roman paraît. Or, lorsque l'on considère *Les angoysses douloureuses* dans le contexte de la *devotio moderna* — ou dans celui, complémentaire, du Christocentrisme érasmien ou fabriste — la "confession" d'Hélisenne, apparemment si inconvenante pour l'époque, semble beaucoup moins un geste d'autonomie ou l'indice d'une révolte toute féminine que la démarche stratégique d'un jeune auteur qui, cherchant à atteindre un large public et à se faire une place dans le monde des lettres[50], souscrit tout simplement au goût régnant.

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50. Voir l'épître aux Lisantes : "A mes despens, dommage et pris" (p. 96). *Pris* désigne les risques encourus (l'humiliation, les souffrances endurées) mais peut-être aussi la gloire convoitée par Hélisenne en écrivant son roman. Sur les ambitions littéraires d'Hélisenne, cf. Robert Cottrell, "Hélisenne de Crenne's *Le songe*", pp. 204-205.

Agony, Ecstasy, and the Mulekeeper's Wife: a Reading of *Heptaméron* 2

Mary B. McKinley

"Esprit abstraict, ravy, et ecstatic"
François Rabelais, "A l'esprit de la royne de Navarre", *Tiers Livre* (1546)

The second story of the *Heptaméron* tells of the mulekeeper's wife, a virtuous woman who, in her husband's absence, is viciously raped and murdered by his servant. This is a story about a spirit, an *esprit abstrait, ravy et ecstatic*, abandoning its body. The dying victim and the killer present a striking illustration of the conflict between the spirit and the body. The servant, called the *varlet*, desires the *muletiere*'s body, and when she rebuffs him, he enters her chamber and surprises the sleeping woman in her bed. When she awakens and tries to defend herself, the varlet, "qui n'avoit amour que bestialle, qui eut mieulx entendu le langaige des mulletz que ses honnestes raisons, se montra plus bestial que les bestes avecq lesquelles il avoit esté long temps" (p. 19)[1]. She dies, the text tells us, a "martire de chasteté". Her story is an exemplary hagiographical account of martyrdom. The woman has no name, but as Michel de Certeau has observed "l'individualité, dans l'hagiographie, compte moins que le personnage. [...] Plus que le nom propre, importe le modèle"[2]. The *muletiere*'s character is an unwavering model. From beginning to end, she is, the narrator insists, a "vraie femme de bien".

This short, ostensibly *véritable histoire* points to and is informed by several earlier texts that shaped Marguerite's religious thinking as well as her manner of writing. It is important to remember that the *Heptaméron* records only one part of its ten storytellers' daily routine: the afternoon exchange of *nouvelles* in the lovely meadow by the monastery in the Pyrénées where they are stranded. The prologue specifies that the group begins each morning by

1. Marguerite de Navarre, *L'Heptaméron*, ed. Michel François, Paris: Garnier, 1967. See also the excellent critical edition, based on BN ms. 2155, of Renja Salminen, *Marguerite de Navarre, Heptaméron*, Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae n° 258, Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1991, and *Commentaire et apparat critique*, n° 286, 1997; reissued in one volume, Droz, TLF, 1999.

2. Michel de Certeau, *L'Ecriture de l'histoire*, Paris: Gallimard, 1975, p. 281.

spending an hour listening to a Scriptural lesson from Oisille, the elderly widow who narrates the *muletiere*'s story and whom the group acknowledges as the spiritual guide of their sojourn at the Abbey of Sarrance. We learn in the prologue to the sixth day that "les jours passez elle leur avoit declaré celle de Sainct Pol aux Romains" [p. 328]. Paul's Epistle to the Romans was one of the most important Biblical authorities of the Protestant reformers. This epistle, particularly in chapter eight, makes a sharp distinction between the flesh and the spirit: "Car ceulx qui sont selon la chair: sont prudens es choses de la chair. mais ceulx qui sont selon lesperit: sont prudens es choses de lesperit" (8:5)[3]. The *Heptaméron* presents the *muletiere*'s story in such a way that it illustrates Paul's lesson. The murderer figures the flesh in this account, and the *muletiere* figures the spirit, the transcendence of the flesh; her story traces an unwavering trajectory from the body to the spirit[4].

For several years in the early 1520's Marguerite corresponded with her spiritual director, Guillaume Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux, a stronghold of the evangelical reform movement. In a short letter written to Briçonnet in 1522, she remarks that an illness has made her too conscious of things of the body: "la maladie cause debilité à la trop en corps". She refers to her body's recalcitrance as "quelque petite lachetté de l'asne" (I, p. 222)[5]. Briçonnet responds with a long commentary on those who are "trop en corps", those who, as Paul says, "sont prudens es choses de la chair". Briçonnet refers often to Paul, most frequently to *Romans*. "Madame, plusieurs sortes de gens sont trop en corps. [...] Ilz sont trop en corps estans charnelz et mectant entierement leur plaisir, cure et solicitude. Telz ne peuvent plaire à Dieu [Sainct Pol: "Qui in carne sunt, Deo placere non possunt"]. [...] Tous sont trop en corps, plus les ungs que les aultrez (mais . . . chardons est viande pour grans et petitz asnes)" (I, pp. 223-24, quoting *Rom.* 8: 8]. Briçonnet's words could describe many characters from the *Heptaméron*, but they have a special resonance for the muletiere's story. His first category of those who live by the flesh describes the bestial servant. However, as Briçonnet quickly insists, all men and women are to some extent "trop en corps". The proverb about donkeys eating thistles allows Briçonnet to echo Marguerite's word "asne", and his letter thereby mirrors and confirms her image of herself as a prisoner of the flesh. He reinforces that image when he goes on to describe the second category of "trop en corps" (I, p. 224, quoting *I Cor.* 2:14):

> Il en est d'aultres qui macerent leurs corps, travaillant pour en sortir et plus y entrent: lesquelz comme asnes tournent alentour de la roue à leur plaisir, toutesfois prisonniers et attachez à icelle en la tournant. [...] Telz sont trop en corps qui en œuvres corporelles et materielles mectent leur salut. Sainct Pol les appelle anymaux ("Animalis homo non percipit que Deo sunt").

Here Briçonnet relegates to a place not far from the likes of the brutal servant those pious Christians who try by good works — by the labor of their bodies — to gain salvation. The question of faith versus works was a decisive doctrinal issue dividing the evangelical reformers from the church of Rome and its partisans at the University of Paris Faculty of Theology, the Sorbonne. The vanity of works and the Christian's dependence on Christ's totally gratuitous redemption, "la beneficque et amoureuse redemption du doulx Jesus" (I, p. 225), is a recurring lesson in Briçonnet's letters where he admonishes Marguerite to beware of weakness on that issue. That solafideism came to mark Marguerite de Navarre's poetry and much of the *Heptaméron*, as well. Years later, when she was writing her *nouvelles*, Paul's and Briçonnet's notions of the spirit and the flesh remained with her and helped to shape those stories. Whether or not the *muletiere*'s story is based on an event that actually happened, as the prologue insists all the stories must be, its details highlight the earlier texts that underlie and inform it. The murderer who becomes like the beasts he has lived with, who understands their language more than that of reason, recalls the *asnes* of the flesh in those early letters and illustrates Briçonnet's earlier remark: "Es bestes brutes est ame vivante non raisonnable . . ." (I, p. 224)

As the *muletiere* figures the spirit, her story dramatizes the transcendence of her body. The contrast between what the reader witnesses and the woman's reaction to the attack is striking. Far from being "trop en corps", she shows no sign of the pain the rapist inflicts on her body. Stabbed in the back by his sword, she runs from him, trying to talk him out of his vile intentions, "luy tenant les meilleurs propos qu'elle povoit, pour cuyder par quelque moien le reduire à cognoistre ses faultes" (pp. 19-20). However, the bestial valet, not capable of rational discourse, only continues to stab her. Recognizing that she is about to die, the *muletiere* shows a remarkable self-possession that transcends her physical suffering. The narrator takes the opportunity to present her death as a lesson in evangelical doctrine. Briçonnet could not have asked for more (p. 20):

> Et quant, à force de perdre son sang, elle senteit qu'elle approchoit de la mort, levant les œilz au ciel et joignant les mains, rendit graces à son Dieu, lequel elle nommoit sa force, sa vertu, sa patience et chasteté, luy supplyant prendre en grey le sang qui, pour garder son commandement,

3. I quote the French translation of Lefèvre d'Etaples, *Le Nouveau Testament,* Fac-simile de la première édition, Simon de Colines, 1523, 2 vol., prepared by Michael A. Screech, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation and Paris-La Haye: Editions Mouton & Co., 1970.

4. Robert D. Cottrell has shown that the stories of the *Heptaméron* reveal the sacred through the "sinful, suffering world of the desiring body", and he has noted the dominant presence of Paul's Epistle to the Romans as the biblical authority behind that view. See "Inmost Cravings: The Logic of Desire in the *Heptaméron*", in *Critical Tales: New Studies of the* Heptaméron *and Early Modern Culture*, ed. John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, pp. 3-24. Among previous studies of *Heptaméron* 2, see Patricia Cholakian, *Rape and Writing*, Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, pp. 48-56; Nancy Virtue, "Telling the Story of Rape in Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*", *Romance Quarterly*, 44.2 (Spring 1997), pp. 67-79.

5. *Guillaume Briçonnet-Marguerite d'Angoulême. Correspondance (1521-1524).* Eds. Christine Martineau, Michel Veissière, and Henry Heller. 2 vols. Geneva: Droz, THR: cxli, I, 1975; II, 1979. I refer to the correspondance by volume and page numbers. Colette Winn has borrowed Marguerite's expression in the title of her study of Marguerite's representation of the body, "'Trop en corps': Marguerite de Navarre and the Transgressive Body", in *Renaissance Women Writers: French Texts / American Contexts*, ed. Anne R. Larsen and Colette H. Winn, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994, pp. 99-114.

> estoit respendu en la reverence de celluy de son Filz, auquel elle croyoit fermement tous ses pechez estre lavez et effacez de la memoire de son ire.

It is fitting that the *muletiere* loses blood as she approaches death. From the point where her blood is mentioned, she abandons all efforts to reason with the rapist and turns her thoughts exclusively to God. In his correspondence with Marguerite, Briçonnet associates blood and reason. For the evangelical Christian, reason is a troublesome faculty because it often cooperates with the body to tempt souls into sin. Too much dependence on reason leads people to presumption and the sin of intellectual pride. Briçonnet admonishes that the Christian must purge her soul of reason and open it to the spirit (I, p. 225, quoting *Galat.* 5: 25 and *I Cor.* 15: 50; cf. *Rom.* 8):

> Pour ceste cause nous commande sainct Pol: puis que presentement nous vivons en et par l'esperit, il nous fault cheminer en et par l'esperit: 'Si spiritu vivimus, spiritu et ambulemus', predominant l'esperit et menant nostre charne, en laquelle raison est embridée et aveuglée, mortiffiant non seullement les œuvres terrestres et charnelles, mais aussy animales et raisonnables. Qui ne chemine que par raison n'est chrestien, lequel ne vit que par l'esperit sur la raison. [...] Pour ceste cause dict Monsieur Sainct Pol que la chair et le sang ne possederont le royaume de Dieu: 'Caro et sanguis regnum Dei non possidebunt'. Par le sang voulant entendre l'ame raisonnable, car les Anciens ont mis le siege et trosne de la vie et de l'ame au sang.

If blood signifies reason, the *muletiere*'s loss of blood shows that she is leaving reason behind her, along with her body, knowing that flesh and blood will not possess the kingdom of God. Indeed, she explicitly offers the blood she is shedding to God, "luy suppliant de prendre en grey le sang. . ." (p. 20). Her prayer, in effect, asks God to help her transcend and abandon her rational faculties. It is as if she, like Madame Marguerite, had read Briçonnet's admonition: "Parquoy, Madame, fault estre desraisonnable par excellence qui se dict chrestien, c'est à dire, sans raison. [...] Qui est vivant aultrement est trop en corps" (I, p. 226). Furthermore, the narrator explicitly compares the dying woman's blood to the blood shed by Christ at his death: "le sang qui, pour garder son commandement, estoit respendu en la reverence de celluy de son Filz, auquel elle croyoit fermement tous ses pechez estre lavez et effacez de la memoire de son ire" (p. 20).

The *muletiere*'s dying beliefs are theologically correct in a Pauline and Evangelical context. Her sins have been effaced, not by any effort on her part, not by works, but by the blood that Christ shed through his crucifixion, his redeeming death. She need not worry about God's wrath, "son ire", the threat of the Old Testament law, because Christ's redemption has replaced the law, has in effect erased sins from God's memory. As Paul reassured the Romans: "sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (6:14). The *muletiere*'s last words affirm her evangelical understanding of the redemption: "Seigneur, recepvez l'ame qui, par vostre bonté, a esté racheptée" (p. 20). In fact, her final words imitate those of Christ: "Pere, je commande mon esperit en tes mains" (*Luke*, 23:26). She offers her soul to Christ just as he had offered his spirit to God the Father, and the narrator echoes those words again as she recounts the moment of the woman's death:

"ainsy, avecq un visaige joyeulx, les œilz eslevez au ciel, rendit ce chaste corps son ame à son Createur" (p. 20).

The story of the mulekeeper's wife may indeed recount an event that actually happened "en la ville d'Amboise" in 1530, the year when Marguerite "la roine de Navarre, seur du roy François, premier de ce nom, [...] estoit à Bloys, accouchée d'un fils" (p. 18). Early readers of the story would have remembered that the son, Jean, lived less than six months[6]. The opening sentence, by providing those details, places the story in a context of historical reality and thereby insists on the tale's adherence to the prologue's rule that it be a "veritable histoire" (p. 9). However, the tale's ostensible historicity should not obscure its participation in literary tradition. Paul and Briçonnet are part of a larger, richly complex web of antecedent texts that shape the *muletiere*'s story. The opening reference to Marguerite, while it underscores her political and maternal role, also points to a woman whom readers knew as a mystical poet and who continued to write mystical poetry until she died. The distinction between corps, ame and esprit, for example, recalls the four women characters in Marguerite's play, *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan.* La Mondaine represents the body, La Supersticieuse those who are still "trop en corps" by their concern with works, La Sage those whose souls still rely on reason and La Ravie de Dieu, Bergere, those who have filled their souls with the spirit. While the mystical Ravie and her joyful song may at first seem quite different from the murdered mulekeeper's wife, the two women are, in fact, closely related. Similar structures representing the spiritual progress of the evangelical Christian through the stages outlined by Briçonnet appear early and frequently in Marguerite's poems. The 1533 Augereau edition of *Le Miroir de Marguerite de France, Royne de Navarre*, includes, after the "Miroir" itself, the poem entitled "Discord estant en l'homme par la contrarieté de l'Esprit & de la Chair, & paix par vie spirituelle. Qui est annotation sur la fin du septiesme chapitre, & commencement du huict. de l'epistre sainct Paul aux Romains"[7].

Several of the *Heptaméron*'s stories dramatize in detail the moments leading up to a character's death. Such descriptions were frequent in Medieval and Renaissance documents. Called *agonies*, they share many conventions with medieval hagiographical writing. They bear witness, not only to the period's preoccupation with death, but also to the changing cultural attitudes toward death at a given time. Representations of ritual death agony, of a person's state and conduct as he or she approached death, reveal a great deal about the values and beliefs of the writer recording them. Claude Blum has among others examined the typology of such representations: "C'est dans ce temps de la mort que va se trouver pris le corps à l'agonie socialisé, corps entouré par la famille, les représentants de la société et de la religion" (p.

6. Pierre Jourda, *Marguerite d'Angoulême. Etude biographique et littéraire*, 2. vol. Paris, Honoré Champion, 1930, I, pp. 160-61. The note in M. François's edition disagrees with Jourda on the length of the baby's short life.

7. See Marguerite de Navarre, *Théâtre profane,* ed. Verdun L. Saulnier, Geneva: Droz / TLF, 1978, *Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*, pp. 241-324; and *Le Miroir de treschrestienne Princesse Marguerite de France, Royne de Navarre [...]: auquel elle voit & son neant, & son tout*, Paris: Antoine Augereau, décembre 1533.

149)[8]. The *muletiere*'s hagiography ends with such a ritualized description, presenting her death as a socialized spectacle witnessed by the neighbors who respond to the cries of her chambermaid, "ceulx qui l'aymoient et estimoient autant que femme de la ville, vindrent incontinent à elle, et emenerent avecq eulx des cirugiens ..." and "ung homme d'esglise ..." (p. 20). The omission of details about her body's pain is consistent with the conventions of death agonies, what Blum calls "le refoulement de la souffrance du corps" (p. 149). Contrary to our expectations, descriptions of the agony of death conventionally portrayed no physical agony. That omission of details about the dying person's suffering constituted a moral judgment about that person on the part of the author. The degree of an individual's suffering during the time leading up to death indicated to a Renaissance audience the state of that person's soul. Physical pain and emotional anguish were traits of a soul destined for damnation. Witnesses hostile to the dying person could imply divine confirmation of their views by depicting the deathbed scene as one of great pain and anguish. Thus, in the *Heptaméron*, as if to prepare by contrast for the virtuous death of the *muletiere*, the preceding story, story one, ends with this succinct comment about the evil wife of Sainct-Aignan: "Et la mauvaise femme, en l'absence de son mary, continua son peché plus que jamais et mourut miserablement" (p. 17).

Of primary importance in agonies was the power of speech. Clarity of speech indicated possession of mental faculties and allowed the dying person to utter edifying discourse which was itself ritualized. The *Heptaméron* offers a striking case of such eloquence in story 70, in the long speech of Madame du Vergier that ends in her death. However, an even surer sign of election could be silence. "Dans certaines agonies exemplaires, quand la parole s'est tue, le silence est interprété comme la quintessence de la parole; la parole du mourant s'est entièrement intériorisé pour devenir le langage même, inaudible, de l'extase" (Blum, p. 151). The *muletiere*'s passage from speech to silence is foregrounded by the narrative of her agony. The conventional details which shape the literary representation of her death inscribe her story at the intersection of several genres, and, within them, of several precise texts — notably some of Marguerite's own writings. The muletiere dies, not only as a Christian saint destined for eternal happiness, a "martire de chasteté", but also, I will argue, within the textual echoes of Marguerite's œuvre, as a mystic, a mother, and a mirror.

Marguerite de Navarre had occasion to compose several agonies. Her correspondence with Briçonnet commemorates the deaths of two women: Claude de France, wife of François Ier, who died in July, 1524 and Charlotte, François and Claude's eight year old daughter, who died in September of the same year. Marguerite briefly recounts Claude's death, emphasizing that her sister-in-law was alert, in possession of her mental faculties and talking until the end: "Confessée et evyllée, en bon sens et parolle jusques à la fin, s'en est allée, comme j'estime, en joye, laissant à ses amys tristesse . . ." (II, p.

8. See Philippe Ariès, *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en Occident du Moyen Age à nos jours,* Paris, Seuil, 1975: and Claude Blum, "Le corps à l'agonie dans la littérature de la Renaissance," in *Le corps à la Renaissance. Actes du XXXe Colloque de Tours 1987,* eds. Jean Céard, Marie Madeleine Fontaine and Jean-Claude Margolin, Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1990, pp. 147-160.

230). Briçonnet responds (31 August 1524) with one of the longest letters in the correspondence (II, pp. 231-261), a meditation on the mystical marriage of the soul with Christ after the death of the body. His letter hardly has time to reach Marguerite when Charlotte dies, and he must again offer consolation. To do so, he continues and elaborates on the theme of the mystical marriage: "Autre chose n'est mort que liberté et unyon avec le desiré, doux et aimable espoux" (II, p. 264). Marguerite did not, to my knowledge, write about Charlotte's last hours in the conventional manner of the ritual agonies. However, her niece's death and her own grief in its wake gave rise to one of her earliest poems, the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*. Scholars have shown how Briçonnet's consolatory letters became an informing source, a text on which Marguerite drew while writing the *Dialogue*[9]. In her response to Briçonnet's letter about Charlotte, Marguerite describes the reaction of her own mother, Louise de Savoie, upon learning of her grandaughter's death: "les yeux levéz au ciel, ne cessant jamais de louer Dieu, [je] pensois veoir un esprit ravy en luy" (p. 272).

These excerpts from Briçonnet and Marguerite's letters, written in 1524, cast a revealing light on certain passages from the *Heptaméron*, composed more than twenty years later. They show that the image of death as a passage from the prison of the body to mystical union with Christ was already prominent in her correspondance with her spiritual director at the time when she was first becoming a mystical poet. They reveal that in those early compositions, she freely adapted elements of one genre, letters, into another, poetry. They provide us with her early representation of a virtuous woman's death, Claude's, as well as with abundant detail about her religious beliefs about death. Finally, her letter tells us that, as early as 1524, she saw in her mother a mystic, "un esprit ravy en luy".

Louise de Savoie died on September 22, 1531, less than a year after the death of Marguerite's infant son, Jean, and therefore, if we believe the so-called "veritable histoire", a little more than a year after the mulekeeper's wife herself died. Perhaps stunned into silence by her grief — as Montaigne reminds us in his essay "De la tristesse", *Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent* —, Marguerite did not immediately pay tribute to her mother in writing, either by an epitaph or a description of Louise's death. She finally composed the epitaph in 1532, but she was apparently criticized for the delay because she also wrote a much longer poem, "Les dames plorantes a ceulx qui se meslent de parler et escripre, par la Royne de Navarre", in which she indi-

9. "Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne," ed. Pierre Jourda, *Revue du seizième siècle,* 13 (1926), pp. 1-49. See Christine Martineau and Christian Grouselle, "La source première et directe du 'Dialogue on forme de vision nocturne'", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance,* 32 (1970), pp. 559-577; Paula Sommers, *Celestial Ladders: Readings in Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry of Spiritual Ascent,* Geneva: Droz, 1989, ch. 2, "Dialogue: Projected Ascent", pp. 35-48; and Robert D. Cottrell, *The Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry,* Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1986, ch. 3, "Catechistic Discourse", pp. 35-46; French translation, *La grammaire du silence, Une lecture de la poésie de Marguerite de Navarre,* Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995, pp. 33-50.

rectly defends her silence[10]. It was only much later, in *Les Prisons*, her longest and one of her last works, that Marguerite composed the ritual description of her mother's death. She did so in Book Three, in one part of a double diptych representing the exemplary deaths of two sets of royal mothers and sons: first, Marguerite de Lorraine and her son Charles, the duke of Alençon, Marguerite de Navarre's first husband; then, Louise de Savoie and François Ier, who died in March, 1547. The section devoted to Louise's death covers 239 lines (III, vv. 2457-2696). Amy, the male narrator, gives a short résumé of Louise's life, recalling her prominent virtues: chastity, goodness and prudence. He relates those virtues to the responsibilities of her public life, declaring that the strains of the period when her son was a prisoner (François's long captivity in Madrid after the defeat at Pavia in 1525) had weakened her body and moved her closer to death. After the safe return of François and the ransom of his two young sons, according to *Les Prisons*, Louise retired from public life and, her health declining, prepared for death. The narrator tells us that in her prayers, "[elle] parloit à Dieu comme espouse à espoux" (III, vv. 2527-31)[11]. Recognizing that her final day had come, she asked that mass be said by her deathbed and, since she was too ill to receive communion, requested that her daughter receive the sacrament in her place. Marguerite represents herself here in the third person. Only Louise's words are recorded in direct discourse. Like the dying *muletiere*, Louise communicates to her confessor the steadfastness of her faith in her final moments (III, vv. 2550-2567). She asks the priest to let her look at the sacred host and upon seeing it, addresses it directly as the crucified Christ: "Jesus, filz de David, / Qui sur la croix pour moy fuz estendu . . ." (vv. 2578-79). Expressing adoration she, like the *muletiere*, offers her soul to God, imitating the words of the dying Christ (vv. 2590-92):

> Las! plaise vous, ô mon Pere eternel
> Entre voz braz l'ame et l'esprit reprendre
> Que de bon cueur entre voz mains vois rendre.

She receives the sacrament of extreme unction and asks to hear the gospel account of the Last Supper. The narrator records only one brief expression of physical pain, "grant tourment de pierre et de gravelle" (v. 2619) once the gospel reading is over, a torment followed closely by the emotional pain of knowing that her son, François Ier, will not reach her side before her death. However, Louise quickly regains serenity, accepting God's will, "levant au ciel ses pleurans yeulx" (v. 2629). Finally, holding a crucifix, she bids farewell to Marguerite, asking her daughter to withdraw so that she may be alone with God, but making to her verbally the one last declaration of faith that the *muletiere* could only make "par signes si evidens, que la parolle n'eut sceu mieulx monstrer son intention" (vv. 2658-2662):

> Mais ung seul mot pour la fin je vous presche:
> C'est que en mon cueur je sens la foy si ferme,

10. For the epitaph and her lines explaining its delay in appearing, see René Sturel, "Poésies inédites de Marguerite de Navarre", *Revue du seizième siècle*, 2 (1914), pp. 149-168, especially pp. 158-161.

11. I refer to Simone Glasson's edition of *Les Prisons*, Geneva: Droz, 1978.

> Le don de Dieu par lequel il m'affirme
> De mon salut, dont le plaisir je gouste;
> N'en faictes plus, m'amye, nulle doubte.

The narrator then describes Marguerite's tearful withdrawal and her final vision of her dying mother (vv. 2667-71):

> regardant à loisir
> Sa bonne mere en lict mortel gesir,
> Qui escoutoit la lecture divine,
> Les yeulx en hault, sans parolle ne myne,
> Comme personne en estase ravie.

Louise de Savoie is represented here in death as a mystic, as already being in another place, *en estase ravie* (vv. 2690-96):

> Et sans bouger ses yeulx d'enhault, aussi
> Sans plus parler, la croix elle baisoit,
> Et d'ouyr clair tousjours signe faisoit.
> Et tost après, jecta ung regard doulx
> Devers le ciel, là où son Tout en tous
> En soubrizant sembloit veoir clairement
> Et sur ce poinct fist son trespassement . . .

Louise dies, like the *muletiere*, "avecq un visaige joyeulx, les œilz eslevez au ciel" (p. 20).

The imitation of Christ's last words, along with the detail of the crucifix and other references to the crucifixion — the linking of the *muletiere*'s blood with that of Christ, for example — invite the reader to associate these two women's deaths with the death of Christ. Such an association recalls the widespread devotion of the *imitatio Christi*, codified by Thomas à Kempis in the fifteenth century and central to the reforms of the brethren of the common life, the movement responsible for Erasmus's early formation. A volume titled *Imitation de Jhesu Christ et mesprisement du monde* figures in the inventory of Louise de Savoie's library[12]. However, the imitation of Christ has a much more immediate resonance in the context of Marguerite de Navarre's own œuvre. Her last poem, composed shortly before her death in 1549, is *Le Miroir de Jhesus Christ crucifié*[13], a long meditation by a woman contemplating the crucified Christ, mirroring herself in his image and finally losing herself in mystical *unio* with him (vv. 1291-99)[14]:

> o doulx Jesus, soies icy aydeur
> car je ne puis fere ce que je veulx,
> faictz que soyons ung seul, non plus deux:
> ung corps, ung cueur, une ame, ung esprit,

12. Jourda, I, p. 21.

13. See Lucia Fontanella's edition, Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1984.

14. See Robert D Cottrell's study of the poem in *The Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry*, pp. 124-130; and also Cottrell's article, "The Gaze as the Agency of Presence in Marguerite de Navarre's *Miroir de Jhesus Christ crucifié*", in *French Forum* 13.2 (May, 1988), pp. 133-41. The article appears as an appendix in the French translation, *La grammaire du silence. Une lecture de la poésie de Marguerite de Navarre*, pp. 257-66.

tant que du tout je soye, Jesucrist,
de toy vestu, ramply, envyronné,
en croix cloué et si bien atourné
que je ne sante et dedans et dehors,
fors de toy seul, Jesus, ce divin corps.

As Robert Cottrell points out, "Christ's anguish, Marguerite understands, is her own. She abolishes the difference between herself and Christ by identifying with the crucified figure on the cross" (*Grammar*, p. 124).

Several details in the account of the *muletiere*'s death recall the stages leading up to mystical ecstasy, as Marguerite conceives of them in her final mirror poem. The time that elapses between the attack and her death marks a steady passage from the corporal to the spiritual. The text stresses that she loses the faculty of speech: "apres qu'elle eut perdu la parolle et la force du corps, ce malheureux print par force celle qui n'avoit plus de deffense en elle" (p. 20). After she is raped, her servant girl finds her "sans parolle ne mouvement". After doctors recognize that their efforts to save her are in vain, "elle languit encores une heure sans parler, faisant signes des œilz et des mains" (p. 20). In her passage from speech to a non-verbal language she follows Paul's admonition and imitates the language of the Holy Spirit. "Et semblablement aussi lesperit aide nostre infirmité. Car nous ne scavons point quelle chose nous devons prier; comme il appartient: mais lesperit mesme prie pour nous par gemissements inenarrables" (*Rom.* 8:26). Although she has suffered twenty-five stab wounds and been raped, she shows no signs of pain in her final hour, as though she has withdrawn from her body to focus her complete attention on Christ. The final image of her face, joyful, with eyes raised heavenward, captures the expression of mystical rapture (p. 20)[15]:

> Estant interrogée, par ung homme d'esglise, de la foy en quoy elle mouroit, de l'esperance de son salut par Jhesuchrist seul, respondoit par signes si evidens, que la parolle n'eut sceu mieulx monstrer son intention; et ainsy, avecq un visaige joyeux, les œilz eslevez au ciel, rendit ce chaste corps son ame à son Createur.

The *muletiere* dies an exemplary mystical death. As Briçonnet reminds Marguerite, for the mystic, death is a marriage with God: "Autre chose n'est mort que liberté et unyon avec le desiré' (II, p. 264). We might imagine the moment of the *muletiere*'s death from her point of view as corresponding to the final vision of the *Miroir de Jhesus Christ*'s narrator (vv. 1356-63):

l'espouse icy voit son expoux a plain
et de ce doulx regard son cueur est plain;
icy l'espoux embrasse son expouse,
icy mon cueur dedans ce cueur reppose,
et en sentand ceste union si forte
icy amour mon cueur en Dieu transporte:
là je le perdz et je ne le voys plus,
vous qui lisés contemplés le surplus.

15. Eyes rolled upward became an identifying feature in visual representations of women mystics in ecstasy. See the illustrations in Jean-Noël Vuarnet, *Exstases féminines*, Paris: Arthaud, 1980.

R. Cottrell has noted that the poem's last line mimics the ecstatic passage beyond language (*Gaze*, pp. 139-40). The mystic bids farewell to her readers, passing to them who remain in the domain of language ("vous qui lisés") the charge of moving out of language and into contemplative silence ("contemplés le surplus"). The economy of mystical discourse is paradoxical, employing copious language (the poem has over 1300 lines) to express and achieve the end of silence.

In their transcendence of the body and their passage to a mystical union with Christ, a passage that includes as an essential step an identification of the woman's body with that of the crucified Christ, the *muletiere* and the narrator of the *Miroir de Jhesus Christ crucifié* belong to the same spiritual sorority. And in portraying that identification Marguerite is not alone; indeed, she inscribes herself in the lineage of her mystical predecessors. Carolyn Walker Bynum has shown that such physical identification was common in the literature of holy women in the late Middle Ages. Commenting on one such mystic, Lidwina of Schiedam (d. 1433), a Flemish mystic, Bynum remarks: "she became one with the body on the cross" (p. 8)[16].

It is difficult to say which of these texts, the *muletiere*'s story, the description of Louise's death in *Les Prisons*, or the final lines of the *Miroir de Jhesus Christ crucifié*, was composed first. However, it is probable that the story, like the *Miroir* and *Les Prisons*, dates from the very last years of Marguerite's life, after François Ier's death on March 31, 1547, when the contemplation of death became an even more prominent feature of her poetry. We might read in the *muletiere*'s story a rehearsal of Marguerite's own death. The three women united in mystical union with Christ: the *muletiere*, Louise, and the *Miroir*'s narrator, point ahead to the end of Marguerite's life, but they also look backward, evoking the young woman to whom Briçonnet addressed his letters. More than twenty years before the composition of *Les Prisons*, the *Miroir* and the *Heptaméron*, Briçonnet closed his "trop en corps" letter (n° 46) by praying that Marguerite might experience the death that would unite her in mystical marriage with Christ (I, p. 228):

> Je vous desire de tout mon cœur la bande apocalypticque et propheticque et que vraiement morte en vous et y vivant le doulx Jesus, puissez fermement en simplicité de cœur dire par ardant desir trop estre en corps, pour estre vraie marguerite au debonnaire espoux de vostre ame, Jesus . . .

Briçonnet's letters often cast Marguerite in the role of a mystic. In his letter written to her about nine months before the 'trop en corps" letter, he portrays her approaching a mystical trance (I, p. 188):

16. See Caroline Walker Bynum, "Fast, Feast and Flesh: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women", *Representations* 11 (1985), pp. 1-25. C. Bynum argues that theological and cultural assumptions of the period encouraged the identification of a female subject with the body of the suffering Christ: "A God who fed his children from his own body, a God whose humanity was his children's humanity, was a God with whom women found it easy to identify. In mystical ecstasy as in communion, women ate and became a God who was food and flesh" (p. 16). See also Bynum's elaboration of that topic in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

> Madame, en cuidant faire fin, me semble veoir vostre esperit insaciable [...] transporté par amoureuse et ravissable contemplacion hors de soy et enyvré de ce qu'il ne veoit et ne verra jamais, vray ignorant en sçavoir transportant et alienant son esperit en abisme de lumiere, gemissant par humbles souspirs et simples, desirant sortir de prison, disant avec le psalmiste . . .

This paradoxical image of Marguerite's spirit, ostensibly conceived as a means of closing the letter, introduces a long prosopopeia in which Briçonnet makes the mystical persona he has created speak to Christ. He authors her prayer for her, beginning with a paraphrase of Psalm 43.

The four texts examined here reveal a compelling preoccupation with portraying a woman in mystical ecstasy. The passages from Briçonnet's letters, the end of Marguerite's final Miroir, the agonies in *Les Prisons* and the description of the *muletiere*'s death, show a complex network of intertextual echoes that move across Marguerite's years as a writer and belie any rupture between her mystical poetry and her nouvelles. The first three, representations of Marguerite or her mother in mystical ecstasy, become subtexts for story two of the *Heptaméron* such that the portrait of the dying *muletiere* becomes a self-portrait of Marguerite de Navarre the author, a portrait consistent with Rabelais's dizain dedicating the *Tiers Livre* to her. The story, which inscribes Marguerite as queen, royal sister, and mother in its opening sentence (p. 18) —

> En la ville d'Amboise, y avoit ung mulletier qui servoit la roine de Navarre, seur du roy François, premier de ce nom, laquelle estoit à Bloys, accouchée d'un fils . . .

— moves from that temporal, political, and physical identification of her at the beginning to evoke at the end Marguerite, the mystic and poet, figured by a poor, nameless woman who has been raped and murdered. The author thereby traces for herself a humbling trajectory consistent with the lesson Oisille draws from the story in her commentary following it (p. 21):

> Parquoy se fault humillier, car les graces de Dieu ne se donnent poinct aux hommes pour leurs noblesses et richesses, mais selon qu'il plaist à sa bonté: qui n'est point accepteur de personne, lequel eslit ce qu'il veult car ce qu'il a esleu l'honore de ses vertus. Et souvent eslit les choses basses, pour confondre celles que le monde estime haultes et honorables.

Oisille is the only devisant to speak after the story, which has, the narrator tells, left all the women tearful and pensive. Her repetition of the verb eslire marks her evangelical rejection of good works as a means to salvation and aligns her with Briçonnet's position: "Telz sont trop en corps qui en œuvres corporelles et materielles mectent leur salut. Saint Pol les appelle animaux" (I, p. 224). Her lesson is an oblique commentary on the reactions of the women who are left behind after the *muletiere*'s death. They fall into two groups (p. 21):

> Ainsy fut enterrée ceste martire de chasteté en l'eglise de Sainct Florentin, où toutes les femmes de bien de la ville ne faillirent à leur debvoir de l'honorer autant qu'il estoit possible, se tenans bien heureuses d'estre de la ville où une femme si vertueuse avoit esté trouvée. Les folles et legieres, voyans l'honneur que l'on faisoit à ce corps, se delibererent de changer leur vye en mieulx.

The final sentence is surely tinged with irony. Nothing in the moral universe of the *Heptaméron* encourages us to believe that the "folles et legieres" followed through on their resolution to change their ways. On the contrary, several details indicate the vanity of their reaction. First, they are motivated by the honor paid to the dead woman's body rather than by her virtue. Their minds are set on the things of the flesh; they are still *trop en corps*. Secondly, the phrase "se deliberent de changer leur vye en mieulx" implies that they think they are able through their own efforts, by an act of the will — by works — to effect their own salvation. They have not remembered *Romans* (9:16): "Ce n'est point doncques ne par celuy qui veult, ne par celuy qui court; mais c'est par Dieu qui faict misericorde". The *folles et legieres* are guilty of presumption, of "outrecuydance" when they think they can by themselves bring about such radical moral change. The corpus of Marguerite de Navarre's writing, like the entire belief system of the evangelicals, challenges the notion that men and women can do anything to "changer leur vye en mieulx". Salvation depends, as the dying woman insisted, on "Jhesuchrist seul" (p. 20) or, as Briçonnet put it, on "la beneficque et amoureuse redemption du doulx Jesus" (I, p. 225). The foolish women miss the point; they misread the muletiere's example[17].

Reading the foolish women's reaction retrospectively, having read the rest of the *Heptaméron*, we cannot be optimistic about their resolve. Rarely, if ever, do its characters resolve ("se deliberent") to change their lives for the better and succeed in doing so. Characters, like the *muletiere*'s murderer, for example, may show an inherently vicious nature; or, like the *muletiere, femme de bien*, they may steadfastly maintain virtue. Characters may fall rather easily into sin, but they do not typically make a morally motivated change from vice to virtue. The *Heptaméron* is not a book of conversion stories. Its characters do not re-enact Paul's dramatic change of heart on the road to Damascus, nor do they finally succeed, after a long struggle of the will like the one Augustine describes in the *Confessions*, to change the course of their lives away from sin and toward God. The *Heptameron* portrays a universe where there are often strong-willed characters, but where the will is incapable of contributing to an individual's salvation. With all their diversity, many of its characters tend to act out a view of the human condition that Paul elaborated in Romans: "car je ne fais point le bien que je veulx: mais je fais le mal lequel je hais [...] car le vouloir est avec moy: mais je ne trouve point a accomplir le bien" (*Rom.* 7:16, 18). That sentiment is echoed twice by the woman speaking in the *Miroir* de Jhesus Christ crucifié: "Defens moy donq tout puissant qui le peulx,/ car je ne peutz fere ce que je veulx" (vv. 434-35) and "o doulx Jesus, soies icy aydeur / car je ne puis fere

17. In this respect the foolish women are typical of the *Heptaméron*'s characters, who, as John Lyons has argued, regularly show the inefficacy of example. See "The *Heptaméron* and the Foundation of Critical Narrative", *Yale French Studies*, 70 (1986), pp. 150-163; also *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989, ch 2, "The *Heptameron* and Unlearning from Example", pp. 72-117.

ce que je veulx . . . " (vv. 1291-92). Those words, in turn, echo Marguerite's poetic annotation of Paul to the Romans following her first *Miroir*, the *Miroir de l'ame pecheresse* published by Antoine Augereau at the end of 1533. In the "Discord estant en l'homme par la contrarieté de l'Esprit & de la Chair" she wrote (vv. 15-18):

> Je ne faictz pas le bien, que je veux faire
> Souvent commence, & je ne puis parfaire:
> Mon bon vouloir n'est en moy le plus fort:
> Et qui pis est, plustost fais le contraire.

With her tale of the *muletiere*'s martyrdom, Oisille carries into the meaow of Notre Dame de Sarrance both her morning reading of Paul and Marguerite de Navarre's signature as a mystical poet, *esprit abstraict, ravy, et ecstatic.*

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"Les Livres comme les Dames ont des Pieds": Marie de Gournay's Developing Self-Image in her Linguistic Essays

Cathleen M. Bauschatz

From the time of the "Préface de 1595" until the final revisions to her complete works, *Les Advis* in 1641, Marie de Gournay was preoccupied with questions about language and language change[1]. These concerns paralleled her own developing self-image as a writer, and the increasing difficulties she encountered, in the seventeenth-century, as her ideas on language and literature appeared to be out of date[2]. At the same time, Gournay was forced to confront, from her earliest discovery of and affinity for Montaigne's *Essais*, her own identity as a woman — as a woman writer —, which put her out of step first with her mother's expectations, and later with those of her social and literary contemporaries.

It is clear, from the start, that she did not identify with the pursuits of other young girls. She tells us that she refused to learn to sew, preferring the study of Latin, much to the displeasure of her mother[3]. Rather, from the time

1. The "Préface de 1595" was written to introduce Marie de Gournay's edition of Montaigne's *Essais*, published in 1595. It has been reprinted and edited by François Rigolot, in *Montaigne Studies*, Vol. I (Nov. 1989), pp. 7-60. *Les Advis* (1634 and 1641) was the second edition of Gournay's complete works, first entitled *L'Ombre* (1626). These works have not been re-printed in full since the seventeenth-century, although selected essays have been re-printed and edited, and an edition of the entire "œuvre" of the 1641 edition is in process, by Jean-Philippe Beaulieu and Hannah Fournier (see below).

2. Many of the questions about language which I treat in this essay have been touched on in the *BSAM*, VIII[e] Série, N° 1-2-3, Janvier-Juin 1996, special issue on "Marie de Gournay et l'édition de 1595 des *Essais* de Montaigne", ed. Jean-Claude Arnould. See in particular Section III, "De l'édition à la création, des *Essais* aux *Advis*".

3. In the "Apologie pour celle qui escrit" (1626), Gournay tells us that she never learned to sew: "On dit que les femmes n'ont jamais le filet, que pour recoudre leur linge: La règle est pourtant fausse en moi, qui ne sais guère coudre ..." (Elyane Dezon-Jones, *Fragments d'un Discours féminin*, Paris: José Corti, 1988, p. 159). In the "Copie", she had already explained (although in the third person): ". . . elle

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