

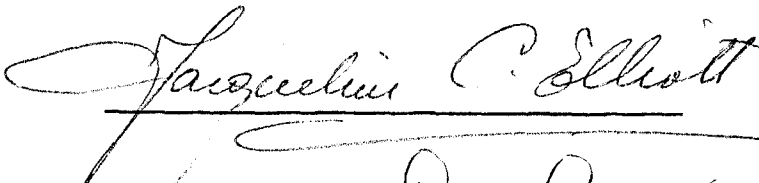
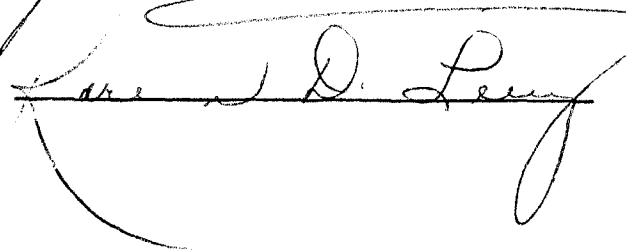
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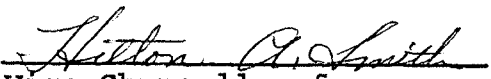
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Barbara Palyarik Wright entitled "Hélisienne de Crenne: A Sixteenth Century Modern." I recommend that it be accepted for nine quarter hours of credit in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in French.


Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Vice Chancellor for
Graduate Studies and Research

HÉLISENNE DE CRENNE:
A SIXTEENTH CENTURY MODERN

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
The University of Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Barbara Palyarik Wright

August 1973

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to become acquainted with the works of the neglected H  lisenne de Crenne, a sixteenth century French authoress. An investigation of the study of her life yielded few facts. It was discovered, however, that Helisenne de Crenne is a pseudonym for Marguerite Briet.

Since the author is not widely known, a plot summary was included of her works Les Angoyssees Douloureuses, Les Epistres Familieres et Invectives, and Le Songe. The analysis of the works was only concerned with Part I of the novel, several selected Epistres, and one passage from Le Songe as these parts were personally evaluated as the most important.

The analysis of the works included a study of Helisenne's attitudes towards life, her art of writing, and how she fits into the framework of literature. Included in her attitudes were those about religion, education, and particularly the position of women in society. A study of her manner of writing found the dominant characteristics to be realism, psychology, and a personal viewpoint. To determine her place in literature, comparisons were made with works from the Middle Ages, the sixteenth century and later centuries.

The conclusion was to determine the validity of studying Hélisenne's works. It was decided that they would be most valuable to today's readers if presented in an extract form.

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INTRODUCTION

"C'est une oeuvre considerable à plus d'un egard: c'est la première en France qui -- au moins dans son developpement le plus important -- se classe nettement dans le genre sentimental."¹

Gustave Reynier is not speaking here of La Princesse de Clèves or some modern novel. He is referring to a novel written in 1538 titled Les Angoysses Douloureuses qui procedent d'amours contenant troye parties composées par dame Hélisenne de Crenne laquelle exhorte toutes personnes à ne suyvre folle amour. Reynier adds to his statement: "Il vaut la peine de s'y arrêter."² Thus, it is the purpose of this thesis to accept this invitation to examine the works of this neglected sixteenth century authoress.

Since Hélisenne de Crenne has not been studied or read extensively, this thesis shall include a biographical sketch of the few available facts known about Hélisenne and a plot summary of her works. Besides the aforementioned novel,

¹Gustave Reynier, Le Roman Sentimental Avant l'Astrée (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1908), pp. 101-102.

²Ibid., p. 102.

Hélisenne is the author of Les Epistres Familières et Invectives (1539), Le Songe de ma dame Helisenne (1539), and a translation of the first four books of the Aeneid (1541). This study shall be concerned with Part I of Les Angoysses Douloureuses, several selected Epistres Familières et Invectives, and a brief passage from Le Songe.

The main intention of this study is to determine the modernity of Hélisenne's works. The modern elements shall be determined through a study of Hélisenne's attitudes towards life and her style of writing. Her attitudes towards the position of women in her century will be emphasized. Through a series of comparisons and contrasts, an attempt will be made to place Hélisenne as a link between Middle Age writers and modern novelists in regard to her attitudes and art of writing. Hélisenne is both representative and unique in her century of the Renaissance. Included in the comparison - contrast study will be Le Roman de la Rose, Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage, Aucasin et Nicolette, and poetry by Christine de Pisan from the Middle Ages; Marguerite de Navarre and Ronsard from Hélisenne's era; Madame de Lafayette, Abbé Prevost, and Madame de Staël from the modern era. Finally, it shall be determined why Hélisenne has been overlooked since the sixteenth century and if she should be

considered today as an important author worthy of our consideration.

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY OF HÉLISENNE DE CRENNE

"Il est difficile de savoir qui fut au juste Héli-sen-ne de Crenne," proclaimed the critic Gustave Reynier in his study of novelists. Few facts are known about the life of this sixteenth century authoress for two main reasons. First, the name Héli-sen-ne de Crenne is only a surname. Secondly, few facts were recorded about women of the era unless they were connected with the court. Women of the time were seldom involved with business transactions which would bear record of their existence. Often birth and death dates were not even notated. This is the case with Héli-sen-ne de Crenne.

Perhaps the best summary of biographical facts on Héli-sen-ne de Crenne has been accumulated by Louis Loviot as presented in the Revue des Livres Anciens. He discovered in the Latin chronicle of Nicolas Rumet, historien of Abbeville, that Héli-sen-ne de Crenne is the surname for Marguerite Briet. It is believed that she was born in the village of Mailly in Picardie around 1520 because of the praise offered by

¹Reynier, p. 100.

François de Billon in 1555:

La Picardye ne reçoit peu d'honneur par l'esprit merveilleux de sa fille Hélienne, les compositions de laquelle sont si souvent es mains des François se delectans de prose qu'il n'est besoin en faire autre discours.²

The husband of Marguerite Briet was Philippe Fournet, squire and lord of Cresne (also written Crenne and Cresnes in the sixteenth century). His family's fief was situated near Coucy. Marguerite, married at the age of eleven, lived with her husband for an undetermined period of time and then a separation occurred. The cause of this is unknown. Some critics believe that the novel Les Angoysse Douloureuses (to be later summarized) is autobiographical and thus, fill in these unknown years with Hélienne's account of her life.

H.R. Secor, Jr., editor of the newest edition of Les Angoysse Douloureuses, informs us of the speculations of H. Duseval, editor of Le Département de la Somme, ses monuments anciens et modernes, ses grands hommes, et ses souvenirs historiques. Duseval believes that Hélienne was called to the court of François I where she enjoyed the

²François de Billon, "Fort inexpugnable de l'honneur du sexe féminin" in "Hélienne de Crenne" by Louis Loviot, Revue des Livres Anciens, II (1917), 138-139.

patronage of the Duchesse d'Estampes. This is somewhat supported in that in 1541, H  lisenne dedicated her translation of the first four books of the Aeneid to Fran  ois I. Also, in her Epistres, H  lisenne speaks with great praise of Marguerite de Navarre.

The next definite information available is that in Paris in 1538, Denis Janot obtained the rights to print Les Angoysses Douloureuses, and in 1539 the rights to print Les Epistres and Le Songe. In Les Epistres, also autobiographical, we learn that H  lisenne is separated from her husband and she is living in Paris. The Inventaire des registres des insinuations du Ch  teau de Paris affords us two final notations on her life. August 9, 1548, is the date of a donation or deed of gift made by Philippe Fournet to his son Pierre Fournet (unmentioned by H  lisenne) to help pay for his expenses as a student at the University of Paris. The second notation concerns another donation, this one by Marguerite Briet to Christophe de Manier "pour les bons et agr  ables services et pour remuneration des salaires et s  ances que ladicte damoiselle Marguerite de Briet dict avoir receuz dudict de Manier."³ Attached to this payment

³Louis Loviot, "H  lisenne de Crenne" Revue des Livres Anciens, II (1917), 143.

was a list of all the possessions of Marguerite which indicated a fair fortune.

This is the last evidence we have of H  lisenne de Crenne. The date of her death is assumed to be around 1560 when the last edition of her works appeared.

CHAPTER II

SUMMARY OF HÉLISENNE'S WORKS

In summarizing and evaluating H  lisenne's works, one must decide whether or not to follow the theory that they are fiction based on autobiographical truth. This cannot be definitely determined either way since so few facts are known about the author's life. This writer chooses to believe that the works are based on H  lisenne's experiences because of the manner in which they are presented -- the realistic background, the personal point of view, the heroine bearing the author's name, the sincerity and emotion expressed. (These points are further developed in the following chapter under "Art of Writing.")

H  lisenne herself wishes us to believe that Les Angoysses Douloureuses is true. Her introduction to the novel, here presented in full, explains that we must take heed of her personal experience:

L'Epistre dedicative de dame H  lisenne    toutes honnestes dames, leur donnant humble salut. Et les enherite par icelle    bien et honnestement aymer en evitant toute vaine et impudique amour.

Les anxietes et tristesse des miserables (comme je peulx penser et conjecturer) se diminuent quand on les peult declarer    quelque sien amy fidele. Par ce que

je suis certaine, par moy mesmes, que les dames naturellement sont inclinées à avoir compassion, c'est à vous, mes nobles dames, que je veulx mes extremes douleurs estres communicquées. Car j'estime que mon infortune vous provocquera à quelques larmes piteuses, qui me pourra donner quelque refrigeration medicamente. Helas! quand je viens à rememorer les afflictions dont mon triste cueur a esté et est continuellement agité par infiniz desirs et amoureux aguillonemens, cela me cause une douleur qui excède toutes aultres, en sorte que ma main tremblante demeure immobile. O trescheres dames, quand je considere qu'en voyant comme j'ay esté surprise, vous pourrez eviter les dangereulx laqs d'amours, en y resistant du commencement, sans continuer en amoureuses pensées... Je vous prie de vouloir eviter ociosity, et vous occupez à quelques honnestes exercices. En ces considerations je me viens à reverberer et reprendre mes forces, en exorant celle qui est mere et fille de l'altitinant plasmateur de vouloir ayder à ma triste memoire, et soustenir ma debile main, pour vous le scavoir bien escripre.¹

From the beginning of this three-part novel, Hélisenne emphasizes her misfortunes; ill fate guides her from birth.

"Las! que je fuz née en maulvaise constellation!" (p.5.).

Hélisenne, an only child, is raised by her mother as her father dies before she reaches the age of one. She is a gifted child, and her mother provides her with a broad education. She is sought after by many suitors and is

¹Hélisenne de Crenne, Les Angoysses Douloureuses, ed. Harry Rennell Secor, Jr. (Yale Dissertation, 1957), pp.3-4. (All subsequent quotations from the novel are from this edition. All quotations from the novel in this summary section will be noted by the page number listed in parentheses following the quotation.)

married at the age of eleven. Renown of her beauty travels even to the court. The king journeys to see this "forme elegante." (p.7). But her husband, already showing signs of jealousy, removes Hélisenne from the village, disallowing the meeting: "Mais mon mary (comme prevoyant le temps futur) m'avoit faict absenter, congnoissant qu'impossible m'eust esté de resister contre ung tel personnage." (p.7). These first thirteen years of Hélisenne's life occupy only one chapter in the novel. This brief presentation leads up to the main event -- the meeting of the lovers.

The occasion arises from a trial in a neighboring village. As Hélisenne's husband is required to attend, they take up new lodgings "où estoit le comble de mes prochains malheurs" (p.9.) according to Hélisenne. From her window, Hélisenne catches sight of a young man who has been watching her intently. This is the beginning of "une grande amytié." (p.10). Here she tries to listen to her mind's reason rather than to her heart:

En ces considerations, raison me venoit à corroborer, me conseillant d'estre ferme et ne me laisser vaincre, et me disoit: "Comment veulx tu prendre le vilain chemin, ord et fetide, et laisser la belle sente remplye de fleurs odoriferantes? Tu es lyée de mary; tu peux prendre ton plaisir en mariage. C'est beau chemin, lequel suyvant, tu te peulx saulver. O pauvre dame, veulx tu preferer amour lascif à l'amour

matrimonial (qui est chaste et pudicque) que tu as en si grande observation conservé? (pp.10-11).

But she finally submits to love when "l'appetit sensuel me vint livrer ung tresdur assault." (p.12).

The two lovers talk at H  lisenne's window for several days until they are perceived by her husband. He pretends not to take notice of the young man's attentions. The lover continues to serenade H  lisenne each night. On day he tells H  lisenne of his background which is inferior to H  lisenne's noble birth. H  lisenne is "merveilleusement marrye." "Mais la grand fureur d'amour m'offusquoit et estoit la congnoissance ... l'amour ne diminuoit." (p.18). The husband, "melencolieusement irrit   de veoir mes gestes et contenance," (p.18) makes known to H  lisenne his suspicions:

Ha! faulx femme, telles excuses ne trouveront lieu de reception en mon cueur, car, combien que tu ayes est   chaste et pudicque, je congnois appertement ton cueur estre subverty et eschauff   d'ardeur libidineuse; et as contamin   pudicit   pour ensuyvre amour lascif. Parquoy, j'ay bien raison de mauldire l'heure que premierement je te vis, car telles dissolutions seront cause de denigrer et adnichiler ton honneur et le mien. Et si la chose vient    ma congnoissance, soye certaine que j'en prendray cruelle vengeance. (p.20).

Helisenne, "devenue hardye et audacieuse," (p.22) only denies all and refuses him the marital pleasures: "Mon cueur avoit desja faict divorce et repudiation totale d'avec luy." (p.30).

Changing lodgings is to no avail as the lover only follows. H  lisenne becomes even bolder and meets her lover at the trial sessions and at church. Her emotions are constantly vacillating: "Ainsi comme avez ouy (trescheres dames) j'estois traict  e en amours, aulcunesfois par extremes douleurs contraincte gemir et lamenter; et quelquefois grand joye et consolation m'estoit irrig  e, au moyen du plaisant regard de mon amy." (pp.23-24).

The lover continues to serenade Helisenne at night, thus provoking the husband's anger:

Tu es si abus  e de son amour que tu as chang   toutes tes complexions, facons, gestes, vouloyrs et manieres honnestes en opposite sorte. Mais, sois assuree que je n'en souffriray plus, car ta vie desordonn  e me cause tant d'ennuyz et de passions, que contraincte me sera d'user de crudelit   et ignominie en ta personne. (pp.26-27).

The couple even dare to exchange letters. The husband catches H  lisenne who is perusing the letters. His anger becomes violent: "fort indigne, s'approcha de moi et me donna ung si grand coulp sur la face que violement me feist baiser la terre." (p.46). Helisenne's reaction is indignance, not shame for her deeds: "La cause de mon pleur ne me procedoit de la juste douleur et remords de conscience aue je debvoye avoir de ma vie detestable, mais au contraire d'une grande superbite  ." (p.46).

However, in "un acte de folie passagère,"² according to Paule Demats, Hélisenne attempts suicide to end her woes:

Et pour les bien declairer, vous falut entendre que toutes mes pensées se reduyrent en une, qui estoit telle que par mort me vouloye mediciner. En mon trouble couraige je fuz si eschauffée de fureur, pour l'ardent desir que j'avoye de mettre mon miserable vouloir à execution, que furieuse raige revocqua les forces en mon corps angoisseux et debile qui toutes dehors estoient dispersees. (p.52).

The husband's reaction is at first one of compassion and understanding: "Il fut espris de l'angoisseuse douleur à cause de l'excessif amour qu'il me portait, laquelle eust ceste puissance de refrener l'ire dont son triste cueur estoit persecuté, et la convertit en compassion." (pp.54-55). He sees two paths of curing Helisenne of her love: "regardez d'imposer fin à mes extremes tristesses, soit par separation or par vous reduyre en vivant en plus grande honnesteté." (p.56). He chooses the latter and sends her to a confessor. Helisenne has no desire to cooperate in a confession: "je n'ay aulcun vouloir ny affection de communiquer le secret de mes amours en confession, car je n'en ay contrition ne repentance." (p.58). But she is forced to listen to the priest, and several chapters are devoted to

²Paule Demats, Introduction to Critical Edition of Les Angoysses Douloureuses by Hélisenne de Crenne (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968), p.xxx.

his admonitions. He tells her that she must renew her faith in admitting her sins: "si vous voulez vous retourner a Dieu en luy faisant devotes supplications, vous debvez avoir ferme credence, avecq une foy indubitable qui ne vous laissera mais vous donnera ayde et confort." (p.60). Hélisenne is moved and wishes to speak, but her body is unwilling:

Mais devant que prononcer la premiere parolle je commencay à trembler, et entra une si extreme froideur dedans mes os que, pour la douleur que je souffroys, la parolle me fut forclose, au moyen des regretz qui anticipoient ma voix; et fuz longtemps, que plus simalchre ou stature que creature vive representois. (p.61).

She finally regains composure, but the priest's words are in vain as she can only think of her lover. Thoughts of suicide are again dominant. The confessor speaks to her with the voice of reason: "par prudence, avec honnestes exercices vous mitiguerez et temperez vos excessives douleurs, et par succession de temps la fureur se passera et consumera." (p.67). Then he speaks to her as a priest of the church: "et vous voulez suyvre vostre sensualité et plus tost vous priver de vie que de faillir à l'accomplissement de vostre voluptueux plaisir et appetit desordonné, sans avoir regard à l'offense que vous faictes à Dieu et à vostre mary." (p.69). These words do not serve to persuade Hélisenne but rather to make her even more obstinate: "Ce n'estoit que temps perdu de me

remonstrer et admonester de cela, car j'estoys si obstinée que jamais pour fascheries, peines, et tourmens que j'eusse souffert à l'occasion de mon amy; et avois ferme propos de toujours perseverer." (p.70). The confessor realizes that he is accomplishing nothing and ends in promising his prayers of intercession for her.

Hélisenne appears to make an instant recovery from her desire for death. She once again attends the trial with her husband. There she sees her lover and contrives to speak with him. The lover reveals his fear of her husband:

Helas! ce qui plus me tourmente et me cause ung desespoir de jamais ne parvenir à mon affection, c'est la continuelle presence de monsieur vostre mary, lequel journellement me menace, non seulement de me frapper ou molester, mais, par mort violente, à la nature me faire renoncer. (p.81).

Hélisenne is greatly "aguillonée" but she tries to reassure him that her husband suspects nothing: "je suis certaine qu'il m'ayme plus que jamais homme aymast femme." (p.84).

It is finally in one of these conversations at the trial that Hélisenne reveals that her lover's name is Guenelic.

The two lovers carry on a game of "amoureuses devises." Guenelic does not always come to the trial to meet Hélisenne, causing her distress: "Je ne scay si mon amy differoit par crainte ou s'il le faisoit par cautelle." (p.94). He is very often accompanied by his friends to whom he brags of

his conquest. Finally a mutual friend tells H  lisenne of Guenelic's boastings:

Publicquement il se vante et glorifie d'avoir vostre pudicque honnestet   viol  e, dont je le tiens pour homme ygnorant et sans raison parce qu'il s'efforce de maculer et denigrer la bonne renomm  e d'une telle dame. (p.116).

H  lisenne immediately falls ill and can only lament against her lover: "O inique et meschant jouvenceau! O ennemy de toute piti  ! O miserable face simul  e, sentine de trahison." (p.117). But her fury soon lessens: "Je me repentoie d'avoir si oultrageusement increp   mon amy." (pp.118-119).

Finally the husband decides that H  lisenne must return home in order to avoid further embarrassment. However, against her will, he does not return her to their village but has her locked up in a tower "qui me sembloit triste et caligineuse habitation." (p.133). Thus ends Part I with H  lisenne "estant prisonniere en la fleur de ma jeunesse." (p.141). She addresses herself once again to the "trescheres et honnor  es dames": "par experience de ma furieuse follie, vous puis adviser et donner conseil qui vous sera utile et proffitable pour de tel embrasement vous conserver." (p.143).

The critics are in agreement as to the value of the first part of the novel. From examining passages, we can sense the emotion felt by its author. We can see the

techniques of psychology and realism. The tone is highly personal.

But the critics are in disagreement as to the value of the second and third parts. They are both narrated from the male point of view. Guenelic is the speaker narrating the tale of himself and Quezinstra, a friend, searching for Hé'lisenne who is hidden in the tower. The two travel through many lands, experiencing varied adventures. Guenelic becomes "addonné à l'art militaire." (p.147). The two gentilshommes are transformed into chevaliers -- they participate in tourneys, liberate a princess, help attack a village to aid a befriended prince. According to Reynier, "Nous sommes là en pleine chevalerie."³ The tale is common in the sense of being a renewal of medieval style and content. It contains none of the sentiment of Part I. We can assume that the story is second-hand to Hé'lisenne as it is not based on a personal experience. In fact, her name is rarely mentioned.

The third part of the novel is the culmination of the search. Guenelic relates his adventures to Hé'lisenne and she hastily records them in a book. In the face of death,

³Reynier, p. 120.

(due to an illness), she repents her transgressions. Broken-hearted, Guenelic joins his lover in death. But the novel does not end here. The author adds an epilogue, narrated by Quezinstra. In this section, Mercury descends from the heavens to discover H  lisenne's book and deliver it to Pallas. Mercury also comes "pour conduyre les ames de ces amsns au royaaulme de Mynos, auquel lieu sera determin   de leur demeures perpetuelles." (p.400). This episode includes giving Quezinstra a tour of the heavens: "allasmes par une voye estroicte, tres difficile et fascheuse    monter." (p.406).

Again this part is nothing like the first. H  lisenne abandons realism in using the medieval elements of the fantastic, the magical, the unbelievable. Perhaps one explanation of her intention is Reynier's comment that: "Dans la Ti  rce Partie la tendance didactique morale est tr  s apparente."⁴ H  lisenne restates an ideal of the chansons de geste: "Car plus utile seroit mourir    honneur que vivre    honte; parquoy, heureux est celluy qui avecq louenge et renomm  e de ce monde se depart." (p.148). And Quezinstra ends his narrative in telling of the lesson he has learned:

⁴Reynier, p.121.

Et pource que qui de peche se garde, de ceste
 timeur s'eslogne, je vins à considerer que la
 vie solitaire est plus apte à la fruition de
 la vie bien heurée que la continuelle conversation
 avec le monde, et deliberay à icelle me reduire.
 (p. 410).

These morals come across as insincere, unrealistic. The author is not there to temper them with feeling. Subtlety is sorely lacking. These last two parts seem to digress from the modernistic attitudes of the first part. There seems to be a regression from the sixteenth century society back to that of the Middle Ages. The gentilshommes, conducting business affairs become chevaliers showing off in tourneys and fighting battles. The role of the woman is lessened as the center of attention is no longer upon Hélisenne.

It appears that the male critics would have been better satisfied had Hélisenne ended her novel with Part I. It is only two female critics of the twentieth century -- Irene Bergal and Helen Waldstein -- who have tried to justify the unity and beauty of the entire novel. Though a twentieth century female, this writer must join the ranks of those admiring Part I. Thus, this study in the following chapters will not be concerned with Parts II and III. Before beginning the analysis, it is necessary to briefly summarize her other works.

Summary of LES EPISTRES

Hélisenne published one year after her novel two types of letters -- Epistres Familières and Epistres Invectives. If one accepts the novel as fiction based on truth, then it is necessary to also accept the letters as such. They recall events supposedly in Hélisenne's life which are recounted in the novel. They bring to mind the letters of Heloise and Abelard written in the twelfth century. It is Abelard who advocates the value of personal experience: "Souvent l'exemple a plus d'effet que la parole pour exciter ou pour calmer les passions humaines."⁵

In the Prologue to the Epistres Familières, Hélisenne states her goal as: "donner quelque recreation aux lecteurs veu la diversité des propos en icelles redigés."⁶ But we can discern deeper intentions in studying the letters. The first three letters are just addressed to relatives and friends, referring to ordinary occurrences such as why she cannot

⁵Lettres d'Heloise et d'Abelard, E. Marcel Jouhandeau (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1959), p.15.

⁶Hélisenne de Crenne, Les Epistres Familières, Ed. C. Colet (Paris: E. Grouleau, 1560), n. pag. (All subsequent quotations from these letters are from this edition. They will not be individually footnoted in this section since no pagination is given.)

attend her cousin's wedding. But the fourth letter, addressed to an abbess whom she had visited, becomes more didactic. She moralizes: "quand on ne peult faire ce que l'on veult, il fault faire ce que l'on peult."

It is the fifth letter which first bears the message of her novel. It is written "à la dame Galasie: laquelle luy avait déclaré par lettres estre d'amour illicite attainte parquoy Hélisenne detestant ceste follie, l'incite à s'en desister." She warns this cousin, as she did the "trescheres dames" in the novel to beware of love: "certes amour, comme nous lisons est un songe plein d'erreur, de follie, temerité et inconsideration." She advises her cousin to give up the love now "car qui du commencement l'on s'efforce de resister, plus facilement l'on demeure victorieux." Hélisenne proceeds logically in her advice. First she recounts what merits her cousin finds in the lover:

Car tu estimes tant de perfections resider en la personne du possesseur de ton cueur; que selon ton jugement, il est digne d'estre aymé d'une deese. Tu dis sa beaulté estre tres excellente, comme tu peu; conjecturer, tu crois qu'en luy regne vraye obeissance amour entiere, et souveraine fidelité, à brief parler il te semble que si a homme du monde en aymer fidele devoit la posterite des amoureux rendre grace, que ton amy seroit celuy à qui amour et tout les amans seroient debiteurs.

Then Hélisenne proceeds to discount these merits because the

cousin is naive in these matters: "Tu es ignorante de la condition de plusieurs hommes." Hélisenne presents her image of men:

Du commencement ilz sont fort doux, et à la fin tres amers: et voyons ordinairement que apres qu'ilz ont de leurs dames victoire obtenue, ilz aspirent à nouvelles conquestes delaissant celles qui faignoient à perpetuite vouloir aymer.

She warns her cousin not to be confident in "ce deceptif et fraduleux sexe virile." She says that her own experience is the qualification for her advice. "Considere et pense que tresheureuse est la personne, qui à l'exemple d'autrui se corrige." She ends in advocating a return to reason from the folly of passion: "Esvertue toy doncq, de mettre en effect, ce dont je t'exhorte, et à l'heure tu trouveras que les bonnes imaginations souffriront legerement estre reduicts à la droicte voye de raison."

However, Hélisenne does not really condemn all men. Her last Epistre Familière is addressed to Quezinstra "duquel elle extolle la vertueuse amytié et fervente benevolence qu'il a manifestié luy porter, en s'esforçant par son artificielle eloquence de la rendre en sa pristine liberté." Her letter is to thank Quezinstra for his help in finding her in her captivity:

Je tiens pour indubitable (trescher amy) qu'affectueusement tu aspires d'avoir fidelle cognoissance

de mon estat pour duquel te rendre certain, je t'adverty que depuis le temps qui suis detenue captive, jusques`a present n'a esté en ma puissance de temperer les anxietés de mon cueur.

She praises highly the value of friendship: "Mais amytié est une grande convenance et consentement de toutes choses divines et humaines, avecq benevolence et charité." She cannot resist commenting that those who persist in volupté are "bestialle." Helisenne continues in her analysis of friendship:

En trois cas peult estre approuvée la fidelité de l'homme. Premièrement si le nouvel amy qu'il a, ne mestruisire du degre d'amytié, dont il m'aymoit: secondement s'y exaltant, sa prospere fortune n'est cause de luy causer oblivion de moy: et tiercement si mon adversité n'est point ocasion de me delaisser.

Finally, we see that perhaps beneath all this praise of Quezinstra's faithful friendship, there lies an ulterior motive:

Je te supplie de ne discontinuer les remonstrances que tu fais`a mon mary: afin que par l'artificielle elegance de tes melliflues parolles, il commence`a congnoistre que c'est`a grand tort, qu'il preste matiere de me tormenter et adolorer. J'espere que ta persuasion sera de grand efficace.

As we shall next see, this last letter announces the subject of the entire Epistres Invectives.

The Epistres Invectives are of quite a different tone. They consist of a biting exchange of insults between Hélisenne

and her husband (of course all authored by Hélisenne). Each blames the other for the incident narrated in Part I of Les Angoysses Douloureuses. Each not only condemns his or her partner, but the entire opposite sex. Hélisenne claims her "fortune cruelle" with its "cruauté intolérable" to be the inspiration for these letters. The "Préambule aux Invectives"⁷ is composed of a series of bitter lamentations against this "mauldicte fortune, de l'aveuglé monde deese." Yet in her letters, the husband is the blame for her suffering. In her first letter, entitled "Epistre envoyée par ma Dame Helisenne à son mary: auquel elle veult persuader qu'à grand tort il a contre elle inimitié conceu, en luy faisant peine non meritée souffrir: à l'occasion de quoy grandement elle le blasme, l'accusant du vice de cruauté," Hélisenne elaborates on the suffering caused her by his impetuous and irrational ire:

Or pense doncq en quelle calamité ma perverse fortune et ta cruauté m'ont conduit: puis qu'elles ont violement pressé la langue de me charger de chose non par moy pensée. Helas si bien tu rememores, quelles estoient mes gestes,

⁷Hélisenne de Crenne, Les Epistres Invectives, Ed. C. Colet (Paris: E. Grouleau, 1560), n. pag. (All subsequent quotations from these letters are from this edition. They will not be individually footnoted in this summary section since no pagination is given.)

alors telle devroit estre ton opinion, que la prononciation de mes excessives parolles furent pour pretendre par mort ma douleur guerir. Car ie presupposoy, que toy estant pour l'heure plus cruel que cruauté donner fin à ma vie tu serois merveilleusement prompt.

And she reminds him that her "affair" with Guenelic consisted only of conversations and letters: "sans cause tu m'as faict souffrir tant." She condemns him for his perverse fantasy and questions his accusations:

Mais dy moy, Qui te donne la stimulation de continuellement prendre les choses en la plus deterieure partie? ... Ton imagination est elle telle, que tu te juges digne de louange, pour te nommer tres curieux gardien d'une femme, de laquelle par ton estimation le cueur est totalement perverty?

The second letter is the husband's answer to these accusations as written by H  lisenne. He is surprised by her "audacieuse hardiesse." He tries to justify his punishment of her:

Car l'offense que ta detestable personne a envers moy commise, est si grieve, que toy n'ayant qu'une seule vie, ne scaurois avec la perte d'icelle satisfaire. Mais pour te punir de desserte condigne, seroit chose necessaire, que par innumerable fois ton corps meschant resuscitast, à fin qu'avec la peine de plusieurs querelles et ignominieuses morts la penitence fust assez grande pour effacer l'odieuse macule de tes enormes pechez.

He explains her sin using the symbol of a boat:

Tu as faict divorce et repudiation totale avec Dame Vertu, pour accumuler en toy les vices à elle contraires. La congregation desquelz a faict rompre les avirons

d'honnesteté, et lors haussées les ancrs de la honte
 as appareillées les voilles de ton cueur, et la nef
 de ta personne, te joignant à la roche de libidineuse
 affection.

He proclaims that his accusations were not based on exaggerated
 fantasy: "Car je te certifie que non en choses ouyes: mais
 en choses veues je suis croyable." He claims to see the
 motive of her publicly chastising him: "sous ombre de bonté
 persuade les Dames d'estre chastes, mais tu ne dois croire
 combien que les secrets de l'ame ne se voyent, que j'ignore
 ta perverse intention, qui n'est aue chose sinon que pour
 crainte d'estre repulsée de la société des Dames." She
 should only blame herself: "Je te supplie ne vouloir de
 cela accuser ta mauuaise fortune, ne moy que tu dis estre
 si cruel, ce que je te nye. Car justice n'est cruauté."
 She should remember that "à la prescience divine rien n'est
 caché." He continually refers to her "luxure abominable,"
 generalizing its effects on women: "toutes femmes qui sent
 de luxure esprises et maculées, desirent de veoir toutes les
 autres de semblable vie contaminer." He further generalizes
 on women:

O que miserables creatures sont, toy, et otutes
 celles qui te ressemblent, dont grande multitude
 se retrouve: car la graine de fidelité est peu
 semée entre ceste inconstant sexe feminin. O
 fraduleuse condition, tant plus on te croit, tant
 plus on erre, tant plus on te preste, tant plus on

pert: tant plus on t'ayme, tant plus on offense.
 ... O combien doit penser l'homme sage, premier
 qu'au lieu matrimoniale submette, et s'il delibere
 de femme s'accompagner, il doit faire son cueur
 large, afin qu'il puisse recevoir toute ce qu'avec
 elle a de coustume venir.

He even quotes Socrates:

Manifeste exemple, nous en rend le Philosophe
 Socrates: Lequel de Xantipe tant d'anxiété toléra
 certainement avecques sa patience, il apperceut en
 la condition muliebree tant de malice, que quelques
 fois luy estant interrogué, selon son jugement que
 c'estoit de femmes, il respondit, qu'elles estoient
 semblables a un arbre appelle Adesla, qui semble
 estre d'excellente beauté à regarder: mais il est
 tout remply de venin.

He ends with the hope that reason will triumph over sensuality:

"mais la chair est fragile, et l'esprit prompt: la guerre
 est grande entre la sensualité et la raison."

Hélisenne immediately begins her third letter, a reply
 to her husband's, with insults: "Tu es si remply d'indolence
 que la raison te defaillant, pour refuge as eu recours aux
 detractions, opprobres et injures." She is concerned in this
 letter not just with accusations against herself, but with
 those against women in general:

Voyant que generalement tu detestes la feminine
 condition, me semble que trop est grande l'injure,
 puis qu'elle est universelle. Tu dis que femmes
 sont infidelles, inconstantes, fraduleuses et
 deceptives, et à brief parler, qui presteroit foy
 à ton dire, nul en mariage ne se lyeroit.

To formulate her counterattack against his insults to the feminine sex, Hélisenne recounts a list of virtuous women:

Ilz cognoissent que de sempiternelle louange
 plusieurs sont dignes: entre lesquelles est
 nombrée Judith, que saint Heirosme exalte,
 prononcant telles paroles. O louable excellence
 de chasteté, ta splendeur se manifeste au cueur
 constant de plusieurs dames: et si sont encores
 grande multitude de tres nobles femmes, lesquelles
 avec ceste gracieuse vertu, ont aussi observé
 amour conjugale, comme Arthemisia, femme de Mansolus.
 Argia, femme de Polimites, Cornelia femme de Graccus,
 Yfioratea femme de Mitridates. Ilz sont autres sans
 nombre qui ont preferé virginité à toute autre
 coustume de vivre: desquelles sont foy les exemples
 d'Athalanta vierge native de Calidoine. Camila
 royne de Volquains a la discipline militaire avec
 magnanimité virilement s'exerca. Combien ont aymé
 honnesteté virginalle Hiphigame, Grecque, Cassandra
 et Chrisis.

Hélisenne's supreme defense of women is her last
Epistre Invective addressed to Elenot "lequel, excité de
 presumption temeraire assiduellement contemnoit les dames
 qui au solacieux exercice literaire se veulet occuper."
 Elenot is apparently a poet who thinks of himself as "le
 Phenix de sapience." Hélisenne speaks of him in contrast
 to Marot: "Je suis certaine que bien te souvient que ta
 venimeuse langue source d'iniquitez, s'est efforcée de
 desestimer le hault et doulx stile, du tres eloquent poete
 Marot." Of Elenot, she says that the "inimitie que tu
 portes aux dames" places him in "la muliebre condition."

His opinion is that women are "de rudes et obnubilez esprits."

To contradict him, Hélisenne lists women who have excelled in the arts:

Damas fille de Pitagoras, fut si tres savante en Philosophie, qu'apres que les trois seurs eurent coupé le fil vital à son pere, elle exposoit les difficultez de ses sentences. La Royne Zenobia fut tellement instruite par Longin Philosophe que par l'habondance et reluysante science des escritures, fut nommee Ephinisa: dont Nicomachus translata les saintes et sacrées oeuvres. En Grec Delbora fut tant prudente et discrete, que comme on lit au lieu des Juges, pour quelque temps exerça l'office de judicature, sus le peuple d'Israel. Cornelia mere des deux Graccus, leur forma la langue tres eloquente. Valerie vierge Romaine, fut si experte en lettres Grecques et latine, qu'elle explicqua les vers et metres de Virgile. Car je n'estime point qu'au passé jamais fust ne pour l'avenir peult estre personne de plus excellent et hault esprit, que la tres illustre et magnanime princesse, ma dame la Royne de Navarre, c'est une chose toute notoire qu'en sa Royale excellente et sublime personne, reside la divinité Platonique, la prudence de Caton, l'eloquence de Cicero et la Socratique raison: Et à brief parler sa sincerité est tant accomplie que la splendeur d'icelle à la condition feminine donne lustre.

Hélisenne's conclusion is a two-fold request to Elenot:

Or penses doncq de confesser l'offence que tu as perpetrée envers ce gracieux sexe féminin, qui par l'eglise est appelé devotieux, si tu peulx faire ce dont je te prie, bien t'en trouveras: car raison le veult, honnesteté le consent, et conscience le commande. Je desirerois bien que ton vouloir fust de communiquer ceste mienne Epistre à gens d'excellens et claires espritz.

Summary of LE SONGE

Le Songe is quite different from Hélisenne's other

works. It is more ordinary in that it is in the form of an allegory -- a genre common in the Middle Ages. But the subject is much the same as in her other works: "vous donnera certaine evidence des perilz qui de vie lascive et voluptueuse nous surviennent."⁸ The allegory consists of a debate between reason and sensuality in which reason triumphs. The dream consists of Hélisenne, "l'ardeur de mon age florissant," watching the events in a beautiful valley. She sees two young people meet and fall in love. The young girl has a fear of jealousy. Hélisenne comments that "amour et crainte sont deux qualites d'une meme fontaine procedans." But the girl contemplates suicide as did Hélisenne in the novel. However, the boy dissuades her: "la vie est la plus precieuse don de Dieu et nature." Venus and Cupid then arrive to lift the fears from the lovers. Also enters Pallas, goddess of prudence. Each of the goddesses tries to persuade the girl. Pallas warns her that love will cause "perdition de corps et d'ame," while Venus promises her good fortune in love. Honte, Sensualité, and Raison enter

⁸Hélisenne de Crenne, Le Songe, Ed. C. Colet (Paris: E. Grouleau, 1560), n. pag. (All subsequent quotations from this work will be from this edition. They will not be individually footnoted in this summary section since no pagination is given.)

and do battle. Sensualité claims that the domain of Raison is "le sexe viril" and she must not therefore interfere with "le sexe muliebre." This leads to a discussion on the equality of women, which will be further detailed in the following chapter.

Chasteté, Charité, and Humilité enter and proclaim that to be "bien vivante" is necessary to renounce all "richesse." Diligence and abstinence are necessary. The woman lover is finally convinced by Raison. She accepts chastity and the "certitude de verité." "Elle fut recut dans la resplendissante congregation avec humaine benignité." Raison concludes the allegory by restoring peace to the valley.

CHAPTER III

THE MODERN ASPECTS IN HÉLISENNE'S WORKS

Hélisenne de Crenne lived during the French Renaissance. She adopted the attitudes of this new era and even developed some attitudes which are considered as modern from the sixteenth century point of view. This can be seen first through a study of her attitudes towards life around her, and secondly, through an examination of her art of writing.

In order to begin a study of this nature, it is necessary to know what ideas the Renaissance encompassed. Professor Mustapha Benouis defines the Renaissance as a "transformation dans la vie intellectuelle et artistique sous l'influence de l'antiquité greco-latine qui se produit aux quinzième et seizième siècles."¹ This transformation indicates a casting aside of medieval concepts. Education, facilitated by the invention of printing, became of capital importance. There was a return to the study of the classical authors with Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato predominant. This led to the return to Platonism. But perhaps more

¹Mustapha Benouis, Personal Communication.

importantly, the life style was changed. Advances in navigation opened up commerce making the cities, not the feudal fiefs, the centers of activity. The chevaliers became gentilshommes. Il Cortegiano, by Italy's Castiglione, "a storehouse of most necessarie implements for the conversation, use and trayning up of man's life with courtly demeaners,"² became a popular guidebook among the French noble class. New prosperity brought about a need for more education and allowed more leisure time in which to obtain it. One great influence which aided this transformation was the attitude of the ruling class. François I^{er} and his courtiers became patrons of the arts and had brought in from Italy artists to act as models for the French. His sister, Marguerite de Navarre, was a noted writer in several genres. All of these changes brought forth the concept of humanism in France in both aspects of its definition:

1. mouvement d'esprit représenté par les 'humanistes' de la Renaissance et caractérisé par un effort pour relever la dignité de l'esprit humain et le mettre en valeur

²Sir Thomas Hoby, "Hoby's Epistle," in The Courtier by Baldassare Castiglione (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co, Inc., 1928), p.3.

2. formation de l'esprit humain par la culture littéraire ou scientifique ³

People were taught to accept life, not reject it or try to escape it in times of trouble -- a renewal of stoicism. Reason became dominant over blind faith.

Hélisenne's works embody many of these ideas. She is certainly an advocate of individualism as she chooses to make her novel autobiographical instead of retelling some legend. She is extremely proud of her noble birth and her great beauty. There are many examples of self-admiration throughout the novel: "je m'eusse hardiment se nommer des plus belles de France."⁴ She delights in her ability to attract men: "j'avoys accoustumé de prendre et captiver les hommes, et ne me faisoye que rire d'eulx."⁵ She even characterizes her lover as being of a less noble background to accentuate her importance.

However, Hélisenne is not totally self-centered. In fact, her individualistic attitude is her means of expressing her greatest concern -- the position of women in society.

³Le Petit Robert, Ed. Paul Robert (Paris: Société du Nouveau Littre, 1967), p.855.

⁴Les Angoisses Douloureuses, p. 7.

⁵Ibid., p. 10.

In the Middle Ages, women fit into two basic categories. They were either idols of love to be always kept on pedestals by the chevaliers or the women were base shrews, unfaithful to their spouses. (Of course, there are always exceptions to any generalization. In this case, Eleanor of Aquitaine, her daughters, and Heloise in the Middle Ages were respected women due to their education and interest in the arts.) The role of women began to change in the sixteenth century. They were allowed to be educated and take an important place at court. The richer ladies could patronize artists by presiding over salons. It was not until later centuries that women were allowed to think about being equal to men. Even today this equality battle continues. But back in the sixteenth century, *Helisenne* expressed a genuine concern for women. Waldstein termed *Helisenne's* novel "a social protest."⁶ There were a few earlier pleas for women's well-being by Christine de Pisan and Marguerite de Navarre (to be later discussed in detail) but they were weak and confined within the boundaries of tradition. *Helisenne* is bolder, afraid of offending no one. She presents herself equal to men of the

⁶Helen Waldstein, *Helisenne de Crenne: A Woman of the Renaissance* (Wayne State University Dissertation, 1965), p. 13.

time in writing a novel about herself. And she succeeded in having her works published. In fact, there were ten editions of her combined works published between 1538 and 1560. Reynier points out that "dans une de ses lettres, elle reclame pour les dames la liberté de 'monstrer leurs louables oeuvres.'"7

Hélisenne also dares to make her novel a confessional. Demats points out that one critic, A. M. Schmidt, considers this as original -- her novel is "la première à extraire de ses malheurs conjugaux un thème de roman."<8 Hélisenne recognizes her own boldness in writing about a delicate matter, but she does it in spite of all:

Me proceda la hardiesse de m'ingerer d'intituler l'oeuvre present faisant mention d'amours impudiques ce que selon l'opinion d'aulcunes dames timides se pourra juger plus dignes d'estre conservé en profonde silence que d'estre publié ne vulgarisé.⁹

Hélisenne uses her novel not only to warn women of her plight (as expressed in her introduction) but also to chastise publicly her husband. She rebels against the double standard of women not being allowed men's friendship.

⁷Reynier, p. 101.

⁸Demats, p. xxxv.

⁹Les Angoisses Douloureuses, p. 16.

She is proud of her transgression of talking with Guenelic. She also condemns the medieval concept of locking women away in towers to keep them chaste. In her own life, she gives up living with her husband. She does not even endure his company for appearance sake, as did the women at the court of the Princesse de Clèves. In the society presented by Madame de Lafayette, the women tried to appear happy in marriage while being unfaithful in reality.

This brings us to Hélienne's conception of love and marriage -- again modern. Plattard says that Hélienne and Marguerite de Navarre are "les premières à voir dans l'amour autre chose que le contact de deux épidermes."¹⁰ Hélienne aptly recognizes that her husband's pleasures in marriage abound from sexual contact, and she, thus, refuses her part in the act to show her contempt for him. She does not even bother to pretend illness. She protests against childhood marriages since hers was the cause of her only weakness: "c'estoit santé, qui de moy s'estoit sequestrée, au moyen que j'avoys esté mariée en trop jeune aage."¹¹

¹⁰ Jean Plattard in Littérature Française, I, Ed. Joseph Bédier and Paul Hazard (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1948), p. 201.

¹¹ Les Angoisses Douloureuses, p.16.

As for love, Helisenne rejects both Middle Age concepts of it as being either ideal or base. She tries to paint a more realistic picture of love as guided by sentiment and passion. She introduces "l'appetit sensuel." The woman is allowed to experience the emotions of love, unaided by any potion as is so often the case in medieval literature (for example Tristan et Iseult, Cligés by Chretien de Troyes, Le Lai de Deux Amants by Marie de France.) Hé/isenne feels sincere emotions:

Ainsi qu'il proferoit telles parolles, mon amoureux cueur se debatoit dedans mon estomach; en muant couleur, du principe devins palle et froide; puis apres, une chaleur vehemente licencia de moy la palle couleur, et devins chaulde et vermeille; et fuz contraincte me retirer pour l'affluence des souspirs dont j'estoye agitée, comme le monstrois par indices evidens, gestes exterieures et mouvemens inconstans. Et quand je voulois prononcer quelque propos, par manieres de plaintes et exclamations, l'extreme destresse de ma douleur interrompoit ma voix, je perdis l'appetit de manger, et de dormir m'estoit impossible.¹²

In reviewing Hé/isenne's concept of love, we must recall her stated purpose in writing: "vous pourrez eviter les dangereux laqs d'amours, en y resistant du commencement."¹³ How can Hé/isenne advocate women's freedom in love (as is

¹²Les Angoysses Douloureuses, p. 15.

¹³Ibid., p. 3.

allowed men) and yet advise women to avoid it? Perhaps the novel of her woes in love serves to warn women that realistically this freedom is not yet possible. She would probably disagree with the statement of Le Duc: "freedom from moral restraint in matters of sex is one of the dominant traits of the Renaissance."¹⁴ Hélisenne points out that there still exist in her century many men who still abide by the medieval customs. The husband illustrates one such prejudiced -- his reactions are exaggerated as we remember that the relation between the lovers was never physical. Thus, Hélisenne appears to be advocating reason over sensuality, another Renaissance concept. In the novel her passions are constantly dominant: "Ainsi doncques, commencay du tout à chasser, raison parquoy la sensualité demeure superieure."¹⁵ But women must learn to exercise reason to avoid sorrows of love. In her fifth Epistre Familiere, written to Galasie, Hélisenne encourages her cousin to rebel against her parents' choice of her husband. Yet it is unwise to persist in an illicit love which will only end in sorrow.

¹⁴Alma Le Duc, "Gontier Col and the French Pre-Renaissance," Romanic Review, VIII (1917), 151.

¹⁵Les Angoysses Douloureuses, p. 13.

Hélisenne even becomes a female chauvinist in her warnings: "voyons ordinairement que apres qu'ilz ont de leurs dames victiore obtenue, ilz aspiternt à nouvelles conquestes delaissant celles qui faignoît à perpetuite vouloir aymer."¹⁶

Apart from this major theme of love, Hélisenne also deals with two other Renaissance concerns -- education and religion. She certainly adopts the Renaissance spirit of education with its emphasis on the classics. Throughout all of her works, she frequently alludes to mythology, Greek and Latin authors, philosophers, the Bible, and previous French works. She shows her erudition in using a number of latinisms. She advocates education in the manner of Rabelais: "ma mere print ung singulier plaisir à me faire instruyre en bonnes meurs et honnestes coustumes de vivre."¹⁷ She speaks proudly of the "dames en science de literature de si hault esprit douées."¹⁸

As for religion, in the sixteenth century, reason began to take the place of blind faith. The humanists such as Erasmus and the reformers such as Luther began to question

¹⁶ Cinquième Epistre Familière, n. pag.

¹⁷ Les Angoysses Douloureuses, p. 6.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

the church's power. H  lisenne only discusses religion as an issue in one work -- Le Songe de ma dame H  lisenne. Here the discussion is to show once again the equality of women. She disputes the belief that Eve drew Adam into sin thus making her responsible for all of man's sins. She takes issue with these statements:

On pourrait arguer que la femme n'est pas l'ymage de Dieu pource que dit saint Paul au chapitre 13 de l'Epistre aux Corinthiens: l'homme est ymage de Dieu, et la femme ymage de l'homme: et au huitieme chapitre de l'Epistre au Romains, dict saint Paul, que les predestinez seullement, c'est    dire, ceux que Dieu a ordonn   devoir estre participans de la fruition divine auront l'ymage de Dieu et non pas les negligens, c'est    dire, ceulx dont la prescience divine a sceu la damnation.¹⁹

H  lisenne argues first that Christ is the only perfect image of God. "Mais l'ymage de Dieu est en l'homme, comme en une nature estrange et differente, ainsi que l'ymage du Roy en un denier d'Argent."²⁰ The soul is the essence of man's being in the image of God. And this is the basis for the equality of men and women:

On peult respondre    ceste question qu'en Dieu y a aulcunes choses en quoy l'homme et la femme conviennent, comme en l'ame representant unit   d'essence et Trinit   de personne, l'homme convient avec la femme

¹⁹ Le Songe, n. pag.

²⁰ Ibid.

et en ceste maniere l'homme et la femme sont
 egallement à l'ymage de Dieu.²¹

In all of her other works, H  lisenne mixes paganism and religion. In her first Epistre Invective, she asks for the blessings of the "mere des Dieux," Deese Vesta, and Deese Juno. In the introduction to the novel, she invokes again a female deity, not God: "en exorant celle qui est mere et fille de l'altitonant plasmateur de couloir ayder à ma triste memoire."²² And she seems to disregard the strict guidelines if the church in taking lightly the matter of sinning. In the Epistres Invectives, she says "une chose qui me conforte: c'est que qui peche avec plusieurs, il n'est pas digne de si tresgrande reprehension."²³ And in Le Songe, she says: "car c'est chose certaine, que toutes celles qui pechent, ne sont si promptement punies."²⁴

These modern attitudes expressed by H  lisenne would be ineffective if not expressed in a concurrently modern manner. Her way of writing is indeed modern for the sixteenth

²¹Le Songe, n. pag.

²²Les Angoysses Douloureuses, p.4.

²³Les Epistres Invectives, n. pag.

²⁴Le Songe, n. pag.

century in many ways -- it is realistic, it contains sentiment and psychology, it is typical of its century with its latinate style. Two critics, Reynier and Secor, choose to believe that the novel Les Angoisses Douloureuses is simply a French adaption of Boccaccio's Fiametta. Other sources attributed to H  lisenne's perusal are Le Peregrin by Caviceo, Le Petit Jehan de Saintre by Antoine de la Sale, and Les Illustrations de Gaule et Singularitez de Troye by Jean Lemaire de Belges. But other critics prefer to believe in the originality of H  lisenne's manner of writing. She shows a concern for character delineation, sentiment, and credulity. Guichard feels that H  lisenne is unique, isolated from the Renaissance:

Elle peint le monde et les moeurs de son temps, rappelant ses meditations sur elle-m  me, faisant vibrer les fibres les plus cach  es de son   me, elle raconte en po  te les desordres d'une de ces passions violentes qui sont de tous les temps.²⁵

Realism, defined as "une conception de l'art, de la litt  rature selon laquelle l'artiste ne doit pas chercher    id  aliser le r  el ou    en donner une image   pur  e,"²⁶

²⁵J.-Marie Guichard, "H  lisenne de Crenne," Revue du XIX   Si  cle, VIII (1840), 284.

²⁶Le Petit Robert, p. 1471.

is important in H  lisenne's manner of writing. She does not try to produce the effect of realism by using countless names and dates as did Madame de Lafayette in La Princesse de Cl  ves. She adds only enough data to give her story a realistic, a true to life, background. Abel le Franc substantiates this in determining that the names Guenelic and Quezinstra are anagrams for Guecelin (Gueslin, Geslin, Guislain, Guillain) and Quezinsart (Quezin) -- names frequently used in the region of Picardie. The names of the villages mentioned can be traced as actual fiefs belonging to the Briet family. This information is found in Les Fiefs et les seigneuries de Ponthieu et du Vimeu.

Realism is best expressed through the story being personal and narrated from the first person point of view. Helisenne always speaks directly to the readers, involving them intimately. Henriette Charasson explains this well:

Il faut, je crois arriver `a ce tres curieux roman d'H  lisenne de Crenne, Les Angoyssees Douloureuses, pour trouver en 1536, une   tude psychologique scrupuleusement faite; l'analyse minutieuse, le 'je' qui regit toute la premi  re partie, certains

²⁷Abel le Franc, "A Propos d'H  lisenne de Crenne: 'Guenelic' et 'Quezinstra'," Revue des Livres Anciens, II (1917), 376.

²⁸Loviot, p. 141.

details particuliers nous portent à croire que ce roman est fait d'après nature, et qu'Helisienne de Crenne, en donnant son nom à son héroïne, publiait tout simplement ses Mémoires.²⁹

Hélisienne uses picturesque details to depict her characters unlike Madame de Lafayette who dealt only with superlatives of description. This can be seen in comparing each author's first description of her lover. Madame de Lafayette says: "Mais ce prince était un chef-d'oeuvre de la nature; ce qu'il y avait de moins admirable, c'était d'être l'homme du monde le mieux fait et le plus beau."³⁰ But Hélisienne is more specific:

Je veis ung jeune homme. Il me sembla de tresbelle forme; et selon que je povoye conjecturer à sa phisionomie, je l'estimoys gracieux et amyable: il avoit le visage riant, la chevelure creppé, ung petit blonde et sans avoir barbe, qui estoit manifeste demonstrance de sa gentile jeuness. Il estoit assez honneste en son habit, toutesfoys sans user d'accoustremens superfluz. Et, au moyen de la grande chaleur, n'avoit aultre habillement qu'ung pourpoint de satin noir.³¹

But to keep herself in the foreground as the center of

²⁹Henriette de Charasson, "Les Origines de la Sentimentalite Moderne," Mercure de France, LXXXVIII (1910), 200.

³⁰Madame de Lafayette, La Princesse de Cleves, Ed. H. Ashton (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p.31.

³¹Les Anoysses Douloureuses, pp. 9-10.

attention, H  lisenne does not tell us that her lover's name is Guenelic until two-thirds of the way through Part I. And she never assigns a name to her husband, ranking him of even lower importance.

Perhaps H  lisenne's most effective device in achieving verisimilitude is her use of sentiment. We see not just a tale of love, but more importantly the feelings of the characters as they act: "A la prononciation de mes parolles je devins palle, et me print ung tremblement de tous mes membres: souspirs en si grand multitude vuidoye de mon estomach que l'ung ne donnoit lieu    l'aultre."³²

Irene Bergal sees the pattern of the novel as (1) contact between H  lisenne and Guenelic, (2) meditations and lamentations on the part of H  lisenne, (3) reactions of the jealous husband, and (4) renewed meditations and lamentations by H  lisenne.³³ It is these meditations which interest the reader, which show the psychological workings of the heroine's mind. This is especially evident in H  lisenne's inner debate on committing suicide:

³²Les Angoysses Douloureuses, p.38.

³³Irene Bergal, H  lisenne de Crenne, A Sixteenth Century French Novelist (University of Minnesota Dissertation, 1966), p.78.

Et lors que je feuz saisie, incontinent je commencay à trembler à cause de la triste apprehension de la mort; et, en pensant marcher, je tumboys et sentoys en moy ung grand debat entre ma douloureuse ame et mes paoureux esperitz de vie. Mais la cruelle Megara me persuadoit de suyvre le propos mortel, me faisant rememorer que moy vivante ne pourrois plus veoir mon amy par ce que mes amours estoient trop publiées et vulgarisées; mais apres ma mort, mon ame le pourroit frequemment visiter, parquoy la mort me seroit felice et heureuse. Et donques chassa de moy la froide paour pourquoy je feuz enflambee de plus ardens desirs à la mort.³⁴

It is not just in the novel that the elements of emotional expression and psychology are used. The Epistres Familières are full of feeling for the addressee: "Comme j'ay eu commence à lire ta lettre, il m'est prins compassion de toy. O combien le penser à tes calamitez futures me rend apte à excessivement me contrister."³⁵

We must note that the Epistres Invectives were all written by Hélisenne but from two opposite viewpoints -- hers and her husband's. For this reader, this versatility provides an interesting insight into the psychological workings of the mind of the real Hélisenne. She can write equally well spirited insults to her husband as well as to herself. She gives him a chance to defend himself in the

³⁴Les Angoysses Douloureuses, pp. 53-54.

³⁵Cinquième Epistre Familière, n. pag.

reader's eye. This gives her the advantage of having someone to dispute with and finally triumph over. This is a much more effective method than just writing an essay against anti-feminists. In attacking her husband, and vice versa, H  lisenne uses bits of what today might be called psychology. In her first letter, she analyses her husband: "Je te supplie dy moy, si en diminuant ma bonne reputation, tu penses augmenter la tienne?"³⁶ In the husband's reply, he tries to analyse H  lisenne's intentions in writing her book: "ta perverse intention qui n'est autre chose sinon pour crainte d'estre repulse   de la societ   des Dames."³⁷ He even turns to philosophizing: "O fraduleuse condition, tant plus on te croit, tant plus on erre; tant plus on te preste, tant plus on pert; tant plus on t'ayme, tant plus on offense."³⁸ H  lisenne's final answer to her husband is one heard frequently in modern times: "Et pour ce que les choses mentales nous sont occultes, nous ne devons estre promptz    faire jugement des intentions d'autrui."³⁹

Irene Bergal feels that H  lisenne owes a debt to the

³⁶Premi  re Epistre Invective, n.pag.

³⁷Douxi  me Epistre Invective, n.pag.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Troisi  me Epistre Invective, n.pag.

"rhetoriqueurs" in strictly speaking of style -- a comment worth examining. Bergal lists three aspects of the style of the "rhetoriqueurs": (1) affected modesty, (2) invocation of divine assistance, and (3) aim being to persuade.⁴⁰ H  lisenne certainly uses affected modesty. In her closing chapter of Part I of Les Angoyssees Douloureuses, she admits:

Mais, si mon debile scavoir est cause qu'il n'est en langaige plus aorne et modeste, a luy se doit attribuer la fault, et non au deffault de mon vouloir et aspirant desir, comme celle qui totalement est studieuse et affect  e pour vous faire congnoistre mon affection.⁴¹

She immediately follows this with an invocation of the aid of "l'altitonant plasmateur," And her introduction states that her intention is to persuade by examples the ladies to avoid the failings of love, thus fulfilling the last of Bergal's requirements.

Like the "rhetoriqueurs," H  lisenne used an abundance of exclamatory sentences. In one lamentation, she uses a series of ten exclamations beginning with "O." Her sentences are often long, but have well-balanced parts for emphasis: "O fortune plus inhumaine, que l'hydre, plus violente que l'oustre, plus acerbe que aspicz, plus incertaine que

⁴⁰Bergal, p.87.

⁴¹Les Angoyssees Douloureuses, p.43.

l'onde!"⁴² She also uses an abundance of adjectives and adverbs to place emphasis on sentiment rather than action. Another device of the "rhetoriqueurs" which she employs frequently is reduplication -- the use of a pair of synonymous words rather than one. Examples all found on one page are: "reparer ou amender; corroboré et conforté; retribuer ou remunerer; doulce et tranquille; commode et propice."⁴³

Finally, one last element readily noticeable in her style is the use of latinisms. This is probably her weakest point as it is an overused device common to the less capable writers of the era. Loviot says that before Reynier's study, Hélienne was known only as "une 'escorcheuse' de latin."⁴⁴ And Demats tells us "Pasquier crut que Rabelais a pris Hélienne pour cible dans Chapitre VI de Pantagruel à cause de son usage de Latin."⁴⁵ This chapter is entitled "Comment Pantagruel rencontra un Limosin qui contrefaisoit le langaige François."

Hélienne also likes to use numerous mythological and

⁴²Les Angoyssees Douloureuses, p. 43.

⁴³Ibid., p. 91.

⁴⁴Loviot, p. 13.

⁴⁵Demats, p. v.

classical allusion. Reynier feels that she does this to "colorer d'une teinte poetique certaines réalités de la vie, les phénomènes naturels, les changements de l'heure ou de la saison."⁴⁶ The first sentence of the narrative part of the novel exemplifies this well: "Au temps que la deesse Cibeles despouilla son glacial et gelide habit, et vestit sa verdoyant robe tapisée de diverses couleurs, je fuz procréée de noblesse."⁴⁷ Héli-senne often uses these allusions as comparisons of her situation to others. In her suicide attempt, she invokes "Thesiphone, Megara, et Alecie, furies infernales" to help her "user de crudelité en moy-mesmes."⁴⁸ Then she speaks of Isiphile, Socrates, Philis, Dathan, and Abiron all who had readily available instruments of death.

Now that we have examined Héli-senne's works in themselves, it should prove interesting to place them in the frame-work of literature throughout the centuries.

⁴⁶Reynier, p.115.

⁴⁷Les Angoysses Douloureuses, p.5.

⁴⁸Ibid., p.53.

CHAPTER IV

HÉLISENNE AS A LINK BETWEEN THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE MODERN ERA

"Hélisenne est le lien qui unit le quatorzième siècle au dix-huitième, Christine de Pisan à Mme. de Staël,"¹ according to Guichard. An examination of works preceding, surrounding, and following those of Helisenne shows indeed that Helisenne is a natural link between these periods in literature.

The Middle Ages literature progressed through the recounting of saints lives, the "chansons de geste," the "romans d'aventure" to finally prose fiction in the thirteenth century and allegories in the fifteenth. Hélisenne's novel in the sixteenth century seems to combine many of the aspects found in these two latter categories.

In the thirteenth century, we find the anonymous story, L'Empereur Constant, which progresses from the roman d'aventure in its tendency towards a moralitis (there is no

¹Guichard, p. 284.

armour against fate).² Helisenne proclaims this idea in her numerous lamentations against fate. One failing of several medieval works is illustrated by the story Le Roi Flore et la Belle Jehan. Here we have "the mixture, by arbitrary and violent process, of two stories which have nothing whatever to do with each other except that they are, wilfully and with no reason, buckled together at the end."³ In Part I of her novel, H  lisenne avoids this weakness. The attention is centered completely around H  lisenne and her dilemma. There is a distinct lack of action as compared to the "romans d'aventure." And the lack of extraneous stories about other characters adds to the realism and over-all effectiveness of Part I. But the remaining parts of the novel are medievalistic in their stories of adventure through many lands. Many other characters and their stories are added, and H  lisenne is rarely mentioned. And after the lovers' death, the narrative continues about Quezinstra. This deviation from the story of Part I makes the second two parts ineffective

²George Saintsbury, A History of the French Novel, I (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1964), p. 87.

³Ibid., p. 75.

and ordinary in the medievalistic style.

In the fourteenth century, we have Asseneth, a mystical allegory; Foulques Fitzwarin, an embryonic historical novel; and Troilus, a classical romance -- each a further development in prose fiction. But perhaps the work that is the closest in the ideas on life and the manner of writing to Hé'lisenne's novel is Aucasin et Nicolette from the thirteenth century. It is in the form of a cante-fable but it is "a sort of idyll, almost a lyric in which the adventure is entirely subordinated to the emotional and poetic interest."⁴ And the main theme, love, is viewed in the spirit of the Renaissance. Aucasin sees himself important as an individual. He has no desire to become a valiant knight just to protect his father's lands. He only wishes to marry the lady which he truly loves. He rebels against his father and his country. Nicolette, too, gives up the reign of her own country to return to marry her true love. Hé'lisenne expresses these same ideas of marriage for love and duty to the individual. But her more advanced novel captures only the emotion of love, leaving out the adventures and mock epic included in Aucasin et Nicolette.

⁴Saintsbury, p.87.

We must note that the above works were all termed prose fiction (except Aucasin et Nicolette). As discussed in the preceding chapter, H  lisenne was a first to write about herself, to present an original tale.

With the fifteenth century comes the popularity of the allegories, prose stories, and an avid "querelle des femmes." Three works, in favor of the male point of view, which become widely quoted in this "querelle" are Li Livres d'Amour (1290) of Drouard la Vache, a translation of De Arte Honeste Amandi of Andreas Capellaneus; Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage, ascribed to Antoine de la Sale 1338-1462; and Le Roman de la Rose of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun (around 1269-1277).

Li Livres d'Amour acclaims to be a rule-book of love. It contains a definition of what love is, the why and whom one should love, the effects of love, dialogues and cases from all levels of society to support its reasonings, with the conclusion that one should not fall in love. The author delights in listing the qualities of women:

Apr  s on st certainement
Que la fame tant seulement
N'est pas donne a avarice,
Ains a en li maint autre vice,
(Car fame est trop luxurieuses,
Gloutone et avaricieuse),
Innobiens, menteresse,
Mesdisans et rapineresse,
Chose qui nului ne vieut croire,

Couvoitans toute vaine gloire,
 A touz biens faire pereceuse
 Sor toutes bestes orgueilleuse,
 A touz maus faire appareillie,
 Qant maus adrece, toute lié,
 Plaine d'eivrogne, maucelans,
 Les secrez partout revelans.⁵

A few other characteristics of these women are: their persistence in making the daily marketing equal in importance to the purchase of a chateau, the obsession with envy of another woman, and the refusal to ever praise another.

Richard Aldington tells us "it is almost certain that the Quinze Joyes de Mariage was one of the very last of these anti-feminist attacks, and it is certainly one of the most amusing and least offensive."⁶ The dominant metaphor (borrowed from Le Roman de la Rose) throughout the fifteen stories is the trap of marriage. The man is always cajoled into accepting a marriage which should prove beneficial to him. But the ending is always the same:

Ainsi languist et chiet en pouvreté, et à paine s'en
 relievera james, puis qu'il est ainsi acullé; mais
 tout ne luy ist que joie. Ainsi est enclos en la

⁵Li Livres d'Amours de Drouart la Vache, publié après le manuscrit unique de l'Arsenal, Ed. Robert Bossuat, 1926, p. 213.

⁶Richard Aldington, Intro. to The Fifteen Joys of Marriage (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., n.d.). p. 29.

Nasse, et l'aventure ne se repent point, et s'il n'y estoit il se y mettroit bientoust: la usera sa vie en languissant toujours, et finera miserablement ses jours.⁷

Aldington adds that this satire is praised in France for its "insight into the feminine mind."⁸ His explanation of the medieval concept of the feminine mind is quite interesting:

According to this psychology, men are individuals and each male mind must be studied separately; but women all possess the feminine mind. The feminine mind is a creation of masculine laziness, invented to gratify the masculine sense of superiority.⁹

The supreme example of this misogynism is Le Roman de la Rose by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Speaking of this work, Aldington laments:

Why that great poet should have chosen to attack so bitterly the less barbarous half of the human race, I do not know; nor have I seen any adequate explanation. Early Christian ascetism and hatred of chivalry seem the most possible motives. In any case, Jean de Meun popularized anti-feminine literature.¹⁰

But Charles Dunn has another explanation of Jean de Meun's attitude towards women:

⁷Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage, Ed. P. Jannet (Paris: Chez P. Jannet, Libraire, 1853), p. 3.

⁸Aldington, p. 36.

⁹Ibid. p. 37.

¹⁰Ibid. p. 29.

The irreverance shown towards women in Jean's portion of The Romance arises from the author's constant reaction against the humility of Guillaume's courtly lover. A lover should not dance in attendance. He should possess and fecundate.¹¹

The characterization of women in this allegory in verse is exaggerated in its generalizations: "Toutes estes, serez et fustes/ de fet ou de volenté, pustes,/ car, qui que puist le fet estaindre,/ volenté ne peut nus contraindre."¹² Later in the work, the Duenna speaks of how women contrive to gain men's love: "Torjorz dout fame metre cure qu'el puist la louve ressembler/ quant el vet les berbiz enbler."¹³ She goes on to explain in base terms that to capture a man, a woman must: Curl her locks or wear a wig, color her face with berry juices, keep her hands idle to preserve their smoothness, bind her breasts should they be too large, keep her Venus room clean and free from spiders, keep her feet well-shod, avoid others when she has bad breath, never laugh in such a manner to show the wideness and ugliness of

¹¹Charles Dunn, Intro. to Le Roman de la Rose. Trans. Harry Robbins (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1962), p.xxv.

¹²Jean de Meun, Le Roman de la Rose, II. Ed. Felix Lecoy (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1966), p. 28.

¹³Ibid. p. 162.

the mouth, and linger not too long at foreplay in the sexual act. And then comes the capture of the man:

Ausinc doit fame par tout tendre
 ses raiz por touz les homes, prendre
 car por ce qu'el ne peut savoir
 des quez el puist la grace avoir,
 au mains par un à soi sachier
 à touz doit son croc estachier.¹⁴

Representations of women such as these weighed heavily on the anti-feminist side of the querelle. There were few answers to them before H  lisenne. But two shall be considered here. The first is Le Petit Jehan de Saintre which is said to be one of H  lisenne's sources. It is interesting to note that this work is thought to be written by the same author as Les Quinze Joyes de Mari  ge. The content, however, is quite different. According to Saintsbury, "the best part of Petit Jehan remains a gracious sort of dream for gracious dreamers -- a picture of a kind of Utopia of Feminism, when Feminism did not mean votes or anything foolish, but only adoration of the adorable."¹⁵

The other Middle Ages supporter of feminism is the poet Christine de Pisan. Christine's poetry was not biting as

¹⁴Jean de Meun, p.163.

¹⁵Saintsbury, p.102.

was H  lisenne's prose because she was fortunate in marriage. One of her best known poems is "Doulce chose est que mariage." But she did strike out against those who wrote badly of women as is illustrated by this poem:

Mon chier Seigneur, soyez de ma partie!
Assailli m'ont    grant guerre desclose
Les aliez du Rommant de la Rose
Pour ce qu'   eulx ne me suis convertie.

Bataille m'ont si cruelle bastie
Que bien cuidant m'avoir ja presqu'enclose.
Mon chier Seigneur, soyez de ma partie!

Pour leur assaulx ne seray alentie
De mon propos, mais c'est commune chose
Que l'en cuert sus    qui droit deffendre ose:
Mais se je suis de sens pou advertie,
Mon chier Seigneur, soyez de ma partie!¹⁶

Christine was not extremely effective in her plea for women, as she did not complain against the traditions in marriage. According to Jeanine Moulin, "Arguments que Christine avance sans acrimonie aucune et avec m  d  ration. L'  poux reste le chef de la famille; son autorit   n'est jamais contest  e."¹⁷

Thus, H  lisenne's works came about at an appropriate

¹⁶Christine de Pisan, "Mon Chier Seigneur," in Christine de Pisan's Ballades, Rondeaux, and Virelais, An Anthology, Ed. Kenneth Varty (Welwyn Garden City: Broadwater Press, Ltd., 1965), p.118.

¹⁷Jeanine Moulin, Christine de Pisan (Paris: Pierre Seghers, 1962), p.28.

time. They represent the next natural step in the defense of women in the "querelle." Héli-senne is perhaps the most effective in her defense for several reasons. First, she chose two appealing genres of writing -- the novel and the "epistre." Her novel of a supposedly true story, directed at her contemporaries, holds the readers' attentions in asking for their compassion. And it seems virtually impossible to read Les Epistres Invectives without becoming enthoused or enraged.

It would seem that in this century of the Renaissance when the role of women is changing that there would be more pro-feminist literature. But the prime writers Rabelais and Montaigne do not take part in the querelle in their works. For Ronsard, women are only objects of his love -- beautiful when paying him attention and destined to become "une vieille accroupie"¹⁸ if she refuses his affections. Jean Plattard mentions one male on the side of women in the querelle. In La Parfaicte Amye (1582) of Antoine Heroet:

l'amour y était exalté comme le bonheur supreme
et le principe meme d'existence. ... un exposé
de la doctrine platonicienne de l'amour fournissant

¹⁸Ronsard, "Quand vous serez," Poètes du XVI^e Siècle, Ed. Marc Alyn (Paris: Éditions J'ai Lu, 1962), p. 330.

quelques reponses aux problemes de la vie sentimentale: la femme a-t-elle le droit d'aimer? doit-elle dissimuler son amour?¹⁹

Marguerite de Navarre is perhaps the only other well-known feminist of the century. But critics place her attitudes towards life and specifically towards love into two categories. The first is that love and relationships between sexes is purely Platonic as shown in her poetry and the Miroir de l'Âme Pecheresse (1531). This Platonic attitude stems from her religious interests. The second classification of Marguerite's attitudes is of a more base nature: "L'Heptameron trahit au contraire son gout de la gauloise spirituelle."²⁰ These stories, shadowing those of Boccaccio, poke fun equally at men and women. There is one passage, however, which is very similar to the intentions of Hélisenne:

Je prie à Dieu, mes Dames que cest exemple vous soit si Profitable que nulle de vous ait envie de se marier pour son plaisir sans le consentement de ceux à qui l'on doit obeissance porter.²¹

In this passage we see Marguerite still clinging to tradition.

¹⁹Plattard, p. 131.

²⁰Marc Alyn, Poètes du XVI^e Siècle (Paris: Editions J'Ai Lu, 1962), p. 53.

²¹Marguerite de Navarre, L'Heptameron, Ed. Paul Lacroix (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1879), p. 70.

But perhaps her greatest importance in feminism is seen more in her life than in her works. Marc Alyn, in naming her "la Renaissance faite femme," says that she was "une mère pour un grand nombre de poètes et de savants."²² Educated in numerous fields, she is an example to the women of her time. She opens the court to the artists and encourages the women to become cultured.

We have thus established Héli-sen-ne's works as the natural outcome in the development of the Middle Ages literature. Moving forward in literature, we can establish her as a link to modern times. Many of the works from the centuries following Héli-sen-ne's contain elements found in her works. The seventeenth century novel which most readily comes to mind in reflecting on Helisenne's novel is La Princesse de Clèves (1670) by Madame de Lafayette. The foremost element of comparison is the psychological aspect. There is little action in either novel with an emphasis on what goes on in the mind of the heroine. Both are modern in their emphasis on the ego of the principal character. Each is an analysis of sentiment. In each, there is a battle of reason and

²²Alyn, P. 50.

sensuality with reason being the victor. (In H  lisenne's works, this is more clearly indicated in the letters than in the novel.) Both writers choose realistic surroundings. And Madame de Lafayette's work is also speculated to be based somewhat on her life experiences and her society:

Madame de Lafayette states, in a letter to Lescheraine, that the novel caused much discussion. While disclaiming any share in its composition -- La Princesse de Cl  ves was published anonymously -- she informs him that it is not really a novel but M  moires, and that this was the title originally given to the book by its author.²³

In both works, since the narrative is told from the female "I" point of view, the male characters are subordinated. At the court of the princess, it is the women who rule, using men to their advantage -- probably the culmination of H  lisenne's dreams.

In the next century, we have two more novels embodying the concepts of women's liberty: La Vie de Mariane by Marivaux and Manon Lescaut by l'Abb   Prevost. In La Vie de Marianne, the heroine must fend for herself in Paris much the same as H  lisenne might have done in her life during the

²³H. Ashton in Intro. to La Princesse de Cl  ves by Madame de Lafayette (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p.xxxvi.

separation from her husband. Marianne succeeds in manipulating men while preserving her dignity. On the other hand, Manon Lescaut chooses to manipulate men for her own desires, sexual and monetary. She seems to be the female counterpart of Helisenne's men whose only desires are the seduction of women.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Helen Waldstein placed Hélisenne as the link between Christine de Pisan and Madame de Staël. The "De l'Influence des Passions" of Mme. de Staël is in part a plea for the emancipation of women:

La nature et la société ont déshérité la moitié de l'espèce humaine; force, courage, génie, indépendance, tout appartient aux hommes, et s'ils environnent d'hommages les années de notre jeunesse, c'est pour se donner l'amusement de renverser un trône. L'amour est l'histoire de la vie des femmes, c'est un épisode dans celle des hommes. Les lois de la moralité même, selon l'opinion d'un monde injuste, semblent suspendues dans les rapports des hommes avec les femmes.²⁴

She feels that a woman who strives with men's ambitions is resented. Man has willed the limitation of a woman's career. She is the first since Helisenne to strike out bitterly

²⁴"De l'Influence des Passions," Oeuvres Complètes de Mme. la Baronne de Staël, III (Paris: Treuttel et Wurtz, Libraries, 1820), pp.134-135.

against men. Her advice is similar to that of H  lisenne:
 "  tres malheureux!   tres sensibles! restez dans la carri  re
 de la vertu, restez sous sa noble garde."²⁵

To summarize, Plattard comments: "Ce petit livre (Les
 Angoysses Douloureuses) represent autant qu l'Heptameron
 et plus que les Amadis la naissance d'une nouvelle conception
 de l'amour."²⁶ But perhaps H  lisenne's work is not really
 the birth of a concept but the natural development in the
 attitudes toward love, sparked by a changing life style.
 Plattard continues in describing this new attitude towards
 love which will continue to develop in the centuries
 following H  lisenne: "celle qui fleurira au XVII^e si  cle,
 la passion amoureuse non plus sujet de plaisanterie gauloise,
 mais source de plaisirs   mouvantes et cause de tragiques
 douleurs."²⁷

²⁵"L'Influence des Passions," p. 140.

²⁶Plattard, p. 200.

²⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

We have become acquainted with H  lisenne de Crenne up to this point by examining her life, studying her works, analysing her ideas and her manner of writing, and by establishing her as a link between the medieval literature and that of later centuries. We have learned that several firsts have been attributed to her:

1. La premi  re    mettre la litt  rature    son service, au service de ses rancunes et de ses espoirs intimes, et savourer le plaisir amer de revivre et d'achever un drame qu'elle sentait, comme il se doit, unique et exemplaire. -- Paule Demats.¹
2. C'est la premi  re en France qui -- au moins dans son d  veloppement le plus important -- se classe nettement dans le genre sentimental. -- Gustave Reynier.²
3. La premi  re femme qui se soit racont  e elle-m  me. -- Louis Loviot.³
4. La premi  re    extraire de ses malheurs conjugaux un th  me de roman. -- A.M. Schmidt.⁴

¹Demats, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

²Reynier, p. 102.

³Loviot, p. 137.

⁴Schmidt in Demats, p. xxxv.

5. Notre premier roman autobiographique -- le premier livre français qui puisses s'appeler 'Le Journal d'une femme'. -- Gustave Reynier.⁵
6. C'est timide, maladroite, mais significative, la naissance du roman sentimental français, promis à si belle carrière. -- Jean Plattard.⁶
7. Le seul véritable roman de la période. -- Paule Demats.⁸

This is quite an impressive list of accomplishments.

It would seem that *Hélisenne* would be a milestone in French literature. But she has been studied by only a few literary critics and three doctoral candidates. So there remains one final question to be asked about *Helisenne*: Why have her works not remained popular throughout the ages?

Arthur Machen, in his introduction to the Heptameron of Marguerite de Navarre, says: "The Heptameron, I wrote once, always reminds me of an embroidered silken dress that has lain in a dark chest long years. It is still beautiful; but the embroidered roses have grown somewhat dim."⁸

⁵Reynier, p.118.

⁶Plattard, p.201.

⁷Demats, p.xxxvi.

⁸Arthur Machen, Intro. to The Heptameron by Marguerite de Navarre (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), p.vii.

So Helisenne is not alone in being neglected. And we cannot say that just the female writers of the period have been forgotten. Many male authors such as Noel du Fail, Brantôme, Bonaventure des Périers, Beroalde de Verville, Jacques Amyot, or Guy de Brués have also been neglected.

Perhaps one explanation is the Renaissance itself. This new spirit of learning inspired numerous works of which survived only the best -- today's classics. Tastes changed rapidly in the seventeenth century. We must remember that it is the audiences of the time who determine a work's popularity. Ashton reminds us that each new society had its preferences which we must respect today:

It is easy to sneer at the five thousand pages of l'Astrée, to make fun of the overdressed shepherds and shepherdesses, of the beribboned sheep, of the scores of secondary stories, the fact remains that dignitaries of the church (and Bossuet among them) found it interesting and inspiring; La Fontaine, after all his experience of life, still read it; Boileau had to admit its charm; the eminently reasonable M^{me}. de Lafayette read it with pleasure; dramatic authors (Corneille among them) borrowed from it for a quarter of a century or more.⁹

This book soon fell out of popularity too as tastes changed again. But for whatever reason, *Hélisenne* was not read and discussed until the twentieth century. Reynier, in 1903,

⁹Ashton, p.xv.

was one of the first to rediscover H  lisenne. And Harry R. Secor, Jr., in 1957, was the first to completely re-edit the entire Angoysses Douloureuses. Since then, only Paule Demats has presented a new edition -- one which contains only Part I of the novel.

Machen found a place for his Heptameron:

Let us preserve the Heptameron by all means, but not as the great masterpieces that hang on the wall or as those which stand on the bookshelves behind jealously locked glass doors. Rather, the Heptameron should take its place on the 'silver table,' or in one of those minor cabinets in which little oddities pretty, quaint, obscure, and ancient, are preserved. With Pontypool-ware snuff boxes, with eighteenth century shoe-buckles, with pipe-stoppers of odd design, with a curious sampler or two should this pretty, dim, old book be cherished.¹⁰

But this writer chooses not to have H  lisenne's works tucked away to be remembered only at dusting time. There is something worth considering in each of her works. They would be most valuable presented in an extract form, leaving out the now obscure allusions. For this writer, the study of this noble lady has certainly provided a delightfully interesting look into feminism and the sixteenth century.

¹⁰Machen, p. viii.

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