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*La misogynie à visage féminin: Hircan's Role as Marguerite's Anti-feminist Voice in the
Heptaméron (VII & XLIX)*

Gregory Jackson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

La misogynie à visage féminin:

Hircan's Role as Marguerite's Anti-feminist Voice in the *Heptaméron* (VII & XLIX)

Gregory Richard Jackson

Department of French and Italian

Master of Arts

The following document is a meta-commentary on the article, "*La misogynie à visage féminin: Hircan's Role as Marguerite's Anti-feminist Voice in the Heptaméron* (VII & XLIX)," co-authored by Dr. Robert J. Hudson and myself, which will shortly be submitted for publication. It contains an annotated bibliography of all our primary and secondary sources and an account of writing the article.

Our article examines what Marguerite de Navarre, the sixteenth-century French Renaissance author of the *Heptaméron* (a collection 72 *nouvelles*, all supposedly true stories being told by a group of ten *devisants* to one another), intended by her inclusion of the misogynist, Hircan. As we demonstrate, current scholarship views Marguerite as one of the first authors to create a space for women in literature, and further, that the *Heptaméron* was meant to serve the didactic purpose of forming young ladies' perspectives and behavior. Given this, Hircan, whose debasing views on women are shared in each of his stories and interlocutory commentaries, seems an odd *devsiant* for Marguerite to create; and so, we ask, why did she include him?

We conclude that Hircan serves as Marguerite's straw man for the worst aspects of sixteenth-century French society, allowing her to subvert him and demonstrate how Hircan (and by extension, French society's) views towards women ought to be considered inappropriate. To support our reading, we start by explaining the historical context, demonstrating that the attitudes Hircan represents did indeed exist and were prevalent. We then show how Marguerite undermines Hircan: first, by making him so grotesque that the reader finds his views repugnant, and second, in allowing other *devisants*—especially Parlamente and Oisille—to use superior arguments to overturn his perspectives. Finally, we demonstrate how Marguerite uses Hircan's own tales against him, by having his fellow *devisants* interpret his stories completely differently from his womanizing and debasing purposes—instead find praise for women in them.

Keywords: [Marguerite de Navarre, Renaissance, Heptameron, Hircan, misogynie, misogyny]

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I would like to thank the faculty with whom I have worked and studied to prepare this thesis, and throughout my masters program. Dr. Robert Hudson, thank you being my chair and professor nearly every semester during the MA. I enjoyed all of it, from Rabelais on up. Dr. Eric Dursteler, thanks for serving as a reader and for employing me semester after semester for four years! I learned a great deal through that experience. Dr. Marc Olivier, thanks as well for serving as a reader and for engaging courses on theory and French theater. I still know my lines to *En attendant Godot*. Thanks to Dr. Anca Sprenger for being so willing to help at a moments notice as the graduate coordinator, and to Dr. Corry “Patron” Cropper and Dr. Daryl Lee. While they did not serve on my committee, I could not imagine giving thanks for any aspect of my MA without acknowledging them. Short stories and crime films will never be the same. *Vive la NCFs!*

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Preface

In accordance with thesis option two, I co-authored the article “*La misogynie à visage féminin : Hircan’s Role as Marguerite’s Anti-feminist Voice in the Heptaméron (VII & XLIX)*,” with Dr. Robert Hudson, and prepared the annotated bibliography of our sources and the meta-commentary on our work that follows. Our article will be submitted to academic journals for publication within the next few weeks.

The genesis of this project comes from a term paper I wrote on the subject of Hircan’s misogyny in the *Heptaméron* for Dr. Hudson’s graduate seminar on “Humanism and Reform in Renaissance France,” which I took my first semester in the MA program (Fall 2008). This paper was focused on a textual analysis of *nouvelles* VII and XLIX. After presenting it at the “Third Annual Graduate Student Conference” hosted by Louisiana State University’s French Studies program in January 2009, I decided I wanted to further develop the paper into a publishable piece. With Dr. Hudson’s close mentorship, we expanded on the historical context of the *Heptaméron* and did further textual analysis to accomplish this.

Dr. Hudson and I both worked on all aspects of the article. We started talking about different directions to take the paper and how we would go about improving it in October 2009. I started to prepare a preliminary annotated bibliography as we both researched shortly thereafter. By late January/early February 2010 we had begun writing. We took turns sending our work to each other via email so that it could be looked over, commented on and revised. Once we were both happy with a section, we would go onto the next. We repeated this process a total of eight times. Working like this, the end result turned out to be a good blend of research and prose provided by both of us.

Introduction

Marguerite de Navarre was a sixteenth-century author, patroness of humanists and reformers, as well as a sister and counselor to the King of France, François I, and wife and counselor to Henri II d'Albret, King of Navarre. She spent much of her life trying to aid the various causes, people and ideas she supported, and in doing so she helped in innumerable ways to create a flourishing French Renaissance. In short, the amount of influence she held and what she accomplished as a woman in the sixteenth-century makes her remain a subject of great interest to scholars even now in the twenty-first century.

An important part of what allowed Marguerite to be so influential is her very unique background. To start, she received a thorough humanist education, being instructed in several languages, philosophy and scripture. Most European woman of her day would never even learn to sign their names and only the elite learned to read, let alone be taught to think broadly and critically. This kind of education was meant for men who needed to be able to handle business and government. Marguerite's level of education then represents an extremely small percentage of the most privileged. As the King's sister, she was also able to participate in politics, advising her brother on the affairs of the kingdom. Marguerite even played a crucial role in negotiating his freedom after the ill-fated battle of Pavia in 1525. Arguably, she ushered in the beginning stages of our idea of the modern woman.

Yet, she was still not free from, nor ignorant to, the social constraints of the day placed on her sex. She, like most elite women, was offered in marriage for political expediency, being used essentially as a bargaining chip. Later, she saw her daughter go through the same experience as well. Despite the influence and protection that came with

being royalty, she still had to manage herself within the male-dominated society of sixteenth-century France. Indeed, the one commonality of all women that ran from Marguerite to the lowest levels of society during this time was their lack of control over their own lives, which were essentially run by men: first by a father, then usually by a husband or religious organization.

It is in this atmosphere that Marguerite dared to publicly support her ideals, by helping religious reformers and humanists, such as John Calvin and Clément Marot; and through her writings, such as her poem *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*. In fact, this work caused such a stir at the Sorbonne and in the Catholic Church that being the King's sister is perhaps the sole reason she was not put to death for heresy after its publication. As an author, her work has proven to be among the first in history to create a space for women within literature. Beyond her patronage, this is yet another reason why she is a subject of discussion and study among scholars of Feminism/Gender Studies, French Studies and the Early Modern Period/the Renaissance.

With such an incredible background and accomplishments, it seems almost odd at first read that her celebrated posthumous work of 72 *nouvelles*, the *Heptaméron*, contains one particularly misogynistic *devisant*: Hircan. He stands against all that Marguerite represents when it comes to women. He considers them to exist solely for his pleasure, believes that he has a right as a man to take them even against their will, constantly putting women beneath men in every way. His existence in a work by a woman for women begs the question of why the progressive, accomplished and seemingly fearless Marguerite would create such a *devisant* for her last work?

As our article demonstrates, a careful reading reveals that Marguerite's views and unwillingness to compromise are still consistent with her creation and inclusion of Hircan. He serves as the voice of the aspects of her society that she dislikes. Marguerite sets him up in conversations with the other *devisants* to be made the fool, or at the very least proven to have faulty logic. In some instances, she even allows the *devisants* to derive good morals from his base tales to only further undermine Hircan's wicked intentions. In attacking and overturning Hircan's purposes, Marguerite used her literature to indirectly attack those of her day who thought like Hircan, possibly hoping to effect change in her own society. As the last literary contribution by one of France's—or Europe's, for that matter—very few female Renaissance authors, understanding her text is important as there are so few such texts that even exist.

To further explore other aspects of Marguerite's life, her writings, or other activities for that matter, an annotated bibliography of the sources used in my and Dr. Hudson's research follows. It contains many of the most important contributions to the literature surrounding Marguerite, as well as to women in the Early Modern Period/Renaissance in general.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Marguerite de Navarre. *L'Heptaméron*. Ed. Michel François. Paris: Garnier Frères, 1967.

First published posthumously in 1558, the *Heptaméron* consists of 72 existing *nouvelles*—allegedly true stories related by ten *devisants* in order to pass the time while stranded and waiting for a bridge to be built, which will take ten days. Of the ten *devisants*, the sexes are equally represented with five men and five women. Each of them has a unique personality that influences their stories and commentary too. This allowed Marguerite the ability to use each of these different perspectives to construct overarching narratives that ultimately argues in support of her worldviews, such as her favorable stance on ecclesiastical reformation and desire to address the social status of women. This study focuses on what she means to communicate with the misogynistic *devisant* known as Hircan, who seems to personally contradict the latter of these two views. In our reading, we find that she uses him as a straw man who can profess the very attitudes of society that she hates the most so she can argue against them. Naturally, he tends to lose in his debates with the *devisants* who Marguerite uses to oppose him, such as Oisille and Parlamente. We use quotes from throughout the *Heptaméron* and Hircan's tales VII and XLIX to demonstrate our reading of Hircan in the actual text, making the *Heptaméron* paramount to all other sources used in this study.

Secondary Sources

Bourgeois, Louis. *Quand la cour de France vivait à Lyon*. Paris: Fayard, 1980.

Bourgeois describes Lyon's golden age in the first half of the sixteenth century as a privileged city, serving as a great cultural and gathering center, welcoming the French royal courts, some of the greatest minds of France (Rabelais, Marot, Marguerite, etc.) and publishers from all over Europe. Lyon also held four annual fairs that drew merchants, bankers and artisans from all over the Western world. In sum, this was a time when Lyon was the intellectual and cultural capital of France. This work highlights the importance of Lyon during the Renaissance, a city referenced in this study while discussing the historical context of the *Heptaméron*.

Brown, Meg Lota, and Kari Boyd McBride. *Women's Roles in the Renaissance*.

Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2005.

Brown and McBride's 301-page book focuses solely on the woman's place within Renaissance society with chapters on the following: education, law, work, politics, religion, literature, the arts, and pleasures. This work confirms what other sources that had already been consulted said about a woman's education during the Renaissance (that only upper class women were literate, and only a few of this group obtained anything near a full Humanist education), and also provided useful insights on what Martin Luther, arguably the world's most famous religious reformer of the period, thought of women, quoting him as writing that they are to stay at home and are "compelled to obey [their husbands]" (4). Brown and

McBride's work provides solid background knowledge on Marguerite's world and helps demonstrate historically why Marguerite would feel the need to fight against the attitudes embodied by Hircan.

Carron, Jean-Claude. "Les Noms de l'honneur féminin à la Renaissance: Le nom tu et le non dit." *Poétique* 67 (1986): 269-80.

Carron's work lends support to demonstrating the enormous double standard in sixteenth-century France in terms of sexual morality. Specifically for our concerns, he explores how female honor was equated almost exclusively with chastity during the Renaissance.

Chilton, Paul A. "Introduction." In *Marguerite de Navarre The Heptameron*. Trans. and Ed. Paul A. Chilton. London: Penguin, 1984. 7-40.

Chilton's English-language translation of the *Heptaméron* starts with a brief history of the publication of the work, followed by an examination of "the storytellers (or, the *devisants*)," themes in the work, and translations. Towards the end he gives a break down of the ten *devisants*, what their names mean, who he believes each one is thought to represent and so on. This is a great source for a solid understanding of who the *devisants* are and what Marguerite hoped to accomplish with them.

Cholakian, Patricia Francis. *Rape and Writing in the Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1991

In her key text on Marguerite and gender studies, Patricia Cholakian argues that the *Heptaméron* is an example of a female voice in narrative, as Marguerite's "authorial voice makes itself heard over those of her *devisants* as the maker of

discourse” (19). Specifically, Marguerite’s own life and experiences inform her writing, especially the moment when she was nearly raped as a youth. In fact, many of her readings of the story revolve around rape. With this understanding, Cholakian considers most of the male *devisants* to represent the typical male misogyny of Marguerite’s time. She states: “Hircan, Saffredent, and Simontault are all misogynists, preoccupied with denigrating and deflowering women” (34). They are included, then, so that Marguerite could use their own misogyny to “deconstruct the analogues on which [the stories] are based and to argue for women’s rights to speak out against the structures that oppress them” (78). Especially useful to this study is Cholakian’s use of *nouvelle* VII—a tale analyzed in this thesis—as an example of this deconstruction. After Hircan’s tale and commentary makes it clear that he considers a woman honorable if she is simply not caught in having an affair, Cholakian points out how Marguerite overturns his tale through the female *devisant* Longarine, who adds, “I can well believe that there are those you would like to convince, but you are not so stupid that you would want your wife, or the one whose honor you love more than pleasure, to play at such a game” (70). In sum, Cholakian demonstrates how the story “is carefully constructed to betray Hircan’s contempt for women” (69), helping to prove our thesis that Marguerite created him specifically to demonstrate the problem with her contemporary society’s attitude towards women.

Cholakian, Patricia and Rouben Cholakian. *Marguerite de Navarre: Mother of the Renaissance*. New York: Columbia UP, 2006.

This work represents the most recent biography on the author of the *Heptaméron* by a well-known (married) couple of Marguerite scholars. Having a solid knowledge of Marguerite's personal life, from the level of her education, to her political roles, to her influence over and favor of the humanist reformers of her day, was essential in understanding how she might have hoped to influence her world through literature. Beyond helping to build the necessary general background on Marguerite needed to undertake this study, this work provides specifics on several categories that have strengthened the arguments in the final thesis, such as: her role in Lyon and time spent there (49, 183), her experience being used as a political bargaining chip in an attempted arranged marriage with Henry VIII of England (137), and her ecclesiastical censure for her 1531 *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* (175).

Cholakian, Rouben. "Introduction." In Marguerite de Navarre. *Selected Writings: A Bilingual Edition*. Ed. and Trans. Rouben Cholakian and Mary Skemp. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008. 1-42.

Rouben Cholakian provides English translations of some of Marguerite's writings beyond the *Heptaméron*, including letters, epistles and poetry. In his introduction, he takes the time to introduce us to Marguerite, offering a solid background on who she was. Within this, he mentions a few things that are pertinent to our study, such his statement that her work is "one of the earliest to proclaim a space for the woman writer" (2). He also acknowledges her willingness to attack what she saw

as wrong in society, stating that Marguerite “never misses an opportunity to point an accusatory finger at abusive and disloyal husbands and lustful men of the cloth” (2).

Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1975.

This volume contains eight essays by Davis that examine different aspects of commoners in France (especially Lyon) during the sixteenth century. Some of her approaches include: religion, printing, treatment of the impoverished, political and social uses of French carnivals and—most important to this study—an examination of how women were viewed in terms of their sexuality, which she does in her essay “Woman on Top” (chapter five). She also explains the logic (though poor and false) behind those views. For example, Davis recounts how incorrect ideas of physiology provided scientific and medical support to the period’s false conclusions, such as the well known doctor François Rabelais’ idea that: “[the woman’s] womb [is] like a hungry animal; when not amply fed by sexual intercourse or reproduction it was likely to wander about her body, overpowering her speech and senses” (124). Essentially, the article explains how a woman was thought to be governed by her reproductive desires, and that, as a result, religion and morality had to be used to keep her in check.

Davis. “Women in the Crafts in Sixteenth-Century Lyon.” *Feminist Studies* 8.1 (Spring, 1982): 47-80.

This article gives great detail on the different trades a woman could work in and the limitations they faced in nearly every profession aside from housewife, to nun,

to textile-worker and prostitute. As Lyon was frequented by Marguerite and the capital of the French Renaissance, this essay helps provide historical context.

Febvre, Lucien. *Autour de L'Heptaméron. Amour sacré, amour profane*. Paris: Gallimard, 1944.

This book is split into two parts, “*Marguerite la chrétienne*” and “*Marguerite qui fit l'Heptaméron*.” Febvre’s work is pertinent to this study as he examines how Marguerite’s writings merge the sacred and the profane. Discussing nearly every imaginable sin of morality, she simultaneously addresses religion and roles within society. Febvre examines this seemingly unnatural mixture, and while doing so touches on subjects applicable to this study, such as the Gallic mentality of masculinity and marriage.

Ford, Philip. “Sexual Equality and Evangelical Neoplatonism in the *Heptameron*.”

Approaches to Teaching Marguerite de Navarre’s Heptameron. Ed. Colette H. Winn. New York: MLA, 2007. 70-75.

Ford explains how Neoplatonic theories adapted to Christianity show that through God’s grace “men and women can achieve unity and fulfillment in love” (75).

Exploring such themes in the *Heptaméron*, he mentions that Marguerite’s male *devisants* Hircan, Saffredent and Simontaut are all purposely designed to represent competing viewpoints in the sixteenth-century, thus they see male honor as simply residing “in the seduction of women, whereas female honor requires the avoidance of the slightest hint of sexual scandal, as undeserved it may be” (70).

While discussing his larger ideas about Neo-Platonism and Evangelism, Ford demonstrates the double standard of social norms concerning women against

which Marguerite was fighting in embodying radical viewpoints in the characters of her *devisants*.

Freccero, Carla. "Margaret of Navarre." *A New History of French Literature*. Ed. Denis Hollier. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989. 145-148.

Freccero's article highlights Marguerite's contribution to the literary world by providing background information on what influenced the queen. A crucial part of the historical context of this thesis is her inclusion of a letter written by Marguerite's daughter, Jeanne d'Albret, that demonstrates the lack of choice women—especially those from high society—had in the most important aspects of their lives, such as marriage (Jeanne wrote: "the arranged marriage between myself and the Duke of Clèves is against my will" (146)). Freccero also argues that Marguerite, "quietly challenged the norms of male-dominated society" (147), essentially putting forth an idea that is included in this study as well: Marguerite was intentionally subtle in her attacks on society's misogyny.

Gordon, Bruce. *Calvin*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2009.

Gordon's new biographical study of John Calvin touches upon the fact that the Reformation did not include efforts to increase the rights of women in Europe, which further highlights the need for Marguerite's writings to try and push the issue. Gordon demonstrates that even with Calvin's reforms, women at church were relegated to the lowest benches during worship and meant to watch the children so the men could listen (138); and that Calvin, like Luther, thought the woman should be home bound, dutifully looking after the husband's belongs and his home (280).

King, Margaret L. *Women of the Renaissance*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991.

King examines the various roles women played in Renaissance society, specifically within the family, religion, and high culture. This work provides historical context and demonstrates how Marguerite's education was a result of her privileged status as royalty. King cites Agrippa d'Aubigné, whose attitude reflects that of his period (which was roughly two generations after that of Marguerite), stating that he believed women should not receive an education "unless they were princesses, obliged by their rank to assume the responsibilities, knowledge, competence, administration, and authority of men" (207).

King, Margaret L., and Albert Rabil, Jr. Eds. and Trans. *Her Immaculate Hand: Selected Works by and about Women Humanists of Quattrocento Italy*. Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 2000.

King and Rabil's translation of works by (and commentary on) female humanists from Italy serve the distinct purpose in this thesis of demonstrating not only the lack of support a woman in the early modern period might expect for her education, but the persecution that could accompany her studies. King and Rabil tell of Isotta Nogarola, who was an intellectual from Verona that was accused of incestuous relations with her brother because she had an education (17). This is reflective of the attitude of Europe as a whole at the time.

Laguardia, David P. *Intertextual Masculinity in French Renaissance Literature: Rabelais, Brantôme, and the Cent nouvelles nouvelles*. London: Ashgate, 2008.

Laguardia's study of masculinity during the early modern period employs important historical figures and works, such as Rabelais, the humanist doctor and

author of the *Gargantua* series; and Brantôme, a soldier turned historian.

Brantôme is thought to be the son of Anne de Vivonne, a woman that scholars believe to be represented by the *devisant* Ennasuite. This would mean Brantôme would have a familiarity with some of the stories in the *Heptaméron* with this unique connection. Further, Laguardia's analysis of him is useful as he brings to life how this once-soldier-turned-writer puts forth codes of masculinity, helping us better understand the male coterie of *devisants* for which Hircan is the leader.

Llewelyn, Kathleen. "Afin Que Vous Connaissiez, Mesdames." *Approaches to Teaching Marguerite de Navarre's Heptameron*. Ed. Colette H. Winn. New York: MLA, 2007. 52-56.

Llewelyn explains how the *Heptaméron* serves the didactic purpose of instructing its female readers in how to conduct themselves. One evidence she cites for this comes from Cathleen Bauschatz, who "points out [that] the phrase 'Voilà, mes dames,' frequently repeated by the *devisants* in both the stories and the accompanying discussions, 'implies that women are the primary audience intended by the storytellers'" (52). Building on this purpose, she engages, briefly, with how Hircan can be used as a teaching tool for young girls as other *devisants* refute his ideas in their commentary after his tales. This work further illustrates how Marguerite hoped to use the *Heptaméron* to alter the woman's role in society for the better.

Losse, Deborah N. "Narrating Feminine Consciousness in the Age of Reform."

Approaches to Teaching Marguerite de Navarre's Heptameron. Ed. Colette H. Winn. New York: MLA, 2007. 86-90.

Losse's article argues that Marguerite's support of the Reformation is made evident by her choice to have all ten *devisants* appearing to agree on "the subject of clerical abuses against women" (87). It is an example of Marguerite using the several and very different *devisants'* agreement to lend support to her own views.

Lyons, John D., and Mary B. McKinley, Eds. *Critical Tales: New Studies of the*

Heptaméron and Early Modern Culture. Philadelphia: U Pennsylvania P, 1993.

Lyons and McKinley's edited volume represents a great variety of perspectives and approaches on the *Heptaméron* by some of the most respected scholars in the field. In this volume is Cathleen M. Bauschatz's article, "Voylà, mes dames ...": Inscribed Women Listeners" (104-122), which puts forth the argument that female readers were Marguerite's intended audience, specifically young female readers who could glean lessons on virtue from the text. This idea lends support to the argument that Hircan's stories, being debunked by the female *devisants*, allows Marguerite to ultimately use her most potent misogynist to further her goals and hopes for women.

Mathieu-Castellani, Gisèle. *La conversation conteuse: Les nouvelles de Marguerite de Navarre*. Paris: PUF, 1992.

Mathieu-Castellani discusses the importance of polyphony in the *Heptaméron*, as Losse's article (also cited in this study) does, but in greater detail. If the reader wishes to pursue a more in depth understanding of how the interactions of the

devisants help to communicate Marguerite's ideas, this work is a great starting point.

Stjerna, Kirsi, ed. *Women and the Reformation*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2009.

Kirsi Stjerna's work on the Reformation has a chapter dedicated to Marguerite de Navarre and Jeanne d'Albret: "The Protectors of the French Reforms" (149-174). This chapter gives an overview of who Marguerite was, and how she used her place in society to wield influence in the back-and-forth between Protestants and Catholics that eventually brought war to sixteenth-century France. Stjerna helps to demonstrate how unusual Marguerite's was, having: an extensive education (a working knowledge of six languages and understanding of scripture and philosophy (152)), in a time when most women were illiterate; and serving as an advisor to her brother, the King François I (151). Stjerna argues that Marguerite embraced the relative security and influence that accompanied her status as the King's sister to write what she wanted regardless of the popularity—or lack thereof—of her views, and proves this by exhibiting the complaints laid on Marguerite by both Catholics and Protestants, neither side sufficiently pleased with Marguerite's religious views (151-154). She also explains how the social norm of women being subject to men was inculcated both at home and at church in French society at this time (33).

Wilson, Corinne F. "Classroom Tools." *Approaches to Teaching Marguerite de*

Navarre's Heptameron. Ed. Colette H. Winn. New York: MLA, 2007. 22-25.

This short but informative section in Winn's edited volume gives an overview of all ten *devisants*: descriptions of their personalities and who they are each thought

to represent from Marguerite's life. It also has a chart that lays out all of the 72 *nouvelles* with the subject of each one, and who tells it. Specifically, this study cites Wilson's idea that Hircan was based on Marguerite's second husband, Henri II d'Albret, King of Navarre; and Nomefide as being intended for "comic relief" among the *devisants* (23).

Sample of Changes

Dr. Hudson and I wrote our article through an exchange of several emails. After writing one sub-section of the paper (usually 3-4 pages), I would then send it to him and he would improve the prose, connect ideas, and/or leave comments for me through track changes to point out something that needs attention. After that, he would send it back to me to work on until we were both pleased with the section, at which point we moved to the next. I found this especially helpful not just for writing the article, but also for the development of my own scholarship and prose. When he would send back a section that I had originally written with his changes, I could see vividly what I did well and what I could improve on.

As this went on, I came to see that my introduction and conclusion were where I struggled the most. Dr. Hudson did not have to make too many changes to what I submitted in the body of the paper beyond stylistic alterations, which helped the article read better. The initial introduction and conclusion, however, I view in hindsight as being written in the wrong style for a serious academic article. I still wanted to introduce the reader in a very general way to the topic, as I had learned to do when writing 300- and 400-level term papers as an undergraduate. Dr. Hudson, however, cut through unnecessary paragraphs and got right to the pertinent information.

To provide an example of this, here is the introductory paragraph to our final article, followed by the one I originally wrote. Notice how the final version quickly acknowledges scholars who have contributed to the secondary literature and then goes straight into the topic:

With a combination of onomastics and attention to historical detail, much debate in the study of Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* over the past 80 years (Jourda, Krailsheimer, Palermo, Cazauran, Frank, Vulcan, Chilton, etc.) has gone into attempting to identify the authentic sources behind the ten *devisants* that populate Marguerite's coterie of stranded storytellers.¹ While such study has its merits, what is more important to understand is that each of the ten figures represents a literary/philosophical type; and, regardless of any apparent similarities with Marguerite's contemporaries, each is ultimately the literary/rhetorical invention of a writer, a distinct fictional personality created to synergistically mesh into a polyphony of voices and allow for the attainment of an eventual overarching unity through diversity. What is this collective message? Above all else, it is one that seeks to redress hypocrisy and impropriety in religious worship (particularly amongst men of the cloth) and, perhaps more importantly, it seeks to confront (as indicated in the first epigraph above) the accepted disparity between the sexes in Renaissance France. The current study will deal with the latter of these concerns.

Now, here are my original first two paragraphs, after which I still have not started to broach our topic of misogyny within the *Heptaméron*:

Marguerite de Navarre showed little, if any fear in making her mind known. She served as an advised to her brother, the King François I,

¹ Corinne F. Wilson, in the "Classroom Tools" section of Colette Winn's *MLA Approaches to Teaching Marguerite de Navarre's Heptameron* (2007), includes a very useful and thorough chart, which refers to Jourda, Krailsheimer, and Palermo, as it lists possible historical identities alongside social and symbolic roles for each *devisant*.

throughout his life and played a key role in the negotiations of his freedom after the disastrous battle (for the French) at Pavia in 1525 (Cholakian and Cholakian 134-35). Likewise, while displaying the political skill to not unnecessarily offend in her making her requests and sharing her views, she stood up for religious reform and those who most strongly promoted it when it was not the politically expedient thing to do, even to the point that “had she not enjoyed the king’s protection, it is probable that Marguerite would have been burned” for it (175, 196). Even with some protection from the king, she was not immune to attacks by the Sorbonne and the Catholic Church—which she so thoroughly offended that it placed her on the *Index librorum prohibitorum*.

Marguerite’s combination of aplomb and diplomatic manners in attacking a status quo that she disagreed with filled her posthumous masterpiece, *L’Heptaméron*, with social critiques ranging from very direct to intelligently discreet. For instance, her disapproval of traditional clergy would be hard for any reader to miss as she has all ten of her *devisants*, each with very different personalities and view points, unified in their disdain towards them—something that Deborah Losse points out in her article, “Narrating Feminine Consciousness in the Age of Reform” (Losse 87). While Losse makes a very strong and well-argued point, this cannot however be used as a model to expose Marguerite’s other worldviews. Not only would such constant agreement among the ten have given *L’Heptaméron* insufficient conflict to create the amusing and essential

interlocutory discussions employed to frame the 72 nouvelles, allowing for much of her social commentary, but the more sensitive topic of woman's equality would not have had the discretion needed for her to even broach the subject.

While this contrast clearly demonstrates how indirect my first draft was compared to the last, I also want to stress the importance of readability. This next example comes from the body of the text, where Dr. Hudson only made minimal changes to the prose to make it flow better, but these changes make a significant difference. This comes from our section on historical context. To start, here is our final version:

On top of their general exclusion from—or potential persecution for obtaining—a humanist education, women in the early modern period were always subordinate to men in their relationships. Fathers would always make the final decision as to whether a girl would receive an education, vocational training, be married, or enter a convent (these were essentially all of a girl's options). To be fair, some fathers did allow their daughters to choose (or at least took into account) what they wanted, but ultimately the decision remained his. If a girl did undergo an apprenticeship or learn some sort of trade, however, it was nearly always something she could do after marriage and on the side, something that would complement and not compete nor interfere with her future husband's work. Typically, these life altering decisions boiled down to what the father thought was best for

the family, however, especially among the elite. A noble daughter was usually little more than a politico-financial bargaining chip.²

Here is the original paragraph, which is more jarring in style:

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I feel the final version's introductory sentence has a much more natural and cohesive flow, allowing the reader to better enjoy the prose and better understand the paragraph's purpose. Within the body, Dr. Hudson added more precise terms, a small change but one that also improves clarity. One such example is at the end of the paragraph, where "bartering chip" was changed to "politico-financial bargaining chip." This simple

² Natalie Zemon Davis gives a fine perspective of the position of women in the Renaissance workplace in her article "Women in the Crafts in Sixteenth-Century Lyon." *Feminist Studies* 8.1 (1982): 47-80.

addition of adjectives gives a clearer impression of how women were used by men in the sixteenth century, rather than just communicating the fact that they were used by men.

These two examples represent the two most important lessons that I personally will retain from this co-authoring experience. The glaring contrast between my first attempt and the final version of the introduction has taught me to be far more direct with my topic right at the start of my writing, while the second example from the body of the article paper has taught me the importance that precise wording and good flow within the prose can play in the article's overall readability.

Conclusion

This meta-commentary should be useful to anyone wishing to obtain a grounded understanding of who Marguerite de Navarre was; how to interpret the *devisant* Hircan; and what the condition was of women in Renaissance France. While this document is not intended to be a thorough investigation of any of these topics, it offered an introduction to each with direction to substantive essays, books and articles for further study. Our article offers greater analysis that is specific to Marguerite's use of the misogynistic Hircan to ironically further the cause of women.

There are several different paths that further research could be taken. A more inclusive study on this same subject could examine whether or not Marguerite uses her other two misogynistic *devisants*, Saffredent and Simontault, as "anti-feminist" voices as well. If research showed that they were in fact not used as such, it would still be of interest to see how she does use them, and why she created them. Such studies could focus on them individually, as our article did on Hircan, or perhaps of greater interest, examine how all three (Hircan, Saffredent and Simontault) work together, or even inadvertently against each other. Historically speaking, this study has made me wonder how many other texts by female authors of the Renaissance might have used straw men, similar to Hircan, in their texts to allow them to discuss topics a woman could not engage in outside of literature. If so, could Marguerite have had any exchange of ideas with these other authors, be that directly through correspondence or through an influence from reading the other's work? Both literarily and historically, there are plenty of research opportunities that could be extrapolated from this meta-commentary, or our article.

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