

Confession(s) of an Early Modern Virago: Situating Confession, Evangelizing and Defense
of Women in the Works of Hélisenne de Crenne

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ABSTRACT

E. Eugene Hughes: Confession(s) of an Early Modern Virago: Situating Confession,
Evangelizing and Defense of Women in the Works of Hélisenne de Crenne
(Under the direction of Hassan Melehy)

This dissertation situates the writings of Hélisenne de Crenne in the turbulent France of the sixteenth century. I argue that the religious nature of Crenne's works is ambiguous in many ways and much more subversive than many critics seem to believe. By mixing pagan and Christian symbols, as well as walking a line between Protestant and Catholic ideology, Crenne creates a spiritual realm that is complex and nuanced. The manner in which she subverts or even at times perverts traditional teachings could be read as extremely dangerous to the male-dominated social order and I argue that she hides a powerful and sensual corpus laden with ambiguities behind the thinly-veiled disclaimer of didactic exemplarity and counter-exemplarity. Along with the textual analysis of Crenne's opus, my project also examines the actual publication process of her works showing that, much like the characters in her stories who use religious ambiguity to undermine power structures, Crenne's printers and publishers cleverly navigated the increasingly dangerous politics of print culture in sixteenth-century France. This study outlines the history of Crenne's publications including detailed information about each of her publishers or printers. Her last two publishers, Charles

Langelier and Estienne Groulleau, both found themselves embroiled in various reformist movements, subsequently ruining their businesses. Crenne's last sixteenth-century editions date from 1560, just before the formal onset of the Religious Wars in France. My study examines the role that the religious ideas in her texts and the confessional affiliations of the men and women responsible for bringing them to print may have played in the eventual disappearance of her publications.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation deals with the works, life, and publication history of Hélienne de Crenne. Crenne's works include a sentimental novel, *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* (1538), an epistolary work, *Les Epistres familières et invectives* (1539), an allegorical dream sequence, *Le Songe* (1540), and a translation of the first four books of the *Aeneid*, *Les Eneydes* (1541). First published by Denis Janot, all four of her works differ in genre and provide interesting topic and style. Her *Angoysses douloureuses*, *Epîtres familières et invectives* and *Songe* were published either separately or as a collection of *Oeuvres* in about ten different editions by five different printers from 1538 to 1560. Critical editions of her first three works, including English translations, have appeared in recent years allowing modern scholars to discover and engage texts that seem subversive to most. Hélienne de Crenne's works also present many "firsts" in French literary history: she is credited with having written the first sentimental or psychological novel in French, as well as the first collection of missive letters in French.¹ She seems to be the first to present love-sickness from a woman's viewpoint² and the first woman to produce a prose translation of

¹ See Gustave Reynier's *Le roman sentimental avant L'Astrée* and Marianna M. Mustacchi and Paul J.

² See Dorothea Heitsch's "Female love-melancholy in Hélienne de Crenne's *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent amours* (1538)."

the *Aenied* in French.³ Several aspects of Crenne's opus have been discussed at length in recent years, including her role as a champion of women's rights,⁴ the history of the book,⁵ Neoplatonism⁶ and theories of love.⁷ Given the wide variety of topic and genre, it should thus come as no surprise that H  lisenne de Crenne's books had a wide readership in the sixteenth century. What could surprise is why such popular works were not reprinted after 1560. This is the initial and driving question behind my study.

The date of the last sixteenth-century publications of Crenne's works comes just before the formal onset of the Religious Wars in France, which might seem mere coincidence were it not for the effect of this sectarian strife on the two men responsible for the last editions of Crenne's works, Charles Langelier and Estienne Groulleau. Closely connected in various ways to Crenne's first publisher, Denis Janot, Langelier and Groulleau differed from Janot in their religious ideas and eventually paid a dear price for their unorthodoxy. Langelier and Grolleau's connection to the Protestant movement has been well documented but a connection between their religious troubles and the publication history of H  lisenne de Crenne's opus has not been fully examined. Though her works are not exactly religious treatises, Crenne was one of the few women of the time to write on religious topics and her treatment of confession and the confessional aspects of her works in general inform the religious debate and the growing tensions in sixteenth-century France. Thus, this study will

³ See Sharon Margaret Marshall's *The Aeneid and the Illusory Authoress*.

⁴ See Robbins-Herring's "Helisenne de Crenne, champion of women's rights."

⁵ See Diane Sylvia Wood's *H  lisenne de Crenne. At the Crossroads of Renaissance Humanism and Feminism*.

⁶ See Wood's *Crossroads* and Archambault and Mustacchi's article on Crenne in *French Women Writers* p. 99-107.

⁷ See Anne Larsen's "The Rhetoric of Self-Defense in *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* and Cathleen Bauschatz's "To Choose Ink and Pen: French Renaissance Women's Writing."

explore exactly what religious ideas the men and women responsible for editing and printing Crenne's works espoused before examining what the readership of Crenne's works tell us about her world. I will then analyze the religious ideas in Crenne's opus to determine what, if anything might have discouraged the publication of her works after 1560. This is how two seemingly disparate topics, confession and publication history, meet in this study.

Additionally, the "firsts" mentioned above depend greatly on Crenne's status as a woman. Though Michel Foucault famously ends his article "What Is an Author?" with the question, "What difference does it make who is speaking?" (120), it matters greatly to this project. A recent wave of criticism has endeavored to discredit women authors from the period by trying to prove, at best, a joint composition of their works and, at worst, that these women did not exist.⁸ A central point in this study is to challenge this so-called "campagne de désattribution" (Clément 74). Central to my argument is that Crenne, as a woman, appropriates the language and genre of the established patriarchal society and transforms it to champion her cause. It seems that some of the current uneasiness around the idea of Hélienne de Crenne arises because she and her works innovate, provoke, and challenge our notions of normal, causing many to conclude "s'il est incompréhensible qu'elle ait existé, c'est qu'elle n'existe pas" (Clément 75). It is just as likely that Crenne fits the description of a new concept for the time period, what Clément calls "les créateurs en langue vernaculaire" (Clément 81). This idea of Crenne as "créateur en langue vernaculaire" does not mean that Crenne the author falls into the category of what Foucault called a "functional principle...by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction" (119). In fact, I will argue the contrary, that Crenne could be described as a "founder of discursivity" by "creat[ing] a possibility for

⁸ See works by Leah Chang, Mireille Huchon and Anne Réach-Ngô discussed below.

something other than [her] discourse, yet something belonging to what [she] founded” (“What Is an Author?” 114). Out of the world of Crenne’s opus comes the persona of Hélienne who begins in *Les Angoysses* as a young girl of eleven, unaware of her corporeal attributes, and who ends up a Christ-like redeemer of souls with monuments built in her name at novel’s end. Nash describes her opus as follows: “Crenne’s project of equality feminism thus becomes one of how to write women into history, to design new conceptual frameworks...that place women at the center of human nature and human activity, as well as at the center of historical examination” (“Renaissance Misogyny” 401). This is the “Helisennian” world created by Crenne.

The final questions in Foucault’s essay are indeed the ones to ask: “What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions?” (120). Crenne’s works allow for exploration of all of these questions and I address many in this study. However, the reason that I insist on Crenne’s existence as a woman in this project is the fact that the current critical climate does not reflect Foucault’s “anonymity of a murmur” (119). We are hearing much more than “the stirring of an indifference” (120) concerning women authors of the sixteenth century and, until this attack is quelled, it seems necessary to “rehash” these same questions.

To answer these questions, the first part of this study starts by examining a passage from Crenne’s first work, *Les Angoysses douloureuses*, which describes a moment of explicit religious confession. Brief analysis of this scene will serve as an example to structure the discussion of religious ideas in Crenne’s works and her world and the role they played in the

publication history. I will follow the analysis of this passage with a review of critical literature that deals more specifically with my topic to help inform the subsequent discussion.

Chapter 3 aims to discover more about the publication of Héli-senne's works and, most importantly, what caused them to go out of print after 1560. I will do this by briefly outlining the history of her publications, including information about each of her different editors and publishers, concentrating mainly on the final two, Charles Langelier and Estienne Groulleau. While some of this work has been done before, it has never been assembled in one volume and I have yet to read a single word dedicated to possible causes for the stoppage of publication, as current research simply states that the last edition of Héli-senne's *Oeuvres* was in 1560. I will also devote my attention to the history of reactions to Crenne's work throughout the centuries before trying to establish a line of ownership of the extant sixteenth-century editions in hopes of determining, at least in part, who bought and owned her works initially and who read Crenne long after her works were out of print. Throughout this examination of reactions to Crenne's works, I will underline how and if her readers comment on her identity.

Once this history of publication and reaction is established, I will return to the initial presentation of confession from Chapter 2 with the fourth and fifth chapters of this study more closely examining the various "confessions," conversions and attempts at "converting" or "evangelizing" that occur in Crenne's works. Chapter 4 will deal solely with *Les Angoysses*, while the fifth chapter will discuss these notions in the final two works of her triptych: *Les epistres familières et invectives* and *Le Songe*. I will argue that the "religious" nature of Crenne's works is ambiguous in many ways and much more subversive than most critics seem to believe. The textual analysis of Chapters 4 and 5 of this study continues to

inform the question of what, if anything, in her works could have contributed to the stoppage of publication.

CHAPTER 2

CONFESSIONAL CONTEXT AND CRITICAL REVIEW

Moy estant en ce temple sans avoir aulcune devotion, commencay à premediter quel propos je tiendrois audict religieux, et disoye en moymesmes: O mon Dieu, que c'est chose fatigieuse et pendible de faindre et simuler les choses. Je le ditz par ce que n'ay aulcun vouloir ny affection de communiquer le secret de mes amours en confession, car je n'en ay contrition ne repentance, mais suis ferme et stable en l'amour de mon amy,...parquoy ne me semble que folye de le divulguer à ce vieillart,..., il me reprima, et blasmera...en me pressant et stimulant de chasser amours, sans en avoir jouyssance.⁹ (145-146)

Dame Hélienne speaks these words just before confessing to a monk in *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours*, written by her creator and eponym Hélienne de Crenne. This passage runs counter to the work's purported goal of teaching "toutes honnestes dames...à bien et honnestement aymer, en evitant toute vaine et impudicque amour" (96) and provides the reader with a prototypical example of exactly what sacramental confession was supposed to address and remedy in the early modern period. While Hélienne initially resists the sacrament, she alludes to all of the variables included in a successful confession. According to Tentler:

First, to be forgiven, sinners have always been required to feel sorrow at having lapsed. Second, they have consistently made some kind of explicit confession of their sins or sinfulness. Third, they have assumed, or had imposed on them, some kind of penitential exercises. And fourth, they have participated in an ecclesiastical ritual performed with the aid of priests who pronounce penitents absolved from sin or reconciled with the communion of believers. (3)

⁹ Unless stated otherwise, I will cite the De Buzon edition of *Les Angoysses*.

Hélisenne has no desire to confess, acknowledges that she is not contrite and anticipates the role of the priest as a barrier between her and the “jouyssance” of her love. Yet, she is fully cognizant of the realities of her situation and finally admits, “Toutesfois fault il que je luy responde” (146). She has no choice in giving the confession as her husband, advised by one of his “serviteurs” that Hélisenne should declare her troubles to “quelque scientifique personne,”¹⁰ (144) has required her to do so. Additionally, the Christian faith requires her to confess: refusing to do so would “show contempt for her own salvation” (Tentler 66). While it would be irresponsible to call the author’s entire faith into question here¹¹ by “substitut[ing] our thought for theirs, and givi[ng] the words they used meanings that were not in their minds,” (Febvre *Unbelief* 11) a closer look at the passage above reveals some of the ways that Crenne¹² manipulates confession : Firstly, Crenne prefers “temple” to “église,” thus clouding the very arena in which this controlling institution of confession operates. Crenne uses both terms throughout *Les Angoysses* but favors the use of “eglise” in her *Epistres familières et invectives* and *Le Songe*. The ambiguity, therefore, appears deliberate.

According to *Le Petit Robert*, the usage of the word “temple” for a Protestant house of worship dates from 1535, three years before the publication of Crenne’s first work. It seems that she purposely uses a word that could be just as easily a place of worship for pagans and Christians, thus weakening the power of the confessional institution. That she uses a term

¹⁰ The social standing of this “serviteur” should not be ignored. He is obviously of a lower class than his “maistre,” Hélisenne’s nameless husband, and thus, even further removed from Hélisenne’s nobility given that she has far more “bien...terres et seigneuries” than her husband. Could this recommendation be a sign of the rising new “bourgeois” moral thinking? See Joan Kelly’s “Did Women Have a Renaissance?”

¹¹ Interestingly, Hélisenne is not portrayed as particularly religious until the end of *Les Angoysses*. For example there is never mention of children resulting from her marriage despite this being a sacrament and “primary purpose” of the institution (Lebrun, “The Two Reformations: Communal Devotion and Personal Piety” in *A History of Private Life III*, 85).

¹² I shall make the distinction between “Hélisenne,” the character in these works, “Hélisenne de Crenne” or “Crenne,” the author’s penname.

with possible Protestant overtones does not necessarily make her a “reformée” as some have suggested¹³ but does create ambiguity, given the Protestant opposition to the very idea of confession, further complicating the matter. By mixing pagan and Christian symbols, as well as walking a line between Protestant and Catholic ideology, Hélienne de Crenne creates a spiritual realm that is complex and nuanced. The manner in which she subverts or even at times perverts these traditional teachings could be read as extremely dangerous to the male-dominated social order. Hélienne discusses her ever-present “premeditation” before showing her power by speaking directly to God, in her most private of sanctuaries, “en elle mesmes.” She acknowledges one of her most powerful strategies, “faindre,” and states outright her aversion to confession, acknowledging her lack of contrition. Far from simply accepting her fate and succumbing to potential subjugation and correction, however, Hélienne understands the power of the confessional act to serve as a tool allowing her an “accepted” sanctuary in which to enjoy her passion:

mais quand j’ay le tout considéré, je luy peulx bien le tout reciter, Car par ce que je luy diray en confession, il ne l’oserait jamais reveler. Il ne me peult contraindre d’user de son conseil, et si prendray plaisir à parler de celluy que j’ayme plus ardemment, que jamais amoureux fut aymé de sa dame. (146)

Hélienne thus appropriates an institution meant to “provid[e] a comprehensive and organized system of social control” (Tentler 345) and eventually creates a perfect arena to exercise Louise Labé’s famous line: “le plus grand plaisir qui soit après amour, c’est d’en parler” (*Oeuvres* 76). This is just one example of what Barbara Ching describes as Hélienne de Crenne’s “Trojan Horses” (18). Ching states, “Trojan Horses look familiar, unthreatening, and conciliatory, but they are actually new literary forms, ‘always produced,’ [...] ‘in hostile territory’ and operating ‘as a war machine upon the context of [their] epoch’” (18). This

¹³ Conway, “Classicism and Christianity in Hélienne de Crenne’s *Les Angoysses*”, p. 117.

passage from *Les Angoysses* embodies the strategies that Crenne uses throughout her works to navigate the various control mechanisms that she faces: spatial adjustment, interior deliberation and dissimulation.

Hélisienne de Crenne was “rediscovered” by critics in the nineteenth century and most of the earliest research concerning her work attempts to verify the historical identity of the author and deals disparagingly with the work itself, at times repeating claims that Hélisienne was actually a man hiding behind a female nom de plume.¹⁴ An explosion of critical works has emerged in the last half-century dealing with Crenne’s opus, many of which treat her texts more favorably than critics of old. It is my contention, however, that even these critics often miss the mark as much as those of years past. While realizing Crenne’s literary merit and interest, many seem blinded by her purported didactic goals, an idea as misguided as earlier critics’ reading her opus as nothing but a purely autobiographical woman’s diary. While no serious student of literature now believes that Diderot’s *Bijoux indiscrets* or Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* were found randomly as purported by the authors as stated in their introductions or that Montaigne’s *Essais* represent a “livre de bonne foi” the intention of which is entirely “domestique et privée,” many are all too willing not to question Crenne’s stated goals. While some see Hélisienne’s lying as mere self-defense and her writing as therapy or even a means to salvation, I see it as even more. She is indeed “teaching,” but not simply that women should be chaste and flee illicit love, as she states many times throughout her works. I believe that most of these passages are mere ruses which hide her true didactic message of sexual equality. Female figures in her works are continually and repeatedly

¹⁴ Or as Jerry Nash describes it, “a search-and-rescue operation to retrieve the real author...and to identify ‘his’ literary voice” (“Constructing Hélisienne” 371). More recent critics such as Leah L. Chang and Anne Réach-Ngo remain skeptical concerning Crenne’s identity. Their arguments will be discussed below.

empowered through the use of traditional mechanisms of control, traditional genres and sources, and use these tools to find pleasure and to defend themselves. Throughout Crenne's works, women take on the roles of confessor and evangelist, leading others, or at least showing them the proper path to a salvation of her design: one in which men do not slander women without reason and, perhaps most important, one in which Crenne's works are widely read and lauded. I propose that Crenne uses religious practices such as confession and different forms of "evangelizing" to further the idea of equality between men and women. Far from rejecting religion, religious ideas or confession in her works, she embraces all of these ideas once they have been transformed or presented in a non-misogynist manner. Crenne's works and the strategies therein are active and empowering. In the words of Braunstein, "self-consciousness is born when the individual can see himself in perspective, set himself apart from his fellow man; it can lead to a radical questioning of the social order" (536). H  lisenne de Crenne continually undermines the "social order's" attempts to confine her through constant public/private interplay, not only nullifying their effectiveness but also appropriating their power to create intimacy, pleasure, power and renown. As Georges Duby states in the introduction to *A History of Private Life II*, "the opposition between private life and public life is a matter not so much of place as of power" (7). Centuries before Virginia Woolf lamented the lack of intimate space for women writers, it seems that Crenne at least carved out a place for something approaching intimacy. H  lisenne de Crenne uses a conventional literary form, didactic exemplarity, and molds it to her motives. I believe that she entered the small niche allowed her at this time and created a new intimate space therein, allowing something very powerful of her "self"¹⁵ to emerge.

¹⁵ See the chapter "H  lisenne's Story: Collective Love, Singular Anger" in Timothy J. Reiss' *Mirages of the*

Such ideas expressed by a woman of the sixteenth century were hardly looked upon with indifference at the time. As one might imagine, many of the mainly male readers of H  lisenne de Crenne spoke none too favorably of her work. Much of this likely stems from pure misogyny, because she “did what men did, and triumphantly” (King 157). However, certain of her contemporaries’ attacks reveal more than just a hatred of women in general. These critics looked beyond the thinly-veiled disclaimer of didactic exemplarity or counter-exemplarity and were frightened by the potential danger of what truly lies at the heart of H  lisenne: a powerful and sensual corpus laden with ambiguities all written by a highly ambitious early modern “autrice”¹⁶ who strove to cement her place in the Pantheon of great literary figures. By the time she penned her last work in 1541, her title as literary great seemed all but certain. However, her works would experience a 400-year pause in publication. One of the most prolific and extremely popular authors of the early sixteenth century, H  lisenne de Crenne seems to have slipped into near oblivion by the time of Ravaillac’s regicide.

H  lisenne de Crenne’s work very much addresses the historical climate of the sixteenth century. Being such a strong proponent of equality brings into question the political and social structure of the society in which she lived. While polemical religious topics such as ideas on communion do not abound in her works, she does discuss free will and grace at length. She is very familiar with the Bible and encourages its reading, and her ideas on confession would have pleased Erasmus and Luther much more than the doctors of the Sorbonne. While her works were never found on any prohibited indexes and her first printer,

Selfe. Reiss sees this “self” beginning to take form in *Les Angoysses* but coming to full fruition in Crenne’s *Epistres*.

¹⁶ While no longer used in modern French, the term “autrice” was quite common in the sixteenth-century.

Denys Janot, was the royal printer of French works under François Ier, the France of 1538, date of her first publication, and that of 1560 were far from the same. Hélienne de Crenne's epoch was one of great change and turmoil. In the years prior to the printing of her first work the religious and political landscape of Europe was transformed dramatically: March 1534 saw the excommunication of Henry VIII. October 1534 brought L'Affaire des Placards, January 1535 François' edict suspending printing, June 1535 Olivetan's Bible, March 1536 publication of *Institutio Christiana* in Basel, and July 1536 death of Erasmus (Febvre *Unbelief* 107). By 1560, religious tensions had reached a critical point and lines were drawn.

Review of Critical Literature on Confession and Hélienne de Crenne

Most of the critical literature concerning Hélienne de Crenne has dealt with her novel *Les Angoysses douloureuses*, and more specifically, part 1 of this novel. Virginia Krause explores the role of confession in *Les Angoysses* in her article "Confessions d'une héroïne Romanesque: *Les Angoysses douloureuses* d'Hélienne de Crenne" and in the chapter of her book *Idle Pursuits* called "Portrait of an Early modern 'Oiseuse.'" Krause portrays confession in *Les Angoysses* as having two functions, the first being "la vocation toute moderne de l'aveu comme pratique intime" ("Confessions" 20), and the other "cette fonction précise d'opérer le 'retour' dans la communauté chrétienne" ("Confessions" 26). For Krause, Hélienne's final confession in *Les Angoysses* equates to a sort of return to the feminine ideal refused by the protagonist throughout the work:

Eclipsed throughout most of *Les Angoysses douloureuses*, contrition suddenly reappears at the end of Hélienne's story. This sudden return to a religious framework resembles a desperate, final-hour repentance. It also situates the true finality of Hélienne's idle pursuits and Crenne's learned leisure within the realm of the sacred. Here, the heroine finally casts off the role of *oiseuse*,

devoting the last three hours of her leisured existence to a confessional prayer. (*Idle Pursuits* 116)

While it is hard to question the fact that H  lisenne's final confession is a "desperate, final-hour repentance," I find fault with Krause's claim that "H  lisenne's story comes to a close with her reintegration into the community of the faithful via penance" (*Idle Pursuits* 119). Firstly, from a purely technical point of view, the late nature of this confession and the death of the confessants immediately after repentance vastly weaken its power given that neither character is able to prove his or her sincerity to the reader through a changed life or good works. Even such a critic of sacramental confession as Luther believed in a "contrition that is true if it bears fruit in a changed heart, spirit, disposition, and life, so that one sins no more" (Tentler 352). As Tentler points out, "if you do penance when you no longer are able to sin, it is more a case of the sins abandoning you than of your abandoning the sins" (9). Secondly, though H  lisenne does complete a seemingly contrite confession, no religious figure is present to pronounce her as forgiven. Nothing "requires" H  lisenne to undergo any form of punishment for her sins. Quite to the contrary, she finds the reward of eternal life in paradise, with none other than her lover, and perpetual fame with the subsequent publication of her book. Thus, only two of the four components of a full and successful confession, contrition and explicit confession of sins, are met by H  lisenne's final confession. Krause also fails to realize that, just as with H  lisenne's confession to a religious man in part 1 of *Angoysses*, H  lisenne herself "directs" the entire procedure. After hearing Guenelic's lamentations over her impending death, H  lisenne declares to him, "si bien tu considere ce que je te recorde, facilement tu mitigueras ton acerbe douleur" (467). She then begins her confession directly to God: "O eternal et souverain dieux, qui voids noz cueurs et congnois noz pechez, je te supplie que par ta misericorde vueille tourner en oblivion mes continuelles iniquitez" (468).

After completing her confession, she entreats her lover Guenelic one last time: “Donne telle correction à ta vie, que le venin de la concupiscence ne te prive de la possession de ceste divine heritage qui nous est promise” (471). Hélienne does not speak again, leaving the burden of convincing Guenelic to change his ways to Quezinstra, the noble Christian paragon of parts 2 and 3 of *Les Angoysses*. As evidenced from Guenelic’s own words, Quezinstra’s attempt at saving Guenelic is in vain: “Tres cher compaignon et amy, voz melliflues et artificieuses paroles pourroient facilement gaurir toutes douleurs (au moins si elles doibvent estre guaries) mais la mienne qui est intolerable, ne peult estre temperée” (483). It is only after believing that Hélienne has spoken to him that Guenelic, “en dressant [sa] veue aux cieulx,¹⁷” confesses his sins. Though Hélienne makes a more complete confession than Guenelic, both seem to meet the requirements for a sort of redemption.

The “true finality” of Hélienne’s writing does end in the sacred and in a “reintegration into a community” as Krause purports, but the question looms what “sacred” and what sort of “community?” The mix of Christian and pagan imagery, with pagan dominating in the end, seems to weaken what Krause calls, the “retour du pécheur au sein de la communauté” (“Confessions” 34). The community to which the souls of the two lovers are joined is the pagan “Champs Héliens,”¹⁸ not the perpetual dwelling of the Christian trinity. While this confession does bring Hélienne back amongst others and ends her isolation, it must be remembered that she is joined with her lover, not her husband. The illicit love that she has for lover is sublimated by their respective confessions but their unification in “les champs Héliens” hardly represents two sinners finding their place in the fold of the

¹⁷ The exact phrasing used when Hélienne beings her final confession just a few pages before.

¹⁸ That the word beings with an “H” reminiscent of the author’s and protagonist’s name should not be lost on the reader.

traditional community of believers. Furthermore, a “retour” to the community would require initial appurtenance to said community and nothing in *Les Angoysses* leads the reader to believe that Hélienne had ever previously been one of the faithful. If anything Hélienne’s final-hour confession could be characterized as her initial entrance into a community: a community completely devoid of any Christian influence.¹⁹

Krause also questions the modernity of confession in *Les Angoysses*: “A lire le roman sentimental de la première moitié du XVI^e siècle, on sent que l’ère du confessionnel est imminente. Mais avant de sonner l’arrivée de l’*homo interieur*²⁰, créature de l’intimité. [...] force est de constater que la confession reste prise dans un ancien paradigme. Dans les *Angoysses* douloureuses, l’aveu possède encore son revers sinistre” (“Confessions” 34). Krause continues, “En effet, avouer, c’est laisser agir la lumière contre les ténèbres plutôt qu’exprimer l’intériorité. Et refuser l’aveu pour préserver ‘son secret,’ c’est se laisser séduire par le diabolique qui se cache encore dans les ombres et le silence” (34). This implies a passivity that I do not see in Hélienne’s confession. In fact, both with the “scientificque personne” in Part 1 and in her final plea to God in Part 3, Hélienne does not “refuse” confession, she simply resists it until she is able to transform or appropriate it to serve her purpose. The only sort of confession refused outright by Hélienne is that conceived by male forces that seek to control her and her writing in some way. Furthermore, if we enlarge the scope of what we consider “confession” to include all of the thoughts expressed by Hélienne throughout *Les Angoysses*, very little is left “ténébreux” or “secret.” Krause aptly recognizes that confession in Hélienne’s works is in transition. The priest is fairly passive in dealing

¹⁹ The absence of “le mari,” whom Conway called the “Christian spokesperson” (Conway, “Classicism and Christianity in Hélienne de Crenne’s *Les Angoysses*”122), is vital to the status of this community.

²⁰ Her emphasis.

with Hélienne and he does not ask detailed questions.²¹ Furthermore, the “serviteur” who suggests the confession in the first place insists more on the “efficace” of the priest’s words to “a corroborer et conforter, et par ce moyen pourra retourner à sa première coutume” (144-145). He accentuates the role of the confessor not that of the confessant, a dynamic much more in line with earlier periods. One must remember, however, that these more traditional aspects are all performed by men and contrast starkly with Hélienne’s action.

Ewa Janizewska-Kozłowska’s “Le destin féminin dans *Les Angoisses douloureuses qui procèdent d’amours* et *La Princesse de Clèves*” also deals with Crenne’s novel comparing the confessions that the protagonists in *La Princesse de Clèves* and *Les Angoisses* make to their respective husbands. She states, “les deux héroïnes devenues amoureuses sont lucides, elles voient clairement la situation et sont capables de l’analyser rationnellement. Hélienne accepte la passion et la choisit avec courage” (86). Janizewska-Kozłowska continues:

Quelle différence que celle qui sépare ces deux aveux! D’un côté, la volonté de choisir librement l’objet de l’amour, de l’autre, la soumission et le désir de sauver sa réputation [...] Révoltée, Hélienne cherche toute occasion pour s’approcher de son amant. Elle se sent libérée des nœuds du mariage parce que son âme s’est déjà séparée de celle de son époux. Emprisonnement physique, certes, mais Hélienne y gagne sa liberté morale. (86)

Yet, Janizewska-Kozłowska does not question the “didactic goal” of the work. She does, however, call Hélienne’s attitude “‘plus humaine’ et compréhensible” (87). Janizewska-Kozłowska does not comment on the final confession and seems not to have read the entire work.

In her article, “Classicism and Christianity in Hélienne de Crenne’s *Les Angoisses*,” Megan Conway points out that “Hélienne uses pagan imagery to accentuate the sensual

²¹ See Foucault’s *Histoire de la Sexualité I* for a description of the evolution of confessional practices throughout Christian history.

passions of her lovers and Christian references to advocate chaste love and moral rectitude” (112). The love between Guenelic and H  lisenne is “non-Christian since it is in direct opposition to the heroine’s marriage vows” (Conway 114). Conway finds it “curious” that most of the H  lisenne and Guenelic’s interaction takes place in a church and seems to see the use of the word “temple” as proof of H  lisenne’s potential Protestantism, but fails to mention any other Protestant notions to back up her claim, such as Crenne’s familiarity with the Bible, H  lisenne’s direct confession to God and her ideas on grace and free will. However, Conway interestingly points out that, after her confession with the monk, the two lovers never meet in church again and recognizes a “failure of the priest...the failure of religion and Christian precepts” (121).

Conway asserts that Christian doctrine dominates the novel’s final section: “while pagan imagery just held in check by a counterpoint of Christian doctrine dominates parts one and two, part three exhibits a significant strengthening of Christianity that will culminate in the redemptive deaths of the lovers” (126). As with Krause, this sort of reasoning fails to examine exactly what sort of redemption occurs. Are the two lovers in a Christian heaven, a pagan heaven or some sort of amalgam of both? Conway mentions the horoscope used by the seemingly Christian monk but fails to see this as lending ambiguity to the story. She also mentions the hermit’s use of almost all Christian imagery when dealing with Guenelic but fails to draw any conclusions: this attempt at conversion fails and lends itself to showing H  lisenne’s power at the end. H  lisenne alone, not the hermit, not Qu  zinstr   is able to persuade Guenelic to desist from his old ways. H  lisenne’s power is never in question, only her message, which in turn makes her powerful and dangerous.

Conway notes the elimination of the character of H  lisenne’s husband and sees Quezinstra assuming the husband’s role of “Christian spokesperson” (122). This changes, however, by the “Ample Narration” at work’s end, which is absent of biblical references and where Quezinstra is no longer the “Christian spokesperson” (Conway 129). Conway aptly points out that Jupiter “appropriate[es] the Christian purpose of the work” but fails to catch the reference to the book’s title in his reasoning for publication (130). Conway seems to have a magic Quezinstra returning to a Christian role by agreeing with Jupiter that the work should warn others not to let “sensuality dominate reason,” begging the question whether one gives back something one appropriates? Again, I think this reinforces my idea that H  lisenne uses this passage to promote the work itself. The ambiguity, plus the expanded readership leads to no other choice. Quezinstra was the very embodiment of the Christian knight male and becomes nothing more than a monk of literature by the book’s end.

Conway does, however, perceive some mixed messages when she writes, “the statements of virtuous intention that open and close the novel often seem to be frankly contradicted by the hundreds of pages of text that lie between” (130). Conway ends her article with no real conclusion, simply stating that Renaissance readers were more “conditioned to this pairing [of pagan and Christian] than we are today” (130). While I believe her statement to be true, this fails to fully grasp the power of H  lisenne’s ending.

Only one book-length monograph has been devoted solely to H  lisenne’s work, Diane Wood’s *H  lisenne de Crenne: At the Crossroads of Renaissance Humanism and Feminism*. Wood insists upon an evolution of the authorial persona of H  lisenne throughout her works. While her study is insightful and contributes greatly to the understanding of the reception of Crenne’s works, I find her thesis flawed. H  lisenne de Crenne did publish four different

works in very different genres but she did so within the space of three years, giving little time for authorial evolution. As Broomhall points out, “Crenne’s works were marketed in a way which suggest that the sales to the general public were also an important target. Her Parisian publisher, Denys Janot, was responsible for the first editions of all her works: publishing one a year...It is unlikely that this represents an annual literary output by Crenne; rather, it seems to be a deliberate policy of Janot” (Broomhall 102). Broomhall also mentions that Janot asks for permission to publish *Songe* in the *privilege* of *Les Epistres*, implies that *Songe* was ready two years before publication (102). Wood insists upon the importance of the didactic message in Crenne’s works, maintaining that “love brings moral decline and personal ruin” (96). I believe that the true lesson to be learned is to respect women and their power.

While not as widely discussed as *Les Angoysses*, Crenne’s *Epistres familières et invectives* have been explored in modern criticism. In his article “‘Exercant oeuvres viriles’: Feminine Anger and Feminist (Re)Writing in Hélienne de Crenne,” Jerry Nash recognizes the power of Crenne’s writing to combat misogynistic thinking, stating that Crenne’s *Epistres* participate “in the unmaking and remaking of patriachally written history” (38). He continues, “[the *Epistres*] reflect the transgressive, subversive, indeed deconstructive nature and role of all true feminist writing” (39). In his article “Writing as Therapy in Helisienne de Crenne,” Nash explores the cathartic and therapeutic aspects of Crenne’s *Epistres*: “Hélienne’s kind of feminine and feminist writing serves not only to inscribe pain, but to alleviate this pain. She considers writing the only means to enable one (whether reader or writer) to withstand and bear up to the relentless blows of misfortune” (521). Nash continues, “Hélienne also seeks through the ‘power’ of her own writing to free her reader from adversity and even to bring this reader some measure of ‘joy’- ‘ce peu de soulagement’ as

Rabelais put it” (“Writing as Therapy” 522). Nash goes further stating that H  lisenne’s writing gives her “solace and salvation, to provide H  lisenne with “salut” (“Writing as Therapy” 524). Though he dismisses *Les Angoysses* as written “passively for lamentation,” I agree with Nash’s assessment of Crenne’s *Epistres*. Nash concentrates on Crenne’s writing and how it brings her to a sense of salvation but does not underline the role that the character of H  lisenne plays in leading others to salvation and to higher knowledge.

In “Renaissance Misogyny, Biblical Feminism, and H  lisenne de Crenne’s *Epistres Famili  res et Invectives*,” Nash concentrates more on the active role of H  lisenne and the influence her ideas could have on her surroundings. Nash analyzes Crenne’s use of Judith as a powerful example: “triumph of feminine virtue over brute force, with emphasis on the heroic acts of *doing*²² by Judith” (392). Nash mentions in this article that H  lisenne exhorts the misogynist Elenot in her fourth *Epistre invective* to confess and change his ways but does not develop this concept further. He also alludes to the increasingly “god-like” status of many of Crenne’s exempla and posits that the more a woman progressed in holiness the freer she becomes from the original curse and its ramifications in society (“Renaissance Misogyny” 399-400). He does not, however, comment on H  lisenne’s extremely god-like persona at the end of *Les Angoysses* and restricts his commentary to the *Epistres*.

Only Crenne’s *Eneydes* has received less critical attention than *Le Songe*. Robert Cottrell’s article “H  lisenne de Crenne’s *Le Songe*” in *Women Writers in Pre-Revolutionary France: Strategies of Emancipation* (also published in French under the title “*Le Songe d’H  lisenne de Crenne*” in *H  lisenne de Crenne. L’  criture et ses doubles*) is one of the few critical articles to deal with this work. Cottrell sees *Le Songe* as the continuation of Crenne’s attempt “to win recognition as a humanist” (189) through her imitation of Cicero. Much like

²² Nash’s emphasis.

Conway, Cottrell sees a potentially Evangelical point of view in Crenne's *Songe* due to "Raison's preoccupation with religious matters" and her "marked preference for the four Gospels, the Pauline epistles, and the book of Psalms" (195). Cottrell goes further when discussing "Raison's" ideas on grace, claiming that the link established in the text between death and sin "suggests an Evangelical bias, for Evangelicals stressed, to a degree uncommon among other Christians, that death, which was not part of God's plan for man, is a consequence of original sin" (196). Cottrell puts Crenne's works in the "Erasmian camp" (196), due to her concept of free will, "the ability of the will to shape ethical behavior" (196) and emphasis on both grace and good works. Cottrell writes:

Whereas for Evangelicals of a particularly austere temperament, man's sinful nature makes it impossible for him to do any good on his own, for other Evangelicals, specifically those of a more Erasmian bent, man, though sinful by nature and incapable of being saved except by grace, must nonetheless participate in his salvation through works...Erasmian Humanists, whose Christianity was colored by Stoic thought with its stress on the ability of the will to shape ethical behavior, sought to reconcile man's will and divine grace, arguing that human beings must work together with God if they are to lead a life of active virtue. (196)

Cottrell also recognizes the strong defense of women and their power, giving as examples how Dame H  lisenne "romp[t] le silence" when speaking with Raison, in defiance of I Timothy 2 which states that women should learn in silence with all subjection, and Dame H  lisenne's concept of the Garden of Eden (199). Cottrell draws an interesting parallel between language in *Le Songe* and in Marguerite de Navarre's *Miroir de l'  me p  cheresse*, highlighting that Navarre's work was condemned by the Sorbonne²³ (201).

²³ "Seigneur Dieu, cr  e en moy un cueur pur et net: car la mundicit   du cueur est fort duysible, pource que si nous avons purit   interieure, il s'ensuit que les oeuvres exterieures seront nettes"...The same expression ("Coeur net") had been used by Marguerite de Navarre as the epigraph to her *Miroir de l'  me p  cheresse*" (201). This work was condemned by Sorbonne, but the condemnation retracted through Francois' influence

Cottrell seems to understand Crenne's wish for recognition and fame: "as in *Les Angoysses* and *Les Epistres*, writing, if not a cure for unhappiness, is nevertheless an activity that allows the self to affirm its presence in the world and to enjoy (if the book is favorably received by readers) the pleasures of fame and recognition" (203). He tries to make this pleasure for fame and recognition fit with Raison and asks what Dame Helisenne has learned from Raison. He sees all of this as a way to distance herself from *Angoysses* to "establish her credentials as a humanist," seeking patronage from none other than Marguerite de Navarre,²⁴ whom Crenne praises in language that "even by the standards of the time, is hyperbolic and fulsome."²⁵

²⁴ It should be noted that Marguerite de Navarre is the only other contemporary female author evoked by H  lisenne.

²⁵ Cottrell also mentions the equally effusive praise given to Marguerite de Navarre by Claude Colet in his letter following the 1550 and subsequent editions of Crenne's *Oeuvres* (205).

CHAPTER 3

HELISENNE DE CRENNE'S READERSHIP AND PUBLICATION HISTORY

Hélisenne de Crenne has been identified as the model for Rabelais' "Ecolier Limousin,"²⁶ Jean Dorat,²⁷ or even a simple creation of her first printer Denis Janot.²⁸ However, her closest contemporaries rarely doubted her existence as an actual female author. I will begin this chapter by sketching the earliest critiques of Crenne's opus to show how her contemporaries perceived her work, before delving into the deeper issues concerning her relative disappearance from the literary landscape. I will expound upon current research related to Crenne's reading public to establish her widespread popularity during the latter half of the sixteenth century and continue to trace reactions to her work to the present. The motivation for such inquiry is twofold: to establish a sort of profile of readership and to dispel notions that Crenne's works were never read after the end of the sixteenth century. Once this has been established, I will turn my attention to understanding why the works of such a profitable author were not reprinted after 1560. I will examine the people involved in

²⁶ Etienne Pasquier, Jean Bernier, Le Duchat et Le Motteux all repeat this throughout the centuries, see Jérôme Vercruysse, Introduction. *Les Angoisses douloureuses qui précèdent d'amours*, by Helisenne de Crenne, p. 8.

²⁷ Esmangart et Jouhanneau make this claim in their 1823 edition of Rabelais' *Oeuvres*. See Jérôme Vercruysse, "Hélisenne de Crenne: notes biographiques," *Studi Francesi* 11 (1967): "Crenne" est forgé sur le grec 'krèné' et un poète ne boit-il pas à la fontaine d'Hippocrenne?" "Hélisenne" would come from the verb 'eilssein' or to hide, the idea being that Dorat "hid" himself under this name (78).

²⁸ "Helisenne de Crenne is a figment of the imagination, at best a pseudonym, at worst an invention by book producers and by readers, both early modern and modern." Leah Chang. *Into Print: The Production of Female Authorship in Early Modern France*. (Newark : University of Delaware Press, 2009) 140.

bringing her works to the page through the scope of the tumultuous religious strife of the period. It is my contention that ties to the Protestant movement, especially amongst the men who published her works, contributed to Crenne's fall into obscurity. This chapter will strive to establish concrete connections between the Reform movement in France and the business dealings and historical actions of the people in Crenne's world before the subsequent chapters delve into the texts themselves for any evidence of Protestant-minded rhetoric.

Sixteenth-century reactions to Crenne's works

Though few called her identity into question, early reactions to Crenne's work were rarely neutral or moderate (Wood *Crossroads* 27). The first two literary reactions to Crenne's writing not surprisingly criticize women for reading in general. The anonymous *Exhortation à la lecture des Saintes Lettres* (Lyon, 1544) proposes Crenne's opus as a primer on pleasing one's illicit lover and suggests that women would be more criticized for reading the Bible than the "songes et Epistres d'Helysienne."²⁹ This somewhat curious statement shows Crenne's renown as an author in the mid sixteenth century and the mention of the "songes et Epistres" proves that her *Angoysses* was not the only work widely read. In his *Theotimus* (1549), Gabriel de Puy-Herbault,³⁰ a monk at the Abbey of Fontevault, included Crenne's *Angoysses* in a list of *malis libris*³¹ or books deemed "dangerous to the fair sex" (Wood *Crossroads* 29). Gilles Corrozet's *Héctomgraphie* (1540) criticizes a female author who writes of her passion. While never naming Crenne explicitly as the target of his vitriol, the

²⁹ The woman who reads "les songes & Epistres d'Helysienne...auquelz elle apprendra, comment elle pourra complaire a son adultere ou paillard..." qtd. In "Hélisienne de Crenne: notes biographiques," Vercruysse, p. 80.

³⁰ Seen by many as the "Elenot" of Hélysenne's *Epistres invectives*.

³¹ Les *Angoysses* was the only contemporary work written in French included on this list (Wood *Crossroads* 29).

fact that Janot printed both Corrozet and Crenne nearly simultaneously, even reusing woodcuts from *Les Angoysses* in Corrozet's work, makes her a likely target³² (Wood *Crossroads* 47). As Wood points out, "the first emblem, 'Amour ne se peut celer,' deals with the power of love. The accompanying woodcut, which would have been very familiar to the readers of Janot's first edition of the *Angoysses*, is a 'speaking picture' of a woman holding a book" (*Crossroads* 43).

Je suis ung liure auquel on apperçoit
 Les grans secretz de l'amoureuse flame,
 Je suys gardé de ceste belle dame,
 Pour ung ami, quelque part ou il soit. (45)

In relation to another passage, Wood states that "Corrozet transmitted the rationale for writing that gave impetus to the *Angoysses*, namely that writing is a way of sharing experiences despite the separation of lovers" (45).³³ Corrozet's critique of Crenne's *Angoysses* "is unconvinced by the conversion that concludes the novel. This interpretation considers the ending of the novel as nothing more than an effort to conform to convention and sixteenth-century morality, while remaining profoundly subversive" (Wood 49). This sampling of early reactions to Crenne's work underlines its dangerous and subversive nature. Both the *Exhortation* and *Theotimus* concentrate on the "power of novels to inflame female readers to adultery"³⁴ (28) even though technically no physical sexual activity actually takes

³² Corrozet uses five woodcuts created especially for Janot's edition of *Angoysses*. Wood states that "his treatment of love and autobiographical writing by a woman author as well as the woodcuts illustrating both books leave little doubt that he is referring to her" (49).

³³ Wood also points out another Corrozet emblem that uses almost identical tone, verb tense and specific vocabulary as Hélisenne's address to her female readers at the beginning of the *Angoysses* (46-47).

³⁴ Wood points out, however, that reading itself was actually less dangerous than the female libido: "It would seem that it is not the books themselves that are the problem, it is the female libido that is dangerous and must be controlled by men. In the *Theotimus* there is no mention of the negative effects of novels on male readers, according to the misogynist tradition, men were too rational to be swayed easily" (29).

place in Crenne's works. None of these three early reactions gives any credence to the idea that Crenne's works were to be seen as moral lessons intended to show women the dangers of love: these men simply label Crenne's works as subversive and dangerous.

Claude Colet may be the most intriguing and somewhat hard to categorize sixteenth-century reader of Crenne's work. Born at Romilly-sur-Seine in Champagne and named as a member of La Brigade by Ronsard in "Iles fortunées," Colet published little original work and acted mainly as translator and editor (Vercruysse *Introduction* 29). This "indélicat correcteur" worked with or contributed to volumes by important figures such as Labé, Coquillart, Olivier de Magny and on book 9 of the *Amadis* series (Simonin *Encre et lumière* 209). Colet died shortly after obtaining the "privilege" for his work *L'Histoire Palladienne* in 1553 (Simonin *Encre et lumière* 209). His connection with Crenne comes in the form of a letter from March 15, 1550 included in all subsequent sixteenth-century editions of Crenne's *Oeuvres*. Colet addresses the letter to the "Nobles et vertueuses Damoysselles M. et F. de N"³⁵ in order to justify revisions that he had made to Crenne's writing. In the letter Colet recalls his discussion with the aforementioned ladies concerning sundry French authors, placing Crenne just after "la tres-illustre et incomparable Marguerite de France, Royne de Navarre" amongst "Dames et Damoysselles Françoises (et de nostre temps)".³⁶ While praising the subject matter of Crenne's works, his purported goal for the corrections is "rendre en nostre proper et familier languages" (664) words that were "trop scabreux et obscurs," (664) thus helping the ladies' comprehension of the texts. As Wood avers, "the pejorative 'scabreux' [improper] seems inappropriate when applied to Hélienne's Latinate prose because the

³⁵ Identified as Françoise de Mailly and Marie de Haugard of Rumilly in Champagne, Vercruysse *Introduction* (29).

³⁶ In Buzon *Angoysses* 663-664.

context merely implies that Héli-senne’s word choice was incomprehensible, a defect that Colet’s edition intended to remedy” (*Crossroads* 33). The term “scabreux” indeed poses somewhat of a mystery. Le Petit Robert defines the word “scabreux” as follows: “qui crée une situation embarrassante et des risques d’erreur.” Perhaps Colet intended the term to convey both meanings, softening certain words and making clear what he saw as problematic passages.³⁷ Colet claims only to have undertaken such “corrections” grudgingly in response to the request by the two demoiselles but his true intentions may have been more financially driven. Though he seems to have died poor (Simonin *Encre et lumière* 209), he may have had a financial interest in these “revisions.” According to Broohmall, The *Arrets de la Cour* from 1551 to 1586 “restrict *privilege* to new books, those not already printed or new editions that contained additional material” (118). His changes to the text may have been part of a marketing agreement between him and Estienne Groulleau, the final printer of Crenne’s collected works. Whether motivated by fame, fortune or an actual request by the two ladies, what Colet truly thought of the writing is somewhat less clear. Unlike other men of his century, Colet praises Crenne and her works, especially *Le Songe*, as virtuous (Wood *Crossroads* 31). He does not seem to share the inherent misogyny of earlier critics, though he only begins to speak with the young ladies about female writers “apres doncques [avoir] longuement devisé des hommes bien parlans François” (663). It should also be pointed out that, while it is unclear whether Colet actually ever knew Crenne, he must have known and worked with people who did and he never places any doubt on her identity as a female author. While we may never know Colet’s true intentions, his letter serves as an important early reaction to Crenne’s opus.³⁸

³⁷ Christine de Buzon presents the changes made by Colet in her critical edition of *Les Angoysses*.

A half century after Crenne's first publication, Etienne Pasquier claims that Helisenne de Crenne is none other than Rabelais' *Ecolier Limousin*:

Le semblable devons nous faire chacun de nous en nostre endroit pour
l'ornement de nostre langue, & nous ayder mesmes du Grec & du Latin, non
pour les escorcher ineptement, comme fit sur nostre jeune aage Helisaine,
dont nostre Rabelais s'est mocqué fort à propos en la personne de l'escolier
Limosin. (46)

While her style is no more "Latinate" than that of the *grands rhetoriquers* of the previous generation, Pasquier singles out Crenne for what he deems her overly artificial prose.³⁹

Earlier critics of Crenne's work did not castigate her style, simply her subject matter and its potentially nefarious effects on women. Given that these earliest critics read Crenne's works in their most Latinate form, that is to say in those editions which preceded Colet's efforts to "modernize" or make them "less Latin," one would think them more likely to have categorized her style as problematic. The later date of Pasquier's work would imply that he based his judgment off of a post-1550, and thus post-Colet corrected text. Perhaps Pasquier simply saw the style of an author from his "jeune aage" as archaic while the critics of Crenne's generation were more accustomed to such language. One could posit, however, that his condemnation of Crenne's writing stems from the same misogynist vein as critics such as Corrozet or de Puy-Herbault. Robbins-Herring describes the potential motivation for such scathing criticism:

Perhaps [Crenne] gets into trouble because she is a woman writing with a unique combination of passion, erudition, and deliberate confrontation; because she is well-schooled and frankly partisan champion of women's rights; because she openly expresses her desire for a fulfilled intellectual and erotic life. (186)

³⁸ See de Buzon edition for variants.

³⁹ "What would pass unnoticed in the work of Jean Lemaire de Belges is considered unforgivable in her texts" (Robbins-Herring 187).

Perhaps, like the earlier detractors of Crenne's works, Pasquier also feared the power therein and found her guilty of using language that was, in his eyes, too erudite for a woman. While some more "liberal-minded" men of the day saw reading as an effective way to "imbibe notions of proper female behavior," (Broomhall 15) women writers were seen by many to threaten the social order.

Not all early reactions to Crenne's works were negative. Charles Estienne praises her in Declamation XXIV ("Que l'excellence de la femme est plus grande que celle de l'homme") of his *Paradoxes* (1553).⁴⁰ In *Le fort inexpugnable de l'honneur du sexe femenin* (1555), François de Billon notes Crenne's Picard origin and as well as her renown in France at the time:

Après cete noble vile de Lyon, la Picardye ne reçoit peu d'honneur par l'Esprit merveilleux de sa fille Helisenne. Les Compositions de laquelle sont si souvent es mains des François se delectans de Prose, qu'il n'est besoin en faire autre discours. Car, ainsi qu'on dit en Prouerbe, l'oeuvre couronne l'Ouurier. (Billon 35)

Later in the passage, Billon demonstrates some familiarity with the works by mentioning the scathing letter written to the character Elenot by Dame Hélienne.⁴¹

In his 1564 *De la bonté et mauvaisté des femmes*, written for Jacqueline Courtain Dame de Loyselet, Jean de Marconville devotes a paragraph to Crenne in his chapter entitled "De l'excellence du savoir d'aucunes femmes qui ont devancé, dans la connaissance des lettres, plusieurs hommes bien savants en philosophie." Placing Crenne between Marguerite de Navarre and Christine de Pisan, he comments on the philosophical nature of her works:

⁴⁰ "Et quant aux citoyennes, penseriez vous qu'une damoysele Elisene...voul[ai]t s'ayder d'un secretaire, tant sçavant fust-il, pour coucher par escript quelque chose de bonne invention en ryme ou en prose" (228).

⁴¹ Billon claims that this letter to Elenot is from "un passage de son Livre touchant les Angoisses amoureuses", which seems to indicate confusion between her *Angoysses* and the *Epistres* where the Elenot character is actually found (36). However, the intertextual nature and shared themes of Crenne's works coupled with the fact that Billon probably encountered her writing in a collected *Oeuvres* edition (which included *Angoysses*, *Epistres* and *Le Songe*) may account for his seemingly misinformed language.

“Quelle Cornелие ou Cornificie pourroit estre appariée à damoyselle Helysenne de Crennes femme Françoyse. Mais quel Philosophe eust peu mettre plus doctement la main à la plume qu’elle faict & comme il appert par les beaux oeuvres qu’elle nous a laissez en grand nombre” (60). Though critical of women overall, this laudatory passage serves as one more example of Crenne’s popularity in the sixteenth century and, once again, does not doubt her identity.

In the final years of the sixteenth century Crenne’s works were still widely read throughout France. In 1581, Marie de Romieu places Crenne in the company of la comtesse de Retz, les dames Desroches de Poitiers and Marguerite de Navarre (Wood *Crossroads* 29). The famous La Croix du Maine gives special notice to Helisenne de Crenne in his 1584 *Bibliothèque*. Indeed, he does more than just place her amongst a list of authors and works, as Crenne is one of the writers who received more than one entry in the Table of Contents due to the alternate spellings given for Helisenne (e.g. Helisenne or Elisenne). This fact is mentioned explicitly in the “Avertissement aux lecteurs touchant les secondes additions a la Table,” listed thus twice under the heading “de Crenne” with both Elisenne and Helisenne as first names. Under “Elisenne” he writes, “damoiselle native de Picardie. Elle a escrit en prose un discours de l’Amour imprime a Paris par Denis Janot” before guiding the reader to learn more about Helisenne under “H.” Under “Helisenne”: “demoiselle Picarde. Elle a escrit un livre, des Angoisses douloureuses qui procedent d’Amours, epistres familiares et invectives. Le Songe de ladite dame Helisenne, le tout en prose Françoise, imprime a Paris par Charles l’Angelier l’an 1544.” La Croix du Maine seems unaware of *Eneydes* and other editions but, most importantly for this study, fails in any way to doubt her identity as a female author from

Picardy. The appearance of Crenne's name in these catalogues over two decades after her last edition demonstrates continued interest in her as an author as the century turns.

Literary reactions to Crenne's work tell us of her critical reception and prove strong interest throughout the sixteenth century. A closer look at the readers who, as Billon put it, "se delectans de Prose" could not keep their hands off of Crenne's works, can help us understand how her ideas fit in the tumultuous time of Renaissance France. Wood gives a list of people known to own one or more of Crenne's works in the sixteenth century, including Gilbert de Hodic, a notary at the Châtelet in Paris, Nicholas Herberay des Essarts, the Picard translator of *Amadis de Gaule*, the Champenois patrons of Colet, the Vivaroise Marie de Romieu and Pierre Crocquoison, town councilor in Amiens as proof of her wide appeal throughout France. If we add Billon, Pasquier, Jean de Marconville, Colet and Corrozet as readers at the very least, we begin to get an idea of her reading audience. To further this notion of broad appeal, I have encountered another sixteenth-century owner of Crenne's works: Adam de Longuemort, sieur de la Goguerie. An inventory from 1590 compiled after his death shows that his library consisted of 71 titles, including a 1538 Janot edition of Crenne's *Angoysses* (Augereau 333, 345). Longuemort was a Protestant member of the burgeoning *noblesse de robe*, originally from Picardy, who moved to the Touraine where his family served the Kingdom of Navarre (Augereau 332). While the listing of Crenne's work in this inventory does not prove that Longuemort actually read Crenne's *Angoysses*, Augereau characterizes Longuemort's relationship to his collection as "très personelle," citing its relatively moderate size and composition as proof (333). His library gives us an interesting glimpse at what a Reformer of fairly substantial means read during the terrible religious strife of the last half of the sixteenth century. Given that a small percentage of the

population knew how to read and that few could afford books, we see that Crenne's readership, at least early on, was quite diverse.

While most scholars agree that Crenne was popular and widely read through the 1560's, current scholarship states that, shortly after this time, Crenne's works went unread for nearly two hundred years (Wood *Crossroads* 49). In their introduction to *The Torments of Love*, an English translation of *Angoysses*, Neal and Rendall go even further when characterizing the interest in Crenne's works after the sixteenth century: "Hélisenne clearly enjoyed a certain literary success in the first half of the sixteenth century. However, from then until the early years of the *twentieth*⁴² century, relatively little interest was shown in her works. They were neither reprinted nor, so far as we can determine, *read*⁴³ (ix). While it is true that mention of Crenne's works begins to wane by the end of the sixteenth century and that the last edition of her works, before the modern critical editions of the twentieth century, dates from 1560, her books did not totally disappear. An estimated 10,000 volumes of Crenne's works left the presses between 1538 and 1560 (Febvre and Martin 216-222) and, faced with this important production, it would seem irresponsible to state that she was not read at all during the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. On the contrary, bookseller catalogues and private library inventories show dozens of individuals from various parts of France, Belgium, England and the Netherlands who owned one or more of Crenne's works during this time period and many literary dictionaries, anthologies and commentaries mention Crenne and her works. The following section will trace the history of reaction to Crenne's works in later centuries to prove that she never fully disappeared from the landscape. I will also continue in my attempt to identify whether gender, sectarian or

⁴² My emphasis.

⁴³ My emphasis.

class lines shape her readership with the ultimate goal of establishing what caused publishers after 1560 to ignore her works.

Crenne in the Seventeenth Century

The first mention of Crenne in the seventeenth century comes from the *Triomphe de Chastete et totale deffaite du fol amour* by Antoine de Balinghem, a Jesuit priest, in 1616. In this work, Balinghem tells how Crenne's writings "ont conspiré de battre en ruine le fort de Chastete" (447). In 1683, Louis Moreri, also a Jesuit, includes Helisenne in his *Grand dictionnaire historique*, essentially repeating the information given by La Croix du Maine from the previous century discussing her Picard origin and her *Angoysses* while adding information about her *Eneydes* (151). In 1697, Jean Bernier repeats Pasquier's claim that Crenne was the target of Rabelais' *Ecolier Limousin*. In his *Jugement et nouvelles observations sur les oeuvres de maître François Rabelais* he writes, "Elizaine de Crene, Picarde, laquelle composa divers ouvrages fort extravagants...précieuse et sçavante que son sçavoir avait rendue folle."⁴⁴ In his 1696, *Furetierana*, Antoine Furetière puts "Helisenne de Crennes" in a list of "femmes scavantes qui font honneur a leur sexe," placing her in her usual spot immediately after Marguerite de Navarre and just before Christine de Pisan (210). Although Furetière is the only critic to praise Crenne during the seventeenth century, not one of these seventeenth-century critics put Crenne's identity into question. It is clear that her writings had lost popularity and, by century's end, only men of great erudition working on specialized literary projects mentioned her at length. It should be noted, however, that Antoine de Balinghem's 1616 work still sees Crenne's writings as ruinous to "Chastity."

⁴⁴ Cited in *Demats* p. vi and Vercruysse, "Hélisenne de Crenne: notes bibliographiques", *Studi Francesi*, 1967, Anno XI, p. 78.

To date, I have only found hard evidence of one owner of Crenne's works from the seventeenth century. The University of Toronto Rare book collection houses a 1560 Groulleau edition of Crenne's *Oeuvres* the front flyleaf of which is signed Arnout de Buchell, who was also known as Arend van Buchell and Arnoldus Buchelius, and dated 1640.⁴⁵ According to Pollmann, Buchell was brought up in "traditional Catholicism, he was for some time without confessional affiliation, then joined the Reformed Church of Utrecht, and ultimately developed into an orthodox Calvinist" (11). He would die shortly after signing his copy of Crenne's work, but his signature proves that he at least consulted the book, and more importantly, the date proves that he consulted the book as orthodox Calvinist. The seventeenth century thus gives us several Catholic specialists who mention Crenne's works and one very Protestant owner. It is clear that her popularity had waned a bit by the seventeenth century but that she had not, as some have suggested, completely disappeared from circulation. The fact that some conservative critics saw her as dangerous and others criticized her language continues some thoughts of her contemporaries. The fact that an avowed Protestant signed his name in her book in 1640 shows that her works were not completely iconoclast to the Protestant movement.

Crenne in the Eighteenth Century

Crenne's name and works continue to be mentioned in the eighteenth century and we find evidence of more and more people who owned her books. No longer categorized as dangerous or subversive, many critics begin to attack her merit as an author, with some saying that she merits no attention at all. In her 1748 *Apologie des dames appuyée sur*

⁴⁵ Confirmed by email communication and scanned copies of these pages sent to me by Anne Dondertman, Acting Director of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, on August 19, 2011.

l'Histoire, Madame Galien mentions Crenne's *Eneydes* and that this work was dedicated to François Ier (240). Bernard de La Monnoye later shows that Crenne could not be Rabelais' *écolier* due to the fact *Pantagruel* was published several years before *Les Angoysses*. He does state, however, that "cette dame ou demoiselle auteur n'a jamais existé...un nom supposé et romanesque, sous lequel un auteur capricieux a écrit en termes français, écorchés du latin, une histoire imaginée à plaisir."⁴⁶ In 1769, L'abbé La Porte et de Lacroix in *Histoire littéraire des femmes françaises* describe Helisenne as one of the "femmes sçavantes, dont les ouvrages, quoique parvenus jusqu'à nous, méritent peu votre attention."⁴⁷ Louise de Keralio dedicates 50 pages of her late eighteenth-century work *Collection des meilleurs ouvrages français composés par des femmes* to Crenne's works, giving detailed summaries and even reproducing key passages from *Les Angoysses*, *Les Epistres*, and *Le Songe*. She seems never to have read *Les Eneydes* but does mention Crenne as having authored the work. Keralio ends her chapter on Crenne with the following conclusion:

Le style est rebutant; mais les progrès et les degrés des différentes passions y sont assez bien entendus. Il a dû faire, dans son temps, une réputation à celui ou à celle qui l'a composé. Si c'est une femme, on peut lui accorder de l'esprit, du caractère, quelque connoissance du cœur humain, et des idées assez riantes dans les fêtes qu'elle décrit pendant le voyage de Guelenic. On est fâché d'ajouter si l'histoire est vraie, et qu'Hélisenne de Crene ait existé, qu'on ne peut lui donner un rang parmi les femmes chastes à et que ses talents, dénués de cette modeste parure, ne sont qu'un foible attrait pour, ceux qui la jugent aujourd'hui.⁴⁸ (233-234)

⁴⁶ La Monnoye actually consulted Crenne's works and was not simply taking information from La Croix du Maine. In the *Catalogue des Livres de M. Le P. de E**** [Prince d'Essling]* from 1839, we find a 1555 Groulleau edition of Crenne's *Oeuvres* containing "quelques mots de la main de La Monnoye" (76).

⁴⁷ quoted in Vercruysse, p. 81.

⁴⁸ Keralio even includes an illustration titled "La mort d'Helisene" by Jean-Jacques François le Barbier ("Le Barbier aîné) from 1787 (230).

While many still saw her as the target of Rabelais' scorn, all of her works, including her *Eneydes*, which saw but one edition, and her Picard origin are commonly mentioned. Though a few critics questioned whether Crenne did exist, it should also be noted that, in the approximately 250 years following Crenne's first publication, only a few were adamant that she did not exist as an actual female author. There also does not seem to be a sectarian slant to her critics in the eighteenth century.

As mentioned above, Crenne's works become common in library and bookseller catalogues in the eighteenth century. The earliest of these comes from 1725 when Charles Jerome de Cisternay du Fay, an eighteenth-century soldier turned scientist, published a catalogue listing his extensive book collection. He owned a Janot edition of both *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe*, which, according to the catalogue, were been bound together in one book along with De Herberay's *L'amant maltraité de sa mye* (Cisternay du Fay 176). The *Catalogue des livres de feu Madame la Comtesse de Verrue* from 1737 shows that the "Comtesse" owned a 1560 edition of Crenne's *Oeuvres* (105). Born in 1670 and one of the age's great bibliophiles, it is likely that she read Crenne's *Œuvres* before the end of the seventeenth century. We also find that a certain Toussaint Bellanger, trésorier général du Sceau de France, and Chastelain de Stains who died in 1738, owned a 1538 Janot edition of *Les Angoysses*.⁴⁹ M. Gabriel Bernard comte de Rieux owned a 1551 Langelier copy of *Oeuvres* and a Janot 1540 edition of Crenne's *Songe* according to his 1747 Catalogue (191). The 1749 catalogue of M. Gluc de Saint-Port, conseiller honoraire au Grand Conseil, shows a Langlelier edition of Crenne's *Oeuvres* (101). This library was originally formed by Bernard de la Monnoye and purchased by M. Gluc de Saint-Port before la Monnoye's death. The

⁴⁹ (*Catalogue Bellanger* 308) This copy would later be owned by the famous Duc de la Vallière, eventually finding its home in the Arsenal Library in Paris.

1769 *Bibliothecae Thomasiae* vol. 3 shows that Gottofredus Thomasius owned a 1538 Janot edition of *Angoysses* and a 1540 Janot edition of *Le Songe* (223-224). On sale in 1778 the *Catalogue de livres des bibliothèques du collège et du séminaire des Jésuites de Mons* lists a 1551 copy of Crenne's *Oeuvres* (180), showing that the Jesuits of the end of the eighteenth century were not opposed to Crenne's works in their collection. Listed in the catalogue of M. Filheul, a copy of a 1539 edition of *Les Epistres* was sold in 1779.⁵⁰ According to his catalogue from 1782, Jean-Antoine de Tinseau, évêque de Bellay and de Nevers and founder of the Bibliothèque de Saint-Ylie in the Jura (1745-1782), owned a copy of *Les Angoysses* listed as a 1540 edition⁵¹ (p. 272). The *Catalogue des Livres de la bibliothèque de feu M. Le Duc de la Vallière* from 1783 shows a copy of *Le songe* and *Les Angoysses* and a Grouleau edition of Crenne's *Œuvres*.⁵² A 1538 Janot edition of *Les Angoysses* is listed in the *Bibliotheca Croftsiana*, the "curious and distinguished library of the Reverend and Learned Thomas Crofts" from 1783 (249). Another interesting owner of Crenne's works was none other than Honoré-Gabriel Riquetti, comte de Mirabeau. The 1791 posthumous catalogue of his library lists a 1543 Langelier edition of Crenne's *Œuvres*.⁵³ According to the *Catalogue des livres précieux, singuliers et rares, tant imprimés que manuscrits, qui composaient la bibliothèque de M. D.M. MÉON*, from 1803, M. Méon owned a 1560 Groulleau edition of Crenne's *Oeuvres* (341).

⁵⁰ (Buzon Introduction 52, *Catalogue des livres rares et singuliers du cabinet de M. Filheul* 331).

⁵¹ The catalogue does not give a place of publication and estimates a 1540 publication date (*s.l.n.d.*). It describes a "dixain d'*Hélisenne aux lisantes*" on the back of the frontispiece, which would imply a post-1540 edition as this was included for the first time in a pirated edition printed in Lyon by Denys de Harsy (see below).

⁵² 14. 1780, *Catalogue des livres rares et précieux de M*** (le duc de la Vallière)*, 1780p. 175#4195-Le songe, #4258,4259 Angoisses p. 403 #11633 Oeuvres Grouleau

⁵³ *Catalogue des livres de la Bibliothèque de feu M. MIRABEAU l'aîné*, p. 80.

Though the appearance of a book in an inventory does not necessarily mean that the owner read the book, I have found indisputable evidence that at least one of Crenne's books was read in the late 18th or early 19th century. In his 1847 *Catalogue des livres composant la bibliothèque poétique de Viollet le Duc* (Emmanuel Louis Nicolas 1781-1857) writes:

Ces différents dialogues, avec le petit roman d'Hélisenne de Crenne intitulé: *Les Angoysses douloureuses*, et qui fait partie de ma bibliothèque, forment un traité d'amour assez complet pour faire apprécier la manière dont l'on considérait cette passion dans le XVI^e siècle.⁵⁴ (151)

The fact that Crenne was read during the sixteenth century was never in dispute. I hope here, however, to have provided evidence to contradict the previously presented assertion that her works went completely unread and were forgotten throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Arnoldus Buchelius' autographing the front flyleaf of a copy of Crenne's *Oeuvres* in 1640, La Monnoye's hand-written notes in a copy of Crenne's works in either the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, Keralio's extensive summaries and actual excerpts of 3 of Crenne's works in 1787, followed by Viollet le Duc's early nineteenth-century commentary gives indisputable proof that Crenne's works did not fall into total oblivion. This, coupled with the ongoing dialogue concerning both Crenne and her works and the dozens of catalogues which show ownership of her books, proves that, while interest in Crenne may have diminished somewhat during these centuries, it did not decrease as much as once thought. The variety of commentators and owners, from Jesuit and Anglican priests, to revolutionaries and reactionaries alike, shows that her works continued to appeal to a wide audience and were not restricted to one group or another during these later centuries.

⁵⁴ Viollet le Duc includes Jean Bouchet's *Triumphes de la noble dame amoureuse* in these "different dialogues" to which he refers.

Crenne in the Nineteenth Century

The subversive or dangerous nature of Crenne's works no longer seems to be a threat to nineteenth-century critics. However, the "search-and-rescue operation to retrieve the real [Hélisenne de Crenne] and to identify 'his' literary voice" (Nash "Constructing" 371) reaches new heights during this century's second half. No longer content simply to label her writing too Latinate in style, many continued La Monnoye's questioning and did not think it possible that a woman could have written such erudite works. While the idea that Crenne was the model for Rabelais' "ecolier" eventually faded, all other theories as to who Crenne really was or, more importantly, who had actually written her works suddenly became plausible. An example of this appears in the August 25, 1874 edition of *Intermédiaire des chercheurs curieux* when, in response to an inquiry by Jacques de Montardif from May 10, 1874 in the same publication, a person identified only as "Fl. P" writes:

Il me paraît bien douteux que l'auteur de ces volumes pédantesques puisse être une femme; mais quel que soit son sexe, à coup sûr, il a usé d'une suphercherie littéraire, en attribuant à l'héroïne de son roman la composition de ces divers écrits si fastidieux (475).

He even goes on to look for "Henri de Ceneleennes" hidden in the name Hélisenne de Crenne, eventually proposing that Claude Colet may have written the text himself: "Si...Claude Colet était le véritable auteur...on comprendrait qu'il ne se fût pas fait un plus long scrupule de corriger une oeuvre de jeunesse" (475). Even when Crenne's existence as a female author was not questioned, commentary of her work often resembled legend more than fact and relied heavily on a purely autobiographical reading of *Angoysses*. Dusevel purports in 1836 that Hélisenne was born in Mailly near Doullens and was called to the court of Louise de Savoie where she met a young "chevalier" whose death inspired *Les Angoysses*, a work

which “les dames de la cour galante et frivole de Francois Ier ne lisaient jamais sans verser des larmes.”⁵⁵

Previous generations agreed that Helisenne de Crenne was from Picardy but little else appeared to be known about her. After periods of guesswork relying almost entirely on elements from her stories, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have shed more light on this subject. Today, almost all critics agree that H  lisenne de Crenne is indeed a nom de plume. While some still want to see a male voice hiding behind this decidedly female name, the inverse, a female author writing under the cover of a male pseudonym did not appear until later in history. According to Broomhall, “no woman writer in the sixteenth century has yet been shown to have hidden her gender by writing under a male pseudonym” (83). Though they did not use a purely male pseudonym as “protection,” women of this epoch often wrote under names that had some connection to a male figure and could be easily recognized. Broomhall gives the famous example of Louise “Charly” who “wrote under the name her father had taken from his first wife’s husband, Lab  , by which he was known in business” (83). It seems that H  lisenne de Crenne, much like Lab  , also chose a female pseudonym with a touch of the masculine. In 1916, Louis Loviot presented information from a sixteenth-century chronicle by Nicolas Rumet:⁵⁶

Anno 1540, mese Maio, perdocta mulier ortu quidem Abbavillaea, nomen Margaritae Brietae habens (vulgo discebatur Helisenna Crennea), gallico poemate coruscabat apud insignem Parisiorum Augustam. (Loviot 139)

⁵⁵ H  lisenne de Crenne “fit honneur    son sexe par sa traduction des quatre premiers livres de l’Eneide de Virgile, qu’elle d  dia    Francois Ier. Ce monarque qui ch  rissait les lettres et se plaisait    encourager ceux qui les cultivaient, attire    sa cour H  lisenne. Cette nouvelle Sapho y vivait heureuse, lorsque la mort d’un jeune chevalier, qu’elle aimait tendrement, vint l’accabler de douleur; elle en prit occasion de composer un livre ayant pour titre: Les angoisses douloureuses qui precedent d’amour (1538), livre que les dames de la cour ne lisaient jamais sans verser des larmes” (113).

⁵⁶ De Buzon Introduction, p. 9.

That same year, Jacques Renouard continued this inquiry and proposed an explanation for the Crenne name:

On a douté l'existence d'Hélisenne de Crenne: certains même ont cru que Dorat se dissimulait sous ce nom féminin. Hélisenne a cependant réellement existée, elle se nommait Marguerite Briet et avait épousé Philippe Fournet, écuyer, seigneur de Crenne. Elle n'a donc dissimulé que son prénom, et c'est à tort car un mari furieux qu'elle racontât ses propres aventures sous un qui était presque le sien, l'*abondonna*.⁵⁷ (Jacques Renouard manuscript 203)

While no other mention of literary activity associated with Marguerite Briet has been discovered, the case for such an association seems strong given that the archival document is contemporary with Crenne's literary production. Closer examination of other documents dealing with Marguerite Briet also lends credence to her connection with Helisenne de Crenne. The "fief de Cresne" was located near Coucy⁵⁸ where the Fournels or Fournets had lived since the early fifteenth century. According to these documents, the couple had a son at the University of Paris in 1548, lost a court case in 1550 over a debt owed to a Parisian baker and show that, by 1552, Briet was separated from her husband and in control of her own property. She also rewarded one Christophe Le Manyer rather handsomely for unspecified "good and agreeable services."⁵⁹ While I do not see Crenne's works as completely autobiographical, I do believe the parallels between Briet's life and the events that transpire in Crenne's writings to be more than coincidental. Perhaps most convincing are the endless place names and references to Picardy in her writings that support the Briet-Crenne relationship, as stated in the 1541 document (Robbinns-Herring 179-180).⁶⁰

⁵⁷ My emphasis.

⁵⁸ Identified as the source of Icouc in Crenne's *Angoysses*.

⁵⁹ Many see this man as the inspiration for the Guenelic character in Crenne's works.

All of this makes a compelling argument for linking Hélienne de Crenne with the historical personage of Marguerite Briet and would thus explain the “Crenne” portion of the name. If we can accept the Marguerite Briet-Crenne connection, the question of the first name “Hélienne” remains. The name “Hélienne” is not common in the French literary tradition and appeared rarely anywhere before *Les Angoysses*. Names similar to Hélienne such as *Héloïse*, *Helissent*, *Elissent* ou *Lizane* existed and the Elisada from the Spanish *Amadis de Gaule* saga was translated as *Elisenne* in French. The *Table des noms propres* de Louis-Fernand Flutre mentions an *Elissent*, wife of the “Blanc Chevalier” from *Li lais du blanc Chevalier* by Jehan de Condé (66). There is also a “Lizaine, dame leal” from *Perceforest*, a connection that Paule Demats considers “pas absolument impossible” since the character in question is an “héroïne injustement soupçonnée par son mari” (viii). Demats also mentions “Helissent, dame du Ponthieu” in the chanson de geste *Garin le Lorrain* (viii). This is reinforced by what Demats calls a “conjunction séduisante” noting that said “Dame” is from Abbeville.⁶¹ When combined with Loviot’s findings that “la famille Briet possédait plusieurs fiefs en Ponthieu,” these hypotheses cannot be totally discounted. However, the “condensation” of the names of heroines from previous works dealing with love proposed by Christine de Buzon seems the most plausible explanation for the name Helisenne. She proposes a mixture of the names Helene, Medee, Yseult, Lucesse and Genevre that the Helisenne character cites in *Les Angoysses* just after she is “surprise d’amour” for her lover Guenelic. Additionally, Dido, or Elissa in Phoenician, figures prominently in Crenne’s works

⁶⁰ “L’attachement d’Hélienne-Marguerite à sa province natale se marque par les noms de localités picardes qui apparaissent dans son roman” (Demats vii).

⁶¹ La dame truevent, si com dire l’œi
a Abeville ou sejournoit enqui.
Cele nuit furent molt richement servi;
grant joie fist Helissens de Ponti. p. viii.

(Buzon *Introduction* 20-27). It seems most likely that some combination of these female characters produced the name “Hélisenne.”

Despite the evidence mentioned above, and in line with current questioning of Louise Labé’s literary output, Leah Chang has proposed that Denis Janot, Crenne’s first printer, conceived of the authorial persona of Hélisenne de Crenne himself, inspired by a character in the forthcoming translation of *Amadis* in 1548 (*Into Print* 164-165). Chang uses what she calls the “God adage” to explain: “since we cannot know in what form the author existed, we have to invent her...Hélisenne de Crenne is a figment of the imagination, at best a pseudonym, at worst an invention by book producers and by readers, both early modern and modern” (*Into Print* 140). Because the name “Hélisenne” never sits exactly juxtaposed with “De Crenne” in the first edition of Crenne’s works printed by Denis Janot in 1538, Chang claims that “posterity has invented ‘Hélisenne de Crenne’ as the singular, female author of the book” (*Into Print* 157). She states “‘Dame Hélisenne’ and ‘De Crenne’ remained two of several figures in the production of the book” (*Into Print* 173). I agree that a single female author may not have been *solely* responsible for the work, meaning that, just with publishing today, there are many people involved in the process. However, I do not believe that “Dame Hélisenne” and “De Crenne” are two separate figures. I tend to agree with Beaulieu when he writes, “l’unité stylistique et thématique du corpus hélisénien (jusque dans la traduction des quatre premiers livres de l’*Enéide* parue en 1541) laisse croire qu’une seule et même plume est responsable de l’ensemble” (Introduction *Epîtres. Le Songe* 9). The documents mentioned above as well as the common elements from the works themselves show not only the link between Marguerite Briet and Hélisenne but also that of Hélisenne and “de Crenne.” The Latin document found by Loviot dates from 1540, a mere two years after the first edition of

Les Angoysses and already makes reference to a learned woman writer from Abbeville commonly called Helisenna Crennea. Whether from the “suspect” title page or from actual first-hand knowledge of the author, this sixteenth-century chronicler made the connection between “Hélisenne” and “Crenne,” as did every other publisher and critic of the time.⁶² The title page of the pirated addition of Crenne’s *Angoysses* by Denis de Harsy features the Icarus mark, one of de Harsy’s printer’s marks for his anonymous editions, just below the title followed by De Crenne (Chèvre 79). “De Crenne” also figures prominently on title page of every other edition of Crenne’s works. If the “De Crenne” label were closely linked to and created by Janot, it would seem plausible that other printers and publishers would remove this label and simply retain “Dame Helisenne” instead. It would be illogical for subsequent publishers to “advertise” for a fellow competitor. Yet Chang continues her argument: “Helisenne narrates and writes, then, but she cannot bring her project to true fruition; she cannot bring her book into print. If in this work to function as the ‘composer’ of the book means that Helisenne writes of her desire in the first person, that is as far as her agency goes; she feels, experiences, tells and writes, but she cannot print” (*Into Print* 149). This begs the question, however, whether this is not the case with most “composers” of books? Do almost all authors not need someone else to print their writing? Once again, I find that Christine de Buzon sums up best the entire debate over who wrote these books: “Il faudra en effet démontrer que Marguerite Briet n’est pas l’auteur des *Angoysses* ou que si elle l’est elle, elle n’est pas l’auteur unique pour que cette hypothèse soit abandonnée a bon droit” (*Introduction* 11).

⁶² For example, in Colet’s letter he speaks of “ma dame Helisenne de Crenne” (664) and thus links the two names together in 1550.

It thus seems clear that Helisenne de Crenne was an actual female author. I have shown that reactions to her works varied but that her earliest critics saw extremely powerful texts. We also see a wide variety of readership, both in societal and religious aspects, which proves that Protestants and Catholics, nobles and bourgeois all bought and read her books. While she never lacked critics, they do not seem to come from one particular group or another, at least after the sixteenth century, leaving one to believe that, at least on the surface, her works did not disappear from print due to the words on the printed page. With this backdrop already set, I will now turn my attention to the men who printed and published H  lisenne de Crenne's works with the goal of determining if the lives and actions of these men could have contributed to why such popular works were not reprinted after 1560. The number of different editions of Crenne's works surpassed the average for women authors of the time⁶³ and it seems unlikely that there was no longer a market for her books after 1560. Five different men published at least one of Crenne's four works, beginning in 1538 with Denis Janot's first edition of *Les Angoysses* in Paris. After a brief and unauthorized detour to Lyon in 1540, care of Denys de Harsy, Crenne's *Angoysses* returns to the capital to be published by Janot and Pierre Sergent, with Janot publishing first editions of *Les Epistres*, *Le Songe* and *Les Eneydes* by 1541. These earliest editions were all printed in octavo formats save the *Eneydes*, which was published in an impressive folio edition. Charles Langelier and Estienne Groulleau would then compile *Les Angoysses*, *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe*, publishing them as Crenne's *Oeuvres* in tiny in-16 editions, the last of which appeared in 1560. In the burgeoning world of sixteenth-century printing all of these men were connected in some way: Janot, Sergent and Langelier collaborated on projects, de Harsy and Janot

⁶³ Books by women in the sixteenth century rarely saw more than 5 editions, with a more accurate average being 3 (Broomhall 122).

infringed upon established printing rights and pillaged each other's inventories and Groulleau eventually married Janot's widow. In the following pages I will attempt to flesh out the intricate interactions and shared relationships between these five men, tracing the history of Crenne's publications. A closer look at the last two printers to publish her works, Charles Langelier and Estienne Groulleau, reveal men with dangerous ties to the Protestant movement. These men were not alone as "the most celebrated humanist printers in Paris and Lyons were nearly all Protestant in the latter half of the 16th century" (Febvre and Martin 150). I will examine the nefarious effects that those close ties with the protestant movement had on Langelier's and Groulleau's businesses and how this may have contributed to the absence of subsequent editions of Crenne's works.

Crenne's Publication History: Denis Janot

Hélisenne de Crenne's four published works first appeared in a concentrated burst between 1538 and 1542, all initially published by Denis Janot in Paris. While women authors accounted for less than one percent of the literary output of sixteenth-century France (Broomhall 1), Janot and the Langeliers were some of the largest producers of work by women (Broomhall 112). Like many printers in his day, Denis Janot was born into a printing family. His father, Jehan Janot, began printing in 1488 and married Macée Terpperel, daughter of Jehan I Trepperel, a printer in his own right (Chang *Into Print* 162). Denis Janot first established his business "en la rue Marchepalu, à l'enseigne de la corne de cerf devant la rue neufve Nostre Dame," an address which he shared with his mother for nearly a decade as he helped continue the family business following Jehan's death in 1521. Rawles suggests that Janot began only as a *libraire* or bookseller not printing on his own until 1534, though he is

described as an *imprimeur* with his colleague Alain Lotrian as early as December 1530 (16).⁶⁴

Denis Janot spent the first few years of his independent career publishing books successfully sold by his father (Chang *Into Print* 26). These years, especially before 1534 and the Affaire des Placards, could be described as relatively tolerant, a time when “the exact demarcation between heresy and orthodoxy was still blurred” (Febvre and Martin 306). This spirit of toleration stemmed in large part from the influence at Court of such figures as Marguerite de Navarre and Jean and Guillaume Du Bellay and Janot thrived in this environment. By 1536 Janot emerged with his own equipment and set out to be “fully modern” (Rawles 27) as evidenced not only by the list of works that he published but also by the manner in which he published them. His working relationship with Louis Meigret⁶⁵ from an early date shows his interest in reforming the French language though his application of such ideas “were tempered by conservatism” (Rawles 34-35). After 1536, most of Janot’s works were in roman or italic as opposed to the Gothic type that dominated his early printing and that of most early printing in Europe. These new type settings were obtained from Geoffroy Tory⁶⁶ and Antoine Augereau.⁶⁷ Janot’s first edition of Hélienne de Crenne’s *Angoysses douloureuses* definitely fits within his new modern outlook. Chang describes Janot’s printing of Crenne’s *Angoysses* as the first time that a “printer seems to have been

⁶⁴ Janot later worked with many other printers including Etienne Caveiller and the Angelier brothers to name a few (Rawles 28).

⁶⁵ Author of *Traite touchant le commun usage de l’écriture Francoise* 1542, printed by Janot, which called for such reforms as eliminating unnecessary letters (e.g. *un* instead of *ung*) (Febvre and Martin 326).

⁶⁶ Humanist-minded professor and publisher of the famous *Champfleury*. Two decades before Du Bellay, Tory “sang the praises of the French language” all while wanting it to be “as regulated and as polished as Greek or Latin” (Febvre and Martin 148).

⁶⁷ One of the early promoters of using roman type in Paris who also died at the stake in 1534. See Febvre and Martin *The Coming of the Book*, p. 82, 151, Droz “Le curé Landry,” p. 286.

willing to publish a secular work by a nonroyal, apparently living, but decidedly unestablished woman, one who was making her public debut through the printed text, and who was clearly identified on the title page” (*Into Print* 38). Prior to this publication, French books authored by women generally came from nobles such as Christine de Pisan, Hildegard de Bingen and Marguerite de Navarre and more often than not dealt with matters of morality (Chang 38). Given that profitability was the “single most important influence on a printer or publisher’s choice of books” (Rawles 23, Febvre and Martin 260), Janot obviously saw a market for Crenne’s work. The decision to take a chance on Crenne’s *Angoysses* paid off and the success thereof pushed Janot to obtain a “privilege” to print her subsequent works.⁶⁸ Interestingly, however, after publishing Crenne’s *Epistres familières et invectives* in 1539, *le Songe* in 1540 and *Les Eneydes* in 1541, Janot only published one other edition of Crenne’s titles, a 1541 re-edition of *Le Songe*, despite continuing to publish for several more years. As Chang observes, “if Janot made a bet on Helisenne and, moreover, cultivated her as an authorial figure, he was only willing to do so for a short while” (*Into Print* 60). More telling perhaps is that Charles Langelier printed the first edition of Crenne’s *Oeuvres*, which included *les Angoysses*, *les Epistres* and *Le Songe* in 1543, date at which Janot was still active in the printing business.⁶⁹ Janot never printed Crenne’s collected *Oeuvres* and used the bigger octavo format for *Les Angoysses*, *Les Epistres* and *le Songe*. *Les Eneydes*, Crenne’s prose translation of the first four books of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, was printed in a large folio edition

⁶⁸ Janot pleads for permission to print authorized editions of *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe* in his first edition of *Les Epistres*, perhaps partly in response to an unauthorized version of *Les Angoysses* from Lyon that will be discussed below. The fact that he mentions *Le Songe* in the 1539 edition of *Epistres* leads one to believe that it has already been completed even though it would not appear until 1540. The privilege was good for two years for *Angoysses* and three years for the other works.

⁶⁹ These *Oeuvres*, unlike the earlier unauthorized copy of *Angoysses* from Lyon, did not infringe upon Janot’s privilege on any of the works, the last of which expired this very year.

dedicated to François I^{er} and was never reprinted.⁷⁰ Chang suggests that the *Eneydes* edition's lack of success convinced Janot to "leav[e] Dame Helisenne to be reinvented by other printers" (61) or perhaps that he had "reached the apex of an editorial policy" with the "convergence" of Helisenne and Dido in the *Eneydes* (165). For whatever reason, Janot did abandon Crenne's works long before the market for them had disappeared, as proven in the subsequent editions published over the following two decades.

Perhaps not in spite of but due to his printing of Crenne's *Eneydes*, Janot began to reinvent himself in other ways, as the printer of ancient authors in translation, of emblem books and of the bestselling *Amadis de Gaule*. In 1544, Janot succeeded Olivier Mallard as "imprimeur du roi en langue française," joining Conrad Néobar and Robert Estienne as royal printer of Greek and Latin works respectively (Omont 279). Despite its impressive title, this honor gave Janot few special liberties, as shown in the following excerpt from the declaration announcing his nomination: "quil puisse imprimer tous livres composez en ladicte langue Francoyse qu'il pourra recouvrer, après toutesfois qu'ils auront esté bien, deuement et suffisamment veuz et visitez et trouvez bons et non scandaleuz." (Omont 280). The main benefit from this appointment came in the form of a five-year *privilege* for his works instead of the typical two or three years granted to printers (Rawles 26). This new title also brought Janot renown and could not have hurt his efforts in maintaining a share of the market for printed books (Rawles 36). Janot's reign as royal printer proved to be short-lived and not terribly productive. He had died by December 1544 as evidenced by a man named Pierre

⁷⁰ Most non-scholarly works were printed in octavo or in-16 format. Students and scholars tended to prefer the folio as it was more ledible and easier to use as a reference. See *The Coming of the Book*, p. 89. The choice of the folio format for Crenne's *Eneydes* is somewhat puzzling due to the hybrid nature of the work. A prose translation with chapter headings much like a novel, this work seems destined for a non-specialized, large reading public in all areas but subject and publishing format.

Drouard's⁷¹ attempt to replace him as *libraire juré* of the university (Rawles 37). His wife would continue his printing business, publishing works as “la veuve Janot” until remarrying Estienne Groulleau between 1545 and 1547 (Simonin *Encre et lumière* 202). Though he died at the height of his power, Janot never rivaled contemporaries such as Geofroy Tory, Simon de Colines, the Estienne Family or Jean de Tournes.⁷² His career ended before future kings sought to answer rising civil and sectarian discord with increasingly stricter laws concerning printing and Janot seems to have navigated the tense years after the Affaire des Placards in a truly orthodox fashion.⁷³ However, in an interesting twist of circumstance, Janot did come under suspicion for reprinting a Chrestien Wechel text entitled *Brevis quaedam interpretatio orationis Dominicae* in which some writings of Luther were “placed.” As Francis Higman describes, “voilà du Luther imprimé par des Parisiens éminents comme Du Pré et très bien-pensants comme Janot!” (*Lire et découvrir* 220). While always considered a “bien pensant” this shows that the world in which Janot lived and worked had no clearcut, or at least no stable, lines of demarcation between heresy and orthodoxy. Hélienne de Crenne's works never appeared on any prohibited indexes but they did, however, undergo important transformations throughout their two decades of publication. A reader comparing a 1538 Janot edition of *Les Angoysses* to a 1560 edition of the same work finds two very different texts. In next section of this study, I will discuss the second publisher of Crenne's works, Denis de Harsy, and examine the large role that he played in beginning the transformation of the text.

⁷¹ The same man seems to have bought Janot's inventory from the man who would remarry Janot's widow, Etienne Groulleau (Rawles 37).

⁷² He did, however, have ties with the Lyon printing world, especially with Denys de Harsy as will be discussed below (Chang *Into Print* 162).

⁷³ This is not to say that Francois did not censor the press. Both Janot and Pierre Sergent are included in a 1534 list of printers to whom “il fut defendu...d'imprimer aucune chose sur peine de la hart” (Werdet 76-77).

Denis de Harsy

Identified in 1888 after the discovery of a transfer of “privilege” from Jean Longis⁷⁴ to print Castiglione’s *Courtisan*, Denis de Harsy exercised his trade in Lyon from 1501-1544 (Chèvre 79). Described as a printer of “moyenne envergure” (Kemp 277), Harsy concentrated mainly on large folio editions of law books printed for the Vincent family as well as religious missles and other humanist texts (Kemp 280). Only about 13% of the works that he printed were in French and few of those actually bore his name. He used five printer’s marks, including two that he used anonymously for his vernacular works (Brot 25). Of the books in French that Harsy printed, most were first published in Paris and a large majority of them came from Denis Janot’s inventory (Kemp 284). Brot even suggests that Janot and Harsy may have collaborated given the “proximité de catalogue et de materiel” (29). Such collaboration between Parisian printers and their provincial counterparts was not uncommon: a Parisian printer often obtained a “privilege” for several years and published one or two editions of a text before other printers throughout France, especially in Lyon, printed their own authorized versions (Buzon and Kemp 180). Many times, however, popular works found their way to provincial printing presses long before the initial “privilege” had expired.⁷⁵ This seems to be the case for the sole Lyonnais edition of *Les Angoysses*. Unlike his arrangement with Longis for Castiglione’s *Courtisan*, we have no proof that Harsy had permission to print *Les Angoysses* in Lyon and, though the edition is not dated, evidence suggests that Harsy infringed on Janot’s original two-year privilege.⁷⁶ More than simply capitalizing on the

⁷⁴ Longis seems to have been his brother-in-law (Simonin *Encre et lumiere* 198).

⁷⁵ Though not uncommon, this type of piracy seemed to be avoided for business interests most of the time. See *The Coming of Book*, p. 243-243.

⁷⁶ He would also violate the “privilege” Janot had for *Le theatre des bons engins* in 1540 (Kemp 284).

popularity of such works, there were other purely financial incentives behind such clandestine publishing: “the pirate did not have to face any of the costs of ‘justifying’ the layout of the text on the page – he simply copied an edition page for page” (Febvre and Martin 240). He also avoided the need to pay the author and could increase his profit even more by producing a lower quality edition than the original” (Febvre and Martin 240). Indeed, Harsy’s version of *Les Angoysses* has been described as “beginner’s work” or even as having been printed “clandestinement” (Chèvre 80) and is marked by typographical errors and images of inferior quality when compared to Janot’s first edition. However, Harsy’s edition does depart from the “pirating” norm in several ways. As stated above, most editorial diffusion went from Paris to the provinces with the Parisian edition serving as standard. Subsequent editions would then be reproduced “plus ou moins fidèlement” (Buzon and Kemp 180) by provincial presses. As a general rule, if other Parisian printers produced new editions of a work, the original Parisian text was still used as a point of departure. The case of Crenne’s *Angoysses* departs from the norm as all subsequent editions of the work, including the Pierre Sergent 1541 Parisian edition, follow the Harsy’s “mise en livre” and not Janot’s original (Buzon “Allure” 210). Harsy’s edition adds 68 lines of text, introduces the “dizain” or the introductory poem in the beginning of the novel, adds chapter divisions and numbers (a total of 56 chapter titles) and a “phrase de dédicace” which reads: “A toutes nobles et vertueuses Dames” in beginning of Part 2 (Buzon and Kemp 184). Only one other “roman sentimental” from this time period, a Harsy edition of Jeanne Flore’s *Comptes amoureux*, also has a “poème lumineux” (Buzon and Kemp 185). All of these additions and changes obviously run counter to the financial benefits of simply copying the original edition page for page. The anonymous editor of the Harsy edition was a very close reader of Crenne’s work,

as his division of text into chapters shows, especially when compared to Janot's first edition. Described as the "first professional reader" to have left traces of his reactions, "l'éditeur Lyonnais transforme ce roman...en un texte hautement paratextualisé et il l'éclaircit" (Buzon and Kemp 190). The additions to the Lyon version of *Les Angoysses* do much more than simply inform the reader of what each chapter is about, they make clear and powerful statements that could easily sway the readers' ideas on the message of the book. The husband's role is scant from the beginning and diminishes in the chapter titles even as his domestic violence increases. Conversely, Hélienne's role is accentuated as the chapter titles progress. Buzon points out that the use of the third person in the chapter titles "puts more power into author/editor's hands, less in narrator's" ("Allure" 213). The chapter titles also foreshadow what will actually transpire in the chapters, again showing the close reading done by the editor. Buzon avers that these modifications to the text must have come from the author herself or from one of several Lyonnais editors ("Allure" 210). The chapter headings and the "dizain" may have been a sort of marketing tool, especially to attract women readers (Buzon and Kemp 185). The motivation for this "edition pirate" may have been purely commercial and definitely proves the success of books in Paris (Buzon "Allure" 210). Indeed, de Harsy was not unaccustomed to such enterprises, as Chèvre points out: "Il n'a pas manqué de prendre son bien où il le trouvait, se saisissant d'une oeuvre pleine d'espérance ou riche de succès, sans attendre le privilège" (84). Johns supports the idea that commercial gain motivated Harsy's "clandestine" printing more than a certain set of beliefs or principles, especially given the lack of royal and church control present in Lyon at the time (124). However, some have seen the changes in the Harsy edition, especially certain images chosen to illustrate the text, as an attempt to "rendre acceptable le récit quasi-adultérin de la folie

amoureuse de ‘dame Helisenne’” (Buzon and Kemp 188-189). Brot proposes that Harsy collaborated with an “homme de lettres” such as Dolet in his choice of texts to reproduce and edit which varied from his normally austere publications (27). Regardless, the editor of Harsy’s version of this text does more than simply better organise the text: “il induit aussi une interpretation.”⁷⁷

Interestingly, while many of the textual changes in the Harsy edition can be seen as less conservative, especially with the increased voice given to the female protagonist to the detriment of her husband, some of the modifications appear to have an eye towards a more traditional publication. Most “romans sentimentaux” used some sort of “table des matières” and chapter titles. Janot’s original edition of *Les Angoysses* lacks these paratextual features and instead uses just under sixty “passe-partout” vignettes depicting general scenes of love and chivalry, many of which have little relevance to the actual storyline, to “break up” or divide the text. In a way, Harsy goes back to a “norm” with numbered chapter titles that actually speak to the text. Some have proposed that Harsy’s experience with liturgical texts may have made his edition more organized and structured (Buzon and Kemp 190). Regardless, the “mise en chapitres” of Harsy’s *Angoysses* could be seen as a step back to tradition, not a modernization.

This “retour en arrière” in terms of the format of the text should not be understood as as totally traditional. The traditional nature of the chapter headings as such does not permeate the actual words and meaning conveyed therein as they add no element of “morality” not already present in the original text itself. If anything, the words in the chapter titles “met[tent] en relief les emotions et les états d’ame liés à l’aspiration amoureuse” and

⁷⁷ Buzon adds here that Helisenne de Crenne either loved the modifications to the text or never saw them (“Allure” 215).

“accentue[nt] l’obsession amoureuse” (Buzon and Kemp 190). Buzon and Kemp continue: “Cette focalisation sur le personnage féminin (et sur l’histoire amoureuse) et l’insistance avec laquelle l’éditeur lyonnais désigne l’œuvre à l’attention des lectrices sont convergentes. Le texte original de 1538 chez Janot était plus contradictoire” (191). It seems then that Harsy went back to a sort of tradition all while reinforcing the “feminine” nature of text in what has been called “un mouvement d’intense interaction entre quelques hommes et femmes dans un milieu relativement libre selon les normes du temps.” (Buzon and Kemp 192). Harsy only produced one edition of a work by Crenne but it was extremely influential. His edition gave the text a more “feminist” feel and certain modifications that he made to the text were kept by all other sixteenth-century publishers of Crenne’s works. Harsy published all types of works for all types of people and seemed more motivated by financial gain than any sort of ideological agenda. Much like Janot, he also printed Crenne’s *Angoysses* before the most dangerous times of the religious conflicts in France, when lines had not yet been drawn in blood.

Pierre Sergent

Of the five men responsible for publishing Crenne’s works, Pierre Sergent is the least well known. He produced a copy of *Les Angoysses* in 1540 or 1541 that used the format adopted by Harsy. Sergent took over the printing operation of Jean Saint-Denys and conserved Saint-Denys’ “marque and devise” (Gueudet 90). A frequent associate of Janot, Sergent’s name has never been connected to the “nouvelles doctrines” (Higman *Lire et découvrir* 40). Sergent had a daughter named Catherine who married Jean Bonfons sometime before 1547. Upon Sergent’s death, Bonfons took over the business, practicing until his death in 1568. Like Janot’s widow Jeanne de Marnef, Catherine carried on the family business

from 1568 to 1572 before giving way to her own son, Nicolas in 1572 (Renouard, Philippe 35-37). There is no record of any of these heirs attempting to print Helisenne de Crenne's works. One extremely important adjustment that first appeared in the Harsy edition and was retained by Sergent in the 1541 edition of *Les Angoysses* is to correct a "coquille" from the original 1538 edition. The word "Dieu" was missing from a sentence towards the end of the novel, which gives the expression "Dieu en terre" its first true appearance in the works of Crenne when not directly related to mythology. The expression "dieu en terre" would become a highly sensitive and inflammatory tool for critics of the Pope and the Catholic Church as the sixteenth century progressed and will thus merit further discussion below, especially in Chapter 5.

Thus ends what could be seen as the first chapter of the publication history of Crenne's works. At this point in history, Crenne's writings had all been published separately and had not been compiled in an *Oeuvres* format. The forward thinking Janot had taken a chance on the innovative *Angoysses*, using a less conventional format and "mise en livre" only to have his privilege infringed upon by Harsy who, in turn, cleverly used a more traditional presentation to create an arguably more "feminist" message. Already dramatically changed from its original form, Crenne's *Angoysses* would change several times over again before the last sixteenth-century edition in 1560. Two other men who produced Crenne's works, Charles Langelier and Estienne Groulleau, would combine *Les Angoysses*, *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe* into one collection published in a tiny in-16 format, all the while ignoring the elegant prose *Eneydes*. From 1543 to 1560, each new edition claims to have been revised and corrected by the author but no proof of any such action has been found. The final major modifications to Crenne's texts, as discussed above in the introduction to this study, come

from Claude Colet in 1550, perhaps reflecting a shift in reading tastes twelve years after Crenne's arrival on the literary scene. While one could argue how much the reading public's affinities changed over this somewhat short period, the amount of turmoil in the religious and political ideas of the day is without question. In France in particular, the Affaire des Placards changed the landscape dramatically and the printing world was far from immune to the ramifications. In 1542, an edict was issued which imposed stricter control of printers by forbidding anonymous editions, and of booksellers by mandating that books be "inspected" by the authorities prior to being put on sale. By 1551, the Edict of Chateaubriant "explicitly condemned all books coming from Geneva, forbade the sale of any book listed in the 'catalogue' of censored books, refined the system of visitation of bookshops and attempted to establish a special control of imported books" (Higman "French Speaking" 124). While Janot, Harsy and Sergent produced Crenne's works during a time of change and upheaval, there was still some middle ground to be found and the more rigid sectarian lines were only in the process of being drawn. In contrast, the final two men responsible for publishing Crenne's works in the sixteenth century not only did so during more adversarial times, they also reflect perfectly the new dangerous mood in France through the actions of their personal and professional lives. The final part of this chapter will continue to discuss the evolution of Crenne's works as well as the lives and activity of the the two men responsible for bringing them to print. It is my contention that their dangerous and often clandestine activity with various Protestant movements at least contributed to, if not caused, the disappearance of the works of Helisenne de Crenne from the publishing scene.

Charles Langelier

The first mention of the penultimate publisher of Helisenne de Crenne's works comes from a testament dated September 5, 1521 in which is recorded the death of Gillet Langelier, "relieur de livres," survived by his widow, Jeanne Bourdon and four children: Arnoul, Charles, Pierre and Marion (Balsamo and Simonin 17). Information concerning the extended Langelier family and its origins is scant though they may have come from Normandy (Droz "Le curé Landry" 289, 294) and may have been related to Julien and Jean Langelier, both of whom endured persecution for their religious beliefs.⁷⁸ Whatever the origins of the family, the brothers Charles and Arnoul Langelier became two of the most powerful printers in sixteenth-century Paris. Unlike Denis Janot, Charles and Arnoul did not inherit their business from their father (Balsamo and Simonin 17) and were thus required to serve as apprentices to learn the art of printing and publishing (Renouard "Officine" xii). The two brothers established themselves as booksellers in 1536 "en la grant salle du Palays, au premier pillier," with Arnoul acquiring a second stall "au second pillier" in 1538 (Droz "Le curé Landry" 288).

Like many men in the publishing world of the time, Arnoul used marriage as way to strengthen his business dealings when he married Girarde Roffet, whose father was a bookseller in his own right (Balsamo and Simonin 18). Charles also followed this nuptial path, but only after the death of his first wife, Nicole de Joignes, who seems to have had no relation to the printing world (Renouard "Officine" xvii). The widower Charles married Geneviève Landry, daughter of the printer Jehan Landry, sometime between 1544 and 1551

⁷⁸ "Existe-t-il un lien de parenté entre cette famille parisienne et Julien Langelier, cité à Bourges en 1537, fuyant la capitale, protégé par la duchesse de Berry, Marguerite de Navarre ? Etroitement lié à la Réforme, Julien passe à Tours" (Jean Balsamo and Michel Simonin *Abel L'Angelier et Francoise de Louvain*. 17). "Jean Langelier...incarcéré au Chatelet pour vente de livres défendus et remis en liberté en 1546" (Jean Balsamo and Michel Simonin *Abel L'Angelier et Francoise de Louvain*. 17).

(Droz “Le curé Landry” 289). More than just a practical agreement to strengthen his business, this second union had a profound effect on both Charles and Arnoul, on their families and on their subsequent publishing careers. Genevieve’s father may have been a printer but it was her brother, François Landry, who would exert the most influence on the fate of the Langeliers.

In 1539 François Landry was the parish priest of the Sainte-Croix church on Ile-de-La Cité and promoted an “évangélisme qui se tait.” Labeled by the Sorbonne as Lutheran sympathizers and called “nicodémites” by hardline reformers, Landry’s parishioners celebrated mass without wine and listened to sermons that attacked auricular confession, the worship of saints and the idea of purgatory (Droz “Le curé Landry” 275, 289). Landry was no Calvinist, however, but was more than likely a disciple of Gérard Roussel and did not claim one church or another, having found “une voie originale entre le catholicisme pontifical et les églises réformées” (Droz “Le curé Landry” 290).

Though far from the most radical priest in Paris at the time, he was one of the most popular and his ideas periodically attracted unwanted scrutiny from the Sorbonne. Unphased by these threats, Landry used his powerful friends to avoid sanction on several occasions when he found himself charged with inciting the people of Paris to “l’émotion” or riots (Droz “Le curé Landry” 280). These powerful friends included Martin Du Bellay, for whom François’ brother Jean served as secretary, and Marguerite de Navarre, who chose François as “aumonier” for her *enfants rouges* (Droz “Le curé Landry” 278, 390). François Landry also took advantage of his status as a printer’s son and of the many “artisans du livre” near La Cité, including of course his eventual in-laws Charles and Arnoul, to spread his form of the Gospel. Unequivocal evidence shows that, after Charles Langelier officially became a

part of the Landry family, both he and Arnoul began practicing in earnest “une sorte de nicodémisme editorial,” devoting an important part of their printing activity to the propagation “plus ou moins clandestine” of evangelical ideas. (Balsamo and Simonin 19). It seems, however, that, even before this marriage, the brothers Langelier were not opposed to the new religious ideas of the day. Higman labels Charles and Arnoul as the “plus courageux” of all printers of the increasingly turbulent 1540’s, stating that, “tous les textes qui frisent l’hétérodoxie passent par leurs presses” (*Lire et découvrir* 41). Eugenie Droz supports this hypothesis and implies that the Langelier brothers were tied to Landry nearly from the beginning of their publishing careers:

les publications évangéliques des Angelier se seraient échelonnées de 1539 à 1545, c’est-à-dire depuis les débuts de la propagande de Landry jusqu’au 25 juin 1545, date où l’inquisiteur de la foi ordonna que les livres pernecieux devaient être déposés au greffe du Parlement. (“Le curé Landry” 292)

Charles’ relationship with Landry and the parish of Sainte-Croix is corroborated by the fact that Nicole de Joignes, Charles first wife, was buried at the Sainte-Croix church as stated in a 1556 testament drafted by Charles. This proves that Charles was already affiliated with the Sainte-Croix church before his marriage to Genevieve (Droz “Le curé Landry” 358).

Much like their “directeur de conscience” François Landry, the Langeliers used many strategies to spread the Gospel all while navigating the increasingly dangerous environment of sixteenth-century Paris. One such strategy consisted in publishing books ostensibly intended for children that allowed all the faithful to read biblical stories. An example of such a publication is a *Petit alphabet* or *ABC* catechism⁷⁹ that Landry had taught to the children in Marguerite de Navarre’s orphanage as well as to those of his parish. The Langelier brothers

⁷⁹ First published under the name *La Vie d’honneur et de vertu*, written by a German reformer named Hermann Schotten or Schottenius (Droz “Le curé Landry” 297).

published this catechism first in 1539-1540 and included it again in a 1542 edition of *La Fontaine de tous biens* (Droz “Le curé Landry 307). This *ABC* nearly ignores baptism and the Eucharist and promotes a confession that is first delivered in secret to God then expressed to a priest, almost as an afterthought. The text also places doubt on the power of the confessor when it states, “ayez confidence en Iesu Christ et jugez *probablement* que voz pechez vous sont pardonner: allez en paix et ne pechez plus” (Droz 309). This “probablement” questions absolution by the priest with emphasis placed instead on the only sure pardon: that accorded by God himself. This text published by the Langeliers, along with a 1543 edition of *La vie de notre Seigneur Jesus Christ selon le texte des quatre evangelistes, Livre de vraye et parfaite oraison*⁸⁰ to name only a few, shows the influence that François Landry had on both Charles and Arnoul and their devotional publications. However, it is still important to remember that the Sainte-Croix church was not Geneva. These texts were written for Catholics who wanted to live a life based on the Gospel but wished to remain Catholic. Nonetheless, the Sorbonne grew increasingly suspicious of Landry and spared his life only after a dubious retraction and enormous pressure from his powerful friends (Droz “Le curé Landry” 285).

A look at several of their business agreements also lends credence to the Langeliers’ Protestant leanings. In December of 1542, Charles Langelier rented out a house to René Houdouyn, Jean David and Pasquier Le Tellier, all printers (Droz “Le curé Landry” 353). By June 1543, however, all three of these men had vacated the premises. Droz avers that it could have been their landlord’s subversive printing practices, such as establishing an extra-muros printing shop, which caused them to run. While serving as a functioning and fully legitimate place of business, some have suggested that this more remote address also allowed for a

⁸⁰ See Higman *Lire et Decouvrir*, p. 41.

place to pray and read the Bible.⁸¹ Pasquier Le Tellier and Jean David remained in the area and continued their trade after 1543, but Houdouyn fled to Geneva and, by 1554, declared that he lived “selon Dieu et la sainte reformation evangelicque” (Droz “Le curé Landry” 355). The Langelier brothers also shared their editions over a dozen or so “confrères,” including Christophe Plantin of Anverre and Jean de Tournes of Lyon, both heretics according to the Catholic Church.⁸² This allowed them to publish works without it getting back to the “Palais” (Droz “Le curé Landry” 292). Charles became one of the 24 “libraires-jurés de l’Université le 10 novembre 1553,” which gave him the right to edit missives and royal edicts, a right he seemed to use to “camoufler sa propaganda” (Droz “Le curé Landry” 291).

Just as one should not overstate the radical nature of Landry’s faith, it should be noted that all of Charles Langelier’s publications were not entirely subversive or anti-Catholic. Droz lists several works published by Charles during this time period that would have pleased a Catholic clientele, but then curiously opposes it to the following list: *Histoire de Leander et Hero de Marot* (1541), *Les blasons anatomiques du corps féminin* (1543, 1550), and the *Oeuvres* d’Hélisenne de Crenne (1543) (Droz “Le curé Landry” 340). It is interesting that Droz places Crenne’s works in a different category, inferring that her works were not necessarily “pleasing” to a Catholic clientele. Regardless, we can assume that Charles saw nothing in Crenne’s writings that would alienate his reform-minded friends at Sainte-Croix.⁸³

By the beginning of the 1550s, the Langeliers, Charles in particular, had amassed

⁸¹ See Droz “Le curé Landry,” p. 291.

⁸² Charles Langelier owed money to Jean de Tournes in 1561 (Jacques Renouard XXI).

⁸³ Chapters 4 and 5 will attempt to discover the “evangelism” of Crenne’s works.

enormous wealth⁸⁴ and, as mentioned above, enjoyed great protection from powerful people. Despite their riches and protection, however, Charles and Arnoul knew that they were not untouchable. As Droz points out, “malgré la prudence et l’adresse dont ils firent preuve, ces hommes vivaient certainement inquiets et obsédés par la crainte d’une rafle, d’autant que leurs richesses devaient exciter la convoitise.” (“Le curé Landry” 357-358). As early as 1551, Charles and Geneviève began taking steps to protect their possessions “en prévision d’une possible arrestation de l’un des époux.” (Droz “Le curé Landry” 358). In 1556, Charles dictated a testament in which he states his wish to be buried at the Sainte Croix de la Cité church and makes mention of Claude de Marnes, one of his apprentices who left France after the St. Bartholmew’s massacre for Frankfurt and married the protestant André Wechel’s daughter (Droz “Le curé Landry” 359). As Droz states, “Ce testament permet de mieux situer Langelier, qui n’a qu’un ami et qui, bien que devenu riche, reste enfermé dans sa maison, entouré de sept ou huit employés, probablement tous de tendance réformée, gens sûrs dont il tenait à récompenser le silence” (Droz “Le curé Landry” 359). The following year, Charles’ world became even more tumultuous with the passing of his brother Arnoul. Though the two had not always been on the best of terms, Arnoul designated Charles as “tuteur” to his children, which added another complication to an already tenuous situation (Droz “Le curé Landry” 359).

By 1560, the religious and political landscape in France had passed a breaking point. An “arrêt du Parlement de Paris” from April 12, 1560 prohibits “exposer et vendre aucun livre, soit en latin ou en français, si ce n’est par libraires-jurés ayant et tenant boutique ouverte....sous peine de confiscation des marchandises et du fouet” (Werdet 105). Protestants were no longer simple heretics but also a dangerous political force. The

⁸⁴ “Il est appelé ‘sire’, ce qui correspond à la qualité...de ‘notable commerçant’” (Renouard, Jacques XVIII).

aforementioned *ABC* serves as a good example of this change. It was re-published in 1560 by Jean Saugrin, ten years after its last Langelier version. “Temporiseurs” had now become full-fledged Protestants in Saugrin’s Lyon and the revised catechism reveals the shift. In the 1560 edition, confession is given only to God with no mention of the priest and his consolation (Droz “Le curé Landry” 320). The publishing career of Charles Langelier walks in lockstep with this evolution. With his brother Arnoul and his minister François Landry both having passed away, Charles seems to have made an even more dramatic turn towards reformation ideas: “à partir de 1561, il se lança dans une campagne de propaganda en faveur du parti Huguenot, qui reflète la politisation de la réforme française” (Droz “Le curé Landry” 360). Droz gives a list of several anonymous documents linked to Charles through printer’s marks and type-setting and states that “après Pâques (1560), Charles Langelier inaugura ses publications clandestines inspirées par les pasteurs du parti protestant” (Droz “Le curé Landry” 362).

One of his final business arrangements speaks volumes for what Charles Langelier had become towards the end of his life. Charles was one of the 19 Parisian *libraires-éditeurs* chosen by Pierre Danès on February 26, 1562 to handle the distribution of Marot’s *Psaumes de David* (Droz “Le curé Landry” 287). This enterprise was conceived by Antoine Vincent and sought to provide every French Protestant with his own copy of the Psalms, with eight percent of the profits destined to go to impoverished members of the Reformed Church in Paris (Febvre and Martin 318-319). Antoine Vincent was a rich Lyonnais “libraire” who, thanks to Bèze, got a certificate from the Sorbonne and a royal privilege for Marot’s *Psaumes*. From his new home in Geneva, Vincent oversaw the beginnings of this operation for which Jean de Tournes printed more than 27,000 copies. Production soon began in Lyons,

Orleans, Metz, Poitiers, St. Lô and even Anvers thanks to Christophe Plantin (Higman *Lire et découvrir* 47). Religious troubles later in 1562 kept the Parisian entreprise from taking off and a number of Parisian publishers who contracted with Vincent saw jail time and persecution, with many being forced to flee.⁸⁵ Charles Langelier did not escape this fate: by the time the authorities arrived at his home in 1562, he had already fled, leaving his wife to face, “toute une série de perquisitions” (Renouard, Jacques XX).

The protection Charles and his family had enjoyed for over two decades no longer sufficed to keep him safe. The works that he openly published and his dubious associates had raised suspicion for years and his clandestine activity, which had never been a secret at Sainte-Croix, was now known “au Palais” where spies “abondaient” (Droz “Le curé Landry” 376). While the details of his death are not known, Charles disappears from the scene after 1562 and probably died sometime before the end of the following year (Simonin “Abel L’Angelier” 74). The once proud and seemingly untouchable Charles ended his life childless and in debt.⁸⁶

After swearing to the authorities to live “catholiquement,” Genevieve was allowed to resume the family business and continued printing for another decade. Even before Charles’ death, Genevieve seems to have been extremely involved in the family business. Like many booksellers of his day, evidence suggests that Charles used Genevieve as an “intermédiaire” in his clandestine publishing (Febvre and Martin 132). While Charles tended to his “banc au Palais,” Geneviève probably oversaw the stall at the Vieille Draperie (Droz “Le curé Landry” 377). Broomhall credits Genevieve for publishing a number of anonymous Protestant

⁸⁵ Pierre Haultin fled to La Rochelle, André Wechel to Frankfurt, Jean Le Preux and Jean Petit to Lausanne and Geneva. *Coming of Book*, p. 318-319.

⁸⁶“La succession [de Charles] était en effet grevée de nombreuses dettes, si nous en jugeons par les saisies successives opérées pour la garantie des créanciers” (Jacques Renouard XXII).

pamphlets beginning in 1561 until well after Charles' death in 1564 (62). These dangerous activities did little to help Genevieve finish her days on Earth in peace and tranquility. Droz describes Genevieve in these final years as a woman no longer able to pay "ni loyer, ni boucher et vit au jour le jour de menues charités" and speculates that, if sickness did not kill her first, she most likely did not survive the St. Bartholomew's massacre (Droz "Le curé Landry" 389).

Since Charles and Genevieve died with no children, the continuation of the Langelier legacy rested squarely on Arnoul and Girarde Langelier's offspring. Girarde, widowed since 1557, complicated this succession for her children when she remarried Lucas Breyer. Breyer was a printer who worked closely with reformers such as Christophe Paintin and Pierre Porret and would eventually take over Arnoul's stall at the "second pillier" of the Palais in 1560 (Droz "Le curé Landry" 359-360). Girarde would soon leave behind the "évangile qui se tait" that she had espoused with Arnoul to join her new husband as a member of "La Maison de la Charité," a Dutch Anabaptist sect founded in 1540 (Balsamo and Simonin 21). While Droz seems surprised by this more drastic turn (Droz "Le curé Landry" 360), Balsamo and Simonin consider that Arnoul and Girarde may have been more radical from the start (21). These unorthodox views coupled with the complex succession of Arnoul's business added significant trouble to Breyer's debut in the publishing business. As early as March 17, 1563 the new couple found itself accused by neighbors of belonging to the "nouvelle religion" and were forced to swear that they had always "vécu catholiquement" (Renouard, Jacques folio 396 verso).

While Breyer did go on to have some success, it would take Charles' nephew, Abel, to reestablish the Langelier name. Abel Langelier achieved great success, publishing the first

Parisian editions of Montaigne and edited Mlle de Gournay and Mmes Des Roches (Renouard, Jacques 457). His willingness to publish works by women begs the question: why did he not reprint any of Helisenne de Crenne's works? Both Lucas Breyer and Abel Langelier did reprint some of Charles Langelier's stock, especially during the beginning of their careers (Simonin *L'encre et lumière* 279). If we are to believe Balsamo, Abel not only had a chance to reprint Crenne's works from his uncle Charles' collections but he also could have found Crenne again in his borrowings from Estienne Groulleau (Balsamo "Abel L'Angelier" 119). Influenced greatly by his uncle Charles and his radically Protestant stepfather, it would have been natural for Abel to embrace fully "la nouvelle religion." Perhaps persuaded by all of the religious strife that he had witnessed in his youth, Abel seems to have chosen a more moderate sectarian stance. As Balsamo relates, "Il est probable que, 'politique' dès les débuts de son exercice éditorial, Abel avait très tôt professé un esprit de concorde, plus sensible aux remèdes à apporter aux guerres civiles qu'aux querelles des théologiens" (*Abel L'Angelier et Françoise de Louvain* 32). As will be shown below, it could be that Abel's moderate stance or, more specifically, his dislike of religious controversy, influenced his decision not to republish the works of Héli-senne de Crenne.

Estienne Groulleau

Originally from Blois, Estienne Groulleau began his trade as a printer and bookseller in 1547 and earned the title *libraire-juré* in 1558. He died sometime before September 11, 1562 and his brother and sister, who inherited half of his estate, sold his business to Pierre Drouart and Guillaume Cavellat for an enormous sum at the time.⁸⁷ Jeanne de Marnef, originally married to Denis Janot, remarried Etienne Groulleau after the death of her first husband sometime before August 14, 1546 (Simonin *Encre et lumière* 685). The other half of

⁸⁷More than 2380 livres tournois or four times more than comparable sales (Simonin *Encre et lumière* 202).

his estate went to Jeanne's brother, Jérôme de Marnef, leading us to believe that Groulleau died with no children. Upon marrying Jeanne, Groulleau began printing from the stock that she had been managing since her late husband's passing. Unlike Denis Janot, who was never implicated in Reformist groups, Groulleau associated with what Michel Simonin called a "cercle étroit" whose ideas were in some way or another connected to the Reformation.⁸⁸ Groulleau's connections to the protestant movement are hardly surprising when one considers that he got his start in the printing business as apprentice to Oudin Petit, the same Oudin Petit who was killed because of his Reformist ideas sometime in 1572.⁸⁹ Though never overtly in one camp or the other, Groulleau could not have been ignorant of or perhaps even "indifferent" to the content of the works that he published. However, just as this period before the 1560s remained somewhat ambiguous, so seem Groulleau's ideas. He was the nephew of a Catholic priest in Blois and part of his production would have been completely acceptable to the orthodox establishment. However, Groulleau eventually published books that found their way onto the *Index*. Claude d'Espence's *Paraphrase sur l'oraison Dominicale* amongst others were not of purest religious orthodoxy (Simonin *Encre et lumière* 687). He also published Noel du Fail's *Baliverneries d'Eutrapel*. Simonin states, "l'engagement religieux de [du Fail] est toujours resté discret, ce qui ne signifie pas que Groulleau l'ait ignoré" (Simonin *Encre et lumière* 687). After examining Groulleau's production, Simonin states, "nous sommes bien décidément chez un libraire du Palais aussi prudent qu'il est possible [...] Groulleau se tient coi. Un peu trop, a-t-on envie de dire, dans

⁸⁸ People such as Louis Le Caron, Claude Colet, Jean Longis, Noel du Fail and Vincent Sertenas (*Encre et lumière* 139).

⁸⁹ As early as 1567, Petit was stripped of his title of libraire-juré because of Protestantism (Droz, "Antoine Vincent" 282). The possible influence of a master on an apprentice should not be understated. Apprentices entered service as early as age 12 and were bound to him for a period of two to five years. See *The Coming of the Book*, p. 129.

ces temps d'incertitude" (Simonin *Encre et lumière* 687). Simonin goes on to make that case that Groulleau "pourrait bien être le *Stephanus* chargé de faire tenir à Maclou Popon une lettre de Bèze, plutôt que Robert Estienne" and lays out a plan to strengthen this hypothesis stating that this "fait peser sur Groulleau le soupçon, si souvent fondé à ce moment de nicodémisme" (*Encre et lumière* 688).

Groulleau printed Helisenne de Crenne's *Oeuvres* starting in 1551 and ending in 1560. Just like Charles Langelier before him, Groulleau used the small in-16 format for Crenne's works. The major changes in Groulleau's editions were the "corrections" made by Claude Colet and the inclusion of Colet's letter to explain his modifications to the text. Leah Chang sees Groulleau's editions as differing from Janot's original: "'Dame Helisenne,' for example, takes on one form under the imprimatur of Denys Janot in 1538 and another under that of his heir, Etienne Groulleau in 1551. The value that she represented to Janot both commercially and culturally may have been quite different than what she represented to Groulleau" (*Into Print* 22-23). In many ways, this is very true. First, for reasons much grander than anything concerning Janot or Groulleau, the printing milieu had changed dramatically from the time Crenne's first work burst on the scene in 1538 till her last sixteenth-century edition in 1560. Though the first penetration of Luther's writings into France began in the early 1520's, François Ier remained fairly tolerant early in his reign.⁹⁰ After the Affaire des Placards, however, François took an increasingly hard line with regards to censorship of the burgeoning press. His predecessors would be no different. Henri II passed measures to discourage the publication of books on religion and required that the name of the author and the printer as well as the place of printing be clearly marked in all

⁹⁰ Though, as Werdet points out, "de nos jours, il serait surnommé le Persécuteur terrible des imprimeurs et des libraires" (Werdet 95).

books (Werdet 87). As Higman states, “1562 marks a brutal turning point in the history of France, with the outbreak of civil wars [...] they inaugurated a period radically different from the early years” (“French Speaking” 104). The fact that the final two publishers of Crenne’s work both disappear during this year appears to be more than coincidence.

Summary

The first goal of this study aimed to investigate the validity of the claim that Crenne’s works not only disappeared from print but also from circulation by the end of the sixteenth century. I hope to have shown that, far from totally disappearing from the scene, Crenne’s name and her works remained part of the literary and cultural conversation. While a “history of male-centered literary history and criticism” (Ching 22), especially in the nineteenth century, did its best to denigrate Crenne and her works, others lauded Crenne and enjoyed her talents throughout the centuries. My next aim was to investigate the printers and publishers responsible for producing Crenne’s works to discover potential reasons why her books went out of print. I have shown Denis Janot and Pierre Sergent to be successful printers who have never been directly associated with the Protestant movement. Denis de Harsy’s location in Lyons and his dealings with Antoine Vincent could raise some suspicion, but, though his paratextual additions to Crenne’s *Angoysses* show that he did not fear printing material that could be seen as subversive to a male-dominated society, his relationships with Protestants seem to be based more on financial agreements than matters of faith. The same cannot be said of Charles Langelier and Estienne Groulleau. The printing world of sixteenth-century France was a hotbed for new ideas. As printers were often the first to read new works, they were “naturally abreast of new ideas, and frequently among the first

converts to them and among the first to fight on their behalf” (Febvre and Martin 150). It is my estimation that Langelier and Groulleau were among the hundreds of thousands of Protestants who either fled or lost their lives as the religious strife in France truly commenced.

Further clouding the issue is the question of succession. Janot’s succession is easy to follow and not divided, while Groulleau and Langelier leave complicated estates that do not follow one direct line. Neither Estienne Groulleau nor Charles Langelier had children but we have evidence that Lucas Breyer and Abel Langelier published material from both the Groulleau and Langelier stock. We know that Abel Langelier and Lucas Breyer had successful careers and that Abel definitely produced women’s writing. Perhaps the printers and publishers with access to Crenne’s works felt that there was simply no longer a market for them. As early as the 1550’s, critics do point out Crenne’s highly Latinate style, which, in their eyes, seemed pedantic and archaic. However, one must not forget that Crenne’s *Angoysses* was drastically changed by Harsy and her *Oeuvres* were “modernized” by Claude Colet in 1550. All this would seem to make text more commercially viable and current, with both Harsy’s and Colet’s modifications to the text serving as a marketing tool. Perhaps some of the stock copies of Crenne’s works were destroyed in the number of seizures and “perquisitions” endured by the Langeliers and Breyer or perhaps they were simply lost.

As no manuscript has ever been discovered, we may never know what Crenne’s writings looked like before Janot, Harsy and Colet published or corrected them. While every new edition purported to have been “approved” by the author, these claims are dubious at best. Though Crenne’s works were never under official suspicion from religious authorities, men with markedly Reformist convictions still chose to publish her, even as both the

religious strife and their convictions became more extreme. For Janot, Sergent and Harsy, the mood of the age was still one of relative tolerance and religious convictions did not seem to influence their production. They dabbled in all sorts of publications in a pre-Tridentine, pre-Calvinist world. Religious ideas did impact the lives and actions of Groulleau and Langelier and, ultimately, may have cost them their lives. Once the pure sectarian lines were drawn, or even after the mid-1540s, no Catholic printer ever touched Crenne's works again while two Reformers published her books in several editions. In order to understand what attracted these Reformers to Crenne's works, or what may have given Catholic printers pause, the following chapters will examine what sort of religion or confessional affiliation, if any, can be gleaned from Crenne's texts, with the action of confession throughout her works, especially in *Les Angoysses*, as the starting point.

CHAPTER 4

CONFESSION(S) IN *LES ANGOYSSES DOULOUREUSES*

This chapter will open the analysis of the ideas of confession and conversion as they appear in the works of Hélienne de Crenne's. Crenne's *Angoysses douloureuses* dates from 1538, a time when confession and many other tenets of Christianity were being questioned with great intensity. Confession was evolving from a mostly public and quite infrequent act to something much more private and intimate. The new ideas of the Reformers pushed the Catholic Church to revise and reconsider many aspects of what it meant to be a good and faithful Christian, with confession being at the very heart of the discussion. This more frequent confession gave church officials more control and contact with parishioners but also led to greater intimacy. Completely in step with the historical evolutions of her time, the protagonist of Hélienne de Crenne's *Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* uses the very power vectors meant to subjugate women of her epoch to empower her. Crenne's entire opus could be seen as a form of confession, or as Krause puts it, works which "mettent en scène le drame de l'aveu" ("Confessions" 22). Her manipulation of "confession" is at the heart of this empowerment. The role of confession in *Les Angoysses* is extremely active and productive rather than prohibitive. It produces an idea of intimacy, individuality, and forms of sexual pleasure that run counter to the purported didactic goals of the work. The "aveu" is ubiquitous in Hélienne's world: the protagonist confesses to her husband, to her lover, to an

old woman and directly to God himself. This chapter will examine both the confessants and the confessors in *Les Angoysses douloureuses*: the “confessors” to be studied include Hélienne’s nameless husband, the knightly Quézinstra, an elderly woman who accompanies Hélienne in her tower prison, several religious men and Hélienne herself. The “confessant” group will consist of Guénélic and Hélienne.⁹¹ I will also attempt to situate confessional discourse in the novel within the historical evolution of Christian confession, arguing that confession in *Les Angoysses* has already begun the more modern function of creating intimacy and pleasure as opposed to showing the penitent sinner the way back to the community of believers.⁹² Though Hélienne uses confessional action to carve out a space to express her pleasure, thereby heightening it, confession in this work is not totally devoid of any of its traditional reforming purpose. On the contrary, most of the confessional situations in *Les Angoysses* arise from a supposed need to reform: a monk tries to convince Hélienne of her sinful ways, Quézinstra constantly hears Guénélic’s “confessions” and tries to persuade the young lover to abandon his pusillanimity. What makes confession different here is its lack of success reforming the ways of the characters or solving any of their problems when done in a traditional, and especially male-dominated fashion. In what becomes a common theme throughout Hélienne de Crenne’s works, confessional actions result in some sort of “success” only when directed by women. The most obvious example of this comes at the end of the novel when Hélienne herself does what her husband’s violence, a priest’s words and all the pressure of society could not make her do previously: she delivers a

⁹¹ While it could be argued that Guenelic “hears” Quézinstra’s confession on one occasion in part 2 of the work, it is only a half-hearted confession of his admiration for a young woman that Quézinstra himself “corrects.” The scene does not allow any possibility for remediation or counsel from Guénélic. It should be noted that only Hélienne truly serves both roles and that Guénélic’s confessional discourse in Part 2 of the novel is clouded by the fact that Hélienne is “speaking through” him.

⁹² See Virginia Krause’s *Idle Pursuits: Literature and Oisiveté in the French Renaissance* and “Confessions d’une heroine romanesque: les *Angoysses douloureuses* d’Hélienne de Crenne.”

contrite confession to God himself. Ultimately, with nearly Christ-like words, she also plays an active role in eliciting a moment of deathbed contrition from her lover Guénélic and their deaths transform Quézinstra, a noble knight concerned only with martial exploits, into a poet-monk who dedicates his life to the telling and commemoration of Hélienne's and Guénélic's love story.⁹³ The result of these abrupt final confessions and conversions at story's end is somewhat ambiguous and leaves the reader with several questions. As Conway asks, "while the book is touted by the author and her characters as a lesson to be headed, the modern reader cannot help but wonder just what that lesson is?" (130). This chapter will attempt to answer that very question in two sections: the first will situate the novel and its confessional aspects historically before concentrating on how Hélienne manipulates confessional discourse with her husband and her lover. The second section will examine the more explicitly religious confessional passages in the text, ending with a final discussion on the nature of the three "conversions" at the end of the story. Understanding how these conversions fit with the religious ideas of France in the 1530s and 1540s will allow us to return to the question of who would have been interested in Crenne's novels after 1560 and why they were never published after that date. I will search for elements in the text that would have pleased different sectarian factions to see if there is enough to prove a particular confessional affiliation that could have turned away future printers.

A Brief History of Christian Confession

The history of Christian confessional practices can be described as a tension between public and private, communal and individual. Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge describe tension as in a wire, where the objects at opposite ends play a part in maintaining, "a

⁹³ Quézinstra not only abandons his knightly aspirations to record the story of the two lovers on an elaborate tombstone but also builds a small chapel and "perpetual" dwelling for himself next to the burial site.

fragile equilibrium between two worlds made to understand but also to devour each other”

(3). The presence of this sort of tension in Christian confession mirrors that found in the entire Christian faith from its foundation. As Lebrun states, “Christianity has been torn by two apparently irreconcilable tendencies. It is an eminently personal religion, calling upon each person individually to convert, find faith and seek salvation [...]. It is also a communal religion dependent upon a church” (69). The first period of Christian confession is usually divided into three main subdivisions: the ancient Church of the early fathers, the so-called insular period heavily influenced by Irish monks, and an intermediary period from the time of Charlemagne until the late twelfth century. The first and most ancient period was also the most communal and public. Christian confession at this time served the purpose of bringing the sinner back into the “body of the faithful,” and thus had much more to do with community than the individual. Communal confession was the norm and penance, when present, was severe, with testimonials describing diets of nothing but bread and water for one year as punishment for sins (Sot 30). Tentler describes this period: “exclusion from the body of the faithful was public. The avowal of sin and the penitential exercises imposed on the penitent before his readmission to the church were to be performed in public. And public too was the ceremony of reconciliation” (4). Confession and the rituals involved with it also served social functions in the early church:

they existed first of all to insure discipline, to exercise control. In ecclesiastical or theological terms this discipline insured the purity of those who associated in the mystical body of Christ and received [...], the consecrated Body of Christ. In secular terms, these institutions worked to enforce or maintain obedience to a society. (Tentler 12)

When individual confession was practiced, it was generally carried out by the most devout and not necessarily to an official church representative. As Sot points out, most of the “pères

du désert” confessed to an “ancien” without any thought of absolution (17). Direct confession to God was reserved for the powerful and often occurred for quite practical reasons: “il arrive parfois que l’aveu soit fait directement à Dieu, mais c’est le plus souvent lorsque le coupable est un personnage célèbre et qu’il y aurait lieu de craindre que la divulgation de sa faute n’entraîne le scandale” (Sot 27). Evidence of pardon was rarely mentioned and the “visée purement thérapeutique” of these more personal forms of confession in the early years of Christianity seems to have been most important (Sot 28). This is not to say that early Christians never spoke in private to someone about their sins. What seems rarely to have been private, however, is the penance performed to cover those faults. As McNeill states, “throughout the ancient period of the church the acts of satisfaction enjoined in penance were prevailingly public in character, and reconciliation was regularly a public rite” (13).

Starting in the seventh century, a movement often described as insular private penance, due to its origins in Ireland, made its way to continental Europe (Sot 43). Driven in large part by documents called “penitentials,” which gave instruction as to how religious figures should carry out confession, this development laid the groundwork for the modern practice of confession in the West (McNeill 46). The works of the Irish monks promoted a private confession with a “pénitence tarifée,” which established certain penance for specific faults. The insular thought was that “penance is to be administered privately at every stage; confession is to be made in secret to a qualified person, who is regularly, of course, a priest” (McNeill 28). However, in an era when only the highest-ranking ecclesiastical figures were thought worthy of dispensing redemptive rites to the faithful upon confession, the power and authority that these documents gave the common priest proved troublesome to many Church

leaders.⁹⁴ The “private” nature of the confessional activity described in the works overshadows the specificity of punishments, which varied widely and never led to general agreement or widespread fixed reglementation. As McNeill points out, “while in general the documents have the appearance of exact schedules of equivalents between crime and punishment, frequently the confessor is reminded that penalties are to be not so much equated with offenses as adjusted to personalities” (46). This also shows the increasing influence of monastic practices on the life of the Church in general, as most of these “penitentials” originated in monasteries (Sot 50). Additionally, unlike earlier periods, if there was excommunication, reconciliation was “privately accorded” after penance was met (McNeill 29).

The final subdivision of early Christian confession found its form with the Carolingians who came to favor a hybrid version of confession and penance: “à faute publique, pénitence publique; à faute privée, pénitence privée” (Sot 17). From roughly the ninth to the twelfth century, the Church reestablished a form of public penance for public sins alongside a more codified system of private penance for private or hidden sins (Sot 53). Reacting against what they perceived as the “novelty, lack of authority, and divergence from the canonical penance of the previous age” that was encouraged by the insular penitentials (McNeill 47), church leaders on the continent tried in vain to revive earlier traditions all the while failing to fully extinguish the newer confessional practices. All the while harking back to older traditions, the confessional doctrines of this period continued the ever-growing importance of official representatives of the Church. As Sot points out, “il y a une nette tendance au IXe siècle à marginaliser toute pratique pénitentielle qui n’impliquerait pas un

⁹⁴ It seems that certain pious women also heard confession in certain parts of Ireland during this time (McNeill 28).

prêtre comme médiateur” (Sot 65). This somewhat muddled form of Carolingian confessional teachings reflects the anxiety of the ecclesiastical establishment when faced with the autonomy that the “penitentials” afforded even the lowest cleric. This relatively sudden case of nostalgia for yesteryear on the part of the Church reveals the inherent limitations of a completely hierarchical approach to dealing with the “individual” sins of Christian souls.

While rarely appearing in earlier literature, confession begins to make its way into a wide array of works by the twelfth century. As Sot points out, “romans, contes devots et Vies de saints mettent en scène des hommes et des femmes de toutes conditions sociales qui se confessent”: albeit sometimes to a friend, to a horse or even to a sword⁹⁵ (77). Despite a more private form of confession and the Church’s ever-encroaching “encadrement” of society, confession remained a rare event for most Christians during this time, especially among the lower classes. Direct confession to God was still foreign to the common folk and was instead reserved for the elite, often on their deathbed (Sot 66). Georges Duby describes the reluctance of the lower classes to adopt more modern forms of confession: “the internalization of [more modern] Christian practices came about very slowly. It began among the ‘powerful,’ among those whose official duty was to set an example, which then propagated from the upper strata of society to the layers beneath” (“Solitude” 529-530). The common people seem to have favored cursory, formulated confession while the emerging bourgeois class preferred mendicant confessors and nobles their personal confessors.

By the thirteenth century, however, four major changes had taken place in terms of confessional practices: the severity of penances diminished and became arbitrary, contrition became the most essential element for the penitent, private confession was officially required

⁹⁵ As with Roland and his trusty Durendal, to cite one example.

by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and the priest's role was clarified, giving him more power in the process of forgiveness (Tentler 16). The Council's decision essentially meant that the once-reviled ideas introduced by the Irish monks centuries earlier had now been appropriated and modified to become the "typical penance" of late medieval Europe (McNeill 29). Confession had thus become a more private act with guilt and remorse on center stage, "emphasizing the inner preparation and disposition of the penitent seeking help from a sacrament dispensed by a priest" (Tentler 52). It should also be noted that this "dispensation" was not to be given by just any priest: the 1215 Lateran Council made individual confession to one's own priest standard (Sot 17). This is often seen as even more evidence of the Church's increasing influence on society in the West as well as the affirmation of a more modern form of the individual, as Sot avers:

Derrière cette évolution se profilent deux phénomènes majeurs de l'histoire de l'Occident: d'une part, l'établissement d'un solide encadrement clérical de la société et, d'autre part, bien que ce soit un peu un lien commun de l'historiographie, l'affirmation de l'individu à partir du XIII^e siècle. (17)

In other words, this era marks the beginnings of the institution of modern Christian confession, which will become increasingly private and personal and be imposed on the faithful by the Church with increasing insistence. The Church's new role in the private lives of the faithful required a different type of clergyman, one "whose role was not to chant in isolation like the monks but to spread the sacraments and the word among the people" (Duby "Solitude" 529). Again, the most humble classes did not take to these new practices as quickly as their noble counterparts, but there was an undeniable shift towards more private forms of confession in all levels of society: "In the decades around the year 1200, when the pace of progress was most rapid, religious practice underwent a tremendous upheaval because of the new pastoral concern, which taught a different use of the sacraments" (Duby

“Solitude” 531). Even still, as late as the sixteenth century, confession remained a fairly rare event, even among the most devoted Christians (Sot 145-146).

All of these changes led to a more personal and individual form of expression, which also opened the door to closer contact, both literally and “mentally,” between the priest and the confessant. McNeill quotes an anonymous Victorian observer who describes this new relationship and the literature that promoted it as “a deplorable feature of the medieval Church. Evil deeds, the imagination of which may perhaps have dimly floated through our minds in our darkest moments, are here tabulated and reduced to a system. It is hard to see how anyone could busy himself with such literature and not be the worse for it” (47). The advent and popularization of the confessional booth in the second half of sixteenth-century France led to even more privacy and intimacy in the practice (Tentler 82). The beginnings of a more modern and private confession after the twelfth century recalls the tension mentioned above: older public forms of penance were never fully abandoned and lingered well into the early modern period. The Lenten period often saw “the practice of excluding penitents from the church on Ash Wednesday and readmitting them on Maundy Thursday,” recalling the earliest penitential practices of the Church (McNeill 30). Sometimes called “solemn” penance, the penitents were cast out of the church “with solemnity, in ashes and sackcloth”⁹⁶ (McNeill 30). Even as late as the first Council of Trent in 1545, which reaffirmed preference for secret confession to a priest, public confession was not completely condemned or rejected (McNeill 30). Regardless of the tension between old and new practices, it is clear that the role and purpose of Christian confession was evolving from the “antithèse du

⁹⁶ This was interestingly reintroduced during the ascendancy of Presbyterians in England during the seventeenth century (McNeill 30).

royaume diabolique du secret et du silence” to “le moyen de se dire” (Krause “Confessions” 21).

The historical context of Hélienne de Crenne’s literary production stands then at a crossroads between the old communal aspect of confession and a more private “fonction moderne de producteur d’intimité” (Krause “Confessions” 30). The burgeoning Protestant ideas of the epoch that refute the role of the priest in confession add even more depth to the development of “private” confession, as one cannot get more private than a penitent speaking directly to God. The vestiges of an older idea of “confession” are present in Crenne’s world, and thus her works, but I believe that the more modern and intimate confessional practices dominate. I even go further to state that confession as portrayed in Crenne’s writings truly marks a new form of expression, for the intimacy and personal expression created through confession is that of a woman. Sot points out that for Saint Augustine the word “confession” had two possible meanings: “louange de Dieu, aveu des péchés” (49). I believe that both meanings fit the confessional discours in Crenne’s *Angoysses*, at least in the sense that both actions, “louange” and “aveu des péchés,” play a large role: the question remains, however, to what ends do these confessions aspire?

Confession Between Husband and Wife in *Les Angoysses douloureuses*

“Les anxietez et tristesse de miserables (comme je peulx penser et conjecturer) se diminuent, quand on les peult declarer à quelque sien amy fidele [...]. C’est à vous mes nobles dames, que je veulx mes extremes douleurs estre communicquées” (96). Thus begins the “epistre dedicative” of *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d’amours* that Dame Hélienne addresses to “toutes honnestes dames,” exhorting them to “bien et honnestement

aymer, en evitant vaine et impudique amour” (96). The work begins in a confessional space, stating that sharing the troubles of one’s heart can help ease the pain felt by the confessant as well as serve a didactic purpose for all those who may hear the confession. Much like Christian confessional practices or the Christian faith in general, Hélienne’s opening address shows a tension and mixes elements of public and private: the narrator mentions private “declarations” to a close friend, followed immediately by the much more public address to all of her female readers, serving as a perfect metaphor for the changing world in which this work was written. Though Hélienne initially frames the novel as both a private form of “therapy”⁹⁷ and an exhortation to avoid the pitfalls of love, the story quickly smacks against the moral and didactic portion of the introductory epistle and appears as a more private drama. The question could be, however, just how is one to understand the word “private” at this point in history? Duby describes the meaning of the word in medieval parlance: “In the Romanesque vernaculars the word ‘private’ meant almost the same things as in Latin. *Privé*, *privance*, and *priveté* refer, in courtly French, to the people and things included within the family circle” (Duby “Private Power, Public Power” 6). Medieval private life would be better described as “family life, not individual but convivial and founded on mutual trust” (Duby “Private Power, Public Power” 8). *Les Anglois* begins with a brief description of Hélienne’s family: “je fuz procrée de noblesse, et fuz cause à ma naissance, de reduyre en grand joye et lyesse mes plus prochains parens, qui sont pere et mere” (98). This “lyesse” is short-lived, however, as Atropos takes her father’s life before her first birthday. Hélienne describes “le laict maternel” as “venin” on two separate occasions (98, 207), only mentions childbirth once in the entire novel (138-139) and there is never any indication that having children is an option for her and her husband: “convivial” is definitely not an adjective that

⁹⁷ See Jerry Nash’s “Writing as Therapy.”

one would use to describe the family in this work. She marries at the tender age of eleven and lacks the physical maturity to enjoy comfortable sexual contact with her older and unknown husband. Though sexual relations bring nothing but pain to Hélienne's young body, her mind in no way opposes the possibility of pleasures:

Moy vivant en telle felicité, ne me restoit que une chose, c'estoit santé, qui de moy s'estoit sequestrée, au moyen que j'avoys esté mariée en trop jeune aage: mais ce ne me pouoit empescher de persister en l'ardente amour de mon mary. (99)

She admits that her husband's absence from the castle can be "propre pour [sa] santé" (99) but declares a feeling of "extreme tristesse"⁹⁸ nonetheless when he is away. Incredibly, in no more than two years, and only 2 pages of text, a newly nubile Hélienne of 13 emerges who possesses the most beautiful body in the entire kingdom and fully enjoys the fruits of the marital bed:

au treiziesme an de mon age, j'estoye de forme elegante, et de tout si bien porportionnée, que j'excedoye toutes aultres femmes en beauté de corps, et si j'eusse esté aussi accomplye en beaulté de visage, je m'eusse hardiment osé nommer des plus belles de France. (100)

It should be noted here that Hélienne is not the traditional picture of a young "mal mariée" who finds no pleasure with an ancient husband.⁹⁹ Their love is reciprocal and she wants for nothing, as she writes, "j'estois le seul plaisir de mon mary, et me rendoit amour mutuel et reciproque" (99). Just as the introductory epistle expresses a mix of private and public, the novel's early pages project a world on the edge of feudal and modern. Hélienne is "resquise

⁹⁸ One of the few times that this particular phrasing is used by the protagonist to describe her sadness. She almost exclusively uses some variation of the title *Angoysses douloureuses* when lamenting her troubles, relegating the words "extreme tristesse" to her husband or other male characters. I believe that this shows that she has not yet understood her power in this passage.

⁹⁹ While seemingly older than his 11 year-old wife, Hélienne's husband is described as "ung jeune gentil homme." (99).

en mariage de plusieurs gentilz hommes” before she was married to this nobleman “à [elle] estrange” who lived far away from her “pays” (99). When Hélienne describes her husband’s frequent absences “pour faire service à son prince” (99) the reader is reminded that the feudal lord’s first responsibility was in arms, keeping him away from his home. While one can assume that the services rendered in the novel by the husband to his “prince” could have some sort of military function, it is interesting to note that the husband is never explicitly connected with any martial exploits. He seems to be a wealthy, highborn subject as evidenced by being described as “ung jeune gentil homme,” but he is not as rich as his wife and we never see him exercising the duties of the “nobelesse d’épée.”¹⁰⁰ In feudal society a husband’s absence left the lady of the “cite” in charge of much of the daily activity of veritable empires. As Krueger states, “elite women throughout the Middle Ages were often able to expand or transform traditional gender roles and to achieve a degree of agency, if not autonomy, in their roles as queens, regents and counselors, as managers of estates in their husbands’ absence” (12). While *Les Angoysses* does not show Hélienne managing the castle business, we can glean from the initial pages of the text that she enjoys a certain amount of freedom of movement. She states, “J’estoye requise de plusieurs, qui estoient ardens en mon amour, non de gens de basse condition, mais princes et grans seigneurs, ce qui fut cause d’accroistre le bruict de moy, en plusieurs et divers lieux” (100). This notion of freedom changes rather abruptly, however, as the husband realizes that he has a truly powerful being on his hands in Hélienne, as evidenced by a visit from a king drawn to the area by rumors of

¹⁰⁰ The husband makes clear that Hélienne brought enormous wealth to the marriage later in the novel when he says to her, “vous avez du bien de par vous, terres et seigneuries plus que je n’en ay, lequel je ne vous veulx retenir” (125). The lack of a veritable “hero” in this story has been discussed by Beaulieu (“Ou est le héros?” and “Les données chevalersques”).

her corporal delights.¹⁰¹ What follows is the first, and in my opinion, the only truly successful attempt at controlling H  lisenne that appears in the novel. The husband, who remains nameless throughout the work, sends her away from their castle sure that H  lisenne could not resist the charms of such a gracious royal figure as the king. This passage shows the power that a man of the early sixteenth century had over his wife and highlights the tension felt by many noblewomen of this era. Barth  lemy describes a more medieval idea of marriage as “*both egalitarian and hierarchical*. In this respect it was exactly analogous to the relation between vassal and lord” (“Aristocratic Households” 143). Both vassalage and serfdom were technically subordinate stations in feudalism but, contrary to the serf, the knight entered service to his lord “freely” (Kelly “Renaissance” 22). H  lisenne initially uses the words “mutuel” and “reciproque” to describe the relationship between her and her husband, which would seem to describe a courtier or “vassal” form of love. This changes immediately when the king comes to visit and, though the husband does show some tenderness and sincere caring as the story progresses, H  lisenne never again describes their love in such terms. I believe that the beginning of the novel and the abrupt changes that ensue support the notion proposed by some critics that noblewomen lost power during the historical time period commonly known as the Renaissance. Joan Kelly describes this shift:

as the State overrode aristocratic power, the lady suffered a double loss. Deprived of the possibility of independent power that the combined interests of kinship and feudalism guaranteed some women in the Middle Ages...the noblewoman entered a relation of almost universal dependence upon her family and her husband. And she experienced this dependency at the same time she lost her commanding position with respect to the secular culture of her society. (“Renaissance” 45)

¹⁰¹ It has been suggested that this king was none other than Fran  ois Ier (Heitsch “Female Love-Melancholy” 341).

This dependence is evident in *Les Angoysses* since, after the first page of the novel, we almost never hear of H  lisenne’s family and her entire life revolves around only her husband and their servants. The king comes to the chateau expressly to see this beautiful body that he had heard about, yet the text concentrates on the potential lack of control that H  lisenne would have in resisiting such a figure. Interestingly, however, the husband does not confine H  lisenne but instead sends her away. While this would seem less “controlling” than sequestering her inside of their castle, since she retains some freedom of movement, I see this passage as the only case of the husband’s full “control” of H  lisenne, even more than when he restricts her movement or resorts to violence later on, because H  lisenne “produces” nothing from this encounter. What separates this passage from all others in the novel is that H  lisenne lacks full awareness of what is happening and does nothing to resist her husband’s attempt to control her. H  lisenne’s role in this passage is much more analogous to serfdom than vassalage and the way that she describes her relationship with her husband reaffirms that the husband sees their marriage as hierarchical but not egalitarian.

The very next page of the novel sets the scene for Helisenne’s so-called demise. The couple is forced to move to a town which borders a “terre en litige” (101) that they owned. Much like the sudden change in the description of feelings in their marriage, this move to a more urban environment away from their seigniorial lands and castle echoes historical changes in early sixteenth-century French society. *Les Angoysses* captures the “  poque charni  re” in which it was written by showing the “malaise” of part of the French landed nobility as to exactly what purpose they would continue to serve in the world of the burgeoning early modern state. Once the couple moves to the town, the reader feels the tension of what liberty “should” be granted to H  lisenne by the husband. More importantly

for this study, the move from the castle to the town allows the reader to see a noblewoman in an urban setting who must navigate new spaces and therefore new ideas of accepted behavior, and eventually accepted thoughts and words, in the slowly emerging early modern world. As Krause points out, married women of the Renaissance were not to appear in public since they already have what they needed: a husband (“Portrait” 89). At the castle, H  lisenne would have had more freedom of movement, in courtyards or even orchards (R  gnier-Bohler “Imagining the Self” 345). As mentioned above, she was accustomed to being “resquise” by noblemen from neighboring estates but, once in town, her world began to shrink. The Renaissance woman is encouraged to work hard and to frequent the Church and, as Krause declares, “nothing in short is more foreign to eroticism than hard labor” (“Portrait” 92). Unlike the sensuous worlds of medieval writers such as Marie de France, the notions of chastity and purity impose themselves in the Renaissance. Kritzmann describes the perfect Renaissance woman as “a young bourgeoisie who consciously resists vanity of self-interest and the corruption of court manners, opts for reconciliation of love in marriage and distances herself from physical desire” (Kritzman 188). Even certain changes that would seem to advance the cause of women, such as education, actually made them fall under the “ma  trise” of men. More women did receive education during the Renaissance but even this was not necessarily an advantage for them. As Kelly explains:

In a sense, humanism represented an advance for women as well as for the culture at large. It brought Latin literacy and classical learning to daughters as well as sons of the nobility. But this very development, usually taken as an index of equality of Renaissance (noble) women with men, spelled a further decline in the lady’s influence over courtly society. It placed her as well as her brothers under male cultural authority. The girl of the medieval aristocracy, although un-schooled, was brought up at the court of some great lady. Now her brothers’ tutors shaped her outlook, male educators who, as humanists, suppressed romance and chivalry to further classical culture, with all its patriarchal and misogynous bias. (“Renaissance” 35)

All that is said about Hélistenne's education comes from the first pages. She was an only child and her mother "print ung singulier plaisir à [la] faire instruyre en bonnes meurs, et honnestes coustumes de vivre" (99), though we know from the story itself that she can not only read and write but do so with great style and elegance.

After settling in their new home, the scene for amorous emotions is set by an expression that will appear repeatedly before illicit encounters: "ce jour se passa en toutes recreations, et voluptueux plaisirs"¹⁰² (102). Though the husband exerts his hierarchical power over Hélistenne during the king's visit, this pleasant expression describing conjugal activities between the two proves that their relationship has yet to suffer dramatically. It is the day after these "recreations" and "voluptueux plaisirs" between Hélistenne and her husband that she falls madly for a young man whom she sees outside of her window: "en m'habillant vins ouvrir la fenestre, [...] je veis ung jeune homme, aussi regardant à sa fenestre, lequel je prins à regarder ententivement" (102). Unlike her husband, this young man is given a name, Guénélic, and is described with great detail.¹⁰³ Much like the incredible rapidity and precociousness of Hélistenne's sexual development, her falling for Guénélic comes exactly one page after a self-affirmation of "chasteté louable," pledging not only that she had never had such feelings for another man, no matter how "accomply en don de grace et de nature" (100) he may be, but that she "avoit tousjours ferme propos de vivre ainsi, en desprisant et ayant à abomination, celles qui avoient bruict d'estre flexibles et subjects à tel delict" (100). These hyperbolic statements contradict the ease with which Hélistenne falls for

¹⁰² This exact expression is used several times throughout the book and will be discussed below.

¹⁰³ The reader eventually learns that Guénélic is not of the same highborn stock as Hélistenne and her husband but we can infer from the text that Hélistenne's young lover far exceeds her husband in comeliness. Parts 2 and 3 of the novel will see Guenelic engaged in numerous martial exploits, albeit generally against his will and with much less glory than his faithful companion Quézinstra.

Guénélic just a few lines later in the text: “J’avoys accoustumé de prendre et captiver les hommes, et ne me faisoie que rire d’eulx: mais moymesmes miserablement, je fuz prise” (103). While this could be read as another form of confinement with Hélienne becoming prisoner to Guénélic, I see this passage as the actual beginning of Hélienne’s “self.” The difference between this “control” and that of her husband during the king’s visit is that she fully recognizes the situation. She realizes that Guénélic has a certain control over her but she soon grasps that he can become a source of immense pleasure. As Winn adroitly indicates, “[Hélienne] décrit en effet un mouvement vers la captivité, mais cette fois une captivité dont elle a pris conscience” (“Perception” 8). This is a leitmotif throughout the novel: the movement towards captivity is present, yet Hélienne always finds a way to overcome, appropriate, and even pervert different forms of captivity. We see no resistance from Hélienne during the king episode and she is completely passive because she has yet to understand such potential pleasure. She did not *look* upon the king; she was only to be *looked* upon. Here, the window allows Hélienne to return the glance of the other (who also looks through a window) and thus she assumes an active role. What “innocent” scales might have been on her eyes are now removed and she begins plotting ways to obviate the confinement (of which she is now cognizant) of both the physical space and the surveying gaze of her husband. This is where the public/private interplay in the novel’s intrigue truly begins. It is her first “real” experience with the “Renaissance” outside. As the protagonist reckons with her newfound position, both physically in her new urban home and emotionally as “semi-captured” by her feelings for this young gentleman, she retreats for the first time “en [elle]mesmes”¹⁰⁴ (103). This is the first mention of the narratological inner-space that

¹⁰⁴ The expression “en moy mesmes” appears throughout the novel and will be discussed at length below. I believe it is crucial for showing the development of Hélienne’s “self” and helps explain the more modern

resurfaces at poignant times throughout the work. The reader finds H  lisenne probing the inner depths of her mind, trying to deal with such a sudden shift in thinking and emotion. This inner-space sets the scene for the first truly confessional discourse of H  lisenne’s book.¹⁰⁵ This confessional discourse begins as an “auto-confession,” that is to say with herself, but H  lisenne eventually finds or creates a sort of confessor with whom to interact. She declares, “en ces considerations, raison me venoit    corroborer, me conseillant d’estre ferme, et ne me laisser vaincre” (103). Reason is personified, though not capitalized in the text, and given a voice with which to speak directly to H  lisenne, advising her to take her “plaisir en mariage,” to follow the “beau chemin, lequel suyvant tu te peux saulver” (103). “Raison” continues, exhorting H  lisenne (“O pauvre dame”) and contrasts “amour lascif” with “amour matrimonial” which is “chaste et pudique” (103). We see here that “Reason” expresses the more historically “modern” idea of love and sexuality in mariage that the Renaissance church espoused as opposed to a more courtly idea that “kept love detached from marriage” (Kelly “Renaissance” 23). “Reason” sees marriage as a “religious” state, as would the Renaissance Church, as opposed to the earlier Church’s view of marriage as “an inferior [state] that responded to natural necessity” (Kelly “Renaissance” 23). As Kelly writes:

Sexuality could only be ‘mere sexuality’ for the medieval church, to be consecrated and directed toward procreation by Christian marriage. Love, on the other hand, defined as passion for the good, perfects the individual; hence love, according to Thomas Aquinas, properly directs itself toward God. (“Renaissance” 24)

nature of the work.

¹⁰⁵ One could argue that the first confessional discourse of the book itself is found in the introductory epistle, where H  lisenne expresses her desire to share her troubles with “quelque sien amy fidele” (96) in the hopes of causing her female readership to shed “quelques larmes piteuses: qui pourra [lui] donner quelque refrigeration medicamente:” (96).

Here we find that “Reason” already sees a “fateful bond between love and marriage. One index of a heightened patriarchal outlook among the Renaissance nobility is that love in the usual emotional and sexual sense must lead to marriage and be confined to it—for women, that is” (Kelly “Renaissance” 39). Kelly adds, “if the ideal court lady loves, she should love someone whom she can marry” (“Renaissance” 39).

This initial, inner “confession,” with Hélienne as confessant and “raison” as confessor, resolves the issue at first and puts Hélienne back on the straight and narrow path to a righteous life. Hélienne then cites exempla,¹⁰⁶ none of a Biblical or strictly liturgical variety, to prove the idea that “raison dominoit encores en [elle]” (103-104). Just as this is the first true confessional discourse of the novel, it also becomes the first “échec” of confession to curb desire. Hélienne writes, “en sorte que pensant la mitiguer, [la semblance du jeune jouvenceau] croissait et augmentoit.” (105). Once again, after retreating “en [elle]mesmes,” she sheds both the sound advice from Reason and of the exempla, deciding instead: “je nourriray amours tacitement en mon cueur, sans le divulguer à personne, tant soit il mon amy fidele” (105). Here it is her lack of outward confession, the action of keeping something secret that gives her pleasure. However, this pleasure in secret should not be confused with simple silence.¹⁰⁷ Hélienne certainly takes pleasure in not telling anyone of her love but she also revels in “nurturing” this adulterous feeling in her heart. She begins speaking her “self” to herself and, though troubled by her feelings for Guénélic, she retains and even creates power through the situation. After creating an inner confessional space (with Reason, “en ellemesmes”) Hélienne devises a plan to find her pleasure all while putting conditions on

¹⁰⁶ Cited in these examples are the names of several heroines from which Christine de Buzon believes the name “Hélienne” is formed. See the Buzon’s introduction to *Les Angoysses* (24-27).

¹⁰⁷ Virginia Krause describes the silence in *Les Angoysses* as “diabolique” and avers that Helisenne does not control “l’usage de son silence” (“Confessions” 32-33).

her feelings (“tant soit il mon amy fidele”). No matter how powerfully moved by her emotions, she is not confessing her unconditional love for Guénélic. Instead, she professes that she will find pleasure in “loving” Guénélic, without telling anyone (including Guénélic himself) and only on the condition that he remain a faithful “amy.” Much like the mutual and reciprocal love that she once shared with her husband, Hélienne creates a courtly, albeit imaginary, realm for her feelings towards Guénélic.¹⁰⁸ Under these circumstances, which she alone creates, only Hélienne is able to derive pleasure. With this newfound powerful plan for pleasure, Hélienne begins using deceit to protect her passion. When her husband questions her sudden change in comportment, Hélienne creates an “artificiele mensonge” (106), telling him that it is only her fear of the “terre litigieuse” that has caused her to fret. She often retreats to her thoughts and hides behind lies for protection, as pointed out by Beaulieu in the introduction of his modernized edition of *Les Angoysses*:

En effet, aussi bien pour échapper à la surveillance de son mari que pour influencer son amant, Hélienne affirme des choses qui, selon ce qu’elle confie au lecteur, diffèrent de ce qu’elle éprouve. Mécanisme de défense et de survie, le mensonge révèle surtout l’isolement qui est celui de la femme, de même que sa vulnérabilité à la médisance et à l’opinion publique. (20)

Hélienne indeed uses the lies she creates “en ellemesmes” for protection, but I do not believe that this always indicates weakness or isolation as Beaulieu claims. Whether in fantasy or actually plotting her next move, the actions born “en ellemesmes,” including the writing of her own book, are a source of immense power to which no one has access but Hélienne herself: isolation and protection perhaps, but not necessarily weakness. This particular minute “mensonge” could not be more perfectly placed as it was contemporaneous to the change in her emotions and also involves an “accepted” place for Hélienne to dwell.

¹⁰⁸ Somewhat like Marie de France’s *Lanval*.

As mentioned above, Renaissance women were highly encouraged to frequent the church and were also allowed to deal with such court proceedings involving land disputes. Héli-senne's choice to lie about the land troubles engages a doubly "accepted space" since she seems to have brought the landholdings in question to the marriage. Throughout the work, she often uses these accepted places to nurture her love and pleasure.¹⁰⁹

This lie only works for a short period of time before her husband confronts her again. Héli-senne responds to her mate's accusations, "et certes aussi je croy que ses pensées et ymaginations, ne sont pas *en moy*,¹¹⁰ au moins que j'eusse peu appercevoir" (109). She has now recognized the value of "en moy" as a powerfully private locus that remains unavailable to her husband. While the "terre litigieuse" and the lawcourts provide accepted, public spaces fully open to her as a noblewoman, this "en ellemesmes" is a private, even individual space reserved only for her. Danielle Régnier-Bohler describes such new individual expression in literature:

new representations of the individual slowly emerge. Instead of poetry, we have the expression of a lonely conscience, a more individualized lyricism that owes nothing to the rhetorical subjects marshaled by the troubadours and trouveres. As for nonfiction, memoirs and chronicles no longer pretend to be neutral; authors wish to be part of the scene. ("Imagining the Self" 314)

Each time that Héli-senne retreats "en ellemesmes" she is speaking herself, both using this "space" for protection and to conjure pleasure, to "nourish" her love. This too represents a more modern and less medieval aspect of the novel. After once again retreating to her inner-sanctuary, Héli-senne begins to calm and temper the anger that she feels towards her husband all while continuing to nurture the emotion that she feels for her lover. She states, "disant en

¹⁰⁹ See Luce Guillermin's "La prison des textes," p. 13

¹¹⁰ My emphasis.

moy mesmes: je ne doibs estre hors d'espereance d'avoir jouyssance de mon amy, car mon mary n'a point de suspicion de moy [...]. Il me fault apprendre à souffrir patiemment" (109). Much like her initial decision to "nourish" her love without telling anyone, Hélienne uses inner dialogue (en moymesmes) to hatch a plan for the "jouyssance de [son] amy" (109).

Hélienne's husband decides that moving to different lodging might help her disposition, which she hardly resists given that "[son] amy trouveroit bien le lieu" (110). Even more so than with the couple's first change in dwelling, this move engages another one of the very few "accepted" places that a woman of the Renaissance could occupy with complete indemnity: the church. This change of dwelling also continues what could be described as a Russian doll effect in the novel: the couple first moves from their country estate to the city and then again to another lodging in the city close to a "temple." This movement from more open space to more confined space continues throughout the work, mirrors Hélienne's inner speech and establishes a strong connection with religious sites and desire.¹¹¹ While the Church was obviously seen as a place of protection or immunity, it was also a place for intense and sometimes licentious emotions (Duby "Public Power, Private Power" 27). Just as with their first move, the next day¹¹² Hélienne finds Guénélic outside of her window and states, "Je me retiray ung petit, affin de prendre conseil à mon miroir, de mon accoustrement, grace et contenance" (111). It is as if she creates a sort of confessional box for herself by stepping away from the window "ung petit" with her "miroir,

¹¹¹ "Les romanciers sentimentaux aiment placer leurs personnages dans un décor évoquant l'espace resserré du confessionnal. Les espaces de prédilection des amoureux dans le roman sentimental se trouvent au coin d'une église, au fond d'une garde-robe, meme dans les recoins du palais de justice" (Krause "Confessions" 28-29). Further clouding the locus of the "church" is the usage of words like "temple" and "divins oracles." (110-111). This will be discussed in greater detail below.

¹¹² This time "la journée sequente" instead of "le lendemain." (111).

accoustrement, grace et contenance” replacing “Reason” as her confessor.¹¹³ Hélienne uses almost the exact same language when describing the environment of her confession with a monk later in the book: “que fusmes retirez en ung petit lieu secret” (147). Much like her discussion with reason personified, Hélienne begins speaking “en moymesmes,” adding this time, in parentheses “(comme si j’eusse parlé à luy)” (111). Again, she creates the pleasure and controls the situation: her secret is kept but she is expressing herself (“comme si j’eusse parle a luy”) and is thus not being totally silent.

As Hélienne creates this confessional environment for pleasure, her husband assumes a priest-like role in opposition to the “miroir” that Hélienne prefers. She states, “Ainsi que je prenoys singulier plaisir, en mes amoureuses pensées, mon mary se vint appuyer aupres de moy, lequel ne se peust garder de declairer et discharger son cueur” (111). Her husband startles her from her reverie and states, “Je voys la vostre amy que vous regardez merueilleusement, soyez certaine, que je scay veritablement que vous estes surprinse, dont il me deplaist” (111). After admonishing Hélienne, the husband delves further into his role as pseudo-priest when he implores her to repentance:

avez contrition d’avoir si long temps persisté en voz continuelz regards, ne vous voulant desister de vostre folie. Vous repentez vous d’avoir laissé surprendre vostre cueur, voulant commencer une vie detestable et abhominable? Si je pensoye que vostre vouloir fust de adnuller et chasser amour de vostre cueur, et vous vouloir reduyre et remettre à plus honnestes coustumes de vivre, je ne vous en tiendroye à moindre estime, par ce que je congnois les premiers mouvemens n’estre en nostre puissance. (114)

Refusing this opportunity for repentance, Hélienne then retires to “une aultre chambre” at bedtime, once again deftly negotiating the space available to her and successfully avoiding her husband “jusques ad ce qu’il fust endormy” (115). This passage again could show the

¹¹³ On the mirror and moral education see Régner-Bohler “Imagining the Self,” p. 391.

different relationship that early modern subjects had with space when compared with their medieval counterparts. Duby describes the medieval bed as “the family womb, the most private part of the residence” yet also mentions that it was in no way a place of complete “solitude” as servants and other family members often slept in the same room (“Aristocratic Households” 63). Duby also points out that “the *chambre des dames* was not a place for seduction or amusement but a kind of prison, in which women were incarcerated because men feared them” (“Aristocratic Households” 77). Women also ruled over bedroom and birthing rooms, “this most private sanctum, woman ruled over the dark realm of sexual pleasure, reproduction and death” (Duby “Aristocratic Households” 80). Hélienne’s description of her retreat shows just how far removed her house is from these medieval dwellings. While the urban setting does not allow room for orchards or walled gardens, we see that Hélienne does find actual solitude in *another* bedroom. Still somewhat of a prison since she is confined to the house, this other “chambre” also allows her a quiet space in which to reflect and escape her husband’s questioning. Most importantly, this room allows her a space to be alone and eventually to write or, as Beaulieu describes it: “the textual site where the character and the narrator come together” (Beaulieu “Erudition and Aphasia” 40).

The “temple” next to which Hélienne and her husband have moved continues to serve as a favorable place for pleasurable experience. This of course is not without precedent and is definitely not restricted to early modern literature, as stories such as that of Abélard and Héloïse remind us. Sot points out that, for Abélard, the “*demarche penitentielle relève d’un mouvement intérieur d’amour plus que de l’idée de sacrement*” (Sot 74). Héloïse herself states, “during Holy Mass itself, when prayer should be its purest, unholy fantasies of pleasure so enslave my wretched soul that my devotion is to *them* and not my prayers”

(Heloise 79). This also calls to mind the words of Saint Augustine when he declares, “during the celebration of your solemn rites within the walls of your Church, I even dared to lust after a girl and to start an affair that would procure the fruit of death” (37). And as shown above, most of the historical evolutions of Christian confessional practices tended towards more intimate contact. Just as H  lisenne had used the “aultre chambre” in her home for protection or even to linger in her lovesick state, she also finds the accepted space par excellence for a Renaissance woman, the church, as a propitious place for what could be seen as one of the most sensual interactions between the two lovers in the entire novel. H  lisenne states, “allay ouyr les suffrages divins en ung petit temple: [...] je vy mon ami, lequel me jecta une tres percante œillade, qui me fut penetrative jusques au cueur” (115). This passage places an encounter charged with sexual language of penetration, (“jecta”, “percante”, “penetrative”) inside an actual church, recalling H  lo  se’s “unholy fantasies” mentioned above. It should also be noted that, though the medieval church did not encourage sexual activity in the church, it technically did not forbid it. Sot comments on the accepted sexual activity in a holy place: “si les choses pressent, il faut chercher un recoin pour faire ce que nature requiert. Selon le *Compendium theologiae*, la dette conjugale ‘n’a pas besoin d’  tre pay  e en public. Mais    toute heure et en toute circonstance, toutes affaires cessantes, si l’un sait que l’autre est en   tat de d  sir dangereux, il est oblig   de chercher un recoin secret et de payer la dette.’ Il faut m  me accepter de s’en acquitter dans un lieu saint, le cas   cheant!” (Sot 125). This commentary reveals a desire to find a “recoin secret” that is also present in *Les Angyosses*.

The intensity of H  lisenne’s “sexual” experience in the church is heightened by the intimate nature of the “petit temple” where this sensuous encounter takes place, another spatial Russian doll in the novel that is described by H  lisenne. H  lisenne contrasts this “petit

temple” to a “maistre temple” where “ordinairement ouyr les suffrages divins...ou tout chascun convenoit” (115). In the “petit temple” she is struck in a stark, sexual way by Guénélic’s eyes, whereas the experience in the “maistre temple” is much more public and less intense. Heitsch describes how this sort of encounter was understood in Renaissance medical terms: “according to Renaissance medical knowledge concerning the emergence of love: the lover’s image, through visual rays and through the eyes, is etched onto the thoughts and the heart of the beholder” (342). Inside the “petit temple,” Hélienne is overwhelmed by thoughts of sensual pleasure with no regard to what “the public” might think. She writes, “Je me prins à regarder sans avoir honte, ne vergogne, et ne me soucioye d’ung sien compaignon, qui evidemment povoit app[er]cevoir mes regardz impudicques et artificielz” (115). While the smaller temple is much more private and intimate than the “maistre temple,” it is not a completely private place; as seen above, Hélienne alludes to the presence of Guénélic’s friend and leaves the temple due to fear of her husband’s arrival. The mention of this decidedly more public “maistre temple” comes just after Hélienne directly addresses her female readers: “Ainsi comme avez ouy (tres cheres dames)” (115). The smaller and more intimate “petit temple” and its sexually charged images are thus born from the inner dialogue of the narrator while the “maistre temple” emerges from the public forum of the actual written book. What immediately follows is the first of Guénélic’s many “non-heroic” actions: “tousjours accompagné de plusieurs [...] il publioit et divulgoit noz amours” (115). Upon seeing this, Hélienne retreats again to her mind and “disoye en [elle] mesmes” that she will no longer use “de regards, aumoins en public” (116). What begins to emerge is the continuation of a process that started after the king’s visit: Hélienne continues to understand the difference between private and public space. Her writing takes a didactic tone, warning

her female readers of the dangers of love only in the public space of the “maistre temple,” while no such warning comes in the more private place of the “petit temple.” Hélienne begins to realize the “safe” locations available to her as a woman of the sixteenth century, both for simple protection and for pleasure. I do not believe that she is warning her female readership against the dangers of love per se, but that she is, as was pointed out by some of her earliest critics, providing them with a primer on the least dangerous ways to find pleasure in their lives. Most importantly for this study, she continues to create a series of “confessions” which only serve to heighten her pleasure, thus creating, or at least copying, then corrupting an institution meant to control and subjugate her “sinful” desires.

As the story unfolds, Guénélic increasingly violates the public/private pact that Hélienne longs for by playing music at her window, which causes Le Mari to confront her again about her illicit feelings. These actions prove too much for Hélienne to handle and she loses herself completely:

je commencay à derompre mes cheveulx et à violer et ensanglanter ma face de mes ongles, et de mon trenchant cry femenin penetroye les aureilles des escoutants. Quand je peuz parler, comme femme du tout alienée de raison je luy dis: Certes je croy que quelque esperit familier vous revele le secret de mes pensées, ce que je pensoye estre reservé à la divine prescience, et vrayement je l’ayme, effusement et cordialement, et avecq si grande fermeté, que aultre chose que la mort ne me scauroit separer de son amour. (118)

While it would be hard to argue that Hélienne retains power or control in this “confession” or that she is in any way using this story to promote and further the merits of her illicit love, it seems much more than a simple example of showing her readers what not to do. She wonders if some “esperit familier” has revealed secrets only known by “divine prescience.” Krause proposes that this shows the older form and function of confession with the secret equaling the diabolical (“Confessions” 31). I see something very different: what enraged

Hélisenne has nothing to do with diabolical secrets and began back in the “maistre temple.” This “esperit familier” fits perfectly with the classical Greek idea of the daimon, the “messengers who shuttle back and forth between” the mortal and the immortal (Plato *Symposium* 47). Hélisenne already reacts strongly to Guénélic’s “publishing” their love to his friend because, though she and Guénélic have yet to speak, this is an act of betrayal and not at all proof of a mutual and reciprocal love. By boasting to his friend, Guénélic breaks a commandment of sorts that Hélisenne had established with herself after “la semblance, effigie ou similitude du jeune jouvenceau, estoit paincte et descripte en [sa] pensée”, stating later that she would “nourrir” her love for Guénélic “sans le divulguer à personne, tant soit il mon amy fidele”¹¹⁴ (105). In this earlier passage, it is only the memory of Guénélic that troubles Hélisenne but, upon seeing him in the “petit temple,” the imagery is much more active and intense. It is no longer simple “semblance, effigie ou similitude” but Guénélic in person who “jecta une tres percante œillade” (115). Beyond the similar imagery of the eyes as projecting or capturing images then etched in the brain, the words “publier and divulguer” also appear in both passages. Several times throughout the book extremely intense reactions, both by Hélisenne and by her husband, occur following the word “publier” in the text, and not surprisingly. As Rigolot avers, “l’envie de publier [ses sentiments]...est le plus souvent considérée comme un dangereux signe de débauche” (“Ecrire au féminin” 5). Hélisenne realizes the potential pleasure of her personal, private space and makes the decision to keep it there “sans le divulguer à personne.” While she has no power over Guénélic’s actions, she does stipulate that he hold up his end of the bargain (“tant il soit mon ami fidele”). The couple’s mutual sending of “regardz impudiques” while in the (semi)private space of the

¹¹⁴ Again, this recalls the fairy-like lady in Marie de France’s *Lanval*. She “punishes” Lanval for breaking their pact, even though he is doing so in good faith.

“petit temple” does not push Hélienne over the edge, even though the feelings are intense and she recognizes that one of Guénéléc’s companions takes notice. This shows that she is not totally opposed to “publishing” her love, only that it must be on her terms, which in turn can serve as a metaphor for Crenne’s overall authorial endeavor. Crenne’s works are filled with the tension felt by a woman who struggles to find a space to publish pleasure, whether in the form of Hélienne’s letters or confessions or Crenne’s actual published works themselves. Though extremely sensual in nature, much like the rest of Hélienne’s work, this encounter in the temple has as much, if not more, to do with freedom of expression, writing, and publishing on her own terms than anything to do with the sexual body. Much like the idea of *erōs* in Plato’s *Symposium*, which can be seen as “the desire to possess sexually the body of another person,” I believe that Hélienne’s sentiment here, and throughout her works, could be described just as easily as “a desire for immortality, for wisdom, and for the contemplation of an object which is not in any way bodily or physical” (Nehamas and Woodruff “Introduction” xxii). Hélienne shows that Guénéléc transgresses his role as “amy fidele” by using the very same word “divulguer” and adding “publier” to describe how Gueneléc treats their love in the “maistre temple” or public space, also reinforced or corroborated by one of her “demoyselles” proving Guénéléc’s indiscretion. Hélienne then takes another decision no longer to give Guénéléc longing looks but adds the qualifier “aumoins en public,” (116) showing more cunning than guilt. It should be noted that she is not plotting ways to resist her love or to stifle it: she is simply searching for ways to proceed on her own terms to maximize pleasure and to minimize danger. It takes Guénéléc’s coming to her dwelling, thus completely confusing public and private space, to invoke the violent words from her husband and thus provoke her confession.

Once “revenue en elle” after her fit of rage, she is greeted again by threats from her husband. He acknowledges what she has “confessé de [sa] bouche” and states: “Mais s’il vous prend envie de le basier, devant qu’il soit trois jours je vous le feray basier mort” (119). The only thing that will increase more than the husband’s violence as the novel progresses will be his attempts to confine Hélienne. He never fully succeeds, however, as Ching points out: “each time Hélienne’s husband attempts to assert his power by appropriating the evidence of her subjectivity, she counters him by regaining it” (23). Even with her apparent loss of control, by confessing her love for Guénélic to her husband, Hélienne does retain some power: her power is expressed by the lack of success of this confession to reform. She confesses her illicit love but feels no guilt and thus no need to change. She simply continues to state her “moi”, her existence. Hélienne truly becomes powerful because she becomes fully aware. As Barbara Ching writes, “this blossoming of woman’s subjectivity is in fact a result of her consciousness of her oppression, her consciousness of men’s power over her” (17). Outside of the early episode with the king, Hélienne is always conscious of her oppression.

Hélienne also begins to use other devices to manipulate Le Mari. In response to her husband’s increasing violence, Hélienne uses an “effusion de larmes” (119), which softens her husband’s mood and causes him to comfort her all while urging her to forget her illicit feelings. The husband then comes close to her “pour parvenir au plaisir de Venus,” which she finds a way to avoid again by using “larmes, pleurs, douleurs et soupirs, et quand il pensa m’avoir un peu consolée, il s’endormit jusques au jour” (120). The next morning brings renewed sexual advances by the husband that eventually come to fruition. However, this should not be understood as a sign of weakness or submissiveness to her husband. Before this

sexual act, H  lisenne states that her “c  ur avoit desja faict divorce et repudiation totale d’avec luy” (120). Henceforth, she will only sleep with him in order to “couvrir et donner ombre    [son] inique vouloir” (120). Action such as this could be seen as the ultimate perversion of the marital bliss proposed to H  lisenne by “reason personified” earlier in the novel: she agrees to sleep with her husband only after arriving at a state of ultimate “divorce,” thus the complete opposite of the sacrament of marriage. H  lisenne completes the perversion by using sex, the sacred duty ordained by God in marriage for procreation, to cover her sin and lack of contrition.¹¹⁵ One could argue that the idea of procreation is remarkably absent in this work, thus clouding the defiling of marriage that I read in this passage. However, even with no thought towards sex for procreation, H  lisenne’s “divorce” and subsequent sexual activity involving her husband still violates, or corrupts completely the teachings of the Church concerning sex. The Church always saw non-procreative sex as sinful but necessary: As Abelard writes, “for although the payment of the marital debt is not entirely without sin, still the lesser sins are permitted them to keep them from the greater,” with the “greater” in this case being fornication (Abelard and Heloise 216). Whether for procreation or simply conjugal obligation, H  lisenne totally perverts the Church’s teachings on sex, using payment of the marital debt not as way to refrain from sin or keep more sins from happening but as a cover for even greater sin. She states that she is finished with her husband yet recognizes how to use her power over him through sex to continue to find avenues of freedom and thus pleasure. H  lisenne simply could have continued the “strategy” of tears and sadness to hide her true feelings from her husband. Instead, she uses sex which,

¹¹⁵ Other than brief mentions of her own birth, for which her parents waited a long time, H  lisenne only mentions procreation once in the novel (138-139). She describes suffering for love’s sake as the travails that a woman feels during labor, stating that the joys of seeing the child, much like the joys of love, make all of the pain feel insignificant. Here again, H  lisenne takes a tenet of the church and perverts it.

other than at the very beginning of the novel when she is a mere child, always seems to result in at least some physical pleasure for her. In a way, it is her words, her stating the “divorce” that allows the sex act to occur and carry no meaning (at least for her). The proclamation of divorce expresses her true feelings and serves to absolve her from any emotional attachment to the sex act. Just as the penitent sinner can walk away cleansed after the priest declares the absolution, Hélienne “cleanses” sexual relations with her husband of shame by totally separating herself from him. Surprised at first by her confession to her husband, Hélienne eventually uses it to express her love, just as she had done with “reason” earlier in the work. She takes her husband’s questioning and her eventual confession to him and internalizes the lessons, ultimately using the sacred duties of her marriage pact to give cover to her illicit feelings. Just as she navigates the physical spaces of the church and the lawcourts, where women could circulate with some freedom, to foster her feelings for Guénélic, Hélienne hides behind the sacred tenets of marriage to facilitate her adulterous love affair.

A most curious passage follows this “black Sabbath” of marriage. Upon speaking with the neighbors concerning the previous night’s musical commotion, it is proposed that someone is “*espris de l’amour*” for one of the women in the area. This quickly turns into comedy as the only other woman, besides Hélienne, for whom the music could have been intended, is described as follows:

layde et odieuse, et de sa difformité et laydeur je vous en veulx faire le recit. Elle estoit de petite stature, bossue, et boyteuse, et si avoit le visaige fort ridé, les sourcilz larges de deux doigtz, sans y avoir distance de l’un à l’autre. Elle avoit les yeulx petitz et noirs, merveilleusement enfonchez en la teste, et le nez fort camus, la bouche outrageusement grande, et les lebvres grosses, et si n’avoit seulement que deux dents grandes outre mesure, et avoit le col court, et les tetins luy reposaient sur le ventre, et si estoit aagée de septante et deux ans. (121)

This leads Hélienne to a rare moment of levity as she writes, “je ne me peuz garder de rire” (122). Even the publisher Denis de Harsy, who so adeptly divided *Les Angoysses* into chapters with individual titles, appears to be at a loss concerning this passage, as his title simply reads “La jalousie du mary avec la description d’une femme laide.” By its very peculiarity this passage jumps off the page forcing the reader to take note. I propose that, given its inclusion just after such violence and deceit, the placement of this anecdote is more than just a simple moment of ribald humor. Before this moment of laughter, extreme violence was evoked: Hélienne had just drawn blood by scratching her own face, screamed with a “trenchant cry femenin” and imagined her bloody body as a prison pierced by swords. These already violent words were joined by her husband’s threat to make Hélienne “baiser mort”¹¹⁶ Guénélic, Hélienne’s self-proclaimed “divorce” and her use of sex to placate her husband. The only commonality between all of these points is the institution of marriage: Hélienne breaks her vows by confessing her love for Guénélic and then by sleeping with her husband for no other reason but to further protect and facilitate her sinful feelings. The impetus for the conversation between the husband and the neighbor is that there must have been a woman in the vicinity of marrying age. Could this be a judgment on marriage, or at least the type of marriage that the Renaissance church had come to promote? As Chrisinte de Buzon writes, “ce roman dit une haine de la société en général et du mariage en particulier” (“Roman et passion” 216). Perhaps Hélienne would agree with Heloise that “the name of wife may have the advantages of sanctity and safety, but to me the sweeter name will always be *lover* or, if your dignity can bear it, *concubine* or *whore*” (Abelard and Heloise 55). The placement of this comical story appears even more curious upon reading what immediately

¹¹⁶ One should not forget that, even as far back as Villon, the word “baiser” could be used with some ambiguity as to meaning and intensity. Just as Louise Labé would do half a century later, I believe that Hélienne de Crenne purposefully uses this word for effect.

follows. Hélienne's husband, seemingly not moved by the humorous anecdote, forbids Hélienne to leave their house without him before commanding her to dress up for a "feste solennele" (122) the following day. This episode again shows how Hélienne manipulates power. After dressing in "une cotte de satin blanc, et une robe de satin cramoisy" (123) Hélienne and her husband go to the temple for mass. Hélienne and Guénélic see each other briefly but do not exchange words or glances, for which she praises him since his discretion will not rouse the suspicion of her husband. After the "office solennel" was finished, Hélienne and her husband return home where they again "pass[èrent] le temps recreation et voluptueulx plaisirs" (124). Upon returning to the temple for vespers, Guénélic comes so close to Hélienne that he steps on her "cotte de satin blanc" (124). This renders Le Mari furious but pleases Hélienne immensely as she states, "il ne m'en desplaisoit mais au contraire, volontairement et de bon cuer j'eusse baisé le lieu ou son pied avoit touché" (124). By using the exact same language that her husband used so violently to express sexual imagery and immense pleasure, Hélienne transfers the power of such language to herself. As Ching writes, "Hélienne thus self-consciously writes as her man's other, seizing her authority from his power over her, and appropriating his language to express her own subjectivity" (24). Hélienne's appropriation of her husband's "power" through language falls directly in line with Crenne's borrowing from contemporary texts written by men.¹¹⁷ Ching calls this "deliberate intertextuality that makes *Les Angoysses douloureuses* a woman's counter-text" (24). The idea of transgression by the staining of her white cloak, especially when contrasted with her crimson dress, is obvious and has been discussed at length.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ See Christine de Buzon's critical edition for an extensive study of the intertextual nature of Crenne's works.

¹¹⁸ See Leah Chang's article "Clothing Dame Hélienne: The Staging of Female Authorship and the Production of the 1538 *Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours*."

Guénélic's action incenses Le Mari and he states, "il sembla par cela [having stepped on her dress] qu'il eust grand privauté et familiarité avecq vous" (125). This could seem at first glance an odd, if not awkward, way of establishing intimacy but it is, however, a perfect example of Hélienne's clever use of public space for developing pleasure. Even after her husband's new and ever increasing restrictions, she knows that the church is always open to her. Short of killing him, her husband cannot keep Guenelic from attending church services, thus allowing them an "accepted" forum. Hélienne is not offended by Guénélic damaging her costume, a costume in which, nevertheless, she takes great pride, just as she was not offended by his imprudent "regardz" in the petit temple. This "faux pas" allows her intimate contact all while also offending the husband's control. Hélienne not only takes pleasure in the close contact with her lover that this event affords her, but accepts the defiling of her "purity" all while actively wishing to take part in said transgression, as expressed by the sexually charged "baisé." She wishes "to kiss" the spot on her pearly white cloak that Guénélic's dirty underfoot had touched; just like she had done earlier defiling holy matrimony and the conjugal debt, here Hélienne continues her transgression with stark imagery. Kelly describes the Renaissance idea of the role of women in society to which I believe Hélienne is reacting: "It bound the lady to chastity, to the merely procreative sex of political marriage just as her weighty and costly costume came to conceal and constrain her body while it displayed her husband's noble rank" ("Renaissance" 45-46). Le Mari responds to this offense by forbidding Hélienne to be in Guénélic's presence (even at the elevation of the body of Christ) and also forbids her from wearing expensive and fancy clothes. Undeterred by these new interdictons, Hélienne continues throughout the novel to plot new strategies to see and eventually converse with her lover: "pensant que quelque foy

trouveroys lieu plus commode et opportune pour exprimer l'ung à l'autre les secretz de noz pensées" (126).

These events do cause H  lisenne to lose much of her freedom. What she maintains through all of this, however, is her inner conversation "en ellemesme" which eventually leads her to write the "confession" that will become the book we are reading. The first form of writing from H  lisenne appears after her husband breaks down the door to her "chambre," finding letters that H  lisenne and Gu  n  lic had written to each other. Just as Gu  n  lic had violated H  lisenne's private space by playing the guitar at her window, her husband now does the same by violating her personal space and her letters. The husband then speaks of his inability to "convert" H  lisenne's heart and goes beyond mere threats by hitting her in the face causing her to "baiser la terre" (135). H  lisenne tells her husband that her letter was "compose suelement par exercice, et pour eviter oysivet  " (136) but her husband does not believe her. He describes Gu  n  lic's actions: "tout son desir et affection n'est qu'   penser et ymaginer diverses facons, et divers actes,    toy dommageables, pour te priver d'honneur, affin de te *publier*"¹¹⁹ (136), again showing the violence associated with "publier." After this episode, the husband reinforces her lack of freedom once again as they change lodging for the third time. As stated above, I see the first move from the castle to the city as representing the shift from medieval to early modern and the second as establishing the "temple" as a meeting place for love. This third move gives H  lisenne time and space to begin writing her book:

Pendant ce temps que je langoissoye en telle calamite, toutes choses m'estoient tristes et odieuses, et ne prenoye delectation es choses de ce monde, et encores fortune non rassasi  e de me prester matiere d'*agoisseuses douleurs*,¹²⁰ les voulant augmenter, s'efforca d'appareiller une infortune, dont

¹¹⁹ My emphasis.

le rememorer m'est triste, et ayant horreur de le r[e]later, toutesfoys en plorant et lamentant mon infelicité, je m'efforçay de l'escripre. (137)

Increasingly, the story becomes less about Guénélic or her husband and more about the writing of the book itself. As Conley points out, “The reader’s interest leans as much toward the narrator’s personal struggle in composing a text as in assimilation of events: the *mis en abyme* establishes the movements in the work from exterior to interior, from public to private, from the stable to the irrational” (326). Just as Harsy’s chapter titles show, the role of Hélienne’s nameless husband diminishes as his violence towards her increases. He becomes much more brutal throughout part 1 of the novel but in fact becomes weaker in the process. Barbara Ching adroitly points out that the husband’s brutality physically subjugates Hélienne but leads to the “direct exercise of power” that is writing (22). Crenne’s portrayal of conjugal violence is a powerful critique of the plight of Renaissance women. If we look closely at the most openly didactic passages, Hélienne exhorts ladies to avoid scandal and public shame. However, rarely does she espouse the line of thinking put forth by Reason in the beginning of the novel, that is to say that love should be found only in holy matrimony. Instead, Hélienne’s “advice” could be read just as easily as giving women strategies to safely navigate the public spaces available to them, avoiding their husbands and keeping their lovers honest, all while showing them a path to pleasure. As Ching asserts, “giving form to this knowledge constitutes both consciousness of oppression and a revolutionary, subjective response to it” (20).

Perhaps foreshadowing the three encounters with actual religious figures that will follow in the text, Hélienne and her husband also go to “ouyr le divin service de Dieu en ung devot monastere” (138). The husband takes the tone of a confessor and implores

¹²⁰ My emphasis.

Hélisenne: “Je vous prie, dictes moy (sans m’en a vouloir riens celer¹²¹) s’il advenoit que vostre amy fust dedans ce temple, seroit il en vostre faculte de povoir moderer vostre vouloir et appetite” (138). Hélisenne’s response to her husband’s question surprises in its candor and violence: “je prie au createur qu’au cas que cela m’advienne, que toute puissance elementée me soit contraire, et que tygres et loups ravissans lacerent et devorent mon corps, ou que les troys seurs le fil vital immaturément me coupent” (138). This passionate response is immediately followed by increasing violence from Le Mari who forces her to leave the temple after seeing her lover then threatens to kill her, “que je convertisse mon espée dans ta poitrine” (139), before hitting her so hard that she loses two of her teeth. Hélisenne continually exasperates him with her heart that he “n’[a] aulcunement sceu convertir” (135). From the actual physical space (ung devot monastere) to his actual words (sans m’en a vouloir riens celer, convertir), the husband’s role here and lack of success in reforming Hélisenne’s feelings opens the door to the religious confessions that follow.¹²²

The final chapter of Hélisenne’s struggle with her husband begins in a brief moment of freedom. Continuing her manipulation of accepted public space and of her status as rich landowner, she makes occasional trips to the “playdoyer, et aussi pour luy ayder à donner ordre en noz affaires” (159). Helisenne also manipulates her husband, giving somewhat trumped up reasons to get him to leave the house saying: “je luy disoys que c’estoit chose tres urgente qu’il se trovast en plusieurs lieux de ses terres et seigneuries, luy donnant à entendre que par negligence de les visiter, les lieux en pourroient estre moins vallables” (159). Despite the increasing violence and interdiction of Hélisenne’s movement, the husband is not able to neglect their “terres” and, especially since she brought most of the land

¹²¹ The phrase “sans riens celer” or “sans riens reserver” appears at every subsequent confessional encounter.

¹²² This will be discussed at length below.

holdings to the marriage, the husband must allow her to the lawcourts. He does, however, insist on accompanying her to the court, which she accepts grudgingly: “mais considerant que qui ne peult faire ce que l’on veult, il fault faire ce que l’on peult” (159). Somehow avoiding the sartorial sanctions imposed on her after the infamous cloak incident, Hélienne gets out of bed and dresses in “riches et triumpantz habillementz” (159). Seemingly just after she dons her rich attire Hélienne loses herself in reverie: “Et ainsi que me delectoye et prenoye singulier plaisir en mes amoureuses pensées, la delectation entra si vehemente dedans mon cuer, que je perdoye toute countenance” (160). Though she uses the simple past verb form “habillay” just before, indicating that she had finished getting dressed, Hélienne uses verbs in the imperfect (“delectoye” and “prenoye”) to describe her orgasmic thoughts in the next sentence. This temporal ripple stands out even more given that the following sentence, “incontinent que je feuz habillée, me demanda si je vouloys aller au lieu l’on faict droict et accord aux discordantz,” uses another perfect tense, referring again to the action of dressing as having been accomplished. This could even remind the reader of what has been called the “imperfect tense of reverie” in the much more modern prose of Flaubert.¹²³ Schlossman sees Flaubert’s use of the imperfect as “articulat[ing] a number of moments of melting that combine past and present, the real world and the creations of desire, the impression and its disappearance into the fictions and fantasies of the observer” (“Moving Sidewalk” 74). The passage seems to express that Hélienne had these thoughts while she was getting dressed and the ambiguous state of (un)dress in the text only serves to heighten the extremely sensual expression by the heroine. While this trip to the “lieu playdoyable” does not put the two lovers together, it does allow Hélienne great pleasure: “moult grand

¹²³ Krause compares Hélienne to Emma Bovary, Don Quixote, la Princesse de Clèves amongst others, stating, “Intimement lié au phénomène du roman, le bovarysme pourrait bien être de la même façon une invention de la Renaissance” (“Confessions” 21).

multitude d'hommes, et aulcunes damoyselles, dont plusieurs vindrent à circuыр au tour de moy, et me commencerent à louer et extoller" (160). The reader learns once again that H  lisenne is "la plus accomplie en formosit   de corps qu'ilz eussent jamais veue" (161) and that she takes great pleasure in being seen: "Je faignoyz de regarder aultre part: mais je les escoutoyz, et eusse prins singulier plaisir" (161). Much like the beginning of the novel just before the king's visit, H  lisenne is richly dressed and her body is the talk of the town. The difference between this passage and the beginning, however, is that she fully owns her beautiful body and her husband cannot send her away. Also unlike the beginning, sex with her husband is no longer painful and she has even learned to use sex with him as a way to get what she wants, totally divorced from any sentiment. She has continually overcome her husband and his punishments, finding a way once again to be dressed up in public and to be seen. I believe that this scene shows the lack of power that the husband truly has over H  lisenne in the end. As mentioned above, he is never named and never reappears after part 1 of the novel. His last actions in the work are increasingly desperate and violent and he eventually makes good on his threats: "je te feroye present de son corps tout desrompu et lacer  : et    l'heure t'enfermeroyz en une tour, ou par force et contraincte je te feroye coucher avecq luy" (178). The husband locks H  lisenne away in a tower at the end of part 1, a tower that takes her back to her original chateau or at least one with which she is familiar.

Despite all the deceit and treachery that she uses to see Gu  n  lic, it is truly H  lisenne's writing that imprisons her. She states that she was betrayed by a servant: "la perverse et inicque conspira contre moy telle trahyson, que de toutes mes gestes et contenances, et mesmes des parolles qu'elles avoit bien not  es et retenues [...] et pour donner plus evidente preuve de ma vie, luy dist, que par mes escritures en pourroit estre

certioré” (204). Once again, the husband breaks through her door and finds her “escriptures, par lesquelles estoyent exhibées et bien amplement declairées toutes les fortunes benevoles et malevoles qui m’estoyent advenues” (205). Though she cannot physically resist this prison, Hélienne does succeed in appropriating this explicit form of control: her tower prison gives her a “room of her own” in which to write, or re-write her story based on the letters that her husband destroyed:

je ne trouvay moyen plus convenable, que de reduire en ma memoire la piteuse complaincte que paravant j’avoye de ma main escripte: laquelle mon mary avoit bruslée par l’impetuosité de son yre, et me sembla si elle pouvoit estre consignee entre les mains de mon amy, que cela pourroit estre cause de mettre fin à mes peines, et donner principe au vivre joyeux. Moy estant en telle deliberation, subitement je donnay commencement à l’oeuvre presente. (218)

In this way, Hélienne’s prison fits perfectly with Régnier-Bohler’s definition of a tower as “symbolizing the power coveted by the conqueror, the tower is simultaneously a defensive edifice, a habitable space, and a place of pleasure.” (“Imagining the Self” 321). Just as penetrative vocabulary was used in an earlier scene with Guénélic inside the inside of a church, the phallic aspect of the tower should not be ignored. Hélienne is imprisoned but she appropriates the tower and the “power coveted by the conqueror” it symbolizes, makes it a “habitable space” and definitely converts her prison into a “place of pleasure.” Parts 2 and 3 of the novel continue this idea of penetration, with the clichéd chivalric adventures of Guénélic and Quézinstra, and culminate with the two adventurers “storming the castle” to rescue Hélienne. This will be discussed at length below but it should be noted that Hélienne continually takes institutions and mechanisms meant to control her, appropriates them, and finally uses them for pleasure and, ultimately, to create her novel.

The language of confession is first established in part 1 of the novel through interactions with the husband: words like “repentir, confesser, publier, divulguer” and expressions like “sans riens celer” and “sans rien reserver” repeat at each confessional occasion. The public spaces of the lawcourts and religious arenas offer “accepted” places for Hélienne to exist and eventually appropriate for her own pleasure. Ultimately, Hélienne’s navigating and interacting with these various confessional aspects, all meant to control her, leads to her confinement in the tower: the ultimate form of punishment but also an almost completely private place in which to write. Thus far I have only alluded to Hélienne’s interactions with Guénélic and the “pact” that she establishes. A closer look at the confessional discourse between the two lovers will reveal that, unlike with her husband, Hélienne always directs the discourse with her lover. In the following section of this chapter I will use the confessional discourse between husband and wife as a foundation for comparison of the conversations between lover and lady before moving to the more structured and religious confessionals in the text. This next section will show how Hélienne manipulates confession by actually becoming the confessor, foreshadowing her power at novel’s end.

Confessions Between Guénélic and Hélienne

If Hélienne has to struggle to achieve power over her husband, or at least to learn how to navigate his punishments in order to find freedom and pleasure, she controls and manipulates her lover Guénélic from the start. While the text describes her as “prise” by her love for Guénélic just after seeing him for the first time, Hélienne never truly allows him the upper hand. As described above, the initial interactions between the two lovers, though at

times extremely intense, are limited to “regards” with no words or physical contact. In fact, the first actual contact comes in the church when Guénélic steps on her “cotte de satin blanc” (124). The first words spoken between the two lovers share many elements with other confessional discourse in the novel. After returning to the place of worship where the cloak incident occurred in hopes seeing Guénélic, Hélienne reflects on the best manner to communicate with her lover: “Je m’absent[ay] pensant que quelque foys trouveroys lieu plus commode et opportun pour exprimer l’ung a l’aulture les secretz de nos pensees” (126). Having controlled the outward signs of her “flamme” for Guénélic, Hélienne finds a way to go to the “temple” accompanied only by one of her “familieres damoyselles” (126). Preparing the arena for amorous colloquy Hélienne states, “et pour l’inciter, je me tenoye dedans le temple jusques ad ce qu’il estoit vuyde de toutes gens” (126). She continues this for several days before Guénélic musters the courage to approach her. Just as with the “maistre temple” and the “petit temple” in their first exchange of glances, their first vocal conversation happens in a more intimate space inside the church. Hélienne states, “il entra en une chappelle ou on commençoit à faire le divin service, parquoy j’euz occasion honneste de me lever, et aller pres de luy” (127). We see again that Hélienne uses the church as a protected space, giving her an “honest” reason to approach her lover. It is also important to note, however, that she is not simply using the church itself as a passive protective space, she is also violating the sacred moment of the “divin service” to cover her sinful activity. Though Hélienne follows him into the chapel, it is Guénélic who comes to her once she is inside: “il commenca à se pourmener, mais il ne tarda guieres qu’il ne se vint presenter devant moy, en me saluant et regardant d’ung oeil doux et amoureux” (127). Guénélic then declares his feelings: “Ma dame, il y a long temps que j’ay grand desir et affection de parler à vous, pour

vous declarer ce que facilement povez conjecturer mais je ne veulx tenir long propos, affin d'eviter la suspition des gens" (127). Though he cites her honor as an excuse not to speak with her at greater length, it seems that "pusillanimité" and "timeur," words used to describe Guénélic's less than heroic demeanor throughout the novel, are more than likely the cause.¹²⁴ Guénélic asks for permission to write to her and she agrees, telling him to write "entierement [son] vouloir, sans rien reserver" (127-128). Again, the phrase "sans riens reserver" appears but this time from Hélienne and not from one of her male "confessors." This entire scene with Guénélic shows Hélienne's power in several ways. She expressly "incites" Guénélic to come to her and he follows her every order, including stipulating the manner in which Guénélic should write to her. As Christine de Buzon points out, the audacity of Hélienne's actions is heightened by the fact that she breaks with the traditional teaching of Saint Paul that prohibited a woman to speak in a church.¹²⁵ After receiving his letter in the church the next day, Hélienne reads the letter in her "chambre" after returning home. It begins:

Ma dame, puis que la libere faculté de parler à vous, pour vous enucléer mon amoureuse conception, ne m'est permise, j'ay esté contrainct par la persuasion du filz de Venus vous escrire la presente, et pour vous certiorer de l'extremité ou amour excessif m'a conduit. (129-130)

We do not hear Guénélic's words, he is not actually talking; what we have are his words related to us through the lens of Hélienne, much like parts 2 and 3 of the novel will be told by Hélienne "parlant en la personne de son amy." I have pointed out above that the husband remains nameless and totally disappears as the novel progresses but Guénélic also lacks control of his own voice.¹²⁶ Guénélic's letter expresses his love for Hélienne but also echos

¹²⁴ For a discussion of Guénélic's less than heroic actions, see Beaulieu's "Où est le héros?"

¹²⁵ See note 60 on p. 518 in Buzon's critical edition of *Les Angoysses*.

earlier passages in the novel. While Hélienne talks at great length on several occasions in the work about the beauty of her body, Guénélic's letter informs the reader that Hélienne's eyes are green and that they emit "une splendeur, laquelle plus pres le cueur me transperca, que ne fist l'ague sagette de Juppiter Phaeton et à l'heure me sentant de ce doux regard surprins, je vins distinctement à specular vostre excellente beauté" (130). The words "transperca" and "surprins" were also used to show how intensely Hélienne was struck by her feelings for Guénélic and resemble the language used during their first encounter at the church and in a future meeting in the lawcourts.¹²⁷ The sexually charged language of penetration in the words "jecter," "percante," "penetrative," and "transpercer" permeate all three instances. Guénélic's letter states that he wishes to "exposer le secret de [son] cueur" (130) and ends: "Escript par celluy qui hardiment se peult nommer le serviteur en amours excédant, tous aultres en loyauté et fidele servitude" (131).

Already in her private "chambre," Hélienne retreats even further "inside" herself upon reading the letter, "en elle mesmes" and states, "j'euz une incomprehensible et inestimable joye et consolation: car par ses escriptz, il se disoit mien à perpetuité" (131). She finds in Guénélic's letters the reciprocal love that had once existed in her own marriage, if ever so briefly. Though pleased by Guénélic's declarations, she hatches her plan to answer him with "lettres par lesquelles il ne pouvoit gueres esperer de parvenir à son intention" (131-132). Hélienne's letter is filled with calls to "actes vertueulx" (132), which render man "immortel" (132) and gives the impression that they reject all notions of the love that

¹²⁶ Guénélic is introduced to the reader in the title of Chapter 1: "Commencement des angoisses amoureuses de Dame Hélienne, endurées pour son amy Guénélic" but his name is not mentioned again in the text until the final portion of part 1 (175). Hélienne's name is mentioned on the title page and in subsequent chapter headings but her name does not appear in the actual text until much later (208).

¹²⁷ First meeting in the church: "je vy mon amy, lequel me jecta une tres percante œillade, qui me fut penetrative jusques au cueur" (115). Later in the lawcourts: "je veiz mon amy: lequel me jecta ung regard, qui me transperca jusques au cueur" (162).

Guénélic professes.¹²⁸ Hélienne also states in her letter that she “ne prend[] aucune gloire de [ses] louenges et exaltations” (133), which she then contradicts completely when she states, “je me delectoye a lire les lettres de mon amy, puis après je regardoye le doubles des miennes, considerant distinctement tous les termes, de l’une et de l’autre” (134). Much like the entire novel, the didactic nature of Hélienne’s letters serve as mere window dressing as she finds great pleasure in crafting her letters and reading those from Guénélic.

Christine de Buzon emphasizes the importance of “le secret, l’expression oblique, la communication cryptée et d’abord le tacite” (“Romans et Passion” 203) in the conversations between Hélienne and Guénélic. However, Buzon also acknowledges the struggle between private and public, secret and “confessed”: “La contradiction entre ses deux messages, la lettre réprobatrice et le message de son corps, est mise en lumière de façon éclatante dans une scène ultérieure où l’héroïne s’abandonne à de ‘fanatiseuses’ pensées en relisant la lettre de Guénélic et la copie de sa réponse toute de froideur feinte” (Buzon “Romans et Passion” 209). Hélienne has the power here, just like her confession with the monk, just like at the end of the novel with God and Guénélic. Writing a response, “confirme qu’elle accepte un échange qu’elle tente de maîtriser, c’est-à-dire de transformer en un don non-réciproque” (Buzon “Romans et Passion” 208). Just like the first time that she sees Guénélic, “returning the desired gaze is Hélienne’s first step away from this subjection and toward subjectivity” (Ching 21). Guénélic is the first to speak but also the first to declare his love.

As their love story progresses, Hélienne continues to manipulate Guénélic and his feelings: “mais en considerant ses gestes extérieurs, je comprenois qu’il estoit fort espris et attainct de mon amour, qui fut cause que pour ceste fois ne luy vouluz declarer le secret de

¹²⁸ For an in-depth discussion and somewhat different viewpoints of Hélienne’s letter to Guénélic see Marie-Claude Malenfant’s “La Saturation exemplaire des *Angoysses douloureuses*” and Christine de Buzon’s “Romans et passions.”

mon cueur, non pour le bannir ne chasser: mais pour plus ardemment l'enflamber" (167).

She plays coy with him before the two actually speak again. H  lisenne states, "je me retiroye aux lieux qui me sembloient plus secretz et taciturnes" then Gu  n  lic says, "Ma dame, diserte et accommod  e est vostre narration, et de telle efficace, que je me persuade de le croire" (185). Unlike any other figure in the novel, H  lisenne's words have "efficace." H  lisenne continues to admonish Gu  n  lic for his lack of distinction between public and private actions: "je congnois appertement que ne differez de dire en publicque ce qui se debveroit conserver en silence, jusques ad ce que nous fussions en lieu plus commode" (184). Already in places that she deems "secretz et taciturnes," H  lisenne goes further into her confessional space, "je me retiray ung petit [...] et en basse voix luy diz, que la journ  e sequente il se trovast au temple (lequel je nommay) la ou nous pourrions avoir l'opportunit   de deviser plus    loisir" (185). Continuing the ever more private nature of the discussion, H  lisenne calls the shots and develops the plan for their rendez-vous. She continues: "le plus subtilement et ingenieusement que je peuz, luy donnay    congnoistre que j'avoye aulcune chose secrete    luy communiquer: puis faignant d'avoir quelque affaire, me sequestray et prins cong   de eulx et laissay mon amy" (191). Gu  n  lic understands her plan and she promises him that she will tell him what he desires but makes him wait: "ce qu'   l'heure je luy deniay, luy prommettant de luy exhiber le soir. Et adoncques luy creut le desir de le scavoir pour estre la privation cause de l'appetit" (191). H  lisenne describes the setting she has created for their conversation: "pour eviter de m'engendrer scandale, que nous allissions en ung petit temple: duquel n'avoit point grand distance jusques au lieu ou on plaidoit les causes"¹²⁹ (191). Here we see once again a "petit temple," showing the private nature of the

¹²⁹ Conway discusses the importance of the church and the law courts as meeting places for the lovers but incorrectly states: "after the failure of religion and Christian precepts, H  lisenne no longer meets her lover at the

meeting place, coupled with its proximity to the lawcourts, thus owing a sort of doubly protected space for Hélienne to inhabit. Their “confession” meets all of her requirements but Hélienne uses the time mainly to scold Guénélic for his faults before stating: “Ainsi devisant nous partasmes dudict lieu solitaire, et allasmes ensemble jusques ad ce que pour honnesté et pour eviter occasion de parler aux langues malignes, contraincte nous fut nous separer, et lors avec convenante commendation, l’ung à l’aaultre dismes le dernier à dieu, car jamais depuis ne parlay à luy” (194).

In the first section of this chapter, I have presented Hélienne in her deftly played role of confessant and confessor, whether with reason personified, a mirror, her husband or with Guénélic. She uses the spaces available to her and even appropriates them for her protection and pleasure. While the confessional discourse discussed so far has touched on the religious, in both words and locations, no actual religious person has been involved. In the following sections I will focus on the more overtly religious forms of confession in the work, beginning with Hélienne’s confession to a monk in part 1. I believe that this episode is crucial to understanding the importance of Crenne’s work and serves as a poignant example of just how well *Les Angoysses* represents the nascent modern world in which it was written. Using this event as a base point, I will compare other interactions with religious figures that occur throughout the novel before examining the deathbed confessions of the two lovers and the miraculous conversions of all three characters at novel’s end.

church” (121-122). This conversation occurs near the law courts but Hélienne clearly states that they are “en ung petit temple.”

Religious Confession in *Les Angoysses douloureuses*

The scene for the first truly religious confession in *Les Angoysses* comes after Hélienne's unsuccessful attempt at taking her own life. She does not turn to the church on her own but is forced to do so by her husband. Interestingly, the husband resorts to this form of correction only after listening to advice from a "serviteur fidele" (144). The fact that the husband does not propose this remedy on his own reinforces the decline of his influence as the novel progresses. This idea is captured in Harsy's chapter title, "Le conseil du serviteur fidelle," which automatically impresses upon the reader that the husband has to depend upon advice from someone else to "control" his wife. Of equal importance is the status of this "counselor"; he is called a "serviteur," which could seem somewhat ambiguous were it not for his later description as "serviteur domesticque" (145) and the husband being described as "son maistre" (144). It is clear from the text that the man is of inferior rank in relation to the husband, which would diminish the husband's power all the more. The "serviteur" proposes that Hélienne "doibt declairer ses extremes tristesses à quelque scientifique personne, qui avecq l'efficace de ses paroles la pourra corroborer et conforter, et par ce moyen pourra retourner à sa premiere coustume" (144-145). The fact that this never occurred to the husband, despite frequent visits to the church with Hélienne, seems somewhat conspicuous. Once again, we see that a male character describes Hélienne's feelings and potential words as "extremes tristesses" with no mention of "angoisse" or "douleur," which she generally reserves for female characters. This passage also shows us that the assumed role of the religious figure in the confessional act meets with standard expectations of the era: it is clear that this faithful servant expects an active role by both confessant and confessor, with the "efficace" of the priest's words granting a sort of comfort as well absolution to Hélienne. As

one might suspect, Hélienne enters this arena with no desire to diminish her “angoisse rage et extreme douleur”¹³⁰ (145) as she states, “ne me repentoye d’avoir esté surprise d’amours” (145). Indeed, the only time in part 1 of the novel where Hélienne sincerely uses the word “repent” is near the end when she states “je me repentoye d’avoir si oultrageusement increpé mon amy” (200): not exactly the contrition needed for religious absolution. Despite her misgivings, she submits to the ordeal saying: “me mena en ung devot monastere, affin que en confession et sans difficulté je voulusse exhiber mon infortune, et discharger mon cueur à ung auctentique religieux, lequel estoit fort bien famé et renommé” (145). Thus, a perfect scene is set for Hélienne’s confession and redemption: the monastery is “devot” and the monk in question is described with the adjectives “auctentique,” “fame” and “renommé.” However, Hélienne plots to undermine the entire process and states, “estant en ce temple sans avoir aulcune devotion, commencay à premediter quel propos je tiendrois audict religieux” (145). This moment of premeditation calls to mind the words of Heloise on the difficulty of confession: “How can it be called repentance of sins, whatever affliction the body undergoes, if the mind retains the will to sin and seethes with its old desires? Easy to announce that one is guilty and easy to confess one’s sins, or even to afflict the body in some outward act of penance – but it remains the hardest thing of all to wrench the heart away from its desires for the greatest pleasures it has ever known” (Abelard and Heloise 78-79). Hélienne then retreats into what I see as her personal “devot monastere,” “en [elle]mesmes” and she declares, “n’ay aulcun vouloir ny affection de communiquer le secret de mes amours en confession, car je n’en ay contrition ne repentance” (145).

Hélienne continues, “ne me semble que folye de le divulguer à ce vieillart, qui est du tout refroidy, impotent et inutile aux effectz de nature, il me reprimera, et blasmera ce que

¹³⁰ Once again, the words “angoisse” and “douleur” are reserved for female voices in this text.

aultrefois luy a esté plaisant” (146). As Krause correctly states, “confessional discourse in *Les Angoysses douloureuses* I lacks two central ingredients necessary to any religious confession: the confessant’s truthfulness and contrition” (*Idle Pursuits* 116). Despite her resistance to this confession, Hélienne, still in her inner-sanctum of “en ellemesmes,” realizes that she must confess and that the monk already knows her story thanks to the “serviteur’s” love of gossip. After initially seeing this consultation as a potential hindrance to her lascivious desires, she realizes, again after having reflected “en ellemesmes,” that she could use this interview as a tool to augment them. She states, “Mais quand j’ay le tout considéré, je luy peulx bien le tout reciter, car par ce que le luy diray en confession, il ne l’oseroit jamais relever. Il ne me peult contraindre d’user de son conseil, et si prendray plaisir¹³¹ à parler de celluy que j’ayme” (146). It is as if the future words of Louise Labé suddenly appeared in Hélienne’s mind: “le plus grand plaisir qui soit après amour, c’est d’en parler.” One is also reminded of Hélienne’s dedicatory epistle where she remarks that speaking about troubles, or in a sense “confessing,” diminishes sadness: here Hélienne goes beyond simple remedy of sadness and realizes that confession can also augment pleasure. While the words of Heloise cited above show doubt for the success of confession without true contrition, Hélienne goes further, using the act of confession itself to find the “desires for the greatest pleasures it has ever known.”

Once inside the “devot monastere,” and thus already removed from public space, the text intensifies the intimacy of the situation as Helisenne states, “que fusmes retirez en ung petit lieu secret et devotieux” (147). The extremely private setting of this confession departs from the protocol established for medieval priests: “la façon dont le prêtre doit procéder est exposée en detail: il faut confesser au grand jour, en des lieux publics, ne pas fixer le pénitent

¹³¹ My emphasis.

et encore moins la pénitente droit dans les yeux” (Sot 122). We see here that a more modern form of religious confession is present: the priest begins speaking with Hélienne and describes her face as “palle et decoulourée,” showing that, already not out in the open or in public, he is also looking directly at her with no screen or physical barrier between them. The priest addresses Hélienne: “Il vous fault efforcer d’avoir contrition des offenses [...] et ne povons estre reintegrez en estat de grace, que premierement n’en ayons faict penitence condigne” (147). While they are not in a modern confessional booth, this confession clearly could be described as a private dialogue “between sinner and priest, or between the soul and God” (Duby “Solitude” 532). The monk continues: “Je croys si vous avez l’apprehension de telles choses, facilement vous pourrez reduyre, et affin que je vous y puisse ayder, je vous supplie de me declairer la cause dont vous procedent telles furieuses fantasies” (148). Thanks to the husband’s servant, the monk already knows the story but wishes to hear it in her words, which does not seem to surprise Hélienne in the slightest. She disdains the priest from the outset and gives no credence to the possibility of his absolving her, but the very mention of absolution means that this was considered a normal function of the religious figure. The Church doctrine on confession at this time considered seeking absolution without any feelings of repentance to be a mortal sin. However, such people were encouraged to confess so as to arouse guilt and shame, which should eventually lead to contrition and successful confession (Tentler 121).

After Hélienne recounts her story to the monk he declares, “vous m’avez exhibé le secret de vostre cueur, sans riens reserver,¹³² dont j’ay esperance que vostre douleur se pourra temperer” (152) adding that “taire et cacher” secrets can only augment her distress. While Hélienne tells almost exactly the same “story” in this confession as when she tells her

¹³² A phrase always present in confessional passages of this work.

husband of her love for Guénélic, the results could not be more different. The difference with the monk is that she is in a protected place, remains in control and, going beyond simply stating her love or resisting reform, she appropriates the locus of correction for her own pleasure, much like she will do with her tower prison at novel's end. Going beyond simply "converting" a sacred and reforming place, Hélienne also seems to appropriate the Scriptures that serve as a basis for the entire Christian faith during her "confession." She discusses Guénélic in terms that recall the 23rd Psalm: "si je suis palle, il me peult fortifier: si je suis malade, il me peult rendre saine: et si j'estoye jusques à la mort, il a bien ceste puissance de me vivifier" (150). The monk does not attempt to counter this affront with passages from the Bible but interestingly uses almost entirely pagan exempla, to which Hélienne responds by fantasizing about her lover being in the confessional area with her: "en [son] lieu avecq [son] habit" (156). If her lustful fantasy could come to fruition, it would allow the two lovers protected and authorized, albeit completely perverted, contact. This also recalls Abelard and Heloise: "Under pretext of study, we had all our time free for love, and in our classroom all the seclusion love could ever want" (12). The mixing of sacred and carnal abounds in literature both before and after Crenne's works in literary history. However, unlike Heloise, Hélienne is not in a teacher/student relationship and is not in love with her confessor. She is also not being taken advantage of or being seduced by her "private" confessor as in the libertine novels of later centuries. Helienne is as audacious as Heloise and, perhaps, even more active in her subversion of the Church and its institutions. This could be seen as the ultimate example of what Colette Winn has called Hélienne's "quête révélatrice où l'on décèle l'expression détournée d'un besoin essentiel de pénétrer dans les sphères plus privées et encore inconnues du Désir" ("Perception" 6).

The monk realizes the failure of this confession and, importantly only through the narrator, concedes victory to H  lisenne, “congnoissant que ses parolles estoient perdues et mises au vent” (157). H  lisenne indeed gets the last word in this interview as she informs us of the monk’s lasts wishes: “le plus honnestement qu’il peult me licencia, me promectant de faire devotes prieres et intercessions pour moy: affin qu’il pleust    Dieu (par sa grace especiale¹³³) de remedier    mon miserable accident” (157). While this confession is extremely private and complete, the religious figure is given very little agency in the process and does not totatlly fit Lebrun’s description of a priest’s role in early modern confession:

the priest, alone with the penitent, asked specific questions intended to explore the conscience of the sinner who had not already done so; he then reminded his charge of the magnitude of his or her sins and the punishments they entailed, before imposing penance and pronouncing absolution. (“The Two Reformations” 79)

H  lisenne’s priest asks very few specific questions, offers no absolution and only gives passing mention to any sort of penance. He does remind her of the “magnitude” of her sins but to no avail. This sacrament that was “designed to cause guilt as well as cure guilt” (Tentler xiii) did neither for Helisenne.

Much like the beginning of the novel, this passage shows confession in a transitional period. The monk’s action could be seen as an attempt to impose a nascent model of confession that did not yet possess the total institutional power that the Council of Trent would bestow upon it in the decade after Crenne’s first publication. This scene shows the beginning of a more personal and intimate form of confession, complete with at least some sort of confessional area offset from the main part of the church. However, the monk’s lack of interrogation and power over H  lisenne shows that, at least from the monk’s point of

¹³³ The idea of “grace” will become increasingly important at the end of *Les Angoysses* and in *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe*. I will discuss this in greater detail in chapter 5 of this study.

view, this confession is definitely more “early modern” than “modern.” Lebrun tell us that northern France, the setting for this tale, was somewhat resistant to certain confessional reforms: “In the early seventeenth century communal confession and general absolution, widely practiced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, were still in effect in many dioceses in northern France” (“The Two Reformations” 75). However, the confessional actions of Hélienne with this monk, and the entire “confessional” nature of the work itself for that matter, seem at least to predict the newer function of confession.

Similar confessional interactions between the novel’s characters and religious figures occur several times throughout the work but never again with Hélienne, at least not directly. Guénéc and Quézinstra encounter several pious men in their quest to find Hélienne in parts 2 and 3 of the novel.¹³⁴ The two voyagers first encounter “ung devot hermite” (254) who takes them in and listens to their troubles. Quézinstra serves his role as paragon of the Christian faith¹³⁵ imploring Guénéc to “regatier, venerer et adorer le sublime dieu par la providence duquel, le ciel, le monde et le mouvement humain se rege et gouverne: qui de tant de graces nous a faict dignes, comme de trouver ceste sainte personne pour nostre refuge consolatif” (254). The hermit, being “studieux à l’art de chirurgie,” ministers to the physical bodies of the two weary warriors with “herbes et racines pour la refection corporele”¹³⁶ (255). While this does much to strengthen them physically, it in no way diminishes the “simulachre d’Hélienne” which occupies Guénéc’s mind (255). After their health has been restored, the hermit leads them out of the woods “promettant d’avoir memoire de [eux] en ses

¹³⁴ It should be remembered that all of these adventures are told by Hélienne “parlant en la personne de son Amy Guénéc” (227).

¹³⁵ Conway calls both Le Mari and Quézinstra “Christian spokesperson” (122).

¹³⁶ Recourse to what could be seen as medicine also happens with the husband (158) and again with the herb “Helenion” (333-334).

prieres et oraisons: affin que le dieu eternal [leur] octroyast felicité et prosperité en [leur] voyage” (255-256). The religious man’s parting words recall those between the monk and Hélienne but, other than aiding their corporal needs, he does little more than listen to the weary warriors and wish them well on their journey to find Hélienne. A fixture in chivalric adventures, the hermit often serves the role of oracle for wandering knights. As Régnier-Bohler points out, “the hero is aware that there is a meaning, but he cannot decipher it; the hermits are the interpreters” (“Imagining the Self” 320). In this instance, however, the hermit interprets very little and in no way tries to act as a barrier to Guénélic’s pursuit of his beloved.

The two wanderers also have a brief encounter with “ung homme fort anticque, lequell est merueilleusement expert en l’art d’astronomie” (275). This man uses “une certaine science siderale” (276) to interpret a “vision nocturne” that had troubled Guénélic and tells the young lover that he would see his “tres desirée Dame” (276) alive again before two years time. De Buzon indicates that this sort of encounter is fairly standard in medieval quests.¹³⁷ This astrologer poses no questions to either man and, again, does not try to impede their journey or convince them to change course. Upon receiving his good news, Guénélic and Quézinstra take their leave and “pass[erent] ce jour en plus grand plaisir et recreation”¹³⁸ (276).

The final passage dealing with a religious man opens the third part of novel and again involves Guénélic and Quézinstra. The two meet “un homme qui reluysoit d’une admirable sainteté” who was accustomed to having people “venir vers luy pour avoir son opinion de leurs douteuses affaires” (404). The religious man asks Guénélic to tell him the cause of his

¹³⁷ See note p. 576, note 104 of her critical edition of *Les Angoysses*.

¹³⁸ The exact language used to describe amorous amusements between husband and wife in Part 1.

trouble to which the young voyager responds: “Et lors fuz aulcunement timide, considerant la condition de l’homme, la gravité, la vraye religion,¹³⁹ la vie austere: et la continuelle sienne sollicitude en vertueuses operations, me retardoient de luy divulguer l’occasion de mon voyage” (405). It is interesting to contrast the reasons for hesitation that Guénélic feels with those that Hélisenne expresses in her conversation with the monk in part 1. Hélisenne characterizes the monk in part 1 as a “vieillard, qui est du tout refroidy, impotent et inutile aux effectz de nature” (146), portraying his duty of trying to reform as motivated by jealousy and regret for his lost youth and freedom. She uses powerful language to criticize and disdain the monk and shows no respect or reverence for his station. Guénélic, on the other hand, appears in awe of this saintly man and cowers when confronted with “la vraye religion” (405). From the beginning of the confession, Guénélic is far from powerful enough to subvert the confessional space as Hélisenne had previously done with the monk in part 1. Guénélic does eventually give in and express his anxieties “sans rien reserver”¹⁴⁰ (405) to which the religious man responds: “O mon filz pour plus facilement te desister de ceste lascivité je te prie que vueille considerer: combien est yrraisonnable, infirme et à craindre le persister en cela qui le corps damne et l’ame crucie”¹⁴¹ (405). Much like Hélisenne’s monk, this saintly man then lists several pagan sages and declares that if pagans detested vice, they as Christians should do so all the more. Unlike the monk in part 1, this religious man also proposes Christian examples, such as Augustine, Jesus, Peter, Paul and even “la bonne

¹³⁹ An interesting turn of phrase already being used by both Reformers and Catholics at this time. While putting Crenne’s religious ideas in one camp or the other is not simple, the very mention of “la vraye religion” implies that there is a “fausse religion.”

¹⁴⁰ A phrase that, once again, accompanies all confessional speech in the work.

¹⁴¹ The verb “crucier”, which was used on at least two occasions in the novel (405, 472) as well as in *Epistres* and *Songe*, could mean, “to torment” in the figurative and “to crucify” in the literal. It was replaced by the verb “tormenter” in both instances in the final 1560 edition of *Les Angoysses*, which I will discuss at further length below.

Judich” (408) amongst others in a long list of Biblical exempla.¹⁴² Guénélic recognizes this man’s “salutiferes parolles,” but worries himself little with them “pource que aux sours et aux muetz l’office d’oraison est de petite efficace” (409). Not only are the good man’s words useless in reforming Guénélic, they augmented his desire. Guénélic states, “Et tant plus me remonstroit, et plus la souvenance¹⁴³ de ma dame Hélisenne, d’ardent desir m’enflammoit” (410). As with Hélisenne’s colloquy with the monk, we see confessional discourse increasing desire, not reforming the vices of the characters. Guénélic’s confessor is more active and, though not explicitly described as a Christian figure like Hélisenne’s confessor, he uses a decidedly more Christian message to correct Guénélic’s illicit desires. Hélisenne’s telling of her problems is also much more explicit, while Guénélic simply states, “toutesfois apres quelque espace avoir differé sans riens reserver de toutes mes preterites et presentes anxietez, le rendiz certain” (405). Though she uses identical language (“toutesfois apres quelque espace”) as she begins, Hélisenne’s initial confession to the priest covers over three pages of text and it is clear that she is the most powerful being in the conversation. What Guénélic lacks in his initial confession he makes up for with his nearly 5-page retort to the priest’s admonition. However, this response to the holy man’s words reads more like an encomium to Hélisenne than anything else; he enumerates the seven deadly sins and how his love for Hélisenne keeps him from those sins. I believe that this lays the foundation for the Christ-like persona that she takes on in part 3 of the novel. While Hélisenne ends her interview with the monk in part 1 by expressing her subversive desire that Guénélic be there with her wearing

¹⁴² This shows Hélisenne de Crenne’s ample knowledge of the Bible, which will be discussed in the final chapter of this project.

¹⁴³ I believe this helps build the Christ-like image of Hélisenne that begin in part 1 when she takes leave of Guénélic by saying, “vivez en esperance: car soyez certain que j’auray de vous memoire” (177). Her emergence as a Christ-like figure will be discussed below.

the monk's habit, Guénélic mentions a much more conventional situation as he closes his speech: marriage. He states, "que si possible estoit par mariage nous lyer, tres affectueusement le desireroie: comme celluy qui à perpetuité avec elle veulx demourer" (416). In a novel almost completely devoid of praise for marriage, this is a curious statement.¹⁴⁴ Much like the other religious figures in the novel, this man is powerless to change Guénélic:

O mon filz par tes parolles appertement je congnois, que tu es totalement disposé de toute extremité soustenir, plus tost que de toy desister de l'amoureuse entreprinse. Parquoy congnoissant que de toutes les exhortations et parolles salutiferes que je te pourroye narrer, l'operation seroit vaine et inutile, je les passeray en silence. (417)

This saintly man ends the interview with Guenelic in an unexpected manner: astrology. He states that "(selon l'influence des corps celestes) signifie que pour le moyen de cupidité venerique, tu souffriras extremes calamitez" (418) but then goes on to say that, no matter under which sign one is born, "chascun peult user de benefice de son liberal arbitre"¹⁴⁵ (418). This second recourse to astrology in the novel does not totally contradict the first, allowing for the possibility that Guénélic will see his beloved again. However, this religious man tells Guénélic that Hélienne's rescue "ne sera sans grande effusion de sang" and warns him to change his ways, ending with "tu souffriras si extreme misere, que le mediter de tes maux futurs, me cause une merueilleuse frayeur" (419).

All of the reforming and controlling mechanisms which appear in this novel are useless to control or change the illicit love between the two main characters: the husband's violence has little effect on Hélienne, Quézinstra is unable to change Guénélic's ways and

¹⁴⁴ I will continue the discussion of ideas on marriage in chapter 5.

¹⁴⁵ See discussion of free will below.

three different religious men fail miserably in their efforts. In a sense, the only “advice” to which Hélienne ever listens during a confessional conversation appears at the end of part 1 when she is locked in her tower prison. She is accompanied by “une vieille dame” and states, “je recitoye toutes mes amours, depuis le commencement jusques à la fin, et toutes les parolles que nous avions eu ensemble” (214). This is almost the exact same language that Hélienne and Guénélic use when “confessing” to others in the novel. It is also a very private confession that is given in a locus destined for control and reform. However, there are several ways in which this confessional space differs from the others in the novel. First, no one asks her any specific questions in order to change her ways: Hélienne is freely talking about her troubles. Second, she is in an entirely feminine space, with only herself and two maids present. Much like the other “confessors,” the old woman also gives advice, but of a different kind: “Se vous vous monstrez vertueuse, il est assez croyable et concessible, que monsieur vostre mary prendra pitié de vous: parquoy ne serez long temps detenue en ceste tour: et se vous estes libere de telle calamité, ce ne sera chose impossible d’accomplir vostre desir” (216-217). This practical advice is followed by council without which the novel would not exist: “vous seroit necessaire de certifier vostre amy de vostre malheureuse infortune” (217). The maid mentions “vie douloureuse, triste et angoisseuse” only after she talks about telling Guénélic of her whereabouts. This leads Hélienne to consider “je pourroye cercier mon amy de ma doloireuse infortune...je ne trouvoy moyen plus convenable, que de reduire en ma memoire la piteuse complainte que paravant j’avoye de ma main escripte” (218). Saying that if this message were to somehow get to Guénélic, this would “mettre fin à mes peines, et donner principe au vivre joyeux” (218). This confessional moment serves as much a metaphor for her book itself than any other moment in the work. From the very beginning of

her incarceration, Hélienne makes reference to her book's title: "par angoisseuse rage et extreme douleur, me vouloys escrire" (213). These allusions to the title of the work often accompany the confessional scenes throughout the opus. She speaks of her "angoysseuse douleur" just before denying her feelings for Guénélic to her husband (112), foreshadowing the event when she is later alone for three weeks: "fortune non rassasiée de me prester matiere d'angoisseuses douleurs" (136). Even her husband is "espris de l'angoisseuse douleur" (142), a rare occurrence for a male character, especially in part 1, but this seems only to appear because of the excessive love that he has for Hélienne. Hélienne's confession to the monk is proposed to diminish her "angoisseuse rage et extreme douleur" (145) and she looks to dissimulate her "angoisseuse douleur" (158) after speaking with priest. The only confessional space present in the novel that does not make some reference to the title of the book is the passage where Hélienne loses control when "confessing" her love of Guénélic to her husband (118). Confessional discourse is successful, or at least profitable and productive, here in the sense that some hope of accomplishing the desire is possible. This confession reveals a way to get out of the tower and thus to see Guénélic. All of the confessional interactions discussed above share characteristics but the only one that Hélienne does not pervert is the one that happens in an environment entirely devoid of men.

By the end of the story, Hélienne has gone from a child-bride who is unaware of her power to a Christ-like figure who changes the lives of two men and, most importantly, becomes a celebrated author. The last section of this chapter will examine this evolution and discuss the undoubtedly spiritual end to this adulterous tale. The book's ending describes contrite confessions from both Hélienne and Guénélic and reveals a Quézinstra who transforms from a knightly paragon of Christian values to a sort of literary monk whose

purpose in life is to commemorate a love story. Just as no one could reason with H  lisenne during part 1, Gu  n  lic remains unmoved by any advice, even the persistent advice and counsel from Qu  zinstra, to change his ways in part 2 and most of part 3 of the novel. However, H  lisenne herself has a miraculous change of heart at novel's end and eventually leads both Gu  n  lic and Qu  zinstra to their own incredible transformations. It is worth noting, once again, that the only truly successful confessors in the work are women.

Throughout her many trials and tribulations, H  lisenne makes several allusions to God but only addresses the deity directly a few times. The first stated prayer that she directs to God begins: "en basse voix je commencay    dire en m'adressant    Dieu: 'O Eternel, exalt   et sublime Dieu, si quelque foys vous plaist ouyr les miserables pecheurs, prestez vostre ouye    ma priere'" (179). In the prayer that follows, H  lisenne prays for God to protect Gu  n  lic from her husband's wrath and mentions that, though she is not able to repent of her sins, God is well aware of them. After this prayer, H  lisenne seems somewhat "alleg  e" and then heads to the lawcourts where she makes actual contact with Gu  n  lic, "le tir[ant] sur la manche de sa robe" (182). This type of confession is not seen again until the very end of the novel, which would seem to rule out a completely Protestant tone to the story. While some of her dialogue with God resembles a more Protestant idea of a faith that "placed each believer in direct relation with God" (Lebrun "The Two Reformations" 100), H  lisenne also adds in her prayer, "je supplie les saintz glorifiez, qu'ilz vueillent estre intercesseurs pour moy, affin que par ce moyen mon humble requeste soit exaulc  e" (180). The mention of saints as intercessors precludes a hardline Protestant stance but H  lisenne's extreme power at the end of the work complicates the question.

As I have shown above, part 3 of the novel begins with another failed attempt by a religious man to change Guénélic's feelings for Hélienne. Taking leave from this religious figure, Guénélic and Quézinstra eventually find Hélienne's tower prison and begin deliberating ways to liberate her. After an exchange of letters, Hélienne and Guénélic are finally able to talk through a window where she picks up her role as Guénélic's "confessor," much like she had done in part 1. The text intimates that she has already "pensée et excogité" a plan for her rescue, even calling it a "chose facile" (446), but, before sharing her strategy, she first asks Guénélic to tell her what he has encountered since they last spoke (meaning in part 1 before her imprisonment): "je te supplie que me vueille narrer quel esté l'estat de ta vie, depuis que tu fuz adverty de mon absence" (446). Guénélic responds "pour satisfaire à ton¹⁴⁶ désir, sans riens reserver, luy exprimay toutes les calamitez et misères soustenues en mes penibles et fastidieux voyages" (446). Once again, we see the path to pleasure for Hélienne paved by confession: she had already devised the means by which she could escape, thus allowing her the pleasure of being with Guénélic, but it was only after Guénélic's confession to her, given "sans riens reserver," that she tells him of her plans. Hélienne is much like the monk in part 1 who, having been informed by the husband's servant, already knew the story, but insisted that she go through the process of telling it to him hoping to produce guilt and contrition through confession. Of course, the monk's strategy fails to produce the desired results but the event was still quite productive for Hélienne, as she found and produced pleasure in her confession. The actual telling of the stories is not necessary in either case: just as the monk already knew Hélienne's story, Hélienne already had a plan of escape. She found pleasure in telling the story to the monk

¹⁴⁶ This pronoun is changed to "son" in all editions after 1541. There are a few other examples of this narrative confusion in part 3, which I believe that shows the problematic narration of the account from this point until the end.

and did the same through hearing Guénélic's tale. Both instances show Hélisenne with immense power and, I would add, also show the evolution of Hélisenne's persona. Some have questioned why it is Hélisenne who devises the plan for her escape and not the two knightly men who have valiantly defeated every obstacle placed before them in their search for her (Beaulieu "Où est le héros?" 145). The answer could simply be that she is a powerful being who controls the situation, not only by coming up with an effective plan but also by stipulating the terms for sharing the plan with her lover. She controls both her escape and her confession to the monk against all odds: the priest should have "guided" her to produce guilt, contrition and repentance and one would think that the "knights" would figure out how to save the damsel in distress. By story's end, however, Hélisenne is in complete control and in no way submits to controlling mechanisms. What transpires in the tower is doubly important because, without it, the already suspect verisimilitude of the story itself would completely fall apart. This conversation between the two lovers allows Hélisenne, at least according to the story, to record Guénélic's words in writing, thus making plausible the fact that part 2 and the beginning of part 3 are "composée[s] par Dame Hélisenne parlant en la personne de son Amy Guénélic" (227, 397). This adds confusion to the story but also gives Hélisenne even more agency in the sense that she figuratively and literally controls the intrigue. Hélisenne's multiple voices could fit Régnier-Bohler's description of allegory and new conceptions of the individual in late medieval literature: "Allegory fragments the self. The poet multiplies the number of possible selves with whom the audience might identify, hindering the process of identification" ("Imagining the Self" 377). Guénélic responds to Hélisenne's plan as follows: "O ma douce dame, moderatrice de tous mes travaux, tes discrètes, melliflues, et douces paroles me présentent une sauvegarde qui me preserve de tout ennui pour la nouvelle

joyeuseté...de l'ame je te laisse dame et maistresse" (448-449). To which she responds: "Et lors doucement respondant, me dist: Guénélic, grandement je loue ceste tienne consideration" (449). Hélienne ends this interview telling Guénélic: "va t'en paix, en ayant souvenance de moi" (449-450). I see this as proof of Hélienne's mounting presence: Guénélic has just called her "moderatrice de tous [ses] travaux" and "maitresse" of his soul and now she bids him farewell in a manner that recalls both the words of Jesus in the Gospels and the teaching of Saint Paul to early Christians concerning the Messiah. Similar wording is found throughout the Lefèvre d'Étaples New Testament, published the decade before *Les Angoysses*: In Matthew 26.7 "Et Pierre *eut souvenance* de la parole de Jesus." In Luke 22: "Ce est mon corps lequel est donne pour vous. faictes *ce en memoire de moy*." In Corinthians 11: "Soyez mes imitateurs ainsi que je suis de Christ. Et je vous loue mes freres que vous *avez souvenance de moy* en toutes choses." In Corinthians 15: "l'evangile laquelle ie vous ay presche et laquelle vous avez receu et en laquelle vous vous arrestez et par laquelle vous estes sauvez pour quelle raison le vous ay presche se en *avez souvenance*." The words "souvenance" and "memoire" are used several times throughout the work, and almost always in relation to Hélienne.

After successfully escaping from the tower, Guénélic and Quézsinfra begin defending Hélienne from a "grand multitude de gens" (460) who sought to return her to prison. During this battle, the two knights leave Hélienne under a tree "craignant que par debilitation son travaillé corps peust tomber" (461). After defeating these wicked men and chasing them away, and after "longtemps cherché" (463) where they had left Hélienne, Guénélic is finally able to embrace his beloved: "je me feuz posé aupres d'elle, en donnant plusieurs baisers à sa descoulourée face" (463). This is the most intimate contact between the two lovers; other

than his stepping on her cloak and her tugging on his sleeve, all physical contact between the two was limited to a dream. These long-awaited kisses do nothing to restore Hélienne's strength and she declares: "O mon unique refuge consolatif: O lumiere de mes yeulx. O creature que tant à la mort qu'à la vie oultre l'humain croire j'ayme. Bien puis dire que avec la delectation que j'ay de te voir, nulle espece de mort ne me peult espoventer" (463-464). Hélienne begins to lead Guénélic down the path to righteousness, continuing her Christ-like transformation and imploring him to think of "la vraye immortalité de l'ame" (467). She then begins her final confession to God: "En dressant sa veue aux cieulx [...] O eternal et souverain dieu, qui voids noz cueurs et congois noz pechez, je te supplie que par ta misericorde vueille tourner en oblivion mes continuelles iniquitez: par lesquelles, je congnoys avoir envers toy commis offense tres grievée" (468). Her initial remarks follow almost verbatim the confession with which I began this section, though for much different reasons and to much different ends. Much like her earlier confession to God, Hélienne repeats how God sees and knows humankind's sins, but this time she is suddenly contrite. She continues:

Mais toutesfoys j'espere tant en ta divine clemence et infinye bonté, que mon oraison ne sera enervée, mais te sera acceptable. Car jamais tu ne refuse pardon à tes creatures, puis que de cuer devot ilz te le requierent [...]. Toutes les foyes que le pecheur se retournera à Dieu par vraye penitence, tous pechez qu'il pourroit avoir commis ne luy seront imputez, ny ne l'empescheront d'avoir la vie eternelle. (468)

She mentions the late nature of this extreme, eleventh-hour confession and evokes "la vraye penitence" three different times: "la clemence et benignité de toy, mon dieu tres misericordieux, ne la rejecte point de vraye penitence: qui ne peult estre trop tardive: mais qu'elle soit vraye [...]. Et par quelconque nécessité on parvienne à vraye penitence, l'on

obtient facilement pardon de son peché” (469). She continues, “La charité de toy, mon dieu, est ainsi, qu’une mere: qui a son sein estendu pour recepvoir benignement ceulx qui volontairement se retournent à elle” (469). This differs greatly from the only other “maternal” passages in the novel, where mother’s milk is compared to poison, the cradle as sepulchre (207) and the pains and joys of childbirth are equated to the sufferings and felicity of adulterous love (138-139). Hélienne’s “conversion” seems completely at odds with the majority of her story.

After her colloquy with God, she turns her attention back to Guénélic and implores him, “Et donne telle correction à ta vie, que le venin de la concupiscence ne te prive de la possession de ceste divine heritage qui nous est promise” (471). The exact nature of the promised “heritage” Hélienne evokes here is not terribly clear but I believe that this continues her transformation into a Christ-like figure. This is reinforced by Guénélic’s words just after her speech: “Incontinent ces propos finis, par le travail qui par trop la *crucioyt*”¹⁴⁷ (472). She has given up the ghost in her “extreme fin” with the verb “crucier” serving as another example of this passion. While the word “crucifier” is used in Lefèvre d’Estaples Bible, as discussed above, there is no doubt that “crucier” or “crucier” (from the Latin “cruciare”) could also deal with crucifixion.

After Hélienne is thought to expire, Quézinstra tries to reason with Guénélic saying, “N’avez crainte d’offenser Dieu qui telle loy à nature a donné. Ignorez vous ce qui est escript: c’est qu’il n’y a sapience, ne conseil, force, ny aultre chose, qui puisse valloir contre le vouloir sublime et puissant de Dieu” (475). After pages of exempla, Guénélic responds: “Tres cher compaignon et amy, voz melliflues et artificieuses paroles pourroient facilement guarir toutes douleurs (au moins si elle doibvent estre guaries) mais la mienne qui est

¹⁴⁷ My emphasis.

intolerable, ne peult estre temperée” (483). This is even more proof of what Beaulieu describes as the “impossibilité pour chacun des compagnons d’influencer l’autre et de modifier son comportement” (Beaulieu “Où est le héros?” 140). Guénélic refuses to change his ways until he states:

je desire que ma dolente ame se puisse reunir avec ma tres chere dame
Hélisenne, la quelle me semble avec voix piteuse m’invocquer, me disant: que
si ma vie est longue, travail et ennui ne me desaccompagneront [...] puis,
apres quand je commencay à parler, en me dressant ma veue aux cieulx.¹⁴⁸
(484-485)

He confesses in order to be reunited with Hélisenne and only because she seems to “invoke” him to do so. Hélisenne has died, been crucified and now is “speaking” to Guénélic from beyond the grave.

As mentioned above, the beginning of the conversation between Hélisenne and Guénélic in the tower passage clarifies, albeit in a somewhat dubious fashion, the peculiar “parlant en la personne” language from the title pages of parts 2 and 3. However, it also creates complications for the remainder of the narrative. Highlighted by several strange verb and pronoun problems discussed in the notes above, the verisimilitude of the narrative becomes problematic once Quézinstra and Guénélic break into Hélisenne’s prison cell, for it is no longer possible for anyone to be recording the text as all three possible narrators/writers were involved in the action. The novel still reads as Guénélic’s first person narrative, all supposedly recorded by Hélisenne, but she is either actively involved in something other than writing or physically incapacitated beyond this moment and could thus no longer have written the account from Guénélic’s telling of the story. This “extra-narratological” space, from the time of Hélisenne’s rescue to the beginning of Quézinstra’s “Ample Narration,”

¹⁴⁸ Just like Hélisenne’s words.

seems to reveal the author (Crenne) more than any other moment in the work. Hélisenne the protagonist has become powerful, written a book (several times), become confessor and is in the process of becoming Christ-like. Much like the first verse of the book of St. John, Hélisenne is living (and about to live) herself as “la parole.” Lefèvre d’Etaples translation of the Gospel of John begins: “Au commencement estoit la parolle et la parolle estoit avec dieu...En icelle estoit la vie: et la vie estoit la lumiere des hommes et la lumiere luyt es tenebres et les tenebres ne l’ont point comprise. ung homme fut envoye de dieu qui estoit nomme jehan. cestuy vint en tesmoignage pour rendre tesmoignage de la lumiere.” I propose that Hélisenne herself, or at least her book, has now “become” the light in the darkness, which reveals Crenne’s desire to become a literary voice capable of not only equaling male authors but surpassing them. Also, just as Christ speaks of the events of his miraculous death crucifixion and resurrection as having always already been written, much is the same for Hélisenne. What earlier critics have called “supercherie,” I call “Hélisennian” space.

The rest of the story, once Hélisenne is powerful enough, becomes mainly about the Book (*Les Angyosses*) itself and Passion-like experiences. Hélisenne takes Guénélic, a cowardly and somewhat lowborn subject, and transforms him into “a noble man”: “M’amy, vous pourrez certifier à monsieur mon mary, et à sa parente, que mon amy Guénélic, pour lequel j’ay enduré si grievve peine, tant par subtile ingeniosité que par force est entré en ce chasteau”¹⁴⁹ (458). Also like Jesus, she sees a better life in the afterlife: “Mais après ma mort, mon ame le pourroit frequemment visiter, parquoy la mort me seroit felice et heureuse”

¹⁴⁹ It should not be forgotten, however, that Guénélic is not only a construction of the author Hélisenne de Crenne but also of the narrator Hélisenne. All of his chivalry comes from parts 2 and 3 of the work, which are “created by Hélisenne(s)”. Hélisenne also gives the two men the plan for saving her so this “praise” is somewhat clouded.

(142). This language from the early parts of the novel announces the ambiguous “divine heritage” that Hélienne evokes in her final confession. Conway comments on reconciling the supposed lessons of the work with the sinful content and the sudden conversions at the end:

While the book is touted by the author and her characters as a lesson to be heeded, the modern reader cannot help but wonder just what the lesson is. The declaration that the book will warn women to beware of impious love is considerably weakened by the fact that neither Hélienne nor Guénélic regret their passion or evince the least twinge of remorse until they are moments away from death. Moreover, they are welcomed to paradise because of it. How bad can it be? (Conway 130)

Buzon also questions the status of this “retournement ou cette *conversion* [qui] veut annuler en quelques lignes les centaines de pages qui précèdent et qui célébraient à leur manière la folle amour” (“Roman et passions” 201). I think that the afterlife or “heritage” that Hélienne, and eventually Guénélic, allude to is none other than the “champs Héliens, ou est le séjour des bienheureux: ou il ne croist fruitz que ambrosieulx, et si retrouvent toutes liqueurs nectarées” (209). These “*Helysian Fields*” to which Mercury leads souls are first mentioned at the end of part 1 of the novel, interestingly on the same page that Hélienne’s name first appears in the body of the work, completely foreshadowing this “heritage” or afterlife in which the work culminates. This is reminiscent of Ableard’s words to Heloise: “[God] is thinking of your salvation most of all, having marked you as his own with a sacred token of his name when he named you *Héloise*, that is to say, *Of God*, from the name that he himself bears, *Heloim*” (97). Much like the numerous references to the book’s title in the text itself, Hélienne uses this unusual spelling as self-promotion.

In the “Ample Narration” portion at novel’s end, Quézinstra, much like John in the Gospels, has come to bear witness to the light that is Hélienne and to her “parole.”

Interestingly, this final portion contains the only definite “conversion” in the entire novel, that of Quézinstra. Having long puzzled critics, I see the “Ample Narration” as cementing the Christ-like presence of Hélienne. This final section ends the narratological confusion as to who is actually writing what we are reading: Quézinstra is the stated “author” of the Ample Narration, which picks up just after Guénélic’s confession and tells the reader of his death. Even though the text seems to clearly state that Hélienne had perished at the end of part 3, Quézinstra’s epilogue recounts a short “resurrection”: “mais en regardant la face d’Hélienne, grand admiration me survint, pource que longue espace avoit que je l’estimoye morte, et je vis qu’elle jecta encore quelque soupir, qui fut le dernier soupir mortel” (486-487). Once the death of the two lovers is quite clear, the brawny knight Quézinstra barely stands on “weakened limbs” (193) and “contemplates them with an incredible compassion” (193). He, who has been such a stalwart critic of Guénélic’s amorous pining, telling him instead to “use his sword” more, is now simply overcome with emotion. Continuing the parallels between the Gospels and *Les Angoysses*, Hélienne’s death and “resurrection” is followed immediately by supernatural events. Quézinstra states:

Et depuis ne tarda gueres, qu’il ne me survint occasion encores de plus fort m’esmerveiller, pour ce que j’apperceuz en l’ær spacieux et clair, ung homme volant avec ælles dorées, et tenoit en sa main une verge merveilleusement belle, et avecq cest accoustrement outrepassoit et volait par l’ær plus tost, que le violent Boreas...mais en le voyant (à cause qu’il resplendissoit d’une preclaire et resplendissante lumiere) à peine ma veue le pouoit souffrir. (487)

Quézinstra quickly realizes that this creature is not human but “haultine, supernaturele et divine” and he states, “ne peuz aultre chose faire, sinon que tout craintif, et plein de treneur, me prosterner en terre, voulant adorer ce corps celeste” (487). The appearance of this divine creature contributes to the parallels between Hélienne’s story and the Gospel narrative: In Matthew 28 of Lefèvre d’Etaples Bible we read, “Et voicy ung grant mouvement de terre fust

faict car l'ange de dieu desendit du ciel...et son regart estoit comme escler et son vestement blanc comme neige...et pour la crainte de iceluy les gardes furent espouventees et furent faictz comme mortz.” Mark 16 also shares language with Crenne’s work: “veirent ung iouvenceau seant a la dextre lequel estoit couvert d’ung vestement long et blanc. et elles se espouventerent.” As does Luke 24: “voicy deux hommes se tindrent pres d’elles en vestement resluisant. et comme ells craignoient.” In *Les Angoysses*, this winged creature is none other than Mercury, “god of eloquence and guide of souls and the messenger of the gods” who has come to “lead the souls of these lovers to the realm of Minos” where their eternal dwelling shall be determined. Quézinstra pleads to go with Mercury and his wish is granted. Upon preparing the bodies with ambrosia and nectar to preserve them until Mercury and Quézinstra could return, Mercury discovers “un petit paquet couvert de soie blanche” which in fact turns out to be a preliminary copy of the *Les Angoysses*. This again recalls the same passages in the Gospels: in Mark 16: “acheterent de soignemens aromaticques affin quelles vinrent oindre Jesus...veirent ung iouvenceau seant a la dextre lequel estoit couvert d’ung vestement long et blanc. et elles se espouventerent.” The parallels between Hélienne’s story and that of the Gospels is even more pronounced in John 20: “Et quant il se fut incline il veit les linges mis vas touteffois il ny entra point. Simon Pierre vint doncques le suyvant et entra au monument et veit les linges mis bas et le suaire qui avoit este sur son chief non point mis avecques les linges mais *envelope en ung lieu a part.*”¹⁵⁰ Similar language is also found in Luke 24: “Pierre se leva et courut au monument. et se enclinant/veit seulement les linceulx mis a part.”

¹⁵⁰ My emphasis.

The souls were judged and it was determined “sans dilation” that they should rest in the “Champs Héliens, ou en douceur et félicité les âmes se reposent” (494). This hardly seems the treatment one might expect for two souls consumed by an adulterous affair. As Christine de Buzon points out, “La rapidité avec laquelle les âmes d’Hélisenne et de Guénélic rejoignent leur séjour dans l’au-delà est une marque de leur excellence.”¹⁵¹ Again, these words surprise and completely contradict the idea of the two lovers that every form of normalizing control had established throughout the novel: the husband, a bourgeois domestic, several religious men, and even Quézinstra himself had all disapproved of the two lovers and their actions. How can one explain this sudden and effusive praise? Is it simply the “deathbed confession” which gives them this standing?

This last minute confession and conversion cannot erase the hundreds of pages showing the devious plans that Hélisenne and Guénélic used to pursue their love. What Hélisenne was lacking throughout the entire novel was freedom of movement and freedom to love the man that she chose. She used a variety of strategies to subvert these controlling mechanisms, but it was only through sublimation that her full liberation was achieved. Quézinstra himself never mentions that their repentance has any effect on his devotion nor on the praise of the lovers. Repentance is only alluded to by Mercury when describing tortured souls, but is never mentioned directly concerning Hélisenne and Guénélic.¹⁵² As mentioned above, the death of the confessants immediately after repentance allows for no proof of the sincerity of their words. How then are we to understand the praise that the two lovers receive? De Buzon argues that this “honorable reception” could be compared to other scenes

¹⁵¹ See p. 624, note 142 of her critical edition of *Les Angoysses*.

¹⁵² Those who “estant en vie sont demeurez inveterez et endurez en leurs pechez, sans jamais eulx vouloir repentir: parquoy sont sans misericorde de leurs offenses” (493).

of “vanité” in Part 1 where Hélienne’s beauty is lauded.¹⁵³ Regardless, one can doubt whether this deathbed conversion was “enough” to change the souls from wretched to sublime.

Guénélis implores Quézinstra to “en perpetuelle memoire retenir: affin qu’il fust en ma faculté de le pouvoir au monde manifester” (497). This recalls Mark 16, “Allez par tout le monde et preschez l’evangile a toute creature” and Matthew 28, “Toute puissance m’est donnee en ciel et en terre. Allez doncques et enseignez toutes gens....et les enseignez a garder toutes choses l’esquelles ie vous ay commande.” Quézinstra is charged with telling the world about the “good news.” The reader sees increasing references to both author and title in the “Ample Narration,” showing the importance of the publication. While in the “Champs Héliens” Guénélis asks Quézinstra to “vouloir tout ce que v[eu] avoye, en perpetuelle memoire manifester,” which Quézinstra promises to do, saying: “Et affin qu’il feust des deux vrais amans perpetuelle memoire, sur leurs tumbes fut redigé par escript l’acerve et cruel traictement qu’ilz avoient au service d’amours trouvé” (497). This monument claims a didactic purpose, as does the entire work, but is nothing more than another “copy” of the *Angoysses douloureuses*, the title of Hélienne’s book. These tombs are in no way “*Gisant* monuments” which emphasize the “transience” of life with the intention of having an “admonitory effect on the living” (Curl 96) by showing the decay and rotting of the mortal body. Instead, the beauty of the lovers is never doubted in the mortal or immortal realms and great pains are taken to preserve their bodies, both by Quézinstra and Mercury. As Malenfant writes, “Ainsi la valeur contre-exemplaire de l’Hélienne amoureuse...se dissout graduellement alors que, contre toute attente, Hélienne triomphe de sa nature et de son désir en sublimant l’amour qu’elle éprouve pour son amant” (“Jeux de portratis” 88). The love is

¹⁵³ See p. 626, note 148 of her critical edition of *Les Angoysses*.

“sublimé” but in an odd way. The confessions that seem to have washed the lovers clean are both of a decidedly Christian nature. However, as we will see below, their judgments were completely pagan, thus clouding the purported “moral” lessons.

Upon completing the tombs, Quézinstra is so moved by the deaths of his friends that he contemplates taking his own life, but is quickly dissuaded by Mercury’s eloquence. Quézinstra has a sort of revelation, beginning his harangue with “disant en moymesmes”: “que de castigation est digne celluy qui es choses transitoires, sa pensée forme et arreste” (498). Determined to separate himself from the world, he builds “l’edifice d’ung petit temple qui fut construit au lieu mesmes auquel les corps de Guénélic et Hélienne estoient ensepulturez” (498). Quézinstra’s decision to live a solitary life seems perfectly rational. He is put off by the wicked ways of love and has seen firsthand what this can do to humans, so he decides to cut himself off from the world. His choice of where to build a temple is a bit less clear and could shed light on what exactly it is that he is “worshipping.” Is this temple to mark the lovers’ suffering in the hope of dissuading others from like conduct, or is this a celebration of the possibility of repentance for forgiveness of sins? Or could his conversion be so complete that he is now an “acolyte d’amour”? Malenfant comments on this transformation, “Quézinstra, qui vilipende systématiquement l’amour dans les *Angoysses II et III*, décide de vouer sa vie à leur mémoire perpétuelle” (“Jeux de portraits” 88). That Quézinstra chooses to build the temple so close to the tombs could show the “prominence of the dead” (Curl 76). Maddox adds that burial sites are often “a prominent locus of signification and communication, a fine and *public* place, and above all a site at which some type of living memory lingers” (322). As to complete his monastic transformation, Quézinstra begins to build a small hut, which he intends to make his place of “perpetuelle

residence” (498). As with the construction of the tombs, the word perpetual reappears. Buzon points out that this devotion is usually reserved for the guilty:¹⁵⁴ Could this be a form of penance for his refusal or resistance to love throughout the second and third parts of the novel? It is odd that Quézinstras, the most noble and virtuous of the characters, is the only one who participates in any activity that could be seen as penance. While Quézinstras’s building projects are underway, Hélisenne’s “paquet de soie” circulates through the realm of the gods. Pallas and Venus debate whether the book is about war or love. Jupiter prepares to settle the debate but then promptly decides that a copy of this book should be made and immediately printed warn the world of the dangers of love. The motive given by Jupiter for a third “copy” of the book (the first being the “paquet de soie blanche”, the second being the tomb inscriptions) closely mirrors that given by Quézinstras and could be read as fortifying the didactic role of the tombs, and the entire book for that matter. A closer examination of the original French text, however, reveals another possibility: Mercury wants the book to be published “affin de manifester au mondes les peines, travaux, et *angoysses douloureuses, qui procedent à l’occasion d’amours*”¹⁵⁵ (502). As Christine de Buzon aptly points out in her critical edition of *Les Angoysses*, “Jupiter tout à la fois reprend un souhait de Guénélic qui suppliait Quézinstras d’accepter d’au monde maifester l’histoire des amants et amplifie le nom que Hélisenne donne à ses écritures (‘mes angoisses’) et le titre définitif du livre.”¹⁵⁶ These sufferings or “angoysses” are described using different vocabulary throughout the book. This makes the choice of words here significant and seemingly not chosen by chance.

¹⁵⁴ See p. 626, note 151 of her critical edition of *Les Angoysses*.

¹⁵⁵ Emphasis is mine.

¹⁵⁶ p. 627, note 157.

It seems to me that, what is intended to be *perpetually* remembered is the book itself.

Quézinstra's entire "Ample Narration" exists to laud the author and his work.

The souls of Hélienne and Guénélic are judged most worthy and find "demeures perpetuelles (488)" in the "Champs Héliens," the lovers' story is literally etched in stone for "perpetuelle memoire" in the first public display of the book on the tombstones, and the book will forever be worshiped since Quézinstra has created his mini-monastery, site of his "perpetuelle residence" (498). Quézinstra's role is of utmost importance. His existence always opposes that of Guénélic, not just in personality or traits but also in cause up until the very end. His attempts to "convert" Guénélic fail as miserably as the others who tried. While the conversions of Hélienne and Guénélic can be questioned, Quézinstra builds a total of four "monuments" imbued with the perpetual to honor Hélienne. Saint Augustine encouraged penitents to show their sincerity by changing their lives, which is, he charges, "incompatible with the practice of living sinfully and postponing penance to the end" (Tentler 8). By building and then devoting his life to these "monuments," we have proof that Quézinstra's "conversion" is sincere. Proof that will last even after his earthly body joins his friends "aux champs Héliens." Hélienne's book was so powerful as to change a warrior into a monk. All under the initial guise of simply teaching female readers a lesson about the dangers of love and finding solace for her "angoisses" therein, Hélienne appropriates the talents of her harshest critic, the paragon of all things masculine, to complete and publish her *Angoisses*, with a broad call to all readers, male and female. She converts Quézinstra from a scorner of all things literary to a writer himself. Proving perhaps that the pen, or at least the book, is indeed mightier than the sword.

CHAPTER 5

PATHS TO SALVATION IN *LES EPISTRES FAMILIERES ET INVECTIVES* AND *LE SONGE*

This chapter will explore the world of Crenne's second and third works, *Les Epistres familières et invectives* and *Le Songe*. I will continue to examine the notion of confession in these works but will concentrate increasingly on the concept which came to form at the end of *Les Angoysses*: that of Hélienne as a sort of spiritual agent showing others the path to a form of salvation. The idea of Hélienne as a priest-like, or even god-like, figure is reinforced in these works and I will attempt to categorize exactly what sort of "salvation" she is promoting. It must be remembered that all of Crenne's works were published within just a few years of the Affaire des Placards and the subsequent internecine religious strife that would plague France for several generations. To arrive at an idea of a confessional affiliation present in her works, a sort of "Helisennian" faith, I will present the strong intertext between these two works and *Les Angoysses* before comparing the religious ideas presented in all three. I will show clear evidence of religious ideas in Crenne's final two works that help paint a picture of the faith promoted in her opus before coming full circle to discuss and draw conclusions about the ramifications for the history of her publications and readership that opened this project.

Considerably shorter than her first work, both *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe* differ in genre but share a highly developed intertextuality with *Les Angoysses*. More than simply

continuing the plot or using the same characters, Crenne rewrites, or at least retells, much of the story or stories all the while playing confessant, confessor and even spiritual guide with many of the same actors from *Les Angoysses*. In *Les Epistres*, she corresponds with Guénélic, Quézinstra and her husband from the previous work. She also continues the practice of going from speaking to a specific or individual audience to addressing both broader topics and “publics.” Just as her *Angoysses* begins with a stated target audience of “honnestes dames,” before ending as a monumental public display for all readers, Hélisenne lashes out specifically at her husband before castigating all citizens of the fictional city Icouc¹⁵⁷ in les *Epistres invectives*. This private to public evolution is heightened by the framing or reframing of the story in the context of her corpus, or what I call “Helisennian” space. As Beaulieu writes, “en effet, en prolongeant la matière et les enjeux amoureux du roman dans des cadres formels différents, ces deux autres écrits révèlent le dialogisme intertextuel qui est propre au corpus ‘hélisénien’ et que la lecture des seules *Angoisses* ne permet pas de percevoir” (Beaulieu “Introduction *Epîtres. Le Songe*” 7). With this progression from private to public expression also comes more serious subject matter. As shown above in Chapter 4, the reader sees a most intense and powerful Hélisenne, and eventually Quézinstra in the extra-narratological confusion of the end of *Les Angoysses*, treating increasingly profound topics. The most poignant philosophical points appear in the latter stages of all of Crenne’s works, after Hélisenne has truly shaped a story, stepped out of it, and then back again, even penetrating it, before finally going beyond it. This is especially true at the end of *Le Songe*, where extremely delicate and sophisticated matters of theology are debated by allegorical figures such as *Raison*, *Sensualité* and *Honte* as well as the goddesses Venus and Pallas-Minerva. One must not forget that the end of *Les Angoysses*

¹⁵⁷ This city is also featured in *Angoysses*.

leaves a debate between Pallas and Venus with no final verdict; in a way, the entire *Songe* is a continuation of that debate.

The language and exempla in Crenne's novel evoke Biblical and Classical traditions at times but the novel is decidedly modern, as its genre would imply. The literary influence of Classical and Biblical texts and genres is more evident in *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe*. In many ways, the progression of Crenne's corpus mirrors that of the Christian New Testament: the third part of *Les Angoysses* establishing the "gospel" and the "passion of Hélienne," with the *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe* resembling the writings attributed to Saint Paul that help give form to the new faith. Much like the foundation established in *Les Angoysses*, the correct way of living promoted in *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe* is one that always favors women and staunchly defends Crenne's, and by extension, all women's writing.¹⁵⁸ Nash sees a parallel between Crenne's writing and that of Christine de Pizan saying that Crenne "relies on a resounding memorial art for 'telling' the 'memory of her' and 'what she has done,'" adding that Crenne "uses[s] the gospel as called for in Mark 14.9, to spread the feminist gospel on Woman" (Nash "Renaissance Misogyny" 385). A look at the exact language of Mark 14.9 is useful in understanding Crenne's works: "Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what *she*¹⁵⁹ has done will be told in remembrance of her."¹⁶⁰ In this famous biblical passage, a woman has just used an expensive ointment to anoint the head of Jesus. Some of the disciples see this as wasteful and object saying that the money from the sale of such precious oils could have been given to the poor. Jesus rebukes this

¹⁵⁸ In *Les Epistres*, Hélienne refers to and defends her novel explicitly in letters to her husband and to an unknown critic named Elenot.

¹⁵⁹ My emphasis.

¹⁶⁰ All Biblical passages in English come from *The Harper Collins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version*.

judgement, saying, “For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial.” As stated above, this scene brings to mind the end of *Les Angoysses*, when the bodies of Hélienne and Guénélic were similarly prepared for burial by Quézinstra. This is not the only instance where similar language is used in *Les Angoysses*. If we look at Lefèvre d’Etaples’ French Bible from 1523 we can identify several passages from Crenne’s text which resemble the wording of Mark 14.9. This verse in the early sixteenth-century Bible reads: “je vous dis en verite que en quelconque lieu que sera preschee ceste evangile en tout le monde et ce que celle cy a faict sera recite en memoire d’elle.” The ambiguous introduction to part 2 of *Les Angoysses*, the story told by Hélienne “parlant en la personne de son Amy Guénélic,” uses similar wording: “Considerant que ce dont je veulx faire le recit, est digne de perpetuelle memoire...je veulx obsecrer et supplier l’altitonant plasmateur, de me faire ceste grace de bien vous scavoir escrire et exhiber l’oeuvre presente” (232-233). Quézinstra also uses the expression “perpetuelle memoire” twice at novel’s end when describing the purpose of his literary mission (497). This “story” of Hélienne is, indeed, “digne de perpetuelle memoire” and the words “recit” and “memoire” are used throughout her works, most times in direct relation to Hélienne’s story and almost always dealing with women. As I discussed above in Chapter 4, Biblical allusions in Crenne’s works seem to be more than just coincidence or simple literary devices; Crenne purposefully models parts of her story on the Gospels and portrays herself in a Christ-like manner. What we are reading is the story or gospel of Hélienne. However, just as with the story, or better yet stories, told in Crenne’s *Angoysses*, the precise message in *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe* is not always what first meets the eye. In the following section, I will examine

how the “messages” of these two works relate to *Les Angoysses* before taking a look at the entire corpus to form an idea of an “Hélisennian” faith.

Les Epistres

“The letters became events in a continuing story, intentional acts of serious consequence with a public as well as a private function” (Levitan xii).

While these words were written to describe the *Letters* of Abelard and Heloise, one would be hard-pressed to find a more perfect description of H  lisenne de Crenne’s *Epistres famili  res et invectives*. Considered the first epistolary novel written in French (Mustacchi and Archambault 5), Crenne’s *Epistres* build upon the story of her *Angoysses* and definitely portray “acts of serious consequence,” having both a public and private face. Her collection of letters channels both the Latin and Biblical literary epistle to address “the individual specifically named and the larger audience that will overhear” (Levitan xxii). More specific to H  lisenne’s time, Nash believes that Gratien du Pont’s *Controverses des sexes masculin et feminin* “are what occasioned Crenne’s own literary activity in composing her *Epistres*” (Nash “Renaissance Misogyny” 380). Regardless of the exact motivation for her work, Crenne’s message is clear: the feminine sex should not be denigrated without reason. Crenne’s epistolary work is comprised of a total of eighteen letters: thirteen “famili  res” and five “invectives.” Most of the “epistres famili  res” address women and Dame H  lisenne writes all of them. Men are targeted much more in the invectives; H  lisenne writes two epistles directly to her husband, one to a critic named Elenot and a final letter to the hateful

citizens of a fictional city named Icouc.¹⁶¹ The second invective letter is the only one in the collection not composed by Hélienne and comes from her husband.

Crenne's use of the letter as literary expression actually predates *Les Epistres* in her opus. Letters and letter writing drive the plot of her *Angoysses* as much as any other force in the novel. They allow the lovers a way to communicate their feelings and eventually facilitate Hélienne's rescue from her tower prison. The husband finds letters and copies of letters between Hélienne and Guénélic, which sends him into a fury, causes Hélienne to attempt suicide and eventually to go to confession. Hélienne takes great pleasure in composing her letters and in reading and re-reading the letters passed between the two lovers, which is evidenced when she states, "je me delectoye à lire les lettres de mon amy, puis apres je regardoye le double des miennes, considerant distinctement tous les termes, de l'une et de l'autre" (134). The chapter titles used in all but the first edition of *Les Angoysses* reveal the importance of letters to the story: Part 1: "L'Epistre dedicative de Dame Hélienne à toutes honnestes Dames," Ch. VIII "Les amans pour n'estre apperceuz usent de lettres," Ch. IX "La lecture des lettres de l'amoureux," Ch. X "Lettres que la Dame escript à son amy," Part 3: Ch. III "Epistres des deux amans, qui de long temps ne se veirent," "Lettres de Guénélic pour envoyer à sa dame, "Lettres d'Hélienne adressantes à Guénélic." In fact, the entire novel, or at least all except the very end of part 3, can be read as a "letter" from Hélienne to Guénélic, as Hélienne's words prove: "et me sembla si elle pouvoit estre consignée entre les mains de mon amy, que cela pourroit estre cause de mettre fin à mes peines, et donner principe au vivre joyeux...subitement je donnay commencement à l'oeuvre presente" (218).

The "bénéfice d'une lettre" is evident throughout her first work but the reader is only able to glean information about many of the letters written in *Les Angoysses*, learning

¹⁶¹ Coucy.

indirectly of their content from the narrator or from the characters themselves. While there are a few letters that appear as such in *Les Angoysses*, complete with an opening greeting, a body, and a closing salutation, *Les Epistres* is fully composed of actual letters. In *Les Epistres*, Crenne continually puts traditional misogynist reasoning in the mouths of her opponents, with the husband once again, just as in *Les Angoysses*, proposing confession to a religious man to help keep her “lubrique langue” silent (137). However, unlike *Les Angoysses*, the husband has no real power over Hélienne. He is no longer able to control her with physical violence or imprisonment in *Les Epistres*; the epistolary nature of the work keeps that from happening since the reader only sees their correspondence, not actual physical contact as is the case in the novel. While the letters present in *Les Angoysses* drive the text and give us great insight into the thoughts of Hélienne and Guénélic, it is more the actual words spoken by Hélienne, Quézinstra or even the husband, that transmit the most powerful messages. A much more powerful and authoritative Hélienne appears in *Les Epistres*, as evidenced by her scathing invective to the critic Elenot. Much like the husband, who disappears after part 1 of the novel, Elenot has no voice and Hélienne only relays his words indirectly to the reader. We learn that Elenot thinks that women “que aultre occupation ne doibvent avoir que le filler” (150) and that he “prohiberoi[t] le benefice literaire au sexe femenin” (150). While the symbolism of the spinning wheel or distaff is commonplace and far from original, the juxtaposition between this clichéd leitmotif and literary expression serves a specific purpose in this context. “Filer” is private and domestic, a sort of prison with no expression but also no protection, at least from male domination, since the action takes place in the home. Writing, especially in the form of “distant” letters, allows for public protection through distance yet serves as a medium of both public and private expression.

Dame H  lisenne can say what she wishes as writer in *Les Epistres* without the husband's threat of physical violence. This process starts in *Les Angoysses* but requires much pain and suffering on the part of H  lisenne. In *Les Angoysses*, H  lisenne seeks cover from her husband's violence in the "accepted" public places of the church and the lawcourts, spaces that allow her both protection from violence *and* means of expression. The shift to an explicitly epistolary genre allows similarly protected spaces for expression in her second work. While H  lisenne often describes her hand as "debile" or "tremblante" in *Les Angoysses*, her "plume" is described with words like "fasch  e" or "fureur" in *Les Epistres*. The triumph of letters is made final in *Les Epistres* when the pen of H  lisenne soundly defeats the husband, Elenot, and the entire inhabitants of a city. Interestingly, neither the husband nor Elenot are given a voice in *Le Songe*.

The very first letter in this collection is to the abbess of a convent where H  lisenne had previously lived. Somewhat surprisingly, we learn that H  lisenne almost makes her "perpetuelle residence" at the convent but goes home to be with her family instead. The expression "perpetuelle residence" appears in *Les Angoysses* but in the context of (H)Elysian Fields and the "H  lisennian" monastery built by Qu  zinstra at work's end. In the opening letter of *Les Epistres* we see Dame H  lisenne writing about a traditional nunnery with nothing but positive things to say. This is very different from the way the church is portrayed overall in her first work. It is possible that the lack of hostility or resistance to this established form of religion is due in large part to the absence of a male influence. As I established above, H  lisenne's world is not anti-religious but tends to resist religious practice when said rituals are dominated or led by men. The narrator's opening places this work within a religious context: "que en toutes noz oeuvres devons l'ayde divine implorer,    bonne raison

exprime telle chose: Car sans la faveur de Dieu ne seroit en la faculté humaine de parfaire aulcune chose utile. Et pour ce en invocant icelle divine clemence, Je l'obsecr de me vouloir de son ayde rendre digne" (61-62). As with the discussion of free will in *Les Angoysses*, this passage reinforces that the theology expressed in Crenne's works sees a sort of partnership or contract between God and man that requires both faith and good works. The first letter also reveals intertexts between *Les Angoysses* and *Les Epistres* that show very different voices and set a different tone from the outset. The exact phrase, "Mais considerant que qui ne peult faire ce que l'on veult, il fault faire ce que l'on peult" appears in *Les Angoysses* (159) and *Les Epistres* (64) but in very different contexts. In Crenne's novel, Hélienne uses this expression to lament the fact that her husband accompanies her to the lawcourts, thus keeping her from being alone with her lover (159). Hélienne uses the exact words in *Les Epistres* to regret not being able to stay longer in the convent due to her obligation to take care of her sick mother. This first letter is doubly different from the tone in *Les Angoysses* as both religious figures and Hélienne's family are described with positive remarks. While her father is said to have died very early in her life in *Les Angoysses*, he is never mentioned in *Les Epistres*. The "venin maternel" that is described in *Les Angoysses* does not appear in *Les Epistres*, where motherhood and childbirth are mentioned in nothing but harmonious and reverent terms. There is a complete lack of male influence or even existence in the first epistle, which seems to explain this difference in tone and content.

The ending of the first letter shows us that *Les Epistres* is not only different in genre but also in message.¹⁶² The stated goal of the authorial voice of *Les Angoysses* was to show women what not to do through the counter-exemplarity of Hélienne's actions and the narrator's notion of writing as a form of "therapy" for herself. *Les Epistres* opens with letters

¹⁶² See Jerry Nash's article "Writing as Therapy."

that praise women and make direct reference to therapy, not for the narrator herself, but for the letters' recipients and, in turn, the larger readership. As Nash writes, "En soulignant une écriture où la 'vigueur & puissance' de 'lettres ou parolles' vise surtout à 'pouvoir prester salut'...Crenne définit déjà pour le lecteur une motivation essentielle de son écriture, à savoir le principe thérapeutique que le lecteur va rencontrer, d'une façon ou d'une autre, dans toutes les épîtres" ("Writing as Therapy" 167). The labor of infiltrating accepted spaces and appropriating them for her own devices was completed in *Les Angoysses*, and *Les Epistres* begin with a more outward form of preaching the "Hélisennian" gospel established in her first work. The highly important phrase, "en moymesmes," used dozens of times in *Les Angoysses*, rarely appears in either *Les Epistres* or *Le Songe*. Hélisenne's internal struggle no longer takes center stage in these works because the idea of Hélisenne has been lauded with monuments, a monk to worship her and her story, and has been published and widely read. The story of Hélisenne has been told in *Les Angoysses* but now needs to be explained and applied in practice.

This is not to say, however, that *Les Epistres* totally departs from the major themes of *Les Angoysses*. The idea of confession remains central to the plot of *Les Epistres*, though Hélisenne assumes the role of confessor from the beginning. In the *Epistres familières*, Hélisenne acts as confessor for a young woman named Clarice in the eighth letter (93-94). Hélisenne lets the reader know that Clarice does not wish to marry a young man due to the love that she had for another, "duquel par plusieurs fois m'as parlé, me disant que l'amour effuse & cordiale qu'il demonstroït avoir en toy, t'excitoit de luy rendre amour mutuel & reciproque" (94). Helisenne uses this exact expression, "amour mutuel & reciproque," early in *Les Angoysses* to describe the happy beginning of her marriage. Hélisenne tries to

convince Clarice of the unfortunate consequences of such passion then gives the following advice:

si promptement ne t'en peux desister [de l'amour], si est il tres urgent & necessaire d'user de dissimulation, pour eviter que par imprudence, tu ne face manifeste, ce que tu veulx occultement latiter: Et pource que je crois qu'il n'est chose au monde qui plus aultruy trompe qu'est faindre le contraire de ce que l'on veult, Je te exhorte de nyer en apparence, ce que plus affectueusement desireras, pour evader que tu succumbe en l'indignation de ceulx, les quelz par juste raison de toy à leur arbitraige peuvent faire. (95)

The advice given in this confessional discourse differs greatly from that given by the monk to Hélienne in *Les Angoysses* but reminds the reader of the counsel offered by the old woman at the end of part 1. Hélienne does, however, implore Clarice not to “estre du nombre d'aulcunes pusillanimes femmes” (95) but instead to resemble “Helisa” more in her “constance” (95). Here we also have the first mention of “Helisa” or Dido in *Les Epistres*, “qui en langaige Phenicien est interpreté, & vault autant à dire comme Virago, exerçant oeuvres virile”¹⁶³ (95). Interestingly here, Crenne does not talk about love as much as the fact that “par [Dido] fut construite & edifiée la noble cité de Carthage: laquelle depuis fut tresfameuse & renommée” (96).

In the ninth epistle, Hélienne continues her conversation with Clarice, “la quelle elle persuade de persister en dissimulation, affin de ne faire indice de l'amoureuse flame” (97). Following Hélienne's advice, Clarice successfully avoids an arranged marriage by feigning a willingness to join a convent. This manipulation of religious institutions recalls the perversion of religious confession that occurs in *Les Angoysses*. It should be noted, however, that it is Clarice, not Hélienne, who is manipulating the religious institution to cover her

¹⁶³ Though Dido is often mentioned, Crenne rarely uses her original name “(H)Elissa.” In *Les Angoysses*, “Elissa” appears in the beginning of a speech by Quézinstra (433). There is no “H” in the Janot edition but subsequent editions spell the name with an H.

love. Hélienne ends this letter with the salutation, “En exorant le souverain Dieu, que felice repos te concede” (98). Most of the letters in this work finish with similar closings, all which resemble blessings pronounced by a religious figure. The Hélienne of *Les Epistres* resembles much more the woman from the end of *Les Angoysses*, who implores Guénélic to turn from his evil ways and follow a path to salvation, than the suicidal and love-sick young woman from the beginning of the first work. Again, we see here a shift in the focus of Hélienne’s goal.

Though we see the ideas of motherhood, marriage, and even religious institutions treated much more reverently in *Les Epistres*, and though Hélienne’s voice seems to take a very different tone initially, the last three “familières” letters show that the Hélienne of old has not disappeared. These three letters put Hélienne back in the role of confessant and anchor the work strongly into a direct intertext with her novel. Hélienne begins the tenth letter with the following phrase, “Après avoir prinse la plume, deliberant te divulguer & totalement enucléer ma conception secrete” (99). For the first time in this work, we see Hélienne overcome with emotion, “la main tremblant” (100), seeking comfort from her confessional writing to a woman named Galazie: “Mais considerant que les anxietez latitées ne peuvent sinon que augmenter, il m’a semblé que l’exhiber d’un souef refrigere me serviroit: j’ay repulsé toute timidité: Au lieu de laquelle, hardiesse a comparu, de laquelle est emanée la stimulation de donner principe à l’œuvre presente” (100). Much like in *Les Angoysses*, she writes, in part, to help herself deal with pain.

In the next letter, Hélienne writes to the same friend and delves even further into her former confessional persona. This letter also succinctly sketches the outlines of the love story between Hélienne and Guénélic from *Les Angoysses*, though names are not used. What

cannot be mistaken is the reappearance of the exact confessional language that is used throughout *Les Angoysses*. The expression “sans rien reserver” that accompanies almost every confessional moment in *Les Angoysses* appears within the first few sentences of this eleventh letter. Most notably, the expression “disoye en moy mesmes,” which was used dozens of times during Hélienne’s inner-dialogue and most powerful scheming in *Les Angoysses*, appears twice in this letter and nowhere else in the entire work. Even the ending of the letter takes a very different tone and could be seen as alluding to *Les Angoysses*: “Et faisant fin à mes *douloureux*¹⁶⁴ escriptz, Je exoreray celle qui est mere & fille de l’Altitonant Plasmateur, que de toutes choses nuisibles te vueille conserver” (107). While the entire work shares elements with the Héliennian story, the tenth, and especially, the eleventh letters place the reader directly back in the world of *Les Angoysses*. These two letters no longer aim to help others but to help Dame Hélienne herself. She writes, “presentement aultre chose ne te veulx plus exposer, sinon que tres affectueusement je te supplye, que l’extremité de mon mal tu vueille considerer, affin qu’à moy qui tousjours de tes douleurs ay eu compassion, Tu use de reciproque & mutuelle recompense” (106-107). Again, the words “reciproque” and “mutuelle” reappear when describing the type of interaction that Hélienne desires most.

The final two “familières” letters are addressed to Quézinstra and to “ung gentil homme” who is not named but whom the reader guesses to be Guénélic. These letters continue to look back, albeit in strangely coded language, to events that occur in the story of Crenne’s *Angoysses*. In the twelfth letter, Hélienne thanks Quézinstra for his service as an “amy feable” (111) and urges him to “ne discontinuer les remonstrances que [il] fai[t] à [s]on mary” (111). This does not fit exactly into the storyline of *Les Angoysses* as Quézinstra has

¹⁶⁴ My emphasis.

no interaction with the husband in the text.¹⁶⁵ H  lisenne also denigrates her own writing, which she describes as the “debilit   & petitesse de [s]on stile” and implores Qu  zinstra to use the “artificielle ellegance de [s]es melliflues parolles” (111) to convince her husband of her virtue. She does end the letter with some sort of agency, saying, “feray devotes intercessions    celluy qui de toutes noz oeuvres est juste remunerateur” (111-112). As mentioned above, the final “  pistre famili  re” revisits much of the turmoil between Gu  n  lic and H  lisenne from *Les Angoysses* and seems to indicate that, though not in any physical danger, H  lisenne is in some sort of captivity.

As one would expect, Dame H  lisenne begins *Les Epistres invectives* with a different tone, which is evident in the “Preamble.” The last two “famili  res” remind the reader of the trials of H  lisenne in *Les Angoysses* and foreshadow the anger and fury that characterized H  lisenne’s writing in her novel. Words like “recreation” and “clemence” that appear in the opening of the work give way to “sclerit  ,” “cruelle” and “odieux” in the “Preamble aux Invectives.” About twice as long as the prologue to the entire work, this “preamble” describes the two-faced nature of Fortune and the nefarious effects that it wreaks on human kind. While the preamble to *Les Epistres famili  res* speaks of pleasure and variety for the reader, the invectives show a reluctant H  lisenne pushed to the edge by her detractors.

In the first invective, addressed to her husband, H  lisenne defends her writings and behavior with words and expressions similar to those in *Les Angoysses* with even more explicit references to the novel: “comment en plusieurs lieu de mes compositions je deteste amour illicit: & avec affectueux desir, Je exore les dames de tousjours le vivre pudicque observer, par ces remonstrances miennes” (126). She goes on to state that her husband’s

¹⁶⁵ Not only does Qu  zinstra not meet the husband, he appears just after H  lisenne disappears. He seems to replace the husband as the “standard” bearer and almost a “love” interest for Gu  n  lic.

mistreatment causes her to write such scathing letters making a distinction between “experience” and “exercice littéraire” (129). The title of the second invective informs the reader that the husband “deteste tout le sexe femenin” (133). He accuses Hélienne to have “faict divorce & repudiation totale d’avec dame vertu” (134), which reminds the reader of Hélienne’s language from *Les Angoysses* when she uses the exact phrase “divorce et repudiation totale” (120) concerning her feelings for Le Mari. Her husband repudiates Hélienne’s distinction between “experience” and “exercice littéraire” when he says: “& quant ad ce que pour ta deffense tu propose, mettant en avant les remonstrances que tu fais aux dames: En tes angoisses tu ne doibs croire que ceste simulation aye tant d’efficace, qu’elle puisse tes abhominables vices latiter” (135). Interestingly, the idea of “simulation” or “dissimulation” follows the phrase “divorce et repudiation” in both *Les Angoysses* and *Les Epistres*. In *Les Angoysses*, Hélienne uses her corporeal delights to give “ombre à [son] inique vouloir” (120) and to trick her husband into thinking that she would regain “termes de raison” (120). As mentioned above, the idea of marriage is then mocked in the novel in a curious fashion. In this second invective letter, the husband takes an even harder stance, comparing Hélienne to “la voluptueuse Semiramis: Laquelle estant embrasée de libidineuse luxure, institua une loy que promptement elle fist publier, & estoit telle, qu’à ses subjectz estoit permis d’accomplir fornication, ainsi que bon leur sembloit” (135). Again, the same wording from *Les Angoysses* reappears: “soubz ombre¹⁶⁶ de bonté persuade les Dames d’estre chastes. Mais tu ne doibs croire combien que les secretz de l’ame ne se voyent, que je ignore ta perverse intention, qui n’est aultre chose sinon que pour timeur, d’estre de la société

¹⁶⁶ My emphasis.

des dames. Tu as differé de par tes escriptz ton *inicque*¹⁶⁷ vouloir divulguer” (135-136). Just as with the novel, the husband proposes confession and penitence:

Mais icelle supernelle bonté, ne desirant la damnation du pecheur, mais veult qu’il se convertisse, t’a reservée en vye pour quelque temps: durant lequel te seroit chose urgente, que quelque sainte personne se condescendist à supplier, obsecrer & exorer ceste divine masuetude, que sur toy vueille sa grace estendre, de sorte qu’estant reduicte de vraye contrition & repentence, tu te puis accompagner en te submettant de recevoir peine corporelle: pour eviter celle de l’ame qui est perpetuelle. (137)

The husband also makes a correlation between this penance and silence when he states, “bien seroit temps toutesfois de remettre en silence ta lubricque langue” (137). The husband encourages Hélienne to speak or express herself only in private, as in confession with a priest, and, much like in the novel, his harshest remarks always follow words involving public speech or expression (public, vulgariser, etc.). Le Mari ends the letter with a general warning against women and marriage. He writes, “pour certain n’y a plus superbe ne perilleux ennemy de l’homme que la femme” (140) before lamenting the dangerous seduction of the fairer sex: “O que la sequester en seroit bonne: mais la chair est fragile” (140). Crenne puts an exaggerated religious argument against marriage in the mouth of the ridiculous husband, providing her with an easy target to attack. As Beaulieu states:

la deuxième épître donne l’occasion à Hélienne de passer du délicat terrain de la défense individuelle à celui, plus rassurant et plus riche sur le plan rhétorique, de la défense du groupe. En faisant entendre une deuxième voix épistolaire, qui joue le rôle de relais discursif, l’agencement de cette partie du recueil semble presenter un raccourci emblématique du parcours que doit entreprendre, dans le contexte du XVIe siècle, toute prise de parole féminine. (Beaulieu “La fonction du dialogue” 9)

¹⁶⁷ My emphasis.

While some of H  lisenne’s retort to her husband vaguely addresses specific accusations concerning the storyline or actions from the novel, the husband’s exaggerated criticism of all women allows H  lisenne to ignore the (sometimes true) statements about her own situation in order to defend the feminine sex as a whole. This is evident from the introduction of the third invective: “Puis qu’il ne se peult garder d’increper en general la condition muliebre, ce que H  lisenne ne peult tolerer, parquoy elle allegue plusieurs raisons aptes    confondre le dire de son mary” (141). While the husband uses “les escriptures” to attack women and marriage, H  lisenne finds Christian arguments in favor of marriage: “il a est   institute de la divinit     ternelle: & a est   d’icelle tant estim  , que l’  scripture sainte a exprim   l’estat de l’  glise: & choses ardues par ceste stat de mariage, appellant le redempteur l’espoux & l’  glise son espouse” (143). She also defends a woman’s “right” to be beautiful and to dress well, citing examples from the Old Testament and proposing that such attributes enhance “la noblesse de leurs mariz, ou de leur pere” (145). H  lisenne finally calls her husband to repentance: “je t’admonnest de ne plus determiner si promptement: & aussi que tu commences    te repentir” (146). In the novel, H  lisenne appropriates the tower prison to which her husband relegates her to create a piece of literature that becomes a monument (or several monuments) to praise her and tells a story culminating with her as a god-like figure. While H  lisenne leads Gu  n  lic to a sort of salvation and helps in the transformation or even conversion of Qu  zinstra, she never directly addresses her husband again after the first part of the novel. This invective letter shows the fully formed power of H  lisenne; she is no longer simply perverting or appropriating spaces to which she has at least limited access, nor is she “converting” or “saving” a friendly or sympathetic figure. She has called a man, who is

supposed to be her superior as both man and husband, to repent of his sins. She has moved her evangelism to a new level.

The most poignant example of H  lisenne's power comes in the fourth invective where she confronts a critic of her previous work named Elenot. After praising Marguerite de Navarre and Marot, H  lisenne calls Elenot to confession much in the same fashion as her husband: "O medite doncques de confesser l'offense que tu as perpetr  e envers ce gracieux sexe femenin" (155). She continues, "Je desireroys bien que ton vouloir fust de communiquer ceste mienne epistre,    gens de splendides & clairs esperitz...ilz te feroient entendre que c'est une remonstrance qui pour ta salvation & utilit   a est   faicte" (155). Not only showing the error of his ways, the very purpose of the letter is the salvation of this wicked man. If he does not spread the good news, he will "persiste[r] en [son] antique folie qui seroit cause de faire esmouvoir la fureur de ma plume" (155-156). With these words, H  lisenne again calls a man to confess his sins but now provides him with the gospel of her writing and warns him of her wrath if he fails to follow her call. As Nash points out, "the many invocations made by H  lisenne to God, requesting his continued help and guidance in her struggle to combat misogyny through invective, clearly underscore this mission as she perceived it as well as her belief that her message was God-given" ("The Fury" 214).

The final invective addresses the inhabitants of Icouc, a city from *Les Angoysses* where Gu  n  lic and Qu  zinstr   were poorly received and persecuted. In language similar to that used in the letters to her husband and to Elenot, H  lisenne wants to make clear the purpose of this letter: "La faulte que j'ay commise au preterit, passant soubz silence voz iniquitez: je veulx reparer pour le futur en publiant ce que le detracter de voz venimeuses langues ne permet tenir occulte: &    ceste occasion pour donner principe    les declairer"

(158). In these final invectives, H  lisenne rebels against the husband who wishes her silent, preaches to a critic of her work, and only laments not being more forceful in her criticism of the inhabitants of Icouc. H  lisenne defends both her novel and herself before closing with these words: “Atropos te coupe le fil de ta miserable vie, je vouldrois qu’apres telle dissolution, ton corps sans honneur de sepulture, peult demourer: affin qu’il devint pasture de liepars, loups affamez, lions, Ours, Tigres, & toutes bestes feroces” (161). The final words of the letter, and the work for that matter, state her wish that these citizens meet the same fate as Dathan and Abiron, who were engulfed by the earth for rebellion against Moses, their spiritual leader. Here we have a group of men upon whom H  lisenne wishes a death with no burial marker and no ceremony, thus no memory. When compared with the end of *Les Angoysses*, where H  lisenne’s death is commemorated by an elaborate tomb and monastery as well as a story that will last forever, the message is clear. Though similar in storyline and tone at times to *Les Angoysses*, *Les Epistres* show H  lisenne as a stronger figure who goes on the attack, destroying her critics. Helisenne ends this work essentially comparing herself to Moses, a figure against whom rebellion rarely ended well.

While the significance of such a comparison should not be overlooked, another, much more indirect, connection to Moses in *Les Epistres* might be even more important to the H  lisennian idea. Though only mentioned once in each of Crenne’s first three works (*Angoysses* 408, *Epistres* 146, *Songe* 54), Judith, whom H  lisenne calls an “exemple de chastet  ” deserving to be “magnifiez par louenge triumphale & par canticques perpetuelz” (*Epistres* 146), fits perfectly within the H  lisennian opus. Claiming that Crenne sees Judith as the “the biblical equivalent of the classical Dido” (Nash “Renaissance Misogyny” 393), Nash has described Crenne’s epistles as “highly biblically inspired, feminist ‘canticques

perpetuelz” (“Renaissance Misogyny” 408). In the biblical story of Judith, the beautiful heroine loses her husband, but remains a chaste widow. She launches her plan to kill the evil leader Holofernes when the men of Israel fail. Judith uses her beauty and cunning to get close to Holofernes, seducing him before cutting off his head. In chapter 16, verses 5-9, Judith describes her deeds in a song of praise:

But the Lord Almighty has foiled them by the hand of a woman. For their mighty one did not fall by the hands of the young men [...] but Judith daughter of Merari with the beauty of her countenance undid him. For she put away her widow’s clothing to exalt the oppressed in Israel. She anointed her face with perfume; she fastened her hair with a tiara and put on a linen gown to beguile him. Her sandal ravished his eyes, her beauty captivated his mind and the sword severed his neck! (1479)

While the choice of Judith as example for Crenne is obvious, the connection with Moses may not be at first glance; it involves Judith’s song that is mentioned above. Verse 14 of chapter 15 tells us that, not only does Judith sing this “cantique” before all of Israel, but “all of the people loudly” join her (1478). The first verse of her song in chapter 16 implores Israel to: “Begin a song to my God with tambourines, sing to my Lord with cymbals. Raise to him a new psalm; exalt him and call upon his name” (1478). Judith goes on to sing in verse 2, “the Lord is a God who crushes wars” (1478) before calling all “creatures” to serve God and ending with this warning in verse 17: “Woe to the nations that rise up against my people!” (1479). This song is reminiscent of, and likely based on, the Song of Moses in Exodus 15,¹⁶⁸ which fits perfectly with the Héliennian project. Much like Judith’s borrowing, or even appropriation of the Song of Moses, Crenne’s works are littered with intertexts from established male authors. Ching describes these borrowings as “deliberate intertextuality” which create “a woman’s counter-text” (24). Supporting my assertion that Crenne’s

¹⁶⁸ See commentary footnote on Judith 15.14-16.17, *Harper Collins Study Bible*, p. 1478.

“message” mirrors that of the Bible, Nash compares Crenne’s work to Saint Paul’s letters, which “proved to be a most effective literary form for bringing about change and spreading the gospel” (“The Fury” 218). Much like Paul’s use of classical Graeco-Roman letters as models, Nash recognizes Crenne as being “responsible for adapting in the Renaissance the Pauline diatribal letter for pro-woman and feminist purposes” (“The Fury” 219). Beaulieu sees this as “the necessity for the woman narrator, Hélienne, to make use of pre-existing texts by well-known male writers in order to constitute a text, thus expressing new contents with older, already canonized means” (“Erudition and Aphasia” 37). I agree but think Crenne goes beyond necessity. Crenne the author has found a new genre fitting for “louenge triumphale” of women and of her as a writer. Much like her manipulation and appropriation of the church and the law courts in *Les Angoysses*, initially for protection and then for production, she has co-opted an accepted and established literary genre, using Judith as example, showing a willingness to “write and, if need be, to rewrite again, and to have it read and reread as God, not man, wrote it” (Nash “The Fury” 219).

Le Songe

Much like *Les Epistres*, Hélienne begins *Le Songe* with another call that echoes Mark 14:9, albeit through imitation of Cicero: “m’est survenu le vouloir de vous faire d’ung songe digne de memoire ample recit” (45). She announces from the beginning that the work will deal with serious topics, such as the “sainte escripture” and the “immortalité de l’ame” (46) and, in stark contrast to her previous works, Crenne’s *Songe* seems to take a step back historically in genre. As Beaulieu and Desrosiers-Bonin point out, “le *Songe* s’engage dans la voie – très fréquentée au Moyen Age – d’un récit à la première personne qui s’autorise de son caractère onirique pour déplorer un appareil didactique et érudit très fourni”

(Introduction *Epîtres. Le Songe* 9). Crenne's novel borrows elements from chivalric romance and from other male authors of her era but expresses many very modern elements, while *Les Epîtres* refer to an older tradition that she transforms in a modern way. Though it is clear from the reference to Cicero and the similarities to medieval literature mentioned above that Crenne's *Songe* can be seen as looking to the past, it is not an entirely backward-looking work. Critics have interpreted this third "version" of the Héliennian saga as an effort by Hélienne de Crenne to "win recognition as a humanist" (Cottrell "Hélienne de Crenne's *Le Songe*" 189). As Beaulieu writes, "ouvrage très érudit, le *Songe* projette les enjeux habituels du corpus héliennien dans un espace discursif où la figure auctoriale fait la démonstration de son savoir, peut-être par désir d'afficher une ambition humaniste" ("Introduction *Epîtres. Le Songe* 14). For Crenne, writing an allegorical text surely did not represent a return to an earlier tradition. On the contrary, it was a way of inscribing her work in the loftiest and most ambitious literary tradition of her day. It was a way of announcing that her work was both 'modern' and serious" (Cottrell "Hélienne de Crenne's *Le Songe*" 195).

Le Songe also differs from Crenne's previous works in that Hélienne is no longer telling her story, at least not exactly. As Cottrell declares, "whereas in *Les Epîtres* and *Les Angoysses*, the narrator, Dame Hélienne, recounts the story as her own, in *Le Songe* the unhappy Dame Hélienne projects the story onto characters who appear to her in a dream. She now hears her own story told back to her by characters who are the product of her own perfervid imagination" (Cottrell "Hélienne de Crenne's *Le Songe*" 192). This genre also separates each section by the name of the speaker. Dame Hélienne interjects at times but always in a section set apart from the rest of the text.

Though she uses different devices to (re)tell the Héliennian story in *Le Songe*, the language is quite similar to *Les Angoysses*, which would have been obvious to a sixteenth-century reader familiar with both works. *Les Angoysses* and *Le Songe* begin in springtime, described as when “la frigide déesse Cibelle” (*Songe* 47) “despouilla son glacial et gelide habit” (*Angoysses* 98). Just before falling into a sweet slumber in *Le Songe*, the narrator tells us that she had been stimulated by love “en l’ardeur de [s]on aage florissant” (47), much like the end of part 1 of *Les Angoysses* where Hélienne prays to Cupid as “prisonniere en la fleur de [s]a jeunesse” (220). The intertext continues as the narrator of *Le Songe* encounters a young man: “jessant [s]on regard en circonference, à [s]a veue s’offrit ung jeune jouvenceau, qui d’une beaulté indicible et non equiparable, resplendissoit” (49). This recalls the first time that the lovers’ eyes meet in *Les Angoysses*, when Guénélic “jecta une tres percante oeillade, qui me fut penetrative jusques au cuer” (115) and again when Hélienne states, “me jecta ung regard, qui me transperca jusques au cuer” (162). Also present from the very first page of *Le Songe* is the key expression “en moy mesmes je disoye” (49). Though present in *Les Epistres*, the expression does not appear until the third familiar letter, and only two other times throughout the rest of the work. It is thus clear, from the very beginning, and perhaps even more so than in *Les Epistres*, that *Le Songe* is another retelling of the story of *Les Angoysses*. In fact, *Le Songe* could be interpreted as describing a short dream that Hélienne has in part 1 of *Les Angoysses*, where she is with her young lover “en ung beau jardin plaisant et delectable,” (188) or even as her dream from when Guénélic and Quézinstra rescue her from the castle and place her “soubz ung arbre” (461) before giving chase to brigands at the end of the work.

In *Le Songe*, Dame Hélienne tells the story of L'Amant and La Dame Amoureuse, which, as mentioned above, is but a thinly veiled version of the story of Hélienne and Guénélic from *Les Angoysses*. As in *Les Angoysses*, La Dame Amoureuse proposes to leave her husband to be with L'Amant only to be met with words of caution from her lover. As Cottrell points out:

like Guénélic in Part I of *Les Angoysses*, L'Amant, it seems, sought the lady's favors because she was (1) married and (2) wealthy. He sought, in other words, the satisfaction of having conquered a married woman who, moreover, was wealthier than either he or her husband...Male rivalry thus played a part in the dynamics of his love. Without that rivalry, his love wilts. ("Hélienne de Crenne's *Le Songe*" 192)

Also much like the novel, L'Amant suggests that the two lovers exchange letters before Dame Amoureuse understands her lover's change of heart and refuses. Venus then appears and chastises the young man for not pursuing his love, followed by the appearance Pallas-Minerva. Pallas-Minerva encourages the lover to spurn love for "oeuvres viriles" (83), recalling Quézinstra's endless pleas to Guénélic in *Les Angoysses*. Pallas closes a speech to the young man with "tu trouveras que pour ta salvation je les ay dictes" (84), almost the exact words that Hélienne uses with Elenot in *Les Epistres*. This continues the practice of female figures calling male characters to salvation through direct words or messages in Crenne's works.

The debate continues before Cupid shoots L'Amant with a golden arrow and La Dame Amoureuse with one of lead, releasing her from love's bondage. Though the speeches in the work still come mainly from mythological figures, the text begins to shift towards "abstract personnifications" such as "Honte," "Raison," and "Sensualité" (Cottrell "Hélienne de Crenne's *Le Songe*" 193). All allegorical actors eventually disappear as the

text progresses, save Sensuality and Reason, with Reason dominating the speech. As Cottrell points out, “the dominant voice is that of Raison, who delivers lengthy homilies for the edification of Dame Hélisenne. Raison’s discourse is unrelentingly allegorical and didactic” (Cottrell “Hélisenne de Crenne’s *Le Songe*” 194). The end of the text becomes a conversation between Raison and Dame Hélisenne, in which topics of serious theological import are debated. Eventually, even L’Amant disappears from the text and Dame Amoureuse only reappears at the end, under a new name of “Dame Reduicte,” to profess her changed ways. La Dame Reduicte states, “C’est chose à Dieu agreable de le craindre et esperer en sa misericorde...toutesfoys moyennant l’ayde de Dieu, dont principalement je me confie, et non pas en moy: et aussi par la cooperation des oeuvres que je desire accomplir, mon esperance est grande” (130). Just after this, and before any break is indicated in the text, the narrator takes over for la Dame Reduicte describing her ascension to the heavens. Dame Hélisenne finishes the work by waking up in a forest near the “chasteau du Cabasus,” which was her home and prison in *Les Angoysses*. She ends this work by stating: “et lors estant timide, que chose digne de si grand memoire ne me tournast en oblivion, pour n’estre de negligence improperee, promptement je prins la plume pour par mes escriptz le rediger” (132). Once again, Crenne’s writing is to record in monumental memory the story of a woman, told by a woman, and “saved” from oblivion by a woman. It is clear that all three of these works by Hélisenne de Crenne share intertext and are self-referential. She has told the same story, with slight variation, using three different genres. In the preceding remarks, I have examined these works, their intertexts, and the “confessional” discourse and actions that permeate their pages. Though works of fiction that are not strictly religious or philosophical treatises, there are common religious themes and ideas that appear and reappear in each of the works. Much

like the men who were responsible for bringing H  lisenne de Crenne’s works to print, and, for that matter, the entire period during which she wrote, it is difficult to pinpoint precisely Crenne’s own religious ideas, beliefs, and identity from the words of her books. However, closer analysis of what emerges as the “gospel of H  lisenne” as represented in these three works could help situate the author’s particular confessional affiliation. I will endeavor to do just that in the final portion of this study.

The “Hélisennian” Gospel

First and foremost, Crenne's works show abhorrence for misogynist thinking and use religious arguments to attack such views. As Nash points out, "she levels the ethical and biblical playing field, so to speak, on questions of morality by rejecting the male argument of woman's sexual inferiority and depravity based on generalizations and especially the use by misogynists of a double standard to assess morality" (Nash "Renaissance Misogyny" 384). Crenne believes that a woman's beauty should not be feared and that women should not be ashamed of their physical attributes, citing Deuteronomy 21.10-14, which shows the children of Israel selecting their wives from the most "beautiful women prisoners" (Nash "Renaissance Misogyny" 388). Crenne arrives at these conclusions in her works by tackling substantial questions of theological import. For instance, when Dame Hélisenne and Raison debate the biblical creation story in *Le Songe*, Raison makes a clear, yet nuanced, distinction between how Man is not "ymaige de Dieu" but "a esté créé à l'ymaige de Dieu" (112). Raison then goes on to add that "l'homme et la femme sont esgalement faictz à l'ymaige de Dieu" (112). Citing Saint Paul and the creation story of Genesis chapter 1, Raison states:

Dieu le filz est ymaige de Dieu invisible, premier engendré de toutes
creatures: Nonobstant en l'homme est l'ymaige de Dieu, non point parfaite:
mais imparfaite. Et pource notamment n'est pas escript: que l'homme est

faict l'ymaige de Dieu, mais à l'ymaige de Dieu. Car ceste preposition icy latine, ad, denote ung access et une similitude entre choses distantes et differentes: mais Jesuchrist, est parfaicte ymaige de Dieu, car premier qu'ung ymaige soit parfaicte, fault qu'il ne luy faille riens, de ce qui est requis en la chose, dont elle est ymaige. (112-113)

As Cottrell points out, "For centuries, most theologians had held that woman, coming after man and being created out of his body, was made not in the image of God but in the image of man. Raison, however, argues that both men and women were made in God's image" ("Hélisenne de Crenne's *Le Songe*" 199). In by far the longest speech in *Le Songe*, Raison discusses the Trinity and that there will be no difference between men and women as souls in heaven. Nash comments on the importance of such a distinction for Crenne's message: "Crenne develops for the early Renaissance the truly revolutionary feminist implications of the biblical admonition, 'there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28). For Crenne, the accomplishment of 'manly' or heroic works is not in relationship to gender but to individual ability and performance, in the sense of a single human nature and a single human activity" ("Renaissance Misogyny" 394). Nash continues: "what makes Crenne's feminism specifically 'biblical' and distinguishable from other early modern feminist rhetorical practices is the degree to which she is forever turning to and appropriating the Bible in order to 'authorize' her feminist ideology and narratives, especially her use of the meaning of creation in Genesis 1 as the justification for her kind of 'equality' feminism" (Nash "Renaissance Misogyny" 396).

This "equality" feminism is not just for the exceptional virago outside the domestic sphere. Though seemingly hostile to marriage and family in *Les Angoysses*, as shown above, *Les Epistres* and *Le Songe* deal much more favorably with the institution. Even in *Les Angoysses*, when accompanied by the words "mutuelle et reciproque," marriage is portrayed

in a positive light. In *Le Songe*, Cottrell describes “Raison” as “envision[ing] marriage as it ought to be, not as it is, an ideal marriage” (“Hélisenne de Crenne’s *Le Songe*” 198). The aforementioned idea of “mutuelle et reciproque” highlights “marriage as a partnership in which each partner cooperates with the other to assure the success they both desire” and, according to Cottrell, has “a distinctly Erasmian ring” (Cottrell 198). Perhaps the lack of positive feelings towards marriage and family in *Les Angoysses* reflects some of the author’s own mixed emotions concerning family as woman and a writer. Maybe Crenne, undoubtedly due to her own experiences in matrimony, shares Abelard’s concerns that scholarly pursuits and domestic travails do not mix: “scholars and nursemaids, writing desks and cradles, a book and a distaff, a pen and a spindle – what harmony can there be in that?” (Abelard and Heloise 15).

By establishing a more equitable view of man and woman, Crenne is then able to build the case for the power of women, with Judith as a perfect example. While Dido dominates *Les Angoysses*, Judith becomes a more perfect model of female power since she retains her strength and dignity throughout her life, never falling prey to suitors or to weakness of any kind. Judith shows that both a woman’s beauty and faithfulness can be “instruments of political assassination, of biblical good triumphing over evil, of the biblical tradition of God manifesting his power by choosing to work through the ‘weaker sex’” (Nash “Renaissance Misogyny” 391-392). Nash captures why Judith is the perfect paragon for the Héliennian project when he states, “Judith’s beauty and apparent sexual conniving are in fact a coverup for her wit and become her very means of serving God” (“Renaissance Misogyny” 392). Seeing the salacious subject matter of *Les Angoysses*, or even the scheming advice given to women in *Les Epistres*, through the lens of the Judith story lets the reader

understand that this is all a part of Hélienne's "means of serving God." It is easy to see why such ideas frightened many men of her day. Speaking of the treatment of women's learning in Gargantua's letter in *Pantagruel*, Screech writes, "most theologians would have considered Rabelais dangerously liberal in allowing women to study theological matters under any pretext. Even Montaigne poured scorn on Margaret of Navarre as an example of what happens when women meddle with theology" (Screech *Rabelaisian Marriage* 26). With equality and power comes a responsibility to spread her "gospel" to the world. As I have shown above, Hélienne moves from simply empowering herself to using her wisdom to transform loved ones, such as Guénélic, Quézinstra, and Clarice. She eventually proposes her message as a path to salvation for enemies, such as her husband, Elenot and the citizens of Icouc. As Nash states, "Crenne faithfully and fervently believed that her words on woman were endowed with 'la faveur de Dieu', and that they were a true 'proffering' or professing of 'Evangelicques parolles'" (Nash "The Fury" 223).

If Hélienne has followed a Christ-like path and written a sort of Gospel that others should read for salvation, then the texts, despite their fictional nature, have an undoubted religious function. A look back at some of the more overt religious statements or instances in her works will give a greater understanding of just what type of religion Crenne might have espoused. Though resistant to the male religious figures in the texts, Dame Hélienne does not show an aversion to religious orders. The reader learns from *Les Epistres* that she had lived in a convent:

La bonne exemplarité, l'assidue reverence à Dieu, les frequentes abstinences, la virginalle continence, les sobres paroles, l'espargné regard, la continue demeure solitaire, le mesuré temps, la disperse charité, ensemble le contempnement du monde, l'aspre penitence, l'extreme diligence en devotes oraisons, & la souveraine patience en toutes voz affaires observée. O que le mediter en cela, me fait juger vostre vie heureuse. (64)

Dame Hélienne also suggests joining a religious order as a way out of an unwanted marriage. As shown above at length in chapter 4 of this study, Hélienne manipulates confession but does not totally reject it. She also speaks of intercessors and even “les saintz glorifiez” at several times throughout *Les Angoysses* and *Les Epistres*, which obviously would not have pleased a hardline Lutheran. Her ideas on free will are very clear: God’s will dominates but free will does exist and humans must work to find the will of God. The prologue to *Les Epistres* presents this notion unequivocally: “en toutes noz oeuvres devons l’ayde divine implorer, à bonne raison exprime telle chose: Car sans la faveur de Dieu ne seroit en la faculté humaine de parfaire aulcune chose utile. Et pour ce en invocant icelle divine clemence, Je l’obsecr de me vouloir de son ayde rendre digne” (61-62). Much like the role of religious orders, this would not have pleased the most radical Reformers of the era. However, this does not automatically put her in the Catholic camp. As Cottrell points out, “for other Evangelicals, specifically those of a more Erasmian bent, man, though sinful by nature and incapable of being saved except by grace, must nonetheless participate in his salvation through good works” (“Hélienne de Crenne’s *Le Songe*” 196). He continues, “Erasmian Humanists, whose Christianity was colored by Stoic thought with its stress on the ability of the will to shape ethical behavior, sought to reconcile man’s will with divine grace [...] For the Christian Humanists who took their cue from Erasmus, grace and free will, properly understood, are not incompatible” (Cottrell “Hélienne de Crenne’s *Le Songe*” 196). This type of philosophy is evident throughout *Les Angoysses*, especially from the words of Quézinstras. Quézinstras implores Guénélic repeatedly at the novel’s end, telling him, “l’ame a domination sur le corps, quand elle est aydee par grace” (480) and “car on a liberal arbitre avecq l’ayde de dieu, pour resister” (481). In *Le Songe*, Dame Raison also promotes a similar

view: “L’ame qui est du bien et du mal capable, par la force de son liberal arbitre avec l’ayde de Dieu peult operer cela: et est si grande sa possibilité, que soy et aultruy peult saulver: et en adherent à la divine volonté” (108). Another passage from *Le Songe* expresses explicitly this message of human and divine cooperation:

que les fruictz et lignée de bonnes operations ne sortent pas de nous sans nostre cooperation, ne par la grace de Dieu seule ou semence du saint Esperit. Ne paraillement de nostre seul liberal arbitre: mais proviennent des deux, c’est assavoir, de la grace divine: comme premiere cause complete et parfacite, et de notre liberal arbitre, comme principe materiel, cause second moins principale. (108-109)

Again, this line of thought could not be further from Calvin but could be found amongst certain followers of Melanchthon who tended “vers une conception de la grâce qui laisserait à l’homme une certaine responsabilité. Il n’est certes pas question, chez ces derniers, de mériter le salut; mais ils n’acceptent pas non plus un salut qui opère sur l’homme malgré lui ou sans lui” (Screech *Evangélisme* 49). Screech describes the opinions of Erasmus and Rabelais on free will and grace in terms that could also apply to Crenne: “la bonne conduite est le resultat d’une cooperation entre l’homme et la grâce, ‘cooperation concue cependant de telle sorte que dans cette oeuvre commune du libre arbitre et de la grâce, la grâce ne se borne pas au rôle d’assistant mais assume celui de guide’” (Screech *Evangélisme* 66). Much like Rabelais, Crenne tries to “garder intacts le libre arbitre et la predestination de Dieu” (Screech *Evangélisme* 61). For example, Crenne writes, “la predestination divine (par laquelle Dieu nous a eternellement esleuz) est cause principale de tous noz merites: et que nostre volonte est seulement cause concomitative et associative” (*Angoysses* 481). Of Rabelais, Screech writes: “The Lutheran and Calvinist schisms encouraged men to think deeply and anxiously about man’s responsibility within a divinely ordered world. Rabelais was convinced of the

reality of divine Providence, but strove to save a place within it for man's efforts to work together with grace in constructing his own future" (*Rabelaisian Marriage* 141). Words that would describe Crenne's thought perfectly, especially if the schisms encouraged "woman" to reflect on her responsibility and efforts in building "her own future."

Another extremely important notion regarding a possible confessional creed in Crenne's works is "la foi formée de charité." Guénélic speaks of "charite" in his discussion of faith with a religious man towards the end of *Les Angoysses* and Hélienne professes her faith during her final confession to God: "charite de toy, mon dieu, est ainsi, qu'une mere: qui a son sein estendu pour recevoir benignement ceulx qui volontairement se retournent à elle" (469). Quézinstra also lauds faith formed by charity, telling Guénélic not to grieve those who die "avec une ferme foy: laquelle donne espoir qui engendre charite parfaicte [...]" Charite est Dieu: et pour tant si elle est en nous, Dieu ausy nous avons" (476). We see similar language in *Le Songe*: "Dieu est Charité: et qui sa residence faict en Charité, il est en Dieu: et Dieu en luy" (*Songe* 121). Much like the religious orders and the idea of saints as intercessors, faith formed by charity was not a hardline Protestant idea (Febvre *The Problem of Unbelief* 285). Once again, however, it could have appealed to early "evangelists" who wished to reform the Church without a total break from Rome. Febvre writes, "*fides charitate formata* was a phrase foreign to Martin Luther's thought. It was a phrase permeated by Catholic substance, a phrase familiar to many evangelists between 1530 and 1536 and to many devoted readers and disciples of Erasmus" (*The Problem of Unbelief* 287).

Another reformist tendency present in Crenne's works is the emphasis on reading the Bible. She states in *Le Songe*: "Par ainsi apres tel principe ne differeray de sainte escripture parler: la comtemplation de laquelle, est tant melliflue, que tant plus on s'y arreste et

frequent: tant plus on desire à y demourer et la frequenter” (45). Explaining Crenne’s reformist attitude, Cottrell writes, “like the Evangelicals generally, she has a marked preference for the four Gospels, the Pauline epistles, and the book of Psalms” (“Hélisenne de Crenne’s *Le Songe*” 195). It seems clear that the religious figure of the sixteenth century most associated with ideas that resemble those in Crenne’s works is Erasmus. Much like François Landry, whose ideas were shared by some of Crenne’s publishers, Crenne’s works seem to fit in the historical space of a time when “reformers” of all ilks were still searching for a way “to think deeply and anxiously about man’s responsibility within a divinely ordered world” (Screech *Rabelaisian Marriage* 141).

In the words of Febvre, “to define a person who was ‘Reformed’ in France between 1530 and 1535 is truly not an easy task” (280). The same can be said of defining the “Hélisennian faith.” If we can call Crenne a sort of Erasmian Catholic, then what could be the implications for the initial question of the study, namely why her books never again appeared in print after 1560? As discussed above, Hélisenne de Crenne’s works were published in various forms from 1538 to 1560 and none ever caught the eye of censors from the Sorbonne or from Rome. The analysis of the texts shows religious ideas that line up with early, and perhaps, more moderate Reformers but nothing so controversial to cause her first printer Denis Janot, whose orthodoxy was rarely questioned, any concern. The ideas in her works also pleased her final two printers, Langelier and Groulleau, enough to reprint them repeatedly from the early 1540s to 1560. In Chapter 3, I showed that the Protestant leanings of these two men helped end their careers, and possibly their lives, and clouded the succession of their businesses. The question remains, then, if Crenne’s works were printed by a fairly orthodox Catholic and then by two reformers, why did others, from either side of the

religious argument, not publish her works again in later years? As stated above, the political and religious situation in France changed dramatically from 1538 to 1560 and what was acceptable to Janot in 1538 may not have passed the test after 1560. After 1560, the religious ideas in Crenne's works seem too moderate to interest an avowed Protestant like Lucas Breyer, yet contained language and ideas that may have been too suspect for a diplomatic and cautious Abel Langelier to print. A look at another author from the same time period can serve as an example to help us understand this evolution. In his work *L'évangélisme de Rabelais*, M. A. Screech analyses the differences in the treatment of free will in the works of Rabelais. Screech avers that the idea of the "libre arbitre" only interests Rabelais "d'une façon secondaire" in *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*, works that predated Calvin's *Institution*. Screech argues that Calvin's extreme stance on this tenet of the Christian faith affected the subject matter of Rabelais' subsequent works and editions (*Evangélisme* 44-45). Screech writes, "Dans son premier livre, il rend le mot-clef par *coadjuteur*; pour la Tempête de 1548, *aider* lui suffit; en 1552, il opte pour *coopérateurs*. Dans *Pantagruel*, Rabelais prétend que Dieu ne veut 'nul coadjuteur'; maintenant, au contraire, il exige que les hommes se fassent 'coopérateurs avec lui' (Screech *L'évangélisme* 44). According to Screech, the rise of Calvin, the answer by the Council of Trent, and the increasing religious strife all contributed to the change in Rabelais' expression. As Screech writes, "A partir de 1547, les dés sont jetés. Le concile de Trente frappe d'anathème ceux qui maintiennent que le libre arbitre de l'homme ne peut en aucune façon collaborer avec Dieu" (Screech *L'évangélisme* 46). Screech believes that, because of the change in the religious debate at large, Rabelais felt compelled to mark his ideas more clearly with changes in subsequent editions and new subject matter in his later works. While Rabelais was quite critical of Calvin, he also had no great love for the Pope, as

evidenced by the “Papimanes” episode in the *Quart Livre*. Several times throughout these chapters of the *Quart Livre*, Rabelais refers to the Pope as “Dieu en terre.” In her edition of the *Quart Livre*, Mirelle Huchon describes the usage of this expression: “Rabelais fait la critique de la notion de ‘Dieu en terre.’ L’expression, employée par les canonistes depuis le XIII^e siècle, se réfère à la ‘plenitude de la puissance’ que l’on reconnaît au pape” (428). Screech agrees that the expression dates back to medieval canonists but qualifies “dieu en terre” as “une expression moqueuse” and insists that, “au temps de Rabelais, l’expression était entrée dans la controverse religieuse” (Screech *Évangélisme* 78). Screech furthers his argument by pointing out that the canonists almost always spoke of the Pope “comme s’il était Dieu en terre: ‘quasi Deus in terris’” (*Évangélisme* 78). In the sixteenth century, most defenders of the Pope used similar variants, such as “le vicaire de Dieu” or “le lieutenant de Dieu” when describing the Pope.¹⁶⁹ The same cannot be said of anti-papal works from this period. In his 1554 work, *Des actes des vrais successeurs de Jesus Christ et de ses Apostres, & des apostats de l’église Papale*, Pierre Viret uses the term several times to criticize people who believe “au Pape dieu en terre” (59, 462). Again in a 1556 work entitled *Instruction chrestienne et somme générale de la doctrine comprinse ès Saintes Escritures*, Viret writes, “Par ils font, non pas du Dieu souverain, mais du Pape leur Dieu en terre” (18). Viret continues to use the expression in his 1552 *La physique papale* (121) as well as *Le Requiescant in pace de purgatoire, fait par dialogue* (84, 86) from the same year. Théodore De Bèze also uses the expression for the Pope in his 1563 *Confession de la foy chrestienne* (340). In his 1566 *L’introduction au traite de la conformite des merueilles anciennes avec les modernes ou traite preparatif à l’Apologie pour Herodote*, Henri Estienne tells the story of a

¹⁶⁹ See Estienne Pasquier’s *Les Recherches de la France* (123, 146, 300) and Henri Lancelot-Voisin de La Popelinière’s *L’Histoire de France, enrichie des plus notables occurrences survenues ez provinces de l’Europe et pays voisins* (257).

cardinal who speaks of “ung seul Dieu” (329) who is “nostre saint pere, mais aussi Nostre Dieu en terre” (97). In his *Le glaive du Géant Goliath* from 1561, Charles Léopard also calls the Pope, “Dieu en terre,” (19) and ends the entire work hoping to have shown, “à toute personne qui ne voudra fermer les yeux en plein midi que vraiment le Pape de Rome est l’homme de peche, le fils de perdition et l’Antechrist” (75). These examples show that the expression “dieu en terre,” without any qualifier, was used exclusively by Reformers as a tool to discredit the Pope. Perhaps the best example of the charged nature of this expression comes from *L’anti-christ et l’anti-papesse* by a Catholic writer named Florimond de Raemon. ¹⁷⁰ In this work, Raemon relates the attack by “Les Pretendus Reformez” on the new calendar proposed by Pope Gregory, whom he calls “le vicaire de Jesus-Christ” (488). According to Raemon, these “Pretendus Reformez” decry the calendar changes as “quelque nouvelle entreprinse du Pape, pour vouloir paroistre un *nouveau Dieu en terre*”¹⁷¹ (488). There is a clear distinction between the respectful qualifiers used by the Catholic writers (vicare, lieutenant de Dieu) and the absence of such codifying words by the Reformers.

As mentioned above, Rabelais was no Calvinist but his thoughts on the Papacy differ little from the other authors listed above. While the Gallican crisis of 1551 could explain some of the discontent, it is clear that Rabelais’ use of the expression “dieu en terre” denigrates the Pope of the *Quart Livre*. While there is much in the episode of the Papimanes to show Rabelais’ ire for Rome, Screech insists on the power of the “dieu en terre” expression: “Si l’épisode de Papimanes n’eût contenu que cette seule expression *Dieu en terre*, on aurait déjà le droit de soupçonner Rabelais de faire ici cause commune avec la Réforme” (*Évangélisme* 79). If simply using the expression “dieu en terre” is enough to be

¹⁷⁰ First published in 1599, Abel Langelier also published a version of this work in 1607.

¹⁷¹ My emphasis.

labeled a Reformer, Hélienne de Crenne deserved the moniker as much as Rabelais. This expression appears twice in her *Angoysses* and once in *Les Epistres*. The first instance of this expression comes at the beginning of part 2 of the novel where Guénélic, or Hélienne “parlant en la personne de son amy,” relates his struggle with love. He states, “Je ne scavoie quelz embrasemens ont accoustumé de sentir ceulx qui de Venus et Cupdio, font leur Dieu en terre”(234). At the end of *Les Angoysses*, the expression appears again as Mercury guides Quézinstra through Hades showing him the unfortunate souls who had lived “invetez et endurez en leurs pechez, sans jamais eulx vouloir repentir: parquoy sont sans misericorde de leurs offenses” (493). This is followed by, “Les aultres, sont les ames des gens ausquelz l’avarice a esté *Dieu en terre*:¹⁷² et tant plus estoient riches et opulenz, et tant moins à eulx et aux aultres usoyent de ceste belle vertu de liberalité. et les aultres, sont ceulx qui d’outrageuse tyrannie ont leurs etatz et seigneuries regies et gouvernées, et qui estoyent plus estimez de leurs subjectz par timeur que par amour” (494). Crenne also uses the expression in the final invective of her *Epistres* when she describes the cruel inhabitants of Icouc as “estantz en ce vice submergez...car vous scavez que Venus, Bacchus & Ceres sont voz *Dieux en terre*”¹⁷³ (158). All three of these instances, especially in the passage from the end of Crenne’s novel, use the expression in quite a negative way and do not mollify the tone with qualifiers like “comme” or “quasi.” While there is a great deal of writing concerning confession, free will, charity and theological ideas on men and women, the pope is all but absent in Crenne’s works. There are a few religious figures in *Les Angoysses* but most seem simple priests, monks or hermits. In *Les Angoysses* there is one mention of “Antioche, ou Sainct Pierre fut premier Evesque” (335) and *Les Epistres* contains the words “la main

¹⁷² My emphasis.

¹⁷³ My emphasis.

pontifique ou du pontife” (98). While the first passage is completely innocuous, the second is not as clear. Dame Hélienne mentions “la main pontifique” when advising Clarice how to avoid marrying a man whom she does not love. Having advised Clarice to join a religious order, Hélienne tells Clarice what to do in case the father seeks to overrule Clarice’s wishes by appealing to the pope: “A quoy tu dis avoir respondu que ne veulx nyer estre à luy subjecte. Mais que nonobstant cela tu peulx disposer totalement de ce que tu congnois à ton salut estre utile” (98). While the “luy” to whom Clarice is “subjecte” seems to be the father, nothing in the sentence or the context makes it unequivocal and the pronoun could just as easily be read as referring to the pope. Is this a rebellion against the father or a slight to the pope’s power? Or both? According to Screech, “pour les évangéliques schismatiques, l’expression *Deus in terris* était comme tombée du ciel” (*Évangélisme* 78), but it is not completely clear that Crenne uses the expression explicitly for the pontiff.

If we examine the three instances where the expression “dieu en terre” is used, none make direct reference to the pope and the third uses the word “dieuz” in its plural form. However, in the 1538 Janot edition of *Les Angoysses*, the word “Dieu” is missing from the text in the expression “Dieu en terre” and is labeled as a “coquille” in the modern critical edition established by Christine de Buzon. Subsequent editions do replace the word and this may have been a simple printing error. There are numerous “coquilles” identified in the critical edition of *Les Angoysses*, but most involve a missing letter or two and very few leave out entire words. This expression may not have carried as much meaning and may have had no significance for Crenne or for Janot but it is suspicious that one of the few words in the entire work that is indicated as missing entirely from the text happens to be a part of the potentially dangerous expression “dieu en terre.” This peculiar omission, coupled with the

ambiguity of “la main pontifique” episode, does not fully explain the meaning or intent of the “dieu en terre” expression in these works. It does, however, create a feeling that there is more than simple coincidence at play here.

Regardless of what H  lisenne de Crenne intended, her printers and editors would have been well aware of the charged meaning of such an expression by the later 1540s and 1550s. Langelier and Groulleau may have reveled in keeping the expression intact in Crenne’s *Angoysses* and Janot may have “prudently” omitted the word “Dieu” in his first edition. However, the existence of this expression could explain why no Catholic printer touched Crenne’s works after the early 1540s. While some of the ideas expressed in her opus have Protestant tendencies, they do take a less threatening, more moderate form. The expression “Dieu en terre” had earned great currency among the staunchest critics of Rome in the decades after Crenne’s first editions and may have kept Catholics away. Inversely, her moderation, along with her ideas on saints as intercessors and her strong belief in free will, may have kept later Calvinists away. As lines were drawn in the religious conflicts in sixteenth-century Europe, Crenne’s works seemed to have fallen into a middle ground that did not excite zealots on either side but had just enough ambiguity, with a bit of potentially dangerous content, to keep all sides away.

Conclusion

Hélisenne de Crenne lived and wrote during a time when ideas of religion, language and literary genre were in flux. I have attempted to show just how much her works, especially her triptych, reflect this unstable yet productive time. She borrows and appropriates language from established male authors of the day to piece together a new production that literally creates new genres in French literature. The publication history of her opus also mirrors the evolution and change happening in early modern France, showing the influence of the nascent publishing world on the still evolving printed book and how the ideas of publishers and printers affected their businesses. Crenne was a woman and an author and her writing bears the marks of what being an “autrice” meant in Renaissance France. As Kelly states, “only as viragos, as exceptions to their sex, could women aspire to the Renaissance ideal of ‘man’” (71). Much like certain reactions to her writing amongst her contemporaries, the most virulent forms of punishment and criticism by male characters are accompanied by the word “publier” in Crenne’s works. This comes as no surprise, as Rigolot points out, “toute publication [de femmes] constitue une transgression de l’ordre patriarcal” (“Ecire au féminin” 5). This “exceptional” transgression against the established order helps cement the importance of publication at the forefront of my questioning. I have shown that people from almost all walks of life read works by Hélisenne de Crenne, showing that her writing is not easily labeled and that an audience for her books was still present after their final sixteenth-century editions. In my attempt to answer questions concerning Crenne’s

publication history and reception, I have found owners of her books and commentary that had not been previously mentioned in studies dealing specifically with Crenne.

As the beginning of Chapter 2 shows above, the confessional scene between H  lisenne and a monk in *Les Angoysses* centers this study and captures the essence of the H  lisennian world. Crenne’s writings definitely reflect the first decades of the sixteenth century in France: tumultuous and even quite dangerous, but not yet strictly sectarian and split. As Febvre points out, “there was in France, more than in Germany or Switzerland, a prodigious variety of individual doctrines, not very precise and, since they were not put into practice, under no obligation to adapt themselves to reality” (*Unbelief* 280). The complex nature and ambiguity of Crenne’s works express this “reality” of individual doctrines somewhat disconnected with reality. Febvre contends these texts belong to a time that we do not recognize, “for around 1560 a great revolution began in the behavior of our forefathers with regard to religious objects and places” (*Unbelief* 170). Indeed, the world of 1538 and Denis Janot was very different from 1560 and Estienne Groulleau. By the 1560s, there was no longer a space for a “temporiser” and it seems that while some of the religious ideas expressed in Crenne’s fall in this middle ground, certain words and expressions could be interpreted as more extreme. The challenge to understand and recognize the ideas in Crenne’s works motivated this project.

One of the few women of her time to deal with theology, Crenne expresses ideas with reformist tendencies that would resemble those of Erasmus, and perhaps Fran  ois Landry’s congregation, but would stop far short of a Calvinist schism. Much like her borrowings from other established works and authors, Crenne borrows language from the Bible and makes it her own. I have encountered no other studies that acknowledge the presence of H  lisenne as

confessor and Christ-like figure nor have I previously read any commentary on the ambiguity of the expression “dieu en terre” in Crenne’s opus. I hope that my proposing this expression as an example of language that contributed to the stoppage of Crenne’s works after 1560 will lead to further exploration of this question. One obvious challenge to such analysis is the temptation to place ideas and meanings in texts that the author never intended. As Lucien Febvre writes, “to reread the texts with eyes of 1530 or 1540 – texts that were written by men of 1530 and 1540 who did not write like us, texts conceived by brains of 1530 and 1540 that did not think like us – that is the difficult thing and, for the historian, the important thing” (*Unbelief* 12). I would simply add that rereading texts written by *women* of 1530 and 1540 adds another layer of difficulty to this task and makes it all the more important.

Such a rich and varied opus presents many lines of inquiry that remain unexamined. I intentionally did not engage Crenne’s *Eneydes* in this study given that only one edition of this work was published, thus allowing for no comparison or analysis of subsequent editions, publishers or editors. Crenne’s *Eneydes* is quite different from the first three works, most notably in genre and its expensive folio format. It remains the least studied of Crenne’s works and presents a vast and rich field of study for scholars. A recent dissertation by Sharon Margaret Marshall examines Crenne’s translation and, in a refreshing change from some contemporary critics, does not call Crenne’s identity into question. Marshall does recognize the power and subversive nature of the works and states, “Hélisenne’s treatment of truth and fiction thus questions the way in which women have been represented and allows her to defend women’s intellect through her own sophisticated appropriation and bold rewriting of an authoritative masculine text” (13-14). Crenne’s texts also present great opportunities for queer and gender studies. Though critics like Mireille Huchon are resistant to such

examination and fear that authors like Louise Labé and Hélienne de Crenne “risque[ent] de passer du statut d’icône de *gender studies* à celui d’icône des *queer studies*”¹⁷⁴ (Planté 271), I tend to agree with Christine Planté’s assessment of the matter: “tout comme le jeu supposé de poètes du XVI^e, ce bon mot pourrait se prendre au sérieux” (271). The allusively gendered voices in Crenne’s works provide excellent avenues for gender and queer studies specialists to explore.

Regardless of the ambiguities or nuances in Crenne’s works, it seems clear that she wanted first and foremost to be a writer who was respected as much as her male counterparts; her opus creates a space where literary creation by a woman is not only allowed, it is to be lauded. The tendency of the protagonist Hélienne in these works to subvert and appropriate roles of masculine figures of authority, from a priest to Christ himself, mirrors the textual borrowings and genre-bending appropriation from traditionally male-dominated literary tradition practiced by Crenne to create her works. The religious ideas that, in my view, helped contribute to the end of her publication always play a secondary or supporting role in the real battle that Crenne wages for equality of the sexes. As Cottrell adroitly avers, Crenne “touches on doctrine only insofar as it impinges on the ‘feminist’ issues that preoccupy her” (“Hélienne de Crenne’s *Le Songe*” 201). The persona of Hélienne begins in *Les Angoysses* as a young girl of eleven, unaware of her corporeal attributes, who ends up a Christ-like redeemer of souls with monuments built in her name at novel’s end. The builder of these monuments, Quézinstra, explains his goals at the end of *Les Angoysses*:

disant en moy mesmes, que de castigation est digne celluy qui es choses
transitoires, sa pensee forme et arreste. Car tous ses mortelz plaisirs si de
vertuz ne sont gouvernez, ne sont seulement inutiles, mais tres dommageables
a l’ame. Parquoy me sembla que tres felices sont ceulx lesquelz ce pendant

¹⁷⁴ Quoted by Christine Planté in “Tout.e écrivain.e est ‘de papier’” (271).

qu'ilz sont en terre la puissance et gouvernement de leur liberal arbitre, de mettre tout leur esperance en la chose ferme et stable. (498)

In a similar refusal of “les choses transitoires,” Screech comments on Rabelais’ idea “that one’s children are the chosen substitute given by God as partial compensation for that full immortality in the body as well as the soul, which would have been Adam’s if he had not sinned [...] ‘Acquérir une espèce de immortalité, et en decours de vie transitoire, perpétuer son nom et sa semence’” (Screech *The Rabelaisian Marriage* 16). While Hélienne has no children, “perpétuer son nom” is always an integral part of the work. Cottrell describes this constant naming and re-naming, writing and re-writing that accompanies Crenne’s works as it relates to the last printed page of *Le Songe*:

On the one hand it announces the end of Dame Helisenne’s dream and thus repeats in a ‘para-textual’ register what the fictional Dame Helisenne had already announced in the fiction itself. On the other hand it announces the end of the work called *Le Songe*, which was written, of course, not by the fictional Dame Helisenne but by Dame Helisenne de Crenne, as her name appears on the title page. In the text itself, ‘Dame Helisenne’ picks up the pen to write down her story. In the post-scriptural ‘para-text,’ however, the fictional ‘Dame Helisenne,’ the text’s inscribed author, dissolves into Dame Hélienne de Crenne, the text’s real author. In the end, the reader finds himself outside the drama and in the world of Crenne. (“Hélienne de Crenne’s *Le Songe*” 204)

This “world of Crenne” is exactly what Quézinstra is worshipping, what Hélienne is preaching, and what frightens countless male readers, both fictionally in the texts themselves and in reality. As Diotima states in Plato’s *Symposium*, “Everyone would rather have such children than human ones, and would look up to Homer, Hesiod, and the other good poets with envy and admiration for the offspring they have left behind – offspring, which, because they are immortal themselves, provide their parents with immortal glory and remembrance” (*Symposium* 57). Hélienne de Crenne’s entire opus is *en memoire* or *en souvenance d’elle*.

In his letter to Pantagruel, Gargantua writes, “car ceste vie est transitoire, mais la parole de Dieu demeure eternellement” (*Pantagruel* 137). This is eerily reminiscent of the final passage of *Les Angoysses* when Quézinstra states: “Et pourtant en consyderation de ces exemples, ay este desireux de manifester ceste oeuvre. ...ces angoisses dolozeuses...affin que par ce moyen ayez vouloir de delaisser les choses transitoires, pour les choses perpetuelles acquerir” (506). Much like “la parole de Dieu” in *Pantagruel*, Crenne’s oeuvre, her “angoisses” are “perpetuelles” and “demeur[ent] eternellement.”

Just as with the contemporary questioning of Louise Labé’s work, some recent criticism claims that this “world of Crenne,” replete with the writing and re-writing of the same story told by “polyphonic” narrative voices, proves that Hélienne de Crenne must be a creation of a so-called “Cercle de Janot,” a group of individuals involved with Crenne’s first publisher Denis Janot. It is undeniable that this “cercle” left its mark on Crenne’s work in two decades of working with her opus but I see no reason to doubt that a woman using the name Hélienne de Crenne penned these books. In her recent book, *L’écriture éditoriale à la Renaissance*, Anne Réach-Ngô describes Crenne’s *Angoysses* as oscillating from “récit sentimental traduisant la complainte de l’héroïne” to a “récit chevaleresque dépeignant la quête amoureuse de l’amant” to a “fable mythologique relatant la destinée des écrits de la narratrice et de son successeur” (359). According to Réach-Ngô, a woman could not possibly have created this polyphony and mixed genre solely. Where Réach-Ngô sees the varied voices of a team of male editors and printers, I see the truly innovative voice of a female author exploring and appropriating male-dominated authoritative spaces. Réach-Ngô in no way refutes the identification of Marguerite Briet, wife of Philippe de Fournel, sieur de Crenne, and only states that she fails to see how Marguerite could have acquired the books necessary

for such intertextual creation. Réach-Ngô insists on Crenne's work as a collective "produit éditorial" (426). I would agree that Crenne's entire opus is made possible in large part by the very process that Réach-Ngô presents in such detail, namely the new space and process of the printed book. I think, however, that the subversive power of her production, a power recognized as a threat by many of Crenne's contemporaries, gets lost and is simply missed by this new wave of criticism. I tend to interpret the new space of the printed book as "creating" the idea of what Michèle Clément calls "nom d'auteur" (81). According to Clément:

Ce nouveau statut s'est créé par progressive dissociation sémantique entre *auctor* ou *auctores*...et 'auteurs,' 'autrices.' Va donc émerger en langue vernaculaire une nouvelle catégorie sous ce mot puisqu'il n'est plus la seule traduction du latin *auctores*, renvoyant aux autorités classiques, mais forge un nouveau concept: les créateurs en langue vernaculaire. (Clément 81)

Whatever the motives of the men (and women) of the burgeoning sixteenth-century printing world to actually give authors like Crenne a way to share their works with the world, the end result is a forceful statement of equality. Describing the use of "De Crenne" in various places in her books as part of the "nom d'auteur," Clément describes Crenne as "encore plus crâne que" Louise Labé, stating: "Là encore, c'est dans un contexte de revendication d'égalité qu'une femme se nomme sans fioritures féminine. Le nom est utilisé par Crenne, Labé et Gournay comme arme de l'universalisme." (Clément 86). I think it is clear that Crenne's works are saturated with a cry for and proclamation of equality of the sexes.

Throughout her writing, Crenne cleverly uses the acts of confession and the power of conversions to empower her protagonist. She operates in the accepted places and roles for Renaissance women only to subvert these areas and appropriate them for her devices. Through constant manipulation of private and public, sacred and profane, Christian and pagan, even Protestant and Catholic, Crenne navigates the spaces of Renaissance France. As

Rigolot avers, “c’est cette tension entre le désir de subvertir et la nécessité de collaborer qui fait vibrer le tissu de l’oeuvre et lui donne sa vérité humaine” (“Ecrire au féminin” 7). The female characters in Crenne’s texts embody the tension expressed by her style and writing strategies. Clément’s words to describe Labé’s writing could just as easily be applied to Crenne: “Ecrire dans un code masculin, selon la procédure de l’imitation, telle est la loi que subit et dont se délivre dans un même mouvement le texte de Louis Labé” (90). The result of such imitation, borrowing, and appropriation is a decidedly “Hélisennian” space where “Hélisenne and her book are one: not that she is her heroine, but that her heroine and her heroine’s environment are ‘part of who *she* is’” (Reiss 411).

As shown above, Crenne’s works deal with increasingly erudite subjects, culminating in Classical antiquity. Crenne’s final work, a prose translation of the first four books of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, was published in a large and expensive folio format and dedicated to François I^{er} himself. Unlike her other works, *Les Eneydes* was never reprinted and a modern edition has yet to appear. It could, however, serve as a metaphor for Crenne’s entire endeavor. As Cottrell states, “through glosses in the margin of the published book and narrative passages interpolated in the Virgilian text, [Crenne] manages to inflect Dido’s story so that it stands as a canonical Latin model capable of validating the story told by the narrator in Part I of *Les Angoysses*” (“Hélisenne de Crenne’s *Le Songe*” 190). Crenne takes a highly traditional work in a most learned language and form, Latin verse, purposefully chooses the books concerning Dido, a character with whom she relates, and makes it her own. She translates and transforms the epic into prose French, taking liberties where she wishes. Much like her other works, Crenne’s translation “témoigne de conflits, d’une conscience de la place des femmes, d’une réflexion critique sur leurs relations avec les hommes et d’aspiration à

leur transformation dans la société du temps” (Planté 270). I see this endeavor as the culminating element in her effort to create “the possibility of a different kind of community: one where the person is not made by context, but claims the right to define and make herself as free woman and erudite and authoritative writer” (Reiss 424).

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