

Edited by Susan Broomhall

Women and Power at the French Court, 1483-1563

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Edited by
Susan Broomhall

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In the Orbit of the King

Women, Power, and Authority at the French Court, 1483–1563

Susan Broomhall

Abstract

This essay provides both an assessment of the most recent historiography of women and power in early modern Europe and also explores possibilities for new analyses of power and authority through the lens of gender studies and broadening interpretations of politics and power in cultural, social and material forms. It situates the studies to follow in the collection in relation to a burgeoning scholarship on courts in early modern Europe and highlights the distinctions of the contemporary French experience that this volume reveals.

Keywords: women, power, authority, emotions, cultural politics, male rule

Towards the end of 1563, Catherine de Médicis (1519–1589) drafted a lengthy memoir intended for her son, Charles IX (1550–1574). The young man was about to assume rule of the French kingdom from his mother. Growing religious tensions across the court and country made it a challenging time to establish the authority of an inexperienced sovereign. Catherine's advice to the young man looked back to the past, to the reigns of three predecessors, his father Henri II (1519–1559), his grandfather François I (1494–1547), and Louis XII (1462–1515). Catherine set out a code of courtly conduct that was social, spatial, and emotional, promising to assert Charles's royal authority by outlining to him 'what I consider necessary to have you obeyed by all your realm, and [...] to see it in the state that it was in the past, during the reigns of the kings your father and grandfather'.[1] Advising her son, Catherine

1 'ce que j'estime aussi nécessaire pour vous faire obéir à tout vostre royaunme, et [...] le revoir en l'estat auquel il a esté par le passé, durent les règnes des Rois Messeigneurs vos père

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narrated a golden age of past male rulers in a highly emotive visualization of Charles as the latest in a long lineage of successful kings.[2]

However, this age to which Catherine could look back fondly was also a time when contemporaries had firmly recognized the power and influence of leading women and their networks, in religious affairs, key literary and artistic endeavors, and over the governance of the kingdom. Antonio de Beatis, secretary of Cardinal Luigi d'Aragon, recorded from his observation of the court during 1517 that François I's mother, Louise de Savoie (1476–1531), wielded 'absolute power' over the royal couple.[3] During his visit to the king in Rouen, among the few he identified by name, de Beatis observed Louise and her sister, Philiberte, with Queen Claude, who he specifically noted was treated with 'great respect and honor' by the king.[4] At Gaillon, he observed that a number of the senior men resided in surrounding villages, including his employer, the cardinal, 'because he could not stay in the palace, even though there were numerous rooms, because of the quantity of lords and ladies who escorted Queen Claude and the queen mother'.[5] Salic law, and the assertion of agnatic primogeniture for the French throne, might have determined that ultimate authority to rule France lay with men, but this did not preclude women from visible influence and authority at the court.[6]

Indeed, Catherine's first years at the French court, and the memories of it that she imparted to her son Charles, had been in the orbit of these very women de Beatis observed at first hand.[7] That they could work together, independently or in opposition, to achieve their objectives she knew well. Catherine had been among another, later, group of women that included François's sister, Marguerite d'Angoulême (1492–1549), his daughter Marguerite de Valois (1523–1574), his mistress Anne d'Heilly de Pisseleu (1508–1580), Duchess of Étampes, and Marguerite de Bourbon-Vendôme, Duchess of

et grand-père', La Ferrière-Percy, p. 91. There are competing views about the date of this text. However, Cosandey, 2016 (p. 61, n. 4) presents compelling evidence to place it just after the proclamation of the majority of Charles IX in 1563.

2 For a more detailed analysis of this text, see Broomhall, 2018b, pp. 87–104.

3 'un pouvoir absolu', Beatis, p. 137.

4 'beaucoup de respect et d'honneur', Beatis, p. 136.

5 'parce qu'elle [Sa Seigneurie] ne pouvait pas rester dans le palais, bien que les chambres y fussent nombreuses, à cause de la quantité de seigneurs eet de dames qui faisaient escorte à la reine Claude et à la reine mère', Beatis, p. 145.

6 A range of scholars has debated the precise political and cultural contexts in which Salic law came to be applied in the French context. See Hanley, 1997a; Hanley, 1997b; Hanley, 1997c; Cosandey, 2000, Chap. 1; Viennot; Conroy; Taylor.

7 On Catherine's development from duchess to *dauphine* during the reign of François I, see Broomhall, 2017a.

Nevers (1516–1589), who in the late 1530s formed a tight-knit textual and emotional community of care and concern for the king at court.[8] In Catherine's experience, even a king's mistresses could be part of its orderly system of power. In the 1580s, she recalled that the courtly conduct of her husband's acknowledged mistress Diane de Poitiers (1499–1566), 'was, as with Madame d'Étampes, all honorable, but he [Henri] would have been very annoyed if I had retained close to me those who were so silly as to tear apart [the good order of the court]'.[9] Here and elsewhere, Catherine remembered leading women as integral to a powerful courtly system that she sought to re-create with her son, strong, courteous, and cultivated, at its heart. In this schema, the court's female members were vital participants in the establishment of a particular culturally sophisticated emotional community.[10]

Catherine's reflections came as she looked back over her experiences at the French court into which she had been acculturated as a young woman, when older women had transferred to her systems of knowledge about court conduct and access to influence and authority as they claimed to have experienced them. In time, Catherine's own courtly world would be immortalized in print, thanks to figures such as Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme (*c.* 1540–1614).[11] But even her own writing pointed to fractures in the good order of the past that she envisaged for her son. Courtly order of the kind she strove for demanded continual efforts, especially in artistic representations, literary narratives, leisure pursuits, and political policies, to direct courtiers' attention to her goals. These forms of power were coupled with an exceptional emotional control. This encompassed careful performances of feelings, for, as Catherine later confided, 'If I made good cheer for Madame de Valentinois [Diane de Poitiers], it was the King that I was really entertaining […] for never did a woman who loved her husband succeed in loving his whore'.[12] Women's emotional strategies also involved cultivating networks within and beyond the court, which became their own kind of power. Catherine's varied ruminations highlight the complexities of

8 Broomhall, 2017a.

9 'De Madame de Valentinois, c'estèt, comme Madame d'Estampes, en tout honneur; mais celes qui estoient si foles que d'en fayre voler les esclats, yl eust esté bien marry que je les eusse retenues auprès de moy', Baguenault de Puchesse, p. 36.

10 On Catherine's concern for morale, see Zum Kolk, 2006; Zum Kolk, 2009a; Zum Kolk, 2009b; McIlvenna; Broomhall, 2017b.

11 Adams, 2016.

12 25 April 1584. 'cet je fèse bonne chère à madame de Valantynnois, c'estoyt le Roy, et encore je luy fésèt tousjours conestre que s'étoyt à mon très grent regret: car jeamès fame qui aymèt son mary n'éma sa puteyn', Baguenault de Puchesse, p. 181. See further discussion in Broomhall, 2018a.

women's forms of power and authority at the French court that she knew, power that operated through careful emotional management, political and religious engagements, creative visual representations, and narratives voiced with the pen and in print. These forms of power may have been unstable, uncertain, and transient, just as they were for most men below the level of the monarch, but they were no less effective and real, and they made meaning and authority both for those within the court and those beyond it in geography, culture, and time.

Women, Power, and Early Modern Court Communities

This collection explores these ways that a range of women under the rule of a male sovereign interacted with power, principally from within the French court, in order to advance individual, familial, and factional agendas. They did so from a range of positions that extend from holding official courtly status as consorts and regents, to influential and persuasive roles such as mistresses, factional power players and authors. Recent scholarship has demonstrated the important political work conducted by women as ladies-in-waiting, members of household staff with significant responsibilities, as mediators and go-betweens, spies, communication nodes and networkers, and in circles of female involvement in factions around a monarch, in addition to both queen consorts and regnants.[13] Likewise, at the French court, some women studied here worked from within the courtly household, as attendants residing at court, such as lady-in-waiting and insightful writer Anne de Graville (*c.* 1490–*c.* 1543). However, women's activities, just as those of men, also extended beyond the courtly domain, as they advanced family and dynastic ambitions, publicized ideas and opinions in letters, scribal texts, and print publications, and conducted diplomatic work in a number of ways. Scholars have shown how women utilized forms of power operating through letters, artwork, clothing, embroidery, or through their participation in gift-giving, fostering, patronage, diplomatic roles, and via social and communication networks.[14] This was also the case in relation to the French court. Moreover, the court was both highly visible, and to some extent and in

13 Recent examples include Zum Kolk, 2009a; Zum Kolk, 2009b; Akkerman and Houben; Walker and Kerr.

14 In addition to studies already cited, see also Frye and Robertson; Tarbin and Broomhall; Campbell, Larsen, and Eschrich; Campbell Orr, 2002a; Campbell Orr, 2004; Herbert; Palos and Sánchez; Daybell and Gordon, Watanabe-O'Kelly and Morton.

some modes permeable, to those who did not physically make contact with the king or reside in proximity to him. The published author Hélisenne de Crenne (*c*. 1510–*c*. 1560) interacted from beyond the court with high-status individuals at its heart by offering her work as a gift to the sovereign. As a whole, these women's means to assert their authority were varied, but included involvement in high politics and religious movements, financial transactions, ritual and ceremonies, epistolary exchanges, creative composition and translations, emotional self-management, development of networks of sociability, and sartorial, artistic, and architectural engagements as forms of power. Some of those considered here were perceived by contemporaries and historians to have successfully advanced the agendas that they chose to pursue. Recognition of their achievements has sometimes been voiced, however, as fears, concerns, and criticism. Other women discussed here have received little attention as political protagonists of the early sixteenth century. In this collection, we review the opportunities and actions of diverse women interacting with the court in different circumstances and consider their possibilities for asserting and wielding power.

These women operated with those who were at the apex of authority, in particular the male monarch who was the symbolic center of rule and the court personnel who supported him in that role. Some were queens consort and regents, two official positions for women that have received important attention from scholars in recent years. Not only have the individual women who occupied these roles gained more recognition as significant political actors in their own right, but so too has the complexity of their roles as agents of cultural transfer from natal dynasties to new courts, or as nodes for ongoing cultural exchange, as Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly has recently argued.[15] Yet individual women did not occupy only these roles but could transition through these and other positions and identities during their time at a court. Catherine de Médicis, for example, arrived at the French court as a young duchess, assumed the title of *dauphine* after the death of her husband's elder brother, became a mother, was queen consort to Henri II, acted as his regent, was widowed, and performed on further occasions as governor of the kingdom and close adviser for her sons as the queen mother. Other women of interest here did not participate in courtly life through official positions, although their influence on the king and courtly culture was widely acknowledged by contemporaries. This includes particular mistresses such as Anne de Pisseleu and Diane de Poitiers, who were able to translate emotional intimacy with the monarch into more sustained forms

15 Watanabe-O'Kelly, pp. 231–49.

of influence and authority. These women were not isolated individuals, but were firmly integrated into court life, interacting with women and men in official positions in the court hierarchy. Similarly, those women like Graville and Crenne who wrote manuscript and printed works from or in communication with courtiers were also important in shaping court life through their writings, although only some held official appointments at the court.

To capture these complex social, cultural, political, religious, and emotional interactions, the focus of this collection is on women's varied forms of power, their scope for achievement and its outcomes at the French court, understood here as a complex conceptual community, which was movable in physical space and which had its own particular traditions and conventions. It involved elites and service personnel in close proximity with the royal family through official appointments as well as emotional engagements that created opportunities for physical intimacy with rulers and others.[16] The court could convey stability and a coherent set of interests at one level, yet also encompassed many competing interests that continually changed with altered social circumstances and political manoeuvers. It also disseminated its culture and ideologies to a wider populace both physically on progress and in ceremonial entries, and in visual and textual terms depicting the court in media programs that were, in some cases, of the court's making and in others, beyond its control.[17] The power of the French court and its leading women and men, then, reached far beyond its physical form, gaining influence and producing consequences well beyond the borders of the kingdom.

The Court as Disseminator of Female Forms of Power

These essays focus on the French court in an influential period that was book-ended by two female regencies: commencing in 1483 with that of Anne de France (1461–1522) for her young brother, Charles VIII (1470–1498), and concluding with that of Catherine de Médicis for another Charles, her son Charles IX (1550–1574), in 1563. The end date of this collection is not intended to suggest necessarily a change in the nature of women's forms of power or their authority at the French court under the reign of Charles IX and

16 See Zum Kolk, 2009a; Zum Kolk, 2009b; Akkerman and Houben.

17 For conceptualizations of the early modern court and its culture, see Adamson; Campbell Orr, 2002b, pp. 24–32; Cosandey, 2016, pp. 16–18.

beyond, although our period of interest does offer a certain coherence of courtly orientation around French engagement in the Italian Wars, before the period of the civil and religious wars of the second half of the sixteenth century. Furthermore, the French court of this period formed an influential model of how women could draw upon a number of forms of power in order to access authority, and its practices and its assumptions about women's significance as interlocutors at court were passed down and across Europe over time.

Limited by the interpretation of Salic law from rule as reigning monarchs, women were nonetheless appointed as regents by monarchs and their senior male councillors, on multiple occasions during this eighty-year period, as the wives, daughters, and mothers of kings. It was moreover a topic on which women confidently expressed their own ideas and disseminated those of other female authors.[18] It was not the first time that women had been regents and held positions of central influence in France and, as the essays here show, literature including that by Christine de Pizan (1364–1430) which narrated particular predecessors such as Blanche of Castile (1188–1252) and Isabeau of Bavaria (1371–1435) was a vital part of building a repertoire of strategies of authority that women in this era could employ, and that they disseminated as practices of power to others thereafter.[19]

However, it was not merely their significance as regents that determines our work's focus on this time period but also women's activities as diplomats, authors, educators, patrons, and as political and religious factional leaders. In these years, the French court was a noted center of culture, representative of the kingdom's international prestige and ambitions, in which a range of leading women, in positions of power around the monarch that were both formally recognized and informally understood, enjoyed significant influence and authority. During the 22 years that she was twice queen at the French court, Anne de Bretagne (1477–1514), as the heir to the then independent Duchy of Brittany, consort to two monarchs, Charles VIII and Louis XII, continued the court's status as a famed school for educating elite young women that Anne de France had fostered. Nowhere was this more visibly rendered than at the Ladies' Peace (1529), secured by two trainees of Anne de France, Margaret of Austria (1480–1530) and Louise de Savoie negotiating on behalf of Habsburg Emperor Charles V (1500–1558) and François I respectively.

18 Adams, 2015.

19 Adams and Rechtschaffen; Adams, 2009.

The French court became renowned for a kind of female civilizing influence, and a courtly discourse and activities that assumed the participation of women. Several of the most influential works of Christine de Pizan, including the *City of Ladies* and *Othea,* were held in the library of Anne de France, and other women at the court also both possessed and commissioned print and manuscript editions of other works about women in power.[20] Anne de Graville, lady-in-waiting to Queen Claude de France (1499–1524), demanded greater consideration of women's voices and her scribally circulated works foregrounded courtly women as active interlocutors with their own opinions rather than simply as muses of men. In addition to manuscripts, a number of works by Pizan were printed as incunabula in France (albeit not always with reference to her name or sex).[21] Moreover, women at the court began to feature in print publications during this period, spreading female courtly visibility and audibility far and wide. In the first half of the sixteenth century, many of the living women whose works were printed were connected to the court, and the impact of their conspicuousness in print is powerfully suggested by the large increase of the number of female authors in print in the second half of the century.[22]

The French court was at this period the training ground for a number of aristocratic women who went on to shape political life across Europe. That women played a key role in international relations and diplomacy is now well understood, especially as consorts, and the manner in which they transferred ideas and cultural trends through transnational ties has been studied in considerable depth. Adam Morton adopts the term 'cultural encounters' to capture the rich and dynamic array of exchanges and entanglements that royal marriages, and queens consort in particular, enabled between different territories.[23] But women at the French court did not only play such roles as cultural agents when they moved beyond it as brides, but also, for example, as educators of a wider circle of aristocratic women and through their writings. Moreover, the cultural practices that they took with them included significant ideas about the important role of women in courtly life and their sustained involvement in its artistic, literary, religious, and political activities. Margaret of Austria was raised at the French court, under the watchful eye of Anne de France, in expectation that she would become bride to Anne's brother, Charles VIII, a marriage that did not eventuate. English

20 Schutz, p. 74. See generally, Tolley; Broomhall, 2007.

21 Brown.

22 See Broomhall, 2002a.

23 Morton; see also Hufton, p. 5; Campbell Orr, 2004; Sluga and James; Cruz and Stampino.

interactions increased with Mary Tudor Brandon (1496–1533) who became queen consort to Louis XII. These included, perhaps most famously, Anne Boleyn (*c.* 1501–1536). From a distance, her daughter Elizabeth I (1533–1603) imbibed the formidable voice and spiritual ideas of Marguerite d'Angoulême through her translation of the *Miroir de l'âme pécheresse* (first published in Alençon in 1531), which the young princess offered to her stepmother Catherine Parr (1512–1548) as a New Year's gift, embroidered with the queen's initials, in 1545, and which was then printed multiple times.[24] The influence of the reform-minded Marguerite d'Angoulême on other elite women in Protestant England was publicly disseminated with the funerary poems by the Seymour sisters, Anne, Margaret, and Jane, who composed over a hundred Latin distichs at the queen's death, which were published in France first in Latin in 1550 and then subsequently in a French edition.[25]

Moreover, Marie de Guise (1515–1560), who had resided at the French court in her teens alongside Madeleine de Valois (1520–1537), the daughter of François I and Claude de France, later served as regent in Scotland for her young daughter, Mary Queen of Scots (1542–1587). The latter was educated under the watchful eye of Catherine de Médicis and Diane de Poitiers at the French court. The royal daughter with whom Mary shared her room, Elisabeth de Valois (1545–1568), would later take her French courtly training to the Spanish court, as bride of Philip II of Spain (1527–1598). There, Catherine de Médicis continued to engage her daughter, husband and their two daughters, in ongoing emotional and cultural ties with the French court, and to Valois dynastic interests, through correspondence.[26] Renée de France (1510–1575), daughter of Anne de Bretagne and sister of another French queen, Claude, went to Ferrara as bride to Ercole II d'Este (1508–1559), from where she continued to promulgate her Protestant beliefs through lavish artistic and textual commissions. Marguerite de Valois, named for her aunt Marguerite d'Angoulême, and sister-in-law of Catherine de Médicis, took the extensive learning for which she was praised by contemporaries to Savoy, where she became duchess as wife of Emmanuel Philibert of Savoy (1528–1580).

These patterns of cultural transfer to other elite environments of female religious creative, literary, religious, and political engagement as forms of power and authority at the French court continued after the period studied

24 Navarre, 1548. See also Prescott; Snyder.

25 Seymour, 1550; Seymour, 1551. Published in English in Hosington; see also Stevenson and Davidson.

26 Broomhall, 2002b; Broomhall, 2015c; Broomhall, 2015b.

here. Another Elisabeth, Elisabeth de Bourbon (1602–1644), became a further Spanish consort, as wife of Philip IV (1605–1665), in the early seventeenth century, while her sister, Christine Marie (1606–1663), married Victor Amadeus I of Savoy (1587–1637). Both women would later act as regents, Elisabeth while her husband was occupied with the revolt in Catalonia and Christine Marie for eleven years on behalf of two of her sons.[27] Their youngest sister also married out from the French court and was seen by contemporary commentators to have brought many of its courtly cultural forms, as well as fervent faith practices, with her, as Queen Henrietta Maria (1609–1669), consort to Charles I of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1600–1649).[28]

At the same time, the French court was itself enriched by female influences brought from elsewhere. In the period of the Italian Wars, foreign brides came to the French court as part of diplomatic solutions to military interventions. As such, they were as much 'figures of suture' as the ambassadors that Timothy Hampton has described in these terms; their royal marriages bringing together respective sides after times of war as acts of healing.[29] Burgundian and Habsburg courtly practices shaped both Louise de Savoie and Eleanor of Austria (1498–1558), mother and second wife of François I respectively, who were trained at the court of Margaret of Austria. Catherine de Médicis, consort of Henri II, brought cultural influences from the Florentine and Roman environments in which she had been raised, adding to the many Italian artistic and cultural innovations transferred with French involvement in the Italian Wars. As regent, in 1526, Louise de Savoie oversaw the first steps towards a French alliance with the Ottomans, which endured through much of the century and generated a profound appreciation among female leaders of the French court for exotic material, cultural artefacts and even individuals. Two young women from the Ottoman Empire were raised in the households of Catherine de Médicis and her sister-in-law, Marguerite de Valois.

In the seventeenth century, new female regents in France, Marie de Médicis and Anne of Austria, would look back to the experience of courtly women during this period, as well as those they knew from their home environments, in order to formulate their own, often similar, forms of power to be applied in new social and political contexts. Jean-François Dubost argues that Marie looked for inspiration to her forebear Catherine de

27 On Elisabeth, see studies by Oliván Santaliestra, 2013a; Oliván Santaliestra, 2013b; Oliván Santaliestra, 2014. The activities of Christine Marie are discussed in *Oresko*.

28 Griffey, 2008; and Griffey, 2015. See Bell on the influence of Marie de' Medici on her daughter.

29 Hampton, p. 9.

Médicis through cultural leadership at court and artistic and architectural patronage that could translate into political actions and authority both as regent and then as mother of a king.[30] Marie faced challenging circumstances in a different political context and the strengthening ideology of absolutism. Nonetheless, models of women with power and authority such as Catherine de Médicis and Louise de Savoie who were regents in times of a king's military engagements would assist her to act in a similar role.[31] Marie's dominating role through the reign of her son mirrored much that was familiar to the actions of Catherine, and as dowagers heavily involved in the arts, Catherine, Marie, and, in her turn, Anne, seem to have formed models for later powerful women in similar positions, such as Hedwig Eleonora in Sweden.[32] Through the movement of women, and the exposure of their voices and visual representations, female forms of power and access to authority that were practiced at the French court in this period were spread far and wide, where they could be adopted and adapted by other women.

Gender, Politics, and Power

The French court was a significant contributor to wider European courtly culture of its time and generative of new ideas and examples of women's powers and authority. Therefore, it is important to bring analysis of the French court more fully into the current literature. This volume brings together scholars from both Anglophone and Francophone traditions of scholarship on elite women in early modern France, making the most recent research available in an English-language collection. Individual women have been treated with these questions in mind only in a more dispersed manner to date, in collections with generally broad chronological scope.[33] The questions and focus that drive this investigation sit squarely within a burgeoning multidisciplinary scholarship that has been produced with consideration of the relationships between gender, the political, power, and authority over the past few years. For the early modern period, there has been concerted attention to such a lens applied to a range of dynasties

30 In the context of the relationship of their regencies with *Parlement* and the Estates General, see Hanley, 1983, Chaps. 10–12, pp. 231–306; Dubost, 2009a; and the discussion of Marie in the third section of Cosandey, 2000: 'Souveraineté et dignité'.

31 Dubost, 2009b, p. 45.

32 Neville and Skogh, p. 10.

33 See, for example, Viennot; Schaub and Poutrin; Santinelli-Foltz and Nayt-Dubois.

and courts.[34] We explore what forms of power were available to women interacting with the French court in this period. What was the scope for achievement of these forms? What domains of activity — financial, political, religious, or otherwise — did they involve? And what were women's successes in achieving these goals? What did agency, 'success' or the achievement of authority look like, to contemporaries and to twenty-first century scholars?

This collection explores power available to women at the French court, considering its many forms, women's capacity to act through them, their ability to realize goals, and to manoeuver to their advantage (through their own actions by asserting themselves over others) in a range of domains. Understanding power in this way is complex, as it conceptualizes it in flexible and dynamic (as well as context-specific) terms. The evidence here points to the analytical value of power theorizations that consider relational and dynamic concepts of power as it has been expressed in the works of Michel Foucault and Anthony Giddens.[35] Additionally, feminist interventions such as those of Iris Marion Young, Nancy Hartsock, and Mary Caputi fruitfully propose notions of empowerment and models of power that are more transformative than dominating; that is, providing agency and the 'power-to,' and collaborative power forms that consider 'power-with'.[36] Moreover, comprehending how forms of power foster the possibility of authority creates further entanglement since power and authority can be mutually reinforcing and enabling. Some forms of power provide authority, while authoritative status appears to legitimize access to yet other kinds of power. But there were also systemic structures of power in operation, which made forms of power more than practices for women to employ according to their individual circumstances. The prevailing social and cultural structure of the period also governed women's (and men's) possibilities to act, assert, persuade, or dominate. The specifics of the courtly system also imposed a further set of rules and regulations that could on the one hand reinforce the wider social structure and, on the other, subvert it. For example, the ways in which emotional connections could provide some women with a conduit to agency, as a mistress to a king, was one such subversion of wider

34 Levin and Bucholz; Calvi and Chabot; Broomhall and Van Gent, 2011a; Cruz and Stampino; Sluga and James; Broomhall and Van Gent, 2016; Daybell and Norrhem, 2016b. The works published in the series 'Queenship and Power' edited by Charles Beem and Carole Levin by Palgrave/Springer likewise participate in this scholarship.

35 Dreyfus and Rabinow, including Foucault's 'Afterword: The Subject and Power,' pp. 208–28; Giddens.

36 See Hartsock; Hirschmann and Di Stefano; Young; Wartenberg; Caputi; Allen.

social expectations that was nonetheless tolerated at the court under many a sovereign.

Often drawing upon theories and concepts developed in sociological and anthropological literature, scholars now look beyond 'high politics' in order to embrace a wide range of acts and agency by both women and subordinate men in environments of power. In relation to such ideas, gender scholars of the early modern period have increasingly questioned the viability of distinctions such as 'private' and 'public' in terms of considering the political work of women and men, especially in courtly environments. Scholars' conceptualizations of arenas of official, formal, and informal political activities render these complex, sometimes overlapping forms and their utility for analysis ambiguous. James Daybell and Svante Norrhem have recently considered the inflection of gender in 'political culture', a broad-ranging term that encompasses 'modus operandi, spaces and institutions, underlying structures and ideas, practices and protocols'.[37] As Merry Wiesner Hanks observes, this term importantly breaks down any conceptual divide between the political and the cultural.[38] In the wider literature on early modern diplomacy, the cultural aspects of political work are also being given renewed attention under the term 'soft power'.[39] Yet there is perhaps a risk that the terminology of hard/soft power, just as formal/informal and high/other politics or public/private, continues to perpetuate gender and other divisions that were not understood in these terms by contemporaries. Given our interest in pursuing a broad conceptualization of women's forms of power, this collection is multidisciplinary in its perspectives, including studies by historians, art and literary scholars who shed light on the agency and authority of courtly women through examination of different kinds of activities and actions, political, religious, creative, literary, social, and emotional.

Great inroads in breaking down historiographical divisions have been made in the area of cultural patronage, including for women at court, now the subject of a large body of scholarship. As Erin Griffey argues in her recent study of the French-born Henrietta Maria, 'display permeated every aspect of the early modern court'; indeed, she argues, it was 'the materialization of authority'.[40] Women at the French court made extensive use of creative commissions in complex representations of their authority. Aubrée

37 Daybell and Norrhem, 2016b.
38 Wiesner-Hanks, p. 217.
39 See, for example, Rivère de Carles.
40 Griffey, 2015, p. 1.

David-Chapy argues here that Anne de France as regent for Charles VIII and Louise de Savoie for her son, François I, established access to high political decision-making not only through official recognition but also through close attention to the symbolic. Significantly, Christine de Pizan emerges as an important inspiration and guide for the models of female virtues that were foregrounded by these princesses. Erin A. Sadlack emphasizes that the cultural training of the French queen, Mary Tudor Brandon, during her brief marriage to Louis XII, primed her for such a role as an 'ambassador-queen'. Her analysis traces the formidable influence once again of Christine de Pizan through the libraries of Mary's female mentors and tapestry commissions. Laure Fagnart and Mary Beth Winn examine Louise de Savoie's commission of many texts and images to define her ambiguous status as mother of a king and as a regent. Fagnart and Winn identify the historical exemplars, biblical heroines, and astrological signs that Louise, neither the daughter of a king nor a consort, combined in pursuit of a compelling narrative of authority.

Lisa Mansfield argues that Eleanor of Austria was likewise adept at employing cultural politics that could assert an identity during her challenging time at the French court, using portraits in particular to locate herself politically and culturally within Habsburg dynastic networks. Discussions of Eleanor's actions as French queen have been limited by assumptions both contemporary and historical that Eleanor was overshadowed at court by François's mother, sister, and mistress, Anne de Pisseleu. Yet, Mansfield contends, during Eleanor's marriage to François, itself an outcome of the Ladies' Peace (1529) engineered by two powerful women, Margaret of Austria and Louise de Savoie, the queen adopted and adapted Margaret's strategic use of portraiture as political communication. Both of François I's wives, Claude and Eleanor, have been marginalized in historiography by the dominating presence of their husband, his mother, Louise de Savoie, and his sister, Marguerite d'Angoulême, who became Queen of Navarre in 1526. Yet Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier re-reads the symbolic power accrued in royal entries (as well as ambassadorial attention to Claude in gifts and interviews) as evidence that the queen consort was well understood in her lifetime as a key courtly figure.

Women's production of creative expressions was clearly a major and continuing form of power that sought to assert authority in the courtly realm. Cynthia J. Brown studies courtly women's attention to commissioning texts and illustrations, composition of new works, and print publication, including a primer given from one queen, Anne de Bretagne, to her daughter, another queen, Claude de France; a prayer book produced by Claude for her sister Renée de France; a comportment manual written by the regent Anne

de France for her daughter Suzanne de Bourbon (1491–1521) that Suzanne organized to have printed; a prayer book given as a gift by Louise de Savoie to her daughter Marguerite d'Angoulême; and Marguerite's work of short stories, the *Heptaméron*, which her daughter, Jeanne d'Albret (1528–1572), was instrumental in having published in a manner befitting her mother's authorial legacy. By contrast, Pollie Bromilow studies how the material, visual, and paratextual apparatus of Hélisenne de Crenne's printed publications sought to establish a provincial woman's power to write and be read by female and male readers, even at the court, at a time when, as Brown's essay explores, such roles were more typically undertaken by elite women such as Suzanne de Bourbon and Jeanne d'Albret in service of the publication of their influential mothers' works.

As these examples suggest, a further form of power for these women was the dissemination of their own voices and ideas in manuscripts, letters, and printed editions. Wilson-Chevalier demonstrates how Queen Claude cultivated a flourishing literary culture that maintained the intervention of intelligent social interlocutors such as Anne de Graville, who dedicated her works to the queen. In her analysis of the writings of Anne de Graville, author and lady-in-waiting to Queen Claude, Mawy Bouchard examines a woman's conceptualization of social forms of power through language, speech, and gossip. As Bouchard argues, Graville provides a unique female perspective to contemporary debates about courtly modes of social interaction and women's capacity to think, talk, and decide. She pointedly emphasized the risks to women of courtly speech and conceptualized slander as a kind of rhetorical assault, but also proposed the possibilities of eloquence as a form of resistance for women. While Graville's scribally circulated works were dedicated to the queen, another female author sought courtly patronage by dedicating her works to the king, François. Pollie Bromilow's study of Hélisenne de Crenne argues that her works held particular pedagogical value that could empower female readers and enable their participation in the culture of the book, actions that Bromilow argues were deeply political. Jonathan A. Reid extends this exploration into women's creative responses with specific consideration of Marguerite d'Angoulême's activities both at the court and beyond it. Marguerite modeled herself on female forebears: literary, such as the ever-present Pizan; spiritual (including Marguerite Porete (*c.* 1248/50–1310)); and political — and became, in turn, an exemplar for women after her. Thus, Marguerite acted as a key connection between many of the influential women studied by this volume, such as Anne de Bretagne, Louise de Savoie, Anne de Graville, Anne de Pisseleu, Catherine de Médicis among them, as well as others beyond the French court, such

as the Roman poet Vittoria Colonna (1490–1547) and Genevan religious reformer Marie Dentière (1495–1561).

A number of essays here also consider affective forms of power, in analyses of emotional self-management and the development of networks of sociability. Psychic power, they find, asserted over selves and others created significant consequences. Tracy Adams embeds her investigation of Anne de France within the current literature on elite networks and gift-giving as acts of reciprocal obligations, but extends the analysis by considering how emotions created a particular practice of gift-giving gendered feminine. She argues that Anne's gift-giving practice to other elite women constructed and cultivated distinct female emotional communities, networks of sociability, and gendered affects that did particular kinds of collaborative political work for (or, indeed, that constructed) Anne's exercise of power. Brown's analysis highlights the possibilities of female creativity and spiritual expression conveyed in texts and images transferred in a female lineage, of mother–daughter and sisterly relationships of feeling and acculturation sustained through lavishly illustrated manuscripts and printed texts. Mansfield demonstrates how Eleanor of Austria crafted a physical and sartorial connection in her portraits to a proud Habsburg heritage that resisted courtly hostilities and protected her psychologically by embedding her within a community of care. Sadlack argues that the correspondence of Mary Tudor Brandon attempted to establish alliances and influence at the French court that could be of value to her elder brother, Henry VIII (1491–1547). Diane de Poitiers's interactions, also through correspondence, as an authoritative protagonist both during and after the lifetime of Henri II, suggest a considered use of particular emotional expressions that were tailored to her recipients and topics of discussion. Such rhetoric and practice were vital to Diane, who, like Anne de Pisseleu beforehand, had a precarious status of authority founded upon emotional and sexual transactions that were unofficial and subject to a monarch's changing feelings and fortunes. Denis Crouzet's analysis of Catherine de Médicis's discursive activities as queen consort likewise emphasizes the important role of emotional articulation in developing a flexible political position from which she could advance the prerogatives of the Valois dynasty. As Crouzet argues, Catherine visualized her role as one of benevolence and harmony, and voiced in her letters her desire to act with gentleness and charity, as well as her capacity for fortitude.

Engagement with the dynamic religious politics of the French court was yet another form of power for women. The French court fostered generations of women deeply engaged in promoting religious values and movements.

At the turn of the century, Jeanne de France (1464–1505), divorced wife of Louis XII, founded a new monastic order, the Annonciades, that gathered together young ladies and spawned seven sister convents within 30 years.[41] Visible representations of religious devotion were a long-held avenue for elite female agency and one that many courtly women of this era maintained through financial contributions and in artistic and literary forms.[42] Brown's cross-generational analysis vividly demonstrates female networks of cultural power in which women were influential spiritual interlocutors. By the early sixteenth century, the influence of Protestant views sparked new religious divisions that infiltrated the courtly sphere. Accordingly, elite women's religious engagement began to take on new forms that included visible critique of institutional practices. Some women were closely tied to the religious reform movements within the Church. As Wilson-Chevalier argues in her study of Claude's spaces of agency, the queen attracted a coterie around her that was a counterpoint for those opposed in religious and political terms to the positions of her husband and mother-in-law. Furthermore, evidence emerges in both her choice of confessor and the works dedicated to her that Claude followed the spiritual path of her parents in favor of religious reform.

This reforming position would be advanced in different directions by other women in Claude's immediate environment, as evangelical support by Marguerite d'Angoulême, sustained tolerance by Marguerite de Valois, or espousing Protestantism as was the case for Anne Boleyn and Renée de France. Reid examines the letters and literary output of Marguerite d'Angoulême as well as court records to assess the challenges faced by a female courtier, albeit sister to a king and a queen in her own right, to assert and advance political and religious agendas of her choosing. He argues that Marguerite imaginatively exploited resources and pathways open to her, through courtly activities and writings that were circulated scribally and in print. If Claude de France, Marguerite d'Angoulême, and even Catherine de Médicis were all associated with evangelism during this period, other women became vital protagonists in the advancement of Protestant politics in France and beyond, such as Renée de France and Anne de Pisseleu who converted to the reformed faith. These leading women, perhaps especially

41 See Drèze, 1991; and Broomhall, 2008, pp. 10–15, 49–58.

42 The development of religious culture through the activities and patronage of princesses is an important aspect, and has been discussed elsewhere. Zum Kolk, 2016; Wilson-Chevalier. Wilson-Chevalier outlines the important early role of Claude de France in these reforming movements before the better-known involvement of Marguerite d'Angoulême.

two mistresses whose faith affiliations were diametrically opposed, played determining roles through their networks in the development of factional divisions at court. Diane de Poitiers (1499–1566), for example, advanced the cause of a hardline Catholic network, especially supporting the Guise dynasty to whom she was connected through her daughter's marriage. These factions remained powerful blocs that deeply affected the stability of the kingdom through the second half of the sixteenth century, long after both Pisseleu and Poitiers had left the court.

As can be seen, authors here focus on forms of power, artistic, cultural, creative, literary, emotional, religious, and political interventions, which encompassed and achieved not just formal political acts, but more broadly asserted the interests of women or others of their choosing, even to represent themselves or their sex in a beneficial way. These forms of power are difficult to separate neatly from each other; many worked hand in hand, or one form enabled another. Separately and collectively, they gave these women authority and influence. This suggests a nuance to the conclusion of a recent study edited by Eva Pibiri and Fanny Abbott in which they argue that power itself was masculine.[43] The essays here suggest that women had access to a range of forms of power, from involvement in political decisions, advancement of religious beliefs to commission of creative works, writing narratives of their own, and management of their own emotions and those of others as a potent force for action. These forms of power provided the possibilities for authority, largely understood by contemporaries to be a male preserve. Power and authority were, however, interconnected and often mutually enabling, complicating any overly sharp distinction in terms of the gendered nature of these concepts and their practice.

Authority at the French Court

Realms of power informed and reinforced patterns of conduct across key organizational structures, making a study of women's actions at the French court, and the ideologies that surrounded them, pertinent to other contexts, such as print publication, religious institutions, and legal discourses. Read together, these essays reveal the complexities of elite women's agency at the

43 See Pibiri and Abbott, pp. vii–xiv. 'Le pouvoir était masculin, tout comme l'accès au sacré; y pretendre en tant que femme revenait à contrevenir à la norme. Seuls le caractère exceptionnel et le respect de critères temporels et constitutifs definés par des hommes permettaient de ne pas envisager une incursion féminine, dans ces domaines, comme une transgression'.

French court during this period. The majority of essays focus on individuals who were clearly symbolically at the apex of the courtly hierarchy and others who, through a variety of means and circumstances, enjoyed influence and were able to assert at least some of their own agendas or those of their families and favorites. Nonetheless, each of the studies also emphasizes the active cultural work in visual, textual, and material forms and the social and emotional labor that these women were engaged in to justify, shore up, or advance their capacity for influence at the court. Legitimacy to act in many courtly contexts was precarious and limited. This points to a fundamental difference between the relationship of women and authority, and that of men and authority. Whether as consorts, regents, mothers of kings, or as women employing forms of power in the female voice in manuscript and print, women had to insist upon their right to speak, act, and determine, because it was not assumed.[44] Men too were actively building up their authority and insisted upon their status as men of influence, but women by contrast were repeatedly asserting their fundamental right to wield these forms of power at the same time as they were attempting to employ and preserve them. Royal rule was certainly male in France; indeed, male rule was often argued by male contemporaries to be natural and divine.[45] Authority too, the assertion of one self over another, was a practice that was deeply informed by cultural and social rules and gender ideologies. However, it was also a negotiated and dynamic practice that enabled some women in the right contexts to assert themselves over others.[46] They looked to authoritative women from the kingdom's past, their dynastic heritage, ancient mythology, biblical narratives, and literature, and their identities as mothers, as evidence that their authority in various matters at court was viable and legitimate. Moreover, they created for themselves communities of shared beliefs and feelings, often among women, although not exclusively so, that reinforced their ideas. In some cases, these provided intellectual and spiritual support for evangelical views the status of which was at best ambiguous at the court in this period. However, other modes of community creation suggest insecurities and a need for emotional bonding or buffering that extended beyond practical gains.

44 See also for a slightly later period, Hanley, 2006.

45 See Cosandey, 2000; Viennot, 2006, Hanley, 1997a; Hanley, 1997b; Hanley, 1997c; Taylor; Conroy.

46 For discussions of early modern authority specifically in the context of gender, see Broomhall and Van Gent, 2011b; Broomhall, 2015a.

These essays suggest that there are few limits to the kinds of sources that can be drawn into such analyses if approached with questions about women's power and authority to interpret them with. Authors here consider their varied source material through lenses shaped by literary, anthropological, history of emotion, cultural history, and performativity scholarship. As such, the essays to follow adopt more precise terminology for forms of power that reflects the specific nature of access and scope of authority available to the individuals they study. These terms include governance, control, dominance, creation, drive, status, affluence, influence, persuasion, and dynamism. They consider the agency of their subjects in terms of capacity and capability to act towards their goals, as well as the duration of such agency, particularly in changing life circumstances. Such a focus necessarily recognizes how women's choices, actions and experiences were shaped by the power of others to limit actions and impose the will of another. Nonetheless, their studies reveal that, in this light, women could assert authority from often unexpected positions, sometimes marginalized positions, as well as through more visible and formally recognized roles.

The first group of essays in the volume examines how forms of women's power were conceptualized and practiced by two particular women at the French court. Just as the chronology of the collection is framed by female regencies, the volume begins with Aubrée David-Chapy's study of two game-changing regencies exercised in the period: those of Anne de France for Charles VIII and Louise de Savoie for her son, François I. David-Chapy explores their distinct strategies in very different political and courtly contexts but also their shared approaches to legitimacy as women in, and of, power. The legacy of their highly visible authority at the apex of the court and kingdom would inform the possibilities for action of many elite women in the courtly realm during this period and beyond, as the studies to follow demonstrate. Regency is a key role in which these individuals wielded influence but it was by no means the only status that provided such opportunities. The following essay, by Tracy Adams, likewise examines Anne de France, but in relation to a precise form of her power as an important mediator between elite cohorts at the French court through her gift-giving practices. Focusing upon the visualization of the identity of Louise de Savoie as mother and widow, Laure Fagnart and Mary Beth Winn then examine how Louise's representational achievements sustained her enduring influence as a dominant force in the kingdom as François's political companion, interlocutor, and mediator with foreign powers.

Essays brought together in the volume's second part consider women at both the center and yet seemingly the periphery of power, consorts who

were symbolically powerful as partners of monarchs and reproductive laborers in the service of dynastic continuities, but whose political activities and courtly roles have received little attention to date. The consorts who are the subject of the following three chapters, Mary Tudor Brandon, third wife of Louis XII, and the consecutive wives of François I, Claude de France and Eleanor of Austria, have thus far received little scholarly discussion as figures of power at the French court. Erin A. Sadlack demonstrates, however, how the correspondence of French queen, Mary Tudor Brandon, during her brief marriage to Louis XII, offers an opportunity to analyze her attempts to establish alliances and commission creative projects as an 'ambassador-queen'. With tenures as consorts far longer than that of Mary, the wives of François I, Claude and Eleanor, here also receive renewed attention. Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier indicates in her study Claude's spaces of agency for spiritual, creative, and literary engagements, while Lisa Mansfield argues that Eleanor of Austria was likewise adept at asserting her potential influence and connections to the Habsburg dynasty.

The volume's third part shifts focus to assessments of women's production of creative expressions in the courtly realm. Cynthia J. Brown contributes a cross-generational analysis of female creativity and spiritual expression through spiritual and literary works passed from mothers to daughters, and between sisters. Jonathan A. Reid considers the opportunities for Marguerite d'Angoulême to achieve her own political and spiritual goals through a study of her letters and literary output in manuscript and print. Mawy Bouchard examines the works of Queen Claude's lady-in-waiting, Anne de Graville, which insisted on the importance of women's speech on their own terms. Pollie Bromilow investigates the work of another female author who sought courtly patronage by dedicating her works to the king, François, in her analysis of Hélisenne de Crenne whose printed fictional works were among the first published by a living female author and provide a complementary perspective on the production of a creative female voice.

The volume's final section brings together essays that study how emotional rhetoric and sociability practices could generate and define specific forms of power for courtly women. David Potter examines how Anne de Pisseleu, Duchess of Étampes, who rose to enjoy a role of immense political influence at the French court as *maîtresse en titre* of François I, converted her authority at court into forms of power that lasted well after the death of her royal partner. While the extent of her status as a political interlocutor in François's final years has been previously documented, Potter analyzes here the legal, marital, and financial transactions of her familial network that demonstrate Anne's continued significance as a

key figure in these deliberations and in pursuit of Protestantism until her own demise. The following essay studies another prominent woman who rose to influence at the court as a mistress, Diane de Poitiers. Her particular rhetorical forms, and emotional expressions, were designed to insist upon the reach of her influence at court, in securing positions and the king's favor for her nominees, and in asserting her knowledge widely, from matters of child-rearing to international political negotiations and military engagements. Like Pisseleu, Diane outlived the monarch who was her access to status by many years, and thus her correspondence both enacted and reflected activities similar to those of Pisseleu, which were designed to achieve longevity for her reach and influence. Denis Crouzet studies Catherine de Médicis's interventions as regent while consort of Henri II, which developed a pragmatic position of prudence, moderation, and flexibility that she would demonstrate more fully as queen mother and regent for her son Charles IX. Peace — Catherine's objective — demanded these qualities, and a practice of gentleness became more than a feminine tool of power, Crouzet argues, but rather the expression of it.

In the Orbit of the Monarch

What did it mean for women to seek power in a political system such as that of France in which the monarch was always a man? How significant to their actions were individual, cultured men who surrounded themselves with female advisers who were relatives and lovers, and considered, and at times advanced, their opinions? Catherine de Médicis was clearly trying to mold her son Charles in the manner of male rule that she had seen practiced by monarchs during this period (or perhaps idealized in ways useful to women). At the same time, these leading women understood that power, as agency, influence, control, determination of selves and others, was uncertain and unstable in the orbit of the monarch. As such, it was something to be gained, used, preserved, or converted if possible.

Nurturing emotional engagement with royal partners, Anne de Pisseleu and Diane de Poitiers operated in political circles by accruing high status and courtly recognition. This required far more of such women than sexual attractiveness. François I and Henri II, their respective royal partners, were both known to have had sexual relations with other women, which did not accrue for them the sustained political access that Pisseleu and Poitiers achieved. Similar forms of personal and emotional service as family members also proved significant to high political access for other women.

This includes Anne de France and Louise de Savoie, as sister and mother of kings respectively, and Catherine de Médicis for her sons.

Women benefited from access to influence only in certain life stages that signaled different uses and experiences of women's symbolic and lived bodies, from their sexual activity to their reproductive capacity.[47] As wives and mothers of kings, women were recognized with high status that converted into social and cultural power at court, but not necessarily regular influence with the monarch himself or decision-making capacity in the kingdom's affairs, as it did for at least two royal mistresses. Neither of François's two wives, Claude de France nor Eleanor of Austria, acted as regents during his reign, although Catherine de Médicis served multiple times in this role for her spouse, Henri II. Royal wives who came from elsewhere, such as Anne de Bretagne, Eleanor of Austria, and Catherine de Médicis, had to find mechanisms to assert themselves at the French court that both expressed pride in their own dynastic origins and signaled a capacity for harmonious union in their new environments. Producing children assisted these women to assert identities as royal mothers that provided the capacity for influence, particularly if they lived to witness the reign of a son and enjoy the status of queen mother.

Yet, although they shared what appear to be close emotional bonds with their brothers, other sisters of monarchs such as Mary Tudor Brandon, younger sister of Henry VIII, Marguerite d'Angoulême, elder sister of François I, and Marguerite de Valois, younger sister of Henri II, held more ambiguous forms of authority and influence in their brothers' orbits. Agency to determine an independent path was limited. Having fulfilled a dynastic obligation with her first marriage, Marguerite d'Angoulême was given some autonomy from her brother, François, in the choice of her second marriage partner. However, this was a freedom Henri II did not permit his aunt when it came time for Marguerite's daughter Jeanne d'Albret to marry.

In such circumstances, women aimed not to rely on the changeable feelings or disposition of a monarch for their action. The political influence of Pisseleu and Poitiers may have come initially through intimate attachments but they were able to convert it to other, more sustainable, forms of political influence through networks with powerful allies, and especially into lands and monies that they could then control themselves. Jeanne de France chose the convent after her divorce settlement from Louis XII, where she became the creator of a wholly new order for elite women, and acted largely autonomously within it. Other women sought independent action, without reference to monarchs,

47 Schulte; Weil.

in different ways. Mary Tudor Brandon did not wait to discover her brother's inclinations before she followed her own, risking his wrath to wed Charles Brandon soon after the demise of her first husband, Louis XII.

Finally, and importantly, Marguerite d'Angoulême powerfully extended the range of her voice beyond the ears of her brother, or even the court, amplifying her views through the circulation of her writings in manuscript and print. Courtly daughters, Suzanne de Bourbon and Jeanne d'Albret, followed her lead on behalf of their powerful mothers. In doing so, the actions of these elite women provided role models and access to the pen and readers for women of lesser status, whether within the court such as Anne de Graville, or those who gazed at it from afar, such as Hélisenne de Crenne. These women, through their own contributions to literature, took up the possibilities that women at court seemed to make available to them and assumed a right to act, speak, and be heard in their own time and since.

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About the author

Susan Broomhall is Professor of Early Modern History at The University of Western Australia. She is author or co-author of eight monographs and ten edited volumes exploring women and gender, power, and most recently emotions and material culture, from late medieval to nineteenth-century Europe, although the particular focus of her work is early modern France and the Low Countries. She has published *Women and the Book Trade in Sixteenth-Century France* (Ashgate, 2002), *Women's Medical Work in Early Modern France* (Manchester University Press, 2004), *Women and Religion in Sixteenth-Century France* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), and most recently (with Jacqueline Van Gent), *Gender, Power and Identity in the Early Modern House of Orange-Nassau* (Routledge, 2016), and *Dynastic Colonialism: Gender, Materiality and the Early Modern House of Orange-Nassau* (Routledge, 2016). She holds an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship, researching emotions and power in the correspondence of Catherine de Médicis. From this research, she has published a series of book chapters and articles, and is currently writing a monograph on emotions in Catherine de Médicis' letters for Brill. From 2018, she leads a major Australian Research Council project, with Carolyn James and Lisa Mansfield, 'Gendering the Italian Wars, 1494–1559'.



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Part I

Conceptualizing and Practicing Female Power



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1. The Political, Symbolic, and Courtly Power of Anne de France and Louise de Savoie

From the Genesis to the Glory of Female Regency

Aubrée David-Chapy

Abstract
The last decades of the fifteenth and the dawn of the sixteenth century represent a political and institutional turning point when women such as Anne de France and Louise de Savoie asserted themselves at court and at the head of the realm. This chapter considers how both princesses established and sustained power. Their legitimacy was built on blood, dynasty, law, and royal choice, adopting similar strategies to strengthen their power and wielding an unusual authority. Surrounded by many women, both regents build a 'royaume de fémynie' at the royal court where they displayed their political and symbolical power. Under their influence, the female court became a political sphere where they held first rank, just under the queen.

Keywords: regency, Anne de France, Louise de Savoie, networks, eloquence, ethics

In France, the end of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth century witnessed the emergence of female regency, which became progressively established as an institution and form of government in itself. The French court became a place of exercise of women's power where two princesses, Anne de France (1461–1522) and Louise de Savoie (1476–1531) imposed themselves, successively, at the head of the realm, and played an essential part in the genesis of this new kind of power.

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First, Anne de France, dame of Beaujeu, daughter of Louis XI (1423–1483), rose to power at her father's death in order to assist her younger brother, Charles VIII (1470–1498). With the help of her husband, Pierre de Beaujeu (1438–1503),[1] she managed the realm for more than a decade and asserted her unequaled influence. Without having any official title, she played an important role in entrenching modern regency. It was a feature of every subsequent reign, from François I (1494–1547) to Louis XIV (1638–1715). Anne de France exerted her influence on her brother until his death in 1498, and she imposed her political and symbolic authority both at the French court and at the head of the realm. In 1515 the newly crowned François I officially entrusted his mother Louise de Savoie, Duchess of Angoulême, with the regency, before leaving the country for his first Italian expedition that culminated with victory at Marignano. Again in 1524, at the time of his second Italian War, he bestowed the regency upon his mother, giving her many prerogatives. This was the first time a woman had been officially appointed as a regent.[2] Anne and Louise stand apart from the female regents who followed, including Catherine de Médicis (1519–1589), Marie de Médicis (1575–1642), Anne of Austria (1601–1666), and Maria-Theresa of Austria (1638–1683). Neither woman was a queen, and each used her particular status, as 'Daughter of France' for Anne, and as 'the King's Mother' for Louise, to legitimate her presence at the head of the realm and to build power at the French court.

This power had two interlinked aspects: one political, the other symbolic. This study analyzes the genesis of female regency as a new institution officially integrated into monarchy. It examines the nature of this new power exerted by two women who gained the authority to rule for the king. It aims to demonstrate that, over years and in spite of several limitations, this female power, modeled upon royal power, could be identified with the *auctoritas* and *imperium*, which were usually the preserve of the king. This study also investigates the strategies that Anne de France and Louise de Savoie employed at the French court to retain power and limit that of their opponents. Finally, it analyzes the different political and symbolic means that each woman used to build, strengthen, and practice their power.

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1 He became Duke of Bourbon in 1488.

2 This includes even Blanche of Castile (1188–1252), mother of Saint Louis (1214–1270).

Rising to Power: The Genesis of Feminine Regency

A priori, neither Anne de France nor Louise de Savoie was destined to exert an almost sovereign power by the side of Charles VIII or François I. Neither had been part of the King's Council before arriving on the political stage. Nevertheless, they had had experience at the French court where each had been brought up and lived, either as the king's daughter in the case of Anne or, for Louise, as niece of Charlotte de Savoie (1441–1483).[3]

From an institutional perspective, the two women came to power in very different ways. In 1483, Anne's accession to power because of the king's minority occurred outside of any legal framework. Indeed, there was no fixed rule as to the choice of the regent who received power during a sovereign's minority. Traditionally, the latter was under the guardianship of his mother, the queen, but no law determined this practice. Anne de France took advantage of this situation to exclude her mother from the tutelage of the king, whom she took under her own care. There were several points in her favour. At the death of Louis XI, whose main councillor was her husband, Pierre de Beaujeu, the couple were already established at the head of the realm. Their accession to power provided political continuity that Louis XI desired. Indeed, in 1482 the king had verbally designated them legatees of power to his son Charles during a famous session in which he gave instructions to the *dauphin*.[4] All the contemporary chroniclers, including Philippe de Commynes (1447–1511) and Alain Bouchart (b. 1440), confirm that the king intended to bring the Beaujeus to power during Charles VIII's minority.[5] Yet, in the ordinance written after this episode, the couple were not identified directly. This vagueness weakened their position and forced them to confront others who considered themselves as the legitimate holders of power. Their most vigorous opponent was the first blood prince, Louis II, Duke of Orleans (1462–1515), future Louis XII, who would inherit the crown if Charles VIII died without issue. Louis claimed the regency due to his rank

3 Louise de Savoie was the daughter of Count Philippe of Bresse, future Duke of Savoy, and the niece of Louis XI.

4 Pardessus, pp. 56–60: 'Nous lui avons ordonné, commandé ainsi que père peust faire à son filz, qu'il se gouverne, entretiengne en bon regime et entretenement dudit royaume par le conseil, advis et gouvernement de noz parens et seigneurs de nostre sang et lignaige' ('We ordered and commanded him, as a father can his son, to govern himself, and rule the realm with the council, advice and government of our parents and feudal lords of our blood and lineage'). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

5 Commynes; Bouchart.

and rallied many noblemen around him. The 'princes' party' opposed the 'royal party' of the Beaujeus as early as 1485.

In this unstable context, the *États généraux* met at the beginning of 1484 in Tours. They aimed primarily to designate the future King's Councillors and to declare the need for a regency. The decision of the members benefited the Beaujeus, who received the guardianship of the king.[6] Pierre was also designated as Council President in times when Charles VIII and the Dukes of Orleans and Bourbon were absent.[7] Thus, the Beaujeus held power. But they endured opposition from the nobility for several years and it would be 1488 before Anne de France won the war against the dukes, Louis of Orleans, François II of Brittany (1435–1488), and Maximilian of Austria (1459–1519), after the victory of Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier. This took her to the height of her power.

During this 'Mad War', Anne de France fought to retain her power while ruling the realm, making her a powerful female exemplar for those who followed. She laid the foundations for a feminine practice of power as she ruled almost as a regent. This facilitated Louise de Savoie's rise to power as a regent in 1515, only nine months after the accession of her son, François I, to the throne. Anne de France's government prefigured that of Louise de Savoie; it provided both practical and theoretical principles for its establishment. Over three decades, a new institution and the implementation of a power of unprecedented proportions was formed.

The nomination of Louise de Savoie, Duchess of Angoulême, as regent occurred in a peaceful context and did not generate any opposition, for the king took many precautions in the way he designated his mother. After the legal vagueness of Anne's experience in the 1480s came an institutional precision that strengthened Louise's status against potential opponents. Thus Anne de France's *de facto* regency was followed by a *de jure* regency instituted in 1515. The rupture was semantic, juridical, institutional, *and* political. For the first time, a woman held the title of regent with considerable prerogatives that were defined in a royal ordinance, promulgated before the king left for Italy.[8] On the eve of his second departure and during his war, the king promulgated the 1523, 1524, and 1525 ordinances in which he again delegated vast powers to his mother.[9] The shift towards an entirely female power occurred during François I's captivity in Madrid, in 1525. Louise, regent

6 Bernier, p. 703.

7 Bernier, p. 702.

8 Archives nationales (AN), J. 1037, n°7 and published in Levasseur, I, 1902, pp. 262–67.

9 Champollion-Figeac, pp. 1–9 and Levasseur, III, 1932, pp. 282–89; then AN, J. 910, n° 10, and published in Champollion-Figeac, pp. 29–31 and in Levasseur, IV, 1933, pp. 51–52; and finally, Champollion-Figeac, pp. 416–25.

of the realm and guardian of the children of France, had issued hundreds of edicts and mandates written in her own name and using her own formula 'for such is my pleasure'.[10] Louise de Savoie, legitimized in power by her son, was the embodiment of *auctoritas*, *potestas*, and *imperium*. In theory, she was in possession of a quasi-sovereign power.

Thereafter female regency could exist because it had been officially established as a fully fledged power. After Anne de France, women progressively rose to the head of the realm and this process bolstered their personal power. In turn, with the support of the monarchs, both princesses imagined and practiced an almost royal power, during the minority or the absence of the kings with whom they shared the authority. Each wielded a vast power and was involved in all aspects of politics including diplomacy and marriages, domestic and foreign affairs, justice, and economy.[11]

Proximity to the King: The Key to Power

As their authority and their presence at the head of the State could be contested, Anne de France and Louise de Savoie both developed strategies to retain power. The differences in their strategies followed from the nature of the power each exerted. Regency was by nature an unstable and weak form of power as it arose in the minority or absence of the sovereign: it was open to challenge, especially when upheld by women.

For Charles VIII's sister and François I's mother, a key concern was to remain the exclusive intermediary between the monarch and his subjects. A key strategy to keep power was to remain beside him at court as well as at war.[12] Anne acted as a shield, a bulwark, against the king's enemies; that is, her own enemies. The rebellious nobles of the realm such as Louis II d'Orléans, Charles d'Angoulême (1459–1496), René d'Alençon (1454–1492), and François de Dunois (1447–1491) were not permitted to approach the royal person. This proximity had a double meaning. It gave power to the Beaujeu family who monopolized and controled access to the king and also symbolized their power and status. The Beaujeus appeared as the most senior individuals in the realm after Charles VIII. Anne de France exerted power through her permanent proximity to her brother, a symbolic presence that was the guarantee and the expression of her might.

10 'Car tel est mon plaisir', David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 525ff.
11 David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 403–63, pp. 478ff.
12 David-Chapy, 2012.

Louise de Savoie's situation was very different. Her two regencies corresponded with the absence of the sovereign and were generated *de facto* by his physical distance from her. Alone at the head of the State, she held almost full power. During the king's absences, the regent stood in for the sovereign and represented him in the eyes of the subjects. The king's presence was thus superfluous, as his mother assumed the features of a quasi-sovereign, provided with an *auctoritas* that bestowed real political power. On the other hand, when François I returned, the regent Louise de Savoie, a woman, was deprived of institutional office. The essence of the power she exerted then metamorphosed into a power of influence of the kind more commonly wielded by women in particular, and often difficult for historians to discern and to measure. This power of influence flowed from an everyday presence close to the king, at court, at his Council, and even during the royal ceremonies. Contemporaries at the royal court expressed Louise's influence through the formula, 'the King and Madame', which signified a couple connected through blood, presence, power, and shared decision-making.[13]

For Anne de France and Louise de Savoie, the political consequence of their presence close to the king at court was the exercise of power as a couple. Indeed, Anne exerted power either with her brother, or her husband, but always as one partner in a couple. In her *History of the Siege of Brest* that follows the *Enseignements* (1503) written for her daughter Suzanne de Bourbon (1491–1521), Anne de France expressed a personal vision of power. Through the voice of a noblewoman, the main character of the work, she asserts to her husband:

> My dear, love and duty claim that, of all principal matters, according to God and wisdom, I should share with you as one heart in two bodies and one will.[14]

Through the words of the protagonist, Anne revealed her personal political practice, in which a wise woman was equal to her husband, especially in matters of rule and decision-making. Moreover, an attentive reading of the correspondence between Anne de France and Charles VIII reveals the extent to which the king's will merged with that of his sister.[15] Within this inseparable political couple, each played a role: Charles retained symbolic authority,

13 David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 250, 525.

14 'M'amie, amour et devoir veulent que, de tous mes principaux affaires, selon Dieu et raison, vous en dois départir, comme un cœur en deux corps et une même volonté', David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 107–08.

15 AN, X1ª 9319, 9320, 9321; Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), ms. fr 15538; Charles VIII.

while his sister held the real power; that is, the decision-making power. Anne exerted this prerogative in full: Charles legitimated his sister's decisions.

This *modus operandi* represented the application of an ideal of government that would gain unprecedented political and mystical magnitude under Louise de Savoie. As regent, she was a member of a united 'royal trinity' along with François I and his sister, Marguerite d'Angoulême.[16] Louise de Savoie used this expression, coined by Marguerite, in her letters and in ceremonies to present their relationship as a quasi-mystical union.[17] Even contemporaries used it. For example, the poet Jehan Marot (*c.* 1450–*c.* 1526) evoked the 'royal trinity', as did the bishop and statesman, Guillaume Briçonnet (1470–1534) who wrote to Marguerite: 'You are in this world a trinity of persons'.[18] Thus, with the support of her daughter and contemporary authors, Louise de Savoie worked to build her political power on blood and a mystical conceptualization. Whether as a couple or a trinity, however, these formulations functioned only with the presence of the king.

Masculine and Feminine Networks as Supports of the Regents

To strengthen their personal power at the head of the realm, Anne de France and Louise de Savoie developed strong networks, especially at the French court, through numerous alliances.[19] The establishment of Anne de France's government was based primarily on people gathered within networks that she maintained, consolidated, and enlarged. Her power was established through favor and fidelity as well as a party of loyal followers, from princes to nobles and servants of the State, who were integrated into these networks. Loyalty represented a political instrument in the hands of the Beaujeus, as was frequently the case in the period.

The Beaujeus first relied on networks inherited from the reign of Louis XI. In the midst of the 'Mad War', Anne de France knew how to maintain the loyalty of military men and servants of the State.[20] She progressively gained the support of the princes who represented a potential threat to her power. Providing gifts and bestowing responsibilities, she won the support

16 Knecht.

17 She writes: 'by the grace of God our Trinity has always been united' ('le Créateur nous a fait la grasse que nostre trynyté a tousjours esté unye'), cited in Lecoq, p. 393.

18 Translation of the author. 'Vous estes en ce monde une trinité de personnes', Lecoq, p. 395.

19 David-Chapy, 2018b.

20 These men are Louis Malet de Graville, Jean de Baudricourt, Louis II de La Trémoille, and the marshal of Gié.

of many noblemen, such as the dukes Jean II de Bourbon (1426–1488) and René II de Lorraine (1451–1508). Multiple treaties were developed between 1484 and 1487; alliances were made and unmade in favor of Anne de France, who sought help in the realm and beyond it, particularly in Flanders and in Brittany.[21]

Above all, Anne de France relied on the House of Bourbon, which was a key pillar for her power. Within this House she found her most faithful supporters who acted as the bulwark to the endangered kingship. Anne's efforts engaged the mighty Jean II, Duke of Bourbon, her husband's brother, who vacillated between the royal and princes' parties. Others, however, including the Bourbon-Montpensier, the Bourbon-Vendôme, and the numerous illegitimate members of the House, were constant supporters.[22] Members of the House of Bourbon were thus over-represented on the King's Council, in the government, in the royal army, and at court where they supported Anne's policies. Family relationships played a significant part in her political strategies. Indeed, the parliamentary archives, which allow us to sketch the Beaujeus' networks, emphasize the extent to which blood and service were essential elements of Anne de France's policy as 'regent' and as Duchess of Bourbon.[23]

Louise de Savoie inherited dynamic and efficient networks that she needed only to maintain. Fidelity was less important for her than it had been for Anne de France. Louise was surrounded by men who applied her policies, and who were present on the King's Council, the main place of government, which she dominated during her two regencies. In the Council, she supported many powerful men such as Florimond Robertet (1458–1527), Chancellor Antoine Duprat (1463–1535), her brother, René de Savoie (1473–1525), and Jacques de Beaune, Lord of Semblançay (1465–1527), until his disgrace. Moreover, she introduced men into the Council who would become the most important statesmen of her son's reign, such as Artus Gouffier (1475–1519), François de Tournon (1489–1562), Jean Caluau (?–1522), Jean de Selve (1475–1529), Philibert Babou (1484–1557), Jean Brinon (1484–1528), and Gilbert Bayard (?–1548). As Cédric Michon has pointed out, this group constituted seventeen per cent of the main

21 Treaty of Montargis, 13 October 1484, BnF, coll. Doat, vol. X, fol. 95. Letter of René, Duke of Lorraine, Bar, 30 September 1484, in Jaligny, pp. 451–52.

22 Members of the house of Bourbon included Louis, bastard of Bourbon and admiral of France, Charles de Bourbon-Lavedan, Louis de Bourbon-Montpensier, François de Bourbon-Vendôme, Gilbert de Bourbon-Montpensier.

23 AN, X1^{a} 9319, 9320, 9321.

councillors of the reign.[24] He argues that Louise 'asserted herself as the patroness of the Council where she controled the entries and ordered the departures'.[25]

For both princesses, these fidelity networks were essential and had their counterpart among elite women at the French court and in their correspondence. Female networks are more difficult to trace due to a lack of sources. However, letters that Anne de France sent and received identify more than 20 princesses and noblewomen who belonged to her circle. Several family and political networks coexisted and sometimes overlapped with one another. Blood links were the keystone to the networks of women that Anne created. She was connected to three different family networks that included princesses who belonged to the Houses of France, Savoy, and Bourbon.[26] Second, she was a part of political networks with foreign princesses such as Margaret of Austria (1480–1530) and Anne de Bretagne (1477–1514), among other European women of power. Finally, the fidelity networks linked Anne to ladies and *demoiselles* of more humble birth, who belonged to families of royal and ducal officers.

Correspondence highlights Anne de France's superior and remarkable position at the heart of the courtly system. Her correspondents treated her with esteem and deference, even her mother-in-law, Agnès of Burgundy, Duchess of Bourbon (1407–1476), her sister Jeanne de France (1464–1505), and the young queens Margaret of Austria and Anne de Bretagne. Her supremacy was due to her triple status as daughter of France, a woman ruling the realm, and as duchess of a prestigious principality. She acted as a patron to the members of her networks; this augmented her prestige and power, and provided her with an important circle of followers.

Anne and Louise, 'mirrors of virtue' in the 'realm of femynie'[27]

More than any other strategy, however, Anne de France and Louise de Savoie practiced a power based on virtue at court and at the head of the

24 Michon, p. 77.

25 'Elle s'impose indiscutablement comme la protectrice du conseil dont elle contrôle les entrées et ordonne les sorties', Michon, p. 85.

26 These princesses included her sister Jeanne de France, her aunt Madeleine de France, her mother-in-law, the Duchess of Bourbon Agnès of Burgundy, her sister-in-law Jeanne de Bourbon, her cousins and nieces Philippe de Gueldres, Gabrielle de Bourbon-Montpensier, Jeanne de Bourbon-Vendôme, and Françoise and Marie of Luxembourg.

27 Pizan, 1992, pp. 144–45.

realm. For these princesses, virtue was at once a factor of legitimacy and a source of power. Virtue was an ethic as well as a policy, a perpetual quest and an object of discourse that permitted them to shine at court. It was partly because of their personal virtues that Louis XI and François I chose Anne and Louise, respectively, to govern, preserve peace and common good, and secure the crown. The virtues modeled by the princesses corresponded to standards Christine de Pizan (1364–1430) theorized and addressed to women in the *Book of the Three Virtues*.[28] Such ideals had a legitimizing effect upon which these kings and princesses relied. Among these qualities was intelligence, or political 'finesse', which both women possessed from long experience and observation at the court. Above all, both Anne de France and Louise de Savoie had inherited a set of political practices from their fathers. This fact is highlighted by the Venetian ambassador Girolamo Zorzi, present at the court from 1485 to 1487, who described Anne as 'a woman of great seriousness and intelligence, who is walking, by her action, in the footsteps of her father'.[29] The political practice of Anne and Louise was based upon careful observation of the mechanisms and functioning of power at the French court, and inspired by a common heritage of practices, the 'memory' of which they perpetuated and maintained through their government.

This 'finesse' was enhanced by a shared experience of education and acculturation. First, as princesses, their training stemmed from the same basis and was inspired by the same referents, found in the same books. Second, they shared blood ties and an intimate relationship that developed at the court of France where Anne educated Louise.[30] Anne transmitted to Louise an important cultural heritage based on the imitation of ethical and political models. Thus, when they came to power, Anne and Louise were accomplished and cultured women able to draw upon their culture to govern the realm wisely and virtuously and to shine at court through their conversation and behavior.[31]

28 Pizan, 1989.

29 'Une femme de grand sérieux et intelligence, qui marche, dans son action, dans les traces de son père', *Letter Book* of Girolamo Zorzi, British Museum, MS Add. 48067, fol. 12^{v}, cited in Blanchard, p. 49.

30 Louise de Savoie arrived in 1483 at the French court and was educated by Anne de France, as well as Margaret of Austria or Philippe de Gueldres.

31 Anne de France was only 22 years old when she came to power; Louise de Savoie was 40 years old in 1515 and was, at her second regency, a mature woman with 50 years of experience of power.

Beyond culture, they also needed to possess wisdom and prudence, chief among virtues, because both were inherent in the royal office, as Christine de Pizan and other political theorists reminded readers. In her *Enseignements*, Anne de France reminded her daughter that 'the nobility, even high, is not worth anything if not ornamented with virtues'.[32] Virtues had to be present in the princesses' practice of power; they were a tool to retaining power. This was a constituent aspect of the practice of both Anne and Louise.

The exercise of virtuous government by women had its source in the theory written by Pizan.[33] It was embodied in the actions of Anne de France at the head of the State, as early as 1483.[34] The statesman and author, Claude de Seyssel (1450–1520), was not the only author to describe Anne as 'one of the wisest and most virtuous' ladies of the realm, as he did in his early sixteenth-century work, *Louenges du Roy Louys XII^e^ de ce nom*.[35] François I praised his mother's numerous virtues in ordinances conferring the regency upon her. Both women appeared as model Christian princesses, corresponding to Pizan's description. In such texts, Anne and Louise were endowed with clemency, charity, piety, compassion: that is, feminine virtues suited to a queen of France.[36] The Christian virtues of both princesses added to their political qualities.

Virtue had to be the quest of a lifetime, as Anne de France emphasized more than once to her daughter Suzanne.[37] These theories were embodied in her government in the form of political humility towards the different political units of the realm, according to Pizan's advice.[38] Among these was the *Parlement* of Paris whose advice she sought with humility. In exchange, she gained its support in her opposition to the rebellious princes.[39] Thus, Anne displayed humility publicly in order to maintain and strengthen her political authority.

Anne de France also possessed unequaled political acumen.[40] Above all, virtuous government had to be prudent. Just as Pizan advised, the

32 'Noblesse, tant soit grande, ne vaut rien si elle n'est ornée de vertus', David-Chapy, 2016, p. 61.

33 Pizan's *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and *Livre des trois Vertus* were specifically addressed to women.

34 See David-Chapy, 2016, p. 263.

35 'Madame Anne [...] est encores des plus saiges et vertueuses', Seyssel, p. 190.

36 Gaude-Ferragu, p. 117.

37 David-Chapy, 2016, p. 41.

38 Pizan, 1989, pp. 66–68 and David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 267–68 and also pp. 597–98 and p. 634.

39 David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 60–61.

40 See David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 188–89.

Enseignements glorified prudence, which embraced wisdom, restraint, discernment, intelligence, and self-control, as well as cunning and dissimulation. All of these were aspects of prudence that Anne put into practice as a woman of power.[41] Thus were placed the first stones in the construction of a political and allegorical character of Prudence, which supported her *auctoritas*. Anne transmitted this art of power to her niece Louise de Savoie who gave it a symbolic and allegorical turn.

Indeed, Louise de Savoie, whose cultural and ethical references were the same as those of Anne, perfected her aunt's model. Louise had to be virtuous for two reasons: first, as the king's mother and instructor; and second, as regent and a woman of power. She identified herself with Prudence as a strategy of power. François Desmoulins de Rochefort (*c*. 1470/1480–1526?) and Jean Thenaud (1480–1542) were two key authors who worked for Louise and strove to associate her with the figure of Prudence through their works and iconography. In one manuscript, Louise de Savoie was termed 'divine Latona, mother of Apollo and Diana and fountain of all the virtues'.[42] This identification was also made at royal ceremonies. At royal entries, for example, she was glorified as Dame Prudence. In Rouen, on 2 August 1517, Louise appeared with the features of Pallas-Minerva, holding 'the shield of prudence' that she gave to the young king.[43] The *mater regis* displayed a political and religious mysticism, in which she guided the sovereign by her ethical and political perfection and holiness.

Finally, Anne de France and Louise de Savoie established their power to lead as women upon virtue. Wisdom was a policy in itself: it had to shine at the French court where the regents represented models for emulation. The example of Anne and her *Enseignements* constituted the basis of a virtuous and wise government that represented an ideal for Marguerite d'Angoulême and other Renaissance princesses including Philippe de Gueldres, Duchess of Lorraine (1467–1547), Margaret of Austria, and Catherine de Médicis. We know that Marguerite d'Angoulême had a personal copy of the *Enseignements*, as did Catherine de Médicis.[44]

41 David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 270–78.

42 Desmoulins, BnF, ms. fr. 1863 and BnF, ms. fr. 12247. Thenaud, BnF. ms. fr. 144: 'Divine Latone, mère d'Apollon et de Diane et fontaine de toutes vertus'.

43 'escu de prudence', cited in a relation to the royal entry, Lecoq, p. 113.

44 We do not know whether Louise de Savoie held a copy but the Bourbon library was taken by the Crown when Louise won her trial against the constable Charles de Bourbon. She may have been in possession of her aunt's book at that time.

The Power of Eloquence at the French Court

Prudence in behavior was closely linked to eloquence, and this verbal prudence was considered a gift from God. It was a political tool, a way of building and reinforcing power and used as such by Anne de France and Louise de Savoie.[45]

This period witnessed the genesis of a new kind of civility, based on the art of speech, and the presence of women at court. It was theorized in Anne de France's *Enseignements* as well as in *The Book of the Courtier* by Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529), published in 1528. Mastering the art of eloquence stemmed from an ability to distinguish between reality and appearance, between what was seen and shown, and what was thought and said. It gave one a political advantage. In all situations, as Pizan suggested, one had to 'have an ordered way of speaking and a wise eloquence'.[46] Anne de France, heiress to Pizan's ideas, began to conceptualize eloquence and to establish protocols for it. Anne herself was praised by her contemporaries for her prudent and efficient speech. Thanks to her wisdom and her knowledge, she defeated her enemies, and persuaded her interlocutors. The anonymous author of *L'Ainsnée fille de fortune*, a panegyric poem composed in honor of Anne in 1489, described her powerful eloquence as follows:

> Let all people come
> From all countries and lands,
> She knows how to speak to them,
> About peace or war,
> And she speaks so well,
> That words never fail her,
> She is worthy of praise.[47]

By her actions, her example and her *Enseignements*, Anne de France, as a woman of power, placed eloquence and speech at the heart of the ethical and political system. She conferred an essential role upon eloquence, one that continued to be strengthened after her to such a point that it became an ideal for princesses of the period such as Louise de Savoie, Marguerite de Navarre, and Catherine de Médicis.

45 See David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 281–86; and Crouzet, p. 24.

46 Pizan, 1989, p. 45: 'avoir parler ordonné et sage éloquence'.

47 'Laissez trestoute gent venir / De tout païs, de toute terre, / Elle les scet entretenir / Soit de la paix ou de la guerre; / Et son langaige si bien ferre, / Qu'elle ne faut point de propos, / Elle est bien digne d'avoir los [louange]', Lancelot, p. 594.

Thus, the literary circle of Louise de Savoie maintained the intellectual emphasis upon speech being at the heart of politics, and idealized women as those who would obtain peace and concord thanks to their gentle eloquence.[48] In 1519–20, François Desmoulins evoked 'the science and divine speaking of Mrs. Concordia', Louise, in his *Commentaires de la guerre gallique*.[49] The virtue of eloquence remained closely linked to that of prudence, so important for the king's mother, who presented herself as born under the sign of Mercury, the god of fluency.

The Assertiveness of the Court of Ladies

Under the influence of Anne de France and Louise de Savoie, a Court of Ladies emerged as a political space.[50] The court was becoming an increasingly feminized center of power. Formerly a male-dominated sphere, henceforth it contained more and more ladies and *demoiselles* who played symbolic and political roles.[51] Although author Pierre de Brantôme (1537–1614) attributed the development of a strong female presence at court to Anne de Bretagne, it may be necessary to look more closely at Anne de France's contribution.[52] She worked towards the feminization of the court, even before her sister-in-law. The ducal court of Moulins, in which Anne de France moved as early as 1488, represented a kind of courtly laboratory due to the number of women present there. This female court was intended as the place where the model of the virtuous princess was embodied. Through its moral prestige and its wealth, this Bourbon court was intended as the expression of Anne's political power. The maintenance of this court, which was the materialization of the ideal of virtuous and noble behavior, was part of a female practice of power. Elements of a political strategy, based on fidelity networks, enhanced it further, reinforcing the princess's power at the ducal level as well as at the French court. Furthermore, the symbolic power of a brilliant court whose prestige redounded on Anne de France's authority was considerable. The Court of Ladies reflected the quest for an ideal, at the same time as a deliberate strategy of political reinforcement.

48 David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 285–86.

49 'sapience et divine faconde de Madame Concorde', Desmoulins, Musée Condé, ms. 1139, fol. 55 (1519–1520).

50 See David-Chapy, 2018a.

51 See David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 123 and 264ff.

52 Brantôme, p. 262.

The process of feminization continued with Louise de Savoie. Under the reign of François I, the 'incorporation of women at the French court' that Caroline zum Kolk has described was perpetuated under the influence of Louise.[53] Her accounts attest it.[54] They document a particular organization of her female household as early as 1502 in which she occupied a specific position as 'royal mother'.[55] Composed then only of *demoiselles*, ladies entered in 1515, the year of her son's accession to the throne. The personnel grew suddenly and the emoluments of ladies and *demoiselles* doubled as a consequence of her change of status as the king's mother. These ladies came primarily from noble families of the Angoumois and Poitou region; that is, from her ducal lands and local networks. As the years passed and Louise's power grew, the duchess also introduced the daughters and spouses of great servants of the State into her household.[56]

Strikingly, Louise de Savoie seems to have employed ladies and *demoiselles* in order to illustrate her political power and her symbolic prestige. Their numbers speak volumes, especially if compared to the number of those in the service of the queen during the same period. In 1530, the Queen, Eleanor of Austria (1498–1558), had 253 officers and servants in her household, among whom were fourteen ladies and *demoiselles*. In 1531, there were 272, including 25 ladies and *demoiselles*.[57] In the same year, by contrast, Louise's household contained 250 individuals, of whom 33 were women. The king's mother was then at the height of her power and symbolically surpassed the queen.

More than ever, the Court of Ladies was asserted as a site of power and self-representation in which each princess expressed and affirmed her political and symbolic power. Both used the court as an instrument of power and the women who were part of their brilliant retinues as a way of producing their prestige through their number, high birth, beauty, and moral conduct. The court became a place of sociability and political friendship to which foreign ambassadors flocked. In 1516, the Mantuan ambassador Grossino wrote to his mistress Isabella d'Este that there were so many beautiful *demoiselles*

53 'L'incorporation des femmes à la cour de France', Zum Kolk, p. 238.

54 BnF, ms. fr. 3054, fols. 27–32 (1531); ms. fr. 3068, fols. 119–21: Year 1531; BnF, ms. fr. 5503, fols. 20–21: Year 1531; BnF, ms. fr. 7856, fols. 849–59: Years 1496–1518; BnF, ms. fr. 8815, fols. 69–70: Year 1497; BnF, ms. Clairambault 816, fols. 361–87: Years 1502, 1503, 1506, 1517; BSG, ms. 848: Years 1515 and 1522.

55 She was given the title of 'royal mother' (mère royale) by Louis XII as early as 1505.

56 On the origin of the ladies of the house of Louise de Savoie, see David-Chapy, 2018a.

57 See the figures given by Zum Kolk, p. 257.

at the court of Anne de France that he had fallen in love with one of them.[58] The Italians particularly marveled at the friendly reception that princesses and ladies of their households extended to them, and specifically discussed important and serious matters with Anne and Louise. In 1515, Anne still granted audiences. The Mantuan ambassador, and future Duke of Mantua, Federico Gonzaga (1500–1540) described the 'marvellous joy' with which Anne welcomed him during his visits.[59] The relationships were more than cordial but political concerns underpinned the discourse; Anne de France remained above all a woman of power. Gonzaga wrote that he 'spoke about the Italian case with Madame of Bourbon who told [him] she desired peace'.[60]

Anne de France and Louise de Savoie both dominated these courts from which they obtained formidable prestige. Indeed, in May 1506, at the betrothal of Claude de France and François d'Angoulême, a contemporary exclaimed of the procession led by Anne and Louise, surrounded by numerous ladies, that 'it seemed that the realm of *femynie* had arrived' at the French court.[61] This reflects the image of power, prestige, and perfection that both princesses, who appeared as queens in this 'realm of *femynie*', sought to bring to life. In the eyes of contemporaries, the courts of these princesses embodied, by their magnificence, the theoretical, cultural, and social ideals proposed by Pizan. They represented the symbolic and political accomplishment of a model that participated in the creation of the new courtly character of the female regent.

Gaining a Position at Court

Political power was expressed through symbols and with rank at court, which was itself a locus of power. Anne de France and Louise de Savoie dominated the courtly sphere by their presence and the symbols they deployed over time. This staging at court was part of their female power.[62]

What rank could Anne de France claim in the courtly ceremonies from her royal birth? What place did she hold at the queen's court? *Le Cérémonial des Estats de France*, written by Eleanor de Poitiers, answered these questions

58 Grossino to the marquise of Mantua, 28 February 1516, Mantua, Archivio di Stato, A.G. 633. David-Chapy, 2016, p. 603.

59 Tamalio, p. 234.

60 'Heri ragionando dela cose de Italia con Madame de borbone la mi disse che la desideraria pace', Tamalio, p. 242.

61 Anonymous. 'Il semblait que le royaume de fémynie fût arrivé', cited in Viennot and Wilson-Chevalier.

62 See David-Chapy, 2014.

for the Burgundian court.[63] For the 'daughters of France', blood was more important than the rank of their husband: they were positioned at court just behind the queen. Thus, until 1491, in the absence of the very young queen, Margaret of Austria, Anne de France held precedence in all court ceremonies. According to the chronicler Alain Bouchart (*c.* 1440–after 1514), Charles VIII's sister demanded that everybody should curtsey to her. This gesture was supposed to pay homage to the dignity of the woman who was the king's guardian: 'Madame de Beaujeu had the guardianship of the person of the king and for this reason, all the other state officers and noble men would curtsey to her'.[64] Moreover, Anne de France projected her omnipresence at state ceremonies such as the coronation, royal entries, and weddings. Her precedence at court continued after her brother's death. In the reigns of Louis XII and François I, Anne was treated with the utmost respect, as the letters of the Mantuan ambassador Grossino show. In 1516 he wrote that the Duchess of Bourbon was treated with 'the highest honours by the whole court of France'.[65]

Whereas Anne benefited from a specific rank as 'daughter of France', Louise de Savoie had to create a specific position with a kind of *dignitas* at the center of the court, one which was legitimized by her status as royal mother and regent. A quest for precedence at court inspired her actions and motivated the construction of the political character she designed for herself. *A priori*, Louise's body had no sacred nature in itself, as she was not a queen; thus, the king's mother had to assume a sacredness of a new essence and to transpose the notion of the sovereign body of the queen to the regent's body.[66] Thus, she assumed an unprecedented courtly character that reflected and expressed her political power. More than Anne de France, Louise de Savoie created a concept around her person to extol her image and power. With her developed the desire to imagine this new political and courtly character of the female regent as a fully fledged woman of power, as devoted to the realm as the king. This process would reach its peak with the queen Catherine de Médicis.[67]

63 Paviot, pp. 163–79; and Broomhall.

64 'Madame de Beaujeu avoit la personne du roy en garde et à celle cause tous autres personnaiges d'estat et de nom luy clineroient le genoil', Bouchart, p. 170.

65 'Non mi par di tacere l'onor grande ch'è fato da tuta la corte di Francia ha Madama di Borbon', letter of Grossino to the marquise of Mantua, 28 February 1516, Mantua, Archivio di Stato, A.G. 633.

66 Guillaume Michel called Louise de Savoie 'the Royal Blood of France' ('Le Sang Royal de France') in his *Penser de royal mémoire* (1518).

67 Crouzet.

As a regent and mother of the king, Louise de Savoie had no codified rank in the protocols of the court. To bridge this theoretical gap, she endeavored to gain a rank that reflected her very extensive power and her status as mother of the sovereign. As early as 1515, she was given an exceptional place in ceremonies at the court, in which she had thus far appeared among the second rank. Her son promoted her to an unequaled rank that permitted her to stand next to her daughter-in-law, the queen, during royal ceremonies. Louise valued her place at the very heart of the court and sought to strengthen it from 1515 until her death in 1531.[68] Contemporary chroniclers confirm Louise's precedence in royal ceremonies from as early as 1515.[69] For example, in 1517, at the coronation of Claude de France: 'after [the queen] Madame, mother of the king, walked alone', followed by the ladies of the court.[70] Likewise, in 1531, at Eleanor of Austria's coronation, Louise again walked first and alone, even before the king's daughters.[71] In 1520, during royal entries in cities of the realm such as Poitiers, Angoulême, Cognac, and La Rochelle, Louise stood next to the royal couple.[72] Such an association of the king's mother to the royal couple during such entries was a remarkable phenomenon in the history of the realm.

The absences of François I whom Louise officially represented justified the place of honor in power and court ceremonies that she was given. Louise de Savoie was engaged in a real conquest of the courtly and ceremonial space where the queen was the only person who legitimately had precedence over her. As was Anne de France before her, Louise was distinguished as the first princess in the realm, after Claude de France and Eleanor of Austria. From 1524 until 1530, when there was no queen, she appeared as the main female figure in the realm. From 1525–1526, she was honored for her political successes during the war against the imperial camp and the liberation of François I from his captivity in Madrid during 1525.[73] Through the influence of the king, the realm expressed its gratitude towards the regent via precedence protocols that she had contributed to creating. The institutional invention that gave birth to female regency was linked to an associated invention of protocol. The political character of the regent corresponded with a hitherto unprecedented court figure who symbolically dazzled the court with her prestige and might.

68 See David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 624ff.

69 See the numerous relations in 1619; and Godefroy, 1649.

70 'Après [la reine] marchait Madame mere du Roy seule', Godefroy, 1649, p. 755.

71 Godefroy, 1649, pp. 796–801.

72 Rivaud.

73 David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 551, 625, 654–56.

Louise de Savoie stood as a character apart, between the queen and the other princesses. Such staging arose from an intellectual and carefully considered construction that verged on glorification, thanks to extensive use of symbols in ceremonies, iconography, and books. She was already employing the features of Prudence and associating herself with Saint Louis's mother, Blanche of Castile, as early as 1517, at Claude de France's coronation and arrival at the Palais Royal in Paris.[74] Indeed, Blanche of Castile was represented on a scaffolding, saying to the King of France: 'my beloved son, do love wisdom'.[75] The example of Blanche here functioned as a symbolical and metaphorical reference to the power that Louise, the virtuous mother and widow, held in government. In 1530, when Eleanor of Austria entered Bordeaux, Louise was again associated with the royal couple during the entrance ceremony. The city glorified the king's mother as a member of the royal dynasty and even of a divine family. She was compared with Pallas, goddess of prudence and wisdom.[76] Ceremonies were an opportunity for Louise de Savoie to display the symbols that she held dear and that she employed to build her image of woman of power and mother of the king.

During the early Renaissance, a double process was occurring, which consisted in the construction of a political and courtly female power. The 'regents', Anne de France and Louise de Savoie, dominated both the head of the State and at the French court. Through the power they wielded, both princesses were the pivots of political and court life. Their precedence at court, their numerous networks, their major influence in political decision-making tell us a great deal about the early exercise of female regency in France. In spite of the challenges and opposition they had to overcome, supported by Charles VIII and François I and thanks to political strategies that included networks, proximity next to the king, the virtuous practice of power, and eloquence, they succeeded in gaining unequaled cultural and political might and asserting a legal and institutionalized kind of power modeled on royal power. Ruling the realm, they took part in sovereignty and possessed the *auctoritas* and *imperium* usually constitutive of royal power; in the monarchical ceremonies and at court, they were honored and even glorified as women of power. Following in the footsteps of Pizan, both princesses embodied virtuous power. This political and ethical art of behavior at the head of the State and at court was an enduring legacy

74 Godefroy, 1619, pp. 193–94.

75 'Mon tres amé filz, ayme sapience', cited in Gringore, pp. 171–72; and Godefroy, 1619, p. 193. See also David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 653–54.

76 Godefroy, 1649, p. 770; and David-Chapy, 2016, pp. 655–56.

for the numerous women who filled the European courts during the early modern period.

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2. Anne de France and Gift-Giving

The Exercise of Female Power

Tracy Adams

Abstract
Anne de France's early political success – her ability during the reign of her younger brother, Charles VIII, to force the barons, especially the Duke of Brittany, into line, – can be attributed in large part to her strategic gift-giving. The first part of the essay draws on the canonical works on gift-giving to create the context for examining Anne's most important presentations to show that women, like men, used gift-giving to consolidate power. The second part of the essay proposes that, in addition, a specifically female version of gift-giving existed. Powerful women patrons or brokers could call on female networks in ways open only to women to accomplish goals that would have eluded men.

Keywords: Anne de France, gift-giving, communities, networks, affect transmission

'Kings and emperors give gifts', announces the anonymous 1378 treatise on kingship, *Le Songe du vergier*, 'and for this reason they are powerful'.[1] Female members of the royal family also gave gifts: did this make them powerful as well? Anne de France (1461–1522), regent for her younger brother Charles VIII (1470–1498), gained the support of hostile barons through gift-giving after the death of her father, Louis XI (1423–1483). Distributing gifts just as a male regent would have done, she received the baronial cooperation that she was seeking in return. But this was an exceptional case, earning Madame, as she was often called in contemporary documents, praise as a sort of ersatz man,

1 'Lez Roys et lez imperereurs sont donataires, par consequant ilz sont seigneurs', Schnerb-Lièvre, II, p. 123.

Broomhall, S. (ed.), *Women and Power at the French Court, 1483–1563*,
Taylor & Francis Group, 2018
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a 'woman truly surpassing the female sex'.[2] In the context of this collection on female power, a more relevant question than the one posed above might be whether a specifically female version of gift-giving existed, and, if so, what sort of power it yielded. Did Madame, in her capacity as giver of gifts, that is, as a patron or broker, call on her female networks in ways open only to women to accomplish goals that would have eluded men?

As recent work — including Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben's volume on female households and Barbara Stephenson's study of the patronage of Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549) patronage — demonstrates, women, like men, created communities upon whose members they drew for support through strategic gift-giving.[3] But whereas results of the practice — offices and territories awarded, alliances in war — are relatively visible for men, such female activity is often invisible to historians. Although we assume that women prevailed on each other to carry out political work that required the intervention of another woman, much of this influence was exerted indirectly and therefore tends to be difficult to recover, as Sharon Kettering has noted.[4] Still, if identifying concrete examples of women exchanging gifts for services requiring a woman's touch is not straightforward, such examples can be unearthed, as I hope to show here, using the example of the extended circle of Madame, who with her spouse Pierre of Beaujeu (Duke of Bourbon as of 1488) served as unofficial regent for her younger brother Charles VIII from late 1483 until the first years of the 1490s. Once visible, these examples offer an important dimension to our knowledge of how elite women 'got things done' in early modern France.

I begin this essay with a brief survey of Madame's early gift-giving strategies, by means of which she stabilized the kingdom after the death of Louis XI. When the dying king left his daughter and Pierre as guardians of the young monarch and therefore effective rulers of the realm, the pair faced widespread challenges to their authority. Madame, however, as noted above, managed to gain the support of the barons who otherwise would have risen up against her. Still, new kings always awarded gifts (although, in contrast with Madame, they typically enjoyed many other means of asserting their authority), and thus it is difficult to see Madame's practice in this case as particularly female. The lack of distinction, however, can be seen as the exception that proves the rule. Throughout this essay I hope to show that

2 'Virago sane supra muliebrem sexum', a description attributed to Benedictine monk and writer Nicolas Barthélemy of Loches (b. 1478), cited in Pélicier, p. 54, n. 1.

3 Although Stephenson (p. 2) emphasizes Marguerite's extraordinary position.

4 Kettering, 1989, p. 837.

when we move from Madame's relations with the great lords of the kingdom to her interactions with the women whom she raised and the interactions of those women with each other, we discover women practicing a particularly female version of gift-giving, getting things done indirectly but effectively. Madame is known for her role as mentor, with courtier, soldier, historian and memoirist, Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme (1540–1614), famously remarking that she was 'always accompanied by a large number of ladies and girls whom she raised very virtuously and wisely' and adding that 'there was hardly a lady or girl of a great family of her times who did not learn from her, the house of Bourbon being at the time one of the greatest and most splendid in Christendom'.[5] These ladies may very well have learned virtue from Madame. But, as I hope to show here, they also learned how to cultivate relationships, that is, give gifts to create bonds upon which they drew for accomplishing political goals.

Gift-Giving as Political Act

Madame's position as unofficial regent for her younger brother Charles VIII was initially precarious. Just before his death in August 1483, Louis XI verbally expressed his wish that his heir be placed in the care of Madame and Pierre, passing over the two traditionally most likely candidates for regency, the queen mother, Charlotte of Savoy (1441–1483), and the closest adult male relative to the king, Louis of Orleans (1462–1515).[6] The queen mother, backed by Louis of Orleans, made a counter-claim, but she died in November of the same year.[7] Louis of Orleans, reinforced by a coalition of powerful lords, including many of the princes of the blood, then claimed regency for himself. To settle the question the Estates General were called to meet in Tours in January 1484. Between November and January, Madame toured the territories of Louis of Orleans with the young king to win support for him and for herself and Pierre as his guardian.

Under the best of circumstances a young king was vulnerable, and, in this case, the situation was all the more perilous because many of the great lords of the realm felt themselves to have been badly treated by Louis XI.

5 'accompaignée de grand' quantité de dames et de filles qu'elle nourrissoit fort vertueusement et sagement'; 'n'y a guières heu dames et filles de grand' maison de son temps qui n'ayt appris leçon d'elle', Brantôme, VIII, pp. 104, 105.

6 Seyssel, p. 39.

7 Saint-Gelais, p. 43.

To win their cooperation, Madame courted them with gifts, attempting to rectify her father's brutal transgressions and forge new relationships. The concept of gift, or *don* as it was called in French, covered an enormous variety of objects, physical and abstract, from jewels and clothing to land and pensions to rights, offices, titles, human beings, through marriage: favors in general.[8] Moreover, as Kettering explains, gift-giving was transactional,

> used to create and maintain a personal bond; there was an obligation to reciprocate; and the reciprocity was disguised and governed by the rules and language of courtesy. Gift-giving was a euphemism for patronage, the material assistance and protection of a patron. Clientage was the loyal service that a client owed in exchange, sometimes disguised as voluntary assistance.[9]

Thus when on 12 September 1483 Madame had the new king confirm the officers of the *Parlement* of Paris in the exercise of their functions she was awarding a gift that demanded reciprocity, in this case, loyalty.[10] The next day Charles VIII confirmed the offices of the *Cour des aides*.[11] Madame then approached the people, reducing the *taille* in a number of cities.[12]

She turned next to winning back the individual princes who had suffered under her father. She freed René, Duke of Alençon and Count of Perche (1454–1492) from the prison into which he had been thrown by Louis XI and restored the territories that the king had seized from his father; she restored the confiscated heritage of the children of Jacques d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours (1433–1477), another rebellious lord who had clashed with Louis XI; she recalled Prince of Orange, Jean de Chalons (1443–1502), from the banishment imposed on him by Louis XI; she restored the Barrois, usurped by Louis XI, to René II, Duke of Lorraine (1451–1508); she returned the territories that Louis XI had taken from the La Trémoille family, kin of her husband, and given to royal favorite, Philippe de Commynes (1447–1511). Her husband Pierre's older brother, Duke Jean de Bourbon (1426–1488), furious that Pierre, as the king's son-in-law, had appropriated from him Clermont-en-Beauvaisis, les Dombes, and the Beaujolais, was made *connétable* and given governance of the Languedoc. Heir presumptive Louis of

8 Bijsterveld, pp. 124–26.

9 Kettering, 1988, pp. 131–32.

10 Pastoret, pp. 124–29.

11 Pastoret, 129–32.

12 For the details that follow see Labande-Mailfert, 1986, p. 43; Pradel, pp. 45–50; Chombart de Lauwe, pp. 65–87; and Pélicier, pp. 54–61.

Orleans, outraged that the Beaujeus were trying to deny him guardianship of the king, was awarded governance of Paris, Île-de-France, Champagne, and Brie as well as leadership of the Royal Council. Louis of Orleans's uncle, the Bastard of Orleans, Jean de Dunois (1402–1468), was given governance of the Dauphiné.

Desirable marriages were gifts, as we noted, and, to further solidify her relationship with the powerful *seigneurs* whom she was bringing to her side, Madame turned to match-making when possible. She offered her niece through Pierre, Gabrielle de Bourbon (*c*. 1460–1516), to Louis II de la Trémoille (1460–1525) in 1484, and Philippe de Gueldres (1467–1547), whom Madame at that time was raising at her own court, to René II, Duke of Lorraine in 1485. Her aptitude for negotiation in this case is noted in Philippe's 1627 biography: Madame, interested in the marriage, spoke of it to the Duke of Bourbon, and was 'skilfully able to spin the thing' such that he was persuaded to approve it. In 1488 she gave her young charge, Louise de Savoie (1476–1531), to Charles d'Angoulême (1459–1496).[13]

Through these large-scale forms of gift-giving, Madame created and maintained the asymmetrical relationships necessary to her regency. True, given Madame's need to consolidate support quickly because her authority was being openly challenged, this form of gift-giving was a more valuable tool to her than it would have been to a male counterpart. Still, it might be argued that her gift-giving in these cases does not represent a *particularly* female way of asserting authority, for men also solidified alliances by awarding lands, favors, and marriages. Such gift-giving was typical at the beginning of any reign.

Female Gift-Giving

The large-scale gift-giving that we have just considered was open to any ruler, in this case, regent, male or female. In what follows, I suggest that we look for specifically female gift-giving within female networks. To begin to define the particularity of female gift-giving as a way of wielding power, I first consider a form of the practice that was restricted to men.

Late medieval guides to chivalry emphasize the emotional communities, as Barbara H. Rosenwein has called them, the 'group[s] in which people have

13 For the La Trémoille–Bourbon marriage see Bouchet, pp. 392–96. On Philippa of Guelders see Bertrand-Didelon; Madame 'sçût si bien tourner la chose', Mérigot, p. 12. On the Savoy–Angoulême marriage see Maulde La Clavière, p. 13.

a common stake, interest, values, and goals', that develop during combat, demonstrating how solidarity of the members was further enhanced through gifts.[14] *Le Jouvencel* (*c.* 1466) by Jean de Bueil (1406–1477) shows the eponymous hero first as a lowly man-at-arms, and, later, after he has proven his mettle, as a royal captain. In both cases, he is moved to fearless deeds by the strong sentiments fostered through participation in a community of knights. In his first raid, his captain, a wise man who listens to his advice, offers the young man a gift, a cuirass. This gift, along with the personal presence of the captain, 'doubled his courage and boldness'.[15] Years afterwards, when the Jouvencel and his men take Crathor, he reflects on the joys of war. Among these is the love that develops among men during combat: a 'sweetness enters his heart, of loyalty and pity to see his friend, who so valiantly exposes his body to carry out the commandment of our Creator'.[16] A man, out of love, does not abandon his comrades, and, in the experience of fighting together, 'there is a delectation such that, for those who have not experienced it, no one can say what it is'.[17] In short, in male emotional communities, a leader creates ties through gift-giving that he can rely on when he needs military support.

Turning to female communities, as I noted above, understanding how gift-giving took place among women is difficult, much of the activity between members remaining invisible to modern historians. The rare glimpses into the world of female networks that we possess seldom offer concrete evidence of such exchange. For example, the account by an anonymous female narrator of the 1501 journey of Archduke Philip of Austria (1478–1506) and Archduchess Juana of Castile (1479–1555) across France on their way to claim Juana's Spanish throne depicts the court filled with the women of Anne de Bretagne (1477–1514), first among them Madame. Arranged in a minutely ordered hierarchy, they greet the Archduchess and follow her into her chambers, tantalizing the reader with precious access to their intimate feminine world.[18] The story stops here without making us privy to conversation. And yet, surely such women, like their male counterparts, formed close ties that they used to further political goals.

14 Rosenwein, p. 25.

15 'lui doublerent coeur et hardement de bien faire', Bueil, I, p. 37.

16 'Il vient une doulceur au cueur de loyaulté et de pitié de veoir son amy, qui si vaillamment expose son corps pour faire et acomplir le commandement de nostre Createur', Bueil, II, p. 21.

17 'une delectacion telle que, qui ne l'a essaiée, il n'est homme qui sceust dire quel bien c'est', Bueil, II, p. 21.

18 Chatenet and Girault, pp. 127–35. Many thanks to Cynthia Brown for the reference.

A further obstacle to retrieving information about female gift-giving is that women's accumulation of the materials of gift-giving has often been dismissed by modern scholars as avarice. Princely accumulation of such objects is taken for granted. For example, during the worst crises of Charles VI's reign, writes Daniel Russo, the princes continued to buy 'for themselves or to give them as gifts, all sorts of precious stones, embroideries, jewels, mentioned in their inventories'.[19] Queens, however, tend to be treated as spendthrifts. In the words of Jean Verdon, Isabeau of Bavaria (1385–1422) enriched herself 'while the financial difficulties of the State grew' and while '[j]ewels accumulated in her coffers'.[20] Many recent historical studies on medieval gift-giving do not indulge in such biased gender assumptions but a surprising number continue to do so. This has long been the case for Madame. Although her gift-giving practices have not previously been examined per se, in studies about her life generally, Madame continues to be a target of sexist moralizing. Even Jean-François Lassalmonie's illuminating article of 2008 refers to her as 'undeniably greedy', based on a handful of dealings involving what are clearly episodes of gift-giving. Lassalmonie's judgement echoes that of Paul Pélicier's 1882 political biography of Madame, as have her other biographers, John Bridge, Marc Chombart de Lauwe, and Pierre Pradel.[21]

According to Pélicier, Madame inherited the traits of her father, Louis XI: like him, she pushed 'finesse to perfidy, [and was] adroit at corruption, humble of word but of a haughty and rigid character'.[22] But 'a more serious reproach can be directed at the Lady of Beaujeu', Pélicier continues, 'and it does not seem possible to justify it: that of unbridled and shameless avidity'.[23] On the same pages, Pélicier lays out his evidence for the claim, emphasizing Madame's love of luxury and her propensity to engage in what to modern readers might look like bribery and corruption. But when we regard the examples that Pélicier marshals as evidence of Madame's avarice through the prism of gift-giving they become simple cases of political jockeying.

19 'faisant exécuter pour leur compte personnel ou pour les offrir, toutes sortes de bijoux, de broderies, de "joyaux", mentionnés dans leurs inventaires', Russo, para. 5.

20 'La reine s'enrichissait, alors que les difficultés financières de l'Etat grandissaient […] Les joyaux s'accumulaient dans ses coffres', Verdon, p. 201.

21 Unfortunately, I could not consult Aubrée Chapy-David's eagerly awaited *Anne de France, Louise de Savoie, inventions d'un pouvoir au féminin* (Paris: Garnier, 2016) in time for this essay.

22 'la finesse jusqu'à la perfidie, adroite à corrompre, humble en paroles, mais d'un caractère hautain et ferme', Pélicier, p. 206.

23 'Un reproche plus grave a été dirigé contre la dame de Beaujeu, et il ne paraît guère possible de l'en justifier: celui d'une avidité sans frein et sans vergogne', Pélicier, p. 208.

To choose just one example, he concludes his case by citing Madame's irritation at being gifted only dishes by the city of Lyon in return for her support of their fair.[24] But Madame's reaction should not be attributed to greed. Rather, her annoyance was caused by the Lyonnais's failure properly to recognize her status and her support of their fair with a commensurate gift. She was insulted, her honor injured: the gift, explains Jean Nagle, was central to the honor society.[25]

Yes, support, favors, and offices were for sale, openly, during this period before public bureaucracy; marriages were arranged as mergers; mercenary soldiers served the highest bidder. Kettering notes the similarities between gift-giving and modern bribery.[26] Martha C. Howell, writing of late medieval northern Europe, observes that scholars have often worried that the 'expansion of the commercial economy during the later Middle Ages impoverished the gift's cultural importance' for when gifts were itemized 'they seemed like cold, impersonal market exchanges', indistinguishable from 'the self-interested, calculated, and quantifiable exchanges of the marketplace'.[27] Still, as Howell continues, there seemed to be no confusion among contemporaries.[28]

It is necessary, therefore, to update the nineteenth-century assertions of Madame's greed and consider her actions within the tradition of gift-giving. To further contextualize the examples to follow, I turn now to contemporary traces of female attitudes toward the practice, the first from Madame's own instructions for her daughter, Suzanne, Duchess of Bourbon (1491–1521) the *Enseignements à sa fille*, written in about 1505. This text is instructive on female gift-giving, revealing the place of the practice in Madame's more general philosophy of how a great lady should manage herself and her entourage.[29] Anthropologists note that a special property of gifts, as opposed to other forms of exchange, is that they reify social relationships.[30] Madame, vigilant about maintaining hierarchical boundaries, embeds her discussion of gifts in a larger one about managing relationships with the women of one's *hôtel*. She reminds her reader to visit acquaintances who are in labour or suffering bad fortune or illness with something new from her *hôtel*, especially if the afflicted one is someone she knows or a family member,

24 Pélicier, pp. 210, 282.
25 Nagle, p. 128.
26 Kettering, 1988, pp. 147–51. See also Davis, pp. 142–66.
27 Howell, p. 148.
28 Howell, p. 149.
29 For all references to the *Enseignements* see Anne de France.
30 See, for example, Strathern, p. 333.

because these are the people, poor or rich, to whom she is the most closely bound or indebted.[31] Madame then reminds her reader of the importance of graciously accepting all gifts, small as well as large: 'Also, speak humbly, as much to the small as the important', she writes, 'and receive with as pleasant an expression small gifts and presents, if [your ladies] give you any, thinking that you are as tied to them according to their little power as to others who give larger gifts, and, for this reason you should not hesitate to compensate and humbly thank them, sweetly and heartily, with no affectation'.[32] Madame's advice is practical: if a great lady seems too proud, as soon as her *demoiselles* are alone they are likely to make fun of her, and, if this happens, she will lose her power to influence them.[33] Gifts create ongoing expectations of counter-gifts, which, as we have seen, amount to 'loyal service', and, to perpetuate the cycle, a great lady must nurture affection. To gesture back to Isabeau's accumulation of jewels, cited above, these would have been used as gifts to secure and reward loyal service.

Two other roughly contemporary texts corroborate this evidence for gift-giving as a way of creating bonds. First, the funeral oration for Françoise d'Alençon (1490–1550), daughter of René, who had been thrown into prison by Louis XI, as we saw above, expatiates on Françoise's liberality towards her household. The long and vigorous defense of Françoise's excessive generosity is interesting in the present context because it suggests, by its very vehemence, that women's cultivation of their charges' affection through gift-giving was sometimes criticized by contemporaries as wastefulness. The salient points here are that the oration argues that Françoise's generous gift-giving created ties and that her practice was deemed worthy, deserving of lengthy attention and spirited defense.[34] A second example is the 1617 biography of Philippe de Gueldres — whom Madame gave in marriage to Duke René of Lorraine, as we saw above — written by Father Christophe Mérigot (1579–1636). Mérigot showcases the heroine in the midst of a loving circle of young women whose careers she has advanced. After her entry into the Order of St. Clare, the Duchess of Lorraine is lauded for her loving

31 Anne de France, p. 63.

32 'Aussi, parlez humblement, autant au petit qu'au grand, et recevez à aussi grande chère les petits dons et présents, si les vous font, pensant qu'autant êtes-vous tenue à eux, selon leurs pauvres puissances, qu'aux autres de plus grands dons; par quoi, ne vous devez feindre à les récompenser et humblement remercier, doucement et pleinement, sans nulles mignotises', Anne de France, p. 65.

33 Literally, 'that would be all the recompense that you would get for it' ('et serait tout le guerdon que vouz en auriez'). Anne de France, p. 65.

34 Sainte-Marthe, pp. 29–33.

encouragement and enthusiastic solicitation on behalf of the younger ladies for their entry into the convent. Moreover, once they were admitted, the happy girls who 'landed in her care were better enlightened about their obligations and firmer in the vocation'.[35]

Gift-giving, then, although transactional, created reciprocal obligation at least partly by creating personal bonds of affection, not only in chivalric circles but also in female entourages. Madame trained a group of young women upon whom she could call for favors and who could rely upon each other to reciprocate when they required assistance. But in the examples below, I would like to emphasize that whereas male circles aimed to produce members who would come to each other's aid openly, the type of power associated with female gift-giving is distinctive in that much of it was carried out quietly or even invisibly.

In what follows I examine two examples of a favor being called in with significant results, that is, of gifting cycles that permitted exercises of female power. The first cycle begins with Madame's presentation of sumptuous wedding clothes to Anne de Bretagne, who in 1491 became the bride for whom Madame's brother, Charles VIII, repudiated Margaret of Austria (1480–1530). Marriages, as we have noted, were conceived of as gifts awarded to supporters. Under Madame and Pierre, the French conquered Brittany in 1491, and, to prevent the young Duchess Anne from allying with someone else, the French determined to have her marry her conqueror, despite the king's prior — although unconsummated — marriage to Margaret, and Anne's own marriage by proxy to Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian. Although the king had to approve any significant marriage — in this case his own — the details were often worked out through female networks. Thus Madame, rather than Charles VIII, who was not even physically present during negotiations, arranged the marriage.[36] Not only did he cede that task to Madame, he left to her the emotional work of bringing Anne into the family. Anne resisted, but Madame strove to convince her of the benefits to be gained from the union.[37] With the engagement to her enemy Anne

35 'Aussi ces heureuses Filles qui lui tomboient entre les mains, prenoient si bien son esprit, qu'elles en étoient et mieux eclairees sur leurs devoirs, et plus affermies dans leur vocation', Mérigot, pp. 158–59.

36 See Labande-Mailfert, 1978, p. 27. The king met the Duchess for the first time in Rennes between 15 and 17 November. Before 22 November, he was in Baugé breaking the news of his engagement to Anne de Bretagne to Margaret of Austria. On 2 December, he was in Tours. For Charles VIII's itinerary see Pélicier, p. 308. It is evident from Labande-Mailfert (1978, pp. 27–32) that Madame was with Anne from the beginning of marriage negotiations.

37 The story is recounted in many chronicles, for example, Molinet, V, p. 177.

received a series of monetary gifts, the French taking on the payment of all of her own and her father's debts.[38] Moreover, her marriage contract stipulated that if Charles VIII predeceased her, she would remain a queen, marrying the next king of France, if he were free.[39]

In addition, sometime between consenting to become queen of France and departing for the wedding, Anne received a large supply of luxury items: furniture, including a camp bed with crimson curtains; rich material to make clothes for her servants; and gorgeous cloth and furs from which to construct her own wardrobe, including her wedding dress.[40] The wedding dress was made of over ten yards of golden cloth covered with a raised gold design of the cross of the Order of St. Michael, and it was lined with 160 pelts of sable. The gifts, surely arranged by Madame, were a means of reifying the relationship between the women, of reinforcing Anne's indebtedness and position of inferiority, but also of making the new family relations more palatable. Indeed, they seem to have worked. In its early stages the relationship between Madame and Anne seems to have been positive, one of mentor and student. Madame did not let the young woman out of her sight, writes Milanese ambassador Erasmo Brasca (1463–1502).[41] The meaning of such possessiveness is not easy to gauge: loving concern and/or jealous anxiety? But Milanese ambassador Agostino Calco, writing almost four months after the wedding, makes the former seem the likelier, describing Madame standing next to the teenaged queen, who responded to courtiers only after she had consulted Madame.[42] A nineteenth-century historian laments that Calco does not comment on the character of the queen. And yet, Calco does precisely that, by revealing her reliance on Madame. The queen was a student, still getting her bearings and taking instruction.[43]

Madame, through her early gifts, initiated a relationship that she maintained over the years. On 5 July 1492 she offered the queen the gift of her alliance, joining her signature to that of the queen, Louis d'Orleans, and Pierre de Bourbon, against the Admiral Louis Malet de Graville (1438–1516).[44] The Admiral had been one of Madame's most powerful and successful

38 See Le Fur, p. 219.

39 The contract is printed in Morice, III, pp. 715–18.

40 The list of goods is printed in Le Roux de Lincy, pp. 214–18. See also La Borderie, pp. 235–52.

41 Cited by Labande-Mailfert, 1978, p. 34.

42 Delaborde, p. 246.

43 A long-standing assumption holds that Madame and Anne were rivals for power. Once Anne became queen, so the legend goes, Madame tried to hold on to power but lost out. I have addressed this story in another essay, see Adams.

44 Perret, pp. 147–48.

supporters in the war for Brittany, and yet, she swears with the others on fragments of the true cross to give each other aid, help, and, with good love, union, and intelligence to keep the king safe, to put a stop to the great disorder that reigned in his household, and to refuse friendship or intelligence with the Admiral Graville, without the knowledge of the others.[45] Why this decision to unite against Graville? The reason for the queen's *animus* is clear: he had been instrumental in Brittany's defeat. But what brought Madame and Pierre into the compact? Whatever the reason for Madame's reversal, the important point is that she supports the young queen against a man who recently had been one of her most important military leaders.

Madame's gifts over the years to Anne were reciprocated in 1504. Anne still reigned although with a different king, Louis XII (1462–1515), Charles having died prematurely in 1498. Madame's husband, Pierre, by then Duke of Bourbon, had arranged a marriage between his and Madame's only heir, Suzanne, and the young Charles IV, Duke of Alençon (1489–1525), whose territories lay far to the north in Normandy. On his deathbed in 1504 Pierre reiterated his desire for the marriage to be carried out.[46] Madame, however, feared that with Pierre's death his lands would not pass to Suzanne but to his closest male relation, Charles, Count of Bourbon-Montpensier (1490–1527). True, Madame and Pierre had made their support of Louis XII's annulment of his marriage to Madame's sister, Jeanne (1464–1505), which freed him to marry Anne de Bretagne, contingent upon the new king's recognition of Pierre's lands as heritable by a woman. But such changes were always challenged by those cut out, who in this case would be Charles, and the king could (and did) change his mind. Thus Madame determined to marry Suzanne to the young Charles, uniting all of their territories. She easily persuaded Charles. But the second obstacle was the king. Despite his earlier promise, he did not want to approve the marriage, because it would consolidate geographically contiguous lands into an enormous territory right in the middle of the kingdom. Madame would never have gotten his consent in a straightforward way. She needed the help of the queen, who owed her a favor.

Charles's contemporary biographer, his secretary Guillaume de Marillac (1521–1573), recounts the story. Immediately after Pierre's funeral, Madame let it be known that Suzanne's inheritance was being challenged by Charles — who was in fact complicit with Madame — and needed to be dealt with quickly. Charles pressed his claim and demanded Suzanne's hand,

45 Jaligny, p. 625.

46 Available in many sources, the story is found in the biography of Charles of Bourbon by his secretary, Guillaume de Marillac, pp. 129–36.

first obliquely through his older sister, Louise, Duchess of Montpensier (1482–1561), eventually the heiress of all the Bourbon estates, but not titles, who had also been raised by Madame, and then personally. Madame showed herself to be pleased, which, of course she had been all along. The case was then presented to Louis XII who needed to approve the marriage. He hesitated. The Alençon alliance would be much safer from the king's perspective, uniting two widely divided territories. Advising against the alliance was Graville, the very same against whom the Bourbons and the queen and king had earlier joined forces.

And yet Madame prevailed by persuading the queen, who had a good deal of clout with the king, to lobby on her behalf. Marillac writes that 'Madame, drawing on her skill, convinced the king to be happy about and consent to dropping the Alençon marriage agreement and to the marriage of the aforesaid Charles with the lady Suzanne of Bourbon; and in this Madame Anne de Bretagne, queen of France, helped her', adding that the queen had always liked the House of Montpensier, having raised a girl named Anne from that house.[47] This Anne (1495–1510), eight years old, was Charles's sister. There is no reason to doubt that the queen liked the Montpensier family. However, had she not been inclined to help Madame, her love for this child would not have kept her from thwarting the former regent.

To return to the point that this incident can be regarded as a particularly female form of gift-giving and the power that it yielded as uniquely female, Queen Anne was able to exert influence over the king that even his closest advisers (Graville, for example) could not. This is the essence of the power associated with female gift-giving; one imposes one's will by calling on members of one's network to lobby quietly on one's behalf, out of sight of male advisers. After cultivating a relationship with Anne over the years through gifts, Madame reaped the benefits, pulling off a major victory, marrying Suzanne to Charles and keeping the Bourbon territories in her family (at least for the moment). The triumph, which created a situation that the king would have preferred to avoid, could only have been achieved by women working through women.

The bonds between Madame and the ladies of the community that she created extended into the next generation, as we see the next example in

47 'Madite dame éguisa son esprit et fit tant envers le roy qu'il fut content et consentit au département dudit mariage d'Alençon et que ledit comte Charles épousât ladite dame Suzanne de Bourbon; et à cela luy aida bien madame Anne de Bretaigne, royne de France, laquelle a toujours aimé ladite maison de Montpensier, à cause d'une fille de ladite maison, nommée madame Anne, qu'elle avoit nourrie', Marillac, p. 136.

which two of the women raised by Madame come together in an exercise of power that, once again, could only have been carried out by women. The Peace of Cambrai of 1529, popularly known as the Ladies' Peace, was negotiated by two of Madame's former charges, Louise de Savoie and Margaret of Austria, on behalf of Louise's son, François I (1494–1547), and Margaret's nephew, Charles V (1500–1558). When several years after their period at Madame's court the women became relatives by marriage, with Margaret united to Louise's brother, Philibert II, Duke of Savoy (1480–1504), Margaret convinced her husband to banish his and Louise's half-brother, René, known as the Bastard of Savoy (1473–1525), from Savoy. Despite this, the women also worked together. Still later, after Philibert's premature death in 1504, they corresponded, offering gifts that required reciprocity from one another. Louise agreed to Margaret's request to arbitrate some affairs between Margaret and François I.[48] After assuring Margaret that she would treat her affairs as her own, Louise requested a favor, asking that Margaret return some lands of the Bastard of Savoy in exchange for unspecified compensation.

The Ladies' Peace came about several years after François I's 1525 capture in Pavia by Margaret's nephew, Charles V, for whom she acted as Regent of the Netherlands. The women were in touch after the French defeat, painstakingly working out an agreement on behalf of their respective male relatives.[49] But the Ladies' Peace was their most famous collaboration, carried out after the Treaty of Madrid that resulted in François I's release in 1526.[50] Ambassador reports agree that only two women could effect the peace. In late autumn of 1528 with François I and Charles V at loggerheads over the Treaty of Madrid (the terms of which François I had broken by refusing to turn Burgundy over to the Emperor), Louise dispatched a messenger to Malines to sound out Margaret on the possibility of entering into negotiations on behalf of the kings. Margaret eventually agreed, and, over the next several months, the two women and their advisers hammered out the details. In July 1529 they met in Cambrai for final negotiations. Charles V remained in Spain; François I spent the month hunting in nearby Coucy and La Fère, where he was kept informed of what went on every day.[51] The treaty was signed on 3 August and then celebrated in the Cambrai cathedral in the presence of François I two days afterwards.

48 Le Glay, II, p. 83.
49 Le Glay, II, pp. 607–09.
50 See Russell, pp. 94–154.
51 Knecht, p. 219.

What is interesting here is the way that the roles of Louise and Margaret were imagined. An ambassador's report to Charles V on the original peace overtures describes the advantages of delegating negotiations to the two women as they were laid out by Louise's messenger. The report, through the words of Louise's ambassador, reveals François I's perception, that he, the king, was unable to negotiate with Charles V and that he was fully dependent on his mother to bring his two sons home from Spain without letting Burgundy devolve to the Empire. First, the report specifies, the kings had fought and thus could not negotiate themselves without dishonor.[52] Second, the King of France had many allies who would have to be consulted if he were to enter negotiations with the King of the Romans, which meant in practical terms that peace would never be achieved. However, if Louise negotiated, the King of France could always later claim to his allies that he had had no idea what she was doing and blame everything on her.[53] Third, no one was better suited to negotiate than the two women, who 'would have in this area no other interest or inclination than to bring about the good, security and peace of the two princes, their estates and their subjects'.[54]

A specifically female power, unavailable to men and one enabled by female gift-giving, then, brought the Peace of Cambrai to its realization. The high-level negotiations between Louise and Margaret were possible in the first place because of their relationship, itself a product of the emotional community in which they both had spent formative years. Modern historian Nicolas Offenstadt notes that peace throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period was itself was conceived of as a gift.[55] Certainly Louise and Margaret saw it as such, a gift not only to each other, but to their respective peoples: nothing could be more pleasing to God and useful to Christendom than to 'procure' 'a good, true, entire and perfect peace and friendship'.[56]

Conclusion

It is now widely accepted that women of the early modern period exercised significant power indirectly. One form of such power, I have suggested, is gift-giving between women. But concrete examples are often elusive.

52 Le Glay, II, p. 682.

53 Le Glay, II, pp. 682–83.

54 'que lesdites dames n'auroient en cest endroit nul autre regard ny affection que de faire et procurer le bien, seurté et repoz desdits princes, et de leurs estats et subgectz', Le Glay, II, p. 683.

55 Offenstadt, p. 218.

56 'une bonne, vraye, entière et parfaicte paix et amytié', Le Glay, II, p. 682.

True, as I suggest in my discussion of Madame's swift action to garner the support of the disgruntled lords of the kingdom just after the accession of Charles VIII, in many cases, gift-giving was not particularly female. In distributing territory and releasing prisoners, Madame exerted authority in the same way that any regent, male or female, would have done. However, in building and nurturing communities of young ladies, noblewomen established bonds upon which they and others of the networks depended for support when they required the help of another woman. The marriage that Madame envisioned as the best way of protecting the Bourbon territories was possible only with the intervention of the queen, who was in a position to exert influence as a wife. Several years after Madame's own death, two of her former charges came together to create a peace acknowledged at the time to have been possible only with the help of women.

Although examples of the exercise of such power generally are not immediately obvious, other examples could be adduced. Marguerite de Navarre and Renée of Ferrara (1510–1574) cooperated in offering refuge to Clément Marot; Louise de Savoie and Anne de Bretagne teamed up in overthrowing Pierre de Rohan, Maréchal de Gié (1451–1513), whose influence with Louis XII both deeply resented; Marguerite de Navarre and Anne Boleyn (*c.* 1501–1536) cared for Nicolas de Bourbon (1503–1550), the young Master of Arts at the University of Paris whose evangelical works were suppressed.[57] Released from prison in 1534, thanks to Marguerite's influence on her brother the king, the Queen of Navarre seems to have sent him on to Anne in England for protection.

Typically hidden from view and therefore difficult to recover, such cooperation is starting to receive scholarly attention. Recent studies are beginning to demonstrate the interest of examining female networks as authentic sources of power. The exercise of power was never solitary but required the support of networks, especially for women, and these were cultivated through judicious gift-giving.

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57 See Ives.

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3. Louise de Savoie

The King's Mother, *Alter Rex*

Laure Fagnart and Mary Beth Winn

Abstract

Neither queen nor queen-mother, but mother of the king, Louise de Savoie nonetheless played a prominent role in the affairs of France. Married in 1488 at age 11 to Charles d'Angoulême, she gave birth to her illustrious children, Marguerite in 1492, and François in 1494, and asserted her maternal authority after the sudden death of her husband in 1496. As her son rose to be king in 1515, she succeeded in establishing her place at court through astute patronage of arts and letters, aligning herself, in text and image, with illustrious women, past and present. Identified with 'Dame Prudence' as she overcame obstacles and rivals, her tenacious devotion to her children culminated in power as Madame, Regent of France.

Keywords: Louise de Savoie, regency, cultural patronage, motherhood, self-representation

Countess, then Duchess, of Angoulême, Louise de Savoie (1476–1531) was the mother of two illustrious children, Marguerite (1492–1549), poet and future Queen of Navarre, and François (1494–1547), future King François I. Even before her son's ascent to the throne of France, Louise frequented the royal court. Daughter of Philippe (1438–1497), Count of Bresse, then Duke of Savoy, she was raised by her aunt, Anne de France (1461–1522), elder sister of Charles VIII (1470–1498), before marrying Charles d'Orléans (1459–1496), Count of Angoulême and head of a secondary line of the house of Valois in 1488. At her husband's sudden death in 1496, Louis XII (1462–1515) insisted upon joint custody of François, the potential heir to the throne, and compelled Louise and her children to reside at Amboise so as to be closer to court.

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Once her 'Cesar' became king, Louise governed the kingdom as his appointed regent at two different times: first, from July 1515 to January 1516, then from August 1523 to March 1526. But her political role vastly exceeded the periods of her two regencies.[1] The omnipresent mother had her son's ear. During the first fifteen years of her son's reign, she dominated the Council and royal diplomacy, received foreign ambassadors, and negotiated with princes and princesses of the time, culminating in the 'Ladies' Peace' concluded in 1529 with Margaret of Austria (1480–1530). François signed some of his letters with the words 'the King and Madame', while Louise punctuated her own missives with 'at my sole pleasure', an expression ordinarily reserved for the sovereign.[2] Beyond the official documents, letters, and reports of ambassadors that attest to the key role played by Louise de Savoie in orienting French politics from 1515 to her death in 1531, the books that she commissioned or owned provide ample evidence for her exceptional status, that of an *alter rex*. Although she was neither wife nor daughter of a king, and never herself a queen, the texts and illustrations of Louise's books promoted her image, to members of the court and beyond, as the founder of a new dynasty of French kings, as governess, and as protector of the realm, another figure of her son. This essay considers not only her official power during the periods of her regencies, when she was charged with the government and administration of the state, but also her symbolic stature, the authority that, as the king's mother, she exerted at the court and in the public domain and the strategies by which she achieved and promoted it. Extending the analyses of Anne-Marie Lecoq and Myra D. Orth, we will focus on the historical, religious, and mythological figures regularly invoked by and for Louise as models for asserting her position as *alter rex*.[3]

Filial Trust, Maternal Love

Only a few months after acceding to the throne, François I conferred the 'rule, government and total administration of affairs' upon his beloved mother, praising her prudence as well as her love.[4] The royal letter dates

1 Knecht, 2011; Michon, 2015; David-Chapy, 2016 (not yet published during the writing of this essay) and her article in the present volume.

2 'le roi et Madame', 'à mon seul plaisir', Michon, 2011, p. 85.

3 Lecoq; Orth, 1999.

4 'regime, gouvernement et totalle administracion des affaires', 'nostre très chère et très amée dame et mère la duchesse d'Angoulesme et d'Anjou, comme à celle dont avons totalle et parfaicte confidence et que savons certainement qu'elle se y saura saigement et vertueusement

from 15 July 1515, when preparations for the invasion of Milan were almost complete. In the history of France, Louise de Savoie was the first woman to have been officially appointed regent when she was neither daughter nor wife of a king.[5] The rights transferred at that time to the Duchess of Angoulême corresponded to a number of royal privileges. François I granted to Louise 'full power, authority and mandate' to handle judicial and legal affairs, defend the realm and its cities, convene the courts, and manage finances, both ordinary and extraordinary.[6] In addition, he entrusted her with the right to grant pardons.[7] In reality, the rights then conferred upon the Duchess of Angoulême were limited. The king himself retained the great seal that authenticated official documents, so it was he who continued to handle state affairs, especially diplomatic ones and those concerning Italy.

Although this first regency lasted but a few months and granted limited powers to Louise, contemporary writers already considered her the king's *alter ego*. Soon after François had returned from Italy and Louise's regency had ended,[8] the Lyonnais writer Symphorien Champier (1471–1538) published in Paris his *Grandes Chroniques de Savoie*.[9] The author did not indicate that Louise commissioned the work, but he nevertheless crafted it with details that he knew would curry favour with her. In the frontispiece of the copy offered to Louise, François and Louise are seated on one and the same throne

acquitter par sa prudence, pour la grande et singulière amour et zelle qu'elle porte à nous et icelluy nostre royaume'. The text is quoted from Levasseur, I, 1515–1516, n° 64, pp. 262–68. All translations are our own. About this letter, see McCartney, pp. 126–27.

5 Bertière. The author reminds us that in France, even though Salic law was barely contested, the tradition of leaving his wife in charge of the domain when a husband departed for war or a crusade was well established.

6 'plain povoir, auctorité et mandement', Levasseur, I, p. 264.

7 'de remettre, quicter, pardonner et abolir à tous ceulx que besoing sera tous cas, crimes et delictz qu'ilz pourroient avoir commis et perpetrez envers nous et justice', Levasseur, I, p. 265.

8 According to the *Itinéraire de la chancellerie royale sous le règne de François I^er^* published in Marichal, ed., *Catalogue des actes de François I^er^*, VIII, pp. 417–18, François arrived in Sisteron on 13 January 1516 and on 24 February in Lyons where he remained until 28 May.

9 Printed by Jean de La Garde on 27 March 1516, the colophon records that Champier completed the work in 1515 and that he was 'conseillier et premier medecin' of Antoine, Duke of Lorraine. The Universal Short-title catalogue (USTC) lists 28 other copies of this edition, all of which bear on the title page a large woodcut of the arms of Savoy. In the presentation copy (BnF, Rés. Vélins 1173), the arms have been painted (a white cross on a red field) and the motto 'FERT' added in gold letters to either side of the cross. Moreover, the final words of the lengthy title have been erased so that the names of both Champier and La Garde are missing. The page bearing the colophon is also lacking in this copy, as if the book were a manuscript, individually prepared, rather than one copy — albeit illuminated on vellum — of a printed edition. See M.B. Winn, 2007, p. 268.

(Fig. 3.1).[10] It is tempting to see therein a visual rendition of the political power shared by mother and son. The young king is represented in full regalia (hat encircled with a crown, collar of the Order of St. Michael, mantle adorned with fleurs-de-lis and ermine, coronation gloves, scepter and hand of Justice), apparel in fact reserved solely for the coronation ceremony.[11] The chamber in which the book is presented also manifests regal splendor in the raised dais and fleur-de-lis drapery. As for Louise, she appears as usual in widow's clothing, which typically consisted of a dark-colored gown, usually brown or black, adorned only by the ermine or sable lining of her bombard sleeves. A black headdress, often reinforced with a broad white band that, like the nun's bandeau, hides the forehead, falls into long panels in a style popular in the 1490s. Throughout the period, in text and image, this apparel identified Louise as an eternal widow, entirely devoted to her son, now the king.[12] After the death of Charles of Angoulême in 1496, Louise never remarried, a fact that her entourage consistently emphasized. In the manuscript of the *Petit Livret a l'honneur de sainte Anne* (after 1518) addressed to Louise, François Demoulins (*c.* 1470/1480–1526?) writes that the apostle says that true and good widows are those who wished to have only one husband.[13] It is notable that in the majority of images, Louise's attire is intentionally unadorned. In the frontispiece to the *Grandes Chroniques de Savoie*, she wears a simple gold chain that seems to correspond to that of François's Order of St. Michael. In other miniatures, while she might wear a finely worked gold belt, she is almost always dressed with a sobriety uncustomary for her rank. Her dress only rarely displays shimmering colors, rich fabrics, or jewels.[14] The sources that recount the major ceremonies of François's reign, especially coronations and royal entries, likewise take note of Louise's sober dress, which distinguished her from other ladies of the court.[15] For the coronation of Eleanor of Austria (1498–1558), for example, Louise's clothes were 'without ornament', while the 'coifs, corsets, mantles

10 BnF, Rés. Vélins 1173, fol. 1^{r}. The miniature covers the woodcut of a writer at his desk that appears in all other copies. See, for example, the copy at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (4-H-1382), digitized on Gallica.

11 Chatenet and Lecoq, p. 22.

12 Zvereva, 2015a.

13 'l'apoustre dyt que les vrayez et bonnez vefvez, ce sont cellez qui n'ont jamaiz voulu avoir qu'un / mari' (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. 4009, fol. 19$^{r–v}$). In our transcriptions from contemporary sources, we have expanded abbreviations, altered capitals and punctuation so as to conform to modern usage, added a cedilla to ç and an accent aigu to final tonic e (parlé, aprés) except when it is followed by –z.

14 Zvereva, 2015b, pp. 23–24.

15 David-Chapy, 2015, pp. 72–73.

Figure 3.1 Symphorien Champier, *Les Grandes Chroniques de Savoie* ⏎



Paris: J. de La Garde, 1516) Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. Vélins 1173, fol. 1[r]

and surcoats' of the ladies, duchesses and countesses who accompanied the queen were 'adorned with precious stones of such value that the smallest was estimated at more than 50,000 *écus*'.[16] This deliberate desire to appear in public, even several decades after the death of her husband, in somber and sober mourning dress, while she occupied a major position at court, constituted a political act.

Without doubt, this attire made explicit the role that Louise intended to play at court. She was neither queen nor dowager queen; she was a widow, an eternal widow. She was mother of the heir to the throne, then king of France. She was head of the family, replacing the *pater familias*, dead 20 years earlier, founder of a new dynasty, regent, veritable *alter rex*, entirely devoted to her son's destiny, to which she expected to contribute significantly, and guardian, in the same capacity as other exemplary widows of history, of the requisite qualities of wisdom, virtue, chastity. If the frontispiece of the *Grandes Chroniques de Savoie* insists on the power that mother and son share, Champier's text calls special attention to Saint Louis (1212–1270) who acceded to the throne at age twelve and was therefore left 'under the tutelage and protection of his mother named Blanche, who without ceasing took great care and solicitude to instruct and teach him in all virtues and in the holy catholic faith'.[17] Genealogical charts demonstrate how the noble houses of Valois, Alençon, and Bourbon descend, through male and female heirs, from Saint Louis. At the end of the *Chroniques*, Champier is careful to record that Louise and her brother Philibert II (1480–1504), 'very handsome children, sensible and courteous',[18] were born to Duke Philippe and his first wife, Marguerite de Bourbon (1438–1483). Louise married the Count of Angoulême and gave birth to François, the very Christian king of France, first of that name.[19] Champier connects François with the Trojan heroes and aligns Louise with Saint Louis, the very Christian French king, and with his mother Blanche of Castile (1188–1252). Composed to the honor and glory of the 'very high and very excellent princess, my lady Louise de

16 'sans aucun enrichissement', 'chappeaulx, corsets, manteaulx et surcots', 'enrichis de pierreries de telle valeur que le moindre estoit estimé plus de cinquante mille escus'. Godefroy, pp. 218–19. For the identification and description of garments of this period, see the copious documentation and illustration in Van Buren.

17 'en la tutelle et protection de sa mere appellee Blanche, laquelle sans descontinuer print une merveilleuse sollicitude et cusançon [soin] de le bien instruire et enseigner en toutes vertueuses meurs et en la saincte foy catholicque', fol. 6^{r}.

18 'tresbeaulx enfans, saiges et humains', fol. 131^{r}.

19 'espousa monseigneur le conte de Angoulesme, de laquelle est venu le roy François, treschrestien roy de France, premier de ce nom', fol. 131^{r}.

Savoie, mother of the very Christian and very excellent king of France',[20] Champier addresses her in the dedication as a 'very noble and illustrious' princess. He repeats the same two adjectives to describe the subject of his *Chroniques*, namely 'this very noble and illustrious genealogy' of the dukes and princes of Savoy whose history is eminently worthy of record.[21]

With similar flattery, the Franciscan Jean Thenaud (1474/1484–1542/1543) dedicates to his 'superillustrious lady' le *Triumphe des Vertuz*, an ensemble of four treatises on the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Fortitude, Justice, and Temperance.[22] Louise commissioned this work for her son, and it offered ample testimony, both visual and verbal, to the mother–son couple at the helm of the kingdom. The first volume, dating from 1517, includes the treatises on Prudence, honoring her daughter, Marguerite d'Angoulême, and Fortitude, honoring her son, François I.[23] The second volume, dating from about 1519, includes the treatises on Justice, honoring her grandson François (*dauphin* from 1518–1536) and Temperance, honoring her daughter-in-law, Queen Claude (1499–1524).[24] The frontispiece of the first volume depicts the traditional presentation of the book.[25] The author, tonsured and dressed in a hooded habit tied at the waist with the knotted cord of the Franciscans, kneels before Louise who, as in similar frontispieces for Anne de Bretagne (1477–1514), sits on a throne surrounded by a female court. We know that the number of noblewomen at the court of France increased at the end of the fifteenth century and that these female courts reflected and enhanced the position of the lady who assembled them around her.[26] In the frontispiece, the ladies who surround Louise are attired in coloured gowns adorned with belts and necklaces while the Duchess herself wears a rather plain dress, with gold highlights, and a headdress nearly identical to a nun's coif. Here again, her apparel distinguishes Louise from the other ladies represented in the miniature, especially since her dress, as well as the rosary that she holds in her hand, seem to echo the Franciscan robe. It is nonetheless an almost-queen who is depicted, as if the mental image

20 'treshaulte et tresexcellente princesse, ma dame Loyse de Savoye, mere du treschrestien et tresexcellent Roy de France, Françoys premier de ce nom', fol. 132^{r}, colophon.

21 'tresnoble et illustre princesse', fol. b1^{r}; 'tresnoble et illustre genealogie', fol. b1^{v}.

22 On Thenaud, see Pierre. For the editions of the treatises, see Thenaud, with the dedication to his 'superillustre dame' in vol. I, p. 3. About the manuscripts, see Orth, 2015, II, n° 7, pp. 49–56 and n° 8, pp. 56–60.

23 Saint-Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Fr. F. v. XV, I.

24 BnF, ms. fr. 144.

25 For a reproduction, see Voronova and Sterligov, p. 208, pl. 253.

26 Viennot, 2000, pp. 93–96; Zum Kolk.

had superseded historical fact. Louise is seated on steps covered in blue and gold, the colors of fleur-de-lis fabrics, within an architecture *à l'antique* from which hangs a red drapery bearing her arms.[27]

In the frontispiece to the second volume of the *Triumphe des Vertuz*, her imagined status is made manifest: Louise is now crowned.[28] Dressed in the same gown of golden highlights, with a gold belt, she wears a wide crown and holds in her hands a scepter and rays. She is seated, as on a throne, at the edge of a fountain bearing her arms. This principal fountain irrigates four smaller fountains, the first evoking Fortitude, surmounted by a salamander, with the arms of François I; the second, Justice, with the arms of the *dauphin* François; the third Temperance, with the arms of Claude de France; the fourth Prudence, with the arms of Marguerite d'Angoulême. The Latin inscription inserted near the kneeling author, *Dive Lathone Apollinis et Dyane Matri Virtutum Fonti Perhempni* ('To the divine Latona, mother of Apollo and Diana, perennial source of virtues'), associates Louise with one of the most celebrated mothers of ancient mythology. This assimilation is also found in the second version of Thenaud's dedication: 'You (among the illustrious, renowned, heroic and superexcellent ladies the greatest), represented by poets as that goddess Latona, mother and parent of Apollo and Diana, are that living fountain'.[29] The first version establishes a Christian parallel between earthly paradise and the present 'very Christian realm, which is the monarchic and more than imperial house of France' of which Louise is 'the source and living fountain', thus implicitly connecting Louise with the Virgin Mary.[30] The frontispiece moreover subscribes to the tradition of Marian imagery, since it derives from images associating Mary with the fountain of gardens (*fons hortorum*) or with the well of living water (*puteus acquae vivae*).[31]

This masterpiece by Thenaud is not the only one to associate Louise with the Virgin Mary. The analogy had already been suggested long before François ascended to the throne in a manuscript offered by the Parisian publisher Anthoine Vérard (1485–*c.*1512) to Louise around 1500, the *Vie*

27 The initials inscribed in the pavement below, 'L'-'M'-'F', are those of the Angoulême 'Trinity': Louise, her daughter Marguerite, and her son. See Knecht, 2015.

28 BnF, ms. fr. 144, fol. B. Digitized on Gallica: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10520631m/f5.image.r=triomphe%20des%20vertuz (accessed 19 January 2017). See also Lecoq, pp. 338–340.

29 Included in the copy of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. 3358 but not in that of St. Petersburg. 'Vous (des illustres, renommees, heroes et superexcellentes dames la plus), figuree par les poetes en celle deesse Lathone, mere et parente de Phebus et Dyane, estes celle fontaine vive', Thenaud, I, p. 4.

30 'royaulme treschrestien, qui est la monarchalle et plusque imperialle maison de France', Thenaud, I, p. 281.

31 Lecoq, p. 340.

Nostre Dame, the text of which is taken from the *Matines de la Vierge* by the poet Martial d'Auvergne (1420–1508).[32] In his dedication, Vérard employs metaphors for Louise ('flower of honor', 'fruit of virtue') that imitate those for the Virgin ('she is virtue, she is the clear fountain'), thus reinforcing the parallel between the two mothers that is illustrated by facing miniatures: the Virgin and Child on fol. 3^{r}, Louise and her young son on fol. 2^{v}.[33] If Mary is 'our mother, our supreme head', Louise is the one who holds 'the sovereign branch of the lily'.[34] This symbolism endured until Louise's death: her embalmed heart was buried in Notre-Dame Cathedral, in a casket the cover of which displayed a crowned lily issuing from a crowned heart.[35]

Louise's identification with the Virgin is also noteworthy in the *Chants royaux du Puy de Notre-Dame d'Amiens*, a work composed in 1517–18.[36] At the end of May 1517, François, Claude, Louise, and Marguerite undertook a long voyage in Picardy and Normandy. On 17 June, the court visited the cathedral in Amiens where a series of paintings in honor of the Virgin was displayed. Every year, the society of the 'Puy de Notre-Dame', dedicated to the Virgin, organized a poetry contest. At the Feast of the Purification, the newly elected master of the society would announce the verse or palinode he had just composed in the Virgin's honor, which would serve as the refrain for the competition the upcoming year. At Christmas, he would unveil the painting that illustrated the verse and would serve that year as the altar painting for the society. The competition would then be launched. The collection of paintings and poems that hung in the cathedral of Amiens impressed Louise de Savoie: she ordered copies, which were then assembled into a manuscript. Illuminated by the Parisian painter Jean Pichore (fl. 1490–1521) and his workshop, from sketches made by Jacques Plastel of Amiens, the manuscript reproduces 47 of the paintings executed for the contests held between 1458 and 1516. All of them show the Virgin and Child, surrounded by numerous people, in scenes that emphasize the saving grace of Mary. Kneeling as the donor, the master holds in his hands a phylactery (or banner) on which is written the verse of the palinode. In the dedication

32 BnF, ms. fr. 985.

33 For reproductions and discussion of these miniatures, see M.B. Winn and Wilson-Chevalier, p. 239 and pl. XVI, fig. 97.

34 'fleur d'honneur', 'fruit de vertu', 'c'est la vertu, c'est la clere fontaine', 'nostre mere, nostre chef capital', 'du liz la branche souveraine', fols 1^{r}, 1^{v}.

35 See the reproduction in Crépin-Leblond and Barbier, p. 137.

36 BnF, ms. fr. 145. Digitized on Gallica: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8426257z?rk=21459;2 (accessed 19 January 2017). Lecoq, pp. 325–35; Zöhl, 2004, pp. 25–42; Zöhl, 2007; Orth, 2015, II, n° 18, pp. 83–88.

scene, Louise is seated on an elaborate gold chair, its high back sculpted with her coat of arms.[37] She sits in state at the center of the composition, her feet resting on a green cushion. Dressed in her traditional widow's clothing, she is surrounded by numerous ladies of the court. As Anne-Marie Lecoq and Caroline Zöhl have already noted, the king's mother occupies the place reserved for the Virgin in the paintings of the 'puy' reproduced in the manuscript, while the two magistrates (Andrieu de Monsures and Pierre Louvel) who offer her the book, are represented as the devout worshipers, kneeling at the feet of Mary and their patron saint.[38] Louise's already regal posture is thus enhanced with almost-divine authority.

The dedication in the form of a *chant royal*, analogous to those addressed to the Virgin, reinforces the connections between Louise and Mary, their respective maternities, and by extension between François and Christ:

> You carried as mother and regent
> The royal blood, the honorific body
> Of King François who rules the French,
> Giving them admirable hope,
> For which, while the unsurpassed queen
> Mary, virgin in her maternity,
> Brought us in person
> The hope of the entire world,
> So are you too, by another quality,
> The frank and humble mother,
> For the great hope of France.[39]

While Mary is unsurpassed as the virgin mother whose son brought hope to the entire world, Louise nonetheless gave birth to King François, hope of France, thus becoming mother of the entire realm. Although the text's reference to humility alludes to that essential quality of the Virgin at the moment of the Annunciation, the implicit equation of Louise with Mary asserts a stature ordained by God himself, granting the king's mother an authority

37 BnF, ms. fr. 145 fol. 1^{v}; see http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8426257z/f8.image (accessed 19 January 2017).

38 Lecoq, p. 333; Zöhl, 2004, pp. 32–34.

39 'Tu as porté comme mere et regente / Le royal sang, le corps honorificque, / Du roy Françoys qui les Françoys regente, / En leur causant ung espoir admirable, / Dont, quoy que la royne insuperable, / Marie, vierge en sa maternité, / Nous a porté quant a l'humanité / Totalement du monde l'esperance, / Aussy es tu, par aultre qualité, / Mere humble et franche / au grand espoir de France', BnF, ms. fr. 145, fol. 2^{r}, vv. 13–22.

that transcended the terrestrial sphere. Suggested as early as 1500 in Vérard's dedication to the *Vie Nostre Dame*, the identification of Louise, mother of François, as the temporal equivalent to the Virgin Mary, mother of Christ, is here fully exposed in word and image. This spiritual authority bestowed upon Louise justifies her political role as the king's regent, his *alter rex*.

The Second Regency

On 12 August 1523, as François was preparing for his second Italian campaign, he once again appointed his mother as regent.[40] In a royal letter the king justified the need for a regency and for his choice:

> We could only provide for such a government and administration the person of our very dear and very beloved lady and mother, the Duchess of Angoulême and Anjou, Countess of Maine, as much for the zeal and singular love and legitimate and natural affection that we know she bears to us and to our realm, provinces, and dominions, and to our loyal and obedient subjects thereof, as for the good experience she has in such matters, as in a similar case, when we left for the conquest of our duchy and state of Milan and the dominion of Genoa, soon after our accession to the crown, she exerted and administered while regent and governor for us in our said realms, provinces, and dominions hitherto, to which charge she acquitted herself, as is certain and well known, with such virtue and prudence that she is worthy of praise and singular commendation.[41]

The powers granted to Louise were described in more detail than for François's first Italian campaign. They concerned all areas of government

40 Levasseur, III, 1521–1523, n° 355, pp. 282–289. See Henry-Bordeaux; Mayer; McCartney, pp. 131–35; Knecht, 2011, pp. 178–82; Michon, 2015.

41 'Nous […] ne pourrions pourvoir a ung tel regime et administration, que de la personne de nostre treschere et tresamée dame et mere, la duchesse d'Angoumoys et d'Anjou, contesse du Maine, tant pour le bon zele et singulier amour et affection legitime et naturelle, que savons certainement qu'elle a porte [sic] a nous, et nosd. royaume, pays et seigneuries, bons loyaulx et obeïssans subgectz d'iceulx, que pour la bonne experience qu'elle a en telles matieres, que en cas semblable, que allasmes a la conqueste d'iceulx noz duché et estat de Millan et seigneurie de Genues, tantost apres nostre advenement a la couronne, elle exercea et administra demorant regente et gouvernante pour nous en nosd. royaume, pays et seigneuries de deça, en la quelle charge elle s'aquicta, comme il est certain et notoire, si vertueusement et prudemment, qu'elle en est digne de louenge et singuliere recommendacion', Levasseur, III, 1521–1523, n° 355, p. 284. The text goes on to express the king's confidence in Louise's 'senz, vertuz, prudence et integrité'.

affairs, the convocation of sovereign courts, the execution of sentences and arrests made by these courts, the security of the realm, commerce, finances, the right of pardon, and the appointment of officers. The regency extended through the entire captivity of the king following his defeat at the Battle of Pavia on 24 February 1525 until March 1526. Louise, residing at the Abbey of Saint-Just, near Lyons, ruled over an enlarged Council, presided by the chancellor, Antoine Duprat (1463–1535). When the king was taken prisoner, the *Parlement* of Paris sought to reinforce its own power by limiting that of Louise. It encouraged Charles de Bourbon (1489–1537), Duke of Vendôme, the closest male relative of the king and member of the Council, to claim the administration of the government, in place of the Duchess and Duprat. The Duke, it appears, refused to divide the realm, then in crisis.

Despite this fragile context, Louise governed successfully, seeking above all to maintain peace within the realm and to liberate her son. In August 1525, she signed with Henry VIII of England (1491–1547) the Treaty of the More, which broke the Anglo-Imperial alliance and thus put pressure on Charles V (1500–1558) to release her son.[42] The *Traicté de la paix perpetuelle*, published on 22 September 1525, announced on the title page the agreement between the king and 'Madame, his mother, Regent in France in his absence'.[43] A woodcut of the royal arms surrounded by the collar of the Order of St. Michael is printed on the last leaf. Louise also sought support from the sultan Soliman the Magnificent (1494–1566), an initiative that would be crowned with a military alliance against the Emperor in the Mediterranean. Finally, she sent her daughter Marguerite to negotiate directly with the Emperor. Louise's efforts were successful in maintaining peace and securing the release of François I.

For Louise and her entourage, this second regency became the moment to invoke, as did other elite women of the time, Blanche of Castile. Blanche — as a woman, mother of the king, widow, in charge of her son's education and then as regent — offered several points of comparison with Louise. The similarity was proclaimed loud and clear in two works that Étienne Le Blanc (*c*. 1490–1565) composed for Louise: the *Généalogie de Bourbon, Histoire des accroissements territoriaux des Bourbons, Vie de saint Louis*; and the *Gestes de Blanche de Castille*.[44] The *Généalogie*, dedicated to Louise

42 Jacqueton.

43 'Madame, sa mere, Regente en France en son absence'.

44 BnF, ms. fr. 5719 and BnF, ms. fr. 5715 respectively. Orth, 2015, II, n° 38, pp. 144–46 and n° 37, pp. 140–43. Etienne Le Blanc succeeded his father Louis as *greffier* of the Chambre des comptes

and commissioned by her, was written at a time when she claimed the inheritance of her cousin, Suzanne de Bourbon (1491–1521), heir of the duchy of Bourbon, instead of Suzanne's husband, the constable Charles de Bourbon (1490–1527). The composition is thus placed between 28 April 1521, date of Suzanne's death, and 14 November 1522, date of the death of Anne de France, Suzanne's mother. In the *Généalogie de Bourbon*, Le Blanc states that Suzanne has died without heir, while Anne is still living.[45] According to Elizabeth A.R. Brown, the work was composed before 11 August 1522, when the *Parlement* of Paris began to examine the challenge to Suzanne's will brought by Louise and François I.[46] The date of the *Gestes de Blanche de Castille* is more controversial, although it must have been composed after Louise's first regency.[47]

Le Blanc begins by explaining his choice of subject for 'this little book', extracted from the histories of France. Louise descended from Saint Louis, whose mother, Blanche of Castile, had acted as regent for her son, expelling his enemies and governing with virtue and prudence. Blanche was not, however, the first woman to 'defend and save' her people, as Le Blanc demonstrates by citing the two most famous biblical examples.[48]

> The good Judith, filled with all beauty and wisdom, being a widow, saved the people of Jerusalem and of all Judea from the hand of Holofernes, lieutenant general of the army of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians. So also did Queen Esther, wife of Ahasuerus, king of Persia and Mede, from the hands of Haman, cruel tyrant.[49]

in 1509 and became Louise's secretary in 1526.

45 'de present est decedee sans hoir', BnF, ms. fr. 5719, fol. 3^{v}.

46 Brown, p. 10, n. 26. An edition and study of the *Gestes* is in preparation by Elizabeth A.R. Brown and Mary Beth Winn.

47 Lecoq, pp. 477–78 dates its composition to the first regency. Other scholars propose the second regency (McCartney, pp. 133–35; Viennot, 2008, pp. 80–81; M.B. Winn and Wilson-Chevalier, p. 243). Brown and Zale, pp. 236, 252–53, date it to between 1515 and 1521, before Le Blanc had entered Louise's service. According to Orth, 2015, II, p. 140, the manuscript dates from *c.* 1520–1522.

48 BnF, ms. fr. 5715, fol. 1^{r}: 'ce petit livre'; fol. 1^{v}: 'Et n'est pas la premiere dame qui en l'ancienne et nouvelle loy a deffendu et sauvé le peuple'.

49 'La bonne dame Judich, remplye de toute beaulté et sagesse, estant en viduité, sauva le peuple de Hierusalem et de toute la terre de Judee de la main de Holofarnes, lieutenant general de l'armee du roy des Assyriens, Nabuchodonosor. Ce que feist aussy la royne Hester, femme de Assuere, roy de Perse et de Mede, des mains de Aman, cruel tyrant', fol. 1^{v}.

In line with these illustrious women, Louise, too, had 'until now guarded and defended the people of France'.[50] This apparent reference to her regency established a link to those of Blanche of Castile, one during her son's minority, between 1226 and 1234, the other beginning in 1248, when the king departed for the crusade. To such a regency similarly, wrote Le Blanc, 'has succeeded, by her great prudence and virtue, the very honorable, powerful and excellent princess and my very revered lady, Madame Louise'.[51] Le Blanc emphasized elements that established a clear parallel between the two mothers. Blanche oversaw her son's education: she was his tutor and engaged the most worthy and wise counsellors, both religious and lay, that one could find.[52] The king became benevolent (*debonnaire*) through the advice of his mother who was compassionate and magnanimous, always striving to do good works and to treat everyone, great and small alike, with justice.[53] Against the nobles who thought that the government of the realm did not belong to a woman, the king maintained the contrary, and, fully confident in his mother, he entrusted her with his kingdom. Le Blanc asserts another argument against the 'envious' who claim that a mother should not hold the government of her son, namely that natural law grants her this power, witness the proverb *bon sang ne peult mentyr* ('Good blood cannot lie'). Furthermore, virtue reigns in some women more than in many men, and in such cases, 'they deserve not only to be called women, but men'.[54] Such statements seem to hold greater significance for the years 1523–26, when Louise's authority was being contested and her regency extended because of her son's captivity, than for her first regency.

Moreover, a stylistic analysis of the celebrated frontispiece further substantiates this later date.[55] According to Guy-Michel Leproux, the frontispiece is closely related to the *Rosenwald Hours* of 1524.[56] A motif of

50 'jusques cy gardé et deffendu le peuple de France', fol. 1^{v}.

51 'a laquelle regence a, par sa grande prudence et vertu, succedé treshaulte, trespuissante et tresexcellente princesse et ma tresredoubtee dame, Madame Loyse', fol. 21^{v}.

52 'Blanche, sa mere, le feist endoctriner et enseigner, car elle l'avoit en garde comme tutrice, et luy quist gens de conseil, tant clercs comme laiz, les plus preudhommes et les plus sages que on peut trouver', fol. 3^{r}.

53 Blanche 'tousjours s'estudioit a faire bonnes œuvres […] faisant justice tant au grant que au petit, sans acception de personnes', fol. 19^{r}.

54 'elles meritent non seullement estre appellees femmes, mais hommes', fol. 7^{r}.

55 Digitized on Gallica: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55005969b/f8.image (accessed 12 January 2017).

56 Washington, Library of Congress, Rosenwald Collection, ms. 10, fol. 79^{v}. We thank Guy-Michel Leproux for this information. The Rosenwald manuscript is digitized at http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rosenwald.0014.2 (accessed 12 January 2017). See also Orth, 2015, II, n° 41, pp. 152–56.

two superimposed columns surmounted by winged cupids likewise frames the image of Saint John on Patmos, behind whom rises a similar château built on a rocky cliff.[57] Seated beneath a dais of green velvet, Louise wears her traditional widow's clothing. Her face derives from an original portrait by Jean Clouet (*c.* 1485–1541), since lost, that was undoubtedly executed around 1516–18, since it appears in the frontispiece to the *Petit Livret a l'honneur de sainte Anne*, whose dedication mentions only the royal children born before 1518.[58] She is outfitted with gigantic wings whose significance is multiple. They are, first, a rebus on the 'L' of her name, but also an evocation of her protective role, first of the *dauphin*, then of the king. Similarly, the anonymous author of the *Compas du Daulphin*, composed around 1505–15, begged François's mother to keep him under her wing.[59] But these wings are also borrowed from the Bourbon emblems, thereby reflecting Louise's claim to that inheritance.[60] In any event, the king's mother is portrayed as regent, governing the realm, since she holds with both hands the tiller of a rudder, plunged into a rectangular pool filled with water. The rudder is of course the instrument used for directing the country, the traditional symbol of government. This government extends beyond the walls of the palace to include the whole realm; the room in which the two figures appear opens in fact through an Italianate loggia onto a vast landscape. At Madame's feet, lying prostrate on a humble bed, the author awaits a commission, as indicated by the Latin words inscribed on the dais ('remarkable for piety') and on the frame ('say a word and I shall be cured').[61] The words recall those of the preface, in which the author hopes to earn Louise's favor and make her 'turn [her] eyes of pity and clemency on [him], which however has not yet occurred'.[62] Le Blanc achieved his goal when Louise named him clerk and auditor of the *Chambre des comptes* in May 1525, the *terminus ante quem* therefore for the work's composition. In 1526, he became her secretary and later that of her daughter Marguerite.[63] The *Gestes de Blanche de Castille* emphasized Louise's ability to guide the ship of state in the absence of the

57 Fol. 14^{v}.

58 Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. 4009; Zvereva, 2011, p. 203, cat. 4. The portrait by Clouet is also known from the copy preserved in Knowsley (Derby Collection, inv. W 418, fol. 4, *c.* 1525) or fol. 2^{v} of the *Livre d'heures de Catherine de Médicis* (BnF, ms. nouv. acq. lat. 82, *c.* 1573).

59 BnF, ms. fr. 2285, fol. 7^{r}, 'sous [son] aile cherie'.

60 See Lecoq, pp. 470–77; M.B. Winn and Wilson-Chevalier, p. 243; Fagnart and Girault.

61 'Insignis Pietate', 'Verbo dic t[antu]m et sanabitur'.

62 'et faire tourner voz yeulx de pitié et de clemence vers moy, ce que toutesfois ne m'est encores advenu', fol. 1^{r}.

63 Orth, 1999, p. 85.

king, to govern the realm by herself, as had her illustrious predecessor, regent to Saint Louis.

Le Blanc's two works are not the only ones to associate Louise de Savoie with Blanche of Castile, nor was the association with Judith and Esther unprecedented. Indeed, an emblematic example can be found in the stained-glass windows of the Sainte Chapelle, that monumental reliquary erected by Saint Louis to house the relics of the Passion of Christ, including notably the crown of thorns and the True Cross, bought from the Venetians to whom the bankrupt Baudouin, Emperor of Constantinople (1217–1273) had pawned them. Depicting the stories of Judith and Esther, several windows might be interpreted as an homage to Saint Louis's mother, who had assumed the regency during the king's youth, when most of his vassals were in league to usurp the government. The heraldic decor is especially elaborate, with the lily of France, the castles of Castile, *or* and *gules*, and the arms of Castile. The niche reserved for Blanche and her daughter-in-law, Queen Marguerite de Provence (1221–1295), during the religious offices, was arranged beneath these windows.[64] Contemporary literature paid particular attention to Judith. She is a model of virtue, piety, and chastity in the 1504 *Vies des femmes célèbres* of Antoine Dufour (d. 1509), commissioned by Anne de Bretagne but surely known to Louise, and in the 1534 *Palais des nobles Dames* of Jehan du Pré (d. 1504) dedicated to Marguerite d'Angoulême.[65] In the *Chants royaux du Puy de Notre-Dame d'Amiens*, prepared for Louise, one refrain focuses on Esther: 'Fair Esther, elected by the king of heaven'.[66] The author praises Esther for saving the Jews and thereby prefiguring the Virgin's intercession on behalf of humankind. The accompanying miniature depicts, in the right background, Esther kneeling in supplication before Ahasuerus and, in the foreground, being crowned, in a gesture parallel to the Virgin's coronation by the infant Christ, which occupies the center of the painting.

Blanche, Louise, and Esther were also linked together on 1 May 1517 for the entry of Queen Claude into Paris, following her coronation at Saint-Denis. The street celebrations for the occasion were organized by Pierre Gringore (1475–1538). An abundant documentation, analyzed by Anne-Marie Lecoq and Cynthia J. Brown, describes the raised platforms on which dramatic stagings were performed all along the parade route.[67] The last play, presented in front of the Palais Royal where the supper was prepared, showed Saint Louis,

64 Leniaud and Perrot, pp. 158, 169. See also Jordan, pp. 344–46; and Wilson-Chevalier, pp. 26–27.

65 C. Winn, 2003, p. 292; Llewellyn.

66 'Plaisant Hester, du roy des cieulx eslute', BnF, ms. fr. 145, fol. 19^{r}.

67 Lecoq, pp. 377–91; Gringore.

crowned and enthroned.[68] If one trusts the painter of one of the contemporary manuscripts depicting these events, the king, holding the scepter and the hand of Justice, was flanked by the figures of Justice and Louis's mother, Blanche of Castile.[69] The presence of the arms of François I and Claude de France, attached to the base of the platform, allows for no doubt: the scene makes an obvious allusion to the mother of the reigning king, as equal in authority to Blanche of Castile. The dialogue between the characters does likewise: it evokes a ruler guided in his decisions by the maternal figure and by Justice.[70]

Furthermore, Claude's entry pageant into Paris in 1517 also emphasized the biblical heroine Esther whom Le Blanc named as predecessor to the French regents, Blanche of Castile and Louise de Savoie. Esther was represented at the Saint-Denis gate, on the first raised platform. The scene is depicted in a manuscript offered to Claude herself, as well as in manuscripts of the *Sacre de Claude de France*.[71] Centered within the symbolic representation of the coronation (the basis for the legitimacy of the queen), Claude is crowned by the dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit (an obvious allusion to the Coronation of the Virgin), surrounded by six heroines of the Bible, each embodying a virtue of the ideal wife: Sarah for fidelity, Rachel for conjugal amiability, Rebecca for prudence, Esther for modesty, Helbora for good morals, Lia for fecundity. Gringore specifies that Esther, despite her humility, found a means to have her enemy Haman hanged.[72] At the foot of the platform stood four virtues, embodied in four virtuous and venerable widows of France: Prudence, Louise de Savoie; Justice, Anne de France, Duchess of Bourbon; Magnanimity, Marguerite de Lorraine-Vaudémont, Duchess of Alençon (1463–1521); and Temperance, Marie of Luxembourg-Saint-Pol, Countess of Vendôme (1462/72–1547). The order, and indeed the names, of the virtues vary according to the source but the association of Louise with Prudence is widely attested.

The parallel between Louise and Blanche of Castile was also promoted in the *Dicts sybillins par personnages*, an anonymous collection, copied after 1515.[73] In the author's dedication 'to the very noble of high renown princess

68 Gringore, p. 307.

69 BnF, ms. fr. 5750, fol. 49^{v}. The miniature is viewable at the Banque des Images (http://images.bnf.fr/jsp/index.jsp); see also Lecoq, p. 389; and Gringore, p. 121.

70 Lecoq, p. 390, who transcribes additional text from Le Moyne, fol. 16.

71 BnF, ms. fr. 5750, fol. 37^{v}, and ms. 491 de l'École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris and British Library Cotton Titus A.XVII respectively. Lecoq, pp. 377–380; Gringore, pp. 109, 122.

72 'Mais non obstant l'humilité de laditte Hester, trouva moyen de faire pendre son ennemy au gibet', Gringore, pp. 163–64.

73 BnF, ms. fr. 2362. Lecoq, p. 582, n. 95; Colin, 'Louise de Savoie et la musique', pp. 222–24. The work contains a mystery play that includes a Noël with music. The manuscript is digitized on

of Angoulême, mother of King François', Louise was compared to illustrious mothers, including Blanche of Castile, who have guided ('conduit') their sons. The author acknowledged

> the care that you have for the common good to guide wholesomely your son François, by God's grace, King of the French, like Saint Monica, Saint Augustin, Saint Ciline, Saint Remy, Saint Aelidis, Saint Bernard, and other innumerable saintly mothers, each her child; also like Queen Blanche Saint Louis, to whom she often said that she would rather see him beheaded than that he commit a mortal sin.[74]

This last phrase is encircled in the manuscript with a hand-drawn line, as if a reader had highlighted its importance. It is worth noting that the Cimmerian Sibyl is represented wearing a red dress and a headdress that resembles the one typically worn by Louise, although in her case it is blue.[75] The corresponding text refers to her Italian origins and underscores the fact that she nursed her son, insisting thereby on a mother's nurturing character. But when the Sibyl speaks, she praises astrology by which, she asserts, God insures the correlation between earth (*monde inferiore*) and heaven (*ciel superior*). She declares that while contemplating the heavens one day, 'the supreme Regent, Intelligence' transmitted to her a 'prophetic light' by which she could recognize the influence of the planets and the signs of the zodiac.[76] It is to understand the astrological signs that she carries a globe and a sextant. The choice of the term 'regent' and its identification with intelligence is surely not fortuitous in a text dedicated to Louise de Savoie. One other sibyl displays similar attention. The Phrygian Sibyl, who predicts the Resurrection, carries the victory banner of the risen Christ, but in contrast to the colors normally used (a red cross on a white field), here the colors are reversed, so that they are identical to the arms of Savoy: a white cross on a red field.[77]

Gallica: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b525016145.r=2362?rk=85837;2 (accessed 16 January 2017).

74 'A tresnoble de bonne fame, haulte princesse d'Angoulame, mere du Roy François [...] advertiz aussy du soing que avez pour le bien publicque de conduire salutairement monseigneur vostre filz François, par la grace de Dieu roy des François, comme saincte Monicque, sainct Augustin, saincte Ciline, sainct Remy, saincte Aelidis, sainct Bernard, et aultres innumerables sainctes meres chascune son enfant; comme aussy la royne Blanche sainct Loys, auquel souvent disoit que myeulx aimeroit le veoir decoller que il commist ung pechié mortel', fol. 2^{r}.

75 Fol. 19^{r}.

76 'la supreme Regente, Intelligence', 'lumiere prophetique', fol. 20^{r}.

77 Fol. 37^{v}.

Alter Rex: The 'Ladies' Peace'

The culmination of Louise's authority as *alter rex* manifested itself in 1529 when her negotiations with Margaret of Austria led to the Treaty of Cambrai, named in consequence the 'Ladies' Peace', a memorable agreement that brought to an end the second war between François I and Charles V.[78] During the autumn of 1528, when relations between the king and the emperor had deteriorated, Louise had taken the initiative to contact Margaret of Austria. The two princesses had long known each other: raised together at the court of Anne de France, one of the most politically astute women of the time, they were also sisters-in-law. In 1501 Margaret had married Louise's brother, Philibert II, Duke of Savoy. Preliminary discussions led to a meeting inaugurated on 5 July 1529 at Cambrai. Louise was accompanied by her daughter, Marguerite de Navarre, and by members of the Council, including Duprat and the constable Anne de Montmorency (1493–1567). Margaret of Austria was escorted by members of her Council and her court, and by deputies from the Estates. An important delegation from England, led by Sir Thomas More (1478–1535), Chancellor to Henry VIII, as well as representatives from the Italian states, mainly Venice and Tuscany, joined them. As for the King of France, he was off hunting at La Fère and at Coucy, while the Emperor, then in Barcelona, had already given his consent to the most important provisions. To stay in the background, at least for all appearances, was astute: François and Charles could at any moment reject the agreement if it did not suit them. Each was represented, however, by his most faithful adviser: François by his mother, and Charles by his aunt, formerly his guardian and governor of the Netherlands. Both women had served as regent of their respective realms, and, empowered by the rulers themselves, their authority was unchallenged. On 29 July, after fierce discussions, a compromise was reached. The treaty was signed on 3 August. Two days later, it was celebrated in the cathedral of Cambrai by a Mass, in the presence of François I, then by three days of festivities in the town. The detailed account of the meeting, with its negotiations but also its processions, Masses, banquets, and music, which punctuated the daily meetings, and analysis of the celebrations, in literature and the arts, that immortalized the meeting, both immediately and thereafter, is only now being written.[79]

78 Russell, pp. 94–161; Knecht, 1998, pp. 283–85 / *Un prince*, pp. 281–83; Hamon.

79 Under the direction of Laure Fagnart, Jonathan Dumont, Pierre-Gilles Girault and Nicolas Le Roux, a newly-funded project on the 'Paix des Dames' is under way at the Université de Liège

Among the various texts in the form of news bulletins that have recorded the event, the most interesting as well as the longest, at twelve folios, is perhaps the publication in Antwerp by Guillaume Vorsterman of the *Triumphe de la paix celebree en Cambray, avec la declaration des entrees et yssues des Dames, Roix, Princes, et Prelatz*.[80] The author, Jean Thibault, identifies himself below the title as 'Astrologer of the Imperial Majesty and of Madame', and as such, he was present in Cambrai in 1529.[81] A woodcut on the title page displays three women standing above the prostrate figure of a male warrior in full armor who, according to the text, represents Mars, the god of war. Dressed in elaborate gowns and headdresses, the women are identified by names printed above their heads: Lady Margaret, The Regent, The Queen of Navarre (Fig. 3.2).[82] Margaret and Louise are turned toward each other, clasping hands. Various astrological symbols appear with each figure, for Thibault explains the achievement of peace by the movement of the heavens, understood through philosophy and astrology as God's order. Libra is the sign for the year 1529, a feminine sign in opposition to the masculine Aries. Given the configuration of the stars and planets at that time, he argues that only the two princesses, Margaret and Louise, could have achieved peace. It was, moreover, in the natural order of things that women would bring an end to the war that had lasted so long. After this introduction, Thibault proceeds to give an eye-witness account of the arrival in Cambrai of the two principals and their retinues, the discussions leading up to the agreement, and its signing.[83] He then provides a copy of the accord and describes the ensuing celebrations, with details about the dress, banquets, and music following the king's arrival in Cambrai. Thibault concludes with a discourse on the 'virtue of ladies', citing both Judith and Esther as proof that when God wishes good upon his people, he has it accomplished by women. He claims that the peace achieved by Margaret and Louise is as great as that given to the children of Israel, for all of Christendom awaited it. They deserve as much honor as Judith, for they received from God the grace and

and the Université Paris 13, in collaboration with the Musée royal de Brou (Bourg-en-Bresse). A volume of papers presented at the conferences held in Liège and Bourg-en-Bresse is in preparation.

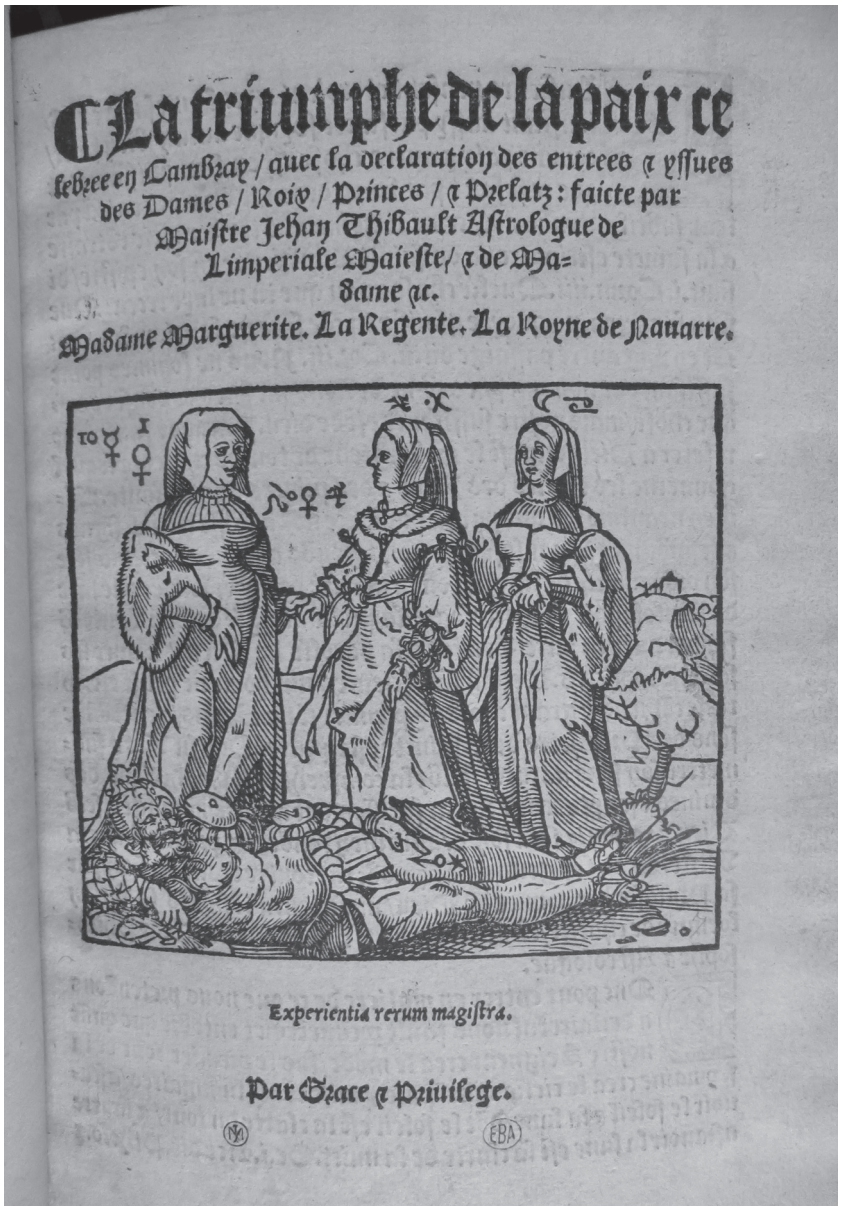
80 USTC 54350; copies seen: Paris, ENSBA Masson 1321; BnF Rés. Lb30.144. Three other copies are known: BnF, Rothschild 2135 (IV.4.73); BnF, Arts du spectacle, 8-RA4-37; Brussels, KBR, II.28.596A. Mary Beth Winn is completing a critical edition and study of the *Triumphe de la paix*.

81 'Astrologue de L'imperiale Majesté et de Madame'. A medical astrologer originally from Antwerp, Jean Thibault was invited to France in 1533 by François I who had met him in Cambrai. See Servet, pp. 10–12.

82 'Madame Marguerite. La Regente. La Royne de Navarre'.

83 Fol. 6^{r}.

Figure 3.2 Jean Thibault, *La Triumphe de la paix celebree en Cambray* ⏎



(Antwerp: G. Vorsterman, 1529) Paris, ENSBA, Masson 1321, title page

gift to bring peace and assurance to the people. Finally he calls on the 'bad husbands' who have abased their wives and considered them foolish to honor them for having saved lives. Even though women are fragile in body and tender in complexion, they are often more virile and constant in mind than many men reputed for their knowledge and judgment.[84] Although Thibault's astrological explanation for the 'Ladies' Peace' seems to express a highly personal view, the opposition between a woman's fragile body and her strong mind, equated with virility, has a long history, sparking debates from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries.[85] To cite only one other example in reference to Louise, Jean Bouchet (1476–*c.* 1558), in his *Jugement poetic de l'honneur femenin*, published in 1538, praises her as surpassing her gender and earning 'virile' honors, defeating more enemies through peace than the Roman general Pompey (106–46 BCE) ever did in combat.[86]

In January 1529/30, Jean de Bourdigné (d. 1547) published his *Hystoire agregative des annalles et croniques d'Anjou*.[87] Printed in Paris by Antoine Couteau and Galliot du Pré for Charles de Boigne and Clément Alexandre of Angers, the work is a history of the world with emphasis on events that occurred in the regions of Maine and Anjou, of which Louise is duchess and the author a native son. The vellum presentation copy contains an illuminated frontispiece that proclaims the power of Louise and the importance of her role in politics (Fig. 3.3).[88] In a lofty, vaulted chamber, the author kneels before Louise and presents to her a large volume on which is inscribed a Latin phrase: 'A work dedicated to the divine Pallas of Savoy'.[89] Madame, dressed in her widow's garb, is seated on a high-backed chair, beneath the arms of Anjou, which are suspended from the arch above. To her right are seated noblemen, princes of blood or of the sword, who during the reign of François I dominated the Council.[90] In the woodcut underlying the painting, they are represented wearing armor and the collar of St. Michael, but the collars have been overpainted with colored tunics in the miniature. Three of the noblemen have a ducal crown, while the

84 'selon leur esperit sont souvent plus viriles et constantes que ne sont plusieurs hommes que l'on estime de grande science et jugement', fol. 12^{r}.

85 It would appear that the treatise did not circulate widely: only one edition is known, with five extant copies. See note 80.

86 'honneurs / Non seulement femenins, mais virilles', Bouchet, p. 227, v. 901; 'A surmonté par paix plus d'ennemys, / Que par combatz ne feit onques Pompee (p. 228, vv. 931–32).

87 M.B. Winn, 2007, p. 269; M.B. Winn and Wilson-Chevalier, p. 242; Crépin-Leblond and Barbier, p. 132.

88 BnF, Rés. Vélins 761, fol. ā4^{v}.

89 'Dive Sabaudiensi paladi dicatus labor', fol. ā4^{v}.

90 Michon, 2011, p. 71.

Figure 3.3 **Jean de Bourdigné, *Hystoire agregative des annalles et croniques d'Anjou*** ⏎



Paris: A. Couteau and G. Du Pré for Ch. de Boigne and C. Alexandre of Angers, 1529 [1530]) Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. Vélins 761, fol. ā4^{v}

fourth, who holds a scroll in his hand and whose armor is gold, has a crown of fleurs-de-lis, identifying him perhaps as the *dauphin* François. To her left are seated the clergy, including two bishops and a cardinal. Behind them sit councillors in long robes, their square hats indicating university degrees. Facing them are councillors with plumed hats, representing the bourgeoisie and merchants.[91] No longer is this a court of ladies, as in previous dedication miniatures, but rather a masculine assembly, a group of male councillors who participate, under Louise's direction, in the government of the realm and the appointment of officers. Until her death in 1531 and in addition to the periods of her regencies, Louise is an *alter rex* who, as Cédric Michon has amply demonstrated, controled the Council.[92] Completing the scene are the two biblical heroines earlier cited by both Le Blanc and Thibault: Judith and Esther. They too participate in Louise's government. On the side of the noblemen, Judith, accompanied by the inscription 'Judith liberator of the country', stands beneath the arms of Angoulême; on the side of the clerics, Esther, beneath the arms of Savoy, is identified as 'Esther savior of the people'.[93] Both women were celebrated for freeing their people, as the inscriptions in the frontispiece underscore. As mediators, both were also considered prefigurations of the Virgin. It is not surprising therefore that they are among the biblical heroines most often invoked as models by the queens of France.

If Louise asserted her power by association with a previous female regent of France, Blanche of Castile, and with the biblical heroines Judith and Esther, she relied also on astrological signs. The 1529 Peace of Cambrai was, according to Thibault, achieved because the stars and planets were aligned under a female sign, enabling the two dominant princesses of the opposing realms of France and the Empire to bring an end to war. It was another celestial event that supposedly alerted Louise to her approaching death. The celebrated memorialist Pierre de Bourdeille, known as Brantôme (*c.* 1537–1614), records that three days before her death, Louise saw a comet from her window and interpreted it as a sign:

91 We thank Cédric Michon, Robert J. Knecht, and David L. Potter for helping to identify this scene.

92 Michon, 2011, p. 85. The frontispiece is closely related to those of the *Second volume de la premiere partye du blason d'armoiries*, a work composed in 1520 by Jean Le Féron (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. 5255, fol. 2^{r}) or the *Traité sur l'art de la guerre* of Bérault Stuart d'Aubigny, completed before 1525 (Yale University, Beinecke ms. 695, fol. 2^{r}). For Le Féron's frontispiece, see https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55008900v/f5.image (accessed 30 July 2018); for Bérault, https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3442866 (accessed 30 July 2018).

93 'Judie patrie liberatrix', 'Hester salvatrix populi', fol. ā4^{v}.

> And suddenly, opening her curtain, she saw a comet that shed light right on her bed. 'Ha! she said, there is a sign that does not appear for people of low estate. God makes it appear for us great men and women. Close the window again: that is a comet that announces my death […].' […] And three days later, leaving the dreams of the world, she died.[94]

The editor, Maurice Rat, notes that the time in question was three weeks rather than three days, the comet being visible only from 6 August to 7 September 1531, and Louise's death occurring on 22 September.[95] That did not prevent contemporary authors from evoking the comet in their epitaphs for Louise. Jean de Vauzelles (*c.* 1495–*c.* 1557) composed a *Theatre de françoise desolation* in which he writes that her nobility merited a flamboyant sign in the heavens to foretell of her death.[96] Victor Brodeau (1500?–1540) likewise asserts that the comet signaled Louise's importance, equal to that of a great prince or monarch.[97] The various epitaphs, both Latin and French, composed for her and published soon after her death, do not cite the heroines who had been referenced during her lifetime, but they praise Louise for having saved her country and brought peace.[98] François himself penned the first poem included in the collection, and he summarized in a few lines his mother's claim to fame. Addressing her, he writes that she has triumphed 'by saving [her] honor, country and [her] child' and by achieving peace.[99] As such, she was the worthy successor to Judith and Esther, and to Blanche of Castile. 'Daughter of Virtue, Regent of Honor', Louise de Savoie was the 'Mother of the king, of the French and of France'.[100]

94 'Et soudain, faisant ouvrir son rideau, elle vid une comette qui esclairoit ainsi droit sur son lit. "Ha! dit-elle, voilà un signe qui ne paroist pas pour personnes de basse qualité. Dieu le fait paroistre pour nous autres grands et grandes. Refermez la fenestre: c'est une comette qui m'annonce la mort […]." […] Et puis, au bout de trois jours, quittant les songes du monde, trespassa,' Bourdeille, p. 282.

95 Bourdeille, p. 503, n. 657. See BnF, ms. it. 1714, missives from Venetian ambassadors concerning France, fol. 137; Chatenet, p. 155.

96 *Theatre de françoise desolation sur le Trespas de la tres auguste Loyse: louable admiration de Savoye & de feminine gloire: represante d'ung vray zele* (Lyons: 10 Nov [1531]); the only known copy is now at the Biblioteca Colombina in Seville.

97 Brodeau, p. 103.

98 *In Lodoicae Regis Matris mortem*.

99 '[…] avez triumphé du malheur triumphant / En sauvant vostre Honneur, Pays et vostre Enfant, / En guerre soustenant avez la Paix reduicte / Par vostre grant vertu et tressaige conduicte', *In Lodoicae Regis Matris mortem*, fol. A4.

100 'Fille a dame Vertus, & Regente D'honneur […], Mere du Roy, des François, & de France, 'Complainte de M.A.D.L.' (Adrien de Launoy), *In Lodoicae Regis Matris mortem*, fol. B6, vv. 24, 36.

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Part II

Centers and Peripheries of Power



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4. Literary Lessons in Queenship and Power

Mary Tudor Brandon and the Authority of the Ambassador-Queen

Erin A. Sadlack

Abstract
Mary Tudor Brandon, Henry VIII's sister, married Louis XII to cement an Anglo-French alliance. As an ambassador-queen, she knew that typical political maneuvering would be exacerbated by the possibility that she might give Louis an heir. Her letters reveal the setbacks she faced in crafting alliances and the ways she attempted to leverage power. Mary's reading, especially works by Christine de Pizan, provided multiple models of queenship, rhetorical strategies women might employ to exercise political power, and a sense of the value of female alliances and wisdom, as well as the limits of queenly authority and the importance of relationships. This essay explores Mary's attempts to negotiate stronger agency, positioning herself to exercise power in both French and English courts.

Keywords: Mary Tudor Brandon, diplomacy, queenship, cultural patronage, letters

The proper role of a good, wise queen or princess is to maintain peace and concord and to avoid wars and their resulting disasters. Women particularly should concern themselves with peace because men by nature are more foolhardy and headstrong.
— Christine de Pizan[1]

1 Pizan, *Book of Three Virtues*, as translated by Willard (p. 86): hereafter Pizan, 1989b. 'le droit office de sage et bonne royne et princepce d'estre moyenne de paix et de concorde, et de travaillier que guerre soit eschivee pour les inconveniens qui avenir en peut. Et ad ce doivent

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In her 1405 conduct book for women, *The Book of Three Virtues*, Christine de Pizan (*c*. 1364–*c*. 1430) argued that a queen's primary duty was to act as peacemaker. Given the combination of women's innate gentleness and foresight to see the inevitable dangers of war, a good queen would help her husband govern well, keeping his subjects happy, or tactfully soothe quarrels at court, especially between her husband and any fractious nobles. Should another realm attack, she would do all she honorably could to forestall the war. The subjects of a realm blessed with such a queen, Christine argues, will see her 'not only as their mistress but almost as the goddess on earth in whom they have infinite hope and confidence'.[2] Given longstanding Anglo-French conflict and the turmoil exacerbated by the intermittent bouts of madness of Charles VI (1368–1422) and resulting power struggles between his relatives, Christine's estimation of the value of a queen who could mediate effectively is understandable.

In *Three Virtues*, Christine had clearly designed both a practical handbook and a pointed commentary on the immediate political situation in France.[3] Yet how long and in what ways did her influence persist in the courts of Europe? One case study may be found in the brief tenure of Mary Tudor Brandon (1496–1533), younger sister of Henry VIII (1491–1547), as queen of France. Examining Mary's connection to Christine's works and her actions at the French court reveals that Christine's advice remained realistic, accessible, and applicable into the sixteenth century.

The poetry celebrating Mary's marriage to Louis XII (1462–1515) echoes Christine's rhetoric in elevating a peace-making queen to quasi-divine status. When she entered France, Mary was welcomed by a series of pageants, the most elaborate in Paris, where the fountains were made to spout wine and stages were constructed to hold ships with singers in the rigging lauding Mary. The poet Pierre Gringore (*c*. 1475–*c*. 1538) proclaimed:

> As the peace between God and mankind
> By the means of the Virgin Mary
> Was already made, so now are

aviser principaulment les dames, car les hommes sont par nature plus courageux et plus chaulx', Pizan, 1989a, p. 35.

2 Pizan, 1989b, p. 87; 'non mie seulement comme a leur maistresse, mais ce semble a leur deesse en terre, en qui ilz ont souveraine esperance et fiance', Pizan, 1989a, p. 36.

3 Adams contends that Christine intended several works, including *Three Virtues*, to serve as arguments that Isabeau of Bavaria (1370–1475) should be regent for her husband Charles IV (1368–1422).

We French relieved of our burdens
For Mary is married among us again.[4]

Accompanied by two thousand English nobles and greeted by French spectacle and cheering crowds, Mary was the living symbol of the peace between the two countries, which had been at war once again.

This particular Anglo-French conflict arose within the context of general sixteenth-century jockeying for primacy in Europe. Henry, with Ferdinand II of Spain (1452–1516) and Emperor Maximilian I (1459–1519), had joined the Holy League of the Pope Julius II (1441–1513) in an effort to check Louis's territorial ambitions in Italy. At the time, Mary was betrothed to Charles, Prince of Castile (1500–1558), a match arranged as part of a campaign to create a strong alliance between England, Spain, and the Low Countries. By 1513, Henry had had success in battle, capturing the towns of Thérouanne and Tournai in the north of France while English troops triumphed against the Scots at Flodden. Maximilian, impressed with England's resources, agreed to hold Mary and his grandson Charles's wedding in May 1515. However, Louis opened secret negotiations with Ferdinand and Maximilian, who delayed the marriage once more. In disgust at his allies' underhanded dealings, Henry reversed course and made peace with Louis, offering his eighteen-year-old sister Mary to the recently-widowed fifty-two-year-old French king as part of the alliance.

Yet Mary was no mere symbol. She was a woman facing the sobering reality of such a role. England's peace with France was new and fragile, with negotiations over French hostages captured in battle still to be arranged. England's existing ties were with Spain, through Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536), and, since age eleven, Mary had been preparing to become the bride of a Spanish Habsburg prince. Now she had to alter her mindset to accommodate French fashion, culture, and a potentially hostile French court. In particular, Mary knew that if she bore Louis a son, he would supplant the current *dauphin*, François d'Angoulême (1494–1547), Louis's cousin and son-in-law, who, together with his mother Louise de Savoie (1476–1531) and sister Marguerite (1492–1549), represented a powerful faction in the French nobility. On a personal level, she confronted the prospect of marriage to an old husband who was reportedly ill with gout. Through her close relationship with Catherine of Aragon, who was

4 'Comme la paix entre dieu & les hommes / Par le moyen de la vierge marie, / Fus jadis faicte ainsi a present sommes / Bourgoys francoys desrangez de nos sommes / Car marie avec nous se marie', Baskervill, p. 15.

welcomed enthusiastically to England as bride of Prince Arthur (1486–1502), then largely ignored as his widow, only to rise to power again as Henry's queen, Mary would have understood the precariousness of her position in the French court.

Nonetheless, Mary had been groomed by her father and grandmother, Margaret Beaufort (1443–1509), to meet such challenges; she had been immersed in the rhetoric of chivalric spectacle from an early age and knew how to wield its tools to her own advantage.[5] She was well educated; her tutor would publish a book outlining the precepts he had used with her, including a program of reading a wide range of medieval French and English literature. In particular, Mary would have known the works of Christine de Pizan, especially the *Epistle of Othea* and *Book of the City of Ladies* and almost certainly the *Book of the Three Virtues*.

Mary's reading would have provided her with multiple models of queenship and the rhetorical strategies women might employ. However, her books would also have taught the limits of queenly authority, and how much her influence rested on the strength of her relationships with Henry and Louis. Mary was a unique figure on whom both courts could call for favors, effectively making her an ambassador-queen occupying the liminal space between realms. Therefore she had to foster quickly the appearance of a loving marriage and devise close ties with her new courtiers, all while sustaining her familial connection with Henry.

With regard to politics, Mary understood the importance of her role as a symbol of peace. Hers was a society that valued rhetorical spectacle, and she was prepared to play her part by writing letters grounded in the rhetoric of affection and by engaging in behaviors that would paint an image of a close familial bond between Henry and Louis. The warmer their relationship, the more likely it was that they would honor one another's calls for military aid or diplomacy. For this reason Mary, Henry, and Louis take great pains in their letters to emphasize their love for one another and thereby project the impression of a firm alliance to other European kingdoms.

At the same time, the Tudor princess also understood that her role as peace-making queen was more than symbolic. Indeed, when renouncing her betrothal to the Spanish prince Charles, Mary claimed she did so because Charles's advisers had poisoned his opinion of Henry and that she would be unable to marry a man so alienated from her brother.[6] She preferred to

5 For Mary's education in epistolary rhetoric and spectacle, see Sadlack, which includes an edition of Mary's letters. Spelling of Mary's letters modernized in this essay.

6 Sadlack, pp. 51–52; Rymer, p. 63.

marry where she could serve both Henry and her spouse. Mary's actions as French queen underscore the seriousness of her desire to be an effective intermediary; from the outset she worked to foster the growth of a genuinely close working relationship between her husband and brother by facilitating the exchange of favors between the two courts. Mary's example demonstrates how an early modern queen, as sister to one monarch and wife to another, had a unique power to strengthen alliances between countries.

By establishing her value to Louis politically and through her personal attentions to him, Mary could increase her influence on him and in turn, increase her authority, whether to obtain patronage for her favorites, to achieve personal ends, or to intercede on behalf of her subjects. Intercession was yet another traditional queenly role, as Mary was reminded when her coronation ceremonies invoked the example of the biblical Queen Esther persuading her husband the king to grant her people mercy.[7] Records demonstrate that during Mary's short stay in France, she sought the release of prisoners in England and France, and preferment for various individuals.[8] Such actions would both earn gratitude and enhance her reputation as a benevolent queen. In an age where rhetorical spectacle both symbolized and enhanced one's power, Mary recognized the value of such a reputation.

Mary's reading and experience at the English and French courts taught her that her status, reputation, political allies, and influence were conduits for the power necessary to safeguard her future. Maintaining warm, loving relationships with her husband and brother, while garnering additional friends at court, would help ensure that Mary was well treated during Louis's life and protect her after his death. Should she give Louis a son, Mary would likely play an influential role in French affairs for some time, perhaps even by acting as regent during the *dauphin*'s minority. In that event, she would need support from French nobles to navigate the factions at court. If Louis died without a son, Mary wanted leverage so that Henry would keep the secret bargain she had made with him: she would marry Louis in exchange for the freedom to choose her second husband. Ultimately, the more allies Mary made, the greater her ability to control her own fate.

Studying the records of Mary's brief tenure as queen of France, especially her letters, therefore gives new insight into how and why a woman might attempt to negotiate her agency in order to accomplish both political and personal ends. Moreover, Mary's example also teaches how a queen might seek

7 Dewick, pp. 45, 48.

8 In addition to examples discussed below, Mary exercised her right to free prisoners while traveling to the capital for her coronation; see Green, p. 53.

to learn from other women. Whether through her familiarity with the works of Christine de Pizan, her observations of the experiences of other female royalty, especially Catherine of Aragon, or advice received from English mentors and French noblewomen, Mary understood that to wield power in France, she would need to draw on as many sources of authority as she could, whether through her rhetorical skill, reputation, status, or the influence that came from building a network of support through the economy of courtly favor.

Visiting the *City*: Mary's Familiarity with Christine de Pizan

When Catherine of Aragon came to England, her father-in-law Henry VII (1457–1509) invited her and her ladies to his library, where they found 'many goodly pleasant books of works full delightful, sage, merry, and also right cunning, both in Latin and in English'.[9] This detail is from *The Receyt of the Ladie Kateryne,* a work designed to record the magnificence of Catherine's welcome to England. It suggests that Henry was proud of his library and that he thought reading an appropriate pastime for his daughter-in-law and her women. It is reasonable to conclude that he would have felt his library a similarly appropriate venue for his daughter, Mary, who was close to Catherine and traveled with her regularly.[10]

Through her father and grandmother's libraries, Mary would have been immersed in French literary culture. Catalogues of Henry's holdings show that the king's library included a range of histories, classical and religious tomes, romances, and works by notable writers of the day, particularly French authors.[11] Henry and Elizabeth of York (1466–1503) took pains to ensure their daughter was educated in French; when Mary was two years old, a 'French maiden' was engaged to converse with her, and in 1512 the humanist John Palsgrave (*c.* 1480–1554) was hired to give her formal tuition in the language.[12] Palsgrave's record of his teaching of Mary, *Lesclaircissement de la langue francoyse*, includes frequent quotations from a French translation of Ovid's *Heroides*, as well as excerpts from popular French writers such as Jean Lemaire de Belges (1473–*c.* 1524), Alain Chartier (*c.* 1385–*c.* 1430), and Jean de Meun (1235/40–1305).[13]

9 Kipling, 1990, p. 77 (I have modernized the spelling).
10 Sadlack, pp. 21–28.
11 Kipling, 1981, notes the surprising predominance of French texts, p. 124.
12 Sadlack, p. 21.
13 Sadlack, pp. 30–36.

It is likely that Mary would have known Christine's works in particular. Her father, Henry VII, certainly knew Christine's writing; he had asked William Caxton (1415/24–1491/92) to print a translation of Christine's *Book of Deeds of Arms and Chivalry* and there were two copies of the *Epistle of Othea* in his library.[14] Mary could also have read the *Othea* in the library of her grandmother, Margaret Beaufort, who engaged in a small community of female readers. She exchanged books regularly with her mother-in-law, Anne Neville, Duchess of Buckingham (d. 1480), and sister-in-law, Anne Vere (1446–1472), who left Margaret her copy of the *Othea* in her will.[15] Since Margaret was a noted patron of scholars who urged her granddaughter-in-law, Catherine of Aragon, to learn French, it is easy to imagine that she would have shared a work about women's wisdom written by a famous Frenchwoman, given to her by a woman friend, with her granddaughter Mary.[16]

As is perhaps fitting, Mary had connections to Christine's work through her maternal heritage too. The Tudor royal libraries included a manuscript copy of the *City of Ladies* that probably belonged to Richard, Duke of York (1411–1460), Mary's great-grandfather.[17] Anthony Woodville (1442–1483), her great-uncle, owned the magnificently illuminated collection of Christine's works, Harley 4431, and translated her *Moral Proverbs*.[18] In 1521, Woodville's nephew, the printer Henry Pepwell (d. 1539/40) would publish the translation by Bryan Anslay (d. 1536) of the *City of Ladies,* perhaps to attract the patronage of Catherine of Aragon, who was actively planning an education for her daughter that would prepare her to become queen after Henry VIII.[19] Cristina Malcolmson observes that 'such details make it probable that, among the older members of the Tudor and Woodville families, Christine was well known'.[20] That certainly could have included Mary, the future French queen.

14 Malcolmson, p. 19.

15 Krug speculates the bequest stemmed from affection, family ties, and an assumption that Margaret would enjoy *Othea* (p. 78).

16 Dowling notes that Margaret Beaufort and Elizabeth of York suggested Catherine learn French (p. 17).

17 Royal MS 19 A.xix; Malcolmson, p. 19.

18 Summit, p. 83.

19 Either Royal MS 19 A.xix or Harley 4431 was likely Ansley's source (Long, p. 525). For Pepwell, see Malcolmson, p. 20.

20 Malcolmson, p. 19. Knowledge of Christine as author of the *City* may have started to fade, especially outside the court. Summit traces the gradual erasure of Christine as author from her works in England during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and notes that Ansley's translation makes no mention of Christine de Pizan (pp. 61–108).

Mary may also have encountered the *City of Ladies* through her potential marriage to Charles of Castile. While preparing for the match, Mary wrote to his aunt and regent, Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), thanking her for some clothing patterns, noting that she was relieved the fashions suited her and that she was 'greatly contented with them'.[21] Partly a rhetorical move showcasing her willingness to be guided by Margaret of Austria, the letter also reveals that Mary was attuned to the fashions of the Burgundian court and anxious to be sure she was familiar with its culture.[22] That likely included reading habits, and Margaret of Austria owned several works by Christine, including two copies of the *City of Ladies,* one purchased in 1511, by which time Mary had been betrothed to Margaret's nephew for four years.[23] Had Margaret mentioned the work, or had an ambassador alluded to its popularity, it would have been a natural choice for Mary to read the copy in her brother's library in her efforts to remain *au courant*.

There is another strong connection between Mary, Margaret of Austria, and Christine de Pizan's *City*. In 1513, as Henry VIII was closely allied with Margaret's father, Maximilian, Margaret came to Tournai to celebrate Henry's victory there. As part of the festivities, the city gave Margaret a six-panel set of tapestries illustrating scenes from the *City of Ladies*.[24] While Henry was in Tournai, a city known for the quality of its tapestry production, he purchased a set of tapestries for Mary, the subject of which has not been recorded. Yet a catalogue of his tapestries made at his death in 1547 includes a six-panel set of *City of Ladies* tapestries among the items in 'Lady Elizabeth['s] Guarderobe'.[25] In her quest to identify the *City of Ladies* tapestries that made their way into Henry's possession, Susan Groag Bell speculates that perhaps Henry bought them for Mary as a wedding present, but concluded it was unlikely since such tapestries would have been passed to Mary's daughter Frances (1517–1599) and thence to her granddaughter, Jane Grey (1537–1554), not Mary's niece Elizabeth (1558–1603).[26] However, if the tapestries Henry bought for Mary did depict the *City of Ladies*, it is entirely possible that they would have returned to Henry's possession after Mary's second (scandalous) marriage to Charles Brandon, the Duke of Suffolk (*c.* 1484–1545). Henry was so outraged at Mary's secret wedding to the English duke that she ultimately wound up ceding to Henry a significant portion

21 Sadlack, Letter I, p. 164. 'Je me contente moult fort deulx'.
22 Sadlack, pp. 45–46.
23 Bell, p. 87.
24 Bell, p. 42.
25 Bell, p. 2.
26 Bell, p. 141.

of her French dower income, as well as the gold plate and his choice of the jewels she received from Louis during her time in France.[27] The first indenture Mary signed promised Henry 1000 pounds every six months until she had repaid 24,000 pounds. She was consistently behind on the payments and constantly begged Henry's forbearance, often sending gifts with the requests. For instance, in 1516, Brandon wrote Henry asking for an extension and inquiring when Mary might come to court; accompanying the letter was a goshawk and several jewels. The final indenture signed in 1526 promised Henry any of the remaining jewels or plate from Louis upon Mary's death. It is entirely possible that Mary gave Henry other goods, such as a set of tapestries, against her debts.

Mary may well have seen other examples of the *City of Ladies* tapestries in France. Her predecessor, Louis's second wife, Anne de Bretagne (1477–1514), owned another six-panel tapestry with a *City of Ladies* theme, which she brought to France upon her marriage to Louis.[28] Anne's hangings remained in France after her death, since a 1533 inventory of the French royal collection includes them. It is plausible that they either adorned the rooms of the next French queen, Mary, who arrived in France only nine months after Anne's death, or that they were passed to Anne's daughter Claude (1499–1524), the *dauphin*'s wife. Bell also traces another eight-panel set of *City of Ladies* tapestries in the French court, likely belonging to Louise de Savoie, the *dauphin*'s mother.[29]

The *City of Ladies* remained a popular work among the French nobility.[30] For instance, Christine's Lady Reason influenced the works of Katherine d'Amboise (*c.* 1481–1550), the wife of François I's chancellor, and of Gabrielle de Bourbon (*c.* 1460–1516), daughter of the Count of Montpensier.[31] Maureen Curnow observes that copies 'were to be found in the royal library, as well as in the libraries of the noblemen and noblewomen of the houses of Berry, Burgundy, Orleans, Bourbon, and Savoy'.[32] Given period practices of communal reading, even if Mary missed reading the *City* in England, it is highly likely she would have encountered it in France.

Another of Christine's works that remained influential was *The Book of Three Virtues*. The patron for the first three printed French editions of the

27 Sadlack, pp. 114–15, 120–22.
28 Bell, p. 109.
29 Bell, pp. 113–14.
30 Long, p. 526.
31 Broomhall, p. 161.
32 Curnow, p. 118.

work was Anne de Bretagne.[33] Manuscript copies belonged to Margaret of Austria, her niece Mary of Hungary (1457–1482), Louise de Savoie, Diane de Poitiers (1499–1566), and Anne de France (*c.* 1460–1522), who drew upon Christine's wisdom in writing a book of advice for her daughter, Suzanne (1491–1521).[34] Anne, who had served as regent of France during the minority of her brother Charles VIII (1470–1498), also oversaw the education of many of the next generation of noblewomen, including Margaret of Austria and Louise de Savoie.[35] So trusted was Anne that Louis turned to her to guide his new English bride in the 'modes and fashions of France'.[36] Whether Anne gave Mary the *Book of Three Virtues* to read is unknown, but certainly lessons from Christine's book would have been employed as part of Mary's instruction.

If Mary did read all three works, *Othea, City of Ladies,* and *Three Virtues*, she would have derived an understanding of various models of queenship, a respect for the influence women could wield, especially at court, and yet a keen awareness of the difficulties she might face as Louis's queen. Amid dozens of stories about wives in the *City of Ladies*, Christine includes the tale of Antonia, whose 'advice, intelligence, and bravery' twice enabled her husband Belisarius to survive the machinations of court politics and earned him the favor of the emperor Justinian.[37] Christine frequently illustrates how a woman might use her influence on a loved one to bring about desired ends, such as Veturia persuading her son Coriolanus to spare Rome or Clotilda convincing Clovis to convert to Christianity.[38] The men who ignore women's advice do so at their peril; Hector's failure to heed Andromache's warning leads to the destruction of Troy, as Christine emphasizes in both the *City* and the *Othea*.[39] In none of these particular stories do women possess absolute rule, yet each of them wields enormous influence on family, influence that in turn affects the whole country.

Nor were the women in Christine's works all taken from history or classical mythology; in the dialogues with Ladies Reason, Rectitude, and Justice, Christine emphasizes that she knows women who illustrate the lessons the

33 Pizan, 1989b, p. 43.

34 Willard, p. 59.

35 Willard, p. 62.

36 'modes et façons de France', Pradel, p. 197.

37 For a French edition, see Pizan, 1975; for English, Pizan, 1998. 'par le conseil, scens, et vaillance de sa femme', Pizan, 1998, pp. 140–41; Pizan, 1975, p. 854.

38 Pizan, 1998, pp. 150–52; Pizan, 1975, pp. 870–71.

39 Hindman observes that the heart of Christine's political allegory in *Othea* — her plea that the leaders of France listen to her and make peace — rests on her portrayal of Andromache and Hector (pp. 55–60).

allegorical figures teach her. For instance, in a subject that Mary would find most relevant, Christine addresses the subject of young wives of much older men. Lady Rectitude tells stories of Julia, wife of Pompey, Tertia Aemilia, wife of Scipio Africanus, Xanthippe, wife of Socrates, and Pompeia Paulina, wife of Seneca.[40] The Christine-narrator responds with her own story of Jeanne de Laval, wife of Constable Bertrand de Guesclin: 'although he had a very ugly body and was old, while she was in the flower of her youth, she paid more attention to the worthiness of his virtues rather than to the manner of his person and loved him with such devotion that she mourned his death for the rest of her life'.[41] In the process, Christine encourages her readers to understand the *City of Ladies* as an exemplar, effectively creating a conduct book for ladies before writing *Three Virtues*, one that encourages readers to see themselves within the broader context of women's herstory. For a queen in Mary's position, reading about such women would confirm the enormity of the task ahead.

Reading Christine: Mary's Literary Lessons

One of the most troubling stories in the *City of Ladies* is that of the Sabine women, who were abducted and forcibly married by Romulus and the Romans. After a five-year war between the Romans and Sabines, the Sabine queen calls her ladies together to say that they can only lose in this conflict: the death of husbands, fathers, or brothers. Therefore she leads the women and their children onto the battlefield between the warring armies and begs them to make peace. These actions move both groups to pity as the Romans miraculously transform into loving sons-in-law who honor their fathers.[42] Christine is clear that the remarkable courage of the Sabine ladies 'forced' the men to make peace; however, that peace required their disturbing self-sacrifice, remaining married to their rapists.[43] Throughout her works, Christine consistently places the onus of domestic harmony on the wife; for instance, in *Three Virtues,* Lady Prudence's first precept for a princess desiring honor is that she 'must love her husband and live with him in peace.

40 Pizan, 1998, pp. 128–31; Pizan, 1975, pp. 833–38.

41 Pizan, 1998, p.131; 'nonobstant fust il tres lait de corps et viel, celle noble dame estant en la fleur de sa jeunesse, qui plus regarda au grant pris de ses vertus que a la façon de la personne, l'ama de tres grant amour tant qu'elle a plainte toute sa vie la mort de luy', Pizan, 1975, p. 839.

42 Pizan, 1998, pp. 147–50; Pizan, 1975, pp. 863–68.

43 Pizan, 1998, p. 149; 'Ilz furent contrains a gitter just leurs armes d'ambedeux pars [...] et de faire paix,' Pizan, 1975, pp. 867–68. Christine's Sabine queen explicitly calls it 'rape'; 'le ravissement qui fut fait de nous de nos maris', Pizan, 1998, p. 148; Pizan, 1975, p. 866.

Otherwise she has already encountered the torments of Hell, where storms rage perpetually'.[44] Such works give insight into the pressures medieval society placed on women to subjugate themselves for patriarchal needs.

That pressure remained steady in the sixteenth century; Mary knew well that she was expected to sacrifice her own desires on the marriage altar to make peace. After Louis's death, she reminded Henry, 'your grace knoweth well that I did marry for your pleasure at this time'.[45] Moreover, this behavior was required of women. Naomi Miller and Naomi Yavneh note that sisters 'were often constructed as their brothers' "treasures", both because they could be married off and because they look out for their brothers' interests, monetarily, socially, or even emotionally'.[46] Yet Mary possessed a weapon in the rhetoric that obliged Henry to protect his sister to maintain his reputation as a good chivalric king. Therefore, she agreed to marry Louis to establish the 'great weal of peace which should ensue of the same, though I understood that [Louis] was very aged and sickly, yet for the helping forth of good peace, I was contented'; however, she added a clause to the deal: 'if I should fortune to overlive the said late king, I might with your good will freely choose and dispose myself to any other marriage at my liberty'.[47] With Henry's consent, Mary prepared for marriage, accepting the burdens of a much older husband in ill health, the factions of the French court, and the duty of creating bridges between England and France in exchange for a tenuous grasp at personal agency later.

After a proxy wedding, Mary's first action was to establish an epistolary relationship with her new husband. Her letters project the image of the virtuous wife Christine outlines: loving, obedient, and eager to please. Each of the three letters that survive opens with professions of humility and love: 'very humbly I recommend myself unto your good grace'.[48] Thanking him for the affectionate letters he has sent, Mary assures Louis that:

> the thing I most desire and wish for today is to hear good news of you, your health and prosperity [...]. It will please you moreover, my lord, to send for me and command your good and agreeable pleasures in order for

44 Pizan, 1989b, p. 98; 'il apertient que elle aime son mary et vive en paix avec lui, ou autrement elle a ja trouvéz les tourmens d'enfer, ou n'a fors toute tempeste', Pizan, 1989a, p. 52. Rouillard notes that Christine gives no such precepts to men (pp. 162–63).

45 Sadlack, Letter 14, p. 174.

46 Miller and Yavneh, p. 12.

47 Sadlack, Letter 23, p. 182.

48 Sadlack, Letters 2, 3, and 4, pp. 164–66. 'bien humblement a votre bonne grace je me recommende'.

> me to obey and please you in this by the help of God, who keep you, my lord, in good life and long, by the hand of your very humble wife, Mary.[49]

Christine might have used such a letter as an exemplar. Since letters in the sixteenth century were routinely often read aloud and shared with others, regardless of personal feelings, Mary needed to craft a specific rhetorical picture for Louis and the French court.[50] To this end she emphasizes that she writes with her own hand, which would have been seen as a sign of her investment in the marriage. It also made the letter a more tangible connection between the sender and recipient.[51] For his part, Louis responded positively to Mary's overtures and wrote enthusiastically to Henry's adviser, Archbishop Thomas Wolsey (1471–1530), about his delight in Mary and commitment to the Anglo-French alliance.[52]

The marriage proceeded smoothly initially; chroniclers recorded the charm and beauty of the new queen, one of them even remarking on Mary's love for the king, while English ambassadors reported how dutifully Mary cared for Louis when he fell ill and how generously Louis responded with extravagant praise and jewels.[53] However, in the midst of the apparent harmony, Louis abruptly dismissed most of Mary's retinue, including her adviser Lady Jane Guildford (*c.* 1463–1538), causing a flurry in both courts. Mary wrote letters of protest to Henry and Wolsey. Given that Louis had approved the list of Mary's proposed attendants, his actions seem sudden and inexplicable. For her part, Mary's anxious rhetoric seems overly dramatic.[54] Yet examining the incident through the lens of Christine's *Three Virtues* gives new insight into the situation and Mary's forceful response.

49 Sadlack, Letter 3, pp. 165–66. 'la chose que plus je desire & souhaite pour le jourdhuy sest dentendre de voz bonnes nouvelles, sante et bonne prosperite [...] il plaira au surplies Monsieur me mander et comandez voz bons & agreables plaisirs pour vous obeir et complaire par laide de Dieu qui Monsieur vous doint bon vie et longue. De la main de votre bien humble compagne Marie'.

50 Sadlack, pp. 3–8.

51 Literary depictions of letter-writing urge writers to embed themselves in the letter — ideally by weeping on it, see Sadlack, pp. 60–61.

52 September 1514. Rymer, p. 81.

53 Jean de Treul wrote of Mary: 'et est une aussi belle dame que jamais dame natur créa; et l'ayme tant le Roy' (in Garnier, p. 263). For the ambassadors, see Worcester and West's letter (Ellis, pp. 239–43).

54 For list, see British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius C.XI, fol. 155^{r}. For Louis's care regarding attendants, see Worcester's letter to Henry explaining that Louis had forbidden Jane Popincourt, Mary's French companion from childhood, when he discovered that Popincourt had become Longueville's mistress (Ellis, p. 236).

After outlining the virtuous behavior of a queen in *Three Virtues*, Christine describes in detail the ideal governess to care for the young royal after her marriage. Such a woman will be wise, prudent, and loving, maintaining a balance of gentle instruction and companionship with cautious guardianship.[55] She will foster a good relationship between the lady and her husband, guiding the lady's affections towards him. In particular, Christine warns, she will protect her princess from gossip, court machinations, or any attempts to sully her virtue. Therefore, the governess-adviser will observe her lady's behavior at all times, as well as those who surround her, and act quickly to neutralize any threats; 'she will keep such close watch that nobody will have the opportunity to speak to her mistress alone'.[56] Yet Christine's wisdom irritated Louis. The English ambassador Charles Somerset, Earl of Worcester (*c.* 1460–1526), wrote to Wolsey that Louis complained that Guildford 'began to take upon her not only to rule the Queen, but also that [Mary] should not come to him but [Guildford] should be with her; nor that no Lady nor Lord should speak with her but she should hear it'.[57] By operating under Christine's model of counsel, Guildford must have seemed overly interfering to a king largely preoccupied with securing an heir and being entertained by his young bride.

For her part, Mary wrote anxiously but cautiously to Henry and Wolsey about Guildford's dismissal. Her letters were lengthy, indicating the extent of her distress. She writes to Henry that the only women left to her are maidens 'such as never had experience nor knowledge how to advertise or give me counsel in any time of need, which is to be feared more shortly than your grace thought at the time of my departing'.[58] Mary appeals to Henry's self-interest, arguing that she requires advice that will be to Henry's 'pleasure' and her own 'profit'. To Wolsey, Mary warily makes similar plaints, observing that she anticipates needing Guildford's counsel soon but will let Guildford relate the details. Both letters close with a postscript asking Henry and Wolsey 'to give credence to my mother Guildford'.[59] In this fashion, Mary endorses the truth of Guildford's speech while remaining discreet about any problems in the French court. Given how public a letter might be, this prudent diplomacy accords with Christine's warnings about the consequences of injudicious speech; a queen 'must be mistress of her tongue, for if she should say any equivocal word behind [her enemies'] backs

55 Pizan, 1989b, pp. 125–29; Pizan, 1989a, pp. 90–96.

56 Pizan, 1989b, p. 133; 'si pres s'en prendre garde que personne n'aura loisir de lui faire aucun raport', Pizan, 1989a, p. 101.

57 6 November 1514. Ellis, p. 244 (I have modernized the spelling).

58 Sadlack, Letter 5, p. 167.

59 Sadlack, Letter 6, p. 168.

which could be repeated back to them, it would indeed be very dangerous'.[60] Mary weighs carefully what she commits to writing.

It is difficult therefore to ascertain exactly what situation troubled Mary so greatly, but logically, it would have concerned her relationship with the *dauphin*, François, his wife and Mary's new step-daughter, Claude, and his mother, Louise. The French court gossiped that François was overly attracted to his new stepmother-in-law, while his mother was so threatened by the prospect of an heir that she ordered Claude to watch Mary during the day and a lady-in-waiting to do so at night.[61] On 22 September, Louise wrote scornfully of the aged king, that he was 'exceedingly old and weak', going to meet his 'young wife', and then anxiously recorded on 9 October that the king and Mary had wed and gone to bed together.[62] Others mocked the disparity in Mary and Louis's age; law clerks sniped that Henry had sent Louis a 'hackney' — vulgarly signifying 'prostitute' — to 'carry him swiftly and more gently to hell or heaven'.[63] The opposition and gossip must have helped Louis realise that Mary needed some French allies, since he sent for his cousin, Anne de France, one-time regent of France (and reader of Christine's works), to give Mary advice. Pierre Pradel speculates that Louis even anticipated a possible regency for Anne again should he have a son with Mary but die, leaving an infant *dauphin*.[64]

While Louis would die without siring a son, there can be no doubt that Mary knew the king was hoping for the birth of an heir and, furthermore, the challenges that a widowed queen with a young child might face. Christine supplies many examples in the *City of Ladies*, including the French queens Fredegund, who protected her son against ambitious barons, and Blanche, who ruled so well in her son's minority that she remained head of his Council ever after.[65] She also mentions Zenobia, who fought wars beside her husband and defied his jealous relatives to keep the throne for her children after the king's murder. She ruled well, Christine notes, partly by ruling wisely, but also by ensuring peace through her generous gifts and surrounding herself

60 Pizan, 1989b, p. 106; 'elle soit maistresse de sa bouche, car se aucun mot disoit d'eulx en derriere contraire a ses semblans qui fust raporté [ce seroit peril]', Pizan, 1989a, p. 64.

61 Brantôme reports that Louise had to caution her son not to disinherit himself (p. 640). After Louis's death Mary complained to Henry of 'the extreme pain and annoyance I was in by reason of such suit as the king made unto me not according with my honour', Sadlack, Letter 15, p. 175. For Louise, see Fleuranges, p. 44.

62 'fort antique et débile'; 'sa jeune fille', Savoie, p. 89.

63 'une hacquenée pour le porter bientost et plus doucement en enfer ou en paradis', Fleuranges, p. 45.

64 Pradel, p. 197.

65 Pizan, 1998, pp. 33–34; Pizan, 1975, pp. 668–69.

with virtuous and chivalrous retainers.[66] Christine also addresses such issues in *Three Virtues*; her second and fourth teachings — how a princess should treat the king's relatives and deal with enemies at court — both have great resonance for Mary's situation. In the second rule, Christine advises a princess to treat her new family kindly, making every effort to praise them (even if they do not deserve such magnanimity), and to ensure peace between them.[67] Her fourth rule is more startling; Christine counsels the princess to deceive her enemies by acting warmly towards them.[68] While a wise princess will anticipate the difficulty of hiding her feelings, pretending disingenuousness in the face of attack, and remaining constantly vigilant, she may be confident that such dissimulation is virtuous because it preserves the kingdom's peace. Moreover, her friendliness may eventually win them as allies; at worst, the kind reputation she develops will defend her against any detractors' lies.[69]

Whether she read Christine directly or had Christine's wisdom transmitted through Anne de France, Mary seems to have attended to such advice and to have worked to charm everyone she met. Merchants meeting her in London after her marriage report that Mary made a point of speaking some words to them in French.[70] Like Zenobia, she bestowed gifts; for instance, at a banquet which Mary attended with the *dauphin* and his wife, Claude, she was given boxes of expensive spices, and chroniclers noted that she graciously ordered six boxes be sent to her step-daughter Renée (1510–1574), Claude's sister, at Vincennes.[71] Her efforts were noticed; the chronicler at Abbeville described her as 'beautiful, honest, and joyous, and takes pleasure in all entertainments […]. I think that this will be a lady of boldness, because she is not afraid of anything, and here rules wisely her people as one could wish to have'.[72] The connection the chronicler makes between Mary's behavior and his prediction that she will rule well, suggests the wisdom of Christine's advice. Through her enthusiasm and warmth, Mary was winning allies wherever she could.

66 Pizan, 1998, pp. 53–55; Pizan, 1975, pp. 701–06.

67 Pizan, 1989b, p. 101; Pizan, 1989a, pp. 57–58.

68 Denery observes that Christine challenges theologians such as Augustine who maintained lying was always a sin.

69 Pizan, 1989b, pp. 102–07; Pizan, 1989a, pp. 62–65.

70 Sanudo, p. 167.

71 Bonnardot, p. 219.

72 'La dicte dame est tres belle honneste & joyeuse & est pour prendre Plaisir en tous esbatemens. […] Je croy que se sera une dame daudasse, car elle ne seffraye de rien, & cy commande sagement a ses gens se quelle vault avoir', Cocheris, p. 7.

Mary also took pains to ensure her alliances at home with England remained strong. She wrote frequently to Henry; if she did not have a particular favor to ask, she expressed her love and gratitude for his letters and counsel, thus maintaining the epistolary and emotional connection. She also praised the ambassadors who had worked on her behalf; by offering them public recognition, she rewarded them with the implicit suggestion that they were worthy of Henry's continued favor.[73] At the same time, she deepened her relationship with Wolsey. Throughout her stay in France, the only person besides Henry from whom she asks patronage for her servants is Wolsey.[74] During the Guildford affair, she suggests that she prefers Wolsey to a rival, Thomas Howard (1473–1554), the Duke of Norfolk. Where her letter to Henry simply expresses dismay that Norfolk so easily acceded to Louis's wishes, to Wolsey she condemns the Duke's behavior, saying that 'he has neither dealed best with me nor yet with [Guildford] at this time' and wishes for Wolsey's presence in Norfolk's stead.[75] Here Mary clearly, yet delicately, aligns herself with Wolsey in the factions of the English court. The two were starting to establish a partnership of mutual benefit that would only deepen after Mary secretly wedded Charles Brandon after Louis's death. Wolsey mediated between the couple and a wrathful Henry.

Mary understood well the courtly economy and how the exchange of favors increased her status, and enhanced her authority and security. Before she left for France, Louis d'Orléans, the Duke of Longueville (1480–1516), asked her to intercede with Henry on behalf of a merchant named Jehan Cavalcanty in return for any service that might please her.[76] This accords with Christine's fifth teaching in *Three Virtues*: a princess should cultivate the favor of clerics, nobles, lawyers, knights, and the people, whose reverence will provide protection.[77] When Mary arrived in France, she almost immediately started accumulating socio-political capital. Only nine days after her wedding, she wrote to Henry asking him to arrange a low ransom for François Descars, a Frenchman captured at Thérouanne who was a friend of both the *dauphin* and Longueville. She explicitly tells Henry that 'I would that my lord the king and the two dukes to whom I am much bound should think he should be the more favoured for my sake'.[78] Such rhetoric illustrates Mary's awareness of the economy of influence, and her desire

73 Sadlack, Letter 10, pp. 170–71.
74 Sadlack, Letters 9, 17, 22, pp. 169–170, 177–78, 181.
75 Sadlack, Letter 6, p. 168.
76 Longueville.
77 Pizan, 1989b, pp. 107–12; Pizan, 1989a, pp. 66–71.
78 Sadlack, Letter 7, pp. 168–69.

to establish herself as a power worth courting. On another occasion, Mary would practice public piety by writing to Henry on behalf of the priest Vincent Knight, who was captured at Tournai and held in England for nearly a year. Calling on familial ties, she reminds Henry that Knight had done great service for their father, then asks that he be released and recompensed for his losses, receiving in exchange only the prayers he would offer for them both.[79] Mary also took care to preserve her ties back in England, remaining active on behalf of the retainers released from her service by seeking Henry and Wolsey's patronage for them.[80] In each instance, she acts as Christine says a great lady should, cultivating the good will of her people. Each savvy rhetorical move was designed to enhance her reputation as a virtuous and gracious ruler and to increase her influence by demonstrating the depth of her connection to Henry.

Because a princess should particularly court the king's advisers, writes Christine, 'from time to time she will have them come before her, receive them honorably, speak to them eloquently, and make an effort to like them as much as possible'.[81] Taking such advice to heart, Mary used flattery to create allies at the French court. For instance, Brandon wrote to Wolsey that Mary told him and the other English ambassador 'diverse things the which we will show you at our coming whereby we perceive that she had need of some good friends about the king'.[82] Therefore, they arranged a meeting with Mary and some of the king's advisers, including Longueville, already an ally of Mary's, together with the treasurer Florimond Robertet (1459–1527) and the receiver-general of Normandy, Sir Thomas Bohier (1460–1524). There, Brandon explained to them that Mary asked:

> on her behalf and in the name of the king our master that they would be good and loving to her and that they would give her counsel from time to time how she might best order herself to content the king whereof she was most desirous and in her should lack no good will. And because she knew well they were the men that the king loved and trusted and knew best his mind therefore she was utterly determined to love them and trust them and to be ordered by their counsel.[83]

79 Sadlack, Letter 11, p. 171.

80 Sadlack, Letters 5, 6, 9, 16, 17, and 22, pp. 167–68, 170, 176–78, 181.

81 Pizan, 1989b, p. 109; 'ordonnera que ilz viennent vers elle aucunes fois, les recevra honnourablement, parlera a eulx par sages paroles, et le plus qu'elle pourra les tendra en amour', Pizan, 1989a, p. 68.

82 Brandon.

83 Brandon.

The speech follows Christine's proscriptions precisely; it is a blend of flattery, humility, and gentleness calculated to demonstrate her loyalty to Louis and win his advisers' favor. According to Brandon, it worked; moved by her plea, the men promised to report her 'honorable and loving request' to the king. In this fashion, Mary would gain the benefit of their wisdom in navigating court politics, and their protection against any machinations, which, as Christine notes, meant that people would praise her shrewdness.[84] By enlisting both English and French advisers to help in this fashion, Mary demonstrates her political acuity and creates a formidable defence against any difficulty with the *dauphin* or his family. While history shows that Mary was not destined to remain in France much longer, she was nonetheless establishing a foundation for power in the event that Louis's continued life meant her longer rule, or even, should they produce a son, a regency in France.

Louis died on New Year's Day, 1515; the Anglo-French marital alliance, which lasted less than five months altogether, was over. Mary was not pregnant with Louis's son, so a new king, François I, was crowned. Meanwhile, hearing rumors that Henry sought another alliance, Mary seized the initiative and told Charles Brandon that he had four days to marry her or else give up the idea forever. The couple wed in secret and continued to negotiate the terms of Mary's return to England; when fears of a false pregnancy led them to confess, Mary took full responsibility for the match and used a combination of rhetorical wiles and promises of money to win Henry's forgiveness.[85] The move ensured that she would remain 'Mary the French queen' and, as dowager queen, serve the rest of her life as both a conduit for favors and a symbol of amity between the two courts.

Although brief, Mary's tenure as queen of France nonetheless reveals the continuing influence of Christine de Pizan's works on the noblewomen of Europe. Moreover, it serves as a case study illustrating the practicality of Christine's advice and how well it applied to the machinations of real court politics whether the stakes were personal or political. Christine's writing was a primer for women in positions of authority, emphasizing that status and influence were conduits to power that a woman could wield just as effectively as men. Through her sage logic and copious examples of literary, historical, and biblical queens, Christine demonstrated how vital it was for a princess to establish a network of allies at court and how potent was the rhetorical power of the reputation of a virtuous and loving queen. Christine's works also taught the dangers a woman might face and the limitations of queenly

84 Pizan, 1989b, p. 109; Pizan, 1989a, p. 68.

85 Sadlack, pp. 91–117.

power, particularly with regard to the ways that a woman's relationship with her husband and kin would generally determine how much agency she possessed over her own life and the extent of her ability to accomplish any political goal she might have.

Examining Mary's life reveals how a sixteenth-century princess might become familiar with Christine de Pizan's works, whether through their enduring popularity at the English and French courts, tapestries or other visual depictions, or female mentors who could have shared Christine's works to supplement her education. Mary's letters also demonstrate the impact of such reading on her political choices, how she used the literary lessons Christine provided to develop strategies to strengthen her relationship with Louis and position at court, and by extension, to foster a genuine alliance between England and France. Studying the ways Mary worked to gain influence as a foreign princess in the French court thus adds new insight into the avenues of power open to such an ambassador-queen.

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5. Claude de France and the Spaces of Agency of a Marginalized Queen

Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier

Abstract
The power of Queen Claude de France, who gave birth to seven children and died at the age of twenty-four, was objectively curbed by "the Royal Trinity" of François I, Louise de Savoie and Marguerite de Navarre. This essay examines texts, ambassadorial accounts and artworks that nonetheless point to Claude's role as an active promoter of religious reform and prove that she functioned as a discrete magnet for political opposition to the contested policies of François and Louise. Were Claude's image, stature and popularity feared by Louise and François? Was it not the religious tolerance not only of Marguerite de Navarre but also of Claude's own court that was transmitted to her sister Renée and daughter Marguerite de France?

Keywords: Claude de France, religious patronage, cultural patronage, religious reform, queenship

Does Claude de France (1499–1524) deserve her place in historiography's unwritten list of disempowered queens? A dispatch penned by a Venetian ambassador on 21 September 1518 has contributed to the widespread perception of Claude as inconsequential. On a visit to the 'most serene Queen', Antonio Giustinian (1466?–1524) spoke 'in generalities' because 'with her one does not deal with issues of State'.[1] She is discussed only tangentially in *Les Conseillers de François I^er^*, a fine collective study of the political advisers to Claude's famed spouse François I (1494–1547), wherein a single citation

1 'Serenissima Raina', '*verba generalia*', 'con lei non si trata cose di Stato', Sanudo, XXVI, col. 114. Unless otherwise specified, the translations are mine.

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(dated 1517) from Antonio de Beatis disqualifies her in passing: Louise de Savoie (1476–1531) 'always accompanied her son and Claude, over whom her power was absolute'.[2] Yet this appraisal embraces both François and his spouse, suggesting a cautionary approach. Claude, after all, was the sole French queen who bore the exceptional prestige of having descended from a French king, Louis XII (1462–1515), and a French queen, Anne de Bretagne (1476–1514), an ever-more-studied queen/sovereign duchess, now recognized as exceptionally strong. Wilfully, her parents made her the universal heiress to their personal possessions, including the County of Blois (then the seat of government), the Duchy of Brittany, and the fleeting but politically potent Duchy of Milan, as well as Anne's exceptional personal library.[3] Claude's sister Renée (1510–1575), for decades Duchess Renata di Francia at the Ferrarese court, has shared an eerily similar historiographical fate. A recent study has confirmed Renée's pivotal position at the center of a vast network of religious dissidents in Italy. Yet Claude's sister-in-law Marguerite d'Alençon/de Navarre (1492–1549) is cast as an omniscient leader, Claude as 'young, weak, ill, politically inept', Renée's cognitive and speculative capacities deemed 'modest', her ignorance manifest.[4] These sisters' reputations, I argue instead, have suffered unfairly from the objective marginalization to which their political marriages confined them both.[5] A royal consort did not sit on the King's Council and hence could not rule in the full sense of the term. In pageantry, however, her queenship positioned her symbolically directly after the king. She possessed territories and wielded certain forms of power in her own right — especially in the traditional queenly domains of justice, peace, piety, and culture.[6] In her subjects' eyes, Claude's physical proximity to her spouse, no matter how fraught with difficulty, enabled her potentiality as a mediator on both a national and an international plane. What then were the physical and conceptual spaces of agency that a resisting Claude managed to carve out for herself?

2 Knecht, 2011, p. 178, citing the French translation: 'Elle accompagne toujours son fils et la reine Claude sur lesquels elle exerce un pouvoir absolu'.

3 Chevalier, p. 108; C.J. Brown, 2011.

4 Belligni, pp. 8, 387.

5 Zum Kolk.

6 Cosandey; Gaude-Ferragu.

From Lauded Pupil to Judicious Queen

Anne de Bretagne gave birth to ten children, of whom only Claude and Renée survived into adulthood.[7] Although a volume of *Les Remèdes de l'une et l'autre Fortune* lamented (probably around 1503) that Claude was only a girl, numerous signs prove that the king and the queen invested carefully in the tutoring of their royal daughter(s), who would be marketed from birth to marry high.[8] Eleven years separated Claude and Renée, but their superior educations overlapped in multiple ways. Already in the year of her birth (1499), Claude had five officers in her service. Her high-ranking, experienced governess was Jeanne de Polignac (d. 1509), wife of Anne's first knight of honor Jacques II de Tournon (d. 1525), mother of both the future cardinal and political adviser to François I, François de Tournon (1489–1562), and his sister Blanche (*c.*1490–*c.*1538), future lady of honor to Marguerite d'Angoulême/de Navarre.[9] One of the ageing de Polignac's daughters held the child during the visit of Archduke Philip of Austria (1478–1506) and Archduchess Juana of Castile (1479–1590) to Blois in 1501.[10] Did Georgette de Montchenu, Madame du Bouchage (d. 1511), play an important role in Claude's upbringing as well?[11] She and her husband Imbert de Batarnay (1438–1523) had already served Anne's ill-fated son Charles-Orland (1492–1495), and at Renée's baptism in 1510, du Bouchage was both governess and godmother to Claude's sister.[12] After his spouse's death, Batarnay was still overseeing the expenditures of Claude and François's children in 1519.[13] The successful rearing of the only viable royal child in three long decades was crucial to the networking at court of the Tournon/Polignac and probably also the du Bouchage clans.

7 E.A.R. Brown, p. 193, Appendix, The Children of Anne de Bretagne (25 [26] Jan. 1477–9 Jan. 1514).

8 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), ms. fr. 225, after Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374); C.J. Brown, 2011, pp. 1–3; Zöhl.

9 Minois, pp. 439–40; Matarasso, 2001, pp. 184, 223–34, 247, 261; Michon and Nawrocki, pp. 507–08.

10 Chatenet and Girault, pp. 47 and 170–71.

11 Leroux de Lincy, III, associates a series of Anne's letters to both Madame and Monsieur du Bouchage with Claude; Matarasso, 1996, and Matarasso, 2011, pp. 71–74, argues that they relate to Renée. Batarnay (who took his 'du Bouchage' title from a territory transmitted by Georgette) was Claude's governor and maintained his position officiously for the children of Claude and François (Philippe Hamon within Michon, 2011b, pp. 89–91). Madame's beautiful *gisant* (1513–1522) survives in Saint-Jean-Baptiste at Montrésor (Noblet, pp. 272–73; Corvisier, pp. 455–58).

12 Minois, pp. 434–35; Baumgartner, p. 52.

13 Hamon, 1994, p. 124.

While Louis and Anne monitored Claude's progress carefully, so did Anne's wardrobe mistress (*dame d'atour*) and closest adviser, Michelle de Saubonne (d. 1549), Madame de Soubise from 1507, Renée's governess following Madame du Bouchage's death in 1511, and the evangelical adviser who would accompany Claude's sister to Ferrara in 1528.[14] In 1505, when Anne retreated to her duchy of Brittany during her open dispute with Louis XII over Claude's forthcoming engagement to François d'Angoulême (1506), a series of 23 letters shed light on Saubonne's crucial position in the queen's entourage.[15] Financier Jacques de Beaune/'Semblancay' (*c.* 1445–1527), who remained a close ally of Monsieur du Bouchage into the reign of Claude and François, Cardinal Georges d'Amboise (1460–1510), and Louise de Savoie proactively sought Saubonne out to convince the headstrong queen to return to court.[16] The intellectual profile of Anne's *dame d'atour* was particularly high. In his *Epistre à Madame de Soubise*, the poet Clément Marot (1496–1544) credited her 'Anne's best beloved', for having introduced his father, the writer Jean Marot (*c.* 1450–*c.* 1526), at court. He praised her love of literature and knowledge, while the humanist Guillaume Budé (1467–1540) lauded her wisdom; and her penchants spilled over onto her daughters, especially Anne (d. 1555) and Renée de Parthenay-l'Archevêque.[17] The link between Renée de France and her life-long governess was deep. Yet Anne de Bretagne's confidence in Michelle de Saubonne, thought to have entered the queen's service shortly before Claude's birth, following the death of Anne's own *alter ego* governess Françoise de Dinan (*c.* 1436–1499), must provide an important key to understanding the nature of Claude's excellent education as well.[18]

In Claude's formative years, education and religion perforce went hand in hand. Page two of her luxurious Primer transmits the alphabet, intertwined with the Instruments of the Passion and coupled with a Pater Noster prayer, with which she learned her letters.[19] Yet conceived more broadly, a pious education was a route to empowerment; and empowerment was clearly one of Queen Anne's major concerns. Prior to Claude's engagement to François d'Angoulême (an alliance that her mother opposed in the name of Breton

14 Giraud-Mangin justifies this designation, p. 70 (but is it anachronistic?). Minois, pp. 433–34, attributes a proactive role in Claude's education to this 'femme remarquable'; Belligni, p. 5, also thinks she oversaw the education of both daughters.

15 Matarasso, 1997, pp. 354–55; and Matarasso, 2011, pp. 71–74.

16 Hamon in Michon, 2011b, p. 90.

17 'la mieulx aimée d'Anne' Ségalen, p. 103; Belligni, pp. 94–95ff.; Gorris, 1997, pp. 341–42; Gorris, 2001; Gorris, 2007; Marot, 1969, III, pp. 388–90; Marot, 1993, I, v, xxvii, cxxix.

18 Giraud-Mangin, pp. 69–70.

19 The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, MS 159. Wieck, C.J. Brown, and König.

independence and probably out of distrust of Louise de Savoie and her son),[20] Anne commissioned the *Vies des femmes célèbres* from the Dominican Antoine Dufour (d. 1509), with the collaboration of the Parisian illuminator Jean Pichore (documented between 1502 and 1521).[21] While of interest to the queen and her ladies-in-waiting, three of whom are represented with Anne on the dedicatory page, her royal daughter was surely a conscious target of this vernacular manuscript, too.

What were some of the major issues that Dufour's text and Pichore's illustrations set out to address? Then, how exactly would these issues play themselves out in Claude's short life? Like the Tuscan Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) before him, Dufour credited a woman, Nicostrata (depicted on fol. 21^{v}), with the invention of the very alphabet that Claude was acquiring via her Primer. Pichore's images also align women who read (the Empress Mamaea, fol. 61^{r}, the Virgin Mary, fol. 2^{r}); women who write letters (Medea, fol. 18^{v}) and books (the Erythraean Sibyl, fol. 17^{r}, Sappho, fol. 28^{v}, Amalthea, fol. 29^{v}, Blæsilla, fol. 61^{v}); and women who are the recipients of books (Theodelinda of Lombardy, fol. 69^{v}), as was so often the bibliophile Anne. Both Sappho (fol. 28^{v}) and Hortensia (fol. 44^{r}) model the notion that public speaking — to men — is an important skill. And interestingly, one of the letters Jacques de Beaune sent to Michelle de Saubonne in 1505, when the princess was not quite six, confirms Claude's actual empowerment through education: 'You would never believe how much she has learnt since you left and how she has grown in strength and confidence'.[22] Later, her judgment and epistolary skills were praised in a rare mother-to-daughter epistle, written perhaps in 1513: 'I assure you my daughter that you will find me a good mother, for you oblige me more and more with the gracious letters you write me'.[23] Ambassadorial reports confirm these allusions to Claude's successful tutelage. Much is made of Claude's 'strange corpulence', yet according to a Venetian 'orator', 'grace in speaking greatly made up for her want of beauty'. Similarly, de Beatis remarked that 'though small in stature and badly lame in both hips, [the young Queen] is said to be very cultivated, generous and pious'.[24]

Objective proof of Claude's genuine erudition lies in the extraordinary marginalia of her Book of Hours, produced subsequent to her 1515 accession to

20 Knecht, pp. 12–14; Matarasso, 2001, pp. 168–69, 211–30.

21 Musée Dobrée, Nantes, ms. 17. Cassagnes-Brouquet; C.J. Brown, 2011, pp. 144–66.

22 Matarasso, 1997, p. 354, for the translation: 'Vous ne croiriez empresse depuis le partement et la seurte et bonne contenance quelle a, cest une chouse singulliere'.

23 'vous asurenst ma fille q[ue] me trouverés bonne mere, car vous m'y obliges de plus en p[l] us veu les grassieusses lestres q[ue] m'escripvés', Matarasso, 2011, pp. 183–85 and translation.

24 Translations from Knecht, 1994, pp. 17, 114.

the throne, and perhaps about four years after her mother's aforementioned letter of praise.[25] The daughter is often cast as merely a weak shadow of her mother; and the Latin devices shown on fols. 87^{v} and 88, NON MUDERA ('I will not waver') and FIRMITAS ETERNITATIS SPEM DUPLICAT ('constancy [of faith] doubles the hope for eternal life'), were effectively — like Claude's ubiquitous *cordelière* (knotted cord) — inherited from Anne.[26] Yet the second device appears not only in Latin, as her mother's, but also in Greek; and both accompany Claude's personal emblem of an armillary sphere while framing a page written in a beautiful, 'modern', humanistic script. These changes suggest that Claude was already in contact with the evangelical circle of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1450?–1536), as her younger sister Renée would be.[27] This pattern of learning is also shared with Michelle de Saubonne's highly cultivated daughters, Anne and Renée, who in their childhood were exposed to both Latin and Greek.[28] Clément Marot informs us that his father, Saubonne's protégé, was writing an epistle to Queen Claude at the moment of his death; and Clément launched into his own courtly career as 'Facteur de la Royne' (poet of the queen).[29] An early link to his mistress's sister is his *Epithalame de Renée de France* (1528), in which he imitates the humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1467?–1536); and when he later became Renée's protégé in Ferrara, the 'noble ladies of Soubise' figured amongst the recipients of his epistles and epigrams.[30] Under the direction of an ever-present team of ladies closely collaborating with the queen, and in the company of privileged *demoiselles*, Claude (and her sister) mastered the critical thinking skills essential for confronting the perils of power, which for both proved great.

Trial by Fire at Court

The poet Octavien de Saint-Gelais (1468–1502) completed in 1489 his autobiographical *Séjour d'honneur*, warning of the dangers of court life after his sojourn at the court of Charles VIII (1470–1498), shortly prior to Anne's

25 Switzerland, Heribert Tenschert collection. König.

26 See C.J. Brown, 2010, pp. 101–21, for multiple examples of the 'shared ownership' of mother and daughter.

27 Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a, pp. 109–10; Wilson-Chevalier, 2016. On Renée: Belligni; Gorris Camos.

28 See n. 17 above.

29 Cornilliat, p. 178, n. 3; McKinley, p. 621.

30 Céard, p. 111, n. 1; Marot, 1993, II, pp. 94–100, 280–81.

arrival in 1491.[31] A comparable but female-inflected goal inspired Anne de France, Duchess of Bourbon (1461–1522), when during Claude's infancy, sometime between 1503 and 1505, she addressed her famed *Enseignements* to her daughter Suzanne.[32] Therein, she instructed ladies on how to bear themselves with the dignity appropriate to their rank, but also on how to compose an inscrutable mask. The court was a figurative minefield for both sexes, and princesses were ideally groomed to conceal an iron will. In Dufour's almost contemporaneous *Vies des femmes célèbres*, saints are martyred; Pharoah sexually assaults Sarah (fol. 8^{v}); Herod has Mariamne's head chopped off for adultery (fol. 45); Deborah plants a nail in Sisera's temple (fol. 17^{v}); Medea writes with the blood of the son she has killed (fol. 18^{v}); the sword with which Judith decapitated Holophernes is huge (fol. 30); Athaliah massacres four of her children (fol. 27^{v}); men murder Agrippina and slice open her womb (fol. 47^{v}); Amalasuntha knocks her son down with a blow (fol. 68). The world is no place for the feeble at heart, and no fewer than ten heroines, many of them queens, don armoured suits. Fol. 13^{r} surely illustrates Anne de Bretagne's aspiration for her daughter(s): in a palatial setting, the supreme goddess Juno (despite Dufour's rather negative description) addresses 'king' Jupiter seated on his throne, proactively counselling her husband the king (Fig. 5.1). Yet in this courtly universe where malicious factions were constantly at war, how did 'the good queen Claude' fare?

When Claude and François ascended the throne in 1515, the king promptly appointed to his Privy Council his formidable mother Louise; and there she remained, serving twice as regent, until her death in 1531. Mother and son constituted a remarkably tight governing team.[33] Louise, 23 years older than the queen, was deploying her savvy political skills with Jacques de Beaune and Michelle de Saubonne when Claude was but five; and she outlived her daughter-in-law by six years. Claude's will to wield power was also up against unfavorable numerical odds: two, or even three against one, since the king's brilliant older sister Marguerite proved to be a major political protagonist too. The possibility that the fifteen-year-old queen would be able to hold her own, no matter how well groomed for her role, was extremely slim. Yet, while the Valois-Angoulême trio was adept in promoting its image as a 'royal trinity', as in their staging on the oft-reproduced fol. 2 of the *Orationes devotissime* manuscript, the concrete situation was actually much more complex.[34]

31 Saint-Gelais.

32 See Anne de France; Chatenet; and Cynthia J. Brown's chapter herein.

33 For Michon, Louise is a true '*alter rex*', 2011a, p. 85.

34 BnF, ms. NAL 83; Lecoq, pp. 393–433.

Figure 5.1 Jean Pichore, *Juno and Jupiter* ⏎



In Antoine Dufour, *Vies des femmes célèbres*, Nantes, Musée Dobrée, ms. 17, fol. 13^{r} (© H. Neveu-Dérotrie / Musée Dobrée – Grand Patrimoine de Loire-Atlantique)

'The Very Christian King, Very Serene Queen, and Very Illustrious Madame Mother'

Further reports expedited by Venetian ambassadors in France during the nine and a half years of Claude's reign (1515–1524) suggest a rather different configuration, their trinity being most often that of the king, the queen, and 'Madame Mother'.[35] While there can be no doubt whatsoever that Louise and François were in command, Claude's physical presence at court proved dogged. Perhaps she learnt a lesson during the first year of her reign, when she was absent from the anointing ceremony in Rheims, although the delivery of her first child was over six months away.[36] As the years passed, her body bore the brunt of seven pregnancies. Nevertheless, she made a point of asserting her majestic rank, following her overbearing spouse, but preceding her overbearing mother-in-law. The king and his mother probably wished to keep an eye on the queen, too. Early in the reign, in Paris, the law clerks' organization known as the *Basoche* choreographed satirical plays that denounced the rapacity of Louise and François, openly taxing the son with debauchery. *Les Povres deables* and the *Troys pelerins et malice* may have been directed against Louise, the preferred focus of popular criticism, cast as a plundering 'Mère Sotte' (Mother Folly).[37] Shortly after his rise to the throne, *Monsieur Cruche* castigated the king as an adulterer who had had an affair with the wife of *Parlement* councillor Jacques Dishomme, then rapaciously confiscated the parlementarian's great wealth.[38] Claude's image rose in moral authority instead.

François I's reputation as a womanizer was such that in September 1518 a Venetian ambassador in Milan relayed the rumor that the king had impregnated one of the daughters of 'the lord Galeazzo Visconti', headed to the French court.[39] The previous year, the king's former tutor, royal almoner François Desmoulins de Rochefort (d. 1526), had offered Louise the magnificent *Vie de la Magdalene*, with an alignment of tiny roundels that foreground the lascivious comportment of Mary Magdalen and her lovers.[40] Fol. 10^{r} (Fig. 5.2) shows the future saint leaving for the hunt, falcon in hand,

35 Almost without exception listed according to rank: 'Il Cristianissimo Re, serenissima Regina, et Illustrissima Madama madre', Sanudo, XXIX, col. 386.

36 Sanudo, XX, cols. 22–34; Knecht, 1994, p. 45.

37 Arden, p. 85.

38 Lalanne, pp. 13–14; Rousse, pp. 189–91.

39 Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 59.

40 BnF, ms. fr. 24955. Johnston; Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a, pp. 111–15; Wilson-Chevalier, 2016, pp. 129–36.

Figure 5.2 Godefroy le Batave, *Mary Magdalen Going off to Hunt (for Pleasure)* ⏎



From François Desmoulins de Rochefort, *La Vie de la belle et clere Magdalene*, Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 24955, fol. 10^{r} (©BnF)

her horse led forth by a groom with an emphasized codpiece as a heavily plumed accompanying knight (foregrounded on fols. 9^{r} and 11^{r}) stares from behind her with glee. The Latin inscription on the frame — 'without dignity one must not hunt for pleasure' — proffers an admonition, mirroring a *leitmotiv* of the Venetian ambassadors: 'the king went to the hunt indulging in his usual pleasures'.[41] Rochefort's volume concludes with a prayer to the sinner-saint, whom Louise should implore to lead her son towards salvation and to help him distinguish between good and bad advice, so that his sins

41 'il Re andò a la caza ai soliti soi piaceri', Antonio Giustinian; here, January 20, 1519; Sanudo, XXVI, col. 449.

do not cause suffering to others. The birth of a male heir to Claude and a child to Marguerite, but also the harmony of the royal family and of the commonweal itself hinge on this moral rectification.[42]

Claude's spectacular entry into Paris in May 1517 affords proof that public opinion held the queen in high esteem.[43] The scaffold of the *Trinité* cast her as an advocate for her people — an intercessory task for which she had been programmed in childhood, as page thirteen of her Primer attests. The first scene of this early vellum sheet is devoted to the Annunciation to the lowly shepherds; the second, set above Anne de Bretagne's arms, shows a Virgin Mary receiving her subjects, amongst whom she singles out the shepherds, the humblest of them all. The third, set under the prayer to the right, concludes the entire pictorial cycle by presenting the Virgin Mother of Peace, not Christ, descending into Limbo to save poor souls.[44] At this entry celebrating Claude's coronation, the first scaffold at the Porte Saint-Denis associated the queen with six virtuous biblical heroines.[45] Thanks to trick machinery, an apple appeared, descending and multiplying until it became a dove with a crown in its beak, which it then placed upon the head of the queen. The manuscript narrative of the playwright Pierre Gringore (1475?–1538) tendered a warning: 'her humility makes her dreaded just as prowess makes princes dreaded'.[46] At the aforementioned scaffold of the *Trinité* — illustrated on fol. 40^{v} of Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 5750 — an enthroned queen was seated on the heraldic right of her royal consort (Fig. 5.3). By the king's side stood Good Counsel and Good Will, by the queen's Prudence and Knowledge, represented not as a single widow (Louise/Prudence), but rather two (plausibly alluding to the former regent Anne de France, henceforth serving the Bourbon cause). Below stand Prowess (resembling one of Dufour's armoured heroines), holding what Gringore calls a 'club of union', and Labor, identified as 'the French People', who turns to Concord

42 That the king 'ayt esprit pour se saulver, & pour congnoistre bon & mauvaiz conseil affin que par luy seul plusieurs personnez ne soient en souffrance' (fol. 105^{v}); that Louise's 'fille Claude soit grosse dung fils' and that her 'fille Margarite pareillement'. Louise should ask that her desire be accorded 'pour le bien de la chose publicque [...] affin que [elle] puysse vivre en amour fiable avecquez [ses] enfans', fols. 106^{r}, 106^{v}.

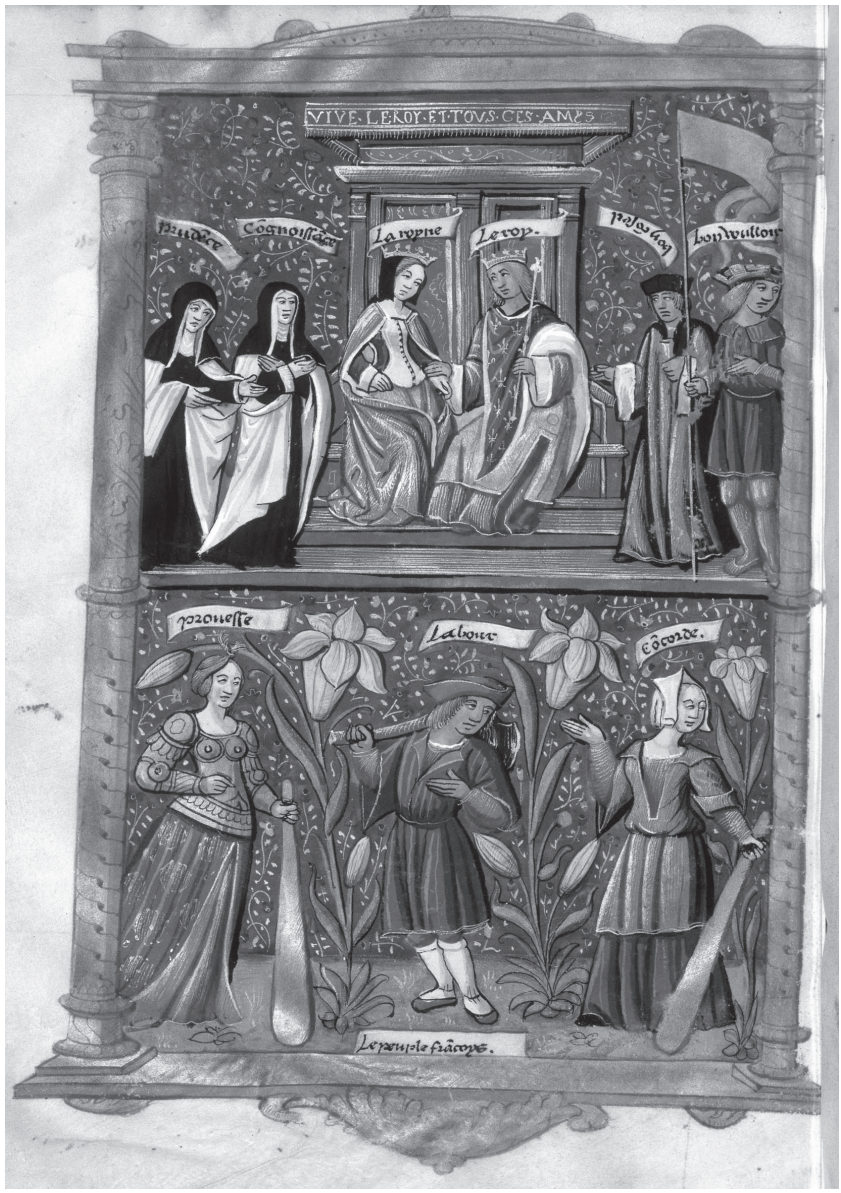
43 Gringore.

44 Wieck, 2012, p. 162; with translations of the accompanying inscriptions: 'Fear not, Amen'; 'How the shepherds came' (not signifying though that all the figures surrounding the Virgin are shepherds); 'O mother of God, remember me'; the prayer to 'Lord God of hosts' invokes peace (p. 137). Wilson-Chevalier, 2015b, pp. 250–59.

45 For what follows, Hochner, pp. 266–74; and Wilson-Chevalier, 2015b, pp. 264–71.

46 'son humilité la fait redoubter tout ainsi que proesse fait redoubter les princes', Gringore, pp. 163, l. 194–95.

Figure 5.3 ***The King, the Queen, Good Counsel and Good Will, Prudence and Knowledge, Prowess Labor and Concord*** **(Parisian scaffold)** ⏎



From Pierre Gringore, *Le Sacre, couronnement et entrée de Madame Claude Royne de France*, Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 5750, fol. 40^{v} (©BnF)

with her victory club. For Nicole Hochner, the staging aligns political wisdom with the queen, in order to redirect the king's energy away from military endeavors like Marignan, towards peace and his people.[47] Furthermore, the royal canopy reads 'VIVE LE ROY ET TOUS CES AMYS' ('Long live the king and all his friends'), emphasizing the ability of the queen, aided by (her own) Prowess and two mighty but counterbalancing great ladies, to foster a harmonious State. Religious and civic dignitaries thus acknowledge the queen's moral probity and her power to intercede.

Unpacking the Pageantry of the Queen

Month after month, year after year, Queen Claude and the 'very illustrious' Louise appeared side by side, with or without Marguerite. Just before Christmas 1518, the Venetian Antonio Giustinian paid a visit to the queen, then in Paris with her mother-in-law. The following morning, he and other ambassadors attended Mass, where Claude performed a public acceptance of the political engagement of the ten-month-old François (1518–1536) to Mary (1516–1558), daughter of Henry VIII (1491–1547) and Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536).[48] The queen was six months pregnant at the time. Two and a half months before the birth of the future Henri II (31 March 1519), she was still in Paris alongside her mother-in-law when chests of spices gifted by the Venetians were opened in Louise's chamber.[49] On 10 March the ambassador announced that François had gone off to hunt as Claude and Louise proceeded to Saint-Germain, where the second royal son would be born. The ambassadors accompanied not the king but the queen and the royal mother, 'wishing to follow the court' — a remarkable conflation of the court and its female protagonists.[50] When the news of the birth reached Rome, the Venetian ambassador to the Holy See congratulated Denis Briçonnet (1479–1535), French ambassador to the pope and an episcopal ally of the queen.[51]

Approximately a year later, 29 February 1520, in the presence of the ambassadors of Rome, Spain, England, Venice, Ferrara, and Mantua, Louise organized a grand entry into the symbolic Valois-Angoulême seat of Cognac in honor of Claude. The glory of her queenship surely radiated upon the royal

47 Hochner, p. 271.
48 Sanudo, XXVI, col. 331.
49 Sanudo, XXVI, cols. 419–20.
50 Sanudo, XXVI, col. 449 and Sanudo, XXVII, col. 97: 'volendo seguir la corte'.
51 Sanudo, XXVI, col. 184; Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a.

mother as they rode forth in a black and crimson litter while ancient gods and goddesses emerged to pay homage to the queen, escorted by three carts full of her *demoiselles*.[52] Claude was once again pregnant. Yet she traversed France to assume a major role in the astounding Field of Cloth of Gold (June 1520),[53] a ceremonial encounter that ended less than two months prior to the delivery of Madeleine (10 August 1520). The previous November the queen's secretary had conveyed to the royal princess of England Claude's gift of a cross of gold and jewels, along with a portrait (by Jean Clouet?) of her infant fiancé, the *dauphin*.[54] The date of the famous Franco-English encounter had been negotiated in function of her pregnancy;[55] and Claude regally presided over a banquet honoring Henry VIII and sat on the heraldic right of Catherine of Aragon when the jousting began.[56] The French queen was obviously determined that her power to produce heirs no longer deprive her of the symbolic power of public space.

On 22 May 1521, in a climate of rising fear of an Imperial threat to the Duchy of Milan (transmitted via the queen), Claude and Louise ceremoniously entered Dijon together, as they were wont to do.[57] Then most unusually, on 28 May, the Venetian ambassador Brizio Giustiniani delivered a present to the 'Very Serene Queen' and her wet nurses ('nutrice'), alone, in the presence of the grand chancellor and admiral: two coffers containing a jewel, spices, gold cloth, crimson silk, and so forth.[58] On 2 July, Ambassador Giovanni Badoer (1465–1535) paid a first visit to the king, assuring his majesty that Venice supported the conservation of his State. He then went to the queen, who rose to greet him as her consort had done, and likewise thanked the Republic for its support of the king's State and for its gifts. She reported on Madeleine (1520–1537), whom Badoer had had the honor to hold at the baptismal font almost a year before in the name of Venice and its doge.[59] Only then did the ambassador visit the king's mother. The ceremonies surrounding the royal children were at the very core of the politics of the age; and since the secretary of the children's household was Gilles de Commacre, one of

52 Sanudo, XXVIII, cols. 342–51.
53 Russell.
54 Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 116.
55 Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 443.
56 Sanudo, XXIX, cols. 22–23, 30.
57 Sanudo, XXX, col. 297.
58 Sanudo, XXX, col. 359.
59 Sanudo, XXX, col. 48, XXIX, col. 139.

her many Breton officers, Claude's power over her progeny was real, not merely symbolic.[60] In 1521, the Venetians were courting her.

The Italians cultivated the queen at important conjunctions, particularly it would seem when religious issues were at stake; and when useful, they flattered her artistic taste. In 1518 Pope Leo X (1475–1521) was seeking support for a crusade against the Turks, and he offered paintings by the sought-after Raphael (1483–1520), not to Louise but rather to the atypical trinity of François, Claude, and Marguerite d'Alençon/de Navarre, the latter two linked by their sustained interest in religious issues. The queen's present, Raphael's *Grande Sainte Famille* (Paris, Louvre), honors the birth of the *dauphin*. Yet Joseph, set at the top of a diagonal that runs from the Christ Child through the Virgin Mary/Claude, dons papal colors, suggesting that Leo had an especial interest in engaging the queen to put pressure on the king.[61] When the Venetians decided to commission 'a Visitation of St. Mary and St. Elizabeth' to 'hang perpetually in the chamber of the Very Christian Queen of France', they turned to their own most famous artist in Rome, Sebastiano del Piombo, whom they classified amongst the outstanding painters just after Michelangelo and Raphael.[62] Their Roman ambassador followed the development of the work from at least 4 May 1519 — the very day that Marcantonio Michiel wrote of St. Francis of Paola's canonization and expedited a copy of the *Divi Francisci Paulii apotheosis* which credited the event to the French king and queen.[63] On the feast of Corpus Christi, the Venetian Cardinal Cornaro exhibited Claude's future painting in front of his residence on an altar in the streets of Rome.

Venetian ambassadors are renowned for observing the European political scene with an eagle eye. When in June 1520 a French and an Italian pilgrim were murdered en route to St. Anthony of Padua, Claude and the king, 'our very dear confederates' in the ambassadorial transcription, addressed letters calling for justice to the Venetian government.[64] Antonio Giustinian later listed amongst the great expenditures of 'His Majesty', the court of 'the Majesty of the Queen, of his mother, of the children'.[65] Then on 12 September

60 Le Page, pp. 656–57.

61 Cox-Rearick, pp. 191–214; Wilson-Chevalier, 2010, p. 131. Also, Henry and Joannides, nos. 14, 16, and 21.

62 'la visitatione di Santa Maria e Santa Elisabetta, dono destinato a la Cristianissma regina di Franza, et che averà a stare sempre ne la sua camera', Sanudo, XXVII, col. 470.

63 Sanudo, XXX, cols. 272–77.

64 'nostri carissimi confederati' Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 628.

65 'come per spexe in la corte di la Maestà di la Regina, di Madama sua madre, di fioli', Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 628.

1520, when the king was tending to his customary pleasures of the hunt, Giustinian's compatriot Badoer went to Saint-Germain to transmit letters to 'the mother' but also to speak to the queen separately to invite her to Venice.[66] Thanks to a report from the secretary Alvise Marin, penned on 2 January 1521, we finally learn, six years after Claude rose to the throne, that she had a political agenda of her own. Odet de Foix, Lord of Lautrec (1485–1528), Marin relates, was not pleased that the queen was 'in the power' of the Constable; in other words, she was countering the politics of François and Louise.[67] On 16 January, Badoer reported that a political battle of benefices was underway: the French king had given the 'abazia di Ras' (Saint-Vaast d'Arras) to the queen's confessor, surely Louis Chantereau (d. 1531), while Charles V (1500–1558) had bestowed it upon one of his allies.[68] Was the king not trying to neutralize the queen, whose critical spirit made her a potential magnet for an alternative faction at court? Claude — her mother's daughter — was an active participant in the patronage game, both on the giving and on the receiving end. Her power helped make saints and distribute ecclesiastical charges. She could also wield it to defy the politics of the king.

The Power of Gift-giving and Discrete Alliances at Court

Although politically marginalized, Claude's marginalization was never absolute. Documents and artefacts prove that she made a valiant effort to occupy political spaces shortly after her queenship commenced. Her 1524 testament lists the territories that continued to fall under her legal jurisdiction: the Duchy of Brittany, which supplied a number of her officers and covered the major part of her expenses in 1523; the Counties of Blois, Montfort, Étampes, Soissons and Vertus; the *seigneurie* of Coucy.[69] At the beginning of François's reign the court was centered in her dynastic castle of Blois where, as countess, she rendered justice throughout her life. The king immediately began construction to leave his mark thereupon, relying on the services of Jacques Sourdeau (d. 1521/1522), a master mason formerly in her parents' employ.[70] While the king planted his salamanders triumphantly on the new *corps-de-logis* and

66 Sanudo, XXVIII, cols. 276–77.

67 'disse non li piacer la Raina sia in poter dil Contestabile', Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 540.

68 Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 596.

69 Hamon, p. 6. Le Page, in addition to Gilles de Commacre, mentions Philibert Tissart, Jean-François Cardonne, her treasurer Clérembaut Leclerc, and Yves Le Flo, pp. 24, 310, 469, 472–73, 639, 649–50.

70 Lesueur, pp. 99–100.

the grand staircase, the balustrade above sports the *cordelière* the couple shared; it however wraps itself around Claude's C, topped by a high crown, while the crown of François's monogram hovers below at the middle of his F. The queen's donation of land to Sourdeau offers proof of her agency on the construction site in 1516; and building at Blois came to a halt upon her death.[71]

The preceding year, when Claude and her consort of lesser rank took the throne, she had twice made gifts of lands from her territories to the major secretary of state Florimond Robertet (*c.* 1465–1527), for the 'eminent services' he had rendered to her parents.[72] In the name of the king and herself, she wrote to 'Monseigneur de Lafayette', Governor of Boulogne, charged with overseeing the borders to the north.[73] She intervened to support the successful bid of her almoner Antoine de Levis-Châteaumorand (d. 1565) to become a canon of the chapter of Saint-Jean of Lyons. Yet did such acts play in her favor. The powerful Robertet, serving kings since Louis XI (1423–1483), quickly aligned himself with François and Louise, slipping seamlessly into François's Privy Council and remaining there until his death in 1527.[74] In 1522, his wife Michelle Gaillard was a lady-in-waiting not to Claude but to Louise.[75] Nothing, however, precluded the couple's continued bonding with the queen. Robertet had recourse to Greek devices, like Claude. Both contributed to reviving ruinous religious edifices in Blois; and Gérard Defaux argues that the royal officer was a protector of the evangelical cause.[76] In 1523, Étienne Poncher (1446–1525), Archbishop of Sens, solicited Claude alongside Robertet when he sought to place a Parisian parlementary councillor in a vacant slot at the *Parlement* of her Breton duchy.[77]

Early in her reign Claude had intervened to support the reform of the religious house of Yerres, effected by the same (then reforming Bishop of Paris) Poncher.[78] As for her almoner Levis-Châteaumorand (still recorded in that function in 1520), facets of his ecclesiastical career dovetail neatly with Claude's links to religious reform. In 1516 the recently appointed canon of Lyons was promoted Bishop of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. When ten years later he became Archbishop of Embrun, his bishopric was given to none other

71 Lesueur, pp. 95, 100.

72 Mayer and Bentley-Cranch, pp. 65, 157; Castelain, p. 39.

73 Castelain, p. 37 (BnF, ms fr. 2934, fol. 45).

74 Chevalier, pp. 99–116.

75 I thank Aubrée David-Chapy for this information.

76 Taburet-Delahaye; Mayer and Bentley-Cranch, p. 16 (including his sons Claude and François's knowledge of Greek); Bernier, p. 52 (for his renovation of Saint-Honoré); Marot, 1993, I, pp. 609–21.

77 Hamon, pp. 389–91.

78 Le Gall, p. 99; Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a, p. 99.

than Michel d'Arande (d. 1539), who had begun his controversial preaching of the evangelical gospel at court in 1522.[79] Linked to the circle of Meaux, d'Arande is most famous as a protégé of Claude's sister-in-law Marguerite. This suggestive transfer of a bishopric marks but one instance when the religious sensitivities of Claude and Marguerite crisscrossed. Their complicity had begun no later than 1515, when the queen and her sister-in-law each wrote to the *Parlement* of Paris to promote monastic reform.[80]

The Power of Education and the Promotion of Church Reform

The minuscule girdle book that Claude de France wore around her waist is her most personal gift to posterity.[81] Exquisitely illuminated by the master who bears Claude's name, it reveals the nature of the queen's piety and the discerning power of her fine aesthetic eye. Its 102 illuminated pages include the queen's arms three different times (fols. 5^{r}, 15^{v}, 18^{v}); her *cordelière* encircles all of the other sheets minus two, which defer to a model king and a model pope. The first exception highlights a rainbow-golden Trinity framed by the king's *cordelière* of Savoy (fol. 24^{v}).[82] The second depicts the Mass of St. Gregory (fol. 50^{v}), an open book on the altar, the raised host projecting a pure explosion of golden light. On the opposite folio (51^{r}), Pope Gregory the Great (*c.* 540–604), seconded by a cardinal, composes instructions for a kneeling bishop, the threesome dutifully administering an exemplary Church. The page bearing the king's *cordelière* succeeds, however, a very first burst of divine rainbow-golden light: that of the Coronation of the Virgin (fol. 24^{r}), an allusion to the queen's 1517 coronation at Saint-Denis.[83] Hence Mary/the queen introduces the light of pure faith, in stride with the Eucharistic beliefs of Lefèvre d'Étaples.[84]

The folios of the prayer book address popular evangelical themes, including the imminence of the end of the world (fol. 1^{r}, John the Evangelist composing his Apocalyptic text) and four scenes of resurrection (fols. 1^{v}, an

79 Longeon, p. 68, n. 142.

80 Renaudet, pp. 586–87; Le Gall, pp. 82, 515–16. Reid, I, p. 106, cites a letter from Marguerite to *Parlement* regarding the reformed Dominicans in Le Mans, dated August 23 1515, so predating the queen's two September interventions related to Jarcy.

81 The Morgan Library and Museum, ms. M 1166; http://www.themorgan.org/collection/Prayer-Book-of-Claude-de-France. Wieck and C.J. Brown; Wieck, 2012, 2014.

82 Wieck and C.J. Brown, pp. 257–58.

83 Wieck and C.J. Brown, p. 175, dates the manuscript to shortly before.

84 For these, see Hughes, p. 87.

unanticipated Drusiana; 15^{r}, Christ; 36^{r} and 39^{v}). Saints Claude and René, the model bishop-patrons of the queen and her sibling, enact the latter two. The task of resurrecting not only suffering souls but also a suffering Church, I contend, was placed in the royal daughters' hands at birth. Sometime between 1503 and 1505, in a letter addressed to Ferdinand (1452–1516) and Isabella of Spain (1451–1504), Anne de Bretagne expressed her explicit concern that bishops reside in their seats.[85] Anne (in synchrony with Michelle de Saubonne?) deliberately transmitted a dynastic responsibility that both Claude and Renée embraced.

The suffrages begin unexpectedly with a prayer to the Holy Face. Two pages are correspondingly devoted to St. Veronica (fols. 27^{r} and 27^{v}), who no less unexpectedly intervenes with her husband Amadour, forming a couple united to convert a disbelieving crowd — an expression of the queen's conjugal dream?[86] Claude shouldered her task of spiritual renovation earnestly, overseeing the reconstruction of the parish church of Saint-Solenne (today the cathedral of Blois)[87] and, in 1521, rebuilding the Augustinian convent of Saint-Jean of Blois for the nuns known as the 'Véroniques', who specialized in 'the good education they give to their boarders'.[88] Books abound in illustrations throughout her prayer book, often in women's hands. A grand double-page representation (fols. 46^{v} and 47^{r}) is accorded to St. Ursula, dear to Claude and her mother as a saint from their sovereign duchy (Fig. 5.4). A renowned protectress of female education, she is depicted enthroned in front of a (Breton) maritime scene like a queen with a vast court of *demoiselles*, one deploying a large open book on her knees. Education had empowered Claude, and transmitting its power was high on her agenda, whether sacred or profane.

The exemplary Pope Gregory intervenes just before the final illumination of the Exposition of the Eucharist (fol. 52^{r}), signaling Claude's full assumption of her active role in the promotion of an exemplary Gallican Church. St. Claude first appears at his consecration, kneeling at an altar with an open book (fol. 35^{v}). On the single page of the suffrage to St. René (fol. 39^{v}), the main scene depicts Bishop Maurilius resuscitating the infant René with the help of the open Scriptures.[89] The adult René stands nearby in a

85 Anne requested that they withdraw their candidate in favor of her almoner, 'en considerant que c'est une seulle église catedralle ou royaume de Navarre, & qu'il est besoing que leur preslat demeure continuellement sur les lieux', Leroux de Lincy, III, p. 34.

86 Wieck and C.J. Brown, pp. 218–19, and 258–59 on the crowd.

87 Sauvage, p. 28.

88 'la bonne éducation qu'elles donnent à leurs Pensionnaires', Bernier, p. 61.

89 Wieck and C.J. Brown, p. 268.

Figure 5.4 Master of Claude de France, *St. Ursula and Her Maidens* ⏎



Prayer Book of Claude de France, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.1166, fols. 46^{v} and 47^{r} (© The Morgan Library and Museum. Ms M. 1166. Gift of Mrs. Alexandre P. Rosenberg in memory of her husband Alexandre Paul Rosenberg, 2008)

gold-ground insert with his bishop's staff and a closed book containing the word to be diffused. Six of Claude's prayers are to bishop saints; but St. Julian (fol. 39^{r}), an early Christian bishop of Le Mans, is the only one (like St. Anne educating her daughter, fol. 42^{r}; St. Martha, fol. 43^{r}; the royal Augustinian St. Genevieve, fol. 46^{r}) with open book in hand. As early as 1493, Philippe du Luxembourg (1445–1519), Cardinal-Bishop of Le Mans, had emerged as a major actor of Church reform.[90] It was he who on 15 February 1514 officiated at the funeral ceremony of Anne de Bretagne celebrated at Notre-Dame of Paris, he who on 10 May 1517 crowned Claude at Saint-Denis.[91] That same year, this 'great connoisseur of the Italian milieu', then serving as papal legate too, led the reform of Jumièges.[92] At the Council of Pisa in 1510, the Cardinal-Bishop had worked hand in hand with Anne to reconcile Louis XII and the Pope; and there he had labored alongside the Briçonnet father and sons reforming team.

90 Pierre, p. 143; Le Gall, pp. 101–02; Lestocquoy, 1949, pp. 81–82 for the Bishop and Arras.

91 Girault, p. 24.

92 Le Gall, pp. 450, 454.

Claude's documented connections are not to Guillaume Briçonnet (1470–1534) but rather to his lesser-known brother Denis (1473–1535), the 'enlightened' Bishop of Saint-Malo who, also, was highly familiar with the Italian scene.[93] For several years, Arcangela Panigarola (1468–1525), mother superior of the Augustinian convent of Santa Marta in Milan and head of a circle laboring for Church reform, identified Denis Briçonnet as the evangelical pastor destined to renew a decadent papacy. Moving in Panigarola's orbit was a Dominican theologian, Isidoro Isolani (*c.* 1480–1528?), who favored the French presence in Milan. In 1517, Isolani dedicated his *De imperio militantis Ecclesiae* to Denis; in 1518, the dedication of his Latin life of the blessed Veronica da Binasco (1445–1497), a humble nun of Santa Marta, targeted 'the invincible Lords of Milan', François I and Claude de France. The tale of Veronica's miraculous literacy is an important theme in Isolani's narrative and woodcuts, bisecting Claude's support of the 'Véroniques'. Louis Chantereau, Claude's Augustinian royal confessor and a(nother) monastic reformer, translated Isolani's text into French for the 'very honored lady and Queen of France', confirming that she, not the king, was the key dedicatee.[94] In keeping with the spirit of Lefèvre d'Étaples and of the prayer book that Claude had fabricated for her young sister Renée,[95] never does a priest intervene in Veronica da Binasco's personal religious experience. Christ himself feeds Veronica a host, and the nun learns to compose her own text — much as the Virgin, or Mary Magdalen, writes alongside the Apostles in the volume crafted around the same time for the young Renée.[96]

Like Denis Briçonnet and many an evangelical, Claude seems to have advanced cautiously. Yet her religious sensitivities were such that Jean Daniel (documented 1518–1544), a priest based in Nantes at the time of her entry into her Breton capital in 1518, could offer her subsequently a bitterly satirical manuscript, *Les Obfuscations du monde.*[97] Daniel summons rich prelates to take humility as their patron and denounces the 'rich and powerful' King Pharaoh, who unleashed the wrath of God 'for his oppression

93 Veissière, p. 105; Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a. His brother Nicolas (d. 1529) was Anne and Claude's 'contrôleur et général des finances' for Brittany (Le Page, p. 248).

94 The king's and the queen's (more elaborate) vellum copies are BnF, Rés. Vélins 2744 and BnF, Rés. Vélins 2743.

95 Formerly Modena, Biblioteca Estense (stolen).

96 See Cynthia J. Brown's text herein, identified as the Virgin passing the Credo down to the Apostles; Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a, for the hypothesis that this youthful figure may be the Apostle Mary Magdalen.

97 Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliothek, NKS 165. Deuffic. See Chardon; Wilson-Chevalier, 2017.

of the poor'.[98] Since charity enables salvation,[99] Jean Daniel necessarily approved when the humble and respectful Queen Claude, during her entry, gave back to the Nantais their mandatory gift. Moreover, at the beginning of his text, he praised Anne de Bretagne's religious stance, complimenting his dedicatee's mother for having appointed pastors who illuminated the Gallican Church.[100] However humble, Claude insisted on her rank in both pageantry and her prayer book. She (and later her sister), in her mother's stead, used the power of rank to promote Church reform.

Perfect Friendship: The Power of a Pious and Equitable Queen

On 19 September 1519, Sebastiano (1459–1543) and Antonio Giustinian characterized the eloquent Claude de France as 'a woman of few words';[101] and when about a year later Antonio described Marguerite d'Alençon/de Navarre as someone who knew all the secrets but 'spoke little',[102] he unwittingly placed the sisters-in-law side by side in the same ever-more-prudent Church-reforming circle. Although most often linked to Marguerite, the future queen of England Anne Boleyn (*c.* 1501–1536) had actually spent almost seven years at Queen Claude's court.[103] A 'convinced evangelical', Boleyn borrowed stylistic elements from Claude's manuscripts and, like the queen, invoked the celestial armillary sphere.[104] Today Boleyn is credited with having shaped religious change in England; and the extant volumes from her library include Lefèvre d'Étaples's French Bible and his *Epistres et evangiles des cinquante et deux sepmaines de l'an*.

Another of Claude's remarkable ladies-in-waiting with evangelical ties was the author Anne de Graville (*c.* 1490?–after 1540), learned enough to offer the queen her translation of Boccaccio's *Theseida* around 1521. The Arsenal copy of her *Beau romant des deux amans Palamon et Arcita*, thought to have belonged to Claude, contains a dedicatory illumination

98 'Riches prelats situez au hault trosne [...]. Humilite recepvez pour patrosne', fol. 15^{r}; 'Pharaon etoit roy riche et puissant', 'pour l'oppression qu'il fist au pouvre peuple', fol. 25^{v}.

99 'The good you have done to the poor [...] you have done it for me [Jesus] and my affairs'; 'Ce que avez faict de bien aux pouvres gens [...]. Vous lavez faict pour moy et mes affaires', fols. 72^{r}, 72^{v}.

100 'toute l'eglise gallicane en est enluminee', fols. 6^{v}–7^{r}.

101 'di poche parole', Sanudo, XXVII, col. 610.

102 Sanudo, XXIX, col. 167: 'Disse che [...] madame di Lanson sapeva tutti li secreti, ma parlava poco'.

103 Reid, I, pp. 61–62, n. 57; Ives, pp. 24–33.

104 Ives, p. 30; Starkey, p. 8; and Carley, fig. 118.

(fol. 1^{v}) with an outstanding image of the queen.[105] Seated on her throne under a Franco-Breton canopy, she receives from her lady-in-waiting the tale of the Amazon queen Hippolyta and her sister Emilia that Graville rewrote. The preceding folio (1^{r}) casts the 'sovereign dame', patron of the translation, as 'the site of all knowledge', 'in all said to be without vice'.[106] Graville's artist depicts the curtain of Claude's impressive canopy extending out to embrace three ladies-in-waiting, two of them pictured in active debate. The text refers explicitly to the Field of Cloth of Gold, and the male heroes Palamon and Arcita, cousins who fight to the death for Emilia's love but are ultimately reconciled, have been equated with François I and Henry VIII. Hence, when Hippolyta and Emilia appear side by side as the central spectators of a tournament (fol. 36^{r}), Queens Claude and Catherine of Aragon, who together on 11 June watched the kings joust and then gave each other's consort a ring,[107] must have come to the contemporary viewer's mind. In the final image (fol. 68^{r}), the main female protagonist, standing on the heraldic right with two courtly ladies dressed in ermine like the queen, commands over four rather contrite looking men. The text directly below proffers a commentary on perfect love — 'I mean loving as perfect friendship / Not today's counterfeit love' — which reads as Graville and Claude's main point.[108] The author/translator was boldly formulating the power of women to redefine the parameters of Renaissance love: her own right to marry the man of her choice against her father's will, Claude's right to object to a philandering husband.

There is a political sub-text, too. In the first narrative image (fol. 2^{r}), Hippolyta and Emilia stand between the enthroned king (Theseus) and a knight with upright sword (Fig. 5.5). At the Field of Cloth of Gold, on 8 June, Constable Charles de Bourbon (1490–1527) rode by François's side 'with the naked sword in hand which he held point up'— the emblem of the charge bestowed on Bourbon in 1515.[109] Queen Hippolyta/Claude's gesture is that of an intercessor recommending a wary Constable to a troubled king. The tale of fratricide has become Claude's plea to François to mitigate his hostility to Bourbon, aggravated in December 1519 when Suzanne de Bourbon (1491–1521)

105 Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. 5116; dated 1521–1524 by Orth, II, p. 102, n°25; Müller, 2003; Müller, 2004; Reno; L'Estrange. Six manuscripts survive.

106 'ma souveraine dame', 'la ou gist tout sçavoir', 'en tout dicte sans vice', Arsenal, ms. 5116, fol. 1^{v}.

107 Sanudo, XXIX, cols. 45–46.

108 'J'entens aymant d'ung amytié par faicte / Non pas de celle aujourd'huy contrefaicte'.

109 'lo illustrissimo ducha di Barbon gran contestabele de Franza […] havea in mano una spada nuda qual teniva *cum* la ponta in suso', Sanudo, XXIX, col. 78.

Figure 5.5 ***Queen Hippolyta, Emilia, King Theseus and a Mounted Knight*** ⏎



From Anne de Graville, *Romant de Palamon et Arcita*, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5116, fol. 2^{r} (©BnF)

bequeathed her vast territories to her spouse.[110] Graville reinterprets Lautrec's recent claim that Claude was 'in the power of the Constable' by presenting the queen as fostering reconciliation and attempting to counter François's intractable stance. Nevertheless, following Suzanne's death in April 1521, François I and his mother opened aggressive parlementary suits to claim Bourbon territories for the crown. It was almost two years later, on 23 March 1523, that Charles de Bourbon made his final appearance at the French court, then at the Louvre. According to an ambassadorial letter dispatched to Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (d. 1530), the king and the queen were dining separately when the king learned of Bourbon's presence in the chamber of his spouse. It was therein that he castigated the Constable's dealings with Emperor Charles V, therein that the tone mounted for the very last time between the acrimonious rivals.[111] Claude called upon Graville's literary talents to voice her discordant view; and while this political battle over inheritance tarnished the reputation of François and Louise permanently, it surely enhanced Claude's image as a just queen.

An inscription runs up the curtain of Claude's regal canopy on Graville's dedicatory page: DEUM TIME PAUPERES SUSTINE MEMEN(TO FINIS) ('Fear God, support the poor, remember the end').[112] Hence, even this profane work includes a socio-religious edge, recalling Jean Daniel's concern with charity and the oppression of the poor. The inscription appears in the St. Roch chapel in the hospice of Issoudun, under construction during the first decade of Claude's life; and three of her prayer book illuminations are dedicated to the saints who protected from the plague, Sebastian (33^{v} and 34^{r}) and Roch (34^{v}). While Sebastian is shot with arrows and uncharitably clubbed to death, an angel intervenes delicately to dress the ailing Roch's wound. Claude remained proactive until the end of her life. Even after the birth of her seventh child Marguerite (1523–1574), when still following the court, she subsidized the church of Saint-Honoré in a suburb of Blois, to help build a cemetery for plague victims.[113] Yes, the king and his mother intentionally thwarted Claude's will to rule. Nonetheless, her political and religious agendas were oft attuned to the demands of her age. In the name of charity and justice, a number of her subjects — including the second most powerful in the realm — reached out to build alliances with the queen.

110 Crouzet, pp. 298–301.

111 La Mure, p. 585, n.

112 The beginning transcribed by Orth, II, p. 102. The whole inscription figured at Issoudun (see Péricard-Méa).

113 Néret, p. 185, n. 1 cites a document in the Archives of Alençon.

Conclusion

Claude de France did not live to see François's humiliating capture at Pavia, nor the ensuing exchange of the *dauphin* François and the future Henri II as hostages in Spain. This twist of fate may explain why the sons destined to rule escaped the responsibility of shouldering evangelical Church reform, unlike the other viable royal children whose tutoring, logically, fell to Claude's sister soul Marguerite d'Angoulême/de Navarre at the queen's death.[114] Guillaume Briçonnet wrote one of his longest letters to Marguerite after his brother Denis had gone to Blois to see the dying Claude, after she had received extreme unction from her confessor/translator Louis Chantereau.[115] The 'very high, very powerful and very excellent dame Claude' left it up to her 'very dear, well-loved lord and spouse' to elect the site of her sepulcher and the arrangements of her funeral rites.[116] She did not choose to bequeath her personal possessions to her consort, though, but rather to her sons, by order of birth, with a provision for her daughters where custom allowed. If the power she had expected to wield at her husband's side had been sorely constrained, the power of her image as a queen who interceded for her people remained intact. The writer Guillaume Michel of Tours (fl. 1540s) claimed in an elegy that the torrent of tears of the inhabitants of Blois, Tours, and Amboise caused the waters of the Loire to rise after Claude's death.[117] Their queen provided sepulchers for her humblest subjects, victims of the plague, and conversely refused to bend to the will of her spouse and his powerful mother as they toppled the highest feudal lord of their realm. She helped make saints and simultaneously worked to renew a dangerously corrupt Church. She distributed lands and charges, and yet her moral authority remained unblemished. In the realm of culture, foreign powers sought her support through artistic gifts, and she herself commissioned books 'fit for a queen'. Power is not singular but plural; and the short-lived 'good queen Claude' demonstrated that the powers of a marginalized queen could indeed instil respectful dread.

114 Wilson-Chevalier, 2017.

115 Briçonnet, II, p. 144; Ferguson and McKinley, p. 5.

116 'très haute, très puissante et très-excellente', 'son très cher, très aimé seigneur et époux', cited in Néret, pp. 191–92.

117 'ung torrent voluntaire', 'jusqu'à faire croistre [L]oire', Michel, n.p.

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Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier, Emerita Professor of Art History at The American University of Paris, wrote her dissertation on Père Dan's 1642 guidebook to Fontainebleau (Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne). Her research interests henceforth focus on female patronage in sixteenth-century France. She has edited, with Éliane Viennot, *Royaume de fémynie. Pouvoirs, contraintes, espaces de liberté des femmes, de la Renaissance à la Fronde* (Champion, 1999) and in collaboration with Eugénie Pascal, *Patronnes et mécènes en France à la Renaissance* (Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2007). Other publications deal with: the Castle of Fontainebleau (including the Gallery of King Francis I and the Chamber of the Duchess of Étampes); Queen Eleanor of Austria; Madeleine de Savoie (in *Bâtir au féminin? Traditions et stratégies en Europe et dans l'empire ottoman*, ed. S. Frommel and J. Dumas, Picard, 2013), and *Das Porträt als kulturelle Praxis*, E. Krems and S. Ruby, De Gruyter, 2016); and dedications of Ovid's *Heroides* to sixteenth-century women of

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6. Portraits of Eleanor of Austria

From Invisible to Inimitable French Queen Consort

Lisa Mansfield

Abstract

This essay critically reexamines Eleanor of Austria's status as a passive marital pawn subject to Habsburg marital ideology through her performative practice of portraiture. Eleanor's brief marriage to the king of Portugal and hostile union with the king of France curbed her ability to exercise traditional forms of feminine political power and governance as a queen consort and regent. However, her elevated pedigree, merging Burgundian, Habsburg, and Spanish bloodlines, upbringing at Margaret of Austria's famed court in Mechelen, and position as the eldest sibling of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, endowed her with a protective dynastic identity that would emerge in portraits executed during her most challenging tenure at the French court.

Keywords: Eleanor of Austria, cultural patronage, Habsburgs, queenship, dynastic image-making, Margaret of Austria, self-representation

Eleanor of Austria (1498–1558) holds a tenuously defined status as a Renaissance woman of power. Despite having been twice queen consort in the kingdoms of Portugal and France, her significance is comparatively elusive when juxtaposed against other women of political and cultural power in the Habsburg dynasty and Valois court during the first half of the sixteenth century. Her paternal aunt and guardian, Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), was not only regent of the Netherlands from 1509 to 1515, and 1519 until her death, but matched her competence in managing international affairs with discerning patronage of the visual arts, music, and architecture.[1] Eleanor

1 Margaret of Austria was appointed Governor-General of the Burgundian Netherlands in 1507 before her promotion to Regent. On her exceptional quality and quantity of artistic, architectural, and musical patronage, see Eichberger, 2005b, pp. 48–55; Eichberger, 2005a,

Broomhall, S. (ed.), *Women and Power at the French Court, 1483–1563*,
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of Austria's younger sisters were also entrusted with regencies. In 1520, Isabella of Austria (1501–1526), the short-lived queen consort of Christian II (1481–1559), King of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, was regent of Denmark. In turn, Mary of Hungary (1505–1558) succeeded her aunt as regent of the Netherlands in 1531, following the death of her husband, Louis II (1506–26), King of Hungary, Croatia, and Bohemia. Likewise, the youngest Habsburg sister, Catherine of Austria (1507–1578), married to the king of Portugal, John III (1502–1577) from 1525 to 1557, served as regent for the Portuguese realm from 1557 to 1562. The three Habsburg regents were also active and innovative in their patronage of music and art, particularly Mary and Catherine.[2] Conversely, Eleanor of Austria was not charged with formal responsibilities for governance or administration, and her cultural activities remain somewhat indistinct due to relatively limited primary sources.[3] Her example not only demonstrates the limits of political power experienced by some queen consorts, but also highlights complexities and contradictions concerning fundamental conceptualizations of gender and power.

Eleanor of Austria's illustrious Burgundian-Habsburg lineage, incorporating the Spanish royal bloodlines of Aragon and Castile, marked her as an elite woman of social access and cultural privilege. However, in her subjection to the diffusion of hierarchical power emanating from the central source of Habsburg dynastic rule that directed the conditions of her private and public lives, like many seemingly powerful Renaissance women, she was authoritatively powerless. Although the power of a ruler was usually only disrupted or usurped by coercive political interventions intended to affect change, the dynamics of sixteenth-century courtly society still afforded opportunities for men and women to wield personal influence or embody forms of 'agency' as 'the capacity to act for oneself and by oneself'.[4] For Renaissance women like Eleanor of Austria, agency was commonly expressed through modes of cultural patronage, such as portraiture.[5] Portraits were affective communicative instruments of Renaissance court culture that could manipulate the perception of the viewer by shaping the contours of gender identity and amplifying visibility. As Stephen Orgel observes, 'the

pp. 287–95; Eichberger, 2003, pp. 239–59; Eichberger, 2000, pp. 4–24; Eichberger and Beaven, pp. 225–48; Gelfland, 2007, pp. 193–202; Gelfland, 2003a, pp. 203–25; Gelfland, 2003b, pp. 145–59; Houdoy, pp. 515–18.

2 Koenigsberger, pp. 123–51; Doyle, pp. 349–60; Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2583, ns. 16–17, 20; Jordan, pp. 173–94; Jordan Gschwend, 2012.

3 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2571.

4 McKee, p. 180.

5 See Pearson.

crucial pictures in Renaissance collections are the portraits of the patrons, those specific manifestations of their view of themselves'.[6] The ensuing discussion contextualizes and analyzes Eleanor of Austria's representation in portraits produced before, and during, her second marriage to the French king, François I (1494–1547), one of the most frequently portrayed rulers of the first half of the sixteenth century.[7] It moves beyond her reputed passiveness as a 'valuable' pawn exploited by Habsburg marital policy and neglected Valois queen consort, by calling attention to her active image-making practice at the French Renaissance court.[8]

Marrying and Making the Queen Consort

The precise social function and relative power, influence, or agency of a queen consort was dependent on a complex web of personal, cultural, and political factors. While there was no definitive position description to fit the circumstances of all queen consorts, there was a general expectation for the reproduction of legitimate offspring and provision of an heir to the throne. If not called on to exercise direct political authority independently or as a co-ruler, a queen consort would typically perform various practical and symbolic tasks from overseeing the education of her children to evoking the honor of the king through her exemplary feminine demeanor (with moral virtue having been equated with physical beauty).[9] Nevertheless, according to Theresa Earenfight, the role of queen consort was inherently political regardless of the way power was directly or indirectly exercised. This form of self-creation was:

> an incessant daily project, a daily act of reconstruction and interpretation situated in a zone of multiple and overlapping cultures, in which personality and temperament have some degree of influence over a queen's ultimate expression of her own unique practice of queenship.[10]

Despite the brevity of Eleanor of Austria's first marriage in 1518 to Manuel I (1469–1521), King of Portugal, she not only gave birth to her only surviving

6 Orgel, p. 266.
7 Mansfield, 2016, pp. 1–16.
8 Wilson-Chevalier, pp. 474–75; Jordan Gschwend, 2010, pp. 2569, 2572; Knecht, pp. 289, 544.
9 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2573; Earenfight, pp. 1–9; Rodrigues, p. 2; Goffen, p. 64.
10 Earenfight, p. 14.

child, Maria (1521–1577), Duchess of Viseu, but also amassed a veritable treasure trove of precious gems and exotic objects gifted by her husband who was 30 years her senior.[11] The queen consort's strategic placement at the Portuguese court at the age of nineteen, originally to marry Manuel I's son and successor, John III, was instigated by her powerful brother, Charles V (1500–1558), Holy Roman Emperor, to safeguard the Iberian Peninsula by uniting the Habsburg and Avis dynasties.[12] In turn, Charles V further strengthened the bond between these two prestigious royal houses in 1526 by wedding Manuel I's daughter, Isabel of Portugal (1503–1539), in the same year that Eleanor of Austria was betrothed by proxy to François I.[13] The emperor also entrusted the empress with the regency of Spain in 1527 and 1535.[14]

Carefully calculated negotiations years in advance were not unusual for planning Renaissance royal marriages, especially for Habsburg brides and grooms destined to absorb foreign realms in service of the dynasty's motto: Bella gerant alii: tu, felix Austria, nube! ('Let others make war: you, happy Austria, marry!').[15] Thrice married, Margaret of Austria had been subject to the matrimonial machinations of her imperial father, Maximilian I (1459–1519), who had himself been placed in a politically arranged marriage by his father, Frederick III (1415–1593), Holy Roman Emperor.[16] Eleanor of Austria was the oldest sibling, and last of Charles V's sisters, to wed. Her eligibility on the international marriage market was played out during her youth in a series of unresolved betrothals with powerful monarchs.[17] The Flemish princess was portrayed as young girl on the right panel of a triptych, displaying Charles in the middle panel, with Isabella on his left side. Whereas the smallest child, Isabella, holds a doll, Eleanor clasps a small

11 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, pp. 2572–73, 2593–98; Rodrigues, p. 10; Jansen, p. 94. Manuel I had previously been married to Eleanor of Austria's aunts, Isabella (1470–1498) and Maria (1482–1517) of Aragon-Castile.

12 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2572; Elbl, pp. 87–111.

13 Knecht, pp. 247. An intimate double portrait commemorating the marriage of the imperial couple, an alabaster relief sculpture attributed to the Master of Metz (Jean Mone), dated to 1526, is held in Gaasbeek Castle, Brussels; see Lipinska, pp. 58–59.

14 Jansen, p. 105.

15 Patrouch, pp. 25–26; Fitchner, pp. 243–56.

16 Johnson, p. 61; Willard, p. 350. On Margaret of Austria's betrothals and marriages, see Jansen, pp. 83–84, 86, 92; Tamussino, pp. 25–123; de Boom, pp. 1–63; Tremayne, pp. 3–5, 17, 25, 61–63.

17 Rodríguez-Salgado, pp. 42, 50, 90–91. Potential husbands included Henry VIII (1491–1547), King of England, Sigismund I (1467–1548), King of Poland, Louis XII (1462–1515), King of France, Antoine, Duke of Lorraine (1489–1544), and Christian II of Denmark. The youngest brother, Ferdinand (1503–1564) would accede to the post of Holy Roman Emperor in 1558, following the abdication of his brother, Charles V, in 1556.

'pink' (marriage flower) symbolizing her value as a future royal spouse.[18] In turn, Charles V obliged his older sister to make a personal sacrifice beyond the acceptance of a short-lived elderly husband and accumulation of wealth and independence by relinquishing her daughter Maria to the Portuguese court in 1523.[19] The separation of mother and daughter, when the *infanta* was not yet three years old, was due to Maria's 'rich fortune', which was controlled by the new king of Portugal, John III.[20] The strength of the Habsburg sibling bond, enmeshing the personal with the political, ensured that Eleanor of Austria would willingly forfeit her own desires to meet Charles V's vision of universal empire with her second marriage and relocation to France in 1530.[21]

Conjugal Discord at the French Renaissance Court

Having performed her role as queen consort to the king of Portugal admirably, Eleanor of Austria's arrival at the Valois court as a 31-year-old widow was beset with a challenging set of adverse historical, political, and personal conditions that complicated her experience as a mature queen consort. On the death of François I's first queen consort, Claude de France (1499–1524), he was left with five of seven legitimate offspring, including the *dauphin*, François III (1518–1536), Duke of Brittany, and his two brothers, the future king of France, Henri II (1519–1559), and Charles II of Orleans (1522–1545).[22] While a pregnancy was possible for Eleanor of Austria, the line of succession to the French throne was secure without expectations of auxiliary royal reproduction. François I, at 35 years, was, moreover, ensconced with his powerful mistress, Anne de Pisseleu, Duchess of Étampes (1508–1580), whom an imperial envoy described as 'the real president of the king's most private and intimate council'.[23] His mother, Louise de Savoie, and sister,

18 Attributed to the Master of the Guild of Saint George, 1502, oil on panel, 38 × 61 cm (each panel), Schloss Ambras, Sammlungen Kunsthistorisches Museum, Innsbruck, inv. no. GG 4452. Jordan Gschwend, 2010 p. 2572; Lorentz, p. 117.

19 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2572.

20 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2588, n. 125. Also see Serrão.

21 On Eleanor of Austria's love match in 1517 with one of Charles V's courtiers, Frederick II (1482–1556), Count Palatine of the Rhine, see Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2572; Moeller, pp. 198–218, 324–28.

22 The four daughters of François I and Claude de France were: Louise (1515–1517), Charlotte (1516–1536), Madeleine (1520–1537), and Marguerite (1523–1574).

23 *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, VI.1, p. 117: 'Con Mma d'Etampes, que es cabeza del Consejo mas privado'.

Marguerite d'Angoulême (1492–1549), were also loyal women of political acuity entrusted with political authority.[24] The power of François I's three closest female companions was manifest in their ability to individually and collectively transform personal influence into political change at both the French court and within international affairs.[25] Their relationship with the king was also characterized by familial or romantic forms of intimacy. In short, Eleanor of Austria entered a rival court where her 'power [...] was curtailed'.[26] The French court was marked by a distinctive gendered culture under the direction of a king who was criticized for the perceived permissiveness of his relations with women that stemmed from his close connection to his mother and sister as much the royal mistresses.[27] On his sojourn in France in 1517, Antonio de Beatis (dates unknown), secretary of Cardinal Luigi d'Aragona (1474-1519), recorded that:

> The Queen [Claude de France] is young, and though small in stature, plain and badly lame in both hips, is said to be very cultivated, generous and pious. And though the King her husband is a great womanizer and readily breaks into others' gardens and drinks at many sources, there it is a matter of common report that he holds his wife the Queen in such honour and respect that when in France and with her he has never failed to sleep with her each night.[28]

The significance of this observation resonates with François I's future conduct with Eleanor of Austria, whom he was reportedly reluctant to embrace in the royal bedchamber, and is elaborated on shortly.

François I appointed his mother as regent of France on two occasions to cover his absence during military campaigns in the ongoing Italian Wars.[29] The Habsburg–Valois marital alliance of 1530, a consequence of the Treaty of Cambrai or Ladies' Peace in 1529, was an outcome of a pivotal turn of events in François I's pursuit of the Duchy of Milan from 1521 to

24 Levin and Meyer, pp. 347–48; Lindquist, pp. 197–221.

25 Knecht, pp. 290, 395–96.

26 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2571.

27 For an insightful summary of François I's contemporary and later reputation with women, see Knecht, pp. 112–14, 249, 483, 549.

28 Beatis, *The Travel Journal,* pp. 76, 107. Antonio de Beatis, secretary of Luigi d'Aragona (1474–1519), penned his account of the cardinal's journey throughout northern Europe and Italy from May 1517 to March 1518.

29 McCartney, pp. 117–41.

1526.[30] Negotiated through the diplomatic collaboration between Margaret of Austria and Louise de Savoie, the institution of marriage was used as a peaceful compromise in the aftermath of François I's disastrous defeat by imperial troops at the battle of Pavia in 1525, and subsequent incarceration in Spain.[31] The traumatic nature of the loss extended to the *dauphin*, François, and his brother, Henri, who were held as imperial hostages in Spain for four years in exchange for the release of François I as part of the Treaty of Madrid in 1526.[32] Congenial relations between the French king and his Habsburg queen consort were also marred by the clashing dynastic claims over Burgundy and Italy that continued the enduring Habsburg–Valois tussle for European dominance.[33] Further hostility stemmed from the competitive enmity between François I and Charles V, on account of the French king's failed candidature in the imperial election of 1519 following the death of Maximilian I.[34] For the Habsburg dynasty, the union between Eleanor of Austria and François I was equally profound and went some way towards avenging Margaret of Austria's thwarted marital destiny as queen of France in 1491, when at the age of eleven she was repudiated by Charles VIII (1470–1498) for the hand of Anne de Bretagne (1477–1514).[35]

The ceremonial festivities interwoven with traditional allegorical references to peace that honored Eleanor of Austria's coronation at Saint-Denis and her royal entry into Paris in 1531 were hardly able to offset the barbed personal and political reverberations that contextualized her experience of the French Renaissance court in words and portraits (Fig. 6.1).[36] In his eyewitness reportage of the pageantry penned for Henry VIII on 23 March 1531, the Tudor ambassador, Sir Francis Bryan (1490–1550), noted that François I 'rode to a house where Hely [Anne de Pisseleu, Duchess d'Étampes] was, and set her before him in an open window, talking two hours with her in sight of all the people, which was not a little marvelled at of the beholders'.[37] Marguerite de Navarre confirmed the absence of connubial affection between the royal couple in a conversation with Thomas Howard,

30 Mallett and Shaw, pp. 139–73; Russell, 1992, pp. 94–152.

31 Mallett and Shaw, p. 172.

32 Knecht, pp. 246–47.

33 Knecht, p. 66.

34 Knecht, pp. 165–70.

35 Jansen, pp. 83–84; Willard, pp. 351–53; de Jongh, p. 79; Tremayne, pp. 21–22, 212–13.

36 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2576. Also see the primary accounts compiled in two booklets by François I's secretary Guillaume Bochetel (d. 1558) in 1531, Bochetel. On the anonymous satirical double portrait of the royal couple, see Mansfield, 2016, p. 122.

37 *State Papers of Henry VIII*, VII, 891.

Figure 6.1 Anonymous artist (French School?), *François I with Eleanor, Queen of France*, *c*. 1530–40



Oil on panel, 70.8 × 56.4 cm. RCIN 403371, Royal Collection Trust (© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017)

Duke of Norfolk (1473–1554), which disparaged her Habsburg sister-in-law. The exchange was translated in Howard's report sent to Henry VIII in 1533:

> [Marguerite] told me also that no man can be worse content with his wife than her brother is, 'so that these seven months he neither lay with her, not yet meddled with her'. I asked her the cause why; and she said,

> 'because he does not find her pleasing to his appetite'; 'nor when he doth lie with her, he cannot sleep; and when he lieth from her, no man sleepeth better'. I said 'Madam, what should be the cause?' She said, 'She is very hot in bed, and desireth to be too much embraced'; and therewith she fell upon great laughter saying, 'I would [not] for all the good in Paris that the king of Navarre were [no be]tter pleased to be in my bed than my brother is to be [in hers]'.[38]

While sexual allure for strategy or pleasure was a political asset and potential instrument of power typically in the remit of royal mistresses, it was possible for the queen consort to wield influence over the king beyond the need to breed. However, for Eleanor of Austria, intimacy with the French king, let alone maternity and eroticism, were blocked as pathways for achieving significant personal influence or wielding political power that would affect a profound change in Valois–Habsburg relations because of François I's incentive to prevent any convergence between the Habsburg and Valois bloodlines that would threaten the future of the French throne.

The Agency of the Habsburg Queen Consort

Eleanor of Austria's position between two of the most powerful rulers in sixteenth-century Europe makes it unlikely that she aspired to real political power, not only because of her independent wealth, but also the corporate framework that supported the collective mission of the Habsburg dynasty.[39] However, scholarship has drawn attention to the queen consort's agency at the French court in two key areas, notwithstanding burgeoning evidence of her patronage and collecting activities.[40] The first area highlights her assertive use of Spanish-style clothing to proclaim her imperial allegiance.[41] According to Ruth Matilda Anderson, wearing the foreign attire of a rival kingdom in a royal entry was 'less than gracious in a new queen.'[42] However, under adverse circumstances, it was just as likely to have been a protective

38 *Letters and Papers*, VI, 692. On her second marriage in 1526, Marguerite became queen consort to Henry II of Navarre (1503–1555).

39 Rodríguez-Salgado, pp. 27–111.

40 Wilson-Chevalier, p. 506; Jordan Gschwend, 2006, pp. 111–20; Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2584, n. 40.

41 Anderson, 1981, pp. 215–22; Wilson-Chevalier, p. 507; Cox-Rearick, 2009, pp. 39–51; Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2577.

42 Anderson, 1981, p. 216.

mechanism and statement of dynastic pride and loyalty. The custom of changing apparel to indicate (private or public) cordiality or displeasure was an enduring political tactic for the women of Eleanor of Austria's exalted pedigree.[43] She had previously experienced the convivial impact of this performative display in Portugal, when Manuel I and his courtiers dressed in the Flemish style to honor the Habsburg queen consort's foreign cultural heritage on her arrival at the court of Lisbon.[44] In the unreceptive environment of the French court, Eleanor of Austria inverted this sartorial device in both her costumes and portraits. Wearing imperial garb interrupted François I's practice of dressing his female courtiers (mistresses and other favorites) as a form of control that merged his renowned aesthetic discernment for feminine pulchritude with the politics of courtly display.[45] In the first year of his reign, François I had requested fashion dolls and cosmetics from the Italian Renaissance authority on sartorial style, Isabella d'Este, *marchesa* of Mantua (1474–1549), in a letter written by her son (and 'hostage' of the French king), Federico II Gonzaga (1500–1540).[46] Six years before her marriage into the Valois monarchy, Eleanor of Austria's ladies-in-waiting had also entreated with the *marchesa* in 1524, but did so directly by way of Federico's brother, Ferrante Gonzaga (1507-1557), then a page to Charles V, asking for 'a mannequin doll with the latest dress of the Gonzaga court' to be sent to the Spanish court in Valladolid.[47] Yassana Croizat makes the astute point that 'the request for a doll came from the women who would be wearing the fashions, rather than from the ruler whose court they graced.'[48]

Eleanor of Austria's interest in cultivating fashion not only demonstrated her agency in acting for herself independently without masculine guidance before her marriage to François I, but also suggests an element of cultural compatibility — if not intimacy — aligned with the French king's contemporary prominence as a patron and collector of precocious visual literacy.[49] The queen had received an exceptional education at Margaret of Austria's

43 Russell, 1969, p. 132; Anderson, 1979, p. 144; Anderson, 1981, pp. 216, 222; Matthews, 2005, p. 150; Cruz, 2013, p. 16.

44 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2574.

45 Croizat, pp. 115–16, 118–19, 120, 122–24, 125.

46 Croizat, pp. 95–97. The future duke of Gonzaga was located at the French court as the king's hostage following François I's military triumph at the Battle of Marignano in 1515.

47 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2587, n. 103, cites a letter from Pandolfo Pico della Mirandola to Isabella d'Este (1524) in Tamalio, p. 203, n. 35: 'Io sono importunate d'alchune damiselle dela Signora Regina che gli fazzi venire de Italia una puva [bambola] vestita in tuto del modo se accostuma li'. On Eleanor's love of fashion, also see Moeller, pp. 196-7.

48 Croizat, p. 101.

49 Mansfield, 2016, pp. 24–27; Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2577; Cox-Rearick, 1996.

court in Mechelen.[50] Domestic skills were complemented with tutelage in the visual arts, literature, dancing, and music, with the Habsburg princess having developed an aptitude for playing the clavichord.[51] Eleanor of Austria and François I not only shared French as their arterial language, but were equally privileged beneficiaries of formative cultural influences that blended aesthetic sensibility with political nous in the realm of image-making.[52] Moreover, as a consequence of her tenure in Lisbon, Eleanor of Austria's acquisition of New World luxury objects procured from India, Turkey, and China, was complemented by her contacts with dealers and agents working at the Portuguese court. Her cultural capital was an asset for François I's expansion of exotic *objets d'art* stored in the cabinets of curiosities at the châteaux of Fontainebleau and the Louvre.[53]

The second area of Eleanor of Austria's influence concerns the informal diplomacy she exercised during her tenure as queen of France. Her instalment at the French court was as inherently political as the pragmatic foundation of her second royal marriage. It not only equipped her with a sanctioned directive to diffuse tensions between François I and Charles V, but also to nurture the communicative network of the widely dispersed Habsburg dynasty.[54] As the division between private and public spheres in Renaissance diplomatic culture was indistinguishable, various forms of inter-courtly exchange mingled personal sentiment with political intent. Eleanor of Austria's selfless dedication to the welfare of her brothers and sisters replenished the emotional space left open by the demise of family's surrogate matriarch, Margaret of Austria, in 1530.[55] The queen consort's exchange of letters and gifts with her Habsburg siblings not only kindled emotional bonds, but also functioned as a discreet conduit for integrating diverse personal, political, and cultural snippets of information about François I and his court.[56] Informal diplomacy was, then, conjoined with formal efforts in (moderately successful) conciliation between the Valois king and his imperial archenemy and brother-in-law.[57] Charles V's quest

50 Cartwright, p. 6; de Boom, pp. 19–22; Tamussino, pp. 147–94; Blockmans and Prevenier, p. 230; Eichberger, 2005b, pp. 49–50; Jordan Gschwend, 2010, pp. 2571–72.

51 Haverkamp-Begeman, pp. 174–99; Brauchli, pp. 33, 77, 79–80; Cazaux, p. 59, n. 58.

52 Mansfield, 2016, pp. 18–25.

53 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, pp. 2576–77. On Margaret of Austria's collection of New World rarities and curiosities, see Vandenbroeck, pp. 99–119; Eichberger, 1998, pp. 24–25.

54 Rodríguez-Salgado, p. 83; Wilson-Chevalier, pp. 490–92, 498–99, n. 37; Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2584, n. 39.

55 Wilson-Chevalier, p. 483; Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2570.

56 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, pp. 2569, 2570, 2584, n. 39.

57 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2577.

to expand his empire was, nonetheless, dependent on more than familial devotion and feminine loyalty; it required the unequivocal commitment and cooperation of his kin. The condition of service demanding obsequiousness and cooperation between Habsburg siblings had been inculcated since childhood at the court of Mechelen in narratives of Joseph and his brethren, and tales of virtuous models of feminine chastity and patience, such as Lucretia and Griselda.[58]

With only a brief interval as a widow after the death of Manuel I, and scant opportunity to operate as a conventional queen consort to François I, it made sense for Eleanor of Austria to maintain her lifelong dedication to Charles V during seventeen years of marriage to François I. She appears to have absorbed the virtuous ideal of a widow's husbandly devotion advocated by the Spanish humanist, Juan Luis Vives (1493–1540), and exemplified by Margaret of Austria, in a revised mode redirected towards the steadfast support of the emperor.[59] However, in line with her title of French queen consort and a powerful living foreign husband, the richly embellished costumes displayed in Eleanor of Austria's portraits executed in the 1530s are juxtaposed against the subdued simplicity of the widow's weeds commonly sported by her aunt and worn by the queen dowager after she returned to Flanders in 1548 following the death of François I. The fundamental political foundation of Eleanor of Austria's complicated role at the French court not only explains the absence of maternal symbolism in her portraits and personal imagery, but also correlates with her desire to connect with her only daughter.[60] Maria of Portugal's immense inheritance not only impeded Eleanor of Austria's determination to recover her, but also explains why the *infanta* remained an 'eternal bride' despite her eligibility.[61] There was perhaps no stronger nor more poignant evidence of the queen consort's powerlessness and devotion to her powerful brother than the forced estrangement that occurred between mother and child.

Instead, Charles V conducted himself as a paternal figure with his sisters, following the model set by Maximilian I, and Eleanor of Austria dutifully adopted an affectionate and affective sisterly role predicated on the obsequiousness of her first-born status in the family.[62] The queen consort's unstinting commitment to mediate between Charles V and François

58 Cartwright, p. 6.
59 Vives, Book III, pp. 309–26; Eichberger and Beaven, p. 241, n. 120.
60 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2583.
61 Frade, pp. 52–53.
62 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, pp. 2570, 2584, n. 27.

I prompted Ghislaine de Boom's reference to Eleanor of Austria as having the 'patience of Penelope'.[63] However, her sibling obeisance is even more evocative of Octavia the Younger (*c.* 69/66 BCE–*c.* 11/9 BCE), an ancient archetype of sisterly virtue. Octavia was the loyal older sister of the first Roman emperor, Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus Augustus (63 BCE–14 CE), and long-suffering wife of his political rival, Mark Antony (*c.* 83/2 BCE–30 BCE).[64] Octavia not only competed with her husband's notoriously seductive mistress, Cleopatra (69 BCE–30 BCE), but also worked to broker peace between the two most powerful men of ancient Rome during the Second Triumvirate (43–32 BCE).[65] On her repudiation by Mark Antony, she was honored in Rome with a spate of commemorative portraits in coinage and sculpture that rewarded her self-effacing brand of femininity and devotion to her imperial brother.[66] While Eleanor of Austria appears to have exercised her agency by commissioning her own portraits at the French Renaissance court, it is clear that she possessed a sophisticated understanding of the ancient theoretical dynamism of the genre of portraiture for shaping and impressing her image and identity in the collective Habsburg and Valois memory.

Habsburg Practices of Portraiture

Eleanor of Austria was empowered with both the motivation and opportunity to draw on her knowledge of the dynastic portrait tradition established by Maximilian I and augmented by Margaret of Austria as part of her image-making enterprise at the French court. Her paternal grandfather's active approach to the genre was demonstrated by his finesse in supervising representations of his ancestors and tweaking portraits of himself executed by his court artists with his own hand to help meet his desired likeness.[67] The emperor also treated his portraits with communicative flexibility, promoting his ducal versus imperial image and identity for different regional audiences.[68] In addition, Margaret of Austria's comprehensive portrait

63 De Boom, pp. 7–8.

64 On Augustus and Charles V, see Tanner, p. 113.

65 Ancient literary sources for Octavia include Plutarch, Appian, and Dio Cassius, and to a lesser extent Suetonius. See Wood, pp. 30–35. On women in the period of the Second Triumvirate, see Cluett, pp. 67–84; Kleiner, pp. 357–67.

66 Erhart, pp. 117–28.

67 See Silver.

68 Eichberger, 2014, pp. 100–14.

collection in Mechelen, which functioned as an instructive image-making repository for Eleanor of Austria and her siblings, was complemented by the regent's fabrication of her image and identity in portraits as a chaste, pious, and prudent widow devoted to the Habsburg dynasty.[69] Margaret of Austria's second appointment as regent in 1519 provided her with an opportune juncture to disseminate at least nine copies of her official portrait in widow's weeds over the next two years in a series of paintings attributed to her court artist, Bernard van Orley (*c.* 1492–1541/42), his workshop and followers.[70] Likewise, the state portrait of Eleanor of Austria (Fig. 6.2) executed by Joos van Cleve (*c.* 1485–1540/41) was replicated in at least nine variations by the Flemish artist's workshop, reflecting the Habsburg practice for disseminating multiple likenesses as family or diplomatic gifts.[71]

Well before Eleanor of Austria's sojourn at the French court, both van Orley and Jan Gossart (*c.* 1478–1532) had executed betrothal portraits of her around 1515, which touted her youthful marriageability in the years shortly before her relocation to Lisbon as the queen consort of Manuel I.[72] Before her arrival at the French court in 1530, all of Eleanor's portraits appear to have been commissioned by other members of her family, such as her brother, Charles, who made a payment to Gossart in April 1516 for two paintings made from life of his 'dear and beloved sister'.[73] The precise identification of the specified works remains unknown. However, a half-length panel attributed to the workshop of van Orley (Fig. 6.3), dated to after 1516, presents a young courtly lady (probably a poor copy of the artist's original portrait) in front of a neutral background as a demure Flemish princess with her hands resting on a parapet.[74] While the finely attenuated fingers of her left hand display several rings set with gems, she delicately pinches a ring between

69 Eichberger and Beaven, pp. 225–48.

70 Wauters, col. 265; Baudson, pp. 16–17; Eichberger and Beaven, p. 228; Eichberger, 2005a, p. 287. On the representation of widowhood, see Welzel, pp. 103–13.

71 Hand, pp. 168–70; Eichberger, 2014, pp. 100–01.

72 Jan Gossart, *Eleanor of Austria*, after *c.* 1515, 28 × 36 cm. The portrait is held in a private collection and shows the sitter holding rosary beads, see Friedländer, IV, p. 144 (Master of the Joseph Legend); Matthews, 2003, fig. 98.

73 Houdoy, p. 516. From the French translation, 'deux tableaux de la portraicture au vif de madame Leonor, sa tres chiere et bien amée seur'.

74 Workshop of Bernard van Orley, *Portrait of a Lady* (probably Eleanor of Austria), oil on panel, 37.6 × 27.1 cm, Royal Collection, inv. no. RCIN 403467. This portrait resembles Eleanor's likeness in the fourth tapestry of the Legend of Notre-Dame du Sablon series, which was designed by van Orley and commissioned by François de Taxis (1459–1517), the imperial postmaster: see Campbell, 1985, p. 108, no. 69; Campbell, 2002, pp. 168–74; Belozerskaya, pp. 119–20. For another possible early portrait of Eleanor of Austria, see Friedländer, VIII, p. 100, no. 74.

Figure 6.2 Joos van Cleve, *Eleanor of Austria, Queen of France*, *c.* 1532–34



Oil on panel, 71.3 × 58.7 cm. RCIN 403369, Royal Collection Trust (© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017)

the thumb and forefinger of her right hand; a gesture replicated in a later portrait of Eleanor of Austria attributed to van Cleve's workshop.[75] Her sumptuous gown, augmented by voluminous ermine sleeves, is enriched by the heavy-set jewel collar draped around her lower neck, hinting at

75 Workshop of Joos van Cleve, *Eleanor of Austria*, *c.* 1532–35, oil on oak panel, 25 × 19 cm, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, inv. no. 1981.

her future displays of sumptuous costume and jewels in pageantry and portraits as queen of France. The Habsburg princess's charming oval face and standardized features in her betrothal portrait appear to have condensed the ideal likenesses of her foremothers: Mary of Burgundy (1457–1482), Isabel of Castile (1451–1504), and her paternal great-grandmother and namesake, Eleanor of Portugal (1434–1467).[76] Her head is framed by a close-fitting Flemish-style hat set back from her forehead, which reveals her neatly combed hair parted in the middle in the same style as her most powerful maternal grandmother, the queen of Castile.[77] She turns her face and diverts her gaze toward the left, in a pose that would be repeated throughout her mature portrait record at the court of France and beyond. Her countenance expresses a benign cast in the trace of a subtle closed smile. The injection of warmth animating Eleanor's visage reflected Erasmian ideals of feminine benevolence, kindliness, and generosity.[78] This northern humanist influence not only transformed the austerity of Margaret of Austria's widow portraits, but was integrated in portraits (drawings and paintings) of François I with a slight smile conceived by Jean (*c.* 1480–1540/41) and François Clouet (before 1520–1572) from as early as 1518 as an enhancement of his eloquence and charisma.[79]

Conversely, the king's smile is barely visible in portraits by van Cleve and his workshop, which reinforces the probability, put forward by Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier, that the queen, rather than the king, was the driving force behind the Antwerp artist's arrival in France in the early 1530s.[80] Cécile Scailliérez has, in turn, contextualized van Cleve's portraits of François I and Henry VIII as diplomatic gifts created to commemorate the second face-to-face meeting between the Valois king and Tudor monarch in 1532 at Calais and Boulogne.[81] Eleanor of Austria's absence at the royal interview was not surprising given that Henry VIII 'was accompanied by Anne Boleyn

76 Master of the Magdalen Legend, *Mary of Burgundy*, 15th century, oil on panel, 26.5 × 22.5 cm, Musée Condé, Chantilly, inv. no. PE588; Juan de Flandes, *Isabel of Castile*, *c.* 1490–1492, oil on panel, 21 × 13.3cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, inv. no. P07656; Hans Burgkmair the Elder, *Eleanor of Portugal*, early 16th century, oil on panel, 79 × 59.1 cm, Habsburg Portrait Gallery, Schloss Ambras, Innsbruck, inv. no. 4399.

77 Jansen, pp. 8–23; Liss, p. 120.

78 Rummel, p. 207. On the impact of Erasmus (1466–1536) on the visual arts and his influence at Margaret of Austria's court, see Marlier; Checa Cremades.

79 Matthews, 2003, pp. 92–94. On the significance of François I's slight closed smile in his portraits, see Mansfield, 2016, pp. 46, 48–50.

80 Wilson-Chevalier, pp. 504–07; Jordan and Wilson-Chevalier, pp. 371–74; Hand, pp. 101–04; Fagnart, pp. 103–15; Leeflang, pp. 19–20.

81 Scailliérez, 1996, pp. 77–78; Scailliérez, 2011, p. 107.

Figure 6.3 Workshop of Bernard van Orley, *Portrait of a Lady (probably Eleanor of Austria)*, after 1516 ⏎



Oil on panel, 37.6 × 27.1 cm. RCIN 403467, Royal Collection Trust. (© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017)

(*c.* 1501–1536), at François I's suggestion'.[82] While this might have been the case, the Valois king's purposeful negligence of his Habsburg queen consort would also seem to negate his role as the patron of the portraits. If the portrait of Henry VIII was a later speculative artistic venture sent to the English court by van Cleve, this would, in turn, cement Eleanor of Austria's status as an influential patron of a popular courtly genre of painting.[83] There is, nonetheless, a calculated individuality in the iconography of the three principal portraits.[84] These peculiar attributes are balanced by the shared compositional and stylistic elements linking the images, from the green backgrounds with shadows to the left-facing direction of each figure's gaze. As a loosely related configuration, the pictures not only encapsulate Eleanor of Austria's marginalization from François I, but reinsert her pride of place and independence at the French court.

Eleanor of Austria's patronage of portraiture in France was extended to Léonard Limosin (*c.* 1505–1575/77) and the Dutch painter Corneille de Lyon (fl. 1533–1575) as early as 1534.[85] François I's predilection for northern Renaissance portraitists, demonstrated by his enduring attachment to the Clouets, has traditionally been overshadowed by his (more securely sourced) preference for Italian Mannerism and antiquities. However, if the claim of Carel van Mander (1548–1606) that François I invited Jan van Scorel (1495–1562) to the French court in the mid-to-late 1520s is accurate, the king is also likely to have valued (or tolerated) Eleanor of Austria's contacts with Flemish and Dutch portraitists as a matter of artistic covetousness.[86] Margaret of Austria's wise counsel to her niece on the eve of her second French marriage, encouraging her towards benevolent and gracious comportment in her relations with the close-knit trio of the king, his mother, and sister, appears to have been channelled into the queen's artistic productivity in France.[87] That Eleanor of Austria, as dowager queen,

82 Knecht, p. 297.

83 Hand, p. 203.

84 The three principal portraits by van Cleve are Eleanor's portrait (Fig. 6.2), Royal Collection (Hampton Court); François I's state portrait, Philadelphia Museum of Art; and Henry VIII's painting in the Royal Collection (Hampton Court). The Tudor monarch holds a scroll with the Latin inscription (Mark 16:15): MARCI 16 / ITE IN MVDVM VNIVERSV ET PREDICATE / EVANGELIVM OMNI CREATVRE 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation'. Hand notes that the smaller image of Eleanor, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna is of equally high quality (p. 102).

85 Baratte, pp. 42–43; Béguin and Dubois de Groër, pp. 28–42; Dubois de Groër, pp. 8, 16, 19.

86 Mander, I, p. 315, fol. 234^{r-v}. Jan van Scorel declined the king's offer of lucrative conditions to avoid being beholden to a court post: see Mansfield, 2017.

87 De Boom, p. 127.

would subsequently employ the services of van Scorel's renowned pupil and court portraitist, Anthonis Mor, in Brussels also highlights her status as an experienced and influential patron of portraiture motivated to manage her own image-making practice.[88]

Although van Cleve did not work for the French or imperial court expressly, he had devised portraits of Maximilian I from life around 1509–1510 that were copied extensively.[89] His portrait of Eleanor of Austria was a resolute iconographic avowal of her imperial allegiance. The queen's (defiant) Spanish-style costume, donned in ceremonials and reproduced again in her portrait, was echoed by the emperor's embracement of 'Spanish dress, language and customs' from 1529.[90] The theme of imperial victory is also made clear in the letter held by Eleanor of Austria evincing her exclusive title of 'Most Christian Queen' of France in Spanish script.[91] In a previously mentioned workshop copy of van Cleve's portrait held in Lisbon, Eleanor of Austria's glittering display of gem and pearl accessories includes a fine golden necklace with a pendant in the form of a small armillary sphere, the Imperial device of her previous spouse and father of her daughter, Manuel I.[92] That the painting was undoubtedly destined for the Portuguese court raises the prospect that Eleanor of Austria's use of portraiture went beyond self-commemoration to maternal communication, functioning as a feminine role model for her beloved daughter in Portugal. The smaller dimensions of the Lisbon portrait and queen consort's placement closer to the picture plane creates an infusion of intimacy that is intensified by the movement of her hands and is comparatively softened by her somewhat ambiguous facial expression that seems to implore the viewer.

A copy of a lost (betrothal) portrait of the youthful *infanta* Maria by Francisco de Holanda (1517–1585), dated to the 1540s, shows the influence exerted by Eleanor of Austria's portrait attributed to the workshop of van Cleve.[93] An effort has been made to capture the physical resemblance between mother and daughter in terms of facial resemblance, pose, gaze,

88 Woodall, pp. 202, 215–16. Eleanor of Austria is depicted as queen dowager in widow's weeds in a portrait attributed to the Workshop of Antonis Mor, *Eleanor of France*, 1549–1550, oil on panel, 99 × 85 cm, Convento de las Descales Reales, Madrid.

89 Hand, p. 20; Scailliérez, 2011, p. 104; Eichberger, 2014, p. 107.

90 Matthews, 2003, p. 188.

91 Campbell, 1985, p. 24; Hand, p. 102: 'Ala xpianisima [christianisma] y muy podisinora ponderosa siñora la Reyna ma siñora'. On the privileged title of 'Most Christian' with the French monarchy, see Knecht, pp. 88–89.

92 On the symbolism of Manuel I's device, see Jordan, 2005, p. 186; Pereira, 44–50.

93 Unknown artist (after Francisco de Holanda), *Portrait of Maria of Portugal*, *c*. 1541–1545, Church of the Convent of the Incarnation, Lisbon.

costume, and jewels. The *bateau* neckline of both gowns, strewn with a looped string of pearls, ruby pendant with drop pearl, fine necklace (with an unidentifiable pendant worn by Maria), and slashed sleeves are shared visual features. However, the *infanta*'s portrait is imbued with an air of gravity and stillness, reflected in her dark gown and impenetrable facial expression. In contrast to the congenial facial aspect of Eleanor of Austria's early portraits by van Orley, the larger portraits by van Cleve, which place her at a distance from the viewer and show her holding a letter, represent the queen consort with a new mask of imperiousness. Her formality and aloofness are accentuated by the mannered flamboyance of her costumes and comparatively immobile face. This change in Eleanor of Austria's representation appears to have aligned with Charles V's imperial coronation on 24 February 1530, which motivated the reconfiguration of his image and identity as an authoritative ruler sporting armour in full-length portraits that accentuate his rigid sobriety.[94] However, it also suggests the multifaceted functions and communicative nuances in van Cleve's portraits pitched at different target audiences.

Eleanor of Austria's definition in portraits showing the diluted facial contours of her Habsburg kin also appears to be an outcome of her role as queen consort of François I. In addition to the multiple private and public social functions performed by portraits, Renaissance rulers followed ancient precedent and invested in permanent and peripatetic court portraitists to devise and duplicate salient likenesses that reinforced political legitimacy through familial resemblance.[95] Portraits played a vital role in transmuting the Habsburg dynasty's genetic disfigurement of mandibular prognathism (Habsburg jaw) into a powerful physiognomic symbol of imperial resolve.[96] Charles V's early portrait record, before he grew a beard, appears to have delineated the physical severity of his affliction under the protection of this physiognomic bias.[97] In contrast, Eleanor of Austria's early portrait by

94 Rosenthal, p. 205; Yates, pp. 1–28; Tanner, pp. 119–30; Matthews, 2003, pp. 188–89.

95 A large nose was an established physiognomic symbol perpetuated in portraits of the Valois kings. On the symbolism of François I's long nose in his portraits, see Mansfield, 2016, pp. 60–64. Maximilian I's inheritance of his father's hooked nose was also accentuated in his portraits. Physiognomic theory designated an aquiline nose as an exterior sign of imperial dignity or 'regal spirit': see Gauricus, p. 147.

96 See Rubbrecht; Thompson and Winter, pp. 838–42; Wolff, Wienker, and Sander.

97 Refer to the following examples: Anonymous Flemish artist, *Emperor Charles V, c.* 1514–1516, oil on panel, 43.8 × 32.2 cm, Royal Collection, inv. no. RCIN 403439; and Bernard van Orley, *Charles V, c.* 1520–1522, oil on panel, 72 × 51.5 cm, Szepmüvèsti Muzeum, Budapest, inv. no. 1335. Profiles on medal obverses by Hans Schwarz (*c.* 1492–1521) also showcased the emperor's angular face: *Charles V, c.* 1520, bronze medal, 6.5 cm diam., Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. The

van Orley (Fig 6.3) mitigates signs of the Habsburg jaw to meet Renaissance ideals of feminine beauty and enhance her desirability on the international marriage market. This may also have been due to the fact, established in modern medical diagnoses, that this 'autosomal dominant trait' usually affects 'males more severely than females'.[98] However, the theory and practice of Renaissance portraiture advocated excessive verisimilitude be tempered to create the most agreeable likeness of the sitter. Charles V patronized Tiziano Vecelli (*c.* 1488/90–1576), commonly known as Titian, as his prime image-maker in the 1530s and 1540s because of the Venetian painter's ingeniously idealized physical interpretations of his innate imperial virtue.[99]

Imaginably, the Habsburg jaw was an aesthetically challenging trait for the women of the dynasty despite the Renaissance rhetorical principle that 'all good women are beautiful'.[100] Whereas Charles V's 'extremely deformed jaw did not permit the upper and lower teeth or the mouth to close', Eleanor of Austria's left facing profile rendered on a boxwood game piece displays a rather more subtle extension of her chin and protruding lower lip with slightly open mouth.[101] The conventional feminine softness of her facial outline contrasts the harder profile of her sister, Mary of Hungary, on another game board token, dated to around 1535, attributed to Hans Kels (1508/10–1565).[102] The younger regent's conspicuously protracted jaw (and slight dorsal hump of her nose) not only alludes to her imperial resolve, but also her reputed vigor and active political leadership in the Netherlands by way of her right facing profile, which replicates Mary of Burgundy's game piece profile.[103] Reflecting her real political power, reputed energy, and combative nature, Mary of Hungary's dynamism would also be expressed

facial template outlined in the numerous versions of Schwarz's medal was also used to depict Charles V's profile portraits in panel paintings, woodcut prints, and a shallow relief sculpture in stone by Loys Hering after Hans Schwarz, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. 4371. On the positive intellectual connotations of Charles V's high forehead and blue eyes, see Burke, p. 408.

98 Thompson and Winter, pp. 838–39.

99 Freedman, pp. 115–43.

100 Goffen, p. 64; Lozano, p. 153. Scholarship on Renaissance (poetic) ideals of femininity, beauty and portraiture is extensive; see the bibliographic list of primary and secondary sources in Firenzuola, pp. xliii–xlv.

101 Unknown German artist, *Eleanor of Austria, c.* 1530s, boxwood game piece (roundel), 54 mm diam., Paris, Musée du Louvre; Wethey, p. 19. On Habsburg game boards, see Wilson-Chevalier, pp. 474–524; Eichberger, 2010, pp. 123–39.

102 Attributed to Hans Kels, *Mary of Hungary, c.* 1535, boxwood game piece (roundel), Kunsthistorisches, Vienna, inv. no. KK 3868; see Wilson-Chevalier, pp. 478, 482, n. 26.

103 Wilson-Chevalier, p. 485, n. 32. Mary of Hungary's profile is strongly evocative of right-facing profiles of Charles V in medals attributed to Hans Schwarz, which spawned portraits (dated to

in a full-length bronze sculpture, executed by Leone Leoni around 1555, which bypassed the traditional artistic boundaries of gender and power in Renaissance portraiture through its imperial grandeur and audacious use of materials.[104] Margaret of Austria had also demonstrated her physiognomic discernment in seeking the 'faithful representation' of her family members in the formation of her portrait collection.[105] According to the anecdotal testimony of Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme (*c.* 1540–1614), Eleanor of Austria was acutely curious about the origins of the Habsburg jaw; having allegedly scrutinized the effigies of the Burgundian royal tombs in Dijon, she exclaimed:

> Ah! I thought we did take our mouths from them of Austria; but by what I see here we seem rather to get them from Mary of Burgundy, our ancestress, and the Dukes of Burgundy, our ancestors. If ever I see the Emperor, my brother, I will tell him; nay! I will write him at once.[106]

The portraits of Eleanor of Austria as queen of France by van Cleve and Limosin fabricated flattering facial templates without forfeiting Habsburg signs of identity in her thin oblong bone structure, narrow jaw, small pursed mouth with fleshy lips, and hooded eye lids topped with fine linear brows.[107] However, van Cleve's painting stretches the boundary between generic beauty and physiognomic likeness in the soft curve and smudgy outline around her chin and left cheek.[108] Likewise, the decorative high collar that conceals her neck in Limosin's enamel plaque of 1536 (Fig. 6.4) fashions a pretty white ruff that diminishes the extreme pointedness of her jawline by mirroring the paleness of her porcelain complexion. The curved frame for the lower face is replicated in the small rigid ruff worn by her daughter,

the early 1520s) of the emperor in anonymous paintings and derivative prints by Daniel Hopfer (woodcuts held in Staatliche Museen, Berlin inv. no. 240-1974) and elsewhere.

104 Van Wyhe, pp. 135–68.

105 Eichberger and Beaven, pp. 227–28. Charles V also placed high value on accurate likeness in portraits of his spouse, Isabel of Portugal (1503–1539), Holy Roman Empress: see Lozano, p. 150; Checa Cremades, p. 275.

106 Cited in Jollet, p. 104.

107 The queen's face is given explicit delineation (compact mouth with slightly distended, fleshy lower lip, in a three-quarter-posed likeness) on the boxwood game piece attributed to Hans Kels, *Game piece with Eleanor of Austria/France*, *c.* 1535, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. KK 3866: see Wilson-Chevalier, p. 485.

108 In the Lisbon portrait of Eleanor of Austria by Joos van Cleve, the queen raises her hands (with no rings visible on any of her fingers), as if on an invisible parapet, holding a single ruby ring between the two forefingers of her right hand.

Figure 6.4 Léonard Limosin, *Eleanor of Austria*, 1536



Enamel plaque. Musée national de la Renaissance, Écouen, inv. CI 2 520 (© RMN-Grand Palais (musée de la Renaissance, Château d'Écouen) / Droits réservés)

Maria of Portugal, in her betrothal portrait, and is used to similar effect in Titian's portraits of the mature emperor with a beard. Eleanor of Austria's French-style costume and headdress worn in the enamel plaque was likely due to her amiable nature and 'assimilation' after six years at the French court.[109] Nevertheless, it was not until 1537 that François I reportedly urged his Habsburg queen consort to adopt the fashions native to his kingdom permanently and dismissed most of her Spanish entourage.[110] Her willingness to oblige the king's request is confirmed in a drawing attributed to the Clouet workshop, dated to around 1540.[111] There is no mistaking, however, Eleanor of Austria's distinctive Habsburg face in either the enamel plaque or chalk sketch.

Unica semper avis ('The bird that is ever unique')

Symbolic layers of Habsburg collective identity and personalized imagery also pervade Eleanor of Austria's *impresa* of the phoenix in flames, and Latin motto (derived from Ovid) 'Unica semper avis'.[112] The wondrous beauty and regenerative immolation of the mystical creature mingled classical allegory as an ancient Roman sign of filial *pietas* with the Christian tradition, alluding to both Christ's Resurrection and the Virgin Mary's perfect chastity.[113] Eleanor of Austria's adoption of the burning phoenix as queen consort of François I not only demonstrated her sensitive erudition and clarity of purpose, but, like her portraits, confirmed her cultural capacity and political agency as an image-maker. The legendary bird was not only aligned with Charles V's imperial eagle, but also complemented François I's *impresa* of the flaming salamander, epitomizing the symbolic dimension of her role as family moderator and international mediator in allusion to 'the empire on which the sun never sets'.[114] As Annemarie Jordan Gschwend explains, Eleanor of Austria's inimitable presence as 'a symbol of light promising peace, deliverance and reconciliation', articulated by the Governor of Paris at her first royal entry, was matched only by her status as the first woman

109 Wilson-Chevalier, p. 507.

110 Anderson, 1981, p. 222; Wilson-Chevalier, p. 507, n. 74.

111 Workshop of François Clouet, *Eleanor of Austria, Queen of France*, *c.* 1540, black chalk, sanguine, 31 × 22.6 cm, Musée Condé, Chantilly, inv. no. MN24 B275. On Eleanor's close working relationship with the Clouets, see Wilson-Chevalier, pp. 492–93.

112 Nigg, pp. 221–22.

113 Jeffrey, pp. 611–12.

114 Scheicher, pp. 54–55; Mansfield, 2016, p. 18.

in a long line of future Habsburg queen consorts to hold royal office at the French court.[115]

In this context, the portraits of Eleanor of Austria are a tacit reminder of the triumphant Habsburg infiltration of the French kingdom. The emotive psychology and political ambition embedded in the queen consort's symbolic vocabulary was amplified by her use of portraits to adapt the contours of her physical identity with communicative nuance and stylistic panache. Portraits disseminated a perpetual public record of Eleanor of Austria's physiognomic resemblance with both her esteemed feminine lineage and immediate Habsburg kin in a decisive — political and personal — episode of history for both the Habsburg dynasty and Valois monarchy. Put simply, the French queen consort's portrait record was formed out of her poignant and quixotic personal narrative, which activated her agency as an image-maker and resulted in a permanent record of recognition. Although she was repositioned at the unwelcoming yet sumptuous French court, Eleanor of Austria's portraits, both humble and imperial, distinguished and commemorated her face — and pride of place — in the Habsburg dynastic framework of sibling devotion.

The pragmatism underpinning the gendered lessons of her cultural and political heritage honed under the guidance of Margaret of Austria, one of the most powerful women politicians and patrons of the Renaissance, would empower the queen dowager to rise again after the death of François I as an accomplished patron of portraiture at Mary of Hungary's court in Brussels from 1548.[116] While Eleanor of Austria's power was universally contained and concentrated within the political ideals and ambitions of the Habsburg collective, her individual identity as the first Habsburg French queen consort could not be repressed despite François I's unreceptiveness. She endured the challenging conditions of her second marriage with a subdued style of self-confidence, discipline, determination, and feminine grace. These inimitable personal qualities not only buttressed her role as the devoted sister of her siblings and most intimate ally of the emperor, but also provided a foundation for her self-directed approach to image-making. Eleanor of Austria's portraits executed at the French court heightened her visibility as a unique queen consort and an agent of empire during the apogee of the genre of Renaissance portraiture.

115 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2576; Patrouch, pp. 32–33.

116 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2583; Woodall, pp. 202, 215–16, 218.

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Part III

The Power of Creative Voices



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7. Family Female Networking in Early Sixteenth-Century France

The Power of Text and Image

Cynthia J. Brown

Abstract

This study examines the visual and textual staging of four interrelated mother–daughter relationships in commissioned books. Through a comparative analysis of a primer Anne of Brittany had confected for Claude de France; a prayer book Claude had designed for her sister, Renée of France; a manual of moral comportment Anne de France dedicated to Suzanne de Bourbon (*Enseignements à ma fille*); a prayer book Louise de Savoie gifted to Marguerite d'Angoulême and her first husband, Charles d'Alençon; and the role of Marguerite's daughter Jeanne d'Albret in assuring the enduring legacy of her mother's *Heptaméron*, I argue that this remarkable women's network promoted an image of feminine pedigree and artistic creativity that gradually reached beyond the French court.

Keywords: Claude de France, Anne of Brittany, Louise de Savoie, Marguerite de Navarre, Jeanne d'Albret, networks, cultural patronage, religious engagement

Since scholars began investigating medieval and early modern culture from a feminist perspective, a number of strides have been made in understanding the transmission of knowledge among women during this period and the intellectual empowerment they derived from such exchanges. One productive area of such research has centered on the creation, acquisition, and circulation of books making up noble women's libraries in Europe. These connections often encompassed mother–daughter–sister or religious sister-to-sister lineages as well as noteworthy male–female and female–male

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associations.[1] As reliable documentation about a woman's cultural upbringing and influence is often hard to come by, scholars can turn to their books, those written about, dedicated to, commissioned, or purchased by them, for evidence of their intellectual interests and cultural impact on others.[2] Noble women did not often wield political power as sovereign rulers in their own right in the French kingdom, owing to Salic law — Anne de France and Louise de Savoie who ruled as temporary regents, and Anne de Bretagne who ruled her own duchy while queen of France, represent exceptions. The contents of their libraries, however, provide evidence of both active pursuit of intellectual empowerment, and promotion of their cultural knowledge through the circulation of these books, many of which provided moral grounding for their readers within their families and at their courts. In this sense, elite women of early sixteenth-century France exercised significant cultural influence over others, especially other women. This kind of power, though, is less easily measured than the political control of French kings or princes, who, of course, also sought to exert cultural influence through construction of their own libraries.

Yet, in many ways, women activated more extensive, diverse, and transcultural networks than their male counterparts, for they were the ones who introduced their family's artistic and intellectual traditions into the foreign domains, dynasties, or countries with which they often became affiliated through marriage. Indeed, one measurable dimension of this hybrid acculturation can be gleaned from the books young foreign brides transported with them to their new households, volumes often marked by their parents' coats of arms suggesting they were family or even wedding gifts — or were inherited after their parents' death. Isabel of Portugal (1397–1471) was probably one of the few who sent books back to her native Portugal after they had been translated into Portuguese from the French of Burgundy, the territory of her husband Philip the Good (1396–1467).[3] Isabel thus ingeniously exploited her marriage. Accessing new forms of 'foreign' knowledge through her politically and culturally influential husband, she then sought to strengthen the intellectual power of her natal dynasty by imparting that culture to her birth family.

1 For details about some of these associations, see Hughes, Holladay, Eichberger, and Hand. There is also evidence that a 'sharing' of the same books occurred (see C.J. Brown, 2010; Hand, pp. 13–14).

2 Ashley considers books of hours as transmitters of cultural identity, and Hand speaks of the multi-functionality of books of hours in preserving family devotional and cultural traditions (p. 8). Not only books of hours functioned in these ways.

3 Willard, p. 310.

Research Challenges and Achievements in Reconstructing Women's Libraries

The power to create an identity as a cultural figure through her legacy as a book owner after death must have figured, consciously or unconsciously, as an objective of the early sixteenth-century French aristocratic woman, although the control that she wielded over the posthumous maintenance and dissemination of her library as a unit was, in many cases, limited. In fact, reconstructing the libraries of women and their reading and writing networks remains a distinct challenge, for the incomplete and disparate nature of available documents may offer only partial insight into these cultural dynamics. While noble men's deaths typically precipitated the creation of official inventories of their book collections, these catalogues have not always enlightened us about the existence or contents of the libraries of their widows. Indeed, women's libraries were frequently assimilated into men's collections without differentiation of ownership. Many such manuscripts might bear spouses' joint coats of arms, but these can make it difficult to ascertain the role the woman might have played in the acquisition of a particular codex and why. Combing the inventories of women's husbands, brothers, sons, and even uncles can, however, reveal works that were originally designed for their female relatives.[4] That women's books were not always inventoried upon death increases the difficulty of reconstituting their holdings.[5] Even if extant inventories are to be found, descriptions of books are often incomplete or so vague that a work might not be recognizable. In a superb reconstruction of the library of the French queen Jeanne d'Évreux (1310–1371), Joan Holladay demonstrated how scholars must still comb through a variety of documents, even when inventories exist.[6]

4 For example, Bonne de Luxembourg's books appear in the inventories of her sons, Charles V and Jean de Berry, while those of Jeanne de Bourbon, wife of Charles V, are known only through the inventories of her husband, brother-in-law (Jean de Berry) and son Charles VI. Margaret of Bavaria's books are described in the inventory of her son, Philippe le Bon (Hand, pp. 13–14, 15–17, 22).

5 Book inventories, often made after death, exist for: Jeanne de Navarre (1305) (E.A.R. Brown, 2010); Jeanne d'Évreux (1371), her daughter Blanche d'Orléans (1392), Clémence of Hungary (1328), Valentina Visconti (1408) (E.A.R. Brown, 2013b; E.A.R. Brown, 2013a; Holladay, pp. 69, 82–84, 86); Margaret of Flanders (1405) (Hughes); Margaret of Bavaria (1423) (Hand, p. 22); Charlotte de Savoie (Legaré, 2001); Isabel of Portugal, (Sommé, 1989); Isabeau of Bavaria (1401), Marie de Clèves (1487), Anne de France (1507, 1523), Margaret of Austria (1499, 1523), Anne de Chabannes (1500–1502) (E.A.R. Brown and Claerr); and Joanna of Castile (1545) (Hand, pp. 18, 27–28, 37, 41). No known inventories exist for Anne de Bretagne, her daughters Claude and Renée, or for Margaret of York, among others.

6 See Holladay.

We should remember also that women did not always choose their own books. Frequently, beautifully illuminated devotional texts, such as prayer books or books of hours, were offered to women by their advisers or parents (masculine and feminine), often when they were learning to read or in commemoration of their marriages, to encourage them to a life of virtuous conduct. This is a kind of 'double bind' for the researcher attempting to understand and define the tastes and interests of female readers of the medieval period.[7] However, Susan Groag Bell showed in her seminal article about female 'cultural ambassadors' that women's desire for vernacular works in the fourteenth century prompted the dramatic change in book production from an emphasis on liturgical works for an ecclesiastical readership to the proliferation of devotional books targeting a female audience.[8]

Distinguishing whether manuscripts and early printed books in women's libraries were inherited, gifted, purchased, or commissioned thus becomes a critical part of the scholarly objective.[9] Researchers should seek to understand the role played by family and society in molding women's interests, the extent to which females might have embraced and pursued these learned ideologies, the manner in which they might have shaped or reshaped their own literary, cultural, and intellectual aspirations, and the extent to which their personal ambitions influenced and empowered others, particularly female family members and entourages. A close examination of those very books known to have constituted part of a women's library in the medieval or early modern period can contribute in a constructive fashion to such inquiries. This detective work often involves scrutinizing the manuscripts and early printed books associated with women's families as cultural artifacts. It involves interpreting more carefully coats of arms as signs of ownership (sometimes a female heraldic device has been misread as that of her husband).[10] It also entails reading prologues, rubrics, inscriptions, and colophons, which may provide veiled references to (female) dedicatees and owners, studying the texts themselves, and decoding the relationship between illustrations and the texts they accompany in order to discern how these codices were acquired and why. Like most medieval investigations, this

7 L'Estrange, p. 35.

8 Bell.

9 On gifts, see, for example, Buettner, 2004; Davis; and Orth, 2001. On gifts with a focus on Margaret of Austria, see Eichberger.

10 For example, some scholars attributed Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), ms. 2222 to Louis XI, Charlotte de Savoie's husband, based on the coat of arms that appears on the opening folio, when, in fact, it is Charlotte's own coat of arms that is displayed. For details, see C.J. Brown, 2016b.

constitutes an interdisciplinary enterprise involving scholarship in the fields of history, art history, codicology, literature, culture, and history of the book.

Considerable research in this arena has taken place. Madeline Caviness's analysis of early medieval female patronage and John Parsons's research on thirteenth-century Plantagenet queens in the 1990s have been pivotal to the field, but much work remains to be done.[11] The influence of prominent female patrons in the production of illustrated books from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries has been recognized — that of Jeanne d'Évreux, Charlotte de Savoie (1443–1483), Marie de Berry (1375–1434), Gabrielle de la Tour (*c.* 1422–1486), Anne de France (1461–1524), Isabella d'Este (1474–1539), Anne de Bretagne (1477–1514), Louise de Savoie (1476–1531), and Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), to name a few. However, many facets of their cultural impact on the art of bookmaking and intellectual networking are still unexplored, as well as the contributions of lesser known and still understudied women in a variety of countries. Anne-Marie Legaré's in-depth research into the libraries of Jeanne de Laval (1433–1498) and Charlotte de Savoie, her comparative analyses of the collections of Margaret of York (1446–1503) and Margaret of Austria, and her edited collection, *Livres et lectures de femmes en Europe entre Moyen Âge et Renaissance* present enlightening studies of cultural advances generated by a wide-ranging number of women who inherited books from their fathers and mothers, brought books to their marriage as part of their dowries, borrowed books from their husbands, and received books as gifts.[12] Joni Hand's 2013 survey of devotional manuscripts belonging to, or commissioned as gifts for others by women associated with the House of Valois provides a valuable review of research into many women's libraries and insightful analyses of the significance of feminized images, coats of arms, and inscriptions in a selection of devotional books that project women's political, cultural, and genealogical claims as well as their spiritual concerns.[13] The 22 articles in a volume that I recently co-edited with Legaré expand our understanding of the cultural roles played by a host of celebrated and lesser-known female book owners in France, England, Germany, and Italy in the textual and iconographical crafting of secular and religious works.[14]

Among these many investigations, Brigitte Buettner's 2004 study of the system of objects in the will of Blanche de Navarre (1330–1398), Queen of Philip VI (1293–1350), stands out for its innovative viewpoint of female

11 See Caviness; Parsons.

12 See Legaré, 2001 and Legaré, 2005; as well as Legaré, 1985 and Legaré, 1996.

13 Hand.

14 C.J. Brown and Legaré.

networking in the Middle Ages. It serves as a reference point for case studies of individual female's libraries and their intellectual exchanges. Focusing on what she calls an art of the circulation of things, Buettner explores the genealogy of nine generations of objects bequeathed to women that funneled down to Blanche de Navarre before being passed on.[15] She theorizes that the value of these objects, including books, which were among the most prized possessions of noble families, lay in their provenance. That is, their value resided not only in their material cost and the dynastic symbolism they promoted, but also in their role as cultural artifacts and instruments of knowledge, which had been leafed through by female forebears and then passed down to their female heirs, creating a kind of female lineage ('*parenté féminine*') in the transmission of cultural wisdom.[16] What was constructed through the transferral of books (and other cultural objects) by these female legators, and what is inscribed in the material reality of these volumes, is cultural memory as these women became historically visible through their bequests.

This study resituates Buettner's concept of *parenté féminine* in a later period by examining how a selection of manuscript and printed books that women had confected for other women during their lifetimes visually and verbally staged, defined, and empowered several interrelated family female pairings during the reigns of Louis XII (1462–1515), François I (1494–1547), and Henri II (1519–1559), namely: Anne de Bretagne and her daughter Claude de France (1499–1524); Claude and her sister Renée de France (1510–74); Anne de France and her daughter Suzanne de Bourbon (1491–1521); and Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549), her mother, Louise de Savoie, and daughter, Jeanne d'Albret (1528–1572). Through a comparative analysis of text, image, gift-giving, and 'publication' activity related to one particular book associated with each coupling, I argue that this extraordinarily dynamic constellation of women's networks promoted an image of feminine pedigree, power, artistic creativity, and authorial influence — both Anne de France and Marguerite de Navarre were authors in their own right —, marked by (changing) Christian and moral values, that gradually reached beyond the confines of the French court thanks to their literary and pedagogical engagement and the emerging print culture.

15 'un art de la circulation de choses', Buettner, 2004, p. 2. Buettner considers Blanche de Navarre's networks with female family members during her long widowhood as a kind of female laboratory, where the tools necessary for the management and the defense of dynastic interests, especially of the dower, were sharpened, where models of women of social status were influential, and where religious, cultural, and artistic practices were shared and transmitted (p. 5).

16 Buettner, 2004, p. 18.

Although the research cited above into women's libraries and their potential cultural impact might not always overtly consider their activities as modes of empowerment, that claim implicitly underpins much of this scholarship. My study contributes to those discussions by introducing explicitly a lens through which female intellectual authority in the early sixteenth-century can be measured.

Mother–Daughter Networking

A brief summary of female networking in the Anne de Bretagne–Claude de France and Anne de France–Suzanne de Bourbon pairings will set the stage for a discussion of the workings of *parenté féminine* associated with the sisters, Claude de France and Renée de France, and Marguerite de Navarre and her mother and daughter. It is not surprising that these groupings were interrelated, given the many bloodlines and political alliances that united members of the French nobility during this period. For example, Anne de Bretagne and Anne de France were sisters-in-law (1491–1498) as were Claude de France and Marguerite de Navarre (1514–1524), while Marguerite's mother Louise de Savoie, raised by Anne de France when her mother (Marguerite de Bourbon, 1438–1483) died in 1483, in turn became Claude's and Renée's surrogate mother upon the death of Anne de Bretagne in 1514. In addition, Renée shared spiritual beliefs with both Marguerite and her daughter Jeanne d'Albret. These family clusters imply that intellectual and cultural interactions of consequence took place among the dynastic houses in which these women played critical roles, even though records of such exchanges do not always confirm these mutual interests.[17] Of note is the fact that, although Claude de France is one of the least researched among these women, she stands at the nexus of the cluster of female family networks under investigation here.

Parenté féminine clearly defines the pedagogical and intellectual networks that Anne de France established with her daughter through the gift of her own *Enseignements* (Lessons) to Suzanne de Bourbon, a transaction illustrated in the opening dedication miniature of the manuscript copy of

17 Although there is little information about Anne de Bretagne's relationship with Claude and Renée, Claude's relationship with Renée, or Anne de France's relationship with Suzanne, Marguerite's letters provide some insight into her relationship with Claude of France, her mother, and daughter. See, for example, Briçonnet. On the verse exchange between Marguerite and Jeanne, see Kupisz.

the work that the mother had prepared for her daughter sometime before Suzanne's marriage to Charles de Bourbon (1490–1527) in May 1505 (Fig. 7.1).[18] Although the manuscript disappeared from the Saint Petersburg Library many decades ago (see below), A.-M. Chazaud's 1878 edition of Anne's teachings features Armand Queyroy's engraved reproduction of this original miniature, thereby providing scholars with access to the probable cultural circumstances surrounding this interchange.[19] This image is exceptional in its portrayal of a female family network in action, as Anne de France conveys special knowledge to her daughter from her own principles of moral conduct. The group of fifteen to 20 women in the center background, Anne's female entourage at court, witness and likely listen to this uniquely depicted mother–daughter interaction and appear to partake in it, if only as auditors of the ideas and words exchanged between the two women, who read and/or discuss the manuscript books they hold. Significantly, visual focus here is placed not on the actual reception of a work by its dedicatee as convention dictated, but rather on the very dissemination of the material contained in the book, which included advice to summon the aid of the Virgin in imitating her virtuous behavior. Anne de France's incorporation of her own image and arms, cultural guidance, and intellectual engagement with Suzanne in the latter's personal and personalized copy of the *Enseignements*; that is, the mother's sharing of paratextual and textual space with her daughter, guaranteed the posterity of this family female network, at least within court circles.

It was thanks to the initiative taken by Suzanne that her mother's book enjoyed a broader legacy. Sometime before her untimely death in 1521, she had the *Enseignements* printed by the Lyonnais printer Pierre de Sainte Lucie (*c*. 1490–1558), thereby providing considerably wider access to her mother's directives about ladies' proper comportment. Suzanne's — and her mother's — illustrious lineage were prominently inscribed on the title page of this edition, and although she died without any heirs to whom she might have transmitted her mother's teachings, Suzanne incorporated a new female network into her *parenté féminine* that engaged both noble and middle-class women outside the Bourbon court circle.[20] She could not

18 Saint Petersburg Library, MS Fr. Q. v. III. 2.

19 The summary in this and the following paragraph is drawn from a more detailed and expanded analysis of the *Enseignements* manuscript and its opening image in C.J. Brown, 2016a, pp. 176–82.

20 The title page of this undated edition (which lacks a title) reads: 'A la requeste de treshaulte et puissante princesse ma dame Susanne de Bourbon, femme de tresillustre et puissant prince: monseigneur Charles duc de Bourbon, et Dauuvergne, et de Chastellerault: Connestable, Per,

Figure 7.1 Anne de France's dedication of her *Enseignements* to her daughter Suzanne de Bourbon ⏎



From *Les Enseignements d'Anne de France, duchesse de Bourbonnois et d'Auvergne à sa fille Susanne de Bourbon*, ed. by A.-M. Chazaud (Moulins, 1878), p. XLII

& Chambrier de France: & fille de treshaulte et tresexcellente dame madame Anne de France, duchesse desdictes duchez; fille et seur des roys Loys. xj. & Charles. viij.' ('Upon the request of the most noble and powerful princess, Madame Suzanne of Bourbon, wife of the most renowned and powerful prince, my lord Charles, Duke of Bourbon and Auvergne and Chastellerault, Constable, Peer and Chamberlain of France; and daughter of the most noble and most excellent lady, Madame Anne of France, Duchess of said duchies; sister and daughter of Kings Louis XI and Charles VIII.') For further details, see Kemp, pp. 179–81, and Baudrier, pp. 159–60.

have known that through her actions her mother's legacy would extend to one of the most remarkable intellectuals of the period, namely Marguerite de Navarre, who replaced Suzanne and Anne as the honored female on the title-page of the 1535 edition of the *Enseignements*.[21]

Suzanne's involvement in the relatively new print culture anticipates a similar level of participation on the part of Marguerite's daughter Jeanne d'Albret nearly 25 years later in her successful posthumous effort to ensure the legacy of her mother's *Heptaméron*. The dedication by Parisian editor (and Margaret's *valet de chambre*), Simon Silvius of his 1547 edition of Marguerite de Navarre's *Marguerites de la marguerite des princesses* ('Pearls of the Pearl of Princesses'), a collection of the queen's poems and thoughts on religious subjects, to the nineteen-year-old Jeanne d'Albret united mother and daughter together in the same paratextual space, and introductory verses promoted the image of an authoritative female pairing to the general public.[22] However, even more significant was the action that Jeanne d'Albret took to resurrect her mother's lost authorship of the *Heptaméron*, as a result of the spurious 1558 posthumous publication of the work by Pierre Boaistuau (*c.* 1517–1566).[23] Not only had the Parisian author served as editor of a corrupted version of Marguerite's narratives and debates about appropriate behavior in love relationships by ten storytellers (an unfinished collection inspired by Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which Marguerite had left incomplete upon

21 The title page reads: 'A tresillvstre et pvissante princesse et Dame, Madame Marguerite de France, Royne de Nauarre, Duchesse d'Alencon, et de Berry, Comtesse d'Armagnac, auec humble reuerence prompte et fidelité seruitude, par vng vostre treshumble seruiteur, Iehan Barril marchant de Thoulouze, par vng vray zelle presente, Salut et paix.' ('To the most renowned and powerful princess and lady, Madame Margaret of France, Queen of Navarre, Duchess of Alençon and of Berry, Countess of Armagnac, with humble reverence, ready and faithful service, from your most humble servant, John Barril, merchant of Toulouse, with a true zealous presence, greetings and peace.') See Kemp, p. 181.

22 The title page of the work *Marguerites de la marguerite des princesses* (Lyons: Jean de Tournes, 1547), celebrates the author, and the dedication title (p. 3) similarly praises Jeanne d'Albret. An introductory poem describes the direct links between daughter and mother, claiming, for example: 'Or des vertus qui en elle reluysent, / Et des haults fruits que ses esprits produisent, / Raison veult bien qu'en sois totalement / Vraye heritiere; & desia vrayment / Chacun te iuge estre la vraye Idee / De ses vertus & bonté collaudee: / De bonne mœurs & d'honneur le fontal / Chacun te dit, & son pourtrait total' (p. 7). ('Reason desires that you be absolutely the true heir of the virtues that shine in her and the lofty fruits that her mind produces; and already, truly, all judge you to be the true idea of her virtues and praised goodness: everyone says you are the fountain of good manners and honor and her complete portrait.') Navarre, 1547b. 1547.

23 See Courbet, pp. 283–85. Roelker explains that Jeanne destroyed Boaistuau's edition by buying up all the copies (p. 248). On the publication of the manuscript and print editions of the *Heptaméron*, see Broomhall, and Lefèvre.

her death in 1549), but Boaistuau had also invented its title, *Histoires des Amans fortunez* ('Stories of Fortunate Lovers'), included only 67 of the 72 existing narrative-discussions, and failed to name the author of the work. Jeanne addressed these egregious oversights by initiating the printing of a 'complete' edition of the work in 1559, edited by the Parisian Claude Gruget (d. 1560), whose publication not only contained the 72 stories Marguerite had finished before her demise, provided a better organized collection, and adopted the more relevant title '*L'Heptaméron*', but also featured the author front and center on the title page.[24] The elaborately presented tribute to Marguerite on the cover of the 1559 edition identifies her as the 'most illustrious and most excellent princess, Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre' and Gruget's title-page announcement of his dedication to Jeanne d'Albret ensured the daughter's place beside her mother on the first page of the printed book.[25] Following in the footsteps of Marguerite de Navarre, who had been involved in the publication of several of her works while still alive, Jeanne guaranteed that her mother's name would remain associated with what is recognized as one of her most important works.[26]

Parenté féminine surfaces in two-fold symmetrical fashion through an ingenious doubling of female networks in the liminal and final miniatures of the *Primer of Claude de France*.[27] Like the *Enseignements*, this manuscript book features female teaching-and-learning alliances. It was created (although not written) for a daughter, Claude de France, around 1505 by her mother Anne de Bretagne, provided guidelines for religious and moral instruction, and visually staged the mother and daughter, here in parallel images (Figs. 7.2, 7.3).[28] Once again the transmission of Christian-based wisdom and edification by and for females rather than the dedication or gifting of a book to a female dedicatee is portrayed. The double pairing of mothers and daughters, Saint Anne and the Virgin Mary instructing Anne de Bretagne in the first image (Fig. 7.2) and the holy mother and daughter providing religious inspiration to Claude de France in the second

24 See Navarre, 1559.

25 'tresillvstre et tresexcellente princesse Margverite de Valois Royne de Nauarre', 'Remis en son ordre, confus auparauant en sa premiere impression: & dedié à tresillustre & tresvertueuse Princesse Ieanne de Foix Royne de Nauarre, par Claude Gruget Parisien'. ('Rearranged in its original order, having been previously disordered in its first printing, and dedicated to the most illustrious and most virtuous princess, Jeanne de Foix, Queen of Navarre, by Claude Gruget, Parisian.')

26 These include the *Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses* and *La Coche* (The Coach).

27 Cambridge University, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 159.

28 This paragraph summarizes C.J. Brown, 2016a, pp. 182–86.

Figure 7.2 Anne de Bretagne at her prie-dieu before Saint Claude, accompanied by Saints Anne and Mary ⏎



From the *Primer of Claude de France*, Cambridge University, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 159, p. 1 (© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

Figure 7.3 Claude of France at her prie-dieu before Saints Anne and Mary, accompanied by Saint Claude ⏎



From the *Primer of Claude de France*, Cambridge University, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 159, p. 14 (© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge)

miniature (Fig. 7.3) depicts what had, by the fourteenth century, become a well-known female religious paradigm, and anticipates, indeed inspires, Anne's sharing of religious knowledge with Claude through her gift of the book itself.[29] This intimate depiction of female networking, characterized by a mother's emblems and images placed alongside those of her daughter and associated with the even more enduring sacred mother-daughter paradigm of the Catholic tradition exemplifies early sixteenth-century female family networking in many cases. For example, the *Enseignements* miniature of Anne de France and Suzanne de Bourbon discussed above (Fig. 7.1) calls to mind the famous Moulins Triptych in which the same intimacy of female networking that characterizes the *Primer of Claude de France* is in evidence as Anne de France and Suzanne de Bourbon, with the support of Saint Anne, kneel before the Virgin in prayer.[30]

Just as Anne de France had a special manuscript copy of her *Enseignements* prepared for Suzanne as a wedding gift, and Anne de Bretagne gifted a personally confected prayer book to the young Claude de France, as she was learning to read Latin — both educating and empowering their daughters with principles of decorous behavior as they were becoming royal female models —, so too did Louise de Savoie follow tradition by celebrating the (first) marriage in 1509 of her daughter, Marguerite d'Angoulême, to Charles d'Alençon (1489–1525), with the gift of an 85-folio illustrated prayer book sometime between 1522 and 1524.[31] Where one might expect to find a mother–daughter association in emblems and images, Marguerite's prayer book opens with a Latin dedication to the king (Marguerite's brother François I), mother, and sister punctuated by the crowned arms of France (fol. 1), and a family portrait of this 'Royal Trinity', each identified by individual crests (fol. 2).[32] In fact, Louise and François take center stage

29 Sheingorn, p. 70. Saint Claude, Claude's patron saint, figures prominently in each miniature as well.

30 For a reproduction of this altarpiece, see http://www.wikiart.org/en/jean-hey/the-bourbon-altarpiece-the-moulins-triptych (accessed 26 January 2017).

31 BnF, ms. nouv. acq. lat. 83. For details see Lembright; and Orth, 2015, I, pp. 231–36. The miniaturist has been identified as the Master of the Ango Hours of Rouen. Marguerite d'Angoulême became Duchess of Alençon in 1509 through her marriage to Charles d'Alençon before becoming Queen of Navarre through her second marriage in 1526 to Henri de Navarre, following the death of her first husband.

32 I know of no scenes depicting only Margaret and Louise. Louise's primary goal was to promote her son. The dedication reads: 'O Nobile ternarivm regis matris & sororis vnvm est desiderivm' ('O noble trinity, a union of king, mother and sister is greatly desired'). All 29 illustrations in BnF, nouv. acq. lat. 83 can be accessed at http://mandragore.bnf.fr/jsp/rechercheExperte.jsp (accessed 26 January 2017).

in this promotional miniature, with Marguerite, the supposed dedicatee, partially visible behind them, as all three kneel in prayer. Nevertheless, Louise has her daughter pictured in 23 of the 28 remaining manuscript miniatures,[33] including one that portrays Marguerite and Charles, identified by their individual coats of arms, in adoration of the infant Jesus (fol. 18). Like her contemporaries' gifts to their daughters, the images in the book Louise de Savoie had prepared for Marguerite illustrate her daughter actively engaged in prayer within a host of biblical narratives, including the worship of saints. Echoing the two Annes, Louise also had the book's makers visually celebrate Marguerite by frequently locating her in a female-centric world. Nine miniatures feature Marguerite praying at scenes of the Virgin (or Saint Anne) as mother (the Nativity, Flight into Egypt, Saint Anne and Joachim, the Virgin's birth, the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Virgin's dormition, Mary at the Crucifixion, and the Virgin providing milk to Saint Bernard), which visually document Louise's principal aim of encouraging prayers for producing (male) progeny.[34] Indeed, Christ, who appears in eleven images, is depicted as an infant seven times.[35] Despite Marguerite's increasingly active engagement with the French Evangelical cause,[36] this prayer book was, according to the scholar Myra Orth, 'backward-looking, further reinforcing the connection to Louise', who did not wholeheartedly embrace new religious modes as her daughter did.[37]

These examples of intellectual and cultural female networking reveal how mothers could transfer their maternal and royal wisdom to daughters by dedicating books to their offspring, thereby empowering them to serve as virtuous courtly role models. One could argue that these mothers assumed a new power as educators when their knowledge was more widely disseminated in print, thanks to their daughters, as in the cases of Anne de France and Marguerite de Navarre.

33 Orth claims that '[t]he assertive presence of Marguerite in most of them is a jarring note that commands our attention', Orth, 2015, I, p. 234).

34 Orth, 2015, I, p. 233.

35 These include the infant Jesus's singular appearance on the opening folio, which contains the inscribed dedication, and his presence as object of worship in the Royal Trinity miniature (fol. 2) and the illustration of Margaret and her husband (fol. 18).

36 Compare, for example, Marguerite's *Initiatoire Instruction en la religion chrestienne pour les enffans* ('Initiatory Instruction in the Christian Religion for Children'), Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal MS 5096, a manuscript confected later in 1528–29, which 'resembles a traditional, pious personal Book of Hours, but in fact it contains two texts that come from the turbulent center of the French Evangelical Reform of the latter 1520s' including 'the first known Evangelical French-language catechism', Orth, 2015, I, 122.

37 Orth, 2015, I, p. 233.

Sisterly Networking, Trans-Cultural Shifts

Bolstered too by the visual association between the Virgin Mary and females in prayer, *parenté féminine* assumes a different character in the example of Claude de France and Renée de France. Following the death of Anne de Bretagne in 1514, Claude, who had become Queen of France in 1515 through her marriage to François I, stepped into her mother's shoes in yet another capacity by raising her younger sister, Renée de France, with her own children, and by sharing the role of Renée's educational, cultural, and spiritual guide with the king's mother, Louise de Savoie, and sister, Marguerite de Navarre.[38] Claude's preservation of her mother's role of gifting books that both provided a religious education for her sister and promoted female networking is clearly embodied in the prayer book that she commissioned for Renée around 1517 at the time of her own coronation as queen of France.[39] Like the eight-year-old Claude, when she received the *Primer* her mother had had specially made for her, Renée would have been just seven at the time her sister presented her with this manuscript. The exquisite miniatures in this small codex measuring just 4.8″ × 3.5″ (12.2 × 8.8 cm) were painted by the so-called Master of Claude de France, the artist who also decorated a tiny prayer book Claude commissioned for herself during the same period.[40] Considered to be 'the most precious and masterly painted prayer book of the early 16th century' by its online publishers,[41] *Les Petites prières de Renée de France* ('The Little Prayers of Renée de France') contains twelve richly gilded miniatures, and all 25 folios are decorated with floral ornaments in the margins. Unlike the gothic lettering of Claude's *Primer* and the *bâtarde* characters of Marguerite's manuscript, the various prayers and texts of Renée's prayer book are transcribed in a beautiful Roman script known as Renaissance humanist script, one that was easier to read. In addition, two of the Latin texts, the Ten Commandments and the Apostle's Creed, were transcribed in French at the end of the little volume.

Whereas the image and heraldic signs of Anne de Bretagne, Anne de France, and Louise de Savoie had figured prominently in their respective

38 Rodocanachi, pp. 9–18.

39 Wieck argues that Claude 'used as a model [...] the manuscript that her mother had commissioned for Charles-Orland (and that Claude had inherited)' (p. 127). Charles-Orland (1492–1495) was the son of Anne de Bretagne and her first husband, Charles VIII; he died at the age of three.

40 Wieck, p. 127.

41 See the Quaternio Verlag website of *Les Petites prières de Renée de France*, http://www.faksimile.de/international/editions/productdetail.php?we_objectID=395 (accessed 26 January 2017).

daughters' books, ensuring the posterity of the mother's historic visibility alongside her daughter, Claude does not exhibit evidence of her imprimatur in Renée's prayer book, but rather yields to a more owner-centered visual presentation. Indeed, in five of the twelve miniatures Renée herself takes center stage; there is no visible sign of Claude's presence. In fact, we witness an aging Renée who first appears to be a seven-year-old girl in the opening folio (Fig. 7.4) — the age at which she received the book from her sister —while in the subsequent images Renée looks more like an adolescent (Fig. 7.5). This configuration suggests, then, that the book was envisioned as a guide that Renée would continue to use as she matured. However, Claude or her mother could not have predicted the outcome of this religious education and aftermath of the prayer book itself.

Despite Claude's discretion as commissioner of Renée's prayer book, she nonetheless carried on her mother's tradition, very likely in cooperation with the miniaturist, by having the first illustration depict Renée kneeling at her prie-dieu, before her open prayer book, the very codex gifted to her by her sister, in an appropriate likeness of a young girl learning to read, and one that reminds us of the miniature portraying Claude at this early age in her *Primer*. Hands folded, Renée's eyes are not focused on her book, but rather contemplate the stunning depiction of the Annunciation on the opposite folio, where the young Virgin herself is similarly staged in prayer before an open book, which she reads. Renée, presumably motivated by the scenario before her, is then to repeat the 'Ave Maria' prayer transcribed in Latin on the same folio as her portrait in humanist script, its title 'The angel greets the Virgin Mary' in gold leaf.[42] Once again, it is not the dedication of the book that is featured but rather the transmission of sacred knowledge through one of the many prayers mothers commonly taught daughters.[43]

Missing, however, is the maternal figure. Neither Saint Anne nor Renée's ersatz mother, Claude, appear in either miniature, a conspicuous absence, given the female alliances involving mothers, daughters, and saints that exemplified Claude's *Primer*, Suzanne's copy of the *Enseignements* as well as the Moulins Triptych, and Marguerite's prayer book. Whether consciously or not, this illustration conveys the image of a girl on her own, without family members, who is meant to re-enact, perhaps on a daily basis, what she

42 'La salutation de l'ange a la Vierge Marie', *Les Petites prières de Renée de France*, Bibliotheca Estense Universitaria, Modena, Lat. 614=alfa U.2.28, fol. 6r.

43 Wieck states that the Our Father (*Pater noster*), Hail Mary (*Ave Maria*), Apostles' Creed (*Credo*), Graces for Meals (*Benedicte Dominus nos* and *Agimus tibi gratias*), and the Act of Confession (*Confiteor*) were the basic prayers every Catholic child was expected to memorize (p. 126). These very prayers open Renée's prayer book.

Figure 7.4 Renée de France in prayer before the Virgin ⏎



From *Les Petites prières de Renée de France*, Bibliotheca Estense Universitaria, Modena, Lat. 614=alfa U.2.28, fols. 5^{v}–6^{r} (Su concessione del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo)


La salutation de lange a la
vierge Marie
Ve Maria gratia ple
na dominus tecum
benedicta tu in mulieribus et
benedictus fructus ventris tui
Iesus . Sancta Maria mater
dei ora pro nobis peccatorib⁹
Amen .

observes in the facing miniature, namely the recitation of the 'Ave Maria', inspired through contemplation of this holy episode in Mary's life. Religious knowledge is thereby transmitted directly, in textual and visual terms, from female saint to female disciple without the intercession or presence of the Virgin's holy mother or Renée's royal mother. Mediated by the image of the Virgin Mary transcribing and passing down the Credo to the Apostles (fols. 6^{v}–7^{r}), subsequent miniatures illustrate the older Renée in even more direct association with male holy figures, for within one and the same frame she is pictured receiving absolution from a bishop following confession (Fig. 7.5), praying before Christ (fols. 9^{v}–10^{r}), and being blessed by him (fols. 12^{v}–13^{r}). One miniature illustrating the *Misereatur* (fol. 8^{r}) portrays Renée alone at prayer. Such representations of an immediate connection between Renée and a Catholic bishop, for example, have a certain paradoxical quality when examined with hindsight, given her eventual Reformist religious leanings.

Renée's life as Duchess of Ferrara — her marriage in 1528 to Ercole d'Este (1508–1559), future Duke of Ferrara, was arranged by François I, her former brother-in-law (Claude had died in 1522) — has decidedly ironic associations with Claude's effort to continue family female networking through the transmission of religious knowledge to her sister in the form of this prayer book, which, of course, contained strictly Catholic prayers such as the 'Ave Maria' and images of saints revered by Catholics, such as Mary Magdalene, Saint Helen, and Saint John. On the one hand, *The Little Prayers of Renée de France* constituted part of Renée's dowry when she left France for Ferrara; she thus transported her sister's gift and family cultural artifact to a new country, which embraced the teachings it symbolized. In fact, Ercole d'Este maintained strong ties with the papacy and the emerging order of Jesuits throughout their entire marriage. On the other hand, during her 32 years at the court of Ferrara, Renée openly supported Reformist teachings and sheltered Huguenots and Calvinists, without ever openly declaring her Protestantism.[44] And yet, following her condemnation to life imprisonment by Inquisitors in September 1554 because of her liberal religious leanings, Renée's husband essentially placed her under house arrest, separating her from her children until she agreed to once again attend Mass. Punished at the time with the confiscation of her goods, Renée was further disciplined with the burning of some hundred proscribed manuscripts and imprints in her personal library.[45] Unfortunately, we do not know exactly which of

44 For details on Renée's marriage and this period in her life, see Rodocanachi, pp. 28–36.

45 See Fontana, III, p. 375; and Rodocanachi states: 'On livra aux flammes sa bibliothèque dans laquelle avaient été trouvés une centaine d'ouvrages défendus, manuscrits ou imprimés'

her books were destroyed. This prayer book, however, created before the Reformist movement took hold in France, survived that purge, doubtless because of the Catholic nature of its meditative prayers and absence of Protestant ideology. Whether or not it served as a visual symbol of Renée's now feigned Catholic beliefs or was ever used by her own daughters, Anna (1531–1607), Lucrezia Maria (1535–1598), or Eleonora (1537–1581),[46] we will never know. But, likely reflecting a rejection of society's imposition of certain books on women at a time of more religious alternatives (and adopting beliefs more in line with those of Marguerite de Navarre and Jeanne d'Albret), Renée left this prayer book in the Este library when she returned to France in 1560 following her husband's death.

Promoting the family tradition of female empowerment, Claude de France transferred to her sister the moral and religious wisdom conveyed by her mother through the gift of a Catholic prayer book, whose illustrated spiritual relationships Renée was encouraged to espouse and maintain on her own. However, shifts in Renée's belief system, exacerbated by cultural tensions she experienced as a French Reformist woman living in Italy, ultimately led to her rejection of much of her sister's imparted knowledge, a narrative captured by the book's own history. While Renée was spiritually and intellectually empowered in different ways than her mother and sister, the destruction of much of her library nevertheless suggests that it was through her acquisition of books that she had maintained these new spiritual relationships that were condemned by her husband.

Challenges Controlling the Physical Legacy of Books

Renée's prayer book survived the Inquisition and remained in the Este library until the eighteenth century, but then disappeared and reappeared in 1780, when it was reintegrated into the ducal library. However, the book was stolen while on loan to Montecassino Abbey in 1994, doubtless because of the great value of its exquisite illustrations and decoration.[47] Fortunately,

('They threw into the flames her library in which some hundred banned works, manuscripts or imprints, had been found') (p. 248).

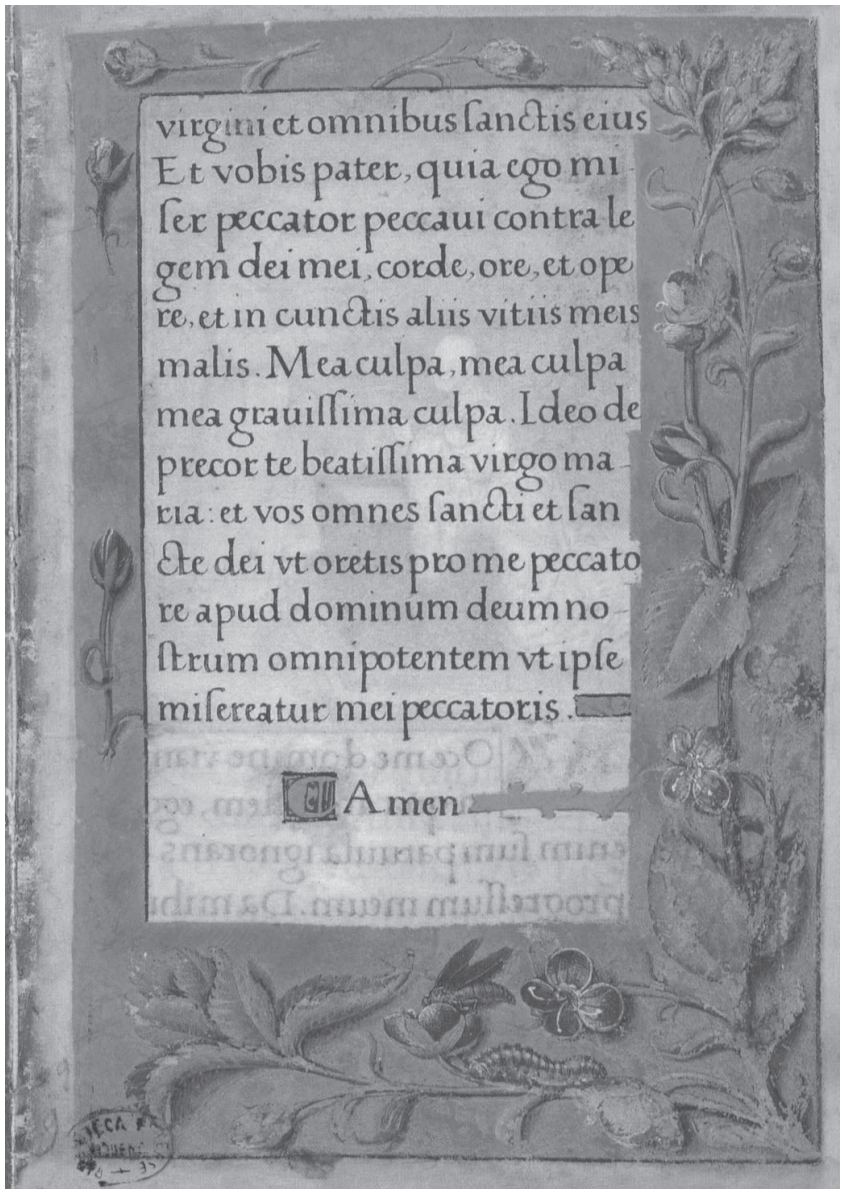
46 This prayer book may well have served to educate Renée's daughters, especially given their father's strong Catholic tendencies, which all three likely embraced into adulthood. While Lucrezia and Eleonara spent their entire lives in Italy, presumably as practicing Catholics, Anna remained in France after her 1548 marriage to François, Duke of Guise (1519–1563), whose family fiercely supported the Catholics during the Wars of Religion.

47 Wieck, p. 125, n. 3.

Figure 7.5 Renée receiving absolution



From *Les Petites prières de Renée de France*, Bibliotheca Estense Universitaria, Modena, Lat. 614=alfa U.2.28, fols. 8^{v}–9^{r} (Su concessione del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo)


virgini et omnibus ſanctis eius
Et vobis pater, quia ego mi-
ſer peccator peccaui contra le
gem dei mei, corde, ore, et ope
re, et in cunctis aliis vitiis meis
malis. Mea culpa, mea culpa
mea grauiſſima culpa. Ideo de
precor te beatiſſima virgo ma-
ria: et vos omnes ſancti et ſan
cte dei vt oretis pro me peccato
re apud dominum deum no-
ſtrum omnipotentem vt ipſe
miſereatur mei peccatoris.

Amen

a photographic copy of the work had been made beforehand (accessible in digital form), providing the only access today to this work.[48]

Curiously, Suzanne de Bourbon's *Enseignements* manuscript had a similarly mysterious and complex afterlife at the hands of a number of male book collectors, a trajectory meticulously reconstructed by A.-M. Chazaud based on a seventeenth-century inscription at the end of the volume, yet another paratextual sign of the manuscript's survival as a literary artifact.[49] Confiscated by François I along with many other works following the treason of Suzanne's husband, Charles de Bourbon, in 1523,[50] the *Enseignements* manuscript entered the king's library at Fontainebleau. Likely serving as a gift from Henri II (son of Claude and François I) to Diane de Poitiers, the manuscript then figured in the library of the famous château of Anet, from where it passed through several hands before being deposited for safe-keeping in the Abbey of St-Germain-des-Prés. The Russian noble Petr Dubrowski apparently stole and transported the book along with 700 other manuscripts to Saint Petersburg during the French Revolution. It was then bought by Tsar Alexander I and transported from the Hermitage to the Imperial Public Library. There Chazaud studied it, before Soviet authorities sold it in the 1930s.[51]

Like so many volumes owned by elite women of the time that lacked a formalized afterlife, jeopardizing their female owners' efforts to assert their identity through posthumous control over their libraries, the subsequent transmission channels of the *Primer of Claude de France* remain unknown until the eighteenth century, when it appeared in a private English collection — its description and call number at the time remain pasted on the upper side of the cover. The manuscript was subsequently acquired in 1808 by Richard, seventh Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion (1745–1816), whose imprimatur appears on folio 2, before being bequeathed to Cambridge University's Fitzwilliam Museum (1816).[52] Similarly, the history of Marguerite's prayer book is unknown before the nineteenth century, when it appeared in the sale of the library of Marie-Caroline, Duchess of Berry (1798–1870) and

48 A facsimile edition, Milano and Orth, was published in 1998. It was also made available in CD-ROM form by Bini, *Les Petites prières*.

49 See Chazaud's introduction to his edition of Anne de France, pp. vi–vii and Delisle, II, pp. 47–48.

50 Upon her death Suzanne left her estates to her husband, who refused to marry Louise de Savoie. After siding with Holy Roman Emperor Charles V against the king, Charles de Bourbon died in 1527 without issue.

51 Hobson, p. 172, n. 3.

52 See Panayotova.

eventually made its way to the Bibliothèque nationale de France. There is no corroborating evidence that it was inherited by Jeanne d'Albret, but it did not figure among the volumes belonging to Marguerite that were absorbed into her brother's library.[53] Given the increasing support of Jeanne (and Marguerite) for Protestantism, how likely is it that Jeanne would have inherited or valued the Catholic-oriented prayer book her grandmother had given to her mother?

Three, and perhaps four, of these manuscripts represent just one generation-worth of family female networking. Once their female owners died — at an early age in the case of both Suzanne de Bourbon and Claude de France — or embraced a different system of belief, as was the case with Renée de France as well as Marguerite de Navarre and her daughter, that female power, prestige, and patronage associated with the books' fabrication and original transmission were appropriated by other agents, and the codices took on a life of their own, out of women's hands. However, thanks to the manuscripts' original images and emblems, that first layer of paratext, the cultural memory of these mother–daughter and sisterly connections has remained embedded in the books themselves. Through books such as these, and often with significant sleuthing, modern scholars are able to resurrect the empowering relationships promoted by elite women of the early sixteenth century.

Conclusion

We can thus better understand the dynamics and the cultural value of female networking associated with Anne de France, Anne de Bretagne, and Louise de Savoie by examining the paratext of the volumes these mothers confected for their respective daughters. While Suzanne de Bourbon's luxury manuscript book of the *Enseignements* that she received from her mother did not carry on the tradition of female networking within her own family since she died without children, her mother's writing saw renewed life through its reproduction in print form, thereby reaching a more diverse bourgeois readership that included one of the most famous royal female figures of the time, Marguerite de Navarre. And in that revived life in print, the names of Suzanne, Anne, and also Marguerite were prominently announced, as publishers appropriated some of that power and prestige Buettner associates

53 For details on this manuscript's provenance, see Orth, 2015, p. 235. Orth claims that the book collections of the Angoulême family, Louise de Savoie, and much of Marguerite's, were absorbed into François I's library at Blois, Orth, 2015, p. 85.

with the workings of *parenté feminine*. The framing illustrations of the *Primer* that Anne de Bretagne had made for her daughter Claude embody and confirm the transmission of sacred knowledge through double interrelated family female networks, that of Saints Anne and Mary and that of Anne and Claude. The power of women as sixteenth-century moral and spiritual educators is thus visibly conveyed through miniatures and a repackaging of their manuscripts into print form.

Marguerite de Navarre's prayer book, which may or may not have passed on to her daughter, serving as yet another example of the challenge scholars face in tracing the trajectory of books that constituted part of a feminine legacy, also verbally and visually projected the transmission of traditional religious wisdom from mother to daughter through an association with female-centered communities. However, unlike the two Annes (who never had adult sons), Louise de Savoie had the intimate mother-daughter rapport reordered and replaced with a family triangle in a simultaneous tribute to her son and Marguerite's brother, François I, an acknowledgment prominently inscribed and painted in Marguerite's manuscript. Jeanne d'Albret, however, ensured her mother's singular eminence by implicitly contesting one editor's questionable printing practice and reviving Marguerite's authorship through Gruget's reconstructed edition of the *Heptaméron*. While a very different work from the others examined here, Marguerite's narratives, and the unique series of debates that follow each story in this work, provide through fictional means similar views about women's contemporary roles as moral leaders. As in Suzanne's renewal of her mother's work through print, the restoration of the *Heptaméron*'s creator through title-page celebratory language that lauded both mother and daughter together may well constitute an equivalent staging of family female networks to that featured in the manuscript miniatures appearing in the codices shaped by Anne de France, Anne de Bretagne and Louise de Savoie.

The prayer book that Claude had made for her sister Renée conveys a different but analogous cultural message about *parenté féminine*, as it bears traces of the transmission of religious knowledge between female family members, while marking the absence of a mother figure. By visually representing the book owner, the manuscript miniatures project Renée's expected, but in the end rejected, visualization and adoration of Catholic figures in her prayers. Like the three other manuscripts examined, Renée's *Petites prières* preserves a record of its cultural life as a treasured artifact. Through its unique history of relocation from France to Italy due to the marriage of two dynasties, of non-circulation status within the Este library as an indirect sign of religious repudiation, of mysterious disappearances in later periods because of its

artistic worth, and of its survival today in photographed, facsimile, and digitized form, Renée de France's prayer book personifies an equally compelling socio-political narrative of feminine pedigree, expanding family female networks, and women's (changing) roles as promoters of Christian and moral values. On the one hand, it is challenging to gauge just how elite women of the period empowered themselves and others as inheritors and purveyors of cultural and intellectual knowledge through books, because even the most lavishly decorated codices remain more or less silent about those very interactions, especially compared with documents and official records that more explicitly convey how men (and sometimes women) wielded political power. On the other hand, as I hope this brief comparative study suggests, it is possible to extricate a narrative about networks of cultural power that early modern women shaped, shared, and sometimes refashioned through careful study of a book's text, illustrations and paratextual details.

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8. The Power of Reputation and Skills according to Anne de Graville

The *Rondeaux* and the Denunciation of Slander

Mawy Bouchard

Abstract
Anne de Graville, as a noblewoman writing for the court, raised many issues that pertain to the theme of social power, mainly through language and speech. This essay analyzes the concept of power through her two main works, a narrative that drew from the literary influence of Boccaccio and another rondeaux composition inspired by Alain Chartier's *La Belle dame sans mercy*, that challenged the perception of the courtly woman within the boundaries of Christianity. Both Graville's works involve reflection on the stakes of courtly conversation, which was staged as a battle of words that most women were not prepared to fight with dignity, thus putting forth a perception of courtly language as a dangerous weapon named 'slander'.

Keywords: Anne de Graville, reputation, slander, gossip, women's speech, courtly households, literature

In this essay, I address the issue of women's power in relation to malicious gossip that becomes the object of denunciation, within Anne de Graville's *Rondeaux* (*c*. 1515) and, to a lesser extent, her *Beau Romant des deux amans Palamon et Arcita et de la belle et saige Emilia* (*c*. 1521). Anne de Graville (*c*. 1490–*c*. 1543) was born in a very influential noble family, at the Castle of Marcoussis. Her father, Louis Malet de Graville (1438–1516), an Admiral of France, was close to Anne de France (1461–1522) and Pierre de Beaujeu (1438–1503), in a position of influence within the circle of Louis XII (1462–1515).[1] Well educated and from

1 Montmorand.

Broomhall, S. (ed.), *Women and Power at the French Court, 1483–1563*,
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a family surrounding where books abounded, Anne was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Claude (1499–1524), first wife of François I (1494–1547).[2] However, when, some time before 1510, she secretly married her maternal cousin, Pierre de Balsac d'Entraigues (b. 1465), she was immediately disowned by her father.[3] Between 1515 and 1524, the queen commissioned two works from Graville, both explicitly dedicated to the queen. Speaking to *and for* the queen, Graville perhaps envisaged her role as both an agent for women of the court in general and as her own defender, for having taken destiny into her own hands.

La Belle Dame sans mercy and Women's Power in Question

At the time of its original circulation, the controversial dialogue entitled *La Belle Dame sans mercy* (1424) by poet and political writer Alain Chartier (*c.* 1385–1430/1446) provoked immediate reaction.[4] Joan E. McRae suggests that Chartier's ambiguous poem offered 'the perfect scenario for debate, since [it had] no clear hero or villain, no internal call for a judge to decide which side holds the stronger claim, and little to no authorial commentary to guide reader's interpretation'.[5] Its circulation also coincided with the awakening of a female audience, a hitherto largely silent social group. Chartier emerged as the frontrunner of a new, 'diverse' literature that was conceived with lay readers in mind; that is, a society composed of noblemen *and* ladies. In rhetorical terms, Chartier targeted a readership with divergent gender identities and social responsibilities. His dialogue bypassed the dichotomy between women's good and evil status that dominated the literature of the *Querelle des femmes*. Chartier's rendering of the challenges of women's public role and social duties did not attempt to attenuate the conflict or assert an idealistic consensus.[6] Chartier showed tensions with the skilled advocates of both positions. As Adrian Armstrong argues, in addition to appealing to the diversity of his audience, Chartier 'pioneers the notion of the poet as a

2 Anne de Graville was well educated, most likely knew Latin and Italian, and had access to the considerable collection of manuscripts and prints that belonged to her wealthy father, one of the richest of the time. She became a collector herself, owning four manuscripts of Christine de Pizan, which she annotated. See Reno. For further biographical information, see Bouchard, 2005 and 2013.

3 For further biographical information, see Bouchard, 2005.

4 Bouchard, 2005.

5 McRae, p. 204. See also Kibler; Cayley. Calin proposes a review of the bibliography concerning the Quarrel.

6 In contrast to later works by Castiglione and Guazzo, for example. See Stampino, p. 93.

public servant, whose work not only bears witness to events and situations but helps to shape opinions and behaviour'.[7] Graville showcased a strong authorial voice in choosing — 'on command' or not — to adapt Chartier's dialogue and his representation of an emerging social diversity.

As the adapter of Chartier's *La Belle Dame sans mercy* (1424) into *rondeaux*, Anne de Graville makes a strong claim for a sort of power that can be exercised through Christian values, and which is readily available to all, men and women alike.[8] This is the power of 'free will', which requires the ability for each individual to choose a virtuous path. Her first literary work, a collection of seventy-one *rondeaux*, was produced in a manuscript that shows two columns, one being the version of Chartier, and the other, that of Graville. Maxime de Montmorand, Graville's biographer, suggests that the success Graville had with the *Rondeaux* assured her a second commission for the translation of the *Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia* (*c.* 1340) by Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375), inspired by the *Thebaid* of Statius (*c.* 45–*c.* 96 CE), which Boccaccio thought to be the first true Italian epic. Graville's adaptation was not the first — Chaucer had earlier written *The Knight's Tale*, an English version of 2250 verses in his *Canterbury Tales* (*c.* 1392). Graville's second work, *Le Beau Romant des deux amans Palamon et Arcita et de la belle et saige Emilia*, was likely composed around 1521 as a commission from Claude, whom Graville says she duly obeys.[9] Testimony of Graville's success as a poet and writer during her lifetime were given by Geofroy Tory (*c.* 1480–1533) in 1529 and later by Antoine du Verdier (1544–1600). Tory noted: 'And to show that our French language can be gracious when it is used with measure, I will quote here a rondel composed by an excellent woman of virtue, Lady of Entraigues' (the married name of Anne de Graville).[10]

Chartier's original dialogue between a rebuffed Lover and a 'cruel' Lady portrays a disagreement between two equally valid but irreconcilable views of feminine power in the context of courtly love traditions exposed to centuries of chivalric romance. Graville rewrites the dialogue in a manner

7 Armstrong, p. 303. Armstrong adds: 'It is precisely this view of public eloquence that underpins much of the rhétoriqueurs' work, and indeed characterizes them as a group regardless of their diverse political affiliations' (p. 1).

8 The *Rondeaux* were first published by Wahlund in 1897, and are accessible in one manuscript (BnF, ms. fr. 2253).

9 There are six extant manuscripts (Arsenal, 5166; BnF, ms. fr. 1397 and 25441; BnF, n.a.f., 6513; Stockholm, Kungliga biblioteket, 719; and Musée Condé, 1570).

10 See Tory, fol. 4[r]: 'Et pour monstrer que nostre dict langage françois a grace quant il est bien ordonné, j'en allegueray icy en passant un rondeau que une femme d'excellence en vertus, ma dame d'Entraigues, a faict et composé', Du Verdier, pp. 42–43.

that gives leverage to the position defended by the Lady, one that asserts individuals' free will in the matters of courtly love. In her adaptation of Chartier's dialogue almost one hundred years after the original composition, Graville indeed makes a strong case against the allegorical character *Malenbouche* (Slanderer) presented in the *rondeaux* as a threat to everyone within court society. To borrow John K. Galbraith's analytical tools described in *The Anatomy of Power* in which he conceptualizes three types of power — Condign, Compensatory, and Conditioned — and the three sources of power — personality, property, and organization —, Graville articulates a seduction strategy disguised as tragic love lamentations that aim at 'conditioning' the submission of women with all the resources of chivalric personality.[11] In light of the pervasive literary theme of excessive talk and slander, Graville's reliance on the perception of courtly language as a dangerous weapon appears symptomatic of a social situation that was challenging for women conditioned by courtly *and* Christian ideals, who sought the empowerment that humanist education made available.[12] Graville's *Rondeaux* in response to Chartier's *La Belle Dame sans mercy* implicitly attempt to underline the manner by which courtly literature is used as a 'condign', a 'compensatory' and a 'conditioned' instrument of power by the Lover, who in turn can only be overthrown by another source of power, that of the Christian institution and values (marriage, chastity, fidelity), which are implicitly claimed by the Lady throughout the dialogue.[13]

11 Galbraith. From the early response of the ladies of the court to Alain Chartier (*Copie des lettres des dames en rithme envoyee a maistre Alain*) to the well-known verses of Louise Labé, in her Sonnet XXIII, 9–10, 'Oh tears, that dry so quickly in the air; / oh Death, on which you promised you would swear / your love — and where your solemn vows still hang / (or was the aim of your deceitful malice / to enslave me, while seeming to be in my service', and her Elegie III, 9–26.

12 My current research project, 'Médisance et constitution des publics modernes dans la prose discursive au tournant des XVI^e^ et XVII^e^ siècles français', explores malicious gossip and slander. See also Butterworth, 2016; and Butterworth, 2006.

13 Galbraith explains: 'Condign power threatens the individual with something physically or emotionally painful enough so that he forgoes pursuit of his own will or preference in order to avoid it. Compensatory power offers the individual a reward or payment sufficiently advantageous or agreeable so that he (or she) forgoes pursuit of his own preference to seek the reward instead' (p. 14). He defines conditional power as follows: 'While condign and compensatory power are visible and objective, conditional power, in contrast, is subjective; neither those exercising it nor those subject to it need always be aware that it is being exerted, the acceptance of authority, the submission to the will of others, becomes the higher preference of those submitting. This preference can be deliberately cultivated — by persuasion or education. This is explicit conditioning. Or it can be dictated by the culture itself; the submission is considered to be normal, proper, or traditionally correct. This is implicit conditioning' (p. 24).

Moreover, Graville's re-working focuses on the condemnation of courtly slander that specifically threatens courted ladies, and which is closely related to *fol amour*. Although Cox argues that by the early sixteenth century courtly language of poetry had already 'deteriorated into a somewhat sterile and formulaic academic exercise',[14] there are strong grounds to investigate an issue emerging from the representation of gallant conversation. Graville challenges the traditional role of women at the court, one that was thoroughly exposed in the influential works of both Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529), the Italian courtier and renowned author of *Il Cortegiano* (1516; 1529), and Steffano Guazzo (1530–1593), an Italian diplomat and author of many dialogues.[15] My reading of Anne de Graville's *Rondeaux* analyzes the specific discussion that occurs between the Lover and the Lady about the conflicted sources of power emerging from polite conversation and courtly values.

Widely represented in chivalric literature as a feminine power to inflict sudden and violent love passion, the personal beauty and virtue of the woman is not perceived as a viable source of power by the Lady of the dialogue. She thus refuses to submit herself to the power instituted by feudal values, equivalent to that of allegiance to the lord, which limits feminine action to acceptance or rejection of the proposed 'service' of love, or, to use the term of John R.P. French and Bertram Raven, to exercise her 'power to reward'.[16] Although it may appear that the key theme of Graville's rewriting of Chartier's famous dialogue is love, its true underlying value is the 'public good', which, as John Locke holds, is conceived as associated with political power, something not readily accorded to early modern women.[17] This fundamental issue of power at stake in Chartier's work helps to explain why an apparently mundane dialogue created such turmoil and interest over more than a century.[18] The form of power that I analyze here is Graville's exploration of women's ability to intervene in the public sphere for the sake of the public good. From the beginning of the dialogue, the Lady rejects the 'power of reward' that the Lover attributes to her, because it constrains her to

14 See Cox, p. 1.

15 See Campbell, pp. 73–88.

16 See French and Raven: 'Reward power is defined as power whose basis is the ability to reward. The strength of power of O [Social agent: another person, a role, a norm, a group, part of a group] / P [Person] increases with the magnitude of the rewards which P perceives that O can mediate for him' (pp. 156–57).

17 See Locke, I.3.

18 See Hult's reading of the 'Cycle' of *La Belle Dame sans mercy* which brings together the cultural and social aspects of its success (Chartier, Herenc, and Caulier, pp. xxx–liv).

a private sphere of love relationships. Instead, the Lady targets what French and Raven describe as 'expert power'; that is, a form of power derived from her skills as a speaker and as a lucid observer of her society's moral conflicts.

The Power of Malicious Gossip

In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French texts, one notion is always present in courtly love debate: slander, and its various grammatical forms or synonyms — defamation, denigration, disparagement, libel,[19] and 'publication' (with a dishonoring connotation related to the idea of being exposed),[20] among others. All involve unworthy speech and degrading public exposure. This notion is crucial for *La Belle Dame sans mercy*, in which malicious gossip makes the object of slander a spectacle for an audience. Slander can also be understood as a form of power. Viewed from a 'functionalist perspective', malicious gossip promotes and maintains a community's norms. Alternatively, from a social and economic perspective, it reveals individual strategies to gain forms of power.[21] Both perspectives highlight how the theme of slander reveals what is at stake for women operating at the court.

In Chartier's dialogue, it is precisely the malicious gossip of lovers that is pinpointed as the main cause of the Lady's 'cruelty' (or absence of 'mercy') in refusing to grant the Lover his deserved reward. It is because the Lover has the power to 'speak ill', and with authority, of the Lady; that is, to make public what ought to remain private, that the Lady cannot grant him the 'courtly prize' he expects. This foregrounds questions of court decorum and politeness, as well as issues of honor, which all have the potential to clarify the strategies developed by women writers to tackle the issue of public good and agency without doing so openly.[22] As malicious gossip involves an accuser, a victim and an audience, it exposes the power struggles between individuals whose access to public discourse and action is unequal. Consequently, slander — as a statement or theme — can be part of a strategy to reveal publicly that which is usually implicit, and that cannot be raised

19 *Médire, calomnier, losenger, brocarder, publier.*

20 Initial research in the project 'Médisance et constitution des publics modernes' has identified approximately 80 different expressions for malicious gossip, most from Marie de Gournay's writings.

21 Mougin, p. 10.

22 See Brantôme, whose *Recueil des dames* reverses the usual order of things: his praise of the great women in the public sphere is directed to women, and his description of intimate scenes explicitly targets a male audience.

any other way. Therefore, it is not surprising to see a vast lexicon of slander appear through more than 20 different terms that recur frequently in the *nouvelles* of Marguerite de Navarre, which discuss a wide range of social aspects of relationships. By the end of the sixteenth century, the topic features prominently in the writings of Marie de Gournay (1565–1645); and in her *Mémoires*, Marguerite de Valois (1553–1615) writes to correct malicious gossip, specifically the slander of her brother, the Duke of Anjou, future King Henri III, 1551–1589).[23]

Three voices are heard in Alain Chartier's *La Belle Dame sans mercy*: those of the Author, the Lover, and the Lady. The Author narrator who appears first in the dialogue expresses sensitivity and sympathy to the feelings of the Lover. While depicting a joyous scene typical of courtly life, Chartier creates a character who presents the *ethos* of a sincerely suffering Lover. Although the Lover is accused by noblemen of the court later in the cycle of not defending courtly values strongly enough, by contrast, the Author appears benevolent, honest, and in sympathy with the moral decorum of the court.[24] The introduction to the dialogue by the Author is thus a crucial part of Chartier's *La Belle Dame sans mercy*, without which the ambiguous meaning of the text would have been even more troubling to contemporary readers. The Author's voice underlines the unfortunate misunderstanding between the Lady and the Lover, while giving the reader some clues about the Lover's sincerity.

In Anne de Graville's version, the voice of the Author completely disappears at the beginning of the dialogue and can only be heard, very briefly, in the end. This disappearance, in addition to effecting a more discrete *ethos* for the female adapter, forces readers to assess for themselves the arguments of both parties. Unlike Chartier, Graville develops an enunciation in the first persona that bears more subjectivity for the two interlocutors. These key differences in the development of the voices within the dialogue thus accentuate the fact that what is at stake in their debate is the question of women's power, which the Lover attempts to dissimulate behind a supposed universal courtly eroticism. The Lady does not allow that pretence to stand in the way of her own capacity to reject or accept proposals, which she calls her freedom to 'not love'.[25] However, as this might have consequences in

23 See Valois, pp. 45–50. It also appears in the title of Book 2 of the *Recueil des dames* by Brantôme: 'Discours sur ce qu'il ne faut jamais parler mal des dames et la conséquence qui en vient'.

24 See Chartier, pp. 481–89.

25 See Rondeau 10, verses 9–13: 'Free, I was born, and by decree / Free, I will remain, without fear or worry / of any living man, and without losing / The freedom that I chose / And for that

the public sphere as well, the Lady in Graville's version insinuates that her private actions have a meaning for a greater audience and interfere with agents of power. Therefore, initiated by Chartier's dialogue, in Graville's text the essential disagreement between both parties is never resolved, and rhetorical negotiation seems impossible.[26] Without the mediation of an Author in her text, the alternative viewpoints on women's agency are passionately stated right from the outset, but left unresolved.

From the courtly point of view of the Lover, the Lady's power derives from the simple action of accepting the Lover's service, which coincides, in the Lover's logic, with an efficient medical action that cures a love sickness that would otherwise prove fatal. And, for the Lover, the Lady simply does not have the moral power to deny her involvement in the suitor's misery, because, in accordance with the courtly literary tradition of the *innamoramento*, she is responsible for the illness; it is induced by the strength of her gaze. In not awarding her courtly prize, the power of the Lady's glance appears immoral because it becomes a tool of domination, vanity, and sadistic pleasure, and perverts the virtuous identity of women. But the Lady firmly denies both the power and its pleasurable experience.[27] She refuses to associate herself with a fictitious generalization. For her, women's power is defined by an alternative reading of the courtly tradition that allows her to reject the Lover's offer of service ('I don't want you'), to separate herself from his pain ('None will die from that'), and to disagree over the question of *innamoramento* ('You are wrong').[28] Subsequently, from the Lady's perspective, female power consists in an argumentative ability that can lead the Lady to convince or 'condition the submission' of the Lover to reason, to control his passion ('I beg of you'), to 'depoetize' the intensity of his love ('frivolous desire'), and then to encourage him to assume responsibility for his own pain ('This type

matter, I don't want any / Of that love' ('Franche naquis et par bonne ordonnance / Franche seray sans crainte ne doubtance / Dhomme vivant et sans me dessaisir / De liberté que jay voullu choisir / Et pour autant, je nen veulx acointance / De telz amours'). I am quoting Carl Wahlund's diplomatic edition: Graville, 1897. For clarity, spelling is modernized. I have distinguished 'i' and 'j', 'u' and 'v'; added accents on prepositions 'à', 'où', on final 'é'; and added commas in enumerations. English citations from the *Rondeaux* are my own translation.

26 On rhetoric defined as a negotiation of the distance between the author (or speaker) and his readers, see Meyer, p. 10.

27 See Rondeau 10, verses 1–8: 'Of that love, I don't want to know / To see you ill has never brought me joy / Neither any regrets to see you happy / To love you I have no hope or desire / And thus I am not asking for trust or confidence' ('De telz amours, je ne veuil congnoissance / De vous voir mal je neuz onc plaisance / Ne aucun regret si vivez en plaisir / De vous aymer nay espoir ne desir / Et si nen quiers ne foy ny asseurance').

28 *'Je ne vous veulx'*, Rondeau 6; *'Il nen meurt nulz'*, Rondeau 8; *'Vous avez tort'*, Rondeau 4.

of love').[29] The Lady thus *a priori* rejects the power that the Lover claims as hers — as 'sovereign of his heart' — to heal him and free him from love's chains: it is up to him alone, she argues.

Disengaging herself from the Iseuts and Guenièvres of courtly literature, Graville's Lady does not admit to any power of seduction, nor does she feel responsible for the Lover's grief. If she does not completely deny her 'medical' function, she does limit it to the boundaries of Christian virtue. Her compassion extends only to reminding the Lover of his honor and his moral obligations, and to warning him against the dangers of *fol amour*. The dialogue between the Lover and the Lady thus articulates two opposite views on women's power. The Lady also attempts to reveal the fraudulent nature of what the Lover refers to as power, which often is a trap that brings the Lady social damnation, and deprives her of any possible source of power. We will now focus on the Lady's view that the Lover's perception of power is erroneous.

Words related to slander appear frequently in the texts of Christine de Pizan and Anne de Graville,[30] likewise in sixteenth-century literature. For example, the *Threzor de la langue françoyse* by Jean Nicot (1530–1600), a compilation of a number of important sixteenth-century dictionaries, including that of Robert Estienne (1503–1559), provides two interpretations through *médisance* and *calomnie*. *Médisance* is malicious gossip that consists in 'blaming an absent'; and one evokes *calomnie* 'when falsely and maliciously one alleges or accuses someone of something'.[31] The *Threzor* anticipates many of the denunciations made by Marie de Gournay, Montaigne's 'daughter by alliance' and one of the first women to claim the status of author (*autrice*) in France, throughout her writings. She considers such discourse a moral crime, at once frequent and unpunished: 'the slanderer and his wilful audience are both possessed by the devil, one by the tongue, the other by the ear',[32] and 'because that deadly spear of the tongue pierces three persons at once, the victim, the speaker, and the listener'.[33] From a theoretical perspective, the meaning of *médisance* differs depending upon whether

29 *'Je vous supply'*, Rondeau 21; *'Leger vouloir'*, Rondeau 22; *'De telz amours'*, Rondeau 10.

30 See Fenster, pp. 461–77.

31 'Blasmer un absent', and calumny 'quand faucement et malicieusement on allegue ou met [...] à sus quelque chose à quelqu'un'. See Nicot.

32 Marie de Gournay, 'De la mesdisance, et qu'elle est principale cause des Duels', p. 706. '[l]e medisant [...] et son auditeur volontaire portent tous deux le Diable, l'un sur la langue, l'autre en l'oreille'.

33 Gournay, p. 706: '[C]este meurtriere lance de la langue transperce trois personnes en un coup, l'offencé, le parleur et l'escoutant'.

the point of view adopted is moral, aesthetic, philosophical, political, that of the victim or an observer. From a literal point of view, malicious gossip is a false statement made in front of an audience, resulting from credulity, stupidity, or incompetence, motivated by jealousy, vengeance, interest, hatred, mockery, or cruelty, and which aims to harm someone who is absent or muzzled. Nevertheless, the 'malicious' speaker can perceive malicious gossip as a hidden truth, unheard, and unsuspected in other instances such as in libellous texts, satires, and conflicting dialogues.[34] In those cases, the slanderer considers his own statements not as evil, but well-founded observations. As the Lady of Anne de Graville's *Rondeaux* attempts to convey to the Lover, the diverse forms of slander can be subtle, because one can speak maliciously by antiphrasis and irony while seeming to praise someone, or by remaining silent or terse and thus insinuating at best that the victim is worthy of neither praise nor comment.

Anne de Graville's *Rondeaux* often imply a specific understanding of malicious gossip as a quantitative phenomenon of speech (too much or too little). This notion of *médisance* requires a cultural context in which silence could be as honorable a deed as speech, especially when it involves ladies of the court. Thus, in certain situations, malicious speech is perceived when silence would have been most appropriate in order to avoid a breach of decorum. It should be countered, according to the Lady, by a 'deaf ear'. This is often the only resistance against slanderous actions of others, which leave the victim without recourse. But 'malicious gossip' can also refer to statement that the Lady in the *Rondeaux* associates with 'fancy talk' and 'elaborate figures of speech'; that is, with overly refined expressions that are deceptive and aim to charm and delude.[35] It is precisely her power to resist seduction, by means of rejecting the literary tradition in which the discourse finds its roots, that is so problematic and caused so many passionate and divided reactions among the court audience. This power not only justifies the Lady's refusal but also weakens the symbolic feudal allegiance within French politics, the 'organizational' power that underpins courtly culture. Based on Christian conventions of fidelity, the agency of women in courtly love metaphorically compromises the otherwise accepted submission of the vassal to his lord. Within the new boundaries of chastity imposed by the Lady — deemed 'cruelty' by the Lover — the Lover finds himself in the position of an offender.

34 Butterworth, 2006, identifies a will to initiate change in the satirical enunciation (p. 5).

35 'Beau parler' and 'fine parabole', Rondeau 12.

Malicious Gossip in the *Rondeaux*

Clearly, in this period the concept of 'malicious gossip' had diverse meanings. Its etymology underscores that 'bad' talk (*mé-dire*: *mal dire*, *dire mal*, *dire le mal*) could involve many levels of error and ineptitude. One could talk maliciously while being wrong about someone or something, willingly deceive an audience, spread lies to serve one's own interests or harm someone, but one could also speak wrongfully, with inadequate words, bad style, inappropriate tone, inadvertently, or reproachfully. One could criticize lightly, without solid grounds, or express an 'opinion' not (yet) recognized as truth. All in all, slander is never constructive. It is the word of the other, the opponent, or the rival. Before Marie de Gournay defined it with precision at the end of the Renaissance, writings concerning relations between men and women often represented malicious gossip as a key cause of disorder. Before Marie de Gournay's contribution to the exploration of slander, however, in the *Rondeaux*, Anne de Graville had already identified three species of slander — excessive speech, insufficient speech, and fraudulent word play — that she linked to poetry and figurative speech. In spite of these nuances, Graville's *Rondeaux* associate the question of malicious gossip with excessive speech that inappropriately made public what should have remained private, and exposed women 'with mercy' against their best interests.[36] To fight against malicious gossip then amounts to claiming the power to remain private, or at least appearing in public at one's own chosen moment.

Anne de Graville's chosen poetic form, the '*rondel*', is itself a response to the Lover's (pseudo) tragic discourse. The *rondeau* is a frivolous and cheerful form of poetry, associated with festive music, song and dance, which, in the context of love lamentations, attributes a parodic tone to the Lover's dramatic discourse.[37] In Graville's version, the Lover explicitly exposes that symbolic meaning of the form himself when he claims his despair

36 See the definitions Furetière gives in his *Dictionnaire universel*: 'Mesdire: Parler mal de quelqu'un, descouvrir [publier] ses deffauts, soit qu'ils soient vrais, soit qu'ils soient controuvez. Quand on mesdie de son prochain, on est obligé en conscience de luy reparer son honneur'; and 'Mesdisance: Discours contre l'honneur de quelqu'un, qui descouvre ses deffauts. On fait souvent une medisance pour avoir occasion de dire un bon mot. Les femmes se font plus de tort par leurs reciproques, mesdisances, qu'elles n'en reçoivent de celles des hommes'.

37 Bouchet establishes the relationship between *La Belle Dame sans mercy* and the parodic confrontation of ideological voices in the fifteenth-century play *Jeu à quatre personnages*. Chartier's composition, as well as *Le Roman de la Rose*, are often part of parodic compositions through the fifteenth century (Bouchet, p. 222).

and renounces all kinds of happiness and earthly pleasure, including the specific happiness of 'writing *rondeaux*',[38] which effects a *mise en abyme*. We need to identify how malicious gossip becomes a source of agency, and how the *rondeau* naturalizes that agency.

Rondeau 42 condenses two aspects of bad speech and is thus a significant example of how Graville seeks to qualify malicious gossip in poetry. As noted above, the basis of the quarrel that emerges from *La Belle Dame sans mercy* is the Lady's rejection of figurative speech as poetic stereotypes. Indeed she presents the praise and courtly claims of the Lover as malicious gossip that aims to seduce her through a poetic embellishment of lies, one that would lead to her immediate social downfall were she to believe him. Her response to the flattering verses of the Lover is in line with the perception that amorous discourse is treachery. The last stanza of the *rondeau* summarizes the components of malicious gossip as excessive language and fraudulent praise, which does not seek the glorification of its subject as an epideictic discourse but aims to disparage the Lady. Interpreted in that skeptical light by the Lady, the Lover's courtly words offer only offence:

> Please do not say that the more we seem in love
> In loyalty, we will be happy
> Later or never, good might occur
> In any places.
> You are excessively laudatory with me
> And every one of your words is offensive to me
> It is not my intention to be mean [but]
> Never before have I seen a lover come to me
> With such outrageous discourse
> In any places.[39]

In these lines the Lady reveals that the tradition of feminine praise initiated by Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374) in the *Canzoniere* (1374) he dedicated to Laura, is the ordinary speech of the seducer (*seducere*). He is defined morally as the 'corruptor' who aims to divert the victim from her virtuous path. The Lady sees it as her task to expose the infamous manoeuver designed to make

38 'Pour l'advenir je n'ay besoing de rire / Faire rondeaulx, de chanter ou escrire', Rondeau 58, verses 1–2.

39 'Ne dictes plus se on se monstre amoureux / En leaulté quon y sera heureux / Tard ou jamais en peut bien advenir / En tous endroiz. // Vous estes trop vers moy avantaigeux / Et tous voz motz me semblent oultrageux / Je nay vouloir meschante devenir / Jamais amant vers moy ne vis venir / Dont le parler me soit si dommaigeux / En tous endroiz', Rondeau 42.

her 'bad' (*meschante devenir*). This perspective strips courtly discourse of all its rhetorical varnish, casts courtly seduction as a moral crime outrageously left unpunished, and which the Lady feels she must denounce. Once the immoral dimension of courtly conventions is exposed as a synonym of malicious gossip, the Lady demands social justice and takes up the role of prosecutor of those lovers who use deceptive courtly language.

The Lady's condemnation of seductive praise has further implications, as *Rondeaux* 12 and 14 show. Courtly talk is offensive, and as a lie, it fails to convince women of good sense. Having no access to legitimate or coercive power, women can only hope to experiment with what French and Raven describe as 'referent power'; that is, power derived through influence and reputation:

> Whatever you might think, ladies are not so stupid
> That for a little sweet talk,
> Make believe and pleasant lies
> One could fool them like dummies
> Or deceive them with outright fabrication.[40]

Paradoxically, in this context, the power of women is to expose such deceptive speech, pinpointing seducers who, in other circumstances, might well be the flatterers of kings and queens. Likewise, in her case against slanderers and flatterers of all kinds who abound and flourish, disguised as advisers, around queens and lords, Marie de Gournay argues for the acquisition of education as a means to develop individual judgment, and as a tool to diminish the power of the slanderer. Feminine power emerges from 'behind the scene' observation of social mechanisms and comes with certain responsibilities. It is the ability to see the truth and detect lies, and, the capacity to open one's eyes and close one's ears to faulty speech: women 'will always show deaf ears / To pretty talk and fancy parable'.[41]

In similar terms, Rondeau 48 exposes courtly talk as malicious gossip (or *mesfaictz*) against which victims' only recourse or means of retaliation is words. In this light, the only power left to women is the limited, but real, capacity to convince an audience. This means of retaining credibility,

40 'Quoy quen pensez dames ne sont si folles / Que pour ung peu de fringantes parolles / De fainct semblant et de plaisantes bourdes / On les decoipve ainsi quon feroit lourdes / Pour se laisser tromper en chauldes colles', Rondeau 12, verses 1–5.

41 'Mais ilz [*sic*] auront tousjours oreilles sourdes / A beau parler et fines parabolles', Rondeau 12, verses 12–13.

however, disappears as soon as the courtly love agreement is settled. But this power of the Lady represents a threat to courtly values. The Lady describes as unacceptable a commonplace in which the malicious gossiper and wrongdoer act with impunity, their audience complacent, and their victim silenced.

> Of your wrongdoings at once in the city or in court
> For justice there is no judge and no court
> To whom can I, me, plaintiff, turn?
> If they are judged, it is not to die
> And so they start again.
>
> Everybody spreads the word
> But nevertheless their vice is not thwarted
> And we receive the blame
> Of your wrongdoings.
> If we dare retaliate, everybody is deaf
> If we are hurt, no one will relieve us
> None, or very few, will come to rescue us
> From your wrongdoings.[42]

In the following *rondeau*, the Lover responds to this critique of his amorous discourse. He admits the infamy of false amorous discourse followed by public exposure, and agrees to the severe punishment that should ensue, but primarily insists upon the strength of virtue required to attract happiness. He argues that men's capacity for vicious action is kept in check by fear of tarnishing their reputation and honor. The Lady finds this argument weak. Instead, the Lover's observations on the fruitful and irresistible influence of honor encourage her to develop new arguments about the powerful social attractions of slander.

It is not the example of honorable behavior that ensures morality at court, but the risk of moral downfall. This is expressed in Rondeau 64's personification of malicious gossip — *Malenbouche* (Slanderer) — and the spectacle of shame at the court.

42 'Sur tez mesfaiz tant en ville quen court / Pour droit avoir ny a juge ne court / Vers qui plaintifz puissent bien recourir / Silz sont jugez ce nest pas à mourir / Dont de rechef recommence tout court. // Pour en parler tout le monde y acourt / Mais non pourtant tousjours leur vice court / Et seuffrent on blasme vers nous courir / Sur tez mesfaictz. // Si nous prions replicquer on est sourd / Se on nous fait tort aucun ne nous ressourd / Nulz ou bien peu nous veulent secourir / Donc il convient gref reprouche encourir / Pour le mal faict qui deulx sengendre et sourt // Sur tez mesfaictz', Rondeau 48.

Slanderer thrives around the world
And malicious gossipers are welcome everywhere
And everyone wants to excel in gossip
And there is no one who does not slander
In the city, in the fields, or at the court.
If one lauds someone, it is very brief
But if one slanders her, everyone concurs
And no one will dare contradict
Slanderer
I do not believe there could be any so stupid
So discreet, be he mute or deaf
Who would want to be believed
When he says he suffers great love sickness
And that is how Slanderer flourishes and succeeds.[43]

In this context, it is not what the Lover says (*dictz*) that is significant for the Lady's response, but the fact that he said it: the wise lady must use her rhetorical power to deter her suitor and ward off his love talk. No good can come from the situation, not even when the Lady is 'truly loved' (*bien aymée*), because loving words are a magnet for slander, and no one truly believes in love sickness:

According to your words, if I am truly loved
I should not be blamed
If, let's say, I did not obey and I fooled around,
But if I happened to believe these words
I could be defamed in no time.

If your mind is enflamed
With mad love and hope blinded
Know me as I ever was
According to your words.
Such compassion does not dent me
And I do not want my weakness to be made public

43 'Malenbouche par tout le monde court / Et mesdisans par tous lieux ont grant court / Donc la pluspart à mesdire estudie / Et nen voit on pas ung qui ne mesdie / Soit à la ville aux champs ou à la court. // Son loue aulcun le parler est fort court / Son en mesdit tout le monde y acourt / Et ne voit on ung seul qui contredie / Malenbouche. // Je ne croy pas quil en soit de si lourd / Tant soit secret fust il muet ou sourd / Qui ne voulsist estre mescreu et die / Pour une amer porter grant maladie / Et de cela se reliefve et ressourd / Malenbouche', Rondeau 64.

For if it were,
And if I regretted my actions afterwards,
My punishment would be defamation.
According to your words.[44]

Thus cornered, the Lover has no other choice but to recognize that the discourse of love participates in a pervasive slandering phenomenon detrimental to women. In so doing, he retains just one of the three meanings of slander proposed by Graville's Lady, namely, as a synonym of 'boasting', a narrower perspective that allows the Lover to prove his capacity to speak with measure; that is, with extreme discretion.[45] From the beginning of the dialogue, the Lover recognizes the virtues of silence and discretion, which are revealed to be the antithesis of slander. He declares his intention to withdraw from the world and condemns malicious gossip:

Without bragging, I know how to dissimulate and say
All my concerns, and describe my regrets
But I prefer to isolate myself
For the future.
Because there is nothing worse in the world
Than to defame and slander ladies
And so a good heart ought to be honored
And a bragger always be dishonored
I never was, and that is sufficient
For the future.[46]

Rondeau 48 is entitled 'Of your Wrongdoings' ('*Sur tes mesfaictz*'), and as shown above, it exposes the leeway given to slanderers who abuse their 'pretty ladies *with* mercy'. In her later writing on slander, Marie de Gournay similarly expresses outrage over this. No 'court' and no 'judge', Anne de Graville

44 'Selon voz dictz se je suis bien aymée / On ne me doibt pas tenir pour blasmée / Si pour parler nobeys et foloye / Car si telz motz souvent croire vouloye / Je pourroye estre en bref temps diffamée. / Si vous avez la pensée enflamée / De fol amour et despoir embasmée / Congnoissez moy celle que je souloye / Selon voz dictz. // Telle pitié ne ma point entamée / Et si ne veulx jamais estre clamée / Pour tel confort car se je men mesloye / Et puis apres de ce je me douloye / Pour mon payement jen serois mal famée / Selon voz dictz', Rondeau 60.

45 'Car il nest riens en tout le monde pire / Que diffamer et des dames mesdire / Dont ung bon cueur se doibt bien honnorer / Et ung vanteur par tout deshonnorer / Onc ne le fuz dont il me doibt suffire / Pour ladvenir', Rondeau 63, verses 9–13.

46 'Sans me vanter je scay celer et dire / Tous mes ennuyz et mes regretz descripre / Mais jayme myeulx à part moy demeurer / Pour ladvenir', Rondeau 63, verses 6–8.

and Marie de Gournay argue, is interested in this 'crime' called malicious gossip, which often has severe consequences for its victims: dishonor, blame, and incomprehension. The social aspect of the Lady's refusal relates to the absence of a remedy for anticipated slander, so frequent at the court, against which all victims of *Malenbouche* find themselves powerless. The Lover can offer no guarantee and no proof of truth, and envisaging the future, he can only prove his sincerity by staging his own imminent death through his deteriorating health and miserable appearance. In this dialogue, his courtly discourse is devoid of power and fails to convince the Lady of his true love.

In Graville's debate, both interlocutors appear at their best; their discourse enhances the virtues associated with their status and gender. Their arguments present them as each possessing the exemplary *ethos* that make the nobleman or the Lady an honorable member of the court. Both interlocutors battle fiercely to convince the other and to mount arguments designed to end the controversy. The Lover's strategy is clever. From the start, his engagement with female identity aims to institute the principle of compassion as a prime feminine virtue, by which he can hope to submit the Lady to his will and power. By claiming that the Lady's compassion is a key element of virtue, he hopes to convince her that it would be indeed a pledge in favor of her excellence and value. Although the attempt fails, it succeeds in reinforcing the *ethos* of a prisoner of war that the Lover has also consistently developed through the dialogue, a powerful posture in consideration of the military and chivalric values shared among the contemporary audience of the dialogue. Assimilated to a love war initiated by the Lady's gaze, the love pursuit appears unfairly disadvantageous to the honorable Lover and the merciless, cruel Lady. The *pathos* of erotic desire and war conquest might have positioned much of the audience against the Lady, but it would fail to convince those whose *pathos* is not activated, and who aspire to maintain a good reputation through chaste, modest, and discreet behavior.

From a rhetorical point of view, the Lover does not have a winning appropriate strategy. He counts on the passions of his targeted audience's desire for conquest and pursuit of erotic pleasure. The same chivalric hierarchy of passions does not stand for the Lady (or the assumed readership of Graville's text). But the Lady observes that the Lover only pretends not to know her hierarchy of values and desires, and to thus consider her interpretation invalid, a strategy that is often successful with an inexperienced debater. The Lady, however, employs reason. Highlighting the questionable aspects of courtly love, she exposes the problematic dimensions of such relationships between men and women. The Lover shows himself incapable of resolving the conflict presented to him.

The Voice of a Lady

Anne de Graville gave voice to the courtly lady by adapting the literary precedents established by Boccaccio and Chartier, literary icons who had created a fictional universe attractive to leisure readers and members of the nobility and who had problematized the constraints that restricted courtly women. The *Rondeaux* present a Lady suffering the insistent requests of an impassioned lover, while her *Beau Romant des deux amans et de la belle et saige Emilia* represents a young and beautiful maid emotionally destroyed by the passionate attention of two noble kinsmen who were ready to risk their lives and friendship to gain her love.[47] In both works, Graville demonstrated that the 'courtly prize' of such service was a source of public chaos.

The significance of Graville's decision to center two literary works upon the actions and dialogues of female characters, and thereby to inform readers about women's social and cultural power, is clear. Her work gives us access to a social discourse that welcomed the voices of new interlocutors who were resisting the precepts of traditional courtliness and employing new strategies to claim power for women. They allow us to evaluate contemporary debates about feminine power. The *Rondeaux* represent different types of power and identify one that emerges from eloquent speech — verbal resistance to the rhetorical assault of the Lover who possesses all the required seduction skills, and whose power derives from both feudal and in the courtly institutions.[48]

The famous 'Quarrel' that emerged around *La Belle Dame sans mercy* in the fifteenth century, and that Anne de Graville's version re-enacts in the sixteenth century, can be explained in part by the disappointment of half of the audience forced to identify with the rebuffed Lover, who is powerless in two meaningful ways for courtly culture. For the Lover and his supporters, the requalification of the Lady's chastity as 'cruelty' appears to be the only rhetorical exit, one that neutralizes the Lady's powerful speech and arguments, and thus ends the debate. If we understand 'power' in the political sense Galbraith defines as the ability to control or influence others or the course of events in a given society, then discussion around malicious gossip can be described as a tool that courtly women could use to stage their capacity to think, talk, and decide. In Anne de Graville's *Rondeaux*, the topic of malicious gossip is central. Analyzed from a functionalist

47 See Graville, 1965.

48 See Müller, pp. 231–41, and my own analysis of the female voice in Bouchard, 2004, and Bouchard, 2012, in which the focus of the analysis is also on the female voice.

perspective, the discourse of the Lady both challenges and confirms the norms of relationships between men and women at court. From a social and economic perspective, the topic and phenomenon of slander reveal the diverse, and conflicted, individual strategies to gain power or, in the case of women at court, to not lose one's social strength and influence.

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9. Imagination and Influence

The Creative Powers of Marguerite de Navarre at Work at Court and in the World

Jonathan A. Reid

Abstract

This study examines Marguerite de Navarre's many sources of power and her goals in using it. Beyond her use of seigneurial rights, fiscal resources, patronage, and influence over her brother, François I, it explores how shewielded her considerable powers of imagination as a writer and scripter of narratives: to craft programmatic personas for her brother, self, and other courtiers; to build relationships, especially with other women; to generate valuable cultural capital; and to shape affairs at court, in France, and abroad. Her concern with promoting religious renewal stands out as her abiding ambition, which conflicted occasionally with her attempts to champion her brother, her family and household, and her patronage and religious networks.

Keywords: Marguerite de Navarre, religious reform, religious engagement, letters, cultural patronage, literature, diplomacy, networks

> For what is the hart of a Man, concernynge hys owne strength before he hath receyved the gift of faythe? Thereby only hath he knowledge of the goodnesse, wysedome, and power of God. And as sone as he through that faythe, knoweth pythely the truthe hys hart is anon full of charyte and love.
> — Marguerite de Navarre, translated by Elizabeth I, prefatory verse epistle, *Le Miroir de l'ame pecheresse* (The Mirror of the Sinful Soul) (1533)[1]

1 'Quel est le cueur d'ung homme quant à soy / Avant qu'il ait receu le don de Foy, / Par lequel seul l'homme a la congnoissance / De la Bonté, Sapience, et Puissance ? / Et aussi tost

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Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549) played many roles during her 57 years. Among French female courtiers, she arguably ranks among the most powerful after the two regent/queen mothers of the sixteenth century, Louise de Savoie (1476–1531) and Catherine de Médicis (1519–1589).[2] Setting her apart among that group, she produced a large corpus of literary works, which earned her high regard in her own day and ever since as one of the most important female writers of early modern Europe for her contributions to religious, social, and political thought.[3] Recognizing that her literary career was an important aspect of her political one, this study attempts more narrowly to analyze her 'worldly' influence as a female courtier: how she won power; the limits she encountered in wielding it; and to what ends she put it.[4] It also investigates her collaboration with and influence on other noble women in those pursuits.

The primary focus of this essay and volume — a preoccupation with power — it should be recognized, is framed from a modern perspective. Theorists following the path from Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) via Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche to Michel Foucault, often treat power (authority, might, or influence) as an end or reality unto itself. In the epigraph quoted above, Marguerite, faithful to the religious and philosophical traditions of her day, asserted that power (*puissance*) was — as Elizabeth I (1533–1603) rightly interpreted her meaning — ultimately God's. In her pithy formulation, a blend of Christian and Platonic virtues — Faith and Love framing Goodness, Wisdom, and Truth — give rise and purpose to power. Put another way, those traditions held that moral ends should shape how holders use power and be the standard by which their use of it be judged. The object of our study, Marguerite, has something to say subjectively and substantively, about our preoccupation with power as well as the power we wield and the conceptualizations we employ in studying her use of it. Eschewing any moral judgment about means or ends, this essay follows Max Weber, who

qu'il congnoist Verité, / Son cueur est plein d'amour et Charité.' Translation by Elizabeth I, 'The preface', *A Godly Medytacyon on the christen sowle* (1548), B2^{r}.

2 Among the recent studies on the subject of French women's power, Viennot, chs. 12–13, provides a useful overview grounded in a *longue durée* perspective.

3 King and Rabil count Marguerite as one of 28 major female religious writers in Europe from 1450–1700; Stjerna presents her as one of 11 major female 'models, leaders, and teachers' during the Reformation; and Broad and Green examine her literary works as contributions to political thought For a penetrating reading of her *Heptaméron* in that vein, see Ferguson, Part 2, Ch.3.

4 See Stephenson on Marguerite's 'raw' power; and Reid, 2009, on the ends to which she put her might and the results. The latter work will only be cited to draw attention to particular points, not for the bulk of the information or interpretation related below, which can be readily found via the work's table of contents and indices.

understood authority (rule, power, or influence) to originate from three possible sources: tradition (inherited power), the law (elected or bureaucratic power), and charisma (attracted power). This essay explores how Marguerite valorized and increased her inherited powers by use of her imagination and intellect (charisma), that is, through her ability to convince others of her vision of the world.

Along those lines, among Marguerite's many qualities, two stand out as essential to understanding her influence. First, as exemplified in *The Mirror of the Sinful Soul*, she was a gifted writer, endowed with creative powers of narrative invention and subtle reflection. Second, as the title page of the 1533 edition of *The Mirror* forcefully announced, she was 'Marguerite de France, Unique Sister of the King, by grace of God Queen of Navarre'. As Machiavelli would have recognized, fate had bestowed on her great fortune. She was the sole, beloved sister of François I (1594–1547), whom contemporaries recognized at the start of his reign as forming one angle of the closely-knit ruling 'royal trinity' composed of them and their widowed mother Louise de Savoie. As will be explored below, the obvious *sine qua non* for Marguerite's influence was her close rapport with her brother, which was in dynamic balance with his relations with his mother and, later, his mistress Anne de Pisseleu (1508–1580) as well as his closest male councillors.

The full measure of Marguerite's influence in her roles as a royal courtier, diplomat, territorial lord, patron, writer, forceful voice in the *querelle des femmes* (debate about women), theorist in several fields, religious reformer, and champion of the poor and persecuted has not been fully plumbed after over 170 years of ever growing study since François Génin published an edition of her correspondence and observations based on it. Nor will or could all those roles and that huge body of scholarship be surveyed here.[5] Taking inspiration from Marguerite's greatest literary work — one unfinished and unpublished at her death — the *Heptaméron* (Seven Days) (1558), this essay presents and interprets *contes* (tales), that is, representative vignettes, from seven days or seasons of her life's work. Collectively, these interpreted episodes throw into high relief the main contours of her acquisition and use of power at court and beyond. Borrowing Lucien Febvre's apt characterization of the world reflected in her *Heptaméron*, these vignettes demonstrate that Marguerite sought and wielded influence for both 'sacred and profane' purposes.[6] She promoted the interests of

5 For orientation to the literature, see Clive; Ferguson and McKinley, 'Introduction'; and Reid, 2009, I, 'Introduction'.

6 Febvre.

the Valois dynasty and her own house. Like her mother, brother, and the burgeoning ranks of humanist educated nobles throughout Europe, she patronized the new arts and learning to enrich culture, literature, and courtly life. Lastly and most distinctively, far beyond the worldly concerns of most courtiers, she strove with domestic and foreign allies to effect evangelical religious renewal in France. Her determined efforts put her in conflict with conservative Catholics. As a result, her dynastic and religious goals were at times at cross-purposes and she experienced her most bitter failures on the latter front.

Whatever the tally of Marguerite's victories, defeats, and stalemates, the hallmark of her unfinished life's work at court was her remarkable, perhaps exceptional, use of imagination to multiply fortune's gifts and win significant power from, or influence over, her male relations — her brother, his sons, and her two husbands — by providing them with political service, advice, exploitable cultural capital, and, at times, by scripting for them narratives of possible actions that promised to fulfil their dynastic ambitions. Beyond those core relationships, she exercised significant influence by fostering and collaborating with a broad circle of noble men and women, humanist and religious writers, churchmen, town notables, and commoners. If not always successful in her goals, she helped to create opportunities and expectations for cultural and religious revitalization in France, which would not have existed without her efforts and those of her networks.

The Celebration of the Treaty of London, 1518: The New Role of Women at François I's Court

On 22 December 1518, François I had the three women closest to him, Queen Claude (1499–1524), Louise de Savoie, and Marguerite, host the banquet for the ratification of the Treaty of London. During the dinner, breaking with custom, women and men were seated together. This innovation, Robert J. Knecht observes, was an early example of the much more prominent role François gave to women at court than his predecessors had. It was a lasting precedent. As the century wore on, while women generally lost rights, especially over property within marriage, female courtiers continued to exercise significant influence. Although a minority, never making up more than 20 per cent of the court, women were present in greater numbers than during the late Middle Ages, especially in the households of queens, regents, and mistresses — a trend that had begun under François's mother-in-law, Anne de Bretagne (1477–1514). Women also had more frequent and intimate interactions with

the king and his courtiers.[7] Thereby, some female courtiers had increased opportunity to exert influence since access to the ruler was a key to power.[8]

While presence and access were important, the quality of the relationship mattered most. François's two wives had little say in shaping his rule. His first, beloved wife, Claude, was a retiring figure. Ambassadors at court never credited her with holding significant sway at court before her early death in 1524. Daughter of the powerful Anne de Bretagne, her influence might have increased had she lived to oversee the rearing and marriages of her sons and daughters. After her death, the responsibility for educating them fell to Marguerite, who chose the children's tutors. François's second wife, Eleanor of Austria (1498–1558), was even less influential over him. While her household was larger and had more women in it than those of Claude or Louise, François paid slight attention to her. Theirs was simply a state marriage, which sealed in 1530 a short-lived peace treaty with François I's chief enemy, her brother Charles V (1500–1558).

During François's reign, only three women figured among his important formal and informal councillors. His mother, Louise, dominated during the first half of his reign. She sat on his council and twice served as regent during his war-time absences.[9] Some speak of her as a co-ruler from his accession in 1515 at age 19 to her death in 1531. His mistress for the last two decades of his reign, Anne de Pisseleu, a young woman from an unremarkable noble family, came to court in 1526. Only towards the end of his reign did she exert extraordinary sway, serving as leader of an anti-imperial faction at court, which included Marguerite and François's third son, Charles (1522–1545); a group that a rival faction associated with the *dauphin* Henri (1519–1559) swept from court at his accession. Marguerite was the only councillor (male or female) to exercise influence over the whole of François's reign, and, though clearly second to Louise during the first half, as were all other courtiers, she exerted significant sway over her brother in spurts from the 1520s to the end of his life.

The foregoing examples illustrate the core fact that the unfettered will and affection of the ruler shaped an elite woman's capacity for influence at court. They also provide comparative context revealing how fortunate Marguerite had been in 1518 to have been at court presiding at that treaty celebration. For women of royal blood — whose marriages monarchs sought to regulate as a matter of state — the starting point for their adult careers depended upon

7 Knecht, 2008, pp. 58–60, 72–74; citing Jouanna, pp. 812–13. See also Michon, 2015.

8 Raeymaekers and Derks; Claerr and Poncet.

9 Michon, 2011, provides a thorough review of the relative influence of François's 44 leading councillors.

the sovereign's decision over whom they would marry. Unlike Charles V's four sisters and three daughters, Henry VIII (1491–1547)'s two sisters, Queen Claude's sister, Renée de France (1510–1574), François's two surviving daughters, and most other early modern princesses, Marguerite had exceptionally not been subject to the traditional dynastic policy of being married off at a young age to a foreign prince in order to seal a political alliance. Instead of being wed to Henry Tudor, as Louis XII (1462–1515) once intended, he had her betrothed in 1509 to Charles d'Alençon (1489–1525), a match designed to tie the heir of a royal blood line and possessor of important territories closer to the royal house.

Thus, when François became king, Marguerite was lucky to be in a position to rise in power with him. After his accession, second only to Louise, François granted her and her husband more gifts, powers, and territories than any of the other men and women he brought to court. Crucially, he gave Marguerite sovereign territories of her own, including the Duchy of Berry, as well as a large annuity, which secured her a degree of independence, including from her husband. As he stated in the official acts of his gift, François appreciated the loyalty of his beloved sister and trusted her to use those gifts to bolster his rule. Subsequently, François augmented her seigneurial and fiscal power by granting her lifelong usufruct of the Alençon territories after the death of Charles (in 1525) and allowed her to choose her second husband, Henri d'Albret (1503–1555), King of Navarre, the most powerful feudal lord in France. At court, however, her relationship with François and personal sway mattered most. After his death, her fall was immediate. Henri II, who evidently did not love her — likely because of their opposing religious views and factional loyalties in the 1540s as well as because Marguerite had cherished his brothers prior to their deaths more than him — kept her from court. Henri gave her daughter Jeanne d'Albret (1528–1578) in marriage against Marguerite's will, and even laughed at the queen's diminished station.

In sum, through a fateful decision by Louis XII, dynastic chance, and François's appreciation for her outstanding qualities, at the start of his reign Marguerite had acquired substantial seigneurial powers and a leading position at court.

Captain Marguerite and the Meaux Reformers: An Independent Religious Agenda

In September 1521, Louise and Marguerite left court to visit Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet (*c.* 1472–1534), who, with a team of humanist scholars from Paris headed by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (*c.* 1455–1536), was orchestrating

innovative reform in his diocese of Meaux. The visit marked the importance of what had become a close relationship between Marguerite, Louise, and female members of court and Lefèvre's circle. The visit was a reunion of sorts, since both groups had had substantial interactions at court and in Paris dating back to 1516. Though Briçonnet's first reform efforts in the diocese began in 1518, only after 1521, when Lefèvre's team arrived to reinforce his attempts to improve his clergy and educate the laity did their relationship flourish. That move precipitated Marguerite to initiate regular correspondence with Briçonnet in June 1521. In her first letters, she begged him to allow one of the Meaux group, Michel d'Arande (fl. 1521–1539), to return to court to finish a series of Bible lessons he had been giving to her and other ladies at court. She also placed herself under the spiritual tutelage of Briçonnet and the Meaux group, and promised to serve as their champion, or as Briçonnet likened her, their 'captain,' at court. Over the next four years, Briçonnet and Marguerite carried on an intensive spiritual and tactical dialogue, resulting in over 120 long letters, which document their efforts at court to promote the Meaux reform as a model for the rest of France. François's defeat at Pavia in 1525 enabled conservative critics from Paris to pressure Briçonnet into ending the reform experiment as well as to level accusations of heresy against Lefèvre's group, forcing them to flee to safe havens.

Marguerite's involvement with the Meaux group and their reform program was the most transformative experience of her life. Under their tutelage, she underwent a spiritual awakening and was inspired to express her new faith in works of poetry and prose. Her first two substantial poems were religious dialogues and date from this period. Her unpublished *Pater Noster* (Our Father), *c.* 1524, was a verse translation of the exposition of the Lord's Prayer by Martin Luther (1483–1546) as a dialogue between the God and the soul.[10] In her *Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne* (Dialogue in the form of a Night-time Vision), published in 1533, she channelled her grief at the death of François's daughter Charlotte (b. 1516) soon after child's passing in 1524: the spirit of her niece speaks to her, consoling and instructing her in the knowledge of true saving faith. Inspired by the Meaux circle, these works exhibit the hallmarks of her later works: discursive form; intimate settings; characters — more often women than not — modeled on her family, courtiers, familiars, or some heavenly or holy figure; a preoccupation with spiritual instruction and consolation; and Scripture as the omnipresent frame and subject of her discourse.

Those spiritual and literary awakenings paralleled her emergence at court as the leading advocate of a contested evangelical agenda of religious

10 Navarre, 2001, pp. 25–36.

renewal. Already in July 1521, Marguerite and Briçonnet worried that her advocacy of their reform program might break the royal trinity. She and Briçonnet tried twice over the period 1522–1523 to induce Louise and François to back specific reform proposals based on the Meaux model. Those efforts failed for a variety of reasons: the preoccupation of Louise and François with the first Habsburg war (1521–1525) and opposition from conservatives at court, such as Chancellor Antoine Duprat (1463–1536), as well as the Faculty of Theology and *Parlement* of Paris. On the defensive, Marguerite was forced to spend her credit with Louise and François to induce them to protect the Meaux group as well as a series of evangelicals who preached under her aegis in Paris, Lyons, Mâcon, Grenoble, and her seigneurial territories of Alençon and Bourges. Marguerite's efforts at court and across France were so forceful that she earned admiration or condemnation at home and abroad as a leader of the 'Lutherans' in France. Diplomats, journalists, street singers, pamphlet writers, and hostile preachers described her as a version of the image of her portrayed in a *tableau vivant* staged in the cloister of Notre Dame of Paris in the summer of 1525: that is, as a woman riding on horseback accompanied by devils on foot with Luther written on their fronts and backs.[11]

Marguerite's leadership during this first phase of the Reformation, when religious frontiers and identities were being explored and clarified both in France and the Empire, did not permanently tarnish her reputation or fundamentally undermine her position at court. Her standing there, however, was thereafter complicated by her independent religious agenda, which her brother or mother tolerated but did not actively support and other courtiers positively opposed. Through the rest of François's reign, her reputation and religious agenda both attracted friends and made enemies. She worked the numerous allies who flocked to her into a broader network. Beyond her relationship with her brother, this network became one of her most important sources of power for advancing her various political, social, cultural, and religious projects.

François's Captivity, 1525–1526: Purgation and Protection

François I's defeat at Pavia on 24 February 1525 was a disaster of enormous proportions, including for Marguerite. Unlike most of the nobles, who died on the field, or the few taken captive, including her brother, her husband, Charles d'Alençon, commander of the rear guard, was the only major figure

11 Knecht, 1994, p. 236 for the incident; Reid, 2009, I, pp. 299–305 for the reputation of Marguerite and her network *c.* 1525.

to escape the battle. Fate or fortune erased that dishonor and also ended Marguerite's long, childless marriage, when Charles died unexpectedly of a pleurisy within weeks of returning to France (11 April), leaving his major estates to her in his will. Then, during the summer, with her brother in captivity and the court facing strong opposition within France, Louise and Duprat allowed discontented Parisian authorities to indict the Meaux group and others in her evangelical network on heresy charges. Marguerite's greater challenge was to save her brother, the lesser, her persecuted evangelical 'brethren'. She responded by using her pen, imagination, and newly growing network to attempt to protect persecuted evangelicals and save her brother, body and soul. The remarkable series of letters from that year display her prodigious creativity and resilience as a leader and religious thinker when her main support, François I, was at his weakest.[12]

Marguerite took it upon herself to minister to François as a sort of spiritual adviser. In March 1525, she sent him (via his childhood friend, and closest companion in captivity, Anne de Montmorency (1493–1567)), her copy of Lefèvre's translation of Paul's epistles. She promised that if he were to read them each day 'as if in prayer', he would be delivered. Her relentless efforts over the rest of the year to lead François to embrace an image of himself as newly remade by God to restore a badly broken church ultimately failed. The poems and letters François wrote during captivity, some in direct response to her overtures, do not reflect her religious interpretation.

Marguerite's efforts, however, succeeded on two other fronts. In the summer of 1525, François and Louise agreed that Marguerite should be sent to Spain (where François had been transferred) to negotiate the terms of his ransom. François's only act during his captivity was late in 1525, when Marguerite was with him in Spain. He ordered the suspension of proceedings against Lefèvre and the rest of the Meaux group. On the political front, she ultimately failed to complete the negotiations for François's release. Instead, shortly after dismissing her from Spain as a meddler, Charles agreed with Montmorency essentially to the same terms she had proposed. While in Spain, she did win a symbolic victory of her own crafting, however. When she arrived, François was mortally ill, barely conscious. She had the Eucharist celebrated before him and convinced the officiant to allow him to commune. When her brother recovered soon after, courtiers credited Marguerite with his salvation, and proclaimed to the hostile *Parlement* of Paris and public back home that the king's restoration from near death by the Eucharist was a clear sign that God had blessed his anointed to whom they owed obedience.

12 Over 140 letters date to 1525, a tenth of her known correspondence.

While scripting such morality plays out of the dire circumstances of François's captivity, Marguerite also succeeded in securing safe havens for the main members of the Meaux group while she was absent. During the fall of 1525, Anne Malet de Graville (*c.*1490–*c.*1540), a former lady-in-waiting of Queen Claude, sheltered Pierre Caroli (1480–1550), a member of the Faculty of Theology and Meaux group, who had been in trouble for his preaching in Paris. Given the proximity of Marguerite and Anne at court and the fact that Marguerite had taken Anne and her daughter into her household by 1529, it is likely that Marguerite arranged for Caroli's protection under Anne's wing. If so, Anne would be the first of many noblewomen in Marguerite's network to protect persecuted evangelicals at her request or in emulation of her.

Marguerite also helped to arrange the high-profile escape into exile with Sigismund von Hohenlohe (1485–1534), a distant cousin, who was a leader of the Reformation in Strasbourg, of the three most prominent figures in the Meaux group: Lefèvre, Gérard Roussel (1500–1555), and Michel d'Arande. Through correspondence with Sigismund, Marguerite kept tabs on the Meaux group and called them back after François's release was assured. In the following years Marguerite secured the ex-Meaux campaigners positions either in her household or in François's gift: Caroli as priest of Alençon, Roussel as an abbot and her almoner, d'Arande as a bishop, and Lefèvre as tutor to François's children.

These episodes demonstrate Marguerite's considerable tactical political skill and influence with her brother. Equally, they show that even when François was at a psychological low point, she was unable to convince him fully of his supposed role as a reforming king. These vignettes also reveal that the ever-conservative Anne de Montmorency had emerged, as he would remain until his disgrace in 1541, as her major rival for François's favor. In her letter to Montmorency, noted above, Marguerite complained she was envious of him since though she wished it more than he ever would, she could not serve François as easily because 'fortune has done me this wrong, that in making me a woman, it has made the means difficult'.[13] Her statement was a frank admission that her gender constrained her from assisting her brother as Montmorency could, but it was also a challenge to Montmorency: neither fortune nor he would stop her.

13 Marguerite de Navarre to Anne de Montmorency, [March 1525] 'Bien est vray que toute ma vie j'auray envie que je ne puis faire pour luy office pareil au vostre, car où la voulenté passe toute celle que pouriés avoir, *la fortune me tient tort, qui, pour estre femme, me rend le moyen difficile*' [Translated passage in italics]. Génin, 1841, nº 25, p. 176.

The Diet of Augsburg, 1530: The New Protestant Powers and Political Possibilities

On 25 August 1530, Martin Bucer (1491–1551), a leading reformer from Strasbourg, wrote to Martin Luther and others from the Diet of Augsburg, where the nascent 'Protestants' were taking a major step towards establishing themselves legally by presenting their confession(s) of faith to the Emperor for recognition. Bucer told Luther that French evangelicals had written to him outside of the official diplomatic channels 'at the order of the Queen of Navarre' expressly to encourage them to present a united front and a single confession of faith.[14] Three rival confessions of faith were in competition and the Protestants were trying, but failing, to settle on one agreeable to the majority. The 'French brethren' were pleading with them, Bucer noted, because they believed that if the German Protestants were united they would able to advance the evangelical cause in France, since François was not hostile to it and many nobles had been won over by 'that most Christian heroine, the king's sister'.[15]

Bucer's testimony reveals that Marguerite was serving as the active leader of French evangelicals and had clear plans for advancing their cause. Moreover, his letter testifies to her geo-political political acumen. Well before François and his councillors, she saw and seized upon the opportunity to cooperate with the nascent German Protestants to advance François's dynastic ambitions against Charles, Thereby, she also sought to advance her network's reform objectives.

Whereas François I had no diplomatic representation in the Empire during the 1520s, in the 1530s and 1540s, following the paths blazed informally by members in her network to centers of power in the Empire, he established strong representation. Two of Marguerite's closest allies at court, the learned Guillaume du Bellay (1491–1543), whom she had chosen to accompany her to Spain in 1525, and his equally talented brother Jean (1492–1560), whom she helped have named bishop of Paris, employed a coterie of German operatives such as Johann Sturm (1507–1589), subsequently an influential educator and humanist, and Johann Sleidan (1506–1556), the future official historian of the German Lutheran movement, to gather information, communicate via back channels, and make formal diplomatic overtures to Protestant powers. Marguerite, the Du Bellay brothers, and other courtiers, including Anne de

14 Martin Bucer to Martin Luther, 25 September 1530, Augsburg, Bucer, nº 328, pp. 212–19, esp. p. 215, l. 17 – p. 216, l. 16.

15 'Tum numquam suo officio deest christianiss[ima] illa heroina, regis soror,' Bucer, p. 216, ll. 2–3.

Montmorency's rival, Philippe de Chabot (1492–1543), and eventually Anne de Pisseleu would champion from 1530 to the end of François's reign, principally in three extended periods — 1531–1535, 1538–1543, and 1545–1547 — political alliances with the German Protestants, schemes which always carried the promise of mutual aid and, whether probable or not, religious concord. In each of these periods, Marguerite was, as diplomats ever noted, a leading architect and key instigator at court of these anti-Habsburg, pro-Protestant overtures.

The Alençon Heresy Trials, 1533–1534: The Limits of Influence

In 1533, an iconoclastic attack in Marguerite's ducal seat of Alençon dealt her a severe blow. On the eve of the feast of Corpus Christi, two commoners took statues of the Virgin Mary and Saint Claude and hung them from the gutter of a house.[16] Their act could reasonably be interpreted as a violent symbolic attack on belief in the cult of the saints, the Virgin as intercessor before Christ, as well as the doctrines of the real presence and the sacrifice of the Mass. The judges of her ducal exchequer court, which, as an apanage territory, enjoyed independence from oversight by the region's royal high court, the *Parlement* of Rouen, treated the event as a minor infraction and handed down lenient sentences. What happened next reveals much about the limits of François's tolerance for direct attacks on the church and tradition, the degree of Marguerite's influence over him in such matters, the strength of opposition to her religious agenda at court, and, ultimately, the otherwise opaque workings of her influence on the local level via her networks and the prominent role of women in them.

In response to the lenient sentencing of the iconoclasts, in 1533 and again in 1534, evidently spurred by Marguerite's *bête noir*, Chancellor Duprat, François ordered two special judicial commissions, made up of hand-picked, conservative judges from several *parlements*, to re-investigate and re-try their cases. With the help of the local bishop, these commissions enlarged the investigation beyond the act of the two iconoclasts. They discovered cells of heretics, indicted over 40 of them, and eventually, in the summer of 1534, handed down harsh verdicts (only 21 of which survive) including at least nine death sentences and three of banishment from the realm.

16 For the data and analysis backing up this interpretation of Marguerite's relationship to the local networks at Alençon, see Reid, 2009, I, pp. 393–416; and for a critical edition of the record of the 42 individuals tried and sentences of 21, see Farge, II, pp. 1245–73.

During this affair, Marguerite wrote to her brother three times in an attempt, initially, to convince him to order the first commission of 1533 to send the expanded docket of cases back to the ducal court for retrial. Evidently, François agreed for a time, only to change his mind. Marguerite submitted to his final decision, promising to cooperate with the second special commission, which passed final sentence. Despite her best efforts, she had lost a significant battle at court, had her territorial rights overturned at the king's express order, and suffered a black mark against her name.

This fray transpired in the context of a complex set of interrelated struggles from 1533 to 1535 at home and in the foreign arena that were shaping the religious direction of France and Europe including French support for Henry VIII during his request for an annulment through his break with Rome (1528–1535); François's first period of cooperation with German Protestants (1531–1534); his negotiations with Clement VII (1478–1534) for an alliance, which was eventually sealed by the marriage of the Pope's niece, Catherine de Médicis, with François's second son, Henri; and a rapidly escalating period of religious strife in French cities between evangelicals and Catholics (1533–1535). Marguerite had ignited that domestic season of strife by having her almoner Roussel preach during Lent of 1533 at the Louvre. It finally exploded when radicals in the evangelical movement posted incendiary placards against the Mass in October 1534 and again in January 1535, precipitating a massive persecution sanctioned by François.

Marguerite and her court network were heavily involved in all of those momentous episodes. The less well-known Alençon affair, however, allows us to glimpse something of her unheralded and difficult-to-measure leadership of evangelical communities in the towns and burgs of France, both those under her control and beyond. Despite her promise to cooperate, in fact she did much behind the scenes to dull the judicial blow and save her subjects. 27 of those indicted had connections to Marguerite: she employed eleven of them in her household or ducal administration, several after the trials, including two of those sentenced to banishment. She also had relatives of sixteen others in her service, including in the 1540s, the son of one iconoclast and a relation of the other. The ex-Meaux campaigner, Pierre Caroli, whom Marguerite had named priest of Alençon in 1530, saw his case — one evidently too politically sensitive for the judges to handle — remitted to the king's Privy Court, where he found clemency.

Retrospectively, when the names of those indicted at Alençon are compared with those on the rolls of her household, the officers of her duchy, and the directors of the local *Hôtel-Dieu*, or poor relief foundation, it is clear that Marguerite was directly responsible for fostering the several

conventicles of evangelicals, which the external judges discovered there in 1533 and 1534, dating back to 1523 when she first sent Michel d'Arande to preach in Alençon. Subsequently, she appointed a series of clerics, several of whom, like d'Arande and Caroli, were indicted for spreading heresy in her duchy. These conventicles included town notables and ducal officers as well as commoners in nearby villages. Given the focus of this essay, it is noteworthy that a coterie of elite women indicted by the judges seem to have anchored several of these sodalities: including the elite women Marguerite had given over-sight of the town's poor relief system and a local noblewoman, Jeanne d'Avoise.

Alençon was one venue of Marguerite's local influence. In dozens of other towns similar evangelical cells formed, some in her seigneurial territories, like Bourges and Nérac, but many more in places outside her direct reach as lord such as Meaux, Nîmes, Lyons, Grenoble, Aix, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Orleans, Troyes, and Paris. Marguerite fostered such communities by ensuring evangelicals in her network were appointed to key ecclesiastical, royal, and university positions as well as by protecting evangelical sodalities when authorities targeted them.

La Coche (The Coach): Literary Clout at Court and in Print

During mid-winter 1541–1542, Marguerite presented Anne de Pisseleu, her brother's mistress, with a deluxe manuscript of her poem, *The Coach*, which she had commissioned with detailed miniatures corresponding to the story and act of dedication.[17] Befitting the recipient, in the poem the figure of Marguerite and several interlocutors discuss the nature of true love in its various forms and counterfeits. The figure of Marguerite lauds Anne as an exemplar of the perfect *amie* (female friend/lover), not for her great beauty and grace but for her perfect, virtuous love of François.[18]

By that time, Anne was exerting powerful influence over Marguerite's brother. With the gift of *The Coach*, Marguerite was nourishing her already close relationship with Anne, because, as she often told ambassadors during this period, she needed Anne's help to sway the king. Marguerite had chosen her time and manner of currying favor carefully. That winter, Anne was riding higher than ever. She had convinced François to reverse the pro-Habsburg policy of their greatest rival, Anne de Montmorency, who

17 Petris, introduction to *La Coche*, in Navarre, 2012, pp. 271–76.

18 Navarre, 2012, *La Coche*, ll. 1244ff.

left court in quasi-disgrace in June 1541.[19] As a mark of his growing esteem and deference, François was having special apartments decorated for Anne in his favorite residence, Fontainebleau. Marguerite's poem echoed the themes of that project.[20]

Marguerite's gift of *The Coach* to Anne exemplifies three aspects of her attempts to wield influence in the latter years of François's reign, a period when she was reaching her full powers as a writer and simultaneously facing stiffer competition at court. First, she more frequently deployed her literary works as cultural capital in the pursuit of her personal, dynastic, and religious agendas. In the 1540s specifically, she renewed her effort, similar to the one during François's captivity, to convince him of his calling to be a restorer of the church, a role which corresponded to the reform and dynastic foreign policies that she and Anne were proposing in those years. As part of this campaign, Marguerite addressed a series of New Year's Day poems to her brother in the 1540s, which again prescribed for François a reforming persona.[21] Thereby, she drew François I, who was also a poet, albeit one whose pen had largely run dry since the 1520s, back into the intimate world of their previous poetic exchanges and induced him to respond. His poems from the 1540s exhibit that in some measure he accepted the religious persona Marguerite ascribed to him. Given the large number of surviving contemporary manuscripts of their poetic exchanges, which invariably contain copies of Marguerite's other literary works alongside those of other court poets, her overtures to François were widely circulated and noted at court and in literary circles.

Second, Marguerite collaborated more closely with a sodality of women at court and their male relatives and allies to keep the king's grace, win favors, and shape his policies. At times in the 1530s, Marguerite had acted in concert with other ladies to sustain their relationships with François, such as in April 1537, when she, Anne de Pisseleu, Catherine de Médicis, Marguerite de Bourbon-Vendôme, and François I's daughter, Marguerite de France (1523–1574), co-signed a letter of encouragement while he was on campaign.[22] In the 1540s, Marguerite cultivated her relationships with important female courtiers by involving them in her literary efforts, even

19 Extending the work of Knecht, 1994, Potter, pp. 543–56, confirms Anne's dominant power at court, and corroborates Reid, 2009, II, pp. 497–516, that Marguerite and Anne collaborated throughout the 1540s in attempts to guide François's foreign policy towards alliances and religious concord with the German Protestants and England.

20 See Ruby, pp. 104–14.

21 Reid, 2013, pp. 45–47.

22 Génin, 1842, nº 83, p. 138.

if they were not capable of creating such works themselves. In addition to Anne, she had copies of *The Coach* made for Anne's sisters and, similarly, dedicated her *Fable du faux cuyder* (Fable of False Belief) to François's daughter, Marguerite. On at least one occasion in 1542, Marguerite had ladies at the royal court perform one of her plays. Indeed, many of her late plays, longer poems like *The Coach*, and, above all her *Heptaméron*, are peopled with noble men and women (sometimes only women) in courtly settings. These works reflect and project the women's sodalities she cultivated and cooperated with in maintaining influence at a court that was formally dominated by François but by no means solely directed by him and his male courtiers.

Third, in the 1540s, Marguerite drew on the cultural capital she acquired over the years as one of the leading women in the republic of letters. The significance of that capital and ways she deployed it have yet to be fully measured. In the 1540s, although she had been writing consistently since the 1520s, she had stopped publishing new material after the last authorized versions of her *Mirror* in the winter of 1533–1534. Then in 1543 she released two of the aforementioned works*: Epistre envoyee au roi par sa soeur unique, la roine de Navarre* (Letter sent to the King by his Only Sister, the Queen of Navarre), which was one of her New Year's Day verse letters to François, and the *Fable of False Belief* (reprinted in 1545, 1546, and 1547). In early 1547, when her brother's death was imminent, she had her secretary secure a copyright privilege to publish a collection containing all her previously printed works and a selection of unpublished ones in the *Marguerites de la marguerite des princesses* (Pearls from the Pearl of Princesses) (1547) and *Suite des marguerites* (More Pearls) (1547). Thereafter, however, even though they were designed in part to flatter Henri II, she withheld from print her three late major works: *La Navire* (The Ship) and *Les Prisons* (Prisons), which she completed after François's death and contain some of her most important religious reflections, and her incomplete masterpiece, the *Heptaméron*.

In response to her literary *œuvre* and patronage of other authors, she received a crescendo of recognition as one of the leading women in the republic of letters. Authors from France, Italy, England, Switzerland, and the Empire dedicated at least 76 books to her and wrote dozens of poems in praise of her.[23] Religious figures running the spectrum from Protestant reformers like Wolfgang Capito (*c.* 1478–1541) and Huldrich Zwingli (1484–1531) to conservative Catholics like Pierre Doré (1500–1569) chimed in to the chorus

23 The figures are from the author's (incomplete) unpublished lists of books and poems dedicated or addressed to Marguerite.

of praise sung by the leading literary figures of the day, including neo-Latin luminaries, Salmon Macrin (1590–1557) and Nicolas Bourbon (*c.* 1503–*c.* 1550), and the most widely read French authors Clément Marot (1496–1544) and François Rabelais (1483/94–1553). How much her reputation as a cultural and religious paragon weighed at court or in her dealings beyond remains a question begging investigation.

Jeanne d'Albret's First Marriage: An Abrahamic Sacrifice to the Hard Realities of Power Politics

In June 1541, Jeanne d'Albret, who was, according to Marguerite, still pre-pubescent, was forced by François I to marry William, Duke of Cleves (1516–1592). Jeanne had previously protested the marriage proposal, even directly to François when he visited her to inform her of his decision. At the marriage ceremony, Anne de Montmorency had literally to carry the unwilling Jeanne to the altar. That was his final humiliating duty before he left François's court for good. The purpose of the marriage was to seal an important anti-Habsburg military and defensive alliance between François and the Duke, a wavering Catholic leaning to the Protestant cause, whose extensive lands straddled the Empire and Low Countries. The alliance was intended thereby to serve as the basis for a broader coalition between France and the German Protestant princes, in chief John Frederick I (1503–1554), Elector of Saxony, the Duke's brother-in-law, who were supporting the Duke in a territorial dispute with the emperor. As part of his grander ambition to thwart the power of his rival, François was thus committing his support to the Duke in an imminent war with Charles V as well as implicitly to the German Protestants, on whom the Emperor had also threated to wage war.

The marriage was also diametrically opposed to the interests of Marguerite's husband, Henri de Navarre, who had been negotiating semi-secretly with Charles to marry his sole heir, Jeanne, to the Emperor's son in return for the restitution of Lower Navarre on the Iberian side of the Pyrenees, which the Spanish had conquered in 1517. Marguerite was thus the monkey-in-the-middle between her brother and husband.

Marguerite played a major role in bringing the Cleves marriage to pass and in managing its outcome. The affair reveals that she had embraced the inexorable logic of her pro-Protestant foreign policy when fortune presented an alliance between France and Cleves as the best means of promoting it as well as her brother's dynastic interests. To those two ends, she sacrificed her husband's wishes. Viewed in terms of gender politics, Marguerite made some

hard choices in this affair, which reveal her commitment to her brother as the prime source of her power. The Cleves marriage also displays her cagey political sense for she both orchestrated the political alliance it sealed and planned for the likelihood that it would fall apart, as it did when Cleves lost the war with the Emperor and capitulated in 1543. As early as 1538, when Montmorency was leading François towards reconciliation with the Emperor, Marguerite learned from the Du Bellay brothers' German agents that a French marriage alliance with Cleves could bind François, the German Protestants, and Henry VIII together against the Emperor. During the marriage negotiations, Anne de Pisseleu and Marguerite worked hard to promote the three-way alliance. They held long, private interviews with English and Protestant ambassadors to plot and plan. From 1540 onwards Marguerite seconded those efforts by sending dozens of letters to reassure the Duke and his Protestant allies of her and her husband's agreement to the marriage, to express their happiness with it once it happened, as well as to maintain good relations with them up until, and even after, Cleves' defeat voided the *raison d'être* of the marriage. After the Emperor forced Cleves to foreswear his French and Protestant allies, Marguerite appealed to François and the Pope to have the marriage annulled. In her letters, she assumed total responsibility for having forced her daughter into the marriage despite Jeanne's opposition, noting that the marriage had never been consummated and was thus not valid (Marguerite had ensured that the Duke only put a symbolic foot into the nuptial bed). As proof of Jeanne's unwillingness, Marguerite produced two secret, formal protests signed by Jeanne on the day before, and of, the wedding. The witnesses included members of the Albret household, including Marguerite's close friend and hand-picked governess for Jeanne, Aymée de La Fayette. Marguerite had built into the marriage alliance scheme an escape hatch should it fail: blaming herself via Jeanne's protestations against the forced marriage she exculpated her brother and 'freed' her daughter to serve once again as a bargaining chip in François's foreign policy. In all this Marguerite accepted and played by the iron law, as she put it to her brother, that 'a girl should have absolutely no will' of her own in marriage matters.[24] The contrast with her contemporaneous literary meditations on the voluntary, mutually

24 In an apology to François, Marguerite summarizes this harsh rule of dynastic marriage politics: 'Monseigneur, ayant entendu que ma fille, ne connoissant [...] *ne l'obéissance qu'elle vous doit, ny aussy que une fille ne doit point avoir de voulonté*, vous a tenu ung si fou propous que de vous dire qu'elle vous supplioit qu'elle ne feust point mariée à M. de Cleves' (emphasis added), Génin, 1842, nº 105, pp. 175–76; discussed by Petris in Navarre, 2012, p. 275.

enriching, affection between perfect lovers — her brother and his mistress in *The Coach* — is staggering, but completely congruous with the gendered rules of that era's game of dynastic politics, wherein the fates of families and states were shaped by whether such 'advantageous' marriages actually paid off, not least in producing (male) heirs.

Conclusion: Abiding Influence

In June 1536, shortly after the death of Anne Boleyn (c. 1501/7–1536), an unidentified English ambassador sympathetic to the Catholic cause, writing to the English court about the Emperor's preparations for war with France, quipped that he 'would be loath the King [Henry VIII] should have married in the French race, for they have been trained with the queen of Navarre'.[25] It was a backhanded compliment of sorts, admitting that Marguerite had great influence on other women, and, implicitly, that such women could sway the policies of kings. The ambassador likely had in mind Marguerite's influence on Boleyn, who spent part of her youth at the French court. As modern scholarship has established, Anne had close, discrete ties to Marguerite and her network. Before and during her reign, Anne acquired many evangelical works in French, including Marguerite's *Mirror*. Her brother George (1504–1536), who served several terms in the early 1530s as ambassador to the French court and was in frequent contact with Marguerite, transmitted at least some of these works as well as personal messages. In early 1534, most likely at Marguerite's request, Anne appealed for the neo-Latin poet, Nicolas Bourbon, to be released from prison in Paris after indictment on heresy charges. Anne employed him as the tutor of noble children in her household. After her execution, Bourbon returned to France and Marguerite eventually made him tutor to her daughter Jeanne.

It is not surprising, then, that in 1544 Anne's daughter, Elizabeth, would be set the task, designed to help her win the favor of her step-mother, Catherine Parr (1512–1548), of translating Marguerite's *Mirror*.[26] The decision to publish Elizabeth's translation in 1548, early in the reign of Edward VI (1537–1553), clearly had a political dimension and could not have been made without the approval of the English court. The publication served to bolster Elizabeth's persona as a pious and learned princess by associating her with the pious

25 2 June [1536], Brewer, X, nº 1042, pp. 432–33.

26 Ellis argues that Elizabeth learned a form of rhetorical 'indeterminacy' from Marguerite, which served her well when addressing concerns over her marriage and succession plans.

and learned queen. Much the same could be said for the decision in 1550 and 1551 to associate the young Seymour sisters with two editions of poetry in honor of Marguerite after her passing.

Those cross-channel examples of Marguerite's stature as an evangelical paragon reflect her exemplary role among powerful women of the French court and beyond. While obedient to the gendered behavioral norms and expectations of women within marriage and families, at court, and as nobles, Marguerite creatively exploited the available social pathways. As a courtier and writer, she developed, and passed on to contemporaries and succeeding generations, traditions of female agency she had learned from her forebears. She had grown up witness to the formidably able political manoeuverings of Louise de Savoie and Anne de Bretagne, and the piousness of her mother-in-law, Marguerite de Lorraine (1463–1521).[27] She imbibed and invoked in her literary works the ideas of female writers who had gone before her, such as the renowned French royal courtier, Christine de Pizan (1364–*c*.1430) and the martyred mystic Marguerite Porete (*c*. 1248/50–1310). In turn, Marguerite's reputation attracted the attention of contemporary female writers. The Genevan reformer, Marie Dentière (*c*. 1495–1561), dedicated to the queen her *Epistre tresutile* (A Most Helpful Letter) (1539), an apology for the evangelical cause containing a strident 'Defense of Women' and their right to discuss Scripture with one another despite the attempts of men on all sides of the religious controversy to keep them silent.[28] In the 1540s, the renowned religious poet, Vittoria Colonna (1492–1547), prompted by Renée de France, Duchess of Ferrara, initiated a spiritual correspondence and exchange of religious poetry with Marguerite. In 1542, the first letters of Marguerite and Colonna were published in Italian, adding to their lustre as major religious literary figures.

These literary examples of Marguerite's stature among women are telling markers of her influence. More importantly, following the English ambassador's line of thinking, they suggest that her influence over her brother, at court, and in the world — explored in the seven examples above — was broader and stronger than it otherwise would have been precisely because she sought influence among women and succeeded in attracting their attention and aid. In two articles published in 1972, Nancy Roelker analyzes Marguerite's possible impact on elite French noblewomen active either in evangelical reform during her generation or later as supporters

27 For analysis of Marguerite's relationship with her mother-in-law after the latter's retirement to her convent, see Reid, 2009, I, pp. 109–11.

28 Fols. 4^{r}–5^{r}. For orientation to the literature on Dentière see Stjerna, pp. 133–47; and McKinley's introduction to Dentière.

of the Huguenot party during the first religious wars.[29] Roelker notes ties between Marguerite, the anchor of the first generation, and four or five of the 28 elite women she cites for those two periods. One can easily make the case for Marguerite's direct or strong indirect influence on over half of those cited by Roelker, as well as many ladies of the lesser nobility whom Roelker did not cite, such as (noted above) Anne Malet de Graville, Jeanne d'Avoise, or Aymée de La Fayette. Roelker's sketch of Marguerite's influence on the women of her generation remains to be completed. What seems clear, however, is that, unlike Marguerite's campaign to win her brother's heart to an ardent desire for religious and personal renewal, she had much greater success with noble women. In the summer of 1542, Anne de Pisseleu — whom Roelker oddly does not count among her 28 — vaunted to an ambassador that she had recently come to a knowledge of the word of God by reading the Gospel, and then turned to Marguerite to complain teasingly: 'Madame, how could you have wanted to do me this ill-turn of hiding and depriving me of such a great good for so long? I am now so calm and confident that I count myself happy and do not know how to thank God enough'.[30] Anne's was another backhanded compliment. In addition to *The Coach*, Marguerite had evidently convinced Anne, unlike François, to read the Scriptures, leading Anne to claim adherence to the evangelical cause and boast of her ability to move François to support it. Anne's testimony and the other vignettes cited above show that Marguerite was not just evangelical in her beliefs and writing, but a dynamic *evangelist* on several fronts. At court, in the realm, and indeed internationally, she not only sought to spread 'knowledge of the word of God', but also promoted culture and learning. In particular, she advocated by word and example that women play a vital role in deliberations over matters sacred and profane helping to ensure that 'Faith, Goodness, Wisdom, the Power of God, Truth, Love, and Charity' would be embedded in the hearts of kings, men, and women and realized in some measure on earth.

Or, as some modern theory asks, were her pious claims mere cant to mask more mundane ends? At times, one suspects, as Febvre argued, it was a bit of both.

29 Roelker, 1972a; Roelker, 1972b.

30 '[L]a dame d'Estampes lit l'Evangile et rend graces à Dieu qu'elle vienne à la cognoissance de sa Parolle. Elle doibt avoir dit à la royne de Navarre: "Madame, comment m'avez-vous voulu ce mal de moy si longuement receler er priver de si grant bien? Je suis presentement tant à mon aise et repose que je me repute heureuse, et n'en sçauroye assez rendre graces à Dieu."' Juan Naves to Louis of Flandres, 24 June 1542, Vienna, Staatsarchiv, Frankreich, Varia 3, fol. 146. Cited by Petris in Navarre, 2012, p. 275.

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10. Power through Print

The Works of Hélisenne de Crenne

Pollie Bromilow

Abstract
Hélisenne de Crenne was one of the first women from beyond the court and the nobility to have her works circulated in print in sixteenth-century France. Although she occupied a potentially marginal position, as an author she accrued power with the appearance of each successive book in print. This power was reflected in the materiality of the books themselves and in her use of paratexts to position the text vis-à-vis its readers. Her final work was printed in folio and dedicated to François I, showing that even an unknown and provincial woman could, through the print circulation of her works, participate in the networks of patronage usually reserved for court writers.

Keywords: Hélisenne de Crenne, François I, literature, print culture, female visibility, self-representation

When evaluating female authorship in both manuscript and print in sixteenth-century France, courtly women predominate.[1] It is not difficult to imagine how their greater wealth, higher social status, and participation in the cultural life of the court afforded royal and noble women opportunities for educational and literary development that were beyond the reach of most women, including those from professional families. Although courtly women such as Anne de Graville (*c.* 1490–*c.* 1540) and Madeleine de l'Aubespine (1546–1596) wrote, the fact that they did not rely on writing

1 For an overview of the practices of scribal and print publication of works by female authors during this period, see Broomhall, esp. chs. 3 and 4. Broomhall points out that the work of over 100 women circulated in print in sixteenth-century France and that many chose print circulation (p. 93).

Broomhall, S. (ed.), *Women and Power at the French Court, 1483–1563*,
Taylor & Francis Group, 2018
DOI: 10.5117/9789462983427/CH10

for an income meant that their works rarely found their way into print. Indeed, the evidence of surviving editions suggests that, on the whole, print culture and its possibilities for self-representation and self-empowerment were hostile to living female authors in a way that manuscript circulation was not. This was particularly the case in early sixteenth-century Paris, before the 1540s when Lyons became established as a center for the printing of women's works.[2]

Where women's writings did appear in print in Paris in the first half of the sixteenth century, there were generally specific circumstances that mitigated the possibilities for female literary agency and represented female authorship as somehow separate from the living author. In the early decades of the sixteenth century, only historical female authors such as Christine de Pizan (1364–1430) had their texts printed as entire books. Texts by other women, such as Anne de France (1461–1522), appeared in print only posthumously, as was common for royal and noble women who did not rely on their writing for an income. Most frequently, single poems or individual short texts by courtly women writers were included in anthologies, in which writers were often confined by the expectations of strictly codified genres and there was little opportunity to develop an authorial identity.[3] Anthologies of this kind demonstrate the slippage between the printed book and the social networks that fostered early modern literary activity, and imply that the same expectations of women's seemly and chaste behavior were present in print as in real life.

Whilst the favoring of manuscript circulation over print for female authors appears in some ways to be a consequence of the practical circumstances of women writing, all of these instances in which women did make exceptional incursions into the realm of print speak to the cultural reticence in sixteenth-century France to allow women power through self-determined and sustained activity in the circulation of their texts in print. Within this cultural context, it seems all the more remarkable, then, that Hélisenne de Crenne (*c*. 1510–*c*. 1560), a woman from rural Picardy, achieved such success in creating an identity as a writer. Hélisenne de Crenne was the pen

2 These included the *Rymes* by Pernette du Guillet (*c*. 1520–1545), printed in 1545 by Jean de Tournes, who became well known for his promotion of female authors, especially Louise Labé whose *Œuvres* he printed in 1555.

3 Broomhall has argued that in anthologies female-authored texts were often greatly outnumbered by their male-authored counterparts. The opportunity for an anthology as a whole to be identified as female-authored was therefore limited. In addition, there was often little opportunity to write the female experience in poetic genres such as the *tombeau*, for example: Broomhall, pp. 186–93.

name of Marguerite Briet, a woman from Abbeville in Picardy about whom relatively little is known. She was the wife of Philippe Fournel de Crenne, whose patronym she took as part of her authorial identity. They had a son named Pierre who, in 1548, was a student in Paris. By the time of her death in 1552, Crenne had separated from her husband and was herself living in Paris. The role of the name Helisénne de Crenne has been the subject of much critical discussion.[4] It had multiple connotations in the context of contemporary and classical literature. Christine de Buzon has pointed out that 'Hélisenne' evokes four female names frequently included in lists of exempla (Elissa, Helen, Iseult and Polisenne) one of which was a synonym for Dido, who was an enduring focus of Crenne's works.[5] Furthermore, 'Hélisenne' is also a homonym for a heroine of the highly popular romance *Amadis de Gaule*, the French translation of which was also printed by Denis Janot (fl. 1529–1544) in 1540.

This chapter evaluates the consequences of Crenne's exceptional position as the only living woman writer to have her works printed in Paris during the first half of the sixteenth century. These texts revolve around the disorder created by an imbalance between reason and sensuality and the perilous position of the woman caught in the throes of an unvirtuous love. Self-representation is constructed as central to her original compositions. These issues are always refracted through specific genres, the consequences of which for the themes and style of Crenne's writings have yet to be fully explored by scholars, in spite of the considerable critical attention the author has attracted in recent decades. The appearance of critical editions of the *Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* in 1997, the *Epistres familieres et invectives* in 1996 and the *Songe* in 2007 together with Diane Wood's 2000 book, the very first monograph devoted to Crenne, represent the culmination of the rediscovery of her writings over the past 40 years. Although her writing was frequently reprinted in the mid-sixteenth century, it fell into obscurity after the final edition of the *Œuvres* in 1560.

Through the circulation of her works in print, Crenne makes an implicit challenge to contemporary gender norms that constructed women as silent and relegated women from beyond the court to obscurity. Crenne is noteworthy for publishing without the protection of a longstanding patron and not having access to the networks of a powerful husband or male relative that were the pathway to print for so many women writers

4 See, for example, Buzon's extensive discussion in Crenne, 1997, pp. 20–29, which is taken up in Wood, pp. 57–66.

5 Crenne, 1997, p. 22.

in the early modern period.[6] We have no record of Crenne participating in court life, nor do the dedications of her works suggest that she relied upon patronage in court circles as a significant source of income to support her writing.[7] Indeed, because Crenne is described in legal documents of the period as owning properties jointly with her husband, we can assume that she enjoyed independent wealth that, at least partly, funded her writing activities. However, given that it was Janot and not Crenne who requests the privileges of all of the first editions of her works, it seems likely that it was he, and not Crenne, who financed the publication of the books. We can glean from the privilege to the *Songe* that Janot was preoccupied, even worried, by the potential financial risks that printing this text entailed, as he asks in good faith for a privilege of three years rather than the more standard two years in order to see a return on the capital tied up in printing the work.[8] Although the popularity of her corpus suggests that they were also read at court, more typical readers of Crenne might have been Gilbert de Hodic and his wife Geneviève Bureau, whom Lyndan Warner describes as 'on the lower to middle rungs of the ladder to dignity above the wealthy merchants but below the officers in the sovereign courts'.[9] Two copies of Crenne's *Epistres familieres et invectives* were found in Gilbert's library when an inventory was taken in 1549.

A number of questions arise regarding the appearance and success of Crenne's works in print: to what extent did their publication result from strategies of empowerment adopted by the author in resisting cultural norms that usually prevented living women from circulating their works in print? What were the characteristics of this empowerment? What kinds of power resulted from it? Given the collaborative nature of the printing process in the early modern period, how was this power enabled or undermined by the printer she worked with?

In order to explore these questions further, I will position myself as a Foucauldian feminist and use Michel Foucault's theory of the 'microphysics

6 Broomhall has established that two of the most important factors for printers choosing female-authored works were family connections to powerful men, and first-hand experience of events of particular contemporary importance (p. 98).

7 Broomhall has noted, 'Only her 1541 translation, *Eneydes*, is dedicated to a specific patron, Francis I. This does not suggest that she had a well-developed circle of court patrons. However, Crenne's independent wealth and lack of contact with the French royal court left her free to explore her own choice of literary themes' (p. 137).

8 'Et ce jusques à trois ans: affin que ledict Janot se puisse honnestement rembourser des fraiz qu'il luy convient faire pour l'impression desdictz livres', Crenne, 1541, sig. Aii^{r-v}.

9 Warner, p. 43.

of power' as a conceptual framework by which to analyse Crenne's power as an author.[10] For Foucault, power is not the exclusive preserve of a particular social class, but a diffuse and dynamic network that encompasses many more possible positions and relationships.[11] Power is not an inherent property of a structure, whether bodily or social; it accrues through the adoption of strategies, dispositions, manoeuvers, techniques, and functions. It is not possessed, but rather exists in a complex network of relationships that are always in tension with each other. Domination is not the privilege of the dominant class, or a cultural elite such as the court, but is the cumulative and global effect of the adoption of strategic positions that may also be manifested in, and reinforced by, those who are dominated. Power, then, is always productive, for both the dominant and the dominated.

Foucault's definition of power has received a mixed reception from feminist theorists. This is largely, but not exclusively, related to its failure to acknowledge gender as a category of difference when elaborating the operation of power. Ultimately, if power is not possessed by men, then this also counters central tenets of feminist thought, such as the view that women are oppressed by power illegitimately held by men.[12] In this chapter, I align myself with the approaches of feminist scholars who have brought Foucault's theories into productive dialogue with female acts of resistance to norms.[13] In particular, I follow Margaret McLaren's analysis of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who used the gender norm of the mother to oppose the repressive Argentinian government of the 1970s and 1980s.[14] I will show that by adopting Foucault's more fluid and dynamic definition of power, we can open up Crenne's career to the possibility that the author used the print circulation of her works to empower herself. This empowerment, I

10 I borrow the term 'Foucauldian feminist' from Sawicki, p. 13.

11 'Or l'étude de cette microphysique suppose que le pouvoir qui s'excerce [sur le corps] ne soit pas conçu comme une propriété, mais comme une stratégie, que ses effets de domination ne soient pas attribués à une "appropriation", mais à des dispositions, à des manœuvres, à des techniques, à des fonctionnements; qu'on déchiffre en lui plutôt un réseau de relations toujours tendues, toujours en activité plutôt qu'un privilège qu'on pourrait détenir; qu'on lui donne pour modèle la bataille perpétuelle plutôt que le contrat qui opère une cession ou la conquête qui s'empare d'un domaine. Il faut en somme admettre que ce pouvoir s'exerce plutôt qu'il ne se possède, qu'il n'est pas le "privilège" acquis ou conserve de la classe dominante, mais l'effet d'ensemble de ses positions stratégiques — effet que manifeste et parfois reconduit la position de ceux qui sont dominés', Foucault, p. 31.

12 On these and other problematic aspects of Foucault's theories for feminism, see Ramazananoglu.

13 For further case studies exploring the usefulness of Foucault's theories for feminist thought see, for example, Taylor and Vintges.

14 See McLaren, pp. 221–23.

will argue, resulted from the numerous productive ways in which Crenne used her status as a woman to challenge the general curtailment of women's voices in print in early sixteenth-century France. I will demonstrate that, by understanding power as dynamic rather than static, and accumulated rather than possessed, as feminist scholars we can circumvent the very male-dominated structures that restrict the visibility of women in social constructions, such as the court, and instead create flexible models of interpretation whose boundaries are more permeable to female historical figures.

Developing an Authorial Persona in Print

One of the principal ways in which Crenne's publications differ from those of other women writers in the first half of the sixteenth century is how she develops an authorial persona across her works. This was particularly innovative and ambitious given the popularity at the time of including only short pieces by women writers in anthologies where male-authored works predominated. Crenne's first work, the *Angoysses douloureuses*, an autobiographical fiction in the form of a prose novel that told the story of the unchaste love of the married heroine Helisenne for a younger man, was her most frequently reprinted text in sixteenth-century France.[15] It was followed the very next year by the *Epistres familieres et invectives*, a collection of personal and invective letters, which demonstrated to the reading public the author's knowledge of the themes and techniques of humanist writing and provided her with a generically acceptable way of advancing challenging ideas as a female author. The *Songe*, an allegorical dream sequence on the nature of virtue and vice, further developed the ideas of love and the relationships between the sexes, and appeared in 1540.

Like the first editions of Crenne's other works, her final book was printed by Janot in Paris. It represented a break with the author's previous works in a number of significant ways. Firstly, it was a translation rather than an original composition. It therefore represented something of a departure from the first three works that had all been situated within the same fictional universe. However, the reading public's taste for vernacular translations had grown during the reign of François I (1515–1545).[16] The choice of text, the

15 For a full bibliographical description of the sixteenth-century editions of Crenne's works see Crenne, 1997, pp. 43–69.

16 On this point see Marshall, pp. 45–54.

first four books of Virgil's *Aeneid*, also mitigated the potential commercial risks of this change. Not only was it a key humanist text with the potential for popular appeal, it also allowed Crenne to explore the experiences of a tragic heroine overwhelmed by an ill-fated love, from the distinctive viewpoint of a female translator.[17] The same scenario had been the central focus of much of her first and most successful work.[18] The market for a male-authored translation of the *Aeneid* had been tested by the publication of the translation by Octavien de Saint Gelais (1468–1502) by Antoine Vérard (fl. 1485–1512) in 1509. This translation of the whole work was reprinted five times and remained the most widely circulated translation until 1547. All of the previous editions of Crenne's texts had appeared in octavo format but, in contrast to this, the *Eneydes* was printed in folio format in 1541. Books in folio projected a greater sense of permanence. They also provided a wide margin suitable for note-taking but lacked the portability of their octavo counterparts, which by the 1530s had become firmly associated with reading for leisure.[19] This may suggest that Janot was hoping to target a more scholarly readership with the translation than had been the case for the works attributed solely to Crenne. Perhaps reflecting the change in scale of this larger format, the *Eneydes* were decorated with a different range of woodcuts than were the first three works.[20]

In addition, the *Eneydes* was the only work to be dedicated by the author to an individual. The popular *Angoysses douloureuses* had based its appeal on a claimed readership of compassionate but learned women. Crenne does not repeat this explicit appeal to a female readership in either the *Epistres* or the *Songe*. In the former she claims to have gathered together her letters for ungendered readers ('lecteurs', 'gentilz espritz', 'gens prudens').[21] In the preface to the *Songe*, Crenne talks of 'noble readers'.[22] This may reflect a growing confidence in addressing readers of both sexes, a view certainly reinforced

17 For an overview of the publication of early French translations of Virgil's *Aeneid* see Worth-Stylianou.

18 On the similarities of the *Angoysses douloureuses* and the *Eneydes* see Wood, pp. 135–51.

19 As Richardson explains: 'A folio was a bulky object, to be consulted in one place, while an octavo or smaller format allowed one to slip a book in one's pocket and carry it around, consulting it where and when one wanted, for study or in moments of leisure and it could be cheaper if a smaller typeface allowed economies in the amount of paper used' (p. 125).

20 Re-use of woodcuts was common in sixteenth-century French printing and a number of them had been repeated across the *Angoysses douloureuses*, the *Epistres familieres et invectives* and the *Songe*, which added to the coherence of these volumes. For an overview of the practice of reusing woodcuts see Rothstein, pp. 85–94.

21 Crenne, 1996, p. 61.

22 'nobles lecteurs', Crenne, 1541, sig. Aiii^{v}.

by the *Epistres*, in which both men and women appear as inscribed readers within the texts. For her final work, Crenne chose to associate her authorial persona with the king, François I. In addressing the monarch, Crenne may be utilizing her growing power and authority. Alternatively, the dedication may reflect her aspiration to have her texts circulate in courtly circles, even if this was not in reality the case. Lastly, but not insignificantly, the *Eneydes* was the only one of Crenne's works never to be reprinted.[23]

Crenne's reputation as an author transcended these first appearances in print, however, as the publication of new editions suggest that her works enjoyed commercial success in the *libraires* of Paris and Lyons beyond Janot's own shop.[24] The *Angoysses douloureuses* was printed in Lyons by Denis de Harsy (fl. 1522 onwards) as early as 1539 (in violation of the privilege held by Janot and therefore undated on the title page), and Pierre Sergent also printed a new edition in Paris in 1541. From 1543, Crenne's three original compositions were printed in the much smaller sextodecimo format by Charles l'Angelier (fl. 1543–1563) in Paris under the title of *Œuvres*. These collected works were the first to be printed in the French language by a living author and claimed on their title page to be an improved version of the original text that had been 'newly printed by the order of the said Lady'.[25] From 1551, a version with spelling revised by Claude Colet formed the basis of an edition printed by Étienne Grouleau (fl. 1551–1563).[26] Colet claimed that he revised the spelling of Crenne's works after two young women had asked him for guidance on reading the text after a dinner at their home.

Although ultimately Janot may have controlled the speed with which the first editions of Crenne's works appeared in print, her texts were carefully positioned so as to maximize their appeal to the book-buying public. The way in which Crenne's texts circulated initially as single works with the author's name clearly identified on the title page suggests that this gendered

23 I note, as do Ehrling and Karlsson, that the *Eneydes* is the only of Crenne's works not yet to have been edited by modern scholars (Ehrling and Karlsson, p. 271). This reflects the importance of 'originality' to modern-day scholars who are less keen to study translations than original compositions. Doubtless the scarcity of surviving copies of the work has impeded its study as well. Surviving copies are held in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, site de l'Arsenal; Geneva, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire; and Berlin, Staatsbibliothek.

24 For a discussion of the potential commercial opportunities afforded by women's writing in early modern France, see Chang, esp. Ch. 1.

25 'Le tout mieulx que par cy devant redigées au vray, et imprimées nouvellement par le commandement de ladicte Dame', Crenne, 1543, title page. This volume of collected works did not include the woodcut illustrations of Janot's first editions.

26 See Crenne, 1997, pp. 663-65.

authorial identity was valuable to the marketing of those works.[27] This was distinct from the ways in which the majority of women writers in sixteenth-century France saw their texts appear in print — in anthologies where their authorial status was eclipsed by male-dominated material and literary contexts in which their works were circulated.[28]

The sense of cohesion across Crenne's four works went beyond the literary and intellectual to encompass likely patterns of production and consumption. The fact that Janot mentioned both the *Epistres familieres* and the *Songe* in the privilege to the former, for example, demonstrates that there was a degree of forward-planning in the appearance of Crenne's works in print.[29] We can speculate that they may have been produced according to a pre-established timetable agreed between the author and her printer-collaborator, which was designed to maximize sales. This is consistent with the appearance of other women authors' works in print in sixteenth-century France, which tended to be grouped in a concentrated time period as if the purchase of one text created a market demand for another.[30]

Taken together, this outline of the print publication of Crenne's works offers us numerous insights into the possibilities for discursive, literary, and creative agency available to her as a woman writer in 1530s France. They show us that an apparent choice to circulate one's writings in print was possible, although rare, for a woman writer. Once printed, if their success with the book-buying public was established, works would then be printed and read in centers beyond the capital. The appearance of Crenne's works in rapid succession suggests that she viewed writing as a sustained and structured activity. Although rare amongst women writers of her time, Crenne seems to have sought recognition as a writer as her primary occupation. Evidence for this is found in the fact that the most commercially successful of Crenne's works was the first printed. The *Angoysses douloureuses* differs from its intertexts in constructing the act of reading rather than the act of writing as central to the progression of the plot. This is true in the passing of the letters

27 Chang has argued that there are, in fact, two narrators to the *Angoysses douloureuses* ('de Crenne' and 'Dame Helisenne') and that these multiple authorial personas compete with, and undermine, each other (pp. 139–74). For a reply to this see Bromilow, 2013.

28 On this point see Ellinghausen, esp. Ch. 1.

29 'Ledict suppliant ait recouvert deux petites copies composes par ma dame Helisenne qui a compose les Angoisses d'Amour. En l'une desquelles copies sont continues plusieurs epistres, tant familieres que invectives, et en l'aultre est contenu ung songe, le tout compose par ladicte dame', Crenne, 1996, p. 59.

30 Broomhall has noted also, with respect to Jeanne de Flore, that there is a pattern of women's writings appearing in print in concentrated bursts, suggesting that a market could be found, but that long-term interest could not be sustained (p. 123).

between Helisenne and her lover Guenelic and also in the way that his friend Quezinstra recuperates the manuscript of the book from beside Helisenne's body and gives it to Mercury who has it read by the Gods. Jupiter's opinion that the text should be printed in Paris prefigures how the text will be consumed by readers as a printed book and authorizes its distribution in this medium.

Her other works followed in quick succession, seemingly to capitalize on readers' interest in the *Angoysses douloureuses*. This was especially likely concerning the *Epistres familieres et invectives* and *Songe*, which were situated in the same fictional universe as the first work.[31] It is easy to imagine that the enjoyment of the first book, a relatively racy tale of adulterous love, fueled readers' enthusiasm to purchase the second and third. This is one way in which the form and content of her works overlapped with likely patterns of consumption. With the appearance of each subsequent book the author developed and consolidated her discursive power; as her reputation grew, Crenne displayed increasing confidence in addressing male and female readers.

The Female Voice and Exemplarity

The success of Crenne's works in print was, then, at least partly self-determined and the female author actively sought ways to maximize her discursive agency which were both innovative and remarkable at the time. An author who was well-versed in both contemporary and classical literature, Crenne resisted the norms of sixteenth-century literary culture which sought to silence women, by identifying narratives where the addition of the woman's perspective offered new insights into the text's themes.[32] This was a common feature of works by female authors. In the *Angoysses douloureuses*, Crenne re-works male-authored intertexts to create an autobiographical fiction in which the identity of the protagonist and that of the author are deliberately merged. Whereas in the *Fiametta* by Giovanni

31 According to Wood, the first two works 'were intended to be read together, as complements'. She adds that 'the volumes [the *Angoysses douloureuses*, *the Epistres* and the *Songe*] were undoubtedly displayed side by side in Denis Janot's shop in the rue Neuve Nostre Dame and in his stall in the Galerie des Marchands of the Palais de Justice, Deuxième Pilier. The complementary nature of these works becomes even more obvious in the 1543 edition when the novel, letters, and allegorical dream sequence appear in the same volume, printed by Charles Langelier. Subsequent sixteenth-century editions recognized the self-referentiality of the three works by continuing to publish them together' (p. 79).

32 As Janet Smarr has remarked: 'all of Helisenne's works [...] deal with the problems caused by passion and the relations between the sexes and do so in an interconnected manner' (p. 140).

Boccaccio (1313–1345), for example, the reader is aware that they are reading a female protagonist's voice ventriloquized through the male narrator, Crenne creates the impression of the authentic narrative by implying that the authorial persona, Dame Helisenne, is recounting her own story. The illicit nature of the love affair adds to the strong sense of identification with the narrator that the reader feels in response to a story that has been dedicated to their moral improvement.[33]

In the *Epistres familieres et invectives*, Crenne uses the form of the letter to craft correspondence between the narrator Helisenne and a variety of male and female recipients. In the *Epistres familieres*, she draws on works such as the *De conscribendis epistolis* by Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) which had been circulating since 1522 and included chapters on the letter of consolation, of asking and giving advice, and the invective letter.[34] Within this adaptation of the humanist letter, Helisenne demonstrates publicly her ability to console, counsel, and advise her acquaintances, all of whom are presented as her correspondents. In the *Epistres invectives*, Crenne takes advantage of the acceptability of the letter form as a means of communication for women to advance her most challenging ideas, defending herself against detractors, accusing her husband of misogyny, and defending the female sex against his attacks. She also writes two letters defending literary women and, in particular, her own writings from the criticism of an individual reader-correspondent, and of the readers in a fictional town named Icuoc. She skilfully uses the slippage between the letter and the oration to 'voice' ideas in print. She also exploits the possibility of using letter form to stage a confrontation of ideas in which the letter is the only link with the correspondent whose ideas are being challenged.[35]

Hélisenne de Crenne presents herself as an example for readers, especially female readers, to follow. Although she starts the *Angoysses douloureuses* with the conventional claim of the inadequacy of her writing owing to her weak mental and physical state, this should be seen as an *apologia* for the act of having one's works printed.[36] In the dedication of the work to the inclusive and broad category of 'all honest women', it is the narrator's wish

33 Here, and throughout Crenne's first three works, the narrator doubles as 'the person both in need of moral advice and able to offer it', Smarr, p. 141.

34 Nash describes the *De conscribendis epistolis* as 'un ouvrage très important pour Crenne [...] que personne jusqu'ici n'a rapproché', Crenne, 1996, p. 24.

35 According to Smarr, 'letter writing was more acceptable for women than participation in public gatherings or face-to-face meetings with men' (p. 153).

36 The dedication in the *Angoysses douloureuses* to 'toutes honnestes dames' twice evokes the frailty of Dame Helisenne's hand as it traces across the page: 'cela me cause une douleur qui

that in reading the text they use the heroine's own experience as a counter example and thereby avoid the agonies of unchaste love themselves:

> O dear ladies, when I consider that in seeing how I was caught, you will be able to avoid the dangerous snares of love, by resisting love from the outset, without persisting in amorous thoughts[.][37]

Crenne further legitimizes the project of circulating her exemplary text in print by disrupting the conventional relationship between printing and unchasteness. She achieves this by representing the project of printing the book for the learned people of Paris as authorized by the Gods and therefore divinely ordained. The printed book is further valorized over manuscript circulation by the representation of letters exchanged between the lovers as a means to advance their love affair. This destabilizes the conventional hierarchy between scribal publication as limited and chaste, and print publication as more accessible and unvirtuous.

Furthermore, an overarching exemplary model is present in the works in a more diffuse manner: that of the virtuous and erudite woman engaged in the acts of reading and writing. This is an obvious theme in the *Epistres familieres et invectives*, where Crenne draws attention to the act of reading and writing the letters in order to emphasize the materiality of the epistolary exchange. She also displays her knowledge of classical *exempla*, and, through the form of the letter she links exemplary models to the lives of her correspondents and readers. In the *Songe*, the narrator contextualizes the reading of her own work by describing the reading of the Scriptures that is an established part of the reader's life. She wakes from her dream poised to write the dialogues in which she has taken part, thus displaying, however briefly, the writing process to the reader. This *exemplum* of the learned woman exceeds any single text, to encompass the author figure as well as her books. It reveals that the aspiration to educate the reading public came hand-in-hand with self-fashioning.

Thus, we can understand that Crenne intended a civic purpose for her writing.[38] This aligns Crenne's aspirations for her writing to those of a group of sixteenth-century English poets whom Richard Helgerson has called

excede toutes aultres, en sorte que ma main tremblante, demeure immobile', and 'à soustenir ma debile main, pour vous le scavoir bien escripre', Crenne, 1997, p. 97. See also Larsen.

37 'O tres cheres dames, quand je considere qu'en voyant comme j'ay esté surprinse, vous pourrez eviter les dangereulx laqs d'amours en y resistant du commencement, sans continuer en amoureuses pensées', Crenne, 1997, p. 97.

38 See Helgerson, esp. ch. 1.

the 'laureates': professional poets who ascribed a usefulness and timeless quality to their writing in order to erase either the purely commercial ends or amateurish origins of their printed works. This aspect of her work achieves its fullest expression in the *Eneydes*, in the dedication to François I.[39] Although works were frequently dedicated to the king, this dedication, along with the folio format of the book, one of only three works to be printed by Janot in this large format in his active years, mark Crenne as a significant author relative to others published by that printer. As Janot would become official printer to François I in 1543, this edition was perhaps a convenient way to display the quality of his printed books to the king. In the dedication, Crenne describes how the inadequacies of her writing and the monarch's erudition had long prevented her from acting on her desire to translate the work that she had planned to complete with him in mind. She explains that he will notice that she has made some additions to the second book in the form of a description of the death of Hector, from whom she claims François is descended, reflecting the literary myth, widespread in late medieval and Renaissance France, that the nation was founded by Hector's son Astyanax.[40] Crenne describes how the virtuous Hector was killed by the treachery of Achilles, who prevailed in spite of his inferior skill at arms. Crenne's own commentary on Homer intrudes here, and again during her presentation of his narrative in Book Two, as she questions the credibility of his account. She claims that Homer was mistaken in favoring the Greeks, as Hector's superlative chivalry meant that he could only have been killed by Achilles through treacherous means. This denigration of Homer and praise of Hector compounded the effect of the four different accounts of Hector's death by supplementing the Virgilian source text with a prehistory of the Kingdom of France. In the dedication, she states her preference for the eyewitness accounts of Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius over Homer's which was written after the fall of Troy. Thus, not only does the comparison with Hector serve to flatter François and ultimately France, but the inclusion of the multiple accounts of Hector's death shows Crenne to be capable of a scholarly rigor and critical judgment rivalling, or exceeding, that of her male counterparts.[41] Through her self-representation as an example for readers to follow, the development of the exemplary model of the reading and

39 Janot would become official printer to François I in 1543.

40 For Wood 'the text contains two simultaneous layers of erudition, Renaissance humanism with its desire to spread the classics overlaid with medieval scholarship and subjectivity' (p. 136).

41 Wood describes how, for example, Crenne's fourth source, Guyon de Coulomne, is not mentioned by Jean Lemaire de Belges in his *Illustrations de Gaule et singularitez de Troye*; its inclusion in Crenne's work is a result of her thorough research (p. 141).

writing woman, and her aspiration to rewrite the mythological prehistory of France, Crenne demonstrates the civic purpose that drives her writing, simultaneously foregrounding the shift in her power from the discursive sphere to the domain of practical application.

Visualizing Female Authorial Power

Whilst we can consider the printed book as an agent of the author's power, we must also acknowledge that control of the production process usually resided with the printer and the artisans in his workshop. In this case, as all of the privileges of Crenne's works were made out to the printer rather than the author, we would assume that Janot controlled format, typography, illustrations, and the use of woodcut initials, for example. Of course, Crenne may have played a part in these aspects of book production. In addition, the choice of woodcuts, fonts, and decorated initials was limited to those in the printer's stock. It was even possible for the *mise en page* to provide alternative interpretations and meanings beyond those suggested by the words of the text itself.[42] The author's self-empowerment was in constant tension with the practical and commercial constraints governing the work of the printers who were partners in disseminating the text.

Given that the success of the *Angoysses douloureuses* would have facilitated Crenne's approach to other printers, we can assume that her relationship with Janot was a good one. This partnership, which lasted for the publication of all four of her works, ensured that the first public appearance of Crenne's texts occurred under the protection of Janot's long-standing and good reputation.[43] Janot's printshop ensured that the name 'de Crenne' was emblazoned in a distinctive large roman font across the title pages of all the first editions of her works, ensuring that her authorship enjoyed prominence and visibility. Janot also illustrated the fact of Crenne's authorship with a number of woodcuts. Although these were not necessarily commissioned specifically to illustrate her works, they suggest that the Janot workshop viewed Crenne

42 Indeed, it was possible for the addition of a woodcut to change the overall interpretation of the text. For an overview of the role of woodcuts in creating meaning in the *Angoysses douloureuses* see Réach-Ngô, pp. 263–74. For a case study of how the insertion of a woodcut modified the meaning of the *Angoysses douloureuses*, see Bromilow, 2012.

43 Broomhall has established that collaboration with a reputable printer was even more important for female authors than for their male counterparts, as to some extent this mitigated the questioning of their virtue provoked by their excursion into the public realm (pp. 112–17).

as an authoritative figure.[44] This page layout sympathetic to the promotion of the female author was essential in empowering Crenne to maximize the potential of the medium of print for her own self-fashioning as an author.[45]

A woodcut showing a woman in classical dress holding a book representing female literary creativity featured as the opening image to Books One and Two of the *Angoysses douloureuses*, thereby unmistakably identifying the work as female-authored.[46] The classical dress, and historical, rather than contemporary, buildings in the background create the impression of timelessness. This was undoubtedly a generic woodcut used by Janot to illustrate many other scenes in addition to Crenne's authorship.[47] Another striking woodcut was used as the opening woodcut to *Epistres familieres et invectives*.[48] It shows a woman seated at a desk handing a letter to a messenger. Although it is also a generic image, used also in the *Angoysses douloureuses*, interestingly this representation gives solid physical presence to the woman writer seated at her carved desk. Her quill in hand, we see the lines of handwriting while the messenger in mid-stride appears at the threshold of the room, the movement of his body suggested by his outstretched hand. Whereas the male figure connotes texts in transmission, the woman at her desk suggests both prestige and permanence. Warner has explained that this woodcut did not first appear in Crenne's works and was used to illustrate a range of texts produced in Janot's workshop from its first use in 1537.[49] Nevertheless, when it was placed in this context by the compiler of the book, it represents Crenne's authorship, although it may not originally have been commissioned to this end. This is especially the case in the first edition of the *Epistres familieres et invectives* in which it is the only woodcut. It is worth noting that both these woodcuts have been used on front covers of modern editions and scholarly monographs, owing to their rarity as visual representations of women and books in France in the period.

44 On the multiple ways Janot supported Crenne's construction of her own authorial persona, Dame Helisenne, see Bromilow, 2013.

45 On the page layout of the *Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* see Réach-Ngô, esp. chs. 4 and 5.

46 http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k70526g/f9.image.r=helisenne%20de%20crenne (accessed 11 November 2016).

47 Crenne, 1997, pp. 97, 228. It also appears when Guenelic addresses Venus before he and Quezinstra enter a tournament for which they are ill-prepared (p. 298). Wood describes how this striking image was also used by Gilles Corrozet in his *Hécatomgraphie*. It was accompanied by verses highly critical of the *Angoysses douloureuses* as a self-revelatory, widely distributed narrative (pp. 43–49).

48 http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8609511v/f14.image.r=helisenne%20de%20crenne (accessed 11 November 2016).

49 Warner, pp. 21–23.

The frontispiece to the *Eneydes* provides us with another noteworthy image reflecting Crenne's authorship.[50] It shows a woman kneeling before a monarch and offering him a large book in front of a crowd of courtiers.[51] Sharon Marshall has argued that the woodcuts for the narrative of *Eneydes* are relatively poor quality copies of woodcuts used in an earlier sixteenth-century edition, which remained popular across Europe for the next 50 years.[52] This allows for the possibility that all of the woodcuts for the *Eneydes* were commissioned at the same time, but that for stylistic reasons, Janot preferred to use woodcuts illustrating the diegesis copied from an early sixteenth-century antecedent. By contrast the frontispiece was carved in a much more contemporary style. At the very least, the compiler of the book selected this first woodcut from Janot's stock to represent Crenne's authorship. Indeed, it is even possible, given the evidence discussed above of the forward-planning in the printing of Crenne's texts, that Janot instructed the woodcut artist with the express intention of using it in the *Eneydes*, irrespective of whether it was initially used elsewhere.

The image stages the moment of the presentation of the book to the monarch at the court. It is a dramatic scene. Placed within the opening lines of the dedication, there can be no doubt in the reader's mind that the author of this weighty, and beautifully bound, volume is a woman. Her poise evokes a gift that is voluntarily placed in the monarch's outstretched hand. He is represented in contemporary dress, which is different from the other woodcuts in *Eneydes*, where the images draw more heavily on the medieval tradition. This woodcut is significant in the staging of Crenne's authorship because it provides a visual representation of the courtly reception of her work. The details of the woman and the monarch's dress convey a sense of reality that is very different from the other two woodcuts where her authorship is represented as symbolic or confined to the domestic realm. This dramatic image shows the widespread reception of the female author's work and courtly recognition of her writing. It confirms that Janot had a specific interest in visualizing female authorship;

50 http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k15101304/f15.item.r=helisenne%20de%20crenne (accessed 11 November 2016).

51 Davis has read this as a representation of Crenne's presentation of the work to François I (p. 96). Wood, however, considers this as another generic image, claiming that this woodcut was first used the previous year to illustrate the *Amadis de Gaule*, newly translated from the Spanish by Nicholas Heberay des Essarts and printed by Janot (pp. 63–64). Rothstein lists only one 1540 edition of the *Amadis de Gaule* (p. 166). I have consulted the 1540 edition of the first book of the *Amadis*; of the fourteen woodcuts included, none matches this one. However, this image is in the same style as the *Amadis* woodcuts, whereas the woodcuts to the *Eneydes* are all in a different style. Therefore, I do not rule out Wood's hypothesis that this scene was first used elsewhere and was subsequently used by Janot to illustrate different scenes.

52 Marshall, p. 141.

this distinguishes the volume from male-authored works that he published which share many typographical features, such as the first volume of the *Amadis* printed in 1540. The Crenne frontispiece stages the moment when the author's self-empowerment has resulted in representational power. The printer, with his carefully crafted book in the king's hands, has succeeded in conveying the quality of his work to the viewer. Janot and Crenne may have had different motivations for wanting to participate vicariously in court life, yet this image conveys the mutual benefit of their partnership.

Conclusion

Hélisenne de Crenne adopted numerous strategies that resisted normative discourses aimed at silencing and obscuring women in sixteenth-century French society. Her self-empowerment stemmed from her adoption of a multiplicity of positions: adviser, advisee, example, and counter example. She located her voice in textual precedents that were male-authored, highlighting the previous absence of the female viewpoint in literary paradigms. In her original compositions, Crenne wrote not just as a woman but used the very fact of her gender to deepen the text's appeal to the female reader. She constructed herself both as needing education, and as having the ability to educate others. To this end she offered herself as an *exemplum* of lived experience, both of the potentially dangerous experience of love, and of the writing (and reading) woman. The overall perspective projected by her texts suggests her aspiration to move beyond simply entertaining the reader to contribute to the common good. This is achieved through her attempt to educate the lay reader, particularly the female reader, whose perceived needs the texts addressed directly. By using exemplary models, especially that of the erudite author herself, Crenne's works contributed to the education of women.

Crenne's self-fashioning as an author was informed by contemporary gender politics. She strived to show that she was better read than her male contemporaries. Furthermore, she could create texts that would serve a range of applications in the reader's own life and perhaps serve as a model for writing in their own lives. Thus, the empowerment of the reader moved beyond the printed page to become a political act of resistance and change. Through their representation as readers, women were inscribed in book culture, making them visible as a group in ways that were both innovative in print and empowering. The success of these ventures relied upon Crenne's disruption of the association between print publication and unchasteness. Although the illicit nature of Helisenne's love in the first book of the

Angoysses douloureuses must certainly have had its attractions as reading matter, the project of printing the book for the learned people of Paris is presented as a work of educational merit for readers and one sanctioned by the Gods. This aspiration for the moral and political utility of her writing culminates in the *Eneydes*, where she supplemented Virgil's text with four accounts of Hector's death to propose a culturally and politically expedient view of the prehistory of the kingdom of France. Crenne's relationship with Janot reinforced her self-representation as an authoritative figure. The compiler of her works included woodcuts portraying female literary creativity in a positive light. The most significant was the frontispiece to the *Eneydes*, in which Crenne is depicted presenting her work to the king. Through the printed page, albeit not in reality, then, Crenne empowered herself to take part, however vicariously, in the cultural life of the court.

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Part IV

Economies of Power and Emotions



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11. The Life and After-Life of a Royal Mistress

Anne de Pisseleu, Duchess of Étampes

David Potter

Abstract

Anne de Pisseleu, Duchess of Étampes, was *maîtresse en titre* of François I, one of the first really high profile figures in such a position. This chapter provides a number of perspectives, combining profound suspicion of non-royal women in political power and assumptions about women, marriage, and political power. Artists and writers provide one perspective. Cellini was notoriously sour about her; poets celebrated her favors; architects found in her a patron. Another emerges from her unusual 'afterlife', since she lived nearly half her lifetime after the death of François I (until her death in 1580). In that period, she recovered from personal and political disaster in 1547 and became an energetic businesswoman, promoter of her family's interests, and a notable Protestant.

Keywords: Anne de Pisseleu, networks, financial transactions, religious reform, religious engagement, royal mistress

Power in early modern France was, at the summit, constitutionally masculine, defined by the accumulation of a set of ad hoc assumptions that came to be defined as 'Salic law' by the end of the sixteenth century. Yet, in reality, there was much debate about this and rule by female regents was in any case a recurring feature of political authority, accepted, if often grudgingly, as necessary.[1] Less formal influence was exercised by the women who shared

1 Barnavi, pp. 332–33; Viennot, 2006, Chs. 11, 14; Viennot, 2008, pp. 23–25; Cosandey, 2000, Part II.

Broomhall, S. (ed.), *Women and Power at the French Court, 1483–1563*,
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the king's intimate life at a time when royal marriages were often less than satisfactory.[2] Influence exercised by such women was widely criticized and the end of such influence usually accompanied by a *damnatio memoriae* and the stripping of accumulated privileges. Anne de Pisseleu d'Heilly (1508–1580) was the first major example of such a woman in the political history of early modern France as mistress to François I (1494–1547). Daughter of a middle-ranking Picard noblemen, Guillaume de Pisseleu, lord of Heilly, after the marriage arranged for her by the king to Jean de Brosse-Bretagne (1505–1564), Anne became Countess of Penthièvre (1534), then Duchess of Étampes (1536) and thus attained high status in the social hierarchy. Her downfall in 1547 has often been seen as the terminus of her career. This study aims to juxtapose controversy generated by the wealth and favor accumulated in her youth with a long fightback in which she appears to have used her natural ability to build a new life for herself after the king's death.

La belle Heilly would have been no more than eighteen when (as the traditional story has it) she became François's mistress in 1526. Paulin Paris, who relied heavily on the poems of François that he assumed were addressed to Anne, made the strange suggestion that François had established his liaison with her as early as 1523–24, when she would have been only fifteen or sixteen.[3] Arnoul Le Ferron writing in 1554 relates that François, on his sad return from captivity, saw Anne in the company of his mother and much enjoyed her conversation.[4] The biographer and memoirist Pierre de Bourdeille de Brantôme (*c.* 1540–1614) confirms that François took her as his mistress on his return from Spain and adds that the king may have had other dalliances but she was his 'chief morsel'. Though Brantôme considered women generally unreliable, he thought 'Heilly' an honest person who never abused her favor.[5] By 1527 Anne had become, according to the English envoy Anthony Browne, one 'whom above others, as the report is, he favoreth'. She accompanied Louise de Savoie (1476–1531) as a member of her household for the negotiations at Cambrai in 1529.[6] By the time of the entry of new queen, Eleanor of Austria (1498–1558), into Paris in 1531, Anne was publicly displayed by François at a window as his companion, 'whych was not a lytyll

2 Both at Saint-Germain and Fontainebleau Madame d'Étampes had a '*logis*' with communicating stairs or passages to the king's (Chatenet, pp. 77–80).

3 Paris, II, pp. 209–15.

4 Le Ferron, fol. 121^{r}: 'delectatus est eius comitate & suavitate', trans. in Du Haillan, II, p. 344.

5 Though the king may have loved others, she was his 'principal boucon […]. Ceste dame pourtant fut une bonne et honneste dame, et qui n'abusa jamais de sa faveur envers le monde', Brantôme, 1867, p. 244.

6 *St.P.*, VI, p. 599; Cambrai meeting: Paris, II, p. 240.

marvelyd at of the beholders', reported Henry VIII's envoy, Francis Bryan.[7] Thereafter, her influence, for instance concerning patronage, grew into real political power in the 1540s.

In the late nineteenth century, when Paulin Paris wrote the first serious historical study of Anne, he got her story wrong in some crucial ways. His intuition about her good sense and level-headedness, of their love affair shading into steady friendship, is sensitive and convincing. On the other hand, his determination to absolve François from the disgrace of being influenced by a mistress leads him astray. He insisted that she was not seen to exercise any serious influence in public affairs; the romantic image of her influence on the distribution of royal favor was pure invention. He was not even sure whether Anne remained at court in François's last year. The biography by Desgardins, often referred to, lacks detail and clarity of sources.[8] Some of the more widely accepted testimonies to the extent of her influence over François I were argued by Paris to derive from the invective of her husband Jean de Brosse, Duke of Etampes (d. 1564) in the course of a legal dispute during the 1550s over gifts of property made by Anne to her younger sister Charlotte, Countess of Vertus (d. 1604).[9] Jean de Brosse had married Anne in 1532 in a bargain with François I by which he recovered his ancestral title of Count of Penthièvre and was later made Duke of Étampes. Subsequently, he considered that Anne had used her favor with the king not only to build up her own fortune but also to diminish his.

Anne's political influence and her role in influencing the king during the 1540s are no longer in doubt. Her relations with the king's close advisers Anne de Montmorency (1493–1567), Philippe Chabot de Brion (1492–1543), Claude Annebault (1495–1552), and François de Tournon (1489–1562) were pivotal in the last decade of the king's reign. To take a few telling examples: her brother assumed she would read his report on a fortress in Picardy and ensure that the necessary funds were made available.[10] The Imperial ambassador in 1541 reported that no councillor dared approach the king about anything without checking first with Madame d'Étampes if she approved it.[11] The following

7 *St.P.*, VII, p. 291. Knecht, pp. 484–85, 555–58.

8 Paris, II, pp. 239, 204, 311. Paris, on the basis of misunderstood documents, suggests that she cannot have been a Protestant. See pp. 316–17, where he attributes a letter of the Duchess's niece to her and uses this as evidence (now in SAP, Chartrier d'Heilly, 57, nos. 38–43). Desgardins, passim.

9 Paris, II, pp. 318–23.

10 Adrien de Pisseleu to Mme d'Étampes, Hesdin, 24 May [1541?], BnF, fr. 2996, fol. 30.

11 Saint-Vincent to Charles V, 7 May 1541, Vienna HHSA, Belgien, P.A.41, fol. 47^{r}. 'Madame d'Étampes' was the usual way she was referred to in her lifetime.

year, though the king was with the army in Languedoc, despatches from the front in Flanders were forwarded to her at Lyons.[12] Her intervention in the appointment of Jean du Bellay as Archbishop of Bordeaux in 1544 was widely commented on at the time.[13] In this period she employed the standard political tactics of a Renaissance politician: the placement of friends and allies at court, many drawn from her extensive kindred on her father's side and from the relatives of her mother, the Sanguins. These included Antoine, Cardinal de Meudon (1493–1559), her uncle, who held a high place among the royal councillors late in the reign, as did Nicolas Bossut de Longueval (d. 1553), possibly a kinsman.[14] Modern historians have been willing to accept that part of the romantic tradition that allowed for the possibility of female influence behind the scenes.[15] There was doubtless some exaggeration by foreign observers but they universally understood her influence on the king. They widely deplored this and ignored the fact that Anne was using a modified form of the political influence that all courtiers used in order first to gain 'favor' (a term deployed generally to convey access to royal power) and exercise influence.[16] Her status is reflected by her inclusion — as the only non-royal woman — in a series of fifty or so woodcuts created by Hans Liefrinck the elder at Antwerp, which included the most powerful dynastic figures of the day (Fig. 1). It was the only one specifically done *au vif* and must date from Anne's visit to Brussels with the Queen of France early in 1545.[17]

This study places Anne's influence in a wider biographical and cultural context. The carving of David and Bathsheba in the choir stalls at Auch, so reminiscent of François and his mistress, testifies to the necessarily oblique nature of public comment. What has been argued to be a programmatic assertion of female assertiveness in court life, Primaticcio's decor for the chamber of Madame d'Étampes at Fontainebleau was scarcely for public consumption.[18] There was some reticence on the part of contemporary writers about her, which reveals common assumptions about irregular female political influence. Though the statesmen and ambassadors of the age were convinced of her importance, she is never mentioned in the memoirs of Guillaume and Martin du Bellay, written in the 1540s and 1550s, one of principal contemporary sources for politics in the reign of François I. The

12 Da Thiene to Ercole II of Ferrara, 11 August 1542, ASM, Francia, busta 18 (no pag.).
13 Scheurer, III, pp. 277–78.
14 See Potter, 2007; Potter, 2011.
15 For example, Knecht, passim; Michon, passim.
16 Le Roux, Ch.1.
17 Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum RP-P-1932-140. See Landau, p. 221.
18 Smith and Bentley Cranch; Wilson-Chevalier and Viennot, pp. 203–36.

Figure 11.1 Hans Liefrinck the elder, *Anne de Pisseleu*, 1545



Woodcut after a drawing by Cornelis Antonisz., Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, cat. RP-P-1932-140. (By permission of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

great essayist Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) commented wryly on a history which, though by a contemporary, said nothing to the detriment of the king and often stayed silent about matters everybody knew.[19] Brantôme, in his *Dames galantes*, written in the 1570s, wrote with relish of the *petite bande* of women around the king.[20] Brantôme sometimes seems to give the impression that the court of François was a kind of royal seraglio,[21] though both in his biography of François and in the *Dames galantes*, he emphasizes the civilizing role of women at court, in contrast to the introduction of *putains* (whores) by earlier kings. Brantôme, responsible for so many scandalous stories, tells us that François, on his accession, thought that women were the entire adornment of a court 'for in truth a court without ladies is like a garden without flowers'.[22] For Brantôme, François was no Heliogabalus, but rather encouraged ladies of good family and of reputation to his court; if it was true that some took lovers, the king was hardly to blame. So, for Brantôme, a court without ladies was hardly worth the name: it would be 'a court without courtiership'.[23] Brantôme is also curiously reticent about telling stories involving Madame d'Étampes, recalling little more than a story about the dignified way Françoise de Foix (*c.* 1495–1537), the king's earlier mistress, dealt with François's desire to get back gifts of jewellery and give them to Anne.[24] The later biographer Antoine du Verdier (1544–1600) in 1573 argued that François simply esteemed Anne for her grace and vivacity and that the relationship went no further.[25] The historian François de Mézeray (1610–1683) related that François fell into the captivity of a fair lady, while both he and Antoine Varillas (1624–1696), the first serious historian of François I, recorded that Louise de Savoie deliberately placed Anne in his way.[26] Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), the philosopher and dictionary compiler, blackened her reputation.[27] Jules Michelet was to embellish these accounts, heedless of chronology, with anachronisms.[28] As for the accusations that she betrayed secrets to the Emperor Charles V, in most cases these go back to the seventeenth century, though it seems to have been François de Beaucaire

19 Montaigne, II.10, p.143.
20 Brantôme, [1857], p. 345.
21 For example, Brantôme, [1857], pp. 174, 256, 248, 348–49.
22 'une cour sans dames c'est un jardin sans aucunes belles fleurs', Brantôme, 1842, I, p. 257.
23 'une cour sans cour', Brantôme, 1867, pp. 127–28.
24 Brantôme, [1857], p. 367.
25 Du Verdier, III, p. 2347.
26 Mézeray, IV, p. 324; Varillas, II, p. 101.
27 Bayle, VI, pp. 300–12.
28 Michelet, VIII, p. 296.

(1514–1591) who first invented the idea that she and Longueval betrayed France to the Emperor in 1544.[29]

With the greater visibility of women in public life at court in the early sixteenth century, the role of women in that domain and the basis of female authority came more sharply into focus.[30] It has been argued, controversially, that the general decline in the independent status of women in the Renaissance period encouraged them to use more informal routes to the acquisition of power. There is no good reason to suppose that such informal influence was new or, indeed, that the formal power of women was any greater before the sixteenth century.[31] Nevertheless, it is clear that the influence of female princesses and aristocrats was taken for granted. Marguerite de Navarre (1492–1549) was the object of regular observation by foreign ambassadors as a figure of influence, whose evident charm had to be 'decoded'.[32] Yet the court poet Clément Marot (1496–1544) in 1542 was to observe, in a *coq-à-l'âne* (savage satire) that was particularly ferocious in its satire of public corruption, that he had never read a book that said that women should govern.[33] This was a view that shaped the reports of most of those ambassadors and statesmen and even some of the artists who came into contact with Anne. It was assumed that, as a woman and one not born to rule, she was a prey to passions and vengefulness, that she could have no consistent 'policy' (as though many male statesmen had such consistency). For Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571), who saw too much of her for his own peace of mind, she personfied *fortuna* in all its caprice.[34] For the papal nuncio Hieronimo Dandino (1509–1559), who saw a great deal of her and noted her dislike of gossiping Italians, the king in 1543 was more a prey than ever to his lasciviousness and under her sway. He thought the secret of her success was the spirit of contradiction, always saying the opposite of what others did.[35] For the Imperial envoy Nicolas Villey de Marnol, Anne had been *légière* (unstable) all her life.[36] This was the same view as that of the Venetian envoy Marino Cavalli (d. 1572), who reported in 1545 that, despite her previous preference for peace with England, she was pressing for further

29 François de Beaucaire, pp. 741, 761, cited in Paris, II, pp. 300–01.
30 Chatenet, ch. VI.
31 For this debate, see Kelly; Wiesner; Poutrin and Schaub; Wilson-Chevalier and Viennot.
32 Prescott; Vose; Reid, II, pp. 499–501.
33 'Je ne leuz jamais en nul livre, / Que une femme deust gouverner', Marot, 1962, p. 171.
34 Cellini, second part, p. 433.
35 *ANG*, III, pp. 22, 26–27; May 1543, *ANG*, III, p. 220.
36 HHSA, Frankreich 10, 'Villey-Karl V, V–VIII', fol. 4r.

war, hoping that failure would undermine Admiral Annebault, her rival.[37] Literary views were similar; for instance, Rondabilis, the protagonist of the 1546 *Tiers Livre* by François Rabelais (1494–1553), views all women as frail, variable, capricious, and inconstant.[38]

There is plenty of evidence for criticism of her position in widely available satirical poetry, while the *coqs-à-l'âne* of Marot alone would be enough to measure the venom of contemporary literary comment. Such political and literary comment should be expected in a male-dominated world, but this makes it more difficult to estimate the reality of her position. We therefore need to separate out the 'facets' of Anne's life, the way she was perceived by different groups and individuals. According to these, she could be viewed as an ornament to the court, a grasping favorite, a desired patroness, an able businesswoman, later on as a pillar of the reformed church and cantankerous old woman. At different times and over a long life, Anne de Pisseleu played all these roles.

The period of Anne's supremacy was marked by extensive public debate about female power and coincided with the literary *querelle des amyes*, which brought this into sharp focus. François I commissioned the French translation of *Il Cortegiano* by Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529), which appeared in 1537 and gave popular currency both to the idea of the woman of the court and to the interpretation of platonic love of Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499). In 1541, Bertrand de La Borderie took up the theme of Castiglione's third book in his *Amye de Court*, ostensibly a cynical portrayal of a young court woman, surrounded by lovers, who rejects platonic love and seeks independence — 'my heart, its own master' — while not refraining from the exploitation of the game of courtly gallantry.[39] Naturally, no direct mention is made of Anne de Pisseleu but court morals were clearly a major talking point; the *Amye* declared that it was wise not to refuse a prince's largesse to an 'honneste femme'.[40]

The work sparked off a major literary battle when, in 1542, Antoine Héroët (*c.* 1492–*c.* 1567), a member of Marguerite de Navarre's circle, published *La Parfaicte Amye*, a simple reply. The following year saw the *Contr'Amye de Court* of Charles Fontaine (1514–1570?). Paul Angier (possibly a pseudonym for La Borderie) contributed *Expérience* in 1544, ostensibly a defence of

37 ASV, Consiglio dei Dieci, Ambasciatori, Francia, busta 10: Marino Cavalli to Council of Ten, 3 February 1545 (*CSPV*, V, no. 327).

38 Rabelais, *Tiers Livre*, ch. 32, pp. 242–49.

39 'mon Coeur de soy maistre', Screech, pp. 114–15.

40 Screech, p. 124.

La Borderie but better described as a defence of marriage as a remedy for fornication.[41] The whole affair has been variously interpreted by Émile Telle as a court debate on Neoplatonism or as a feminist confrontation between an aristocratic view of love (the quest for freedom from subordination to men) and a bourgeois ideal, revolted by court scandal.[42] The *querelle des amyes* formed part of a wider debate on female power linked to public corruption. A collection of contemporary *pasquils* about politics in France, now in the Bibliothèque municipale of Lille, represents a fair range of satire at Anne's expense. In one she is made to declare that she would shed not a tear in enjoying her pleasures, 'the king's heart is at my mercy'. In one, François I is compared to Paris, Anne to Helen, the Duke of Étampes to Menelaus.[43]

That Anne was the object of scurrilous public vilification is also demonstrated by the extraordinary *coq-à-l'âne* of 1542 known as *Le Grup de Clément Marot* and confidently, if erroneously, attributed by Georges Guiffrey to the great poet. Marot is portrayed in this work as attributing the problems that led to his second exile for religious opinions to Madame d'Étampes's hatred of him. The work contains an extensive and savage critique of public corruption linked to female influence. It instanced the ups and downs at court, justice denied, corrupt judges, excessive royal liberality leading to higher taxes and oppression by the military, war imminent for foolish desire to acquire territory.[44] In this satire, never of course printed at the time, the author likens the Duchess to the ever hungry monster 'Chicheface' from a sculpture at Saint-Martial of Limoges.[45] Guiffrey suggested that Marot's line, 'she kicked me out of court', could also refer to the Duchess and that she was the mysterious figure blamed for his first arrest in *l'Enfer*.[46] In words of unusual scurrility, he goes on: 'this devil of a cunt / maker of so many cardinals / so many bishops and new abbots'.[47] Guiffrey, in the light of royal gifts and ecclesiastical benefices acquired by her relatives, was convinced that the subject of the satire could be none other than Madame d'Étampes. As evidence for Marot's authorship, though, he offers simply an

41 Screech, Introduction.

42 Telle; Albistur and Armogathe.

43 'le coeur du Roy sy est la myenne proie', LBM, MS 623, fol. 50.

44 Marot, 1962, pp. 168–74.

45 Marot, 1920, p. 443.

46 'Elle m'a chassé de la court'. On the identification of the figure in *l'Enfer* of 'Luna' with Mme d'Étampes, see Marot, 1920, pp. 444, 454. Though unlikely, it was taken up inconclusively by Becker. 'Luna' was also linked by Nicolas Lenglet-Dufresnoy, in his 1731 edition of Marot, to Diane de Poitiers, again without much reason. Marot, 1958, p. 20.

47 'Mais voy tu ce diable de con, / Qui a tant faict de cardinaux, / Force euesques, abbez nouveaux', Marot, 1920, pp. 452–54.

anecdote that the poet had been heard to remark of François I, 'he's only Étampes sand, good for polishing an old pot'.[48] Sablon d'Étampes certainly was an agent for polishing copper or pewter but that Marot should have thus attacked a patroness who had formerly protected him is unlikely, even though the saying was obviously going round.[49] *Le Grup* stands, however, as a startling example of public vilification of the royal mistress which could scarcely be mistaken by contemporaries.

A very different literary dimension (from within the court) emerges from Marot's verse in honor of the newly created countess, beginning: 'this pleasant vale called Tempé', now no longer in Thessaly but with us transported by Jupiter to France. In the *Estrenne* of 1538, Marot praised Anne's beauty and loyalty to the crown.[50] The court poet Charles de Sainte-Marthe (1512–1555) dedicated his works to her in September 1540, praising her great beauty and great *honnesteté*.[51] Marguerite de Navarre's discussion of courtly love, *La Coche* (The Coach) (1541–42), was dedicated to Anne. The relations between Marguerite and Anne were complex. Sometimes described as rivals, they often shared tactical objectives in court politics and, though Marguerite was waspish about many others in her talks with foreign envoys, she never was about Anne. There was clearly also some sympathy between them in matters of religion, which in Anne's case developed later into Protestantism.[52] Marguerite's poem is a discussion about the miseries and pains of love, which are submitted by Marguerite to the arbitration of Madame d'Étampes in the absence of her brother the king. The text also contains an extended eulogy of Anne (though not named directly) in which she is likened to 'a sun midst stars who spares nothing for her friends, nor stoops to vengeance on her foes'.[53] Marguerite addresses her as cousin and mistress. There are several illuminated copies, the best known in the Musée Condé showing Marguerite presenting the work to Anne.[54] It has been argued that the work sought to use Anne as

48 Marot, 1920, II, pp. 453–54n; Colletet, p. 20: 'Il n'est que du sablon d'Estampes pour faire reluire vn vieux pot.'

49 The point was made long ago by Guy, p. 303. Mayer, though, in his edition of Marot, 1962, pp. 37–38, leaves the case open: 'possible, mais loin d'être certain'. For Marot's verse in praise of Madame d'Étampes, see Marot, 1966, Étrennes, VIII: 'Vous reprendrez, je l'affie, / Sur la vie / Le tainct que vous a osté / La Deesse de beaulté / Par envie'.

50 'Ce plaisant val que l'on nommoit Tempé', Marot, 1919, II, p. 43; I, p. 481.

51 Sainte-Marthe, *Recueil de poésies*, épistre, Dedication, pp. 4–6: 'debonnaireté de ta noble nature' of one who was 'des belles treserudites, des erudites tresbelles'.

52 On their relations, see Reid, I, p. 701; II, pp. 506–12.

53 'un soleil au milieu des estoilles [...]. Pour ses amys elle n'espargne rien, / Et des meschants ennemis ne se venge', MC, MS 522, fol. 43^{v}.

54 For a fuller discussion, see Lundquist, pp. 199–200.

a vehicle through which Marguerite could win back the favor of François at a time (in 1541) when their interests were sharply opposed over the marriage of Marguerite's daughter.[55] The explanation of this work remains difficult.

One of the most interesting features of Madame d'Étampes's life is the way she coped with disgrace. Her life after 1547 reveals an ability to deal with extreme hostility and also to use her acumen to rescue her financial fortunes and establish a new independent role for herself. General histories note her disappearance from the public scene, yet she went on to live a long and active life; under 40 at the time of her disgrace, she lived to the age of 72 and not quietly. François I died at Rambouillet near Anne's château of Limours, on 31 March 1547, having at least twice recommended Anne to his son's protection.[56] Anne left Rambouillet for Limours two days before.[57] On 3 April, it was reported that she sent to the new king, Henri II (1519–1559), to ask for her old lodgings at Saint-Germain-en-Laye in order to take her leave of him. He replied that she should go to Queen Eleanor, implying that she had wronged her in the past. Her followers were being rapidly dismissed from their posts.[58] The Venetian ambassador was clear by 16 April that all her followers at court had been dispossessed.[59] In May, it was said that Anne had met her husband at Étampes on his way to court, to ask him tearfully to take her into his protection. The duc d'Étampes, once arrived at court, had been told that he could have his wife's property as a reward for having been so long cuckolded by her. Anne's sister, Péronne, Mme de Cany (*c.* 1505–after 1555), was condemned to return certain grants; many others were stripped of their royal grants.[60] The Venetian ambassador reflected on her fall early in June. She had been, he reported, in great terror of losing everything she had acquired over the years and likely to be prosecuted in the courts by her enemies in the new council. Henri II had encouraged her husband to ruin her and reduce her to misery. All those with a grudge had been heard and she had been ordered to pay out 100, 000 *écus*. The king had been convinced that she held a mass

55 Marguerite de Navarre, pp. 36–38.

56 Potter, 2013, nos. 3, 4, 5, 9, 12; ASM, Cancelleria, Estero, Ambasciatori, Francia, busta 24, fo. 46 (decipher) Alvarotti to Ercole II, Paris, 15 March 1547 on the king's words to his female favorites; 30 March 1547, ibid., fo.108 on the removal of Mme d'Étampes to a chamber further from the king because of the sound of her lamentations; 31 March 1547, ibid., fo.123: Mme d'Étampes has gone to Limours 'luogo suo con dui paggi soli et uno suo fratello'; 3 April 1547, B 24, fasc. ii, fo.10, François's recommendation of Mme d'Étampes to his son. (My thanks are due to Jean Sénié and Marcello Simonetta for photographs of these documents.)

57 Potter, 2013, nos. 13, 15.

58 Potter, 2013, no. 15.

59 Francesco Giustinian, 16 April 1547, BnF, it. 1716, p. 105.

60 To Mary of Hungary, 20 May, Potter, 2013, no. 22.

of crown jewels and ordered the inventory of all her possessions. Anne had offered, through the cardinal Jean de Lorraine (1498–1550), to give up all her jewels but begged not to be proceeded against with full rigor. Lorraine obtained the grace that she would not be put on trial but that her husband should come to court immediately and decide what to do with her. Anne was still not out of trouble, as the two cardinals, Odet de Coligny (1517–1571) and Charles de Lorraine (1524–1574), were determined still on her ruin.[61]

Anne's fate was a matter of wry satisfaction to foreign observers. There was talk of public penance at court as well as her return of royal jewels. Giulio Alvarotti reported in May (and quoting Virgil's gloomy judgment about the depths to which lust for gold would lead) the story that Anne had handed over to her husband 1000 *marcs* of silver and 50 in gold that she had in Paris and that the couple had agreed so well when they met at Limours that they had slept together for three nights. As a result, the duke had been looked at askance when he returned to court since he had always asserted that he would never take her back. Nevertheless he had removed her household and given her no new servants. By June it was reported that she was under her mother-in-law's control at Les Essarts (Vendée) and was being forced to submit to her husband's management of her property.[62] At the end of June there was further news: her sister, Countess of Vertus, had been sent under guard to Poitou, Anne to a castle of her husband's in Brittany for her 'insolences' to him. There she had been pressured to give up her jewels. The king had not wished to proceed further because of his promise to his father but left it to the duke to punish her.[63] A declaration by her brother, Adrien de Pisseleu-Heilly, in May 1548 notes that the doctors had diagnosed a recurrent daily fever and that her place of confinement, La Hardouinaye, was 'very damp and injurious to her health'.[64] She had expressed the desire for a change of air at Lamballe, north-west of Rennes,

61 This narrative is drawn from the despatch of Giustinian, 8 June, BnF, it. 1716, pp. 177–82.

62 Giulio Alvarotti to duke of Ferrara, 26 May 1547, ASM, Francia, B 24, fasc. ii, fo.198 (decipher): 'In fatti dicono che Madama d'Estampes con havere dato al marito 1000 marchi d'argento et cinquanta d'oro che si trova ad havere qui in Parigi ha acconci seco i fatti suoi talmente che'l marito dormì seco tre notti in Limors et quando tornò alla corte non fu molto ben veduto per haver sempre fatto professione di non volerla mai per moglie, ma quid non mortalia pectora cogis, auri sacra fames'. 'Occurens', 15 June, Potter, 2013, no. 26; Giustinian, 3 July: 'Madama di Tampes è stata querellata di molte cose, la quale perchè il Re Christianissimo a rimesso a discretione del marito, et perche esso la tiene hora come sua prigioniera ad un castello in Bertagna, non è stata atata altrimenti', BnF it. 1716, pp. 203–04.

63 Potter, 2013, no. 27.

64 'est fort aquatic et contrere à sa santé'. Declaration signed by 'Antoine' de Pisseleu, seigneur de Heilly, la Hardouinaye, 26 May 1548, copy, sold: 18 November 2014, Ader-Nordmann, lot 37.

not wishing to be taken to Moncontour, and Heilly undertook on his honor to Étampes's *maître d'hôtel* to bring her back once her health had improved. The picture conveyed is a somber one.

Yet for all this, it seems that a formal separation of property had been effected by 1550 and financial sources reveal Anne in the 1550s energetically concerned with the defense of her property portfolio and the management of her money. François I had showered her with gifts, often in the form of grants of property between 1538 and 1542, confiscated from those condemned during the governmental upheavals of the 1530s.[65] Then in October 1545, François transferred to her the properties south of Paris confiscated from former Chancellor Guillaume Poyet (d. 1548).[66] The Duchy of Étampes was conveniently situated to absorb Limours, which had been the property of one of the financiers who had been attacked in the 1530s. Jean Poncher (who died in 1535) had been condemned to a fine of 380, 000 *livres tournois* and his children were probably forced into a transaction with the king which enabled him to grant Limours to Madame d'Étampes in June 1538. François stayed there in July 1540.[67] At the same time, Anne acquired the seigneurie of Challuau.[68] There, François commissioned around 1542 a hunting retreat on a grand scale, in many ways reminiscent of the château de Madrid and La Muette. The Duchess enjoyed possession here of what the Ferrarese ambassador described in 1546 as a *palazzo*.[69]

Though the estate of Meudon had been acquired by Anne's maternal Sanguin grandfather, there were still other claimants to the seigneurie, notably her cousin Claude Sanguin (d. 1545) and his wife, who abandoned their claims in 1542. In the acts conveying their rights to Anne, it was noted that the château, then still occupied by her uncle, the cardinal Antoine Sanguin de Meudon (1493–1559), was one in which, according to a contract of 1542, she 'takes great pleasure and builds fine and sumptuous edifices'.[70] In effect, the ancestral home of the Sanguins was transformed for Anne into a real palace with two new grandiose wings. Further to the south-west was Angervilliers, also inherited from the Sanguins, and both Dourdan and Limours formed a compact group

The copy is a hastily written one and mistakenly transcribes 'Antoine' for 'Adrien' de Heilly. Desgardins, p. 71, mentions this but says nothing of the source.

65 *CAF*, III, 499, 9807; 562, 10097; IV, 360, 12690; IV, 441, 13073; IV, 95, 11440.

66 Compardon and Tuety, no. 1899.

67 *CAF*, III, 561, 10094; *ANG*, I, p.579; IV, 81, 11372.

68 *CAF*, III, 652, 10497; 562, 10095; III, 352, 9140.

69 Chatenet, pp. 52, 302.

70 Compardon and Tuety, no. 780 (7 August 1542); 822 (30 August, 3 September 1542): 'prend plaisir et y faict faire beaulx et sumptueulx édifices'.

of properties conveniently close to the domain of Étampes. The king himself had come to stay there in January 1539 and June, July, and October 1540.[71]

The Guise were major financial beneficiaries of Anne's fall and in 1554–55 she was energetically defending the rights of another niece, Jossine de Pisseleu (*c.* 1520–1580), to the Lenoncourt succession, which they were attempting to acquire.[72] In 1554, Anne ceded by exchange the lordships of Limours and Beyne to her successor as royal mistress, Diane de Poitiers (1499–1566).[73] In fact the acquisitions made by the Lorraines of Meudon and Limours had to be paid for but the process was tortuous. Meudon had been transferred by the Duke and Duchess of Étampes to the Cardinal of Meudon in 1537 and then leased back for 20 years for 1200 *livres tournois* a year and the seigneurie transferred back to them in June.[74] This needed to be sorted out. Complicated financial transactions by the Cardinal of Lorraine and an Italian financier allowed the Guise to pay Anne for part of their property purchases, for example the moveables of the château of Limours and the *ferme* of Meudon, amounting to 14,000 *livres tournois* made in 1552.[75] 1556 saw the sale of the seigneurie of Coussac to Jean d'Escoubleau, lord of Sourdis (d. 1569).[76]

So, despite her difficulties after 1547, Anne de Pisseleu seems to have been able to fight back. In 1556 she was still dame d'Égreville, Bransle, Challuau, et Villemur Saint-Ange.[77] The 1544 gift to Longueval by the Duke and Duchess of Étampes of the lordships of Challuau and Bransle was revoked after Longueval's death in 1553.[78] Anne's substantial assets in this period are partly indicated by the receipts, dating from the 1560s and 1570s, for *rentes* bought either from the municipality of Paris or acquired from individuals between 1553 and 1559, which indicate a total capital investment of 47,615 *livres tournois*, probably more.[79] She was also acquiring other property in

71 *CAF*, VIII, Itinéraire, July 1540; *ANG*, I, p. 435, 566, 611 (27–31 October) (none of these stays are recorded in the Itinéraire).

72 Anne de Pisseleu to Duke of Guise, Paris, 11 March [1555], BnF, fr. 20470, fol. 191: 'ayant entendu le contract fayct pour le conte de Nanteul entre monsyeur voutre frere et madame la contesse, quy sanble fort prejudycyable a mon nepveu fılz ayne et ses enfans', i.e. Robert de Lenoncourt, husband of Jossine de Pisseleu.

73 AN, MC/ET/XIX/104 (13 March 1554).

74 AN, MC/ET/III/13 (12 July 1537); AN, MC/ET/III/6 (3 June 1537).

75 AN, MC/ET/VIII-85 fols. 571^{v}–573^{r} (24 January 1559); 591$^{r–v}$ (27 January 1559); fols. 592^{r}–593^{v} (21 January 1559). AN, MC/ET/LXVIII-20 (1554–55); AN, MC/ET/LXVIII-25 fols. 23^{r}–25^{r} (16 April 1559).

76 AN, MC/ET/LXVIII/20 (6 and 8 March 1556).

77 AN, MC/ET/XIX/200 (11 March 1556).

78 AN, MC/ET/CXXII/1282 (29 May 1553).

79 These *rentes* were: 1000 *livres* sold by Paris in January 1553–54 (BnF, pièces orig. 2291, fr. 28775, doss. 51786); 1000 *livres* sold in May 1555 (ibid., nos. 43, 45, 46); 800 *livres* sold in December

Paris by lease.[80] In 1559 she was negotiating to buy the lordship of Menetou from Marguerite de Bourbon, Duchess of Nevers (1516–1589) but baulked at the asking price of 30,000 *livres tournois*, having seen the last statement of revenues and in the absence of a declaration of noble fiefs depending and a full statement of forest rights.[81] She seems to have managed all this by a combination of astuteness and perhaps continuing good will on the part of influential figures.

The middle years of the century saw Madame d'Étampes using her native acumen and contacts to rescue what she could of her property. Her strategy could be judged as one in which she shifted from exercising political power to exercising power in the private sphere among her family and friends; there seems no doubt that she saw herself at the center of a large extended kinship. The last decades of her life also saw her playing part in the world of political Protestantism, also preoccupied with the disposition of her property, favor or disfavor towards her relatives, and the fighting of law suits being part of her strategy. In that context, the fact that she was a childless substantial landowner comes into play.

February 1559 saw the death of her eldest brother, Adrien, who died in captivity after his capture at Ham following the battle of Saint-Quentin. She commented in a letter at the time that he was 'the best brother I had and whom I loved the most'.[82] The terms of his ransom were to be a problem for some years. For the first marriage of her nephew Jean de Pisseleu (d. 1581) in 1552, to Françoise de Scépeaux (d. by 1569), she gave a *rente* of 1200 *livres tournois* per annum or 30,000 in a lump sum (a useful comparison with the legacy to her niece, Diane de Barbançon (d. 1566)). The Duchess, in fact, fell into dispute with Jean over some debts which she claimed she owed her sister, Péronne de Pisseleu, and she obtained a seizure of his lands, which he reversed by royal letters in December 1563.[83] This, as will be seen below, seems to have left no lasting bitterness.

1559 (ibid., no. 34); 500 *livres* acquired from Nicolas de Pellevé; and by him from Pierre Hotman (ibid., nos. 35, 37); 542 *livres* acquired from Anne Meigret (ibid., no. 36); 125 *livres* 16s. 8d. acquired from Antoinette, Duchess of Guise (ibid., no. 40). A total yield of 3967. 16. 8, being interest of 8 1/3 *per cent*, gives a capital of 47 615 *livres*. We know also of a *rente* constituted by her to Antoine Mynard, president of the *Parlement*, AN, MC/ET/XIX/200 (11 March 1556).

80 AN, MC/ET/XIX/107 (5 October 1555).

81 Anne to Duchess de Nevers, Paris, 14 May 1559, BnF, fr. 3114, fol. 126.

82 Friant, pp. 171–80: 'le meilleur frère que j'eusse et que plus j'aymois'; Villebon to Humières, 12 September 1557, BnF, fr. 3128, fol. 130; will of Adrien de Pisseleu-Heilly, SAP, Ch. Heilly, 58/I, no. 22; ransom of Heilly, ibid. 60.

83 Compardon and Tuety, 3 September 1552, no. 4159; marriage contract, SAP, 52, no. 9 (2 September 1551); AN, AB XIX, 781, *mandement* of Charles IX, 9 December 1563.

On 19 March 1560, Anne ceded her seigneurie of Challuau to her niece Jeanne (d. after 1613), daughter of Louise de Pisseleu (d. *c.* 1563) and Guy Chabot-Jarnac (1514–1584), in favor of her marriage to René d'Anglure (d. 1562), reserving the usufruct for her life.[84] This was part of a pattern during her later life of making provisional dispositions of her property, while keeping a degree of control over the heirs. Her dispositions could be revoked and she did indeed do this. On 1 March 1560, she donated 114, 000 *livres tournois*, 'in contemplation' of the marriage of her favorite niece, Diane de Barbançon, daughter of her sister Péronne, 'for the dear love she bears her […] whom she has brought up since childhood' to Jean de Rohan, sieur de Frontenay (d. *c.* 1571), cousin of Jeanne d'Albret (1528–7152), queen of Navarre.[85] She reserved most as usufruct but 24, 000 directly in the form of *rente* on the *hôtel de ville* assigned on her seigneuries of Angervilliers and Égreville. The 90,000 *livres tournois* which would come to the couple eventually would be divided in half in the event of there being no children: half to Frontenay and half to the sons of Anne's brother Adrien. Alongside this she gave Diane her claims to seigneuries she still disputed with Diane de Poitiers.[86] Madame d'Étampes, having had to be cautious about her religious sympathies under François I, was by now quite open about them. The marriage contract was signed and the ceremony took place at Argentan on 28 September 1561, at the high tide of Protestant self-confidence at court, sponsored not only by the Queen of Navarre but also Louis, prince of Condé (d. 1569), admiral Gaspard de Coligny (d. 1572), and the Rohan clan. It was a very public statement by the Protestant nobility that they could hold major religious ceremonies in public. The chronicler Nicolas Brulart (d. 1593) called it a great scandal against the Christian religion and the historian Étienne Pasquier (1529–1615) thought that the marriage 'thus accomplished, almost at the gates of Paris and of Saint-Germain where the king was staying, done with impunity, greatly strengthened the hearts of the ministers'.[87] Diane's brother François became a commander in Condé's army and was to be killed at the battle of Saint-Denis (1567). The Rohan

84 AN, MC/ET/XIX/115 (19 March 1560).

85 'pour le bon amour qu'elle a porte […] laquelle elle a nourrye dès son enffance', SAP, Ch. Heilly, no. 52/ xi. S.A.P. 52, no. 11 (also copy in AN, MC/ET/LXVIII/20), the ratification of 28 September 1561 containing a draft of the contract of 1 March 1560 with notes of acceptance of the terms by Jean and Antoine de Pisseleu dated 29 November 1566 and 11 April 1567. Copy of the contract of 28 September 1561 in AN, Y 107, fol. 309.

86 SAP, Ch. Heilly, no. 52/ xi. S.A.P. 52, no. 11.

87 Secousse, I, 54. Pasquier, IV, lettre IX, p. 69: 'ainsi fait, presque aux portes de Paris et de Saint Germain en Laye ou le Roy sejournoit, n'ayant esté contrôlé, a grandement accreu le coeur des Ministres'.

family were to be crucial in the Protestant cause. Diane died in September 1566, very much the victim, according to her aunt, of a violent and controlling husband who had ruined her life, stolen her money and ultimately poisoned her.[88] Madame d'Étampes pursued her niece's husband single-mindedly and assembled her family with her. In the spring of 1567, she was joined by her sister Charlotte de Pisseleu and niece Marie de Barbançon (d. 1601) in bringing a case against Frontenay before the *Parlement* of Paris. This was no doubt intended to prevent his laying hands on the funds included in the Duchess's donation of 1560. Frontenay was arrested in May 1567 but, though he survived until 1571, the outcome of the case is uncertain. Her attack on her favorite niece's husband, though, had been energetic.

Thus, Anne de Pisseleu continued to occupy the high profile already observed in her participation in the Protestant marriages of 1561. Naturally, this made her vulnerable during the civil wars. It seems that, because of the fighting, she took refuge, some of the time with Diane, at her castle of Égreville in Gâtinais.[89] There had been war in this district in 1562, where Catholic commanders were aided by Spanish troops. Nevertheless, as she wrote to her nephew Jean, lord of Heilly (d. 1581), the French in the army 'did me all the courtesy they could, saving my land and taking nothing from me', though no thanks to her neighbors in the region.[90] The first war over, she was observed by Sir Thomas Hoby, who visited her at Paris in 1566 and found her 'a grave, godlie, wise sober and courteious lady, one of the staies of the refourmed religion in Fraunce, one that thinketh aswell of the Q. my sovereign and all her refourmed dooinges [...] offring enie service she can'.[91] In 1565, Jean de Brosse died, still legally her husband though long separated. Declaring his Catholic faith and his devotion to royal service, his words about his wife were bitter to the end: 'since she would never take her place as my wife she can demand no endowment'.[92] Yet he appealed to the fact that they all had to face their end, not to continue to hold what she held wrongly in their divided property and to do right by his heir, the vicomte de Martigues (d. 1569).[93]

88 Potter, 1990.

89 'pour les esmotions civilles', Potter, 1990, p. 13.

90 'm'ont faict tout le plaisir qu'ilz ont peu et ont sauvé toutes mes terres que l'on ne m'a rien pris', Anne de Pisseleu to Heilly, 5 March [1563], BnF, n.a.fr. 23167, fol. 42.

91 T. Hoby to Cecil, Pans, 21 June 1566, TNA, SP 70/84, no. 417, fol. 327^{v} (*CSPF*, II, no. 512).

92 BnF, Clair. 355, fol. 22. The manuscript breaks off but can be supplemented by Morice, III, cols. 1343–45, signed at Lamballe, 25 January 1565: 'n'ayant poinct voullu server ny tenir lieu de femme elle ne peult demander douaire'.

93 BnF, Clair. 355, fol. 22.

The affairs of her family and inheritance continued to preoccupy Anne, concerned as she was to exercise her authority over the succession to her property. When Jean de Pisseleu came to marry Françoise de Pellevé in 1569 it was Anne who acted as intermediary. Writing to the lady's uncle and guardian, she expressed her assumptions about a marriage alliance, writing that her nephew had come to her to discuss his desire for it.[94] In July 1569, she was trying to obtain payment of her interest on investments (*rentes*) on the Paris municipality and, denied payment, she was helped, without any earlier obligation, by Jean Ébrard de Saint-Sulpice. She claimed that she had been obstructed by other members of the duc d'Anjou's council 'by the malice of some members of that council who wish me no good'. During the 1570s there is little information on Anne's life available, though the effects of the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew on her sense of security must have been profound. The lawyer-historian Jacques-Auguste de Thou (1553–1617), who married in 1587 one of Anne's favorites in these years, Marie de Barbançon, stated in his personal memoir that his wife's mother and father had returned to the Church, though in the case of François de Barbançon, this cannot have been the case since he had been killed in battle in 1567. Thou's desire to stress the Catholic credentials of his wife is all too apparent and he makes no mention of Madame d'Étampes among the many relatives involved.[95]

We can learn a certain amount about her late household from enquiries undertaken after her death.[96] The château of Égreville, south of Fontainebleau, was laid out on a smaller scale but along the lines of any great aristocratic residence. In the main *corps de logis*, her *chambre* on the first floor was equipped with a *cabinet* which housed the cupboards containing her jewels and title deeds within the *tour neuve* and a *garderobe*. The floor above that had room for guests and servants. Below was the *salle* and there were other towers with suites of rooms, including the keep. Rooms also existed over the main gate.

94 Anne de Pisseleu to [Nicolas de Pellevé; Archbishop of Reims], Égreville, 21 June 1569, copy; SAP 57, no. 38. The marriage contract was signed on 27 June; see SAP, Ch. Heilly, 52, no. 14. Françoise was the heiress of the eldest of the Pellevé brothers, Jean (d. 1558), the Archbishop's brother.

95 'plus par la malice de quelques uns dudit conseil qui ne me veult gueres de bien qu'aultrement', Anne de Pisseleu to Saint-Sulpice, 4 July 1569, sold: Thierry de Maigret *LETTRES et MANUSCRITS AUTOGRAPHES – ARCHIVES TALLEYRAND*, 5 December 2017, lot 55; Thou, 1734, I, pp. 118–19.

96 'Ensuyvent ls deppositions des gentilzhommes, damoiselles, serviteurs et servantes domesticques de deffuncte, noble et puissante dame Anne de Pisseleu', December 1580, AN, MC/ET/III/404.

What do the long and detailed examinations of the Duchess's domestic servants in 1580 (conducted in the light of quarrels over inheritance) reveal about the relationship to their mistress? The first point that stands out is that this elderly (and perhaps by now difficult) woman was surrounded by the young. The gentlemen and *maitres d'hôtel* of her household were all in their twenties and thirties, her *demoiselles* even younger, ranging from 14 to 30. She had a number of gentlemen, including the eldest, Richard Sanguin, *maître d'hôtel*, aged 50, who was her cousin, natural son of the Cardinal de Meudon.[97] Two other *gentilshommes domestiques* in particular stand out, Denis and Pierre Roullin, both entitled *écuiers* and sieurs de Mignonville, a fief of Égreville. There seems little reason to doubt that these brothers, Mignonville, were Protestant activists, captains in the armies of the Prince of Condé in 1585 and Henri de Navarre from 1587, one of them killed at Dreux in 1590.[98] Otherwise there were members of the regional gentry connected with these: Prégent Popine, lord of Frolles, aged 39 and Jacques du Val, lord of Vaulx, aged 26. There were six *demoiselles*, mostly in their teens.[99] The domestic servants included a *femme de chambre* and her husband, an *argentier*, two cooks, a page, *sommelier* and two *valets de chambre*.

Madame d'Étampes signed her last will on 6 February 1580, possibly at Paris though this is not clear.[100] Her simple statement of belief was that having prayed to God 'by his son Jesus Christ to order her actions by the holy spirit […] pardoning the faults she might have committed'. She ordered her body to be buried 'peacefully and without pomp' either at the priory of the Bonshommes of Amiens next to her father or at Angervilliers in the parish church should she die there.[101] The terms show both her generosity to her domestic staff and also a determination to repay those whom she thought had slighted her; it was a final instrument of her family power.

97 Royal letters confirming his right to 100 *livres tournois* a year from the property left by cardinal de Meudon to his niece and heir, Péronne de Pisseleu, Madame de Cany, 28 March 1561 and transcript of *distraint* of the property of Madame de Cany in Paris as she had no cash to pay, 9 August 1561, BnF, Dupuy 606, fols. 288–89.

98 Mornay, p. 114; Thou, 1740, VII, p. 243; Aubigné, VI, p. 250; A.M. de Mignonville had been *gentilhomme de la maison* to Guy XIX de Laval in 1577: see Broussillon, IV, p. 304.

99 A sister of the Mignonvilles, Elize Roullin, Mlle de Mignonville, 25, and her nieces Anne Roullin, 14–15 and Esther de Leveston, 14; Renée d'Escolliers, 30, daughter of the sieur de Chesnay; Marie Bude, daughter of the sieur de Rancy; finally, Marie de Barbançon, the Duchess's great niece, 13–14.

100 BnF, Dupuy 606, fols. 222^{r}–223^{v}.

101 'et l'avoir prié de par son fils Jesus Christ vouloir regir et dresser ses actions par son sainct esprit […] luy remectant et pardonnant les faultes et offenses qu'elle peult avoir commises' 'paisiblement et sans pompe', BnF, Dupuy 606, fol. 222$^{r–v}$.

Her sister Charlotte, Countess of Vertus, was disinherited along with her son by her second husband, Jacques Brouillard sieur de Lizy, the sieur de Badouville.[102] Her nephew Jean de Barbançon was also disinherited for having brought a court case against her. His brother Charles was provisionally awarded Angervilliers as long as he refrained from his brother's case. The 1560 agreement that her sister Louise's descendants should inherit Égreville and Challuau was denounced because she insisted it had been extorted from her under false pretences. Louise's son René d'Anglure de Givry had been killed at Dreux in 1562 fighting for the Guise and his son, Anne d'Anglure, lord of Givry, had entered Égreville 'in order to murder the lady Renée d'Escolliers one of her demoiselles, whom he sought to shoot with an arquebus', leaving Renée with a disabled arm.[103] Thus, a case had been launched by Anne against Givry and his step-father and *tuteur*, Claude de La Châtre, the later marshal, Catholic follower first of the Duke of Anjou, then of Guise. The echoes of the case against Frontenay are strong. On the positive side, she left 6000 *écus* to her great-niece and *demoiselle*, Marie de Barbançon, three-quarters of the property to her nephew in Picardy, Jean de Pisseleu, lord of Heilly, and the other quarter to her great-nephew Louis de Barbançon, Lord of Cany.[104] Madame d'Étampes clearly intended to hand out rewards and punishments in this will and dictate the course of her succession.

Anne de Pisseleu was at Égreville when she fell ill on 13 November 1580 at the age of 72. Her illness lasted eight days and became dangerous on 19 November. At midday, a doctor at Sens was sent for. At 9 o'clock the night before her death, her cook was called from his lodging in the village to prepare a dish of almond milk for her in her room. She was given it at 10. At an hour after midnight, with the Duchess sinking fast, the doctor was called for again. She lost the power of speech and died at two minutes after midnight on 20 November. Most of her domestic servants were in the room, the *demoiselles d'honneur*, *femmes de chambre*, the *maîtres d'hôtel* and a number of the gentlemen. Present, too, was one of her heirs, Louis de

102 Badouville was a Huguenot captured along with Nemours's natural son the prince de Genevois in 1577 by Mayenne, in danger of their lives but released on the orders of Henri III: L'Estoile, II, p. 113.

103 'pour tuer et et metre à mort damoyselle Renee d'Escolliers l'un de ses damoiselles, ce qu'il a pensé executer d'un coup d'arquebuse'. This does not easily accord with the later reputation of Givry as 'gentilhomme doué de tant de bonnes et rares qualités qu'il s'en trouvait pas de semblable en France', quoted in Villedieu, p.119.

104 There is reason to think the Barbançons had converted to Catholicism, since they were high in Catherine de Médicis's favor and Cany married his daughter to Gaspard de Schomberg, himself a convert, in 1588 (Thou, 1734, I, 133).

Barbançon, seigneur de Cany, and his sister Marie, one of the *demoiselles*, who had slept on a bed in the Duchess's room during her illness. Those present wept and said prayers for the departed for about three-quarters of an hour. There then followed an unseemly intervention by Cany in commandeering the keys to coffers held by the *demoiselles* and keys kept by the Duchess herself at her bedside. With these he entered the cabinet and had the boxes and cupboards opened, taking out a certain number of valuable jewels and plate. On the Monday, Cany was seen riding away and the surgeons arrived to embalm the corpse. The *bailli* of Égreville arrived to apply seals to the property and by Wednesday, La Châtre's guards had been posted.[105] On 28 November the English ambassador Lord Cobham (1527–1597) reported that La Châtre had sent a company of servants to challenge for the inheritance in the name of his wife, Jeanne Chabot.[106]

Cany's high-handedness in assuming his control of the inheritance clearly had implications for the executors, but given the nature of the account, there is little sentiment about it. The death of the head of the household was a major event and there were some tears wept, as was to be expected. The whole household gathered round the bedside as soon as it was known that Anne was dying. But otherwise, nothing is said about religion and there are no extravagant outpourings of grief recorded. Her will had specified, should she die at Paris, burial at the Bonshommes of Amiens next to her father, with bequests to the friars. Death at Angerville would be followed by burial in the parish church next to the lords her predecessors, peacefully and without show; aristocratic seemliness trumped religion.[107]

Anne de Pisseleu had exercised a form of power that was intrinsically extra-institutional and dependent entirely of the king's favor; her role was clearly understood by political insiders. Criticism took the form of conventional hostility to the role of women in power, yet in the king's lifetime had to be circumspect and oblique. However, she lived more than half her life after the death of the king whose love had given her power and wealth. In this, she weathered the storm of disgrace remarkably effectively, carved for herself a new role and ended her life a moderately wealthy woman whose assets became a matter for ferocious competition among her relatives.

105 This sequence of events is established from the enquiries in December over the high-handed actions of Cany, AN, MC/ET/III/404.

106 'Madame d'Estampes is deceased this laste weke, and Monsr de Chartres [sic], follower of Monseigneur [Anjou], hath sent a company of his servants who entred her castle and seased on her goodz, challenging to be one of her heirs by the right of his wife'. Henry Cobham to Walsingham, 28 November 1580, TNA, SP 78/4B, fol. 181.

107 BnF, Dupuy, 606, fol. 222^{v}.

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ASM – Archivio di Stato, Modena
ASV – Archivio di Stato, Venice
BnF – Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
HHSA – Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv
LBM – Lille, Bibliothèque muncipale
MC – Chantilly, Musée Condé
SAP – Amiens, Société des Antiquaires de Picardie, Chartrier d'Heilly
TNA – The National Archives, Kew, London.

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David Potter is Emeritus Reader in French History, University of Kent. His most recent books are: *Renaissance France at War: Armies, Culture and Society, c.1480–1560* (Boydell and Brewer, 2008); *Henry VIII and Francis I: The Final Conflict, 1540–47* (Brill, 2011); and *A Knight of Malta at the Court of Elizabeth I: The Correspondence of Michel de Seure, French Ambassador 1560–61*, Camden Society, 5th Series, vol. 45 (Cambridge University Press, for the Royal Historical Society, 2014). On Mme d'Étampes he has published: 'Politics and Faction at the Court of Francis I: The Duchesse d'Étampes, Montmorency and the Dauphin Henri', *French History*, 21.2 (June 2007), pp.

127–46; 'Marriage and Cruelty among the Protestant Nobility of Sixteenth-Century France', *European History Quarterly,* 20 (1990), pp. 5–38; 'Anne de Pisseleu, duchesse d'Etampes, maîtresse et conseillère de François Ier', in C. Michon (ed.), *Les conseillers de François* Ier (Rennes, 2011), pp. 535–56 as well as other studies of the French court in the sixteenth century.

12. ‘The King and I’

Rhetorics of Power in the Letters of Diane de Poitiers

Susan Broomhall

Abstract
This essay explores the gendered performance of power in the letters of Diane de Poitiers (1499–1566), particularly during the period when, as mistress of Henri II (1519–59), she wielded considerable political influence at court. It argues that her power was established and enacted through performances of authoritative behaviors and rhetoric that were inflected by contemporary understandings about gender and explores a number of distinct strategies embedded in Diane’s correspondence. These techniques reflected the corporeal and sexual nature of her access to consideration as a political interlocutor but also aimed to position her status as a figure of social and economic influence beyond this original means to power.

Keywords: Diane de Poiters, letters, royal mistress, emotions, networks, financial transactions

This essay explores the performance of power in the letters of Diane de Poitiers (1499–1566), particularly during the period when, as mistress of Henri II (1519–1559), she wielded considerable political influence at the court. For Diane, power was exercised in a number of forms, at different historical moments, and with varying degrees of success. It included emotional influence on political interlocutors, involvement in decision-making regarding the French kingdom, communicating political and military information, liaising between factional leaders, increasing economic security in lands and titles both directly for herself and also for her extended family, and accruing greater recognition for her descendants in elite dynastic networks. As this essay explores, Diane’s ability to claim some of these capacities shifted over her lifetime and in regard to her personal circumstances. Some kinds

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of power displayed rhetorical longevity in her missives, while the assertion of other influences waned, particularly after the death of Henri II.

Diane's power was enacted and demonstrated in many contexts, including through activities such as patronage and courtly positions for her favorites. It was visualized in artworks and constructed in built monuments including châteaux at Anet and Chenonceau. However, this essay draws upon Diane's extant letters as a key source for examining how her power was performed rhetorically. Judith Butler's conceptualization of gender as performative has been a powerful analytical tool for historians studying Diane's contemporary, Catherine de Médicis (1519–1589).[1] However, Diane's activities and writings have not been studied in such a light to date. Considering Diane's epistolary practices of power through the lens of performativity, though, demonstrates how her power was established and enacted through performances of authoritative behaviors and rhetoric that were inflected by contemporary understandings about gender. This analysis explores a number of distinct strategies embedded in Diane's correspondence, from the range of networks created and maintained via the work of letters, the nature of the political matters that she addressed with interlocutors, to the positioning of particular phrases within the letter text that asserted her proximity to influence, and techniques of unique autograph letter-writing that demonstrated her access to power both within the court and extending beyond it. It also included distinctive emotional tones, different offers of service, and wide-ranging matters for discussion raised with the diverse recipients of her letters. These techniques reflected the corporeal and sexual nature of Diane's access to consideration as a political interlocutor but also aimed to position her status as a figure of social and economic influence beyond this original means of power. Through textual, material and spatial mechanisms within epistolarity, Diane de Poitiers demanded and exerted consideration as a political protagonist at the court across a wide range of matters.

Building Networks

The established record of Diane's extant correspondence is patchy and provides an incomplete picture of her strategic activities at the court. For

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1 Butler, 1996; Butler, 1999. This is applied to consideration of Catherine by ffolliott; Crawford, 2000; Crawford, 2004; Broomhall, 2017b; Broomhall, 2018b.

example, no letters as yet uncovered are addressed to her two daughters, Françoise (1515–1577) or Louise de Brézé (1521–1577), to Henri II or to Catherine de Médicis.[2] Yet we know from her movements and positions at court, and from her letters to others, that these were individuals with whom she interacted intimately at the court. For the whole of Henri's reign, Diane enjoyed direct access to the royal couple as one of the foremost ladies-in-waiting to the queen. Epistolary communication was by no means the only transmission pathway for information therefore. Nonetheless, the bulk of Diane's extant letters do concern the period of her acknowledged political influence, during the reign of Henri II from 1547 to 1559, and can therefore help to elucidate her distinctive epistolary strategies in her most prominent years at the court.

These letters reflect a range of Diane's relationships at and beyond the court during the reign of Henri II. Some of her correspondents are those who occupied positions key to Diane's own influence at court. A man Diane regularly addressed as 'my ally' (*mon allye*), Jean II, seigneur de Humières (d. 1550), had enjoyed an illustrious career in close proximity to the royal family from the reign of François I (1494–1547). He had been Henri's governor as *dauphin* and that of his elder brother before him. Humières was named in turn the governor of the children of Henri and Catherine in October 1546.[3] Both before and after his death in 1550, Diane also corresponded with his wife, then widow, Françoise de Contay (d. 1557).[4]

Other correspondents were members of key political dynasties with whom Diane was establishing strategic alliances, or indeed those who were hoping for the same from her. These included both male and female correspondents from among France's elite families. In July 1558, for example, Diane thanked Marguerite de Bourbon, Duchess of Nevers (1516–1559), who had sent her legs of ham as a gift.[5] Chief among her political allies, however, was the House of Guise, led by Claude de Lorraine, Duke of Guise (1496–1550), then his son François (1519–1563). In August 1547, Diane had wed her younger daughter, Louise, to the duke's third son, Claude (1526–1573). Diane inserted herself into the Guise communication network, passing letters from Marguerite de Valois, Queen of Navarre (1492–1549), to François, then Duke of Aumale.

2 Likewise, no letters are addressed from Catherine de Médicis to Diane de Poitiers although we do have letters from Henri to Diane. See Broomhall, 2018a.

3 Potter, pp. 131–32.

4 Letters from Diane to Contay before her husband's death are no longer extant, but in Diane's letters to Jean, it is clear that she is also corresponding to his wife. See for example, BnF, ms fr. 3155, fol. 18$^{r–v}$ and BNF, ms. fr. 3128, fol. 12^{r}.

5 Poitiers, pp. 151–52, citing BNF, ms. fr. 4711, fol. 31, Rheims, 29 July [1558].

Conveniently for Diane, these particular letters demonstrated not only Marguerite's good wishes for her allies, but also the queen's respect for her personally.[6] When the new duke's uncle, Jean, Cardinal of Lorraine (1498–1550), died in May 1550 shortly after his father Claude in April the same year, Diane's letter, ostensibly of condolence, promised her assistance in helping François and his brothers to manage the succession of his properties. '[Y]our brothers must not be forgotten', she wrote, 'and even though I believe that the King will proceed as he has done in the past, I will still bring it to his attention by my letter, even though I know he will do it'.[7] Although insisting that her intervention was not necessary, Diane nonetheless promised to assist the duke and his brother in managing their transition to power.

During the later 1550s, however, Diane astutely expanded her allegiances at court and this may explain an increase in extant letters to the Montmorencys at this period. Letters to the Constable Anne de Montmorency (1493–1567), a man who was Henri's senior and a deeply trusted military and political adviser, formed another significant, but more complicated, network at court. Henri bestowed a widely noted affection on the older man who was a powerful influence on his political thought, especially in the final days of the Italian Wars.[8] While the Guise dynasty favored a hawkish policy in the campaigns against the Spanish king, Philip II (1527–1598), during the late 1550s, Montmorency's captivity under Habsburg surveillance led the statesman, and eventually Henri, to favor peace. Diane corresponded directly with both the Constable and his wife, and eventually forged a marriage between her grand-daughter Antoinette de la Marck (1542–1591), and Montmorency's son, Henri I, Duke of Damville (1534–1614), in 1558. Diane's autograph letters to the imprisoned Constable during this period reflected these ambitions, as she expressed her 'hope' to him that the peace negotiations would soon see Montmorency return to court.[9]

While these networks do not reflect the full extent of Diane's activities as these are revealed in other archival sources, they do chart the broad lines of her influence that was exercised among the highest echelons of the French aristocracy, for whom the kind of power that Diane wielded, as we shall explore, was most likely to be of interest. On the other hand, they do not bear evidence of strong international networks beyond this domain of

6 BnF, ms. fr. 20537 (formerly Gaignières 425), fol. 32^{r}.

7 'il ne fault pas oublyer messrs voz freres aussy croy je que le Roy suyvra les choses quil a faict du passe, je l'en ramenteverary encor par ma lettre bien que je sache quil le fera', Anet, 21 May [1550], copy, BnF, ms. fr. 23236 (formerly Gaignières 2871), fol. 101^{r}.

8 See Broomhall, 2018 a.

9 See BnF, ms. fr. 3021, fol. 94^{r}.

the kind that was often exercised by foreign-born queens such as Eleanor of Austria (1498–1558) and Catherine de Médicis. In this respect, Diane's power base remained firmly French.

Voicing Authority

The contents of Diane's letters demonstrate, perhaps better than do the recipients of her extant letters, the nature and extent of her power. Her letters ranged over a wide variety of subjects, but her discussions on child-rearing, on contemporary military strategies, and on courtly political manoeuvers were significant domains in which she claimed authority. This assertion of an advisory role on key matters of national significance translated into power to influence decision-making. Significantly, the means by which Diane claimed authority were all marked by her gender. Advising on the health and wellbeing of children were legitimate matters of discussion for a woman who was an experienced mother, as also was her offer to supply favors and services for leading elite correspondents. Thus, the framework for establishing and performing Diane's power was informed by contemporary expectations of her sex.

A focus of Diane's correspondence with Jean de Humières, governor of the royal children, and his wife, was the matter of managing the health and wellbeing of their young charges. Diane proposed advice on wet-nurses, diet, air, and sanitation of the chambers of the children. She sought and queried information about their accidents and illnesses, and demanded higher degrees of communication at key moments.[10] In general, Diane offered little explicit evidence as to why the couple should follow the sometimes firm health recommendations laid out in her letters, views that were clearly marked as her own views: 'it seems to me that you would do well to…'; 'it seems to me that…'.[11] She did not explicitly refer to her experiences as a mother of two adult daughters nor that conversations with medical professionals at court gave weight to her advice, although she did suggest that the latter would share her ideas: 'I think that the doctors will be of the same opinion'.[12] Diane's close attention to the royal children gave widespread recognition to her activities at court in this domain. It was this work that medical authors praised publicly in dedicating publications to her.

10 See Broomhall, 2004, pp. 191–98.

11 'il me semble que feries bien', 'me semble que', Oiron, 20 May [1551], BnF, ms. fr. 3208, fol. 127^{r}.

12 'je croy que les medecins seront de ceste opinion', BnF, ms. fr. 3208, fol. 127^{r}.

Guillaume Chrestien (1500–1558), physician to the king and his children, offered his 1559 translation of Jacques Sylvius's work on menstruation to her. Chrestien argued that Diane might be particularly interested in his text, specifically lauding her attention to the royal children; that is, her 'care not only for the conception and birth of them, but also to have them duly fed by robust, healthy, well complexioned wetnurses'.[13] Diane was also the targeted recipient of work by Claude Valgelas (fl. 1554–59), who in 1559 translated into French the *Commentaire de la conservation de santé, et prolongation de vie* of Hierosme de Monteux (*c.* 1495–1560).[14] Diane's child-rearing and medical knowledge might have legitimized authors' claims to her patronage, but it was also her proximity to power that these authors, and her correspondence in this domain, made evident.

Diane insisted that the Humières should attend more diligently to greater communication not with her but with the *dauphin*. In this respect, Diane's message made clear, without being absolutely explicit, her intimate knowledge of Henri, and more particularly his sentiments, desires, and keen interest in his children. When Monsieur de Humières failed to explain clearly a decision in the royal nursery, Diane informed him that Henri 'was most annoyed about it'.[15] Similarly, when Henri's daughter, Claude (1547–1575), fell ill with measles, Diane warned Humières that 'the King was stunned that you have not advised him of it'. In these letters, Diane could also demonstrate her capacity to protect those whom she favored, continuing: 'but I told him that it must be that your letters were lost, so you would do well to make your excuses as best you can'.[16] In this context, the advice Diane proffered suggestively became, by association, advice with royal assent. However, extant correspondence from both the children's mother, Catherine de Médicis, and their father, Henri, demonstrated the assiduous degree of attentiveness of the royal couple to their children, coupled with many independent recommendations. What role then was Diane's own advice intended to play? In most cases, Diane's recommendations mirrored and supported those offered by Henri, sometimes in contradiction to advice

13 'auez eu soing de la co***n***ception & natiuite d'iceux, mais aussi à les faire deueme***n***t nourrir par femmes nourrices vigoureuses, saines, bien complexionnees', Chrestien, p. 107.

14 Broomhall, 2004, p. 193.

15 'il ma semble que monsr en estoit tout fasche', Joinville, 27 October [1546], BnF, Ms. fr. 3155, fol. 18^{r}.

16 'le Roy a este bien esbay que ne len avez adverty mais je luy ay dit quil failloit que voz lres eussent este perdues parquoy ferez bien de faire voz excuses le myeulx que pourrez', Fontainebleau, 27 December [1547], BnF, ms. Fr. 3128, fol. 20^{r}.

from Catherine.[17] However, its strongest message and intent was perhaps to demonstrate and remind her readers of her unique significance as a mediator to and for the royal couple.

Another facet of Diane's epistolary discussion was her intimate knowledge of the campaigns of the Italian Wars and of the personal movements and actions of the king. She was clearly exceptionally well informed. Analysis of Henri's letters to her present a clear picture of the high level of strategic military information to which she was privy directly from the king.[18] Once again, correspondence provided a mechanism through which Diane could demonstrate her power and intimate knowledge of the king's business. Her dissemination of military news was not limited to senior men. To Madame de Humières, Diane wrote of how the latest information from the war's frontline 'could not have been better: the taking of Metz, which fell two days ago, so that our people are now inside'.[19] Even where she had little new to report to her network of friends and allies, Diane did not fail to suggest her proximity to potential sources of information. While Henri was away at the front near Boulogne, Diane observed to Jean de Humières, 'I have no other news from the camp than what I sent you, except that that evening, I was told that only Follambert was left to be taken and all the other strongholds had been taken. If I know of any other news, I will not fail to let you know'.[20]

War offered Diane the opportunity to use her correspondence with far-flung servants of the king in order to present herself as a mediator. She assured those on campaign that she could employ her physical and emotional proximity to the monarch to remind Henri of their important contribution. This included the Duke of Guise who, from the frontline at Metz in 1552, was seeking reassurance from a number of courtly advisers of the king's recognition of his service and forthcoming royal assistance towards the costs he had personally incurred.[21] Diane's correspondence with Guise provided a useful delay for Henri's finances, as she assured the

17 See Broomhall, 2004, pp. 191–98.

18 Broomhall, 2018 a.

19 'ne sçauroient estre meilleures cest de la prinse de mays que sest rendu il y a deux jours de sorte que noz gens sont dedans', Joinville, 12 avril [1551–52], BnF ms. fr. 3124, fol. 53^{r}.

20 'je nay point heu de nouvelles du camp que ce que vous en mandis si ce nest que ce soit la on me manda encores quil ny avoit aprandre que Follambert et que tous les aultres fortz estoit pris. Si jen sçay quelques autres nouvelles je ne faudray vous en advertir', Anet, 29 August [1559], BnF, ms. fr. 3208, fol. 115^{r}.

21 See also the letter from Cardinal de Lénoncourt, 7 September 1552, copy, BnF, ms. fr. 23236 (formerly Gaignières 2871), fol. 195$^{r–v}$.

Duke that 'the lord King thinks of nothing other than to aid you'.[22] Likewise, she supplied important emotional management on the king's behalf in her correspondence to François I of Cleves, Duke of Nevers (1516–1561), which enabled the king to delay a range of decisions and costs:

> I receive the letter you wrote in which I saw what you had written. I spoke of it to the King, who assured me of his great contentment with you and your good duty to his service. He said to me that he could not think of it now, putting me off until after his campaign and assuring me of the strong friendship that he holds for you.[23]

Later when the king required a number of noblemen to supply wood from their estates, Diane was among those whose correspondence helped to smooth relations between the king and his frustrated courtiers. To the Duke of Nevers, she gave pledges of Henri's appreciation of their sacrifices. Recognizing the 'quantity of wood from your forest, which is no small thing', Diane assured the Duke, '[…] he asks for nothing more […]. His Majesty is well satisfied with your service'.[24] In these exchanges, Diane provided the king with an important service of emotional labor on his behalf, making herself an indispensable component of his political communication and strategy.

Diane sustained a lengthy correspondence with Henri's marshal and governor of Piedmont, Charles de Cossé, Count of Brissac (1505/6–1563). Here, her letters discussing war formed an important part of the royal strategy of communication. From Turin, Brissac sought assurances of his continued favor with Henri, which Diane's correspondence supplied. She not only provided Brissac with news of the king's military activities, 'informing you that the King is about to depart' for the frontline of the conflict, but also promising him 'that the said Lord carries for you much goodwill that it is not possible

22 'Je vous asseure que led. Seigneur Roy ne panse qu'a vous secourir', [1552], copy, BnF, ms. fr. 23236 (formerly Gaignières 2871), fol. 269r.

23 'j'é reseu la letre que m'avez escrite, où j'é veu se qui vous a pleu me mander, j'en ay parleé au Roy, lequel m'a asseuré du grant contentement qu'il a de vous, & du bon devoir que vous fètes pour son servisse; il m'a dit que maintenant il n'y povèt panser, men remetant après ses guerres, & qui m'asseurèt de la bonne amytyé qui vous porte', Poitiers, p. 114, citing BnF, ms. fr. 4711, fol. 25 [Compiègne, December 1552].

24 'j'ay recue les letres que vous m'avés escriptes, & entendu, par ce porteur, la quantité de boys que l'on avoyt mise sur vostre forest, qui n'estoit par petite chose; toutesfoys le Roy, quant je luy en ay parlé, it n'entendoyt pas vous y fère tort, mais byen ayse de l'invention qui luy a [été] baillé pour les marchans quy luy délivreront le boys; il ne demandoit autre chose […]. Sa Majesté est byen satisfaite de vostre servise', Poitiers, p. 147, citing BnF, ms. fr. 4711, fol. 21 [Paris, 27 February 1557–58].

to have more and relies entirely on you for matters over there [...] I know that he has exactly the opinion of you that you could hope for'.[25] With Brissac, Diane employed a suggestive language of particular friendship, in which she not only promised to provide Brissac with up-to-the minute information 'as he who I esteem one of my best friends', but also to serve his interests at the court 'with a good heart'.[26] Indeed, a particular intimacy between them was perceived by subsequent generations, who speculated as to why Henri had sent Brissac away from court, tasked with the governance in Turin. This was reflected in Madame de La Fayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* in which the fictional Diane de Poitiers conducts an affair with Brissac unbeknownst to the king.[27] Whether or not Diane and Brissac enjoyed a particular emotional bond, her communicative assistance to the distant courtier and governor secured an ally on relatively achievable terms.

As is evident in Diane's letters to Brissac and as can be seen across a wide range of her letters to the aristocratic elite, Diane offered to do her correspondents favors at court and with the king. To Antoinette de Bourbon (1493–1583), the dowager Duchess of Guise, Diane insisted in a handwritten letter that 'if I had the honour to be your very own sister I could not have more desire to serve you in some way'.[28] She concluded another letter to François, Duke of Guise, reminding him that if 'there is a service that I could do for you, I beg you not to spare me, as she who will hold herself very happy to do something that is agreeable to you for the desire that I have to remain your humble [friend] to do you service'.[29] Diane even justified her advice to the Duchess, that he send her brother to court to assist the king, by explaining that her recommendation was offered because 'the desire that I have to do service to all your House made me write of it to you'.[30] Diane's

25 'pour vous faire entendre que le Roy est sur son partement', 'que le dict Sgr vous pourte si bonne vollenté qu'il n'est possible de plus, & se repose entièrement en vous des affaires de par de là; [...] je congnoys qu'il vous a à une tell oppinion que le pouvés souhaicter', Poitiers, pp. 94–95, citing BnF, ms. fr. 20451 (Gaignières 325), fol. 129, Joinville, 4 April [1551–52].

26 'comme celluy que j'estime de mes meilleurs amys', 'd'aussi bon cueur', Poitiers, pp. 120–21, citing BnF, ms. fr. 20451 (Gaignières 325), fol. 179, Paris, 13 April [1552–53]

27 See Letts, pp. 147–71; Grande.

28 'sy javes lonneur destre vostre proupe seur que je ne sares avoyr myleure anvye de vous servyr an queque chouse', [November 1552?] BnF, ms. fr 3237, fol. 13^{r}.

29 'Sy par deça il y a service que je vous puisse faire, je vous prie ne m'espargner, comme celle qui se tiendra tousjours bienheureuse de faire chose qui vous soit agreable pour l'envye que jay de vous demeurer Vostre humble a vous fere service', [1552], copy, BnF, ms. fr. 23236 (formerly Gaignières 2871), fol. 269^{r}.

30 'lanvye que je de fere servyse a toute vostre meson mest le vous écryre', [November 1552], BnF ms. fr. 3237, fol. 9^{r}.

promises of service, let alone what she may have done for her clients and friends, suggested in themselves her powerful capacity to achieve favors.

Whether discussing the royal children or political and military affairs, Diane's authority to offer advice and insight to her varied correspondents was positioned in her letters, implicitly and explicitly, as stemming from a single source — her proximity to the royal couple and her particular intimacy with the thoughts, wishes, and feelings of the king. This clearly generated a great deal of political credit that enabled her to interact with key political factional leaders, to offer them services and unique communication conduits within the courtly political sphere.

Phrasing Power

Diane's letters used a range of common phrases with her correspondents that marked her particular access to power through the king. Some common statements made clear to readers how close Diane was to the center of royal power. Her letters often presented claims to know the feelings or wishes of the king based on close observation. Such claims formed an important part of her missives to the Humières couple managing the household of the royal children. She could warn Jean de Humières of Henri's frustration at not receiving news of his children, 'it seemed to me that he was very angry about it', as well as his delight on other occasions.[31] After the arrival of the young Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–1587), at the French court, Diane could inform Humières that Henri 'particularly wants Madame Ysabel and the Queen of Scotland lodged together'.[32] 'I advise you that the King was marvellously pleased with the good welcome that monsieur the *dauphin* made for the Queen of Scotland'.[33] In such ways, Henri became a constant presence in much of her correspondence.

However, Diane also made her proximity to the king explicit in ways that demonstrated the particular intimacy of their relationship. To Antoinette de Bourbon, mother of the Duke of Guise, Diane closed one handwritten letter thus: 'In finishing this letter, the king has arrived, and commands

31 'il ma semble que monsr en estoit tout fasche', Joinville 27 October [1546], BnF, ms. fr. 3155, fol. 18r.

32 'Ledict Sr veult nommement que madame Ysabel et la Royne d'escosse soient logees ensembles', Tarare, 3 October [1548], BnF, ms. fr. 3128, fol. 10r.

33 'je vous advise que le Roy a este merveilleusement aise du bon recueil que monsr le Daulphin a faict a la Royne d'Escosse […]. Moulins, 20 October [1548], BnF, ms. fr. 3128, fol. 14r.

me to make his recommendations to you'.[34] To the Constable, whom Diane carefully offered respect, letters also explicitly reminded him of her access to the king's thoughts and feelings. In acknowledging receipt of the Constable's letter to her during his captivity in 1558–59, Diane made clear that she had in fact more significant conduits to knowledge of his activities. 'I was very pleased to hear your good news, even though I knew it well, for the king had written to me of his happiness in seeing you and how well you were'.[35] It was not that Diane was simply close enough to the king at court to observe his responses to particular situations; her letters gave her readers clear evidence of her own involvement as a source of information for him too. In an early letter to Jean de Humières while Henri was still *dauphin*, for example, Diane could write:

> I want to advise you that in reading your letter, monsieur le *dauphin* [Henri] took it, looked at it and found within it how you had decided to leave for St. Martin [...] he found it a little strange [...] and he asked me [why].[36]

According to Diane's description of these events in her letters, Henri embedded her in his communication strategy. These phrases positioned Diane as a valued component of, and a conduit for, the king's political networking.

One remarkable letter rendered the intertwined political and emotional relationship of Henri and Diane entirely explicit through both its material and textual representation. During his captivity, Montmorency received from Diane a short missive that thanked the statesman for his most recent news. Henri continued the letter in his own hand, thanking the Constable for finding the time to write personally during the intricate process of peace negotiations then underway that would culminate in the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis. Henri then textually bound himself together with 'the secretary who has completed half of my letter', Diane, in order to 'recommend

34 'An fynant sete lestre le Roy est aryve quy ma commande vous ferere ses recommandacyon', [December 1552], BnF, ms. fr. 3237, fol. 7^{r}.

35 'jay ete byen fort ayse dentendre de vos bones noveles encores que je la seusse byen car le Roy mavoyt mande layse quil avoyt eu de vous voyr et come vous vous portyes,' [St. Germain en Laye, 20 Feb 1558–59], BnF, ms. fr. 3139, fol. 76^{r}.

36 'Je vous veulx bien advertir que en lisant vostre lectre monsr le daulphin la print et la regarda et trouva dedans comme vous avyez deslibere de partir ala St Martin pour le venir trouver [...] il la trouve ung peu estrange de voeir que vous vous ennuyez sy tost la/ Et ma demande le plusfort du monde que se povoit ester Je ne luy en ay sceu rendre raison [...].', Joinville, 27 October [1546], BnF, ms. fr. 3155, fol. 18$^{r–v}$.

ourselves to your good grace'. Diane was left to close the letter, wishing God's blessing upon their recipient, with Henri penning the complimentary close 'Your ancient & best friends'. Each author then signed their name.[37] There is no further extant evidence of a regular pattern of joint authorship of this kind between Diane and Henri, despite claims reproduced in many works on Diane. That Montmorency should be the recipient of the only known example of this material demonstration of power may be significant: he was widely understood to be Diane's greatest rival for the affection and influence of the King at this period.[38]

Transferring Power

While Diane's immediate source of authority and influence lay with her physical and emotional proximity to the king, a fact made clearly and repeatedly to her recipients, her letters also demonstrate concerted efforts to translate this influence into other, more long-lasting domains of power, namely, economic strength, administrative networks of personnel, and dynastic advancement. In doing so, Diane sought to transform gender-specific access to power via sexual and emotional services to the king to standard forms of authority and control utilized by aristocratic men and women.

A considerable amount of Diane's extant correspondence concerns her growing economic portfolio, notably tax incomes and land assets for herself and her children.[39] Diane was an experienced financial manager. She had sought and received from François I the right not to have a male guardian appointed to manage her assets during widowhood. Furthermore, she had persisted in a lengthy case and secured from the *Parlement* of Paris the right to hold the domains of her husband for her two daughters, without reversion to the crown.[40] Additionally, she engaged in a particular negotiation with her cousin René de Batarnay, comte du Bouchage, over the sale of land at Rouveray, near Loches, around 1550, the full and final price of which, and the rights associated with it, generated a large correspondence. The lack of clarification of the terms of the sale prompted the production of letters adopting a very different tone to those with which Diane had addressed her

37 'la segretère quy achève la moytye de ma lestre et moy nous recoumandons a vre boune grase' 'vos ansyens et mylleurs amys', BnF, ms. fr. 3139, fol. 26r.

38 Broomhall, 2018 a.

39 On the gifts she was given by Henri in taxes and special payments, see Cloulas, pp. 157–58.

40 Cloulas, pp. 87–88.

courtly interlocutors. Indeed, Du Bouchage was to discover that his 'obedient, good cousin' could readily voice anger and frustration in this context:

> I am wondrously annoyed to see such a long time to bring our affairs to conclusions, which makes me send this porter to beg you to send your deliberation and what you want me still to wait on, for, from me, I want to tell you clearly by this letter, if within ten days you do not bring this to an end, I will secure it by another means, for I do not want to remain without knowing in what capacity I am there, for this has dragged on too long until now.[41]

These letters lacked the particular niceties and subtleties of hierarchical interplay displayed in Diane's correspondence with men at court and aristocratic women. Her claim to authority in these letters was explicit and demanded a compliance from her recipient that, in fact, had not been the case.

The employment of feeling in Diane's letters typically avoided the strong emotional rhetoric that was present in many letters of her contemporary, Catherine de Médicis, for example, but Diane did establish distinct moods and tones in her letters, partly through her emotional expression.[42] However, in this case, the articulation of strong feelings, particularly anger, which was more typically the expressive purview of governing men, may have formed part of a strategy to assert power over her cousin, rather than a reflection of it.[43] The focused attention to concrete detail in this resolutely practical side of her correspondence has generated much, generally critical, response from most of her scholars. Diane's mid-nineteenth-century editor Georges Guiffrey, for example, argued that the correspondence reveals a 'hardness of form, this aridity of sentiment' of a woman 'imperious and pressuring to demand her due, while elsewhere we see her dextrous at finding pretexts to delay when it came to loosening the strings of her purse'.[44] In a similar vein, her more recent biographer, Ivan Cloulas, considering a crayon portrait by

41 'obeissante bonne cousine', 'je suys merveilleusement marrye de veoir sy grant a mectre fin a noz affaires qui me faict vous envoyer ce porteur pour vous pryer me mander vostre desliberation et ce que voullez que jatende encores Car de moy je vous veulx bien advertir par ceste lectre sy dedans dix jours vous ny mectrez une fin je y pourvoyre par autre moyen car je ne veulx plus demourer sans sçavoir en quoy jen suys, car cecy a trop trayne jusques icy', Brie-Comte-Robert, 27 August [1550?], BnF, ms. fr. 3145, fol. 49.

42 Broomhall, 2015, pp. 67–86; Broomhall, 2017a; Broomhall, forthcoming (a). The author is currently working on a monograph study about emotions in Catherine's letters.

43 Pollock; Broomhall and Van Gent.

44 Poitiers, pp. lxxxviii, 54 n. 1.

Jean Clouet, suggests that in widowhood Diane acquired a 'more calculating' gaze.[45] But Diane's certainly very precise attention to economic aspects of power helped to secure long-term gain from what could be potentially short-term royal favor, particularly as she had not borne the king children who could be promised entitlements into the future. Diane fought hard to secure these land rights, and then successfully passed them on to her daughters.

Interestingly, we see far less discussion in her letters about the visual and material production of power through her extensive architectural and artistic investments, particularly at Anet and Chenonceau.[46] None of the letters that remain are addressed to architects or craftsmen. The details of these material symbols of status are primarily documented for posterity in contemporary accounts, the publications of their architects and, particularly at Anet, in the artistic details of the buildings that visualized a narrative of the interwoven identities of its creators Henri and Diane throughout. Their meaning as demonstrations of power were attested by eye-witnesses, such as the English ambassador William Pickering who visited Anet in March 1553 and declared it 'so sumptuous and prince-like as ever I saw'.[47] Nevertheless, one letter to Montmorency in which Diane discussed her building program at Anet asserted her claims to creative significance and innovation in its construction. 'I do not know how to talk about anything but my masons. I am not losing a single hour and hope that when you come here that you will find something new to take pleasure in'.[48] Diane presented herself as responsible for this creative demonstration of her status. In this respect, her letter bears similarities with the concerns of other women on her era to establish status as creative agents.[49] Of particular note are the letters of her close contemporary Catherine de Médicis, which keenly asserted the central role of the queen in all stages of the material process.[50]

A further area where Diane's letters demonstrate a strategy of power conversion was in relation to appointments of her political networks. Diane celebrated victories when those among her network received appointments, as in her letter to Claude d'Urfé (1501–1558), writing that she was 'very pleased

45 Cloulas, p. 88. 'le regard s'est fait plus calculateur'.

46 Chevalier, 1864, Chevalier, 1866; 'The Chateau d'Anet'; Roussel.

47 Turnbull, 253–60.

48 'je ne vous scauroys parler que de mes massons ou je pertz une seulle heure de temps / Et espere que quant viendres icy que vous y trouveres quelque chouse de nouveau / ou vous prandres plaisir', BnF, ms. fr. 3038 fol. 50r.

49 Broomhall, forthcoming (b).

50 Broomhall, 2018b.

that the abbey of St. Denis de Liseulx fell into the hands of my relative'.[51] With her close allies, she discussed attempts to secure positions for them, in doing so demonstrating the extent of her influence on the king. In order to reserve a benefice of the abbey of St. Barthélemy that had been earlier promised to Odet de Coligny, Cardinal de Châtillon (1517–1571), Diane explained to Jean de Humières that Henri had

> already made a promise of another that, instead of this one, was given to the Cardinal de Châtillon, in recompense for one that he had given to the brother-in-law of Mademoiselle de Surgères; by this means, I recovered this one.[52]

There was no mistaking the role Diane expected her recipient to understand she had played in this process. Likewise, in a letter to the Duke of Guise, Diane foregrounded her significance in securing appointments via her networks, explaining that François de Meuillon, Baron de Bressieu and de Ribiers, had written to her as a conduit to the Duke, seeking a position for his brother. '[F]or love of me, recommend him to the king', she wrote.[53]

Managing the marriages of her daughters and grand-daughters into France's most powerful families would also provide advancement of her line. Indeed, via these marriages, her descendants would, in just over a hundred years, marry into the royal family itself.[54] While negotiations for these marriages are not represented in Diane's extant letters, the relations that she was forging first with the Guise and then the Montmorency dynasties can be seen in the significant number of letters addressed to these recipients and the tone of such missives. In one, Diane wrote to the Duke's mother, Antoinette de Bourbon, asking her to consider Diane like 'your own sister' and one ready to do her favors.[55] Material qualities also conveyed the close relationships that Diane hoped to forge within this family.

51 'Ayant esté bien aise de ce qu'avez faict tumber l'abbaye de St Désir de Liseulx entre les mains de ma parente', Poitiers, p. 62, citing 5 June [1550] copy in BnF, Moreau 774 (formerly Collection de Fevret de Fontette 23), fol. 51.

52 'le dict Seignr avoit desja faict promesse dune autre qui en lieu de ceste cy a este baillee au cardinal de chastillon en recompense dune quil a baillee au beau frère de mademoiselle de Surgeres par ce moyen jay recouvert ceste cy', Vauluisant, 25 April [1548], BnF, ms. fr 3028, fol. 103^{r}.

53 'pour lamour de moy le veulles avoir pour recommande / et en faire la requeste au roy', [Rheims, 8 July 1554], BnF, Clairambault 347, fol. 249.

54 When her descendant, Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie (1685–1712), married Louis, Duke of Burgundy, *Le Petit Dauphin* (1682–1712) in 1697, giving birth to the future Louis XV in 1710.

55 BnF, ms. fr 3237, fol. 13^{r}; see note 28 above.

Among these was autograph correspondence. On an occasion in August 1552 when Diane was ill, she apologized to the Duke of Guise that she was not able to write in her own hand.[56] Diane's correspondence during the war with one of Henri's closest friends, Montmorency, presented a marked emphasis of deference. It was clear to contemporaries that Henri had formed a special bond with the older courtly figure, bestowing upon him many courtly privileges. Montmorency was also leader of an opposing dynastic faction to the Guise. However, Diane's correspondence reflected a rhetoric of humility in discussions of military engagement with the statesman. Diane, Montmorency's 'humble friend', expressed concern about Henri's safety at the front, advising that the king needed to be 'better guarded than ever, as much from poisons as from artillery'.[57] These were quasi-wifely concerns that situated Montmorency as the superior in his relations with Diane, but nonetheless insisted implicitly upon her right to information and consideration among the king's intimate circle. By the end of the period in which she was influential, Diane had ensured that her descendants were tied to this powerful dynastic family.

In the days after Henri's death, when Diane had retired from the court, it was precisely these networks that she sought to activate through letters to assist her. She wrote to Montmorency more than once to seek his assistance to ensure the financial security of her family. 'I wrote to you before to beg you to aid my son Aumale [the son of the Duke of Guise] and my daughter Bouillon, regarding the gift that the late king Henri had made to them before on salt, so as to have the gift confirmed', she wrote in the months after the king's fatal accident.[58] Indeed, one of Diane's letters demonstrated what appears to be rare acknowledgment of just how her position of immediate access and thus influence had transformed after the king's death. To the Duke of Guise, who had by the early 1560s risen to become Grand Master, she wrote deferentially, 'I beg that my letter not be an occasion to bother you, coming from a place which is now so troublesome'.[59] Nevertheless the

56 Poitiers, pp. 106–07, citing Villers-Cotteretz, 30 August [1552], BnF, ms. fr. 20515 (formerly Gaignières 403), fol. 122.

57 'le myeux garder que jamès, tant des poyssons que de l'artylerye', 'vostre humble bonne amye', Poitiers, pp. 101–02, citing [June 1552] BnF, ms. fr. 2974, fol 83.

58 'je vous ay cy-devant escript pour vous supplier ester aydant à on fılz d'Aumalle & à ma fille de Buillon, touchant le don que le feu roy Henry leur a cy-devant faict sr le sel, affın de faire confirmer le don', Poitiers, p. 177, citing Paris, 25 Nov [1559], BnF, ms. fr. 20507 (formerly Gaignières 395), fol. 97.

59 'je vous suplye, que ma lestre ne soyt aucasyon de vous annuyer, venant dung lyeu quy est mentenant sy fâcheux', Poitiers, p. 187, citing [1563?] BnF, ms. fr. 20507 (formerly Gaignières 395), fol. 147.

missive simultaneously sought to enact advantage from the very networks that her former power had enabled her to create. Diane continued to seek means to provide services and favors to these dynastic families. She wrote to Madeleine de Savoie (*c.* 1510–1586), wife of Montmorency, to announce that she could help procure a piece of land that she had heard the Montmorencys wanted: 'begging you to believe that what I do is nothing more than the goodwill that I have to see you accommodated with that good and to give pleasure to you in anything that is ever possible for me to do'. The missive made clear that she could do so, by relying on a network of supporters that she had developed at the height of her power, having, by her own account, instructed d'Urfé to sell the land to them. 'I wanted to write a little word about it to him, advising him to put it in your hands'.[60] These latter letters to the Guise and Montmorency family members provide evidence of Diane's continued expectations of reliance on their support in her latter years and the sustained impact of the elite network that she had cultivated during her years at the apex of courtly power.

Conclusion: Writing Power

An analysis of the letters of Diane de Poitiers provides important insights into the epistolary strategies of a woman whose status, authority, and influence emerged not from a formal position but a far more precarious source, the affections of a king. As such, they demonstrate particular attention to rhetorical positioning that made explicit the intimate and emotionally powerful nature of the relationship that Diane shared with the king. Diane's missives show the specific ways in which a mistress could insert herself into matters of national significance that extended from overseeing those tasked to the royal nursery and the courtly machinations surrounding appointments, to international political negotiations and European battlefields. They also reveal the way in which letters could be used to reveal, sustain, and expand a significant network of allies who, it was hoped, could be relied upon in potentially changing (and detrimental) circumstances, as indeed occurred in Diane's case. Correspondence became then, for Diane, another tool in

60 'vous suppliant de penser que ce que jen faiz nest que bonne volunte que jay de vous veoir accommodee de ce bien la et de vous faire plaisir en tout ce qui me fera james possible', 'je luy en ay bien voullu toucher ung mot, luy conseillant de la mectre entre voz mains', [1564?], BnF, ms. fr. 3119, fol. 66^{r}.

a strategy to transfer psychic power to more stable and long-term forms, particularly economic security and dynastic advancement.

However, Diane's letters also bear out similarities with other contemporary women at the apex of courtly influence such as queens and regents, because some aspects — assumptions and activities — of the experiences of women with courtly power were more widespread. The performance of power was gendered, and thus the nature of women's influence was often most clearly exercised in unofficial capacities that were well recognized by contemporaries as vital components of the political system. Many of these roles, which included conveying and exchanging information, offering services that advanced the careers of men and placed them in official appointments from where they could offer support to women, and through emotional work that smoothed, enhanced and fostered relationships, were conducted, and remain most visible to historians, through correspondence.

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13. Catherine de Médicis Tested by the Virtue of Charity (1533–1559)

Discourse and Metadiscourse

Denis Crouzet

Abstract

If Catherine de Médicis presented as a princess embodying the fertility of French blood and claimed thus to possess a benevolent, feminine side, her situation during the reign of Henri II seems to have been marked by ambiguity. Adopting a posture of withdrawal in relation to the management of affairs, her feminine identity was staged in the exercise of the virtue of prudence. But this policy of distance should not obscure the fact that she acceded several times to a position of authority. With prudence came the virtue of fortitude, without, however, renouncing her female identity. We must review the current historiography: the Catherine of before 1559 anticipates the Catherine during her widowhood, in her alliance of moderation and authority.

Keywords: Catherine de Médicis, queenship, regency, emotions, self-representation

Catherine de Médicis (1519–1589) is a challenging historical subject because each of the phases of her life has been historically reconstructed, and thus fabricated after the fact, by a dark legend that was constructed notably post-1574. This defamatory account accused her of being the primary culprit of the great 'misfortunes' that befell France from her arrival in 1533. A poisoning queen, scheming murderer and liar, ambitious Italian, foreign magician, abusive mother, devotee of Machiavelli, Catherine was stigmatized as an evil figure manipulating religious and political forces around the kingdom to dominate or even annihilate them, in order to establish her total authority.

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Until the 1980s, historiography was dominated by this unfavorable portrait exploiting all the stereotypes of political misogyny, interpreting the events at the time of the wars of religion through a prism of feminine psychology that was unequivocally negative. The approach to Catherine de Médicis's thinking and acts has substantially changed today. The mother of the Valois is portrayed now as a humanist princess whose efforts focused on defending the royal state, especially in accounts of her management of the crisis pitting Catholics versus Protestants that began in 1559. During her widowhood she strove to remain at the heart of this political–religious game in order to better defend royal power, and the sphere in which it was exercised, against competing forces. This was the *haut coeur* of Catherine de Médicis, to employ the expression of Estienne Pasquier searching to define the immense will of a queen mother attempting to impede the descent into violence.[1]

In fact, historians have focused little on the question of her role prior to the death of her husband Henri II (1519–1559). This role has been studied from the angle of a prudential study in power, a strategic perspective positing that Catherine had been patiently waiting for her turn. This raises questions about continuity or discontinuity, namely: did Catherine take on politics in a limited and sporadic manner, discreetly masking boundless ambition that was waiting to express itself, or should this ambition be viewed as already operational, albeit often metadiscursively, in the mediator role she subsequently sought in the religious conflicts that came to the fore after 1559? Indeed, one may ask whether Catherine aspired to a power that she was careful to portray as distinct from the very male power that she sought to appropriate, mobilizing all the resources of a political strategy that exalted her role as a widow and mother distinct from male forms of legitimacy?

The Ambiguities of Caution

It will be valuable to begin with what we know about Catherine de Médicis's link to the *res publica* prior to the tragedy of Henri II's death. Her situation appears marked by an ambiguity that was doubtless as imposed on her as it was controlled. On the one hand, she adopted what seems to have been a background position, distancing herself from the conduct of public affairs, preferring rather to influence certain decisions involving foreign relations or even military strategy concerning Italy, by playing on the support provided to a micro-society of clients and regular Italian visitors such as

1 See Crouzet, 2005; Crouzet, 2008; Crouzet, 2009; Crouzet, 2011.

members of the Gondi and Strozzi families and by defending what she believed was due to her children by birth right. Despite her likely fellowship in an Erasmian evangelical culture, she does not seem to have attempted to temper the repression of religious reform that marked her husband's reign. She made no statements to that effect. Religion was only important to her when it threatened the integrity of royal decisions or specifically when it threatened public order. Only at the end of Lent in 1552 do we see her writing to Cardinal Charles de Bourbon (1523–1590) to report that potentially seditious sermons had been delivered in Paris that may have raised questions of 'affairs of state'. In Notre Dame, a Cordelier had preached aggressively, while in the Church of Saint-Paul, a Jacobin had disparaged the alliance between the king of France and Protestant German princes, and the monarch's decision to finance the war by 'tak[ing] twenty *livres* per village on the revenues and gold plate of the churches'. Moving the masses toward sedition was what 'we must guard against, even more so than against fire or the plague'.[2] This appears a life-long obsession for Catherine, to maintain an impenetrable barrier between the spiritual and temporal: in no event should royal power be challenged in the name of faith. The king represents God on earth, and he alone makes the law.

Significantly Catherine's female identity is expressed, and initially presented, by exercising the virtue of prudence, calculated to take her out of the spotlight with regards to religious tensions and games jostling for royal favor. This self-control, however, should not obscure the fact that, very likely thanks to both her prudence in thus placing herself in a neutral position in regards to such games, and the king's perception that she was integral to the system of balance that he would establish while away at war, she would reach a position of authority on several occasions. First, in 1548, Henri II temporarily placed his council under her theoretical responsibility, and on three occasions, in 1552, 1553, and 1557, he granted her what appeared to be a regency, that she characterized herself as training. Caution may thus signal submission, by her accepting a delegation of shared authority either as part of a council or with an important figure such as the Constable Anne de Montmorency (1493–1567) or an expert such as Chancellor Jean de Bertrand (1482–1560).[3] In such a context, she expressed her desire to learn the art of power, to study it in all its breadth, such as, for example, the 'commissary of provisions' of which she claimed exhaustive knowledge. 'I can assure

2 'prendre vingt livres pour clocher sur les fabriques et joyaux des Eglises […] nous debvons plus garder que du feu et de la peste', Médicis, 1880, p. 50.

3 Broomhall, p. 3.

you that I am turning into quite the expert, for from one hour to the next I study but that, and occupy most of the Keeper of the Seal's time'.[4] Her correspondence reveals a queen performing like an actress in a specific role: seeking initiation while initiating herself in politics, accepting this fact and stating that she merely wanted to be of proper service to the king.[5] This did not prevent her from also claiming that, in order to best carry out her training and provide such service, all information should be reported to her.

In keeping with Susan Broomhall's analysis, we note that Catherine's rhetoric did not exclude, at the same time as her submission as a trainee, advising and thus exceeding the role that she accepted or adopted. In letters, she gave Henri II 'a subtle form of counsel' or portrayed herself as playing a decisive role in following, and supporting from a distance, his military operations.[6] Over the years, she would alter her posture from a woman undergoing training to one trained to play a pivotal role in the king's absence. As Broomhall argues, this was a way for her to underline that she temporarily symbolized a fullness of authority while persuading others that she was the authority, and that when she commanded, she should be obeyed as if the king were expressing himself through her. In this way, she became actively involved, for example, in exposing the delays with which edicts of the *Parlement* of Paris were registered.

Thus, Catherine's role shifted from listener to speaker, yet she maintained a cautious strategy. Her life began to gravitate toward the spoken word. It was Catherine who, in August 1557, after the defeat of Saint-Quentin, left the northern border of the kingdom without protection, and prided herself on maintaining order in the capital and the Ile-de-France region by taking the floor during an extraordinary session of the *Assemblée bourgeoise* and obtaining a vote promising 300, 000 *écus* intended to finance a military force. It was also Catherine who, with the Guise family, crystallized a hub of discontent against the decision to make peace with Spain that Henri II made under the influence of Montmorency and the royal favorite, Diane de Poitiers (1499–1566). Her caution was thus matched with the virtue of fortitude. The standard historiographic interpretation therefore merits revision.

The Catherine before 1559 anticipated the widowed Catherine in her articulation of a practice of moderation that assigned her to the political

4 'je vous asseure que je m'en vais maistresse passée; car d'heure à autre je n'estudie que cela, et y occupe la pluspart du temps Monsieur le garde des sceaux', Médicis, 1880, p. 56.

5 See Gellard.

6 Broomhall, pp. 12–13, 19.

background and in the development of the authority which she laid claim to and promoted. Her voice could push her to protest, as in 1553 when she allegedly went to the king in tears because she was not consulted on an alliance concerning her cousin Cosimo de' Medici (1519–1574) 'saying that one had no regard for her'.[7] More radically the year before, in 1552, she had complained that council decisions were made collectively and yet when Louise de Savoie (1476–1531) had been regent, she had not been required to have a 'companion' in that rank. For this reason Catherine refused to have published a regency declaration in *Parlement* and at the *Chambre des Comptes* that 'would detract from rather than enhance the authority others perceived in her, having the honor to be that which the king possessed'.[8] The tasks that fell to her during the regencies, however, as Ivan Cloulas argued, were no less 'subordinate', save after the Saint-Quentin defeat.[9] A further example of this relatively marginal situation was her failure to prevent the peace accord signed on 3 April 1559 with Philip II of Spain (1527–1598) at Cateau-Cambrésis that she had condemned since it allowed Spanish hegemony on the Italian peninsula by relinquishing all French territorial claims.

The Necessity of Knowledge

Catherine de Médicis's strategy of caution, however, functioned on another level. Everything transpired as if she had interiorized a compensatory game played through a mastery of language: 'she said and spoke French very well'. She was a princess who 'made her speech clear to great men, foreigners and ambassadors'. Her speech displayed 'beautiful grace and majesty', founded in oratory skills.[10] Her contemporaries were unanimous. These oratory skills had a moral purpose that must be read between the lines of her contemporaries commenting on her use of speech: to convince those to whom she spoke, through her rhetorical virtuosity and related persuasive techniques, to follow her way of thinking. A Venetian emissary wrote: 'she is so loved by all the court and all the peoples'.[11] In a letter of December

7 'disant qu'on n'avait nul égard pour elle', cited in Cloulas, pp. 97–98.

8 'diminuerait plus qu'elle n'augmenterait de l'autorité que chacun estime qu'elle a, ayant cet honneur d'être ce quelle est au roy', cited in Cloulas, p. 100.

9 Cloulas, p. 111.

10 'disoit et parloit fort bien françois', 'faisoit fort paroistre son beau dire aux grands, aux estrangiers et aux ambassadeurs', Brantôme, p. 450.

11 'sì ugualmente amata da tutta la corte e da tuttii popoli', Matteo Dandolo, cited in Alberi, pp. 47–48.

1544, a Tuscan ambassador highlighted a fact that struck him as significant: Catherine's mastery of ancient languages, deemed uncommon in France for a woman. Not only did she practice Latin, she was 'very studious, so very cultured, particularly in Greek, that she surprises men'.[12] It is noteworthy that she possessed advanced knowledge in history, geography, physical and natural sciences, and even astronomy that she knew how to use against her adversaries. Knowledge was foundational to her plans for the education of her own children. In her eyes, governing involved being prepared to make decisions based on a broad and scholarly base of knowledge, in particular speaking well through the possession of extensive knowledge. The goal was to achieve Plato's dream of a philosopher-king, of power held by a 'lover of reason'. This dream was one she certainly applied to herself early on and one that explains her alternating position of distance and presence, allowing her to perfect her cognitive skills in the political sphere. For she considered herself a knowledgeable woman, capable of adding to her skills learned empirically from her delegations of authority, a science that was synonymous with reason and that brought her closer to knowing God. This science was also a symbolic instrument of power because it allowed her to shape perceptions of a kind of alternative political legitimacy.

This knowledge translated into Catherine's penchant for book and manuscript collecting. Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585) observed that, following the tradition of her ancestors Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–1492), early in life Catherine sought 'the oldest books, Hebrew, Greek and Latin, in translation or to be translated'.[13] An analysis of two late inventories of her library reveals the extent of this fascination. The 780 manuscripts included 40 in Hebrew, 437 in theology, philosophy, and Greek poetry and rhetoric, and 303 in Latin. They reveal an immense range, demonstrating an eclectic appetite for culture and sacred texts, from the Kabbalah to St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and St. John of Damascus. A large prophetic corpus can be observed, including the oracles of the Sibyls and Hermes Trismegistus. The manuscripts concerning philosophy demonstrate a preponderance of Plato, with 32 books and 45 commentaries, in addition to Plotinus, Proclus, Iamblichus, Porphyry, Judah Leon Abravanel, and others represented. There was also Aristotle, Pythagoras, Homer, Hesiod, Prudentius, and the historians Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, and Josephus.[14]

12 'est très attentive à l'étude, elle est si cultivée, en particulier en grec, qu'elle étonne tous les hommes', cited in Mariéjol, p. 61.

13 'livres les plus vieux / Hebreux, Grecs et latins, traduits et à traduire', Ronsard, p. 324.

14 Bonaffé.

It bears repeating that her years of training may recall the Erasmian concept of an accumulation of knowledge covering both sacred and profane subjects, thus providing life lessons.

There seems to have been, on Catherine's part, an immediate desire to publicly pronounce her union with a Valois prince for a specific purpose. She portrayed herself as having arrived in the French kingdom with a mission to act as intermediary between the divine and the human. Her motto, 'she brings light and serenity', assumed the identity of a mediator. This *impresa* was enhanced by the theme of fine weather following the rain and harkened back to the imagery associated with her great-grandfather, Lorenzo the Magnificent: *il tempo si rinuova* (times are changing). The return of a saturnine golden age was part of the Medicean mythology and the Florentine princess desired that her presence in the French kingdom operate as a kind of symbolic translation to such a golden age. Added to that was the knowledge that Catherine claimed to possess, and which would allow her to introduce France to a new chapter of its history. With her came the arrival of light, the light of day both symbolizing the truth of the Arts brought back to a Florence which the Medici family claimed to have made a center of rediscovered knowledge, and opening Christian souls to betterment. Ignorance was understood as that which kept human beings in the low spheres of reason and passions, and after having long reigned, it was to be chased away. Ronsard would speak openly about this revival of the ancient, forgotten virtues, thanks to the treasures of Antiquity. Catherine, he proclaimed, belonged to a princely race that had already saved Athens from obscurity and all the great names of Greece — Plato, Socrates, and Homer among others — 'would have known an eternal death without the Medicis'.[15] Thus, Catherine's 'noble' blood would lead to the Arts. With her, henceforth, France would surpass all the other countries in Christendom in knowledge and science.

From the outset, therefore, it is fundamental to note that Catherine sought to paint herself as involved in a permanent active fight against a dark side, against illusions and passions, engaged in the task of 'conversion' as Plato described in *The Republic*: a conversion of souls to reason and thus to good, and a passage from darkness to light that would touch men as much as the government of the earthly city. To this end, she adopted another motto that announced a certitude of felicity: 'she brings hope and joy before her'. Precisely because of the fact that the kingdom would enter a new era by

15 'eussent esté occis / D'une éternelle mort sans ceux des Medicis', *Complainte à la Royne Mere du Roy*, cited in Miernowski, pp. 176–77.

the providential act of the heir of Lorenzo de' Medici, the present might be a time of doubt, hardship, and uncertainty, but this would soon be over; optimistic certainty predicted that better times were to come.

No less interesting is the distinctive icon, allegedly adopted at the suggestion of François I (1494–1547) himself, which aimed at making the motto both deeper and clearer. This was the image of Iris's scarf unfurling, a rainbow revealing the return of the sun, after dark times of tempests and storms, to the human world. Thus, Catherine allowed herself to be identified with the divine messenger of Greek mythology, daughter of Thaumas and Electra, who was depicted as winged and dressed in a light veil — the messenger whose arrival would bring a reign of peace fruitful for the realm, foretelling a golden age. Once again, the Medicean imagination perhaps implicitly emerges here, since Iris, maidservant to Jupiter, and especially through the agency of Juno, is sometimes the mother of Eros, god of Love and thus the union of human beings. Moreover, the iris is the flower symbolizing spring, the time when life and love are renewed. The theme of fecundity is inherent in the symbolism of the rainbow, which has just absorbed earthly waters to fill the clouds so that they might rain down on earth, ensuring the eternal life of nature. In this system of perpetual communication, air and water are sources of terrestrial and therefore human life. But the rainbow with its 'chameleon-like' colors also unites the earth to the Heavens, only appearing thanks to the sun's fire that lights it and allows its arch to be supported at both ends by the earth. Catherine's motto was intended to signify commitment to tireless activity to ensure that this communication always operated, so that man would remain faithful to God.

It is no surprise that sources from the period 1533 to 1559 depict a queen positioning herself as a mediator, an agent of peace on earth and thus in the French kingdom, playing a traditional female role in the court, that of intercession. It is not enough to take into account only the immediate means of expression of her character in the scope of court politics, but also the symbolic self-representation that she herself produced to underline her necessity to the realm and to its messianic achievement. Symbolism mattered as much as reality. Was this posture a new form of feminine power, a new culture? Had Anne de France (1461–1522) and Louise de Savoie already established the foundations of this 'self-fashioning', or did Catherine's Italianness drive her to insist on this symbolic staging? In the years leading up to the fatal accident in 1559, Catherine de Médicis appears in effect to have engaged in a singular role-play identifiable in fragments of remaining correspondence. What would become political action after 1559 was already identifiable in her early assumption of the role and identity as mediator.

Admittedly, this role entailed acts that fell firmly within the sphere of a dutiful princess who was called upon to perform duties of patronage that simultaneously constituted means of female court power. These included duties to protect, to assist with socio-political advances, to solicit pardons, particularly for those from her natal lands. However, in Catherine's case, these accrued a certain tone, as a parallel symbolic means of action, spread out amongst all the king's subjects in the name of the common good of the realm, and that would be then reproduced in a neutralization of religious antagonisms and marital urges.

Looking for Love

Examined through this lens, power appears to have been seen by Catherine de Médicis as an example of give and take of 'love'. Every sign of love called for love in response or announced it, a chain formed that created perpetual community. This chain found expression in the epistolary arts because, as Broomhall notes, they enabled 'a performance of power' that combined the expression of authority with a style that was often emotional.[16] On 1 August 1539, for example, Catherine wrote to her cousin, Duke Cosimo (1519–1574), son of Giovanni dalle Bande Nere and Maria Salviati, of her visitor from Urbino, Jehan André, 'who everyday devotes himself to serving me, so much so that I feel greatly obliged to recognize it both toward him as well as to his people'. She asked Cosimo to employ André's brother as chamberlain 'for love and out of favor for me', while stressing her 'willingness to do for you what I can in any place where you might wish me to be of use'.[17] Such was the formalized approach to politics from which she would never part: he who gives, receives, and those in power must never forget that they must give to receive, or withdraw if they fail to receive. Favor creates power because it creates love, and favor should always act as a corrective that facilitates continued reciprocal harmonious relations. Only when this system of reciprocity becomes dysfunctional should she undertake, temporarily, an act of conflict. Love is the foundation of politics, even more so when a woman holds and dispenses it.

16 Broomhall, p. 2.

17 'lequel s'employe chacun jour à me faire service, de sorte que je me sens grandement obligée de le recognoistre tant envers luy que les siens', 'bonne volunté de faire pour vous ce que je pourray en tous endroits où me vouldrez employer', Médicis, 1880, p. 4. Jehan André is likely Giovanni Andrea.

Even more expressive than duty thus defined, is the request that rights refused be restituted. In 1545, Catherine wrote to Cosimo about two merchants from Lucca, Antonio and Luigi Bonvisi, in dispute with Alessandro Antinori and the creditors of Benedicte Gondy. A sentence had been handed down that failed to take into account that the two were not from Florence; they should not have been tried under the 'statutes and customs' of the Tuscan city. Catherine requested that the two men be retried, this time according to 'reason and equity, and the law'. This would be to grant her 'a great and singular pleasure'.[18] Some months later, she requested a pardon for Gismondo de Meleto who, responsible for certain wards, married the widow whose estate he was managing. This had led to a fine of 1,000 *écus* that he could not pay and so had been sent to prison. His friends had asked the queen to intervene, 'friends', Catherine wrote to Cosimo, 'whom I would like to support'.[19] Writing to the Duke of Tuscany, she saw herself as responsible for performing a duty of rectification: justice of course exists, but must accommodate itself to the times and players. This requires being human and flexible. The Duke must not allow what is humanly unjust.

After 1559, this would be the great theme that guided the queen mother's work toward peace. If the law accentuated the tensions between men of different religions, and if there was a risk of pushing the kingdom into catastrophe, the need for law must be considered alongside another necessity, that of preserving life and royal authority. Mitigation of the law is a duty for those who govern; the good of the governed requires it. And here once again, the metadiscursive influence of Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536) bolstered the rhetoric of female intercession. Erasmus who, like Guillaume Budé (1467–1540) in 1508 in his *Annotations aux Pandectes*, laid claim to the Latin adage *summum jus, summa injuria* (extreme justice is extreme injustice). He called into question the absolute character of positive law, postulating that there was no unconditional value in life on earth, except love. Religion was for Erasmus 'love and concord': *summa nostrae religionis pax est et unanimitas* (the culmination of our religion is peace and concord).[20]

Catherine demonstrated more directly her own approach in another letter to Cosimo, obscuring her difficult relationship with the Duke by adopting feminine language. If Cosimo obtained the release of a certain prisoner, Anthoine, brother of Catherine Gazette whom Catherine had brought to

18 'un bien grant et singulier plaisir', 'auxquelz je désire bien subvenir', Médicis, 1880, p. 10.

19 'amys [...] ausquelz je désire bien subvenir', Médicis, 1880, p. 10.

20 Margolin, pp. 30–32. See Geonget.

France, she would also do the same for his servants if they should find ever themselves in difficult situations. In a subsequent letter, Catherine thanked Cosimo for treating her *protégé* so well, 'recognizing that you acted out of thought and love for me'.[21] She then added that she hoped Cosimo could bestow pardon upon the man, since she 'need[ed] him for certain reasons'.[22] Gazette's husband, Viscount of Mothe-au-Groin, had just died, and his widow, alone and defenceless in France, wished her brother to be sent to her. Catherine asked Cosimo to do a 'charitable deed'.[23] Her word choice was important: mediation was part of a practice in which she considered virtue played a role. At the individual level, it was a means of protecting oneself, or one's loved ones, from hardship, since love was the way paved by Christ. Charity and faith are indivisible and both must work in service of humanity. In his powerful analysis, Jacques Chomarat explains:

> to be just before God, meaning between opinion and reality, between appearance and being, like for Plato. Justice, in fact, according to a common definition, is to respect the law; yet there is a profound difference depending on whether the subject is the law of man or that of God, meaning God's will. The latter is an absolute, it is one and eternal, as distinct from man-made laws.[24]

What counted first and foremost was the law of Christ, which was the law of charity. It is in this context that the motives directing Catherine de Médicis's writing should be examined, as much after 1559 as from the beginnings of the religious troubles when she sought, by the Edict of January 1552, to impose a religious commingling of denominations in the name of Christ and thereby to quell the morbid passions of men interested only in killing and destruction. The metadiscursive mechanism underlying her correspondence from 1533 to 1559 anticipated in its schemes the political choices she made during the reigns of her three sons. One can also argue that it also provided her the means to believe that civil harmony should take precedence over the dreams of war that drove a number of religious protagonists.

In her letter regarding Catherine Gazette, the queen also noted the necessity of establishing a 'good friendship' that 'I believe corresponds to

21 'saichant que vous l'avez faict à ma contemplation et pour l'amour de moy', Médicis, 1880, p. 18.

22 'besoin de lui pour quelques choses', Médicis, 1880, p. 18.

23 'œuvre de charité', Médicis, 1880, p. 18.

24 Chomarat, p. 35.

that which I feel for you and your family'.[25] This friendship was marked and maintained by signs indicating virtue: granting a living to a cleric or a service to a layperson, canceling a fine imposed on a person, compensating for the adverse consequences of a lost or extended trial. An example of the latter concerns Jean-Baptiste de Bony, whose trial left him in need: 'for whom I mourn and feel compassion in recognition of the services he provided to our home'.[26] Catherine requested of Cosimo a review of the trial, and that one of Bony's daughters be taken into the service of Cosimo's wife, Eleanor of Toledo (1522–1562): 'I promise you that, in so doing, you would make me particularly pleased'.[27] It is clear that these calls for moderation were also calls to charity: the relationships that Catherine built were justified on the basis of sharing and reciprocating charity, understood as a shared virtue promoting a peaceful social circle in which he who performed a service also received, either directly for his own benefit, or indirectly for a loved one or or an extended loved one, a gesture of goodness. On 14 January 1553, Catherine wrote to Madeleine de Savoie (*c.* 1510–1586), the wife of Anne de Montmorency, concerning a certain Pierre Garnier who was accused of having killed a stag in the forest near Boissy. Garnier had fled, leaving his wife and children penniless. Poverty having forced them out on the street, Catherine begged Madeleine to cancel the punishment or fine to which Garnier had been (or would soon be) sentenced. She asked for mercy and forgiveness in the name of his wife and children. A consistent motive appeared: to carry out 'an act of charity'.

Charity and Faith

A pardon sought by a third party is an act of charity intended to reduce the punishment which would be otherwise merited but which may have repercussions more inhumane than the act that precedes it. One of the purposes of political action, in terms of individual relationships, is charity, which relieves the other of threatened sorrows and pleases God because it is born of faith and fed on hope.[28] To quote Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), clemency is rooted in reason 'because it lessens punishments when and

25 'bonne amitié', 'je pense estre correspondante à celle que porte à vous et à vostre famille', Médicis, 1880, p. 17.

26 'dont ay dueil et compassion pour la recongnoissance que j'ay des services qu'il a faictz à notre maison', Médicis, 1880, p. 17.

27 'je vous promects que, ce faisant, vous me ferez ung singulier plaisir', Médicis, 1880, p. 17.

28 Médicis, 1880, pp. 73–74.

where necessary'.[29] These examples demonstrate that Catherine de Médicis's identity as a moderator, and the more or less explicit schemes around which she built her views, approached the Erasmian Christian soldier: the pardon leads to God. The higher placed the individual, the more she or he must, by the virtue of charity, be a 'servant to all', committing acts of love to reduce the punishment deserved by neighbors. At the very heart of Catherine's letters was the servant modeled on Christ, ministering all, hiding behind the role of one who intercedes on others' behalf.

Perhaps what was at work, for Catherine, was a kind of socio-political calculation whose purpose was serving God. For example, in October 1547, Catherine wrote to Cosimo regarding André Lepsy, a father involved in a lawsuit concerning an uncle's estate. The length of the suit had caused Lepsy great expense that could lead to ruin. Lepsy had been recommended to Catherine by 'certain servants' and for this reason she requested that the Duke of Florence order that the trial be held as soon as possible, 'in good and quick justice so that I can pray to God, my cousin, once it is over, to grant you what your heart desires'.[30] Clearly, it was not only in terms of 'concordance', soliciting a demonstration of love for herself, that the queen justified her pleas. Catherine invited the Duke of Florence to view the pardon that he could extend as a 'pleasure' to the person for whom she had made the request, and a pleasure to her, in exchange for which she prayed that God would watch over him. Charity must be exercised to prevent hardship from befalling Lepsy, and holding hardship at bay would fulfil God's will. Serving all meant drawing attention to one who needed help. A service rendered did not only concern the person who received it: 'all services require recognition, rent and payment before God'.[31] A triangle was thus created: love was not only due to one or another, in an exchange, but also involves God. Moderation is demanded by a merciful God who wishes for humankind to live in peace. Even before Catherine found herself on the frontline of political action amidst rising religious tensions, she was experimenting with moderation. She would transition its application from the limited scope of her patronage to a broadening-out to all of the king's subjects who had to be protected from rising passions in the French society,

29 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, III.146.

30 'en bonne et briesve justice et l'avoir pour recommandé, qui sera l'endroit où, en faisant fin, je prieray à Dieu, mon cousin, après m'estre recommandée à vous, vous donner ce que vous désirez', Médicis, 1880, p. 21.

31 'tous services demandent recongoissance, loyer et payment devant Dieu', Médicis, 1880, p. 23. The request was repeated late July 1550.

in the name of the *benevolentia* defending the continuity of a society based on friendship and love.

Thus, Captain Jheronymo Pepi, a former servant of 'my' house, as Catherine wrote to Ercole II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara (1508–1559), had made a deposit of 700 golden *écus* with a Florentine merchant called Lorenzo Guichardini, over five years before. Guichardini had since gone bankrupt and was imprisoned in Ferrara, his assets, goods and credits having been seized. Everything should be done, argued Catherine, so that Pepi could recover his money. She requested that the Duke help do so in any way he can, 'out of love for me'.[32] Catherine concluded the letter in stating that at the time of writing, she prayed to God that He would grant the Duke a good and long life.

Throughout Catherine's correspondence, there was a theme of the need to pardon, beyond another need which was to never forget the offence. On 1 April 1554, Catherine evoked the memory of the murder of her brother, Alessandro de' Medici (1510–1537) by Lorenzino de' Medici (1514–1548). Although she would be most justified in holding a grudge, she nonetheless interceded on behalf of Lorenzino's younger brother, Giuliano (1520–1588), who at the time was very young and thus 'could not have the judgment and knowledge of such a miserable act, and for which he is innocent'.[33] Out of 'love for me,' Catherine asked that her cousin Cosimo return his property.[34] The past is the past and one should know when to turn the page on such horrible and criminal violence because, as Erasmus said, he who wants God to forgive his mistakes must forgive those of his enemies or those who have done him wrong.

Catherine was especially keen to take on the case of Leon Strozzi, prior of Capua and Knight of Malta (1515–1554), whose post as general of the prisons had been withdrawn, probably at the instigation of Montmorency in favor of his eldest son. Driven by fear of an assassination attempt against him, Strozzi claimed that he had stabbed to death Jean-Baptiste Casella, known as Le Corse, one of his trusted servants in charge of managing finances related to his post. After the murder, he left Marseilles for Malta to avoid prosecution. Catherine's letter to her *compère* Montmorency had her denying as early as 26 September 1551 that Strozzi had acted out of malice and instead underlined that his Corsican victim was 'such a mean

32 'pour l'amour de moy', Médicis, 1880, p. 35.

33 'avoir le jugement et congoissance d'un si malheureux faict, et qu'il en est ygnocent', Médicis, 1880, pp. 38–39.

34 Médicis, 1880, p. 39.

man' 'powerful enough to cause him fear or doubt'.[35] That Strozzi had resorted to violence, Catherine repeated incessantly that she was displeased with, but mitigating circumstances had to be taken into consideration. Catherine implied that the murderer believed that a conspiracy was being mounted against him. Moreover, his brother Piero (*c.* 1510–1558) was a great servant of the crown, and Catherine was certain that Leon, if pardoned, would give his life in service to the king: 'and have no fears of taking him under your protection, for I tell you that he will never do wrong'.[36] Some days later, she returned to the Strozzi case. He had committed wrong, and the wrong was an offense to the king, but very quickly Catherine added that her *protégé* had realized the grave nature of his error, his 'despair' growing day by day, but he must not be driven to serve another prince than the king of France, in this instance the emperor. To avoid such an act and her undue suffering from such a decision, Catherine wrote that she had asked the king to grant Strozzi an audience: 'not because he deserves that the king do something for him, for no one knows better than me his error'.[37] It was important that the king hear Strozzi and that he alone pass judgment as he saw fit. Catherine sought Montmorency's support in her request, and she would in turn do the same for him. Afterwards, when addressing Henri II, she promised that the guilty man, pushed by his conscience after committing such an act, if pardoned, 'would rather die 100,000 deaths' than ever fail him.[38]

From Catherine's letters, a complementary theme of reconciliation also emerges. In a letter to the Duke of Ferrara, on 26 February 1557, Catherine cited the 'indignation' that the Duke had long felt toward Mr. François Ville. The latter was her *protégé*, on account of his virtues: she wrote that she sought reconciliation 'out of your good grace and friendship'.[39] The Duke's resentment, she suggested, should be quelled since it went back so many years that there was no longer any reason for it, and instead should be converted into 'benevolence' restoring the ties of friendship.[40] One should forget offences with time in the same way that Christ pardoned those who had gravely offended him. Ought this 'benevolence' be seen as a reference

35 'si meschant homme', 'eu puissance de luy faire peur ou doubte', Médicis, 1880, pp. 43–44.

36 'et ne craignez point de le prendre en vostre protection, car je responds qu'il ne fera jamais faulte', Médicis, 1880, p. 44.

37 'non pas qu'y meryte que le Roy fasse rien pour luy, car y n'y an y é poynt quy conese plulx sa faulte que moy', Médicis, 1880, p. 45.

38 'moura plulx tôt de san myle mort', Médicis, 1880, p. 45.

39 'vostre juste indignation', 'en votre bonne grace et amytié', Médicis, 1880, pp. 105–06.

40 Médicis, 1880, pp. 105–06.

to the *benevolentia* of Erasmus? After all, Catherine, in her large collections of drawings, owned a very important portrait of Erasmus.

Catherine acted through her correspondence, albeit in the years preceding 1559, by practicing a kind of patronage that in some ways ritually sought to protect and assist her close relations and friends of her close relations. But she also sought to enhance the image of a mediator queen, like Iris, to whom her *impresa* would refer: a mediator queen between heaven and earth calling for charity in the service of God, employing a paradigm of avoiding misfortune that was, in her eyes, the responsibility of any ruler toward her subjects. This was a mediator queen who considered speech a divine gift and a means to participate in the divine. For true speech does not turn on itself and has no value of its own; it is infused with faith and is directed toward charity, fed by hope. Human wisdom is but a mere hint of wisdom, as Budé wrote in the *Praefatio* dedicated to François I, which opened the *De transitu Hellenismi ad Christianismum*. Speech, employed in the desire to recreate harmony, is part of a desire for God. If it is directed toward the virtues of hope and charity, it is supported by faith. It is the expression of faith and its purpose, to produce fellowship between humankind.[41]

Power and 'Doulceur' (Gentleness)

If, from 1559, there was an epistolary power to Catherine de Médicis's practice to defend and successively illustrate the authority of her three sons, it must be seen from the humanist perspective that, since Petrarch (1304–1374), had attributed to writing a power of fellowship. The aim was to simultaneously inform and persuade, but also to maintain despite distance a human link of *amicitia* or *fraternitas*, to stimulate and continually re-stimulate that link to prevent forces of passion from overcoming the State. Every letter, even the most innocuous and least political in appearance, even addressing financial questions or involving the payment of German or Swiss mercenary budgets, was controlled speech aimed at maintaining, inasmuch as possible, a *convivium* threatened by barbarism. When the queen mother responded in 1567 to Laurent de Maugiron (1528–1588), discontented at his dismissal as Lieutenant General of the Dauphiné, not only was it to promise him an appointment of comparable honor as soon as an opportunity arose, but also, in weighing her words carefully, to communicate her own serenity in order to alleviate any resentment.[42]

41 Budé, pp. 4–6.
42 Médicis, 1887, p. 9.

Everything had to be done, Catherine repeated incessantly throughout the religious troubles, to avoid the kind of violence that risked pushing human order towards evil and hardship. For example, between the Vassy massacre and the beginning of the first religious war, Catherine wrote repeatedly to Louis, Prince of Condé (1530–1569) to stop him from deciding to go to war. Likewise, on the day after 24 August 1572, at the time of the Massacre of Saint-Bartholomew, Catherine, together with her son Charles IX (1550–1574), sent multiple missives to the various provincial governors, lieutenant generals, royal officers, and village magistrates to order them to prohibit violence against the Huguenots and to continue to apply and enforce the Edict of Saint-Germain.

Catherine's political conscience and the different support that this conscience could draw upon in the years from 1533 to 1559 is expressed in a letter dated 31 January 1561 addressed to Sébastien de L'Aubespine (1518–1582). Her conscience was formed over time. The queen mother began by recalling the closing of the Estates General of Orleans (1560), then outlined the policies that she had endorsed, claiming for herself, or liberally adopting, the arguments that had been recently developed by Chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital (1503/7–1573). Concerning religion, recent examples proved that a sole remedy would not suffice to heal what ailed the kingdom. Given 'recent events', Catherine wrote, new medicines had to be tried until a cure was discovered. Politics should be flexible, shifting. For 20 or 30 years, it was believed that cauterization was the best means to stop the spread of new ideas, but the violence of this remedy had proved ineffectual; repressive punishments only served to confirm the new opinions in an 'infinity of poor people'. The death of followers of the new opinions, far from changing the minds of the men and women of the realm, only served to strengthen their Calvinist faith. Things had reached such a point that the kingdom had become little more than a giant sedition, fortunately appeased for the moment by the grace of God, Catherine added. If a new remedy was to be tested following that of violence, it should be, according to the queen mother, on the advice of the blood princes and the princes and lords of the King's Council. They needed to be even more cautious, for Charles IX was still a minor, and especially since the cinders of the seditious fires had only just been doused, yet were still warm. The tiniest spark could result in an even bigger blaze than before. It was thus out of 'consideration for the season' that the change of course should be made. Another sphere of political rationale would be necessary, a rationale entered but 'occasionally', driven by events, and where one would be forced to 'conceal many things that in other times one would

not have borne'.[43] Here, Catherine empirically defined politics as training, as work on a changing world, work on the 'malice des temps' (evil of the times), an aptitude to continually re-think oneself relative to the present and one's potential to work toward a harmonious conclusion. Clearly this peace, in this context, could also be a form of power, the means to find a way to confirm the necessity of feminine power to meet competing male ambitions. But for Catherine de Médicis, it would be her femininity itself that would be synonymous with moderation, of 'keeping within bounds', and thus of peace.

This new cure was an exceptional one that was only used provisionally and required that a 'gentle approach' should henceforth be followed. It was an approach that entailed 'honest remonstrances, exhortations and sermons' aimed at leading those who strayed back to the faith.[44] It was this desire for 'doulceur' that Catherine claimed here was required by politics that give primacy to speech. On 31 March 1561, this approach became that imposed by 'the necessity of time',[45] a necessity that, on 20 June, became increasingly great: 'it pressures and compels us in such a way that we can do no less'.[46] However, this notion of gentleness could be conceptualized as a tool for controlling power, a means to possess it or distinguish a female aptitude for power. The queen mother, faced with the contradictions of the authority she claimed to exercise as mother of a child-king, took what appeared a weakness in the male world and turned it into a strength.

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