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### Butterworth, Emily. Marguerite de Navarre: A Critical Companion

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**Butterworth, Emily.**

***Marguerite de Navarre: A Critical Companion.***

Gallica 48. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2022. Pp. 246 + 2 col. ill., 1 table. ISBN 978-1-84384-626-0 (hardcover) £60.

Emily Butterworth's critical companion constitutes a wide-ranging and erudite resource on the life and writings of Marguerite de Navarre. The text's chapters combine historical context with literary analysis to consider the queen of Navarre's activities as a writer, a non-schismatic religious reformer, and a political player at the French court as well as in international diplomacy. Each chapter, aside from the introduction and conclusion, analyzes a particular theme rather than proceeding chronologically through Marguerite's life and era or discussing one text at a time in the author's corpus. This thematic approach enables Butterworth to blend together, within each chapter, analyses of multiple texts by Marguerite, a useful gesture given that this sixteenth-century writer practised numerous genres, including dialogues, poetry, plays, and the *nouvelles* in her famous *Heptaméron*. As part of her religious and political endeavours, Marguerite also developed a rich correspondence. Butterworth considers, for instance, the queen's exchanges with Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet, who partnered with her in promoting the work of the French Evangelicals, a group of critical Catholics who sought to reform the church from within. Finally, throughout the text's chapters, Butterworth summarizes and builds upon the long history of scholarship on the queen of Navarre, adding reflections on topics of recent interest in the field, such as Marguerite's political role, homosocial bonds in her writings, perspectives on the psychology of desire, and the influence of medical discourses of sexuality and gender on her works.

The text's introduction provides an overview of Marguerite's era, marked by new intellectual currents, social norms, and religious ideas. Butterworth explains that her primary aims are to elucidate those aspects of the queen's life and works that might seem foreign to some readers in the twenty-first century and also to consider points of overlap between Marguerite's thought and our own times. Chapter 1 furthers these goals by situating Marguerite's writing and socio-political activities in relation to the theme of communities. The chapter shows how writing helps forge relationships and larger networks, specifically those of the royal family, the aristocracy, and sixteenth-century writers, such as

Erasmus, Marot, and Rabelais. In this chapter, Butterworth considers multiple texts by Marguerite, including *La Coche*, several plays, and the *Heptaméron*.

Chapter 2 considers the theme of religion to show how the theological concepts of grace and the fallen world permeate Marguerite's corpus. To illustrate this point, Butterworth reads *Le Miroir de l'âme pécheresse*, *Les Prisons*, and *Les Chansons spirituelles* against the backdrop of Reformation-era theology, while also commenting on *L'Inquisiteur* and *La Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan*. The chapter likewise examines the importance of *cuyder*, anticlericalism, and the notion of vision to Marguerite's religious perspective.

Chapter 3 responds to recent scholarship on the queen's political activities and how they intersect with her writing. Here, Butterworth discusses Marguerite's correspondence, her attitude towards pregnancy in relation to the monarchy, her concern for justice, and Italian texts that inform her treatment of political themes, including Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*. This chapter analyzes passages from the *Comédie des quatre femmes* and the *Comédie des Innocents*, in addition to the *Heptaméron*.

Chapter 4 extends logically from discussions of politics into an analysis of women and men in Marguerite's milieu and in her works. As one would expect, the chapter includes reflections on the *querelle des femmes* and the *querelle des amies*, providing an overview of criticism on those subjects. Within the context of the *Heptaméron*, the chapter examines such questions as sameness or difference between men and women and the diverging viewpoints on marriage expressed in the debates. The chapter also investigates themes that have been treated less extensively in Marguerite de Navarre criticism, such as male homosocial bonds and latent homosexual impulses in the *Heptaméron*.

Similarly, chapter 5 introduces other recent topics of interest into its treatment of desire in Marguerite's writings. The analysis illustrates how desire, power, and gender interact in the stories and debates while also exploring the role of medical discourses of gender and sexuality during Marguerite's life, a timely topic amid growing interest in the history of medicine and science in the early modern era and how these forces shaped notions of identity. Chapter 5 also adopts frameworks from Freud and Lacan to explore the psychology of desire in such texts as the *Heptaméron* and *Les Chansons spirituelles*.

In chapter 6, Butterworth turns her attention to form and technique in the queen's works. The chapter analyzes texts in several genres, including *La Navire*, *Le Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne*, and *Trop Prou Peu Moins*, in addition

to Marguerite's tales. Topics of discussion range from the polysemous genre of the *nouvelle* to exemplarity to an intriguing examination of the *Heptaméron*'s influence on the *histoire* genre as practised by Boaistuau, Bandello, and Belleforest. The concluding chapter provides valuable insights into the queen of Navarre's legacy via an examination of eulogies and translations of her writings by her contemporaries in France and England, as well as the editions of her *Heptaméron* published by Boaistuau and Gruget, respectively.

Butterworth's critical companion to Marguerite de Navarre will prove a useful resource for colleagues and students alike. Its extensive scope that blends together history and literature, as well as analyses of the queen's larger corpus of writings, make this text a one-stop reference for instructors, as well as for their graduate students and advanced undergraduates. In-depth explanations of the Reformation and sixteenth-century history make the book accessible to readers who may have less experience with early modern topics, while the chapters' engagement with scholarly trends and theoretical frameworks will spark the interest of early modernists and specialists of French history and literature, gender, sexuality, religion, and psychoanalysis.

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