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Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, eds., *A Companion to Marguerite de Navarre*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013. ix + 405 pp. Bibliography and index. \$218.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-90-04-22189-5.

Review by Leanna Bridge Rezvani, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley's important and well-researched volume is the latest addition to Brill's Companion to the Christian Tradition series. This particular series aims to elucidate medieval and early modern Christian thoughts and practices by offering analyses by renowned experts. This volume is dedicated to analyzing and understanding religious elements of Marguerite de Navarre's life and prolific literary works. While the religious beliefs of the spiritually enigmatic Queen of Navarre have been the subject of lively debate for centuries, this volume offers an innovative and valuable collection of essays on the topic. Eleven prominent sixteenth-century scholars offer compelling and, at times, contrasting views of her works and personal beliefs as they scrutinize various religious facets of her prose, poetry, and theatre, as well as her most celebrated work, the *Heptaméron*. The volume also contains a thorough bibliography as well as an extensive index.

Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley's thoughtful introduction situates Marguerite de Navarre's life and writings in the broader context of religious change in sixteenth-century France with particular focus on her affiliation with the Reform movement. Jonathan A. Reid presents a convincing argument for Marguerite de Navarre's unique role and tenacious efforts in promoting reformist beliefs. He highlights her repeated attempts to influence François I to promote religious reform as well as her affiliation with numerous reformist writers and Swiss and German Protestant Evangelicals. In sharp contrast, Jean-Marie Le Gall's essay offers evidence of Marguerite's adherence to the Catholic Church throughout her life. His argument is persuasive as he underscores her role in monastic reform, her persistent loyalty to the Pope and certain traditional Church practices, and the favorable reception of her writings by her Catholic contemporaries. Regardless of the reader's own views on the subject, both essays present thought-provoking and well-constructed arguments that encourage further reflection on this complex topic.

Philip Ford examines certain neo-Platonic notions and their influence on Marguerite's philosophical and religious beliefs and writings. His essay offers luminous insights into neo-Platonic and Christian imagery, more specifically the concepts of death and ascent, and their expression in Marguerite's poetry and her novella collection. Isabelle Garnier and Isabelle Pantin's joint contribution analyzes Marguerite's mirror poems, the 1531 *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, and the *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié* (published posthumously in 1552). The essay underscores the importance of the first mirror poem, arguing that it represents "a major work in European literary history" (110-11). They note that it was one of the first religious texts in the vernacular, that it influenced later Christian poetry with its use of the first person pronoun, and that it was the first work by a French woman published during her lifetime. The essay eloquently argues that its publication was a "militant act" and that the text represents "the entire range of doctrinal ideas promoted by the Evangelicals" (pp. 119). The authors also offer insights into the existing scholarship on this important text. The second half of the essay is dedicated to Marguerite's final work, the *Miroir de Jésus-Christ crucifié*, and its parallels with her first

mirror text. It establishes strong similarities between the works while also acknowledging the unique perspectives on death in this text composed during the final year of Marguerite's life.

In a well-organized and illuminating essay, Reinier Leushuis, clarifies the narrative, poetic, and thematic similarities between the *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* and *La Navire*. Despite the substantial time span separating these two texts, this essay eloquently establishes their stylistic commonalities and shared concentration on the themes of mourning, transcendence, and human agency. Cynthia Skenazi's meticulous work on *Les Prisons* concentrates on the notions of poetics, expression of the divine, and conversion. She argues that this poetic work offers more than a story of conversion; it also incites the reader to meditate on personal spiritual values. Jan Miernowski presents valuable reflections on Marguerite's *Chansons spirituelles*. The essay examines the musical and ritualistic nature of these *chansons* as well as their potential reading as solitary, devotional poetry. It also offers unique perspectives on the representation of death and transcendence in this work as well as stimulating insights into Marguerite's expression of the spiritual.

Olivier Millet's essay explores the Queen of Navarre's theatrical works and their parallels with her other literary texts. He concentrates most specifically on their religious meditations on salvation and conversion as well as their dialogic nature. He also convincingly demonstrates the spiritual elements in all her dramatic works, even those that are traditionally perceived as non-biblical. Reminiscent of the complexity and richness of the *Heptaméron*, Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley discuss a diversity of themes from that novella collection in the final essay. They offer insightful reflections on the *Heptaméron's* depiction of marriage, anticlericalism, and challenges to women in Renaissance France, with particular emphasis on the connections between these themes and the spiritual tendencies of the Queen of Navarre. Through a number of close readings and meticulous research, they convincingly demonstrate how "[...] the *Heptaméron* expresses a theological and spiritual vision in harmony with that developed in her poems and plays" (pp. 364).

This volume is a rich and indispensable resource for scholars of Marguerite de Navarre and represents an important contribution to the existing scholarship. Its essays present original perspectives on her diverse literary works and offer compelling insights into her religious tendencies. This impressive work will also lead the reader to reflect more fully on the spiritual nuances of a complex and intriguing writer, leader, and thinker.

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Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, "Introduction"

Jonathan A. Reid, "Marguerite de Navarre and Evangelical Reform"

Jean-Marie Le Gall, "Marguerite de Navarre: The Reasons for Remaining Catholic"

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Jan Miernowski, “*Chansons spirituelles*—Songs for a ‘Delightful Transformation’”

Olivier Millet, “Staging the Spiritual: The Biblical and Non-Biblical Plays”

Gary Ferguson and Mary B. McKinley, “The *Heptaméron*: Word, Spirit, World”

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