

**A MIRROR FOR PRINCESSES: THE PORTRAYAL OF
QUEENSHIP IN THREE FRENCH VERNACULAR
CHRONICLES, C. 1260 - C. 1310**

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Abstract

France in the thirteenth century offers a significant example of the changing role of queens in government: power was centralised and the queen's political role was reduced. The transformation of French government in this period has been the subject of many studies, yet medieval perceptions of the queen's role remain under-explored. This thesis examines three French vernacular chronicles written between c.1260-c.1310 in order to deepen our understanding of attitudes towards Capetian queens and queenship during this key period of change. The Minstrel of Reims gives a fictionalised version of recent French history in his *Récits*; John of Joinville, a nobleman, provides an eyewitness account in the *Vie de Saint Louis*; and Primat gives a monk's perspective on France's broader history in his *Roman*. The chronicles, written for royal or noble audiences, were intended, in part, to encourage good behaviour by presenting models of desirable and undesirable actions. This thesis explores the presentation of queenship in these texts via four areas: familial relations, piety, sexual agency, and government and influence. It demonstrates that each chronicler minimised the involvement of queens in political affairs. Instead, each chronicler placed emphasis on the queen's role as a mother and as a loyal and pious wife. In so doing, each writer revealed his support for the administrative changes to the office of queenship. The thesis thus demonstrates that the vernacular French chroniclers each presented a model of queenship that acted in the interests of the Capetian royal family. It establishes that these chroniclers showed that a queen, following the expectations of her position, would help ensure the peace and stability of the kingdom. This, in turn, ensured the strength and legitimacy of Capetian rule by establishing and solidifying contemporary expectations of queenship for an aristocratic and royal audience.

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Notes on the Text

Anglicisation of Names

The names included in this thesis have been anglicised where possible, following the names assigned in the English translations consulted in this thesis. Robert Levine's translations of Primat's *Roman des rois* occasionally includes variant spellings of names. In these instances, the first iteration of the name included by Levine is employed. A footnote highlights one case where a name has been changed for clarity.

Biblical Citations

All references to the Bible are taken from the Vulgate, following: A. Kinney and S. Edgar (ed.), *The Vulgate Bible: The New Testament*, 6 vols, Douay-Rheims edn, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2010-2013.

Introduction

Our holy mother and lady, Madame Isabelle, was of royal lineage and was the daughter of the very noble king Louis of France, who was the son of king Philip, and the daughter of the very noble queen of France, Madame the queen Blanche ... She was pledged by her family to contract a marriage with the son of the emperor of Rome ... but she never wanted to assent to corporal marriage, because she had chosen the enduring husband, our Lord Jesus Christ, in perfect virginity.¹

Isabelle of France (d. 1270), the sister of Louis IX (r. 1226-1270) and daughter of Blanche of Castile (d. 1252), refused to bow before tradition and expectation. She rejected marriage outright and dedicated her life to God. Isabelle's remarkable decision has, in recent years, led many scholars to examine her life and its legacy; indeed, she is one of the most extensively studied Capetian royal women.² However, the authors of the vernacular chronicles studied in this thesis, which were written during the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries, did not deem her life worthy of much attention. This thesis examines three French vernacular chronicles, a section of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* known as the *Roman des rois*, the *Vie de Saint Louis*, and the *Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims*, yet it is only in the *Récits* that Isabelle makes even a fleeting appearance. Instead, the authors of these texts, comprising a nobleman, a monk, and an entertainer, were concerned with royal women who played a more traditional role: those who married, produced heirs, and influenced the running of the kingdom. Isabelle fulfilled none of these traditional expectations. Although these chroniclers differed in many respects, all focused on and presented fashioned images of queens who fit this traditional mould, using them to provide examples of desirable and undesirable behaviours. These perceptions are worth examining because France was undergoing significant social and political change at the time of the chroniclers' writings. Members of the French aristocracy

¹ Agnes of Harcourt, *The Writings of Agnes of Harcourt: The Life of Isabelle of France and the Letter on Louis IX and Longchamp*, trans. S. Field (ed.), Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2003, pp. 53, 55.

² For a selection of recent works: A. Alliot, 'Isabelle de France, sœur de saint Louis: la vierge savant. Etude de la *Vie d'Isabelle de France* écrite par Agnès d'Harcourt', *Médiévales: Langue, textes, histoire*, vol. 48, 2005, pp. 55-98; S. Field (ed.), *The Writings of Agnes of Harcourt*; S. Field, 'New Evidence for the Life of Isabelle of France,' *Revue Mabillon*, vol. 13, 2002, pp. 117-131; S. Field, *Isabelle of France: Capetian Sanctity and Franciscan Identity in the Thirteenth Century*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2006; S. Field, 'Imagining Isabelle: the fifteenth-century epitaph of Isabelle of France at Longchamp', *Franciscan Studies*, vol. 65, 2007, pp. 371-403; W. Jordan, 'Isabelle of France and Religious Devotion at the Court of Louis IX', in K. Nolan (ed.), *Capetian Women*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 209-223; R. Lahav, 'Ambitions of Faith: Mystical Instruction from Gilbert of Tournai to Isabelle of France', in C. Mews (ed.), *Interpreting Francis and Clare of Assisi: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, Mulgrave, Broughton Publishing, 2010, pp. 209-220; B. Lynn, 'Clare of Assisi and Isabelle of Longchamp: Further Light on the Early Development of the Franciscan Charism', *Magistra*, vol. 3, 1997, pp. 71-98; T. Worcester, 'Neither Married nor Cloistered: Blessed Isabelle in Catholic Reformation France', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 30, 1999, pp. 457-472.

who had previously made up the king's councillors were slowly being replaced by lesser-ranked men with appropriate expertise, and power was becoming centralised.³ Alongside these changes, the ability of queens to wield formal power in thirteenth-century France was dramatically reduced in comparison to their historical counterparts, though this did not mean they could not exercise either informal power, or formal power when requested.⁴

This thesis will consider how three French chroniclers writing during the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries portrayed queenship. By uncovering the construction of the queen and her role in these texts, conclusions can be drawn about how and why queens were being presented in particular ways. This study reveals that the works commissioned by the Capetians themselves, the *Vie* and the *Roman*, normalised the unfolding political overhaul. The chroniclers idealised those queens who acted within contemporary normative bounds. Thus, they aligned their works with the Capetians' desired image. The *Récits*, however, were written to entertain an urban (and likely noble) audience.⁵ The success of literature written for entertainment is decided by the audience. Thus, an examination of the way queenship was constructed in the entertainer's work indicates popular opinion during this time of political change. Together, these chronicles allow insights into various facets of French society and help to uncover how each chronicler believed a contemporary queen should act.

Historiography

The thirteenth century in France has been examined in great detail by scholars due, in part, to its powerful and high-profile monarchs, such as Philip II (r. 1180-1223) and Louis IX (r. 1226-1270), and the social and political change that was experienced during the period. As a result, a large portion of these academic works focus on the kings and their respective governments.⁶

³ H. Barak, 'The Managerial Revolution of the Thirteenth Century', in W. Jordan and J. Phillips (ed.), *The Capetian Century, 1214-1314*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2017, p. 144.

⁴ Though the amount of power they lost is debateable, the formal power exercised by queens was certainly altered. For an overview of the debate see: Z. Rohr and L. Benz, 'Introduction', in Z. Rohr and L. Benz (ed.), *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation in the Medieval and Early Modern West, 1060-1600*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2016, pp. xx-xxi.

⁵ This is explored in greater detail below. See: n. 93-94.

⁶ For key works, see: Barak, *The Capetian Century*, pp. 143-150; J. Bradbury, *Philip Augustus: King of France: 1180-1223*, London, Longman, 1998, pp. 214-278; E. Brown, 'Laity, Laicisation and Philip the Fair of France', in P. Stafford, J. Nelson and J. Martindale (ed.), *Law, Laity and Solidarities: Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2001, pp. 200-217; J. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986; J. Dunbabin, 'The Political World of France, c. 1200-c.1336', in D. Potter (ed.), *France in the Later Middle Ages, 1200-1500*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 23-46; J. Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, trans. G. Gollard, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2009, pp. 519-572; J. Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980, pp. 36-236.

Anne Hedeman has suggested that a coherent theory of Capetian kingship was established by the thirteenth century, helped, in part, by the writings of vernacular chroniclers.⁷ However, there have been no dedicated studies on how vernacular chroniclers fashioned the image of the queen during this period.

The study of medieval women is not a new historiographical development, but in recent years the representation of women in the Middle Ages has become the subject of an extensive body of literature.⁸ While these texts often focus on English noblewomen, French noblewomen have not been ignored.⁹ Works concerning queens in the Middle Ages have often taken the form of biographies or collections that cover the lives and deeds of selected women. Examples include Eleanor of Aquitaine (d. 1204), Blanche of Castile (d. 1252), and Margaret of Provence (d. 1295), who are further examined in this thesis, and who are all subjects of individual biographies.¹⁰ In the latter part of the twentieth century, scholars started to shift from biographical studies and instead began examining ‘the queen’s experiences and what it meant to be a queen’.¹¹ Historians such as Marion Facer found that after the king and queen’s household was separated, the queen’s role became much more that of a figurehead, stating, ‘[q]ueenship had become by the thirteenth century a career embracing a public office clothed

⁷ See, for example: A. Hedeman, *The Royal Image: Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques de France 1274-1422*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991, p. 1.

⁸ D. Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France 900-1300*, Harlow, Pearson, 2005, pp. 304-305.

⁹ For recent works on English women, see, for example: M. Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth-Century England*, Malden, Blackwell Publishers, 1997; J. Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship 1445-1503*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004; J. Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile: Queen and Society in Thirteenth-Century England*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1995; P. Stafford, ‘The Portrayal of Royal Women in England, Mid-Tenth to Mid-Twelfth Centuries’, in J. Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1993, pp. 143-167; J. Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages*, London, Longman, 1992. For works on French women, see, for example: T. Adams, *The Life and Afterlife of Isabeau of Bavaria*, Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 2010; A. Hornaday, ‘A Capetian Queen as Street Demonstrator: Isabelle of Hainault’, in K. Nolan (ed.), *Capetian Women*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 77-97; E. McCartney, ‘Ceremonies and Privileges of Office: Queenship in Late Medieval France’, in J. Carpenter and S. MacLean (ed.), *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1995, pp. 178-219; Z. Rohr, *Yolande of Aragon (1381-1442) Family and Power: The Reverse of Tapestry*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2016; J. Verdon, *Isabeau de Bavière, la mal-aimée*, Paris, Tallandier, 1981; A. Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: by the Wrath of God, Queen of England*, London, Pimlico, 2000.

¹⁰ For biographies on Blanche of Castile: E. Berger, *Histoire de Blanche de Castille, reine de France*, Paris, Thorin et fils, 1895; R. Pernoud, *Blanche of Castile*, trans. H. Noel, London, Collins, 1975; G. Sivéry, *Blanche de Castille*, Paris, Fayard, 1990; for Eleanor of Aquitaine: A. Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1950; J. Markale, *Aliénor d’Aquitaine: La vie, la légende, l’influence d’Aliénor, comtesse de Poitou, duchesse d’Aquitaine, reine de France, puis d’Angleterre, dame des troubadours et des bardes Bretons*, Paris, Payot, 1979; M. Meade, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Biography*, New York, Hawthorn Books, 1977; D. Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993; B. Wheeler and J. Parsons (ed.), *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2002; for Margaret of Provence: C. Gil, *Marguerite de Provence: épouse de Saint-Louis*, Paris, Pygmalion, 2006; G. Sivéry, *Marguerite de Provence: une reine au temps des cathedrales*, Paris, Fayard, 1987.

¹¹ Rohr and Benz, *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation*, p. xix.

in honor and dignity, but shorn of all functions except the decorative and symbolic; privately the office was limited only by the role the queen chose and was able to play as the wife of the king.¹² However, recent studies have found that a queen was still able to exercise power through various other means.¹³ Many scholars in the last two decades have compared and contrasted queens' experiences, allowing us to understand their role more clearly.¹⁴ This thesis will expand on and contribute to knowledge of the queen's expected role and position during the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries.

Vernacular chronicles have been chosen to examine how queenship was portrayed and viewed in late-medieval France. Many source materials, such as hagiography, seal-dies, tombs, and even inquisition records, have been used to uncover the lives of women in this period. However, resources available for examining the lives of queens are limited. While hagiography has been effectively used to uncover the lives of royal women who were regarded as saints,¹⁵ it cannot be used to reveal perceptions of French queens during this period, as none were widely-regarded as saints. On the other hand, visual material such as illuminations, statues, and seal-dies can be used to shed some light on perceptions of medieval queenship.¹⁶ For example, Christine Raynaud has studied the portrayal of queens in illuminations in the *Grandes Chroniques* and found that the images reflected the new role of the queen, that of motherhood, and discouraged her intervention in politics.¹⁷ However, these resources do not allow for a broad study of societal perceptions of queenship. French vernacular chronicles have been chosen as a source base because they contain native views on queenship. Each chronicler comes from a different section of society, and each chronicle covers a section of French history with

¹² M. Facinger, 'A study of medieval queenship: Capetian France 987-1237', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, vol. 5, 1968, p. 40.

¹³ Rohr and Benz, *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation*, pp. xxi-xxii. See: L. Huneycutt, 'Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen: The Esther Topos', in J. Carpenter and S. MacLean (ed.), *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1995, pp. 126-146; J. Parsons, 'The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England', in J. Carpenter and S. MacLean (ed.), *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1995, pp. 147-177; M. Shadis, 'Blanche of Castile and Facinger's "Medieval Queenship": Reassessing the Argument', in K. Nolan (ed.), *Medieval Queenship*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 137-161; T. Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 129, 153-154.

¹⁴ For key collections of queenship studies: Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*; Parsons, *Medieval Queenship*; Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*.

¹⁵ See, for example: Field, *Isabelle of France*; R. Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?: Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 72-76.

¹⁶ For a selection of works addressing tombs and seal-dies and their representations of French queenship: K. Nolan, *Queens in Stone and Silver: The Creation of a Visual Imagery of Queenship in Capetian France*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; K. Nolan, 'The Tomb of Adelaide of Maurienne and the Visual Imagery of Capetian Queenship', in K. Nolan (ed.), *Capetian Women*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, pp. 45-76.

¹⁷ C. Raynaud, 'La Reine dans les *Grandes Chroniques de France*', in E. Kooper (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle: Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 1, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1999, pp. 226-239.

focus placed on the royal family. Together, the chronicles are an effective tool for uncovering views on the appropriate way for a queen to act.

Methodology

Chronicles cannot always be relied upon as factual sources, but they can be used to shine a light on medieval beliefs and expectations. Though chroniclers almost certainly believed (they certainly proclaimed) that they were recording truth,¹⁸ as Hans-Werner Goetz notes ‘without any doubt, medieval historiography was unfamiliar with modern criticism of sources which was not developed until the age of Historicism in the nineteenth century’.¹⁹ Chroniclers often relied on the authority of previous chronicles when writing their texts, favouring authority over originality.²⁰ They also adapted situations to fit known tropes. For example, Chris Given-Wilson notes that chroniclers’ accounts of battles often followed established formulas such as showing the victorious side as ‘maintaining strict discipline on their way to battle, arriving in good order under unified and purposeful command, devoutly committing their cause to the arbitration of God, and, at the last moment, having their spirits uplifted by a rousing and forceful oration on the part of their leader.’²¹ In other words, ‘[a] battle was not simply an event, it was also an exemplar, providing models to imitate or avoid, lessons to be contemplated’.²² Chronicles often included myth, and were generally untrustworthy sources of fact. Twentieth-century scholars such as Vivian Hunter Galbraith and Leopold von Ranke favoured instead more factually accurate sources.²³ However, in the latter half of the twentieth century, the study of chronicles increased as historians began to use them to uncover both societal and political thought. Bernard Guenée, for example, notes that the process of

¹⁸ G. Fedorenko, ‘The Language of Authority? The Source Texts for the Dual Chronicles of the ‘Anonymous of Béthune’ (fl. c. 1200) and the Evolution of Old French Prose Historiography’, in J. Dresvina and N. Sparks (ed.), *Authority and Gender in Medieval and Renaissance Chronicles*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, p. 227; G. Spiegel, ‘The Textualization of the Past in Thirteenth Century French Historical Writing’, in E. Morrison and A. Hedeman (ed), *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting*, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2010, p. 44.

¹⁹ H. Goetz, ‘The “Methodology” of Medieval Chroniclers’, in J. Bak and I Jurković (ed.), *Chronicon: Medieval Narrative Sources: A Chronological Guide with Introductory Essays*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2013, p. 25.

²⁰ Goetz, *Chronicon*, p. 30

²¹ C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England*, London, Hambledon, p. 2.

²² Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. 2.

²³ J. Burrow, *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century*, London, Allen Lane, 2007, pp. 463-464.

compilation could reveal useful information such as the perspectives of the compiler.²⁴ This thesis adds to growing area of research which uses chronicles to uncover societal thought.²⁵

When working with chronicle sources, one must be mindful of their limitations. One example is the ‘text-context conundrum’.²⁶ Lee Patterson, in his examination of this problem, suggests some texts can be considered to be ‘at once constituted by and constituting history’.²⁷ Chronicles are one of few major records of social context.²⁸ Therefore, using them to understand societal thought ‘runs the danger of circularity’.²⁹ In order to combat this conundrum, secondary sources that do not draw solely from chronicle sources are examined in order to build context around the chronicles and what they report. One must be also mindful of the fact that it can only be said that a chronicler was making a deliberate choice to include or exclude material when their sources are identified. This is not always possible as material may be unidentifiable. When source material is unable to be identified, an author’s intentions can remain obscured – did he intend to alter the facts? Did he believe that was how the event occurred? Did he misremember the past? These caveats need to be taken into account when using chronicles to uncover societal perceptions of queenship.

This thesis employs vernacular chronicles because they provide a window into contemporary ideas and motivations. This allows for greater comprehension of ideas surrounding French medieval queenship. Scholars have tended to view Old French prose historiography as ‘a late, and not altogether welcome, addition to a centuries-old and already sophisticated tradition of Latin historical writing’.³⁰ Recent studies, however, have shown the value of chronicles as sources for understanding medieval political ideas. Examinations of a fifteenth-century genealogical chronicle roll known as the ‘Canterbury Roll’, for example, have shown how its text was constructed to purposely portray political ideas about deposition and the role of women in the English monarchy around the time of the Wars of the Roses.³¹

²⁴ B. Guenée, ‘L’historien et la compilation au XIIIe siècle’, *Journal des Savants*, 1985, p. 126, cited in: M. Shirota, ‘Unrolling History: Fifteenth-Century Political Culture and Perceptions on the Canterbury Roll’, unpublished MA Thesis, University of Canterbury, 2015, pp. 17-18.

²⁵ See, for example: T. Adams, ‘Between History and Fiction: Revising the *Affaire de la Tour de Nesle*’, *Viator*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2012, pp. 165-192; T. Parker, ‘A Woman’s Role: How Scribes Depicted Women on the Fifteenth-Century Canterbury Roll’, *Comitatus*, vol. 48, 2017, pp. 95-115.

²⁶ Gabrielle Spiegel coined this term. See: G. Spiegel, ‘History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages’, *Speculum*, vol. 65, no. 1, 1990, p. 70.

²⁷ L. Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1987, p. 58.

²⁸ Adams, *Viator*, p. 165.

²⁹ Adams, p. 165.

³⁰ As characterised by Spiegel in: Spiegel, *Imagining the Past in France*, p. 44.

³¹ See: Parker, *Comitatus*, pp. 95-115; M. Shirota, ‘Royal Depositions and the “Canterbury Roll”’, *Parergon*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2015, pp. 39-61; Shirota, ‘Unrolling History’, pp. 75-97.

Chronicles have also been used to shine a light on French political thought.³² While Latin texts are traditionally viewed as more reliable sources, there has been a recent surge in studies of vernacular chronicles.³³ Chronicles written in the vernacular can provide insights into the ideologies of various authors from differing levels of society,³⁴ something their Latin counterparts cannot offer. Derek Whaley has recently examined the vernacular tradition of Saint-Denis and found that the chroniclers consciously altered the tales intended as *exempla* as the years passed, which reflected the changing political nature of France during the period studied.³⁵ Thus, he demonstrates the value of vernacular texts in understanding medieval societal thought.

One of the more prominent scholars in the field of vernacular chronicles is Gabrielle Spiegel who writes on the connection between vernacular literature and the changes occurring in thirteenth-century France.³⁶ Spiegel posits that the popularity of vernacular works in medieval France was a consequence of the political changes occurring at the time.³⁷ She suggests that vernacular historiography ‘addressed sentiments of loss and decline that plagued the French aristocracy in the opening decades of the thirteenth century’.³⁸ She proposes that the *Grandes Chroniques* was an attempt by ‘royalist historians to present to an aristocratic audience in the language of their class a new image of Capetian government in order to reconcile those most affected by royal centralization to the “new order of things,” to proclaim not only the power of monarchy but its inhering righteousness as well.’³⁹ She believes the Capetians recognised that vernacular literature was being used to convey ideas and used it to reinforce their claim to the throne and alleviate aristocratic concerns.⁴⁰ While her argument is influential and has received praise,⁴¹ her ideas have also been challenged. Jeanette Beer, for

³² See, for example: C. Jones, *Eclipse of Empire?: Perceptions of the Western Empire and its Rulers in Late-Medieval France*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2007; D. Whaley, ‘The Wilted Lily: Representations of the Greater Capetian Dynasty within the Vernacular Tradition of Saint-Denis, 1274-1464’, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Canterbury, 2018.

³³ See, for example: Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*; Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*; Whaley, ‘The Wilted Lily’.

³⁴ K. Pratt, ‘The Image of the Queen in Old French Literature’, in A. Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe: Proceedings of a conference held at King’s College London April 1995*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 1997, p. 235.

³⁵ Whaley, ‘The Wilted Lily’, pp. 225-227.

³⁶ G. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. 138-162; G. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993; G. Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition of Saint-Denis: A Survey*, Brookline, Classical Folia Editions, 1978.

³⁷ Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, p. 12.

³⁸ Spiegel, p. 3.

³⁹ Spiegel, p. 312.

⁴⁰ Spiegel, p. 318.

⁴¹ See, for example: Hedeman, *The Royal Image*, p. 3; C. Jones, ‘Geoffroi of Courlon and Political Perceptions in Late Medieval France’, *Viator*, vol. 47, no. 1, 2016, p. 187; N. Lacy, ‘Romancing the Past: the Rise of Vernacular

example, suggests Spiegel omits crucial works from her evaluations, meaning the conclusions she draws may not be wholly accurate.⁴² By examining the vernacular chronicles, both those that were commissioned by the Capetians and those that were not, Spiegel's ideas are tested as this thesis explores how the chroniclers differed when discussing the desired role of the queen, and whether each of their perceptions supported the royal family.

The chronicles surveyed in this thesis have received varying levels of attention. Of the three chronicles, the *Grandes Chroniques* has been the subject of the most scholarship.⁴³ It is a compilation of works, written by many authors, which together tell a history of the French kings and kingdom up until Philip VI.⁴⁴ It was a product of the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Denis, the 'official custodian and interpreter [*sic*] of royal history' between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries.⁴⁵ Being a popular and well-known work, the construction of the chronicle, the people it included, its illuminations, as well as the background leading to its commission have all been examined.⁴⁶ The portrayal of women in the text itself has not yet been examined extensively. This thesis conducts new research by examining the section of mythical and early history included in the *Grandes Chroniques*. This section forms part of what is known as the *Roman des rois* which was written by a monk named Primat and completed in 1274.⁴⁷ It will be studied in order to uncover what the royal family and the abbey wished to project about the office of queenship during the formation of the French kingdom. The examined material traces the history of the Franks from Troy through to the reign of Charlemagne.

Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France' [book review], *The French Review*, vol. 69, no. 1, 1995, pp. 130-131.

⁴² J. Beer, 'Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France' [book review], *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 4, 1997, p. 1143. William Chester Jordan suggests that the lack of sources which she interprets as meaningful might in fact be lack of survival of sources. W. Jordan, 'Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France' [book review], *Speculum*, vol. 69, no. 4, 1994, p. 1277.

⁴³ Jules Viard produced the definitive modern edition of the *Grandes Chroniques* between 1920-53. See: J. Viard (ed.), *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, 10 vols, Paris, Société de l'histoire de France, 1920-53. Part of his text has been translated into English by Robert Levine in the form of two books: Primat, *A Thirteenth-Century Life of Charlemagne*, trans. R. Levine, New York, Garland Publishers, 1991; Primat, *France Before Charlemagne: A Translation from Les Grandes Chroniques*, trans. R. Levine, Lewiston, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990. These volumes constitute the first four books of Primat's *Grandes Chroniques*. Key works on the *Grandes Chroniques* include: B. Guenée, 'Les *Grandes Chroniques de France: Le roman aux roys (1274-1518)*', in P. Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire: II: La Nation*, vol. 1, Paris, Gallimard, 1986, pp. 189-214; Hedeman, *The Royal Image*; Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition*, pp. 72-92.

⁴⁴ D. O'Sullivan, 'Grandes Chroniques de France', in G. Dunphy (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 1, Leiden, Brill, 2010, p. 728.

⁴⁵ Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition*, p. 7.

⁴⁶ See, for example: Hedeman, *The Royal Image*; E. Inglis, 'Image and Illustration in Jean Fouquet's *Grandes Chroniques de France*', *French Historical Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2003, pp. 185-224; Raynaud, *The Medieval Chronicle*, pp. 226-239; Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition*, pp. 72-92; M. Suzuki, 'French National Identity through Medieval Chronicles', in A. Kawahara (ed.), *Medieval Identities: Political, Social and Religious Aspects*, Tokyo, Keio University, 2013, pp. 75-86.

⁴⁷ For the construction of the *Roman des rois*: Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition*, p. 78.

The second chronicle to be examined, the *Vie de Saint Louis*, has similarly been the subject of much research. It is an account of the life of Louis IX written by his friend, John of Joinville, who was the seneschal of Champagne, and was completed sometime between 1305 and 1309.⁴⁸ The chronicle focuses primarily on Louis' actions during the Seventh Crusade and his saint-like attributes. Many scholars have researched the *Vie* in terms of what it reveals about the king and his life.⁴⁹ In addition, it has been a valuable source of information on crusading and medieval life.⁵⁰ While Joinville's portrayal of queenship has not been extensively studied, Afrodesia McCannon has examined his characterisation of Louis' mother, Blanche, and his wife, Margaret, and argues that their inclusion can be used to shine a light on the relationship between Louis and Joinville.⁵¹ The examination of the *Vie* in this thesis also centres on Blanche and Margaret, but specifically focuses on what Joinville's portrayal of them reveals about political and social changes in thirteenth-century France.

The *Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims* have received the least amount of scholarly interest.⁵² The *Récits* were composed in the early 1260s and are a fantastical version of French history up until the thirteenth century.⁵³ Any contemporary title given to the text is not known today, thus the *Récits* take their name from the author, an anonymous court entertainer known

⁴⁸ Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*, p. 60. The idiosyncrasies in the writing style of the *Vie de Saint-Louis* have led to an ongoing historical debate over its date of composition. Caroline Smith, who has engaged most with this debate, follows a two-stage composition theory, which suggests part of the *Vie* was written immediately following Louis' death, and was later revised and expanded when it was commissioned by the Capetians in the early fourteenth century. However, some historians have suggested that the work was entirely written in the early fourteenth century. As the exact dating of the *Vie* does not impact on the argument in this thesis, this is not further examined here, however, this thesis assumes that it was compiled entirely in the early-fourteenth century, primarily due to the fact that Joinville himself states that he wrote the work following its commission. For more on the dating: John of Joinville, 'The Life of Saint Louis', in C. Smith (trans.), *Joinville and Villehardouin: Chronicles of the Crusades*, London, Penguin Books, 2008, p. 141, §2; Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*, p. 60, n. 10; C. Smith, 'Introduction', in C. Smith (trans.), *Joinville and Villehardouin: Chronicles of the Crusades*, London, Penguin, 2008, pp. xxxv-xxxvi; C. Smith, *Crusading in the Age of Joinville*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006, pp. 48-58.

⁴⁹ Joinville's work is used, for example, throughout the seminal work: Le Goff, *Saint Louis*.

⁵⁰ For crusading: Smith, *Crusading in the Age of Joinville*; C. Smith, 'Martyrdom and Crusading in the Thirteenth Century: Remembering the Dead of Louis IX's Crusades', *Al-masāq: Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2003, pp. 189-196; for everyday life: S. Khanmohamadi, 'Casting a "Sideways Glance" at the Crusades: the Voice of the Other in Joinville's *Vie de Saint Louis*', *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2010, pp. 117-199.

⁵¹ A. McCannon, 'Two Capetian Queens as the Foreground for an Aristocrat's Anxiety in the *Vie de Saint Louis*', in K. Nolan (ed.), *Capetian Women*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 163-176; for the conclusion: McCannon, *Capetian Women*, p. 175.

⁵² For selected works discussing the *Récits*: Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*, pp. 45-48; C. Jones, 'Perspectives from the Periphery: French Kings and their Chroniclers', *The Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 10, 2016, pp. 69-93; Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, pp. 293-302; R. Levine, 'Deadly diatribe in the *Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims*', *Res Publica Litterarum*, vol. 14, 1991, pp. 115-126; D. Tappan, 'The Manuscripts of the *Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims*', *Symposium: Quarterly Journal in Modern Foreign Literature*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1971, pp. 70-78.

⁵³ For the dating of the *Récits*: R. Levine, 'Introduction', in R. Levine (trans.), *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle (Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims): A Translation and Introduction*, New York, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, p. 1.

as the Minstrel of Reims.⁵⁴ While individual queens in this work have been discussed by scholars,⁵⁵ its representation of the office of queenship has not yet been examined.

By basing this research on three chronicles that employ different forms of history writing, broader conclusions can be reached regarding each chronicler's portrayal of queenship. Primat's *Roman des rois* covered the mythical history of the Frankish kingdom. Primat worked as a 'compiler-translator' of others' material,⁵⁶ drawing information from Latin sources such as Aimon of Fleury's *De gestis regum Francorum*, Einhard's *Vita Karoli Magni*, and the Pseudo-Turpin chronicle, alongside others from the abbey of Saint-Denis' collection. The *Roman* was completed approximately ten years after the Minstrel's chronicle, offering a point of comparison. Compilation was not an act of mindless copying from various other chronicles; rather, it required personal thought and decision making.⁵⁷ Indeed, though Primat himself noted in his prologue that he 'added nothing of his own [to the text]',⁵⁸ he did alter stories in order to match his aims. Robert Levine notes that though Primat was 'fastidiously unoriginal' in his work,⁵⁹ he did 'add and subtract material when his agenda made such demands'.⁶⁰ For example, Primat, while translating a list of French rulers from Rigord's Latin chronicle for his *Roman des rois*, removed Rigord's emphasis that the kings were all emperors by adding that 'they were firstly kings of France', since to him, this fact was the most important.⁶¹

The early history of the kingdom, as constructed by Primat, is worth examining as the Capetians traced their origins back to this period.⁶² Contemporary society believed that blood transmitted the essence of a family. Royal blood, for example, 'carried with it associations

⁵⁴ For the loss of title: Levine, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, p. 2; the modern title was assigned in the 1876 edition of the text: L. Grant, 'Récit d'un ménestrel de Reims', in G. Dunphy (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 2, Leiden, Brill, 2010, p. 1265.

⁵⁵ See, for example, an excerpt about Blanche of Castile in the *Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims* in: Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 294.

⁵⁶ Isabelle Guyot-Bachy coined the term 'traduction-adaptation': I. Guyot-Bachy, 'La diffusion du *Roman des roys* avant la Guerre de Cent Ans: le manuscrit de Pierre Honoré, serviteur de Charles de Valois', in E. Kooper (ed.), *The Medieval Chronicle II: Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle: Driebergen/Utrecht 16-21 July 1999*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2002, p. 90.

⁵⁷ J. Lake, 'Current Approaches to Medieval Historiography', *History Compass*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2015, p. 96.

⁵⁸ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, p. 12.

⁵⁹ R. Levine, 'Introduction', in R. Levine (trans.), *A Thirteenth-Century Life of Charlemagne*, trans. R. Levine, New York, Garland Publishers, 1991, p. vii

⁶⁰ Levine, *A Thirteenth-Century Life of Charlemagne*, p. ix.

⁶¹ Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*, pp. 158-159. For more on Rigord and his chronicles: R. Rech, 'Rigord', in G. Dunphy (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 2, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 1278-1279.

⁶² For the Capetian claim: C. Wood, 'Queens, Queens, and Kingship: An Inquiry into Theories of Royal Legitimacy in Late Medieval England and France', in W. Jordan, B. McNab and T. Ruiz (ed.), *Order and Innovation in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Joseph R. Strayer*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 395.

strongly linking the kingship to religious mission and rites'.⁶³ Capetian kings actively tried to promote the idea that there were links between the three dynasties of French kings. Philip IV (r. 1285-1314), for example:

ordered a rearrangement of the [royal] tombs of the crossing of Saint-Denis. These alterations resulted in a mingling of the monuments of the three royal lines and thus indicated that there was no essential difference or break among them. The tombs of Philip the Fair's mother and father were installed in the formerly Merovingian and Carolingian line.⁶⁴

This idea was not just seen through the rearrangement of royal tombs, but also through an alteration to an official history of the French royal family which removed references to the Capetian takeover and thus promoted continuity.⁶⁵ Invented links between the Capetians and their predecessors were also featured heavily in hagiographical works which placed importance on noble bloodlines.⁶⁶ Emphasising the commonalities and relationships between the royal families helped to ensure legitimacy and stability. By examining how Primat recorded the behaviour of their 'ancestors' in a chronicle intended for the royal family, it is possible to ascertain how the Capetians wanted their history to be portrayed.

The Minstrel's *Récits* differ from the other chronicles. As Chris Jones notes, the Minstrel 'treated history as a malleable resource that could be plundered for its entertainment value'.⁶⁷ Indeed, the *Récits* are largely of the Minstrel's own devising, comprising gossip, rumours, and many factual errors, though he may also have drawn some of the information on which he based his accounts from the *Chanson d'Antioche* and the works of the Anonymous of Béthune.⁶⁸ Their English translator, Levine, found the work difficult to categorise as the Minstrel had no interest in dates or chronology and the work contains largely fictional material.⁶⁹ Jacques Le Goff notes that the work could be classified as a universal history,⁷⁰ though it is argued here that it should not be viewed as such because it focuses almost entirely

⁶³ Wood, *Order and Innovation*, p. 395.

⁶⁴ E. Brown, 'Burying and Unburying the Kings of France', in R. Trexler (ed.), *Persons in Groups: Social Behaviour as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, Binghamton, State University of New York at Binghamton Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1985, p. 247

⁶⁵ Brown, *Persons in Groups*, p. 247.

⁶⁶ J. Dunbabin, *France in the Making, 843-1180*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 135.

⁶⁷ Jones, *The Medieval Chronicle*, p. 83.

⁶⁸ Grant, *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, p. 1265.

⁶⁹ Levine, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, p. 1. Others too, have this problem. Matthew Bennett, for example, refers to the minstrel as a poet: M. Bennett, 'Virile Latins, Effeminate Greeks and Strong Women: Gender Definitions on Crusade?', in S. Edgington and S. Lambert (ed.), *Gendering the Crusades*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 23.

⁷⁰ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 293.

on French history and does not refer to the beginning of the world, nor does it include any reference to the accepted chronology following the Creation.⁷¹ The text does, however, follow a largely chronological structure and contains (a variation of) historical events, making ‘chronicle’ a suitable classification.⁷² While at the outset such a fictional body of work may not appear to be a font of historical knowledge, the inclusion and presentation of its stories remain informative.

Though noted as being similar in some ways to romance works or *chansons de gestes*,⁷³ the degree of influence that romance literature had on the Minstrel’s work has not yet been studied. Though few studies compare and contrast romance literature with chronicles,⁷⁴ they are worthwhile additions to the field. For example, Laura Barefield uncovered new ideas about gender ideology and its construction by examining both medieval English romance literature and chronicles.⁷⁵ The links are, however, worth examining, because by comparing and contrasting romance literature and tropes to the Minstrel’s work, one is able to more clearly understand his motivations and the lessons he wished to impart.

The *Vie de Saint Louis* is difficult to categorise because it includes elements of, but is not limited to, mirrors-for-princes literature, crusade narrative, biography, memoir, and hagiography.⁷⁶ Joinville, the author, accompanied the king on the Seventh Crusade and became his close friend. As a result, he was able to record the king’s speeches and actions first-hand.⁷⁷ Rather than acting as a narrator, Joinville placed himself in his work, making his personal bias easier to uncover. While crusading chronicles often include reference to queens in terms of marriage or engaging in acts of rulership,⁷⁸ Joinville discussed the royal family more candidly and also did not fail to criticise them. The information Joinville included about Margaret and Blanche thus provides an insight into his beliefs about what constitutes a good queen.

Each of the chroniclers’ intended audiences comprised of nobility and, therefore, comparisons and contrasts between the messages contained in the texts are able to be explored.

⁷¹ For a summary of universal history: M. Allen, ‘Universal History 300-1000: Origins and Western Developments’, in D. Deliyannis (ed.), *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, pp. 17-42.

⁷² For a definition of ‘chronicle’: Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. xix.

⁷³ Levine, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel’s Chronicle*, p. 2.

⁷⁴ For one example, see: L. Barefield, *Gender and History in Medieval English Romance and Chronicle*, New York, Peter Lang, 2003.

⁷⁵ Barefield, *Gender and History*, p. 9.

⁷⁶ D. Delogu, *Theorizing the Ideal Sovereign: The Rise of the French Vernacular Royal Biography*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2008, p. 23.

⁷⁷ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 377.

⁷⁸ See, for example: Oliver of Paderborn, ‘Oliver of Paderborn, *The Capture of Damiatta*, ca. 1217-1222’, in J. Bird, E. Peters, and J. Powell (ed.), *Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, p. 213.

As Justin Lake notes, ‘history tended to be written in response to specific circumstances and intended for specific audiences’.⁷⁹ Target audiences influenced the framing of a chronicler’s work, and the chronicles selected for this thesis are closely associated with noble society. As stated by Matthew Kempshall, chroniclers were informed by ‘the nature of the subject-matter under discussion; by what generally happens according to nature; and by *what is in accordance with the opinions or beliefs of the audience*’.⁸⁰ Primat’s work was intended for the royal family and was presented to Philip III (r. 1270-1285).⁸¹ He stated in his prologue that ‘this is an example for leading the good life, especially for kings and princes who have lands to govern ... Here everyone can find good and evil, beauty and ugliness, wisdom and folly, and may profit from all the historical examples’.⁸² In a tradition that stemmed from Sallust’s *Jugurthine War* and *Catiline*,⁸³ *exempla* were seen to be ‘an effective means of offering political education and advice’.⁸⁴ This genre was defined by the fact that the final product was essentially intended to ‘provide a template for the ideal sovereign’.⁸⁵ Using the mythical and early history section of the *Grandes Chroniques* as the basis for this thesis allows for a close examination of how Primat wished to portray the women who were critical to the foundation of the French kingdom. Examining the compilation of his work also reveals how history was arranged in order to help prove the legitimacy of the Capetian dynasty.

The *Vie de Saint Louis* was written specifically for a royal audience and with didactic intent.⁸⁶ It was commissioned by Joan of Navarre, the queen of Philip IV of France, Louis IX’s grandson,⁸⁷ and was intended to be an account of the ‘holy words and the good deeds’ of the king. It covers ‘how [Louis] conducted himself throughout his life in accordance with God and the Church and to the benefit of his kingdom ... [it then] speaks of his distinguished knightly deeds and impressive feats of arms’.⁸⁸ Joinville dedicated it to the future Louis X of France (r. 1314-1316).⁸⁹ He wrote from the perspective of a companion to the king, rather than as an objective outsider; his proximity to the royal household provides a different angle from that of the monk of Saint-Denis.

⁷⁹ Lake, *History Compass*, p. 89.

⁸⁰ M. Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History, 400-1500*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2011, p. 350. Emphasis mine.

⁸¹ O’Sullivan, *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, p. 728.

⁸² Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, p. 11.

⁸³ Kempshall, *Rhetoric and the Writing of History*, pp. 38-46.

⁸⁴ Kempshall, p. 249.

⁸⁵ Delogu, *Theorizing the Ideal Sovereign*, p. 32.

⁸⁶ Smith, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. xxxiv.

⁸⁷ Smith, p. xxxiii.

⁸⁸ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 141, §2.

⁸⁹ Smith, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. xxxiv.

The value of using the *Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims* lies not in its (lack of) historical accuracy but in the morals and values that were intended to be drawn from its accounts. It can be assumed that the Minstrel's stories 'resonated to at least some extent with the intended audience'.⁹⁰ As Jones notes, '[t]he popularity and longevity of the [M]instrel's work suggests that he knew both his craft and his audience well: the text was revised at least once in the 1290s, that is over two decades after it was written, and survives in two distinct recensions represented by ten manuscripts'.⁹¹ Despite its entertaining premise, the Minstrel still intended to instruct his readers on appropriate behaviours through the inclusion of his stories, much like a 'mirror-for-princes'.⁹² Quite who the *Récits* were intended for is disputed. Le Goff suggests that they were intended to be entertainment for a predominantly noble audience.⁹³ The idea that the audience was urban has also been suggested.⁹⁴ However, the Minstrel focuses many of his stories on issues the nobles were facing, such as disputes over land claims and conflicts with bishops. Indeed, there is evidence he shaped his text to meet his audience's desires since, as quoted above, there are two existing versions of the text – one version omits a power struggle in Flanders.⁹⁵ The fact that the *Récits* were intended for a non-royal audience differentiates it from the other two chronicles. By examining a chronicle shaped to meet the nobles' desires, one can begin to form a picture of how the nobles themselves felt about administrative change. This is a topic worth examining because the nobles were directly affected by the changes that were implemented by the Capetians, which saw a reduction in their political power. In addition, a growing commercial sector meant that aristocrats lost power as their wealth was partly based on traditional forms of land possession.⁹⁶ This situation is aptly summed up by Spiegel, who states that '[b]y the beginning of the thirteenth century, the revival of a monied economy and the growth of royal centralization had collaborated to undermine the sources of aristocratic strength and to delimit spheres of noble activity'.⁹⁷ It is worth examining these texts to see if

⁹⁰ Jones, *The Medieval Chronicle*, p. 83.

⁹¹ Jones, p. 83.

⁹² Jacques Le Goff suggests they were not *exempla* but states that they were at least partly intended to instruct: Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, pp. 293-294.

⁹³ Le Goff, p. 293. This theory can also be found in: B. Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval*, Paris, Aubier Montaigne, 1980, p. 321; Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*, p. 49.

⁹⁴ Levine, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, p. 3; Jones, p. 49.

⁹⁵ Grant, *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, p. 1265. This thesis employs the only modern English version available, a translation by Levine in 1990: Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle (Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims): A Translation and Introduction*, trans. R. Levine, New York, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990. For the original French version of the text: Minstrel of Reims, *Récits d'un Ménestrel de Reims au treizième siècle*, trans. N. De Wailly (ed.), Paris, Librairie Renouard, 1876.

⁹⁶ Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, p. 11.

⁹⁷ Spiegel, p. 11.

the works were intended to support the nobility or to help normalise changes on behalf of the Capetians.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, the king had expanded his borders and consolidated his power and authority across France. Prior to the thirteenth century, the king held little power outside the Île-de-France. Almost no revenue was taken from his lands outside this area, nor did the king have much say in their operation; revenue and decision-making were largely up to the feudal lord in charge of each region.⁹⁸ Joseph Strayer suggests that the biggest change occurred during the reign of Philip IV, stating that the king ‘left behind him a France that was better administered, more unified, and more conscious of its identity than it had been before’.⁹⁹ He does, however, identify the beginnings of these changes in the thirteenth century, prior to Philip’s reign,¹⁰⁰ and it is this latter line of argument that other historians have tended to support, suggesting that the vital changes occurred before Philip became king. Jean Dunbabin, for example, suggests that by the time of Philip’s reign, a French king’s power was fairly well consolidated, noting, for example, that by this time, the king was free from the ‘bonds of homage’ tying him to various bishops.¹⁰¹ In identifying the expected role of the queen during this period, the power or expected power of the king can be identified, which can help to pinpoint the moment of change. In addition, studying this period of change is worthwhile as, writing amid these changes, the chroniclers revealed their views on how queens should act during this period.

As noted by Janet Nelson, ‘[q]ueenship has often been taken for granted as if it were a natural part of the medieval landscape. In fact, like any other human product, material or social, *it was fashioned* by men and women in particular times and places’.¹⁰² Because chronicles were occasionally fabricated and often altered, an examination of the way queens were presented allows an insight into the mindset of and beliefs held by chroniclers and their audiences. Although their chronicles are usually declared as containing ‘truth’,¹⁰³ chroniclers modified facts and made conscious decisions about the inclusion and exclusion of information which shaped the way individuals were presented in their work. Thus, women in chronicles were

⁹⁸ J. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970, p. 49.

⁹⁹ Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair*, p. 35.

¹⁰⁰ Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins*, pp. 50-52.

¹⁰¹ Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, p. 257. Gabrielle Spiegel, Suzanne Wemple, and Jo Ann McNamara also suggest the idea that changes started occurring before Philip IV’s reign. See: Spiegel, *Romancing the Past*, pp. 16-17; J. McNamara and S. Wemple, ‘The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe: 500-1100’, *Feminist Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3/4, 1973, p. 137.

¹⁰² J. Nelson, ‘Medieval Queenship’, in L. Mitchel (ed.), *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, New York, Garland Publishing, 1999, p. 179. Emphasis mine.

¹⁰³ Spiegel, *Imagining the Past in France*, p. 44.

generally moulded to fit an ideological agenda. The chroniclers' accounts of queens reveal their own thoughts, influences, and desires with regard to the governance of the kingdom. The chroniclers' portrayals of the people included in their texts were influenced by their intended audience and the style of history they wished to present. Examining the image of the queens presented in the chronicles reveals how the chroniclers and their audience believed a queen should behave.

Overall, through the use of vernacular chronicles to study the portrayal of queenship in the chronicles, this thesis will reveal contemporary French societal views on the place of women and the office of the queen throughout the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries, and why queens were being described in this manner.

Approaching the Problem

This thesis is divided into four sections, each focusing on an aspect of queenship, specifically the queen's relationship with her family, her piety, her sexual agency, and the actual power she wielded. Together, these chapters reveal details of the office of queenship and how the chroniclers tailored their stories to meet their audience's desires, which in turn reveals the audience's thoughts and attitudes at the time.

The portrayal of a queen's relationship with her family reveals each chronicler's influences and agenda. In examining how they discussed family life, one can see how romance literature, expectations, and audience affected each chronicler's examples. By engaging with common tropes and making the characters accessible through discussions of affection and grief, the chroniclers made their lessons more available to their audience. In so doing, each chronicler reveals what was perceived as acceptable household emotions for the royal family. These emotions generally included qualities such as loyalty and support, ones which would ensure the safe future of the royal family.

By uncovering the chroniclers' portrayals of queenship and piety, it becomes clear that both Primat and Joinville were intending their work to be *exempla* for royal readers, highlighting the religious values and actions of queens and describing the negative consequences that could arise from turning against religious teachings. The examples of queens as sinners are concluded with their repenting of wrongdoing. In so doing, lessons can still be drawn, and the desired image of the holy royal family is maintained. Finally, they discussed how queens were able to influence the king, acting as an intercessor for religion and the Church.

Overall, these examples helped to bolster the claim that the Capetians were a pious royal family, thus supporting and reinforcing the legitimacy of their rule.

Through the examination of Primat and the Minstrel's approach towards queenship and sexual agency, it is shown that each chronicler was influenced by their audience's desires. This chapter examines accounts of infidelity, autonomy in marriage negotiations, and the linking of sexuality to purity. In each of these cases, Primat ensures that the legitimacy of the Capetian line is not in doubt, though his examples demonstrate that sexual promiscuity and autonomy could bring harm to the kingdom. The Minstrel, rather than focusing on sinful nature, linked his stories to issues which affected his readership, suggesting a link between sexual promiscuity and a crusade's failure, lost lands, and disruption to the kingdom. Ultimately it is shown that both chroniclers demonstrated similar ideas surrounding a queen's autonomous behaviour which indicates it was not only in the royal family's interests to have faithful wives but also in the interests of the nobles. This may be due to the fact that an illegitimate royal family would create further unrest in a period already experiencing immense change.

After examining the social aspects of queenship, the thesis concludes with an examination of how each chronicler approached power. All three acknowledged a queen's ability to influence the king and the ability to take control of the kingdom, although each chronicler ultimately emphasised her inferiority in this role. Both Primat and Joinville knew their work would be read by a Capetian queen and intended their works as *exempla*. In clearly demonstrating the queen's political role as subservient to that of the king's, the works may have also have been intended to familiarise the aristocracy with the queen's new role within the changing power structure. Both chroniclers failed to acknowledge these administrative changes overtly, with no mention made of the role or responsibilities of the new government officials. Rather, the rulings and actions of the king were emphasised, thus reflecting the changing nature of the structure of the royal family within the new administrative system. Intriguingly, though the Minstrel did not intend his work specifically for the royal court, he too projects this image, reinforcing Levine's suggestion that although the Minstrel's work was not royally commissioned, his stories needed to avoid incurring the displeasure of the royal family.¹⁰⁴ This bolsters Spiegel's theory since it suggests that vernacular chronicles in the thirteenth century were being used to reinforce the legitimacy of the Capetian dynasty.

Together, these chapters establish a theory of thirteenth-century queenship by describing the chroniclers' beliefs about how a queen should act, what her role in the new

¹⁰⁴ Levine, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, p. 3.

government system was, and where her priorities should lie. In so doing, they provide an insight into the chroniclers' and the audience's views on life in thirteenth-century France.

Chapter 1: Expectations Regarding Familial Relationships

The strength of familial relationships could affect the stability of a royal family's reign and, thus, they attracted attention from contemporaries. The nature of emotional connections between medieval family members was the subject of numerous historiographical debates throughout the last century. Much of this discussion was prompted by historians' assertions that expressions of affection and love could not be found between husband and wife, and parent and offspring. However, through an examination of evidence overlooked by the promulgators of that earlier theory, recent studies have concluded that medieval familial love can be said to have existed. This chapter diverges from such discussion and focuses instead on what chronicles reveal about the nature of household emotions during a period of administrative change. As discussed in the general introduction, chronicles have been overlooked as sources for legitimate historical research largely due to the fact that they often incorporated myths and fabrications. However, chronicles have since been shown to allow an insight into the motivations and agendas of chroniclers,¹ allowing the reader to make educated assumptions about various issues. An examination of the evidence found in the three texts that form the focus of this study shows us that a queen's relationship with her family should be one comprising loyalty and support. It is revealed that the expected conduct of a queen in her personal relationships was one which would contribute to the maintenance of the power, piety, and stability of the royal family.

Whether medieval mothers experienced love for their children and whether medieval marriages contained love have both been the focus of examination and debate over the past century. The debate over the existence of maternal affection was first prompted by Philippe Ariès' monograph *Centuries of Childhood* in which he famously stated: '[t]he idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children'.² He did not deny that the family existed, but believed that 'it did not penetrate very far into human sensibility'.³ Ariès' convictions influenced many subsequent scholars.⁴ The idea that love did not exist has since been disproved, indeed, it was challenged almost from the time it appeared.⁵ For example,

¹ See, for example, works dedicated to political thought revealed in chronicles: Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*; Shirota, *Parergon*, pp. 39-61; Shirota, 'Unrolling History', pp. 75-97.

² P. Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. R. Baldrick, Jonathan Cape, London, 1962, p. 128.

³ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, p. 411.

⁴ For a selection of works influenced by Ariès ideas: J. Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization, 400-1500*, trans. J. Barrow, Oxford, Blackwell, 1988, pp. 287-288; E. Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family*, New York, Basic Books, 1977, p. 169.

⁵ See, for example: U. Holmes, 'Medieval Children' [book review], *Journal of Social History*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1968, pp. 164-172.

Shulamith Shahar wrote her seminal work *Childhood in the Middle Ages* after developing doubts over Ariès' claims.⁶ Her central thesis suggests that 'a concept of childhood existed in the Central and Late Middle Ages, that scholarly acknowledgement of the existence of several stages of childhood was not merely theoretical, and that parents invested both material and emotional resources in their offspring'.⁷ Nicholas Orme and Lois Huneycutt are amongst the other scholars who have provided evidence to support the fact that noble parents did love their children.⁸

Scholars have also debated the existence of love within medieval marriages. C. S. Lewis, in his *Allegory of Love*, once influentially stated that love and marriage were incompatible in the Middle Ages, writing '[m]arriages had nothing to do with love ... [a woman] was often little better than a piece of property to her husband'.⁹ Lewis derived these ideas from his examination of medieval literature, including tales of courtly love and allegory. His ideas largely held sway until the latter half of the twentieth century when historians began to challenge them. For example, Conor McCarthy shows that while love, sex, and marriage may not always be found together, various combinations of the two can be found.¹⁰

While emotion certainly has a 'biological dimension', this dimension does not necessarily dictate how it was expressed.¹¹ The idea of courtly love, for example, appeared in eleventh-century France through the tales of troubadours and inspired a 'code of behaviour' in the twelfth century.¹² Susan Broomhall notes that '[a]s historians, we need to reflect on the extent to which we think emotions are neuro-anatomically hard-wired, but whatever the place we give to the physiological, our emphasis and expertise focuses us on the cultural component and results of the mix'.¹³ In this vein, recent scholars have examined how a person's emotions

⁶ S. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. ix

⁷ Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, p. 1.

⁸ See: N. Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530*, London, Methuen, 1984, pp. 3-4; L. Huneycutt, 'Public Lives, Private Ties: Royal Mothers in England and Scotland, 1070-1204', in J. Parsons and B. Wheeler (ed.), *Medieval Mothering*, Garland Publishing, 1996, pp. 295-311.

⁹ C. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 13.

¹⁰ C. McCarthy (ed.), *Love, Sex and Marriage in the Middle Ages: A Sourcebook*, London, Routledge, 2004. For this particular claim: C. McCarthy, 'Introduction', in C. McCarthy (ed.), *Love, Sex and Marriage in the Middle Ages: A Sourcebook*, London, Routledge, 2004, p. 22.

¹¹ K. Barclay and K. Reynolds, 'Introduction: Small Graves: Histories of Childhood, Death and Emotion', in K. Barclay, K. Reynolds, and C. Rawnsley (ed.), *Death, Emotion and Childhood in Premodern Europe*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 6; J. Rider, 'The Inner Life of Women in Medieval Romance Literature', in J. Rider and J. Friedman (ed.), *The Inner Life of Women in Medieval Romance Literature: Grief, Guilt, and Hypocrisy*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 1- 2.

¹² L. Muir, *Literature and Society in Medieval France: The Mirror and the Image, 1100-1500*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1985, pp. 47-48.

¹³ S. Broomhall, 'Emotions in the Household', in S. Broomhall (ed.), *Emotions in the Household, 1200-1900*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 9.

were shaped by the historical context of the time. While the existence of love in the Middle Ages has been proven by recent scholars, it is worth examining how and why familial relations were portrayed as they were. Indeed, in 2016, Katie Barclay and Kimberley Reynolds acknowledged that historiography has shifted from discussing whether parents loved their children to exploring the ways that emotion is influenced by culture.¹⁴ This chapter examines both *how* the chroniclers believed a woman should relate to her family, and *why* they wished to portray this idea.

In order to answer these questions, this chapter breaks down familial relations and emotions into three sections: filial relations, grieving, and marital relations. Together these areas reveal how and why the chroniclers chose to portray these relationships as they did. The first section examines a queen's relationship with her offspring and will reveal that all three chroniclers encouraged queens to be involved actively in their children's lives. Through her role as a caring and pious mother, a queen could help to ensure the future heir to the throne was adequately prepared. Primat also used negative examples to show the adverse effects of a queen not caring for her child. The second section builds on the idea of affection between mother and child. It shows that this was partly reflective of the change in the queen's role to that of a mother and wife from that of a ruler. Though a queen was encouraged to grieve, a king's grief was shown to be acceptable only in a controlled fashion. Thus, the chroniclers portrayed the king as an impassive leader and viewed the queen's political role as subordinate – her portrayal of grief was not perceived as altering the vulnerability of the kingdom. The final section examines the chroniclers' perceptions of marital emotions and reveals that affection was encouraged; a queen demonstrating loyalty and unwavering support for the king would create a strong bond, decrease the chances of divorce and illegitimacy claims, and serve to maintain peace in the kingdom. Altogether, these sections reveal that each chronicle included accounts which reflected the Capetians' desire to maintain a strong and stable kingdom. This suggests the chronicles were intended as a guidebook for the future royal family, but also, as Gabrielle Spiegel suggests, to convey the idea of the powerful royal family to audiences. As the aristocracy was strongly affected by the administrative changes, the chronicles almost certainly played a part in 'normalising' the new system and alleviating any concerns the nobles may have had about the kingdom's stability.

¹⁴ Barclay and Reynolds, *Death, Emotion and Childhood*, p. 3.

Filial Relations

The three texts examined make it clear that positive mother-child relations were encouraged. There is, however, a discrepancy between the chroniclers writing for the royal family and the chronicler writing for a noble audience. The Minstrel did not focus much attention on mother-son relations.¹⁵ This suggests maternal affection was not a point of interest for his noble audience, nor something he felt strongly about. As the chronicles all contain an element of the ‘mirror’ genre, they allow an insight into what was believed or expected to be the appropriate way to behave according to the author. Primat and Joinville portrayed a good queen as being involved actively in the health and survival of her children. Primat also showed the negative consequences that arose from failing to care for a child through either filicide or abandonment for a non-pious reason (abandonment of children in order to serve God was deemed acceptable). It can be seen that each chronicler encouraged the queen to involve herself actively in her children’s care and ensure their survival and success. The chroniclers also helped disseminate the idea that the royal family was a strong and stable unit, thus acting to ease any fears their audience may have had during the period of upheaval.

The chroniclers’ portrayal of the mother-child relationship as an important bond was almost certainly influenced by the thirteenth-century projections of the Virgin Mary. Prior to the thirteenth century, Mary’s virginity had taken pride of place over her role as mother.¹⁶ However, from the thirteenth century there was a focus on family life, such as the relationship between Mary and Jesus, and ‘[b]elievers were encouraged to discover and exploit tender family affections, the better to love God’.¹⁷ Depictions of Mary began to portray the mother-child bond, with artists experimenting ‘with the many ways in which mother and son might engage with each other, exploring posture and play’.¹⁸ Thus, influenced by the prevailing idea in the thirteenth century that family affection was to be celebrated, the chroniclers’ accounts were palatable to their audience, and therefore, were likely more influential.

¹⁵ He did discuss Blanche’s grief at Louis IX’s decision to take the cross: Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel’s Chronicle*, bk. 35, p. 89.

¹⁶ C. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 144.

¹⁷ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, p. 145.

¹⁸ M. Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009, p. 206. See also: H. Jewell, *Women in Late Medieval and Reformation Europe 1200-1550*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 26-27.

Primat showed that Brunhild (d. 613),¹⁹ the wife of Sigebert (r. 561-575), well-known and well-documented for exhibiting cruel behaviour against her extended family members,²⁰ placed her son's life before her own, thus reinforcing to his audience that even dastardly queens should act selflessly when it came to their children. Upon hearing about the death of Sigebert, Brunhild 'considered many ways of escaping, to save herself and her son from mortal danger'.²¹ A plan was devised in which the son would be placed in a basket, out the window, and passed to a friend who would take him to the city of Metz.²² There, he was received as 'their legitimate lord', crowned, and given the kingdom.²³ Primat then noted that '[a]fter Brunhild had saved her son, she gave some thought to protecting her own life'.²⁴ In placing this tale of selflessness amongst many stories detailing her sinful living, Primat emphasised that even evil queens cared for their children, particularly the heir to the throne. This in turn reinforced that expectation to his intended royal audience. By acting in this manner, a queen would help to secure the future of the royal line.

Joinville included an account which showed that he viewed queens favourably when they cared for their children. He highlighted Margaret of Provence's care of her offspring when he noted that while the crusaders were on the ocean, she requested that Louis 'send three galleys to fetch fruit for her children' from a nearby island.²⁵ The tale appears to have been included to demonstrate the king's moral nature as the men sent to collect the fruit were delayed on their return, and the king was encouraged to leave them behind, yet he refused to abandon them.²⁶ It also, however, indicates that Margaret was involved in the well-being of her children. It is clear, for instance, that it was Margaret's request, not one of her children's minders, to get the fruit as when the men did not re-appear, Joinville noted that Margaret showed 'signs of deep distress and said, "Alas! This is all my doing!"'.²⁷ Thus, it can be seen that the involvement of a queen in her children's lives was acknowledged as being a desirable quality.

The chronicles include two examples which allude to a queen leaving behind her children, one whose silence on the matter reveals their acceptance and another whose act is shown to have negative consequences. When Margaret of Provence set out to accompany her

¹⁹ Primat includes that her name was originally Brunehaut but that her name was changed before she married Sigebert. Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, pp. 99-100.

²⁰ For a detailed discussion on this see: Chapter 2.

²¹ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, p. 113.

²² Primat, bk. 3, p. 113.

²³ Primat, bk. 3, p. 113.

²⁴ Primat, bk. 3, p. 113. Emphasis mine.

²⁵ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 306, §640.

²⁶ For the tale: John of Joinville, p. 306, §641-642.

²⁷ John of Joinville, p. 306, §642.

husband Louis IX to the Holy Land on the Seventh Crusade, she left her young children behind under the care of Blanche.²⁸ This fact is not commented on by either the Minstrel or Joinville, aside from a later comment by Joinville which reveals a fear for her daughter when Blanche died.²⁹ The silence is deafening, particularly in Joinville's chronicle. Joinville himself noted that he had found it hard to leave his children, being 'fearful that [his] heart would melt for the fine castle and two children [he] was leaving behind'.³⁰ Furthermore, even though he expressed sympathy with Blanche over her intense grief at Louis' departure, he remained silent over Margaret's probable upset over leaving behind her children.³¹ The silence reveals his acceptance of Margaret's decisions; as he did not fail to criticise the royal family, it can be assumed he would do so here if he believed them to be wrong. It was accepted that a woman, and a queen, could go on crusade – women were even granted legal status as *crucesignatae*, the contemporary Latin term for crusader, in the thirteenth century.³² He may have felt it was a wise decision, as the crusade may have been too dangerous for the children, particularly the heirs to the throne.

There may be another reason for deciding not to mention the separation of mother and child. Abandonment of children, in certain circumstances, was praised in the thirteenth century. Saints such as Elizabeth of Thuringia (d. 1231) were praised, in part, for the fact they willingly separated from their children.³³ When Elizabeth's husband died, she '[sent] her children to various places to be cared for,' and dedicated her life to God.³⁴ Indeed, Jesus is recorded as saying '[h]e that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.'³⁵ Thus Margaret's decision to join the crusade could have been viewed as an act of piety by Joinville. Indeed, Joinville mentioned St Elizabeth in his chronicle, thus demonstrating his awareness of her actions.³⁶ The fact that abandonment was only acceptable if it was in the name of God is shown through an example that Primat included of a Lombard noblewoman named Romilda. In the

²⁸ N. Goldstone, *Four Queens: The Provençal Sisters Who Ruled Europe*, London, Phoenix, 2009, p. 224.

²⁹ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 296, §605.

³⁰ John of Joinville, p. 176, §122.

³¹ Joinville wrote that Blanche 'demonstrated grief as profound as if she had seen him dead'. John of Joinville, p. 173, §107.

³² For the appearance of the term '*crucesignatae*': N. Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land in Historical Narrative*, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2007, p. 39. Natasha Hodgson summarises Maureen Purcell's research, for Purcell, see: M. Purcell, 'Women Crusaders, a Temporal Canonical Aberration?', in L. Frappell (ed.), *Principalities, Power and Estates: Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Government and Society*, Adelaide, Adelaide University Union Press, 1979, p. 57.

³³ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, pp. 166-167. For an overview of the life of St Elizabeth: Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead*, pp. 72-76; Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. W. Ryan, vol. 2, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 302-318.

³⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, vol. 2, p. 308.

³⁵ Matthew 10:37.

³⁶ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 170, §96.

early seventh century, Romilda's husband, Gisulph, the duke of Cividale was engaged in a battle in which he was killed.³⁷ Romilda, 'much taken with [Gisulph's opponent, Cachanes'] good looks', agreed to surrender her city on the terms that she spend a night with him.³⁸ According to Primat, after Cachanes had 'captured the city, taken all the wealth, and enslaved the people', he slept with her.³⁹ It is clear he did this out of duty, as he then handed her over to twelve Slavs who lay with her before he speared her through her body with a stake stating '[t]his is the kind of husband you deserve'.⁴⁰ Primat showed his opinion of these events explicitly through his inclusion of the statement '[t]hus perished the treacherous woman, who desired the pleasures of the flesh more than the safety of her children and the citizens of the city'.⁴¹ Together, these examples demonstrate the belief held by the chroniclers that selfishness was punishable, but, as long as one's children were cared for, dedicating one's life to a cause in the name of God was deemed acceptable.

While tales of love between parent and child are abundant in the examined chronicle sources, Primat's mythical-history section of the *Grandes Chroniques* reveals one case of intentional filicide. This tale concerns a sixth-century queen named Deuteria, and her daughter. Worried that her second husband, Theodobert, son of king Theodoric, would be attracted to her adult daughter from her first marriage, she 'put her in a cart drawn by bulls that had not been tamed, and she was then tossed into the Meuse'.⁴² Theodobert, upon learning of this act, left Deuteria and married a woman to whom he had been betrothed previously, a Lombard princess named Wisegard.⁴³ Though it appears contrary to Primat's aim of showing the royal family in a good light, this account may have been included to demonstrate to the king that he should not renege on previous marriages or engagements, while simultaneously serving as a warning to queens about the consequences arising from unacceptable maternal behaviour. Indeed, the contrast between the behaviours of the king and queen is further drawn with the

³⁷ N. Christie, *The Lombards: The Ancient Longobards*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1995, pp. 93-94. For more information on the battle, see an account by an eighth-century monk, Paul the Deacon: Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards*, trans. W. Faulke, E. Peters (ed.), Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003, pp. 179-180. Primat consulted Aimon of Fleury for his version. Levine, *France Before Charlemagne*, p. 210, n. 232.

³⁸ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 4, p. 210.

³⁹ Primat, bk. 4, p. 210.

⁴⁰ In thirteenth-century terms, it is unclear whether this would qualify as rape. At the time of writing there were four elements which together constituted rape: sexual intercourse, violence, abduction, and no given consent. Though Romilda's experience does appear to be intended as punishment, there is no given mention of violence or abduction. For the definition of rape, see: J. Brundage, 'Rape and Seduction in the Medieval Canon Law', in V. Bullough and J. Brundage (ed.), *Sexual Practices and The Medieval Church*, Amherst, Prometheus Books, 1994, p. 143. For the quote: Primat, bk. 4, p. 210.

⁴¹ Primat, bk. 4, p. 210.

⁴² Primat, bk. 2, p. 72.

⁴³ Primat, bk. 2, p. 72.

description of Theodobert as being ‘very civilized and well-mannered’ before it is noted that he returned to Wisegard, which served to emphasise the wrong-doing of Deuteria.⁴⁴ In killing a child, a queen was not only committing a mortal sin but potentially affecting the fortunes of the royal family; a daughter could, for example, be used as a political tool for forging alliances or gaining land through a strategic marriage.

The existence of these tales strongly suggests that care of a child by its mother, even the queen, was expected and encouraged. The chronicles show that a queen’s involvement in her children’s life was acceptable and desirable and that care was a natural part of the mother-child relationship – even within the royal family where it could be expected that a queen would take a more removed role due to the employment of household staff. In the accounts which saw a queen *not* acting with her child’s interests at heart, the negative consequences are clearly described. These accounts also demonstrated that the chroniclers were influenced by ecclesiastical beliefs, suggesting the image of the Virgin Mary as a mother and the lives of saints were pervasive in thirteenth-century France. As the chronicles were intended partly to be *exempla*, these accounts clearly demonstrate the chroniclers’ beliefs that queens should take up an active role in caring for their children, as was fitting in the new administrative system. Indeed, caring for a child was one of the only avenues through which a queen could ‘exercise authority, power, and influence’.⁴⁵ By showing that the family unit was strong, both Primat and Joinville helped to alleviate any concerns about the stability of the royal family at the end of the thirteenth century.

Grieving

The Minstrel, Primat, and Joinville all included accounts of maternal grief over the death or departure of a child in their chronicles, thus demonstrating to their audience the acceptability of a queen expressing her sorrow over loss. It clearly did not matter that queens displayed grief publicly; fainting, crying, and burning belongings by a queen were all discussed, though most of these expressions were turned into a lesson for the intended audience. This suggests that such emotion was seen as weakness and, thus, that the queen’s role as being decidedly subordinate to the king’s was actively upheld by the chroniclers. The chroniclers only included accounts of the king being admonished for or helped through grieving. This suggested his

⁴⁴ For the quote: Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, p. 72.

⁴⁵ A. Harper, ‘Bodies and Sexuality’, in K. Phillips (ed.), *A Cultural History of Women in the Middle Ages*, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 44.

higher status than that of a queen, as a queen's grief made her more accessible and 'human' to the audience.

In order to understand the difference between the chroniclers' approaches to a queen's grief compared with a king's, the approaches to a king's grief must first be explored. As Jacques Le Goff states, '[t]he Middle Ages belonged to men, but they were always crying'.⁴⁶ Though kings were acknowledged as grieving, they were often met with reproach. That a king should not publicly display grief can be seen throughout history. Remy, the bishop of Reims, is noted as having to remind Clovis I (r. 481-511), who was mourning the death of his sister, Audofleda, that it was 'not proper for a king to show intense grief in public',⁴⁷ while Henry II of England was admonished for grieving too heavily for his son, as was Louis VI after the death of his eldest son.⁴⁸ Similarly, Joinville admonished Louis IX for his outpouring of grief over the death of his mother, Blanche, noting that Louis' sorrow had meant he was unable to talk to anyone for two days.⁴⁹ He records his interaction with the king, telling him 'I am surprised that you, a man of good sense, have demonstrated such great sadness. For you know that the wise man says that a man should not allow whatever distress he has in his heart to appear on his face, because he who does so makes his enemies happy and his friends upset.'⁵⁰ Joinville's reprimand of Louis demonstrated to his audience that the expression of grief did not make a 'good' king.

While Joinville's desire is clearly for a king who has control over his emotions, the Minstrel and Primat did not view this as an important trait. The Minstrel did not rebuke Louis IX for expressing grief over the death of his son, Louis (d. 1260); instead, he stated that the king was grieving because he had loved his child.⁵¹ Indeed, he noted that his sorrow was so immense that the Archbishop Rigaud of Rouen came to comfort him, and with the aid of an *exemplum* and Scripture, alleviated his grief by reminding him that his son could never return and was in Paradise, and so he should move through his grief.⁵² Primat also did not explicitly admonish grieving. He included, for example, a tale of how Chilperic I 'delayed the wedding of his daughter, whom he had promised to the king of Spain, out of grief for the death of one

⁴⁶ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 297.

⁴⁷ S. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500 to 900*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, p. 58.

⁴⁸ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 369.

⁴⁹ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 296, §603-604.

⁵⁰ John of Joinville, p. 296, §604.

⁵¹ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 43, p. 107.

⁵² Minstrel of Reims, bk. 43, pp. 107-108.

of his sons'.⁵³ He was, however, pressed to reconsider this decision.⁵⁴ The difference in Joinville's approach to Primat's and the Minstrel's may lie in his proximity to the grieving monarch. The fact that Joinville had a direct relationship with the king may have meant he was more eager to demonstrate to his audience that a king should control his grief, particularly as Louis was leading the crusade in hostile and foreign territory. Primat and the Minstrel had no personal experience with kings expressing grief and therefore had no real cause to discourage it. When they did mention it, however, it was clear that the king needed to move on from the grieving period as soon as possible. Indeed, it is clear the desired Capetian image during Louis IX's reign was partly one of impassivity; all royal tombs erected in Saint-Denis were 'devoid of any emotional content', with such content only appearing on the tombs of less important Capetians who were not buried at the abbey.⁵⁵

Queens faced no such rebuke in any of the chronicles. Contemporary images of women grieving may have influenced the chroniclers' accounts. For example, images of the Virgin Mary 'recoiling, leaning away from the cross, throwing her hands into the air' in public expressions of grief could be found in the thirteenth century,⁵⁶ as could teachings on the life and death of Jesus which 'emphasized his quite human suffering, and his mother's agony.'⁵⁷ Paul Binski notes that 'usually in medieval art the codification of grief is the special preserve of women'.⁵⁸ Indeed, in Joinville's case, though he had criticised the king for his grieving over Blanche's death, he helped to comfort Margaret through her own grief over the passing. Having been asked to provide comfort for the queen, he expressed surprise that he found Margaret grieving over Blanche's death because she had disliked her mother-in-law.⁵⁹ Margaret explained she was grieving for the king who was extremely close to his mother, and for her daughter who 'was left in the guardianship of men'.⁶⁰ This showed her concern and care for members of her family. Margaret may have been positively reported as expressing grief as Joinville would have been familiar with the images and teachings of female grief, seen most vividly in the thirteenth-century portrayal of the Virgin Mary, making this a pious action. In addition, unlike the king, she was not a military commander whose grief had the potential to rouse the enemy and lead to lower morale.

⁵³ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, p. 151.

⁵⁴ Primat, bk. 3, p. 151.

⁵⁵ For the Capetian tombs: P. Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1996, p. 51.

⁵⁶ Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 244.

⁵⁷ Rubin, p. 243.

⁵⁸ Binski, *Medieval Death*, p. 51.

⁵⁹ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 296, §605.

⁶⁰ John of Joinville, p. 296, §605.

A correlation between an account by the Minstrel of Reims and a passage written by the popular twelfth-century French author Chrétien de Troyes in his tale *Le conte du graal* may suggest that the Minstrel thought the defeat of the Seventh Crusade was linked to Louis IX's failure to adequately care for his mother. In *Le conte du graal*, Perceval decided to leave his home to become a knight at King Arthur's court despite the fact that when he looked back after leaving, he saw his mother collapsed, unconscious from grief.⁶¹ Perceval's failure to stay and help his mother is blamed for the disasters that he faced when later hunting the Holy Grail, when he was told that he was being punished for the sin he had committed against his mother when he left.⁶² This tale resembles the Minstrel's retelling of the departure of Louis IX on crusade. He records Blanche as saying '[I]ovely, sweet son, how will my heart be able to endure your leaving me? Surely it will be harder than stone if it does not break in two, for you have been the best son that any mother has ever had'.⁶³ He then noted that she proceeded to faint twice.⁶⁴ The similarity between Perceval's failure in his quest to find the Holy Grail because he did not return and care for his mother,⁶⁵ and Louis' failure in his attempt to secure the Holy Land, may suggest that the Minstrel was subtly indicating that the sin of abandoning his mother contributed to the loss of the Crusade. It is likely the Minstrel was familiar with the tale as Chrétien was the 'father of the Arthurian romance';⁶⁶ his tales were influential and well-known. Overall, the Minstrel's account reveals his belief that it was acceptable for a queen to openly grieve for her departing son, which in turn gave substance to a queen's role as a mother to his noble audience.

Primat showed that grief could go hand-in-hand with repentance – a trait he, as a monk, encouraged. As infant mortality was high in the Middle Ages, some early historians believed that medieval parents treated their children as 'little adults' and did not become emotionally attached to them.⁶⁷ However, as seen in the examples discussed above, this was far from true, which can be seen further through examples of the effects of grief. Primat recounted many accounts of the grief suffered by St Clotild (d. 548), which saw her implore her children to avenge her parents' deaths.⁶⁸ Primat also recounted the deaths of her grandchildren, in which

⁶¹ Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval: The Story of the Grail*, trans. B. Raffel, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999, p. 21.

⁶² Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, p. 114.

⁶³ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 35, p. 89.

⁶⁴ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 35, p. 89.

⁶⁵ Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval*, pp. 202-203.

⁶⁶ For this characterisation of Chrétien: Muir, *Literature and Society in Medieval France*, p. 50.

⁶⁷ K. French and A. Poska, *Women and Gender in the Western Past*, vol. 1, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007, p. 168.

⁶⁸ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, pp. 52-53.

she was implicated; the children's deaths were brought about by Clotild's sons, Childebert and Lothar, who, perceiving that Clotild showed more love and affection towards the grandchildren than themselves, kidnapped them, and then asked Clotild to choose the fates of their nephews – either they would become clerics or they would be killed.⁶⁹ Upon receiving the news, Clotild lamented:

[c]ertainly my grief is great, since I have given birth to homicidal sons, who murder their relatives, their own flesh. ... Alas, grieving woman that I am, what kind of progeny have I produced? ... Ah, my children, I am the cause of your perdition. I urged your father to risk his life, leaving you orphaned. I have been a bad and wretched mother; now I would like to be a better grand-mother.⁷⁰

The choice of this tale suggests that Primat decided to include this story of a queen grieving as it demonstrated her repenting and growing closer to God. As he intended his work as a guide, it is likely he was encouraging future queens to seek solace in God.

Furthermore, in an attempt to emphasise her piety, Primat may have encouraged the reader to associate Clotild with the Virgin Mary. In the thirteenth century, Mary was portrayed as a 'beautiful feminine figure.'⁷¹ Thirteenth-century art also explored her grief over the death of Jesus, often showing her pain and sadness at the scene of the crucifixion.⁷² Similarly, Primat introduces Clotild as 'the virgin Clotild, who was unusually beautiful',⁷³ he speaks of her grief over her children, and emphasises her dedication to God.⁷⁴ By including Clotild's expression of grief over the actions of her children and tales of her Christian behaviour, Primat was able to portray her as a good and pious woman. This was a matter of importance, as Clotild was claimed as an ancestor by the Capetians,⁷⁵ and therefore needed to be seen as embodying idealised royal characteristics. In encouraging the link between Clotild and the Virgin Mary, Primat reinforced the idea of Capetian piety to his audience – something of immense importance and an idea explored in greater detail below.

Though both kings and queens experienced grief, a king's expression of sorrow came with caveats while a queen's was uncritically accepted by the chroniclers. While, such as is

⁶⁹ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, pp. 67-68.

⁷⁰ Primat, bk. 2, p. 68. Believing the threat to be a bluff, she chose death for the grandchildren. Two were killed, though the third escaped and became a priest. Primat, bk. 2, p. 69.

⁷¹ Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 211.

⁷² Rubin, pp. 243-244.

⁷³ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 1, p. 36.

⁷⁴ For her grief: Primat, bk. 2, pp. 67-68; Primat, bk. 2, p. 77; for examples of her dedication to God: Primat, bk. 1, pp. 36-37, 77.

⁷⁵ This can be extrapolated as they claimed Clovis, her husband, as an ancestor. C. Wood, *Joan of Arc and Richard III: Sex, Saints, and Government in the Middle Ages*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 21.

seen in Joinville's case, a king often needed to appear invulnerable, it is clear there was no such hesitation around the queen. Instead, stories of queens expressing grief were used as lessons for their audience. Expressions of sorrow were used by Primat to encourage repentance and a good relationship with God, by the Minstrel to encourage a son's closeness with his mother, and by Joinville to demonstrate the virtues of a good queen. This suggests that a queen was seen to be of lesser status than the king, and thus of lesser importance to the kingdom, as their grief was not shown to have a direct impact on the safety and smooth operation of the kingdom. This further reinforces the idea that the works were intended as guidance, using tales to teach their audience the correct way to behave, encouraging the family unit, queenly piety, and instilling in the audience an awareness of the religiosity of the Capetian family.

Marital Relations

The three chroniclers included evidence in their tales which supported medieval marital affection between the king and queen. Affection and loyalty was promoted as being the correct behaviour of a 'good' queen. It was an idea portrayed not just in the chronicles, but in thirteenth-century romance literature, which suggests the idea was widespread at the time. A solid marriage lent itself to a peaceful kingdom as there would be no disputes over legitimacy of offspring or loss of dowry lands. Thus, it was an important image for the Capetian dynasty to project via the chronicles.

Love and affection were not always promoted within literary genres. Modern assessments have shifted from a belief that love was not a characteristic of medieval marriage, to a stance, backed up by examples of affection and love found in source material, which asserted the existence of love between marital partners. It is, however, easy to see why the former idea developed. Medieval literature was dotted with stories of murder, spite, and adultery. Romance literature, in particular, frequently focused on extra-marital love, indeed, well-known stories such as *Tristan and Iseult* and the tales of Lancelot and Guinevere all had adulterous love at their core. The three chronicles, too, contained tales of jealousy, adultery, and murder of kings by queens. The majority of these examples are explored in Chapter 2 of this thesis, which reveals that they were used to show that negative outcomes would arise from this behaviour. Of course, similar scenarios of adultery could be found in reality. That does not mean, however, that love could not be found between royal partners, and the chronicles used examples of affection to show the positive impact of a queen's loyalty to and support of her husband.

Joinville included an account which supported intimacy between king and queen even in the face of resistance. He discussed the lengths that newly-weds Margaret of Provence and Louis IX went to in order to meet privately, due to the fact that Blanche of Castile was an overbearing mother-in-law who often attempted to prevent Louis and Margaret from spending any time together during the day. As a result, Louis and Margaret favoured a royal residence which had their rooms situated one on top of the other, with a private spiral staircase connecting them in which they could converse without being disturbed.⁷⁶ To maintain this secret, and to allow the rendezvous to continue, they had servants stationed at each door who were to knock when Blanche approached either room so that the person Blanche wished to talk to could quickly re-enter their room and be found there alone.⁷⁷ There is no denying that Joinville's account of the measures Louis and Margaret took in order to spend time together indicates that love and affection were certainly felt and encouraged between newly-weds. The story appears to have no purpose other than to retell a story of affection (and to encourage the future king to act independently from his mother, as will be discussed in Chapter 4). As such, Joinville almost certainly included the tale to demonstrate to his dedicatee, the recently married Louis X, that affection was a positive marital quality. This is reinforced by his later reprimand of Louis IX for being too distant from his wife and children.⁷⁸

The Minstrel of Reims emphasised that loyalty to one's husband was an important attribute for a queen through his tale of Sibylla of Jerusalem (d. 1190) and her husband, Guy of Lusignan. Sibylla inherited the kingdom following the death of her father, King Amalric.⁷⁹ Despite the pressure placed on her to choose a new husband once she became queen, she remained loyal to her husband of non-royal descent, Guy, and ruled alongside him.⁸⁰ The barons were jealous of Guy's position as king and convinced the patriarch to call upon the queen to ask that she marry one of them instead, since Guy was 'not sufficiently wise to hold and govern' Jerusalem.⁸¹ They warned that destruction could come upon the kingdom if she did not heed their advice.⁸² When the day came to choose her king, Sibylla, after first extracting a promise from the patriarch that he would not force her to choose another lord once she had made her decision, placed the crown on Guy's head, much to the chagrin of the patriarch and

⁷⁶ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, pp. 296-297, §606-607.

⁷⁷ John of Joinville, pp. 296-297, §607.

⁷⁸ John of Joinville, pp. 293-294, §594.

⁷⁹ The Minstrel says she was his sister: Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 5, p. 16; but she was his daughter: B. Hamilton, 'Women in the Crusader States: the Queens of Jerusalem 1100-90', in D. Baker (ed.), *Medieval Women*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1978, p. 159.

⁸⁰ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 5, pp. 16-17.

⁸¹ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 5, p. 16.

⁸² Minstrel of Reims, bk. 5, p. 16.

the barons, and said ‘I do not see here a great man more faithful than you, nor one who better deserves to be king ... I grant and bestow upon you the crown and the kingdom, as well as myself and my love’.⁸³ This decision led to the collusion of the barons with Saladin and the eventual loss of control of the kingdom.⁸⁴ When Guy later attempted to visit Sibylla, who was residing safely in Tyre, he was barred from entry.⁸⁵ The queen, upon discovering this, escaped and re-joined him.⁸⁶ The Minstrel praised this act of bravery,⁸⁷ and noted that, following further battles, Guy and Sibylla were restored as king and queen of Jerusalem. He stated that of the kingdom ‘they had lost nothing and they acquired nothing’, thus demonstrating the adequacy of their rule and commending the queen’s loyalty.⁸⁸

This tale was largely a fictionalised story based on historical fact. Sibylla and Guy *were* separated following the conquest by Saladin and eventually reunited. However, the Minstrel created the story surrounding Sibylla’s daring escape – in reality, they had been allowed to reunite with no obstacles,⁸⁹ and in addition, Sibylla died in a battle soon after her reunion with Guy.⁹⁰ By separating the husband and wife and putting them through separate trials before allowing them to happily reunite at the end, the Minstrel closely follows a trope established by Chrétien de Troyes. For example, in Chrétien’s story *Cligès*, Cliges and his love, Fenice, were separated and eventually reunited;⁹¹ in *Erec and Enide* a married couple faced tests and ordeals together which tested their love before they were eventually crowned as king and queen of Nantes;⁹² and *The Knight of the Lion* saw Yvain, rejected by his wife for failing to return when he said he would, eventually win her back.⁹³ Indeed, twelfth- to fourteenth-century French

⁸³ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel’s Chronicle*, bk. 5, p. 17.

⁸⁴ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 6, pp. 17-20.

⁸⁵ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 6, p. 20.

⁸⁶ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 7, p. 21.

⁸⁷ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 7, p. 21.

⁸⁸ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 10, p. 26.

⁸⁹ Hamilton, *Medieval Women*, pp. 171-172.

⁹⁰ Hamilton, p. 172.

⁹¹ Chrétien de Troyes, *The Complete Romances of Chrétien de Troyes*, trans. D. Staines, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990, pp. 87-169. Cligès, following the request of his father to go to Britain once he became a knight, left the court. Fenice, at this time, was married to Cligès’ uncle, Alis, though remained a virgin. Upon his return, they ran away together, before Alis died and they were free to be together. For his move to England: Chrétien de Troyes, *The Complete Romances*, pp. 139-149; for her virginity: Chrétien de Troyes, p. 151; for their escape: Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 151-169.

⁹² Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 1-86. For the ordeals: Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 36-49; for the coronation: Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 81-86.

⁹³ Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 257-338. Yvain married Laudine, the wife of a knight he defeated, and then was convinced to depart with the king to engage in tournaments. Laudine allowed him to go with the promise that he would return within one year. When he failed to return within his promised time, she rejected him, though he ultimately won her back. For his promise to return: Chrétien de Troyes, p. 288; for his failure to return and subsequent punishment: Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 289-337; for their reunification: Chrétien de Troyes, pp. 337-338.

romances tended to end ‘with a community at peace and a couple reconciled’.⁹⁴ By altering the facts of Sibylla and Guy’s reign to reflect the romance trope, the Minstrel transformed the tale into one that his audience would have recognised and enjoyed. By choosing to keep Sibylla alive and ending the account with her successfully running the kingdom with Guy, the Minstrel created a happy ending for the couple for his audience’s enjoyment. The fact that he believed his audience would enjoy the tale suggests that the noble audience believed that loyalty and affection should be found within a royal marriage.

Similarly, Primat included expressions of queenly loyalty to the king. Beretrude, a seventh-century queen, was told that her husband, Lothar II (r. 613-629) would soon die, and was encouraged to move her treasury to another city, an act which would guarantee her a new husband. She became ‘enraged [at the suggestion] ... particularly because she thought that [the advisor] imagined her to be a woman who would willingly consent to such a betrayal [of her husband]’.⁹⁵ She did not move her treasury, and her act of loyalty was well-determined – the suggestion was a plot to help bring another man to the throne.⁹⁶ Indeed, the warning over Lothar’s impending death was false – Beretrude passed away before the king.⁹⁷ Though this tale has tones of the queen displaying moral righteousness, her recorded outrage demonstrates that the chronicler wished to emphasise her loyalty, thus demonstrating to his audience how to behave in a marriage.

Each chronicler strongly encouraged affection between husband and wife. Mentions of marital love in the works of Primat and Joinville are typically incidental to the main point of their stories and, as such, provide clear evidence that they deemed the relationship worthy of inclusion. The Minstrel, on the other hand, dedicated a significant portion of his chronicle to one of these stories. His inclusion of the tale of Sibylla and Guy, infused with elements of the romance genre, indicates his audience’s expectation for a love story, thus showing the knowledge and existence of marital love. The fact that tales of medieval marital love were documented in the works examined and were the work of authors with different backgrounds and intentions highlights the significance of a peaceful and loving royal marriage. An untroubled royal marriage leads to a calm kingdom as a husband and wife who were affectionate and loyal to each other would decrease the likelihood of, for example, legitimacy

⁹⁴ Z. Kocher, ‘Peace and Love: Communities and Couples in Old French Romance Plots’, in A. Classen and N. Margolis (ed.), *War and Peace: Critical Issues in European Societies and Literature 800-1800*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2011, p. 277.

⁹⁵ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 4, p. 212.

⁹⁶ I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751*, London, Longman, 1994, p. 144.

⁹⁷ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 5, p. 217; Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 148.

issues. It is therefore likely the chroniclers included these tales to promote peace within a marriage and thus harmony in the kingdom.

Study of familial elements of the *Roman des rois*, the *Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims*, and the *Vie de Saint Louis* reveals a number of facts. It can be clearly seen that love, constructed in the form of loyalty and support, was experienced within the medieval family and was actively supported. Together, the chroniclers demonstrated that queens were encouraged to act in a way which was subordinate to the king and emphasised their roles as mothers. Although the chroniclers acknowledged the existence of feelings of affection within a family, using the word 'love' (in its old French form) and exploring stories of grief over loss, they were more concerned with demonstrating *how* the queens should act in their relationships. The chronicles show that a queen being involved actively in her children's lives, grieving over loss or family dysfunction, and demonstrating loyalty to and support of the king were all viewed as the correct way for a queen to behave. In allowing and encouraging a queen to care for her children, the chroniclers emphasised her role as a mother rather than a ruler. In addition, through the chroniclers' handling of the subject of grief, they implicitly suggested the hierarchy of the royal family, showing the queen as subordinate by emphasising the necessity of a king's ability to rule at all times. Finally, in a similar vein, the chroniclers suggested that a queen should aid and remain loyal to her husband, almost certainly in support of the continued peace of the kingdom. The consequences of the actions of a disloyal queen are explored in the next section.

Chapter 2: Portrayals of Queenship and Piety

Joinville and Primat both emphasised the importance of a queen's religiosity, framing a 'good' queen as being involved in religious practice. This chapter considers stories of devout queens, canonised queens, and queens who converted to Christianity. It also examines women involved in sinful activities such as prostitution and murder. Examining how each queen's involvement in murder affected perceptions of their piety reveals that they could be shown in a pious light if they were repentant or generous to the Church. The fact that both chroniclers emphasised the religiosity of the queen, even those who committed sinful acts, suggests they were aligning themselves with and reinforcing Capetian ideas. In the latter half of the thirteenth century, the Capetians were fostering the idea that they were a pious family. Part of the Capetian image was built on the idea of 'dynastic sanctity', or the idea that the bloodline, not just the king, was holy.¹ As stated by Sean Field, '[v]isible saintly behavior was crucial to the emergence of the "reputation for outstanding piety"' that the Capetians held.² Capetian sanctity was largely helped by Louis IX's canonisation, but as will be seen, both Margaret and Blanche were also shown to be devout. Louis' sister Isabelle of France also helped contribute to the aura of sanctity around the family, remaining a virgin, establishing a religious house, and earning the respect of two popes for her pious lifestyle.³ The propaganda campaign worked – "[r]oyal" and "most holy" became nearly synonymous' in thirteenth-century France,⁴ a move which helped to solidify the family's legitimate right to rule. Joseph Strayer suggests that this helped to facilitate the emergence of the nation state, as the sacred image made the king and kingdom 'a worthy object of loyalty, even love' in the eyes of the French people.⁵ The *Vie de Saint Louis* and the *Roman des rois* served as *exempla* for the royal court, encouraging future Capetian queens to maintain and uphold a pious image while simultaneously strengthening the idea of the holy royal family through the inclusion of the pious examples.

To date, queenly piety has been examined from a number of different angles. Scholars

¹ Field, *Isabelle of France*, p. 3.

² Field, p. 3.

³ Field, pp. 2-3. For more on Isabelle of France: Field, *Isabelle of France*; Agnes of Harcourt, *The Writings of Agnes of Harcourt*, pp. 51-93. Of the three chronicles consulted in this study, only the Minstrel of Reims mentions Isabelle: Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 30, p. 76.

⁴ Wood, *Joan of Arc and Richard III*, p. 21.

⁵ Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, p. 159. See: J. Strayer, *Medieval Statecraft and the Perspectives of History: Essays by Joseph R. Strayer*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971, pp. 301-302.

have tended to focus on a queen's religious patronage,⁶ role in her family's salvation,⁷ involvement in the crusades,⁸ or exhibition of saintly behaviour.⁹ They have also looked at the way queens contributed to their family's perceived sanctity.¹⁰ No one has yet examined the selected texts in order to explore thirteenth-century perceptions of a queen's pious nature. Though both Primat and Joinville detailed queens engaging in pious activities, no significant discussion of queenship and piety can be found in the Minstrel's work; though he noted that Eleanor of Aquitaine accompanied her husband King Louis VII (r. 1137-1180) on crusade, he focused the story on her alleged infidelity rather than her piety or crusading effort.¹¹

Details of the queens' actions included by Joinville and Primat will be examined through three lenses: veneration of saints, religious influence, and sin which together reveal how each chronicler expected a 'good' queen to act. The first section will reveal that both Primat and Joinville believed virtuous queens made generous donations or publicly demonstrated their devotion to the saints. The second section demonstrates that both Primat and Joinville believed a queen had influence over the religiosity of their husbands or sons. The third section uncovers Primat's belief that even if a queen had sinned, she could still be viewed as pious as long as devotion or repentance was observed. In so doing, Primat promoted the idea that the royal line was continuously holy. It can, therefore, be concluded that both Primat and Joinville were attempting to broadcast the idea that the Capetians were a holy royal family and, thus, were helping to secure its future.

Devotion to the Saints

Primat and Joinville occasionally included a side-comment about a queen engaging in a pious activity while discussing a larger event. This indicates their desire to highlight such behaviour for their audience. These side-comments tended to involve a queen in prayer to or showing devotion towards a saint. They also included tales of sin and redemption which were almost certainly included to demonstrate that correct queenly behaviour should contain repentance and

⁶ E. Jordan, *Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 61-85.

⁷ See: S. Vecchio, 'The Good Wife', trans. C. Botsford, in C. Klapsich-Zuber (ed.), *A History of Women in the West: II: Silences of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, MA, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 124.

⁸ See, for example: Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, pp. 120-121.

⁹ See, for example, the life of St Elizabeth of Thuringia: Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead*, pp. 72-76

¹⁰ See: Field, *Isabelle of France*.

¹¹ See: Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 2, pp. 12-13.

devotion to God. Overall, both demonstrated that a good queen should consistently exhibit pious behaviour and direct her devotion towards the saints.

Primat provided an early example of Christian behaviour in the French royal line with his discussion of the piety of Nanthild (d. 642), the wife of a Merovingian king, Dagobert I (r. 623-639), and mother of Clovis II (r. 639-657). Typically, it is Dagobert who is the recipient of praise for his piety. Indeed, he is often named as the founder of the abbey of Saint-Denis (though this is untrue).¹² Primat, however, also chose to include praise of Nanthild's piety separate to his recognition of Dagobert, thus deeming her actions worthy of inclusion. He included several stories demonstrating Nanthild's generosity towards the Church such as her gifting of towns to various churches, including the abbey of Saint-Denis.¹³ Her generosity was not unheard of; many aristocratic women involved themselves with religious institutions, founding houses, and making donations.¹⁴ However, the fact Primat included her generosity alongside that of her husband suggests he was trying to make a point.

Including this passage benefitted Primat in two ways. First, it allowed him to show the abbey's historical connection to the royal family, thus reinforcing that the abbey had maintained royal favour throughout its history. As summarised by Gabrielle Spiegel, the abbey 'sought to establish a tie to the ruling house, to make the abbey indispensable to the crown as the chief and privileged guardian of the royal presence.'¹⁵ Further highlighting this idea, Primat noted that one of the copies of Nanthild's will could still be found in the archives of Saint-Denis at the time of writing.¹⁶ By drawing attention to the storage of Nanthild's documents at the abbey, Primat highlighted the link between the royal family and Saint-Denis, affirming the abbey's royal favour.¹⁷ Second, as his work was intended as a 'mirror', the tale helped demonstrate perceived 'good' behaviour. In demonstrating Nanthild's generosity, he appealed to any queen who read the account to give generously to the Church and to continue to favour the abbey. The example also served to emphasise the holy royal blood of the Capetians, who traced their lineage through to the Merovingians to help secure their legitimacy,¹⁸ thus

¹² S. Crosby, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis from Its Beginnings to the Death of Suger, 475-1151*, Pamela Z. Blum (ed.) New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987, pp. 29-30. Indeed, he is named as the founder in the *Grandes Chroniques*, see: Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 5, p. 268.

¹³ Primat, bk. 5, p. 257.

¹⁴ K. LoPrete, and T. Evergates, 'Introduction', in T. Evergates (ed.), *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, p. 5.

¹⁵ Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, p. 138.

¹⁶ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 5, p. 257.

¹⁷ These documents were examined when the early history of France was first being written. Crosby, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, p. 9.

¹⁸ Wood, *Order and Innovation*, p. 394.

strengthening the image of the holy royal family in the eyes of the audience.

Similarly, Joinville promoted the idea that the Capetian family was inherently holy. Indeed, he was commissioned to write ‘the holy words and the good deeds of our king Saint Louis’.¹⁹ An example of this intention can be seen in a side-comment he included concerning the actions of Blanche. Joinville included, in his recollection of a large court that the king held in Anjou, how the king’s mother, Blanche of Castile, kissed the son of St Elizabeth of Thuringia (d. 1231) on the forehead ‘as an act of devotion, for she believed his mother must have kissed that place many times’.²⁰ Joinville included this comment on Blanche’s actions in a section largely concerned with details of the ‘most elegantly appointed court [he had] ever seen’, where he outlined the people, the servers, and the clothing present.²¹ The out-of-place nature of the comment suggests that he specifically intended to highlight her piety for his audience. By linking her devotion to St Elizabeth, he tied Blanche to one of the most prominent saints of thirteenth-century society – the sole contemporary female saint included in the popular thirteenth-century collection of hagiographies known as the *Golden Legend*.²² In linking Blanche to Elizabeth, through a tale influenced by the hagiographic genre, he may have intended his audience to see the connection between the two women. Elizabeth was a Hungarian princess, married to Ludwig IV, landgrave of Thuringia, and a mother of three children, who later dedicated her life to God. Blanche was a pious royal mother herself; indeed, she herself was later called a saint by her son, Charles of Anjou, at Louis IX’s canonisation proceedings.²³ In highlighting Blanche’s actions, and linking her and her lifestyle to a prominent saint, Joinville attempted to highlight the pious nature of the Capetian family, in keeping with their holy image.

Joinville also included accounts of Margaret of Provence which were intended to emphasise her piety. Margaret is, from the outset, portrayed as a holy woman, with it being noted that she accompanied Louis on crusade.²⁴ Joinville included a lengthy account of a

¹⁹ For the quote: John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 141, §2.

²⁰ John of Joinville, p. 170, §96.

²¹ For the quote: John of Joinville, p. 169, §93. For the description: John of Joinville, pp. 169-170, §93-7.

²² For St Elizabeth’s inclusion in the *Golden Legend*: Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead*, p. 75. For recent scholarship on the *Golden Legend*: L. Cochrane, *In Search of Sacred Time: Jacobus de Voragine and The Golden Legend*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014; S. Epstein, *The Talents of Jacopo da Varagine: A Genoese Mind in Medieval Europe*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2016.

²³ See: C. Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France*, trans. S. Huston, F. Cheyette (ed.), Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991, p. 190.

²⁴ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 182, §146. Her accompanying of Louis is also mentioned in other chronicles concerning the Seventh Crusade. See, for example: J. Shirley (trans.), *Crusader Syria in the Thirteenth Century: The Rothelin Continuation of the History of William of Tyre with part of the Eracles or Acre text*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 1999, p. 112.

conversation he had with Margaret during a storm at sea, in which she asked him to witness her prayers to St Nicholas for God to deliver them safely.²⁵ Margaret's devout nature is made apparent in the recorded exchange. It is clear that Joinville believed that, together, his and Margaret's prayers worked, as he stated that Margaret, after entering the cabin shortly after making her promise and noting the wind had dropped, said 'Saint Nicholas has saved us from this peril'.²⁶ Joinville noted that a good queen was one who kept her word, as he remarked twice on seeing the offering she had promised in return for safe passage when he passed by the church in Saint-Nicolas-de-Port.²⁷ As Joinville was writing on Louis, he included the devotion of both Margaret and Blanche in order to further achieve his purpose of relaying the piety of the king.²⁸ This, in turn, reinforced the idea to contemporary queens that this was a 'good' way to act.

While the chroniclers of the *Vie* and the *Roman* had different reasons for including passages detailing queenly expressions of piety, each highlighted a good queen's devotion to the saints. As each of the chronicles contained elements of the 'mirror-for-princes' genre, the accounts were almost certainly included as *exempla* for the royal family, demonstrating how each should act to be seen as the ideal sovereign or royal family member. They were also intended for a broader audience and thus assisted in spreading the idea that the royal family was inherently holy. The *Vie* showed the wife and mother of Louis IX as good and pious women, which strengthened the perceived holiness of Louis' family. As the *Vie* is acknowledged as having been intended to show how a good king should act,²⁹ his detailing of the queens' pious actions showed he believed this was the way a contemporary queen should conduct herself.

Sin

Primat was simultaneously able to provide a warning to future queens of the consequences of sinful behaviour and reconcile the sinful queens with the Capetians' desire to project their royal line as holy by including tales of redemption. Though Primat included remarks on a queen's immoral behaviour, such as her involvement with prostitution or murder, he showed that as long as she was seen to repent, such deeds would not affect his recognition of her piety. In

²⁵ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, pp. 303-304, §630-633.

²⁶ John of Joinville, p. 304, §632.

²⁷ John of Joinville, p. 304, §633.

²⁸ Intriguingly, he does not mention Louis' pious sister Isabelle, though this may simply stem from the fact he was basing his account largely on the Crusade, with which she was not involved.

²⁹ Smith, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. xxxiv.

including accounts to be used as *exempla*, he showed royal readers that to be a good and pious ruler one must only repent and love God. Of the three examined works, it is only the *Roman* that contains these sinful yet pious queens. This is most likely due to both Primat's occupation as a monk, and his task of writing the wide-spanning early history of the Frankish kingdom.

Primat reveals his hesitant belief that despite a history of prostitution, a woman could be recognised as a good Christian queen. It is clear that he did not approve of the practice, at one point using an example of keeping a concubine as a negative trait of a king.³⁰ This idea also comes through in his inclusion of an account of Theodora (d. 548),³¹ the wife of Justinian I (r. 527-565), the Byzantine Emperor. Before becoming an empress, Theodora had certainly worked as a courtesan.³² Primat noted that she was a prostitute who was linked to Justinian before he became emperor. Although Primat mostly referred to Theodora in a complimentary manner, he did note that people were outraged at the fact that a 'deranged female slave from a foreign country' could become empress.³³ By choosing to include this comment in his compilation, Primat may have been revealing his true feelings. Though in reality Theodora and Justinian were married before he was made emperor, the *Grandes Chroniques* relays the order of events differently.³⁴ Theodora is noted as being 'very wise' and prophesising, after spying an eagle flying above them, that Justinian would become emperor.³⁵ According to Primat, Theodora then made Justinian promise that after he became emperor he would not 'despise [her] and judge [her] unworthy of [his] bed and of [his] embraces'.³⁶ After he was made emperor, Justinian recognised the promise he had made, and Theodora was 'dressed with imperial garments, and ever after ... called Augusta'.³⁷ The fact that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Egypt were saints who had once been prostitutes proved that former prostitutes were able to become holy through repentance.³⁸ Mary Magdalene was particularly well known in the thirteenth century, with many religious institutes of the Order of St. Mary Magdalene established throughout Europe at this time.³⁹ Primat, as a monk, would have been aware of

³⁰ Primat stated that Guntram (r. 561-592), king of Orleans, was a good man who had one vice, 'he was excessively given to lechery and adultery, supporting women who were not his legal wives, and turning from those to whom he was legally married'. Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, p. 98.

³¹ She is named Antonia in his *Roman* but is commonly known as Theodora.

³² L. Garland, *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527-1204*, London, Routledge, 2014, p. 11.

³³ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, p. 58.

³⁴ For the historical timeline: Garland, *Byzantine Empresses*, p. 12.

³⁵ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, p. 56.

³⁶ Primat, bk. 2, p. 56.

³⁷ Primat, bk. 2, p. 57.

³⁸ R. Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others*, 3rd edn, Abingdon, Routledge, 2017, p. 44.

³⁹ For the establishment of the religious houses: J. Brundage, 'Sex and Canon Law', in V. Bullough and J. Brundage (ed.), *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, New York, Garland Publishing, 1996, p. 45.

these saints, which may have influenced his inclusion of the passage. Indeed, he demonstrated that once a prostitute repented, she could lead a holy life just as the prostitute saints had.

It was also in Capetian interests for Primat to show that a queen was pious, even when she was known to have arranged multiple murders. In order to do so, he made clear that she was seen to be fully repentant of her actions. Fredegund (d. 596/597), the sixth-century queen and wife of Chilperic I (r. 560/61-584), is noted as arranging the murders of numerous women and men, both royal and common. The first murder attributed to her was the murder of her predecessor, Galswinth (d. 568). Scheming a way to become queen herself, Fredegund convinced Chilperic to strangle Galswinth.⁴⁰ Primat disapproved, stating that '[Chilperic] was insane, to have soiled the beauty and honor of such a noble marriage, in obedience to the urging of a foolish woman'.⁴¹ Indeed, following the tale of Galswinth's death, Primat included mention of a miracle that occurred at her tomb which showed her to be a martyr.⁴² Later, Fredegund arranged the murder of Sigebert, Chilperic's half-brother, by casting an 'evil spell' over two men and ordering them to kill him.⁴³ In order to quell their fears about the sin they would be committing, Fredegund promised that she would 'give alms for their souls, and offer oblation to the saints' if they were killed so that God would forgive them.⁴⁴ Thus, Fredegund is shown to be aware of the sin she is arranging to be committed. Primat also included the needless murder of her stepson, noting that she went 'wild with rage' after hearing false rumours, and needlessly tortured various people before arranging his death.⁴⁵ She is also blamed for the murder of Chilperic after he discovered her affair.⁴⁶

Though he noted many stories of Fredegund's homicidal actions, Primat was sure to include her remorse and subsequent piety which emerged when she was desperate and facing trials. He noted that Fredegund acknowledged that she and Chilperic were being punished by God for their combined crimes when their children began to die.⁴⁷ This caused her to 'put aside

⁴⁰ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, pp. 102-103. Other variations of this historical event suggest that Chilperic arranged for Galswinth's death, rather than doing the deed himself. See: Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 89; Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, p. 37.

⁴¹ Primat, bk. 3, p. 103.

⁴² Primat, bk. 3, p. 103. E. T. Daily drew a similar conclusion from Gregory of Tours' passage concerning the same event. See: E. Dailey, *Queens, Consorts, Concubines: Gregory of Tours and Women of the Merovingian Elite*, Leiden, Brill, 2015, p. 120.

⁴³ Primat, bk. 3, p. 112.

⁴⁴ Primat, bk. 3, p. 112.

⁴⁵ Primat, bk. 3, p. 143.

⁴⁶ Primat, bk. 3, p. 155; Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, p. 42. The murder of Chilperic is also sometimes attributed to Brunhild, see: L. Huneycutt, 'Power: Medieval Women's Power through Authority, Autonomy, and Influence', in K. Phillips (ed.), *A Cultural History of Women in the Middle Ages*, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 158.

⁴⁷ Primat, bk. 3, pp. 132-133.

the cruelty of the savage beast, and [clothe] her heart with human compassion'.⁴⁸ She repented of all the wrong they had done and begged Chilperic to join her in prayer. Primat's adoption of the passage sought to demonstrate to his audience that Fredegund had turned to God and acknowledged that she had lived an unholy life. This was perhaps in keeping with his religious vocation, as it suggested that a restoration of goodness and piety comes to those who are repentant and forgiven. More importantly, however, Primat obviously wished to write his book in favour of the Capetians, and as such, he included the story of repentance to maintain the 'pious Capetian lineage' image.

If a queen was personally implicated in murder she was still revered as a pious woman in Primat's *Roman*. His portrayal of Brunhild provides a good example of this complicated paradox. A few Merovingian writers, such as Gregory of Tours, described her in a positive light.⁴⁹ However, Gregory's positive view of Brunhild was swiftly contradicted by later chroniclers who portrayed Brunhild in a negative light.⁵⁰ Primat selected stories which noted her as being 'faithless and outrageously brutal', stating that 'she arranged many murders' and that 'so many kings and princes of France perished at her hands'.⁵¹ The first man she arranged to have killed following her marriage was Gogo, an emissary sent to collect her for her upcoming marriage to Sigebert.⁵² Indeed, Primat noted that Gogo should have deserted rather than have brought Brunhild to Sigebert, as she was 'more vicious than any savage beast'.⁵³ Though Primat included the fact that Brunhild arranged for his death by strangulation, in reality, Gogo outlived the king.⁵⁴ This suggests that this was a false story created by a later chronicler, presumably to emphasise Brunhild's brutal nature. Her brutality in Primat's account is solidified through a story he noted of her striking a baby named Meroveus 'so powerfully with a stone, that she made his head fly'.⁵⁵ Robert Levine states that Aimoin of Fleury, whose chronicle was heavily relied upon by Primat during his composition of the *Roman*, does not mention the fact that the baby's head flew off.⁵⁶ Patrick Geary, on the other hand, suggests that

⁴⁸ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, p. 132.

⁴⁹ It has been suggested that Brunhild had a role to play in the appointment of Gregory as bishop of Tours which may have influenced his writing. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 126. For more on Gregory: A. Cain, 'Gregory of Tours', in G. Dunphy (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 1, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 734-735.

⁵⁰ Wood, p. 126. Constance Bouchard recognised the shift towards seeing the Merovingian period as a 'dark, uncultured period' by the Carolingian publicists, and noted that this view continued to be held until recently. See: C. Bouchard, 'Images of the Merovingians and Carolingians', *History Compass*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2006, pp. 302-303.

⁵¹ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, p. 101.

⁵² Primat, bk. 2, p. 101.

⁵³ Primat, bk. 2, p. 101.

⁵⁴ For Gogo outliving the king: Dailey, *Queens, Consorts, Concubines*, p. 120.

⁵⁵ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 4, p. 201.

⁵⁶ Primat, bk. 4, p. 201, n. 222.

King Theuderic, the boy's uncle, ordered Meroveus' death,⁵⁷ which suggests other chronicles wrote the tale differently. Primat, therefore, almost certainly purposefully included Brunhild's involvement, and the brutal nature of the child's death, to emphasise the horror of her actions. This was not an unusual turn of events and is in fact reminiscent of the way chroniclers approached sensitive issues involving the ruler. For example, Chris Jones notes that Primat's near contemporary and a fellow Benedictine, Geoffroi of Courlon, intentionally misrepresented the 1214 battle of Bouvines in order to demonstrate 'harmony and cooperation' between the king and the emperor.⁵⁸ Primat's inclusion of this story did not, however, influence his inclusion of Brunhild's faith, which was highly commended.

The separation of the homicidal and pious natures of a queen such as Brunhild may have been the result of Primat wishing to highlight the ongoing importance placed on orthodox Christianity by the royal family; the Capetians at this point were effectively curating an image of royal piety.⁵⁹ First, Primat noted that although Brunhild had been born and raised in the Arian heresy, she was baptised before her marriage.⁶⁰ This is a point sometimes left out of chronicles. Fredegar, for example, did not include her baptism in his chronicle, which meant that his readers were left with the impression that she remained an Arian and, therefore, a heretic.⁶¹ Primat thus showed her to be a good Christian queen. Second, Primat praised the extent of her generosity towards the Church, stating '[s]he founded so many churches and other buildings ... that one can scarcely believe that one woman could have built so much in her own lifetime'.⁶² Indeed, her immense donation to a Church mission was noted by Pope Gregory I.⁶³ Third, Primat included the fact that 'she had great reverence for the churches of the saints, both male and female', and that she praised St Martin above all others.⁶⁴ Fourth, he noted that many holy fathers prospered in the kingdom while she was in power.⁶⁵ Though Suzanne Wemple posits that part of the reason Brunhild died was that she had made 'the fatal mistake of not

⁵⁷ P. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 152.

⁵⁸ Jones, *The Medieval Chronicle*, p. 81. The battle of Bouvines witnessed the defeat of Emperor Otto IV by the French king Philip II. Geoffroi, however, intentionally separated the two, and wrote that Philip won his battle against the French barons, not Otto, while Otto was said to have had a battle on the same day, with a royal knight. Jones, pp. 80-81. For more on Geoffroi of Courlon: R. Rech, 'Geoffrey of Collion', in G. Dunphy (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 1, Leiden, Brill, 2010, p. 681.

⁵⁹ Field, *Isabelle of France*, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, p. 100.

⁶¹ Dailey, *Queens, Consorts, Concubines*, p. 120. For more on Fredegar: S. Rosik, 'Fredegar', in G. Dunphy (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 1, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 637-638.

⁶² Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 4, p. 206.

⁶³ Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 130.

⁶⁴ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 4, pp. 205-206.

⁶⁵ Primat, bk. 4, p. 206.

maintaining at least the pretense of trying to accommodate churchmen,' and therefore did not receive their support and loyalty,⁶⁶ Primat did not allude to any discontent from the Church as a whole, demonstrating his belief that she could be regarded as a pious queen.

By including tales of redemption, acknowledgment of sin, and love of God, Primat was able to demonstrate to his royal readers that the 'right way to live' was to live a good, repentant, and pious life. Primat acknowledged each queen's sinful behaviour, yet despite this, he did not fail to recognise her pious actions. His recognition of piety was influenced by each queen's relationship with the Church. This may have been because Primat was a churchman; his inclusion of the pious acts may have been determined by contemporary ideas, and an attempt to remind the current and future queens of the nature of God, sin, and repentance. Two years after Primat completed his *Roman*, Marie of Brabant, the wife of Philip III was, likely falsely, accused of murdering her stepson.⁶⁷ Primat's words may have allowed her some comfort and encouragement, namely that even if people believed she had arranged the murder, her pious reputation might remain untarnished if her behaviour reflected accepted Christian practices. As a churchman, Primat may have felt it was his duty to prove that God could be harsh but fair, as seen with the deaths of Fredegund's children. However, he also demonstrated that a queen could still be viewed as devout if she had committed a mortal sin. Through the inclusion of these tales, he reinforced the piety of the Capetian line, thus strengthening their pious image and the idea that they were God's chosen rulers.

Religious Influence

That a queen was able to influence the religious devotion of the current or future ruler was a fact acknowledged and encouraged in both the *Roman des rois* and the *Vie de Saint Louis*. A queen's ability to exert influence was a well-recognised fact in contemporary medieval society, so the perception of this power came down to how she used it. Her ability to influence the king could be viewed in two ways. Many of the chronicles included tales of a queen negatively influencing the king, as will be explored in Chapters 3 and 4. However, if a queen interceded on behalf of the Church, this was a good use of her power and was thus portrayed in a positive light. Primat included multiple examples of a queen using her religious devotion to influence the king, sometimes diverging from the traditional narrative in order to prove this point.

⁶⁶ Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, p. 70.

⁶⁷ For the accusation of Marie: J. Bradbury, *The Capetians: Kings of France 987-1328*, London, Hambledon Continuum, 2007, p. 238.

Joinville acknowledged a queen's influence over the piety of the future king. Primat also noted cases where a queen's bad behaviour pushed the king towards God. This was a positive outcome and thus helped preserve the pious image of the royal line. In including these examples, each chronicler attempted to encourage queens to use their ability to influence for the good of the kingdom and emphasised the holy nature of the Capetian line.

Primat showed that if a king was not a Christian, a good queen would convert him to the Christian faith. The opportunity a queen had to influence the king in matters of religion was well-known. Indeed, in the medieval period, churchmen would often encourage queens to influence their husband in favour of the Church and towards good Christian behaviour.⁶⁸ Primat included a passage detailing how St Clotild converted her husband Clovis I to the Christian faith. Primat noted that Clotild, a Burgundian princess,⁶⁹ was originally hesitant to marry the pagan king, but accepted that if it was God's will, she would do so.⁷⁰ After the marriage took place she attempted to convert Clovis to the Christian faith, but his conversion was shown to be difficult. Though Clotild tried to persuade him, he time and again refused to accept her God. Furthermore, he blamed the deaths of his children on the fact they had been baptised into the Christian faith.⁷¹ The king's conversion is later credited to a revelation during a battle against the Germans. Certain he was going to lose, Clovis prayed, acknowledging that Clotild was completely devoted to God, and promised to convert to the faith if he was granted victory.⁷² After winning the battle, he told Clotild about his revelation and was baptised after she asked for a bishop to come to the castle before he could change his mind.⁷³ Primat noted Clovis as saying that he would attempt to convert his people in order to show the depth of his newfound faith.⁷⁴ This would have marked the start of the Christian Frankish kingdom in Primat's eyes.⁷⁵ The Capetians also made this link, tracing their lineage back to Clovis,⁷⁶ likely in an attempt to strengthen their pious image.

While Primat credited Clotild as the inspiration behind Clovis' conversion, historians have suggested other possible motivations, which suggests that Primat's inclusion of the tale

⁶⁸ M. Erler and M. Kowaleski, 'Introduction', in M. Erler and M. Kowaleski (ed.), *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, Athens, GA, University of Georgia Press, 1988, p. 11.

⁶⁹ For Clotild's heritage: E. James, *The Origins of France: From Clovis to the Capetians 500-1000*, Basingstoke, Macmillan Education Ltd, 1987, p. 28.

⁷⁰ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 1, p. 37.

⁷¹ Primat, bk. 1, p. 39.

⁷² Primat, bk. 1, p. 39.

⁷³ Primat, bk. 1, p. 40.

⁷⁴ Primat, bk. 1, p. 40.

⁷⁵ However, the actual number of people who converted as a result of Clovis' conversion is disputed. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 48.

⁷⁶ Wood, *Order and Innovation*, p. 395.

was a calculated act. Ian Wood has compared two contemporary accounts of the conversion. The first, written by Gregory of Tours, mentioned Clotild and divine intervention during the battle, much as Primat did. The second, written by Avitus of Vienne, instead ascribed the decision to convert to Clovis' intelligence and personal choice. After comparing these two sources, Wood posits that the historical reality was that Clovis' conversion was a personal decision due to the 'propaganda value' of being seen as the defender of the Christian faith.⁷⁷ Another recent scholar, Janet Nelson, suggests the conversion of Clovis occurred so he could expand his ally base.⁷⁸ Wemple puts forward a similar theory.⁷⁹ The fact that Primat framed the story of Clovis' conversion around Clotild was, therefore, included to be an example to the Capetian queens that they should be involved in their husband's religiosity, encouraging him closer to God. Primat was probably influenced in this belief by the words of St Paul: 'the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife'.⁸⁰ Furthermore, Primat may have been both influenced by and making an attempt to demonstrate Clotild's similarity to a biblical figure, the Virgin Mary. The projected image of Mary was altered throughout history, and in the thirteenth century it became one where she had a 'beautiful, feminine figure'.⁸¹ As Miri Rubin notes, the thirteenth-century idea of Mary was 'an ideal type for young womanhood: accepting, obedient, beautiful and full of grace'.⁸² Similarly, Primat described Clotild as a virgin 'who was unusually beautiful', and describes her dedication to her faith and to helping the poor.⁸³ By shaping the image of Clotild to resemble Mary, he was able to better demonstrate the holiness of the origins of the royal family.

Primat approved of a queen's influence over the religious upbringing of and beliefs held by her offspring. Queens were often tasked with raising their children,⁸⁴ and a woman's role in the Middle Ages included overseeing her children's religious practice.⁸⁵ Clotild's influence over her children is described in the *Roman* through the recounting of an organised battle between her two sons, Childebert and Lothar. Upon hearing this news, Clotild is described as having prostrated herself and prayed to God to spare her the pain of 'having born and brought up children of such great brutality that they may not spare one another'.⁸⁶ As a

⁷⁷ Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 48.

⁷⁸ J. Nelson, *The Frankish World 750-900*, London, The Hambledon Press, 1996, p. 100.

⁷⁹ Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, p. 9.

⁸⁰ I Cor. 7:14.

⁸¹ Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 211.

⁸² Rubin, p. 214.

⁸³ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 1, p. 36.

⁸⁴ Nelson, *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, p. 194.

⁸⁵ Vecchio, *A History of Women in the West*, p. 124.

⁸⁶ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, p. 77.

result of her prayer, a sudden thunderstorm above the battlefield diffused the tension between the brothers.⁸⁷ The inclusion of this passage affirms that Clotild's faith could work to the advantage of her family, and indeed, help to create harmony across the kingdom. He reinforced to the reader that a queen engaging with God could bring positive outcomes for her family and kingdom.

Joinville also placed importance on a mother's involvement in her child's religious upbringing. In his *Vie de Saint Louis*, Joinville credits Blanche with Louis IX's devout nature, stating that God 'safeguarded [Louis'] soul through the pious teachings of his mother'.⁸⁸ Indeed, it is acknowledged by historians that Blanche 'instilled in the young Louis a set of religious values that would remain with him all his life'.⁸⁹ The depth of Blanche's own faith can be summed up by the fact that Blanche once told Louis, for whom she had great affection, that 'she would rather he were dead than that he commit a mortal sin'.⁹⁰ This suggests that Blanche placed the utmost importance on Louis' religious education, which influenced his devout nature. Indeed, Blanche's efforts were rewarded – Louis was widely revered for his religiosity.⁹¹ This, in turn, strongly helped to solidify the Capetians' pious image.

Primat indicated the coexistence of piety with sinful behaviour. In this context, he shifted the focus from a queen's evil actions to the good impact she had on her husband. As noted previously, following the deaths of many of her family members, Fredegund acknowledged that she and Chilperic were being punished by God for their wrongful actions and she convinced him to join her in prayer. Primat reported that Chilperic 'softened the hardness of his nature' after talking to her and 'burned the documents in which the decrees had been written to do harm to the people',⁹² demonstrating the positive influence she had over her husband's actions. It is likely that Fredegund's own actions were so widely recognised as being sinful that showing the positive impact they had on the king's religiosity may have been the only avenue left open to Primat in attempting to show the royal family in a pious light.

Both Primat and Joinville recognised a queen's ability to influence her family's religious beliefs, made possible by the intimate proximity she had to her husband and children which was encouraged – as long as it was for good. In writing the early history of the Frankish

⁸⁷ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, p. 77.

⁸⁸ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 163, §71.

⁸⁹ M. Gaposchkin and S. Field, 'Introduction', in M. Gaposchkin and S. Field (ed.), *Sanctity of Louis IX: Early lives of Saint Louis by Geoffrey of Beaulieu and William of Chartres*, trans. L. Field, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2014, p. 2.

⁹⁰ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 164, §71.

⁹¹ Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, p. 162.

⁹² Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, p. 133.

kingdom, Primat had to include some of the most well-recognised sinful women in its history. By including accounts of their redemption and their similarity to popular saints, it is likely that he was using their inclusion to demonstrate to rulers how not to act and to encourage the belief that the royal line was intrinsically holy. He also drew attention to those ‘good’ queens who continuously exhibited piety, including individual examples where a queen was able to use her faith to ease tensions and bring peace or, in one instance, to secure her husband’s faith and thus convert the Franks. Demonstrating this was of importance as the Capetians traced their origins to Clovis I.⁹³ Joinville, by helping to prove the religious nature of Louis’ family, also helped the propaganda campaign to establish the ‘pious’ royal family. Thus, both chroniclers acknowledged the importance of a queen’s involvement in matters of religion.

It is clear, from the number of pious queens included in each chronicle, that Primat had much more to say on queenship and piety than Joinville; the Minstrel made no mention of queens acting in a pious manner. As the Minstrel’s *Récits* were a collection of stories designed for entertainment, it can be concluded that he did not find the topic entertaining or of interest to his audience. It also suggests that he did not feel the need to remind his audience of the need for queens to be pious, which may indicate that contemporary queens were viewed by a noble audience as (correctly) upholding pious values – they were, indeed, pious. Instead, when discussing queens, the Minstrel often focused on the notion of marriage and love, and women ruling and dispensing advice. As Joinville’s *Vie de Saint Louis* was commissioned to be a history of Louis, Blanche and Margaret’s inclusion was not unusual, especially as they helped in building the context for Louis’ holiness. The *Roman* was written by a monk, who thus leant more towards detailing the pious nature of the queens than either Joinville or the Minstrel.

As each of the chronicles by Primat and Joinville can be categorised or partially categorised as a ‘mirror-for-princes’, they allow insights into each chronicler’s beliefs concerning queenship and piety. It can be concluded that the overriding factor in both of these chronicles is the promotion of the idea that the Capetians were holy. In writing chronicles for a family concerned with its pious image, each chronicler must have decided it was in their best interests to highlight the ongoing and constant piety exhibited throughout the royal line. In addition, both chroniclers acknowledged that a queen had the ability to influence a king’s

⁹³ Wood, *Joan of Arc and Richard III*, p. 21.

religious beliefs. By attributing conversions, peace through prayer, and devotion to the activities of queens, both Primat and Joinville show they supported and encouraged a woman's involvement as long as it supported the religiosity of her husband and offspring. It is also clear that the chroniclers believed that demonstrating devotion to the saints was a respectable way to show piety. This could be done through donations of land to the churches of the saints, displaying affection to recognised saint's offspring, and turning to saints in times of trial. Generosity to the Church is also one of the ways in which a queen who had sinned could redeem herself. The other was through repentance, and this remained the case from prostitution through to murder. Though Primat did not approve of the sinning queens' actions, he acknowledged their acceptance of wrongdoing and noted their generosity in donations and the foundation of abbeys. However, chroniclers were less forgiving when it came to sexual promiscuity without repentance.

Chapter 3: Views on Queenship and Sexual Agency

A queen's sexual transgression was undesirable. It could threaten the legitimacy of the royal family's claim to rule through the possibility of producing a royal bastard, and thus could raise doubt over the legitimacy of the royal line. The stability of the kingdom could also be called into question if a queen chose to leave her husband; divorce could lead to loss of dowry lands and political alliances. This chapter shows that Primat and the Minstrel of Reims reinforced the idea that a queen should behave in a chaste and subordinate manner, almost certainly because a queen acting submissively would help ensure the stability of the kingdom.

While both Primat and the Minstrel stated their views on queenship and sexuality, Joinville did not express his thoughts on the matter. This can be put down to the fact that his purpose in writing, combined with his subject matter, did not provide any need for comment. Joinville set out to write the history of Louis IX and placed his focus largely on the king's crusade effort. Of the queens and female rulers that Joinville discusses, he found no reason to discuss any transgressions. Indeed, Joinville did not comment on Blanche's life prior to her marriage to Louis VIII, except to say that she had come from Spain.¹ Though Nancy Goldstone has suggested that there may have been real life adultery between Margaret and Joinville, citing verses in which there was an apparent closeness between the two,² this is no more than conjecture. Even if it was true, Joinville was hardly likely to broadcast that he had had an affair with the king's wife, in a book intended to glorify Louis.

French society in the thirteenth century was exposed to various ideas regarding sexual agency. In the Middle Ages, the Church tended to view women as subordinate and inferior to men. This was reinforced, for example, through their teachings of Eve and the subsequent Fall of mankind,³ as well as the teachings of Paul in Ephesians and Colossians.⁴ Margaret Labarge suggests that churchmen's desire to demonstrate the inferiority of women stemmed from the fact that, with the majority having taken vows of celibacy, they saw women as 'threats to their chastity', maintaining a 'panicky view of the strength of feminine sexuality'.⁵ They therefore promulgated the belief that the existence of sin was due to Eve as this 'provided an adequate explanation to justify woman's inferior position and reinforced man's God-given right to rule over her'.⁶ For example, Eve's actions in the Garden of Eden could be seen as the

¹ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 164, §72.

² Goldstone, *Four Queens*, p. 226.

³ Ward, *English Noblewomen*, p. 2.

⁴ Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18.

⁵ M. Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life: A Small Sound of the Trumpet*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1987, p. xii.

⁶ Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life*, p. xii.

‘manifestation of female nature, of inborn disobedience and weakness towards the temptations of evil’.⁷ Examples for women’s inferiority were indeed drawn from the Bible. In Genesis, Eve’s position is noted as being ‘a helper for man’.⁸ Some took this as an indication that women were designed to be ‘subservient and submissive’ to men.⁹ This lesson was later reinforced and spread through the Epistles of Saint Paul.¹⁰ ‘Science’ was also thought to prove a woman’s inferiority. Thomas Aquinas put forward the idea that a conceived child would always be a boy unless a defect was present, in which case the child would be a girl; a girl was, in other words, ‘nothing but a “misconceived male”’.¹¹ Ideas such as these reinforced the Church’s teachings surrounding women, and these views can be seen in both *Primat* and the *Minstrel*’s texts. Popular contemporary romance literature, on the other hand, often detailed adulterous relationships and other such sinful sexual behaviour.

Medieval sexuality has been an object of much academic attention since the late twentieth century.¹² James Brundage, a key figure in the field, has written or edited a number of prominent works concerning all aspects of medieval sexuality; his 1987 book *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* remains a seminal text.¹³ Authors of studies concerning medieval marriage and family have tended to delve into ideas surrounding sexual agency in the Middle Ages.¹⁴ In particular, studies of queens and queenship often touch on these matters. Eleanor of Aquitaine, for example, is the subject of a wide catalogue of biographies and studies, and many of these works discuss the rumours of infidelity that surrounded her.¹⁵ Studies have shown that medieval views on sexuality were nuanced and depended on, for example, class or

⁷ J. Bumke, *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages*, trans. T. Dunlap, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1991, p. 327.

⁸ Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, p. 327. ‘[L]et us make him a help like unto himself’. Genesis 2:18.

⁹ Bumke, p. 327.

¹⁰ Bumke, p. 327.

¹¹ Bumke, p. 328.

¹² J. Brundage and V. Bullough, ‘Introduction’, in V. Bullough and J. Brundage (ed.), *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, New York, Garland Publishing, 1996, p. ix.

¹³ See: J. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1987. Other works exclusively focused on medieval sexuality include: V. Bullough and J. Brundage (ed.), *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, Amherst, Prometheus Books, 1994; Bullough and Brundage, *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*; Harper, *A Cultural History of Women in the Middle Ages*, pp. 39-58; Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe*.

¹⁴ See, for example: G. Duby, *The Knight, The Lady and The Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. B. Bray, New York, Pantheon Books, 1983, who discusses adultery and concubinage throughout his work. See also: G. Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, trans. J. Dunnett, Chicago, The Chicago University Press, 1994.

¹⁵ See, for example: G. Duby, *Women of the Twelfth Century: Volume One: Eleanor of Aquitaine and Six Others*, trans. J. Birrell, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1997, pp. 6-10, 13; P. McCracken, ‘Scandalizing Desire; Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Chroniclers’, in B. Wheeler and J. Parsons (ed.), *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, pp. 247-263; Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend*, pp. 105-107.

religion.¹⁶ The central thesis of Ruth Karras' *Sexuality in Medieval Europe* posits that there was no single idea surrounding acceptable sexual behaviour.

Despite the fact that there was a fluidity of medieval ideas surrounding medieval sexual agency, Primat and the Minstrel, who might be expected to differ on this subject given their backgrounds, can be shown to have subscribed to the same values. This is almost certainly because they were both writing for an aristocratic audience. The first section of this chapter reveals that even the idea of a queen's infidelity attracted a negative response due to the dangers that could befall the kingdom as a result. Second, this chapter demonstrates that ideas around women choosing their own husbands were nuanced, receiving varying levels of disapproval, though ultimately the chroniclers came to the same conclusion: that it could be dangerous for the kingdom if a queen exerted autonomy. Third, it is found that each chronicler believed strongly in the idea of purity and chastity, though Primat showed that this could be overruled if it was for the good of the kingdom. Together, these chronicles show that the idea that women were potentially immoral beings and needed to be encouraged in the path to purity was widespread. If women behaved morally, the peace of the kingdom could partly be guaranteed. Primat wrote his chronicle for the royal family and as he intended his work to be a 'mirror', these examples were selected as they conveyed the ideas he wished to get across, in this case, that queens should be loyal and supportive of their husbands. Though the Minstrel was open to romantic influences, he also took an ecclesiastical and royalist view, thus helping to consolidate the idea that a queen should embody these ideal characteristics for the good of the kingdom.

Infidelity

Both the Minstrel and Primat showed their audience the harm that could befall the king and kingdom should a queen decide to conduct an affair. While ordinarily, a wife committing adultery would bring great shame on her husband,¹⁷ a queen committing adultery was viewed as a serious threat as it called into question the stability and success of both the king's reign and the security of the kingdom itself. Indeed, it could also be viewed as a form of treason.¹⁸ As summarised by Theresa Earenfight, queens 'were integral to the power structure of the

¹⁶ See, for example: McCarthy, *Love, Sex and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, which compiles ecclesiastical, legal, and literary sources, along with letters, chronicles, biography, conduct books, and medical writings to show the diverse opinions held by medieval English society.

¹⁷ A. Harper, 'Punishing Adultery, Private Violence, Public Honor, Literature, and the Law', *Haskins Society Journal*, vol. 28, 2016, p. 171.

¹⁸ Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, p. 23.

monarchy', in other words, they were not just viewed as women, but as part of the monarchy and hence were integrally important.¹⁹ Through his inclusion of a fictitious tale concerning Eleanor of Aquitaine, the Minstrel highlighted the negative consequences of infidelity by linking it to the failure of the Second Crusade and, as will be discussed in the following section, the rise of the Plantagenets. Primat's story of Fredegund and her lover, Landry, explored the dangers associated with a queen's intimate proximity to the king and fears of illegitimacy. Indeed, the fear of illegitimate children appears to be the main cause of the chroniclers' concern due to the instability it could introduce to the royal line. Overall, both chroniclers showed that a queen committing infidelity could negatively affect the kingdom, though neither went so far as to detail queens *actually committing* adultery as courtly literature such as *Tristan and Iseult* did. By alluding to the act, they were able to show the consequences without bringing the royal family into disrepute.

While infidelity brought with it many fears, it was the fear of illegitimate children which was of primary concern due to the instability it could bring to the line of succession. The expectation of monogamy in a royal marriage, particularly on the part of a queen, guaranteed the indisputable legitimacy of her offspring. A queen's primary role was to guarantee legitimate royal succession.²⁰ This was demonstrated time and again by the repudiation of queens who did not bear male children. Thus, adultery and the possibility of illegitimate children were taken very seriously. In Castile, for example, legislation was passed to prevent queenly adultery due to the fact it 'dishonoured the king and endangered the royal line'.²¹ In medieval literature, as noted by Georges Duby, 'adultery, though consummated, was barren. Bastardy was too serious a matter to be treated lightly even in literature.'²² Occasionally, literary works would contain mention of children conceived through adulterous relationships, but never in the case of the queen, where power and legitimacy would be put on the line.²³ Chronicles, as a form of history, did not adhere to the literary trope. Primat wrote that Fredegund, in an attempt to convince Landry to orchestrate the mortal sin of murder, promised that once the king was dead, they would reign together, with *their* son, implying that Landry was the father.²⁴ Though Primat

¹⁹ Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, p. 126.

²⁰ Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life*, p. 44.

²¹ Nelson, *Women in Medieval Western European Culture*, p. 193.

²² Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest*, p. 222.

²³ P. McCracken, 'The Body Politic and the Queen's Adulterous Body in French Romance', in L. Lomperis and S. Stanbury (ed.), *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, p. 40.

²⁴ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, p. 155.

alluded to a child born of the affair, he did not go so far as to claim that the child was indeed illegitimate as that could influence the public's perception of Capetian legitimacy.

Adultery was punished in royal courts in the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries. During Louis IX's reign, a case was brought forward in which an adulterous woman had asked her lover to murder her husband. Even though she repented and the queen, as well as other members of the court asked Louis to spare her, Louis decided to have her punished through a public burning,²⁵ thus sending a message that this behaviour was unacceptable. Between Louis IX and Philip IV, as Georges Duby aptly summarises, '[f]rivolity ... possessed the French court, where strict morality had previously held sway'.²⁶ Under the reign of Philip IV, two wives of the king's sons were accused of adultery, and morality once again came to the fore. As punishment, '[t]he men were castrated and burnt alive, the guilty princesses imprisoned in Château-Gaillard. One died of cold the first winter, the other mouldered there for many years and ended her days in a convent'.²⁷ It is clear that the royal family took adultery seriously and wished to make a spectacle and an example of those who were found guilty. The chroniclers, reinforcing this view, showed that adultery was to be discouraged.

The Minstrel relayed one of the most famous stories about adultery within the royal family - that of Eleanor of Aquitaine during the Second Crusade. It is accepted historical fact that Eleanor and her first husband, Louis VII (r. 1137-1180), resided with Raymond, Eleanor's uncle, while in Antioch during the Second Crusade.²⁸ The perceived closeness between Eleanor and Raymond created a surge of courtly gossip that led to many chroniclers detailing the story of an affair.²⁹ This adulterous tale was adapted in the thirteenth century by the Minstrel who replaced Raymond with the renowned leader of the Muslims, Saladin.³⁰ The Minstrel recorded that Eleanor 'conceived a great passion for [Saladin] in her heart', and made plans to join him. Before she could make her escape, the king was alerted, and after discovering Eleanor with one foot on a boat, he brought her back and shortly afterwards returned to France. Later, his barons encouraged him to divorce her, citing that she was 'a devil' and had yet to bear him a

²⁵ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 705.

²⁶ G. Duby, *France in the Middle Ages 987 – 1460: From Hugh Capet to Joan of Arc*, trans. J. Vale, Oxford, Blackwell, 1991, p. 268.

²⁷ Duby, *France in the Middle Ages*, p. 268. For more on the affairs: Adams, *Viator*, pp. 165-192.

²⁸ For a summary of the relationships between Louis, Eleanor, and Raymond: Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, pp. 133-134; Bennett, *Gendering the Crusades*, pp. 22-23.

²⁹ It is worth noting that Odo of Deuil, the main eyewitness chronicler for the Second Crusade, barely mentioned Eleanor, let alone discussed an affair. Hodgson suggests that Eleanor was removed from Odo's work, likely following her divorce from Louis. Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, p. 131.

³⁰ The Minstrel also switched Antioch to Tyre.

child (*enfant*).³¹ The discounting of female progeny demonstrates the importance the Minstrel placed on bearing a male heir, as in reality, Louis and Eleanor's daughter Marie (b. 1145) was born two years before the Second Crusade began and their second child Alix (b. 1151) was born once they had returned to France.³² That the relationship between Eleanor and Saladin was fabricated is indisputable. Though there are no surviving references to Saladin's birth,³³ it is widely accepted that Saladin was just a boy when Eleanor was on crusade.³⁴

By working common literary genres into his account, the Minstrel was likely pandering to his audience's desire for entertainment. As Matthew Bennett suggests, it may be that the Minstrel sought to bring into his work the 'noble Saracen' genre,³⁵ a literary trend that saw some Muslims portrayed as noble despite being infidels. Indeed, Saladin, in much medieval literature, became 'the personification of Arab honor and magnanimity'.³⁶ The Minstrel aligns with this view, highlighting Louis' ineptitudes and contrasting them with Saladin's great achievements and thereby showing Saladin to be a justifiable and desirable choice.³⁷ A noble audience would, in all likelihood, have known the original version of the story and, therefore, would have known that the Saladin and Eleanor tale was not true. The popular twelfth-century chronicler William of Tyre alluded to an affair, while Peggy McCracken suggests that Gervase of Canterbury and Richard of Devizes, in not discussing details but alluding to the situation, were employing a literary device known as the 'topos of secrecy' which drew attention to a well-known scandal without relaying the details.³⁸ As his primary aim was almost certainly an entertained audience, the fact that the Minstrel decided to replace Raymond with Saladin suggests that he did not believe the tale about Raymond to be sufficiently entertaining; by this

³¹ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 2, p. 13. 'Et ensourquetout vous n'avez nul enfant de li'. Minstrel of Reims, *Récits d'un ménestrel de Reims au treizième siècle*, p. 6.

³² J. Parsons, 'Damned If She Didn't and Damned When She Did: Bodies, Babies, and Bastards in the Lives of Two Queens of France', in B. Wheeler and J. Parsons (ed.), *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 267.

³³ M. Lyons and D. Jackson, *Saladin: The Politics of Holy War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 2.

³⁴ F. Chambers, 'Some Legends Concerning Eleanor of Aquitaine', *Speculum*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1941, p. 461; Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, p. 132, McCracken, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, pp. 259-260, n. 8.

³⁵ Bennett, *Gendering the Crusades*, p. 23.

³⁶ M. Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, p. 51.

³⁷ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 2, pp. 12-13.

³⁸ McCracken, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, pp. 248-249. For more information on William of Tyre: M. Jubb, 'William of Tyre', in G. Dunphy (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 2, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 1515-1516; for Gervase of Canterbury: P. Hayward, 'Gervase of Canterbury', in G. Dunphy (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 1, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 691-692; for Richard of Devizes: P. Hayward, 'Richard of Devizes', in G. Dunphy (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 2, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 1275-1276.

time the tale had been around for a number of years. It is clear that enough time had passed that he was able to invent a new tale to entertain his audience without fearing retribution.³⁹

Though in the Minstrel's tale Eleanor only *intended* to commit adultery, the chronicler's fears over infidelity were still brought to the fore. It is clear the Minstrel did not approve of Eleanor. His description of her as 'a very evil woman',⁴⁰ and later as 'a devil',⁴¹ are the opposite of the constructed image of the ideal woman in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; the Virgin Mary was portrayed at this time as chaste and docile.⁴² Though polygamy and the presence of concubines were common in the early Middle Ages,⁴³ by the thirteenth century, the Church had 'adopted and instituted' marriage in order to monitor and control sexual practices,⁴⁴ and there was an expectation of monogamy within it.⁴⁵ Furthermore, intercourse was only to be engaged in if it was with the aim of making a child and was not to be enjoyed. It was believed that by avoiding 'worldly temptations', one was able to focus on their relationship with God.⁴⁶ Any act that fell outside of these parameters was a sin,⁴⁷ and since adultery was lust-based, it was regarded as a serious sin. Indeed, it was so serious that it was not just an ecclesiastical tribunal that punished an adulterer, the secular courts might also do so.⁴⁸ As April Harper suggests, through his linking of Eleanor to the devil and mentioning her failure to provide the kingdom with a male heir, the Minstrel expressed his disapproval over the way she used her body and sexuality.⁴⁹ Though Eleanor had not committed infidelity, the fact that the Minstrel recorded it as being imminent served to show her perceived immorality and thus reinforced this idea to his audience without actually calling into question the legitimacy of anyone in the Capetian family.

The Minstrel may also have been suggesting that Eleanor's actions helped contribute to the failure of the Second Crusade (1145-49). He noted that after Louis brought Eleanor back from the boat, Louis decided to return to France since 'in the East he had acquired only

³⁹ He was not alone in adapting the account, Eleanor was also linked to an adulterous relationship with Henry II's father, Geoffrey of Anjou. Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, p. 133.

⁴⁰ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 2, p. 12.

⁴¹ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 2, p. 13.

⁴² For the image of the Virgin Mary in the thirteenth century: Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 214.

⁴³ Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, p. 40.

⁴⁴ Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, p. 10.

⁴⁵ Jewell, *Women in Late Medieval and Reformation Europe*, p. 25.

⁴⁶ S. Bardsley, *Women's Roles in the Middle Ages*, Westport, Greenwood Press, 2007, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁷ Brundage, *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁸ It was mainly treated as a female offence. Brundage, *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, p. 42.

⁴⁹ Harper, *A Cultural History of Women in the Middle Ages*, p. 44.

dishonor'.⁵⁰ In reality, Louis and Eleanor continued on their journey towards Jerusalem.⁵¹ By distorting the facts, the Minstrel highlighted the dangers of infidelity to a kingdom's honour. As stated by Elizabeth Siberry, '[t]he crusades were holy wars and as such were believed to be sanctioned and even commanded by God';⁵² to fail in the Holy Land was to experience God's disapproval. The fact that the crusade was a failure was, thus, a matter of mystery. How could a crusade which included the first crusading French king have failed? The loss prompted many questions: was Louis still fit for office? Did he still hold God's approval?⁵³ Though many people and events were among those blamed for the failure of the venture, the majority of chroniclers attributed the loss to the sinfulness of the crusaders.⁵⁴ William of Newburgh, in his *Historia Regum Anglicarum*, blamed the failure of the Crusade on the participation of women.⁵⁵ He further suggested that it was Eleanor's participation that encouraged the presence of many more women, thus increasing sexual sin, angering God, and ultimately causing the failure of the venture.⁵⁶

Though the Minstrel finished his account approximately a decade after the failure of the Seventh Crusade, he did not intend to draw any parallels with later crusades. These did not feature royal infidelity scandals even though women accompanied men and the efforts had failed. The Minstrel linked the failure of the Second Crusade to Eleanor's attempted infidelity without mention of any other crusades or of other women accompanying men. He thus intended this to be a one-off example for entertainment. The other chroniclers examined in this thesis did not make a connection between women's sexuality and the failure of crusade. Joinville, for example, did not assign Margaret of Provence the blame for the failure of the Seventh Crusade even though she accompanied her husband, Louis IX and gave birth to three children while away. Though legitimate, this was a clear sign of sexual activity. Unlike the Minstrel's inclusion of Eleanor, Joinville did not intend for his inclusion of Margaret to suggest a reason for the crusade's failure.

While the Minstrel expressed his ideas through an account of *attempted* infidelity, fears

⁵⁰ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 2, p. 13.

⁵¹ J. Phillips, *The Second Crusade: Extending the Frontiers of Christendom*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 211.

⁵² E. Siberry, *Criticism of Crusading 1095-1274*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985, p. 69.

⁵³ A variation of these questions is put by: J. Naus, *Constructing Kingship: The Capetian Monarchs of France and the Early Crusades*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2016, p. 87.

⁵⁴ Naus, *Constructing Kingship*, p. 97. Today, it is recognised that allowing women to join the crusade actually aided the crusading effort as it allowed more men to join as they did not have to be separated from their families. Goldstone, *Four Queens*, p. 154.

⁵⁵ Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, p. 115.

⁵⁶ Hodgson, p. 115.

over what would happen if infidelity actually occurred can be seen in Primat's recounting of a tale concerning Fredegund and her alleged lover, Landry. Just before leaving to go hunting, Fredegund's husband, King Chilperic returned to the house unexpectedly, and 'playfully ... struck [Fredegund] in the curve of her behind'.⁵⁷ The queen mistook his presence for Landry and replied 'Landry, Landry, [you are] behaving badly, how dare you do this?', which caused the king to almost go 'mad with rage' through jealousy and suspicion.⁵⁸ Perceiving Landry and herself to be in danger, Fredegund told her lover to organise men to murder the king upon his return from hunting.

Contemporary events almost certainly influenced what the writers chose to include in their chronicles. The Minstrel wrote his chronicle during the reign of Louis IX, a period in which strict morality was upheld, which may have influenced his portrayal of Eleanor of Aquitaine. Primat, on the other hand, likely wrote during the reign of Philip III, a time in which Duby suggests immorality was present in the royal court.⁵⁹ As a monk writing a 'mirror' for the royal family, Primat was likely attempting to re-instil the idea that adultery was a sin. Primat's inclusion of the above story reflected a number of common fears held by society over royal infidelity. As heterosexual intercourse was a 'power-generating action', synonymous with a woman agreeing to 'respect, obey, and honor' the man's decisions,⁶⁰ a woman committing adultery brought with it the fear that she would be consequently under the control of another man. A queen committing adultery brought with it significantly more fear due to her intimate access to the king, both in proximity and influence. Having the queen under the power of another man could prove dangerous, as ideas could be fed back to the king, through the queen, to undermine his power. Primat's inclusion of a story where Fredegund organised the death of the king after her affair was discovered may have been a reflection of this fear of shifting loyalties, particularly as chroniclers did not agree that it was Fredegund's fault that Chilperic died.⁶¹ Indeed, it is clear Primat believed that a woman could be influenced by her lover, as seen by his inclusion of another example which detailed how Brunhild, wishing to advance the position of her lover Prothadius, asked for a man to be killed so that Prothadius could take his place.⁶² In highlighting and reinforcing the link between infidelity and shifting

⁵⁷ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, p. 154.

⁵⁸ Primat, bk. 3, p. 154.

⁵⁹ Duby, *France in the Middle Ages*, p. 268.

⁶⁰ H. Bagerius and C. Ekholst, 'The Unruly Queen: Blanche of Namur and Dysfunctional Rulership in Medieval Sweden', in Z. Rohr and L. Benz (ed.), *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation in the Medieval and Early Modern West, 1060-1600*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2016, p. 113.

⁶¹ See: ch. 2, n. 46.

⁶² Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 4, p. 191.

loyalties, Primat illustrated to his royal audience the dangers connected with infidelity, thus reminding them how to maintain the strength and stability of Capetian rule.

In addition, as discussed previously, there was a preoccupation in the Middle Ages concerning the importance of bloodlines. A father's blood was presumed to be 'battered into semen', and there was an idea that people 'sharing the same blood were defined as part of the same social body'.⁶³ The idea of the 'nobility of blood', along with fictitious genealogies, could also be found in hagiographies at the time.⁶⁴ Infidelity, and therefore the introduction of another man's blood, into the family was seen as a jarring interference.⁶⁵ If the blood of Clovis, or Charlemagne, was replaced in the royal line by the blood of a common man, the royal family could, therefore, not just lose its legitimacy, but also its intrinsic power.

It is alleged by Primat that the regicide of Chilperic occurred because Fredegund promised Landry, as mentioned, that if he arranged for the murder they would then reign with *their* son. However, Primat included the fact that Fredegund remained a widow which implies that she fabricated the fatherhood and deliberately lied to Landry to orchestrate the murder of the king.⁶⁶ The suggestion that Fredegund's son, Lothar II (r. 613-629) was illegitimate was not novel. In reality, Lothar's legitimacy had been challenged at the time by Fredegund's brother-in-law following Chilperic's death, which led to the queen calling upon three bishops and three hundred nobles to confirm Lothar's parentage.⁶⁷ The fact that Fredegund's promise was almost certainly an orchestrated ploy can be seen through Primat's note that she remained a widow after the death of Chilperic. By including this account, Primat showed Fredegund to be untrustworthy and treacherous while simultaneously guaranteeing the legitimate parentage of Lothar. This in turn secured the legitimacy of the subsequent royal line through to the Capetians.

Though the writing aims of the Minstrel and Primat differed, each chronicler revealed the insecurities they held over the idea of a queen being unfaithful to her husband. As seen in the *Récits*, even the idea that a queen *intended* to be unfaithful brought with it fears. The ramifications that the Minstrel connected with Eleanor's intention of leaving Louis suggested that the king and kingdom would be affected. In this case, the act was shown, in part, to be the reason behind the failure of the Second Crusade. The inclusion and lessons drawn from this story may have been a reflection of the period in which piety was of utmost importance to the

⁶³ B. Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2006, p. 135.

⁶⁴ Dunbabin, *France in the Making*, p. 135.

⁶⁵ Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood*, p. 136.

⁶⁶ For Fredegund remaining a widow: Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, p. 156.

⁶⁷ French and Poska, *Women and Gender in the Western Past*, p. 147.

royal family. When adultery *was* committed, the ramifications were shown to be more severe, such as a king being murdered. Thus, Primat demonstrated that adultery could be the gateway to much worse sin. The detailing of this story revealed fears over intercession and succession, demonstrating Primat's belief that adultery could result in upheaval in the running of the kingdom. Though the Minstrel intended his stories to be entertaining, and Primat wished to inform his audience of the rightful way to act, they both revealed to and imparted their beliefs on their audience that the kingdom was safer if a marriage was monogamous due to the assured legitimacy of the royal family, while simultaneously promoting the idea that the family were the recipients of God's favour.

Marriage and Autonomy

As a general rule, noble women were seen as valuable commodities: tools which could be used to increase land and bolster power.⁶⁸ In acting independently, women defied the normative practice of families of either the bride- or husband-to-be arranging the marriages of their offspring. Though a clandestine marriage was valid in the eyes of the Church, both ecclesiastical and secular courts disapproved of the practice.⁶⁹ While by the thirteenth century a woman's consent was required before a marriage could take place, the reality was that the voices of aristocratic women remained mostly restricted.⁷⁰ Wider society held a distaste for any queen who exercised autonomy by selecting a man to marry. Even though they had very different vocations, both Primat and the Minstrel certainly disapproved of the idea. While Primat linked independent women to sinful pasts, reinforcing their flawed nature, the Minstrel was less concerned with the sinful nature of his subject, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and instead concentrated on the harm to the kingdom that the divorce brought.

That Primat disapproved of a queen choosing her own husband can be seen in a number of examples he provides linking negative traits to erring queens. For example, he included a passage in his compilation about Basina (d. 477) who chose to abandon her husband, King Basin of Thuringia, in order to unite with King Childeric (r. 457 - 481/82). Primat included

⁶⁸ C. Opitz, 'Life in the Late Middle Ages', trans. D. Schneider, in C. Klapsich-Zuber (ed.), *A History of Women in the West: II: Silences of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, MA, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 273.

⁶⁹ For the validity of such marriages: B. Gottlieb, 'The Meaning of Clandestine Marriage', in R. Wheaton and T. Hareven (ed.), *Family and Sexuality in French History*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980, p. 51. For the views on clandestine marriages held by ecclesiastical and secular courts: C. Dunn, *Stolen Women in Medieval England: Rape, Abduction and Adultery, 1100-1500*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 111.

⁷⁰ Opitz, *A History of Women in the West*, p. 273.

many allusions to infidelity and the corrupt morals of Basina, including the allegation that Basina had slept with Childeric when he had previously stayed with her and Basin.⁷¹ It is clear that Primat disapproved of the marriage between Childeric and Basina as he noted that ‘[Childeric] married her, like the pagan he was, forgetting the benefits bestowed upon him ... by [Basin], the king of Thuringia’.⁷² By contrasting the generosity of Basin with the adulterous Childeric, Primat highlighted Basina’s bad decision to his audience.

Reaffirming his disapproval of Basina and Childeric’s union, Primat included an account predicting the downfall of the Merovingians that was not mentioned by every chronicler who discussed the marriage. He noted that on their wedding night Basina wished to be chaste and asked the king to go to the door three times and report back to her the visions she knew he would see. The first vision featured ‘unicorns, leopards, and lions’, which Basina interpreted as meaning that Childeric would have noble and strong offspring, which pleased the king.⁷³ The second and third visions of bears, wolves, dogs, and small animals she interpreted as meaning the next generation would be ‘rapacious’ and that the future rulers of France, their descendants, would be wretched and lethargic.⁷⁴ As previously noted, from the time of the Carolingians, the Merovingians were party to a propaganda campaign which set out to discredit their rule in favour of the Carolingians. It is therefore possible that this story was originally an invention conceived in order to portray the Merovingians in a bad light and to show the legitimacy of the Carolingian usurpation. This may explain the difference between the near contemporary accounts, such as that of Gregory of Tours who did not include this story, and later versions which did.⁷⁵ Primat would have been aware of the tale through his consultation of Aimoin of Fleury,⁷⁶ and made the decision to include it in his compilation, likely influenced by his desire to highlight the disastrous results of Basina’s abandonment of her husband to start a family with another. Though the inclusion of this passage could appear to undermine the Capetians, it was not until the early-fourteenth century that the idea that there was continuity between the dynasties was actively acted upon.⁷⁷ Before this, though continuity and connected lineages were promoted to help reinforce the legitimacy of the Capetian reign, there was still the idea that there were three successive changes in dynasty.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 1, p. 24. Childeric had, in fact, been banished from his kingdom for seducing the wives of others. Primat, bk. 1, p. 21.

⁷² Primat, bk. 1, p. 25.

⁷³ Primat, bk. 1, p. 25.

⁷⁴ Primat, bk. 1, p. 25.

⁷⁵ Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 39.

⁷⁶ Levine, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 1, p. 24, n. 44.

⁷⁷ For more on the active attempt to blend the dynasties: Brown, *Persons in Groups*, p. 247.

⁷⁸ Brown, p. 244.

It can be deduced that Primat disapproved of divorce for love due to its potential ability to disrupt the kingdom. In another passage, he included a tale of a king who abandoned his wife due to love for two other women; he later stated that God struck down the women (and a son) because the king ignored St Germanus who had urged him to re-join his lawful wife.⁷⁹ The New Testament also maintained the view that divorce was not favourable.⁸⁰ Though men typically were forgiven for their adulterous transgressions so long as the woman was not attached to another man,⁸¹ the Church felt very strongly about divorce, and as Primat was a Benedictine monk, he would have subscribed to and demonstrated this belief. In linking the collapse of the Merovingians to Basina and her loose morals, Primat highlighted the potential negative outcomes he believed could arise from a queen asserting her independence.

The inclusion of Basina's ability to interpret the king's visions may have been an attempt by Primat to show that she was unnatural and to emphasise her immorality. Though the visions were apocryphal, the interpretations were believed to be true by thirteenth-century French society. Due to the common belief that history was preordained, prophecies were accepted as being able to give an account of the future.⁸² Furthermore, dreams foretelling the future were accepted as truth as it was believed that 'they allowed the human soul access to a transcendent, spiritual reality'.⁸³ However, those who could interpret the dreams were viewed with varying levels of approval. Although the Bible shows dreams being used as 'predictive tools', it also condemns dream divination, stating 'neither let there be found among you any one that ... observeth dreams and omens ... For the Lord abhorreth all these things'.⁸⁴ Indeed, divination was largely condemned due to its perceived 'demonic' nature.⁸⁵ However, not all forms of prophecy were condemned; divine illumination appears to have been accepted. The most well-known example of this is Joachim of Fiore, who was able to, amongst other things, interpret Sibylline prophecies and receive visions to help him understand scripture.⁸⁶ While Joachim had supporters, including Pope Lucius III,⁸⁷ many condemned all forms of 'magic' and saw women as particularly 'prone to magic and superstition because of their supposed

⁷⁹ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, pp. 97-98.

⁸⁰ Jewell, *Women in Late Medieval and Reformation Europe*, pp. 24-25.

⁸¹ Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe*, p. 168.

⁸² Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, p. 46.

⁸³ S. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 2.

⁸⁴ Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 7. See: Deuteronomy 18:10,12.

⁸⁵ R. Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 12.

⁸⁶ M. Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future: A Medieval Study in Historical Thinking*, rev. edn, London, Sutton, 1999, pp. 2-3.

⁸⁷ Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore*, p. 2.

moral and intellectual weakness'.⁸⁸ As discussed in Chapter 2, another previously sinful woman was also shown to be able to interpret prophecies; Theodora, the prostitute who became empress in 527, had interpreted an eagle's flight as a sign that her lover, Justinian, would be made emperor. As Basina, who is suggested as having had an affair with Childeric prior to abandoning her husband to marry him, was also depicted as being able to interpret visions, Primat may have been actively linking previously sinful women to the ability to interpret visions in an effort to highlight their unnatural nature.⁸⁹

It is clear that Primat believed a queen should not exercise the right to choose her own husband. This can be seen in another account which detailed Fredegund's plotted rise from slave to queen. As discussed earlier, Fredegund orchestrated the murder of Chilperic's first wife, Galswinth. Not content to remain a concubine, and desiring the position of queen, she further plotted for Chilperic's divorce from Audovera (d. 580), his second wife. According to Primat, Audovera gave birth to a daughter while Chilperic was away fighting the Saxons.⁹⁰ Fredegund convinced Audovera to baptise the child before Chilperic returned, tricking her into lifting the child from the baptismal font herself, thus making her godmother to her own child.⁹¹ At the time of Fredegund and Chilperic, marriages between godparents, and godparents and parents, were disapproved of.⁹² Chilperic, therefore, separated from Audovera and put her and their daughter in a monastery.⁹³ He subsequently married Fredegund, 'who had wrought all this maliciously'.⁹⁴ Primat once again linked the woman in question to sinful behaviour, demonstrating his disdain for a woman's autonomy in marriage arrangements. Primat's inclusion of these accounts of Basina and Fredegund would have highlighted to the Capetians that arranged marriages, and passive acceptance by the bride, were the best way forward in order to safeguard the continuing success of the family.

Rather than disapproving of the fact that a queen had overstepped societal boundaries as Primat had done, the Minstrel's disapproval of a queen choosing her own husband appears to have been in connection with the material consequences to the kingdom. A queen played an important role in increasing the size of her husband's empire by bringing lands to the marriage.

⁸⁸ Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, p. 187.

⁸⁹ In another example, a vision seen following a young woman's first night with her husband is interpreted by a noble lady in a court. This noble lady is described as having the ability to murder a child, once again linking the interpretation of visions with unnatural nature. Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 1, p. 27.

⁹⁰ Primat, bk. 3, p. 103.

⁹¹ Primat, bk. 3, pp. 103-104.

⁹² Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, p. 193.

⁹³ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, p. 104.

⁹⁴ Primat, bk. 3, p. 104.

Indeed, many marriages were organised over land negotiations.⁹⁵ When introducing Eleanor, the Minstrel mentioned she ‘held Maine, Anjou, Poitou, Limoge, and Touraine, and easily three times the land held by the king’.⁹⁶ The Minstrel noted that after Louis VII returned to France following the attempted escape of Eleanor, the barons encouraged Louis to divorce her, which the Minstrel believed to be foolish advice.⁹⁷ He believed that Louis ‘should have cloistered her, so that [amongst other things] this land would have remained great all his life’.⁹⁸ The land instead went to Eleanor’s second husband, Henry II (r. 1154-1189), who the Minstrel explicitly stated was chosen by Eleanor following her divorce from Louis.⁹⁹ The Minstrel did not wholly blame Eleanor for the land loss, having noted that it was foolish of Louis to follow the advice of his barons and let her go. However, by highlighting Eleanor’s independence in choosing Henry, the Minstrel showed the land lost to the English was linked to her actions. The fact that Philip II (r. 1180-1223) spent a large part of his reign expanding the kingdom, in some cases laying claim to Angevin lands in France which had previously been under Capetian control, may have reinforced for the Minstrel the idea that the land loss could have been prevented in the first place. The Minstrel mentioned that Henry paid homage to Louis ‘for the very sizeable land’ that he received upon his marriage to Eleanor.¹⁰⁰ He thus revealed the bitterness he felt over the loss.¹⁰¹ This feeling of bitterness was possibly shared by the Minstrel’s audience, the nobility – land-owners themselves who could thus sympathise with the loss of power that losing land brought. The inclusion of the story may therefore have been an attempt to play into the desires of his audience and reaffirming the idea that this behaviour should be avoided.

Neither Primat nor the Minstrel supported instances of queens choosing their own husbands. Although by the thirteenth century marriage between two people required the consent of both participants, aristocratic families did not typically abide by this practice. Royal families, in particular, desired the connections, land, and wealth that arranged marriages could bring. The result would see the reader of the chronicles receive the reinforced message that a queen could negatively affect the kingdom if she selected her own husband. The examples the

⁹⁵ E. Power, *Medieval Women*, M. Postan (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, Canto edn, 2000, p. 16.

⁹⁶ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel’s Chronicle*, bk. 2, p. 12. Peggy McCracken notes that Anjou and Touraine were actually Henry II’s lands, which she suggests indicates knowledge of future events: McCracken, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, p. 257.

⁹⁷ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 2, p. 13.

⁹⁸ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 2, p. 13.

⁹⁹ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 2, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 2, p. 13.

¹⁰¹ Natasha Hodgson puts forward the theory that perhaps Louis believed he could retain control of Eleanor’s lands for a couple of years after the divorce as he continued to ‘style himself as duke’. Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, p. 140.

chroniclers included of women choosing their own marital partners were extreme cases, where the act was linked to murder, land loss, or a crumbling kingdom.

Sexuality and Purity

Both the Minstrel and Primat included stories that centred on issues of sexuality to firmly and pointedly make a case for purity. These accounts served to illustrate to the reader what was acceptable behaviour and to show how the negative consequences attached to sin could be avoided. The Minstrel, in typical fashion, created a false account of Blanche of Castile, which ultimately demonstrated her wholesome nature in a way his audience would find entertaining. Primat also attempted to show that purity was a desirable attribute of a woman, using a sharply contrasting account to show the value of chastity in one story, and in another, pointing out the importance of the virginity of a woman prior to her bearing an heir to the throne. By being pure and chaste, a queen aligned herself with the popular view of the day surrounding a woman's purity until marriage. More importantly, acting in this manner ensured the legitimacy as well as the stability of the royal line as there would be no illegitimacy-based quarrels amongst offspring.

The Minstrel included a story about Blanche of Castile which saw her standing, naked body clearly visible, on a table in front of her barons, prelates, and the bishop of Beauvais to prove that she was without child. This situation arose as earlier the bishop of Beauvais, Milo, had accused Blanche of being pregnant by a cardinal named Romanus. Shortly after this accusation was made, the Minstrel credited Blanche for her self-control, stating '[t]he queen showed no signs of how she felt, but kept her feelings hidden, intending to take action at the right time and place'.¹⁰² It was only after her subjects came to her with a complaint, following a wrongful excommunication placed on them by Milo, that Blanche decided to act. After the bishop refused to absolve her people and to meet with her to discuss the situation, she summoned an audience, including the bishop, and after standing on a table, 'let her cloak fall on the table, turned to the front, and then to the back, so that everyone could see her, and she clearly had no child in her belly'.¹⁰³

The Minstrel, as an entertainer, was concerned with including stories that would satiate his audience's desires. His inclusion of this account was probably connected with a well-known

¹⁰² Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 20, p. 50.

¹⁰³ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 20, pp. 50-51.

dispute which occurred throughout the 1230s between Louis IX and the bishops of Beauvais.¹⁰⁴ Chris Jones suggests that the Minstrel may have transformed the dispute from a disagreement with Louis into a conflict with his mother, due to the fact it would have been ‘inappropriate that [Louis] should engage in lengthy and heated disputes with the Pope, archbishops, and bishops over issues of ecclesiastical jurisdiction’.¹⁰⁵ There may also be another reason. As discussed previously, Blanche was a very pious, devout woman; she was, for example, buried in the habit of a Cistercian nun,¹⁰⁶ and credited with raising Louis IX with a great deal of emphasis placed on his religiosity.¹⁰⁷ The Minstrel’s account is completely out of character for Blanche and is certainly false. As Jacques Le Goff identifies, the Minstrel fabricated his tale by moulding it into a well-known literary trope of the time, which typically saw a nun disrobing in front of an audience in order to shut down rumours of a pregnancy.¹⁰⁸ One such example appears in Gautier de Coincy’s *Miracles de Notre-Dame*, which was a contemporary bestseller.¹⁰⁹ In appropriating this trope, the Minstrel created a story which graphically demonstrated Blanche’s purity and sensibility by showing the accusation to be false, and by noting that she waited until the appropriate moment to respond. The inclusion of the fact that Milo left his position and died not long after served partly to highlight Blanche’s moral superiority,¹¹⁰ as well as an acknowledgment of the anti-clerical feelings that the Minstrel’s noble audience were experiencing following the, at the time of his writing, recent dispute between the French nobility and Pope Innocent IV.¹¹¹ By using an expression of Blanche’s purity, and moral superiority over Milo, the Minstrel was able to capitalise on, and thereby allow his audience the chance to ruminate on, the failings of Church officials and Blanche’s goodness.

Through this (false) account of Blanche, the Minstrel explored the danger of infidelity, attempting to warn the royal family of the repercussions it could have for the kingdom. Such an act could have serious consequences for the future of the ruling family, namely, the bearing of an illegitimate son rather than an heir, which could lead to a crisis in leadership. However, the Minstrel is sure to reinforce Blanche’s purity and its positive consequences, thereby affirming the ideal qualities a queen should exhibit. It also served to paint the Capetians in a

¹⁰⁴ C. Jones, ‘The Role of Frederick II in the works of Guillaume de Nangis’, in B. Weiler and S. MacLean (ed.), *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany, c. 700-c.1500*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2006, p. 279.

¹⁰⁵ Jones, *Representations of Power in Medieval Germany*, pp. 279-280.

¹⁰⁶ F. Gies and J. Gies, *Women in the Middle Ages*, New York, Harper Perennial, 1978, pp. 118-119.

¹⁰⁷ Gaposchkin and Field, *Sanctity of Louis IX*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 294.

¹⁰⁹ Le Goff, p. 294.

¹¹⁰ For Milo’s exile and death: Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel’s Chronicle*, bk. 20, pp. 51-52.

¹¹¹ For the latter: Jones, *Eclipse of Empire*, p. 49.

positive and pious light.

Primat wished to commend the chaste nature of a queen, and to do so he possibly embellished the account of the contrasting fates of Romilda, the seventh-century Lombard noblewoman, and her daughters, Appa and Gaila. As discussed in Chapter 1, Romilda surrendered her city to its attacker, Cachanes, on the condition that she be allowed to spend one night with him. After this arrangement was fulfilled, Primat noted that Cachanes let twelve Slavs have sex with her, and then impaled her body on a stake, as an act of punishment.¹¹² Not content to let this speak for itself, Primat followed the example with an account of Romilda's daughters who, it is said, 'did not follow the example of their mother's lechery, but loved chastity' and placed the fetid flesh of pigs between their breasts in order to repel any unwanted touches.¹¹³ Primat noted they were rewarded for their chastity, mentioning that one daughter became the duchess of Bavaria and the other, the queen of Germany.¹¹⁴

The juxtaposition of Romilda's behaviour with her daughters' is intended to prove a point. Directly following the gruesome portrayal of Romilda's death is that of her daughters, described as fiercely protective of their chastity, who were rewarded with good marriages, thus concluding Primat's clear-cut warning: sexual immorality resulted in negative consequences, while chastity and purity were rewarded. This account demonstrates Primat's alignment with the popular ecclesiastical views of the day: engaging in sex purely for the sake of lust was a serious sin. This belief found its roots in the Augustinian concept that sexual desire was the result of the Fall.¹¹⁵ As stated by James Brundage, '[n]o one denied that sex was pleasant: that was its snare, for attached to the pleasure were shame, defilement, and ... depression'.¹¹⁶ Women were seen as being sexually voracious, likely aided by the Church's projection of the image of an unrestrainedly sexual Eve who needed to be controlled by Adam.¹¹⁷ Indeed, the late-thirteenth-century pope, Boniface VIII, maintained that women 'were sexually dangerous'.¹¹⁸ Instead, women 'were expected to be shy, retiring, coy, and modest about sexual matters'.¹¹⁹ Based on this belief system, Primat highlighted the extreme immorality of Romilda. In the original version of the story, written by Paul the Deacon in the late-eighth

¹¹² Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 4, p. 210.

¹¹³ Primat, bk. 4, p. 210.

¹¹⁴ Primat, bk. 4, p. 210.

¹¹⁵ Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, p. 421.

¹¹⁶ Brundage, p. 424.

¹¹⁷ K. French, 'Religion and Popular Beliefs: Choices, Constraints, and Creativity for Christian Women', in K. Phillips (ed.), *A Cultural History of Women in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 63-64.

¹¹⁸ Summarised in: French and Poska, *Women and Gender in the Western Past*, p. 196.

¹¹⁹ Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, p. 426.

century, Romilda asked for Cachanes to marry her in exchange for her surrender.¹²⁰ It is not possible to know with certainty that Primat himself changed the story to Romilda requesting one night rather than marriage. However, not content to just show her sexual immorality, Primat hinted that he also believed her to be capable of murder, noting that '[Cachanes] thought she would quickly have him killed', due to the fact that 'she had betrayed her own children and her kin'.¹²¹ This reaffirmed her immorality.

Despite taking an ecclesiastical stance regarding sexuality, Primat took an unexpected position regarding the begetting of an heir. He supported the use of a concubine for this purpose, with the legitimacy of the heir ensured if the woman was a virgin. He included an account of the desperate Dagobert, the previously mentioned husband of Nanthild, taking 'to his bed a virgin named Ranetrude, in hope of producing an heir'.¹²² As the motivation behind the act was to conceive a child (and further, an heir for the kingdom) no sin was committed;¹²³ at the time of Dagobert, the use of concubines was accepted,¹²⁴ and the status of the mother of the child did not affect the child's ability to inherit, as long as his father was the king.¹²⁵ However, the Church disapproved of this practice: during the reign of King Theuderic, a monk named Columbanus refused to bless the king's sons because their mother was a concubine, and he was consequently exiled.¹²⁶ However, Primat clearly did not have a moral objection, recording that the venture was successful, and obviously blessed by God, as an heir was born later that year. Not content to leave it at that, Primat sought to prove that this was a good act by showing the child, Sigebert, performing a miracle. He was noted as being able to say 'amen' at forty days old, in response to St Amant who was facilitating his baptism.¹²⁷ It is clear that Primat saw the birth of an heir, and therefore the continuation of the ruling family, as a priority when it came to matters of marriage and the sexual relations of kings; he took a 'dynastic' rather than the expected 'spiritual' view. This is most probably due to the fact that the abbey of Saint-Denis was trying to procure and retain its royally favoured status. Indeed, through the writing tradition that started with Abbot Suger in the twelfth century, the abbey 'became the

¹²⁰ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards*, p. 181.

¹²¹ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 4, p. 210.

¹²² Primat, bk. 5, p. 234.

¹²³ Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, p. 449.

¹²⁴ It was Louis the Pious' marriage reforms which saw the offspring of concubines officially lose their legitimacy. French and Poska, *Women and Gender in the Western Past*, p. 152.

¹²⁵ J. Nelson, 'Queens as Jezebels: the Careers of Brunhild and Balthild in Merovingian history', in D. Baker (ed.), *Medieval Women*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1978, p. 34.

¹²⁶ James, *The Origins of France*, p. 79.

¹²⁷ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 5, p. 234.

official custodian and interpretor [*sic*] of [French] royal history'.¹²⁸ It is possible that Primat also reflected upon the biblical story of Sarah, Abraham, and the handmaiden, to reconcile his views. In this tale, found in Genesis, Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is barren and thus tells Abraham to lie with her handmaiden, Agar, so he could have a child.¹²⁹ Though this causes tensions, Abraham ended up with a son. It may have also helped that the concubine was a virgin, as, by the thirteenth century, the Church was very clear in its support of virginity. By remaining a virgin, a woman demonstrated her pious and moral nature. Therefore, by selecting a virgin, Dagobert chose the most morally-pure kind of woman. By supporting the almost 'any means necessary' way of begetting an heir, Primat was showing his audience, the royal family, that he believed producing an heir was of the utmost importance. Therefore, his view was aligned with that of the royal family, namely, that male heirs were of paramount importance to peaceful succession within the family.¹³⁰

Occasionally chroniclers explicitly attempted to use sexuality to prove a point. In many of their chronicles, the chroniclers used their examples to infer correct behaviour, allowing the reader to draw their own lessons from the accounts. As seen in the examples discussed above, however, it is clear that both the Minstrel and Primat included explicit examples to influence their audience. By creating a wild and fictitious tale, the Minstrel could entertain his audience, as was his profession, with an anti-clerical story, while simultaneously highlighting Blanche's purity. Blanche's piety would have been known by all of the listeners, so this would have reinforced the idea in his audience's mind. Primat, on the other hand, employed a darker approach, showing the painful death that could befall a queen who let lust override her senses, contrasting this with the fate of those who preserved their purity and were rewarded. His stance on chastity is consistent to the extent that a virgin concubine was permitted in an effort to produce a legitimate heir to the throne.

Both the Minstrel and Primat believed and expressed ideas about sexuality held by much of thirteenth-century French society. Both works demonstrated to their audience the harm that could affect the kingdom should a queen transgress. Each chronicler expressed their disapproval of queens committing, or intending to commit, infidelity. The chroniclers'

¹²⁸ Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition*, p. 7.

¹²⁹ Genesis 16:1-16.

¹³⁰ For the importance of male heirs in maintaining peaceful transitions of power: Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life*, p. 44.

backgrounds influenced both their beliefs and their area of focus. Primat, being a monk, was more concerned with matters of sin in connection to infidelity, and linked an adulterous queen to schemes and murder. As the royal court following the death of Louis IX was not as strict on morality,¹³¹ Primat may have been attempting to encourage the return to pious living. The Minstrel instead linked adultery to the crusade's failure and disruption to the kingdom. If the royal family became illegitimate, further disruption to the kingdom would be experienced – something, it can be assumed, that neither the royal family nor the nobles would want. Though the Minstrel incorporated tropes drawn from romance literature into his work, on this particular issue ecclesiastical ideas prevailed. By taking an ecclesiastical stance, the Minstrel supported the Capetian dynasty rather than calling its lineage into question through suggesting the possibility of illegitimacy. Both chroniclers disapproved of a queen choosing her own husband, though again for different reasons. Primat linked his queens to sin and unnatural behaviour such as vision-interpretation, while the Minstrel linked the act to harm to the kingdom of which he, and his audience, was a part. Lastly, the chroniclers continued to demonstrate their similar views by both including examples of sexuality in order to demonstrate that purity was the idealised state, thus reinforcing the idea to their audience that they should aspire to be more like the Virgin Mary than a Jezebel.

¹³¹ Duby, *France in the Middle Ages*, p. 268.

Chapter 4: Perceptions of Queenship and Government

So far, this thesis has examined the social aspects of queenship: the religious behaviour of queens, their relationships with their families, and their sexual agency. It will now examine their role within the newly bureaucratised government and centralising system. This chapter looks at how each chronicler approached the role of the queen in terms of her involvement in governance and rulership, examining the portrayal of the influence a queen had over her husband and the actual power she herself wielded.

A queen's actual power was reduced by the thirteenth century, but her ability to wield informal power remained intact. Marion Facinger describes how the queen's role diminished in the twelfth century. She notes:

[i]t is difficult to hold particular persons or events solely responsible for changes occurring slowly and insidiously, and certainly never articulated as modification; but beginning with Eleanor of Aquitaine, the queen's position suffers a diminution in its official status. This is not to say that the queen did not continue to influence governmental policy and to be a power in the government through her control over her husband, the reigning king, but she ceases to be called the king's partner, and her name gradually disappears from the royal *diplomata*.¹

Facinger's view is not without support; her perspective is backed by Jo Ann McNamara, Suzanne Wemple, and Margaret Labarge, among other scholars.² Frances and Joseph Gies suggest that it was the installation of bureaucrats, replacing the previous council comprising of vassals, which resulted in the reduction of the queen's power.³ However, not all manner of power was lost, and it is now recognised that queens still had influence in government; as Theresa Earenfight suggests, they 'often worked informally alongside their husbands, fathers and brothers'.⁴ Studies have shown that queens managed to retain and exercise power through, for example, patronage, marriage negotiations, and intercession.⁵ This chapter examines how each chronicler chose to portray politically active queens to understand contemporary societal thought about a queen's place in government.

¹ Facinger, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, p. 33.

² See: Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life*, p. 44; McNamara and Wemple, *Feminist Studies*, pp. 126-141.

³ Gies and Gies, *Women in the Middle Ages*, p. 103.

⁴ Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, p. 151.

⁵ Huneycutt, *A Cultural History of Women in the Middle Ages*, p. 156. See, for example: H. Gaudette, 'The Spending Power of a Crusader Queen: Melisende of Jerusalem', in T. Earenfight (ed.), *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 135-148; Huneycutt, *A Cultural History of Women in the Middle Ages*, pp. 153-178; Jordan, *Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages*, pp. 61-85; Huneycutt, *Power of the Weak*, pp. 126-146; Parsons, *Power of the Weak*, pp. 147-177; Parsons, *Medieval Queenship*, pp. 1-11.

Contemporary attitudes towards a queen's involvement in government are examined from three angles. The first section examines accounts of queens exercising influence over the king and his government. It reveals that although queens were able to affect and alter situations, the chroniclers disliked the notion of queens actively attempting to sway political ideas. The second section considers queens exercising autonomous power and finds that while queens were recognised as being capable of ruling, where possible, an outside influence was credited with helping the queen in her decision making and the short-term nature of the queen's rule was made clear. The final section reveals that there was a distrust of foreign queens, suggesting the chroniclers were particularly cautious of queens who had the potential to upset the stability of the kingdom. Overall, the chapter determines that while queens were recognised in the thirteenth century as influencing and exerting power in government, each chronicler showed a strong preference for a government with a king at its centre. They presented a queen's role as being secondary to the king's, though the king could request his queen deputise for him if he deemed it appropriate.

Influence

The chroniclers included examples of influence in their works which simultaneously acknowledged a queen's ability to exercise influence and demonstrated their belief that political decisions should be left to the king. A queen was certainly able to influence her family; her marriage allowed her to involve herself privately in decision-making, while her role as mother allowed her to influence her son. While the practice was recognised, the chroniclers demonstrated that they did not necessarily agree with it; one of the only forms of influence they supported was a queen's role in peace-making. To support their point of view regarding matters of politics, the chroniclers included examples which saw a king rejecting the advice or pleadings of the queen, emphasising the king's position as an independent ruler.

The role of the queen as peacemaker received qualified support from the chroniclers. As discussed above, the queen's actual power had been slowly eroding from the middle of the twelfth century. Her role changed from having an active position in the governance of the kingdom, involved in decisions, and having her name included on charters, to one where the king was the sole ruler with the queen acting largely as a political figurehead.⁶ A queen's access and close proximity to the king was acknowledged by her contemporaries; her ability to

⁶ Facinger, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, p. 40.

influence was often used, for example, by the Church to intercede and persuade the king on their behalf.⁷ She could act as a peacemaker, or help obtain an apology, meeting, or grant.⁸ In these instances, where a queen was working to improve the religiosity of a king or to restore peace to the kingdom, her influence was viewed positively. Though thirteenth-century France contained periods of turbulence, it has been recognised as a generally peaceful period; indeed, the largely peaceful nature of Louis IX's reign was noted by Pope Boniface VIII during the king's canonisation proceedings.⁹ Peace in the Middle Ages 'was seen as the supreme good, as the perfect realisation of the laws of God' and it was 'intrinsically linked to Christianity'.¹⁰ This thus would have aided Louis' status as a saint. Following Louis' reign, there were periods of unrest,¹¹ which may have influenced the chroniclers to include *exempla* of the queen's involvement in peace-making, as this showed ways in which harmony could be achieved and the kingdom could flourish. Joinville attributed the negotiation of the 1259 Treaty of Paris to the sibling relationship between Margaret, the wife of Louis IX, and Eleanor of Provence, wife of Henry III of England (r. 1216-1272).¹² In defence of his decision, which saw lands given to the English in return for homage from Henry III to Louis,¹³ Louis stated he agreed to the terms as he and Henry were 'married to two sisters and our children are first cousins; it is therefore essential that there be peace between us'.¹⁴ Other significant examples of the way a queen could ensure peace was through the birthing of a legitimate heir – Labarge states that the reduction of the queen's political role meant that her 'primary role was to ensure the passage of the royal blood to a male heir whose existence was considered essential for the *peaceful* transmission of power from one generation to the next'¹⁵ – and through prayer. As noted in Chapter 2, Clotild's heartfelt prayer to God to stop a battle between two of her sons was followed by a thunderstorm which diffused tensions and restored harmony.¹⁶

Though the reduction of the queen's actual role meant that her personal influence over the king was one of her few remaining means of exerting power,¹⁷ as noted by Zita Rohr and

⁷ Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile*, p. 66.

⁸ Rohr and Benz, *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation*, p. xxiv.

⁹ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 539.

¹⁰ J. Benham, *Peacemaking in the Middle Ages: Principles and Practice*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2011, p. 2.

¹¹ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 539.

¹² For an overview of the actual reasons behind the negotiation of the peace agreement: C. Jones, 'Paris (Paris, France), treaty (1259)', *International Encyclopaedia for the Middle Ages-Online: A Supplement to LexMA-Online*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2008 [www.brepols.net – subscription only database].

¹³ Smith, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 363, n. 13.

¹⁴ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 158, §65.

¹⁵ Labarge, *Women in Medieval Life*, p. 44. Emphasis mine.

¹⁶ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 2, pp. 77-78.

¹⁷ McCracken, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, p. 256.

Lisa Benz, ‘influence could be just as powerful as “official” authority’.¹⁸ The fact that influence could rival actual power may have caused the chroniclers to be wary of its use, particularly by women who were being actively left out of the new royal administration. Acknowledging the administrative changes occurring throughout the mid to late thirteenth century, the chroniclers emphasised that queens should not play a role in influencing the king with regard to political matters. According to Benz, for a queen’s behaviour to be viewed as acceptable by contemporaries, she needed to ‘appear submissive when she was in a position of power and she must use influence in a manner that recognized the king’s authority’.¹⁹ Stories about women influencing their husbands in political matters are more commonly found in medieval poetry than in contemporary historical sources,²⁰ and it was rare for that influence to be viewed positively.²¹ The same can be said for many romance works. Tales such as *Le roman des sept sages de Rome* and *La châtelaine de Vergi* included stories of women influencing the governance of the kingdom or court through their sexuality, often in a negative manner.²² Women were easy and believable targets for chroniclers to blame for the wrongful actions of the king, an idea acknowledged by John Carmi Parsons when he wrote that, in the Middle Ages, ‘a king’s perceived faults might be projected on his wife, or blamed on her’.²³ In situations where blame could or should have been attributed to the king, the chroniclers mentioned the queen’s influence. For example, Primat noted how Fredegund convinced her husband King Chilperic to murder one wife and divorce another, in order to become queen herself,²⁴ and later discussed how Fredegund gave bad advice to the king, including that ‘Chilperic ... did great harm to the people who were under him, exacting excessive taxes *on the advice of Fredegund*’.²⁵ This demonstrated the weakness of the king’s nature by revealing his ability to be influenced, and ‘[b]y allowing the queen to influence his government, a king was not only less of a king, but also less of a man’.²⁶ While such stories would demonstrate to the reader that this was not a great king, the queen, as the instigator, would receive the brunt of the reader’s judgement. Indeed, the connection between Eve persuading Adam to eat the apple in the

¹⁸ Rohr and Benz, *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation*, p. xxiv.

¹⁹ L. Benz, ‘Conspiracy and Alienation: Queen Margaret of France and Piers Gaveston, the King’s Favorite’, in Z. Rohr and L. Benz (ed.), *Queenship, Gender, and Reputation in the Medieval and Early Modern West, 1060-1600*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2016, pp. 131-132.

²⁰ Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, p. 351.

²¹ Bumke, p. 351.

²² McCracken, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, pp. 255-256.

²³ Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile*, p. 251.

²⁴ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, pp. 102-104.

²⁵ Primat, bk. 3, p. 132. Emphasis mine.

²⁶ For the quote: Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, p. 23.

Garden of Eden, leading to the subsequent Fall of mankind, and a queen influencing her husband may have been made. However, as the subjects of the chronicles were among the previous rulers of France, the outcome of the queen's actions could not be demonstrated as being entirely negative as that could bring the Capetian lineage into disrepute. In regard to the excessive taxes levied on the people, the king is later shown to be repentant and thus closer to God.²⁷ Indeed, Primat included another example showing how a king was pushed towards God via the sinful encouragement of his queen. Sigismund, who inherited half of Burgundy following his father, Gundobad's, death, was depicted as being devoted to St Maurice after he, Sigismund, murdered his son at the encouragement of his wife (the child's step-mother).²⁸ Sigismund subsequently repented and was 'profoundly aware of the seriousness of the sin he had committed'.²⁹ However, no such mention is made of his wife, leaving the reader with the impression that the king was repentant while the wife remained a sinner.

It is apparent that the chroniclers believed that a wife's influence over a king was more dangerous than that of a mother. While a mother could make bad decisions, this generally linked back to her love and care of her son: an excusable misstep. The promotion of the Virgin Mary during the thirteenth century as an actively involved mother, as previously discussed, likely aided the favourable view.³⁰ A wife, however, may have been viewed as more threatening due to her close proximity and ability to use her sexual power to influence the king. In other words, while a wife could be seen as a sexual conniver, acting in her own interests rather than for the good of the king, a mother could be viewed as a sexless sage operating with her child's best interests in mind.

A queen regent could not expect equal power with the king, as Joinville and the Minstrel took care to emphasise. They both noted instances when Louis IX acted contrary to Blanche's interests. It has been suggested by scholars such as Nancy Goldstone that Louis acting against his mother's wishes may have been his attempt to extract himself from Blanche's shadow.³¹ Even when Louis officially took over his role as king, Blanche had continued to be involved in the governance of the kingdom.³² By rejecting his mother's advice, Louis may have been testing his political strength and exercising his independence as a ruler. Blanche, while acting as regent when Louis was on the Seventh Crusade, pleaded for him to return to France when

²⁷ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, p. 133.

²⁸ Primat, bk. 2, p. 53.

²⁹ Primat, bk. 2, p. 53.

³⁰ Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 206.

³¹ Goldstone, *Four Queens*, pp. 151-152.

³² Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 581.

she fell deathly ill. She worried that her passing would make the kingdom vulnerable as he had ‘neither peace nor truce with the king of England’.³³ Instead of returning as she requested, Louis sent his brothers in his place and remained in the East.³⁴ This act of defiance is reminiscent of his decision to first embark on the crusade when he ignored Blanche’s pleas for him to stay. As discussed in Chapter 1, Blanche attempted to stop the newly-wedded couple, Louis and Margaret, from spending time together during the day, which they countered by meeting in secret.³⁵ Blanche also attempted to block Louis’ from seeing Margaret on her supposed deathbed; she is described as pulling Louis away from Margaret’s side insisting he had ‘no business here’.³⁶ Louis, who believed Margaret was dying, returned to her bedside. In each of these scenarios, Louis is noted as explicitly acting contrary to Blanche’s wishes. All are cases where the wishes of the mother of the king and, more importantly, the queen regent, went unheeded. As the chroniclers included these tales of independence in a positive light, they were in favour of the king acting with autonomy. This was a favourable ideal of contemporary kingship; Giles of Rome’s *De regimine principum*, a ‘mirror-for-princes’ written by a famous member of the University of Paris in 1282, argues that ‘the ideal king should be unshackled by any limitations’.³⁷ It might be said that a politically-involved queen was at this time viewed by the chroniclers as a ‘shackle’ on the king.

When a queen’s intercession was used to support the king or kingdom, such as encouraging religious activity or peace, it was encouraged and viewed positively. However, the chroniclers were wary of queens holding too much political power and included examples in their accounts which showed their influence leading to negative results or being rightly ignored by the king. In so doing, the chroniclers demonstrated to their audience that a queen’s advice could not always be trusted. In reflecting this idea, the chroniclers showed that though queens were able to exercise forms of power in the late thirteenth century, they emphasised that the king was the correct person to make the final judgement.

Exercising Actual Power

Though women were continuously present in ruling situations, the chroniclers preferred to

³³ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 249, §419.

³⁴ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel’s Chronicle*, bk. 36, p. 94; John of Joinville, p. 253, §438.

³⁵ John of Joinville, pp. 296-297, §606-607.

³⁶ John of Joinville, p. 297, §608.

³⁷ C. Jones, ‘Giles of Rome, Political Thought’, in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, 2nd edn, New York, Springer, 2018, p. 3. Available from: Springer, (accessed 2 April 2018).

project the idea that the kingdom was safest under a man's rule. By the thirteenth century, administrative changes meant that the kingdom was beginning to be run through a series of offices rather than through the most powerful barons and prelates.³⁸ Though queens were still involved in organising battles and controlling the treasury when the need arose, the chroniclers ensured that their readers understood that any power exercised by the queen depended on her environment and circumstance, and that the ultimate power remained with the king.

The Middle Ages are littered with stories of competent female rulers. Even though they were anomalies, women in positions of power were present and active and would have been known within aristocratic circles. A relevant example is Eleanor of Aquitaine. Although she was not actively involved in politics while married to Louis VII, at times Eleanor controlled Aquitaine while married to Henry II.³⁹ She was also the probable motivation behind Henry's Toulouse campaign in 1159,⁴⁰ and she was active in helping her sons lead a revolt against Henry in 1173.⁴¹ A second example concerns the Countesses Jeanne and (her sister) Margaret, both of whom ruled Flanders and Hainaut throughout most of the thirteenth century.⁴² The Minstrel showed Jeanne to be less capable than she actually was.⁴³ He relates a well-documented event, the deception of the people of Flanders who believed that Baldwin IX, Jeanne's father, who was dead, was in fact alive and had returned to take back control of the county.⁴⁴ The Minstrel noted that the people of Flanders rejoiced and accepted the imposter as their lord,⁴⁵ which reinforced the preference the people had for a male over a female ruler. The Minstrel's retelling of the tale showed Jeanne requiring the help of the king to discover and overcome the plot of the fake Baldwin. He noted that Jeanne escaped a kidnapping attempt and that, in the aftermath, she wrote a letter to the French king asking him to intervene before she lost her land.⁴⁶ The king's subsequent questioning of the man convinced him that the Baldwin

³⁸ Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus*, pp. 101-136; Barak, *The Capetian Century*, pp. 144-145.

³⁹ E. Brown, 'Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and her Seasons', in B. Wheeler and J. Parsons (ed.), *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁰ Brown, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, p. 12.

⁴¹ Hodgson, *Women, Crusading and the Holy Land*, p. 180.

⁴² Jordan, *Women, Power, and Religious Patronage in the Middle Ages*, p. 1. Erin Jordan notes that a number of women inherited fiefs in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. E. Jordan, 'Exploring the Limits of Female Largesse: The Power of Female Patrons in Thirteenth-Century Flanders and Hainaut', in T. Earenfight (ed.), *Women and Wealth in Late Medieval Europe*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 153.

⁴³ The Minstrel acknowledged Margaret when detailing a story over a disagreement over inheritance between her sons: Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bks. 37-38, pp. 94-98.

⁴⁴ See: Minstrel of Reims, bk. 31, pp. 78-80. This was a ruse in order to take control of her country. The fact that he died in a Bulgarian prison meant that the imposter was not immediately dismissed. For Baldwin's death in Bulgaria: K. Nicholas, 'Women as Rulers: Countesses Jeanne and Marguerite of Flanders', in T. Vann (ed.), *Queens, Regents and Potentates*, Dallas, Academia Press, 1993, p. 78.

⁴⁵ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 31, p. 78. For an historical account of the villagers' acceptance of the fake Baldwin, see: Nicholas, *Queens, Regents and Potentates*, p. 83.

⁴⁶ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 31, p. 78.

was a fraud.⁴⁷ The imposter was, however, released, and the Minstrel credited a lord named Erard with later discovering and imprisoning him.⁴⁸ Thus, the Minstrel credited Erard and the king with uncovering the plot, thus allowing Jeanne to take up her role as countess once more.⁴⁹ In reality it was a combined effort of Louis VIII, who questioned the false Baldwin and found him unable to answer questions about his supposed life,⁵⁰ and Jeanne,⁵¹ who uncovered his lie. Recent studies have shown Jeanne was actively involved in uncovering the plot,⁵² which suggests it was an active decision by the Minstrel to frame the countess as less capable than a man. The Minstrel also made sure his audience was aware of Jeanne's flaws as a ruler, noting that she failed to pay a reward she had promised to Erard for his work in uncovering the plot.⁵³

An exception to this prevailing attitude of feminine ineptitude appears to be that of finance – the chroniclers noted and supported the idea that queens were able to wield control over the royal coffers. However, each of these examples were linked to women who were acting either as regents or on behalf of the king. This suggests that it was acceptable for a queen to exercise financial responsibility as long as she was not operating in her own right. For example, the Minstrel noted that Blanche of Castile had control of the treasury when he wrote that Emperor Baldwin II of Constantinople informed her that he planned to sell the county of Namur as he needed the money.⁵⁴ The queen instead lent him 20,000 pounds so that he did not have to sell it.⁵⁵ Joinville also acknowledged that Margaret ably controlled the royal finances during the Seventh Crusade. When Louis was kidnapped and asked about his ransom, he responded that he would be unable to commit to paying it because 'he did not know whether the queen, who was his lady, would be prepared to do this'.⁵⁶ Aware of the control the queen had over the finances, the Sultan, in response, decided that the king would be released when the queen agreed to pay the ransom.⁵⁷ The queen did so, and the king was released after just one month's imprisonment.⁵⁸

Primat, writing about the Merovingian period, took a slightly different view,

⁴⁷ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 31, p. 79.

⁴⁸ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 31, p. 80.

⁴⁹ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 31, pp. 78-80.

⁵⁰ Nicholas, *Queens, Regents and Potentates*, p. 83.

⁵¹ K. Nicholas, 'Countesses as Rulers in France', in T. Evergates (ed.), *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, p. 130.

⁵² Nicholas, *Aristocratic Women*, p. 130.

⁵³ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 31, p. 80.

⁵⁴ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 41, pp. 102-103.

⁵⁵ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 41, pp. 102-103.

⁵⁶ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 230, §342.

⁵⁷ John of Joinville, p. 230, §342.

⁵⁸ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 137.

acknowledging that queens could ably control finances and contribute to the kingdom's well-being. He noted that Fredegund paid her daughter's dowry. He stated that when she sent her daughter, Rigunth, to Spain for her intended marriage to the Visigothic prince, Reccared, she provided her with a great many jewels as dowry.⁵⁹ There were so many jewels that it caused consternation on the part of the French barons and the king.⁶⁰ Fredegund assured the nobles the money was hers and not her husband's by saying, 'you should not think that the jewels we have given our daughter are from the king's treasury. The king himself gave me part of it as dowry, the other part I have acquired and amassed by my own efforts, and you yourselves, noble Frenchmen, have given me a part of it'.⁶¹ This was partly meant to reassure the king who was worried that the money came from his own treasury and 'feared that he would become a poor man'.⁶² The fact that Primat was compiling his material may have meant that this story was included simply because it was mentioned in the texts he consulted. A queen's financial independence was prevalent in the Merovingian period where, as Ian Wood suggests, '[s]ome, if not all, queens took charge of their husband's treasuries'.⁶³ However, it is clear from this account that Fredegund's spending was used to support the kingdom's alliances through Rigunth's intended marriage. This suggests Primat may have included this tale because it demonstrated appropriate spending, thus showing queens an appropriate way to control finances.

Each of the chroniclers sought to demonstrate the ways in which a king was able to maintain his political authority despite the involvement of his queen. As Lois Huneycutt summarises, though the new administration of kingship 'had theoretically stripped [the queens] of their power', scholars have noted that queens such as Blanche of Castile remained actively involved in the administration.⁶⁴ The fact that some queens remained active questions the validity of the idea that queens had lost their ability to exercise power.⁶⁵ Indeed, queens could also still exercise power through indirect means. However, as stated by Earenfight, '[a] king was expected to rule his kingdom as a husband ruled his wife'.⁶⁶ Indeed, the chroniclers attempted to demonstrate to their audience that despite the involvement of queens in political decisions and activities, the king was and should remain dominant. This does not mean that the

⁵⁹ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 3, p. 153.

⁶⁰ Primat, bk. 3, p. 153.

⁶¹ Primat, bk. 3, p. 153.

⁶² Primat, bk. 3, p. 153.

⁶³ Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms*, p. 122.

⁶⁴ Huneycutt, *A Cultural History of Women in the Middle Ages*, p. 156.

⁶⁵ Huneycutt, p. 156.

⁶⁶ Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, p. 23.

chroniclers ignored queens exercising independent power, but rather that when they did, the short-term nature of their rule was made known. Primat noted the military accomplishments of early medieval queens in no uncertain terms. For example, he included tales which showed Fredegund successfully organising battles after Chilperic I's death when she was acting as queen regent for her son, Lothar II. Before one battle, she delivered a rousing speech, reminding the nobles that though the king was young they had promised to honour him as a king and should continue to do so.⁶⁷ She followed that speech with a threat and promises of rewards – '[y]ou should also understand that I shall be on high ground from which I shall be able to survey the battlefield, watching who fights bravely and who does not, and I shall give rich rewards to everyone who does well for my son'.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Primat included a tale which emphasised her ability as a military strategist: she ordered the men to follow what a fellow knight was doing, attaching leafy branches to their horses to emulate a forest in order to surprise the enemy.⁶⁹ Primat concluded that the subsequent victory was due to Fredegund's 'malice and cleverness'.⁷⁰ He also noted another victorious battle that she organised against Theudebert and Theuderic.⁷¹ However, as these events all happened following Chilperic's death, the reader is aware that Fredegund is acting on behalf of her young son.

Joinville and the Minstrel observed the challenges to the regency of Blanche of Castile and presented them in a way that supported their view of her leadership. Her position as a foreigner, as well as her gender, played into their portrayal of her as weaker than a king. Indeed, the intention of one of the rebellions against her in her first period of regency was to separate Louis from Blanche rather than dethrone him so that the nobles could 'govern in his name and claim power, land, and wealth for themselves'.⁷² Though recent historians credit Blanche with noticing the brewing rebellion and being at the forefront of ensuring it did not succeed,⁷³ the chroniclers downplayed her role. Joinville belittled the successes of Blanche, crediting the saving of the kingdom to God, stating that '[m]any people said that the count [Peter of Brittany] would indeed have outdone the queen and the king if God – who never let him down – had not helped them'.⁷⁴ The inclusion of the wording 'never let *him* down' also demonstrates

⁶⁷ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 4, p. 184.

⁶⁸ Primat, bk. 4, p. 184.

⁶⁹ Primat, bk. 4, pp. 184-185.

⁷⁰ Primat, bk. 4, p. 186.

⁷¹ Primat, bk. 4, p. 188.

⁷² Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 60.

⁷³ Goldstone, *Four Queen*, pp. 23-28; Gies and Gies, *Women in the Middle Ages*, pp. 105-109; M. Lower, *The Barons' Crusade: A Call to Arms and Its Consequences*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, p. 50.

⁷⁴ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 164, §74.

Joinville's belief that the king was still the ruler, despite the fact that Blanche was regent at the time.⁷⁵ Even chroniclers who wrote favourably about Blanche did so despite their acceptance of her secondary status. The contemporary English Benedictine Matthew Paris,⁷⁶ for example, called Blanche a 'venerable matron beloved by God',⁷⁷ and stated that she 'left the Kingdom of France inconsolable' at her passing.⁷⁸ However, he chastised Louis for listening to his mother when making some decisions,⁷⁹ and described Blanche in tears consulting the young king on what to do during the confrontation with the Mongols in 1241.⁸⁰ Though he noted that she organised an army to defeat them,⁸¹ the Minstrel also highlighted that Blanche feared the counts on her borders and credited the decision to crown Louis as soon as possible to the barons to whom Blanche turned for advice.⁸²

The chroniclers may have downplayed rather than lauded her actions simply because she was recognised as regent rather than a ruler. Though the term 'regent' is modern and Blanche was recognised simply as queen by contemporaries,⁸³ there would still have been a distinction – regents 'did not claim the same moral, political, or social authority as a ruler'.⁸⁴ Nancy Goldstone suggests that she ruled as queen, not regent, until Louis IX came into his majority,⁸⁵ however, the fact that Louis was crowned as a boy not long after Louis VIII died suggests this may not have been the case; he was the king and she was ruling on his behalf. Indeed, this may have been the reason Blanche was largely accepted for so long as the ruler – she was not taking the king's role or authority but was simply exercising power for the king until he was able to assume that role. In addition, it was up to the king to decide who would act as regent. This was seen explicitly when Louis did not make Margaret regent when he embarked on the Eighth Crusade and instead appointed two men – the abbot of Saint-Denis, Matthew of Vendôme, and the lord of Nesle, Simon of Clermont.⁸⁶ Jacques Le Goff believes this was due to the changed nature of government during Louis' reign: Louis 'wanted to leave the protection and administration of the kingdom to two people who were more closely

⁷⁵ For the quote: John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 164, §74. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁶ For a summary of Matthew Paris: L. Ruch, 'Matthew Paris', in G. Dunphy (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*, vol. 2, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 1093-1095.

⁷⁷ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 672.

⁷⁸ Matthew Paris, *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora*, vol. 5, H. Luard (ed.), London, Longman, 1880, p. 354. For discussion, see: Le Goff, p. 344.

⁷⁹ Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, vol. 3, p. 325. For discussion, see: Le Goff, p. 672.

⁸⁰ Matthew Paris, vol. 4, pp. 111-112. For discussion, see: Le Goff, p. 16.

⁸¹ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 33, p. 84.

⁸² Minstrel of Reims, bk. 32, p. 82.

⁸³ Gies and Gies, *Women in the Middle Ages*, pp. 104-105.

⁸⁴ Goldstone, *Four Queens*, p. 22.

⁸⁵ Goldstone, p. 22.

⁸⁶ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 598.

involved in his government and who could better assure its continuity'.⁸⁷ Although queens and queen regents *could* exercise power, it was only possible through the order of the reigning king.

In contrast, the successful exercise of power by a queen was overlooked by the Minstrel in a remarkable example of omitting facts to pursue his agenda. During the Seventh Crusade, Margaret and part of the French army were situated in Damietta, which had been cut off from the rest of the army and had come under siege.⁸⁸ Margaret, having just given birth, set about ensuring that Damietta held firm. The Saracens demanded that Damietta surrender or face a prolonged blockade. Hearing this, the troops in Damietta planned to flee but Margaret, desperate to retain the soldiers and hold the city, bought all the food that was in the city and insisted that the soldiers would be kept 'at the king's expense'.⁸⁹ In so doing, Margaret 'prevented the slaughter or starvation of hundreds of Frenchmen',⁹⁰ until the city was eventually surrendered under terms of agreement. While Joinville detailed the role that Margaret played in the saving of the city, placing her at the forefront of the decision making,⁹¹ the Minstrel simply noted that Margaret gave birth to a son, that his 'baptismal name was Peter, and he is still called Peter Tristan, for Damietta was soon lost'.⁹² Indeed, in making no mention of Margaret's practical actions in the saving of the men, the Minstrel may once again be revealing the influence of romance literature in his work. In courtly literature, the female ruler was commonly depicted as being in distress only to be rescued by a knight who then takes over governance of the land.⁹³ Indeed, this appears to be a bias held by many writers of courtly literature; Joachim Bumke notes that 'courtly poets used the image of the positive female ruler far less frequently than real life offered it to them'.⁹⁴ This is interesting in itself, as it suggests that the idea that women should not rule was present throughout literate society. Though the Minstrel makes no mention of a male saviour, he does ignore an excellent example of female authority and, indeed, an interesting story as Margaret gave birth during the dramatic

⁸⁷ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 598.

⁸⁸ Goldstone, *Four Queens*, pp. 176-177.

⁸⁹ Goldstone, p. 178.

⁹⁰ Goldstone, p. 178.

⁹¹ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, pp. 243-244, §397-400.

⁹² Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 35, p. 90. The name of the son was actually John Tristan. He did, however, have a brother named Peter. Thus, this appears to be confusion on the Minstrel's behalf. The name 'Tristan' either arose from a form of the French 'triste' meaning sadness: W. Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade: A Study in Rulership*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979, p. 188, n. 45; or was a reference to Sir Tristan from the twelfth-century romance-tragedy, *Tristan and Iseult*. Goldstone, *Four Queens*, p. 178. For the naming of Tristan due to sadness in *Tristan and Iseult*: J. Bédier (ed.), *The Romance of Tristan and Iseult: Drawn from the best French Sources and Re-told by J. Bédier*, trans. H. Belloc, London, George Allen, 1913, p. 5.

⁹³ Bumke, *Courtly Culture*, p. 349.

⁹⁴ Bumke, p. 350.

circumstances of the siege. As noted by Gordon Reynolds, Margaret's position of leadership during this Crusade was an anomalous situation in the thirteenth century,⁹⁵ and, as such, her conduct was discussed by other contemporaries such as Robert, the patriarch of Jerusalem.⁹⁶ The fact that Margaret's actions were not mentioned suggests that the Minstrel wished to convey the idea that motherhood, rather than saving the city through political action, was a better model for royal female behaviour.

Joinville, on the other hand, as noted, was open to Margaret's active role. Indeed, following Margaret's involvement with the ransom payment and her leadership in Damietta, Joinville mentioned that Margaret was consulted on decisions. He wrote: '[t]he queen and all the king's council agreed that he should land [at the castle of Hyères], since this was his brother's territory', though Louis refused to do as they suggested.⁹⁷ Though Louis ignored their advice, the tale shows that Margaret was being consulted on political decisions following her acts of leadership. Reynolds suggests that this may have been an intentional inclusion by Joinville to show Margaret finally overcoming Blanche's control over Louis.⁹⁸ As Joinville had a fondness for Margaret, his inclusion of her may have been a reflection of this. It is true, however, that in each case it is made clear that Louis is the overall decision maker, thus reinforcing the queen's subordinate position even when exercising leadership.

It was not just through prayers or familial relations, as previously discussed, that a queen could bring about peace but also through active involvement. Primat included a story which saw Bertha, the mother of Charlemagne, speak directly to her son, Carloman, 'to establish peace and harmony between the brothers ... since there was contention between them'.⁹⁹ The Minstrel, too, shows a queen actively establishing peace in his account of Blanche negotiating with the king of Navarre over a dispute about his fiefs.¹⁰⁰

The chroniclers overlooked important peace-making ventures conducted by queens, and the few they did note were often attributed to male help, thus belittling the queen's direct and independent involvement in the governance of the kingdom. Blanche of Castile, for example, negotiated many peace agreements as regent for Louis IX. In 1227, a truce was arranged with Hugues de la Marche, the future count of Angoulême, by Blanche and her

⁹⁵ G. Reynolds, 'Cross Purposes: Frankish Levantine Perceptions of Gender and Female Participation in the Crusades, 1147-1254', unpublished MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 2017, p. 124.

⁹⁶ Reynolds, 'Cross Purposes', pp. 78-79. See: Robert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, 'Robert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, to the Cardinals, 15 May 1250', in trans. P. Jackson (ed.), *The Seventh Crusade, 1244-1254: Sources and Documents*, Farnham, Ashgate Publishing, 2009, p. 105.

⁹⁷ John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 308, §652.

⁹⁸ Reynolds, 'Cross Purposes', p. 93.

⁹⁹ Primat, *A Thirteenth-Century Life of Charlemagne*, bk. 4, pp. 11-12.

¹⁰⁰ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 34, p. 86.

advisors, which saw an agreement that one of Hugues' daughters would marry her son Alphonse, though the marriage did not take place.¹⁰¹ It is known that Blanche arranged a peace agreement with a powerful lord, Thibaud IV, the count of Champagne,¹⁰² and was involved in the discussions concerning the Treaty of Vendôme, 'which secured tentative peace with Blanche's most persistent opponent, Pierre Mauclerc, a grandson of Louis VI'.¹⁰³ These negotiations all helped to restore peace to the kingdom on behalf of Louis IX, a significant achievement. However, these accomplishments were mostly ignored by the chroniclers. In some cases, success was attributed to someone else. For example, the Minstrel discussed a rebellion against Blanche in the years in which she was regent and states that peace was achieved largely due to the change of heart of one of the men involved, the count of Boulogne.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, as is discussed in the following section, Blanche's actions in battle scenarios were often attributed to other people.

In the above cases of queens being involved in conflicts, each queen's situation may be viewed as 'abnormal' – either the king was too young to rule, leaving his mother in charge, or the king was taken hostage and unable to do his duty. In including these tales, each chronicler highlighted the unusual nature of these situations, which would later be righted when the king was restored as ruler. The chroniclers wished to demonstrate that a queen's ability to exercise power in the thirteenth century was largely due to her personal circumstance and the king's approval. The involvement of queens in financial matters in previous centuries made it an acceptable practice in the thirteenth century. It is of note, however, that all but one of these examples are drawn from women who were acting as regents at the time thus demonstrating the short-term nature of their control. It is clear that the chroniclers drew a line at the involvement of queens in battle scenarios. In these cases, examples were either overlooked, it was made clear that the king remained in charge and in control, or it was established that it was due to a period of regency. Though Joinville highlighted Margaret's role during the siege of Damietta, he downplayed Blanche's role in the challenges to the kingdom during her first term as regent, which suggests his close relationship to Margaret may have influenced his writing, but not necessarily his beliefs.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, pp. 102-103.

¹⁰² Le Goff, p. 60.

¹⁰³ Shadis, *Capetian Women*, pp. 140-141.

¹⁰⁴ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 33, p. 84.

¹⁰⁵ For the relationship between Joinville and Margaret: Goldstone, *Four Queens*, p. 226.

International Family Connections

Though the chroniclers acknowledged that queens continued to have power up until the time they themselves were writing, they often emphasised that this was not something they supported; this was particularly the case if the queen was foreign. A foreign queen brought unpredictability: she was raised differently, did not have guaranteed support in her new land, and may have loyalty ties to a place and people beyond the kingdom. Each chronicler emphasised that a foreign-born queen could pose much more danger to the stability of the kingdom than a native-born queen. This is despite the fact that the royal families themselves tended to favour foreign brides due to the alliances, land, and thus increased power, that these connections could bring. Indeed, this was a path favoured by many royal families throughout Europe between 1100 and 1350,¹⁰⁶ including the Capetians. However, each chronicler emphasised the negative consequences that could arise from taking a foreign bride, despite the fact that each king they wrote for had a foreign wife.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, as Le Goff notes, there was a belief in the Middle Ages that being a foreign queen was not a positive attribute.¹⁰⁸ This may have stemmed from a number of reasons: the fact that they were ‘foreign’, and thus did not share similar cultures or ideas; that they were perceived as not having the same ties of loyalty to the kingdom as a native queen; and, as explored below, because they could influence the king to pursue their own agenda which could lead to international battles and thus cause instability in their adopted kingdom.

The selection of a prospective queen was an important and difficult decision. If a king chose a woman from his kingdom, he risked upsetting the balance of power between aristocratic families or selecting a wife who would work for her family’s benefit rather than his.¹⁰⁹ There were two viable options available to a king who wished to avoid these situations. First, he could marry a woman of low birth. Indeed, this was common practice in the Merovingian era. Charibert I (r. 561-567) married two sisters who were in his first wife’s service; Chilperic I married his previous wife’s servant, Fredegund, Theudebert II’s (r. 595-612) wives Bilichildis and Theudechild had been slaves,¹¹⁰ as was Dagobert I’s (r. 623-639) wife Nanthild and Clovis II’s (r. 639-657) wife Balthild.¹¹¹ If the king chose this route, no

¹⁰⁶ Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, p. 126.

¹⁰⁷ Louis IX was married to Margaret of Provence, Philip III to Isabella of Aragon, and following her death, Marie of Brabant, while Philip IV married Joan of Navarre.

¹⁰⁸ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 580.

¹⁰⁹ Parsons, *Medieval Queenship*, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ Geary, *Before France and Germany*, p. 186.

¹¹¹ Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, p. 57.

important family was upset by the shift in the power balance, and if the woman failed to produce a son or please the king, she could easily be set aside.¹¹² Second, he could marry a foreign woman. A foreign-born queen brought many recognised benefits to the kingdom. Earenfight notes that foreign queens were viewed as trustworthy, as they were removed from their families and thus loyal to the king.¹¹³

In the late Middle Ages international royal marriages were often favoured by the royal family due to a desire for land, revenue, or an alliance. Margaret of Provence, for example, was selected because she was from Provence, a region with which Blanche desired a closer relationship.¹¹⁴ The Minstrel noted the eagle-eyed gaze the royal family had with regards to spotting potential for land growth. He included that Philip II was informed that Baldwin, the count of Flanders, had a sister,¹¹⁵ Isabella of Hainault (d. 1190), who would bring land as part of her dowry.¹¹⁶ Baldwin was pleased with the match and agreed to the transfer of the county of Artois and the lands that Isabella held independently. The Minstrel described the great celebration that followed the marriage and mentioned that there was ‘marvellous love’ between the new queen and her husband.¹¹⁷ It is worth noting that the Minstrel did not include the well-documented fact that Isabella did a walk of penitence to prevent Philip from repudiating her following their marriage.¹¹⁸ Instead, he noted that it was a happy marriage which produced an heir, the future Louis VIII. In so doing, the Minstrel left the story as a happy marriage match which brought land the king needed, showing his bias towards royal families who expanded their kingdom’s lands, and ensuring the king’s morality remained untarnished.

The fact that contemporary queens were attempting to involve themselves in matters of state may have influenced the chroniclers’ writings. For example, as noted previously, Marie of Brabant was accused of poisoning her stepson and thus of attempting to influence succession in favour of her own children. She was also accused of being too involved in affairs of state.¹¹⁹ Prior to Marie, Margaret of Provence, following the death of Louis IX, caused an upset by attempting to wrest political power from Louis’ brother, Charles of Anjou, for control of her home county of Provence. This was an act which multiple times ‘threatened to erupt in war’.¹²⁰

¹¹² Geary, *Before France and Germany*, p. 187.

¹¹³ Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, p. 129.

¹¹⁴ Gies and Gies, *Women in the Middle Ages*, p. 110.

¹¹⁵ This is an error of the Minstrel’s; she was his niece. For Isabella’s lineage: Bradbury, *Philip Augustus*, p. 31.

¹¹⁶ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel’s Chronicle*, bk. 11, pp. 26-27.

¹¹⁷ Minstrel of Reims, bk. 11, p. 27.

¹¹⁸ Hornaday, *Capetian Women*, p. 83.

¹¹⁹ Bradbury, *The Capetians*, p. 238.

¹²⁰ W. Jordan, ‘The Capetians from the death of Philip II to Philip IV’, in D. Abulafia (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 5, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 301.

Both Louis and Blanche worked to limit Margaret's political influence. For example, she was not allowed to receive presents without the consent of her husband and the royal curia nor was she permitted to independently 'appoint or give orders to the crown's officials'.¹²¹ Margaret also attempted to emulate the power Blanche had over the young Louis by making the young heir-to-be, Philip III, take an oath that he would obey her should he become king until the time he turned thirty. When Louis discovered this oath, he appealed to the Pope to get it overruled and forbade Philip from doing anything similar in the future.¹²² The fact that there was a desire to limit Margaret's ability to exercise power over government reflects a preference for power and control to be exercised by the king. Both of these contemporary attempts by queens to involve themselves in matters of state may have set the chroniclers on guard against foreign influence in the kingdom and thus saw them include in their chronicles attempts to dissuade kings from marrying outside the realm.

Foreign queens could bring with them grudges which could cause the country to go to war. This may have been seen as particularly significant to Primat, as the period directly preceding the writing of his chronicle was one of the most peaceful in thirteenth-century France.¹²³ Thus, his chronicle contained a warning designed to appeal to Philip III to maintain peace. Primat warned his readers of grudge-bearing queens via a detailed discussion of Clotild, the wife of Clovis. On her way to marry the French king, the Burgundian Clotild ordered the men accompanying her to 'sack the country and to burn the castles and villages' as retribution for the death of her father and mother by Gundobad, the king of Burgundy, and noted that this was only the 'beginning of vengeance'.¹²⁴ Later, at the urging of Clotild, Clovis battled Gundobad and won.¹²⁵ Not content with this victory, Clotild later asked her sons to 'avenge the death of [her] father and mother', going so far as to say 'I must take pleasure in the fact that I have born and raised those who might relieve my grief'.¹²⁶ They did as they were asked, laying waste to Burgundy and killing Gundobad.¹²⁷ In including this tale, Primat highlighted the unrest and devastation that resulted for two generations from the grudge that Clotild bore.

A foreign-born queen regent, alone in her adoptive country, was regarded as potentially weak, lacking the support a native queen would have. The Minstrel stated that 'Blanche grieved deeply for the king's death, and that was not strange, since she had lost so very much. Her

¹²¹ Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade*, p. 6.

¹²² Jordan, p. 6.

¹²³ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 539.

¹²⁴ Primat, *France Before Charlemagne*, bk. 1, p. 38.

¹²⁵ Primat, bk. 1, p. 43.

¹²⁶ Primat, bk. 2, p. 52.

¹²⁷ Primat, bk. 2, p. 53.

children were small, *and she was a woman alone in a foreign country*'.¹²⁸ This tale demonstrates that the Minstrel believed her expression of grief to be a legitimate response to the situation in which she found herself. The rest of the account focused on the challenges to the kingdom that Blanche faced as a queen regent with an infant heir. Although she secured success, her period of regency saw the stability of the country waver slightly. The Minstrel may have included this tale partly as a warning to kings considering foreign brides. By acknowledging her grief, the Minstrel reinforced that she was all alone and therefore could pose more danger to the stability of the kingdom than a local queen would. This understanding, recognised by contemporaries, partly explains the practice of sending young girls to the land of their betrothed in order to lessen their attachment to their homeland.¹²⁹ Joinville and the Minstrel also note that the appointment of Blanche as queen regent was viewed as an opportunity by the barons and neighbouring counts to challenge the French ruler. Both of the chroniclers expressly noted that Blanche was alone in a foreign country following the death of Louis VIII and that this meant there was an opportunity to challenge her rule.¹³⁰ Joinville's reasons seem to be influenced by the fact she was not native, as he emphasised that she was weak because she was from Spain, noting that the French barons rebelled as 'the king was a child and the queen *a foreigner*',¹³¹ and that the barons wished to see if the rebellion's leader could 'get the better of the queen who, as you have heard, *was a foreigner*'.¹³² As Georges Duby notes, if a foreign-born queen succeeded her husband, she could be viewed as an intruder.¹³³ Indeed, Blanche was an easy target; the barons' rebellion saw rumours being spread that Blanche was giving royal money to her Castilian parents.¹³⁴ However, Joinville's claim that Blanche had 'no relatives or friends anywhere in the kingdom of France' is false: she had the support of at least some bishops and noblemen.¹³⁵ Miriam Shadis suggests that Joinville highlighted Blanche's isolation on purpose, 'to reveal the role of divine grace in Louis IX's achievements'.¹³⁶ I would argue that this may also have been in order to highlight the danger Blanche, being foreign, brought to the kingdom.

¹²⁸ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 32, p. 82. Emphasis mine.

¹²⁹ Parsons, *Medieval Queenship*, p. 4.

¹³⁰ Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 32, p. 82; John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 164, §72.

¹³¹ John of Joinville, p. 164, §72. Emphasis mine.

¹³² John of Joinville, p. 164, §74. Emphasis mine.

¹³³ G. Duby, *Medieval Marriage: Two Models from Twelfth-Century France*, trans. E. Forster, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978, pp. 5-6.

¹³⁴ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 62.

¹³⁵ For Joinville's quote: John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 164, §72. For the argument to the contrary: Shadis, *Capetian Women*, p. 151.

¹³⁶ Shadis, p. 151.

It should be noted that Joinville's dislike of Blanche was not solely due to the fact that she was an outsider since he portrayed Margaret positively. Margaret would have been perceived as foreign – Provence was France's south-east neighbour.¹³⁷ The difference would have been exacerbated because her native language would have been the *langue d'oc* rather than the *langue d'oui*, which was spoken in the Île-de-France. Indeed, centuries previously, Constance of Provence, wife of Robert II (r. 996-1031), had faced hostility at the royal court partly because she spoke the *langue d'oc*.¹³⁸ Joinville painted Margaret in a friendly light, including stories where she burst into laughter after mistaking pieces of camelin for holy relics and of her requesting a stop at an island they were passing to get fruit for her children.¹³⁹ He failed to mention or allude to other qualities she was known to possess, for example, her ambitious attitude and political meddling.¹⁴⁰ This may have stemmed from the fact that Joinville and Margaret were on good terms, while he did not know Blanche personally. McCannon goes so far as to suggest that Joinville deliberately reflected Margaret in a positive light to highlight Blanche's negative traits.¹⁴¹ She posits that many barons disliked Blanche because she was a Castilian woman, not a French man, and because she 'surrounded her son [Louis] with the religious, not with the barons who would become his peers', which alienated him from the noblemen.¹⁴² Therefore, it is possible that as Joinville was a seneschal, he may have shared this attitude.

Each chronicler highlighted that foreign women could bring with her many problems such as personal vendettas, which led to war and challenges to power relations within the kingdom. This fits with the previously explored idea that the chroniclers viewed queens as inferior to kings, but it may also have been influenced by the contemporary events of the day. In particular, the examples of Marie of Brabant and Margaret causing political disruption may have contributed to the chroniclers' idea that foreign queens were more trouble than they were worth. As Primat and Joinville were writing their chronicles for a royal audience and intended their work, at least partly, to be a guidebook for the royal family, they were likely intending to prove a point for future marriage considerations. The Minstrel's reflection of these ideas suggests that this attitude was prevalent throughout aristocratic circles. Joinville's dislike of

¹³⁷ Gies and Gies, *Women in the Middle Ages*, p. 110.

¹³⁸ Le Goff, *Saint Louis*, p. 580.

¹³⁹ For the camelin story: John of Joinville, *Joinville and Villehardouin*, p. 295, §601. For the fruit story: John of Joinville, pp. 305-306, §640.

¹⁴⁰ For her attitude: R. Fawtier, *The Capetian Kings of France: Monarchy and Nation (987-1328)*, trans. L. Butler and R. Adam, London, Macmillan and Co, 1962, p. 30. For her meddling, see, for example: Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade*, p. 6.

¹⁴¹ McCannon, *Capetian Women*, pp. 166-167.

¹⁴² McCannon, p. 165.

the Castilian Blanche appears to have been, at least in part, separate from her heritage due to his support and positive portrayal of the Provençal Margaret, however, he still demonstrated his belief that foreign queens could be problematic.

This chapter focused on the chroniclers' perceptions of queenship and power, examining their thoughts on the influence a queen had over a king and her ability to exercise power in her own right. While they included examples that demonstrated a queen's ability to wield power, it is clear that the chroniclers disliked the notion. Particular emphasis was placed on the harm a foreign queen could cause. While the events that occurred as a result of the queen's actions or period of rule are historical fact, the focus of the chroniclers on the women's actions and backgrounds demonstrated the bias each retained against women in power. Despite the fact that female rulers exerted actual power in the thirteenth century, the chroniclers, writing for a royal or noble audience, sought to reflect the idea that queens were capable of taking charge when they needed to but that the king was viewed as and demonstrated as being the ruler. The chroniclers were able to tolerate queens being in charge of finances in crucial situations, such as those in which the king was taken hostage or on crusade, as there was a precedent for such responsibility and it was for a limited time. Overall, the chroniclers demonstrated to their audience that the exercise of a queen's formal power was largely the king's decision, thus emphasising to their audience the ultimate power of the king in the centralising system of government.

Conclusion

The chroniclers constructed images, stories, and lessons in order to engage, influence, and inform their audiences, and the image of the queen was no exception. Vernacular chronicles reflect their audience's desires and expectations and, as such, they are a valid source of information about the values, attitudes, agendas, and political machinations at the time of their writing. Examining the chroniclers' perceptions of queenship during this time is worthwhile due to the fact that France's thirteenth century was filled with economic, political, and social change. This period of French history witnessed the shifting of the governance of the kingdom away from powerful nobles and into the hands of bureaucrats as well as the centralisation of power. In addition, the queen's ability to exercise actual power was reduced, leaving her with significantly less power than her historical counterparts.

Each chapter of this thesis examined a different aspect of queenship and revealed the chroniclers' views about what was appropriate behaviour for a queen. By comparing and contrasting the chroniclers' opinions on, and approaches to, the themes identified, it has been shown that each writer recognised that a queen was a key part of the monarchy and not solely the bearer of heirs – she had the power to make the king a better ruler and the kingdom stable, although she needed to do so in an understated manner. Each chronicler downplayed the political actions taken by queens, and instead emphasised their supportive roles as mothers and wives. The first chapter examined familial relations between mother and child, and husband and wife. It revealed that positive mother-child relations were encouraged, with a queen expected to instil in her children religious teachings, to always support them, to act in their favour, and to shape heirs into good and pious rulers. A queen was also expected to act in a supportive and loyal manner towards her husband, the king. The second chapter examined piety and revealed that both Primat and Joinville showed that closeness to God was an ideal queenly trait and that repentance as a means of achieving that relationship was to be celebrated. They also emphasised the harm that a woman exhibiting sinful behaviours could bring to the king and kingdom. In the third chapter, it was seen that both the Minstrel and Primat demonstrated that a queen exercising sexual agency could bring harm to the king and kingdom. The chroniclers also tried to show an association between pure and sexually correct behaviour and positive political outcomes. The fourth chapter showed that when it came to power, each chronicler shaped their text to show that kings were its appropriate wielders; a queen's exercise of power was only acceptable if she were regent or if the king were incapacitated. Overall, the

chroniclers implicitly acknowledged their belief that although a queen *could* exercise power, the kingdom was safest in a king's hands.

Each of the chroniclers demonstrated similar expectations of queenship, which reflected the desires of their intended audiences. Each chronicler wrote a text that was, at least in part, intended to be didactic. Primat and the Minstrel both knew the royal family would read their work, and both wrote what would be expected of them; as authors of vernacular chronicles intended for the royal family during a period of social and political disruption, they wrote accounts which legitimised the Capetians, entertained or educated their audience, and normalised societal changes. They did not always portray the 'operational realities' of the kingdom, instead opting to show that the queen should be subordinate to the king. The chroniclers acted to bolster and legitimise Capetian rule by both broadcasting and solidifying for their audience the idea that the kingdom was strong and stable, while simultaneously offering queens a lesson in how to behave in order to ensure that the Capetian reign continued. Interestingly, the Minstrel demonstrated similar values to those found in the works intended for the royal family. His chronicle, written for an aristocratic audience, also supports the subordinate role of the queen in the contemporary political system. This indicates one of two things: either he was attempting to maintain royal favour in his work or his audience was apathetic towards the political changes. As the Minstrel indicated that harm could befall the kingdom should a queen stray from the expected behavioural patterns he portrayed, and because he wrote to fulfil the desires of his aristocratic audience, it can be concluded that the nobles preferred the projected office of queenship. This was likely because it minimised the possibility of further disruption to the kingdom. By projecting this image, the Minstrel was also able to reaffirm the contemporary expectations of queenship, thus holding queens accountable through their subjects. This suggests Spiegel's theory that vernacular chronicles were commissioned by the royal family in order to disseminate their desired image is correct. Despite the fact that, in reality, queens were able to exercise power through many different avenues such as direct governance, influence, sexual agency, piety, and within the family, each of the studied vernacular chroniclers emphasised to their royal and noble audiences that queens should ideally act as supporters of the king and his power. They suggested that by following the rules of 'good' behaviour they outlined, a queen would help ensure the peace and stability of the Capetian government and kingdom. Thus, each chronicler acted in the interests of the royal dynasty.

This thesis demonstrates the value of interrogating chronicle sources. Even the Minstrel of Reims, whose work is essentially a fictionalised version of Frankish history, should not be

overlooked when endeavouring to uncover medieval political ideas. Because chroniclers were known to alter and adapt historical fact, as is seen explicitly in both Primat's and the Minstrel's work, they offer valuable insights into motivations and aspirations of the period. Furthermore, the fact that the chronicles contain biases, such as Joinville's *Vie* towards the Capetians' pious image and Primat's *Roman des rois* towards the Capetians' overall image of rulership, does not mean the chronicles should be discounted as sources for uncovering political ideas. Each chronicler's text was written in a way which pushed their agenda or helped them to meet their audience's expectations. As such, it is possible to use the examples they included and, by extrapolation, these chronicles as a whole, in order to understand contemporary medieval societal beliefs.

In order for broader conclusions on this topic to be drawn, further research would need to examine thirteenth-century romance literature in greater depth and assess Latin chronicles in order to establish how they approached queenship. By broadening the literature studied to examine other genres, the conclusions reached in this thesis can be tested further. This thesis has expanded on work started by historians such as Spiegel by examining vernacular chronicles for romance influence. It found that the Minstrel's work contained various romance tropes, which helped to uncover the intentions behind his writing. By broadening the scope of the sources examined, it will be possible to determine whether the perceptions of medieval queens uncovered in this thesis were universal or simply the product of contemporary vernacular literature. Likewise, broader conclusions about the nature of the change and consolidation of power in the French kingdom and the perceived place of queens within it could be drawn.

While broadening the studied literature could help place the findings of this thesis within a wider context, this thesis has shown that by examining the three vernacular chronicles, we are able to better understand certain contemporary expectations. Indeed, gaining an understanding of how royal women were expected to behave in the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries can be used to explain why Louis IX's sister, Isabelle of France, is a subject of interest in recent scholarship but not in the chronicles examined in this thesis. Of the three chroniclers examined in this thesis, it was only the Minstrel who mentioned her in his text.¹ Rather than discussing the lives of royal women who did not fulfil traditional expectations, such as Isabelle, each chronicler included instructions for royal women who did;

¹ 'The lady [Blanche of Castile] was pregnant with a daughter named [Isabelle] who did not want to get married, preferring to remain a virgin and to do good works'. Minstrel of Reims, *A Thirteenth-Century Minstrel's Chronicle*, bk. 30, p. 76. Primat's *Roman des rois* ends in 1224 so does not cover the period in which Isabelle lived; Isabelle is not mentioned in the continuation of the *Grandes Chroniques*. My thanks to Chris Jones for this information.

all three chronicles showed that the behaviour of a queen who fulfilled traditional expectations of marriage and children impacted positively on the stability and operation of the kingdom. Thus, by examining their texts, we can uncover a mirror-for-princesses.

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