



QUEENSHIP AND POWER

QUEENSHIP, GENDER, AND
REPUTATION IN THE MEDIEVAL
AND EARLY MODERN WEST,
1060-1600

Edited by
Zita Eva Rohr
and Lisa Benz



Queenship and Power

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palgrave
macmillan

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ISBN 978-3-319-31282-8

ISBN 978-3-319-31283-5 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-31283-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016951453

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Cover illustration: Anne de France, dame de Beaujeu, duchesse de Bourbon, (1462–1522), presented by Saint John the Evangelist, c.1492–1493.

Printed on acid-free paper

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For our families and friends

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume of collected essays was the brainchild of Rachel C. Gibbons, who sought to mark the passing of two decades since the influential and durable publication of John Carmi Parsons' *Medieval Queenship*. Her aim was to highlight the contributions since made by early and mid-career researchers as well as doctoral students to suggest a "New Generation" of queenship studies that both builds upon and departs from the considerable scholarship of previous decades. Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond her control, Rachel was unable to bring her project "to market." In an effort to continue and build upon Rachel's initial vision, we assumed the editorial role. We have made considerable changes to the way in which the collection was first framed and conceived, and trust that the reader will find the collection a worthwhile point of departure for further reflections on the nature of queenship and power as viewed through the lenses of gender and reputation.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the series editors, Carole Levin and Charles Beem, for their support and unwavering encouragement. Kristin Purdy (History Editor at Palgrave Macmillan) has been enthusiastic, constructive, and kind throughout the process of bringing this collection to press. Engaged, caring, and efficient, Chelsea Morgan (Production Manager) and Michelle Smith (Editorial Assistant) have been of invaluable assistance. We acknowledge the scholarly dedication and hard work of our contributors who accepted our sometimes exacting editorship in good humor, wholeheartedly embracing our joint vision for their collection.

We wish to thank and acknowledge our families: Zita's sons, Lucas, Christian, Declan, and Flynn, her husband, Mark, and Lisa's parents for their love and support in bringing this collection to press. We would also like to recognize our mentors, friends, and colleagues, Andrew Fitzmaurice, Theresa Earenfight, Nria Silleras-Fernndez, Mark Ormrod, Barbara Gribling, Christina Figueredo, Bronach Kane, and Simon Sandall for their invaluable encouragement, for their advice, and for acting as our respective sounding boards.

Zita Eva Rohr and Lisa Benz
(Sydney, Australia, and Salem, MA)

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the International Medieval Congress held annually at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. It is also just over 20 years since papers from two sessions at the 1989 and 1991 Congresses were published in John Carmi Parsons's influential and durable *Medieval Queenship*.¹ This body of work played a formative role in conceptualizing research into the lives of medieval queens and the office of queenship. Since then, the study of medieval queenship has developed into a vibrant and dynamic field with scholars exploring the queen's landholdings and household; her networks embedded therein; her artistic, religious, and literary patronage; and her role in court, government, and the medieval political milieu. Since 1989, papers and roundtables focusing on medieval queens have appeared in sessions at every Medieval Congress, either as entire panels dedicated to queenship studies or as individual papers in sessions covering a vast array of topics such as art, literature, archeology, religion, history, and politics. Papers and sessions dealing with medieval queens now extend to a wide range of geographical areas and historical periods, and their scope is illustrative of just how interdisciplinary the field of queenship studies has become.

This present collection features articles developed from papers presented over the last few years at the International Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo. It celebrates the current breadth of queenship studies, the collaborative nature of the discipline, and the diversity of its practitioners, with contributions from the fields of political and cultural history, legal history, literary studies, literary and feminist theory, material culture and art history, gender

studies, and female biographical research. It offers the reader an array of western European geographical and cultural spaces encompassing the central European kingdom of Hungary, states of the Holy Roman Empire such as Swabia and Savoy, as well as Sweden, England, France, and Italy, and stretching to the Pyrenean kingdom of Navarre. The chapters cover time periods ranging from the central Middle Ages to the early modern period. This diversity is anchored to the collection by an expanded and enriched exploration of its unifying themes of queenship, reputation, and gender. The breadth and scope of these articles reflect the evolution in the ways in which queens have come to be studied.

During the nineteenth century, works on medieval queens mainly centered on England and France, taking the form of individual biographies and personal narratives not part of the political histories produced in academia; the queen's place in medieval society therefore was given very little critical or theoretical attention. Agnes Strickland's *Lives of the Queens of England* and Mary Anne Everett Green's *Lives of the Princesses of England* are two of the most notable examples of this genre of biographical literature.² These works were informed by nineteenth-century gender rules and restrictions, which divorced women from the economic and productive roles they had performed in preindustrial societies, largely relegating them to the domestic sphere.³ Strickland and Green judged medieval women against Victorian gender norms and as a result they tended to focus on extremes, either idolizing or condemning their subjects.⁴ For instance, Strickland's depiction of Eleanor of Aquitaine suggests that she was flighty and irrational: "Queen Elanora acted in direct opposition to his [the king's] rational directions. She insisted on her detachment of the army halting in a lovely romantic valley, full of verdant grass and gushing fountains."⁵ Likewise, Strickland's Isabella of France was certainly a villainous queen: "They perceived, too late, that they had been made tools of an artful ambitious, and vindictive woman, who, under the pretense of reforming the abuses of her husband's government, had usurped the sovereign authority, and in one year committed more crimes than the late king and his unpopular ministers together had perpetuated during the twenty years of his reign... Isabella's cruelty, her avarice and hypocrisy, and the unnatural manner in which she rendered the interests of the young king, her son, subservient to the aggrandizement of her ferocious paramour, Mortimer, excited the indignation of all classes."⁶ While these works are problematic and of little use to the modern historian, whose main interest is in queenship as an office, it is important to acknowledge that Strickland

and Green were themselves subject to Victorian gender norms and were writing the types of histories that were considered suitable for women.

The feminist movements of the twentieth century changed the ways in which academics viewed women's place in the world, and therefore the way in which women were studied. Medieval scholars began to consider issues of gender, power, and the status of medieval women.⁷ As part of the new approaches to studying medieval women, researchers concerned with medieval queens moved away from the biographical sketches that focused on the colorful events and myths surrounding individual queens and started to think about the queen's experiences and what it meant to be a queen. Hilda Johnstone's studies during the 1920s and 1930s of the queen's household administration are prime examples of this departure.⁸ They serve as evidence that women were being gradually drawn into the inner sanctums of male political and administrative historians, rather than being relegated to the romantic "histories" of Strickland and Green.⁹ Johnstone's articles were grounded in archival research and were published in seminal studies of English administrative history, namely T.F. Tout's *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England* and Bertie Wilkinson's *The English Government at Work*. Johnstone considered particular issues relating to the queen's lands and estates and began to explore ideas about the type of power that queens held within this sphere. Tout illustrated the manner in which the administration of the English crown became more bureaucratic in the later medieval period and Johnstone identified that the queen's household became a separate administrative unit from that of the king's household as this new bureaucracy emerged. Johnstone's focus on the administration of the English queen's household, and its place within the mechanisms of the institution of the crown, provides a congruent opportunity to demonstrate the interaction of mainstream political, administrative history with the new feminist movement of the twentieth century and its concern with the public and private dichotomy.

First-wave feminism's main focus was to bring women out of the private sphere and gain equal opportunities for them in public institutions. They felt that contention for political activity depended on access to the public sphere and that women were denied this access.¹⁰ For these modern feminists, the public sphere was the area in which work, business, and politics occur while the private sphere was made up of domestic life—the home and the family. With second-wave feminism, liberal feminists continued this shift to bring women into all public institutions. The writings of Betty Friedan,

for example, explore the misery experienced by women who had no public careers and the anguish they felt as unwaged housewives and consumers.¹¹ This concept of the public/private divide was utilized by medieval queenship scholars. In applying the view that the public and private were disparate spaces, scholars concluded that the queen was increasingly relegated to private, domestic spaces as her household was separated from the king's. The most notable example of this line of thinking is Marion Facinger's influential 1968 article "A Study of Medieval Queenship: Capetian France, 987–1237."¹² Facinger found the same separation of the king's and queen's households in medieval France that Johnstone had found in England.¹³ Facinger argued that in Capetian France, after the mid-twelfth century, the centralization of royal power and the separation of the king's and queen's households resulted in the distancing of the queen from the monarchy and her loss of an official office. Consequently, the queen's only influence on government was through a personal relationship with the king as her husband or son. She was no longer a part of the public arenas of the king's household and court. Facinger believed this new status led to a queen's marginalization from public power and authority. The research of Johnstone and Facinger notwithstanding, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the study of queens continued to focus on queens who "excited the most popular interest" and still depicted them as "moral pendants to husbands or sons," focusing on their lives, not their offices.¹⁴ Part of this lack of interest in queenship studies as an office might be explained by the trend to focus on socioeconomic research that concentrated on women of lower social status as well as by the unpopularity of administrative and institutional history among feminist scholars of the time.¹⁵

Despite the dearth of analytical study on queens, Facinger's line of reasoning sparked a lively discourse in scholarship produced on medieval women. In 1987, Joan Kelly-Gadol wrote that these Western examples of public and private are inappropriate for describing sexual hierarchies in countries where the sexual division of labor does not fit into the binary opposites of the public and private divide; this notion also applies to historical settings, particularly those pertinent for the study of medieval women.¹⁶ This still did not, however, completely eliminate the idea that women and queens were marginalized as government became more bureaucratic. For Jane Tibbets Schulenburg, the pre-eleventh-century household served as the noblewoman's "powerhouse" by providing "nearly limitless opportunities for women whose families were politically and economically powerful."¹⁷

Notwithstanding this, Schulenburg concluded that as government developed into impersonal institutions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries the powerbase was removed from the household, and women lost their formal positions of influence. However, in 1989, a year after Schlenberg's study was published, Caroline Barron argued famously that the medieval household continued to be the fundamental institution from which emerged industry and politics; consequently, the later Middle Ages was a "golden age" for women.¹⁸ By way of contrast, Judith Bennett claimed that the merging of the household and workplace did not provide women with an egalitarian working relationship with men, but that it was rather a social phenomenon that reflected patriarchal authority.¹⁹ As a consequence, medieval scholars of the period tended to agree that the public and private spheres overlapped in the household, but the extent to which these roles were either limiting or empowering for medieval women was vigorously debated.

The late 1970s and 1980s also brought forth a fresh emergence in the study of queenship as an office or an institution.²⁰ Accordingly, while the validity of the terms public and private were being reevaluated and redefined in discussions about medieval women in general, they were also being called into question for medieval queens.²¹ Scholars began to argue that, while there is no denying that the nature of the queen's powers changed after the eleventh century, the queen was not marginalized.²² Significantly, John Carmi Parsons's 1994 collection of essays, *Medieval Queenship*, drew attention to the need for new terminology. In his introduction, he writes that queens make an ideal case study for reconsidering the public/private categories precisely because of their high visibility in medieval society.²³ The fundamental theme of Parsons's collection is the familial context in which queens operated. The essays in the collection "argue against describing their position and roles as 'private' or 'domestic'" because they "reveal women as fully functioning members of royal families."²⁴ In doing so, these essays demonstrate the necessity for a new vocabulary to discuss the queen's place within the royal spheres of power, authority, and government; Parsons utilizes Louise Fradenburg's suggested term "interstitial" because it denotes a more flexible and inclusive role for the queen.²⁵ Parsons concludes his introduction by highlighting the fact that "all aspects of medieval queenship need much further investigation" particularly within a wider geographic range. He argued likewise for the necessity of more comparative anthologies.²⁶

Scholars in 1990s and 2000s heeded Parsons's call and there was an explosion of studies on queenship, with research focusing on individual queens' fulfillment of the office as well as comparative studies of queens and their queenships. While there is still a strong interest in French and English queens, the geographical area that some of these studies cover has grown extensively, particularly in relation to Iberian and pan-Mediterranean kingdoms and their queens and royal women. This upsurge in interest and diversity has meant that the study of medieval queenship has developed into a lively and ever-changing field with researchers exploring a multiplicity of queens' experiences in an effort to better understand queenship as an institution, essential to less gendered notions of rulership and government. Contemporary scholars draw from a wide range of disciplines and theoretical paradigms as analytical tools. Post-second-wave feminism and the rise of women's studies have assured the study of queenship a dominant presence within feminist research, influenced by diverse disciplines and theoretical agendas. Scholars of medieval queenship have embraced with alacrity the ideas of theorists such as Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick who posit that gender was performative in nature and that it is problematic to project conclusions about modern heteronormative society onto the past.²⁷

Medieval historians have begun to argue that gender is an unstable term, and that applying modern theory without an awareness of cultural specificity risks the production of ahistorical and distorted conclusions. Gender should be utilized as a mode of historical inquiry because political historians can no longer focus on traditional politics, and need to take into account society, culture, and economics. With this in mind, historians argue that analyses of queens must include contemporary understandings of manhood and womanhood, kingship and queenship; the *retrospectoscopes* are being packed away.²⁸ They have also looked to feminist discourses on social theories of power. These feminist discourses engaged with traditional theories of Marx, Weber, and later Foucault, Lukes, and Giddens, in attempts to define a feminist theory of gender and power.²⁹ Historians of medieval women have found modern feminist scholarship, and anthropological studies about power and gender, useful in making distinctions about the types of power available to medieval women. One example among many others is Helen Maurer who, influenced by anthropologists Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, makes distinctions between power and authority: authority as the publicly recognized right to give direction and expect compliance; and power as the ability

to get people to do things or to make things happen involving pressure, influence, persuasion, and coercion.³⁰ These constructions of power and authority have permeated scholarly conceptualizations of the queen's experiences and they are utilized in the wider study of medieval women as well.³¹ More recently, a significant number of scholars have gravitated toward the term "agency," or a queen's ability to act independently, rather than focusing on ideas of power and authority.³² Nevertheless, power and authority continue to occupy a legitimate place in queenship studies alongside agency. Enriched by these discussions of gender and social theories of power, the status of queens has become a fertile field of inquiry. Scholars who study medieval women have come to varying conclusions as to whether or not women constituted a "sex class," that is, should women be categorized alongside men of their rank, or do all women fit into a separate group based on shared experiences that derive from being women? Theresa Earenfight writes that "women were not rigidly defined by extremes of power and powerlessness because the relational dynamic between men and women depended upon social rank, age, marital status and economic resources" and that queens formed an unusual elite among women.³³ Such lines of inquiry have led those who study queenship to look at queens' experiences in the context of other analogous medieval women, that is, elite and royal women, as well as their closest male counterparts, that is, the king, the princes of the blood, and the male high nobility. In so doing, a framework by which to study queens has been developed. This framework has come to include, but is by no means limited to, the investigation of the queen's motherhood, her intercession, her patronage, and her household. Within this framework scholars typically seek to find the level of agency, power, or authority that was afforded to, or indeed manipulated by, the queen, evaluating how and if these areas contributed to her participation in the governance of the realm.

One of the chief purposes of marriage in the pre-modern period was to ensure the survival of the dynasty and a continuation of its heritage; motherhood was the expectation of all married women.³⁴ For medieval and early modern women of all ranks, the emphasis on motherhood stemmed from the necessity to provide heirs to their husband's familial legacy.³⁵ Scholars interested in queens have found that, for the queen, motherhood not only defined her domestic role, it was an important source of power.³⁶ Those studying the coronation rituals have discovered that a queen's coronation served to legitimize her children as heirs to the throne, creating a direct connection between the office of queenship and motherhood.³⁷ Historians

have pointed out that a queen's position became secure only when she produced a male heir, and she could use this power to her advantage.

The dowager queen often relied upon her sons to buttress her political relevancy and prestige in the royal court after the king's death. Queens who were fortunate enough to have sons in their minority at the time of the king's death realistically could aspire to be appointed regent.³⁸ Through regency, motherhood gave queens the opportunity to exercise political influence and even authority in some cases.³⁹ This is why Violant of Bar, dowager queen of Aragon, fought hard to convince her successor to the post of queen consort, María de Luna, that she was pregnant with the late king's heir.⁴⁰ It may also be why the coronation of Philippa of Hainault, consort of Edward III of England, was delayed, possibly at the instigation of the dowager queen, Isabella of France, during Edward's minority.⁴¹ Daughters too could be sources of power, and interactions between mothers and daughters perpetuated the roles and powers ascribed to queens. Daughters, in common with nieces and female cousins, acted as cross-cultural, diplomatic, and political conduits between reigning dynasties which sometimes had little else in common and frequently held divergent and/or conflicting geopolitical interests.⁴² John Carmi Parsons's study of Plantagenet queens in *Medieval Queenship* has been especially important in revealing mother/daughter interactions.⁴³ Queens were able to expand their powerbases by using the concept of female networking with their own daughters, by widening their domestic spheres of influence, and by increasing their influence in foreign affairs.⁴⁴

Moreover, influence could be just as powerful as "official" authority, and one of the major manifestations of influence was queenly intercession. The queen's use of intercession as a wife and mother is one of the major applications of influence studied by historians. There were several ways in which queens might act as intercessors: queens could be peacemakers between the king and his subjects or his foreign counterparts; they could secure a privilege such as a pardon, grant, or appointment from the king at the behest of someone else; and they could intercede on their own initiative, beseeching the king to grant their own request. Queens acted as intercessors throughout their life stages, with husbands, sons, and foreign relatives (fathers, brothers, uncles, and cousins) and allies. Parsons argues that the exclusion of queens from the central government in the twelfth century made intercession more important than in the earlier Middle Ages as a "means to create and sustain impressions of power."⁴⁵ Intercession was a particularly emphasized role for medieval queens and

several scholarly studies have noted how the connections made between the queen and female biblical figures such as Judith, Esther, and especially the Virgin Mary permeated medieval culture.⁴⁶ A queen's subjects might seek a new queen's aid without any real-life evidence that she was a particularly effective mediator or intercessory. A successful and canny queen could manipulate these requests into a currency of power and, as long as she maintained that image, she would increase her power and influence.⁴⁷ According to Parsons and Janet Nelson, one way for the queen to earn the king's favors was to use her "feminine wiles," and as a result, the queen's intercession with the king had sexual implications.⁴⁸ Due to the sexual implications of the queen's intercession, they could be suspected of improper influence over the king, and adultery was one of the first charges brought against a queen when detractors sought to discredit her. Another popular biblical image against which the queen was compared was Jezebel.⁴⁹ Such scholarly arguments exemplify the fine line the queen had to negotiate between legitimate power and criticism of overreach.⁵⁰

Throughout the Middle Ages and early modern periods, patronage was a critical part of effective royal lordship regardless of gender; consequently, the queen's participation in the culture of patronage could be a significant indicator of her power, and could be pragmatically deployed to extend that power base.⁵¹ Women who had access to significant economic resources exercised patronage, which included the support and promotion of favored monastics, members of the urban elite, the gentry, and the aristocracy.⁵² We also find these women commissioning books, religious artifacts, "statement" jewelry, gold and silverware intended for their religious establishments, buildings, and religious institutions themselves.⁵³ The level of agency women exercised through this patronage is indicative of their ability to act independently and to potentially extend their influence beyond their "domestic" spheres. The queen was potentially one of the most influential patrons among the landed and urban elite. Parsons's study of Eleanor of Castile reveals the extent to which the queen consort relied upon conveying a sense of wealth and command through public displays of liberality and patronage to spread her influence throughout the kingdom. If she used her wealth to patronize artists, writers, religious institutions, and so forth, then she had fully exploited the sources of income available to her, demonstrating her power and, to some extent, her authority.⁵⁴ Studies of queenly patronage have shown that the types of works a queen commissioned could spread her influence in a variety of ways: it could have an impact on the court and king; in cases where she

patronized a convent, it could provide for her widowhood and demonstrate her piety⁵⁵; it could indebt a person to her; and she could justify her power, authority, and activity over a certain region or people.⁵⁶

As queenship scholars studied the “behind-the-scenes” nature of the queen’s marriage and coronation, childbearing, intercession, patronage, and so on, they began to review the argument that queens were separated from the main mechanisms of government in the later Middle Ages. Crucially, in works subsequent to his collection *Medieval Queenship*, John Carmi Parsons has argued that queens manipulated these “behind-the-scenes” duties because official positions of authority were denied to them.⁵⁷ Though he does not challenge the view that the queen became separated from the crown or that she was distanced from official roles, he highlights a new emphasis on her other unofficial duties, arguing that the queen was not marginalized in the later Middle Ages.⁵⁸ Pauline Stafford, who originally supported the marginalization theory in her 1983 edition of *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, rescinds her earlier argument in the new introduction to the second printing “I am less confident of circumstances which ended female power and am more inclined to feel that the whole question of women and power throughout the Middle Ages is ripe for (...) reassessment.”⁵⁹ In 1998, Kathleen Nolan and John Carmi Parsons organized sessions at the International Medieval Congress at Western Michigan University to “discover and assemble current scholarship on French queens” framed around Marion Facinger’s essay. These along with other commissioned pieces were later published by Nolan in *Capetian Women* in 2003.⁶⁰ Her volume contains an essay by Miriam Shadis, “Blanche of Castile and Marion Facinger’s ‘Medieval Queenship’ reassessing the argument,” wherein she argues convincingly that Capetian queens were not distanced from significant roles in government. Shadis focuses her study on Blanche of Castile, who Facinger did not study because her queenship purportedly fell after the watershed for queens who shared in ruling. Shadis argues that studying Blanche, we can see that Facinger’s conclusions were problematic and in fact Blanche and the queens after her perpetuated the “ancient Capetian tradition of co-rule between generations” (referring to regency). Furthermore, Shadis contends that even if Facinger had studied Blanche, her particular methodology would not have uncovered this.⁶¹

With the rise of queenship research came a shift in the thinking that the queen gained power from manipulating the “behind-the-scenes” roles she played after the centralization of monarchy, with some scholars advancing

the notion that the queen was never separated from government, but was rather always a partner in monarchy. Theresa Earenfight maintains that the queen had never been separated from the institution of the crown. Using Spanish queens as her primary example, she deconstructs the term monarchy and its application to the system of government in medieval Europe.⁶² In so doing, she argues that the queen can be understood as a governor of the realm and she goes so far as to suggest co-rulership between the medieval king and queen.⁶³ Lisa Benz likewise takes up this notion in her studies of fourteenth-century English queens, finding that the queen's household maintained significant links to the king's, and these remaining institutional ties kept fourteenth-century English queens from being separated from government. Consequently, the development of the queen's household as an institution as identified by Johnstone actually enabled these queens to remain important influences on the political scene. The complex status of the queen's household made her one of the most powerful magnates and the most powerful noble woman, and it also established her as an integral part of the crown.⁶⁴ Similarly, Zita Rohr applies Earenfight's thinking regarding the Iberian model of queenship to the fifteenth-century case study of Yolande of Aragon, a daughter of the house of Aragon, who deployed and modified Iberian queenship norms to her situation in late medieval France and her marital house's interests the kingdoms of Naples-Sicily-Provence.⁶⁵ Elena Woodacre's study has added a new paradigm through which to evaluate monarchy as a power sharing institution, by introducing a group of queens, the queens regnant of Navarre, or queens who inherited a throne rather than acting as a placeholder for a husband or son, into the historiography of queenship studies. Until Woodacre's work, these queens received very little attention, the most popular study of queens regnant focusing on the early modern period and queens such as Isabella of Castile, Mary I, and Elizabeth I of England.⁶⁶

The remarkable proliferation of queenship studies since Parsons's *Medieval Queenship* has enabled scholars to grasp the complexities of medieval queenship. We finally have a richness of comparative material with which to begin to illuminate a coherent phenomenon of queenship across medieval Europe from the early to the late Middle Ages and into the early modern period, one in which situational factors (as well as an individual queen's skills, personality, and inclination to influence) informed how an individual queen experienced and practiced queenship. Earenfight has articulated this most concisely in her recent textbook,

Queenship in Medieval Europe, drawing together the threads of this phenomenon for the first time in more than 40 years of scholarship into medieval queenship. A textbook such as this would not have been possible when Parsons first gathered together the papers presented at the 1989 and 1991 International Medieval Congresses. That is not to say that the exploration of medieval queenship is complete; far from it: “the field is rapidly changing, new articles, books and doctoral dissertations are published every month. The sheer abundance of works may seem daunting—the bibliography is impressive—but believe me [Earenfight] when I say that this is just the beginning.”⁶⁷

The effective and relevant study of medieval queenship demands interdisciplinary research, incorporating sources and methods from political theory, socioeconomic history, gender theory, literature, religious studies, art history, family history, and court studies. This collection of papers celebrates the breadth and the collaborative nature of the discipline and its practitioners, with contributions from historians, art historians, and medieval literature specialists. As a collection, these essays highlight some lesser-known queens and also provide new insights into more familiar figures. Importantly, given that the majority of scholarship on queenship produced so far has been largely Anglo-centric, this collection ranges widely culturally and geographically in a western European context. The essays collected in this volume add to the nascent (yet burgeoning) research fields on the lesser-covered kingdoms of Hungary, Sweden, and Navarre alongside essays on queens of England and France, highlighting the constants of queenship as a pan-European and inter-/intra-state phenomenon. A number of papers are specifically comparative, drawing parallels on a theme between a number of queens of the same kingdom, while others explore diverse cultural contexts and geographies and (perhaps most interestingly) across time periods, bridging the conventional separation between medieval and early modern eras. This collection drives queenship studies in new directions and into new areas and methods of research, reflecting the constant evolution and vibrancy of the discipline.

At the heart of this drive for new directions and methodologies in queenship research is the primary unifying thread of this collection: reputation. Late medieval and early modern writers such as Christine de Pizan and Anne of France, one an observer of effective queenship and the other a practitioner of regency, understood well the importance of a spotless personal and household reputation to the effective and durable deployment of gendered authority, power, and influence.⁶⁸ Reputation has long

been a theme running through scholarly discourses of medieval queenship with Patricia Skinner reminding us most recently that “Reputation was a fragile thing, and gossip could stick.”⁶⁹ A queen’s reputation can be built on several levels, which are not mutually exclusive of one another first, on a contemporary level in which a queen’s reputation or reputations might be constructed by her contemporaries or even at her own instigation to further a certain political or cultural agenda; second, a queen’s posthumous reputation might be created decades or even centuries after her own death, either because later writers seized particular reputations, which were constructed during the queen’s own time and perpetuated them, or because they developed out of some cultural norm of a later time period. Christopher Marlow and William Shakespeare first used the derogatory “she-wolf” to describe both Isabella of France and Margaret of Anjou respectively, centuries and decades after their deaths, and the images stuck.⁷⁰ Strickland is an example of a writer who appropriated reputations created by contemporary writings, and who applied Victorian gender norms to those reputations. Modern queenship studies have sought to complicate such reputations, delving more deeply into the source material available to understand their origins and what their purpose was for the societies that created them, medieval and beyond. Both the Judeo-Christian religious traditions, wherein women were essentially placed in an inferior role to men, and the Greek classical tradition, wherein women were considered to be below reason and merely a receptacle for reproduction, ran deep through medieval society. These traditions led to opposing images of women and queens: the Jezebel or Eve and the Virgin Mary. Scholars have found that many of the sources that provide the most detailed descriptions of queens: chronicles, hagiographies, and romances often force queens into one of these roles. *Vitae*, as biographical texts, set out to portray their subjects as paragons of virtue to be emulated by their successors, especially hagiographic texts, which were interested in providing evidence for their heroine’s sainthood.⁷¹ Chroniclers believed that history should be didactic and that “universal truths” construed from specific events were as important as providing factual accounts of the event. They also recorded events that they perceived to be plausible.⁷² As a result, the queens discussed in chronicles often conformed to general stereotypes of womanly behavior: Jezebels, who were overmighty viragos, adulterous wives, and wicked enchantresses, or Virgin Marys, who were supportive wives and mothers, and modest intercessors and peacemakers.⁷³ Romance literature generally offers two types of archetypal queens: the calumniated

queen and the guilty, often, adulterous queen. In some cases negative gendered stereotypes of queens were often exploited by their contemporaries in the need to discredit their positions of power and authority or to set them up as scapegoats.⁷⁴ Medieval scholars have waded through these and other sources from the period, such as government and financial administrative documents, to deconstruct these stereotypical portrayals of queens. As queenship studies evolved, we came to understand that historical queens existed outside these binary opposites and were more dynamic than the queens of histories and romances; these sources frequently reveal more about their writers' and patrons' agendas (and prejudices) and the received medieval expectations and perceptions of queenship rather than the "operational" realities of the institution of queenship. Consequently, in its broadest sense, reputation is a strong undercurrent in almost all studies of medieval queenship. As we seek to comprehend the power, authority, and agency of queens by studying their marriages, patronage, motherhood, widowhood, and so forth, we naturally engage with the constructions of a queen's reputation. Yet, this collection is the first to make reputation the driving force and unifying theme of its essays. There are three principal connections and congruencies running through the present collection: the methods by which medieval contemporaries created queenly reputations; reputations created by critical responses to the disruption of social norms; and finally the rehabilitation of those reputations by historians. The chapters by Christopher Mielke, Tracy Adams, and James Dahlinger demonstrate the importance and durability of commissioned objects (in the absence of a textual legacy), storytelling, and historiography in constructing images of queenship and the queen's reputation. Christine Ekholst and Henric Bagerius, Lisa Benz, Zita Rohr, and Rachel Gibbons explore the contemporary critical and legislative responses to perceptions of queens disrupting the perceived proper gender order, the balance of power and authority, or ideals of queenly image and behavior. Finally, the "affect" of contemporary rumor on a queen's posthumous character is explored in Elena Woodacre's chapter, which rehabilitates a queenly reputation.

By its very nature, this collection of thoughtful and well-researched essays is interdisciplinary, venturing into diverse cultural contexts, geographies, and time periods. Rather than arranging the essays arbitrarily according to their respective chronologies, the essays have been divided into two broad thematic strands: "Biography, Gossip, and History" and "Politics, Ambition, and Scandal." The purpose of this division is to offer an enriched

perspective to entice readers into cultures, geographies, fields, and disciplines, which might not necessarily be their first port of call. Christopher Mielke opens the collection with an insightful discussion on the nature of object biography and how this is revealed in the commissioning of an important reliquary cross by Adelaide of Rheinfelden (d. 1090), married to one of Hungary's most famous kings, St. Ladislav (r. 1077–95), but who is herself something of a mystery to us. Mielke confirms that there is very little information to be uncovered about Adelaide of Rheinfelden in written sources, including in the hagiographies of her husband, but that her memory and reputation has been kept alive largely because of a reliquary cross, which still bears her name, commissioned by her as a memorial to her mother, Adelaide of Savoy, donated to the Abbey of St. Blaise. Mielke's essay is a material culture analysis of the Adelaide Cross by means of agency theory and object biography and argues that, while a queen might be absent from the extant written record, she clearly manipulated material culture to her advantage using it as a medium for the expression and reinforcement her queenly power; real or imagined.

Following on from Mielke's exploration of the informed commissioning, deployment, and durability of non-textual material culture to communicate the power of a largely forgotten queen of a famous and saintly king across the centuries, Tracy Adams draws our attention to the importance of texts and storytelling in constructing durable images and reputations of famous queens and politically active royal women. Adams poses the question: What would we do without Brantôme? She argues that while his corpus is a delight to read, packed with scandalous observations about the French royal court as well as anecdotes passed down through the generations, his very accessibility as a narrator has caused readers over the centuries to take his gossip for unmediated glimpses of court life, even though many of his subjects lived over a century before his birth. Her essay focuses on one queen, Anne of Brittany (1477–1514), and two regents, Anne of France (1461–1522) and Louise of Savoy (1476–1531), whose modern reputations derive principally from Brantôme. Adams opens by considering Georges Minois's biography of Anne of Brittany, which, following the narrative of Brantôme, relates that in the spring of 1492, “[at] court, the young queen [Anne of Brittany] was well accepted, except by her sister-in-law, Anne, now Anne of Bourbon or of France.” Adams argues that Minois's unmediated acceptance of Brantôme's take on events causes him to fundamentally misread documents associated with the two Annes, perpetuating the story of jealous rivalry passed down and embellished through

the centuries. Adams does not deny the value of the highly entertaining Brantôme, instead offering us constructive suggestions as to how we might put his anecdotes to good use by applying recent theories of female power to them.

Zita Rohr, whose research has many points of cross-disciplinary and chronological intersection with the scholarly interests of Adams, but who is a gender-conscious political historian to Adams's literary and feminist theorist, examines the closing stages of the Hundred Years War when stories were seeded both to discredit and enhance the reputations of key players, particularly queens and politically active women. Rohr discusses how, for pragmatic geopolitical reasons and rather more personal ones, Isabeau of Bavaria undermined her popular and erudite sister-in-law, Valentina Visconti, with targeted propaganda, accusing her of sorcery in 1389, and the ways in which Jean sans Peur (the Fearless), duke of Burgundy, consciously and ruthlessly incited pamphleteers and tavern gossipers to denigrate Isabeau's personal prestige and credentials for regency. In doing so, Jean worked to enhance his image as a reformer in a year when Paris was alive to rumors alleging Isabeau's "wicked, wicked ways." In her recently published monograph, Rohr has unpicked these events, weaving together a discussion as to how an effective female politician (and maternal adversary) might deploy negative propaganda generated by a third (male) party. Her research has highlighted the very conscious re-fashioning of Isabeau's image by Yolande of Aragon, Charles VII's Franciscan-influenced pious and pristine "Bonne mère." Yolande held up the mirror of her pristine maternal credentials against the pre-blackened image of Charles's "other mother," his birth mother, Isabeau of Bavaria. Rohr has revealed how a canny "other" might benefit from, and covertly add to, an existing rumor/propaganda/innuendo mill in times of political uncertainty and crisis.

The first section of the collection concludes by moving away from the themes of gossip, rumor, and propaganda to the writing of history in the early modern period with James Dahlinger's lucid and well-informed essay, which discusses Etienne Pasquier's historical writings and the ways in which this early modernist engaged with ideas regarding female strategies of power. Etienne Pasquier (1529–1615) was a renowned magistrate of the Parliament of Paris, a poet, an advisor to the last Valois kings as well as to Henri IV, and a founder of modern French historiography. While he moved in circles of prominent men, Pasquier showed, in his life and in his writings *Les Recherches de la France* and in his published *Correspondence*,

that women inevitably influenced the ascent of great men *and* the course of French history. Dahlinger demonstrates how Pasquier gave women of consequence due attention, be they heroines or renegades, as they strategized to preserve the State in unsteady times of succession or in light of a king's infirmity.

The second section of the collection, "Politics, Ambition and Scandal," opens with Christine Ekholst and Henric Bagerius's thought-provoking examination of the "unruly" Queen Blanche of Namur and the dysfunction of rulership in medieval Sweden. Ekholst explains that King Magnus Eriksson has worn the scandalous reputation of being a sodomite since the time of his reign, when St. Bridget of Sweden called for rebellion against him in a manifesto claiming he was unfit to rule because he had had sexual intercourse with men. His queen, Blanche of Namur, has been likewise depicted negatively in contemporary and later propaganda for her attempts to take independent political action, described as being "improper and suspicious." These two elements of their respective received reputations were clearly linked to one another in targeted propaganda designed to undermine their sovereignties; if sexual intercourse was supposed to symbolize the proper gender order of the Middle Ages, with the man active and in charge, Magnus's stubborn refusal to fulfill his proper conjugal "debt" to Blanche was to blame for her becoming independent and unruly. Notwithstanding the significant stain upon the historical reputation of Magnus Eriksson, Ekholst and Bagerius use this case study to explore how the role and rhetoric of sexuality in late medieval propaganda was directed most frequently at queens consort.

Moving away from the themes of sodomy and unruly queens, Lisa Benz and Rachel Gibbons examine the political history of fourteenth-century England and fifteenth-century France. Benz considers the effect the relationship between Edward II and Piers Gaveston had on Margaret of France, the dowager queen, stepmother to Edward II, half-sister to Philip IV of France, and aunt to Edward's consort, Isabella of France. The nature of King Edward II of England's relation with Piers Gaveston has been debated, some arguing that it was homosexual in nature and others viewing it as a bond between brothers-in-arms. Benz sheds new light upon this little examined triangle of power and influence between Margaret, Edward, and Gaveston. After the death of Edward I, Margaret of France almost completely disappeared from court life, and as such has disappeared from any historical analysis of her dowagerhood. One historian asserts that Margaret vanished in order to make way for Edward's new

queen, Isabella. By positing an alternate reading of the historical record, Benz argues convincingly that it is improbable that a woman who had been an active intercessor with her husband, who had been a force in Plantagenet family politics, and who had, until then, a very cordial relationship with her stepson, would suddenly decide to conclude almost all direct involvement with the crown. Benz (Benz's) essay demonstrates that Margaret attempted to establish herself as a key player in a conspiracy against Gaveston and in so doing she crossed the fine line of acceptable behavior for queens, thereby alienating her stepson and initiating her retreat from court. She had crossed the threshold of what was acceptable for medieval queens and, as a result, she was alienated from the king and from the main mechanisms of government.

Rachel Gibbons examines the political history, informed by royal ordinances, underpinning Isabeau of Bavaria's attempts to fulfill the responsibility of the lieutenant-general of the kingdom of France during the "absences" of Charles VI. Female regency was not unknown in France during the later Middle Ages, but the position occupied by Queen Isabeau of Bavaria in the early years of the fifteenth century was unprecedented. Gibbons's essay sets out to analyze the series of regency ordinances drawn up by Charles VI in periods of seeming "sanity." Isabeau was propelled into unexpected prominence as an emergency head of state—and, as Gibbons cogently argues, unwanted prominence, given the bitterness of the struggle for power between the king's male relatives being fought around her. In the face of Charles VI's compromised sovereignty and authority, Isabeau held the key to regnal legitimacy sought by a succession of princely claimants to the regency. While Gibbons examines the significance of each legal instrument in the context of the political situation in France at that time, she frames her thinking in the context of medieval queenship studies.

From French family feuding at the unhappy courts of Valois, Elena Woodacre transports us to the Pyrenean kingdom of Navarre in the later Middle Ages to examine the political life and supposed ambition of Leonor of Navarre (d. 1479), a woman, who, in the grand scheme of things, "should never have become a queen." In yet another example of an accession crisis and its attendant "family feuding," Woodacre takes up her examination with the death of Blanche, Navarre's queen regnant, relating how Leonor, the youngest surviving child of Queen Blanche I and her consort, Juan II of Aragon, ascended the throne of

her mother. Juan had sought to retain the throne and had disinherited his son and elder daughter when they refused to support his project. Leonor appears to have been settled upon as the compromise candidate but chroniclers have blamed subsequent unrest and civil war on Leonor's unseemly ambition and support of her father as his lieutenant in Navarre. Taking up the political story articulated by these chroniclers, Leonor's reputation suffered further damage in popular nineteenth-century novels by Francisco Villoslado, which romanticized the fate of Leonor's older sister, who died imprisoned in one of Leonor's castles. Woodacre assesses Leonor's image as a scheming villainess in contemporary and modern works as well as her actions as a ruler to ascertain whether her reputation could (and should) be rehabilitated.

All of the essays in this collection complicate and clarify, problematize, and offer solutions to questions arising from an enhanced contemplation of the issues revolving around queenship, reputation, and gender in the medieval and early modern West. In a variety of cultural and political contexts and across diverse geographies, the people of the medieval and early modern period responded to the institution of queenship and individual queens in a variety of ways. Effective and influential queens showed themselves adept at molding and fashioning their reputations to avoid criticism and deflect manufactured negative propaganda; powerless or "impotent" queens were unable to achieve this for a number of reasons. Some queens were consciously and pragmatically involved in the business of propaganda mongering and reputation besmirching to neutralize both their male and female adversaries. A good deal of this propaganda has proven so durable that many still hold with it today. The essays in this collection prove the necessity of creating new insights into the perceptions and realities—both those of medieval contemporaries and of modern scholars—of the queen's roles and actions.

NOTES

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3. Charles Beem, *The Lioness Roared: The Problems of Female Rule in English History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 15.
4. Beem, *The Lioness Roared*, 15.
5. Strickland, *The Queens of England*, I, 247.
6. Strickland, *The Queens of England*, I, 528.
7. Eileen Power, *Medieval Women*, ed. M.M. Postan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
8. Hilda Johnstone, "The Queen's Household," in *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England*, vol. 5, ed. T.F. Tout (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1920–1933), 231–89; Hilda Johnstone, "The Queen's Household," in *The English Government at Work, 1327–1336*, vol. 1, eds. J.F. Willard and W.A. Morris (The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1830–1940), 250; Hilda Johnstone, "The Queen's Exchequer Under the Three Edwards," in *Historical Essays in Honour of James Tait*, ed. J.G. Edwards (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1933), 143–53.
9. Also see Maxine Berg, *A Woman in History: Eileen Power, 1889–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
10. Maggie Humm, *Modern Feminisms: Political, Literary, Cultural* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 14–5, 181–3; Olive Schreiner, *Women and Labour*, (London Virago, 1978); Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1957); Virginia Woolf *Three Guineas*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977); J. Marcus (ed), *The Young Rebecca West: Writings, of Rebecca West 1911–1917* (London: Virago, 1983); Ray Strachey, *The Cause* (London : Virago 1978); P. Bery and A. Bishop (eds.), *Testament of a Generation: The Journalism of Vera Brittain and Winifred Holdby* (London: Virago, 1985); Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ed. H.M. Parshlay (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) as excerpted and republished in Humm, *Modern Feminisms*, 15–50.
11. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, New York, 1963, particularly 233–57.
12. Marion Facinger, "A Study of Medieval Queenship: Capetian France, 987–1237," *Nebraska Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 5 (1968): 45–6.
13. Ferdinand Lot and Robert Fawtier, *Histoire des institutions françaises au Moyen Age: Institutions Royales* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958), 234 cited by Facinger, "A Study of Medieval Queenship," 36.
14. Parsons, "Introduction," I.
15. Parsons, "Introduction," I.
16. Joan Kelly-Gadol, "The Social Relation of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History," in *Feminism and Methodology*, ed. Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 15–28; Kelly-Gadol, "The Social Relation of the Sexes," 15–28.

17. Jane Tibbets Schulenburg, "Female Sanctity: Public and Private Roles, c. 500–1100," in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 105.
18. Caroline Barron, "The 'Golden Age' of Women in Medieval London," *Reading Medieval Studies* 15 (1990): 40. See also: Peter Coss, *The Lady in Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 70; Maryanne Kowaleski, "Women's Work in a Market Town: Exeter in the Late Fourteenth Century," in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, ed. B.A. Hanawalt (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 146; Joan Kelly, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" in *Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 19–50.
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24. Parsons, "Introduction," 10.
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27. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1–16, 42, 59; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 22. See also S.H. Rigby for his discussion on gender as culturally defined based on sex traits in medieval history: S.H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status, and Gender* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 243.
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PART I

Biography, Gossip and History

Lifestyles of the Rich and (In?)Animate: Object Biography and the Reliquary Cross of Queen Adelaide of Hungary

Christopher Mielke

In the museum at the former monastery of St. Paul im Lavanttal in southern Austria there is a splendid piece of Romanesque goldsmith's work known as the Adelaide Cross (Fig. 1). It is one of the largest *crux gemmata* of the eleventh century, and it was originally donated by Adelaide of Rheinfelden, queen of Hungary (d. 1090), to the monastery of St. Blaise in the Black Forest as a memorial to her mother, Adelaide of Savoy (d. 1079.) In the past 900 years, the cross has been altered, copied, destroyed, renovated, and restored. As a result its function and meaning have changed. Nonetheless, a study on an object such as this would allow for a better understanding of the sort of power this mostly unknown queen would have wielded in her lifetime. The lens of object biography would not only elucidate aspects of the turbulent life course of this reliquary cross, but also demonstrate the changing perception of the queen's agency in its creation in the centuries

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Z.E. Rohr, L. Benz (eds.), *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation in
the Medieval and Early Modern West, 1060–1600*, Queenship and
Power, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-31283-5_1



Fig. 1 The Adelaide Cross, front, ca. 1080s (*Source:* Stift Sankt Paul am Lavanttal. ©Foto Stift St. Paul, Gerfried Sitar)

to come.¹ An analysis of the composition of the gemstones on the cross and a comparison with other similar reliquaries will be undertaken as well. Finally, this long-term view will be employed to see how the meanings related to aspects of the reliquary changed over time. In spite of the limited amount of written data on the life of this particular queen, this approach can clearly demonstrate not only Adelaide's own imitation of Hungary's first queen, but also her concern for the promotion of her natal family, particularly their "Roman" or imperial ties. The new questions raised by this approach will aid in understanding issues of gender, memory, and material culture of Central Europe in the Middle Ages.

Regarding the methodology, there is fundamental tension in the archaeological study of the past between the focus on objects versus the focus on people. On the one hand, objects are something that in an archaeological context can be quantified, organized, and analyzed—from this process generalized and abstract conclusions about humanity at large may be drawn. Yet from an interpretive standpoint, this process is one that gives a static, momentary view of the objects and the people that would have interacted with them. For these reasons Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall advocated the approach of an object biography which traces the life course of an object through the metaphor of a human biography. What is unique about this approach is that one is able to see not only how humans over time interacted differently with the objects, but how over the course of the object's life it began to shape the world around it, taking on a life of its own, so to speak.² Indeed, objects can have several biographies, be they economic, technical, or social just to name a few.³ For the study of religious objects and artifacts, this methodology is ideal; most individuals in the Middle Ages were illiterate, and images and objects were almost seen as living, as a liminal connection between this world and the supernatural.⁴ Object biography is thus meant to be a more sophisticated analysis that goes beyond merely fabricating a chronology for a particular piece: it is meant to understand, how, as objects change over time, people's perception of the object changes and the object thus begins to take on new meanings suited to each period.

The Adelaide Cross is perfect testing ground for the object biography due to the combination of surviving written and material evidence. The origin of the Adelaide Cross was documented shortly after her death in the *Liber constructionis monasterii ad St. Blasiiem*.⁵ In addition, the gemstones embedded in the Cross are cataloged in eighteenth-century work on the history of the Black Forest (see Appendix I).⁶ Admittedly, the donor, Adelaide of Rheinfelden, is not mentioned in any of Hungary's medieval chronicles, and while she would have issued charters, their existence is only attested to in thirteenth-century royal charters confirming her earlier donations.⁷ Even though her husband, Ladislav I (r. 1077–1095), was made into a saint in 1192, she is completely and conspicuously absent in his legends.⁸ The barest biographical information establishes that she would have been born sometime after 1060/1061 (the date of her parents' marriage), married in 1078, and then died in May 1090.⁹ Ladislav is known to have had two daughters, presumably from this marriage. One became the wife of a Russian prince named Yaroslav; the other, named Piroška,

would take the name Eirene and become the wife of John II Komnenos, emperor of Byzantium.¹⁰ Her father was Rudolf of Rheinfelden, the duke of Swabia, and from 1078 to 1081 a rival to Henry IV for the German crown. Rudolf had previously been married to Henry's sister Matilda, but after her death, Rudolf married Adelaide of Savoy, sister of Henry's first wife, Bertha.¹¹ When Henry IV was briefly separated from Bertha in 1069 and seeking for divorce, Rudolf likewise sought divorce from Adelaide of Savoy, accusing her of being unchaste. She cleared herself of this accusation in the presence of Pope Alexander II and the couple were later reconciled.¹² Written sources are imperative here in the understanding of the Adelaide Cross, but with this approach they are not overtly determining the meaning and function as recorded by those describing it. The picture that emerges from the written sources is that medieval Hungarian queens, as women and foreigners, were easy scapegoats for the chroniclers, and this colors the perception of them to this day.¹³ Charters of queens from surviving documents of the Árpád dynasty (1000–1301) only comprise 2 % of the total.¹⁴ The goal here is to examine the life and afterlife of the Adelaide Cross within the context of the agency of Hungarian queens in the eleventh century. This material culture study will be able to prove not only Adelaide's own program in the design of the cross but also how her own actions recall and reflect those of her predecessors.

THE CROSS AND ITS HISTORY

In its present state, the Adelaide Cross is 82.9 cm high, 65.4 cm wide, and 7.4–7.8 cm thick. Originally there would have been 170 gemstones adorning the cross, but now there are only 147 stones remaining on the cross.¹⁵ Of the remaining gemstones, there are 24 antique gems and 3 Egyptian scarabs, though in 1783 the total would have been 38 (Ginhart itemizes only 37, see Appendix I).¹⁶ Comparing the list of current gemstones with the itemization of the ones still existing in the eighteenth century, the main difference is the absence of seven lapis lazuli from the current reconstructed cross.

According to the *Liber constructionis monasterii ad S. Blasium*, Adelaide received a particle of the True Cross from her brother-in-law "Ceysa."¹⁷ After the death of her mother in 1079, Adelaide commissioned a cross of gold containing the relic to be donated to the Abbey of St. Blaise in the Black Forest along with 70 gold pieces.¹⁸ The *Liber constructionis* also asserts that Adelaide's donation was an indication that she wished for the

rest of her family to be buried at St. Blaise—this is supported by the fact that her two brothers, Berthold and Otto, were buried at St. Blaise with their mother. The *Liber constructionis* asserts that the family had a history of donating to the abbey, with many donations coming from her mother (“multas elemosynas”), and her brother Berthold donating his farms to the abbey.¹⁹ Rudolf of Rheinfelden seems to have taken a personal interest in the Abbey of St. Blaise, in the 1070s implementing Clunaic reforms seen in monasteries like the Fruttuaria abbey in Italy. When Henry IV opposed these reforms, his mother, the Dowager Empress Agnes, mediated between the two, siding with Rudolf and ensuring that the reforms took place.²⁰ Rudolf is mentioned in the abbey’s necrology and Berthold and Otto built the Nicholas Chapel adjacent to the monastery church between 1092 and 1096.²¹ The Adelaide Cross was commissioned under Abbot Giselbert, who served from 1068 to 1086, but it does not seem to have been completed until the tenure of Abbot Uto (1086–1108).²² According to the *Liber Originum*, the reliquary cross, it seems, would have originally been a memorial of some kind to her mother, possibly even a grave marker in front of the associated altar.²³ This would be consistent with the family’s interest in the preservation of their memory: after the death of Rudolf, a bronze memorial was commissioned for his grave in Merseburg showing him in a full-sized portrait (one of the earliest German examples) and with the full royal insignia.²⁴

The second stage of development in the life of the Adelaide Cross would have been in the mid- to late twelfth century under the leadership of Abbot Gunther of St. Blaise (1141–1170). After the monks began to doubt the authenticity of the relic (due to the reliquary’s large size), Gunther was able to prove it and afterward commissioned the back for the cross, which at that point had not been finished.²⁵ The four points of the cross display the four Gospels and their associated animals. The inscription at the top reads: CLAUDIT(VR) HIC DIGNI CRUCIS ALN (M)E PORTIO LIGNI PANNONICI REGIS DED(IT) VXOR HA(N)C ADILHEIDIS.²⁶ Above the bottom panel Abbot Gunther takes credit for the rehabilitation of the cross.²⁷ It was also at this time that the cross fully entered the abbey liturgy.²⁸ Though the cross mentions Adelaide as the donor of the reliquary, the memory of her mother was no longer as important, and the relationship of the cross with her mother only remains in the written sources. There is no donor’s portrait (except for that of Abbot Gunther on the back), unlike other similar reliquary crosses of the period.²⁹ One possible explanation, given the unfinished nature of the cross in the time of Abbot Gunther,

is that Queen Adelaide died during its preparation and the project was dropped soon thereafter.

In 1688, Abbot Romanus Volger (1672–1695) ordered a new reliquary to be made that was a Baroque copy of the Adelaide Cross (Fig. 2). The particles of the True Cross in the original reliquary were transferred to this new one, but it was destroyed sometime in the Napoleonic Wars



Fig. 2 The Baroque copy of the Adelaide Cross, from a 1734 engraving (*Source:* Stift Sankt Paul am Lavanttal. ©Foto Stift St. Paul, Gerfried Sitar)

and all that remains of this copy is an engraving of what it looked like from 1734.³⁰ In 1809, the original cross was brought from St. Blaise in the Black Forest to the Abbey of St. Paul in Lavanttal, in Austria (Fig. 3).³¹ The Abbey of St. Blaise was dissolved in 1809, but the monks were invited

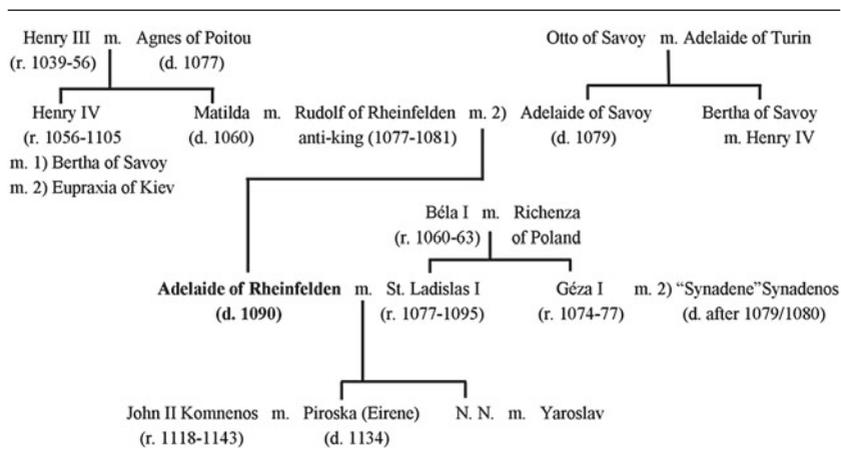


Fig. 3 1810 Copy of the Adelaide Cross (*Source:* Stift Sankt Paul am Lavanttal. ©Foto Stift St. Paul, Gerfried Sitar)

to settle at St. Paul instead.³² In 1810, a third copy of the Adelaide Cross was commissioned by Abbot Berthold III Rottler to replace the destroyed Baroque one.³³ This incarnation was made of silver gilt, diamonds, emeralds, and rock crystal and is somewhat smaller than the original. It looks very little like the original Adelaide Cross, but it does mention her in the inscription.³⁴ Lastly, from 1958 to 1960 the Adelaide Cross was pieced together and reconstructed by Otto Nedbal from the College of Applied Arts in Vienna.³⁵ Currently, the Adelaide Cross is on exhibit as a museum object, no longer a memorial object, processional cross, or piece of liturgical paraphernalia.

Previous authors have dealt with the iconography, style, and smithing techniques in more elaborate detail, but a few necessary points are worth mentioning here. First is that stylistically, the Adelaide Cross seems to come from a German workshop: the argument has been put forward that it is from a workshop in the Upper Rhine, such as Reichenau.³⁶ This means that in terms of physical appearance, it resembles pieces like the Imperial Crown of Konrad II rather than the Gisela Cross which came from the Regensburg workshop in Bavaria.³⁷ In her work on the Imperial Crown of Konrad II, Mechthild Schulze-Dörrlamm has compiled a chart comparing various design elements on gold objects showing that the Adelaide Cross shares design features with earlier treasures such as the portable altar of Countess Gertrude, the mid-eleventh-century Cross of Theophanu, and the cross on top of the Imperial Crown.³⁸

There are also several historiographic problems worth mentioning. First is the original owner of the cross particle. The “brother-in-law Ceysa” in question apparently was her husband’s older brother, Hungarian king, Géza I (r. 1074–1077), but it is unlikely that the two would have ever known each other considering he died the year before her marriage to his successor. What is interesting about the assertion the *Liber constructionis* makes is the purported family connections behind this donation. In the series of events, it seems that first Adelaide’s dead brother-in-law gives her the cross particle, second her mother dies, third the reliquary is commissioned for the memory of her mother, and finally supposedly on the notion that the rest of the family would likewise be buried there as well. The eastern provenience of the cross particle (i.e., from the Hungarian king) is similar to the Byzantine emperors and their occasional gifts of relics to the West. For the period leading up to the eleventh century, the Byzantine

Table 1 The familial relations of Adelaide of Rheinfelden

court had a near monopoly on the earliest relics, especially those related to Christ and the Virgin Mary.³⁹ Pieces of the True Cross were sent by the Byzantine emperors to Louis the German, Robert the Pious, and Conrad II.⁴⁰ Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, the enemy of Adelaide's father Rudolf of Rheinfelden, was sent sumptuous gold reliquaries containing the remains of various saints with cards attached identifying them.⁴¹

Though Géza I and Adelaide most likely would have never met, the connection, nevertheless, shows the care with which the monks went about verifying the relic's provenience in a way they would have understood to be authentic. It also could be an indication of the Byzantine connections Géza I had in his short reign. Shortly after becoming king, he married a woman the secondary literature refers to as "Synadene," the daughter of Theodolus Synadenos (see Table 1). Her mother was the sister of Nikephoros Botaneiates, who would become Byzantine Emperor Nikephoros III (r. 1078–1081).⁴² Synadene is a likely candidate for being the mother of Prince Almós, and according to Byzantine sources she returned to her homeland in the October of either 1079 or 1080.⁴³ There is also the argument that the lower part of the Hungarian crown was originally a diadem intended for Synadene—its large size (to fit over a woman's veil), the pinnacles, and the chronology seem to support this view, though it is not the only one.⁴⁴

GEMS ON THE ADELAIDE CROSS: REUSE AND MEANING(S)

Medieval lapidaries combined the biblical virtues of certain gemstones with knowledge from ancient Greek and Roman treatises. The question of the significance in the choice of gemstones on the Adelaide Cross is complicated by the many different possible meanings ascribed to them in the medieval period. Gemstones were known for their apotropaic effects: inscribed jewels were widely used as protection against poison and falling sickness, among other ailments.⁴⁵ Concerning some of the stones present on the Adelaide Cross, amethysts could ward off wild animals and ease the symptoms of drunkenness; chalcedony could aid in overcoming adversaries; cornelian could aid in recovery and strengthen the limbs of a bleeding man; agates could comfort an old man in his twilight years.⁴⁶ Yet in the words of Hana Šedinová, “neither ancient nor medieval natural historians had the uniform ideas of the colors of the respective stones.”⁴⁷ Colors and symbolism related to medieval gemstones could vary greatly, and even identification of gemstones between medieval and modern times often does not match up. Rather, the presence of the antique gemstones on this reliquary indicates an awareness on the part of Queen Adelaide of not only the actions of her predecessors, but also a desire to showcase her status as a Hungarian queen and an imperial princess.

The Adelaide Cross distinguishes itself from the others in the sheer volume of gems, especially those with Roman figures on them—one can even be seen with the naked eye on the left arm of the cross in Fig. 1. The pagan imagery on other antique gems was not a problem if it was appropriately Christianized in the medieval period. A triple mask on one gemstone had the phrase “Haec est Trinitatis Imago” inscribed on it sometime in the Middle Ages.⁴⁸ The idea that these gems were reused with the notion that the figures on them were religious figures might seem a plausible idea, but the antique gemstones on the Adelaide Cross are mostly imperial or figures of deities, if Ginhart is accurate in his assessment. The inscriptions on the gems themselves do not seem to be deliberately Christian, and it seems most plausible that they were chosen for their specific link to antiquity. It is also important to keep in mind that other reliquaries made use of these antique Roman gems. The tenth-century Liudolf Cross has three very prominent imitations of antique seals complete with pseudo-Greek inscriptions.⁴⁹ The presence of Roman-era engraved gemstones on a deliberately Christian reliquary is not uncommon, as in the case of the Lothar and Gertrude Crosses.

One of the strongest corollaries to the Adelaide Cross in its reuse of antique gems is the so-called Lothar Cross. Believed to have been commissioned by Otto III in the late tenth century, the cross makes use of a number of antique gems and cameos from the Roman to the medieval period. The cross gets its name from a gem that is a reused Carolingian seal inscribed with the name of Lothar II, r. 855–869, specifically saying “O Christ, defend King Lothar.”⁵⁰ At the center of the cross is an onyx cameo of the Emperor Augustus with the laurel wreath and the standard of Jupiter in the form of an eagle.⁵¹ The prominent placement of this very pagan imagery at the center of such an important Christian reliquary is the specific linkage that the cameo had with Rome. In this context, the central position of Augustus means the Lothar Cross serves as more of a political statement, a deliberate linkage of the Ottonians with the Carolingian dynasty and even the Imperial Roman past.⁵²

The presence of the recycled Roman-era gemstones on the Adelaide Cross can be seen as an assertion of her natal family’s imperial connections. Her father was Rudolf of Rheinfelden, the German anti-king supported by the pope who was vying for control of the Holy Roman Empire against Henry IV. Indeed, one of the reasons King St. Ladislas I of Hungary married her was to counter the Imperial connections of his rival Salamon, who was married to Henry’s sister Judith.⁵³ At the time of her mother’s death, her father was still fighting Henry IV for the Imperial title, and the presence of these antique gems could be a deliberate political and dynastic statement. The strong stylistic connections between the Adelaide Cross and the cross on top of the Imperial Crown of Konrad II seems to indicate that the imperial imagery on this reliquary is not a mere coincidence. The high percentage of Roman intaglios (especially in comparison with other reliquaries) indicates a deliberate choice on the queen’s part of the gems that comprise the Adelaide Cross. Not only is Adelaide of Rheinfelden continuing a tradition of female royal religious patronage, but she is doing so in a way that seems to showcase (1) her status as queen of Hungary, (2) her continuation of elite German women preserving memory in material culture, and (3) the Roman aspects of her own family. Adelaide’s interest in Rome can also be illustrated by one of the few written documents connected to her. A letter to her from Pope Gregory VII giving her council on the behavior of a good queen indicates that she was the one who initiated the correspondence shortly after her marriage.⁵⁴ The Abbey of St. Blaise itself shows her family’s interest in papal reform.

The reliquary thus serves the purpose of establishing a family memory at a site they were clearly devoted to, yet it should also be remembered that its purpose was of course as a memorial for her mother. This could explain why so many different gemstones were used. Most of the other crosses reviewed below are content to have only rubies, sapphires, emeralds, amethysts, topazes, and pearls.⁵⁵ One possible explanation is the 12 precious stones mentioned in the Book of Revelations that are the founding stones for New Jerusalem. There is a difficulty in translating what these stones are, however. The tenth- to eleventh-century Old English Lapidary says that the stones are hyacinth (jacinth), chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, onyx, sard, beryl, chrysoprase, topaz, and carbuncle (the tenth gemstone for some reason is omitted).⁵⁶ The fourteenth-century London Lapidary and its contemporary, the North Midland Lapidary of King Philip, both list the 12 stones as sard, topaz, emerald, ruby, sapphire, jasper, ligure (lyncurium, or jacinth), agate, amethyst, chrysolide, onyx, and beryl.⁵⁷ Unlike the other crosses which will be reviewed below, the Adelaide Cross seems to contain a significant number of gemstones belonging to this list. A conservative estimate of all three of these lapidaries shows the Adelaide Cross contained seven of these gemstones while a more loose interpretation of the Old English Lapidary would put the number closer to nine. There are several problems with this interpretation, such as whether the current composition of gemstones is an accurate reflection of its original state, the question of which stones the goldsmith thought were the 12 mentioned, and whether or not visitors to the monument would have recognized the significance. For instance, in Prague the St. Wenceslas Chapel is meant to be a reliquary adorned like Heavenly Jerusalem and representative of the virtues of the 12 stones mentioned in Revelations, Chap. 21, even if it does not contain all of the 12 stones specified.⁵⁸ If the selection of stones is predicated on this notion of which gems were holiest to God, it would speak more to its active role in aiding Adelaide's mother in the afterlife. Yet it seems these apotropaic effects would have only been noticed by the visitor while the cross was in a context that associated it with the grave. This would have no doubt have changed once Gunther had changed its use for liturgical purposes. In its original context, as the last and largest of a series of Central European *crux gemmata*, this reliquary is on the one hand a touching memorial to a teenage girl's mother and on the other a rather deliberate statement about one dynasty's quest for the Imperial Crown.

COMPARISON WITH SIMILAR RELIQUARIES

As mentioned above, the Adelaide Cross is part of a group of eleventh-century reliquary crosses mostly commissioned by men and women with familial ties to the Saxon and Salian dynasties. A list of analogous crosses in chronological order includes:

The Matilda Crosses—I: ca. 973–982 and II: before 1011.⁵⁹

The Lothar Cross—before 1000.⁶⁰

The Gisela Cross—ca. 1006.⁶¹

The Imperial Cross (Reichskreuz) of Conrad II—1024.⁶²

The Cross of Countess Gertrude—ca. 1040.⁶³

The Theophanu Cross—ca. 1040.⁶⁴

Of these, the Gisela Cross is most similar to the Adelaide Cross in its origin. Gisela of Bavaria (d. 1065) was the wife of St. Stephen I of Hungary (r. 997–1038) and the first queen of Hungary. In 1006, Gisela's mother, Gisela of Burgundy, died. To commemorate her mother, Gisela of Bavaria commissioned a gold memorial cross for the tomb of her mother at the Abbey of Niedermünster in Regensburg decorated with rubies, sapphires, emeralds, pearls, and a large topaz over the head of Christ.⁶⁵ Women were often responsible for preserving the memory of the dead, such as Queen Sichelgaita of Sicily rescuing her husband's corpse from the field on hostile territory. Likewise, Adeliza of Louvain, second queen of Henry I of England, donated to Reading Abbey her husband's resting place, to keep alive his memory on the anniversary of his death.⁶⁶ On the front of the Gisela Cross there are two female figures kneeling at Christ; presumably the crowned woman represents Queen Gisela of Hungary and the duchess wearing a veil represents her mother.⁶⁷ The name of the donor is inscribed on the front and back of the cross.⁶⁸ The similarities between the two queens is even more staggering considering that it was thought for a while that the two were buried at the same place, the cathedral founded by Gisela in the city of Veszprém. Recent analysis has concluded, however, that only Adelaide seems to have been buried there.⁶⁹ This deliberate emulation of Hungary's first queen does not seem to be a coincidence, but it is something only seen in the material as opposed to the historical record.

A word must be said at this point on comparison in terms of function. The Gisela and Adelaide Crosses are the only two designed explicitly with some sort of funerary function in mind. Though similarities to the Lothar Cross have been noted, the Lothar Cross was a processional cross, and not a reliquary.⁷⁰ The crosses of Gertrude and her husband Liudolf, on the

other hand, were reliquaries that were fitted at the bottom to be put on a processional staff.⁷¹ Even the bottom of the first Matilda Cross shows the *donatrix* and her brother, Duke Otto of Swabia, holding a processional cross, possibly indicating its use. At other times, crosses such as the ones listed above would have been placed on altars.⁷² The founder's image can be seen on the Gisela and Gertrude Crosses, and it is quite possible that the monks writing of the object's history in the twelfth century gained their information from an inscription no longer extant indicating that the cross was designed as a memorial object. There is a founder's image on the back of the Adelaide Cross, but it depicts a kneeling Abbott Gunther: as the reliquary was not finished in her lifetime that seems to explain her visual omission.⁷³ A comparison with the other crosses also shows that the Adelaide Cross was designed to outshine all of them. Physically it is bigger than even the Imperial Cross, and it was meant to have the most jewels: the Gertrude Cross, by comparison, only has settings for 48 jewels, while the Adelaide Cross in its prime fitted 170.⁷⁴ The fact that the Adelaide Cross was the last in this series of royal donations of jeweled reliquary crosses does not mean that its importance had diminished or its memory had been forgotten.

MEANING AND MEMORY IN MEDIEVAL PERIOD

It is the memories attached to the cross that in effect allowed it to briefly gain a life of its own, in spite of the fact that Queen Adelaide has no image on the cross. Though the dates are uncertain, the changing of the cross' back and the writing of the *Liber constructionis* would have both occurred in the twelfth century. Gunther saw no reason to include Adelaide's image on the back of the cross, yet the monks felt compelled to include her presence in the history of the object. They remember her not only in the history of the object, but by including her as a donor in their Necrology, saying prayers for her soul on the anniversary of her death.⁷⁵ In addition to the aforementioned possibilities why Adelaide's presence might be necessary in the history of the object (authenticity, prestige, etc.), there are several analogous situations which may aid in the understanding of how medieval people interacted with objects.

In her challenge to the monopoly monks had on the preservation of memory, Elizabeth Van Houts compares three donations from England: Matilda of Flanders, queen of England (d. 1083), Judith of Flanders, duchess of Bavaria (d. 1094), and Empress Matilda (d. 1167) whose

records of donations to monasteries survive. The lists include many sumptuous and expensive objects meant to be used in the monastery's liturgy, but Van Houts notes that there are almost no personal objects included in the records. The only personal items recorded in the lists (such as personal cloaks both Matildas bequeathed) were donated with the explicit purpose of being turned into an item meant for the monastery's rituals: in these cases the cloaks were turned into capes and albs worn in the church's ritual.⁷⁶ What is interesting about these donations is that the memory of the donor is kept alive not only in the material objects but also in the written record itself. The gift these royal women made to their favored monasteries ensured that not only their endowments were well provided for but also their own memories would be preserved. In addition, it should be noted that the items donated were intended to be for practical use in these cases, whereas presumably more personal items would have been passed on within the family. The Adelaide Cross thus represents an unusual circumstance, for it seems that it went from being a stationary object connected to a particular patron to a very public, processional object. The fundamental nature of reliquaries is that they are designed with memories implanted in them related to the life of the person they belonged to—they had to be “identified and named.” Not only that, but over time the reliquaries themselves, as the public face of the relic inside, gained a significance of their own.⁷⁷

A similar change in use occurred with two of the reliquaries at the Abbey of Conques, wherein the personal histories of two objects were altered in the historic records of the monastery in order to suit pressing issues of the present. The monks chronicling the origins of Conques claimed that Charlemagne had endowed the abbey with its lands and had bestowed upon it the relics of Christ's foreskin and umbilical cord, when in fact it had been Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious who endowed Conques.⁷⁸ Part of the reason for this blurring of facts is the fierce competition Conques had with the nearby abbey at Figeac. Figeac was founded by Pippin I of Aquitaine and thus claimed an earlier heritage of royal patronage than Conques, so as a result of this conflict and competition, it is quite possible that the history of Conques was subsequently embellished in its own quest for patronage.⁷⁹ As Gosden and Marshall have noted, there is a desire to link objects with people of particular renown; the fame of objects and people is mutually creating and reinforcing.⁸⁰ Even though the monks and the abbot of St. Blaise were altering the physical object meant to preserve the memory of Adelaide's mother, the object's connection to the

Hungarian queen, nonetheless, serves as a very powerful and important link to the past for the monastery.

Lastly, one aspect about the relationship between people and objects that consistently rears its head is the context of an object as a gift from Queen Adelaide to St. Blaise along with a large cash endowment. In his conceptualization of object biography, Kopytoff points out the difference between a gift and a commodity in the relation of their exchange. A commodity is something that has use value and is exchanged in a discrete transaction for a counterpart of equivalent value. A gift on the other hand evokes reciprocity: gifts are not discrete and in principal not terminal.⁸¹ This is particularly apparent in the relationship between the Byzantine emperor and Western rulers concerning the gifts of relics the former occasionally gave to the latter.⁸² Likewise, the Byzantine monopoly on the silk trade ensured not only several political alliances with western Europe, but also trade concessions to northern Italy ensured naval military aid until the Fourth Crusade.⁸³ These, however, concern secular exchanges; thus it becomes imperative to ask in which ways is the Adelaide Cross a gift to the Monastery of St. Blaise and what the donation signified in the medieval mindset. In the medieval period relics often functioned as commodities: they were bought and sold, stolen, and divided like other goods. Thefts and gifts of relics were quite common in the eighth through twelfth centuries: in fact, theft and gift were highly regarded forms of exchange for luxury items and property.⁸⁴ As such, the process at hand in the twelfth century shows that after the original gift of the cross, the original intent was laid aside for more pressing practical concerns (the need for a liturgical cross), yet the object was so impressive a donation it merited remembrance by the monks of the donor, as opposed to the original benefactor of the monks' prayers, Adelaide's mother. In this way, the biography of the object shows that issues of memory and identity of objects was a two-way street: on the one hand the monks were actively altering the cross, and yet the cross itself was also guiding the monk's behavior.

CONCLUSION

In giving a preamble of the cultural biography of objects, Gosden and Marshall state, "there is a mutual process of value creation between people and things."⁸⁵ By trying to understand the Adelaide Cross in terms of its biography, it becomes clear that objects in the material are often subject to

alterations, theft, active destruction, and a whole series of nasty events that permanently change its physical form. However, the agency of both the queen of Hungary and (in later generations) the object itself can clearly be seen. First and foremost, the presence of the cross directly recalls the Gisela Cross commissioned by Hungary's first queen; the Adelaide Cross attempts to both emulate and improve upon the example of Gisela of Bavaria. The presence of the gemstones would not only have been a reminder of the imperial connections to the Salian dynasty of Adelaide's family but also possibly have encouraged whatever magical properties were inherent in the stones themselves. After its alteration in the twelfth century, the monks at St. Blaise felt the need to record the story of the Adelaide Cross and shift their focus of attention to its donor, rather than the person it was made as a memorial to. Its presence at the Abbey of St. Blaise would have been a reminder of the high status of the abbey, and there would be the constant reminder that its donor was a proper queen, rather than a member of a minor princely German family that had a failed bid for imperial power. In some ways, the alterations that took place to the cross in the twelfth century can almost be chalked up to it being too successful, too large, and eclipsing the Rheinfelden dynasty, which after the death of Adelaide's father, Rudolf, in 1080 never quite recovered the same prestige it once had. Lastly, the copies made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries both continued to emulate the basic style of the original reliquary (with plenty of gaudy contemporary stylistic additions). Even though the original cross at this point was no longer in use, its design still continued to have an impact on its successors after it was no longer suitable for the liturgy.

Much is still unknown about the relative power of Hungarian queens in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, yet Adelaide's actions are very telling. She seems to have done much to emulate Gisela of Bavaria by creating a similar memorial for her own mother and choosing her place of burial at the cathedral Gisela founded. Adelaide's interest in corresponding with the pope and her donation to St. Blaise show an interest in religious devotion as well as international affairs. While there is much knowledge about the Adelaide Cross that will most likely be lost forever, new ways in thinking about the relationship between objects and people have proven fruitful in gaining a better understanding of how a medieval queen's power can be visible through material culture even when the written sources are silent on her.

NOTES

1. In essence, object biography is an archaeological approach that requires the researcher to ask the same questions of objects that one would of humans, understanding the objects in an active sense, rather than as things acted upon. For readings on object biography, see Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall. "The cultural biography of objects," *World Archaeology*, 31–2 (1999): 169–78; Igor Kopytoff, "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process" in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91.
2. Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The cultural biography of objects," 169.
3. Kopytoff, "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process," 68.
4. John Moreland, "The World(s) of the Cross," *World Archaeology* 31–2 (1999): 195.
5. The earliest surviving manuscript dates from the sixteenth century, but the first draft would have been made in the first quarter of the twelfth century and finished in the last quarter. Wolfgang Schütz, "Die Große Kreuzpartikel von St. Blasien/St. Paul und ihre drei Fassungen," *Carinthia* 148 (1959): 611–2; Karl Ginhart, "Reliquienkreuz der Königin Adelheid" in *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Benediktinerstiftes St. Paul im Lavanttal und seiner Filialkirchen*, ed. Karl Ginhart et al. (Vienna: Schroll, 1969), 220.
6. Martin Gerbert, *Historia Nigrae Silvae ordinis Sancti Benedicti Coloniae* Vol. I (St. Blasien: Typis San Blasianis, 1783), 385–7.
7. In particular they refer to a donation of a village to the Bishopric of Veszprém mentioned in the thirteenth century. Imre Szentpétery and Attila Zsoldos, *Az Árpád-házi hercegek, hercegnők és a királynék okleveleinek kritikai jegyzéke* [A Critical edition of the charters of the princes, princesses and queens of the Árpád Dynasty] (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2008), 184.
8. Wertner Mór, *Az Árpádok családi Története* [A Family History of the Árpáds] (Nagy-Becskerek: Pleitz, 1892), 194. Her absence is duly noted by Macartney who remarks not only that the chroniclers may have confused her with the fictional Adelaide of Poland, said to be the wife of Prince Géza and possible mother of St. Stephen I (r. 1000–1038), but also that he only knew her name from an inscription. Carlisle A. Macartney, *The Medieval Hungarian Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 179, 182. The legends of St. Ladislav come from two versions (both of which had a common source) that date to the first years of the thirteenth century, indicating that the original was written shortly after his canoniza-

- tion in 1192. Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 417–9.
9. Mór mistakenly calls her the daughter of Berthold of Zähringen. Mór, *Az Árpádok családi Története*, 203; The Necrology of the *Liber constructionis* gives the date of her death as May 3, 1090. Franz Josef Mone. “Liber constructionis monasterii ad S. Blasium” in *Quellensammlung der badischen landesgeschichte*, Vol. 4 (Karlsruhe: G. Macklot, 1867), 136.
 10. Mór, *Az Árpádok családi Története*, 190–191; Gyula Moravcsik, *Szent László leánya és a bizánci Pantokrator-Monostor* [The daughter of St. Ladislav and the Byzantine Pantokrator Monastery] (Budapest and Constantinople, 1923), 7–8.
 11. Matilda died on May 12, 1060. Ian S. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056–1106* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 34.
 12. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056–1106*, 110.
 13. János M. Bak, “Roles and Functions of Queens in Árpáadian and Angevin Hungary (1000–1386 A.D.)” in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 16–7; János M. Bak, “Queens as Scapegoats in Medieval Hungary” in *Queens and queenship in medieval Europe*, Anne J. Duggan, ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), 223–33.
 14. Attila Zsoldos, “The Problems of Dating the Queen’s Charters of the Árpáadian Age (Eleventh-Thirteenth Century)” in *Dating Undated Medieval Charters* ed. Michael Gervers (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2000), 151–60.
 15. Of the remaining stones, there are 53 amethysts, 22 cornelians, 17 agates, 13 quartzes, 7 moonstones, 6 garnets, 5 chalcedonies, 5 onyxes, 4 almandines, 4 heliotropes, 3 turquoises, 2 beryls, 2 serpentines, 1 lapis lazuli, 1 emerald, 1 milk opal, and 1 smoky quartz.
 16. The itemization of the gemstones was done in the twentieth century by Alois Kudrinka, a master goldsmith from Wolfsberg. Gerbert, *Historia Nigrae Silvae*, 386–387; Ginhart, “Reliquienkreuz der Königin Adelheid,” 217.
 17. “Frater quipped regis, mariti scilicet” Mone, “Liber constructionis,” ch. 19, 94; Gerbert, *Historia Nigrae Silvae*, 234; Ginhart, “Reliquienkreuz der Königin Adelheid,” 220; Herman Fillitz, “Das Adelheid-Kreuz aus St. Blasien” in *Schatzhaus Kärntens: Landesausstellung St. Paul 1991: 900 Jahr Benediktinerstift*, ed. Hartwig Pucker et al, 665. (Klagenfurt: Universitätsverlag Carinthia, 1991).
 18. Mone, “Liber constructionis,” ch. 18, 94; Ginhart, “Reliquienkreuz der Königin Adelheid,” 220.

19. Mone, "Liber constructionis," ch. 18–19, 94.
20. Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056–1106*, 126–7.
21. Helmut Maurer, *Der Herzog von Schwaben* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1978), 167–8.
22. Fillitz, "Das Adelheid-Kreuz aus St. Blasien," 665.
23. This source dates from 1555. Schütz, "Die Große Kreuzpartikel von St. Blasien/St. Paul und ihre drei Fassungen," 617–8; Klaus Gereon Beuckers, "Adelheid-Kreuz (Reichskreuz)" *Die Macht des Wortes: benediktinisches Mönchtum im Spiegel Europas*, ed. Gerfried Sitar et al. (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 2009), 348.
24. According to Robinson, the grave was commissioned by Rudolf's supporters in the Saxon party to show him as a true king and defender of the church, rather than a hubris-heavy usurper. Thomas E. Dale, "The Individual, the Resurrected Body, and Romanesque Portraiture: The Tomb of Rudolf von Schwaben in Merseburg" *Speculum* 77:3 (2002): 714–6; Robinson, *Henry IV of Germany, 1056–1106*, 204.
25. Fillitz, "Das Adelheid-Kreuz aus St. Blasien," 665–8.
26. Ginhart, "Reliquienkreuz der Königin Adelheid," 220.
27. "CHRISTE DATOR VITAE, QUEM LAUDENT OMNIA RITE, PRAMIA DIGNA PARA REPARATIS IN CRUCIS ARA. CLAUDITUR HIC DIGNI CRUCIS ALMA PORTIO LIGNI DOMINVS GUNTHERUS ABAS PATRAVIT HANC CRUCEM." Gerbert, *Historia Nigrae Silvae*, 387.
28. Mone, *Liber constructionis*, ch. 20, 94–5.
29. Beuckers. "Adelheid-Kreuz (Reichskreuz)," 348.
30. According to Fillitz, the reason for the new reliquary was a desire to have it in a larger, gem-encrusted showpiece. Fillitz, "Das Adelheid-Kreuz aus St. Blasien," 668–669.
31. Ginhart, "Reliquienkreuz der Königin Adelheid," 220.
32. Fillitz, "Das Adelheid-Kreuz aus St. Blasien," 668.
33. *Ibid.*, 669.
34. It measures approximately 67.5 cm high, 38.5 cm wide, and the base is 25 × 19.5 cm. "Veram Hanc S. Crucis particulam Adelheida Hungariae Regina Sec. XI. S. Blasio D. D. Bertholdus III. Abbas cum conventu see Blasiano Patrocinio Karinthiae, alia Hiccotheca [= Hierothecca] ornatam invexit Anno MDCCCX." Holger Kempkens, "Kreuzreliquiar" in *Die Macht des Wortes: benediktinisches Mönchtum im Spiegel Europas*, ed. Gerfried Sitar et al. (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 2009), 350.
35. Fillitz, "Das Adelheid-Kreuz aus St. Blasien," 670.
36. Ginhart, "Reliquienkreuz der Königin Adelheid," 221; Beuckers, "Adelheid-Kreuz (Reichskreuz)," 348.

37. Mechthild Schulze-Dörrlamm, *Die Kaiserkrone Konrads II. (1024–1039): eine archäologische Untersuchung zu Alter und Herkunft der Reichskrone* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1991), Table 1, 4; Hermann Schnitzler, “Die Regensburger Goldschmiedekunst” in *Wandlungen christlicher Kunst im Mittelalter*, ed. Johannes Hempel (Baden-Baden: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1953), 181.
38. In particular, the author points to the gold beads in a pearl wire ring, the gems with four pearls at the diagonals, and the gems surrounded by pearls in the shape of a cross as diagnostic features. Schulze-Dörrlamm, *Die Kaiserkrone Konrads II*, 41, 105.
39. Holger Klein, “Eastern Objects and Western Desires: Relics and Reliquaries between Byzantium and the West,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004): 289.
40. Klein, “Eastern Objects and Western Desires,” 290–1.
41. *Ibid.*, 291.
42. Zoltan J. Kosztolnyik, *The dynastic policy of the Árpáds, Géza I to Emery (1074–1204)* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006), 23, 31 n. 113; Jozsef Deér, *Die Heilige Krone Ungarns* (Vienna: Hermann Böhlau Nachf., 1966), 66–7.
43. Raimund Kerbl, “Byzantinische Prinzessinnen in Ungarn zwischen 1050–1200 und ihr Einfluss auf das Arpaden-Königreich” (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1979), 55–7; Ferenc Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni: Political Relations between Hungary and Byzantium in the 12th Century* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1989), 125 n. 1.
44. Patrick Kelleher, *The Holy Crown of Hungary* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1951), 64; Zsuzsa Lovag and Éva Kovács, *The Hungarian crown and other regalia* (Budapest: Hungarian National Museum, 1986), 37; Deér, *Die Heilige Krone Ungarns*, 62.
45. Joan Evans, *Magical Jewels of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (London: Constable, 1922), 114, 123.
46. Joan Evans and Mary Serjeanston, *English Medieval Lapidaries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 26, 45–6, 123, 128–9.
47. Hana Šedinová, “The Symbolism of the Precious Stones in St. Wenceslas Chapel,” *Artibus et Historiae*, 20–39 (1999): 75.
48. C.W. King, *Antique Gems: their Origin, Uses, and Value* (London: John Murray, 1860), 301.
49. Patrick De Winter, *The Sacral Treasure of the Guelfs* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1985), 35.
50. King, *Antique Gems: their Origin, Uses, and Value*, 305; Robert Calkins, *Monuments of Medieval Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 115.

51. Moshe Barasch, *The language of art: studies in interpretation* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 30–1.
52. Barasch, *The language of art: studies in interpretation*, 31.
53. Kosztolnyik, *The dynastic policy of the Árpáds, Géza I to Emery (1074–1204)*, 38.
54. H. E. J. Cowdrey, *The Register of Pope Gregory VII 1073–1085: an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 396.
55. King, *Antique Gems: their Origin, Uses, and Value*, 305; De Winter, *The Sacral Treasure of the Guelphs*, 33; Gerda Friess, *Edelsteine im Mittelalter: Wandel und Kontinuität in ihrer Bedeutung durch zwölf Jahrhunderte* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1980), 53.
56. Evans and Serjeanston, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, 14–5.
57. Evans and Serjeanston, *English Medieval Lapidaries*, 17–8, 39.
58. Šedinová, “The Symbolism of the Precious Stones in St. Wenceslas Chapel,” 86–7.
59. I is 44.5 cm high while II is 46 cm high. De Winter, *The Sacral Treasure of the Guelphs*, 45.
60. This cross is 50 × 38.5 cm. Calkins, *Monuments of Medieval Art*, 115.
61. The Gisela Cross is 45 cm high. Schnitzler, “Die Regensburger Goldschmiedekunst,” 181.
62. 77 × 70 cm. Fillitz, “Das Adelheid-Kreuz aus St. Blasien,” 670.
63. 24.2 × 21.6 cm. De Winter, *The Sacral Treasure of the Guelphs*, 8.
64. 44.5 cm. De Winter, *The Sacral Treasure of the Guelphs*, 44.
65. Friess, *Edelsteine im Mittelalter*, 53; Hermann Schnitzler, “Die Regensburger Goldschmiedekunst,” 181.
66. Elizabeth Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 94–97.
67. Patrick Kelleher, *The Holy Crown of Hungary* (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1951), 80–1; Éva Kovács, “Gizella királyné keresztje” [The Cross of Queen Gisela] in *Gizella királyné, 985 k.–1060*. (Veszprém, 2000), 158.
68. On the front, “HANC REGINA. CRVCE(m) FABRICARI GISILA IVSIT” and on the back “HANC CRVCE(m) GISILA DEVOTA REGINA AD TVMVLV(m) SVE MATRIS GISILE DONARE CVRAVIT.” Éva Kovács, “Gizella királyné keresztjének feliratai és ikonográfiája” [The iconography and inscriptions of the Cross of Queen Gisela] in *Gizella királyné, 985 k.–1060*. (Veszprém, 2000), 160; Béla Czobor, “A Gizella-kereszt leírása” [A description of the Gisela Cross] in *Gizella királyné, 985 k.–1060*. (Veszprém, 2000), 157; De Winter, *The Sacral Treasure of the Guelphs*, 81.
69. Alan Kralovansky, “The settlement history of Veszprém and Székesfehérvár in the Middle Ages” in *Towns in Medieval Hungary*, ed. László Gerevich. (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1990), 58.

70. Calkins, *Monuments of Medieval Art*, 119.
71. De Winter, *The Sacral Treasure of the Guelphs*, 37.
72. De Winter, *The Sacral Treasure of the Guelphs*, 36.
73. Fillitz, "Das Adelheid-Kreuz aus St. Blasien," 665.
74. De Winter, *The Sacral Treasure of the Guelphs*, 33.
75. Mone, *Liber constructionis*, 136.
76. Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200*, 114–8.
77. Amy Remensnyder, "Legendary Treasure at Conques: Reliquaries and Imaginative Memory" *Speculum*, 71–4 (1996): 887–8.
78. Remensnyder, "Legendary Treasure at Conques," 892.
79. Remensnyder, "Legendary Treasure at Conques," 901–2.
80. Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The cultural biography of objects," 170.
81. Kopytoff, "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process," 68–9.
82. Klein, "Eastern Objects and Western Desires," 286.
83. Anna Muthesius, "Silk in the medieval world" in *The Cambridge history of western textiles*, ed. David Jenkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 326.
84. Patrick Geary, "Sacred Commodities: the Circulation of Medieval Relics" in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 169. For further information, see Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
85. Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, "The cultural biography of objects," 170.

APPENDIX I

Gerbert's list of antique gems in the Adelaide Cross from *Historia Nigrae Silvae* (pp. 386–7)

Translated from Latin by the author

I. In the Upper Part

1. Lapis lazuli in which there are three figures, Jupiter stands in the middle, to his right stands Mars with a helmet on his head, and to the left another soldier with a similar helmet.
2. Cornelian, inscribed with a nude Apollo holding a branch in his right hand and a lyre in his left hand.
3. Sard, nude Hercules leaning on a club wearing a lion skin. In this gem one can still see a winged caduceus, with two serpents winded around it.

4. Sard, seminude Mars with a helmet on his head, a spear in his right hand, and a trophy on his left shoulder.
5. Agate, engraved with the head of a man, worked roughly.
6. Cornelian, the figure of the sun radiating from a sitting four-horse chariot, holding a whip in the right hand and a spear in the left.
7. Cornelian, Mars Gradivus, with a trophy on the right shoulder and a spear in his left hand.
8. On the back of a cornelian a cross with a palm (of a hand?) in between. Possibly a Christian sculpture.
9. A great cornelian, with a helmeted Pallas Athena, right hand extended over a burning spider, holding a spear in the left hand.
10. Cornelian, inscribed with a scarab, doubtful that it was used as an amulet.
11. Cornelian, engraved with a nude man, holding an ear of corn in the right hand, a dish in the left.
12. Cornelian, with a running horse, below which is the branch of a palm tree.
13. Head of the wife of Domitian.

II. In the Right Arm of the Cross

1. Lapis lazuli, inscribed with a scarab.
2. Cornelian, with a figure protecting a seminude man, a staff in the right hand extended over a bread basket.
3. A seven-sided lapis lazuli, on which is engraved a seminude man with a dish in his right hand and a cornucopia in his left. The letters G.L.C.D. on the gem might stand for "Genius Lobi, Caesar Diocletianus."
4. Cornelian, engraved with a nude Venus.
5. Cornelian, with winged Victory standing toward a camel with a branch in its teeth.
6. Cornelian, with a cloaked figure wearing a helmet on his head. In his right hand he holds a shield and in the left a spear. Mars type.
7. Cornelian, with an eagle and the letter I superimposed.
8. Two scarabs, one an amethyst, the other a cornelian.

III. In the Left Arm of the Cross

1. Gallus, gallinaceus with Mercury.
2. Cornelian, with a wolf and another beast resting in front of a palm branch.
3. Lapis lazuli, engraved with a walking man holding a staff in his right hand.
4. Cornelian, with Mars standing, wearing a helmet and holding a staff in his right hand and with a shield in front of an altar.
5. Cornelian, engraved with Hercules and a club and a spear.

6. Cornelian, engraved with a goat and running beasts below the branch of a palm.
7. Lapis lazuli, with Venus Victrix, holding a helmet in her right hand and a spear in the left.
8. A white gemstone engraved with a seminude Jupiter seated, holding a spear in his right hand and a dish in the left.
9. Cornelian, with a rough helmeted figure standing, holding a branch in the left hand, similar to a Mars type.

IV. In the Lower Part

1. Lapis lazuli, engraved with a seated figure of a woman holding a dish in her left hand.
2. Lapis lazuli, with a poorly worked standing figure holding a cross.
3. Cornelian, with the head of a man with a corona radiating outward.
4. Lapis lazuli, engraved with a mangled lizard.
5. Cornelian, with the head of Vitellus with laurels is on the back.
6. Onyx, with the figure of a seminude man wearing a broad traveler's hat (petasus) holding a caduceus in the right hand and a spear in the left—Mercury type.
7. Cornelian showing the head of a man with laurels.

Gender, Reputation, and Female Rule in the World of Brantôme

Tracy Adams

The literary portraits and anecdotes related by Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme (1540–1614), in the works widely known today as the *Vies des dames illustres* and the *Vies des dames galantes* (Brantôme himself named the two together the *Recueil des dames*) have long been important sources of information about the women of the French royal court.¹ Brantôme was well placed to collect stories: his grandmother was raised at Anne of France’s court and later served Queen Marguerite of Navarre; his father and two of his aunts served Queen Anne of Brittany; his mother, goddaughter of Anne of Brittany, waited on Marguerite of Navarre; and the author himself spent time as a young boy at Marguerite’s court alongside his mother.² By employing expressions like “I read,” “I heard it said,” and “I saw,” his narrative persona encourages readers to believe that his descriptions are based on genuine memories, if not always his own, at least those of trustworthy eyewitnesses.³ Although many of the women he discusses in the *Vies* died before he was born, his descriptions of them are generally assumed to reflect oral tradition.

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Z.E. Rohr, L. Benz (eds.), *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation in
the Medieval and Early Modern West, 1060–1600*, Queenship and
Power, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-31283-5_2

Still, it is also important to note that scholars have discovered that he borrowed a number of his stories more or less directly from literary sources, which means that some of the information that he presents as based on his or his family's memories is not. As Ludovic Lalanne points out in his edition of Brantôme's works, the author borrowed at least one of his anecdotes about the regent Anne of France from a book of "facéties" and "motz subtiles."⁴ Robert D. Cottrell shows that although Brantôme claims to have taken his description of the death of Mary Queen of Scots from an eyewitness, his account repeats word for word Blackwood's *La mort de la Roynie*.⁵ In addition to the problem of distinguishing between authentic impressions and fiction, historians drawing on Brantôme for details about women have to deal with the writer's biases, including gender biases. These color his observations in ways that are not always immediately obvious.⁶ Historians thus often insert the raconteur's moral judgments, whole cloth, into biographies as if they were objective truths.

This chapter explores the continuing influence of Brantôme's *Vies des dames illustres* on the modern reputations of Queen Anne of Brittany (1477–1514) and the queen's sister-in-law, Anne of France (1461–1522). Anne, Duchess of Brittany, was also twice queen of France, consort first to Charles VIII from 1492 until his death in 1498 and then to Louis XII from 1498 until her own death. Anne of France (also known by her husband's titles of Beaujeu or Bourbon), although never queen, governed France with her husband from 1484 to 1492 on behalf of Charles VIII, her younger brother. It opens by considering the biographies of Anne of Brittany, which, following the narrative of Brantôme, treat her and regent, Anne of France (former regent as of 1492), as self-important peahens and linger over unpleasant aspects of the queen's personality. It then turns to the popular impression of Anne of France, attributable to in large part to Brantôme, that she led her husband, Pierre, Duke of Bourbon, around by the nose. Still, the purpose of the chapter is not to deny Brantôme's historical value. It is, rather, to suggest ways of putting some of his anecdotes to good use. Regarding queenly reputation, it is important to recognize that personal qualities are always inferred, whether from direct observation or from reports of behavior, through social templates that are already interpreting words or actions for the observer. Much of what Brantôme writes about the Annes simply casts in negative terms qualities that feminist scholars today see as positive, that is, qualities that allowed female rulers to accomplish their political goals. The contemporary stereotypes that Brantôme applies to his women can be contested and reinterpreted.

BRANTÔME AS HISTORIAN

Robert D. Cottrell writes that for Brantôme a person's particular or individual features, their *particularitez*, were of special interest and that, for the author, biography is a "rhapsody of enumerated perfections."⁷ Cottrell signals an early passage from the *Vies des dames illustres* in which Brantôme discusses this interest and how it ties into biography. Brantôme writes:

I know that in this discourse and the preceding ones I can be criticized for putting in many small "particularities" that are very much superfluous. I suppose, but I know that if these bother some, others appreciate them; it seems to me that it isn't enough when we praise people to say that they are beautiful, wise, virtuous, worthy, valiant, magnanimous, open, generous, splendid, and quite perfect. These are just general accolades and descriptions, commonplaces used by everyone. It is important to be specific about the whole and especially to describe perfections in such a way that we can almost touch them.⁸

Brantôme, then, adds a woman's "particularities" because these bring her to life.

I will return to the issue of particularities. But to continue for the moment, Cottrell explains that this Brantôme, the one we have just seen, is not the only one. The ostentatiously reverent biographer appears too in the *Dames galantes*. There, however, he is constantly interrupted by a "restless and assertive ego," the Brantôme of "*Les dames galantes*—the hablador, the cynical victim of Fortune, the shrewd observer and the unwitting debunker of courtly reputation."⁹ This back and forth between praising and undermining that praise, or, as Cottrell later observes, this movement from "appearance to the exposure of hidden truth," becomes a literary reconstitution of court life in "dialectical terms." That is, Brantôme both idealizes court life, infusing the couriers with meaning in a neo-Platonic sense, and undermines them through his cynical comments.¹⁰

I believe that Cottrell's insight about Brantôme's version of the court life, which was viewed with deep ambivalence during the author's lifetime, in the *Vies des dames galantes* is exactly right.¹¹ Examples of his procedure abound. For example, he lauds beautiful women who possess the soul of a "whore" ("pute"), reflecting that women who are never tempted are not worthy of praise. His point is that only hard-won virtue is worthy of the name. He could have made the point in a straightforwardly positive way, however. Instead, he works by erecting an ideal, the chaste woman, and, at the same time, demystifying it.

Such beautiful women, whores in their souls and chaste in their bodies, deserve eternal praise; but not [chaste women] who are cold like marble, weak, cowardly, and more unmoving than a rock, and have no interest in their flesh Speaking of which, I know a great lady who said to some of her beautiful friends, “God did me a big favor when He did not make me beautiful, like you; because I would have made love and been a whore, just like you.” So, we can praise beautiful women who are also chaste.¹²

But in addition to Cottrell’s point that Brantôme approaches court life dialectically in the *Vies des dames galantes*, it is important to note that the writer sometimes works in the same way in the *Vies des dames illustres*, using particularities to undermine the ladies whose praises he purports to be singing. In other words, the particularities, far from idealizing as Brantôme and Cottrell claim, are often precisely the qualities that the author does not idealize, qualities that seem to be personal and unflattering and that puncture the platonic generalities that precede them. Moreover, the particularities tend to be the characteristics that historians throughout the centuries have assumed to be objectively true. And yet, Brantôme’s particularities should not be accepted uncritically: it is important to keep in mind that whether they reflect his own observations or those of his grandmother, father, mother, another source, or nothing but Brantôme’s imagination, such particularities are interpretations based on outward behavior. The observer infers an inner quality, and such inferences are always mediated by culturally specific templates, in other words, assumptions about appropriate behavior. They are therefore not objective truths, physical features about which there is little dispute—that the Louvre was constructed from Paris limestone, for example—but interpretations of gestures or words that might sometimes be understood in alternate ways.¹³ This is not to say that Brantôme’s particularities should be dismissed. On the contrary, they can be used to reconstruct the behavior that would have motivated them and then “reprocessed” through cultural templates that feminist scholars have developed to discuss female power.

ANNE OF BRITTANY AND ANNE OF FRANCE: JEALOUS RIVALS?

Georges Minois’s 1999 French biography of Anne of Brittany (1477–1514) relates that in the spring of 1492,

[at] court, the young queen [Anne of Brittany] was well accepted, except by her sister-in-law, Anne, now Anne of Bourbon or France Still young, 31, [Anne of France] had not reacted well at first to her brother's attempts to emancipate himself from her tutelle. Intelligent and authoritarian, she still claimed an important political role for herself. In this area, she didn't have much to fear from the young queen, who was awarded no political authority. It was more in the area of honor, worldly vanity, that the two women were jealous of each other.¹⁴

The biography is erudite and densely packed with information about the queen's life and late fifteenth-century France. However, the paragraph above gives the false impression that the continued political activity of the regent (former regent by that time) Anne of France was somehow illegitimate: the locution "claim an important political role for herself" ("prétendre toujours jouer un rôle politique de premier plan") casts doubt on her right to authority. Also, Minois's claim that regarding "worldly honor" ("vanité mondaine") Anne of Brittany and Anne of France were jealous of each other diminishes the women.

Minois brings his commentary to close by asserting that "the constant rivalry occasioned a multitude of incidents."¹⁵ Where did Minois get his information? He cites Brantôme. Turning to Brantôme, we read that Anne of France

wanted to exercise her prerogative and authority regarding Queen Anne; but she met her match, as they say; because Queen Anne was a true Breton, very proud and haughty towards her equals, to such a degree that Madame de Bourbon had to yield and allow the queen, her sister-in-law, to maintain her status and majesty, as was right; it must have bothered her greatly, because, as regent, she clung fiercely to her status.¹⁶

At first glance Brantôme's assessment of the Annes's relationship seems to justify the interpretation that Minois gives it, at least up until Minois's conclusion that the women's rivalry occasioned a multitude of incidents. This conclusion requires further comment, but, for the moment, it is enough to say that, on the face of it, Minois follows Brantôme. And, indeed, Brantôme's assessment is plausible. After all, in 1491 the French under Anne of France had forced Anne of Brittany to surrender her duchy to them; even worse, Anne of France had forced Anne of Brittany to marry Charles VIII to guarantee that Brittany would remain in French control. Nonetheless, while Anne of France was undoubtedly victorious over Anne

of Brittany, the duchess's marriage to Charles VIII elevated her rank, at least theoretically, over the regent's.

To return to Brantôme's comment on the Annes' difficult relationship, it gave rise to a long tradition that Minois continues. Writes one historian, Anne of Brittany "saw in the Regent the organizer of French victory, and she hated her on that account from the bottom of her Breton heart and with all the fervour of her Breton patriotism. As a wife, as a queen, and as a woman, she disliked [Anne of France's] influence, coveted her authority, and resented her position."¹⁷ To become queen in the first place, writes another, "the little duchess had been vanquished by the regent; therefore she was her inferior, in debt to her."¹⁸ Anne of France, for her part, was angry that she had "to cede precedence to her sister-in-law, who reigned in intimacy, over her royal husband."¹⁹ The dislike was mutual: "Fifteen years younger than Anne de Beaujeu, Anne de Bretagne was equally ambitious and even more self-willed. While the Regent acted with calculated ruthlessness, the Breton heiress was passionate and unpredictable."²⁰

But do the Annes merit this reputation? Perhaps not. Brantôme's comment is an example of an individualizing and often unflattering detail that suddenly challenges the ideal that the author had begun to set in place. The story of rivalry interrupts Brantôme's account of Anne of France, which he had begun by proclaiming that during her regency she had governed so sagely and virtuously for her brother that he had become one of the great kings of France.²¹ In the same portrait, Brantôme credits his grandmother as the source of two of his statements: that although Anne of France hunted Louis of Orleans down during the Mad War she had originally loved him and that Anne of France raised girls at her court very effectively ("a-elle fait de très-belles nourritures").²² He does not attribute his story of rivalry to any source.²³ Still, whether or not the rivalry existed is less important than the way Brantôme uses it to undermine the idealized portrait he had begun to sketch of Anne of France.²⁴

If the Annes were genuinely rivalrous, the object of their jealousy would have been power, access to the king. This was hardly trivial. It is possible, then, to recast Brantôme's story of rivalry in positive terms: the two Annes were forceful, each accustomed to being the most highly ranked woman in the room. Early modern Europe offers any number of examples of rivals: François I and Henry VIII, François I and Charles V, Maximilian I and Charles VIII to name a few. However, historians do not represent these male rivals in the terms that we have just seen applied to the Annes: they are not haughty; they do not hate from the bottom of their hearts; they

are not little; they are not strong-willed, passionate, or unpredictable. Minois's reference to "worldly honor" must be recast as "rank," a concept that is no longer belittled in discussions of medieval and early modern representations of power, at least with regard to men. The enactment of rank "was more than a "colourful ceremony"; homage was the central political act between powers...."²⁵ And to return to Minois's conclusion that "the constant rivalry occasioned a multitude of incidents," he presents only one example of such an incident, writing that relations between the two Annes over the winter and spring of 1492 were "deteriorating to the point that the ministers and the Duke of Orleans felt it necessary to intervene. On July 5, a small family meeting was held to settle things."²⁶ The family appealed to the women's Christian sentiments, explains Minois, requiring them to swear on a fragment of the true cross to give each other aid, help, with good love, union, and intelligence to keep the king safe and to put a stop to the great disorder that reigned in his household.

A search through histories and collections of documents related to July 5, 1492, turns up only one document containing the words quoted by Minois, a treaty of July 5, 1492, signed by Anne of Brittany, Louis of Orleans, Pierre of Bourbon, and Anne of France. And yet, an examination of the document reveals that it had nothing to do with a dispute between the women. It was, rather, a treaty allying the Annes, Louis of Orleans, and Pierre of Bourbon against the Admiral Louis Malet de Graille. The document begins:

We, Anne by the grace of God queen of France, and Louis Duke of Orleans, Pierre and Anne, Duke and Duchess of Bourbon, seeing and considering the great affairs and damnable actions that enemies of Monseigneur le Roy perpetrate daily against the king and his kingdom and the great disorder reigning today, also in the house of the king, which could cause great trouble for his subjects; for this reason we, who want only the good of the king and his kingdom, as those closest to the situation, find it necessary that we share love, union and intelligence in order to better serve the king and his kingdom and prevent, resist and prevail against those who wish the contrary.²⁷

Minois seems to have fixed on the reference to "the great disorder reigning today, also in the house of the king, for which reason the king and his subjects are in danger of falling into disasters" and, his view colored by the long tradition of the Annes's "cat fighting," concluded that this "disorder" referred to the presumed ongoing quarrel between the two haughty females. But this reading is clearly inaccurate. The oath that

they swore on fragments of the true cross in fact united the four against the admiral of France. They pledged to give each other aid, help, and, with good love, union, and intelligence to keep the king safe and to put a stop to the great disorder that reigned in his household, but also not to enter into friendship or intelligence with the Admiral Graville, without the knowledge of the others. Why this decision to unite against Graville? The admiral's biographer assigns a different motive to each of the four, concluding that above all they were driven by their jealousy against "the clever man who knew how to get himself out of all compromising positions in time while remaining in control of the situation."²⁸ One thing is certain: the league was not motivated by Louis of Orleans's desire to "settle things" between the Annes, as if he would have had the authority to intervene in such a way, in any case.

The document held up by Minois as evidence of a cat fight, then, is just the opposite, showing that the women pursued common political goals. As such, the document further authorizes a revised interpretation of Brantôme's particularity: it reveals a degree of anxiety about female power. Turning briefly now to the particularities that Brantôme employs in his portrait of Anne of Brittany and their lingering effects, we find these effects in Bernard Quilliet's evaluation of the queen's personality. On the positive side, Quilliet writes that she had "a sense of duty," "quick wit," and "at times demonstrated great finesse." On the negative side, she was "dry of heart and cold-headed," and had a taste for "torturous intrigue, tenacious resentments, the most opulent splendour, and the most ostentatious devotion." She was "ferociously jealous," "vindictive," "selfish and haughty," "monomaniacal," "hateful," and prone to "Breton sulking"; her devotion was "almost pagan."²⁹ Like the story of the rivalry between the Annes, these negative characteristics can be traced ultimately to Brantôme. In his portrait of the queen in the *Vies des dames illustres*, he praises Anne of Brittany. And then, abruptly, just after claiming that according to what he has heard from his sources ("miens," he calls them) Anne was "very good, extremely merciful and very charitable," he announces that it is also true that she was very quick to vengeance and could not forgive.³⁰ Two and a half pages of examples of the queen's meanness follow. To justify the characterization, Brantôme offers the examples of how Anne treated Pierre de Rohan, the Maréchal de Gié, and Louis of Orleans.

Recent work on Anne of Brittany eschews these old stereotypes, recognizing that they were based on contemporary gender expectations.³¹ However, Brantôme's particularities about Queen Anne can be use-

fully unpacked and reexamined as evidence of her political engagement. To begin with the latter, Brantôme writes that Anne took offense at Louis's gaily dancing at a masquerade at Amboise shortly after the death of her son, believing him to be rejoicing that he, Louis, was now the heir to the throne. She was so angry that Louis was forced to flee to Blois. If the story is true as Brantôme relates it, it is understandable that Anne was furious to see Louis dancing for joy because he stood to gain politically from her terrible loss: this does not mean that she was vengeful. But the first example is more interesting. Anne's treatment of Gié, which is often cited by modern biographers as evidence of her vengeful nature, is a complicated story.³² Several contemporary sources attest that Anne, seeing King Louis XII apparently on his death bed, was ready to depart for her duchy of Brittany with her daughter, Claude, and that Gié prevented the boats from departing. With Louis dead, she rightly feared that Claude would be married to François of Angoulême, heir to the throne, later François I. Anne fought against this marriage, knowing that Brittany would be fully absorbed into the French kingdom if it took place. She worked instead for a marriage between Claude and the heir to the Holy Roman Empire, a marriage that would guarantee Brittany's continued existence as an independent duchy. As Lucien Bély observes, for Anne, the French kingdom was "familial, feudal, or dynastic," and she wanted to marry Claude to the heir to the Holy Roman Empire to ensure her duchy's continued independent existence, whereas Louis XII's vision was "national and sought to defend at all costs the integrity of the [French] territory."³³ Anne's case against Louis XII and his men and her fury at Gié, then, should not be regarded as the obsessions of a petulant, unforgiving child, but as signs of her desire to keep her duchy free from French rule. That she failed should not be taken as a sign of her weakness or the unworthiness of her cause but recognized as the inevitable result of the overwhelming power against her, a centralizing power that was slowly eroding the power of the kingdom's great seigneurs.

ANNE OF FRANCE: IN PRAISE OF MARRIAGE

Anne of France has long been imagined as master of her subservient husband, Pierre Count of Beaujeu and Duke of Bourbon. Once again, the image derives largely from Brantôme.³⁴ Although it has been convincingly corrected to a degree over the past few decades with recent scholars regarding Pierre more as Anne's partner than her spaniel, the remainder of this chapter extends on this correction, first suggesting that if we reflect

on what sort of outward gestures would have motivated Brantôme's judgment, the Bourbons's marriage as he describes it begins to look very positive. I then consider this readjustment in light of Anne of France's writings on marriage.

Brantôme writes of Pierre with scorn. Shortly after describing Anne of France (whose governance of the kingdom, we recall, he had praised) as "filled with dissimulation and a great hypocrite, who, because of her ambition, hid and disguised herself in all ways," he turns to Pierre, writing that Anne "ruled him and knew well how to lead him, so much so that he was often stupidly miffed; nonetheless, the Council refused him and solicited her."³⁵ Those who, following Brantôme, assume that Pierre was the weak member of the pair, find corroboration in how his father-in-law, King Louis XI, treated him. A long tradition holds Pierre to have been the king's toy. The story goes that after the War of Public Weal, in which Pierre lined up with the lords against the king, the king decided that Pierre, because of his weakness, would be an easily manipulated and therefore valuable ally. On this basis, Louis XI pardoned Pierre's treason and brought him into the royal circle, marrying him to his daughter, Anne, in 1473, when she was just 12 to Pierre's 35. Nonetheless, when Anne grew up Pierre became her plaything.

This tradition can be traced to Brantôme. Although some modern historians give the impression that contemporaries of Pierre wrote of him in such terms, this is not true. To find such descriptions, we need to scroll up to 1691 when historian Antoine Varillas writes that Louis XI selected a husband of lower rank than his daughter so that there would be no danger of a struggle over the throne when Charles VIII reached majority and that Pierre had sufficient intelligence ("esprit") to recognize that Anne's was "infinitely greater than his own."³⁶ A work entitled "Memoire particulier fait par une personne d'esprit et bien instruite des affaires, touchant Charles VIII, les personnes principales de son tems, et celles par luy eslevées, les actions plus considerables et dicts plus memorables," covering folios 34–56 in manuscript français 15538 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, has been described as authored by a contemporary. However, it is written in eighteenth-century hand and states its purpose as to make available information that is little known or that can be found only in manuscripts. It makes the same case as Varillas's history, claiming that Pierre's wife was "always the master and held authority over him after the manner of [Louis XI]."³⁷

In contrast to these later depictions, contemporary accounts of Pierre are positive. Octavien de Saint-Gelais describes Pierre in a long allegorical poem, “Le Séjour d’honneur,” as a feared (“doubté”) prudent prince whose value was inestimable and virtues uncountable.³⁸ In this poem, Anne follows her husband, even though she is described as another Semiramis and new queen of the Amazons. Claude de Seyssel, who died in 1520 and was therefore a near contemporary, wrote about Pierre that he was “peaceful, good (‘benin’), and good-willed, without badness or duplicity.”³⁹ Lest we assume that in describing Pierre as peaceful Seyssel intended a backhanded insult, the writer also described in the same pages the barons’ great joy at the ascension of Charles VIII by noting that there had never been a king at the beginning of his reign so peaceful in France. He observes that Charles VIII loved Pierre like a father and made sure that the House of Bourbon was stronger than it had ever been.

It is clear that Louis XI had confidence in Pierre. One wonders why it is always assumed that the king chose to forgive Pierre for rising up against him because he thought that he would be easy to manipulate. One might equally well marvel at the finesse of a man able not only to win his way back into Louis’s good graces but to get himself married to the king’s daughter. But, in fact, Pierre is a shadowy figure who has attracted little attention among modern historians except as Anne’s husband. Biographers of Louis XI typically have little to say about him. The negative descriptions of him turn up in biographies of Anne. Paul Pélicier writes that “[t]he Sire de Beaujeu offered, along with the hope of great landed fortune, a fund of docility that the king would have valued highly,” and, after noting the “the blind devotion of Beaujeu for his father-in-law,” he concludes that “Beaujeu saw his fortune multiply but only at the price of his submission.”⁴⁰ John S.C. Bridge describes him as someone “unimaginative and without originality, whose ability was of the sort which can execute a policy but does not initiate it, which can obey but does not command.”⁴¹ Marc Chombart de Lauwe writes that Pierre transferred his servility toward the king to the king’s daughter after the former’s death and that Anne, happier to live with a friend and counselor ready to accept her domination than with a lover, found in him a “loyal and safe collaborator.”⁴² In one of the interpretive essays of her excellent translation of Anne’s guidebook for her daughter, Suzanne, Sharon Jansen writes that Seyssel describes Pierre as “one who served his ‘redoubtable’ wife with a kind of blind devotion,” but Seyssel, as we have seen, does not actually write this; Jansen also describes the nineteenth-century editor of

the *Histoire des ducs de Bourbon* (and, following Chombart de Lauwe, the eighteenth-century author of the “Memoire particulier,” which I mentioned above), as contemporary with Pierre, but this is not accurate.⁴³

Pierre’s political impotence has been convincingly countered, with recent historians noting, among other things, that when Charles VIII left for Italy he named Pierre, not Anne, “Lieutenant du Roy avec tout plein pouvoir de besongner en tous affaires.”⁴⁴ Moreover, Anne’s political activity in her own time was more remarkable than Pierre’s because she was a woman, which meant that she attracted a level of discussion that he did not; also, leaving Anne and Pierre as unofficial guardians of the young king was unprecedented—normally guardianship would have gone either to the queen mother or to Louis of Orleans, the closest male heir to the throne. Anne, sister of the king, had a greater claim to regency than Pierre, who, as just one among many “grands seigneurs,” had absolutely none.⁴⁵ Therefore her constant visibility was important.

The most important evidence about the Bourbon’s marriage, however, can be adduced from Anne’s own writing. Historians following Brantôme have often applied unflattering and gendered terms to this marriage, writing that Anne “was not as unhappy with Pierre as she had expected to be,” or that she dominated in the marriage, even though it was a happily companionable one.⁴⁶ My point is not to insist on any particular reading of the marriage, but to suggest that the gender stereotypes initiated by Brantôme and perpetuated by subsequent historians can just as easily be read in a very different way and that there is no reason to continue a narrative that has no real basis in fact. To make the case, we turn to Anne’s guidebook, referred to above, her *Enseignements à sa fille* (*Lessons for her daughter*), that she composed for her daughter, Suzanne of Bourbon, and its companion work, an exemplum called *The History of the Siege of Brest* that Anne adapted and that foregrounds the relationship between a husband and wife.⁴⁷ The manuscript is now lost but a copy of it along with its 19 miniatures, copied in 1878, lets us imagine the original.⁴⁸ Although the discussion of marriage in the *Enseignements* has been regarded as rigidly moralistic and strangely at odds with the political life of its author, reading it in conjunction with its exemplum provides a new view.⁴⁹

First, a quick summary of the exemplum. With his fortified city of Brest besieged by the Prince of Wales, the Seigneur du Châtel agrees to surrender if provisions do not arrive before a certain date and offers his only son to guarantee his promise. Provisions arrive just in time. But the Prince of Wales reneges and threatens to kill the Seigneur’s son if Brest is not surrendered to

hm. Thus emerges the dilemma that structures the story. Does the Seigneur surrender Brest and live in infamy or does he retain his honor and sacrifice his son? Ready to surrender, he is convinced by his wife to sacrifice their son rather than his honor. And yet, all the while that she is guiding him to the decision required by their honor culture, the Dame du Châtel humbles herself before her husband, treating him gently, using such expressions as “Monseigneur, virtue and knowledge of higher things should issue from the spirits of virtuous men and not the feeble hearts of us women who are, by divine commandment, subject to their husbands,” and, after her son’s execution, despite her great sorrow, “God’s will be done. May God receive his soul.”⁵⁰

Keeping in mind the model of marriage embodied by the du Châtel couple, we return to Anne’s discussion of marriage in the *Enseignements*. This takes place in books 11–19, first with the lead-up to marriage and then marriage itself. In book 11, Anne writes that a young woman should show herself virtuous in her “conversations” (the word retains the Latin meaning of close associations) so that she will be loved by all with the kind of love taught by the Philosopher.⁵¹ Above all, she should flee dishonest love: she is not immune to seduction (here intervenes a short exemplum about a lady who was duped).⁵² Books 12–16 explain that her recompense for fleeing dangerous love is that she will be able to make a good marriage, excellent for the reputation. A girl should eschew the example of the girls from Poitiers, Anne warns, who frightened away potential husbands. Specifically, she should not look around or talk too much. Furthermore, if she marries a great seigneur she should not be too proud. She should obey her husband. If she “marries up” she should not denigrate her own lineage. In books 17–19, Anne reminds her reader to be virtuous as a great lady: nobility is nothing without virtue. A girl receives credit from God and a good reputation (“bonne renommée”) by being virtuous in adversity.⁵³ A girl should make herself loveable to her husband’s seigneurs and friends, taking their advice; she should use her husband’s friends to keep him behaving well and cover up for these friends should they require it.⁵⁴

The command to flee amorous suitors is consistent with Christian constructions of the vulnerable female character and also with the secular nobility’s requirement for chastity among young women entering into marriage. But the command to flee reveals Anne’s assumption of the common physiology of carnal love as utterly delightful and irresistible, especially for women, who being weaker were more susceptible to passion than the men who seduced them. After arousing her reader (for how can a discussion of the most delectable relationship imaginable, one for whose fleeting

pleasure some young women risked their future, not arouse the reader?), Anne hints that these forbidden joys are available with one's husband, to whom one submits with love. She recounts the dangers of seduction, of the difficulty of refusing an importunate suitor, not only to discourage her daughter and similarly highly born women from having love affairs, but also to assure them that carnal relations are delectable. Yes, a favorable marriage brings a young woman honor. However, what Anne offers can be read as an erotics of marriage, presenting female submission as a pose that will arouse both husband and wife. This erotic model is very different from the modern one.⁵⁵ However, recent scholarship on female desire suggests just how extremely malleable desire is: that women respond to a much wider variety of visual stimuli than they self-report, which suggests, in turn, the importance of social models to the formation of female desire and the impossibility of applying modern assumptions to past experiences.⁵⁶

To reconstruct Anne's erotics of marriage and measure it against what Brantôme had to say about her and Pierre's marriage, we need first to imagine the cognitive framework within which Anne and Brantôme thought about marital relations. Key to this framework was the assumption that women were so insatiable that keeping them satisfied was a bit of a burden for their men. Medieval and early modern stereotypes about women's extremely intense sexual desire and their weakness in the face of blandishments and caresses have been well studied.⁵⁷ Brantôme himself writes that women must be pardoned, because they are a bit more "fragile" than their husbands.⁵⁸ When women were sexually unsatisfied, they faced serious health issues—specifically, suffocation of the womb—and therefore it was a "sin against nature ... to keep [women] from having sex with the man they choose."⁵⁹ Also crucial for positioning Anne's words about marriage against Brantôme's assessment of her and Pierre's own relationship is the assumption that a happy sexual relationship with one's husband was a priority because a woman conceived only if she reached orgasm, a belief, testified to by Galen, that endured into the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ When eighteenth-century authors ceased to link "the loci of pleasure with the mysterious infusing of life into nature," orgasm lost its overwhelming importance.⁶¹ But as far as Anne would have been concerned, the man was tasked with "ensuring that the woman experiences full satisfaction in heterosexual intercourse since conception cannot take place without it."⁶² Instructions on how to arouse a woman are included in the *De Secretis mulierum*.⁶³ Thomas Laqueur explains that husbands were willing to invest a good deal of time and energy to ensure mutual

orgasm, using foreplay and various drugs and treatments to bring about more heat. Although sexual longing was the sign of the will damaged by the Fall, “pleasure was construed as precisely what compelled men and women to reproduce themselves, despite what prudence or individual interest might dictate.”⁶⁴

As for the female contribution to a happy marriage, Anne counsels gestures of submission to one’s husband. A large body of feminist scholarship demonstrates and the examination of medieval romance suggests that male domination was the model for sexual relationships. Brantôme claims that women assured him that they pretended to refuse sexual relations to their husbands to provoke them to “half-force and coerce” them.⁶⁵ This made the experience “a hundred times better” for both of them.⁶⁶ An underlying assumption that desire led ineluctably to consummation meant that sexual aggression, although not approved of, was simply the most extreme form of intense sexual desire carried through to its natural end. Because the will was frail and fleshly impulses powerful, what we today define unambiguously as rape was less clear for Anne and her readers. It was thus ever a cause for worry among sexually active populations, and, as we can imagine from Anne’s warnings, attempts to bridle male desire through the discourse often referred to as “courtly love” were not always successful. Moreover, although in romances suitors restrain themselves, their aggression is glorified when their partners consent; that is, imagery associated with sexual relations (beginning with the approved male dominant position) is grounded in controlled male aggression and female docility.⁶⁷ This is what Brantôme describes and what Anne promotes, although, unlike Brantôme, she does not explicitly discuss the delight that such submission encodes.

This, I suggest, is the reason that Anne follows the *Enseignements* with the exemplum of the Dame and Seigneur du Châtel, a complementary couple deeply devoted to each other’s happiness. It is not necessary to assume that Anne wrote out of her own experience with Pierre. Rather, the point is to challenge the notion of her as master over a submissive husband that has long been accepted as true because of a heavy reliance on Brantôme’s particularities. To return one last time to Brantôme’s particularity about the Bourbon marriage, he writes, as we saw above, that Anne “ruled [Pierre] and knew well how to lead him.” But this does not need to be taken as a sign of Pierre’s weakness, although Brantôme seems to have intended it to be, if we trace the particularity to the behavior that motivated it.

Brantôme hints that his information about Anne comes from his grandmother, although he specifically attributes only an anecdote about Louis of Orleans fleeing to Brittany to her.⁶⁸ But Brantôme did not need to rely on family tradition to make his claim. Anne ruled beside Pierre. Her very visibility would have been enough to incite Brantôme's charge that she dominated her husband. Brantôme's comment, just a few lines before his description of the marriage, that Anne was dissimulating and a great hypocrite, offers a further piquancy to his negative characterization of the couple's rapport. Anne was 23 years younger than her husband, 12 years old when they married. Such a young person must naturally have behaved submissively to her adult husband, through her words and gestures. As an adult, she continued to conform to conventional modes of behavior, as the positive contemporary assessments of her suggest, although she made apparent she knew how to impose her will.⁶⁹ This appearance of submission that both masked and made possible her power is what Brantôme refers to as dissimulation and hypocrisy.

In contrast with Brantôme and in agreement with Anne, we might think of such behavior as a way of exercising power in an environment hostile to women. If we take the Dame du Châtel as the exemplum of such behavior, we might think of performed submission as the basis for a happy marriage. It is impossible to recover the nature of the Bourbon's marriage. However, there is no reason to assume Brantôme's negative evaluation to represent the truth about it.

NOTES

1. The *Vies des dames illustres* covers the second half of volume 7 and volume 8, and the *Vie des dames galantes* volume 9 of Ludovic Lalanne's 11-volume edition of Brantôme's *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1864–82). On the origins of the modern titles see Ludovic Lalanne's first footnote, 7: 308, where he explains that Brantôme, in the catalog that he drew up of his own writings, gives the simple title of *Recueil des Dames* to the two works familiarly known as *Vies des Dames illustres* and *Dames galantes*, first published in 1665. Madeleine Lazard explains that "galantes" was added by Brantôme's first editor. She writes that the term had, in those days, a "laudatory nuance" and that it meant "gifted with elegance, grace and seduction." *Pierre de Bourdeille, Seigneur de Brantôme* (Paris: Fayard, 1995), 7. Translations throughout are my own.
2. On Brantôme's life see Lalanne, *Brantôme: sa vie et ses écrits* (Paris: Laurens, 1896) and Lazard, *Pierre de Bourdeille*, which discusses his literary works in

- the context of his biography. For Brantôme's own discussion of his ties to the court see *Oeuvres complètes*, 10: 32–6; 46–8.
3. Léonce Pingaud, "Brantôme, historien," *Revue des questions historiques* 10:1 (1876): 199.
 4. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 8: 104–5, n. 2.
 5. Robert D. Cottrell, *Brantôme: The Writer as Portraitist of his Own Age* (Geneva: Droz, 1970), 62, n. 45.
 6. Pingaud writes that Brantôme "mixed with his memories the expression of his disappointments and resentments," "Brantôme, historien," 187.
 7. Cottrell, *Brantôme*, 77.
 8. "Je sçay qu'en ce discours et autres précédens on me pourra reprendre que j'ay mis beaucoup de petites particularitez qui sont fort superflues. Je le croys, mais je sçay que si elles desplaisent à aucuns, aux autres plairont; me semblant que ce n'est pas assez, quand on loue des personnes, de dire qu'elles sont belles, sages, vertueuses, valleureuses, vaillantes, magnanimes, libérales, splendides et très-parfaites. Ce sont louanges et descriptions généralles, et lieux communs empruntez de tout le monde. Il en faut espécifier bien le tout, et describe particulièrement les perfections, afin que mieux on les touche au doigt..." Cottrell, *Brantôme*, 76; Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 8: 21.
 9. Cottrell, *Brantôme*, 78.
 10. Cottrell, *Brantôme*, 97.
 11. On anti-courtier literature during Brantôme's time see Pauline Smith, *The Anti-courtier Trend in Sixteenth Century French Literature* (Geneva: Droz), 152–218.
 12. "Telles belles dames, putes dans l'âme et chastes du corps, méritent d'éternelles louanges; mais non pas celles qui sont froides comme marbre, molles, lasches et immobiles plus qu'un rocher, et ne tiennent de la chair Sur quoy je cognois une grande dame qui disoit à aucunes de ses compagnes qui estoient belles, "Dieu m'a fait une grand' grâce de quoy il ne m'a fait belle comme vous autres, mesdames, car aussi bien que vous j'eusse fait l'amour, et fusse estée pute comme vous." A cause de quoy peut-on louer ces belles ainsi chastes..." Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 9: 211–12.
 13. See Cottrell, *Brantôme*, 58–65. Late sixteenth-century portraits display individualizing details the purpose of which is not so much to depict the subjects realistically as to illustrate their inner state. See also John Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), 101–54.
 14. Georges Minois, *Anne de Bretagne* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 317.
 15. Minois, 317.
 16. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 8: 102–3. "Elle vouloit user ung peu de quelque prérogative et autorité à l'endroit de la reyne Anne mais elle trouva

bien chausseuse à son pied, comme l'on-dict; car la reyne Anne estoit une fine Bretonne, comme j'ay dict, et qui estoit fort superbé et altièrre à fendroict de ses esgaux; de sorte qu'il fallust à madame de Bourbon caller et laisser à la reyne sa belle-soeur tenir son rang, et maintenir sa grandeur et majesté;; comme estoit de raison ce qui luy devoit fort fascher; car, estant régente, elle tenoit terriblement sa grandeur."

17. John S. C. Bridge, *A History of France from the Death of Louis XI*, 5 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1921–36), 1: 240–41.
18. Jehanne d'Orliac, *Anne de Beaujeu, Roi de France* (Paris: Plon, 1926), 109.
19. Philippe Tourault, *Anne de Bretagne* (Paris: Perrin, 1990), 103–4.
20. J. H. M. Salmon, "The Regent and the Duchess: Anne de Beaujeu and Anne de Bretagne," *History Today* 16:5 (1966): 343.
21. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 8:99.
22. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 8: 99–105.
23. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 8: 105.
24. Although I have argued elsewhere for a reevaluation of the relationship between the two Annes. See Tracy Adams, "Rivals or Friends? Anne of Beaujeu and Anne of Brittany," *Women in French Studies* 18 (2010): 46–61.
25. Robin Neillands, *The Hundred Years War* (London: Routledge, 1990), 16.
26. Minois, *Anne de Bretagne*, 317.
27. Guillaume de Jaligny, *Histoire du roy Charles VIII*, ed. Godefroy (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1684): 625.
28. Paul-Michel Perret, *Notice biographique sur Louis Malet de Graville, amiral de France (1442–1516)* (Paris: Picard, 1889), 148.
29. Minois, *Anne de Bretagne*, 421–22, cites Bernard Quillier, *Louis XII, père du peuple* (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 236–37. The judgment is harsh, Minois admits, but, to his mind, it is mostly true. Quillier is citing Michelet for most of the adjectives, but borrows the "tenacious sulking" ("bouderie tenace") from Venetian ambassador Zaccaria Contarini (who says about the queen that when she puts her mind to something she gets it, either through smiling or crying, "con pianti," p. 16.). The comments about her ostentatious piety are his own.
30. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 7: 310.
31. For example, Kathleen Wellman, *Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), Cynthia J. Brown, *The Queen's Library: Image-Making at the Court of Anne of Brittany, 1477–1514* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), and Didier Le Fur, *Anne de Bretagne: Miroir d'un reine, historiographie d'un mythe* (Paris: Guénégaud, 2000).

32. This entire story comes to life in René de Maulde la Clavière's edition of the depositions related to the affair. See *Procédures politiques du règne de Louis XII* (Paris: L'Imprimerie Nationale, 1885).
33. Lucien Bély, *La Société des princes: XVIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 215.
34. See Jean-François Lassalmonie, "Anne de France, dame de Beaujeu. Un modèle féminin d'exercice du pouvoir dans la France de la fin du Moyen Âge, *Femmes de pouvoir, femmes politiques durant les derniers siècles du Moyen Âge et au cours de la première Renaissance*," ed. E. Bousmar, J. Dumont, A. Marchandisse, B. Schnerb (Bruxelles: De Boeck, 2012), 129–46, and Pierre Pradel, *Anne de France 1461–1522* (Paris: Publisud, 1986), 22–44.
35. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 8: 102. "car elle estoit fine, trinquate, corrompue, plaine de dissimulation et grand' hypocrite, qui, pour son ambition, se masquoit et se desguisoit en toutes sortes [E]lle ... gouvernoit [Pierre] et le sçavoit bien mener, d'autant qu'il tenoit un peu de la sotté humeur, voyre beaucoup touteffois le Conseil lui répugnoit ."
36. Antoine Varillas, *Histoire de Charles VIII* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1691), 10–11.
37. The memoir is cited by Marc Chombart de Lauwe as the work of a "contemporain," but in fact it is much more recent. See his *Anne de Beaujeu ou la passion du pouvoir* (Paris: Tallandier, 1980), 397, n. 11.
38. Octavien de Saint-Gelais, *Le séjour d'honneur*, ed. and intro. Frédéric Duval (Genève: Droz, 2002), 256.
39. Claude de Seyssel, *Histoire singulière du roy Loys XII* (Paris: Gilles Corrozet au Palais, 1558), 39v; 46r.
40. See the still fundamental work of Paul Pélicier, *Essai sur le gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu 1483–1491* (Chartres: Imprimerie Edouard Garnier, 1882), 35, 40, 46.
41. Bridge, *A History of France*, 1: 33.
42. Chombart de Lauwe, *Anne de Beaujeu*, 32.
43. Sharon L. Jansen, *Anne of France: Lessons for My Daughter* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 71 and 71–2.
44. Jean de Saint Gelais, *Louis XII: Roy de France, père du peuple*, ed. Théodore Godefroy (Paris: Pacard, 1622), 80.
45. Amable Sablon du Corail, *Louis XI ou le joueur inquiet* (Paris: Belin, 2015), 537.
46. Varillas, *Histoire de Charles VIII*, 11.
47. The *Histoire du siège de Brest* was identified in the manuscript as an *exemple*, an exemplum. See *Les Enseignements d'Anne de France, duchesse de Bourbonnais et d'Auvergne, à sa fille Susanne de Bourbon*, ed. A-M Chazaud (Moulins: Desroziers, 1878), 135.

48. As explained in Anne de France, *Enseignements à sa fille. Histoire du siège de Brest*, ed. Tatiana Clavier and Eliane Viennot, (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2006), 29.
49. See Anne de France, *Enseignements*, ed. Clavier and Viennot, 8–9. The following citations are from Clavier and Viennot.
50. Anne de France, *Enseignements*, 107 and 129.
51. Anne of France, *Enseignements*, 49–50.
52. Anne of France, *Enseignements*, 57.
53. Anne of France, *Enseignements*, 62.
54. Anne of France, *Enseignements*, 70–1.
55. Although perhaps not all that different given the popularity of the recent shades of gray series.
56. See Daniel Bergner, *What Do Women Want? Adventures in the Science of Female Desire* (New York, 2013).
57. This may not seem logical given the humoral theory that women were “cold” while men were “hot.” But the logic derives from Aristotle’s notion that women are inherently incomplete: they are “characterized by deprived, passive and material traits, cold and moist humours and a desire for completion by intercourse with the male.” Ian MacLean, *Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 30. “Different from women, who cannot get enough of sex,” writes Monica H. Green, citing the *Secrès des dames*, “men are depleted by it, yet they must offer themselves to women therapeutically.” “‘Traittié tout de mençonges’: The *Secrès des dames*, ‘Trotula,’ and Attitudes towards Women’s Medicine in Fourteenth and Fifteenth-Century France,” *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilyn Desmond (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 151. The *Secrès des dames*, based on the early thirteenth-century *De Secretis mulierum*, enjoyed wide circulation, “une extraordinaire diffusion,” throughout the Middle Ages. See Dinora Corsi, “‘Les secrès des dames’: Tradition, traductions,” *Médiévales* 14 (1988): 51. Helen Rodnite Lemay has translated *De Secretis mulierum*. See *Women’s Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus’ De Secretis Mulierum with Commentaries* (Albany: State University of New York, 1992). According to this text, “intensively” understood, delectation was greater for a man “because his semen is hotter,” but, “extensively” understood, delectation for women was double: “because she receives seed, and ... because she emits it” (68).
58. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 9: 79.
59. Of course, urging young women to have sex with anyone went “against custom,” the writer hastens to add, “but that is off the present topic.” Lemay, *Women’s Secrets*, 132. See also *The Trotula: a Medieval Compendium*

- of Women's Medicine*, ed. and trans. Monica H. Green (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 83–9, 121.
60. Thomas Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology," *Representations* 14 (1986): 1. See also Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, trans. Margaret May (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968).
 61. Laqueur, "Orgasm," 1.
 62. Monica Green, *Women's Healthcare in the Medieval West: Texts and Contexts*, (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2000), 151.
 63. "He should speak to her in a jesting manner, kiss and embrace her, and rub her lower parts with his fingers." Lemay, *Women's Secrets*, 114.
 64. Laqueur, "Orgasm," 12.
 65. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 9: 40.
 66. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 9: 41.
 67. A good example is the line describing how Dido and Eneas of the French romance begin their love affair. Dido has just been described as burning with love for Eneas. Nonetheless, the author writes: "[Eneas] does with her what he wishes, nor does he use very much force at all, nor does the queen resist: she consents to him with all her will, for she has long desired him. Now love is made manifest." *Eneas: a Twelfth-century French Romance*, trans. and intro. John A. Yunck (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 87.
 68. Brantôme, *Oeuvres complètes*, 8: 101.
 69. Note, for example, her conspicuous absence from the gathering of the Estates General in 1484, when only Pierre appeared before the delegates. See Jean Masselin, *Journal des états généraux de France tenus à Tours en 1484 sous le règne de Charles VIII*, ed. and trans. Adhelm Bernier (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1835), 5–8.

True Lies and Strange Mirrors: The Uses and Abuses of Rumor, Propaganda, and Innuendo During the Closing Stages of the Hundred Years War

Zita Eva Rohr

Times of crisis, fledgling sovereignty, and social upheaval produce the ideal conditions for the flourishing of bespoke rumor, innuendo, and propaganda; and the closing stage of the Hundred Years War is a case in point worthy of attentive analysis. Whispers of sorcery and treason against Valentina Visconti; Isabeau of Bavaria's supposed wantonness and maternal negligence; Philippe the Bold's mighty endeavors to secure the ascendancy of his House; his son Jean the Fearless's effective spin as an honest broker and reforming duke despite his very dirty hands, notably his "justifiable" murder of his rival, the "tyrant" Louis of Orleans; the debunking of his defense (and the subsequent in kind retribution meted out to Burgundy by Orleans loyalists) are telling illustrations of pre-modern bespoke rumor, innuendo, and propaganda. Add to these Henry V's God-sanctioned victory at Agincourt cast as just punishment for a transgressive France (which not only resonated with the French but validated the domestic English politicking of newly minted Lancastrian sovereignty); the initially successful delegitimization and disinheritance of the dauphin

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Z.E. Rohr, L. Benz (eds.), *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation in the Medieval and Early Modern West, 1060–1600*, Queenship and Power, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-31283-5_3

Charles with the Treaty of Troyes; the parallel golden myth/black legend of Joan of Arc (and her rehabilitation)—instances all of the ways in which rumor, propaganda, and innuendo were pressed into the service of those seeking traction at the end of the Hundred Years War.

While this chapter falls under the umbrella of “Queenship, Reputation and Gendered Power” to ignore what the princes of this tangled and confused period were doing in relation to the making and breaking of reputations would be to tell a very flat tale indeed. The house of Burgundy was a fountainhead from which propaganda flowed and if we are to understand how rumor, propaganda, and innuendo functioned to either reinforce or undermine the power of women such as Valentina Visconti and Isabeau of Bavaria, we must look to its powerful dukes; Philippe the Bold, Jean the Fearless, and Philippe the Good.¹

Bernard Guenée draws our attention to the importance of propaganda and public opinion to political life in the later Middle Ages. He cites two particular witnesses to underscore his thesis: *Le Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris* (1405–1449) and the *Chronique de Charles VI* (1380–1420).² Guenée asserts that the *Journal* is a precious and exceptional witness to Parisian life because it preserves as if in amber partisan public opinion during the second half of Charles VI's troubled reign.³ The *journaliste* was alive to the full gamut of rumors, thought bubbles, and whisperings circulating on the streets of Paris from 1405 to 1449, a convinced supporter of the Burgundian cause recording interesting fragments. He was probably attached to the court of the queen, Isabeau of Bavaria, and his attentive and hungry ear appears to have missed nothing in harvesting public opinion and distilling discontent nor yet any occasion to vent his spleen over Orleans/Armagnac attempts to seize the initiative during the “absences” of Charles VI. The Bourgeois is no disinterested observer of events; he self-censors and edits, and is frequently mute or evasive on aspects of his own party that trouble him as well as Burgundian failures and defeats.⁴ In analyzing rumor in the *Journal*, Colette Beaune concludes that rumor is more *convincing* than true even though rumor will not circulate unless it is *considered* to be true. For the Bourgeois, “news” transmitted from “bouche à oreille” (mouth to ear) is more true and more reliable than information originating from official sources.⁵

The *Chronique de Charles VI* or *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis* is a horse of a different color and a more compelling witness in the case for the importance of public opinion and propaganda to political life in late medieval France, one upon which Guenée lavished careful scrutiny.⁶ It is a work of exceptional scope, and historians have mined its content to exploit

the evidence of a well-informed contemporary of late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century French society, court culture, academic and religious circles. In the past, historians have been satisfied to excavate the *Chronique* for its richness of detail held to be, and most often is, remarkably authoritative. Recently, however, it has become clear that the *Chronique* is far more than the work of an unquestioning and credulous witness. It is not, as one recent scholar pronounces, the work “of a single biased chronicler”—the “Burgundian-leaning, Michel Pintoin.”⁷ The *Chronique* is instead a carefully constructed and intricate work rendered remarkable by a number of very interesting features. Guenée is struck by one trait in particular; conscious of the weight of public opinion upon political life in France during the reign of Charles VI, Pintoin scrutinizes public opinion subjecting it to systematic and detailed analysis. He gives several telling examples and concludes that opinions of individuals regarding events and politics vary widely according to their respective passions, morals, beliefs, social positions, economic circumstances, and multiple other factors.⁸ Pintoin finds support for his position in Cicero; *quot homines, tot sententiae/autant d’hommes, autant d’avis* (many men, many minds—there are as many opinions as there are men).⁹ He warms to his argument, stating that in the light of this observation, the imprudent fervor of a self-serving populace must not be allowed to usurp authority to the detriment of good, right-thinking people. Pintoin holds that, often the multitude, which does not know how to rein itself in or regulate its passions or adopt a measured stance, imprudently excites trouble and sedition.¹⁰

Pintoin’s contemporary observations on the nature of public opinion are revealing, for it is a particular feature of public opinion, hatred, which successive dukes of Burgundy channeled to further the spread of targeted rumor and propaganda in support of their political ambitions.¹¹ They were, however, not alone in using “the imprudent fervor of an inconsiderate populace” to push their agenda forward. The dukes of Orleans were more than happy to behave likewise, Louis of Orleans participating in a pamphlet “war” against Burgundy in 1405 as well as rumor mongering, letter writing offensives, staged personal appearances bristling with arms and men, and the drafting of competing ordinances to be foisted upon the troubled and “absent” Charles VI.¹² In the public domain, rumors concerning prominent figures abounded. All political developments or setbacks constituted a potential source for rumor, and such rumors multiplied and swept through public spaces, captivating the collective imagination.

Rumor is key to understanding the political sympathies of a population, especially one as removed from us as the late fourteenth and early fifteenth

centuries. Reports carried along by the tide of rumor were uniformly distorted in order to crystallize with the ardent desires of a collective consciousness. A striking example of this can be found in the jottings of the Bourgeois wherein he avidly records the wholehearted support of the Parisian population for the duke of Burgundy, Jean the Fearless, against the Orleans/Armagnac faction regardless of his methods and arriviste posturing.¹³ Such “personalized” rumors arose out of financial imposts, nourishing the resentment of the public toward the elites whom they held responsible for bad government and frivolous expenditure. Fear of war and rampaging and ill-disciplined soldiers and military operations (alliances forged with enemies, betrayal, conscription, military disasters and victories, atrocities committed by soldiers) all provided the ideal environment for the incubation of bespoke rumor.¹⁴ These “prepared canvases” were grist to the busy mills of opinion shapers and seekers of power; authorities and those seeking authority were alive to rumor. By understanding and analyzing how particular rumors functioned, medieval power seekers harnessed them to maintain and reinforce their respective positions. They targeted and planted precise information across populations spreading *fausse nouvelles* to disorientate a population or an enemy, drowning them in contradictory dispatches. A technique Fargette describes as “*une forme précoce d’intox* (an early form of brainwashing).”¹⁵

With the onset of his incurable and extraordinary malady, the head of France’s body politic was dealt a savage and unexpected blow, which unhinged governance and affected grievously the destiny of two or three generations of Charles VI’s subjects.¹⁶ Charles’s frequent absences opened unexpected opportunities for the politically and fiscally ambitious. Charles’s consort, Isabeau of Bavaria, was not immune to the temptations presented by his unfortunate situation, enriching and favoring the circumstances of members of her natal house, Bavaria-Wittelsbach, especially her beloved elder brother, Ludwig.¹⁷ Richard Famiglietti makes the point that:

If Charles VI had not suffered from a mental disorder there would have been no such desperate scramble for power on the part of his relatives. The nature of his illness encouraged the conflict even more, for during the periods when he appeared to be able to function normally, he sometimes seemed to grant indiscriminately whatever was asked.¹⁸

Insult and innuendo, the lesser cousins of rumor and propaganda, infested both court circles and the public space from the time of Charles VI’s first episode of madness in the summer of 1392 to the peace of Arras in 1435 and its aftermath. From 1392 Philippe the Bold of Burgundy and

his successor from 1404, Jean the Fearless, targeted the king's younger brother, Louis of Orleans, to gain the upper hand at court. In 1396, the first shot across Orleans's bow was directed at his educated and virtuous wife, Valentina Visconti. This episode of rumor-saturated propaganda is worth a closer look to understand how a hint of sorcery and a "suspect" relative might be folded into a conspiracy theory to create a true lie. Valentina had been a favorite of her brother-in-law, Charles VI, since her arrival at court in 1389 and, as his madness developed and intensified, Charles sought her out to the detriment of his queen consort Isabeau, whom he not frequently rejected. The queen had no great love for her sister-in-law; Valentina's father, Giangaleazzo Visconti, duke of Milan, had removed her maternal grandfather, Barnabo Visconti from his position as co-lord of Milan in 1385. Despite this, Isabeau and Valentina had managed to rub along quite civilly for the first few years of the Orleans marriage; Valentina held no animosity toward the queen, and Isabeau had managed to keep hers in check. Up to this point in Charles's troubled reign, with Philippe of Burgundy in an ascendant position, Isabeau had had little political influence apart from flirting with favored peripheral issues-especially those concerning Bavaria.

Orleans, while keen to make a name for himself on royal council, aspired to carve out a kingdom for himself in Italy, just as his senior uncle Louis I of Anjou and his cousin, Louis II of Anjou had managed to engineer for themselves. Orleans's aspiration met with no opposition from Philippe of Burgundy for it was precisely this ambition that had rid him of his bothersome elder brother, Louis of Anjou, in the early 1380s. Orleans needed to buttress the authority of his powerful father-in-law, Giangaleazzo Visconti, commencing negotiations for a formal alliance between France and Milan against Bavaria.¹⁹ This activated Isabeau's dormant political nerve; she rejected the idea of any agreement between Charles VI and Milan against Bavaria. Isabeau welcomed Florence's overtures to form an alliance with France against Milan and she made it her business to obtain Charles VI's assent for the Florentine/Bavarian project. While Burgundy preferred a Bavarian alliance (he had been the driving force behind the marriage of Isabeau of Bavaria to Charles VI) he was content that Orleans was occupied with Italian matters rather than interfering in the government of France; therefore he did not move to support Isabeau energetically against Orleans's negotiations with Milan.²⁰

Isabeau needed to clear the field. That her brother-in-law would be amenable to compensation therefore weakening or neutralizing his opposition to her plans was a strong possibility; Valentina's objections, however, would be difficult to vanquish.²¹ Already irritated by her sister-in-law's

calming effect upon the troubled king (while she was rebuffed frequently by him), it seems that Isabeau set to besmirching Valentina's good reputation. Valentina was Italian and, "as everyone knew," Italy was a nation of poisoners and sorcerers.²² Charles's illness was reinterpreted; no longer a judgment upon the behavior of his uncles or the misgovernment of his advisers, the unfortunate king was recast as the victim of Valentina's sorcery and enchantment. A rumor started to circulate to the effect that Valentina had bewitched the king; she was the cause of his illness and the obstacle to its cure. As it was rumor there was no need to prove such a claim; its mysterious nature bilked direct proof or formal demonstration, and Valentina's enemies were able to condemn her without a tribunal.²³ To this a concomitant rumor was pressed into service: the classic tale of a poisoned apple and the death of a little prince. Valentina's enemies leapt into the fray to exploit the sad death of her young son Louis in September 1395.²⁴ It was whispered that she had planned to remove the young dauphin but that instead her own son, who was playing with the other royal children, ate the tainted fruit and died of poisoning. The story was picked up by Froissart, keen to deride a woman whom he believed to be ambitious with aspirations above her station.²⁵

Ambitious Valentina is a theme that crops up from this time and one that Jean the Fearless of Burgundy recycled on the occasion of his *Justification* for the murder of Orleans. It was a "known fact" (the rumor reported) that upon Valentina's departure from Milan to marry Louis of Orleans, her father, Giangaleazzo bid her a fond farewell with the words "Adieu, belle fille! je ne vous vueil jamais veoir tant que vous soyez royne de France. (Good-bye beautiful daughter! I do not expect to see you again until you are queen of France.)"²⁶ According to Jehan Petit's *Justification*, drawn up in haste at the command of Jean the Fearless in 1408, co-conspirators Giangaleazzo Visconti and Louis of Orleans hatched an audacious plan: Giangaleazzo was an "acteur avec son beau filz le criminel duke d'Orléans, de mectre le Roy... il convoita merueilleusement que sa fille feust royne de France (a player with his son-in-law, the criminal duke of Orleans, to set aside the king ... he desired ardently that his daughter would be queen of France)."²⁷

Initiated by the rumor of evil spells linked to and fueled by the "known" sorcery habits and nefarious aspirations of Valentina's father, Isabeau's bespoke campaign of propaganda against her sister-in-law aimed to remove Valentina's considerable potential for influence by ensuring that she would have no further personal contact with the king, the princes, the people, the conduct of the business of the kingdom or take any action which might be contrary to Isabeau's projects and ambitions. Valentina

was to be dislodged from court, distanced from Paris, and relegated far beyond the center of political decision making. With Isabeau's campaign, Valentina was reduced to powerlessness and separated from the royal family and her allies. Eugène Jarry expresses well Isabeau's strategy:

Isabeau did not forget the duchess of Orleans's influence over the mind of the king. Her plan was mapped out: it was absolutely necessary to remove the daughter of the duke of Milan. This outcome was achieved by the most cowardly of schemes. The outburst of negative public opinion against Valentina was too precise not to have been stirred up by interested parties.²⁸

Here Jarry links public opinion to interested parties. Isabeau was not the only interested party; the house of Burgundy carried its share of responsibility even though Burgundy was content enough to allow Orleans to divert himself with his Italian dreaming. Philippe was cordial and welcoming to Valentina, but *his* political reality dictated that he needed to work toward removing Orleans from all participation in government. Burgundy's wife, Marguerite of Dampierre, countess of Flanders, was of a mind to assist Isabeau in blackening Valentina's reputation. In taking control of the government in the wake of Charles's first episode of insanity, Burgundy had positioned Marguerite to steer the young queen in the interests of their House. From 1392, Marguerite jealously guarded her pre-eminent position in Isabeau's court, and no one could gain access to the queen without her consent. According to Froissart:

The two uncles of the king, the duke(s) of Berry and Burgundy would have the government (of the kingdom), and principally the duke of Burgundy; and Madame Burgundy would take her place close to the queen, and would be second after her. In these days, the duchess of Burgundy who was a severe and exalted lady, kept her place in Paris close to the queen of France and had supreme management over her affairs; no one was able to speak with the queen without her consent.²⁹

Collas claims that Marguerite had been greatly put out by Valentina's arrival and her subsequent drop in status; she was henceforth the middle-aged sister-in-law of the defunct king while Valentina was the cherished younger sister-in-law of the current king.³⁰

The mud stuck and, for her own safety, Orleans removed Valentina from court. Froissart records that such were the murmurings of the public that had Valentina not withdrawn she might have been attacked and lynched by a Parisian mob that believed she meant to poison the king

and his children.³¹ Some scholars are unconvinced by this reading of Valentina's departure, citing evidence to the effect that Isabeau continued to correspond politely and exchange gifts with Valentina, far removed from Paris and sitting out a late medieval equivalent of "gardening leave." Tracy Adams analyzes the conflict between the sisters-in-law cousins concluding that this was to be expected, given their personal history and the political context and maneuverings of their respective parties.³² The propaganda having succeeded beyond all expectation, Isabeau probably felt it politic to maintain a veneer of civility and even sisterly affection toward her "exiled" and vanquished foe. For an ascendant Isabeau, her studied civility toward Valentina demonstrates *some* capacity for effective queenly self-fashioning. It was, however, to prove ephemeral, a misfortune indeed for her king and his subjects.³³

Pintoin describes and comments upon these events in considerable detail making the point that the mob insistently believed that Charles's madness was a result of magic and evil spells, having been bewitched by the duke of Milan and, even more absurdly, by his daughter, the duchess of Orleans. The visible "proof" of Valentina's magical hold over the king was that she was the only person he recognized even in the throes of his delirium, that he could not pass a single day without seeing her, and, absent or present, Charles did not desist from referring to her as "his well loved sister." Pintoin affirms that these rumors were without foundation and that no one had the right to make such accusations; a noble lady such as the duchess had been accused of a great crime without it having been proved. He did not share the vulgar opinion of the mob on the subject of magical possession and that only fools, necromancers, and the superstitious broadcast such opinions; physicians and theologians gave no credence to evil spells holding that the king's condition stemmed from the excesses of his youth.³⁴ Notwithstanding the observations of this spokesman for the *circumspecti*, the *graves et modesti viri*, sometime before Easter 1396, Orleans dispatched his duchess with great pomp on an indefinite tour of their holdings.³⁵

Alain Marchandisse observes that, in the wake of Valentina's exile, eminent contemporary writers leapt to her defense. Eustache Deschamps honors her in his *Eloge de la femme d'un fils du roi de France* (Ballade 771); Honoré Bouvet dedicates his work, *Apparicion maistre Jehan de Meun*, to Valentina; and Christine de Pizan cannot find sufficient descriptors to laud Valentina's enduring virtues, goodness, and intelligence: "Strong and resolute in courage, with great love for her lord, a fine teacher for her children, well-advised in government, just to everyone, wise and very virtuous in all things, and this is (all) noteworthy."³⁶ This is from Christine's

Cité des dames (1405); Valentina rates further effusive mention in *Livre des faits et bonnes moeurs du sage roi Charles V* (1404) and *Livre du corps de policie* (c. 1407).³⁷ Marie-Josèphe Pinet points out by way of contrast that, while the door to the *Cité* is naturally open to Isabeau as queen of France, Christine damns Isabeau with faint praise when compared to the laudatory descriptors she applies to Valentina Visconti, the queen of Sicily, and the young duchess of Berry (Jeanne, countess of Auvergne and Boulogne). Christine describes Isabeau as having “n’a rien de cruaulté, de extorcion, ne quelque male vice, mais toute bonne amour et benignité vers ses subjez”: Christine tells us what Isabeau *is not* rather than what she *is*—not cruel, not extortionate, with no evil vice, holding her subjects in great affection and kindness. Jeanne, on the other hand, is lauded as wise, good, chaste, well behaved, of great virtue, and Valentina (who follows Isabeau in Christine’s account) dominates the narrative with her intelligence and impeccable virtue; Christine praises all of what Valentina *is* in great detail.³⁸ Moreover, in her *Espitres sur le Rommant de la Rose* collected together and offered to Isabeau on February 1, 1402, and likewise but undated to the provost of Paris and man of letters Guillaume de Tignonville,³⁹ Christine relates that:

In our time as well we have known many ladies of value, those from the house of France, the very great as well as others: the sainted and pious queen Jeanne; queen Blanche; the duchess of Orleans, daughter of the king; the duchess of Anjou who carries the title, queen of Sicily⁴⁰—all of whom shared in beauty, virtue, honesty and knowledge.⁴¹

While Valentina’s reputation had been tarnished by the events of 1396, it was Isabeau who would be cast as historical villainess by the busy propaganda mill of Philippe’s successor, Jean the Fearless.⁴² His handiwork was shored up by nasty insinuations from spin doctors in the pay of the house of Lancaster who put about the rumor that Isabeau’s surviving son, Charles VII, had been conceived out of wedlock.⁴³

With the issuing of his second regency ordinance on April 26, 1403, Charles VI sought to establish a durable governance instrument to protect his sovereignty during his increasingly frequent absences from the business of government. It was collegial in nature, relying upon majority decisions made by the royal council, the “the majority and wiser part of the council without regard to rank, authority, wealth but only in accordance with what they contributed and advised for the good, utility and profit of the said necessities.”⁴⁴ The 1403 decree was a practical evolution from the first regency ordinance issued on July 1, 1402, which handed full executive

powers to his queen to govern in his name. Isabeau was accorded full control over the kingdom's finances and "other important necessities." Depending upon one's point of view, the 1403 modification represents either a reining in of Isabeau's authority in light of Charles's concerns on her ability to govern intelligently in his name (particularly regarding her lack of fiscal rectitude) or a measured response to the increasing frequency of his absences, which required an enduring and pragmatic governance instrument—or a bit of both.⁴⁵

Orleans, having dropped his Italian maneuverings due to the death of his father-in-law,⁴⁶ turned his attentions to the business of government during his brother's now regular absences. This "Prince Charming" had managed to divert the unfortunate queen from her unhappy position as consort of a mad king, with courtly amusements, literary pastimes, music, balls, and good humor. Louis, the only brother of the king, and Isabeau, queen of France, naturally established a close companionship. With the death of Philippe on April 27, 1404, Louis probably believed he had clear air to pursue his ambitions. Enter Jean the Fearless, successor to Philippe the Bold of Burgundy. Philippe's death had left Jean with eye-watering debts; an empire of territorial holdings that could only be sustained by recourse to the royal treasury; intemperate ambition underscored by a deep seated sense of entitlement; and a visceral hatred for his cousin, Louis. Jean, however, had not inherited his father's charm, political finesse, or skill in diplomacy. Isabeau did not warm to him; he was just another cousin of the king—not his venerable uncle Philippe, her defunct protector and primary advisor. Jean was not accorded his father's crown pensions or his dignity at court and, in an increasingly fractured government, the stage was set for conflict.

Things came to a head for Isabeau and Louis in 1405 when rumors started to circulate to the effect that they were playing fast and loose with the treasury, that Isabeau had lost control over the moral standards of her household, and that she was neglecting the king's children. Their echo is to be found in a sermon preached in the spring of 1405 to the king and queen by Jacques Legrand, a celebrated Augustian monk (whose patron was Louis of Orleans), and recorded by Pintoin. He tells us he has a duty to document how the "lively discontent of the kingdom had been excited by the extreme carelessness with which the queen and the duke governed the realm during the illness of the king." The people had not desisted from condemning the pair publicly for their lack of regard for the king, his family and subjects, desiring only to enrich themselves to the detriment

of all. Opinion held that the king's wife and his only brother had forgotten convention and their obligations, becoming objects of scandal within France and the laughing stock of foreign nations.⁴⁷ This snapshot of public opinion and rumor is followed up by Legrand's public sermon to the queen in the presence of assembled dignities, churchmen, university men, and bureaucrats: "Lady Venus alone reigns over your court, drunkenness and debauchery follow in procession after her, transforming night into day in the midst of the most decadent dancing; these contemptible and poisonous flunkies, who continually infest your court, corrupt morals and weaken hearts." If this was not sufficient to hold everyone's attention, Legrand, moreover, criticized *haute couture* in Isabeau's household, Pintoin commenting that the queen was the chief instigator of the luxury of dress at the French court, something for which Legrand reproached her saying, "Everywhere, noble queen, people speak of such disorderliness and of many others that dishonor your court. If you do not believe me, disguise yourself in the clothes of a poor woman and walk the streets of the city, you will hear for yourself what 'everyone says.'"⁴⁸ Pintoin observes that Isabeau was not amused, "Ce langage fut loin de plaire à la reine" (These words were far from pleasing to the queen).⁴⁹ The king "en témoigna au contraire beaucoup de satisfaction" (the king [on the other hand] evinced a great deal of satisfaction); and Charles was keen to hear more of what Legrand had to say.⁵⁰ To add insult to Isabeau's injury, Pintoin relates how it was said that not only were the queen and Orleans busy with the raising of revenue for their own consumption to the detriment of France, but that some dared to accuse the pair of neglecting the royal children. The king was "forte irrité" (greatly angered) at this, and called for the dauphin so that he might hear the truth from his son's lips. Tenderly, he asked the boy how long it had been since he had received his mother's hugs and kisses; the dauphin replied that it had been about three months. Pintoin assures us that the king was greatly affected by the child's response and publicly resolved to put the matter to a council of the princes, notably the king of Sicily, Louis II of Anjou; Charles III, king of Navarre, the dukes of Berry and Bourbon.⁵¹ The king summoned the new duke of Burgundy to assist with the matter of Isabeau's apparent lack of maternal solicitude, but Jean replied he was much occupied with his younger brothers, "divvying-up" their vast inheritance to attend. When Jean of Burgundy eventually appeared in Paris to pay homage for his holdings, he did so at the head of 6000 men armed "de pied en cap" (from head to toe).⁵² Burgundy's "shock and awe" posturing panicked Parisians

and initiated the flight of Isabeau and Orleans to Melun, who ordered that the dauphin and royal children be brought to them, precipitating the civil crisis of 1405.

It was not merely Legrand who called attention to fashion “crimes” in Isabeau’s household; Eustache Deschamps, Jean Juvénal II des Ursins, Philippe de Mézières, and Christine de Pizan all picked up on this theme at one time or another. Deschamps alludes to headdresses with “cornes comme font des limas” (horns like those pushed out by slugs). Juvénal des Ursins did not hold back his disapproval: “The ladies and damsels lived in great and excessive states (with) marvelous horns, long and large (...) having on each side two great wings so huge that when they wished to pass through doorways they needed to turn sideways and crouch or they would be unable to pass through; very displeasing to ‘right-thinking’ people.” Philippe de Mézières, well-acquainted with Christine de Pizan, counseled the queen to sort out her life and live “without ostentation, without pride, without great expense and without flamboyant livery.” Commissioned by Philippe of Burgundy to write his late brother’s biography, Christine de Pizan fashioned a detailed “mirror” of Charles V’s consort, Jeanne of Bourbon, and her court: accompanied by “ladies and damsels in great quantity, from all regions, honest, honorable and well chastised (as required) otherwise they had no place (in the queen’s court), and all dressed appropriately, each according to their function, and each corresponding to the dignity of the occasion.”⁵³ Christine sought perhaps to inspire greater reserve in her queen, hinting that queen Isabeau, “vray miroir des dames” (authentic mirror for ladies), had failed in her obligation to educate, and instead had corrupted the young women of her household⁵⁴

Isabeau’s perceived flamboyance indicated a recognizable pattern of behavior, a “known fact” upon which to construct rumor and establish the foundation propaganda that would weaken her influence, and that of Orleans. Once character weakness or careless behavior had been identified, and public opinion drafted into service, it was easy to make other charges against public figures who did not take sufficient care to fashion their identities for external consumption. Before his entry to center stage of French politics Jean of Burgundy ensured that rumors and innuendo concerning Isabeau and Orleans had circulated around the taverns and streets of Paris. The new duke of Burgundy timed his first appearance at court to coincide with the moment the political credit of Orleans and Isabeau was at its lowest ebb. Richard Vaughan observes that Jean prepared his backdrop skillfully to step into the role of the leader of an organized

opposition to the unpopular government of the queen and the duke of Orleans. He projected the image of a clean skin with a program of constitutional reform and fiscal rectitude to the combat high taxes and wastage that had so upset the king's subjects.⁵⁵ The propaganda was effective: in relatively short order Isabeau was written off as a political lightweight, irresponsible in the face of her duty to king and kingdom, preoccupied by pleasure and a neglectful mother, while Orleans was cast as the tyrannical and grasping younger brother of the unfortunate king with ambitions beyond his station. Against this negative image, Burgundy spun his web of self-serving propaganda, holding up the mirror of his own virtue to reflect his pristine image back at the ones he had tarnished. *He* was the reform-minded prince ready to serve his king to the benefit of all. It was very, very effective spin rendered durable because its message was repeated in variety of media; tavern and market gossip, letter writing initiatives, political pamphlets such as the *Songe Vérable* (The True Dream), and a stream of public justifications and complaints pronounced before the court, in parliament, and at the University by spokesmen in Jean's service.⁵⁶ In the *Songe*, a cast of identifiable officers and servants in the service of Charles VI are named and shamed, accused directly of having impoverished the king and his people; mention of the duke of Burgundy is noticeably absent.⁵⁷ Like his father Philippe, Jean was a master at the game of rumor and propaganda; he always ensured that others did the talking for him, only appearing center stage once it had been dressed for his conquest.⁵⁸ Pierre Champion and Paul de Thoisy describe Jean well, "Whereas he played at popularity, shaking hands, including the executioner's, he was damned to deny, to force his hirelings to justify his actions by attacking (his victims)."⁵⁹

Philippe and Jean used literature extensively to further their projects and bolster their propaganda. Consciously or unconsciously, Christine de Pizan lent her pen to the Burgundians, moving closer to Burgundy in 1402–1403 and away from Louis of Orleans.⁶⁰ Christine had resolved to put aside "frivolities" to concentrate on political, moral, and philosophical subjects worthy of study and comment. According to Pinet, from about 1402 to 1406, most if not all of Christine's serious and pedagogical works were pitched at the house of Burgundy.⁶¹ Until their deaths in 1402 and 1404, respectively, Giangaleazzo Visconti and Philippe of Burgundy were Christine's preferred "intellectual patrons."⁶² Pinet's analysis is at odds with Adams's thesis that, during this period, Christine wrote specifically to support Isabeau of Bavaria. I believe that it is more logical to

assert that Christine wrote in support of the institution of the monarchy within which a French queen consort had a serious and essential role to fulfill.⁶³ The problem for France was that Isabeau's demonstrated lack of sustained political acumen, combined with her questionable judgment in both domestic and external matters, made her a shaky basis for Christine de Pizan's theory of empowering royal women as pillars of the monarchy. At this stage of Burgundy's political career when he was projecting himself as protector-in-chief of the royal family; a reformer; a friend of the University and the common man, striving in the public interest, it might well be that Christine supported his objectives.⁶⁴ Pinet suggests that while it is undeniable that Christine pleads the cause of France in her *Epistre à la royne de France* on a night in October 1405, she equally pleads the case for Burgundy who desires only peace.⁶⁵ Pinet does not hesitate to make this connection, pointing out that the *Epistre* arises from a context wherein the Burgundian cause can be identified with the cause of France and that, according to Christine's accounts, between 1405 and 1408, she held the post of quasi-official writer for the house of Burgundy (specifically for Jean and his brother).⁶⁶

Jean's most fearless work of propaganda, however, is contained in his 1408 *Justification* for the murder of his cousin, the "criminal" duke of Orleans. Jean raked together all the bits and pieces of rumor and innuendo dating from Valentina Visconti's voluntary exile in 1396 and the events of 1405–1406, blending them with biblical and antique references to produce sophisticated propaganda—rhetoric that Willard points out "was not too far behind his Italian contemporaries."⁶⁷ It was not merely the text of the *Justification* that provided propaganda value, but also its context and delivery. In the immediate aftermath of Orleans's assassination, his distressed and exiled widow, Valentina, journeyed to Paris in the company of strategically selected children in her care including her youngest son, Jean, the three-year-old count of Angoulême, and her daughter-in-law and the new duchess of Orleans, Isabelle of France (the king's daughter, already widowed by the murder of her first husband Richard II of England). They had been chosen for maximum impact in a calculated plea for justice to the king and, in the wake of Valentina's appeal, many including the queen and the dauphin, tried to block the reading of Burgundy's *Justification*. Burgundy outplayed Valentina by adopting an offensive position, once again arriving in Paris at the head of an impressive force of arms as if preparing to conquer the kingdom. Both his bellicose stance and the *Justification* left a sour taste in the mouths of many; the queen departed

Paris with the dauphin at the earliest opportunity. The king fetched them back and, within days of their return, issued letters of remission pardoning Burgundy.

Having been thrown together by the calamity of Louis's murder, Isabeau pushed for an allocution to be read against Burgundy's crimes at Valentina's request. It was read in September 1408 by royal advocate, Jean II Juvénel des Ursins; Valentina and her children then prostrated themselves at the feet of the king to plead for justice and a chance to refute Burgundy's *Justification* in detail. Consent was granted and the refutation delivered but Valentina passed away on December 4, 1408, exhausted by her struggle and without having achieved justice for the brutal murder of her husband.⁶⁸ His burden lightened considerably, Burgundy persevered with his propaganda and scandal mongering. In 1409, another of his creatures, the king's secretary, Pierre Salmon, presented his *Réponses à Charles VI et lamentation au roi sur son état*.⁶⁹ The clear aim of this piece of literary propaganda is to "suggest that Louis of Orleans had dabbled in magic in order to maintain his power over his brother, the king," a creative recycling of the evil spell rumor criticized by Pintoin in 1396 and discussed above.⁷⁰

In the wake of the Cabochien uprising in 1413, and in light of Jean's very grubby hands, tainted reputation, and flight from Paris, the bishop of Paris, Gérard de Montaigu, condemned Burgundy's *Justification*, and "a mass of verbiage was hurled" at the fugitive duke by his enemies and victims.⁷¹ But, having gained the agreement of an increasingly isolated Isabeau to form an alternative government in 1417, Jean engineered a successful return to Paris in the summer of 1418.⁷² Vaughan attests, however, that Burgundy's power was not unquestioned nor was it unlimited.⁷³ Jean the Fearless was murdered in Montereau on September 10, 1419, by loyal partisans of the defunct duke of Orleans with the apparent assent of the 16-year-old dauphin, Charles of Ponthieu, igniting a furious propaganda war between the respective belligerents all avid to draw maximum advantage from the political and military confusion occasioned by it. The confusion was due in part to the fact that most in the north of the kingdom, especially Paris, loved the Burgundians, detested the English, and would remain loyal to their king.⁷⁴ All parties seem to have believed that they could force an outcome; the uncertainty was such that either party might have emerged victorious had the king or more precisely, Isabeau of Bavaria, not taken sides.

In early December 1419, the tide turned in Burgundy's favor: The tide turned in Burgundy's favor in early December 1419: in Arras on December 2, Philippe the Good of Burgundy came to terms with Henry V of

England concluding a treaty of mutual support and advancement. However, Philippe was not prepared to have this development made common knowledge, limiting himself to a confidential communication addressed to the king and Isabeau in Troyes. Notwithstanding his precautions, the dauphin was informed of both the Arras meeting and the content of Philippe's letter to Isabeau. Charles redoubled his propaganda efforts, regrouping loyalists around the hereditary enemy: England. To prepare for its dissemination, Charles had the contents of Philippe's letter translated into French while Gérard of Montagu, bishop of Paris, wrote to the bourgeoisie and inhabitants of the capital. Guenée attests that copies of these letters are extant only in English sources, pointing to the likelihood of their interception.⁷⁵ The political and military situation hardened for the dauphin Charles, stiffening allegiances and with the successful propaganda of the Burgundians increasingly impermeable to the opposing propaganda of the dauphin.

Successful propaganda likewise preached to the choir, buttressing existing support to prevent any departure from the key elements of its message. It did not seek necessarily to win over the opposing faction; it was targeted and conscious. Words such as "la partie" (the party); "l'obéissance" (obedience); "induire" (mislead), "adherer" (stay fast), "adhesion" (support) were repeated ad nauseam, and the messages broadcast would not have borne fruit had they fallen upon on fallow ground.⁷⁶ Burgundy and England won the battle, and Charles was effectively disinherited until the death of Henry V and his father Charles VI within months of each other in 1422 when an unexpected blue-sky opportunity opened up for him. Having signed away her son Charles's heritage to England and Burgundy in 1420, Isabeau was cast into a twilight zone of queenly irrelevance and diminished circumstances, dying in 1435—the year of the signing of Treaty of Arras, which ended the Burgundian-English alliance.

During the closing stages of the Hundred Years War interested players seized the many opportunities afforded by the confusion and instability of circumstances to fashion or refashion their respective identities to fit their purpose and the fluid circumstances. In the quest for dynastic or political advancement, men and women checkmated their opponents by taking control of public opinion via the media of rumor, propaganda, and innuendo. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy agrees that propaganda is "the guiding hand of history" wherever persuasion is critical to the survival of regimes or institutions or the attainment of radical social objectives, and that one of the classic elements of propaganda is its "essential Manichean dualism." He sums up with "propagandists have never ceased in their

quest to conjure up enemies, luminous, horrible. Propaganda is antique: only technology changes.”⁷⁷ Dominating the rumor mill and winning the propaganda war was and remains essential to the attainment and maintenance of power.

NOTES

1. Michael Alan Sizer, “Making Revolution Medieval: Revolt and Political Culture in Late Medieval Paris” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2008).
2. Colette Beaune, ed., *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris de 1405 à 1449* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1989); Michel Pinton, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis (Cronica Karoli Sexti)*, ed. & trans. Louis Bellaguet (Paris: Editions du Comité de travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1994) hereafter RSD; Bernard Guenée, *L'Opinion publique à la fin du Moyen Âge d'après la “Chronique de Charles VI” du Religieux de Saint-Denis* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 11.
3. Guenée, *L'Opinion publique*, 11.
4. Beaune, “Introduction,” *Journal d'un Bourgeois*, 10.
5. Beaune, “La Rumeur dans le Journal du Bourgeois de Paris” in *La Circulation des Nouvelles au Moyen Âge*, ed. Michel Balard (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne; Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1994), 191–203, 191.
6. Bernard Guenée, “Le Religieux et les docteurs. Comment le Religieux de Saint-Denis voyait les professeurs de l'Université de Paris,” in *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 136: 4 (1992): 675–86; Bernard Guenée, *Un roi et son historien. Vingt études sur le règne de Charles VI et la Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis* (Paris: Diffusion de Bocard, 1999); Bernard Guenée with Françoise Autrand, Claude Gauvard & Jean-Marie Moeglin, *Saint-Denis et la royauté (actes du colloque de Saint-Denis, Créteil-Université Paris XII, Institut de France, les 2–4 mai 1996)* (Paris: Publications de Sorbonne, 1999); Bernard Guenée, “Ego, je. L'affirmation de soi par les historiens français (XIVe-XVe s.),” in *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 149:2 (2005): 597–611.
7. Tracy Adams and Glenn Rechtschaffen, “The Reputation of the Queen and Public Opinion: The Case of Isabeau of Bavaria,” *Medieval Feminist Forum* 47:1 (2011): 5–30. Fargette likewise oversimplifies with the claim that the Monk is a source, “*plutôt Bourguignon*” (quite Burgundian). Séverine Fargette, “Rumeurs, propagande et opinion publique au temps de la guerre civile (1407–1420),” *Moyen-Âge*, Vol. 113, no. 2 (2007), 309–34, 317. Adams's thesis refuses any suggestion that Isabeau of Bavaria

was other than “a talented diplomat; a woman who from the time of her marriage navigated court politics with ease and grace.” Tracy Adams, *The Life and Afterlife of Isabeau of Bavaria* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2010), 8–9. Adams’s is a courageous reading in light of Beaune’s editorial appreciation of the *Journal*, “*La Reine semble surtout n’avoir eu aucune capacité politique*” (above all, the queen appears to have possessed no political capacity whatsoever). While the Bourgeois generally casts Isabeau in a favorable light (“Many—but not the author of the *Journal*—regarded her as the villain of the piece.” Janet Shirley, ed., *A Parisian Journal 1405–1449* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 50, n. 2), his entry for 1424 (admittedly after the signing of the Treaty of Troyes, and the deaths of Henry V and Charles VI) records the tepidity of public opinion regarding its irrelevant queen dowager “...et le plus de ceux de Paris, qui leur eût demandé: ‘Où est la reine?’ ils n’eussent su parler. Tant en tenait-on peu de compte, qu’à peine en challait-il au peuple, pour ce qu’on disait qu’elle était cause des grands maux et douleurs qui pour lors étaient sur terre” (“...most people in Paris if asked, ‘Where is the Queen?’ would not have had any idea. No one gave her a thought, no one cared at all, because *it was said* that it was she who was responsible for all the dreadful troubles and suffering then being endured”), my emphasis. *Journal d’un Bourgeois*, ed. Beaune, 208 & n. 7; Shirley, ed., trans. *A Parisian Journal 1405–1449*, 193–4.

8. Guenée, *L’Opinion publique*, 12–3.
9. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, (On the Ends of Good and Evil) Harris Rackman ed. and trans. (Cambridge MS: Harvard University Press, 1994), 18–19. Guenée cites an unspecified edition of *De Finibus* in *L’Opinion*, 218; *RSD*, Vol. 1, Bk. III, Ch. iv, 146–7.
10. *RSD*, 1, I, ii, 20–1.
11. Vincent Challet, “Bernard Guenée, *L’Opinion publique* à la fin du Moyen Âge d’après ‘*Chronique de Charles VI*’ du Religieux de Saint-Denis,” *Médiévales* 45 (Autumn 2003): 183–5, 184; Guenée, *L’Opinion publique*, 69.
12. Such were tried and true tactics of propaganda warfare adapted from Philippe the Bold of Burgundy’s earlier campaigns to discredit and sideline first his brother, the regent for Charles VI during his minority, Louis I of Anjou in 1380, and later the Charles VI’s younger brother, Louis of Orleans, from 1401 to 1404. Michael Nordberg, *Les Ducs et La Royauté, Etudes sur la rivalité des ducs d’Orléans et de Bourgogne 1392–1407* (Stockholm: Svenska Bokförlaget, Norstedts, 1964), 61–75, esp. 70–1.
13. Beaune, *Journal d’un Bourgeois*, 208.
14. Séverine Fargette, “Rumeurs, propagande et opinion publique au temps de la guerre civile (1407–1420),” *Moyen-Âge* 113:2 (2007): 315.
15. Fargette, “Rumeurs,” 316.

16. Bernard Guenée, *La Folie de Charles VI. Roi Bien Aimé* (Paris: Perrin, 2004), 7–11.
17. Françoise Autrand, *Charles VI* (Paris: Fayard, 1986); Jean Verdon, *Isabeau de Bavière. La mal-aimée* (Paris: Editions Tallandier, 2001). Adams's analysis is at variance with these. Adams, *The Life and Afterlife*, 241–5, 299, n. 90.
18. Richard Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue: Crisis at the Court of Charles VI 1392–1420* (New York: AMS Press, 1986), 17.
19. Daniel Meredith Bueno de Mesquita, *Giangualeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan (1351–1402): A Study in the Political Career of an Italian Despot* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1941), 107, 110, 119, esp. 203–4.
20. Eugène Jarry, *La Vie politique de Louis de France, duc d'Orléans 1372–1407* (Geneva: Slatkin Reprints, 1976, reprint of Paris: A. Picard, 1889), 37–54; Eugène Jarry, *Documents diplomatiques et politiques. Les Origines de la domination française à Gênes (1392–1402)* (Paris: 1896), 166, 192. Eugène Jarry, “La ‘Voie de fait’ et l’alliance franco-milanaise” (Nogent-le-Rotrou: Imp. De daupley-Gouverneur, 1892).
21. Emile Collas, *Valentine de Milan. Duchesse d'Orléans* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1911), 190.
22. That the queen of France was likewise half-Italian (her mother was Taddea Visconti) seems to have escaped comment.
23. Collas, *Valentine de Milan*, 215.
24. At the time of the little boy's death, two physicians confirmed that he had succumbed to an identifiable illness. Collas, *Valentine de Milan*, 215.
25. Jean Froissart, *Chroniques. Livre III (du voyage en Béarn à la campagne de Gascogne) et Livre IV (années 1389–1400)*, ed. Peter Ainsworth and Alberto Vârvano (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2004), iv, L, 565–7.
26. Enguerrand de Monstrelet, *La Chronique d'Engerran de Monstrelet: en deux livres, avec les pièces justificatives: 1400–1444*, ed. Louis Douët-Darcq (Paris: Vve de J. Renouard, 1857–1862), I:i, Ch. Xxxix, 229; G. Cousinot, P. Cochon, *Chronique de la Pucelle ou Chronique de Cousinot suivie de La Chronique Normande de P. Cochon relatives au règnes de Charles VI et de Charles VII*, ed. Auguste Vallet (de Viriville) (Paris: Alphonse Delahays, 1859), 389–93.
27. Monstrelet, *Chronique*, i, 229.
28. My translation. Jarry, *La Vie Politique*, 167.
29. My translation. Froissart, *Collection des Chroniques Nationales Françaises. Les chroniques de Jean Froissart*, 14 Vols, ed. J.A. Buchon, (Paris: Verdière Librairie, 1824–6), xiii, 101, 107. Yann Grandeau insists that Isabeau refused the imposed tutelage of the duchess of Burgundy and that in any event Marguerite de Dampierre did not habitually reside in Paris. He does not, however, enter into specific details or proofs and it appears certain

that, at least at the time of the campaign to neutralize Valentina's influence at court in 1396, the duchess of Burgundy was a formidable presence in Isabeau's household; she died in 1405 the year following the death of Philippe the Bold. Alain Marchandisse confirms that it was really only from 1409 until his murder in 1419 that Jean of Burgundy conferred the stewardship of their territories upon his duchess, Marguerite of Bavaria. The Burgundians maintained scrupulously the presence of their successive duchesses in Isabeau's household. Alain Marchandisse, "Le pouvoir de Marguerite de Bavière, duchess de Bourgogne. Une esquisse," in *Femmes de Pouvoir, femmes politiques durant le dernier siècles du Moyen Age at au cours de la première Renaissance*, ed. Eric Bousmar, Jonathon Dumont, Alain Marchandisse et Bertrand Schnerb (Brussels: Editions de Boeck Université, 2012), 493–506. Grandeau's closing comment regarding the frivolity or otherwise of Isabeau's household illustrates his line of cogitation: "We will leave the politicians to their intrigues and the censors to their gloom, because we cannot, despite the discredit, be prevented from making allowances for these ladies, either illustrious or coquettish, who 'were always in the mood for consolation and in the perseverance of joy (in their days),' brightening with a smile a century marked by poverty and crime." My translation. He brushes aside that a queen (and her household) had a particular duty to project an image of propriety and piety, especially in centuries marked by poverty and crime. Yann Grandeau, "De Quelques Dames qui ont servi la reine Isabeau de Bavière," *Bulletin philologique et historique (jusqu'à 1610) du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques* 53 (1975): 129–239, 162.

30. Collas, *Valentine de Milan*, 219.
31. Froissart, *Chroniques*, ed. Ainsworth, iv, Ch. 50, 566. "Isabella achieved her first victory, when a campaign of vicious slander compelled Valentina to withdraw to her country residence at Asnières in April 1396." Bueno de Mesquita, *Giangaleazzo*, 204; Jarry, *Vie politique de Louis de France*, 168.
32. Tracy Adams, "Valentina Visconti, Charles VI and the Politics of Witchcraft," *Parergon*, 30:2 (2013), 11–32, 11–2, 23–6.
33. Zita Rohr, "Lessons for My Daughter: Self-Fashioning Stateswomanship in the Late Medieval Crown of Aragon," in *Self-Fashioning and Assumptions of Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, ed. Laura Delbrugge (Leiden & Boston: Brill), 2015, 47–78, 49–50, 51–2, 54, n. 32, 64–5, n. 75, 66–73.
34. *RSD*, 1, xvi, xx, 404–7.
35. In offering a (re)reading the *RSD* from a critical literary perspective, Adams rejects Guenée's thesis that Pintoin was in part engaged in the recording of public opinion. Historians might not concur with her analysis. Adams, *The Life and Afterlife*, esp. 124–7.
36. My translation.

37. Alain Marchandisse, "Milan, les Visconti, l'union de Valentine et de Louis d'Anjou, vus par Froissart et par les auteurs contemporains," in *Autour du XVe siècle. Journée d'étude en l'honneur d'Alberto Vârvano. Communications présentées au symposium de clôture de la Chaire Franquai au titre étranger (Liège, 10-11 mai 2004)*, eds. P. Moreno and G. Palumbo (Liège: Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège, 2008), 93–116, 99–100; Bernard Guenée, *La Folie*, 92–5.
38. Pinet, *Christine de Pizan*, 117–8.
39. Tignonville (d. 1414) was a friend of Eustace Dechamps and was a close acquaintance of Jean de Montreuil (who praised the *Roman de la Rose*) and other "first wave" French humanists. Bamford makes an insightful observation regarding the letter from Christine to Guillaume: "The possibility that Christine views herself as the new owner with privileges of editing and redirecting certainly seems plausible upon reading her letter to Guillaume de Tignonville. In this letter, Christine calls the debate good-humored, an example of a difference of opinion between worthy persons ('le debat gracieux et non hayneux meu par oppinions contraires entre solemnelles personnes' [gracious and not hateful debate steered by the contrary opinions of sensible people—my translation]), including Gontier Col, and Jean de Montreuil (2v, lines 4–5). What is especially provocative about this letter, in addition to her calling the debate 'gracieux et non hayneux' (gracious and not hateful), which might seem contradictory given the aggressiveness of her approach, is Christine's affirmation that Guillaume de Tignonville will be able to understand the nature of the debate by reading the letters that have been exchanged (...)." Heather Bamford, "Remember the giver(s): the creation of the *Querelle* and notions of sender and recipient in University of California, Berkeley, MS 109," *Atalaya* 11 (April 20, 2010), consulted February 3, 2015. URL: <http://atalaya.revues.org/460>.
40. Christine does not specify to which queen of Sicily she refers. It is certainly Marie de Blois-Penthièvre (d. 1404) during the penning of the *débat* letters (1401–1402), queen dowager of Naples-Sicily. But I believe that the second reference Christine makes to the queen of Sicily in the *Cité* works is Yolande of Aragon, who had "reigned" for five years as duchess of Anjou and queen of Naples-Sicily at the time of their realization in 1405.
41. Christine de Pizan, Jean Gerson, Gontier & Pierre Col, *Le Debat sur "Le Roman de la Rose"*, ed. Eric Hicks & Thérèse Moreau (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1977), 18–9. Virginie Green, "Le débat sur le *Roman de la Rose* comme document d'histoire littéraire et morale," *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*, 14 Spécial, (2007): 297–311.
42. Rachel Gibbons, "Isabeau of Bavaria, Queen of France (1385–1422): The Creation of an Historical Villainess (The Alexander Prize Essay)," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6, (Dec. 1996), 51–73.

43. The English, unsettled by the Joan of Arc phenomenon, responded with calculated spin to further “delegitimize” Charles VII’s right to the throne. Chartier records that the innuendo greatly saddened Isabeau and shortened her life: Jean Chartier, *Chronique de Charles VII Roi de France*, ed., Auguste Vallet de Viriville (Paris: P. Jannet, 1858), T. I, 208–12, 209. Adams, *The Life and Afterlife*, 40–7 for a detailed account of the origins of the rumors concerning Isabeau’s supposed promiscuity. Sharman makes an erroneous claim regarding Isabeau’s preparedness to confirm that the dauphin Charles was not the son of the king at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Troyes. Ian C. Sharman, *Thomas Langley, “The” First Spin Doctor (c. 1363–1437): A Political Biography of the Fifteenth Century’s Greatest Statesman* (England: Dovecote-Renaissance, 1999), 41.
44. My translation.
45. Archives Nationales de France (AN) J 402, n. 16 & AN J 402, n. 13. Rachel Gibbons, “Isabeau de Bavière: reine de France ou ‘lieutenant-général’ du royaume,” in *Femmes de Pouvoir, femmes politiques durant les derniers siècles du Moyen Âge et au cours de la première Renaissance*, ed. Eric Bousmar, Jonathan Dumont, Alain Marchandisse and Bertrand Schnerb (Brussels: Editions De Boeck Université, 2012), 101–12, 109–10; and, in English, contained in this collection, 179–182.
46. On September 2, 1402, from a fever.
47. *RSD*, 2, xxvi, vii, 266–9.
48. *RSD*, 2, xxvi, vii, Adams give an alternative reading of the sermon and its motivations. She insists upon the Burgundian leanings of Pintoin and Legrand (client of Louis of Orleans) to support her thesis. Tracy Adams, *Christine de Pizan and the Fight for France* (University Park PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press), 2014, 99–103. For an alternative explanation, consult Rohr, *Yolande of Aragon (1381–1442) Family and Power: The Reverse of the Tapestry*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 64–5.
49. *RSD*, 2, xxvi, vii, 269.
50. *RSD*, 2, xxvi, vii, 271.
51. *RSD*, 2, xxvi, vii, 289–91.
52. *RSD*, 2, xxvi, vii, 292–3.
53. Grandeau, “De Quelques Dames,” 160–16; Jean II Juvénal des Ursins, *Histoire de Charles VI*, ed. Denys Godefroy (Paris: 1653), 336; Mathilde Laigle, *Livre de Trois Vertus de Christine de Pizan et son milieu historique et littéraire*, (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1912), 109–11; Dora M. Bell, *Etude sur le Songe du Viel Pèlerin de Philippe de Mézières* (Geneva: E. Droz, 1955), 164; Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, ed. Suzanne Solente (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1938–40), I, 56–7. Adams posits an alternative reading for this work in *The Fight for*

- France, 107–112. Geoffroy de la Tour Landry, *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, ed. Anatole de Montaiglon, (Paris: P. Jannet), 98–100; Thierry Lassabatère and Miren Lacassagne eds., *Eustache Deschamps. Témoin et modèle. Littéraire et société politique (XIVe-XVIe siècles)* (Paris: PUPS, 2008).
54. Philippe de Mézières, *Le Songe du vieil pelerin* BNF Ms. Fr. 22542, f. 300. Mézières, ed. G. W. Coopland, (London: CUP, 2009 reprint of 1969 edition).
 55. Richard Vaughan, *John the Fearless* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 31. *RSD*, 2, xxvi, xiv, 297–307: “Le duc de Bourgogne fait exposer au conseil des princes la nécessité de reformer le gouvernement de l’Etat.” I concur with Adams that Burgundy was no clean skin with the good of the kingdom at the forefront of his thinking; he was just another Burgundian duke avid for Charles IV’s compromised sovereignty.
 56. *Le Songe Véritable. Pamphlet politique d’un parisien du XVe siècle*, ed. Henri Moranvillé (Paris: 1891).
 57. Thelma Fenster, “Ways of Knowing in the *Songes véritables* and Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de l’Advison de Cristine*,” in *Poetry, Knowledge and Community in Late Medieval France*, ed. Rebecca Dixon et al. (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 202–14, 203.
 58. Barthélemy Amédée Poquet du Haut-Jussé, “Jean sans Peur, son but, sa méthode,” *Annales de Bourgogne* 14 (1942), 181–96, cited by Charity Cannon Willard, “The Manuscript of Jean Petit’s Justification: Some Burgundian Propaganda Methods of the early Fifteenth Century,” *Studi Francesci* 13 (1969): 271–80, 271.
 59. Pierre Champion and Paul de Thoisy, *Bourgogne, France-Angleterre au traité de Troyes* (Paris: Editions Balzac, 1943), 174–5.
 60. Adams argues vigorously against this interpretation. Adams, *The Fight*, 1, 7–10, 63–onwards.
 61. Adams disagrees with much of Pinet’s well-argued and long-respected thinking. See note following.
 62. Marie-Josèphe Pinet, *Christine de Pisan (1364–1430). Etude Biographique et Littéraire* (Geneva: Slatkin Reprints, 2011), 100, 100–10. Adams does not mention Pinet’s work in her monograph, *The Life and Afterlife of Isabeau of Bavaria*. Karen Green acknowledges Pinet’s academic worth to “Christianian” studies in her “What were the Ladies in the *City of Ladies* Reading? The Libraries of Christine de Pizan’s Contemporaries,” in *Medievalia and Humanistica Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Culture*, ed. Paul Maurice Clogan (Plymouth: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2010), 77–100, 77. Earl Jeffrey Richards notes the “patient and sober research” and “pioneering efforts” of Pinet. See E. J. Richards, “Christine de Pizan and the Freedom of Medieval French Lyric: Authority,

- Experience and Women in the Republic of Letters,” in *Christine de Pizan and Medieval French Lyric*, ed. E. J. Richards, (Gainesville, FL: The University of Florida Press, 1998), 1–26, 1. Adams does, however, engage with Pinet to a limited extent in her most recent book, *Christine de Pizan and the Fight for France*, 26–7.
63. Salic law had actually strengthened the power of female regent—the prohibition for a queen’s involvement in politics is largely a fiction. Queens were held to be safer “place-holders” than agnates; their involvement in the affairs of state was less threatening because they ‘naturally’ had the interests of the minor heir at heart. Craig Taylor, “The Salic Law, French Queenship and the Defence of Women in the Late Middle Ages,” *French Historical Studies* 29 (2006), 543–64.
 64. Anne J. Cruz & Mihoko Suzuki, *The Rule of Women in Early Modern Europe* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), esp. “Introduction,” 1–2 and Adams, “Christine de Pizan’s Isabeau of Bavaria,” 13–29. In this chapter, Adams makes much of the unjust evolution of the queen’s “black legend” as a wanton and an irresponsible consort. This is quite beside the point, a form of white noise that distracts us from a truly disinterested analysis of Isabeau’s political strengths and weaknesses. Adams concludes by stating that, through her political works, Christine “attempts to bolster an Isabeau paralyzed within an untenable situation” (25). It seems worthwhile to add, however, that when compared to the career of her contemporary and sometime nemesis, Yolande of Aragon, Isabeau appears not to have had the wit or the courage to exploit her positional advantage (queen of France) nor the formative education and skill to minimize the difficulties she faced.
 65. Pinet, *Christine de Pizan*, 133. Pinet bases her analysis in part upon the fact that at the time Jean was still patron and employer of Christine’s son, Jean Castel. Jean Castel is next heard of in the employ of the dauphin Charles as secretary in 1422.
 66. Pinet, *Christine de Pizan*, 133: Pinet gives details of Christine’s accounts in n. 1.
 67. Such as Coluccio Salutati’s work dating from 1400, *De tyranno* wherein he makes the claim that “just as the individual has the right to defend himself and his property, the citizens have a right to defend their state against the usurper who undertakes to seize the power.” Berthold L. Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1963), 32–4 cited by Willard, “The Manuscript of Jean Petit’s Justification,” 273, 278.
 68. *RSD*, 2, xxviii, xxxiii, 748–53 and xxxiv, 752–65; xxxv, 766–7; xxix, xvii, 91–129.

69. BNF Ms. Fr. 23279; Pierre Salmon, *Les Demandes fait par le roi Charles VI touchant son état et le gouvernement de sa personne, avec les réponses de Pierre Salmon*, ed. Georges-Adrien Crapelet (Paris: Imprimerie Crapelet, 1833).
70. BNF Ms. Fr. 23279; Salmon, *Les Demandes*; Anne D. Hedeman, "Pierre Salmon's Advice for a King," *Gesta* 32: 2 (1993), 113–23; *RSD*, 1, xvi, xx, 404–7.
71. On February 23, 1414. Vaughan, John *the Fearless*, 194.
72. The Constable, Bernard of Armagnac, cast Isabeau into the political wilderness in April 1417 using the perceived disorderly state of her personal court as a pretext (a recycling of the accusations made by Legrand et al in 1405). Armagnac was able to do this due to the absence of Louis II of Anjou who had returned to Anjou to die from the chronic bladder illness he had endured since at least 1414. Isabeau sent letters to Louis seeking his assistance but by this time he was very ill indeed (he died on April 29, 1417). Adams holds that Isabeau was imprisoned "safely under lock and key" (unable even to write letters—but she did manage to reach the duke and duchess of Anjou), rather than merely isolated from the political center of court, the king and the dauphin, and that the Angevins were "fierce Armagnacs"; this is far from the truth—they were instead (as I argue in *Yolande of Aragon*, 49), "fierce" Angevins. Adams, *The Life and Afterlife*, 101, 201–3 and 238. Grandeau points out that Isabeau was "isolated" with some 20 of her ladies-in-waiting and assorted followers: "Monstrelet recounts that in 1417, the queen was followed into exile by four wagons carrying twenty ladies." 131–2.
73. Vaughan, *John the Fearless*, 227.
74. Bernard Guenée, "Les Campagnes de lettres qui ont suivi le meurtre de Jean sans Peur, duc de Bourgogne (Septembre 1419–Février 1420)," in *Un Roi et son historien: Vingt études sur le règne de Charles VI et la Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis*, ed. B. Guenée (Paris: Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 2000), 45–77, 46.
75. Guenée, "Les Campagnes," 45–77, 46.
76. Guenée, "Les Campagnes," 45–77, 46.
77. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy, "The Death and Life of Propaganda" *Journal of Public Affairs* 12:1 (2012), 1, 29–38.

Etienne Pasquier on French History and Female Strategies of Power

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It has often been asserted that the early modern period in France was one where prudence and decorum dictated that women be spoken of as little as possible, and that only predominantly male voices be heard or considered in public life, with few exceptions, and that because of the Salic Law ruling women were all but unheard of.¹ Yet this position has been roundly discredited in more recent times, and studies have amply shown that female voices and their advocates were not altogether lacking in asserting their own value and influence in both domestic and public life—indeed, in the exercise of royal authority and power.² Etienne Pasquier (1529–1615) was just such a voice. This study will demonstrate that Pasquier thought women *inevitably* played a central role in building the political and cultural life of the French kingdom. As he labored in his legal career and especially in his writings to make Frenchmen more familiar with national antiquities as a means of constructing an ethically viable national future, Pasquier discusses some key women who, whether praised for virtue or blamed for vice, became iconic in French cultural memory: they were queens consort, queen mothers, also regents, or at

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times renegades.³ Pasquier acknowledges their rightful place in history. He was a lawyer and magistrate of the Paris *Parlement*.⁴ Over a distinguished 40-year career, he would become the *Parlement*'s moral center, helping to lead them through the difficulties of the nine successive Civil Wars of Religion. Like many of the *robin* (jurist) class at his time, Pasquier wrote poetry and was also deeply involved in the study of national origins. He met Montaigne and tells us that he had a copy of the *Essays* with him when the two met at the Estates of Blois in 1588. Pasquier also corresponded with Ronsard and Pontus de Tyard. He was an esteemed counselor to the Valois rulers as well as to the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici, whom he supported as regent of France for her minor sons after the accidental jousting death of her husband, King Henri II, in 1559.

Pasquier studied in Paris at the Collège de Presles where he had some association with Ramus. It was also here that he came to know fellow students Antoine Loisel and Pierre Pithou, who became lifelong, like-minded friends. The three also studied law under Cujas, at Toulouse. As he reached the time of his debut as an attorney at the Paris bar, he had developed a propensity for daily writing French or Latin verse, chiefly, as he explains to Pithou, love poetry in the vein of Ronsard. He also wrote a pastoral "novel," the *Monophile*, published in 1554, as well as the *Ordonnances generales d'amour* (1564).⁵ His verse projects, then, were chiefly a Petrarchan and Ronsardian celebration of women. His main writing projects that were to occupy him throughout his adult life were *Les Recherches de la France*, the first book of which appeared in 1560 and which continued to expand to ten books until 1611, also with posthumous editions until the beginning of the seventeenth century. His published correspondence was his other major project, which first appeared in 1586. In all of these writings, Pasquier often talks about women and their influence on men and on events. The *Recherches de la France*⁶ and Pasquier's correspondence will be our chief sources for his commentaries on women, both royal and commoners.

Pasquier most often gives his ideas about women in regard to their rapport with his own ambitions both in the construction of his judicial and literary, career and to teach about ethical conduct for the common good.⁷ In his writings he often refers to himself as a *serviteur du bien public* (a servant of the public good) (*Recherches* I, ch. 1). We shall examine Pasquier's writings about women, proceeding from his attitudes toward how a man may live happily with his wife in domestic life; his assessment of women's role in one's political ascent; and finally his strategically

motivated discussions of French queens in medieval history, and their potential to inform royal conduct and rule, both in his own troubled times, and, as he likes to say, in posterity. Pasquier, like many of his parliamentary colleagues, wanted to be remembered for his writings and their ethical contents. Giving illustrious women their due voice was part of his ambition to compose the most accurate and reliable history of French institutions to date.

Etienne Pasquier was very ambitious to advance in his career and in personal fame. In a liminal letter in his correspondence, written to his colleague Antoine Loisel, he refers to himself as one of *les gens de marque*—one of the notable folk—of his society.⁸ Very conventionally for his time, he notes that a successful man is one who is happily married. Is a happy marriage possible, he queries, or would not the celibate condition be preferable for obtaining the *summum bonum* as a man of both contemplation and action, as he conceived himself to be? We get rather strong indications of Pasquier's thoughts and feelings about women in his various points of reply, in his published correspondence.

Pasquier's parliamentarian colleague, Germain Le Picart, is about to be married, and he asks Pasquier's advice about how he might manage. In his reply to his friend, we catch a glimpse of what colleagues think of Pasquier, whose advice has been asked on a topic for which, at that point in time, he has no firsthand experience. He warns his friend humorously that to ask *him* is “to ask a blind man to describe color.”⁹ His disclaimer is only partially true, in that we can conclude from his writings that he does think a great deal about women and their role in his own life. In Pasquier's world, men alone, for the most part, still rose in society, and were spoken about and spoken to—much more so than women—on the public scene, and indeed, he speaks of women as *other*. To Picart, he describes how “we” (men) may relate to them. He tells Le Picart that he will not take up the old debate about the relative value of celibacy and marriage, as others have done it so well before him. He does declare himself in favor of marriage, as “it is our means of perpetuating ourselves.” He realizes the central importance of female influence in the lives of men: “[The only time] we no-longer relate to them [women] is when we no-longer relate to anything,” that is to say, in death.¹⁰

Pasquier moves without transition to different topics in his narrative to Picart. He goes on to philosophize about how one can maintain a good relationship in marriage, always of course from a *male* point of view. He declares that infidelity is a pointless enterprise. For him, clandestine love

affairs are “fleurs sans fruit” (flowers that never bloom). Respect shown to one’s wife is essential, and one should avoid any appearance of mistreating or tyrannizing his wife, who must be allowed self-expression and the possibility to disagree with him, at least at times, without which she would feel like just another female domestic servant. He sought to avoid arguments and to give in to her opinion, at least in small matters, because it is the highest wisdom to know how to live in peace with one’s wife.

These remarks may lead us to question whether he has real respect and affection for his wife—Françoise Belen, who was comfortably widowed from a prior marriage, and who married Pasquier subsequent to his having won a legal case for her, as something of a reward for good offices rendered! He never describes Françoise or his relationship with her, beyond these and a very few other brief remarks. We also have no surviving portraits of her. Was their relationship one marked by frequent disagreements, where Pasquier ceded to keep the peace? Was Françoise a domineering manager, similar to *Guillemette* (whose name means *helmet* or *protection*), the wife in the *Farce de Maistre Pathelin* which Pasquier enjoyed and comments upon in his *Recherches de la France*?¹¹ Or, conversely, did Etienne and Françoise grow old together in a comfortable rapport, after, as he says, physical passion had subsided, and did they grow toward a “doux tolérance” (kind tolerance) for each other? His sentiments, expressed in the letter to Le Picart, would seem to suggest so, and that they had indeed become very good friends, also through recourse to compromise. If a man is too hard on his wife, he loses everything, he affirms. One partner would normally have to cede to the other, since a match of two strong-willed individuals would never do, he notes.

In this narrative, Pasquier seems to echo St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, Chap. 5 which exhorts reciprocal, *agapic* love and compromise between married spouses who are also a model of conduct for others. They are a model of Christian love, which seeks the good of the other.¹² Pasquier would concur with this Pauline exhortation. At the risk of anachronism, Pasquier, it would seem, was an advocate of gender parity *avant la lettre* in most of the arenas of life, both public and domestic. A particularly successful strategy of political ascent is undeniably a matter of cultivating influential women, as he notes in a letter to his friend in the *Parlement*, Guillaume de Marillac,¹³ since women are also those who most closely influence kings.¹⁴ Pasquier goes on to discuss, in his major work, *Les Recherches de la France*, circumstances in which gender had a decisive role to play in the continuity, indeed the survival of what he terms France’s

monarchie de marque. Embedded into the *Recherches* are vignettes of French history which he gives as parallels for the instruction of ethical government in his own troubled times.

Recherches, Book II, Chap. 19, is entitled *Gouvernemens des Roys mineurs par les Reynes leurs meres, Regences et Majoritez de nos Roys*.¹⁵ In it, Pasquier considers the crucial role sometimes played by royal spouses in safeguarding the realm in the untimely death of a king and during the minority of the late king's son and heir. He maintains the principle of the Salic Law that stipulates that only a male may inherit the throne. Still, it is of no small interest that he admits the great *desavantage des femmes pour le regard de la succession du royaume*.¹⁶ He embeds into his text an unambiguous declaration that women of the highest prestige have at times been instrumental in safeguarding the legal and cultural values that, as he explains elsewhere, have made France the longest surviving monarchy since the fall of Rome.¹⁷ This chapter appeared in most of its contents in 1607,¹⁸ and it reflects Pasquier's thoughts about the potential loss of continuity that seemed to loom at the time of the accidental death of Henri II, already alluded to. He wants to insist that the royal widow, Catherine de Medici, is the only viable candidate as regent, and he successfully supported her ascent as such in 1565. As he insists in Book I of his *Recherches*,¹⁹ written accounts of a culture's past are necessary to guide and safeguard both the present and the future. This is the *raison d'être* for his writing. Here, he relates how royal dowagers intervened to preserve royal and national continuity in France. He offers this chapter as a parallel to show his support for Catherine's ascendancy. Thus he indirectly facilitates the female voice in the midst of his otherwise almost exclusively male political narratology. In his *Recherches de la France*, Pasquier relates the achievements of builders of French institutions—the *Parlement*, the University of Paris, and the Church—who are overwhelmingly male, but he also feels impelled to acknowledge that national history has at times been molded by certain uncommonly gifted royal women who not only manifested traditionally feminine characteristics but also functioned with the strength and clear-headedness always ascribed to a strong king. Perhaps in a continued defense of his earlier decision to support Catherine's regency, he very characteristically builds a lawyer's evidence to support his thesis that royal dowagers were at times decidedly more prudent, more able, and more trustworthy as regents for the realm than any of the attendant princes of the blood or other (always male) ministers, all of whom stood to gain by self-interest at the expense of *legitimacy* and *continuity*, values

that for Pasquier recur in his writings as leitmotifs. In his text in Book II, Chap. 19, he brings into “evidence” the instance of an effective female regent among the Ostrogoths, Amalassonte,²⁰ who successfully, and without hint of personal ambition, guided the State during the minority of her son, Athalaric. Also, among the French themselves, Pasquier cites Queen Fredegonda whom we shall discuss later. He writes at length about her as a prime example of the ups and downs that can attend female exercise of power.

Pasquier notes that Fredegonda managed the State for Clothaire, her underaged son, and he insists here that she “did all things well and so deftly”²¹ that Clothaire came to find himself king of all of Gaul and of the German states. Similarly, Nantilde, the widow of Dagobert, governed aptly for her son, Clovis II. These worthy princesses are mentioned only briefly, while Pasquier then pauses with more deference over the name of the venerable Blanche of Castile,²² consort of Louis VIII and regent for her illustrious son, St. Louis (Louis IX). In just a few words, Pasquier conveys for his reader the *hyperdulia*²³ bestowed on Blanche’s memory through the ages. He notes that this queen conducted herself so wisely that, just as Roman emperors had themselves called “Augustus” as a commemoration of the singular virtues of Caesar Augustus, so also in former times (in France) queen mothers upon the death of their royal husbands would style themselves as “Queen Blanche” in honor of the memory of “that wise princess.” Pasquier is actually inaccurate in this detail²⁴ about dowager queens and their supposed deference to the virtues of Blanche of Castile. Moreover, it is noteworthy that Pasquier knew that both Blanche and Louis were also enshrined in hagiographical lore and in public memory: if St. Louis, her son, canonized in 1297, was to incarnate for posterity the image of the just and serviceable king, Blanche herself was venerated for her piety. Thus, in Christian iconography, she emerges not only as the wise queen regent par excellence but also as the ideal Christian mother, solicitous for her children’s salvation.²⁵ In addition, Pasquier’s comparison of the titles *Auguste* and *Blanche* is significant since he places Blanche of Castile on par with Caesar Augustus, pairing them as comparably iconic figures who have come down through the ages as paragons of excellence of male and female rule, respectively. Thus Pasquier tacitly declares that, in reality, the given female lieutenant-ruler has at times proven as effective as even the most lionized of male political models from antiquity.

Pasquier then moves quickly over other instances of female regencies: Isabel of Bavaria had ruled in the name of her husband, the mentally incapacitated King Charles VI, while Louise of Savoy maintained

the government during the captivity of her son, François I, in Madrid. She was honored for the remainder of her life with the title of regent, Pasquier explains²⁶ He further deduces that the permanent bestowal of this title upon her strategically marked Louise as separate and distinct from any consideration for succession to the crown. Invoking Tacitus²⁷ he pursues historical evidence in lawyerly fashion to support his assertions, and he notes that the Germans (of whom *we* are descended, he adds) reserved the crown for males only, while in practice it called both males and females to a participatory role in the affairs of state. He supports this gender disparity in priority of roles and access to power by alluding to ancient French law regarding the succession to fiefdoms, a topic upon which he elaborates at length in Book II of his *Recherches de la France*.²⁸ Fiefdoms passed in succession only to sons, by virtue of the need for military defense of the rights of ownership, while at the death of a father of underage sons, the mother would administer the fiefdom in her son's interests, and thus Pasquier solidifies for his contemporaries and, in his view, also for posterity what has developed in regard to gender in questions of successions. In this, as in many questions touched on by Pasquier throughout his writings, he appeals to the authority of *ancienmeté* in regard to precedent and procedure. It becomes clearer, then, that Pasquier who, from the outset of Book I of his *Recherches*, wishes to offer the State reliable written records of national history to guide its ethical decisions in time of turmoil such as his own, wished to give significant *women* in that history long overdue recognition in that same spirit. While he never overtly challenges tradition in regard to the banning of a female succession, he does take measures in his text to accord women a rightful voice and to acknowledge the reality of their contributions to the survival of the State when they were clearly needed. He does his part to restore a fuller picture of the past which includes a place for gender which heretofore had been whitewashed from record, or at least marginalized. It is of no small interest that Pasquier's Book II, in which he narrates the historic development of the various offices and institutions of the parliamentary monarchy, closes with this tribute to deft regents who assured continuity in times of transition, and it is indisputable that Pasquier has given a succession of female regents pride of place in this text. In this discussion of these dutiful queen regents, Pasquier is content only to name them for the most part, with a more detailed mention of the especially venerable character of Blanche. In other texts, we shall see that he details the strategies that a queen could employ in the construction of her rise to power.

In Book V, Chaps. 6–10, of his *Recherches de la France*, Pasquier considers female power as exercised by two colorful characters of the Frankish monarchy, Queens Fredegonda and Brunehaud. In Chap. 6, Pasquier considers “The Excesses, both for Good and for Ill, of Queen Fredegonda, Based on the Reports of our Historiographers.” It is significant that Pasquier gives lengthy accounts of female rule in these chapters, in which he analyzes *exempla* in their itinerary of the traditional *topoi* of the just and the tyrannical ruler, while recognizing that both of these queens have long since passed into the annals of ignominious royal conduct. Pasquier makes ample use of these two women in his program, urgently felt, to use historical vignettes to teach good ethics, but also, and significantly, to refute the program of Machiavelli, who insisted that rulers ought to use all means at their disposal to secure themselves in power.²⁹

Pasquier relies on the Benedictine chronicler Aimoin³⁰ for his own narrative about Fredegonda and Brunehaud, and he gives an initial caveat as to Aimoin’s reliability. In this opinion he disagrees with his contemporaries: Aimoin’s work enjoyed great prestige throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern Period. Pasquier uses Aimoin’s work to recount the early itinerary of Fredegonda and Brunehaud. King Chilperic married the commoner Andouëre whom Pasquier qualifies as a very discreet princess. One of her ladies was the beautiful young Fredegonda who became Chilperic’s concubine. During the king’s absence, Andouëre delivered a child. Baptism was to be administered immediately to the infant and, when no prominent matron or noble woman of rank qualified to be godmother could be found, Fredegonda persuaded the naïve and gullible queen to allow her to assume that distinction. This action subsequently angered Chilperic and estranged him from the queen, and he banished her to exile in Mans with an annual income for her expenses, while the infant daughter was relegated to a convent in Poitiers³¹ This malicious young woman, as Pasquier styles Fredegonda, succeeded in her strategy of ascent. Fredegonda, a beautiful young woman of humble birth, deployed the wiles traditionally ascribed (often by misogynists, moreover) to femininity. She uses her beauty to seduce Chilperic and she assesses him to be as potentially deceitful and self-serving as she herself, when circumstances serve his whim. We recall that Chilperic married three times and has been unfaithful to his naïve queen—whom he has wed for political expediency—and he is bored with her. Fredegonda takes full advantage of the queen’s simple nature to deceive her. She then defames the queen to her

husband and lies about the circumstances, blaming the queen for having *forced* her to witness the baptism. Chilperic feigns anger and disposes of both his dull wife, the queen, and an unwanted baby girl, thus giving free rein to his own libido and ego—and those of his female counterpart in treachery, Fredegonda. Pasquier depends on the account of Gregory of Tours³² to assert that Chilperic then married Galsonde, Brunehaud's older sister, as his second wife. While Pasquier makes no ethical judgments in this narrative apart from those that can be deduced by the reader, he explores an example of progress in female self-construction and rise to power that is not without implications for the regency of Catherine de Medici and the potential for eventual female rule in France. He begins to discourse, through this narrative, about the political recourse to treachery. Both Chilperic and Fredegonda disdained and mistreated Galsonde to the point that the new queen begged Chilperic to send her back to her father, she fully willing that he keep the wealth of dowry that had been given to him in the marriage contract. Pasquier allows himself a doleful play on words at this juncture. He notes that Chilperic returned Galsonde to her *true* father, that is to say, God and, thus, he implies that the two accomplices had her strangled in her bed. It is interesting to note that Chilperic then married Fredegonda, who controlled his policies absolutely, as Pasquier explains.³³ Meantime, with the death of Aurebert, king of Paris, a dispute broke out over the rightful succession. Sigebert, king of Austrasia, pushed back the forces of Chilperic and had himself proclaimed king of Paris. When Chilperic, with Fredegonda, had been forced to take refuge in Soissons, Fredegonda privately engaged two soldiers to assassinate Sigebert, promising them to have masses celebrated for their souls' salvation should they be taken prisoner or killed. The two complied with Fredegonda's plan. Pasquier does not blame Fredegonda, who was only practicing self-defense, he opines. When the two soldiers had fulfilled their mission, however, he notes that Fredegonda had them massacred.³⁴ Pasquier views Fredegonda's assassination of Sigebert to have been the impetus for the ensuing 40-year feud with Sigebert's family. When Chilperic reached Paris, the doors of the city were opened to him. We remember that the theme of the underaged monarch is recurrent in Pasquier's text. Sigebert's child was a royal heir of only five years of age. The citizens preferred Chilperic over the uncertain rule of a child (and his ambitious ministers, as Pasquier has previously insisted). Pasquier describes the vivid tableau that is the strategic activity of Sigebert's widow, Brunehaud (the name rendered so in the orthography by Pasquier or his

editor).³⁵ He gives his reader the poignant though calculated scene of Brunehaud's ordering that her child be lowered in a basket down the tower walls to the safety of allies in the city of Metz, a maternal instinct of protection that could endear her to the public. Upon arrival in Paris, Chilperic sends Brunehaud into exile in Rouen. However, Brunehaud has seduced one of Chilperic's sons, Merouée, who, rather than follow his father's orders to subdue the Poitou region which had been loyal to Sigebert, returns to court and indeed marries the beautiful and cunning Queen Brunehaud. The latter bides her time in what I will call her game of chess. The next move, however, belongs to Chilperic, who in response places the queen under closer house arrest and packs his son Merouée off to a monastery after having him tonsured. At the demand and threat of war on the part of an Austrasian embassy, Chilperic finds it the prudent thing to release Brunehaud into the hands of her loyal subjects. Is it a citation of the attitude of Chilperic himself, according to Aimoin, or is it Pasquier who places the aside in his mouth: "one woman isn't worth all the trouble."³⁶ This touch of misogyny aside, Pasquier demonstrates that Brunehaud makes full use of the role of the helpless woman—and beloved, endangered queen—in distress, rescued by her valiant men at arms. Pasquier uses the language of the theater as he explains to his reader: "This is how Chilperic, Merouée and Brunehaud performed their roles, when Frédégonde wanted to rejoin the action."³⁷ Fredegonda insisted that the Bishop of Rouen, who had married Brunehaud and Merouée, be tried in a council of prelates in Paris. He was then banished to an island near Coutance. Fredegonda subsequently had her stepson Merouée assassinated, and the claim published that he himself had asked a servant to take his life rather than face his father Chilperic's wrath. She was also responsible for having Merouée's brother, Clovis, stabbed to death with the appearance that he had taken his own life. In an effort to blot out the entire family, she then had their mother, the harmless Andouère, killed as well. Thus she sought to secure power for her own children with Chilperic. We can pause here to consider Pasquier's motives for recounting these "scenes" in his *Recherches*, and we are aware that he enjoyed the tragic theater of both Jodelle's *Cléopâtre Captive* and Garnier's *Les Juives*,³⁸ both of which focus on massacres and vengeance, and the motive of the *raison d'état*. Pasquier's own narrative here has taken a dramatic turn, partially in the spirit of Horace, both to entertain the reader and to instruct in good morals and the consequences of vice. He must also be recalling the bloodshed of the contemporary Civil Wars of Religion, the Conspiracy of

Amboise, and the subsequent repression; Henri III's ordered assassinations of the Guises, of whom Pasquier was fond; and the St. Bartholomew Massacre, not to mention the participation in that massacre by Charles IX, so vividly caricatured in Agrippa D'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques*.³⁹ Pasquier's Fredegonda is a historic figure reinterpreted as an artistic device (a woman has traditionally been thought to be a more engaging dramatic performer than a man)—but also as an ethical study in the dangers of Machiavellian recourse to murder and vice. We can also see, nonetheless, that Pasquier will give Fredegonda her due as an able queen as well as an immoral one. Indeed, we shall see further a special status he assigns her in the history of treachery: he discusses her in reference to Machiavelli's theories and even in reference to the Borgias! Later we shall see that he actually defends her rationale. In his first book of the *Recherches* and recurring as a principle in all of his writings, Pasquier explains that he will not flatter royal personages as had Paulo Giovio, Gauguin, Froissart or Commynes, for example. Rather, he will tell posterity the truth, giving as accurate and balanced an account as possible, weighing the evidence also with the help of his legal training. One feels that he accomplishes this in his recording of his synthesis of Aimoin and Gregory about the behavior of Fredegonda, Brunehaud, and their circle of victims and accomplices. Pasquier's attitude toward the personage of Fredegonda, nonetheless, remains a bit ambiguous, though, and much is left for critical debate by his readers.

In the same text, Pasquier introduces another of Fredegonda's accomplices, Landry.⁴⁰ Pasquier recounts a love affair that Landry has with Fredegonda, which is actually an invention of the historiographer Aimoin. Nonetheless, Pasquier includes it in his text. One day the queen is at her dressing table and Chilperic enters silently behind her, touching her shoulder. Without turning she rejoins "be careful Landry, the king has only just left and you are imprudent to have come to see me."⁴¹ Chilperic thus learns about their affair, and a plot is conceived by Fredegonda to kill Chilperic while he is returning from the hunt. The king is attacked at night, and it is claimed that the perpetrators are henchmen of Childebert, seeking vengeance for the death of his father, King Sigebert. Pasquier explains that Fredegonda, for her part, will not imitate the miscalculation of Brunehaud who allowed herself to be captured and exiled to Rouen. Fredegonda takes asylum in a church with the help of the benevolent King Gontran, whom she will later have assassinated. Some speculated that she had done so because of a guilty conscience, others to seek normal protection from danger, with her infant son, Clothaire. But Pasquier does not

pause here over her feminine vulnerability or her tender motherly solicitude: rather he will focus on the cruelty of Fredegonda. Pasquier pauses over the punctual occasion when Fredegonda might have had Brunehaud, Gontran, and Childebert massacred while worshipping in church and where they were thus more vulnerable, not as much on their guard, but the plan does not materialize. He then moves quickly without further comment to the instance of a servant, Oléric, “known for treasonous actions.” Fredegonda employs him to feign an offer of service to Queen Brunehaud with the purpose of assassinating her when the opportunity would arise. Pasquier explains that Oléric is unable to accomplish the deed and, even though discovered, is returned to Fredegonda safe and sound, who orders that the hapless servant’s hands and feet be severed as punishment for failure in his mission. Pasquier summarizes the ruthless aspects of Fredegonda’s character: no means was impossible for her in getting what she wanted.⁴² Thus far, Pasquier has followed both Aimoin and Gregory of Tours in his description of this determined woman as a she-wolf. There is ambiguity in some of his description, and he praises her cunning in places, as well as her protection of her son as we shall see; he also praises the motherly instincts of Queen Brunehaud. This said, the reader receives in his depiction of Fredegonda and certainly initially and later, in that of Brunehaud, an example of the exercise of female power as dark, perverse, and immoral. This is, as we have seen, an antithesis, not without ambiguity, to his encomiastic, if cursory treatment of Blanche of Castile and other queens regent. At the close of Chap. 6, Book V, Pasquier accords Fredegonda a shining moment. She emerges in his narrative not simply as a she-wolf, but also as a courageous princess who spares herself nothing to protect the interests of her son, Clothaire. Childebert wishes to avenge the death of his father, Sigebert, and so opens a campaign against Clothaire’s forces. As Pasquier explains, there was some doubt as to Clothaire’s age at the time of the confrontation with Childebert’s troops. However, Pasquier decides that, given the evidence, Clothaire was some nine years of age. At the opening of Chap. 8, Pasquier ascribes to Fredegonda not only lion-heartedness but also the slyness of a fox. The Battle of Droissy ensued. Fredegonda herself was at the head of the troops (actually led by Landry) with her young son, Clothaire. Pasquier assesses Fredegonda well for her shrewd strategy—she, a royal mother, delivers a stirring speech of encouragement to the troops who are also inspired by the very presence of the king himself among them, although he is still a minor. Pasquier recounts the details of the battle. As an example of her fox-like slyness,

Fredegonda's troops placed bovine bells on their horses and carried large tree branches. They approached at night and the suddenly roused troops of the enemy took them to be sheep or cattle because of the sound of the bells; also, it seemed to them that suddenly they found themselves in a forest. The rout was complete and Pasquier admires Fredegonda's resourcefulness and courage, as well as her wisdom and admirable magnanimity.

After these comments on the itinerary of Fredegonda, Pasquier turns his attention rather suddenly to Brunehaut, first comparing her conduct to that of Fredegonda.⁴³ While the latter's career in perfidy had been focused on by the Frankish historians as she protected the regalian rights of her own children with Chilperic and, although she had not spared royal blood in the efforts, Brunehaut by contrast worked in direct opposition to her own family and her own best interests. Pasquier notes that, at all times in her life, as a girl, a woman, and a wife, and in all her dealings with kings, she waged war against her servants and her own children, causing divisions among them and thereby hoping to maintain personal control over them and their policies. Queen Brunehaut, who lived from 543 to 613, for her part, also fought vigorously to protect the rights of her son, Childebert II, a tactic she employed in an attempt to mask her own ambition for power and influence, so the story goes. At Sigebert's assassination, the nobles would not support her efforts to be named as regent for her son Childebert. Brunehaut then left for Burgundy and in 612 persuaded one of her grandsons, Theodoric, to murder her other grandson, Theodebert, while Theodoric died anyway, soon after. She had previously published calumnies about the doubtful birth of Theodebert, who she asserted was in reality the child of a gardener. She supported the claim of her *great* grandson, Sigebert II, but the nobles once again refused their approval. Ultimately, Brunehaut was charged as responsible for the murders of 20 royal personages, as Pasquier, referring to her as "that cruel tigress"⁴⁴ asserts in his text. Her victims were, strikingly, members of her own family and others. Brunehaut ultimately fell into the hands of Fredegonda's son, King Clothaire, who condemned her to death and had her executed at the age of 80, dragged to death by a galloping horse. A shocked and dismayed Pasquier speaks of the horrible death of that princess.

In Chap. 10, Book V, continuing the same discussion, Pasquier compares *The Conduct of Fredegunda and Brunehaut, Queens According to the Old Lesson*.⁴⁵ We recall that Pasquier's goals in these narratives about the two queens have been didactic ones, that is to say, to give reliable records of history, also as *exempla* of acceptable and also notorious political conduct; to

include significantly powerful female players in that record; and to consider the strategies adopted by women in power, weighing those strategies in light of his defense of the authority of Catherine de Medici and providing insistent caveats against Machiavellianism. In comparing the two queens, he finds their goals to have been quite contrary to each other. France had been at the mercy of each of them, and had had to *bend the knee*—an expression he uses perhaps to suggest a general condition of constraint and tyranny they had imposed upon their subjects. Later in his text Pasquier employs the term *scélératesse*, or treachery that Machiavelli had seen as central to the maintaining of power. For him, Fredegonda's ambition could be characterized as to a good purpose, while Brunehaud's was weak and diminishing. Each had recourse to terrible malfeasance. The paper upon which their deeds were recorded ought to be red, either blushing with shame or stained with the blood of the many victims of their thirst for power, he marvels.⁴⁶ Be that as it may, Pasquier declares that the treachery that Machiavelli recommends to princes desirous of maintaining power would be best represented historically, not by the notorious Cesare Borgia, but by *our Fredegonda!* She had been responsible for more notorious crimes than Borgia, but with more consequence and with more felicitous results, Pasquier declares.⁴⁷ Moreover, her story, that of a woman (rather than a man), *was consequently more admirable*. She had not been high born but had had to climb by dint of ambition from humble origins and, through treachery, had successfully defeated any obstacles to her self-construction and ascent. Pasquier, although a staunch anti-Machiavellian, is full of admiration for her resourcefulness—indeed, despite himself. He seems to praise her abilities in the face of the enormous obstacles she no doubt confronted: she, a mother alone with a small child, suspected of the murder of Sigebert, tormented by her own conscience, and pursued by Childebert, Sigebert's son. Still she knew how *to play her role*, as Pasquier describes: she developed a fox-like slyness (*renardise*) that accustomed her to bloodshed, whether her victims might be friends or enemies; she developed the stomach of a man, indeed that of a fierce warrior (*un coeur masle et guerrier*). As in the case of the far more conventionally virtuous queens regent we spoke of above, Pasquier credits her with the paramount achievement of having protected her son Clothaire's interests and having secured his crown for him while also expanding the territories of the realm. This final point, above all, suggests to the reader Pasquier's implication of Catherine de Medici, who, despite the bloodshed that marked her administration, governed wisely and avoided, in her time, a change of dynasty, while also no crown lands had been alienated.

Pasquier is anxious to share with his reader his conviction that Queen Brunehaud was the victim of historians' "calumnies." Men and women see things differently, he declares. The male writer may give too summary and severe an account of the "facts." *Les plumes médisantes* (*maligning pens*), as Pasquier calls them, are of little value to the historian or to the service of good ethics, in their desire to defame Brunehaud. He explains that one such detractor is the historian Jonas, a friend of the preacher Colombain, who had been critical of Brunehaud's behavior and was subsequently banished through her influence. Pasquier asserts that Jonas is the most severe of the queen's enemies, and that the Protestant Party, in his own time, made use of his narrative against her as a parallel narrative in their efforts to defame Catherine de Medici. Pasquier also asserts that, contrary to Jonas, Boccaccio, Paul Emilio, and Pasquier's fellow parliamentarian, Jean du Tillet, all wrote in Brunehaud's favor.⁴⁸ Jonas, by contrast, suggests that she had recourse to charms and witchcraft to achieve her ends. But Pasquier defames the defamers. He declares that Brunehaud's judgment and her execution was "the most shameful, inhuman and detestable act that had ever been set to paper." He cites it as a miscarriage of justice, and a violation of both human and divine law. Pasquier takes on the tone and style of a defense attorney. He asks rhetorically, "*who*, after all, was on trial? ... a queen and sovereign princess," and therefore she was not subject to the judgment of Clothaire, or to that of any human agency. "At most her enemy might have attempted to demand a ransom for her, or a long prison sentence or even death, but not a death so cruel and exemplary as this." Moreover, he pursues, her alleged guilt in the death of ten royal personages was never corroborated, and her condemnation was deliberately expedited. Pasquier reemphasizes the atrocity of that condemnation, as she was "a woman, a queen and a sovereign princess, and the wife and mother of kings, well advanced in years."⁴⁹ Thus Pasquier rides to the defense of female rule and female power, suggesting also that deference should be paid to womanly vulnerability. This last sentiment is perhaps an ambient survival of the ethos of chivalry and the codes of courtly love. He seems to infer that, in the course of things, a male, finding himself charged similarly to Brunehaud, might well have expected to suffer the harsh manner of death that was hers, though Pasquier is never explicit in this. It can be noted that, despite his indignance at Brunehaud's execution, nowhere in the *Recherches* does he overtly call into question the exercise of the death penalty as such. He was certainly experienced in *capital* cases where death was the outcome.

We know from internal evidence that Pasquier presided at the *Grands Jours* at Tours and Poitiers, where capital penalties were meted out with regularity.⁵⁰ He was also adamant that, in his defense practices (such as in his early defense of the falsely accused Sieur d'Arconville), the innocent should be exonerated.⁵¹ Of course, he is a royalist by political and religious conviction and the execution of an anointed monarch (Brunehaud) would not have received his approval.

Pasquier's concentrated reading of the Frankish historians' accounts of Fredegonda and Brunehaud reveal the considerable thought and attention he dedicated to the question of female rule, as both of those very complex women, if not queens regnant, certainly wielded power and carried out strategic plans that did much to mold the reigns and the psyches of their male successors. They are, as we have said, serviceable models of the praise and blame that accrue to royal conduct, and Pasquier has tried to set the record straight, in each instance, exercising the role of the truthful historian who avoids flattery of his subject but offers an accurate account for contemporary policy and comportment. We have emphasized that he uses these two historical models as parallels for the reign of Catherine de Medici who, though herself not a queen regnant, certainly marked the second half of the sixteenth century through dint of her dominant character, her finesse, and also her shrewdness as guide and ancillary to her reigning sons, particularly Henri III. This last Valois king had recourse to her counsel and diplomatic intervention,⁵² even with potential enemies, in his efforts to secure his throne. This alone provides us with a significant key to the extent of the Queen Mother's prestige.

Pasquier asserts through his text that queens regent or queens consort provided maternal nurturing for the psychic and social fabric of the State and were necessary, *female* embodiments of reassuring continuity in the midst of chaos. Pasquier accords this same achievement to the *pêle-mêle* strategies of Fredegonda and Brunehaud. We see in conclusion that for Pasquier, these noble women of sometimes dubious method, nonetheless, were in fact mothers to the State who assured continuity in times of chaos. While Pasquier never budged in his support of the Salic Law forbidding female succession to sovereignty, still he is eager to share his awareness that continuity in instability could indeed be provided through the guiding hand of women of consequence. He provides a portrait of female malleability and versatile responsiveness as he accords these sometimes gentle, sometimes determined guiding hands their rightful place in French national historiography.

NOTES

1. Ph. Desan and C. Bauschatz, "Femmes," in Philippe Desan, *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne* (Paris: Champion, 2007), 451.
2. Studies about women's power or influence in France are now more numerous every year, notably, works on Marguerite de Navarre and other royal and noble female patrons.
3. An important study of the vogue for national antiquities and origins is to be found in Claude Gilbert Du Bois, *La conception de l'histoire au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Nizet, 1977).
4. For the details of Pasquier's life and career see Paul Bouteiller, *Recherches sur la vie et la Carrière d'Etienne Pasquier* (Paris: Editions ISI, 1989); or James H. Dahlinger, *Etienne Pasquier on Ethics and History* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).
5. *Le Monophile*, a work of love casuistry, was first published in 1554, and a similar piece, the *Ordonnances d'amour*, in 1564, four years after the first appearance of Books I and II of his *Recherches de la France*.
6. All references to Pasquier's *Recherches de la France* are from the critical edition in three volumes produced by Marie-Madeleine Fragonard and François Roudaut (Paris: Champion, 1996); I cite Book, chapter and page number (e.g., VI, 8 1040). All references to Pasquier's *Correspondence* are from the *Lettres familières*, ed. Dorothy Thickett (Geneva: Droz, 1974).
7. In his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), Stephen Greenblatt deftly described how sixteenth-century person-ages advanced in status. We shall see that Pasquier found the cultivating of great women indispensable to his own professional advancement.
8. Etienne Pasquier, *Lettres familières*, ed. Dorothy Thickett (Geneva, Droz. 1974), 1: Letter 1 to Antoine Loisel.
9. Pasquier, *Lettres familières*, Letter 12 to Germain Le Picart about married life. In her notes, Thickett reminds that this Le Picart was related to the family of the illustrious Hellenist and *lecteur royal*, Guillaume Budé.
10. Same letter to Picart, 12.
11. Pasquier: *Recherches de la France*, VIII, ch. 59, 1691–8.
12. Ephesians 5: 21–33. We know that Pasquier was intimately knowledgeable of the Scriptures, especially as we note in Book III of the *Recherches*. He also wrote commentaries on the Four Gospels, which are now considered lost.
13. Pasquier, *Lettres familières*, Letter 5, 44, to Guillaume de Marillac. In this letter about his work *Les ordonnances d'Amour*, Pasquier reveals his openness toward all peoples, cultures, and religions, which is remarkable for his time and place.

14. Pasquier indeed cultivated prominent women, notably the Maréchale de Retz, with whom he corresponded, as well as Catherine and Madeleine des Roches with whom he had a literary, sparring relationship in salon circles at Poitiers during the *grands jours* of 1579, as well as in the collective poetic effort that the association produced, *La Puce de Mlle. Des Roches*. See Suzanne Trocmé Sweany, *Estienne Pasquier et nationalisme littéraire* (Geneva: Champion-Slatkine, 1985), 19–20.
15. *Recherches*, vol. I, 503–8.
16. *Recherches*, I, 503.
17. *Recherches* II.
18. *Recherches*, I, 503, note 618.
19. *Recherches*, I, 4.
20. *Recherches*, p. 503.
21. *Recherches* II, 19, 504.
22. *Recherches*, p. 504.
23. Hyperdulia: a level of Christian devotion above veneration, and bestowed only upon the Virgin Mary: here, an extraordinary, diachronically present veneration for the womanly and queenly holiness and virtues of the mother of St. Louis.
24. Editors of the critical edition of the *Recherches* note that dowagers actually styled themselves as “la reine blanche” since white (*blanche*, f.) was the color of mourning worn by the queen after the death of her husband, the king (*Recherches* II, 19, 504).
25. We also know that Blanche continued to appear at the side of her son King Louis as he received ambassadors; he would appoint her as regent for a second time at his departure for the Crusade which he led in 1248. New Advent online Catholic Encyclopedia, “St. Louis” <http://newadvent.org/cathen/09368a.htm> (accessed 8 June 2014).
26. *Recherches* II, 9, p. 504.
27. *Recherches*, n. 622, p. 505.
28. Pasquier discusses fiefdoms at length in *Recherches* II, 16, 466.
29. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. & trans. Russell Price (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), ch. XVIII.
30. Aimoin (c.965-c.1008), *De gestis Francorum*, ed. J. du Breuil (Paris: Drouart, 1603), cited in n. 116 of *Recherches*, 1027.
31. *Recherches*, V, 5, p. 1027.
32. Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum*, IV, 28 (cited in *Recherches*, n. 117, 1027).
33. *Recherches*, V, 5, p. 1027.
34. *Recherches*, V, 6, p. 1028.
35. *Recherches*, V, 8, pp. 1034–44.
36. *Recherches*, V, 6, p. 1029.

37. *Recherches*, 1029.
38. Robert Garnier, *Les Juives*. 1583 ; Etienne Jodelle, *Cléopâtre Captive*, 1553.
39. Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, ed. Jean-Raymond Fanlo, 2006. (Les Fers, vv 951–952.)
40. *Recherches*, V, 6, 1029.
41. *Recherches*, 1028.
42. *Recherches*, 1031.
43. *Recherches* V, 8, pp. 1034–5.
44. *Recherches*, 1037.
45. *Recherches*, 1041.
46. *Recherches* V, 10, p. 1042.
47. *Recherches* V, 10, p. 1042.
48. *Recherches*, 1083.
49. *Recherches*, 1042–54.
50. See Dahlinger, *Etienne Pasquier on Ethics and History*, 28, 30, 77–8.
51. *Ibid*, 42–3.
52. *Lettres de Henri III*, ed. Jacqueline Boucher (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France, 2012), vol. VII, Letter 5801, 10.

PART II

Politics, Ambition and Scandal

The Unruly Queen: Blanche of Namur and Dysfunctional Rulership in Medieval Sweden

Henric Bagerius and Christine Ekholst

INTRODUCTION

Few Swedish queens have had a worse reputation than Blanche of Namur (d. 1363). Blanche was portrayed as vain and licentious, and contemporary sources even accused her of poisoning her own son. Blanche and her husband, King Magnus Eriksson (1316–1374), were described as ungodly and lascivious; sources furthermore tell us that their mutual love for a young knight turned into an obsession. The political critique directed at both Blanche and Magnus, although different in content, had clear sexual connotations and it linked their sexual deviances to Magnus's failed regency. Magnus would eventually be deposed and the propagandistic texts might have played a role in his deposition.¹ However, what the sources show us with certainty is that contemporary critics believed that deviant sexual and gender behavior could justify a dethronement. In their mind descriptions of an unruly queen and her weak effeminate husband

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Z.E. Rohr, L. Benz (eds.), *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation in the Medieval and Early Modern West, 1060–1600*, Queenship and Power, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-31283-5_5

would help explain why the king had been overthrown. This chapter aims to explore the interconnections between gender, sexuality, and power in late medieval political critique by examining the accusations launched at Blanche of Namur, queen of Sweden and Norway.

Magnus Eriksson, Blanche's husband, inherited the throne of Norway from his maternal grandfather in 1319 and the same year he was elected king of Sweden. He was only a young boy at the time and he became king in a politically unstable period. When it was time for Magnus to be married, he and his entourage traveled to the small duchy of Namur to propose to Blanche, the daughter of John I, the marquis of Namur, and Marie of Artois. It is not known why Magnus—or his councilors—decided to go to Namur to find a queen. Foreign queens were certainly not unusual in Scandinavia, but during the late Middle Ages they tended to be chosen from the various German regions.² It is, nonetheless, safe to assume that the choice of Blanche of Namur was dictated by a wish to create beneficial alliances with powerful French and Flemish families. Blanche married Magnus in 1335 at which point she received as her morning gift (dower) an important castle with belonging estates located on the border between Sweden and Norway. Blanche was crowned the year after and became the queen of a peripheral, but very large realm; Sweden and Norway were united but continued to be ruled as two kingdoms with separate royal councils.

There was nothing unusual about Blanche's queenship. Magnus certainly ruled during a stormy era with aristocratic rebellions; however, political turmoil was commonplace in late medieval Sweden, as in many other regions in Europe. In fact Magnus's father and his uncle had been killed by their own brother during an infamous civil war. Perhaps Magnus and Blanche were just unlucky; they happened to live during the same time as one of the more remarkable medieval women: Birgitta Birgersdotter. This aristocratic lady, better known as St. Birgitta of Sweden, had strong political opinions and her family was entangled in the political conflicts of the time. It is in Birgitta's revelations and writings we find the origin to the negative depictions of the royal couple. The allegations are vague at times but in a manifesto she stated openly that Magnus reputedly, but likely, had had sexual intercourse with men and that he should be deposed if he did not change his ways.

The political critique against the royal couple brought up many different faults, but it focused more and more on certain marital and sexual issues. There were thus political dimensions to sexuality and gender in the Middle Ages. This chapter will argue that sexual transgressions were used

in propagandistic texts in order to underline how the royal marriage was meant to function. In marriage a man was supposed to have sexual intercourse with his wife since this allowed him to control her. This idea certainly applied to the most public marriage: that between king and queen where the woman had substantial power which could be seen as threatening. Sexual deviances, such as sodomy³ and adultery, were not peripheral to the understanding of politics and power; indeed, these issues were at the very heart of traditional concerns of power and ideology.⁴

QUEENSHIP

During the Middle Ages the royal marriage was a symbol for the societal organization and in particular the relationship between the king and his subjects. The successful marital life of the king and the queen symbolized a peaceful coexistence where the woman lovingly submitted to the man.⁵ It thus symbolized and reenacted the God-given hierarchical gender order. The importance of sexuality for the royal marriage is obvious. The sexual intercourse between king and queen provided the realm with an heir to the throne and secured the monarchy. Implicitly, sexuality can thus be found at the very core of monarchical organization. Indeed, it is commonplace to underline the queen's sexual role; her primary duty was to produce an heir to the throne. Failure to do so could have serious repercussions for the queen, the regency, and the stability of the realm.⁶ However, the queen's sexual role went further than that. The queen's very identity and her other duties such as mediation and intercession were connected to the physical proximity to the king and thus to her sexuality.⁷ Since political power was centered on a person that meant that access to that person and the person's body became a political issue. One of the queen's advantages was her access to the king and a primary way she could approach him was in the bedchamber. This was a great benefit; she would be able to have the king to herself and talk to him undisturbed. This was where she could influence him and potentially gain power for herself or her relatives.⁸

Some historians have claimed that the role of the queen changed during the Middle Ages; they argued that the queen's political position was weakened when the royal administration became institutionalized. Her household then became separated from the king's and this left her outside of the power circle.⁹ Recently this narrative has been questioned; in England, for example, the queen's household was never completely separated from the king's.¹⁰ Furthermore, even if the queen's role changed in the course of the Middle Ages this does not imply that she therefore lost power or

became marginalized.¹¹ However, queenship studies have taught us that a queen's level of influence and power varied greatly with the circumstances. Her power, or indeed authority, depended on region, political context, the personality of the queen and her king, the strength of her original family, and so on. These variations can make it difficult to generalize and clearly define the medieval queen's position and role. As for Blanche, we know little about her, which is true of most Scandinavian medieval queens. But from the scarce sources we have at our disposal, we can tell that Blanche was a powerful queen who ruled the kingdom in Magnus's absence and also co-ruled in his presence. We find her seal on a number of documents and, together with her husband, she signed treaties and negotiated with other rulers. Furthermore, as mentioned above, after her wedding she received several Norwegian fiefs and she ruled over these as her own "queendom" within the kingdom, as Steinar Imsen puts it.¹²

One thing that seems clear is that the queen's symbolic role as a complement to the king became more important during the Middle Ages.¹³ The queen represented the home and the household; she was the symbol for the good wife who submitted to her husband and she was meant to present herself as obedient and chaste.¹⁴ Also, her other roles, as an intercessor and mediator, were quite strongly gendered. She was meant to contribute to reconciliations and peace in society, to soften the king by her gentle touch.¹⁵ If a queen was seen as neglecting this task, she could be reproached and be made responsible for the consequences. Eleanor of Castile, wife of Edward I of England, was thus criticized for her husband's harsh rule. She was indirectly depicted as failing in her duties to enhance and influence the king in a more peace-loving and merciful direction.¹⁶ The role of the queen was thus very complex and in a sense pre-modern queenship embodied a paradox. She had a position of power, but not necessarily formal authority. Her position gave her power at times, while it required formal submission at others. These conflicting aspects were hard to successfully combine and in times of crisis the queen could easily be made a target of criticism. When the king's policies failed or were unpopular, political critique could be aimed at his wife. This was an efficient way to indirectly attack the king. There are patterns in the criticism directed at late medieval queens; allegations tend to have clear sexual aspects. This can be expected since the queen's very function was linked to her sexual body. The queen was supposed to be a role model of chastity and piety and the thought of the queen's sexuality was therefore almost always present.¹⁷ It is in this light that we must see the hints and insinuations that we find

in Birgitta's revelations. The queen's sexuality was an easy target for criticism and, as we shall see, it provided a framework for critics to question the power relationship between queen and king.

A ROYAL EQUILIBRIUM

Scholars have in general analyzed the roles of the king and the queen separately. The historiographies of kings and queens are in a sense as divided as their roles.¹⁸ Kings were studied as political figures, while queens were studied biographically, for their scandalous behavior or their luxurious lives. The last decades have seen a shift in this tendency and queens are now studied as political beings, their roles analyzed as part of the political structure or political culture.¹⁹ Queenship is, however, still studied as a separate phenomenon from kingship. Theresa Earenfight argues that the term rulership better captures the political dynamics between king, queen, and courtiers. The terms kingship and queenship might give the impression that the king and queen had two completely autonomous positions in society. This was not the case; the roles of the king and the queen were meant to complement each other.²⁰ As mentioned, sometimes the queen needed to step in as a regent and she was then meant to represent the king and further his political agenda.²¹ The term rulership thus emphasizes that the king rarely, if ever, ruled alone. Rulership underlines the interrelationship between the king and the queen and emphasizes that the royal couple functioned as a unit. Furthermore, it highlights the role of other influential people, such as ministers and courtiers. Earenfight also states that the king's favorites must be included in government. These ambitious men could acquire so much power that they basically controlled both the king and the entire court.²²

This is also what the accusations against Magnus seem to imply. Magnus's favorite was called Bengt Algotsson. He was born into one of the most powerful families in Sweden and from 1352 he is mentioned as being part of the king's council.²³ In 1353, he was elevated to duke of Halland (a southern province of Sweden) and Finland.²⁴ This was indeed quite extraordinary; Bengt is so far the only Swede to have been awarded the title of duke without being related to the royal family. The Swedish aristocrats were displeased with Bengt's increasing influence and riches and after a rebellion in 1356 he was exiled. King Magnus had to swear an oath that he would never let his favorite back into the country, a promise that he had to repeat in 1359. A short time period thereafter Bengt was murdered.²⁵

It is undeniable that Bengt Algotsson influenced the rulership and that the king's favorites have to be taken into account in order to understand medieval governing. Earenfight argues for the need to deconstruct medieval monarchies in order to better understand their dynamics. It might not be productive to maintain dichotomies such as political and personal, public and private, if we want to capture the complexities of pre-modern government. Indeed, for the medieval king and queen the personal was public. The political was made personal through coronations, weddings, funerals, tours, and receptions.²⁶

Ideally a well-functioning rulership consisted of a king *and* a queen who would maintain the balance between male and female virtues. Furthermore, this allowed for the hierarchical relationship between masculinity and femininity to be made apparent. The royal equilibrium was a patriarchal equilibrium which could be expressed through rituals of various kinds.²⁷ Mark Ormrod refers to this as “the informal division of responsibilities between king and queen.”²⁸ This created a separation between the rulership's masculine characteristics, that is, leadership, control, bravery, honesty, and justice, and its feminine traits, that is, love, reconciliation, and mercy. This division made it possible for the king to distance himself from the female characteristics of the rulership. But it subsequently entailed that the queen carried responsibility for the gentler traits of rulership, which meant that she could be criticized and blamed when conflicts arose or settlements failed. Indeed, Ormrod notes that this informal division of duties and roles had its risks. The equilibrium between the king and queen could be disturbed and the balance between the royal masculine and the royal feminine be tilted. This could, for example, happen when there was no queen to perform the female duties of rulership and the king had to take them on himself.²⁹ Also, if a queen for various reasons had to transgress her female role and perform duties that were considered manly, or indeed, kingly, she might be criticized for subverting the proper gender order.

The political critique against Magnus and Blanche allows us to examine the royal equilibrium between masculine and feminine characteristics and duties. It is evident that what one of the royals did could affect the other one, as on a tipping scale. If the queen was described as transgressive and as assuming a male dominant role, then the king might be seen as unmanly since he was unable to control his wife. In the Middle Ages these gender deviations could be expressed in sexual terms, which is what we find in the criticism directed at this particular rulership. As mentioned above, the

sharp critique against Magnus and Blanche originates with St. Birgitta of Sweden. Birgitta belonged to the Swedish aristocracy and that would explain her position in this case. As in many other places in late medieval Europe, the Swedish aristocracy staunchly defended their rights and fought for increased power. However, Birgitta's relationship to the royal couple was not always strained; in fact it started out on a very positive note. Birgitta functioned as a lady-in-waiting for the queen and the royal couple early on supported her plans for a new monastic order.³⁰ In the mid-fourteenth century, Birgitta encouraged Magnus to go on a crusade to Novgorod; however, this military expedition turned out to be a very disappointing defeat.³¹ At this point, Birgitta's loyalty toward the royal couple seemed to have vanished and she instead became bitterly negative. In her revelations she now stated that the king was a "son of disobedience" who was controlled by the advice of the devil.³²

As noted, Birgitta was ready to take this further. In a short manifesto written in the beginning of the 1360s she suggested that it was time to depose the king.³³ Her manifesto urged four men to confront the king with a number of important issues and the very first allegation concerned Magnus's sexual behavior. Birgitta wrote that Magnus had the worst reputation a Christian man could have: it was rumored that he had had intercourse with men and that this probably was true since Magnus loved men more than he loved his god, his wife, and his own soul.³⁴ The idea that Magnus took pleasure in same-sex intercourse was further developed in a pamphlet known as *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege* written sometime after he was deposed and imprisoned in April 1365.³⁵ The anonymous author is thought to have belonged to Birgitta's circle and the purpose of the text was likely to justify the dethronement of King Magnus.³⁶ This pamphlet underlined that the sexual behavior of the royal couple was a political issue; indeed, when the king and queen ceased to have intercourse the entire rulership collapsed. According to *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege*, Magnus's sexual activities were affecting his ability to govern and, as we shall see, in turn this impacted the behavior of his queen who became unruly. The royal equilibrium had been disturbed.

SEXUAL SLANDER

St. Birgitta's allegations against Blanche adhere to a well-established tradition of sexually charged accusations directed at queens. Already the early revelations touched upon the queen's childbearing role and her sexuality.

In one revelation the Mother of God likened the queen to a “gnawed core of an apple which was not beautiful to look at but bitter to taste and hard to swallow.”³⁷ Virgin Mary further stated that she had planted this queen in a foreign country to bear excellent fruit but now she spoke indecent words and behaved as if she only longed for secular honor and favor.³⁸ Another revelation referred to a proud wife who was egotistical, disobedient, and desired only worldly things. Even Christ passed his judgment on this haughty wife and stated: “She is a viper with the tongue of a harlot, the bile of dragons in her heart, and bitter poison in her flesh. Her eggs will therefore be poisonous.”³⁹

The early criticism directed at King Magnus also had sexual connotations, but, as expected, of a different kind. Birgitta stated time and again in her revelations that a certain king had to get rid of his overly ambitious and greedy councilors. Putting blame on the councilors was a common tactic used in political critique of medieval regents.⁴⁰ She in particular pointed to one “clever flatterer,” a person who had an insatiable thirst for riches and presents. If the king sought his friendship and “ruins himself with him by placing full trust in him” he would look like a crowned donkey rather than a wise prince.⁴¹ The Latin wording *dissoluerit se cum eo* is interesting since it carries ambiguous meanings. The expression can be interpreted as “to destroy” or “to ruin” but the verb *dissoluo* is connected to adjectives such as “loose” and “unchaste” and the phrase can be translated as “if he lets loose with him.”⁴² This ambiguous expression with sexual connotations, but nothing too obvious, was most likely purposefully chosen.

Most historians agree that the “clever flatterer” who Birgitta referred to is Bengt Algotsson, Magnus Eriksson’s favorite. Several of Birgitta’s revelations referred to the king’s favorite. He is depicted as the devil’s servant and his family as vipers. That Magnus had chosen *one* favorite and thereby excluded others from governing was obviously one of the main concerns for Birgitta. In one revelation the Devil states that he advised the king to perform “certain sins” that he dared not do openly.⁴³ He recommended the king to pass over all the other capable men in the kingdom, to promote one man in particular and place him in charge and wholeheartedly love him more than himself.⁴⁴ The king is described as loving his favorite obsessively, which was the reason why he placed him above the other good men of the realm. It is never stated openly which sins the king had performed but the expression was meant to lead the thoughts in a certain direction without being too specific. Unlike the manifesto there is no explicit mention of sexual intercourse between men in her revelations, but the king’s desire for

his favorite is alluded to in several of the revelations. Birgitta's revelations must thus be seen in a contemporary European context where political allegations of sodomy were rarely pronounced explicitly, but rather alluded to and insinuated. In a sense this made the unmentionable vice an even more efficient weapon when used in political critique.⁴⁵

In the pamphlet from the 1360s, *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege*, the discourse surrounding the royal couple changed.⁴⁶ In this text, Blanche is identified as the root of all bad things that happened in the kingdom. What exactly she had done to deserve this harsh judgment is not explained, but it is obvious that Magnus's failures as a king are linked to his marriage to Blanche. The pamphlet stated that he had been married to Blanche for only one year when he started to distrust the "best men" in the realm. Instead he would choose young men of low birth to be his councilors and the pamphlet described the dramatic consequences this had. When these low-ranked men were elevated to positions of power the "arrogance and pleasure seeking" increased in the Swedish kingdom. The king himself tried to fight against his desires but was eventually defeated by devilish lust and he started having sexual intercourse against nature and customs. Many who participated in these excesses were richly rewarded. The rumor of the king's deeds flew over the kingdom, according to *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege*.⁴⁷

These vivid descriptions imply that the queen had turned the king against his proper councilors, the best men of the realm. If we consider rulership to involve the king, the queen, but also the councilors, then we need to consider the queen's interactions with these influential men. Indeed, her relationship to the councilors, in particular to favorites among them, could be complex during the Middle Ages. As mentioned, it was a common strategy to criticize the king's councilors and favorites in order to indirectly attack the king. Propagandistic texts could also criticize the king for becoming too close or affectionate with one of his favorites. In situations where the favorite caused conflicts, the sources sometimes juxtapose the king's favorite and the queen; they are portrayed as competing for the king's time, space, and love. During the English King Edward II's reign sources stated that "a rumour was spread over the kingdom that the king loved an evil sorcerer more than he loved his wife."⁴⁸ Other sources claimed that Edward's male relationships led him to reject the queen's embraces.⁴⁹ This was part of the discourse in Birgitta's revelations as well (see below). However, in the pamphlet *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege* we find a different pattern and the king, the queen, and the favorite are placed in what seems to be a love triangle:

When the king's bad reputation and the queen's audacity grew, the king elevated a knight that he and the queen loved equally, and they loved him more than their sons. They made him a duke and turned over the entire kingdom, as well as all respected and fortified castles, to him.⁵⁰

We find that the king and the queen had changed over time albeit in different ways. The king has gotten a bad reputation from the sexual excesses at court, while the queen is referred to as "audacious." As we shall see, a closer examination reveals that the text points to an upset gender balance in the royal marriage.

THE REJECTED QUEEN

In her call for rebellion, made in the early 1360s, Birgitta stated that Magnus loved men more than his god and his own soul. Birgitta was also convinced that Magnus's love for other men was stronger than his emotions for his wife. His love for men was therefore a threat to the royal marriage which was a major concern for Birgitta. If we return to her revelations we can see that she had suspicions about the king's desires long before the manifesto. One of her earlier revelations stated that the king and queen had decided to live in abstinence after the queen had given birth to two sons. Birgitta had herself lived in a chaste marriage and she believed that a vow of abstinence could be a good thing—if it was done out of love for God. But this was not the case for Magnus and Blanche:

[T]his king and queen mutually consented to an apparent good but not a wise one, because one of the partners lightmindedly consented to a vow of abstinence out of new-found fervor and imprudent zeal, while the other partner did so impulsively out of a kind of complacency and in order to avoid pain.⁵¹

Birgitta advised Blanche and Magnus to immediately resume their marital intercourse, because if they kept living separately they might get exposed to temptations and in the end they would regret their vow to remain chaste. It was not a sin to retract a promise that was not properly thought through, Birgitta ensured. In fact, she claimed that worse things might happen if they did not resume marital sex; there was a chance that it would start rumors and the royal couple would be slandered. Now, that should be reason enough to resume life as husband and wife, Birgitta stated.⁵²

Birgitta mentioned that the king and the queen took their vows of abstinence for different reasons. Queen Blanche did not want to give birth to more children and was hoping that a promise of chastity would please people in her surroundings. King Magnus, on the other hand, was described as frivolous. He wanted to cease to have marital sex because of a new desire or, as the contemporary Old Swedish translation put it, “of a new and intense heat and senseless lovemaking.”⁵³ Magnus’s desire had changed; he felt a new heat in his body. In another revelation Birgitta claimed that both Magnus and Blanche had changed their ways and customs when they elevated “a man from a viper’s root.”⁵⁴ It is not possible to pinpoint which ways and customs Birgitta was referring to but in the context of the other revelations it certainly could lead to speculations about the royal couples’ intimate life. As other scholars have pointed out, this is the seed to the outright allegations of sodomy that Birgitta later launched.⁵⁵ However, she made no explicit link between Magnus’s reluctance to have marital sex and same-sex desires. Instead, she vaguely referred to a “new desire.” In these revelations same-sex desire “is always hovering nearby as a hint, a suggestion, a possibility,” to borrow Richard E. Zeikowitz’s words.⁵⁶

The descriptions of the royal couples’ sexual activities changed over time. An initial phase of insinuations—where Blanche had the tongue of a harlot while Magnus had a new desire—turned into explicit statements in Birgitta’s manifesto where Magnus is rumored to have had sex with men because he loved them more than his wife. This development escalated further in the pamphlet *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege* where the royal marital intimacies—or rather lack thereof—affected the state of the kingdom. In the description of events Magnus’s rejection of Blanche forms a narrative turning point:

At this time joy turned to sorrow since the disinterested king did not want to have sexual relations with the queen. She consented to this for a while. But she then withdrew her consent, revealed her discontent to some of the king’s councillors and said that she found it hard to endure. The king was advised to change his attitude. He answered the queen unfriendly, that he would rather suffer the worst pains and death than return to the ordinary. So, the king and the queen lived together for a while and outwardly it seemed like they lived in harmony and mutual respect, as was expected. Only a few knew what lay hidden in their hearts, as opposed to what they showed openly—although many suspected the truth. After a time, through the agency of the devil, the king was defeated by lust, and complied to having sexual intercourse, but against nature and custom.⁵⁷

Libellus de Magno Erici Rege, thus, made the sex life of the royal couple into a political issue. When Magnus did not want to have intercourse with Blanche she turned to his councilors to solve this political problem. They tried to convince Magnus to return to the marital bed, which he refused. The author of *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege* made it clear that the political order and traditional hierarchies were in danger when the king rejected the queen and engaged in sexual activities against nature.

The lack of royal marital sex had other consequences as well. As Ruth Mazo Karras has pointed out, medieval people did not necessarily view sexual intercourse as a mutual act; instead, they conceptualized sexual intercourse as an act that one person did unto another—in proper order, a man unto a woman. The sexual intercourse was gendered and interpreted in terms of an active man and a passive woman, or a penetrating male and a receptive female. This symbolized the correct hierarchical gender order, where the man literally was supposed to be on top.⁵⁸ Any other type of sexual intercourse, be it same-sex or with the woman on top, disturbed the natural God-given hierarchical order. The heterosexual intercourse represented and enforced a correct gender order.⁵⁹

Thus, the proper gender hierarchy could be disrupted when the king refused to have sex with his wife. The heterosexual intercourse kept the woman content and in place, without it she could become disorderly. *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege* described how the gender order was disturbed when Magnus and Blanche ceased to have marital intercourse. It was after her failed attempt to get Magnus back into her bedchamber that Blanche's "audacity grew" and she started to act independently. Erik, Blanche's and Magnus's eldest son, finally managed to expel the royal favorite and he threatened to put him to death if he returned to Sweden. According to *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege* this made Blanche so upset that she decided to take action to protect her favorite. She traveled to the Danish king—a very cruel ruler according to the author—and she offered him a province in southern Sweden if he supported and helped her exiled favorite. That Queen Blanche was the one who negotiated with the Danes was regarded with distrust. Indeed, the pamphlet stated: "Everyone thought that it was improper and suspicious that the queen meddled in state affairs while the king calmly stayed in the home."⁶⁰ *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege* related that Blanche would not stop there. She apparently saw her own son as a great threat after his successes and in order to finally get rid of him she poisoned him. Twenty days later he was dead and Magnus regained the power of his realm. It can be added that the narrative in *Libellus de Magno*

Erici Rege has little correlation to real events. The description of Blanche using poison to solve a political issue to her own gain is rather part of contemporary European political discourses. It was not uncommon that medieval queens were accused of using magic or poison to their advantage. In addition, many of the queens who were accused of using poison were foreigners in their own country just like Blanche.⁶¹

As we have seen, Magnus's reluctance to have sexual intercourse with his wife was not due to any wish to abstain from sex completely. Indeed, Magnus's unwillingness to fulfill his conjugal duties was linked to his "forbidden desire." He put the entire kingdom in jeopardy when he started to have sexual intercourse against nature and customs. The male same-sex intercourse was alarming for the same reasons as intercourse with the woman on top. The male same-sex intercourse upset the correct gender order since one of the men were conceptualized as effeminate due to his passive and receptive role in intercourse. What could be more worrisome than imagining the king, the leader of the realm, as effeminate, passive and not in charge? Sodomy was also a political concern because the lover got direct access to the king. Much like the queen, the lover gained access to the king's body and to his ear. The physical contact with the king would make it possible for him to gain influence and power. Furthermore, if the king preferred one man over the others the favorite could in turn also block their access to the king. In that sense a sodomitical relationship between king and favorite threatened established power structures and ranks at the court.

In sum, Magnus's unwillingness to have intercourse with his wife made her unruly and too independent while his own sexual relationship with his favorite made it unclear whether the king was still in control or ruled by another man. When *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege* stated that the king sat passively at home while the queen acted in state matters, it was without doubt a reference to the king's lack of manly control and activity. The pamphlet portrayed a powerless and effeminate king that ceased to be the master in his marriage and therefore could not control his unruly wife.

THE UNRULY QUEEN AND THE WEAK KING

The idea that Queen Blanche poisoned her own son was long perpetuated in Swedish historiography, but modern historians have disregarded this as a fabrication and part of a quite conscious attempt to destroy the reputation of both Blanche and her husband Magnus.⁶² But how about

the other parts of the political critique, is there any truth to the rumors? We will never know whether Magnus had a sexual relationship with Bengt Algotsson. Moreover, to try to establish whether Magnus was homosexual is in our opinion anachronistic. It is much more interesting to understand why his alleged same-sex desire was used in political critique and examine how his sexualities were constructed in contemporary sources.⁶³

What we do know of Blanche does not necessarily correspond to the image created. It is important to recall that a big discrepancy existed between queenly norms and queenly practices, and, furthermore, that the norms that outlined the expected queenly behavior were often contradictory. In fact, *Libellus de Magno Erics Rege* gives Blanche less power and autonomy than she had in reality. As far as we can tell from the available sources, Blanche was powerful and active in government and her temporary right to rule and represent the Swedish kingdom was accepted by contemporaries. Still, the queen's undefined role and her unofficial position of power made her an easy target for criticism. Criticizing the queen for excessive power was an excellent way to indirectly claim that the king had lost control. He had no control over his wife, how could he possibly be in control of the kingdom? Within the royal equilibrium, an independent and unruly queen presupposed a weak and submissive king.⁶⁴

This chapter has argued that although the king and the queen had separate roles they were dependent on each other. In a well-functioning rulership there were clearly separated female and male characteristics and duties and these were carried out by the queen and king, respectively. The king and the queen were tied together and one crucial link between them was sexuality. We need not point out that the queen's primary role was to produce heirs to the throne. But the link between royal sexuality and politics went beyond this. Sources show that the sexual intercourse between king and queen was seen as necessary not only for the production of heirs—the king's bedchamber was a place for physical intimacy but also for conversation; it was here that the king could be influenced and swayed. This place should ideally be occupied by the queen, rather than another man. While a king could be criticized for being influenced by his wife; it was even more threatening if a man took the queen's place. Who could then tell which man was in control?

Furthermore, conceptually the heterosexual intercourse kept the queen in her proper subordinate position. The sexual intercourse represented and reenacted the correct gender order, without it she could become unruly. The worst cases were of course when the queen became so unruly that

she sought out a lover, another man who would subordinate her sexually and influence her actions. We claim that the heteronormative practices of medieval rulership were seen as vital for political stability; these practices dramatized the patriarchal ideology. The heterosexual intercourse was a power-generating action. He who penetrated demonstrated his manly ability to act with force and certainty. The woman who was penetrated thereby accepted to respect, obey, and honor his decisions. For the royal couple—where the female was by her very position powerful—this demonstration of a correct gender order was of utmost importance.

NOTES

1. We have chosen to use the terms “political critique” or “propagandistic texts” instead of “propaganda.” While the latter term has its merits it is also problematic. Bernard Guenée, for example, states that one should be careful when using the term propaganda for the Middle Ages; many sources that are referred to as propaganda only existed in one or two copies and must have had a very limited audience. Bernard Guenée, *L'opinion publique à la fin du moyen âge: d'après la chronique de Charles VI du religieux de Saint-Denis* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 455. Justin Lake also points to the limited diffusion of many texts and notes that chronicles were not a very efficient mode of communication. Even if many chronicles have a clear political bias this does not mean that they can be defined as propaganda. Justin Lake, “Authorial Intention in Medieval Historiography,” *History Compass* 12:4 (2012), 353. While our sources all have propagandistic tendencies their actual dissemination is highly uncertain.
2. Steinar Imsen, “Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship,” in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference held at King's College London April 1995*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), 58; William Layher, *Queenship and Voice in Medieval Northern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 17.
3. Sodomy could be used for a number of different sexual sins in the Middle Ages; however, most often it was understood as male same-sex intercourse. Ruth Mazo Karras, “Knighthood, Compulsory Heterosexuality, and Sodomy,” in *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, ed. Mathew Kuefler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 274. We use the term to denote same-sex sexual intercourse in this chapter.
4. Alan Bray, “Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England,” *History Workshop Journal* 29 (1990): 1; Joanna Laynesmith, “Telling Tales of Adulterous Queens in Medieval England: From Olympias of

- Macedonia to Elizabeth Woodville,” in *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, ed. Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville (Boston: Brill, 2013), 195–214.
5. John Carmi Parsons, “Family, Sex, and Power: The Rhythms of Medieval Queenship,” in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (Stroud: Allan Sutton, 1994), 4.
 6. Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 8.
 7. John Carmi Parsons, “Ritual and Symbol in the English Medieval Queenship to 1500,” in *Women and Sovereignty*, ed. Louise Olga Fradenburg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 60.
 8. Lisa Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens: Queenship and the Crown in Fourteenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 35.
 9. Marion Facinger, “A Study of Medieval Queenship: Capetian France, 987–1237,” *Nebraska Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 5 (1968): 45–6; Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King’s Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational, 1983), 195.
 10. Margaret Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 266–73; Miriam Shadis, “Blanche of Castile and Facinger’s ‘Medieval Queenship’: Reassessing the Argument,” in *Capetian Women*, ed. Kathleen Nolan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 137–61.
 11. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 93–4.
 12. Imsen, “Late Medieval Scandinavian Queenship,” 61–2, 67.
 13. Joanna L. Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship 1445–1503* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 26, 130.
 14. Joanna L. Chamberlayne, “Crowns and Virgins: Queenmaking during the Wars of the Roses,” in *Young Medieval Women*, ed. Katherine J. Lewis, Noël James Menuge and Kim M. Phillips (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 49–54.
 15. John Carmi Parsons, “The Queen’s Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England,” in *Power of the Weak: Studies in Medieval Women*, ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 147–77; Lois L. Huneycutt, “Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen: The Esther Topos,” in *Power of the Weak: Studies in Medieval Women*, eds. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 126–46; Paul Strohm, *Hochon’s Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 95–119; John Carmi Parsons, “The Pregnant Queen as Counsellor and the Medieval Construction of Motherhood,” in *Medieval Mothering*, eds. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland, 1996), 39–61. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 55–7.
 16. John Carmi Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile: Queen and Society in Thirteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 152–3.

17. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 20.
18. Clear examples are the two anthologies Anne J. Duggan, ed., *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe* (London: King's College London, 1993), and Anne J. Duggan, ed., *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference held at King's College London April 1995* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997).
19. See, for example, Fiona Downie, *She is but a Woman: Queenship in Scotland, 1424–1463* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2006); Núria Silleras-Fernández, *Power, Piety, and Patronage in Late Medieval Queenship: Maria de Luna* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Theresa Earenfight, *The King's Other Body: Maria of Castile and the Crown of Aragon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Elena Woodacre, *The Queens Regnant of Navarre: Succession, Politics, and Partnership, 1274–1512* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
20. Theresa Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens, and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe," *Gender & History* 19 (2007): 6–10.
21. In the Crown of Aragon, for example, seven medieval queens consort ruled the realm as queen-lieutenant. Theresa Earenfight, "Absent Kings: Queens as Political Partners in the Medieval Crown of Aragon," in *Queenship and Political Power in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, ed. Theresa Earenfight (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 33–51.
22. Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince," 9: "The point is not that nobles, bishops, favorites, brothers and chief ministers have been omitted from the narrative of monarchy, because they have not. It is telling, however, that the power of the favorite is denounced because it operates in a privileged private and secret way, and often is associated with the physical, and often sexual, body of the king. Such power is feared, like that of the queens, and when expressed in a gendered, sexualized manner, it undermines both the office and the officeholder."
23. Sven Tunberg, "Bengt Algotsson," in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, 3: *Beck-Friis – Berndes*, ed. Bertil Boëthius (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1922), 185.
24. Birgitta Fritz, *Hus, land och län: Förvaltningen i Sverige 1250–1434*, 1 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1972), 90–91, and 2 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1973), 119.
25. Hans Gilllingstam, "Hertig Bengt Algotsson och Magnus Nilsson Röde," *Historisk tidskrift* 70 (1950): 21. Cf. Hans Gilllingstam, "Uppteckningen om mordet på hertig Bengt Algotsson," *Historisk tidskrift* 70 (1950): 297–8.
26. Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince," 9.
27. Parsons, "Ritual and Symbol in the English Medieval Queenship to 1500," 60–77; Parsons, "The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England," 147–77. See also Liz Oakley-Brown and Louise J. Wilkinson, eds., *The Rituals and Rhetoric of Queenship: Medieval to Early Modern* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2009).

28. W. M. Ormrod, "Monarchy, Martyrdom, and Masculinity: England in the Later Middle Ages," in *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, eds. P. H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), 175.
29. Ormrod, "Monarchy, Martyrdom, and Masculinity," 175–6.
30. Michael Nordberg, *I kung Magnus tid: Norden under Magnus Eriksson 1317–1374* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1995), 280–1. The monastic order was founded in the 1340s and approved by the pope in 1370. The Brigittine order is still active.
31. Nordberg, *I kung Magnus tid*, 101–6.
32. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4: *The Heavenly Emperor's Book to Kings, The Rule, and Minor Works*, trans. Denis Scarby, intr. Bridget Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 72; Sancta Birgitta, *Reuelaciones*, lib. VIII: *Liber celestis imperatoris ad rege*, ed. Hans Aili (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2002), 177.
33. Hans Torben Gilkær, *The Political Ideas of St. Birgitta and her Spanish Confessor, Alfonso Pecha: Liber Celestis Imperatoris ad Reges. A Mirror of Princes* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1993), 207. Cf. Salomon Kraft, *Textstudier till Birgittas revelationer* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1929), 169. Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller argues for a later date—April or May 1362 at the earliest—in *Magnus versus Brigitta: Der Kampf der heiligen Birgitta von Schweden gegen König Magnus Eriksson* (Hamburg: HHL-Verlag, 2003), 133.
34. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4, 328–9; St. Birgitta of Sweden, *Heliga Birgittas originaltexter*, ed. Bertil Högman (Uppsala: Svenska fornskriftssällskapet, 1951), 81.
35. Salomon Kraft, "En pamflett mot Magnus Eriksson i dess idépolitiska och litterära miljö," *Historisk tidskrift* 37 (1927): 4; Ingyar Andersson, *Källstudier till Sveriges historia 1230–1436: Inhemska berättande källor jämte Libellus Magnipolensis* (Lund: Lunds universitet, 1928), 152–3.
36. Hans Furuhausen, *Furstinnan av Närke som blev Heliga Birgitta* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1990), 143–4; Nordberg, *I kung Magnus tid*, 294; Olle Ferm, *Olaus Petri och Heliga Birgitta: Synpunkter på ett nytt sätt att skriva historia i 1500-talets Sverige* (Stockholm: Sällskapet Runica et mediævalia, 2007), 18.
37. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4, 52; Sancta Birgitta, *Reuelaciones*, lib. VIII, 98.
38. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4, 52–3; Sancta Birgitta, *Reuelaciones*, lib. VIII, 99.
39. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 2: *Liber Caelestis, Book IV–V*, trans. Denis Scarby, intr. Bridget Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59; Sancta Birgitta, *Reuelaciones*, lib. IV, ed. Hans Aili (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1992), 111.
40. Joel T. Rosenthal, "The King's 'Wicked Advisers' and Medieval Baronial Rebellions," *Political Science Quarterly* 82 (1967): 595–618.

41. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4, 56; Sancta Birgitta, *Reuelaciones*, lib. VIII, 110.
42. See Tryggve Lundén's Swedish translation of this section of the revelations. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *Himmelska uppenbarelser*, 3, trans. Tryggve Lundén, (Malmö: Allhem, 1958), 281.
43. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4, 98; Sancta Birgitta, *Reuelaciones*, lib. VIII, 217.
44. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4, 98; Sancta Birgitta, *Reuelaciones*, lib. VIII, 217: "Persuasi quoque regi, ut ceteris bonis viris regni despectis unum super omnes hominem eleuaret et pre preficeret et eum plus quam se tot corde diligeret." The latter part of the quote has mistakenly been excluded from Denis Searby's English translation.
45. Michael Goodich, *The Unmentionable Vice: Homosexuality in the Later Medieval Period* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1979), 10; Richard E. Zeikowitz, *Homeroeticism and Chivalry: Discourses of Male Same-Sex Desire in the Fourteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 106. This was also the way sodomy should be dealt with in confessions according to several later penitentials. Those who had committed the sin would understand what was referred to while the vague expressions would avoid inspiring people to commit new sins. Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 137. Mark D. Jordan argues that the usage of the name Sodom in early penitentials served the same purpose. It would reveal the sin for those who already knew, but disguise it for others. Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 41.
46. Political critique often changed over time; one tendency is that allegations could be pronounced more explicitly after the death of a king or a queen. *Libellus de Magno Erici Rege* was written after Blanche's death and Magnus's dethronement. The authors of this chapter are currently working on a comparative project that aims to analyze the use of sexual transgressions in late medieval political critique directed at kings and queens in Castile, England, France, and Sweden. One aspect of our project is to examine how the political critique changed over time.
47. Claudius Annerstedt, ed., "Libellus de Magno Erici Rege," in *Scriptores Rerum Svecicarum Medii Aevi*, 3 (Uppsala: Edvardus Berling, 1871–1876), 14.
48. William Stubbs, ed., "Annales Paulini," in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, 1 (London: Longman, 1882), 262.
49. Henry Richard Luard, ed., *Flores Historiarum*, 3 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890), 229.
50. Annerstedt, "Libellus de Magno Erici Rege," 14.
51. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4, 53; Sancta Birgitta, *Reuelaciones*, lib. VIII, 99.
52. Chaste marriages are discussed in: Dyan Elliot, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

53. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *Heliga Birgittas uppenbarelser*, 3, ed. G. E. Klemming (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1861), 318.
54. St. Birgitta of Sweden, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, 4, 64; Sancta Birgitta, *Revelaciones*, lib. VIII, 137.
55. Nordberg, *I kung Magnus tid*, 284.
56. Zeikowitz, *Homoeroticism and Chivalry*, 106.
57. Annerstedt, “Libellus de Magno Eri Rege,” 14.
58. Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe*, 4. Cf. Jacqueline Murray, “Historicizing Sexuality, Sexualizing History,” in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. Nancy Partner (London: Arnold, 2005), 146.
59. Karma Lochrie, *Covert Operations: The Medieval Uses of Secrecy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 177–227; Karma Lochrie, “Presumptive Sodomy and Its Exclusion,” *Textual Practice* 13 (1999): 295–310; Joan Cadden, *Nothing Natural is Shameful: Sodomy and Science in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).
60. Annerstedt, “Libellus de Magno Eri Rege,” 14.
61. Franck Collard, *Le crime de poison au Moyen âge* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2003), 115–6.
62. Nordberg, *I kung Magnus tid*, 294–300; Henric Bagerius and Christine Ekholst, “En olydig sodomit: Om Magnus Eriksson och det heteronormativa regentskapet,” *Scandia* 73:2 (2007), 26.
63. W. M. Ormrod, “The Sexualities of Edward II,” in *The Reign of Edward II: New Perspectives*, eds. Gwilym Dodd and Anthony Musson (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2006), 22–47.
64. It should be noted that Queen Blanche was not alone; she had many unruly sisters. Isabella of France, married to Edward II of England, is another queen whose marriage was in crisis. Her husband was accused of preferring Hugh Despenser and rejecting his wife. In consequence the queen became too independent and unruly, according to the chroniclers. Other examples are María of Aragon, married to Juan II of Castile, and Juana of Portugal, married to Enrique IV of Castile. See: Lisa Benz St. John, “In the Best Interest of the Queen: Isabella of France, Edward II and the Image of a Functional Relationship,” in *Fourteenth Century England VIII*, ed. J. S. Hamilton (London: Boydell Press, 2014), 21–42; Diana Pelaz Flores, “Queenly Time in the Reign of Juan II of Castile (1406–1454),” in *Queenship in the Mediterranean: Negotiating the Role of the Queen in the Medieval and Early Modern Eras*, ed. Elena Woodacre (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 169–90; Vera Castro Lingl, “Juan de Flores and Lustful Women: The Crónica incompleta de los Reyes Católicos,” *La corónica* 24 (1995): 74–89.

Conspiracy and Alienation: Queen Margaret of France and Piers Gaveston, the King's Favorite

Lisa Benz

The nature of Edward II, king of England, and the nobleman Piers Gaveston's relationship has been debated. A contemporary source, the *Vita Edwardii Secundi*, claims that:

almost all the earls and barons of England rose against Piers Gaveston...they put to death a great earl, whom the king had adopted as a brother, whom the king cherished as [a] son, whom the king regarded as a companion and friend...I am certain that the king grieved for Piers as a father at any time grieves for his son...In the lament of David upon Jonathan, love is depicted which is said to have surpassed the love of women. Our king also spoke like that.¹

Some modern historians believe that their relationship was of a homosexual nature and others view it as a bond between brothers-in-arms.² What is certain, and probably what is of more importance for the historian of the political culture of medieval England, is that Edward II bestowed upon his favorite a marriage, a title, lands, and offices that the rest of the nobility considered unbefitting of Gaveston's status. Historians have also argued that

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the king's relationship with Gaveston prevented Edward II's young wife and daughter of Philip IV, king of France Queen Isabella, from performing the roles of queenship. However, it has recently been argued that despite Edward's love for Gaveston, whatever the nature, Isabella was able to perform the expected queenly duties of intercession, motherhood, and patronage.³ This chapter considers the effect of Edward and Gaveston's friendship on a different queen of England, Margaret of France, the dowager queen, stepmother to Edward II, half-sister to Philip IV of France, and aunt to Queen Isabella. It argues that it was Margaret who felt threatened by Edward II's favoritism of Gaveston, and so she attempted to establish herself as a key player in a conspiracy against Gaveston. In doing so, she crossed the fine line of acceptable behavior for queens, thereby alienating her stepson and initiating her retreat from court.

Margaret of France, born around 1279, was the daughter of Philip III, king of France, and Mary of Brabant. Her brother, Philip IV of France, arranged her marriage to Edward I, king of England, in 1294 as part of the negotiations intended to end the war between England and France over Gascony.⁴ The marriage was reconfirmed in the Treaty of Montreuil-sur-Mer in 1299.⁵ She married Edward I in Canterbury in September 1299, but hostilities between the two kings did not end until 1303.⁶ Her first son, Thomas, was born on June 1, 1300, in Brotherton and Edmund of Woodstock, her second son, was born on August 1, 1301. Her last child, Eleanor, was born in 1306 in Winchester less than a year before Edward I's death in 1307. Edward I and Margaret's marriage appears to have been congenial. There is significant surviving correspondence between the two about their own health and that of their family.⁷ Margaret accompanied Edward to the Scottish Marches on at least one occasion and as a consort she was an extremely successful intercessor.⁸

Margaret of France was also on good terms with her stepson, Prince Edward of Caernarvon (the future Edward II). She spent the first two months of her marriage in the same household as Edward and her stepdaughter, Mary.⁹ Prince Edward and Margaret cooperated in joint intercessory petitions to the chancellor: in 1300 they secured 20 oaks from Inglewood Forest for the prior and convent of Carlisle; and Robert Benedicte of Norwich received the lesser piece of the seal for recognizances of debts in Norwich at their request.¹⁰ Margaret also became the prince's champion with his father. In 1305, Prince Edward came into conflict with Walter Langton, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and Edward I's treasurer and advisor. When Langton complained to the king, Edward I

banished his son from his household and severed his income at the exchequer.¹¹ Margaret interceded with her husband on behalf of her stepson and succeeded in convincing Edward I to reinstate his son's income.¹² In November 1306, the young prince, who had been in Scotland campaigning with his father, left Scotland for the south and decided to hold a tournament in Wark.¹³ Edward I had banned tournaments for the duration of the war in Scotland and had even ordered the sheriffs to treat a group of knights as traitors for leaving the Scottish campaign to attend a tournament earlier that autumn.¹⁴ Once again, Margaret interceded between father and son, and as a result the prince and the other deserters were pardoned for their participation in the prince's tournament.¹⁵ Margaret had been a key player in the intercessory culture of her husband's later reign, particularly as an effective mediator between her husband and his son.

It is surprising then, that after Edward I's death in July 1307, Margaret of France seems to have disappeared from court life almost entirely. Studies of Edward II's kingship have briefly noted that Edward and Margaret might have come into conflict over Gaveston, but they do not connect this possibility with her withdrawal.¹⁶ In fact, John Carmi Parsons is the only historian to offer any explanation for her departure after Edward I's death in July 1307. Parsons argues that Margaret's intercessory influence ceased completely because she "willingly stepped down" to allow the new queen consort, her niece, Isabella, to handle petitions. He asserts that "it is tempting to think of these adult women," by whom he means Margaret and Edward II's sisters, "holding a kind of strategy conference on the new, twelve-year-old queen's assimilation into the female networks of the Plantagenet family. Among themselves they might well have reached some decisions on the management of petitions."¹⁷ While this is a very nice image of female networking, it is purely speculative. Parsons is unable to offer any substantive evidence that this scenario occurred. It seems unlikely that a woman who had been an extremely successful intercessor with her husband, who had been very involved in the Plantagenet family politics, and who had, until now, maintained a very cordial relationship with her stepson would suddenly decide to discontinue almost all direct involvement with the crown.¹⁸ Instead, she was pushed out, not by Isabella, but by Edward II. Margaret angered her stepson because she would not make way for his favorite, Piers Gaveston.

Piers Gaveston, initially a member of Edward II's household while he was prince, was exiled from England three times. The first exiled happened in 1307, probably because Edward I was alarmed by his son's desire to

settle large amounts of land on Gaveston. The second time occurred in 1308 because the English nobility was unhappy with the level of patronage Gaveston received from Edward II. The final exile transpired because once again the English nobility felt that Edward II had bestowed too many favors on Gaveston. They drew up a list of ordinances for the king to follow, part of which required Gaveston's exile. However, he returned to England sometime between December 1311 and January 1312. Edward II, Gaveston, and Isabella fled north to avoid the anger of the nobility, but by the summer of 1312 Gaveston had been captured and murdered.

Gaveston returned from his first exile shortly after Edward I's death in July 1307, and Margaret may have felt anxious about her security as dowager queen. On August 6, Gaveston received the earldom of Cornwall, except for the honor of Berkhamsted. Berkhamsted was associated with the earldom of Cornwall, but Gaveston did not receive it at this time because it made up part of Margaret's dower assignment.¹⁹ He also did not receive those honors that the wife of Edmund, the late earl of Cornwall, held in dower. While this initial grant did not detract from Margaret's dower, it came very close to her Berkhamsted holdings. She may also have been concerned because she believed that the earldom of Cornwall had been earmarked for her son Edmund. The grant issued by Edward I in 1306, which detailed the inheritance of both of his sons with Margaret, made specific provision for Thomas to receive the earldom of Norfolk, but it never specified the exact lands that Edmund should receive. The grant simply states that Edward I granted land "to the value of 7,000 marks to Edmund."²⁰ Margaret certainly knew the contents of the grant because the steward of her household, Sir John Hastings, was one of the listed witnesses. However, it was subsequently assumed by many contemporaries that the earldom of Cornwall would be the appropriate assignment because members of the royal family, mainly second or illegitimate sons and their heirs, had traditionally held it.

Several of the chronicles dating to the first half of the fourteenth century express the view that Edward I had intended Edmund to receive the earldom of Cornwall or that it should have remained within the royal family. Written contemporarily with the events it records or shortly thereafter, the *Vita* may best reflect contemporary opinion regarding Cornwall.²¹ It is the only chronicle to directly connect Cornwall to Edward II's half-brothers, claiming "the old lord king Edward had decided that the earldom of Cornwall should be conferred upon one of his sons, Thomas or Edmund, but that his sad death prevented what was appropriate from

being carried out.”²² Robert of Reading’s *Flores Historiarum*, Trokelowe’s *St. Albans Chronicle*, and the *Annales Londonienses* claim that the earldom of Cornwall should not have been alienated from the royal demesne, that from ancient times Cornwall was to be given to members of the royal family, though they do not name Edmund or Thomas specifically.²³ Trokelowe may have been writing his edition to the *St. Albans Chronicle*, contemporarily with the events it covers, but certainly not later than 1330.²⁴ Both the *Flores* and the *Annales Londonienses* were written during the minority of Edward III.²⁵ Thus, it could be said that these three chronicles may have been colored by later knowledge of Gaveston’s demise, but were written close enough to the events in question to have still echoed the sentiments of 1307.²⁶

These chroniclers had a solid basis for their assumptions. Reginald Dunstanville, an illegitimate son of Henry I, received the earldom of Cornwall from Robert of Gloucester. When he died, the earldom was taken into the hands of Henry II. In 1227, Richard, earl of Cornwall, brother to Henry III, received Cornwall from his father King John. Richard then passed it down to his own son Edmund, earl of Cornwall, who was Edward I’s cousin.²⁷ When Edmund died, Cornwall was returned to the royal demesne. Edward I’s actions may also have implied to contemporaries that Cornwall was to be saved for his son, or that he at least did not want it to go to Gaveston. Michael Prestwich claims that Edward I had taken exception to Prince Edward’s demand that Gaveston receive Cornwall or Ponthieu, another highly valuable and significant holding that was part of English lands in France.²⁸ Jeffrey Hamilton has argued that Edward I had initially exiled Gaveston in February 1307 to punish Prince Edward because the prince “had shown himself to be profligate and financially irresponsible in his regard for Piers Gaveston.”²⁹ If Edward II’s behavior as prince had alarmed Edward I, Margaret would have been aware of his anxiety, and thus he may have been distressed on behalf of her deceased husband when Edward II recalled Gaveston back to court so suddenly in the summer of 1307 and gave him the title and lands that many believed belonged to her son.

It certainly seems to be the case that Margaret turned her feelings of concern into action by May 1308 when a newsletter arrived in England from France, describing a great conspiracy against Gaveston. This letter states that King Philip IV viewed Piers Gaveston as his enemy and would pursue anyone who supported him. It also declares that the English earls had “ordered, established, and decided” that Gaveston should relinquish

his English landholdings. The letter finishes by claiming that Philip IV sent copious amounts of wine to Henry de Lacy, earl of Lincoln, and to Aymer de Valence, earl of Pembroke, and that “the queen of the deceased king” (this could be no one other than Margaret) had sent these earls £40,000 “for their expenses,” presumably for the parliament of April 1308, held in Westminster.³⁰ This newsletter has been evaluated in studies of the earls mentioned within it and in analyses of the relationships between Edward II, Gaveston, Philip IV, and Isabella. However, the nature of Margaret’s involvement in the conspiracy outlined in its contents has never been considered in any great detail.³¹ An examination of the context of this letter clearly demonstrates that Margaret had far more agency in the creation of this scheme against Gaveston than she has hitherto been credited with.

Former connections can be established between all four of the individuals specifically named in the letter. First, and most obviously, Margaret and Philip IV were siblings. Still more striking than a simple familial connection is Margaret’s presence at the French court during the period immediately prior to the newsletter’s composition. Margaret traveled to France for the marriage of her niece, Isabella, to her stepson in January 1308 and she was there until at least March 16, 1308, and more likely until mid-April. The patent rolls contain an enrollment of an order for Robert Kendale, constable of Dover castle and warden of the Cinque Ports, to allow John Abel to pass the seas with £200 sterling and two palfreys because he was going to parts beyond the sea *to* Margaret, queen of England.³² It is important to note the distinction here from what is usually seen in this type of enrollment on the patent rolls, which is a household member conducting business abroad *for* the queen while she was in England. Here, John Abel is actually bringing things *to* her in France. Parsons’s proposed strategy meeting between Margaret and Edward’s sisters, described earlier in this chapter, supposedly took place in England at the coronation on February 25, 1308. However, Margaret was not at the coronation in England. Neither the *Flores Historiarum* nor the *Annales Londonienses*, which include lists of notable guests, include Margaret among them.³³ The household accounts for the coronation only mention the king’s half-brothers, Thomas and Edmund, and his sister, Mary, as joining the household for the event.³⁴ It is possible that Margaret was not recorded as attending the coronation because she was already with the court when it traveled back to England from France after the royal marriage. She may have returned to England for the coronation and then traveled back to France on her own again afterward. However, we do not see any of the usual preparations for travel

to the continent in February or March of 1308; for instance, there are no examples of household members appointing attorneys at the exchequer in preparation for their travel outside of England with the queen or any records of other arrangements, which are typical just prior to a voyage abroad.³⁵ We do see records of these types of preparations in December 1307 before Margaret left for France for the royal marriage, but not in the late winter or early spring of 1308.³⁶ It is also notable that Margaret's preparations made in December 1307 for the wedding were made through to Easter of 1308. For example, Humphrey de Walden, who was "going beyond seas with queen Margaret," nominated attorneys to represent him at the exchequer "until Easter."³⁷ Margaret was clearly still in France during the coronation and she had always intended to be there until Easter. In 1308, Easter was on was April 14. Thus, she was present at the French court just prior to the parliament of April 1308 and the newsletter's arrival in England.

In mid-March 1308, while Margaret was in France, Edward II redistributed the keeperships of five of Margaret's castles, specifically the castles of Devizes and Marlborough to Hugh Despenser, the castle of Cambridge to Giles of Argentain, the castle of Gloucester to Nicholas Kingston, and the castle of Mere to Walter Skidmore.³⁸ At this time Edward also appointed new custodians, including Gaveston and Hugh Despenser, the Elder, to some dozen strategic castles throughout England. There is a general consensus among historians that Edward was acting in response to an increase in political tensions and that he chose new custodians who he felt were loyal to him.³⁹ It is notable that three of the custodians whom Edward removed from these castles were Payne Tybetot, Robert Clifford, and John Botetourt. All three men had endorsed the Boulogne Agreement. Drawn up in Boulogne during the nuptials of Edward II and Isabella, the Boulogne Agreement was an understanding, expressed in letters patent of the bishop of Durham, the earls of Lincoln, Surrey, Pembroke, and Hereford, Henry de Grey, John de Berwick, and Clifford, Tybetot, and Botetourt. In these letters, they affirm that they were bound by fealty to preserve the honor and rights of the crown. They agreed to do anything within their legal power to protect this honor. The extent that their actions were an attack on the king or simply an attempt at reform has been explored at length. Bertie Wilkinson has pointed out that the agreement made a distinction between the person of the king and the institution of the Crown, a distinction that he believes laid the foundation of the "baronial opposition" to Edward.⁴⁰ J.R. Maddicott contends that while

the intentions behind the agreement were to protect Edward, it was an overt attack against Gaveston.⁴¹ J.R.S. Philips argues that it was an attempt at reform.⁴² It has also been implied that the agreement instigated or justified the alteration of the coronation oath used for Edward II in 1308 to include the clause: “Sire, do you promise to hold and protect the laws and customs that the community of your realm shall determine, and will you defend and enforce them in all your power to the honor of God?”⁴³ R.M. Haines has argued that Edward removed these men from the castles as retribution for their involvement in the Boulogne Agreement.⁴⁴ If this is the case, then Edward’s redistribution of Margaret’s castles at the same time suggests that he was already worried about her loyalties.

Landed power was very important for queens because it allowed them to exercise authority in their own right, to dispense patronage directly, and to attract a retinue. In essence, it allowed them to act in the same manner as male magnates.⁴⁵ Redistributing the queen’s lands was one of the most intrusive actions of the king. He might do this if there was a dispute over the custody of the lands or if he needed to use them elsewhere. However, this would commonly take the form of a quid pro quo transaction, in which the king compensated the queen by granting her lands in another place or through another source of revenue, something he could do with anyone holding crown land. Quid pro quo exchanges of land between kings and queens were frequent; Edward I, Edward II, and Edward III often reabsorbed lands, estates, or other rights that had been granted to their consorts as dower into the royal demesne. For example, in 1303, Margaret surrendered the castle and manor of Montgomery, and the manors of Hope, Brummore, Norton, Bromsgrove, and Great Compton valued at £372 to Edward I because he had since granted them to Prince Edward of Caernarvon, Hugh Courteney, Edmund Mortimer, and John Mohun. In return, Edward granted Margaret the castle and town of Berkhamsted, the manor of Risborough, Dalham, and Bradfield, the castle and manor of Mere, the hundreds of Redlane, Whiteway, Brownshall, £12 that Nicolas Segrave paid to the exchequer, and the tolls and pleas to the king in the town of Shafton, all together valued at £313 5s 1d. To make up the remaining value of the surrendered lands, Edward granted Margaret many of the fines and other income arising from the newly granted places.⁴⁶ Often these types of land transactions were made at the “request of the king” or with “the assent of the queen.”⁴⁷ It is appropriate here to question whether the absorption of a queen’s lands was actually done with her assent, or if a king’s request was more of an order than a choice. In truth,

it may be that the statement was a mere formality. Yet, even if this was the case, its inclusion in the chancery issues demonstrates that it was necessary for the chancery to create the impression that authority for the transaction came from the queen. This was not done when Edward II granted Margaret's castles to Despenser, Argentien, Kingston, and Skidmore. Nor did he offer her any other landholdings or other sources of income in compensation. The seizure of these castles might have further contributed to Margaret's anxieties over Edward II's general disregard in the grants he made. Edward II was slowly eroding one of Margaret's major sources of power and this would have served as an impetus to participate in a conspiracy to eliminate the major beneficiary of the king's uneven distribution of patronage.

There were established connections between the four individuals named in the newsletter. Margaret and the earl of Pembroke had an established, cooperative relationship as early as 1302 when he acted as an inquisitor in an *oyer et terminer* for trespasses on Margaret's park at Queen Camel.⁴⁸ Correspondence concerning these legal proceedings between Margaret and Pembroke continued for a period of four years. Lincoln had spent most of 1303 traveling between Edward I and Philip IV in an effort to negotiate the final Treaty of Montreuil, and so his connection to the conspiracy is likely more through his established relationship with Philip rather than with Margaret. Both Pembroke and Lincoln were members of the party that went to France in November 1307 to negotiate the terms of Edward and Isabella's marriage contract. Moreover, these men were also mentioned by the *Brut* chronicler as being entrusted by Edward I, on his death bed, to prevent Gaveston from returning from exile in 1307.⁴⁹

Despite the connections between these four "conspirators," Margaret and Philip's gifts, if intended as inducements, may not have garnered the outright support the two were seeking. Phillips has convincingly argued that Pembroke was unlikely involved in such a scheme against Gaveston. Phillips's first point centers on the Boulogne Agreement. Phillips believes that the Boulogne Agreement was not a specific attack on Edward II, himself, or on Gaveston, but was rather an attempt to reform abuses of royal administration that stretched back into Edward I's reign before the king's opponents in England became uncontrollable.⁵⁰ He argues that the Boulogne Agreement was not connected to the alterations made to the coronation oath or in retaliation to Gaveston's appointment as regent, and therefore Lincoln and Pembroke's participation in the construction of the agreement should not be viewed as expressing disloy-

alty toward the king, but rather the opposite.⁵¹ Second, Phillips points out that the rumors articulated in this newsletter do not reflect what is known about Pembroke during this period. Pembroke appears to have been on good terms with the king following Gaveston's exile: Edward assisted him in recovering debts at the exchequer; he granted Pembroke the lordship of Haverfordwest; he approved the purchase of Hereford; and he gave him diplomatic help in business that Pembroke was pursuing at the French court.⁵² Pembroke was also part of the embassy that went to the pope at Avignon to seek a reversal of Gaveston's excommunication.⁵³ According to Phillips, Pembroke's sympathies still lay with the king, and we do not see a change in attitude toward Gaveston until after Gaveston returned from his second exile in 1309.⁵⁴

In the spring of 1308, Lincoln's contemporaries viewed him as an enemy of Gaveston. As mentioned above, both Pembroke and Lincoln were portrayed by the *Brut* chronicler as being entrusted by a dying Edward I to prevent Gaveston's return from exile. Although it should be noted that Phillips believes that the oath should not be taken at "face value," that these men were not anti-Gaveston, but rather, as Edward's advisors, they were giving their support to the new king.⁵⁵ It is also likely that such a story was written with the knowledge of Gaveston's second and third exiles and of his execution. The Middle English translation of the *Brut*, which contains this story, was probably made between 1350 and 1380 or even as late as 1400, long after these events took place.⁵⁶ The *Vita*, which was penned contemporaneously with the events it describes, claims that Lincoln was the only member of the baronage to argue that Edward had the right to alienate Cornwall from the royal demesne, but later in the text it explains that Lincoln, who had once supported Gaveston, subsequently became one of Gaveston's foremost enemies.⁵⁷

A faction of monks at Westminster Abbey also believed that Lincoln was an opponent of Gaveston. In January 1308, Richard Kedyngton was elected as the abbot of Westminster Abbey. This group of monks resented his election because they believed that he had received this appointment unfairly through Gaveston's patronage. One of these monks, Reginald de Hadham, wrote two letters in the late spring of 1308 while he was in Avignon acting as the representative of the anti-Kedyngton party to the pope.⁵⁸ He explained that Queen Isabella and the earl of Lincoln should be secretly approached and asked for their support in exposing Gaveston's bad character to the king of England and of France. He wrote that Isabella and Lincoln's hatred of Gaveston would make them especially amenable

to the monks' plight.⁵⁹ Hadham's letters serve as the only evidence of the monks' plan, and there is no indication that the monks ever took any action, or that Lincoln and Isabella ever joined their cause. Consequently, I have argued elsewhere that the letters serve as evidence of contemporary perception of Isabella's feelings toward Gaveston, but they cannot serve as proof that she actually felt this way nor do they demonstrate that she took part in the monks' plots.⁶⁰ The same can be argued about Lincoln. Nevertheless, whatever his attitude toward Gaveston in 1308, many of his contemporaries, both in England and in France, believed that he was Gaveston's adversary.

Modern studies on Lincoln's allegiances during this period have interpreted his actions in two very different ways. These studies have concentrated not only on the Boulogne Agreement, in which he was involved, but also on a declaration that was presented to parliament in April 1308 called the *Homage et Serment*. This declaration made a distinction between the king and the crown and asserted that homage is done to the latter. It claimed that the earls had the duty to act to preserve the crown when the king prejudiced it and in the current circumstances this meant calling for Gaveston's exile. R.M. Haines, while acknowledging that there is some doubt as to whether Lincoln was actually an author of this document and that modern historians are divided in regard to its authenticity, cites it as evidence of Lincoln's anti-Gaveston sentiment.⁶¹ On the other hand, Philip's interprets this same document with the conclusion that Lincoln was a moderating influence in that the *Homage et Serment* gave the earls a way to attack Gaveston without attacking the king.⁶² Nevertheless, as with Pembroke, Lincoln was reconciled with the king, if indeed he had ever been on the outs: Lincoln assisted him with a loan in July 1309 and the *Vita* claims that Lincoln was one of the principal mediators in bringing Gaveston back from his second exile.⁶³

If the many studies of Edward II's reign have demonstrated anything, it is that court factions were so fluid during his reign, it is virtually impossible to construct which earls were "loyal" to the king and which were not at any given time. If Pembroke and Lincoln's loyalty to the king was ever in question, the king and the two earls resolved any such conflict quickly. The newsletter adds one more key player to the political milieu of the period, the dowager queen Margaret of France. It demonstrates that contemporaries viewed the queen as a significant political player of the period, and given the fact that Margaret certainly had her own motivations, given her physical proximity to Philip IV, and given that she was the only person

who lost any favor with Edward II that she might still have curried before the newsletter arrived in England, there is a strong indication that she had more agency in creating the alliance than the two earls.

Margaret was the only one of the four conspirators who experienced any lasting retribution from the king. Margaret disappeared from court because, by participating in this scheme against Gaveston, she alienated herself from the king and the crown in an effort to protect one of her sources of power—her landed estates. In protecting this source of power she lost another valuable one—influence with the king and crown. In December 1308, Margaret's castles were returned to her, but between December 1308 and March 1309 there are no recorded acts of intercession on the chancery rolls.⁶⁴ Moreover, when Gaveston returned from his second exile in the spring of 1309, Edward not only returned the earldom of Cornwall to him, but also granted him the castle, town, and honor of Berkhamsted, the castle and manor of Mere, and the manor of Risborough, which were all portions of Margaret's dower that had been held back in the original 1307 grant of Cornwall to Gaveston.⁶⁵

It was not until March 1310 that Margaret managed to secure a confirmation of all her dowerlands, including Berkhamsted, Risborough, and Mere. This was a confirmation of letters patent issued by Edward II before he assumed the governance of the realm, and in these letters patent, Edward II as prince, had ratified the grants of dower made by "his father to his mother, queen Margaret."⁶⁶ Margaret managed to assert her claim to these lands and force Edward to enroll officially his previous confirmation of her dower in the form that it had been granted by Edward I in 1299. It may not be a coincidence that the confirmation was enrolled on March 19, the same time that Edward issued letters patent agreeing to the election of the Lords Ordainer.⁶⁷ The amount of power that Edward surrendered to the Ordainers at this time demonstrates a capitulation to his opponents. The confirmation of Margaret's dower and the restoration of confiscated lands at the same time implies that Margaret was included in this capitulation. It is also striking that the confirmation was made at the insistence of the earl of Lincoln. Although her dower was now safe, as late as 1314 Margaret was still working to recoup income that she had lost during these early years of Edward's reign. For instance, Edward I had given Margaret £50 per annum out of the £100 for the farm of the manor of Lechlade. Edward II then granted the entire farm of £100 to Gaveston. On April 3, 1314, Edward regranted the original £50 to Margaret, but Margaret petitioned to have £250 in arrears from the time that Gaveston

had her half of the farm, that is from August 5, 1309, to April 27, 1314.⁶⁸ Edward acquiesced to her request and Margaret received the full £100 until the arrears were paid.

The irony of the 1310 enrolment of the confirmation of her dower is that, thereafter, Margaret seems to be alienated from the court to spend the rest of her widowhood on these very dowerlands. Aside from a few records of letters between Margaret and Isabella documented in Isabella's household books, and a visit to her new step-grandson and nephew, Prince Edward of Windsor, in 1314, Margaret ceased to have significant contact with the crown.⁶⁹ There are only five recorded acts of intercession from 1310 until her death in 1318.⁷⁰ Of these five, four actually refer to an act of intercession she carried out during the Lincoln parliament of 1301, under her husband, Edward I.⁷¹ Margaret only interacted with the crown when it concerned the administration of her estates and her household. The single act of intercession found on the chancery rolls between 1310 and 1318, which truly occurred during this period, is a confirmation of an inquiry to be made into trespasses of vert and venison in several of Margaret's forests.⁷² This chancery issue notes that these forests were granted to her as part of her dower by Edward I and also refers to the confirmation of her dower grant by Edward II in 1310. There are no surviving letters from Margaret to Edward II, and there are only a few surviving letters from Margaret at all after 1310: in 1314, she wrote to the chancellor asking for assistance in recovering debts owed to her; in 1317, she asked for letters of protection for her chaplain, who was going to France; and one of her tenants wrote to her asking for an *oyer et terminer*.⁷³ It may also be that Margaret was kept from her sons, Thomas and Edmund. During her marriage to Edward I there is significant evidence of Margaret's involvement in her sons' lives, but after Edward I's death, Margaret had very little, if any, contact with her children.⁷⁴ She does not appear in Thomas and Edmund's existing household accounts for Edward II's reign. There are no surviving letters between, or concerning, Margaret and her children. Part of this lack of evidence for Margaret's contact with the crown may be an accident of survival, but what has survived indicates that, while Margaret was still active in running her estates and household, she was no longer an avenue to the king and crown.

The no-win situation in which Margaret found herself is illustrative of the fine line between the acceptable and unacceptable boundaries of behavior that queens had to negotiate. Scholars have identified two guiding principles for acceptable queenly behavior: a medieval queen needed

to appear submissive when she was in a position of power and she must use influence in a manner that recognized the king's authority.⁷⁵ These principles were also true for men who wished to intercede with the king, but such guidelines were particularly emphasized for the queen because she was often the closet person to the king's body and could thus exercise a large amount of influence. Her role as an intercessor meant that the noble petitioners must acknowledge their inferiority to her, and so the queen's agency was often constructed through submissive gestures or language in order to imply her subjection to the king.⁷⁶ The chronicler Jean Froissart placed Philippa of Hainault, Edward III's consort, within the common trope of submissive intercessor in his recounting of the siege of Calais, a major English victory during the Hundred Years War. By constructing Philippa's actions in this way, Froissart reaffirms the idea that medieval society needed the queen to appear submissive in order to applaud her influence over the king. Strohm comments that her pregnancy, her submissiveness, and her place on the margins all give Philippa a sense of authority. In reality Philippa was not pregnant during the siege, but it was a necessary fictionalization that served to enhance her vulnerability at a time when she exercised enough influence to change the king's mind in full public view.⁷⁷ It was specifically this submissiveness that allowed Philippa to influence the king when the other lords and barons had failed. She was able to intercede with Edward precisely because her vulnerability in this situation explicitly acknowledged his authority. However, queens who were accused of possessing too much influence with the king or who attained significant political positions could be accused of a multitude of vices to discredit their agency—vices specific to their gender, which often contributed to the construction of a negative reputation both in life and posthumously: Judith, the second wife of Louis the Pious, was accused of every possible sin, including adultery, sorcery, and incest while acting as regent; Merovingian queens, Balthild and Brunhild, received the slur, *Jezebel*, because influential men were affronted by their exercise of power; Eleanor of Castile was accused of causing Edward I to rule harshly as a result of her failure to conform to a position of humility when interceding with the king; Isabella of France was called an enchantress by the monks of Durham when she used her influence with the king to secure the election of her own man to the bishopric of Durham; Margaret of Anjou was accused of adultery; and Isabeau of Bavaria was accused of adultery, incest, greed, licentiousness, wastefulness, and so forth due to her political involvement in the negotiation of the Treaty of Troyes.⁷⁸

Queens were also expected to act in a manner that always acknowledged the king's authority.⁷⁹ Queens who were unable to do this faced consequences. Eleanor of Aquitaine provides the most extreme example of an English queen, who went against the king's authority. Her most recent biographer, Ralph V. Turner, commenting on her participation in her sons' rebellion against their father, Henry II, argues that "the queen's active part in a revolt against her royal husband was near unimaginable to contemporaries."⁸⁰ As a consequence for her rebellion, Eleanor was imprisoned in Chinon Castle in France and later at Salisbury Castle in England.⁸¹ She would remain captive in numerous castles throughout England for nearly 16 years, until Henry II's death in 1189.⁸² Isabella of France was able to negotiate this fine line by working with the barons who felt animosity toward Edward II, but always in a way that deferred to the king as the ultimate authority.⁸³ However, Isabella did overthrow Edward II in 1326, putting her son, Edward III, on the throne. She was only able to do so because the political crisis in 1326 created an ideal environment for her success, one in which she had almost the full support of the nobility.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, by 1330, Edward III became disenchanted and deciding that his mother was not behaving in a way that recognized his authority as king, he enacted a coup against her.⁸⁵ While he could not bring himself to officially prosecute his own mother in parliament, he took other punitive actions.⁸⁶ All of Isabella's landholdings were taken from her control and she temporarily resided at Windsor, where she remained for about two years.⁸⁷ Edward also placed Isabella's jewels and other goods in the Tower under guard.⁸⁸ Isabella was reinstated slowly into court life and managed to play a part in politics during her dowagerhood, but she never had quite the same relationship with the king again and 200-plus years after her death she was dubbed the she-wolf, a reputation that would continue into the twentieth century.⁸⁹

Like Eleanor of Aquitaine and Isabella of France, Margaret did not place herself in a submissive position and she did not acknowledge the king's authority. She made an alliance with a foreign lord and she attempted to extend that alliance to the English nobility. Isabella and Margaret were not in as extreme a position as Eleanor of Aquitaine. Nevertheless, Margaret found that she was no longer accepted in the political milieu at court, much as Isabella experienced in the first years of Edward III's majority. Moreover, Margaret never succeeded in regaining any influence with her son as Isabella had. And so Margaret suffered from Edward's patronage of Gaveston. In her attempt to rectify it, she accomplished her immediate

goal of preserving her dower rights, but she also alienated her stepson to such a degree that she was no longer a viable source of power at court. It was easier for Edward II to seek retribution against Margaret than against the earls because their cooperation was necessary to stabilize the polity and secure Gaveston's return. Margaret's support was not. During Gaveston's exile, Edward successfully mollified the nobility, so that they would approve Gaveston's return. Margaret's previous attempts to organize the earls against Gaveston demonstrated that her presence could endanger Edward's efforts to lay the foundation for Gaveston's homecoming. The queen could be a powerful tool for the king when he wanted to unite the polity, something that Edward would find in Isabella.⁹⁰ However, Margaret's disloyalty demonstrated that she would not be useful to Edward in this way. Because Margaret was a woman and the guidelines of submissive behavior were particularly emphasized for women, Edward would be able to easily pursue punitive actions against her. In the end, Margaret may have recuperated her landed wealth, but she sacrificed the significant place at court that she had enjoyed under Edward I. Not only did she lose the actual power she had once had, she lost her symbolic or perceived power as well. A symbiotic relationship exists between actual power and the perception of power. In the Middle Ages there was an expectation or perception that queens would act as intercessors. Queens could exploit this symbolic power to reach achieved power. Likewise, in order to maintain the reputation of power and influence, a queen must continue to intercede in a demonstrably successful manner. Once Margaret no longer possessed a place at court that allowed her to actively assert her influence, she lost the reputation as a powerful intercessor with the king. As such, it is likely that the lack of intercessory activity was due as much to a lack of requests for her intercession as to her actual inability to intercede.⁹¹ Margaret had crossed the threshold of what was acceptable for medieval queens and, in doing so, she was alienated from the king and from the main mechanisms of government.

APPENDIX: TIMELINE: JULY 1307–MARCH 1310

July 1307—Death of Edward I

August 1307—Gaveston Returns from exile and is granted the Earldom of Cornwall

December 1307—Preparations are made for Margaret's trip to France for the royal wedding.

- January 25, 1308—Marriage of Edward II and Isabella of France
 January 31, 1308—Boulogne Agreement
 February 25, 1308—Coronation
 March 12–18, 1308—Edward appoints new custodians to a dozen key castles in England.
 March 12, 1308—Margaret’s castles are granted to Hugh Despenser, Giles of Argentin, Walter Skidmore, and Nicholas Kingston
 March 16, 1308—John Abel travels to Margaret in France
 April 1308—*Homage et Serment* presented to parliament
 April 14, 1308—Easter (Margaret returns to England?)
 May 12–14, 1308—Newsletter arrives in England
 June 25, 1308—Gaveston’s second exile
 Spring 1309—Gaveston returns from second exile
 August 5, 1309—Regranting of the Earldom of Cornwall to Gaveston, including Berkhamsted, Mere, and Risborough.
 March 16–20, 1310—Ordainers elected
 March 19, 1310—Confirmation of Margaret’s dower

NOTES

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26. There are also two chronicles dating to the second half of the fourteenth century which argue that Cornwall should not have been alienated from the royal demesne but do not mention the royal family: *The Brut* and the *Anonimalle Chronicle* from 1307 to 1334; since these were likely compiled in the later half of the fourteenth century, they cannot reflect contemporary opinion from 1307. See Friedrich W. D Brie, ed., *The Brut, or The Chronicles of England*, *Early English Text Society*, Original Series 131, 136 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1906–1908), 206; Wendy R. Childs and John Taylor, eds, *The Anonimalle Chronicle, 1307–1334: from the Brotherton Collection MS 29* (York: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1991), 6, 12, 15, 19–22, 83; Lister Mathesons, *The Prose Brut: The Development of a Middle English Chronicle* (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1998), 3–6, 18, 47–8.
27. For Reginald see: David Crouch, “Reginald, earl of Cornwall (d. 1175),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 46 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 369–70; Deacon Bernard, *A Concise History of Cornwall* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), 34–6. During the minority of Edward III, the tradition continued when John of Eltham was made earl of Cornwall in 1328. When John died in 1337, Edward III entailed it as part of the endowment for royal sons in perpetuity, finally making the tradition official: W.M. Ormrod, *Edward III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) 75; B.P. Wolffe, *The Royal Demesne in English History: the Crown Estate in the Governance of the Realm from the Conquest to 1509* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1971), 8, 54.
28. Prestwich, *Edward I*, 550–2.
29. Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston*, 62.
30. Lincoln Muniments, D. ii/56/I, no. 39, also see Maddiocott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 335–36.
31. J.R.S. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence, earl of Pembroke, 1307–1327: Baronial Politics in the Reign of Edward II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 28; J. R. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster, 1307–1322: A Study in the Reign of Edward II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 84; Phillips, *Edward II*, 149; Elizabeth A. R. Brown, “The Political Repercussions of the Marriage of Edward II of England and Isabelle of France,” *Speculum* 63 (1988): 587; Haines, *Edward II*, 61–2; Katherine Allocco, ‘Intercessor, Rebel, Regent: The Political Life of Isabella of France’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 2004). 75–6.

32. CPR 1307–1313, 52; CCR 1307–1313, 24; TNA, C 54/125, mem. 8. I would like to thank Simon Harris, Jonathan Markman, and Chris Given-Wilson for providing me with images of this entry on the original chancery roll.
33. Stubbs, *Annales Londonienses*, 260; Laud, *Flores Historiarum*, 141.
34. TNA, E 101/373/7 mem. 4.
35. CCR 1307–1313, 12; CPR 1307–1313, 10, 25, 26, 34, 580–81; CPR 1313–1317, 85–87; CPR 1317–1321, 447, 448, 453; CPR 1324–1327, 992, 100, 102, 116, 126; CPR 1340–1343, 397.
36. CPR 1307–1313, 10, 25, 34 44; CCR 1307–1313, 12.
37. CPR 1307–1313, 26.
38. CPR 1307–1313, 51–2.
39. Haines, *Edward II*, 68; Phillips, *Edward II*, 147; Hamilton, *Piers Gaveston*, 49.
40. Bertie Wilkinson, *Studies in the Constitutional History of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1937), 67.
41. Maddicott, *Thomas of Lancaster*, 72–3.
42. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence*, 26–8; Phillips, *Edward II*, 138. See notes 49–53 below.
43. Haines, *Edward II*, 56–60.
44. Haines, *Edward II*, 68.
45. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 65–94.
46. CPR 1301–1307, 118–9.
47. CPR 1301–1307, 261; CCR 1302–1307, 286; CPR 1307–1313, 452; CPR 1313–1317, 117. 152, 109; CPR 1338–1340, 236–7; CPR 1321–1324, 40; [Calendar of Fine Rolls] CFR 1307–1323, 362, 371–72.
48. CPR 1301–1307, 85, 188; CPR 1301–1307, 30, 138; CCR, 1302–1307, 30, 146; TNA, SC 1/28/86.
49. Brie, *Brut*, vol. 131, 203.
50. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence*, 27–8.
51. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence*, 27.
52. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence*, 29–30.
53. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence*, 29–30.
54. Phillips, *Aymer de Valence*, 30.
55. Phillips, *Edward II*, 126. Also see Haines, *Edward II*, 66.
56. Mathesons, *The Prose Brut*, 4–5.
57. Childs, *Vita*, 4–5, 14–15.
58. Chaplais, *Piers Gaveston*, 62.
59. [Westminster Abbey Muniments] WAM 5460.
60. St. John, “In the Best Interest of the Queen,” 23–4.
61. Haines, *Edward II*, 59–60.

62. Phillips, *Edward II*, 147–8.
63. CPR 1307–1313, 123; Childs, *Vita*, 78.
64. CPR 1307–1313, 96.
65. [Calendar of Charter Rolls] CChR 1300–1326, 131.
66. CPR 1307–1313, 216–20, 230.
67. Phillips, *Edward II*, 167.
68. CCR 1313–1317, 121–22.
69. TNA, E 101/375/9, fol. 33; TNA, E 101/375/19; TNA, E 101/376/20; F. D. Blackley and G. Hermansen, eds, *The Household Book of Queen Isabella of England, for the Fifth Regnal Year of Edward II*, 8th July 1311 to 7th July 1312 (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1971), 206–7, 212–6; TNA, E 101/375/9, fol. 33; TNA, E 101/375/19; TNA, E 101/376/20; Ormrod, *Edward III*, 10.
70. CPR 1317–1321, 124, 236, 324–5, 431, 498.
71. CPR 1317–1321, 124, 236, 324–5, 431; also see TNA, SC 8/46/2259. In 1301, Edward I granted a license to the abbot of St. Mary's, York for alienations in mortmain up to the value of £200 at the request of Queen Margaret. The records on the chancery rolls from 1310 to 1318 reflect the abbot of York putting that license to use, not an example of Margaret participating in additional acts of intercession on the abbot's behalf.
72. CPR 1317–1321, 498.
73. TNA, SC 1/35/131, 164; TNA, SC 1/37/55. SC 1/37/55 is problematic because it has been dated 1320, which is after the death of Queen Margaret. The letter itself contains no dating clause. This date was probably assigned to the letter because the chancery issue for the said *oyer et terminer* is dated to December 1320. The letter itself does not mention Margaret by name. It is addressed simply to “a nostre dame la roigne d'Engleterre.” In his published edition of Anglo-French letters, F.J. Tanqueray does not attribute this letter to Margaret. The printed catalog of Ancient Correspondence is the only source that attributes the letter to Margaret. The chancery issue appointing the justices of the *oyer et terminer* does not mention this having been done at the instance of any queen. Thus, it is possible that this letter either belongs to Isabella of France or the letter could have been written to Margaret at an earlier date and action was not taken until 1320. List of ancient correspondence of the Chancery and Exchequer: preserved in the public record office, in Lists and Indexes 15 (Great Britain: Public Record Office, 1963); CPR 1317–1321, 549; F.J. Tanqueray, *Recueil de Lettres Anglo-Françaises, 1265–1399* (Paris: H. Champion, 1916), no. 106. For more information on the dating of the Series of Ancient Correspondence in the National Archives, see St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 150.
74. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 108–10, 117.

75. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 33; John Carmi Parsons, "The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England," in *Power of the Weak*, ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth Maclean (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 158; John Carmi Parsons, "'Never Was a Body Buried in England with Such Solemnity and Honour': The Burials and Posthumous Commemorations of English Queens to 1500," in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a Conference Held at King's College London*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1997), 332–333; Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1998), 19–24, 96; Janet L. Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels: The Careers of Brunhild and Bathild in Merovingian History," in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 31–77; Janet L. Nelson, "Medieval Queenship," in *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, ed. Linda Mitchell (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1999), 181; Helen Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2003), 66.
76. Parsons, "The Queen's Intercession," 158–9.
77. John Carmi Parsons, "The Pregnant Queen as Counsellor and the Medieval Construction of Motherhood," in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996), 40–1, 53; Paul Strohm, "Queens as Intercessors," in *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 102–3.
78. Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, 18–19; Nelson, "Queens as Jezebels," 58–77; Joanna Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens, English Queenship, 1445–1503* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 136; John Carmi Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile, Queen and Society in Thirteenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 123; St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 54–6; Rachel Gibbons, "Isabeau of Bavaria, queen of France (1385–1422): The Creation of a Historical Villainess," in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 55.
79. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 55.
80. Ralph V. Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France and of England* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 205.
81. Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 227, 231.
82. Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 231.
83. St. John, "In the Best Interest of the Queen," 26–31, 40.
84. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 162–3.
85. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 162–3; Ormrod, *Edward III*, 73–91.
86. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 127.

87. TNA, SC 1/63/247; TNA, E 403/254; Ormrod, *Edward III*, 124.
88. Ormrod, *Edward III*, 124.
89. St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 127, 162–64.
90. St. John, “In the Best Interest of the Queen,” 34–38.
91. For a larger discussion of symbolic and actual power see, St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 17, 46–63, 95–8, 102–30.

Isabeau of Bavaria, Queen of France: Queenship and Political Authority as “Lieutenante-Général” of the Realm

Rachel C. Gibbons

The turbulent life and political career of Isabeau of Bavaria (c. 1370–1435) provides much material through which to approach a theme of queenship, reputation, and gendered power. Isabeau held an unprecedented position for a queen of France because of the extraordinary circumstances following the first attack of insanity suffered by her husband, Charles VI, in August 1392, and his subsequent descent into a distressing and debilitating state of mental illness.¹ Isabeau was faced with political intrigues, assassinations, and acts of vengeance among the royal families of France that spiraled into civil war, as we see in Zita Rohr’s chapter. After the deaths of two of her sons in their teenage years from infections, Isabeau herself suffered a humiliating period of captivity at the hands of the Armagnacs in 1417, isolation politically from her last remaining son and, finally, by what one might call the most important victory of Henry V—when he negotiated an alliance

A version in French of this chapter was published originally as “Isabeau de Bavière: reine de France ou ‘lieutenant-général’ du royaume” in *Femmes de pouvoir, femmes politiques durant les derniers siècles du Moyen Âge et au cours de la première Renaissance. Actes du colloque de Lille-Bruxelles, 15–18 février 2006*, edited by Éric Bousmar et al. (Brussels: De Boeck, 2012), 101–112.

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Z.E. Rohr, L. Benz (eds.), *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation in
the Medieval and Early Modern West, 1060–1600*, Queenship and
Power, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-31283-5_7

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with the Burgundians that would lead to the negotiation of the Treaty of Troyes. Over the following pages, close analysis will be made of the regency ordinances enacted by Charles VI in moments of seeming sanity, first, in January 1393 in preparation for his (seeming) expected imminent death and, then, during 1402–1403, when, ten years after his first attack, it had become clear that Charles was going neither to die nor to recover from this mysterious illness, and that measures had to be taken to continue government in the name and in the absences of the king when he was incapable of so doing himself. This chapter also will examine the role set out for the queen in each of these measures and explore the significance of these in the context of the political situation in France at the beginning of the fifteenth century and, also, in the context of medieval queenship studies.

What might seem now to be the most natural function for a queen, that of a regent for an absent husband or a minor son, was not always considered so in earlier centuries, and there is a chronological correlation, if not a direct connection, between recognition in this short-term role and decline in routine political involvement over the course of the Middle Ages.² For example, during the minority of Philip I (1060–1108), the dowager Anne of Kiev held no official position, while Louis VII appointed an all-male regency council when he departed on the Second Crusade, ignoring his formidable mother, Adelaide of Savoy.³ Forty years later, Philip Augustus maintained the idea of collective regency but included his mother, Adele of Champagne, who shared guardianship over the kingdom and the future Louis VIII with her brother, William, archbishop of Rheims, under the guidance of a Council.⁴ Therefore, the regency provisions drawn up on his deathbed by Louis VIII in 1226 were extraordinary at this stage for the unequivocal confidence shown in his wife, Blanche of Castile, under whose tutelage were placed the royal children and governance of the kingdom itself.⁵ The regency or co-rule of Blanche continued at least until the marriage of her son, Louis IX, and she again served as regent during his first crusade, from 1248 until her death in 1252. Blanche's career, though, proved to be an exception rather than a turning point for female regencies in France: her daughter-in-law, Margaret of Provence, was not included within the collegiate regency organized by Louis IX when he again went on crusade in 1270 and was similarly shunned as a dowager by her son, Philip III.⁶

In fact, the change in attitude toward temporary government by women appears to be connected to their definitive exclusion from rights to inherit the Crown of France. The further removed from royal authority that women became—once a queen could no longer be regarded as

a force in her own right and entitled to authority—the more acceptable it was that they be granted power in specific circumstances. Valois kings after 1328 were comfortable in regarding a range of female relations as possible regents in whom trust could be placed with confidence. In 1338, faced with war against England, Philip VI designated his wife, Jeanne of Burgundy, as regent during his lifetime with full powers in government, public finance, and justice if he were occupied elsewhere, the first king to take such a step, and the first likely to, because his wife “was raised with him and must fall with him; who better to entrust with the dynastic heritage?”⁷ Louis XI took the radical step in 1483 of recruiting his daughter, Anne de Beaujeu, as guardian of the kingdom and her younger brother⁸—the ultimate proof that “the vocation of regency was consolidated with the exclusion of women from the succession,”⁹ given that, under pure primogeniture, Anne would have been heir presumptive to the boy in her care and, hence, perhaps considered an unsafe guardian. However, the choice of a king’s mother as his most natural proxy had become so accepted by the end of the medieval era that Louise of Savoy could act as her absent son’s regent in 1515 despite never having been queen herself,¹⁰ and Catherine de Médici simply could put herself forward uninvited in 1560 as regent for Charles IX to become “the first queen in French history to succeed to the regency without prior royal designation.”¹¹

There were no guarantees, certainly, but a late medieval queen might presume a natural expectation of some involvement in a regency and, as demonstrated by Blanche of Castile, motherhood was the means by which a queen created a political space for herself and strengthened her political identity.¹² The birth of a son in February 1392 gave Isabeau of Bavaria a multiple stake in France:¹³ the kingdom was now the birthright of her son, as well as her husband’s heritage and her own domain through the sacramental ties of marriage and coronation. However, as we will see when examining the various regency measures, initial plans set out in 1393 recognized Isabeau’s position as royal mother but contained no provision for direct involvement in government more widely. If Charles VI and his ministers were looking dispassionately at the young woman in front of them rather than the office of queen that she held, arguably this was not a surprising choice. At this point, Isabeau was only twenty-two years old, mother to three children under four years old (with two other children having already died in infancy) and must have been as untrained for a role in royal government as any other bride from an unimportant ducal house. However, ten years later, when both Isabeau’s talent for arbitration and

her interest in becoming involved in politics had come to the fore, the role of the queen would be greatly increased—and, this time, not in a theoretical future minority administration but in the regime of the day.

When drawing up plans for a regency for his baby son in the event of his death, Charles VI almost exactly duplicated legislation drawn up by his own father, Charles V, in 1374.¹⁴ The king's brother, Louis, duke of Orleans, was named as regent of the kingdom, while joint custody of the dauphin and the other royal children and the estates and income set aside to support them was entrusted to the rest of the family.¹⁵ In the performance of their duties, the guardians of the royal children (the *tuteurs*) were to be assisted by a council of six nobles, three prelates and three clerks, to be selected by the guardians collectively and who would remain in their company and service on a permanent basis in order to advise on their guardianship. The obligation and privilege of governing the person of a minor monarch was given, in the main, to Isabeau of Bavaria. It was stated that, according to:

written reason and natural instinct, a mother has the most tender love and the most gentle heart towards her children, and is more diligent in protecting and nourishing them affectionately than any other person, even those next of kin, and for this [the mother] must be preferred to any other.¹⁶

Accordingly, the ordinance goes on to state that the queen would enjoy “the principal custody, guardianship and care” of her eldest son and other children,¹⁷ but would share responsibility with the king's uncles, the dukes of Burgundy, Bourbon, and Berry, as well as with her own brother, Ludwig of Bavaria.¹⁸ Therefore, Charles V's 1374 legislation was copied also in giving the dauphin's maternal relatives an equal status in his upbringing to his paternal family. All eventualities were covered by this legislation: if any of the royal dukes became unavailable through imprisonment or death, the remainder should continue their duty of care without them, and either the queen or any one of the princes were empowered to act as sole *tuteur* rather than replace their colleagues. If Isabeau was unavailable, Berry and Burgundy were named to replace her as “chief and principal guardians.”¹⁹ Orleans²⁰ and each of the five guardians were required to make detailed oaths, promising to uphold the regency provisions and pledging loyalty to the king, the queen, and the dauphin. Even Isabeau was expected to swear: commencing “Je, Elisabeth de Baviere, Royne de France,” the queen promised that, if the king died before his heir reached his fourteenth year, she would:

sustain, guard and care for my said eldest son and all my other children, born and yet to be born, carefully and diligently, to the best of my ability and knowledge, for their greatest good, health, honor and profit.²¹

She also pledged not to allow or consent to anything that could endanger the persons or property of her children and to maintain “tutele, garde et gouvernement” of them fully in accord with the content and spirit of the ordinance.²² In all cases, the oaths taken by Isabeau and her fellow guardians in 1393 were almost exact copies of those sworn by Jeanne of Bourbon, her brother and the royal dukes in 1374.²³

Given past precedent, perhaps Isabeau could have legitimately expected a role in a planned regency government. That she was not given such an opportunity most probably had more to do with her youth and the most immediate precedent than with any doubts as to her personal commitment and aptitude. Jeanne of Bourbon, French-born and in her mid-30s when Charles V's ordinance was drawn up in 1374, had not been chosen as regent and was similarly entrusted with joint custody of her children. Therefore, it was highly likely that Isabeau would be sidelined in the same way. Like Jeanne, Isabeau was accorded status in keeping with her new position as mother of the heir to the throne, illustrated by the inclusion, not only of herself but also of her brother—the children's only maternal relation to hand—as guardians of equal status to paternal relations. However, it is clear that responsibility and power would be hers only in respect of her status as royal mother and wife, not in any way related to her own merits. This is shown by the fact that death and illness are not the only possibilities given for the queen's inability to discharge her duties as guardian (*tutrice*)—remarriage is also prohibited. This provision too was rooted in precedent: Charles V enforced the same condition in 1374 and, when drawing up regency plans in 1294, Philip IV entrusted guardianship of a minor king and of the realm to his queen, Jeanne of Navarre, with the only stipulation on her prerogatives being that she would lose them automatically if she chose to remarry at any point before their son attained his majority.²⁴ Although, in itself, his mother's remarriage would not pose a political threat to a boy king, the balance of a collegiate arrangement could well be altered by the inevitable introduction as a “co-guardian” of a man who would, legitimately enough, consider himself as entitled to his wife's status and legal prerogatives as he was to her other possessions. A royal stepfather was an unacceptable risk and any disquiet that a dowager's personal rights would be infringed was not allowed to threaten the greater good of the kingdom. Queens of France were not the only

widows facing such a ban: Isabeau's youngest daughter, Catherine, queen of England, was prevented by a statute of 1428 from remarrying before her son, Henry VI, attained his majority and was able to give his personal consent.²⁵ This siltation of legally-enforced celibacy resulted in Catherine's clandestine union with Owen Tudor and that seems particularly unjust given that the dowager queen had been given no rights of regency or custody over her son and, thus, that there was no political role upon which a stepfather might intrude. We might also consider Jeanne of Navarre, dowager duchess of Brittany, who married Henry IV of England in 1402. Charles VI enforced his rights as overlord of the duchy²⁶ and took her four sons into wardship;²⁷ Jeanne was allowed to take only her two unmarried daughters with her.²⁸ A remarried mother would not be allowed to have an input into the upbringing of the children that mattered—her sons and in particular the heir.

The role set aside for the queen in the provisions of January 1393 for a possible minority is an indication of Isabeau of Bavaria's general political position at that particular time. Her new status as mother to the heir to the throne allowed her to have a major input in the upbringing of that child and in his preparation for ruling responsibility but was in no way a government prerogative of her own. Isabeau's rank as queen enabled her to consider herself as the senior member of a family collective that held the tutelage of the dauphin, but would in itself accord her no ruling power in the kingdom. However, ten years on, circumstances had changed. The king's mental condition had become more obvious and serious. Breakdowns continued, with frenzied moments of alarm, amnesia, delusion, and paranoia that were unpredictable in onset, length, and severity, and interspersed with longer periods of calm when he might appear to be reacting normally but from which he would degenerate again. In the meantime, competition between the dukes of Burgundy and Orleans to fill the vacuum left by the king's periodic incapability became ever more blatant and bitter. The queen's success in mobilizing the other dukes with her as arbiters between the two rivals meant that she was in a strong position in 1402 and would have a key role to play when it was accepted, finally, that a formal, regency-style settlement would have to be established to compensate for the increasing absence of Charles VI.

On July 1, 1402, Isabeau's powers of arbitration were clarified and extended to constitute a considerable range of authority to act in place of the king when he was unfit to do so.²⁹ It was confirmed that she held "power, authority and special instruction to appease all debates, discords, dissensions and divisions"³⁰ that existed now or erupted in the future,

around any issue whatsoever, between any of the Princes of the Blood, but particularly in light of various initiatives of power sharing between the dukes of Burgundy and Orleans (in the administration of the *aides* taxation, for instance) that Charles VI had recently been trying out in an attempt to mollify all his relations.³¹ By this document, the queen was empowered to resolve such disputes, if possible “by kind words” and if necessary “by ruling between them,” calling on the advice of any princes not involved in the dispute and whichever other members of the council that she saw fit to ask.³² As well as being able to command that advice given by her and the council be taken, Isabeau was also given far-reaching authority to deal with the “government of Our finances and other important needs of Our realm” at all times when the king could not deal with affairs personally through “absence or other affairs” and when delay could be damaging to the kingdom. This power to act in the king’s periods of insanity “in all things and all circumstances as we ourselves could do if we were there”³³ was the first time that actual day-to-day governmental measures were taken to counter Charles’s madness, and illustrates the painful recognition, a full decade after his first attack, that death would not be the only trigger for regency government. By mid-1402, the king and his court were forced to accept that every day of his life could become one of emergency conditions, and that allowing whoever happened to be around him at the time to control events during these ever-increasing periods could no longer continue. The queen was, in essence, named as the king’s replacement or lieutenant in periods when he was incapable of rule, but the significance is not only in the extent of power that she was given, but in the choice of Isabeau at all, over the heads of the king’s brother and uncles, all of whom had been able to manipulate the chaotic situation until this point. The fact that this first outline for regency government deliberately did not follow the same pattern as that which was designed in 1393 in the eventuality of minority rule,³⁴ which ignored the queen and nominated the duke of Orleans as regent of the kingdom, implies that views on the involvement in politics of Isabeau had dramatically changed. She was expected to consult the royal dukes and take their opinion into account, but the ordinance is clear that, in the absence of the king, her word was law:

[the king commands] that, towards our aforesaid spouse and in all the ordinances and appointments that she makes ... they³⁵ obey and pay attention to diligently, and carry them out as if we ourselves had made them.³⁶

There has been some debate as to the intent behind and the upshot of the second regency provisions of April 26, 1403. Marcel Thibault claims that the 1403 ordinance gave Isabeau “supreme authority,”³⁷ while Richard Famiglietti argues almost the complete opposite, that Charles VI had “imposed significant restraint on the queen’s power” as given in July 1402.³⁸ Close examination of the document itself, however, implies that its provisions should be seen as a natural progression in an overall policy of Charles VI. It is aimed at ensuring collective responsibility when the king was not fit to govern personally and also as a next stage onward from the rather open-ended July ordinance, in that measures were no longer emergency provisos, but the setting up of an administration that had to be prepared to govern frequently and come together instantly when required. The preamble to the document declares that it has always been the king’s intention to rule according to the will of God and for the good of his subjects but, because he cannot always attend to important matters when they arise, he is making alternative provisions.³⁹ The queen and the dukes of Berry, Burgundy, Orleans, and Bourbon were authorized and ordered in periods of “absence” to summon any “of our blood and lineage who are at court,” the Constable, the Chancellor and any other Council members “whom and in such numbers as seems expedient,” and all should then deal with any business of state in the king’s name, with decisions to be taken “by the most substantial and sound party of opinion.”⁴⁰

The difference between the two regency ordinances, first, on July 1, 1402, and, then, on April 26, 1403, is not quite as pronounced as one might initially think—from autonomy for the queen to the democracy of a Council. Key is the clause that decisions had to be taken according to the will of “la plus grant et saine partie des voix” (the most substantial/largest and sound party of opinion). What we see with this provision is not merely rule by numerical majority, for “saine” indicates that the substance and quality of the counsel should also be taken into account, as well as the numbers advocating any viewpoint.⁴¹ The ordinance does not specify to whom should be left the decision as to which was the wisest view but, given the trust often placed in the queen’s ability in the past, it would be relatively safe to assume that Isabeau might be expected to hold an arbitrary position of this kind. Indications are here in this royal ordinance that Isabeau is still the central figure of authority, in that the existence of the Regency Council rests with her. If any or all of the four royal dukes “by circumstances cannot always be present together with our aforesaid spouse when the need arises,”⁴² the queen and those of the Council with her have the

authority to make decisions “as if all were there” (*comme si touz y estions*).⁴³ The existence of the Council is with her and its membership at any given time comprises those on the spot, either by chance or whom she has deliberately chosen to summon—and, by consequence, not including any of those not with her or whom she has not summoned. Given that it was made clear in the ordinance of July 1, 1402, that Isabeau should consult and note the opinions of the dukes and other members of the Council, and that she was intended to preside over the new administration, not too much appears to have been altered by the new ordinance of April 26, 1403.

Therefore, the change from quasi-lieutenancy by the queen into a more collegiate structure should not really be seen as a snub to Isabeau, or as an indication that her loyalties were thought to be questionable by Charles VI as has been suggested. After all, there was no legal requirement for the king to maintain his wife’s preeminence in the regency government, or to allow her to contribute in any capacity, even as just one among many in a Council. As the original minority provisions in 1393 had demonstrated, the only expected formal role of a royal woman was to safeguard the heir and, although it would seem appropriate for that to include some level of input into the governance of his inheritance, there was no precedent for this situation and no onus on Charles VI to give any power to Isabeau if he did not trust her motives and want her involvement. Again, the most plausible explanation is that, rather than wishing to attack the queen’s position, the king was again taking steps to curb the power of the royal dukes, this time controlling their role in government with the fetters of majority rule. It was unfortunate for Isabeau that what had made the provisions of 1402 initially seem so appropriate to “emergency” conditions—the lack of formal parameters to her position, enabling specific reaction to problems as they arose—was perhaps their major weakness, given the circumstances of the time of continued friction between the two most powerful princes, Burgundy and Orleans. Another factor may have been an even greater need for permanence because, although only ten months elapsed between the two ordinances, Charles VI’s condition worsened noticeably over that period, in which he spent only six weeks in a state of acknowledged “sanity.”⁴⁴

Although the idea of being replaced by his consort at times when he was too ill to act for himself had been acceptable as an occasional emergency measure, the atmosphere of April 1403 had descended, now, into one of submission. As Charles’s mental state declined, “emergency” government was becoming more usual than was government by the king. Therefore, any regency had to be more than a filler—in fact, had to be well thought-out,

equitable, and built to last for the rest of the reign, in what could, and would prove to be, difficult and uncertain times. The queen's position was not so much the subject of "a very significant restraint,"⁴⁵ as provided with a legislative context and the security of being underpinned by an inclusive Council. At the most basic level, certainly, it might be argued that the 1403 arrangement did not allow as much potential personal power as that of 1402.⁴⁶ The original regency situation provided for a theoretically greater freedom of action on Isabeau's behalf, recommending, rather than requiring, that the views of the princes and the Council be taken into account. Such open, unstructured power could well have functioned as an emergency provision but, however, it would always have been likely to lead to dispute as time wore on, particularly among those who had not been included. The principle of a seen-to-be equitable division of power was not upheld in such a scenario, where the most powerful were given no formal role or parameters to their involvement: the provisions of July 1402 established the Princes of the Blood Royal only as optional consultants, with the names of the feuding Orleans and Burgundy not included on the list. Of course, these two ambitious princes would not allow themselves to be excluded from affairs long-term—with no ruling mandate at all, one or either of them had been able to monopolize government during the king's periods of relapse over the last decade—which would leave the queen in an invidious position, whatever her theoretical authority.

In order for there to be any hope that the desperate struggle for power would come to an end, all parties would need to be given and to accept an explicit, precise role within this regency and within any future administration that might operate during a minority.⁴⁷ Therefore, at this point, Charles VI also revised provisions for the succession, permitting a new king to be crowned immediately, however young, and also stipulating that, during a minority, France would be ruled by this same Regency Council. Again, decisions would be made "with no regard paid to anyone's importance, authority and rank, but only to those who speak and advise to the good, usefulness and profit of the aforesaid matters."⁴⁸ This ordinance indicates that Isabeau would retain ascendancy in a minority governing Council: other members would be "called by her and alongside her" and she was now promised sole tutelage over a child king and all her other underage children.⁴⁹ It is highly likely, therefore, that the queen would have been wholly supportive of these new measures. Although she was now the senior member of a family-based council rather than sole possessor of a royal mandate, she would not have been subjected to as much pressure from disgruntled princes, aiming to force their views upon her. There would be less to gain from seeking to

coerce Isabeau when there was an entire Council that would have to be persuaded. The queen had maintained a sovereign status within the *cursus honorum* of the Regency Council, and had made a definite gain as the sole guardian (*tutrice*) of her children in the event of a minority. Therefore, despite having lost nominal autonomy, Isabeau of Bavaria was perhaps in a stronger position than before.

In conclusion, to twist a turn of phrase, even in madness, there is perhaps method. The 1402 ordinance had been a first attempt by a temporarily recovered Charles VI to break the cycle of feuding, by raising his queen as an independent force between the dukes of Burgundy and Orleans, while that of April 1403 sought to neutralize further the dukes' potential for unlicensed absolutism through the check of quasi-majority rule. The collegiate administration was intended to prevent any one prince being able to intimidate his way to supremacy by keeping power and responsibility divided up as much as possible—as did the mere act of including the queen. The sovereign status of Isabeau of Bavaria trumped any claims for preeminence based on seniority or blood relationship that might be pursued by the dukes, while she herself was not a force that could imperil the king. Her rank and position as queen gave her power, but that (quite clearly) was inextricably dependent on her relationship with the king and one might argue that this made her above all others more neutral, with no agenda of her own. As the king's wife and the legal guardian of his heir, she was the most entitled to act as a proxy yet, unlike the rest of the royal family, could never be a successor herself; so she was no threat.⁵⁰ A queen has power (the capacity to persuade people to act or make things happen) but no royal authority of her own, no publicly recognized right to rule.⁵¹ If authority was granted or sanctioned by the king, and recognized by his peers, a queen held it and it was legitimate, as was the case for Isabeau for most of her reign. The provisions establishing the queen as head (*présidente*) of the Regency Council set her into a position of substantial authority and great vulnerability. While being appealed to, buffeted and threatened by both sides in an increasingly acrimonious civil war, Isabeau was careful always to claim intermediary status for her acts, as the representative and deputy of her husband's authority—and she needed to do so. By sheer definition, the role of queen consort was as a subordinate to the king and Isabeau had to maintain the perception that she was acting only in support of her husband, not as an independent political being with her own agenda. However, Charles VI's selection of Isabeau as head of the Regency Council, ruling in the king's stead in his periods of illness with all

the powers of a lieutenant-general appointed in short periods of absence for war, demonstrates that the office of queen was not regarded as peripheral to monarchy, but an integral part of it that could be utilized when necessary in the service of the Crown as a corporate entity and invested by the king with the authority of kingship.

The queen's authority would be tested to the full over the twenty years following the outbreak of the king's madness in 1392, and first shared with, then gradually yielded to, her eldest son, the dauphin Louis, as he grew toward maturity, both in years and in diplomatic capability. As soon as it was legally possible, in the days before his thirteenth birthday, Isabeau organized Louis's emancipation (his legal majority). Although Isabeau tended to retain chairmanship of the regency council, there were occasions after 1410 when she might easily have attended but chose not to, thereby pushing forward her son into the limelight as next in line after her as the king's deputy. The dauphin Louis represented the king during the preliminary negotiations at Arras in September 1414, and at the later meetings at Saint-Denis and Paris in February 1415 that led to the eventual truce between the warring Burgundian and Orleanist/Armagnac factions. In fact, the phrase recorded by Michel Pintoin, the Religieux de Saint-Denis, in his account of the peace of Arras describes Louis's role perfectly as the one "who held the reins of the State during his father's illness."⁵² However, the end of 1415 witnessed two disasters for France, with the desolation of the battle of Agincourt in October and the sudden death of the dauphin Louis in December. Grieving and politically isolated, Isabeau of Bavaria would spend the remainder of her life, another long 20 years, as subsumed and powerless as the rest of the country in the disaster of division and conquest. She was imprisoned by the Armagnac faction in 1417, who issued an ordinance establishing her last remaining son, the future Charles VII, as the king's deputy instead. It is an interesting coda to this discussion of the regency provisions to consider their later misuse as well. Although Isabeau was in no position to exert power herself in 1417, the ordinance of April 1403 naming her as the king's deputy in periods of emergency Council-run government seems only to have been replicated (not revoked) when the dauphin was granted his title. By arguing that the grant of powers to Isabeau in 1403 was irrevocable, as Burgundy would claim when releasing her from captivity in 1418, it was worth his while to fund her and establish her as the figurehead of a rival regime, seeking to regain possession of the person of the king. Isabeau of Bavaria found herself in an unenviable situation, with no financial backup of her own, no

power base, and absolutely no prospect of being able to take back government herself. In such a scenario, control *of* the queen and her authority, by neutralizing her in prison like Armagnac or, like Burgundy, by persuasion or coercion, or perhaps even deceptive use of her titles and seals with no attempt or interest in gaining her consent or not, remained the ultimate weapon in the civil war. Regency authority somehow endured, despite the essential powerlessness personally of the individual regent queen.

NOTES

1. See Rachel Gibbons, “‘The Limbs Fail when the Head is Removed’: Reactions of the Body Politic of France to the Madness of Charles VI (1380–1422),” in *The Image and Perception of Monarchy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sean McGlynn and Elena Woodacre (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2014), 48–67.
2. See André Poulet, “Capetian Women and the Regency: the Genesis of a Vocation,” in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. J.C. Parsons (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993), 93–116, which presents a clear discussion of the subject of female regency in medieval France and which forms the basis of much of the following few paragraphs.
3. Poulet, “Capetian Women,” 106–8.
4. Poulet, “Capetian Women,” 108. Poulet describes these provisions as the “first model for a regency by edict.”
5. Poulet, “Capetian Women,” 109–10. See René Bertrand, *La France de Blanche de Castille* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1977), 107–36 and Françoise Barry, *La reine de France* (Paris: Éditions du Scorpion, 1964), 277–83 for accounts of Blanche’s regency during Louis IX’s minority.
6. Poulet, “Capetian Women,” 110; Elizabeth M. Hallam, *Capetian France, 987–1328* (London: Longman, 1980), 222–3. Margaret of Provence certainly tried to maintain a great hold over her son, coercing him to swear, while still the child heir, an oath to stay under her tutelage until he was 30, never to take counselors hostile to her and, most importantly, to tell no one about the oath. Urban IV’s agreement in 1263 to release him by papal bull from these promises demonstrates the invalidity of Margaret’s expectations.
7. Poulet, “Capetian Women,” 112–3. Queen Jeanne was of the blood royal herself, as a granddaughter of Philip V, perhaps grateful for this “second chance” for her line now that her personal right to the Crown had been scotched and, thus, dependent on her husband’s survival for her own. At this stage of his reign, Philip VI cannot have been considered as completely secure on his throne, being “a ‘found king’, enthroned by common con-

- sent and not without opposition.” He did have a younger brother, Charles, count of Alençon (d. 1346), on whom he could have placed this burden, but presumably felt a need for him at his side on campaign.
8. Poulet, “Capetian Women,” 115. Louis XI’s snub of Charles’s mother, Charlotte of Savoy, for the regency must, by this stage, be considered unusual, despite his unashamedly public estrangement from her. Louis XI’s “resolve to exclude this foreign woman” extended to instructing Anne of Beaujeu to keep Charles VIII as far away from their mother as possible (Mooney, “Queenship in fifteenth-century France.” Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Ohio, 1977, 15).
 9. Poulet, “Capetian Women,” 116.
 10. Elizabeth McCartney, “The King’s Mother and Royal Prerogative in Early-Sixteenth-Century France,” in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. Parsons, 126–7. Despite, by now, being married to his predecessor’s eldest daughter, Claude of France, François I chose his mother as regent again in 1523, which she maintained during his captivity (*ibid.*, 131–6).
 11. McCartney, “The King’s Mother,” 117. See also Harriet Lightman, “Political Power and the Queen of France: Pierre Dupuy’s Treatise on Regency Governments,” *Canadian Journal of History* 21 (1986), 299–312, which examines a mid-seventeenth-century theorist’s analysis of the history of female regencies in France.
 12. M. Shadis, “Blanche of Castile and Facinger’s ‘Medieval Queenship’: Reassessing the Argument” in *Capetian Women*, ed. K. Nolan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 144.
 13. Charles of France, dauphin of Vienne, fifth child of Charles VI and Isabeau (1392–1401).
 14. *Ordonnances des rois de France de la troisième race...*, (22 vols, Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1723–1849), vol. 6: 1374–1382, edited by D.F. Secousse (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1741), 45–9 (appointment of the eldest of the king’s younger brothers, the duke of Anjou, as regent); and 49–54 (collegiate tutelage of the king’s widow, his other brothers and brother-in-law, Louis of Bourbon). The fact that these careful plans made by Charles V were almost instantly overturned, with Burgundy arranging the coronation of the new 12-year-old king (contrary to additional legal provisions that this could not happen before his 13th birthday (*ibid.*, 26–30)) and successfully nullifying Anjou’s position as regent, did not deter Charles VI from following the same route as his father.
 15. *Ordonnances*, vol. 7: 1383–1394, ed. D. F. Secousse (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1745), 533.
 16. *Ordonnances*, 7: 530. “*Selon raison escripte et naturelle, la mère a greigneur et plus tendre amour à ses enfans et a la cuer plus doulz et plus soigneux de les*

- garder et nourrir amoureusement que quelconque autre personne, tant leur soit prochaine de linage, et quant à ce doit ester preferée à touz autres.”*
17. *Ordonnances*, 7: 530 “... *principalement la tutelle, garde et gouvernement.*”
 18. His exact arrival at the French court is not recorded, but there is no mention of Ludwig/Louis before 1392, by which time he was in a central position. In March 1392, he accompanied his brother-in-law Charles VI to Amiens as part of the French delegation to a peace conference with the English. On August 10, Charles VI named Ludwig of Bavaria as a testamentary executor. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France [henceforward, BNF] nouvelles acquisitions françaises 5085 (“Notes historiques de Auguste Vallet de Virville,” tome IV), nos. 155 and 156.
 19. *Ordonnances*, 7:531.
 20. Paris, Archives Nationales [hence forward AN] J359, n°19. He promised to “*serviray monseigneur le Roy, madame la Royne et monseigneur le daulphin ou quelconque autre leur ainsne filz, et les aideray conseilleray conforteray et leur seray loyal et feal tous les jours de ma vie contre tous ceulz qui pevent vivre et morir, leurs demaines terres et seigneuries aideray a accroistre garder et maintenir ainsi comme Je vouldroye faire pour moy ou pour mes propres enfans.*”
 21. *Ordonnances*, 7: 533. “... *nourriray, garderay et gouverneray mondit ainsné filz et tous noz autres Enfans nez et à naistre, curieusement et diligemment, et au miex et plus proufitablement que pourray et sauray, au bien, santé, honneur et proufit de leurs personnes.*”
 22. *Ibid.*
 23. See *Ordonnances*, 6: 52–4 for the oaths of Queen Jeanne, Philip of Burgundy and Louis of Bourbon.
 24. AN J401, n°4 and 5.
 25. Anne Crawford, “The King’s Burden?: the Consequences of Royal Marriage in fifteenth-century England,” in *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in later Medieval England*, ed. Ralph A. Griffiths (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1981), 36–7.
 26. M. Pintoin [Religieux de Saint-Denis], *Chronique de Charles VI*, ed. L.-F. Bellaguet, Collection des Documents Inédits sur l’Histoire de France, 6 vols. (Paris, 1839–1852), vol. 3, 41.
 27. Pintoin, *Chronique de Charles VI*, 3:41 describes how Duke John and his brothers, Arthur and Gilles, were escorted in December by Burgundy to live in Paris, while the youngest, Richard, remained in Brittany.
 28. The two girls did not long remain in England. They were married on June 26, 1407 to husbands chosen by their brother—Blanche married John, son of Bernard of Armagnac, while Margaret became the wife of Alan of Rohan, a grandson of Clisson (J.B. Henneman, *Olivier de Clisson, and*

- Political Society in France under Charles V and Charles VI* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) 190, 197).
29. AN J402, n°16.
 30. AN J402, n°16—“*pouvoir auctorite et mandement especial de pourveoir a l'apaisement de tous les debas descors discencion et divisions.*”
 31. This document confirms that this was now a shared position between the two princes, legislating on what should be done if antagonism arose between them “because of administrating all of our finances, current and future, from *aides* [taxation] ordered for the war, the which administration We have committed to Our said uncle and brother, that is to say firstly to Our brother and then to Our uncle” (*par raison du gouvernement de toutes noz finances venues et avenir du fait des aides ordonnez pour la guerre, lequel gouvernement nous avons commis a noz diz oncle et frere, c'est assavoir premierement a nostredit frere et apres a nostredit oncle*), and saying that arguments were to be resolved for their own sake and also because nothing should hinder the efficiency of the *aides* administration.
 32. AN J402, n°16—“*par voie amiable si faire se peut, ou sinon par leur administrer justice sur les debas qu'ilz auroient ensemble.*”
 33. AN J402, no. 16—“*en toutes ces choses et leurs circonstances et dependences tout ce que nous y pourrions faire si nous y estions en nostre personne.*”
 34. This is an anomaly that would be corrected when the whole system of regency during Charles VI's life and his plans for any minor heir were addressed again ten months later, in April 1403.
 35. The king's uncles and brother, all others of the Blood Royal, all justiciars, officials, and subjects.
 36. AN J402, n°16. “[*Le roi commande que*] *nostre dicte compaignie et a toutes les ordonnances et appoinctemens que elle fera ... ilz obeissent et entendent diligemment et les acomplissement comme si nous les faisons en nostre personne.*”
 37. Marcel Thibault, *Isabeau de Bavière* (Paris: Perrin, 1903), 373.
 38. Richard C. Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue: crisis at the court of Charles VI, 1392–1420* (New York: AMS Press, 1986), 28. Famiglietti surmises that Charles VI had thought twice, suspecting that his wife's affection for her brother Ludwig might induce her to use the wide authority of the July 1402 settlement on policies that the king himself would not have endorsed—not a conclusion with which I am convinced, given the internal evidence of the document itself.
 39. AN J402, n°13. Pintoin, *Chronique de Charles VI*, 3:77 confirms that Charles was regarded as recovering from his latest bout on April 25, 1403, so the new regency provisions are issued by him personally and, arguably, were of his own creation.

40. AN J402, n°13—“*de nostre sang et lignage qui seront en nostre court ... telz et en tel nombre comme il sera expedient,*” following decisions of “*la plus grant et saine partie des voix.*”
41. Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue*, 221 note 47. This idea is echoed in the plans for a minority government also legislated for in April 1403, as discussed on pp. 180–1 of this chapter.
42. AN J402, n°13—“*ne pourront par adventure estre tousjours presens ensemble devers nostredicte compaignie quant les besoingnes sourvendront.*”
43. AN J402, n°13. However, neither a full nor a partial Council has the authority to supersede the king, and operate without his presence when he is able and wishes to be present. The document dictates that nothing be done concerning the “*grans faiz et besoingnes de nous et de nostredit royaume sanz nostre presence.*”
44. Looking at the ten months prior to April 26, 1403, Pintoin’s precise timetable records a period of relapse lasting from mid-July to October 1, 1402; then, after nine days of recovery, he relapsed again (Pintoin, *Chronique de Charles VI*, 3:37, 47). “Health and reason” were recovered toward the end of February 1403 (*ibid.*, 63), but he was clearly considered well enough on February 21 to conduct the ceremonial bestowal of the Constable’s sword on Charles d’Albret. The king then suffered another three-week bout, recovering on April 25 (*ibid.*, 77). So, he was recognized as sane for only two short periods, between October 1 and 10, 1402, and from just before February 21 to early April 1403. The chronicler betrays sentiments of resignation in his choice of vocabulary that one can only assume were becoming more common, describing Charles VI’s symptoms as “his ordinary state of madness” and “his usual suffering” (*ibid.*, 47, 77). Although this may have been just Pintoin saying that he had heard of or observed no different symptoms than in previous bouts, so had nothing new on which to comment, the tone given to his writings by describing the madness as “ordinary/usual” strikes one as more meaningful.
45. Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue*, 28.
46. Thibault, *Isabeau de Bavière*, 373 is thus wrong to say that the letters of April 26 “conferred supreme authority on Isabeau” (“conféraient à Isabeau l’autorité suprême”).
47. The death of the dauphin Charles on January 13, 1401, just before his tenth birthday, had made a minority in the future seem quite likely again. In late April 1403, the new dauphin Louis was six years old.
48. *Ordonnances*, 8: 581–3—“*sans avoir regard à la grandeur, auctorité et estas des personnes, mais seulement à ce qui sera dit et advisie pour le bien, utilité et prouffit desdictes besongnes.*”
49. *Ordonnances*, 8: 581–3. It is acknowledged that Isabeau “ait et lui appartiengne la garde, nourrissement et gouvernement” of all the children. If she

died during the minority, the Regency Council would take on the collective tutelage. As an adjunct to this measure demonstrating the king's confidence in his wife, a collegiate guardianship was perhaps no longer seen as necessary, given that, with the abandonment of Orleans's sole regency, all princes could expect to play a part in the actual business of government, and did not need to be "compensated" with a share in the custody of the royal children.

50. Historical traditions and legal issues surrounding female regency were much developed in the seventeenth century, when theorists like Jean Savaron and Pierre Dupuy concluded that the queen was "a "natural" governor who, because she lacked political rights, because she posed no biological threat to the throne, was the most worthy guardian for her son." See Lightman, 299–312.
51. Helen Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in late medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 5 concurs with the importance of retaining this distinction between the more nebulous "power," an ability to coerce or persuade or influence, and legally sanctioned "authority," the right to command and expect compliance.
52. Pintoin, *Chronique de Charles VI*, 5:415—"qui tenait les rênes de l'Etat pendant la maladie de son père."

Leonor of Navarre: The Price of Ambition

Elena Woodacre

By rights, Leonor of Navarre should never have become a queen. Born the youngest child of Blanca I of Navarre and her consort Juan of Aragon in 1426, Leonor made a strategic marriage to the heir of the neighboring county of Foix. Leonor's elder brother was designated as the Principe de Viana, or heir of Navarre, while her elder sister was married to the heir of Castile. However, after the death of Blanca I in 1441, Juan of Aragon refused to cede the title of King of Navarre to his son, triggering a civil war between those who supported the rights of the Principe de Viana and those who favored the continued rule of Juan of Aragon. Juan eventually disinherited the Principe and his elder daughter, Blanca, when they refused to support his continued rule and settled the succession to the Navarrese throne on Leonor and her husband, Gaston of Foix, in 1455. Although Leonor was named as the heir apparent and given the right to administer Navarre as her father's lieutenant, she had a tortuous path to the throne, facing opposition from her elder siblings and their supporters, competition from her son, conflicts with her father, half-brother, and daughter-in-law, and struggled to gain acceptance from many of her subjects. When her

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father finally died in 1479, Leonor only had a handful of weeks to enjoy the crown before her own death.

To this day, Leonor remains an unsympathetic figure as her legacy has been marred by criticism from chroniclers and she was later vilified in popular literature. Her unsavory reputation comes from her unorthodox career, collaborating with her father to unseat her elder brother and sister as the heirs to the throne of Navarre, upsetting centuries of custom, undermining the laws of the *Fueros* and transgressing the established order of succession as set down in the reign of her grandfather, Carlos III, and her mother, Blanca I. The untimely deaths of Leonor's elder siblings, which conveniently removed them from her path to the throne, cast suspicion on Leonor, given how much she stood to gain from their demise, and gave Leonor the reputation of a kin slayer, who would not shy from killing those who stood in the way of her ambition. This reputation was amplified in the nineteenth century, by novelists, historians, and other writers who wrote about the intensive dispute for the Navarrese succession and promoted the idea of Leonor as a villainess.

There are some interesting parallels between Leonor and her contemporary, Richard III of England. Richard was also accused of murder, or being complicit in the murder, of his kin in order to gain a throne. In both cases, the exact nature of the suspicious deaths remain a mystery, but both Leonor and Richard stand accused due to the benefit that they stood to gain from their relatives' deaths. While both Leonor and Richard have been vilified in the works of historians and in popular culture, only Richard has begun to emerge from the onus of his dark reputation in recent years after the apparent rediscovery of his body by archaeologists and subsequent ceremonial reburial in Leicester Cathedral, which have prompted reevaluations of his life and reign. A plethora of new and reissued material on Richard has emerged in popular history in reaction to the archaeological find, many of which focus on Richard's reputation and the allegation that he was responsible for the deaths of his nephews, the "Princes in the Tower."¹ Popular interest in the reburial of Richard III led to the internment being broadcast live on the BBC and the foundation of a new visitor center in Leicester, which claims to offer a thorough and balanced assessment of Richard's reputation in its exhibition.²

Leonor, on the other hand, retains the legacy of suspicion in her siblings' deaths and the reputation of a woman who stopped at nothing to satisfy her ambition for a crown. Though she has yet to benefit from a surge of popular interest in recent years as Richard III has, Leonor is

also deserving of reexamination, in order to create a greater understanding of both her career as a fifteenth-century female ruler and how her reputation as an overambitious kin slayer was created. This chapter will begin by tracing Leonor's career from the moment that she usurped her siblings' place in the line of succession until she finally attained the crown for which she worked and waited for nearly 25 years. Then the chapter will compare Leonor's treatment by early modern historians and nineteenth-century writers in order to understand the development of her negative image. Finally, the chapter will conclude by evaluating her actions as a ruler in comparison to the charges laid against her by historians and writers in order to ascertain whether her blackened reputation is deserved. Ultimately, this chapter will argue that, given her tenacity to maintain her position and authority in intensely challenging circumstances and a lack of proof that Leonor had any direct involvement in her siblings' deaths, Leonor should be rehabilitated as a strong female ruler, instead of being remembered as a villainess.

LEONOR IN THE HISTORICAL RECORD

It is impossible to understand the charges leveled at Leonor without a clear delineation of the events which created her negative reputation. While the conflict between Juan of Aragon and his son, the Principe de Viana, has been explored extensively elsewhere, this section will particularly focus on the competition between Leonor and her sister Blanca, as it is this relationship in particular which was seized on by later writers as the reason for her dark reputation.³

Leonor's path to the throne began when her father Juan of Aragon summoned Gaston and Leonor to Barcelona in October 1455 to discuss his proposed changes to the succession. The couple's ceremonial entry into Barcelona to meet with Juan demonstrated the wealth and power of the couple and their keen desire to impress Juan in hopes of being named the heirs of Navarre.⁴ The agreement to promote Leonor and her husband in front of her elder siblings in the order of succession was reached on December 3, 1455, and was described by the Aragonese chronicler Zurita as "against the order and regulation of all laws, divine, natural and human and a great offence to God."⁵ Zurita termed this an act of "great inhumanity" particularly as the Principe de Viana and Princess Blanca had been disinherited without any opportunity for negotiation or reconciliation with their father.⁶ While this change to the succession was unexpected and

certainly ran counter to ideas of primogeniture, it must be noted that Zurita was writing a century after these events occurred, and his knowledge of the subsequent deaths of the *infantes* Carlos and Blanca most likely influenced his denunciation of the 1455 Barcelona agreement.

The new plans for the succession did not put an end to the war between Juan and Carlos which raged intermittently for the next six years and was only truly ended by Carlos's death in September 1461, which has been alternatively blamed on consumption or poison.⁷ The latter possibility became a part of Leonor's "black legend" and will be discussed later in the chapter. Carlos's supporters, the Beaumonts, immediately gave their backing to Princess Blanca, who was now in their eyes the rightful Queen of Navarre. Blanca had returned to Navarre in 1453 after a childless and probably unconsummated 13-year marriage to Enrique of Castile ended in an embarrassing divorce and had been her brother's most stalwart supporter in his fight to reclaim his rights from Juan of Aragon.⁸

Even though Leonor possessed considerable advantages over her elder sister as her father's designated heir and the mother of several children who could guarantee dynastic continuity, her position was not completely secure. Blanca set up a rival court in Olite only 40 kilometers (approximately 24 miles) away from Leonor's own base at Sangüesa. Leonor and her husband Gaston of Foix were concerned both by the Beaumonts's continued support of Blanca and by the possibility that the Count of Armagnac, Leonor's first cousin and Gaston's regional rival, could stake a claim to the Navarrese throne through his mother Isabel of Navarre.⁹ The new French king Louis XI also appeared to favor claim of Leonor's sister Blanca, who Louis described as "our very dear and well beloved cousin, the Princess of Navarre."¹⁰

Leonor's position was clearly under threat and decisive action was needed in order to secure her position as lieutenant of Navarre and heiress apparent from these formidable counterclaimants. Louis XI was brought on side through a marriage between his sister Magdalena and Leonor's son and eventual heir Gaston, which was celebrated on March 7, 1462.¹¹ With French support secured, Leonor reaffirmed her position as heiress in an accord with her father, Juan of Aragon, which was signed at Olite on April 12, 1462.¹² However, even with the avowed backing of both the French and Aragonese kings, Leonor's position would never be fully secure while her sister remained in Navarre. A plan was immediately enacted to remove Blanca from the realm through the offer of a prestigious marriage to Charles, Duc de Berri, brother of Magdalena and Louis

XI. When Blanca refused, either because she had no desire to wed the French prince or because she suspected a ruse, she was taken north, into the Pyrenees, by force.¹³ Thus only weeks after her father and sister had signed the accord at Olite, Blanca found herself a prisoner. During a brief stop at the Pyrenean monastery of Roncesvalles, on April 23, 1462, Blanca wrote a series of missives, complaining of her treatment by her family.¹⁴ Blanca claimed that

the said Count of Foix and his wife, my sister, took me to exile me and disinherit me of my kingdom of Navarre and make me make a donation and renunciation and transport my said kingdom or part of the other lordships, lands, rents and rights which pertain to me to the said Count of Foix, his wife or their children.¹⁵

Blanca railed against her sister and her nieces and nephews who she claimed “want the said Kingdom of Navarre and reign there against all right, justice and good reason.”¹⁶ Although Blanca named her father, Juan of Aragon, as the “principal...destructor of my honor, inheritance and rights” she noted that Leonor, Gaston, and their children participated “tacitly or expressly in my exile, disinheritance, seizure and pressure.”¹⁷

Three days later, at St. Jean Pied de Port, she appealed in desperation to her former husband, the King of Castile, her cousin the Count of Armagnac and the head of the Beaumont clan to help her escape her fate. On April 30, in a final attempt to thwart the ambition of her sister and brother-in-law, she wrote up a document “donating” her right to the crown to her ex-husband, Enrique IV of Castile.¹⁸ Shortly afterward, Blanca crossed the frontier of Navarre, into the territory of her brother-in-law, the Count of Foix. There she was taken by the Captal de Buch to the formidable stronghold of Orthez. This episode, the kidnapping and imprisonment of Princess Blanca, became the cornerstone of Leonor’s “black legend.” The dramatic retelling of these events and the subsequent impact on Leonor’s reputation will be discussed later in the chapter.

Blanca’s disappearance did not initially guarantee Leonor’s position as undisputed heiress and the Beaumont faction still supported Blanca’s claim, even in her absence. Enrique of Castile took advantage of Blanca’s decision to “donate” her right to the Navarrese throne and promptly invaded the realm to press his claim. The Accord of Tafalla, drafted in late November 1464, was intended to resolve the matter of the succession by reviewing the position of all the claimants, including Princess

Blanca.¹⁹ However, Blanca died on December 2, 1464, under mysterious circumstances and was never able to return to Navarre to reassert her claim to the throne.²⁰

The death of both of Leonor's siblings did not completely clear the field of competitors or guarantee familial harmony. Zurita claims that Leonor and her husband decided that they "were not content with the role of lieutenant, but that they wanted to stick to (or be girded with) the royal crown."²¹ However, Juan of Aragon had fought off challenges to the Navarrese crown from his two oldest children, and Leonor and Gaston were equally unsuccessful in their attempts to extricate Juan from power in Navarre.²² Instead, Juan removed Leonor and Gaston from power, appointing their son Gaston and his wife Magdalena of France as the new lieutenant-governors of Navarre on December 11, 1469.²³ This caused a great deal of anguish within the family, particularly for young Gaston who felt unable to reject the position that his formidable grandfather had given him, even if that meant angering his parents.²⁴ Leonor only regained her position due to her son's untimely death while participating in a tournament on November 23, 1470.²⁵ If her son had survived, it is likely that he would have retained the lieutenancy and ultimately succeeded to the throne of Navarre in her place, ousting her completely from the succession. As it was, Leonor's triumphal return to the lieutenancy had come at a terrible cost; the loss of her eldest son and heir with no hope of reconciling after their bitter split.²⁶

Juan was only willing to return the lieutenancy of Navarre to Leonor after she signed the Convention of Olite on May 30, 1471, in which she had to acknowledge him as King of Navarre until his death and agree to Juan's right to name the keepers of Navarre's castles and fortresses as well as the right to occupy the strongholds of the realm.²⁷ It was Leonor's last attempt to dislodge her father from the Navarrese throne. She had to remain content with her hard-won position as heiress apparent and rule as lieutenant until his death. However, the infighting within the family, pitting sibling against sibling and parent against child, left a bitter aftertaste and Leonor's role in this dramatic family saga established her reputation as an overly ambition woman who prioritized a crown over family harmony or unity.

In spite of the continual family quarrels, Leonor proved to be an active and able lieutenant, even though she was administering the realm during a time of acute crisis.²⁸ She tried to mitigate the damage done to the key cities of the realm, such as Estella, due to the ongoing civil conflict.²⁹ Leonor

also attempted to reduce the tension in realm which had been created by the dispute between her father and brother and had been further fueled by the ongoing succession crisis and as Zurita noted “attempt to arrive at a stable peace.”³⁰

Despite Leonor’s efforts, Navarre continued to be riven with conflict and the continuing division in the realm made it incredibly difficult for Leonor to govern effectively, as some towns such as Tafalla and the capital Pamplona that had been sympathetic to her brother, the Principe de Viana, were opposed to her rule as her father’s lieutenant.³¹ Leonor also struggled due to inadequate support from her family, who at times actively or surreptitiously, worked against her. Her only true ally, her husband Gaston IV of Foix, died on July 10, 1472, ironically while en route to give support to Leonor and their partisans in the Pyrenean town of Roncesvalles where Leonor’s sister Blanca penned a vitriolic response to her unwilling captivity ten years earlier.³² Gaston’s death meant that Magdalena of France, widow of Leonor’s lost son Gaston, was now regent in Foix for Leonor’s grandson Francisco Fébo and she could not be counted on to continue to provide key military and financial support Leonor’s lieutenantcy in Navarre.³³

Navarre’s strategic position as a Pyrenean gateway meant that it was literally trapped between the hostilities and rivalry of the kings of Aragon, Castile, and France—all of whom were also members of her natal or marital family. Both the Iberian and French kings were keen to secure Navarre in order to attack or prevent an attack via the Pyrenean passes. Leonor’s half-brother Ferdinand of Aragon and her new sister-in-law, Isabel of Castile, aimed to eliminate the possibility that the French could bring an army through the Pyrenees through the establishment of a Castilian protectorate in Navarre in 1476 which hindered Leonor’s ability to exercise authority as lieutenant.³⁴

Although her administration of Navarre as her father’s lieutenant lasted for nearly 25 years, Leonor only ruled as queen for a matter of a few ephemeral weeks between her father’s death in January 1479 and her own the following month. Her extended lieutenantcy had prepared her to rule as a fully fledged sovereign, but she did not get the opportunity to exercise the royal prerogative for very long. However, Leonor’s administration of the realm lasted longer than her mother’s rule or that of her ancestor Juana II, even if Leonor was only a lieutenant for the majority of that time. This brief delineation of Leonor’s career demonstrates her ability as a ruler, particularly as she was able to retain her place in spite of intensive

challenges she faced from the faction within the realm who sought to unseat her and the alternative claimants within her family who posed a serious threat to her position. Leonor's tenacity and her ability to navigate the turbulent political landscape both within and surrounding Navarre is worthy of greater attention, yet the majority of interest in her reign has come from those who have focused almost exclusively on the question of whether or not she can be held accountable for her siblings' deaths.

EVALUATING LEONOR'S RULE AND REPUTATION IN THE WORKS OF LATER AUTHORS

This section will evaluate Leonor's treatment in historical and fictional works after her death, with particular focus on the nineteenth century when a plethora of works emerged which focused on her life, in order to understand the development of her negative reputation. Leonor has often been represented as a scheming villainess, driven by ambition to claim a crown and willing to kill her own siblings if necessary in order to reach her goals. This negative image of Leonor was fuelled by the nineteenth-century romantic works of Francisco Navarro Villoslada, whose popular novels *Doña Blanca de Navarra* (first published in 1847) and a later work, provocatively titled, *El ante-Cristo; La princesa de Viana*, renewed interest in the lives of the two sisters.³⁵ These works were quickly translated into English and printed in various editions including a three-volume work which retained the original title *Doña Blanca de Navarra* and another version published in Philadelphia under the title *The Queen's Favorite; or The Price of a Crown: an Historical Romance of the Fifteenth Century*.³⁶ These works portray the two sisters in opposition, with Blanca as the tragic victim of the aggressive ambition of her scheming sister Leonor. This portrayal of Leonor, though fictional, was clearly influenced by early modern chroniclers like Moret, Zurita, and Favyn. However, in keeping with the medium of a romantic novel, Villoslada took the portrayal of the two sisters as heroine and villainess to a dramatic extreme. Blanca is described as "the most beautiful of women, the most unfortunate of queens" whereas Leonor is noted as a "woman of severe and almost masculine beauty, of haughty look and majestic bearing" who discomfits all the men in her presence, even her son.³⁷ Villoslada continually emphasizes Leonor's "unrelenting cruelty" and describes her as "haughty and domineering."³⁸

The imprisonment and death of Princess Blanca caught the imagination of nineteenth-century readers and spread the dark legend of Leonor,

the sister slayer. However, Villoslada was hardly the only one publishing the tale. The story of the two sisters turns up in an extensive number of nineteenth-century works in Spanish, French, and English including national and regional histories, travel guides, and even the *Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Younger Members of the English Church*.³⁹ Many of these works predate Villoslada's novel, so the popularity of his work was not the only reason for the intense interest in these two fifteenth-century sisters.

The interest in the sisters' tale in English language works can be linked to an influx of tourism to the Pyrenean region, and Pau in particular, during the nineteenth century. In the first half of the century, the more adventurous of the economically privileged travelers who were part of the "Romantic" era of the Grand Tour did sometimes venture to the Pyrenean region.⁴⁰ A great surge of English travelers to the region in the latter half of the century was provoked by Dr. Alexander Taylor's 1845 work *On the Curative Influence of the Climate of Pau and the Mineral Waters of the Pyrenees on Disease*.⁴¹ This interest in the region continued throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, to the extent that Pau was sometimes referred to as an "English town."

Louisa Stuart Costello and Sabine Baring-Gould's versions of the story in their respective travelogues are excellent examples of the negative treatment of Leonor by writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which appears to be clearly influenced by early modern historians.⁴² Baring-Gould has an extended coverage of the history of Navarre from the death of Blanca I in 1441 and the civil war which was indirectly triggered by the codicil in Blanca I's will which allowed Juan to retain the title King of Navarre at the expense of their son, the Principe de Viana.⁴³ Both accounts are fairly thorough, though somewhat melodramatic, and demonstrate that both authors must have read into the situation, even if they do not cite the sources of their information. Costello does briefly mention Moret in one of her notes which clearly suggests that she has read his account and she also repeats a particular line about the "vengeance of Heaven" which exactly echoes the account of Zurita, suggesting that she may have also read his work.⁴⁴

While in theory Baring-Gould may have based her own account on Costello's, it is important to note that they differ slightly in content and tone and Baring-Gould's includes more historical context both before and after the event. However, both accounts describe the seizure of Princess Blanca and her forced trans-Pyrenean journey in detail and paint Blanca as

the hapless victim of the machinations of her relatives. There is a slight difference in the portrayal of Leonor, however; Baring-Gould labeled Leonor as “ambitious and unscrupulous” while Costello clearly links Leonor to the crime but appears to argue that the mastermind of the whole affair and the death of the Principe de Viana was their stepmother Juana Enríquez.⁴⁵ Baring-Gould adheres to the line of the early modern chroniclers in linking the death of Princess Blanca to the later tragedies of Leonor’s children and descendants and Leonor’s ephemeral rule as queen, claiming that “the crime committed brought but a bitter gain.”⁴⁶

Exactly what happened to Princess Blanca and where she died is a matter of some dispute in these works. Most early modern historians and later writers seem to agree that Blanca was imprisoned in the fortified castle of Orthez, specifically in the impressive Tour Moncade. Local legends claim that the princess (known as “La Dame Blanche”) still haunts this tower, seeking vengeance for her murder.⁴⁷ Louisa Stuart Costello picked up on this local tale and claimed in her guide that “the pale shade of Queen Blanche still flits among the ruined battlements of [la Tour] Moncade.”⁴⁸ Sabine Baring-Gould suggests that perhaps the preoccupation with this legend comes from the Orthez being a “dull town” with “little to occupy it except to brood on the past.”⁴⁹ In contrast, George Bradshaw’s *Illustrated Travellers’ Hand-Book to France* (1807) includes Orthez on Tour 65 and notes that the town is the location of “the decayed Castle Moncade where Blanche of Castile was poisoned by her sister, the wife of Gaston IV and where Gaston, surnamed Phoebus, killed his own son and died.”⁵⁰

However, a few French writers have suggested that Princess Blanca was taken to Lescar and died there instead of at Orthez. Henri Courteault was vehement in his support for Lescar and blamed the popular belief that the princess died at Orthez on “the imagination of an English historian.”⁵¹ This assertion was publically criticized in turn in a special notice in the *Revue de Gascogne* in 1896.⁵² Ironically perhaps, Louisa Stuart Costello had already attempted to debunk the theory that Blanca may have died at Lescar back in 1844:

Some historians say that Blanche was confined in the castle of Lescar, but there is no foundation for the assertion. No castle but that of Pau or Orthez would have been sufficiently strong to retain a prisoner of such importance. Moret, and other Spanish authors, relate the event as above.⁵³

There is little disagreement that the princess was buried at Lescar, however, which may have been the source of the confusion.

The manner of Blanca's death is less disputed as nearly all of the sources claim that she was poisoned either directly or at the behest of her sister Leonor, even though there is no direct proof of this. Poison may have been alleged purely because Blanca's death was both suspicious and unexplained. Although she may well have died from natural causes, the convenient timing of her death, just when there was a concerted effort in Navarre to resolve the succession crisis by bringing all the claimants forward for a diplomatic solution, gave her death the appearance of foul play. Poison may have also been suspected as it was considered to be an ideal weapon for women to use.⁵⁴ The connection to poison further darkened Leonor's reputation, as it was considered to be an underhand method of murder and one that Garthine Walker notes was "attributed with negative feminine characteristics—weak, foolish, wicked, cunning."⁵⁵

Thus the mysterious circumstances of Blanca's death and the fact that Leonor, as a woman, was accused appears to have been all the evidence which has led to the consensus that poison was the weapon used against the princess. This accusation may have originated from the seventeenth-century Navarrese chronicler, José de Moret.⁵⁶ Certainly his contemporary, the French chronicler Favyn, who is more dubious of the story, claims that "Spanish authors" originated the tale.⁵⁷ However, Moret did not accuse Leonor of administering the poison, only that one of her ladies supplied the fatal dose, it is merely insinuated that the order originated with Leonor. However, nineteenth-century writers were happy to claim that Blanca was "poisoned by her sister."⁵⁸

Moreover, Leonor is not the only queen of this period whose "black legend" includes accusations of poisoning. Bona Sforza, a queen of Poland born less than 20 years after Leonor's death, was also accused of being a poisoner in contemporary sources and continues to be perceived as such in modern popular culture.⁵⁹ More famously perhaps, Catherine de Medici, another of Leonor's near contemporaries, was also noted for her skill with poison; this allegation has become so firmly associated with her that it is mentioned in a recently published textbook on toxicology.⁶⁰ Sutherland notes the association between the infamous French regent and poison in her exploration of Catherine de Medici's reputation, "The Legend of the Wicked Italian Queen."⁶¹ One infamous episode of poisoning associated with Catherine de Medici was the death of her contemporary

and supposed rival, Jeanne de Albret, Queen of Navarre and Leonor's great-great granddaughter. The nineteenth-century writer Martha Walker Freer relates the legend that Catherine may have caused Jeanne's death through poison administered through food or even poisoned gloves, even though a postmortem attributed her death to ill health.⁶² However, the contemporary pamphlets which were responsible for creating this reputation as a poisoner claimed she was far more prolific—accusing her of “the attempted poisoning of three of her sons and the entire army of the Prince de Condé.”⁶³

Like Leonor, Catherine de Medici featured in nineteenth-century novels; interestingly, however, Catherine's reputation as a poisoner was at least partially combated in the famous novel by Honoré de Balzac. When Charles IX asks Lorenzo Ruggiero, an expert in poisons, if his mother, Catherine, has ever asked for any poison from him, Lorenzo replies, “Queen Catherine is too able a woman to employ such means. She knows that the sovereign who poisons dies by poison... The queen is from Florence, she knows that poison should never be used except as a weapon of personal revenge.”⁶⁴

In contrast, Villoslada's novel emphasizes Leonor's use of poison at several points in his novel. There is a prolonged scene between the two sisters, where Blanca agrees to sign over her rights to Leonor and the two drink a toast.⁶⁵ To show her good faith, Leonor drinks the first half of the glass and then subtly laces it with poison and passes it to her sister. Leonor's action to poison her sister appears even more malicious because Blanca appears all too willing to renounce her claim to the throne in this scene and renew good relations with her sister as demonstrated in her toast to Leonor before Blanca drank from the poisoned goblet:

My sister! may God bless you in your children; may you sit on the throne of Navarre, and may they succeed you; may God grant you the happiness he has denied to me, and forget your faults, as I forget and forgive the injuries which you have done to me.⁶⁶

Leonor's involvement in the deaths of both her sister and brother are made crystal clear in Villoslada's novel—Leonor freely admits her guilt in her discussion with her Jewish physician, Jehu:

The poison you gave my brother Carlos, heaven rest his soul, caused him to suffer a thousand pangs for the space of eight days, and occasioned us a

world of anxiety, lest we should be discovered. I afterwards took you into my service, and loaded you with riches; I asked of you a poison for my sister Blanca, who is now in heaven, a more active poison, and which should produce less pain than the other, and you gave me one so potent.⁶⁷

Although the allegation of poisoning her siblings has never been definitely proven, the emphasis on Leonor's supposed crimes dominates any analysis of her life both in popular culture and in the work of nineteenth-century historians. Antonio Cavanilles claimed the "so many crimes opened the way to the throne of Navarre for Doña Leonor."⁶⁸ In his non-fiction appendix to the novel, Villoslada reaffirms his opinion of Leonor's responsibility for the deaths of her siblings—"Thus the path to the throne was made straight for unprincipled ambition. The Countess of Foix succeeded to the throne of Navarre, as the reward of fratricide."⁶⁹ Ambroise Rendu included Leonor's husband in the criticism, arguing that Leonor and Gaston's difficulty in maintaining her lieutenancy in Navarre was evidence that "the parricides, complicit in her death could not enjoy the fruits of their crime with tranquility."⁷⁰ It is interesting that Gaston is not mentioned as frequently in association with Blanca's death, even though it took place in one of his strongholds. However, Emile Garet alleged that Gaston was so overcome with guilt for his involvement in his sister-in-law's death that he abandoned Orthez and made Pau his primary seat.⁷¹

Leonor's death scene in Villoslada's novel makes it clear that her incredibly brief reign as queen after years of effort to obtain the crown was a price she had to pay for her scheming. The hero, Ximeno, declares to the dying queen who fears that she too has been poisoned: "Leonora! it is not the hand of man which kills you; you are smitten by the bolt of divine justice!"⁷² In an attempt to provide a deeply ironic twist, Villoslada had altered the death date of Blanca in his novel to February 12, 1464, so that Leonor could die exactly 15 years later, after a reign of just 15 days.⁷³ In her death throes, Leonor grasps this terrible irony and rails against her brief reign:

God has permitted me to reign fifteen days, but during those fifteen days I have not passed a single decree as a sovereign. History will not record a single document bearing my signature as queen in my own right; I have conferred no benefit on my people; I have only been a queen in my horrible sufferings; my reign will not pass into oblivion, but it will be only remembered with maledictions. God, God alone could have chastised me in so signal a manner!⁷⁴

Villoslada's nineteenth-century work echoes the judgments of near contemporary chroniclers of Leonor's reign. Moret argued that Leonor's difficulties ruling the realm as lieutenant were her own fault:

God wanted her to suffer (the authors said this in common) to punish her great crimes committed against the Prince and Princess of Viana, her elder siblings, with the end of depriving them of the crown of Navarre.⁷⁵

In a similar vein, the chronicler Andre Favyn suggested that the tragic death of Leonor's eldest son happened "by divine permission, for the vengeance and punishment of the hastened death of the Princess Blanca of Navarre."⁷⁶ Louis Pierre Anquetil went so far as to suggest that the Annexation of 1512, when Leonor's granddaughter Catalina lost the kingdom of Navarre to Ferdinand of Aragon, was the result of the "atrocious crime" perpetuated by Leonor which doomed her entire line and made them illegal and unjust successors to the Navarrese crown.⁷⁷

CONCLUSIONS: REALITY VERSUS REPUTATION

While early modern and nineteenth-century writers have passed judgment on Leonor's reign, condemning her for her supposed crimes, it is difficult to truly evaluate the effectiveness of Leonor's rule of Navarre, given the upheaval that the realm was experiencing in the midst of civil war and caught between the rivalries of Juan and his Castilian and French adversaries. There has been criticism from early modern chroniclers and later historians that both Juan and Leonor put their own ambitions to rule before the welfare of Navarre by changing the succession of the realm to suit their own selfish desires.⁷⁸ Although it could be argued that part of the cause of the internal conflict in the realm was due to the Gaston and Leonor's ambition to be promoted ahead of her elder siblings, the responsibility for the ongoing conflict clearly originated in her father's unwillingness to cede the royal title to his children. Villoslada harshly condemned Juan's actions with regard to his eldest children:

Thus the insensate monarch disposed of an inheritance which did not belong to him, and conferred a right which he did not possess himself; and, adding barbarity to injustice, he bound himself never to become reconciled with or to forgive his son and daughter.⁷⁹

Boissonade summarized the impact of Juan's reign: "a state ruined by civil war, disabled by anarchy, that is the heritage that Juan II left."⁸⁰ While Leonor has often been characterized as overambitious for a crown that should not have been hers, would she have been able to gracefully decline her father's offer to usurp her siblings place in the line of succession? Crossing her irascible father by failing to fall in with his scheme for the succession would not have been prudent for her and her husband, given Foix and Aragon's shared border. Indeed, as discussed previously, the same argument was made when her son usurped her lieutenancy, that the young Gaston had no option but to concur with Juan's decision to award him the lieutenancy. To oppose Juan was to invite destruction, as Leonor's older siblings learned to their cost. Perhaps what has been interpreted as Leonor's overweening ambition could instead be seen as a keen survival instinct.

The idea that Leonor was responsible for the death of one or both of her siblings in her quest for a crown and that her short reign and troubled lieutenancy were all a form of divine recompense for the crimes that she allegedly perpetrated has become embedded in any analysis of her career, fictional or historical. In his novel, Villoslada's hero Ximeno declares that "history will pronounce a righteous judgment on the ruthless Countess of Foix—will be as severe as heaven towards her."⁸¹ History has indeed passed judgment on Leonor and the largely negative accounts of the chroniclers and the nineteenth-century writers have inevitably colored the perception of modern historians. Leonor's unsympathetic character may be part of the reason why she has not been the subject of a great deal of academic study. Although Eloisa Ramírez Vaquero remains fairly neutral in her monograph for the *Reyes de Navarra* series, Leonor's reputation has not yet been fully rehabilitated by scholars. Unlike Richard III, Leonor has not attracted enough interest from scholars or the general public which might inspire a revisionist account of her reign.

Anyone who might have been able to say with certainty how Blanca died and whether her sister had a hand in her demise is long since dead. It is clear that Blanca was held in her brother-in-law's Pyrenean territories and Leonor obviously had the most to gain from her elder sister's demise. It is too easy to dismiss Leonor, as the nineteenth-century writers did, as an overambitious schemer who would do anything to obtain a crown, shedding the blood of her own siblings and her subjects in order to attain the throne. However, a deeper investigation of her long lieu-

tenancy and ephemeral reign shows a woman who fought tenaciously to preserve her place but also worked tirelessly to administer a realm which was crippled by internal conflict and the center of the political schemes of France, Aragon, and Castile. She tried to broker peace, fight off those who opposed her, repair the wounds caused by conflict, protect the sovereignty of the realm, and keep the wheels of governance turning. Leonor was not always successful in achieving all of these aims but given the background of conflict and the lack of cooperation she received from all of her family members, bar her loyal husband, it is a huge achievement that she survived to wear the crown at all. Many writers have argued that Leonor deserved the troubled lieutenancy, personal tragedies, an ephemeral reign, and a blackened reputation, basing their assumption that she committed a crime that cannot be proven. However, a more fitting description of her would be that of a resolute ruler who successfully overcame a multitude of challenges in order to survive in a difficult political landscape and gain a hard-fought throne.

Leonor's life and legend are a key example of a queen's reputation that can be permanently damaged by assumption and insinuation. While there is no doubt that Leonor was complicit in the seizure and imprisonment of her sister Blanca, the assumption that Leonor was involved in her sister's death is less clear. The insinuation that poison was used, or even administered, by Leonor in order to clear the path to the Navarrese throne has no basis whatsoever in fact but the rumor started in the sixteenth century had become established as legend by the nineteenth century and was happily parroted by the writers of that era. The image of Leonor as not only a kin slayer, but a poisoner, created the persona of an underhand and scheming woman whose ambition knew no bounds. The succession of a queen is rarely straightforward, and in Leonor's case, as both a woman and a younger sibling, her path to the throne was difficult and complicated. As a woman, she had no option to vanquish her rivals honorably on the field of battle to assure her accession, in the same way as Henry Tudor's victory over Richard III at Bosworth in 1485 established him as the next king of England. Multiple public declarations by her father, Juan of Aragon, and the avowed support of Louis XI, King of France, was not enough to ensure Leonor's position as heiress apparent. Ultimately, Leonor's accession required some unorthodox reordering of the established line of succession and involved a few untimely, but convenient deaths, casting suspicion on her as the beneficiary of her siblings' demise. This unusual, and fairly dramatic, mode of succession generated comment from her

contemporaries which developed into a “black legend” which cast Leonor as a villainess. This negative mythology has damaged Leonor’s reputation and has perhaps discouraged further exploration of her life and career which could shift the focus from a presumption of guilt in the death of her sister to an appreciation of Leonor’s political acumen and activity during a very turbulent period of Navarrese history. This chapter has explored both Leonor’s career and the development of her “black legend,” demonstrating that her reputation as a scheming kin slayer is undeserved and that, instead, the lasting image of her should be that of a strong and determined lieutenant/queen, whose instinct to survive helped her navigate the challenging political landscape of late fifteenth-century Iberia.

NOTES

1. Popular history works which examine Richard’s reputation include Desmond Seward, *Richard III: England’s Black Legend* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2015); John Ashdown-Hill, *The Mythology of Richard III* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2015); Alison Weir, *Richard III and the Princes in the Tower* (London: Vintage Press, 2014); Weir and Seward’s books were both reissued recently in connection with the surge of interest in Richard III. Weir explicitly engages with the interest surrounding Richard in light of the archaeological finds in her forward “Richard III: The Man and the Myth.” Michael Hicks has published extensively on Richard III throughout his long career in both academic and popular contexts. His latest book contains not only an assessment of Richard in the context of the Plantagenet family orbit but in the final chapter, an examination of Richard’s posthumous reputation which engages with and challenges the archaeological finds and the current fascination with this controversial king: Michael Hicks, *The Family of Richard III* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2015).
2. King Richard III Visitor Centre, <http://www.kriii.com/about-the-centre/a-controversial-king/> (accessed April 7, 2015). The page on the exhibition states that “We have tried to balance the many different views of researchers and historians, to create an exciting and compelling story. We have then tried to distill that information right down so it’s understandable to anyone who walks through the door of the Visitor Centre, and may know nothing about King Richard or that time in history. We’ve aimed to provide an intellectually robust interpretation of his life, that will inspire people to find out more about this incredible story.”
3. For more detail on the wider family succession crisis in this period see Elena Woodacre, *The Queens Regnant of Navarre: Succession, Politics and Partnership, 1274–1512* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 109–30; Eloísa Ramírez Vaquero, *Leonor de Navarra* (Pamplona: Editorial Mintzoa, 2002).

4. Guillaume Leseur, *Histoire de Gaston IV, Comte de Foix (Chronique Française Inédite du XVe Siècle)*, ed. Henri Courteault (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1893), ii, 39. Courteault notes that certain details have been corroborated by the report of Esquerrier.
5. Jerónimo Zurita, *Anales de la Corona de Aragon*, ed. Ángel Canellas López (Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 1980–90), vii, 147. Original text is “*contra la orden y dispusición de todo derecho divino, natural y humano y en grande offense de Dios.*” J. Reglá Campistol, “La cuestion de los Pirineos a comienzos de la edad moderna: El intento imperialista de Gaston de Foix” in *Relaciones Internacionales de España con Francia e Italia*, ed. Jaime Vicens Vives (Barcelona: Ariel S.L., 1951), 13.
6. Zurita, *Anales*, vii, 149.
7. Although it is not directly relevant here, it is important to note that as Juan’s eldest son, Carlos should also have been considered as heir apparent to Aragon after Juan assumed the throne in 1458. Perhaps as a means of reconciliation, Carlos was named as lieutenant in Catalonia in 1458. See Theresa Earenfight, *The King’s Other Body; Maria of Castile and the Crown of Aragon* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 138.
8. The document which granted a divorce between Blanca and Enrique IV of Castile is Simancas, Patronato Real ES.47161.AGS/3.2.48/PTR, Leg. 12, Doc.1, dated July 27, 1453.
9. The Count of Armagnac was the son of Queen Blanca’s younger sister Isabel; Ramírez Vaquero, *Leonor de Navarra*, 108–9.
10. Joseph Vassan and Étienne Charavay, *Lettres de Louis XI, Roi de France* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1885), ii, 22. Original text is: “*nostre très chiere et très amée cosine, la princessa de Navarre.*”
11. Ramírez Vaquero, *Leonor de Navarra*, 110. The contract was signed a few weeks earlier on February 11, 1462.
12. Reglá Campistol, “La cuestion de los Pirineos,” 23.
13. Jose de Moret, *Anales del Reino de Navarra* (Tolosa: E. Lopez, 1891), vi, 453–454.
14. See “Protesta de la Princesa Blanca,” pts. 1 & 2. Full transcribed text available at <http://www.euskomedia.org/PDFAnlt/cmn/1922191195.pdf>. Original document Simancas, Patronato Real, ES.47161.AGS/3.2.48/PTR, Leg. 12, Doc.12, dated April 23, 1462.
15. Simancas, Patronato Real, ES.47161.AGS/3.2.48/PTR, Leg. 12, Doc.12, dated April 23, 1462. Original text is “*los ditos Conde de Foix é su muger mi hermana me lieva para desterrar y hechar y desheredar del dito de mi regno de Navarra é facerme facer donación, renunciación é transporte del dito mi regno ó de parte dél y de otros Señoríos, tierras, rentas é derechos que yo he y á mi pertenescen, á los ditos Conde de Foix, su muger ó á sus hijos.*”
16. Simancas, Patronato Real, ES.47161.AGS/3.2.48/PTR, Leg. 12, Doc.12, dated April 23, 1462. Original text is “*ayan de aver el dito regno de Navarra y regnar en aquél contra todo derecho, justicia et buena razón.*”

17. Simancas, Patronato Real, ES.47161.AGS/3.2.48/PTR, Leg. 12, Doc.12, dated April 23, 1462. Original text is “*principal...destruidor de mi honor, heredad e derechos*” and “*tácita ó expresamente en el destierro, desheredar, capcion é presión mía.*”
18. Simancas, Patronato Real ES.47161.AGS/4.2.48/PTR, Leg. 12, Doc.11, dated April 30, 1462.
19. Luis Suárez Fernández, “Fernando el Católico y Leonor de Navarra,” En la España Medieval 3 (1982): 621.
20. This episode has been widely documented and discussed due to its dramatic content and ramifications for the history of the country. See Joseph Calmette, *La question des Pyrénées et la marche d’Espagne au moyen-âge* (Paris: J.B. Janin, 1947), 81, Enrique Flórez, *Memorias de las Reinas Católicas*, 2 vols., vol. II (Madrid: Junta de Castilla y Leon, 1761; Reprint, Valladolid, 2002), 743–4, Ramírez Vaquero, *Leonor de Navarra*, 110–2 and Zurita, *Anales*, vii, 408–10.
21. Campistol, “La cuestion de los Pirineos,” 26. Original text is “no se contenta con el cargo de lugarteniente, sino que quiere ceñir la corona real.”
22. Andre Favyn, *Histoire de Navarre; contenant l’Origine, les Vies et conquests de ses Rois, depuis leur commencement jusques a present* (Paris: Laurent Sonnius, 1612), 586.
23. Campistol, “La cuestion de los Pirineos,” 28.
24. Louis XI waded into the family dispute quickly, firmly telling the couple that the younger Gaston was “their good, loyal and obedient son” and that Louis expected Leonor and her husband to treat their son “as a good father and a good mother ought to treat their good child.” Leseur, *Histoire de Gaston IV*, Pieces Justificatives XXXVI, dated August 4, 1470 at St. Martin de Candes, ii, 383–4. Original text is “leur ester bon, loyal et obeissant filz et de les servir en tout et par tout ainsi qu’il leur plaira.” Gaston responded with anger, both at his son’s usurpation of Leonor’s position and at Louis’s interference on their son’s behalf; Leseur, *Histoire de Gaston IV*, Pieces Justificatives XXXVII, ii, 384–6, dated September 27, 1470 at Corella.
25. Zurita, *Anales*, vii, 645.
26. The account of Gaston’s chronicler Leseur suggests that the couple shut themselves up for over a fortnight, racked with grief; Leseur, *Histoire de Gaston IV*, ii, 256.
27. Prosper Boissonnade, *Histoire de la Réunion de la Navarre a la Castille (Essai sur les Relations de prince de Foix-Albret avec la France et l’Espagne)* (Geneva: Slatkine-Megaritotis Reprints, 1975), 11. A transcription of the Conventions can be found in Moret, *Navarra*, vii, 10–1.
28. For a more detailed exploration of Leonor’s long lieutenancy, see Woodacre, *Queens Regnant*, 120–30.
29. Leonor repeatedly issued documents to reduce the tax burden on the important city of Estella in order to facilitate its rebuilding after the destruction caused by attacks and flooding; Merche Osés Urricelqui, *Documentación medieval de Estella (siglos XII–XVI)*. Vol. Tomo I Colección Historia

- (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 2005), hereafter DME, Document 217, dated August 18, 1465, at Tafalla, 600–2 (Archivos Municipales Estella [AME] Fondos Especiales, num. 39). DME, Document 222, dated December 22, 1475, at Tudela, 610–12 (AME Fondos Especiales, num.77).
30. Zurita claimed that Leonor made “a great effort to resolve the differences of the parties and subdue the kingdom into union and calm,” noting her involvement in the drafting of a truce in Sangüesa, in January 1473, and that she took part in a convocation of Navarrese nobles, along with her father and her half-brother Ferdinand in Vitoria in 1476; Zurita, *Anales*, vii, 702. Original text is “haciase gran fuerza en concordar las diferencias de las partes y reducir aquel reino a union y sosiego.” See also Moret, *Navarra*, vii, 36.
 31. For example, Tafalla consistently refused to acknowledge her right to call meetings of the Cortes—between 1465 and 1475, they repeatedly ignored her requests that they send representatives from the town to attend the assemblies; Jose Maria Jimeno Jurio, Roldán Jimeno Aranguren. Merinidad de Olite II. *Documentación del Archivo Municipal de Tafalla* (Pamplona: Editorial Pamiela, 2008) hereafter AMT; AMT Libro 344, nos. 18, 25, 27–8, 30–2, 34–8, 40–1, dated between June 17, 1465, and November 3, 1475.
 32. Campistol, “La cuestion,” 30.
 33. Moret and Zurita both noted the lack of cooperation and outright enmity between Leonor and Magdalena; Zurita argued that their strained relationship was one of the key difficulties of Leonor’s lieutenantancy. See Moret, *Navarra*, vii, 39, Zurita, *Anales*, viii, 328 and 360.
 34. Luis Suárez Fernández, *Politica Internacional de Isabel La Catolica. Estudio y Documentos. Vol. I (1469–1482)* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1965), document 29, dated October 4, 1476 at Tudela (AGS Patronato Real, leg.12, fol.55). See also Boissonnade, *Histoire de la réunion*, 14–15 and Luis Suárez Fernández and Juan de Mata Carriazo Arroquia (eds.), *La España de los reyes católicos (1474–1516)*, *Historia de España* (Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1969), 202–3.
 35. Francisco Navarro Villoslada, *Dona Blanca de Navarra; Cronica del Siglo XV. Quince dias de Reinado*. 4th ed. (Madrid: Gaspar y Roig, 1849) and *El ante-Cristo; La princesa de Viana* (reissue, Pamplona: Mintzoa, 1992).
 36. Villoslada, *Doña Blanca of Navarre; a Historical Romance*, (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1854, three volumes; American edition-New York: T.L. Magnos, 1854). The alternatively titled version is *The Queen’s Favorite; or The Price of a Crown an Historical Romance of the Fifteenth Century* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson & Brothers, 1877). Note: the 1854 London version of the novel is the one from which all quotations from Villoslada’s novel will be sourced from.
 37. Villoslada, *Doña Blanca of Navarre*, (London, 1854), i, 140, 71, 181.
 38. Villoslada, *Doña Blanca of Navarre*, (London, 1854), i, 163 and ii, 77.

39. Anon., 'Royal Rose Buds; Historical Sketches', *Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Younger Members of the English Church*, vol.14 (Jul-Dec 1857): 17.
40. For more detail on this particular period of travel see Amanda Gilroy, *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel 1775-1844* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).
41. Alexander Taylor, *On the Curative Influence of the Climate of Pau and the Mineral Waters of the Pyrenees on Disease* (London: John W. Parker, 1845).
42. Sabine Baring-Gould, *A book of the Pyrenees* (London: Methuen and Co., 1907) and Louisa Stuart Costello, *Béarn and the Pyrenees, a legendary tour to the country of Henri Quatre*, Vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley, 1844).
43. Baring-Gould, *Pyrenees*, 22-8.
44. Stuart Costello, *Béarn and the Pyrenees*, 195. The reference from Zurita is *Anales*, viii, 344. Original text is "parecía furia y venganza del Cielo que las cosas de Navarra no tuviesen ningún remedio."
45. Baring-Gould, *Pyrenees*, 26 and Costello, *Béarn and the Pyrenees*, 195.
46. Baring-Gould, *Pyrenees*, 27.
47. See news story "*La Tour Moncade objet d'un documentaire vidéo*," *La République des Pyrénées*, August 10, 2010 and the linked video on YouTube by Jérémy Arne: <https://youtu.be/p0LNQQ1osR8>.
48. Costello, *Béarn and the Pyrenees*, 191.
49. Baring-Gould, *Pyrenees*, 66.
50. George Bradshaw, *Bradshaw's Illustrated Travellers' Hand-Book to France* (London: W.J.Adams, 1807), 257. For the tale of Gaston Phoebus, his disastrous marriage to Agnes of Navarre and the death of his son, see Froissart "At the Court of the Count of Foix (1388)" in Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Brereton, (London: Penguin Classics, 1978), 263-74.
51. Henri Courteault, *Gaston IV: Comte de Foix, Vicomte Souverain de Béarn, Prince de Navarre 1423-1472* (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1895), 281-3.
52. Anon., "Questions et Réponses," *Revue de Gascogne*, vol. 37 (1896): 408.
53. Costello, *Béarn and the Pyrenees*, 194-5.
54. There have been several recent studies about the perception of poison as a female weapon in the Early Modern period including Chap. 7, "Poison: A Woman's Weapon?" in Vanessa McMahon, *Murder in Shakespeare's England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 107-24 and Randall Martin, *Women, Murder and Equity in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2007).
55. Garthine Walker, *Crime, Gender and Social Order in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 144.
56. Moret, *Navarra*, vi, 454, claims Blanca was poisoned by one of Leonor's women.
57. Favyn, *Histoire de Navarre*, 585.
58. Bradshaw, *Illustrated Hand-book*, 257.
59. See Katarzyna Kosior, "Outlander, Baby Killer, Poisoner? Rethinking Bona Sforza's Black Legend" in *Virtuous or Villainess? The Image of the Royal Mother from the Early Medieval to the Early Modern Era*, edited by Carey Fleiner and Elena Woodacre (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 199-224.

60. John Timbrell, *Introduction to Toxicology*, 3rd Edition (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2002), 3.
61. N.M. Sutherland, "Catherine de Medici: The Legend of the Wicked Italian Queen," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 9.2 (1978): 53.
62. Martha Walker Freer, *The Life of Jeanne d' Albret, Queen of Navarre: From numerous unpublished sources including manuscripts in the Bibliothéque Imperiale and the Archives Espagnoles de Simancas* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1855), ii, 333–8.
63. Silje Normand, "Venomous Words and Political Poisons: Language(s) of Exclusion in Early Modern France" in *Exploring Cultural History; Essays in Honour of Peter Burke*, edited by Melissa Calaresu, Filippo de Vivo and Joan-Pau Rubiés (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 123. Normand notes that this rhetoric of poison was also used more generally to slur Italians in the French court and later another Italian queen regent, Marie de Medici, see pages 122–5.
64. Honoré de Balzac, *Catherine de Medici*, trans. Katharine Prescott Wormeley (The Floating Press electronic edition, 2010, originally published 1841).
65. The scene between the two sisters is *Villoslada, Doña Blanca* (London, 1854), i, 309–317.
66. *Villoslada, Doña Blanca* (London, 1854), i, 316.
67. *Villoslada, Doña Blanca* (London, 1854), iii, 93–4.
68. Antonio Cavanilles, *Historia de España* (Madrid: J. Martin Alegria, 1862), iv, 215. Original text is "*Tantos crímenes abrieron el camino del trono de Navarra à Doña Leonor.*"
69. *Villoslada, Doña Blanca* (London, 1854), iii, 332.
70. Ambroise Rendu, *Compendio de Historia Universal* (Barcelona: Tomas Gorchs, 1848), iii, 38. Original text is "los parricidas cómplices de su muerte no pudieron gozar con tranquilidad el fruto de su crimen."
71. Emile Garet, *Coup d'oeil sur l'histoire du Béarn* (Pau: Imprimerie Veronese, 1867), 49.
72. *Villoslada, Doña Blanca* (London, 1854), iii, 263.
73. However, *Villoslada* notes in his non-fiction appendix to the novel the generally accepted death date of December 2, 1464. *Villoslada, Doña Blanca* (London, 1854), iii, 332.
74. *Villoslada, Doña Blanca* (London, 1854), iii, 264–5.
75. Moret, *Navarra*, vii, 41. Original text is "Dios quería que padeciese (dicen aquí comúnmente los autores) para castigo de sus enormes culpas cometidas contra el Principe y Princesa de Viana, sus hermanos mayores, con el fin de privarlos de la corona de Navarra."
76. Favyn, *Histoire de Navarre*, 587.
77. Anquetil stands by Blanca's donation of the crown to Enrique IV which would have made Isabel and later Ferdinand (as Castile's caretaker) Blanca's true successors. Louis Pierre Anquetil, *Compendio de la Historia de Espana* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1806), ii, 174–6.
78. Zurita, *Anales*, viii, 344. Original text is "*parecía furia y venganza del Cielo que las cosas de Navarra no tuviesen ningún remedio.*"
79. *Villoslada, Doña Blanca* (London, 1854), iii, 289.
80. Boissonade, *Histoire de la réunion*, 8. Original text is "*Un état ruiné par la guerre civile, affaibli par l'anarchie, voilà l'heritage que Juan II laissa.*"
81. *Villoslada, Doña Blanca* (London, 1854), iii, 71.

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