jespère de vous voir* » (17).

Mais là n'est pas l'intérêt véritable de l'information que nous fournissent les *Dispacci*. Avant de connaître cette information, l'histoire avait déjà situé au début de mai l'acquiescement définitif des souverains de Navarre au mariage de leur fille avec le duc de Clèves. Mais elle ne pouvait donner au revirement des souverains de Navarre des motifs bien fondés. En voici un, désormais, et des plus sérieux.

Que Marguerite meure, qu'Henri d'Albret, plus jeune de onze ans, se remarie et qu'il ait des fils, qu'adviendrait-il des droits de Jeanne ? En règle absolue, rappelée au contrat de mariage de 1540, un enfant mâle, même d'un autre mariage, recueillerait la succession de Navarre. Devant une telle hypothèse, les souverains conviennent que le mariage de leur fille avec le duc de Clèves devient souhaitable, dans l'intérêt même de Jeanne. Ils s'y prêtent dès lors volontiers et même avec empressement.

Cette interprétation qui s'impose à l'esprit est en outre confirmée par la dépêche du 2 mai déjà citée, de Dandolo au Doge, après son entretien avec François Ier : « *Ma di queste nozze, si parla per la maggior parte quanto che per le mie da Blès di 12 di marzo tenute fino à 16... alla Vostra Celsitudine, con questo di piu che li Re et Regina di Navarra molto mai voluntieri le fanno, contenendosi in esse, che se essa Regina venesse a mancare et che esso Re ne pigliasse un altra con la quale havesse figliuoli, non herebanno in che succeder dandosi ogni cosa a questa Principessa* (18).

Cependant la mort de la reine ne représentait qu'un risque. Lier le sort de Jeanne et celui des Etats de Navarre à cette éventualité qui, par bonheur, pouvait ne pas se produire, eut été manquer de réflexion et de prudence. D'où la recherche d'une solution subtile durant les entretiens que les souverains de Navarre vont avoir à Saint-André près Cubzac, aux portes de Bordeaux, à la fois avec Juan d'Ezcurra, représentant très officieux de Charles-Quint, et avec le vicomte de Lavedan venu en hâte

(16) R. RITTER, op. cit., pp. 61 et 62.

(17) RUBLE, *Le mariage...*, p. 291.

(18) *Dispacci degli Ambasciatori Veneziani* - Dandolo au Doge. - B.N. Ms Fds italien 1715, fo 86 et 87.

rapporter aux parents la tournure qu'avaient pris les entretiens de François Ier, du Cardinal de Tournon et du duc de Clèves avec Jeanne, à Plessis-les-Tours. C'est à Saint-André qu'a été mise au point la comédie du consentement forcé de Jeanne et l'étrange procédure des rétractions écrites (19).

Le courage dont témoigne Marguerite de Navarre, en mai 1541, pendant son voyage, le soin qu'elle prend de préserver l'avenir de sa fille dans l'hypothèse de sa propre mort, nous interdit de douter désormais de son affection maternelle. Le mariage ne devant pas être consommé, comme il en était déjà convenu avec le duc de Clèves lui-même, Marguerite de Navarre en plein accord avec son mari et avec le représentant de Charles-Quint, a fourni à sa fille les instruments juridiques d'une demande ultérieure en annulation du mariage. Elle a accepté de revêtir le masque de la marâtre. Elle a, ce faisant, tendu un piège à la postérité, où beaucoup d'historiens se sont laissés prendre.

Yves CAZAUX.

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(19) Les historiens ont tort de négliger les sources parfois excellentes que leur offrent les poètes dépositaires de traditions familiales. PALMA-CAYET dans son *Heptaméron de la Navarride* (B.M. Pau ; Réserve Fds Maréchal 2241) nous a laissé une juste version de l'événement (pp. 577 et 578).

On voyait bien que le prince François
Ne cherchoit point le profit Navarrois
Mais le sien propre et pourtant Marguerite
Prenant toujours son escuse en ce fait...
Elle sauva sa fille pour ce coup,
Pour sa maison elle fit un beau coup.

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