

Incoherent Texts? Storytelling, Preaching, and the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* in Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* 21

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To analyze Marguerite de Navarre's response to the misogynist francophone novella tradition, this article asks how material provided by older nouvelles is reorganized in the Heptaméron, blurring both normative definitions of masculinity and femininity and the lines between framed novellas and other genres. This article describes Marguerite's use of nonfictional sources as well as Cent nouvelles nouvelles 26. Visual iconographic transformations in the Cent nouvelles nouvelles are converted in the Heptaméron into textual and intergeneric transformations. In the distance between Cent nouvelles nouvelles 26's elaborate crossdressing farce and Heptaméron 21, which blends romance, pardon request, and martyr's tale, one perceives the differences in gendered thought and rhetorical strategy separating Marguerite from her anonymous predecessors.

INTRODUCTION: AN INCOHERENT *NOUVELLE* AT THE INTERSECTION OF EARLY MODERN FRENCH STORYTELLING AND PREACHING

IN THE TWENTY-FIRST of her *Heptaméron's* (1559) seventy-two stories, Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549) writes one of her longest prose fictions about an enduring and virtuous friendship between two harassed members of a bygone royal court, only to veer in an entirely different direction near the story's end. Parlamente, the fictional narrator of *Heptaméron* 21, expends much narrative energy to craft a convincing love story, but closes by revealing the male lead as a self-interested fortune hunter, bringing in God's Providence to put the villainous characters to death, and reincorporating her female protagonist into

I wish to extend my warmest thanks to William J. Kennedy, Kathleen Long, Colin Macdonald, Joseph Bowling, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and revisions. I would also like to thank my wife Kathryn for her continual enthusiasm regarding the present study. The editions of the *Heptaméron* used here are the original French edited by Salminen (1999) and the English translation by Chilton (1984). I use my own translations in cases where Chilton's version, by translating one French word differently in different places, obscures the strategic reuse of vocabulary that a reader of the original text would no doubt notice. All translations of the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* are my own.

Renaissance Quarterly 68 (2015): 465–95 © 2015 Renaissance Society of America.

the aristocratic society that has persistently rejected her.¹ In her notes on the twenty-first *nouvelle*,² Renja Salminen, editor of the magisterial 1999 Droz edition of the *Heptaméron*, cites the editor of Flammarion's modernized and frequently reprinted 1982 version, Simone de Reyff, to confirm that the story is not coherent: "From a literary standpoint, this unexpected 'happy ending' appears a bit artificial. Reyff emphasizes the incoherencies of the story: the bastard's betrayal, which nothing in his prior behavior prepares or justifies, and Rolandine's sudden change in behavior. After manifesting an obstinacy 'that could pass for a form of schizophrenia,' she benignly accepts a marriage of convenience as soon as she learns of [her lover's] death."³

Such a dismissal of any possibility of comprehending this narrative begs to be improved upon, and ameliorating readers' understanding of the so-called incoherencies of texts that nonetheless fascinate and entertain is, in any case, one important purpose of literary criticism. This article will shed some light upon the apparent inconsistencies of Rolandine's and her friend's trajectories, demonstrating that *Heptaméron* 21's twists and turns may be best understood in light of the many connections between storytelling and preaching that underpin Marguerite's collection. Attending to the individual preaching styles (understood in terms of both narration and exegesis) embodied by the frame characters Parlamente, Oysille, Symontault, and Hircain can help readers make sense of "Rolandine" within the context of the *Heptaméron*.⁴ Exploring those frame characters' sermonizing will in turn clarify the intertextual connections between "Rolandine" and two nonfictional early modern genres, the pardon request and the martyr's tale, helping readers understand "Rolandine" within the context of early modern literature.⁵

Lastly, this article will elucidate the relationship of *Heptaméron* 21 to an unrecognized source text, the twenty-sixth story in the fifteenth-century *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*. The greater length of novellas like *Heptaméron* 21 and *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26 enables them to focus on iconographic transformations,

¹Navarre, 1984, 236–53; Navarre, 1999, 195–217.

²This article will use "nouvelle" and "novella" interchangeably, both terms referring to a short (usually only a few pages) early modern prose fiction narrative.

³Salminen in Navarre, 1999, 718, quoting Reyff, 27 (my translation).

⁴Names of characters from the *Heptaméron* or the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, when written in quotation marks, refer to individual novellas: thus, "Rolandine" means *Heptaméron* 21, "Floride and Amadour" means *Heptaméron* 10, and "Katherine/Conrard" means *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26.

⁵The present study's notion of the pardon tale, or the request for royal remission or grace, as a nonfictional early modern French genre is derived primarily from N. Z. Davis. The martyr's tale as an early modern genre is derived here primarily from the following: Gregory; Kolb. Although the constraints of this project preclude detailed comparative analysis of *nouvelles* with early modern martyrs' tales, both Kolb and Gregory make clear that the first martyrologies to study would be those of Ludwig Rabus, Jean Crespin, John Foxe, and Adrian van Haempstede.

whereby generalized characters (icons) identified by simple clusters of modifiers or small image motifs change their identities as icons rather than merely performing one iconographic function in one brief narrative.⁶ In most readings of the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, novellas are thought of as short, frequently comic narratives with casual attitudes toward sex, violence, and morality, in which men consistently triumph over women and each iconographic character generally plays one obvious part. In *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26, which this article will also call “Katherine/Conrard” for the sake of variety, readers find a story that is comic but also long and didactic, where the clever and virtuous female frame character triumphs over the morally and intellectually inferior male. To do this, however, Katherine has to transform herself outwardly, visually, into a man, Conrard, whose identification as male is underscored by the consistent use of *il* rather than *elle*, *Conrard* rather than *Katherine*, to refer to this character whenever she is crossdressing.

Heptaméron 21 recycles elements it finds in *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26 so as to shift the focus from literal, visual transformations (dressed in women’s clothing and therefore female, to dressed in men’s clothing and therefore male) to textual, intergeneric ones. “Rolandine” reorganizes narrative elements from “Katherine/Conrard” and recombines them, first with passages resembling the requests for royal pardon that accused criminals commonly presented to their lords during the ancien régime, then with passages resembling the stories about martyrs that were very popular during the Reformation. The newer novella is still about men’s shifting loyalties and the different personas that women have to take on in order to navigate around male treachery to happiness, but Rolandine’s appearance, unlike Katherine’s, does not have to change: instead, the outward projection of personality found in Rolandine’s speeches transforms.

There is more to Katherine’s sartorial transformation than the mere Carnavalesque impulse to turn the world upside down, but her journeys as Conrard are nonetheless temporary. From a typical aging and unmarried court lady, to a citizen requesting pardon on her own behalf for lack of a lawyer, to a triumphant and world-defying religious martyr, Rolandine’s guises change as the injustices to which she is subjected multiply. In search of generic forms that can accommodate such unusually strong and articulate female characters as the *Heptaméron*’s women without showing too much disrespect for the prevailing patriarchy of sixteenth-century France, “Rolandine” weaves together several different types of narrative discourse. This interweaving can make the story seem disjointed at times, but readers’ disorientation is a price the *Heptaméron* is willing to pay in order to traverse the boundaries of gender and genre, to reach a space where women may have a Renaissance and a Reformation, in fiction if not in fact.

⁶See LaGuardia, 38–50.

SUMMARY OF *HEPTAMÉRON* 21 AND A REVIEW OF
RELEVANT RECENT CRITICISM

For readers unfamiliar with *Heptaméron* 21, it will be helpful to recount its plot in brief. Rolandine is a lady in the household of an unnamed queen of France who torments the heroine because of “some grudge against Rolandine’s father.”⁷ Because of the queen’s dislike and her father’s avarice, Rolandine reaches thirty years of age without being married. She forms a close friendship with a “bastard son of a good and noble family,” whose situation resembles her own: he is poor and thus unable to secure a wife befitting his lineage.⁸ With the court scandalized by their relationship, the queen’s agents drive their amorous conversations further and further underground, eventually under the threat of death if they continue to meet. Despite the queen’s prohibition, Rolandine and the bastard conduct a clandestine marriage, which she makes him promise not to consummate until her father either dies or consents to their union.

The secret marriage is eventually discovered, whereupon the bastard flees to Germany and Rolandine is sent back to her father’s house to live as a prisoner. The bastard begins to pursue a rich German lady, but Rolandine refuses to renounce her marriage. What finally saves her is her husband’s early death, followed by her father’s decision to arrange an honorable marriage for her after all. Her brother then withholds her share of the family fortune after their father’s death, but the brother, like the bastard, dies soon afterward, leaving Rolandine and her new husband with all of her house’s wealth.

Many critics have argued that “Rolandine” is best read alongside *Heptaméron* 40, the story of Rolandine’s aunt’s clandestine marriage, although their reasons for maintaining this position vary. Some have noted that *Heptaméron* 21 forms one end of an internal frame connecting novellas 21 through 40 to a common theme drawn from Saint Paul’s epistles: the universal sinful nature of human beings.⁹ At least one scholar, focusing on Marguerite’s positive messages about marriage rather than her negative ones about human nature, finds that *Heptaméron* 40 “repairs the defective exemplarity of narration” triggered by the discussion following “Rolandine,” which remains silent on the question of clandestine marriage despite the novella’s obvious interest in it.¹⁰ Several have

⁷Navarre, 1984, 236; Navarre, 1999, 196 (lines 4–5): “quelque inimité qu[e la Reine] portoit à son père.” Scholars have identified the queen as Anne de Bretagne, the wife of Louis XII; Rolandine is thought to be a fictional re-creation of Anne de Rohan: see Salminen in Navarre, 1999, 715.

⁸Navarre, 1984, 236; Navarre, 1999, 196 (line 24): “bastard d’une grande et bonne maison.”

⁹See Defaux.

¹⁰Leushuis, 263, my translation. With the addition of the fortieth *nouvelle* to the twenty-first, Leushuis claims, the reader can appreciate Marguerite’s rejection of clandestine marriage in favor of a union that would combine *philia*, *agapè*, and *éros* to please spouses as well as their families. The exploration of *philia* (love based on personal mutual affinity), *agapè* (love based on a sense of community), and *éros* (love based on sexual desire) is the unifying theme of Leushuis’s book.

argued that *Heptaméron* 21 and 40 demonstrate Marguerite's rejection of clandestine marriages, which were controversial during her lifetime, although critics differ as to whether they believe the queen of Navarre's preferred vision of matrimony, as expressed through her framed novellas, is Calvinist, Lutheran, Catholic, or something else altogether.¹¹

In analyzing *Heptaméron* 21 and 40 together, however, one may also note that the story of her aunt's tragically thwarted clandestine marriage appears not to have taught Rolandine anything.¹² Since Rolandine reacts to her father's failure to marry her off in nearly the same manner as her aunt did (the same Lord of Jossebelin is responsible for both women's predicaments), *Heptaméron* 40 seems an ineffective exemplum. One may see the aunt's story's failure to instruct her niece as a symptom of a wider early modern European crisis of exemplarity brought about by individuals' ability to interpret any given exemplum in multiple ways. Likewise, *Heptaméron* 21 may also signal Marguerite de Navarre's rejection of rhetorical and narrative closure in contrast to her collection's model, Boccaccio's *Decameron*.¹³

This article will read the *Heptaméron* as a thoroughly religious text, while disagreeing with the closure that some religious readings attempt to impose upon Marguerite's project. The present study retains other scholars' emphasis on the basic openness of Marguerite's *nouvelles* to multifarious, even mutually exclusive, interpretations. It is difficult to imagine why Marguerite would have bothered creating ten frame characters, or *devisants*, whose exegetical styles are so much more diverse and distinctive than those of their Boccaccian forebears, if not to provoke readers to wrestle with different possible interpretations.¹⁴ At the same time, this article will separate itself from these latter scholars' assertion that Marguerite and her frame characters employ two totally different logics or attitudes in reading the two bodies of evidence found in the Bible, on the one hand, and everyday life, on the other. As John Bernard puts it, "the 'world' of

¹¹For another view of *Heptaméron* 21 as a rejection of clandestine marriage, see Bauschatz. For a reading of *Heptaméron* 21 as a rejection of Catholic marriage in favor of a Calvinist-style companionate marriage, see Randall.

¹²See Lyons, 1986 and 1989.

¹³See Bernard. For Bernard, the key to understanding Marguerite's twenty-first *nouvelle* lies in comparing it to *Decameron* 4.1, Boccaccio's tale of Ghismunda. Despite the similarities between Ghismunda's angry speech to her cruel father and Rolandine's speeches to her tormentor, the queen, Bernard argues that for Marguerite, the varied and uncontrollable experiences of humans in the world cannot achieve the consummated closure of Boccaccio's "letterarietà" (314) or of holy scripture.

¹⁴I do not mean to suggest that Boccaccio's narrators do not differ from one another in significant ways or that their storytelling does not constitute a conversation worthy of analysis — such a suggestion is thoroughly refuted by Migjel. But even *Decameron* specialists do not dispute that the *Heptaméron* uses a much larger percentage of its text to develop its frame characters than the *Decameron* does.

Marguerite's stories remains incoherent precisely because it retains the openness to the manifold possibilities of signification that a good story, or at least a good medieval exemplum, normally denies."¹⁵

One must not push the distinction between a *Heptaméron* story and "a good medieval exemplum" too far. The internecine turmoil of the early Reformation demonstrated that the Bible itself, like Marguerite's *nouvelles*, is open "to the manifold possibilities of signification." That the *Heptaméron*'s stories do not function in exactly the same manner as medieval exempla should not blind us to the *devisants*' attempts to use their narratives in much the same way that the Reformation's competing preachers used holy scripture. Like those preachers, the *devisants* tell stories that their society has agreed to accept as factually true,¹⁶ but they proceed from that shared fund of narrative knowledge to a variety of frequently incompatible interpretations.

ROLANDINE, THE HIGHBORN BASTARD, AND THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE

Before exploring the ways in which the *Heptaméron* stages and frames "Rolandine," it will be helpful to address some of this novella's supposed incoherencies with some simpler, intratextual close reading. Although this section will restrict its analysis to *Heptaméron* 21 and the historical facts on which the novella is based, the points made here will later help in explaining this narrative's engagement with preaching, nonfiction, and other *nouvelles*.

Most readers are initially shocked at the bastard's sudden betrayal of Rolandine after the years of hardship that the two have endured together. Their love affair is one of the most detailed and convincing anywhere in the *Heptaméron*, and it seems psychologically improbable that he could so easily slip into a relationship with a new woman as soon as he leaves France. This turn of events is particularly difficult to understand given that his move to Germany resembles his earlier travels around Europe. He and Rolandine have often been geographically separated without generating any infidelity or suspicion, so readers wonder why his crossing the Rhine triggers his desertion.

The *devisants* themselves, however, do not seem to find the story incredible. No fewer than six of the ten storytellers weigh in during the discussion following *Heptaméron* 21, and none of them expresses surprise at the events that Parlamente has recounted. One might think that this lack of surprise is evidence that the discussion essentially disregards the *nouvelle*, perhaps suggesting a careless or yet to be refined grafting of frame to story, but the

¹⁵Bernard, 316.

¹⁶Navarre, 1984, 68; Navarre, 1999, 11 (line 342): "veritable."

novella is actually quite well integrated into the frame narrative's storytelling dialogue.¹⁷ Upon rereading, one realizes that the *devisants*, unfazed by the bastard's perfidy, might simply have been paying closer attention than today's readers to Parlamente's language. In fact, when the two lovers first separate, acting on the advice of Rolandine's governess, they "began to feel a torment that she had never experienced."¹⁸

The collective experience of suffering suggested by the third-person plural "commancerent" ("they began") is contradicted by the rest of the sentence, which indicates that the bastard has been involved in similar love affairs before, while Rolandine has not. Readers then learn that instead of simply despairing at the loss of his lover, the bastard thinks up resourceful ways to get around her governess's anxiety and the court's disapproval. The omen of his later betrayal lies in his motivation for overcoming these obstacles and attempting to marry his beloved: "He considered too the honor that would redound to him if he could but win her, and concluded that he must find a way."¹⁹

In the unromantic prize appended to the telltale "avecques" ("with") lies the difference between the bastard's love and Rolandine's. His love is entangled with social and financial concerns, with the pride of possessing Rolandine; hers is purely based on his virtues and pleasant company. When he reveals his desire to marry her, he is careful to argue that a richer husband would actually be excessively interested in her wealth while neglecting her "personne." He thereby cleverly allays what would ordinarily be the automatic suspicion of a woman near the peak of the aristocratic hierarchy listening to the proposal of an impoverished and illegitimate suitor: "I know only too well that I am poor. . . . But . . . if I were to be chosen by you for your husband, then I would be your husband, your lover and your servant. . . . If you take a man who is your equal . . . he will want to be your master and will pay more attention to your wealth than to yourself. . . . He will have full right to enjoy your wealth, yet will treat your body other than it

¹⁷For an example of a reading that considers *Heptaméron* 21 and the frame around it to be unrelated to one another, see Leushuis, 260: "the . . . discussion which follows, remaining silent on the question of clandestine marriage, shows that the narrative text has only served as a pretext. Furthermore, one observes no mimetic relationship in the frame-story discussion, whose generality bears no relationship to the subject of the novella" (my translation).

¹⁸Navarre, 1999, 198 (lines 69–70), my translation: "commance[nt] à sentir ung tourment qui jamais du cousté d'elle n'a . . . esté expérimenté." Chilton's translation is not used here because it ascribes these feelings to both characters equally, but the reader should note that, in contradiction of Salminen's text, the torment of separation from one's partner is also described as new to both Rolandine and the bastard in François's and Le Hir's editions of the *Heptaméron*. See Navarre, 1964, 160; Navarre, 1967, 141 (line 20).

¹⁹Navarre, 1984, 238; Navarre, 1999, 198 (lines 77–79): "regardant avecques l'amour l'honneur que ce luy seroit, s'il la pouvoit avoir, pensa qu'il failloit chercher moyen."

deserves.”²⁰ It makes sense for Rolandine’s friend to present her with a careful argument, but the use of the legal term “usufruit” (“usufruct”) should alert readers to his having money on the brain.²¹

Therefore, when Rolandine’s misgivings (based on the bastard’s writing which is “so cool, so different in style from the way he had written in the past”) are later confirmed, and she learns that her clandestine husband is now “deeply enamoured of a German lady, and that it was his intention to marry her, for she was a very wealthy woman,” readers should not be totally shocked.²² Given his previous experiences in love and his crafty pursuit of Rolandine, this (at least for Salminen’s manuscripts of choice) third amour confirms a consistent pattern.

As for Rolandine’s behavior, her patient suffering ends when God has pity on her pain and calls away to the hereafter first her unfaithful lover and then her ungenerous brother.²³ If the bastard’s betrayal appears sudden, the brother’s tardy and villainous appearance — he lives for only a few sentences near the story’s end — is baffling. Like the bastard’s infidelity, the brother’s disputation of the estate sends perplexed readers back to the beginning of *Heptaméron* 21, wondering whether they have (at least partially) misunderstood the whole story.

In fact, property conflicts constitute a theme running through the entire *nouvelle*. Although Parmente specifies neither the queen’s true identity nor the nature of her dispute with Rolandine’s father, Salminen provides the following information in her notes: “Anne of Brittany [the story’s queen] held a grudge against the Rohans [Rolandine’s family] because they had disputed her inheritance of the lands of the last Dukes of Brittany. The viscount of Rohan defended the interests of the French crown to the detriment of those that Anne had as Duchess of Brittany.”²⁴ For Parmente’s purposes, this is an exemplary novella about feminine chastity and loyalty contrasted with masculine infidelity.

²⁰Navarre, 1984, 239; Navarre, 1999, 200 (lines 129–41): “Je sçay bien que je suis pouvre. . . . Mais . . . sy . . . vous me voulsissiez elire pour mary, je vous serois mary, amy et serviteur . . . sy vous en prenez ung esgal à vous . . . il vouldra estre maistre et regardera plus à voz biens que à vostre personne . . . en joyssant de l’usufruit de vostre bien, traictera vostre corps autrement qu’il ne le merite.”

²¹Analyse et Traitement Informatique de la Langue Française (ATILF), the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), and the Université de Lorraine’s online *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* explains *usufruit* as derived from the Latin *usufructus* and established in French texts since at least the 1330s, meaning “the legal right to enjoy property held by another individual” (my translation): see <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/>, s.v. “usufruit.”

²²Navarre, 1984, 251; Navarre, 1999, 213 (lines 578–79): “escriptures tant changées et refroidies du langage acoustumé.” Navarre, 1984, 251; Navarre, 1999, 214 (lines 587–89): “fort amoureux d’une dame d’Allemagne, et . . . pourchass[e] de l’espouser, car elle est . . . fort riche.”

²³Navarre, 1984, 252; Navarre, 1999, 214–15 (lines 605–08, 631–34). Parmente attributes the bastard’s death to “la bonté divine” (“divine goodness”) and the brother’s demise to “Dieu.”

²⁴Salminen in Navarre, 1999, 716, my translation.

With Salminen's help, however, one can see that in the mouth of a different teller, Rolandine's story could have focused exclusively on the inheritance fights that form its historical basis.²⁵

Even in the prologue to day 3,²⁶ Parlamente announces that she will change the names of her protagonists "because the lady I want to tell you about is from a good family."²⁷ Rolandine belongs to a coterie of "daughters of important noble families" in the company of the queen.²⁸ Her eventual lover is first introduced as a "bastard son of a good and noble family" and only afterward as being "as gallant and worthy as any man of his day."²⁹ Similarly, when Parlamente explains why the bastard cannot marry, she mentions his lack of beauty only after specifying that "he . . . [was] bereft of means."³⁰ From this point on, he will consistently be referred to as either "le bastard de bonne maison" ("the high-born bastard") or simply "le bastard."

Likewise, both Parlamente as narrator and Rolandine identify Rolandine's chief suffering at the hands of her father and the queen as the shame resulting from their failure to secure a husband worthy of her nobility. Rolandine is "she who grew vexed in the end, not so much out of any desire she had to be married as out of shame that she was not."³¹ When her governess advises her to stay away from the bastard for a time in order to appease the court, Rolandine complains, "Alas, Mother, you know that I cannot find a husband to match my family and lineage."³² When the queen criticizes her relationship with the bastard, her

²⁵For a feminist analysis of the relationship between Rolandine and the queen, comparing their conflict over Rolandine's marital status to the well-documented dispute between Marguerite de Navarre and her daughter Jeanne, see Freccero.

²⁶The *Heptaméron* is made up of seven complete days and one incomplete day of stories, with each complete day possessing ten stories, one by each frame character, a pattern copied from the *Decameron*.

²⁷Navarre, 1984, 235; Navarre, 1999, 195–96 (lines 27–28): "pour ce que celle dont je vous veulx parler estoit de bonne maison."

²⁸Navarre, 1984, 235; Navarre, 1999, 196 (line 2): "filles de grandes et bonnes maisons."

²⁹Navarre, 1984, 236; Navarre, 1999, 196 (lines 23–24): "bastard d'une grande et bonne maison." Navarre, 1984, 236; Navarre, 1999, 196–97 (lines 24–26): "autant gentil compaignon et homme de bien qu'il en feust point de son temps."

³⁰Navarre, 1984, 236; Navarre, 1999, 197 (line 26): "la richesse l'avoit du tout délaissé."

³¹Navarre, 1999, 196 (lines 15–18), my translation: "celle qui se faschea à la longue, non tant pour envye qu'elle eust d'estre mariée que pour la honte qu'elle avoit de ne l'estre point." Compare to Navarre, 1984, 236: "As time went by this state of affairs came to distress her greatly, not because she actually wished to marry, but more because she was ashamed." Marguerite's text is more explicit in stating that Rolandine's remaining unmarried is the source of her shame, and I have tried to retain that sense in my translation.

³²Navarre, 1984, 237; Navarre, 1999, 197 (lines 46–47): "Helas, ma mere! vous voyez que je ne puis avoir ung mary selon la maison dont je suys."

foremost counteraccusation is that the queen has not arranged a timely and appropriate marriage for her: “[Rolandine] knew well enough that [the queen] had never wished her to marry at a time when she might have been honorably and comfortably provided for.”³³

When subterfuge fails and the queen publicly confronts Rolandine, this same complaint is found in the most prominent position of the latter’s speech: “If you had favored me in the same way as you favored the other girls, who were not even as closely related as I am, I would by now have been married in a manner that would have brought honour to yourself as well as to me . . . [the] good match[es] that I might have made slipped away before my very eyes, thanks to my father’s negligence and to your lack of regard for me . . . in this state of despair I was sought out by a man whose birth would have been the equal of mine, if only love between two persons carried as much esteem as a ring on the finger, for . . . his father was more elevated than mine.”³⁴ Despite this speech probably acting, more than any other segment of the novella, to cement Rolandine’s reputation in the readers’ minds as one of the most memorable female characters in the *Heptaméron*, here the heroine also exposes the flaws in her own logic. She claims that she is right to marry the bastard in part because his father is more powerful or wealthier or better connected (we cannot be certain of what she means by “son pere passeroit devant le myen”) than her own. One might justifiably question Rolandine’s attempt to suggest that her no-longer-secret husband should not be stigmatized as a bastard child while simultaneously continuing her denunciation of the treatment she has received at court and basing her protest primarily on the nobility of her own lineage, so respected, no doubt, because she, like all her known direct ancestors, is a legitimate child. But it should be obvious by this point in the present study that Rolandine’s eventual peaceful acceptance of a husband chosen by her family does not constitute a “sudden change in

³³Navarre, 1984, 246; Navarre, 1999, 202 (lines 192–94): “[Rolandine] savoit bien qu[e la reine] n’avoit jamais eu envye de la marier au temps et aux lieux où elle eust esté honnorablement et à son ayse.” Parlamente is quoting Rolandine’s speech here indirectly. On the mutual obligations defining *fosterage* at the courts of ladies like Anne de Bretagne, Marguerite de Navarre, and Anne de Beaujeu, see Adams. For some suggestions about how to add early modern conduct literature (Erasmus, Juan Luis Vives, Anne de France, Christine de Pisan, etc.) into one’s consideration of the *Heptaméron*’s exploration of proper and improper female behavior, see Llewellyn.

³⁴Navarre, 1984, 246; Navarre, 1999, 207–08 (lines 383–97): “quant il vous eust pleu me favoriser, comme celles qui ne vous sont sy proches que moy, je fusse maintenant mariée autant à vostre honneur qu’au myen . . . les bons partiz que j’eusse sceu avoir me sont passez devant les yeulx, par la negligence de . . . mon pere et . . . le peu d’estime que vous avez fait de moy. . . en ce desespoir, m’est venu trouver celluy qui seroit d’aussy bonne maison que moy, sy l’amour de deux personnes estoit autant estimée que l’anneau, car . . . son pere passeroit devant le myen.”

behavior." A marriage of convenience, dictated by social status and arranged by her noble superiors (the queen and her father), is exactly what Rolandine has wanted all along. Her deviant clandestine marriage is the result of a breakdown of the normal system of aristocratic bridal exchange, not a deliberate protest against those conventions. Even Parlamente does not view her heroine's relationship with the (anti)hero as socially acceptable, which is underscored by the storyteller's comparison of the couple to "thie[ves]" stealing the time that they spend together.³⁵

NONFICTIONAL INTERTEXTS: LETTERS OF REMISSION AND MARTYRS' TALES

Having retraced the development of the motivations and events that produce the bastard's betrayal, there remains one incoherence to address with regard to *Heptaméron* 21: Rolandine's persistent loyalty to her disloyal partner, which Reyff compares to a "form of schizophrenia." Without claiming that Rolandine's perseverance is productive or therapeutic, her refusal to end her own suffering for the sake of a worthless husband may be better understood in light of some interference from different textual genres within this story. Rolandine's lengthy speeches are largely responsible for drawing readers' attention to her. A close examination of three places in *Heptaméron* 21 where she confidently asserts herself reveals that her declarations begin as a harangue that resembles the pardon requests so frequently addressed to Francis I, but end as something much closer to a martyr's affirmation of her own righteousness.

In Rolandine's first extended speech running from line 377 to line 444, she details the unearned scorn she has endured under the queen, her father's lack of concern for her marital status, and her decision to take charge of her own fate in view of her advancing age. She makes her determination clear, but she also requests the queen's pardon: "I am determined to hold firm to this resolve, so firm indeed that no torment that I might endure, not even death itself, would make me swerve from what is in my mind. So, Madame, you will be pleased to excuse me for an eminently excusable offence, and permit me to enjoy the peace I hope to find with him."³⁶

Up to this point, Rolandine's discourse has many features in common with real-life pardon requests as presented by N. Z. Davis's *Fiction in the Archives*. The heroine details her antagonists' abusive behavior, asserts her own spotless conduct ("I was fully resolved to lead a life more religious than otherwise"), and

³⁵Navarre, 1984, 239; Navarre, 1999, 199 (line 112): "larron[s]."

³⁶Navarre, 1984, 247; Navarre, 1999, 209 (lines 439–44): "Et suis deliberée de tenir ce propoz sy ferme que tous les tourmens que je saurois endurer, feusse la mort, ne me ferait departir de ceste forte oppinion. Parquoy, Madame, il vous plaira excuser en moy ce qui est tresexcusable, comme vous mesmes l'entendez tresbien, et me laisser vivre en la paix que j'espere trouver avecques luy."

cites her age as a legal excuse for defying marital custom. Rolandine also states that she “had fallen into . . . despair” as a result of her prolonged mistreatment.³⁷ The advocate for one of Davis’s pardon requesters, the husband-murdering Marguerite Vallée, describes the perpetrator’s distraught emotional state resulting from her late spouse’s beatings in precisely the same language: “the said Marguerite allegedly fell . . . into despair about it”; and again, to describe Vallée’s suicidal agony after committing the murder, “out of despair . . . she would have wished to drown, as a desperate woman.”³⁸

There are, however, significant differences between Rolandine’s speech and the story told by a typical request for royal grace.³⁹ Rolandine tells of extenuating circumstances that justify her otherwise inadmissible actions and obliquely request that her deeds be “excusez” (“excused”), but supplicants seeking the sovereign’s mercy would never address him in terms this defiant or close their statements by asserting their imminent success.⁴⁰ And although Rolandine provides an emotional explanation for her apparent wrongdoing, claiming that she began her relationship with the bastard while in a state of “desespoir” (“despair”), it is the queen’s face that is “troubled and angered,” the queen who acts out of “wrath” in reproaching and insulting Rolandine.⁴¹

Parlemente may intend the queen’s “collere” (“wrath”), which resembles the reported emotional state of wretched transgressors who beg for the Crown’s grace more than the majesty that befits a monarch, to sharpen the irony of Rolandine’s request for justice, addressed as it is to an unjust authority figure.⁴² After some

³⁷Navarre, 1999, 208 (line 391), my translation: “estois tumbée en . . . desespoir.” All of N. Z. Davis’s pardon tales employ this technique, stating categorically that the supplicants have never been the subject of scandal, criminal trial, or rebuke aside from the events that led to the offense for which they now request pardon. Likewise, almost every supplication includes a litany of transgressions by the victim(s) of the crime for which pardon is being sought.

³⁸N. Z. Davis, 131, 133, my translation: “ladite Marguerite en seroit tumba [sic] . . . en desespoir” and “par desespoir . . . se seroit voullu noyer comme femme desesperée.”

³⁹For seven examples of supplicants’ narratives in pardon requests addressed to François I, see N. Z. Davis, 117–37. One obvious difference between Rolandine’s statement and the letters Davis reproduces is that Davis’s letters are all requesting pardon for homicides, whereas Rolandine’s offense is nonviolent.

⁴⁰Navarre, 1984, 247; Navarre, 1999, 209 (line 442).

⁴¹Navarre, 1999, 207 (line 376), my translation: “troublé et courroucé.” Ibid., 209 (line 447), my translation: “collere.” *Collere* or *chaude colle* (hot anger) were the emotions most often cited by supplicants requesting a royal pardon for an act of homicide. See N. Z. Davis, 16, 36–37.

⁴²The queen as an unworthy monarch thus functions in a manner basically opposite that of the king in N. Z. Davis’s interpretation of the pardon tales; as she explains, 52–58, the supplicant enhances the majesty of the ruler receiving the pardon request through his or her humble address of and submission to the sovereign.

beratement by the queen, Rolandine continues to elaborate on her rights and reasons from line 454 to line 501. This second part of her self-defense makes the connection between her monologues and pardon requests more obvious, as she explicitly cites the lack of an “advocate to speak in [her] defense” as the circumstance that compels her to “declare [the truth] fearlessly.”⁴³

In this regard, however, readers may note another difference between Rolandine’s defense and that of a historical pardon request, which was generally put together by a lawyer on behalf of a supplicant. Because she must speak for herself, Rolandine’s story is told entirely in the indicative mood, as fact, rather than oscillating between indicative and conditional moods, between fact and allegation, as typically happens in the pardon requests.⁴⁴ The indicative, which the supplicant’s lawyer slips into from the more skeptical conditional as often as he dares, takes over the entire autobiographical, self-reflective crescendo of Rolandine’s speech.

Rolandine’s language becomes more religious than legalistic as she brings this second installment of her peroration to a close, suggesting that Marguerite ceases drawing from pardon tales, patterning the latter part of *Heptaméron* 21 on martyrs’ tales instead. As this novella’s protagonist informs the queen and the rest of the court, “I have a Father in Heaven, who, I know, will grant me patience enough to endure the evils which I see you preparing for me, and in Him alone do I place my trust.”⁴⁵ The second monologue’s conclusion is the opposite of the first’s: now Rolandine implies that the queen will not excuse her, and that the shortcomings of her biological father will be counteracted only by the support of her heavenly one. Here the heroine steps fully into the classic martyr’s role, publicly and spectacularly confessing her faith and her willingness to suffer for it. The shift in genre associated with Rolandine’s metamorphosis from supplicant in a clandestine marriage case to martyr of love may have motivated Marguerite’s reassigning the role of chief antagonist from the queen to the bastard by having the latter character exhibit the ungentlemanly change that readers have found so confusing.

After an interlude dealing with the king’s unsuccessful attempt to have the bastard arrested, Rolandine has one last chance to dissolve her troublesome matrimonial bonds (which the “men of the Church and . . . members of the

⁴³Navarre, 1984, 248; Navarre, 1999, 210 (lines 462–64): “advocat qui parle pour [elle]” and “declairer [la vérité] sans craincte.”

⁴⁴The supplicants’ tales’ use of the French conditional tense to lessen the certitude of a statement, which N. Z. Davis does not attempt to translate but which is still current in modern French, might be rendered in legal contexts as *alleged(ly)*.

⁴⁵Navarre, 1984, 249; Navarre, 1999, 211 (lines 498–500): “J’ay ung pere au ciel, lequel . . . me donnera autant de pascience que je me veoy par vous de grans maulx preparer, et en Luy seul j’ay ma parfaicte confiance.”

King's Council" assure her can be done "easily"⁴⁶). Not only does she not do this, but in her indirectly reported one-sentence response of lines 537 to 548, she peels away one more layer of pardon request, revealing the martyr's speech underneath. No longer is the marriage to which she cleaves merely a "forte opinion" ("resolve"), as in her first speech: "she would die to preserve her faith, rather than break it and live."⁴⁷

From a desperate lady engaged in a marriage of choice only for lack of an honorable marriage of convenience, Rolandine has grown by the force of her own speech into a woman willing to die rather than deny her faith, of which marriage forms an integral part. She eventually secures her happy ending not by living happily ever after, but by dying a good death: "at last, after having raised the two sons it had pleased God to grant them, she gave up her soul to Him in whom she had always had perfect trust."⁴⁸ She is a secular saint, a woman whose idealistic vision of "love and honest intent founded on the fear of God" as "the true and sure bonds of marriage" turns out to be a premonition of the conjugal bliss made possible by her reintegration into the bridal exchange that patriarchs regulate for the social advancement of their households.⁴⁹

PARLEMENTE AND OYSILLE, STORYTELLING AND EXEGESIS: ROLANDINE'S PREDICATORY FUNCTION

Parlemente (and Marguerite) wish, perhaps, for a world in which marriage as a sacrament is taken seriously, one where their husbands would shrink before the prospect of divine punishment rather than betray them. But the heroine must show herself at her finest when under the yoke of incomprehensible punishment by her literal, metaphorical, and metaphysical fathers. They come to include the Seigneur de Jossebelin, the wise men of the church and state who try to convince Rolandine to abandon her marriage, the husband who enjoys dominion over a woman as her father once did, and behind and above them, God. Oysille's praise immediately following her younger companion's storytelling zeroes in on the suffering that makes Rolandine's fidelity and patience exemplary: "What

⁴⁶Navarre, 1984, 250; Navarre, 1999, 212 (lines 533 and 535): "gens d'Eglise et de Conseil" and "facilement."

⁴⁷Navarre, 1984, 250; Navarre, 1999, 212–13 (lines 547–48): "elle aym[e] myeux mourir, en gardant sa foy, que vivre après l'avoir nyée."

⁴⁸Navarre, 1984, 253; Navarre, 1999, 215 (lines 636–38): "après avoir eslevé deux filz que Dieu . . . donna [à elle et à son mari éventuel], rendit joyeusement son ame à Celluy où de long temps elle avoit sa parfaicte confiance."

⁴⁹Navarre, 1984, 250; Navarre, 1999, 212, 541–43: "amour et bonne volonté fondées sur la craincte de Dieu" and "le vray et seur lien de mariage."

enhances her constancy is her husband's disloyalty," Oysille explains, "and the fact that he deliberately left her for someone else."⁵⁰

In a less forgiving mood, one may read Renaissance Frenchwomen's appeals to a masculinized God to intercede with their wayward husbands as a deformed attempt to articulate their demands for respect as women, conditioned by the conservative, patriarchal Christendom to which they speak. The martyred saint's life depends on the protagonist's suffering for its narrative authority and emotive force, and readers could see the *Heptaméron's* female Christians as masochists or fools offering themselves up for undeserved punishment by a malicious and sexist God. This is probably the Rolandine that Reyff finds "schizophren[ic]," and whose willingness to suffer for her faith puzzles today's readers just as other early modern martyrs might.⁵¹

Then again, suspending their disbelief at the contradictions underlying the *devisantes'* simultaneously feminist and patriarchal stance, readers can understand why Parmente and Oysille would interpret Rolandine as a model woman. *Heptaméron* 21 is a saint's life as much as a *nouvelle*, since the unexpected resolution of the main character's marital and financial troubles is unnecessary to the substance of her happy ending, the eventual rendering of Rolandine's spirit to "Him in whom she always had perfect trust."⁵² She correctly identifies her own most salient exemplary feature — the God-given patience to endure her torment with honor — just as her defiant moment of revindication folds into martyred resignation, at the end of her second speech.

No character in the *Heptaméron* goes by the name of Griselda, Boccaccio's famous final heroine distinguished by her patient suffering at the hands of her husband, yet in Rolandine readers find one of her many avatars. The female Job, like God's people, and (ideally) like the king's good subjects, finds freedom and happiness in cheerful submission to sometimes inexplicable authority. Reflecting her own position as a long-suffering but seldom silent wife, Parmente's storytelling revolves around the construction of a nonlegendary women's martyrology, wherein contemporary pious female protagonists struggle valiantly against male infidelity, oppression, and violence. The tenth, thirteenth, twenty-first, fortieth, forty-second, and seventy-first novellas, six out of the eight that Parmente tells, fall into this category. She tells these stories of exemplary

⁵⁰Navarre, 1984, 253; Navarre, 1999, 651–53: "Ce qui donne autant de lustre à sa fermeté, c'est la desloyauté de son mary . . . qui la vouloit laisser pour une autre."

⁵¹See Gregory, 1–29 and 344–52, for a discussion of martyrs' privileging of soteriological concerns over physical self-preservation, and the modern critic's viewpoint that (according to Gregory) leads most historical accounts of Reformation martyrs to anachronistically denounce early modern Europeans' relationship to violence.

⁵²Navarre, 1984, 253; Navarre, 1999, 215 (lines 637–38): "Celluy où de long temps elle avoit sa parfaicte confiance."

women for several different reasons, of which this article will discuss only two: one, to explicitly exhort female listeners to virtuous conduct, and two, to surreptitiously communicate with male listeners.⁵³

Parlemente chiefly encourages her female listeners to follow her exempla in preserving their chastity, as Floride, the old pilgrim's wife, Rolandine, and Françoise all do.⁵⁴ At the same time, Parlemente concentrates on examples of feminine patience, so even characters like Floride, Rolandine, and Françoise will try to avoid violent or unpleasant resistance in the face of their tormentors. None of these women successfully reports her problems to an authority that can protect her: Floride's mother and Rolandine's father both act to increase their children's suffering, and Françoise's mistress makes matters worse by forcing her to speak privately with the importunate prince. Each of these martyr-protagonists lives in conditions that heighten the temptation to despair of continuing in a chaste and virtuous life. These include Floride's love for Amadour and the disagreeable marriage that traps her; the pilgrim's wife's marriage to a much older man; Rolandine's marriage vows to an unfaithful, banished husband; and Françoise's predicament, which may be the trickiest of all: she, a poor servant girl, must resist the attentions of a persistent, young Francis I, who does not hesitate to use bribery and threats.⁵⁵

It might be objected that Parlemente's characters cannot be interpreted as martyrs per se, since they do not die for their beliefs, according to the modern acceptance of *martyr*. One of the most thorough recent historical analyses of early modern martyrologies, in fact, criticizes implicitly atheist historians of early modern religion for anachronism but announces its own use of "contemporary [late twentieth-century] criteria" for defining what *martyrs* are without any attempt to justify this anachronistic analytical category.⁵⁶ The *Éditions Larousse Dictionnaire du moyen français: La Renaissance* gives the following definitions for the related Middle French terms: "*martyr* . . . 1. Torture. 2. He or she who suffers for a good cause . . . *martyre* . . . suffering in love."⁵⁷ Notice that a *martyr* in Middle French could thus be anyone who "suffers for the good cause," and that

⁵³On the simultaneous and contradictory meanings of statements by the frame characters and an analysis of how their novellas function as part of this half-concealed discussion, see Tournon, who focuses on the frame characters Parlemente and Dagoucin.

⁵⁴Floride, the old pilgrim's wife, and Françoise are the heroines of *Heptaméron* 10, 13, and 42, respectively. See Navarre, 1984, 122–54, 167–80, 381–91; Navarre, 1999, 66–105, 120–34, 348–59.

⁵⁵The prince in the story goes unnamed, but scholars generally identify him as Francis I. See Salminen in Navarre, 1999, 755.

⁵⁶Gregory, 5–6, 344–52.

⁵⁷Greimas and Keane, 403–04: "*martyr* . . . 1. Supplice. 2. Celui ou celle qui souffre pour la bonne cause . . . *martyre* . . . Souffrance d'amour."

martyrdom could refer to “suffering in love,” the affliction among women that the *Decameron*, according to its prologue, offers to relieve. In fact, in Lutheran martyrologies, such as that of Ludwig Rabus, more quotidian and less physically violent but equally real suffering by the believer could take the place of actual torture and death for the cause; thus Luther’s first few generations of followers celebrated him as a martyr.⁵⁸ As Cryriakus Spangenberg’s 1568 *Zehende Predigt* defines one, a *martyr* is a witness “who gives public confession of Jesus Christ with the mouth, that he alone is our righteousness and that there is no other forgiveness of sins to be found.”⁵⁹

Françoise, Floride, Rolandine’s aunt, and Rolandine all testify to their willingness to suffer and even die rather than renounce their faith and their chastity. While Floride bears the most graphic witness to this martyr-like willingness to suffer, disfiguring her own face with a stone so as not to attract Amadour’s extramarital lust, in Rolandine readers find the woman’s testimony at its most clearly theological.⁶⁰ Parmente’s other three great women are more articulate about their allegiance to a secular code of *honneur*, but Rolandine’s speeches, morphing from the legal-historical into the soteriological, make clear her primary, exemplary identity as a Christian martyr.

The argument that provides the transition from day 3’s prologue to *Heptaméron* 21 itself advertises the story much as Parmente announces “Floride and Amadour.”⁶¹ As Floride proves the possibility of “a lady . . . truly in love, who had been desired, pursued and wooed, and yet had remained an honest woman, victorious over her heart . . . body . . . love . . . [and] would-be lover,” day 3’s first story will “demonstrate . . . that there are women who in their love have had in view nothing other than honor and virtue.”⁶²

While Parmente is demonstrating her storytelling skill by remixing older texts in novel ways and preaching “honor and virtue” to the *devisantes* through examples of martyred women, she also uses her stories to talk in code to several male audiences. These include the monks, her husband, and her *serviteurs*

⁵⁸Kolb, 107.

⁵⁹Ibid., citing and translating Spangenberg.

⁶⁰Floride’s self-disfigurement scene is at Navarre, 1984, 146; Navarre, 1999, 95–96 (lines 911–19).

⁶¹Many editions of Marguerite’s *nouvelles*, beginning as early as the manuscript prepared by Adrien de Thou, include pre-*nouvelle* arguments not enunciated by any of the frame characters, in addition to the actual dialogic explanation of what an exemplum is supposed to prove: see Le Hir in Navarre, 1967, ix.

⁶²Navarre, 1984, 120; Navarre, 1999, 65 (lines 197–201): “une [dame], bien aymante, bien requise, pressée et importunée, et toutesfois femme de bien, victorieuse de son cueur, de son corps, d’amour et de son amy.” Navarre, 1984, 235; Navarre, 1999, 195 (lines 24–26): “monstrer qu’il y a des dames qui en leurs amitez n’ont cherché nulle fin que l’honesteté.”

(literally servants, but in the context of courtly love, men who are in love with her), and in all three cases the communication is integrally tied to her radical pose as a woman preaching to men. Regarding the monks, one must remember that *Heptaméron* 21 is intricately linked not only to the subsequent stories of day 3, but also to the end of day 2.⁶³ At the second day's end, the *devisants* discover that a group of monks has been secretly listening to their stories from behind a thick hedge.⁶⁴ Day 3's stories, therefore, are the first group that the *devisants* knowingly tell to the monks and not merely to each other. Day 3's prologue's reference to the monks' infamous gluttony and the suddenly much higher frequency of anticlerical stories (four out of ten, compared with only three among the first twenty novellas) further demonstrate that both the authorial voice and the frame characters are sensitive to their altered audience.⁶⁵ Spinning a yarn about a woman whose understanding of marriage is morally superior to that of the churchmen, Parmenté gets her fellow storytellers started on a roast of their now-acknowledged monastic listeners.⁶⁶

In telling her stories of patient wives, Parmenté is also sending a message to her husband Hircain: she is faithful, he is unfaithful, and she intends to embarrass him about this imbalance via both comments made during group discussion and veiled analogies to her own tribulations contained in her stories. Readers are given no stage directions for Parmenté, Oysille, and Longarine here, so they must guess whether these characters gaze calmly at one another or glare at the men. One might infer from the greater frequency of their biblical

⁶³For a mythologically minded consideration of the links between *Heptaméron* 20 and *Heptaméron* 21 that, unlike my remarks here, takes account of the former novella's contents, see Wiesmann.

⁶⁴Navarre, 1984, 234; Navarre, 1999, 193 (lines 123–24).

⁶⁵Monastic appetites are invoked by contrastive association with the virtuously restrained *devisants*, who “had their meal, eating in moderation so that their memories would not be clouded and so that they would be able to perform to the best of their ability”: Navarre, 1984, 235; Navarre, 1999, 195 (lines 8–10): “le disner passé assez sobrement, pour n’empescher par les viandes leur memoire à s’acquiter, chacun en son rang, le mieulx qui luy seroit possible.”

⁶⁶During the first two days, the only *nouvelles* depicting clerical wrongdoers are *Heptaméron* 1 and 5, with *Heptaméron* 11 playing on the Franciscans' exaggeratedly bad reputation without depicting *cordeliers* (Franciscans, designated by reference to their rope belts) wreaking any actual havoc. On day 3, by contrast, the reader finds Rolandine righteously resisting the insistence of the implicitly corrupt, or at least mistaken, “men of the church” that she may easily break off a marriage to which only God and the spouses bear witness in 21; Marie Héroët persecuted by villainous church superiors, both male and female, in 22; a young mother's murder-infanticide precipitated by a Franciscan who tricks her into sexual intercourse in 23; and a village priest who thinks up a way to escape punishment for having sex with a laborer's wife in 29. In addition, the final day 3 discussion wheels its argument around against the Franciscans and Italian clergy, apropos of nothing specific to *Heptaméron* 30.

citations that these three *devisantes* are the ones most seriously interested in scripture.⁶⁷ These same three women act in concert to shape a fiercely feminist opening of the post-21 discussion.

First, Parlamente uses her ostensibly all-female audience to bounce a challenge to the *devisants*: “Well, Ladies, let the men . . . produce an example of a husband who was as good, as faithful and as constant as the woman in this story.”⁶⁸ The slippery syntax, “Mesdames, je vous prie que les hommes,” which speaks to the *devisants* while maintaining the disingenuous periphrastic “Mesdames,” is repeated in other forms elsewhere in the *Heptaméron*.⁶⁹ As Parlamente and Hircain form the only husband and wife pair among the *devisants*, and Parlamente consistently champions chaste behavior while Hircain brags about his sexual prowess and appetite and approves of scabrous stories where tricksters win the day, this challenge is especially addressed to him.⁷⁰ Oysille’s approval of Rolandine has already been cited above, and Longarine also chimes in to support her sistren.

While Parlamente and Oysille praise Rolandine’s steadfast loyalty to the unfaithful bastard, Longarine focuses on the psychic pain of being scorned by one’s true love. As she says, “no burden is so heavy that it cannot be carried with a cheerful heart; but when one of them fails to meet the demands of duty and leaves the full burden to be borne by the other, the weight is beyond endurance.”⁷¹ The length and complexity of this story, the proliferation of scenes of concealment and dramatic monologues that define Rolandine’s and the bastard’s ongoing relationship is intended precisely to accentuate this impression of Longarine’s: the weight of the text is the weight of love’s burden, unbearable when the other is unfaithful. The pain of the husband’s disloyalty is exacerbated, and Rolandine’s martyrdom that much more brilliantly emphasized, as Parlamente’s shifting and multiform fiction is able to provide a convincing

⁶⁷Of the biblical citations or allusions that Salminen has identified in her endnotes to the *Heptaméron*, they are used by (from most to least frequent) Oysille (20), Parlamente (13), Longarine (10), Ennasuite (7), and Nomerfide (2), correlating precisely with age, from oldest to youngest. The male *devisants* follow the same pattern.

⁶⁸Navarre, 1984, 253; Navarre, 1999, 215 (lines 639–42): “Mesdames, je vous prie que les hommes . . . me monstrent l’exemple d’un aussy bon mary que ceste cy fut bonne femme, et d’une telle foy et perseverance.”

⁶⁹See Bauschatz, who points out that the sort of phrase she reproduces in her article’s title is a retort to Boccaccio, whose novellas are directly addressed to a female audience, and a departure from sixteenth-century writers’ typical use of *maîtrise auctoriale* (authorial mastery). The latter term is drawn from Genette, 7.

⁷⁰See B. Davis, 23–30, 85–90.

⁷¹Navarre, 1984, 253; Navarre, 1999, 216 (lines 654–58): “il n’y a faix sy pesant que l’amour de deux personnes bien unyz ne puisse doucement supporter; mais, quant l’un fault à son devoir et laisse toute la charge sur l’autre, la pesenteur est importable.”

history of the two lovers' shared suffering, so that her listeners can understand more exactly what makes the heroine think that the bastard's love will last forever.

Although the present study's principal argument is that the *Heptaméron's* novellas, including "Rolandine," fulfill a predicatory function, the reader should remember that most of the *devisants* are involved in numerous romantic intrigues as well. As the prologue informs us, many frame characters are either married to one another (Hircain and Parlamente), pursuing other frame characters as desired love objects (Saffredent, Dagoucin, and Symontault), or being pursued (Longarine and Parlamente). Ennasuitte and Nomerfide, although they are not explicitly identified as parts of any *dame-and-serviteur* couples, appear at various times during the framing discussions to be the objects of Saffredent's and Hircain's attentions. Thus all the *devisants* except the elderly Oysille and Geburon are involved in amorous subplots. The roles that these frame characters play as courtiers, however, do not exist separately from their roles as preachers.

This means that Parlamente's tales of faithful wives, like almost all the other *nouvelles*, can be interpreted in at least two different ways. Her exemplum may be a straightforward reflection of her own identity as an unfailingly chaste married woman, placing her in the same category with her heroines as an example for other ladies to follow. On the other hand, given that the authorial voice acknowledges Symontault as Parlamente's long-time *serviteur* and that she coughs after the first novella in order to prevent Hircain from noticing that Symontault has made her blush, the reader must wonder what her precise relationship to Symontault is.⁷² If Parlamente has been unfaithful to Hircain, clearly she would not reveal that fact to her companions. Her martyrs' tales may thus be an elaborate ruse to deflect attention away from her own failings, but the *Heptaméron* will never let its readers decide with certainty whether this is the case. That the geriatric Oysille and Geburon are the only characters who are free of any suspicion of sexual transgressions plainly suggests that, in the world of Marguerite's frame narrative, biological age is the only factor that can remove a person from the perils of amorous desire. Symontault and Hircain operate within this self-interested preaching system as well.

Geburon plays word games with Longarine's language — "Well then . . . you ought to take pity on us, seeing that we bear the whole burden of love and you never lift a finger to ease the load!" — but the real argument is left to Parlamente and Hircain.⁷³ Rather than let Longarine respond to Geburon herself,

⁷²Navarre, 1984, 64 and 70; Navarre, 1999, 6–7 (lines 188–90, 12–13, and 390–96).

⁷³Navarre, 1984, 253; Navarre, 1999, 216 (lines 658–60): "Vous devriez donq . . . avoir pitié de nous, qui portons l'amour entiere sans que vous y daignez mettre le bout du doigt pour la soulager."

Parlemente jumps back in to claim that the situation the old man has described is caused and justified by men's and women's diametrically opposed definitions of love. Hircain, however, points out that Parlemente's black-and-white dichotomy of male and female love (founded on "pleasure" and on "God and . . . honor," respectively) unjustly makes abandonment of men by their ladyloves laudable, but the reverse situation deplorable.⁷⁴ As he complains, "if what you're maintaining . . . is that an honest woman can honourably abandon her love for a man, but that a man can't do the same, then it's just an argument made up to suit your own fancies. As if the hearts of men and women were any different! Although their clothes and their faces may be, their dispositions are the same — except in so far as the more concealed wickedness is worse!"⁷⁵ Parlemente, growing angry with her husband, infers that the latter must prefer "women whose wickedness is not concealed."⁷⁶

At this point, Symontault, Parlemente's *serviteur*, calls for an end to the discussion by declaring that "the best of them is good for nothing, be they men or women."⁷⁷ Geburon then makes Symontault's biblical allusion explicit by quoting the 115th and 13th Psalms before taking the floor for *Heptaméron* 22.⁷⁸ Having reviewed the ways in which Parlemente uses "Rolandine" as a message to the monks and to Hircain, this article will now consider what she is communicating to Symontault. Symontault's exegesis largely coincides with Hircain's: both assert that men and women are similarly sinful, in spite of outward appearances. Yet readers of the *Heptaméron*'s cornice will note that these two *devisants* are involved in a conflict of interests.

Hircain is married to Parlemente and considers that "infidelity is the greatest injury a woman can inflict on a man."⁷⁹ Symontault, as Parlemente's *serviteur*, wishes her to grant him sexual favors, which would make Hircain a cuckold. Although Symontault does not explicitly state this wish, he admits that he favors feminine chastity only in his own wife's case and even excuses the clerical rapist-villain of

⁷⁴Navarre, 1984, 254; Navarre, 1999, 216 (lines 663–67): "plaisir" and "Dieu et . . . honneur."

⁷⁵Navarre, 1984, 254; Navarre, 1999, 216–17 (lines 672–78): "Vela une raison . . . forgée sur une fantaisie, de vouloir soustenir que les femmes honnestement peuvent laisser l'amour des hommes, et non les hommes celles des femmes, comme sy leurs cueurs estoient differendz; mais, combien que les visages et habitz le soient, sy croy je que les vouluntez sont toutes pareilles, sinon d'autant que la malice plus couverte est la pire."

⁷⁶Navarre, 1984, 254; Navarre, 1999, 217 (lines 680–81): "celles . . . de qui la malice est decouverte."

⁷⁷Navarre, 1984, 254; Navarre, 1999, 217 (lines 682–83): "de l'homme et de la femme, le meilleur des deux n'en vault rien."

⁷⁸Navarre, 1999, 217 (lines 691–93). See Salminen in *ibid.*, 719, for her notes on the Psalm quotations.

⁷⁹B. Davis, 27.

Heptaméron 41.⁸⁰ As a predicant storyteller, Symontault tells the majority of his stories in order to criticize hypocrisy, to suggest that women are just as lustful as men, and to encourage the belief that deceivers should be deceived in turn. His hypocrites include Madame de St.-Aignan in *Heptaméron* 1, the Milanese lady in *Heptaméron* 14, and the incestuous priest-and-sister couple in *Heptaméron* 33. His deceivers deceived include all the aforementioned characters as well as the secretary in *Heptaméron* 28 and the lawyer in *Heptaméron* 52.

Symontault does not hesitate to tie his stories to biblical passages. His explanation of *Heptaméron* 33 states that Christians should not be expecting a second virgin birth of the sort that the priest's sister claims to experience, since John 19:30 informs us that, with Christ's Passion and death, "Consummatum est" ("It is finished").⁸¹ After his story of Bernard du Ha and the wooden ham (*Heptaméron* 28), Symontault connects Bernard's outfoxing the tricky secretary to a perverse interpretation of the golden rule, which appears in Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31. Rather than seize upon the morally upright, straightforward interpretation of these passages — "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" — Symontault suggests that it is right to deceive those who are in the habit of deceiving others — "Do unto others as they do unto you."

In light of his pursuit of Parlamente and the numerous suggestions in the framing dialogues that Hircaïn is unfaithful to his wife, Symontault's preaching seems designed to provoke Parlamente into taking revenge on her rakish spouse and granting her *serviteur's* wishes, thus turning Hircaïn into one more deceiver deceived. At the same time, Symontault competes against his apparent rival for Parlamente's affections, Dagoucïn, a comically Neoplatonist champion of women and possible clergyman inexperienced in physical love, by suggesting that outwardly saintly men are not what they seem. This trend is particularly evident in the very first *nouvelle*, which involves the bishop of Séez as one of its villains (Nicolas Dangu, bishop of Séez, is regarded as the probable closest historical analogue of Dagoucïn), and in *Heptaméron* 33, which ends with the burning of the incestuous priest and his sister.⁸²

⁸⁰Navarre, 1984, 164 and 379; Navarre, 1999, 118 (lines 239–41, 347, and 87–90).

⁸¹On exegesis as a staged event performed by the Count of Angoulême within *Heptaméron* 33, see Langer.

⁸²See B. Davis 36–37. Marguerite's frame-characters' names appear to be a combination of allegorical signifiers and (near)-anagrams of historical personages in the queen of Navarre's entourage. In Dagoucïn's case, "Dagoucïn" is close to "de goût(s) saints," or "of saintly taste(s)," as well as the last name of Nicolas Dangu, bishop of Séez and frequent resident at Marguerite's court in Nérac. Symontault's villain in *Heptaméron* 1 would have to be one of Dangu's predecessors, since the story takes place during the ducal reign of Marguerite's first husband Charles, who died in 1525, and Dangu became bishop in 1539; but Symontault's failure to name the clergyman reinforces his possible association with Dagoucïn.

Symontault opens up the floor for discussion of *Heptaméron* 33 by emphasizing that “the faith of the good count remained firm against outward signs and miracles,” making “the False Virgin” into a story about a victorious main character whose chief attribute is a faith solid enough to guard him against precisely the kind of specious evidence that Dagoucin has boldly offered in his opening of *Heptaméron* 9.⁸³ As Dagoucin says just before his novella about the poor but virtuous gentleman who dies of unrequited love, “In order that signs and miracles may prove the truth of my words, and bring you to have faith in them . . . I shall recount to you what happened not three years ago.”⁸⁴ Symontault’s reduction of “Rolandine” to a sweeping condemnation of all people, male and female, can thus be understood as part of his overall strategy designed to inculcate Hircain and Dagoucin and convince Parlemente to give in to his desires.

Like Symontault, Hircain approves of men’s deception or even rape of women who resist them.⁸⁵ In this respect, both he and Symontault find themselves in agreement with their older companion, Saffredent; all three of these characters are direct descendants of the narrators of the fifteenth-century Burgundian novellas known as the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*. Marguerite satirizes the misogynist francophone novella tradition exemplified by the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* by allowing male storytellers to speak for themselves: the cuckoldry-obsessed men who told the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* at the court of Duke Philip the Good exert their intertextual influence through the misogynist, patriarchal, and frequently rapist attitudes of the *Heptaméron*’s three rogue storytellers.

FICTIONAL INTERTEXT: *CENT NOUVELLES NOUVELLES* 26

Marguerite’s use of the *Decameron*, the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, and the *fabliau* tradition as sources for her novellas has been widely documented, but critics have never associated *Heptaméron* 21 with any particular ancestor text. Nevertheless, the twenty-sixth story of the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*⁸⁶ contains so many features in common with “Rolandine” that the older text, *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26, or “Katherine/Conrard,” does seem to be a source for Parlemente’s novella, albeit a non-analogous source. Unlike *Heptaméron* 8, for example, which largely retells

⁸³Navarre, 1984, 339; Navarre, 1999, 304 (lines 86–87): “la foy du bon conte ne fut vaincue par signes ne miracles extérieurs.”

⁸⁴Navarre, 1999, 59 (lines 227–29), my translation: “Affin . . . que les signes et miracles, suivant ma véritable parole, vous y puissent faire adjoûter foy, je vous allegueray ce qui advint n’y a pas encores troys ans.”

⁸⁵Navarre, 1984, 187; Navarre, 1999, 143 (lines 229–33).

⁸⁶*Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, 163–81.

Cent nouvelles nouvelles 9 and alters its source material more in framing than in content, *Heptaméron* 21 thoroughly transforms the events and characters of *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26. For readers unfamiliar with the Burgundian novella, its plot is as follows: Katherine and Girard live at the “ostel” (“house”) of a great baron in the Duchy of Brabant.⁸⁷ They fall in love and enjoy a close friendship for two years, but love so blinds them that their confidence in their own secrecy turns out to be mistaken — in fact, the whole court talks of nothing but their relationship. At the urging of one of Katherine’s companions, Girard takes leave of the lord and lady of the house and enters the service of a new lord in Barrois.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, Katherine’s parents want her to marry another man, so she tells them that she has promised God not to “change condition” without first going on a pilgrimage to Saint Nicolas of Warengenville.⁸⁹ To get there more cheaply and safely, she suggests that she travel with her bastard uncle, dressed as a man, rather than parade about with a full retinue of young ladies.

Once under way, Katherine reveals to her uncle the real purpose of the journey (to check up on Girard) and promises to reward him monetarily for his cooperation. Dressed as Germans, they infiltrate the house where Girard now lives in Barrois, and Katherine — now called Conrard by both narrator and characters alike — is lodged in the same room with her lover because they both come from Brabant.⁹⁰ Conrard annoys his companion with long lamentations about the lady he has supposedly left behind in Brabant, prompting an exasperated Girard to advise his overwrought roommate to follow in his own footsteps. Conrard must realize, Girard counsels, that women are the same everywhere, and get himself a new one. Katherine, having discovered her lover’s disloyalty, goes home after leaving Girard a note where she outs herself and tells him off. When Girard arrives at the feast of her wedding to the suitor her family favors, she refuses even to dance with him; the narrator intercedes at the story’s end to exhort unfaithful male readers to “look into the mirror of this example.”⁹¹

One obvious similarity between *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26 and *Heptaméron* 21 is their length, as each is among the longest three stories of its respective collection.⁹² Also, both stories feature properly named protagonists, whereas

⁸⁷Ibid., 163.

⁸⁸Ibid., 169 (line 189).

⁸⁹Ibid., 170 (lines 242–43): “change[r] l’estat.”

⁹⁰Ibid., 172–73 (lines 279–320).

⁹¹Ibid., 181 (line 588): “se . . . mirer a cest exemple.”

⁹²*Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26 is 589 lines long in the Sweetser edition, making it one of only four *nouvelles* in the entire hundred that exceed 300 lines. At 635 lines, “Rolandine” is the third-longest story in the Salminen *Heptaméron*, after “Floride and Amadour” (10; 1,138 lines) and “La Châtelaine de Vergy” (70; 705 lines). The line lengths mentioned here include only the *nouvelles*, not their framing dialogues.

numerous *nouvelles* in both books — especially the shortest and most comic ones — use only anonymous characters. Aside from these purely formal considerations, Rolandine's and Katherine's stories converge in many other respects. Each text suggests (although only "Rolandine" actually demonstrates) that a lover's letters are more indicative of his level of sincerity than personal interaction. Both stories turn on similar questions of a female's threat to family honor: both couples exchange vows and precious objects with no other (human) witnesses present and despite the suitor's unacceptable poverty, although both narratives reassure readers that the protagonists' sexual contact goes no further than kissing. Each couple is found out by the court where the lovers reside, forcing the man to flee to another territory, and in each case he soon begins pursuing a new lady. Both women use their positions of power — access to money, servants, and supplies — to check up on their men, and the desire of an inheritance-challenged bastard for a share of the heroine's wealth acts as a plot motor in both stories. After the departure of both women's original lovers but before the heroines learn of their disloyalty, each woman is pressured by her family to marry a different man. And at both stories' ends, the heroines marry the men of their families' choosing.

As so many critics have read *Heptaméron* 21 alongside *Heptaméron* 40 in order to better understand the former text, the present study equally claims license to read "Rolandine" alongside "Katherine/Conrard." Because *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26 is an extended, complex, unpredictable narrative with a didactic thrust, it shares many features with the *Heptaméron*'s longest and most fully developed *nouvelles*. This fact should give pause to any critic claiming that the *Heptaméron*'s short fictions attain some essential complexity that is lacking in the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*.⁹³ The *Heptaméron* is not only or primarily an intermediate step between the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, a medieval collection dominated by the *nouvelle-fabliau*, and the *histoires tragiques* of a Boaistuau or a Belleforest, an early modern collection dominated by longer, explicitly didactic novellas with greater psychological depth. Analysis of Marguerite's transformation of *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26 will advance further by looking once again at the feature of the *Heptaméron* that most obviously sets it apart from prior novella collections: its frame.

The *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* does not have a frame narrative in the sense of a larger fiction containing other fictions told by internal narrators. Their lack of

⁹³For a typical example of this view, see Carr, 13–14: "The fifteenth-century *conteur* had little appreciation for the works he examined . . . [his characters] remained character types without individualization, playing a stylized role in a well-defined series of situations." In this regard, Carr cites Kasprzyk, 278–94; and Coulet, 19–97. For a different view of the evolution of the *histoire tragique* (focused on the question of whether Marguerite de Navarre, Matteo Bandello, or Pierre Boaistuau is most properly regarded as the initiator of the *histoire tragique* genre), see Campagne.

any formal cornice, however, should not fool readers into thinking that these Burgundian stories are totally unframed. The dedicatory letter at the collection's beginning establishes that these novellas have been gathered at the request of Philippe le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, and recorded by one of his servants.⁹⁴ The duke tells numerous stories about men trying to sleep with other men's wives, and he sets the pace for the other storytellers, who also repeatedly display an obsession with cuckoldry, adultery, and the establishment of relations between two men via the desired body of a woman. That men generally function as the only subjects in these stories, with women playing the role of sex objects, leads David LaGuardia to characterize the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* as a series of variations on the theme of hyperbolic "male homosocial domination."⁹⁵ In addition, LaGuardia affirms that late medieval and early modern French *nouvelles* narrate iconographically, meaning that characters are identified by small groups of key images or icons that define them as belonging to particular types (miller, clerk, merchant, etc.), rather than possessing distinct individual personalities.⁹⁶

The vast majority of the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* conform well to LaGuardia's model of "male homosocial domination," but "Katherine/Conrard" does not. Here readers find no cuckoldry, no adultery, and a foolish male character outwitted by an astute female character who, although she may not attain the distinctiveness of a heroine like Rolandine, is able to assume a number of different guises and styles of speech according to varying circumstances. The chain of iterations of the same transgressive story of one man pursuing another's wife is broken by *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26, and the narrator's final remarks drive the point home. Most of the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* finish with the storyteller's assertion that he has heard no more about the characters — "and I never found out," "it hasn't yet come to my attention" — or that he is going to stop talking now — "that suffices for the first story," "about the rest . . . this story is silent" — if indeed any conclusion is offered.⁹⁷ "Katherine/Conrard," however, reveals an unusually didactic intent at its end: "Thus as you've heard, the disloyal man lost his woman. If there are still men like him, they should look at this example like a mirror; it's noteworthy and true and happened recently."⁹⁸

⁹⁴See LaGuardia, 51–56.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 51–82.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 38–50.

⁹⁷*Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, 114 (lines 158–59, 153, and 94): "et n'ay point sceu," "n'est encores venu a ma cognoissance." For the second pair of quotations, see *ibid.*, 30 (lines 241–42, 86, and 46–48): "ce suffice quant a la premiere histoire," "du surplus . . . ceste histoire se taist."

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 181 (lines 586–89): "Ainsi qu'avez oy perdit le desloyal sa femme. S'il en est encores de telz, ils se doyyent mirer a cest exemple, qui est notoire et vray et advenu depuis nagueses."

For scholars concentrating on Marguerite de Navarre's texts, this language might evoke her own *Miroir de l'ame pecheresse*, the spiritual poem that was censored by the Sorbonne in 1533.⁹⁹ Hircain also borrows this specular metaphor in his exegetical opening of the discussion following his own *Heptaméron* 35, about a wanton wife's infatuation with her parish priest. As he announces, "Ladies . . . when you have looked well into this mirror, instead of trusting in your own strength, you will learn to turn back to Him in whose hands your honor lies."¹⁰⁰ Parlamente, reacting combatively to Hircain's attempt to extend this one woman's deviance into a statement about all women, retorts: "I'm glad to see . . . that you've started to preach for the ladies."¹⁰¹ Her sarcastic reference to Hircain as a preacher is not haphazard. In fact, her two perfect lovers gone bad, Amadour and the bastard, are both described as preaching deceptively to women. When Amadour first attempts to consummate his relationship with Floride, she asks him, "And what . . . has become of the honor you preached about so often?"¹⁰² When Rolandine first tries to justify her relationship with the bastard, she describes him very similarly to her governess: "I have found this gentleman wise and virtuous as you know, who never preaches anything but goodness and virtue to me."¹⁰³ Parlamente is constantly aware not only of men's deviousness in general, but of their tendency to deceive women using predicant speech.

CONCLUSIONS

"Rolandine" is emblematic of the ways in which the *Heptaméron* plays upon, contradicts, and challenges the (gendered) expectations of its readers, both in the sixteenth century and today. In "Recreating the Rules of the Game," Margaret Ferguson points out that the *Heptaméron* has frequently been compared unfavorably to Boccaccio's *Decameron*, even by people hoping to sell Marguerite's books to today's readers.¹⁰⁴ What has sometimes been read as

⁹⁹See Cholakian and Cholakian, 187. In English, this poem is known as the *Mirror of the Sinful Soul*.

¹⁰⁰Navarre, 1999, 316 (lines 192–97), my translation: "Mesdames . . . quant vous aurez bien regardé en ce myrouer, en lieu de vous fyer en voz propres forces, vous apprendrez à vous retourner à Celluy en la main duquel gist vostre honneur."

¹⁰¹Navarre, 1984, 351; Navarre, 1999, 316 (lines 197–98): "Je suis bien ayse . . . de quoy vous estes devenu prescheur des dames."

¹⁰²Navarre, 1984, 141; Navarre, 1999, 89 (lines 724–25): "Et où est l'honneur . . . que tant de foiz vous m'avez presché?"

¹⁰³Navarre, 1999, 197 (lines 49–52), my translation: "J'ay trouvé ce gentilhomme icy saige et vertueux comme vous sçavez, lequel ne me presche que toutes choses bonnes et vertueuses."

¹⁰⁴See Ferguson, 153–57.

Boccaccio's "consummate narrative skill," which would thus be lacking in the *Heptaméron*, seems to refer to the *Decameron's* novellas' more clearly and consistently fulfilling certain functions.¹⁰⁵ It is true that an effective piece of short fiction must typically match its register, idiom, tone, diction, characters, and plot to some degree. Certain mixtures in this regard (unaccountable shifts in register or characters speaking in dialects not of their own time and place, for example) will tend to mark a piece of writing as defective or incomprehensible.

Yet the contract between writer and reader need not always follow a preestablished generic pattern; indeed, for new genres to be born, old generic patterns have to be altered and occasionally broken. By tacking themselves on after mornings dominated by Oysille's Bible lessons, the *devisants'* stories transform Oysille's school into a laboratory for a new type of storytelling. The sort of freedom of expression that for Marguerite could only exist in a fictional place like the meadow of Nostre Dame de Serrance allows experiments in textual hybridity that, in turn, have implications for the larger social and political climate of early modern Europe. Even though the twists and turns of a story like "Rolandine" may seem unrealistic or implausible, modern criteria for determining plausibility in a fictional narrative are themselves largely a constellation of calcified genre conventions. The energy that drives an innovative text like the *Heptaméron* is precisely the need to push the limits of conventional thought, to contribute to a strand of literary history (early modern European framed-novella collections) in such a way as to alter that history's course.

In order to forge a new genre, or family of genres, through which to rethink classic narratives, an author must draw on new material and combine it in new ways. The queen of Navarre's access to *nouvelles* — literally "news" — in the form of pardon requests and other legal documents of the French national bureaucracy must have been extraordinarily vast, especially during the periods when she was in favor at her brother's court. In any case, the documents of her own sovereign territories, such as Berry and, later, Navarre, would potentially all have been at her fingertips.¹⁰⁶ Like the material that "Rolandine" draws from *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* 26 (or some closely related intertext), the nonfictional sources that influenced Marguerite's novellas came to her as discrete, formatted packets leaving historical traces in the fictional narrative. As *Fiction in the Archives* asks what it means to find hallmarks of fictive narration in supposedly true and accurate accounts of historical events, one can usefully explore the signs of nonfictional (martyrological, legal, predicant) discourse in the *Heptaméron's* apparently fictional stories.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 156, quoting Norton, 447.

¹⁰⁶For a historical perspective on the pivotal political position Marguerite occupied during her brother's reign, see Stephenson.

In the broader religious and social context, Catholic France's priestly monopoly on predicant activity reflects the sort of male-only subjectivity to be found in the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*. Rolandine, a Renaissance heroine for whom the established *nouvelle*, *fabliau*, and romance genres could provide no model, must transcend the boundaries of preexisting literary forms and some of the ethical assumptions that accompany them. In crossing those borders, she strays into territory unfamiliar to most of her readers, leading some observers to brand her a madwoman. Supplicant and saint, misfit and martyr, she surpasses Katherine/Conrard because she transforms through self-interpretation, speaking her metamorphosis to the reader rather than relying on a male storyteller to frame her transformation.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Although constraints of time and funding have prevented me from obtaining copies of the illustrated pages in early modern manuscript and book versions of the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles* and *Heptaméron*, consideration of these text-and-image combinations should be the next step in the comparative study of the two collections' approaches to iconographic narration. In addition, other segments of the *Heptaméron* could be examined to add an account of the other six storytelling frame characters as preachers to the remarks made here, thus permitting a more holistic analysis of Marguerite's diegetical-exegetical framed-novella structure. Lastly, some significant qualitative work could be done to prove or disprove the usefulness of Marguerite's structure as a tool for reorganizing narrative material and satirizing contemporary society. Data from students engaging in a study along the lines described by Duhl, who imagines students being asked to play the roles of *devisants* in a "series of open-ended dramatic modules" making up an extended "writing [and speaking and acting] assignment on the *Heptaméron* as an open-ended modern play," should yield new insights as to how a frame narrative device can function as an entertaining and incisive critical apparatus.

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