In the early 1540s, a literary quarrel sprang up between two French court poets. Inspired by the vogue for Baldassare Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*, which had been translated into French by Jacques Colin and published in Paris and Lyon in 1537, Bertrand de La Borderie fired the first shot in 1542 with his *Amie de court*, a poem whose speaker embodies Castiglione’s portrait of the ideal courtly woman, but also manipulates the codes of courtly love to her own advantage.¹ Troubled by La Borderie’s deeply ambiguous Amie, Antoine Héroët responded that same year with his *Parfaicte Amye*, whose speaker espouses perfect courtly love as a vehicle for neo-Platonic philosophy. Other poets then entered the fray, leading to two published collections in 1544 and 1547 and rounding out what scholars now refer to as the *Querelle des amies*.²

Perhaps owing to the fact that both poems were composed by men who have their female speakers defend what seems to be highly questionable conduct on their part, *L’Amie de Court* and *La Parfaicte Amye* have often been interpreted as satirical eulogies whose title characters’ apologiae are actually vehicles for misogynistic tropes about lascivious, manipulative, and hypocritical female courtiers.³ However, La Borderie and Héroët were prominent members of what Jonathan Reid calls the ‘Navarrian network’, a group of reform-minded nobles, officials, clerics, and writers centred on Marguerite de Navarre.⁴


² In 1544, La Borderie and Héroët’s poems were published in a collection alongside a French translation of Antonio de Guevara’s *Menestrecio de corte y alabanza de aldea*, Héroët’s verse translation of Aristophanes’ tale of the hermaphrodites in Plato’s *Symposium*, Charles Fontaine’s *Contr’amy de court*, and Paul Angier’s *Honneste Amant*. In 1547, Jean de Tournes published the *Opuscules d’amour*, a volume containing all the aforementioned works except Guevara’s, plus Almanque Papillon’s *Nouvel Amour* and La Borderie’s *Discours du voyage de Constantinoble*. To these principal elements of the *Querelle* may also be added Antoine Du Moulin’s *Amante loyalle* (1545), a satiric parody of Héroët’s *Parfaicte Amye*, François Habert’s *Nouvelles Vénus* (1547), a laudatory poem in honour of Catherine de’ Medici, and the anonymous *Lounge des femmes* (1551), another satire of Héroët that draws on Rabelais. For summaries of the *Querelle* and its constituent pieces, see M. A. Serence, ‘An Interpretation of the *Querelle des Amyes*’, *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, 21 (1959), 103–30, and Émile Telle, ‘La *Querelle des Amyes*’, *La *Œuvre de Marguerite d’Angouleme reine de Navarre et la Querelle des femmes* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1969), pp. 149–75.


especially close to Marguerite, as he belonged to her household, and his sister, Marie, figures as the heroine of nouvelle 22 of the Heptaméron. Both poets share the queen’s inclinations and concerns and use their respective Amies to address issues instantly recognizable to readers of Marguerite’s secular magnum opus: the opportunities and pitfalls facing women who engage in traditional courtly love service and its neo-Platonic variations, the perception and judgement of women’s behaviour by a society steeped in misogynistic discourse, and the reconciliation of these issues with the evangelical spirit that permeates the works of Marguerite and her close associates. La Borderie’s and Héroët’s respective Amies defend their conduct and respective approaches to courtly love before unsympathetic audiences inclined to question their motives and think the worst of them, and this tension between speaker and audience lends itself to a rhetorical approach characterized by extensive use of the figure of praesumptio, the anticipation of opposing arguments.

Praesumptio, or procatalepsis in the original Greek, is defined in the Rhetorica ad Alexandrum spuriously attributed to Aristotle as ‘the method by which we shall counteract the ill-feeling which is felt against us by anticipating the adverse criticisms of our audience and the arguments of those who are going to speak against us’, the logic being that arguments, no matter how forceful, ‘will appear much less weighty to those who have already heard them’. Taking up this definition, Quintilian specifies that praesumptio is typical of the genre of judicial rhetoric as practised by Cicero in Pro Milone and Pro Archia. Renaissance humanist writers such as La Borderie and Héroët would therefore have been familiar with praesumptio on a theoretical level through authoritative texts on formal rhetoric, and possibly on a practical level, as well, especially if they studied or practised law. Additionally, praesumptio is such a broad concept that it may readily be applied outside the strictly forensic and legal spheres, as seen in Renaissance rhetorical manuals such as Philipp Melanchthon’s Institutiones rhetoricae of 1521. Melanchthon defines praesumptio as:

when we anticipate that which may be objected in the mind of the judge or the opponent before it is objected. Of course, it is a necessary figure for all writers, through which they are alerted to remain on guard against the plans and thoughts of others.

In this respect, writers can practise praesumptio even if they are not necessarily working within an explicitly rhetorical framework. To wit, Melanchthon identifies examples of its use not only in Cicero, but in the Pauline epistles, specifically Galatians 1.7 (‘But there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel

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7 While it is unclear whether La Borderie had any legal training, Héroët almost certainly did; see Raphaël Valéry, ‘Biographie d’Antoine Héroët’, in Par élévation d’esprit: Antoine Héroët, le poète, le prélat et son temps, ed. by André Gendre and Loris Petris (Paris: Champion, 2007), pp. 67–111 (pp. 79–80).
8 Philipp Melanchthon, Institutiones rhetoricae (Augsburg: Sigmund Grimm, 1523), folio C8v; translation mine. The Institutiones were published in Paris seven times between 1523 and 1533 by Simon de Colines, Pierre Leber, Nicolas Savetier, and François Regnault.
of Christ’) and the entirety of Romans, which he characterizes as Paul’s anticipation of potential concerns regarding the status of Jews and Gentiles in the new religion.

Whereas Melanchthon uses *praesumptio* to portray the Apostle as an orator every bit as gifted as the masterful rhetoricians of pagan antiquity, La Borderie and Héroët use it in conjunction with a legalistic framework to bring the social perception of women in line with Pauline charity. While Marguerite de Navarre’s mastery of and feelings toward formal rhetoric are less clear than in the case of her protégés, she also played her part in the *Querelle des amies* and appropriated their use of *praesumptio* for the frame narrative of the *Heptaméron*, marked as it is by the discus-
sants’ distrust of one another and of the characters in one another’s tales. All three participants in the *Querelle* anticipate and resist misogynistic judgement not only within the narrative worlds of their respective works, but on the part of the reader, as well.

*La Borderie’s ‘near-whore’ and her slanderers*

Critics have tended to treat La Borderie’s Amie quite harshly. R.-L. Hawkins calls her a ‘cold, heartless, calculating, cynical coquette’, while Michael Screech compares the ‘near-whore’ to Molière’s Célimène. To be sure, Amie holds herself up as an example of how female courtiers can use their youth and beauty to their advantage. She manages to extract generous gifts from male *serviteurs*, such as sumptuous clothing and jewellery, by stringing them along while preserving her virginity and good name. She is, moreover, so supremely assured of her own chastity and of men’s respect for her honour that she does not object to an uninvited guest touching her breast while she lies in bed, because she is certain he would not presume to take things any further. She concludes by stating her ultimate goal of finding a suitable husband: one with money, as poverty terrifies her, but hopefully also one who will share mutual love and respect with her instead of growing jealous and brutal in the face of her modus operandi.

On the surface, then, Amie seems to confirm the fear that women can use courtly love to manipulate men, but critics have increasingly acknowledged the ambiguities of La Borderie’s poem, which may not be the condemnation through satirical praise of its speaker and of the court that Hawkins, Screech, and others have taken it to be. Even as early as 1937, Émile Telle defended Amie on the basis that her cynicism is a necessary self-defence mechanism in the face of men who

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seek to manipulate her and the discourse of courtly love for their own pleasure.  

*L’Amie de court* also bears strong traces of the evangelical orientation that La Borderie shares with Marguerite. Robert Cottrell, for example, argues that the poem is marked by a genuine shift from erotic, material love to Pauline charity, and that Amie’s insistence on her own free will and refusal to impute malicious intent to those around her are consistent with the Christian liberty championed in the single precept of Rabelais’s Abbaye de Thélème, itself an anti-monastery modelled on the French court: ‘Fay ce que voudras.’ More recently, Jonathan Patterson has argued that Amie does not so much twist the rules of courtly love as allow them to function properly by expecting her serviteurs to give her gifts freely and with no strings attached. Insofar as she teaches men to conform to the codes of courtly conduct, Amie could even be seen as a personification of the court’s role in masculine refinement. Accordingly, those who accuse her of venality only reveal their own vulgarity:

> Or cessent donc de me calumnier  
> Les mesdisans, qui ne peuvent nyer  
> Que la vertu s’ilz la scavent comprendre  
> N’est offensée à donner ny à prendre.  
> L’honnesteté de ma vie nourrice  
> Scait que je prens, non point par avarice.  

La Borderie’s satirical verve is aimed less at Amie than at those who would judge her according to misogynistic stereotypes such as avarice, and whose presence is acknowledged by Amie’s use of *praesumptio*.

After relating her encounter with the man who entered her chamber and touched her breast, Amie raises her audience’s potential objection:

> Dames, seigneurs qui escoutez ce compte  
> Ne m’arguez perdre icy toute honte.  
> Le mien parler aulcun tort ne me faict,  
> Et de mon dire encores moins l’effect,  
> Esperant bien prouver par ma deffense  
> Que vostre erreur surmonte mon offense.  

Anticipating that the lords and ladies of her audience might accuse her of shamelessness for allowing such a thing to happen, or for speaking about it publicly, like the hapless lady in *nouvelle 62* of the *Heptaméron*, Amie grounds her *praesumptio* in judicial rhetoric through her use of the terms ‘defense’, ‘offense’, and ‘argue[r],’

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which can mean to plead or to accuse. She then complains that if she questions the sincerity of serviteurs who profess their undying love for her in trite adynata:

Ilz me feront une querimonie
En m’appellant incredule et cruelle. (p. 39)16

The charges of incredulity and cruelty allude to Alain Chartier’s La Belle Dame sans merci, still highly influential in the middle of the sixteenth century. In Chartier, a lovesick serviteur’s profession of true love and honourable intentions is met with the lady’s unrelenting suspicion as witnessed by the acteur who eavesdrops on their tête-à-tête. La Borderie’s Amie is equally suspicious of the commonplaces of courtly love discourse, and is consequently accused of being ‘sans merci’, but the accusation rings more hollow in La Borderie than in Chartier, whose acteur relates that in the wake of his rejection, the despondent serviteur dies of a broken heart, which implies that his love was sincere and the lady’s misgivings were unwarranted. Amie, on the other hand, hears the same commonplaces spouted at her not by a single, earnest lover, but by the ‘uns’ and ‘autres’ typical of satire (pp. 39–40). It is doubtful that the latter are truly heartsick unto death; the fact that they all have recourse to a language meant to express a love more genuine than the rest cheapens their words and renders their sincerity suspect. La Borderie thus uses Chartier in a similar way to Marguerite, who, as Nancy Frelick has shown, has the Heptaméron’s female discussants cite the Belle Dame as an authority to call into question the gendered aspects of courtly love discourse. 17

Amie uses praesumptio to portray herself as both lawyer and defendant, and her audience as the opposing counsel who claim that her intentions cannot possibly be honourable. Anticipating their objections, she reveals them to be based on commonplaces that do not hold up to close scrutiny. Her permissiveness is nowhere near as objectionable as their facile assumption that she is unchaste, grasping, or ‘sans merci’; their ‘erreur’ outweighs any ‘offense’ on her part. La Borderie, then, does not encourage the reader to interpret Amie’s self-defence as indirect blame of female courtiers. Rather, he puts them in the position of judges who should regard Amie’s opponents and their claims with a critical eye. In other words, the ‘[d]ames’ et ‘seigneurs’ whose objections Amie anticipates are not the poem’s readers, but its narratees. La Borderie adopts a similar narratological strategy to that which another member of Marguerite’s circle, Rabelais, adopts in the prologue of Pantagruel by having his charlatan of a narrator, Alcofrybas Nasier, browbeat and bamboozle the rustic and credulous narratee. 18 As in Pantagruel, readers of L’Amie de court are encouraged to distance themselves from the poem’s

16 ‘Querimonie’ means ‘complaint’ in the sense of lamentation, but also in the sense of a lawsuit.
narratees, and this distancing is facilitated by Amie’s *praesumptio*. By adopting a legal framework in which Amie defends herself against the anticipated accusations of her fellow courtiers, La Borderie encourages the reader precisely not to read *L’Amie de court* as a satirical eulogy, a mode of reading that typifies the courtly médisant’s lack of charity and penchant for gossip-mongering.

*La Parfaicte Amye* and the mitigation of rigour

At first glance, the speaker of Héroët’s *Parfaicte Amye* would seem to have a much easier case to make than her counterpart in La Borderie’s poem, and critics have indeed tended to see Héroët’s contribution to the *Querelle* as an indignant, albeit good-humoured response to La Borderie’s venal Amie and a serious exposition of Ficinian neo-Platonism. In fact, Parfaicte Amye’s case is every bit as ambiguous as her counterpart’s, though for different reasons: whereas La Borderie’s Amie entertains serviteurs prior to marriage with a mind to finding a husband, Parfaicte Amye finds love outside the confines of an unhappy marriage. Over the course of three books, she recounts the circumstances of her love and reflects on its eventualities, all while defending her conduct to an audience of highly sceptical ladies. This narrative framework makes the *Parfaicte Amye* less a rigid, idealistic treatise on courtly love philosophy than a portrait of a woman with realistic concerns who tries to find comfort in that philosophy. As Olivier Pot puts it, *La Parfaicte Amye* is essentially Héroët’s attempt to rehabilitate profane love by endowing it with the attributes of sacred love, which entails replacing Marsilio Ficino’s philosophical dialogue in the Platonic tradition with a first-person monologue that traces the speaker’s personal history in the tradition of Ovid’s *Heroides* or the medieval *complainte*. This formal choice allows Héroët to raise a series of questions and concerns about the practical application of Ficinian theory to love, which stem either from Parfaicte Amye’s difficulty in grasping its concepts or from aspects of her relationship that run counter to its tenets.

Parfaicte Amye does make a number of claims with troubling implications. For instance, she claims that if her ‘terrestre dieu’ were to have an affair with another woman, it would simply be ‘[u]ne fureur qui bien tost passera’ if it were purely physical, and if it were spiritual, then according to the Ficinian concept of double life (two lovers effectively living through one another and becoming greater than their individual selves), it would increase her love rather than diminish it:

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\begin{align*}
L’es biens que mon amy reçoit, \\
S’ilz vont au coeur, ce coeur là, c’est le mien, \\
Que luy donnay en eschange du sien. (p. 8)
\end{align*}
\]

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21 Olivier Pot, ‘*La Parfaicte Amye* ou une belle infidèle (Héroët et Ficin)’, in *Par élévation d’esprit*, ed. by Gendre and Petris, pp. 271–301 (pp. 272–73).

Later, she claims that her lover is ‘sçavant et inventeur’ enough to cover up his infidelity, suggesting that he is sufficiently skilled at rhetorical *inventio* to find convincing arguments with which to defend his conduct. Nevertheless, she couldn’t possibly imagine that he would ever be unfaithful (p. 14). Perhaps the most troubling moment occurs in Book 2, in which Parfaicte Amye reflects on what would happen if her lover were to die before her. She tells of how he once explained to her that physical beauty is an imperfect reflection of divine, eternal beauty, and that even if physical beauty perishes, divine beauty is immortal. This is meant to ease the blow of her beloved’s hypothetical death, but she admits that she didn’t quite understand him:

> Ce propos là, comme trop difficile,  
> Je interrompois, et trop plus me plaisoit  
> Luy en parlant, que ce qu’il me disoit. (p. 25)

These dubious moments have led P. W. Byrne to argue that *La Parfaicte Amye* is a poem about self-deception, the story of a woman who allows herself to be hoodwinked by a lover who uses specious love casuistry tinged with neo-Platonic philosophy to excuse his philandering. However, Byrne’s argument does not account for the poem’s evolution towards a supreme assurance in double life or its more rhetorical aspects.

Parfaicte Amye’s problem is not her lover, but the way in which her relationship is perceived at court, given that her own brand of love casuistry is perhaps even more scandalous than that of La Borderie’s Amie. Whereas the latter protests that her chastity is paramount to her and that she is not interested in pleasures of the flesh, Parfaicte Amye aspires to a clearly physical union, not just Ficino’s mystical reunion with the divine. For Ficino, erotic love is fundamentally bestial and sexual attraction’s only virtue is to draw one’s attention towards the beauty that contains something of the divine; but for Parfaicte Amye, sexual congress is a necessary consequence of the communion of souls:

> C’est ung instinct de naive bonte`  
> Si, ce pendant que les maistres jouyssent,  
> Les corps qui sont serviteurs s’esjouyssent;  
> Et quand des deux la jouyssance advient,  
> Prins le plaisir, plus ne leur en souvient;  
> Ny les esprits scauroient estre records  
> De ce qu’ont faict en absence les corps;  
> Ny le corps scait, ny langue signifie  
> L’heure, qui l’esprit en terre deifie. (p. 18)

The narratees of La Borderie’s Amie might assume she has no shame, but they have no basis for this other than their own suspicions. Parfaicte Amye, on the other hand, freely admits to her audience that her and her lover’s bodies

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24 Pot, ‘*La Parfaicte Amye* ou une belle infidèle’, pp. 278–79.
‘s’esjoyssent’ while their spirits commune, and claims that since touching and kissing happen out of ‘naïve bonté’, they should not redound dishonourably to her.

It is not surprising, then, that she spends much of the poem defending her actions to the other ladies who make up her audience in a rhetorical framework akin to that of La Borderie’s poem. Ève-Alice Roustang-Stoller has shown that while La Parfaicte Amye most directly corresponds to the genre of epideictic rhetoric in that it praises true love and blames the false love of La Borderie’s Amie, it also incorporates elements of deliberative and judicial rhetoric in that it gives advice to women in similar situations (deliberative) and defends a married woman in an illicit relationship (judicial). It is in its praesumptio that the Parfaicte Amye is at its most judicial: praise gives way to a judicial strategy meant to refute the arguments that the Parfaicte Amye imagines could be marshalled against her in the court of public opinion. For Roustang-Stoller, Parfaicte Amye’s judicial rhetoric, and especially her appeal to the pity of her listeners, serves to render her more human and sympathetic. I would add that, much as in La Borderie, her praesumptio calls into question the misogynistic assumptions of her audience.

Parfaicte Amye anticipates, for example, that médisants might accuse her of being driven by the same avarice and social climbing imputed to La Borderie’s Amie, of selecting her lover for his social station and wealth (p. 5), or of breaking her marriage vows (p. 10), a not altogether unreasonable assumption given her defence of physical love. They might even assume that the nonchalance she exhibits towards her lover’s flirtations and dalliances merely provides her with a convenient excuse for her own infidelity:

Quelque jalousy icy replicquera,
    Que mon amy par mes dict je provoque
    À me donner liberte reciproque. (p. 8)

The language becomes more explicitly legal in nature as the anonymous jealous plaintiff (‘Quelque jalousy’) accuses Parfaicte Amye of manipulating the laws of courtly love in her own favour: the verb ‘provocquer’, as Edmond Huguet points out, means ‘inviter’, but can also mean ‘appeler en justice’, and Parfaicte Amye is accused of exacting legal reciprocity (‘liberte reciproque’) from her lover in the form of a dalliance of her own. Yet, Parfaicte Amye anticipates and obviates this accusation by turning its own legalistic framework against it. Stating that she takes the blame of the ‘vulgaire et sotte multitude’ for praise, she encourages readers to distance themselves from the profanum vulgus in a manner similar to La Borderie’s Amie (p. 10). To do this, they must judge her case equitably:

Mais confessons que la vertu soit vice,
    Et bannissons tout amoureux service.

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26 Edmond Huguet, Dictionnaire de la langue française du seizième siècle, 7 vols (Paris: Champion, 1925–67), s.v. ‘provocquer’. 
La Borderie’s Amie uses præsumptio to distinguish the reader from the jaundiced courtiers whom she addresses in the second person or mentions in the third person, but Parfaicte Amye’s use of the first-person plural imperative (‘confessons’, ‘bannissons’, ‘laissons’, ‘reduisons’) acknowledges more explicitly the possibility that the reader might share the narratees’ harsh judgement, perhaps owing to her potentially shocking apology for adulterous carnal love. The call to ‘redu[ire] ma cause à équité’ uses an expression from legal terminology that Randle Cotgrave translates as ‘mitigation of rigour’ or ‘clemencie, mercifulnesse’, and that Robert Estienne translates as ‘to consider the importance of what is fair and equitable along with the utmost rigour of the law, to esteem the highly accurate interpretation and refined subtleties of the law less than what is fair and equitable’.27 As Ian Maclean explains, the function of aequitas in medieval and early modern jurisprudence was ‘to correct the procrustean tendency of the law’, and, for Héroet, the Procrustean law in question is not only marriage and its restrictions, which Parfaicte Amye condemns as a ‘coustume saulvaige | Que l’homme a faict trop à son advantage’, but also the presuppositions of misogynist discourse embodied in the objections that she anticipates (p. 10).28 It is in the appeal to equitable judgement that præsumptio intersects most fruitfully with Pauline charity and its injunction against judging one’s neighbour, a concept dear to the theologians and writers of Marguerite’s network.29

The association of aequitas with Pauline caritas is present in legal commentaries, as the term is used interchangeably with caritas and such synonyms as misericordia or gratia. Aequitas is based on the concept of natural reason (naturalis ratio), but it is also syncretized with Christian thought, in particular mercy and benigna interpretatio.30 Gérard Roussel, Marguerite’s almoner and later évêque d’Oloron thanks to her patronage, discusses the charitable mitigation of rigour in the Familiere exposition du simbole, de la loy, et oraison dominicale en forme de colloque (c. 1548–49), a treatise in the form of a dialogue between a ‘Maistre’ and a ‘Disciple’ on the Apostle’s Creed, Ten Commandments, and Lord’s Prayer. In their exposition of the Eighth

30 Maclean, Interpretation and Meaning in the Renaissance, pp. 175–76.
Commandment (‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour’), the Maistre and Disciple extend their interpretation of it to include judgement:

Il veult donc que ne soyons enclins ny promptz à mal pensar et sentir de nostre prochain, ny à l’infamer, mais plustost user de telle équitè et humilité envers eulx, ou pour m'yeux l’exprimer selon l’Escriture, de telle dilèction et charité que les prévenir d’honneur, avoir leur bonne fame et honneur autant et plus recommandée que la nostre, promptz à bien sentir d’eulx autant que le permect verité, défendre et conserver en son entier leur bonne estimation. Et est ce commande-
ment comme pour forteresse à défendre et conserver en son entier l’honneur et fame du prochain contre calumnies, médisances, faulx tesmoignage et jugemens.31

Roussel’s use of the term ‘équitè’ resonates closely with Héroët’s: both authors use a legalistic framework to forestall judgement and replace it with the same sort of agape that governs how Pantagreel behaves towards others in Chapter 2 of the Tiers Livre: ‘Toutes choses prenoit en bonne partie, tout acte interpretoit à bien.’32 Roussel’s exposition of the Eighth Commandment also lends itself particularly well to the courtly milieu, as it advises against the sort of ‘calumnies, médiances, faulx tesmoignage et jugemens’ that characterize the court as depicted in La Borderie, Héroët, and for that matter, Marguerite. Seen in this light, La Parfaicte Amye is not a satirical eulogy whose speaker says the opposite of what Héroët means and whose irony the astute reader should perceive. Rather, Parfaicte Amye’s self-defence by way of praesumptio encourages readers to define themselves in opposition to those who would read the poem as if it were a satirical eulogy, and as such, constitutes an appeal to charity of serious theological import. From an evangelical perspective, one should not judge on the basis of misogynistic tropes, or as Rabelais would say, ‘articulant, monorticulant, torticulant, culletant, couilnettant, et diabliculant, c’est à dire callumniant’.33

Anticipating suspicion and forestalling judgement in the ‘Heptaméron’
While La Borderie and Héroët clearly knew formal rhetoric and structured their poems in an explicitly rhetorical fashion, the same cannot be said for Marguerite de Navarre and the Heptaméron. The extent to which the queen was familiar with formal rhetoric remains unclear, although she certainly could have been exposed to it in the course of the exceptional education she shared with her brother under the tutelage of François Desmoulins de Rochefort, or from copies of classical rhetorical treatises possessed by her family: an inventory compiled in 1518 of the royal

33 Rabelais, Œuvres complètes, ed. by Huchon, Pantagreel, chap. 34, p. 337.
library at Blois, into which the library Marguerite’s father and grandfather built up at Cognac was incorporated, lists copies of Aristotle’s Rhetoric and Quintilian’s Institutio oratoria. Whatever her level of knowledge of formal rhetoric might have been, though, Marguerite adopts a stance that seems to reject it in both her devotional poems and her profane, bawdy prose. To wit, the prologue of the Heptaméron describes how the ten discussants, in keeping with the project for a French Decameron laid out by the Dauphin (the future Henri II), the Dauphine (Catherine de’ Medici), and Princesse Marguerite (Marguerite de Navarre’s niece), are much better suited to producing a collection containing only true stories — unlike Boccaccio’s — than

ceuls qui avoient estudié et estoient gens de lectres: car Monseigneur le Dauphin ne vouloit que leur art y fust meslé, et aussi de peur que la beaulté de la rethoricque fist tort en quelque partie à la verité de l’histoire.

In the same vein, Frelick, Claude La Charité, and Catherine Randall have all interpreted Marguerite’s rhetoric, and in particular her choice of the low or plain style for the Heptaméron, as Augustinian rather than classical.

At the same time, though, scholars have acknowledged that while Marguerite might eschew rhetorical flourishes, she does not shy away from using rhetorical figures or techniques in the pursuit of truth. As Carla Freccero puts it, Marguerite opts for ‘the Cordelian tactic, the rhetoric of anti-rhetoric’; the pretention to freedom from rhetoric is itself a rhetorical gesture. Randall acknowledges Marguerite’s consistent use of antitheses, and Jean Lecointe shows the extent to which character portraits in the Heptaméron conform to Ciceronian prescriptions for praising and blaming personae. Even more to the point, Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, in keeping with Melanchthon’s extension of praesumptio beyond the strictly defined boundaries of formal rhetoric, points out that the discussants are not just storytellers, but orators faced with potentially sceptical or hostile listeners whose reactions they must take into account. Consequently, they engage in epideictic, deliberative, and judicial rhetoric intended to move and persuade their judges in the form of ‘le petit tribunal des Dix’.

35 Marguerite de Navarre, Heptaméron, ed. by Renja Salminen (Geneva: Droz, 1999), p. 11. Further references to Salminen’s edition are given after quotations in the text.
Nowhere in the *Heptaméron* is the tribunal more unfavourably disposed than in tales about women and their dealings with men. In these tales, debates among the discussants focus predominantly on the war of the sexes and on misogynistic tropes of female lust, avarice, and dissimulation. The more chauvinistic discussants, Hircan, Simontaut, and Saffredent, tend to fall back on these tropes, whereas discussants such as Parlamente, who aim to call them into question, are still obliged to acknowledge them in presenting their arguments.\(^{40}\) Rhetoric in the *Heptaméron* is both a reflection of and a challenge to the social perception of gender, and Marguerite addresses this challenge with *praesumptio* in very much the same way as La Borderie and Héroët. Anticipation lays bare the discussants’ motivations and intentions as interpreters and judges, and allows the reader to evaluate them according to evangelical Christianity and its theological precepts.

The most salient example of *praesumptio* occurs in the discussion following *nouvelle* 13, told by Parlamente. In it, a young woman and her old husband, whose mutual love and respect is unshakeable in spite of their difference in age, decide to undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. A galley captain falls in love with the woman and volunteers to serve as their guide, hiding his passion for her beneath a veneer of devotion and rousing the suspicions of those familiar with his reputation:

Mais plusieurs personnes, voyant ce cappitaine, qui avoit eu le bruict d’estre plus hardy et gentil compagnon que bon chrestien, s’esmerveillerent comme ceste dame l’accointoit sy fort. Et, voyant qu’il avoit changé de toutes conditions, qu’il frequentoit les eglises, les sermons et confessions, se doubterent que c’estoit pour avoir la bonne grace de la dame, et ne se peurent tenir de luy en dire quelque parolle. (p. 121)

The captain, fearing these rumours will drive the young wife away, informs the couple that the king has sent him on a mission to rescue the Knights Hospitaller from the Turks, and insists on meeting them privately in their home. In an extension of intimacy and trust, the husband agrees to receive the captain after dark when he and his wife are in their nightclothes, and is lulled to sleep by the captain’s account of the voyage to the Holy Land. Nearly rendered mute by his emotions for the wife, the captain conceals his consternation beneath seemingly pious speech:

Mais, affin qu’elle ne s’en apperceust, se mectoit a ` parler des sainctz lieux de Jherusalem, ou ` estoient les signes de la grant amour que Jhesus Christ nous a portee. Et, en parlant de ceste amour, couvroit la scienne, regardant ceste dame avecques lermes et souspirs, dont elle ne s’apperceut jamais. (p. 122)

The captain’s speech is *eros* masquerading as *agape*: afraid to speak of his passionate love for the wife, he speaks of a love that she would find more agreeable, the selfless love of Christ for humanity as manifested in His sacrifice.\(^{41}\) Just as she

\(^{40}\) Cathleen Bauschatz, noting that all but one of the seventy-two *nouvelles* are addressed to ‘mes dames’, argues that Marguerite empowers women by having the female discussants resist or question the misogynistic exemplarity so often directed at them; Bauschatz, “Voylà, mes dames…”: Inscribed Women Listeners and Readers in the *Heptaméron*, in *Critical Tales: New Studies of the ‘Heptameron’ and Early Modern Culture*, ed. by John D. Lyons and Mary B. McKinley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 104–22 (p. 116).

\(^{41}\) Fittingly, in the verse epistle in which he confesses his love to her, he offers her ‘Le cuer, le corps, bruslant pour ton service | Dessus l’autel d’amour, pour sacrifice’ (p. 128).
mistakes his veiled confession of love for an unworthy sinner’s gratitude for redemption, she mistakes his amorous sighs and tears for signs of contrition. Not daring to declare his love openly, he instead expresses it through signs the young wife would recognize were it not for her own piety and her belief in his: his gift of a crucifix and pieta (‘Nostre Dame de Pitye’) is likely a subtle request for the courtly don de merci that she takes as a sign of genuine devotion (p. 123). A month after his departure, he finally breaks down and sends her a less ambiguous token of his love in the form of a verse epistle and a diamond.

Although he presents himself in his letter as ‘[l]e serviteur plus parfaict qu’il fut oncques’ and assures her that he has no designs on her honour, she is none too pleased with the letter, and even less so with the diamond (pp. 128–29). She resolves to wait until the captain’s return to give him an unfavourable response, and in the meantime she writes a letter to the captain’s estranged wife, pretending to be a nun of Tarascon. She relates that the captain confided in her that he has had a change of heart towards his wife, to whom he sends the diamond as a token of his promise to love her better should he return from his rescue mission. The wife is overjoyed to be blessed once more with her husband’s love, which she had given up for lost, while the captain, betrayed by his jealous subordinate, dies a heroic Christian death at the hands of the Turks. As Katherine Kong points out, the choice of Tarascon is not merely an incidental detail: it was where Martha converted the entire population to Christianity by taming a river dragon. In this sense, the young wife defeats evil in the same way Martha does. 42

Parlamente, addressing the ladies of the company, holds up her female protagonist as an example of how women should convert immoral propositions into good works (p. 119). Immediately after appending this moral, however, she anticipates a possible objection: ‘Et ne fault poinct accuser ceste dame de tromperie, mais plustost estimer de son bon sens, qui convertist en bien ce qui de soy ne valloit rien’ (p. 134). The captain’s dissimulation bordering on hypocrisy would seem far more objectionable than the young wife’s beneficial ruse, but Parlamente’s use of praesumptio shows that she knows her companions well enough to predict that some of them will read uncharitable motives into a charitable act. Sure enough, her husband Hircan does exactly this by referring to the tropes of female avarice and vanity in response to Nomerfide’s quip that she would have kept the diamond:

En bonne foy, ce dist Hircain, vous avez raison, car il y a des femmes qui, pour se montrer plus exellantes que les autres, font des œuvres apparentes contre leur naturel. Nous scavons bien tous qu’il n’est rien sy avariciueux que une femme. Toutesfoiz, leur gloire passe souvent leur ava-rice, qui force leur cueur à faire ce qu’ilz ne veulent. Et croy que celle qui laissa ainsy le dyamant n’estoit pas digne de le porter. (p. 134)

Hircan could just as easily be talking about La Borderie’s Amie as about the young wife: the default explanation for women’s behaviour is greed, which is in their

nature (‘leur naturel’), and any actions not clearly driven by greed may be attributed to that other female vice, vainglory. Hircan’s interpretation is consistent with his tendency to find fault in women regardless of the circumstances, but it may also be a reaction to the young wife’s laughter upon learning how overjoyed the captain’s wife is to know that her husband still loves her. This laughter might seem like callous mockery of the captain’s wife’s credulity, which would support Hircan’s suspicion that the young wife acted out of vainglory, but Nicole Cazauran reminds us that laughter in Marguerite’s works is often a sign of joyous innocence and inhabitation by the Holy Spirit, as is the case for the Ravie of the Comédie de Mont-de-Marsan, the children of L’Inquisiteur, or of Peu and Moins in Trop Prun Peu Moins.\textsuperscript{43}

From this perspective, the young wife laughs not only at the humorous discrepancy between what she and the reader know and what the captain’s wife does not, but at her success in bringing a happy resolution to a grim situation: ‘Et se constanta d’estre deffaicte de son dyamant par ung sy proufictable moyen que, de reynyr le mary et la femme en bonne amytie, il luy sembla avoir gaigné ung royaume’ (p. 130). Parlamente’s narration contextualizes the wife’s laughter by contrasting material gain with spiritual gain, which counteracts Hircan’s claim that her avarice was trumped by her pride: in giving up the valuable diamond to restore happiness to a troubled marriage, she wins a kingdom not of this world.

Hircan’s assessment, then, appears unfounded, and Oisille, addressing him as a judge, warns him not to condemn the young wife too rashly: ‘Holla, holla! ce dist Oysille, je me doubte bien qui elle est. Parquoy je vous prie, ne la condannez point sans l’ouyr!’ (p. 134). Oisille’s familiarity with the woman further weakens Hircan’s case, but he is not deterred, and having exhausted the possibilities of avarice and vainglory, he proceeds to the commonplace of female lasciviousness. The wife, he reasons, must have been uninterested in a serviteur as noble as the captain not because she loved and respected her husband, but because she already had a less worthy lover: ‘Mais, peult estre que ung moings digne estre ayme par le doid que l’anneau ne y peut entrer’ (p. 134). His interpretation closely resembles the one he offers of the ‘memorable charité’ of nouvelle 38’s woman of Tours who, upon learning that her husband is sleeping with one of his sharecroppers, lavishly furnishes the latter’s house so that her husband will be comfortable and no longer catch cold during his trysts. Moved by this gesture, the husband ends his affair. Unlike the other discussants, Hircan attributes her gesture not to marital love or to turning the other cheek, but to an affair she must be having with a friar:

\begin{quote}
Je pense, dist Hircain, qu’elle estoit amoureuse de quelque cordelier, qui luy avoit donne en penitance de faire si bien traiter son mary aux champs que, cependant qu’il yroit, elle eust le loisir de le bien traiter en la ville! (p. 330)
\end{quote}

Of course, there is no mention whatsoever of ‘quelque cordelier’ in nouvelle 38, nor is there any indication in nouvelle 13 that the young wife has taken a lover. Hircan starts from the premise that women are some combination of greedy, prideful, and lustful, and from there, he concludes that seemingly virtuous acts on their part are either manifestations of these vices or hypocritical attempts to disguise them. In a word, he assumes the worst, not unlike the médisans of La Parfaite Amie who chalk the speaker’s generous permissiveness up to her desire to entertain multiple lovers. Like La Borderie and Héroët, Marguerite encourages readers to distance themselves from Hircan and his slander, but she goes one step further in using praesumptio to influence the reader’s judgement. The male poets have their female speakers appeal to readers’ agape in judging cases that pose a potential obstacle to charitable judgement, but Marguerite allows the reader to evaluate Hircan’s objection based on the evidence — or lack thereof — in the tale itself. If La Borderie and Héroët call for the charitable judgement of ambiguous cases, Marguerite reveals that supposedly ambiguous cases are often seen as ambiguous for no other reason than baseless adherence to misogynistic tropes.

In this way, praesumptio acts as a counterpoint to the suspicion that, in Mathieu-Castellani’s assessment, characterizes the Heptaméron. One of the collection’s main themes is that of unveiling the ugly truths often hidden behind fair appearances, and, therefore, it encourages suspicion as an attitude necessary for survival and as a remedy for ‘sotte crédulité’. Yet, suspicion is tantamount to a supposition, a conjecture, or a hypothesis, and does not have the same finality and definitiveness as judgement, which Marguerite reserves for God alone. In the context of gender relations in the Heptaméron, suspicion is indeed inescapable, as the tales are replete with female characters who, like Jambique in nouvelle 43, live up to misogynistic discourse in their efforts to maintain an honourable appearance despite their dishonourable conduct. However, praesumptio allows Marguerite both to acknowledge suspicion and to forestall judgement.

In this vein, another instance of praesumptio specifically addresses suspicion. At the conclusion of nouvelle 47, a variation on the Curious Impertinent theme in which a gentleman’s unfounded suspicion drives his wife and his best friend to an affair, Dagoucin, who intends the tale as an example of how jealousy is a self-fulfilling prophecy, obviates a potential objection: ‘Et, qui dit que le souspeson est amour, je le luy nye, car, combien qu’il en sorte, comme la cendre du feu, aussi le tue il’ (p. 379). While Dagoucin acknowledges that suspicion is perhaps an inevitable consequence of love, like ash from fire, he clarifies that it is not a sign of true love, but rather a danger to it, because it leads to rash judgement. This anticipation is meant for Dagoucin’s fellow male discussants, and is likely a jab at Hircan, the husband of the lady whom Dagoucin serves: while he follows standard practice in addressing ‘mes dames’ when pronouncing the nouvelle’s moral, he says in so doing that it should serve as a lesson for ‘ceulx qui a tort souspesonnent mal de leurs

femmes’, as Hircan implies that he does on several occasions, the most prominent of which occurs in the discussion following nouvelle 7 (pp. 379, 51). As might be expected, Hircan is the first to respond, but instead of voicing the objection expected by Dagoucin, he puts aside his customary chauvinism and agrees that there is no greater displeasure for men or women than to be suspected of something untrue. By anticipating Hircan’s objection, Dagoucin occasions in him an uncharacteristic hesitation to judge and an even less characteristic admission that suspicion is often unjustified, even when it concerns female virtue.

_Praesumptio_ is meant to have the same effect on the readers of the _Heptaméron_ as it does on Hircan, as the former might well harbour the latter’s suspicions regarding women. It encourages them to follow Roussel’s advice to think well of others ‘aultant que le permect verité’, as Oisille does of the young wife in nouvelle 13:

_Vous en direz ce qu’il vous plaira, dist Oysille. Dieu peult juger le cuer de ceste dame; mais quant à moy, je treuve le faict trehonneste et vertueulx. Et, pour n’en debatre plus, je vous prie, Parlamente, donnez vostre voix à quelcun._ (p. 135)

By imposing a suspension of judgement on the group, Oisille follows Parfaicte Amye’s exhortation to ‘redui[re] a equite´’ instead of assuming the worst of women. In this way, Marguerite uses a figure found in formal rhetoric, excluded in the prologue of the _Heptaméron_ on the basis of its incompatibility with truth, to pursue the truth about gender relations and judgement from an evangelical perspective. Marguerite’s rhetoric might be Augustinian rather than Ciceronian, but this does not mean that our understanding of her works should categorically take the prologue at its word. Insofar as Marguerite’s use of _praesumptio_ hinges upon Pauline charity as a remedy for the human tendency towards unfounded judgement based on suspicion, it serves as an example of how formal rhetoric can be compatible with La Charité’s definition of Augustinian rhetoric as ‘the use of language based upon the interpretation of the Bible, in which human intervention is limited’. 46

46 La Charité, ‘Rhetorical Augustinianism in Marguerite de Navarre’s _Heptaméron_’, p. 57.