



Outline: CHWNE Module 4 Lesson 6: Marguerite of Valois (Part 2)(1553-1615)

Marguerite as Ambassador

- In **1577**, Marguerite requested and was granted permission to travel to the Netherlands on business for her brother **Francois Duke of Alencon**. It seemed that the Netherlands were looking for a prince who would support and protect them from Spanish rule under which they had rebelled, to become their king, **(See M4 L4) and Elizabeth 1**
- **Henry III** supported it as a great idea that would also help him get rid of his little brother **Francois d'Alencon (died in 1584)**. Marguerite returned to Paris. There Was petty palace politics between supporters of **Henry III and Francois**.
- In **1578**, **Francois** escaped the court, after being refused a request to leave the court. **Henry III** had turned it down. **Marguerite** is reunited with **Henry of Navarre**. Catherine visits Huguenot South for 18 months.
- In **1579**, Catherine left for Paris while Henry and Marguerite spent time in Pau but settled in Nerac. There Marguerite experienced Henry's court and found that it lacked nothing in comparison to the court of Paris.
- Marguerite enjoyed the company of her sister-in-law, **Catherine de Bourbon**, and her many ladies-in-waiting. Also enjoyed having long walks along the river with her husband during the day and attending balls at night.
- Henry's court consisted of '*gallant lords and gentlemen*' as impressive as the court of Paris. Her only complaint was that they were all '*Huguenots*'.

Enjoying Nerac

- Marguerite stayed at Nerac, grew fond of Henry's sister and experienced a plethora of **accomplished poets and writers who frequented her court. She considered her court 'a true literary academy'**.



- Some of the well-known figures of the times, including **Agrippa d'Aubigne** (soldier and poet), **Guy du Far de Prebec** (magistrate and poet), **Saluste du Bartas** (soldier, nobleman, religious poet, lawyer) and philosopher **Montaigne** (*author of 'Essays, moderate Catholic, mayor of Bordeaux, faithful to Henry IV*).
- It is said that Montaigne influenced **William Shakespeare's** style of writing, while **the romantic adventures of the court of Nerac** inspired Shakespeare's *Love's Labours Lost*.
- Both Marguerite and Henry were indiscriminate and promiscuous in their marital affairs at Nerac. **Pressure to produce an heir** brought many hopeful women into Henry's life. Marguerite was sterile and never conceived.
- Henry had many mistresses. While held against his will in Catherine's court, he fell captive to the '**Flying Squadron**' - women whom Catherine trained to seduce powerful men to find out their secrets, about whom Jeanne had warned Henry.
- **As with Sarah and Hagar**, a fourteen-year-old young woman of Marguerite's Navarre court, **Françoise de Montmorency Fosseux**, had a relationship with Henry (**around 1581 he would have been around 27 y/o**). She became pregnant with his child, and successfully competed with Marguerite for Henry's love and attention.
- Marguerite proposed banishing **Françoise** from her court but she refused to cooperate. This drove a wedge between Henry and Marguerite. Françoise hoped that Henry would divorce Marguerite to marry her instead.
- Marguerite's relationship with Henry suffered great strain. The baby was stillborn. Later, when Marguerite returned to Paris with her retinue, she followed Catherine's advice and forced the young lady from her service, sending her back to her parents further alienating Marguerite from her husband.



- Henry developed another relationship with a wealthy, Catholic noblewoman of Bearn, **Diane D'Andouins**, who was a widow and supported Henry during the siege of Paris around **1587 (he would have been around 33 y/o)**. She sold her jewels to raise an army of 20,000 men to help him fight. She also hoped that Henry would divorce Marguerite and marry her instead.
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Marguerite In Paris Again

- Marguerite returned to Paris in 1582, never returning to Navarre.** She was unhappy about her barrenness and her estrangement with her husband
- Marguerite became embroiled in petty personal politics in her brother's court by criticizing him, his morals, and his inner circle of friends. That caused **a strained relationship with her brother, King Henry III.**
- In 1583** she fell ill, and rumours of an illegitimate child circulated. **King Henry III** expelled Marguerite from his court.
- Henry of Navarre refused to receive his wife for eight months** while negotiating with his brother-in-law **Henry III**. Henry of Navarre was compensated by Henry III of France, by giving him the territory of Mont-de-Marsan.
- Marguerite returned to her husband's court in early 1584** and was not well received. **By June 1584, her brother and closest friend had died (Francois),** making Marguerite's husband the presumptive heir.

Aftermath of a Failed Plot

- In 1585,** Marguerite abandoned her husband, Henry of Navarre. **She joined forces with the Catholic League (formed in 1584) and intransigent Catholics and seized a city - Agen. Recruiting troops, she sent them to attack surrounding cities.**



- **The troops revolted and turned back to Henry III's troops** who had arrived. Catherine entreated Marguerite to move to a royal manor, but instead she fled from one fortress to another, and was eventually besieged for a month before being **imprisoned by her brother (Henry III) in 1586**. She was forced to watch as her accomplice was beheaded. **(In 1585 The Catholic League had Henry III over a barrel with the Treaty of Nemours which gave in to all their demands).**
- **In 1587, Marguerite's jailor switched allegiance from the King to the Catholic League** and released her. The League was happy about that. As long as she was around, her husband **Henry of Navarre** would have no heir to the throne when he did become King.
- She chose to remain in **Castle Usson** for 18 years even tho' she was free. From there, she heard the news about her mother's death, her brother's assassination, and her husband's rise to the throne as **King Henry IV of France**. She also heard that he was not accepted by most Catholics until he abjured four years later.
- *Marguerite surrounded herself with a new court of intellectuals, musicians and writers. The castle was restored, she spent her time reading and learning, and her finances improved as her sister, **Elisabeth of Austria**, sent her money.*
- She was spurred to write her '**Memoirs**' when a good friend and writer, **Pierre de Bourdelle (Brantome)** sent her his narrative of the lives of nobility in verse form. In it there were false rumours and misinformation about her.
- **She dedicated her autobiography (from infancy to 1582) to Brantome, and it was published posthumously in 1628.**



Annulment and Remarriage

- Marguerite had resumed contact with her husband to improve her financial situation. **In 1593**, Henry proposed an annulment of their marriage so that he could marry again to produce a legitimate heir.
- She stopped negotiations when she learnt that Henry wanted to marry his mistress, **Gabrielle d'Estrees**, whose son had been legitimized in **1595**. She called it a '*dishonorable marriage*' which she refused to endorse. Gabrielle died in childbirth.
- Negotiations concluded with Marguerite receiving financial compensation and the right to retain her royal title. **The marriage was annulled in 1599** and the following year **Henry married Marie de Medici**, who bore him a son a year later.
- After **20 years in exile**, with the annulment and remarriage, Henry and Marguerite were on good terms again.
- In **1605**, Marguerite was allowed to return to Paris and plead her case of an inheritance she should have received from Catherine. ***In Paris, she became known as a mentor for the arts, and a supporter of the charitable work of her chaplain, Vincent de Paul.***
- **In 1606**, she won her lawsuit and gained her entire inheritance. She named the dauphin Louis III as her heir



- In a way, **Marguerite and the new Queen Marie de Medici colluded to thwart the claims of one of Henry's mistresses.** The mistress claimed that her son was the legitimate heir to the throne, because Henry had promised marriage to her at one time.
- **Marie de Medici** included Marguerite in events at court and nurturing Henry's children.
- **In 1608**, Henry chose Marguerite to be the godmother of his newborn **Prince, Gaston, Duke of Orleans.**
- She eventually settled her household on the bank of the Seine River, and her palace became a hub of intellectual and political activity. *She opened a literary lounge to entertain philosophers, poets and scholars.*
- *She continued to play minor roles during Marie de Medici's regency after Henry was assassinated. In 1615*, Marguerite Became very ill and died.

References:

1580 (Lover's War) http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/wars_seventh_war_religion.html

Read Marguerite's Memoirs here:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3841/3841-h/3841-h.htm>