

University of Winchester

**Co-Operation, Co-Rulership and Competition:
Queenship in the Angevin Domains, 1135-1230**

Gabrielle Storey

ORCID Number: 0000-0003-3896-086X

Doctor of Philosophy

November 2020

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Acknowledgements

My unending gratitude goes to my supervisors, Dr Elena Woodacre and Dr Katherine Weikert. They have supported my love for #teamangevinqueens from the beginning, with what initially started as a comparative study of mothers and daughters-in-law and has transformed into an examination of queenly power and co-rulers. The guidance, warmth, patience, and humour they have provided over the five years of completing this thesis cannot be repaid. Their invaluable generosity and investment in shaping me as a historian will not be forgotten. Dr James Ross is owed thanks for his initial guidance, particularly concerning The National Archives, support, and the patience with which he bore my many attempts at Latin and paleography.

For my wonderful PhD twin, Katia Wright, who has seen me through enough tears, laughs, coffee, and sundaes: thank you. I would not have managed this PhD without your love and support through every twist and turn that trying to complete research and live a normal life brings. My thanks must go to Emily J. Ward and Sally Spong, who have encouraged and nurtured my many thoughts on all things rulership and been personal cheerleaders throughout. Emily especially has been a mentor and shoulder to lean on at many stages for which I am incredibly grateful. Hillary Burgardt has been a rock and allayed my fears about finishing and heading into the post-PhD world several times in the writing up period. Estelle Paraque has believed in me in all the times I could never believe in myself: your loyalty and encouragement are worth more than diamonds, and you are one of the best friends and mentors a woman could ever ask for. Shout outs to my wonderful band of proof-readers and supporters in the last months are also warranted: Tom, Mary-Anne, Kari, Emily W, Katia, Paul, Abby, Hannah, and Chloe - thank you. Any mistakes which remain are my own.

Several colleagues enabled access to various documents, as well as sharing their forthcoming work, for which I am eternally grateful. Nicholas Vincent, Stephen D. Church, Kathleen Nolan, Miriam Shadis, Dean Irwin, Dan Booker, Catherine Healy, Ryan Kemp, Richard Cassidy, Paul Webster, Ryan Goodman, Rebecca Tyson, and Dan Power have all been instrumental in aiding the completion of this thesis, be it through sharing resources, encouraging words over Twitter or email, and discussing my research at various conferences. Debts are owed to Laura L. Gathagan, Richard Barton, Steven Isaac, Charles Rozier, Paul Webster, Carey Fleiner, and Sig Sønnesyn who have been nothing short of generous and enthusiastic about my research and its possibilities, as well as other related projects, having provided references, encouragement, and sage advice when needed. Without Rick and Steven's support I would not have applied to attend the 2019 Haskins Society Conference and been able to discuss my research in its initial stages. My thanks also go to my examiners Liesbeth van Houts and Ryan Lavelle for their constructive and encouraging comments on the thesis. Louise J. Wilkinson's feedback for my upgrade examination and discussions thereafter have helped shape the thesis into what it is today, and I am grateful for this.

I have been fortunate enough to have received several grants which have made the practicalities of being a self-funded part-time PhD student easier. The Society for the Study of French History enabled my research trips to France in September 2019 and January 2020

respectively, without which this thesis would not have been completed. The University of Winchester, the Haskins Society, the Royal Studies Network, and CARMEN have all provided me with funding which has ensured my attendance at various conferences that have prompted much discussion and motivation, and also deserve my thanks. The ILL team at Winchester, and the archivists at the British Library, the National Archives (UK), the Archives Nationales, and Bibliothèque Nationale de France, as well as the departmental archivists at Le Mans, Rouen, and Angers have all been a huge support in the process of uncovering medieval records.

No PhD is completed alone: it takes a team to chip away at the mountain when the mountain feels bigger than you. The members of #teamqueens: Nicola, Jo, Amy S, Amy H, and Cathy motivated me through every day of the final months of completion, which was no easy feat during a time of lockdown. To provide me with some sense of 'normal', Emily B, James, Meg, Char, Siân, Ailsa, Dan, and Sophie have all reminded me that there is a life outside of academia, and that I am entirely capable of a life outside of queens!

For Tony: you may have come into my life when the PhD was in its last stages, but your support, encouragement, and providing sound logic when I was struggling with finding the words to put on the page were what saw me through the last seven months of this thesis. You helped me to find balance and stability in a world which increasingly felt like there was none, and bore the rollercoaster of emotions that completing a thesis brings with humour, care, and much stoicism.

Lastly, my love and thanks must go to my family. They have provided me with security, encouragement, books, and coped with five years of ramblings about queens and every other delight research can bring. For mum, dad, and Doms, this thesis would not exist without you. From encouraging me to read and nurturing my love of history, and telling me that it can be done, at last it is. Words are not enough, but hopefully the pride of having a daughter with a doctorate is.

This thesis is dedicated to the two queens whose lives and music motivated me through the rollercoaster five years of research: Berengaria of Navarre and Lady Gaga.

Abstract

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

ABSTRACT

Co-operation, Co-Rulership and Competition: Queenship in the Angevin Domains, 1135-1230

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This thesis is a comparative study of the ways in which four royal women, Empress Matilda, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Berengaria of Navarre, and Isabella of Angoulême, navigated the personal and political spheres of the Angevin domains. This examination analyses, through the lenses of co-operation and competition, the co-ruling relationships the women formed with their husbands and sons, and their relationships with one another as mothers and daughters-in-law. This research demonstrates how the exercise of power by women fluctuated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and how female rulership developed and changed in England and France. The first two chapters of this thesis provide a background and overview of the topic under study, outlining the context for the analysis of political activities and partnerships in the succeeding chapters. The third chapter investigates how the four women of this study worked with their husbands to rule, introducing new models of rulership which have their foundations in Woodacre's work on the queens regnant of Navarre. It also examines sole rulership and how the women operated as heiresses and constructed affinities. The fourth chapter continues this analysis of partnerships and models of rulership by examining how Matilda, Eleanor, and Isabella worked with their sons to govern successfully. It will also demonstrate how Berengaria accessed power despite her childlessness. Chapter five highlights the competitive aspects between mothers and daughters-in-law by analysing their access to lands, revenues, and titles, as well as their access to ceremonies and public visibility. An investigation into the religious patronage of the four women will be undertaken here as well. This study demonstrates that queenly power fluctuated in this period due personal relationships as well as political partnerships and changes in governance. This thesis also demonstrates that female rulership was an essential component to the functioning of the Angevin monarchy, and that each of the four women engaged with different facets of rulership to establish their own spheres of authority.

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Abbreviations¹

AD	Archives Départementales
AN	Archives Nationales, Paris
ANS	Anglo-Norman Studies
BL	British Library, London
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
CDF	<i>Calendar of Documents preserved in France, Illustrative of the History of Great Britain and Ireland, I, 918-1206</i> . Translated and edited by James Horace Round. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1899.
Chronica Majora	Luard, Henry Richards, ed. <i>Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora</i> . 7 vols. London: Longman & Co. and Trübner & Co., 1872-80.
Foedera	Rymer, Thomas, ed. <i>Foedera, Conventiones, Literæ, Et Cujuscunque Generis Acta Publica inter Reges Angliæ et alios quosuis(?) imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes, vel communitates, ab ineunte sæculo duodecimo, viz ab anno 1101, ad nostra usque Tempora, Habita aut Tractata ex autographis, infra secretiores archivorum regionum thesaurarias, per multa sæcula reconditis, fideliter exscripta, Tomus I</i> . London: J. Tonson, 1727.
Gesta Regis Henrici	Stubbs, William, ed. <i>Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis. The Chronicle of the Reigns of Henry II. and Richard I. A.D. 1169-1192; known commonly under the name of Benedict of Peterborough</i> . 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867.
Gesta Stephani Howden	<i>Gesta Stephani</i> . Translated and edited by Kenneth Reginald Potter and Ralph Henry Carless Davis. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976. <i>The Annals of Roger de Hoveden Comprising The History of England and of Other Countries of Europe from A.D. 732 to A.D. 1201</i> . Translated and edited by Henry Thomas Riley. 2 vols. London: H. G. Bohn, 1853.
Layettes	Teulet, Alexandre, ed. <i>Inventaires et Documents publiés par ordre de l'empereur sous la direction de M. le Comte de Laborde. Layettes du Trésor des Chartes par M. Alexandre Teulet</i> . 5 vols. Paris: Henri Plon, 1863-1909.
MFF	Medieval Feminist Forum. A Journal of Gender and Sexuality
PR	Pipe Roll
Rot. Chart.	Hardy, Thomas Duffy, ed. <i>Rotuli Chartarum in Turri Londoniensi asservati</i> . 2 vols. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1837-44.
Rot. Litt. Claus.	Hardy, Thomas Duffy, ed. <i>Rotuli litterarum clausarum in Turri Londiniensi asservati</i> . 2 vols. London: Public Record Office, 1833-44.
TNA	The National Archives, UK
Wendover	<i>Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History Comprising The History of England From the Descent of the Saxons to A. D. 1235, Formerly Ascribed to Matthew Paris</i> . Translated and edited by John Allen Giles. 2 vols. London: George Bell & Sons, 1892.

¹ Please note that due to COVID-19, some references in the thesis will refer to outdated editions of texts. Modern editions have been used where possible.

Veterum
Scriptorum

Martène, Edmond and Ursin Durand, eds. *Veterum Scriptorum et Monumentorum, Historicorum, Dogmaticorum, Moraliū Amplissima Collectio*. 9 vols. Paris: 1724-33. Accessed 16 November 2019.
https://archive.org/veterum_scriptorum.

Introduction

The rulership of the sprawling domains which constituted the Angevin 'empire', 1154-1216, has been the subject of intense discussion and contention. Debates endure as to whether these territories constituted an empire, and who orchestrated such a grand design.¹ John Gillingham argued Fulk of Anjou engineered the empire's foundation, whereas Martin Aurell stated Henry II constructed the imperial project.² The kings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries who were part of the Angevin conglomeration of domains have received much attention from scholars, with Stephen, Henry II, Richard I, and John the focus of numerous biographies, edited volumes and articles.³ While the constituent nature of the polity and its (male) rulers have been much discussed, the queens and royal women of these territories have received significantly less study, and have never been deeply compared with one another. This thesis aims to fill this gap by providing a comparative analysis of the lives of Empress Matilda, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Berengaria of Navarre, and Isabella of Angoulême. It examines familial relationships and the exercise of political authority across three groupings: co-rulership with husbands, political partnerships between mothers and sons, and co-operation and competition between mothers and daughters-in-law. Co-rulership can consist of the power-sharing between the two halves of the partnership, as power can come from either direction. When considering the rule of inherited lands, it was the heiress who shared power with her co-ruler, whereas in other circumstances the male ruler would employ his female partner to rule on his behalf as needed. While the thesis focusses primarily on these four women, the co-rulers who will be under study in the context of spousal partnership are: Geoffrey of Anjou, husband of Empress Matilda; Henry II, who was married to Eleanor of Aquitaine; Richard I, spouse of Berengaria of Navarre, and John, husband of Isabella of Angoulême. This study also

¹ See John Gillingham, *The Angevin Empire* (London: Arnold, 2001); Ralph V. Turner, "The Problem of Survival for the Angevin "Empire": Henry II's and his Sons' Vision versus Late Twelfth-Century Realities," *American Historical Review* 100 (1995): 78-96; John LePatourel, "The Plantagenet dominions," *History* 50 (1965): 289-308; Charles Warren Hollister and Thomas K. Keefe, "The Making of the Angevin Empire," in *Monarchs, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman England*, ed. Charles Warren Hollister (London: The Hambledon Press, 1986), 247-271; Martin Aurell, *L'Empire des Plantagenêt 1154-1204*, trans. David Crouch (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007).

² Gillingham, *Angevin Empire*, 7; Aurell, *L'Empire des Plantagenêt*, 1, 3, 7.

³ Edmund King, ed., *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Edmund King, *King Stephen* (London: Yale University Press, 2010); Wilfred Lewis Warren, *Henry II* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973); Wilfred Lewis Warren, *King John*, 3rd ed. (London: Yale University Press, 1997); John Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart*, 2nd ed. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989); Stephen D. Church, ed., *King John, New Interpretations* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999).

focusses on the co-ruling relationships between Henry II, Richard I, John, and their mothers. By examining marital and familial relationships, this thesis reveals how the complex relations between queens and their husbands and sons affected their political and diplomatic power. The political agency of these women within the context of their relations with one another has not been fully explored. This research therefore offers new explorations on the topic by interweaving familial relationships into an understanding of Angevin political dynamics and rule. This study will deeply analyse the nature of co-operation and competition between the four queens, assessing how this influenced the ways they wielded power, and the extent of their influence whilst they were rulers and dowagers.

For brevity, all four women will be referred to as queens, even though Matilda was not formally crowned, since she was an active ruler and intended to be queen of England. It is important to note that Matilda acted as though she were a queen regnant and not a queen consort, as she intended to wield the same powers as a king. Matilda's status in the Anglo-Norman realms was significant due to her previous position as empress, which allowed her greater authority to act as a queen regnant. Matilda was not a consort like Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella as Geoffrey does not hold the more powerful position in their relationship which would elevate his authority over Matilda's. However, Matilda's queenly authority was tempered by the precarity of her position and lack of formal title.

This thesis focusses primarily on the activities of these women between 1135 and 1230. 1135 is a logical starting point as the date when Matilda began to claim her inheritance upon her father Henry I's death. Discussions of Berengaria's struggle to obtain her dower, and patronage as Lady of Le Mans are of great significance, and her death in 1230 marks this study's endpoint. It is important to note that the majority of Isabella's actions as countess of Angoulême and dowager queen, including her second marriage to Hugh X de Lusignan, took place outside the Angevin realms and receive less attention since they are beyond the scope of this particular investigation. This thesis deliberately focusses on women linked to the early Plantagenet kings and, for this reason, does not consider Stephen's wife, Matilda of Boulogne, or John's first wife, Isabella of Gloucester. A thesis is in preparation on the latter topic by Sally Spong.⁴ Margaret of France, wife of Henry the Young King, similarly will not be considered as he did not rule, despite being crowned.

⁴ Sally Spong, "Isabella of Gloucester and Isabella of Angoulême: Female Lordship, Queenship, Power, and Authority 1189-1220," (PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, forthcoming).

An examination of French, Spanish, and English sources, including chronicles, letters and charters, demonstrates that the political agency of the four women at the heart of this study depended not only upon the power afforded to them by their king, but also upon their relationships with one another, and their ability to form political partnerships. By analysing co-ruling relationships, we can understand how composite and corporate monarchies functioned in this period, and the effect this had on royal women who were both rulers and heiresses. This study will highlight that these women were more powerful in their dowager period in part because of the strong relationships they had with their children, except for Berengaria, who was childless. Close mother-son relationships allowed both Matilda and Eleanor to act as regents during their sons' reigns, highlighting their diplomatic skills and the extent of their authority.

This discussion of royal relationships relies on the concepts of power and agency, which are explored further in the literature review when examining various theoretical approaches. The notion of queenly exceptionalism has been rebutted in recent years, as shown by the 'Beyond Exceptionalism' conference and its subsequent volume by Heather J. Tanner, and Theresa Earenfight and Zita Eva Rohr, all of whom demonstrated queens regularly exercised control without falling out of favour, although their power often remained problematic.⁵ The comparative approach adopted here clearly shows these four royal women were not exceptional in their demonstration of agency and authority when compared to each other, and to other high medieval queens.

This thesis focusses on expanding our understanding of the queen's role in this period and the crucial role these women played in the rulership of the Angevin domains. It demonstrates that the exercise of the office of queen fluctuated across the Angevin domains over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The exercise of the queen's office was affected by the control their respective partners, kings, and sons, exerted over their lands and revenues, as will be discussed in chapters three and five. This in turn meant that these women were rarely able to continuously hold power by over their lands and domains. By examining the relationships between these four women, however, and analysing how their

⁵ Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 18, 27; Zita Eva Rohr, "Playing the Catalan: The Rise of the Chess-Queen; Queenship and Political Motherhood in Late Medieval Aragon and France," in *Virtuous or Villainess? The Image of the Royal Mother from the Early Medieval to the Early Modern Era*, eds. Carey Fleiner and Elena Woodacre (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 173-197; Heather J. Tanner, ed., *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100-1400. Moving Beyond the Exceptionalist Debate* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); *MFF* 51.2 (2016).

familial relationships affected their activities, we gain a far broader understanding of royal female power in this period, and the ways these women acted as both female lords and consorts.

This thesis is split into six chapters. The first chapter is comprised of the literature review, which is divided into sections focussing on theoretical approaches, queenship and royal studies, and biographical studies of the four women and their male relatives. This chapter also details the research methodologies and primary sources which form the foundation of the thesis.

Chapter two provides a contextual overview, highlighting the backgrounds of the four women and shows how they became rulers in the Angevin domains: this narrative serves as the foundation for further discussions in chapters three, four, and five. This chapter gives an overview of the office of queen in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and details how changes within government and the office of king affected the authority a queen could wield. These women's backgrounds undoubtedly contributed to their attempts to exercise authority, especially in the case of the heiresses Eleanor and Isabella, since the rulership of women was more acceptable in southern France. Regnant queens and female inheritance were accepted in some regions of western Europe, but in others female rule was unprecedented during this period.⁶ Since all four queens were formally nominated or at least potential heiresses, their natal backgrounds enhanced their authority, furnishing them with considerable land and monetary resources, and respected lineage. Although they were not always able to access these lands, the territories were usually associated with these women through their titles. This was with the exception of Berengaria as Le Mans was not associated with a title. These titles underlined their authority: they were viewed as potential allies and were highly sought after in marital alliances even if their exercise of authority was limited. This chapter also provides a background to royal ceremonies in this period, as well as the terminology surrounding dower, both of which are explored in greater detail in chapter five.

The third chapter examines composite monarchies and the issues of ruling the Angevin domains, exploring how women functioned as part of the monarchical framework. This chapter considers the partnerships of Empress Matilda and Geoffrey of Anjou, Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II, Berengaria of Navarre and Richard I, and Isabella of Angoulême and

⁶ Armin Wolf, "Reigning Queens in Medieval Europe: Where, When and Why," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 169-188.

John, in a comparative framework to understand the different ways these marital collaborations operated. Theories of gender and sexuality are essential to understanding these relationships since the language used by chroniclers to depict these rulers has been influential, and our perceptions of queenly and kingly power rely on how these writers perceived excessive, or non-heteronormative sexualities. This chapter expands upon discussions of women as heiresses and how their inherited lands affected their access to power as sole as well as co-rulers. Finally, this chapter turns to women's use of diplomatic and intercessory skills to independently build affinities with the nobility.

The fourth chapter examines the relationships between the Angevin queens and their kingly sons. It focusses predominantly on motherhood and family, and how the personal experiences of each queen influenced their lives and agency. This chapter also addresses Berengaria's specific situation since her childlessness affected her access to power and the exercise of the queen's office. By examining how queens operated as regents for their sons, and why wives were not always chosen as regents, we can gain further understanding of Angevin marital partnerships. This chapter builds upon the models of rulership constructed in chapter one by examining the differing ruling partnerships Henry, Richard, and John formed with their mothers to enable them to act as regents across the Angevin domains.

The fifth chapter analyses the positions these women held and how their exercise of authority affected their relationships with one another as mothers and daughters-in-law. Their political agency can be explored through their ceremonial roles, both alongside a male counterpart or separately from their spouses and sons. Comparing representations of ceremonies in both charters and chronicles elicits a nuanced understanding of how this demonstrated female power. References to other queens and family members in surviving charters show how marital and familial relations affected the demonstration of authority, and the distribution of lands. This chapter also looks at dower lands, building upon the discussion of inherited land in chapter three to draw comparisons between a queen's exercise of lordship in their various domains, as well as investigating the issue of queen's gold. Lastly, this section examines the relationships between these four women and the Church, to understand the competitive and co-operative nature of their relationships and their diverse motivations for patronising different religious orders.

This final chapter will bring together the various findings from the previous three chapters, as detailed above. It will highlight the aims of the thesis: primarily, to compare four Angevin

royal women through an investigation into their familial relations, particularly the innovative approach of mothers and daughters-in-law. It seeks to understand how co-operation and competition affected the exercise of power and brings forward new models of rulership to understand co-ruling partnerships. Finally, it demonstrates that these women were more powerful in their dowager period, confirming the acknowledgement that widowhood is potentially a time when a woman could exact the most control and development of agency.⁷

⁷ Jo Ann McNamara, "Women and Power through the Family Revisited," in *Gendering the Master Narrative. Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, eds. Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 26.

Chapter One: Literature Review and Methodology

As a comparative study of queenship within the Angevin realms, it is necessary to place this contribution within current historiographical fields. This section will examine the contributions of queenship and monarchical studies, discuss debates within scholarship of the Angevins and Plantagenets, and conclude by summarising the primary sources and research methodology.

Power, Agency, Memory and Sexuality

The concept of medieval power, which underpins queenship, can be broad and difficult to define; Lois L. Huneycutt's emphasis on the combination of personal autonomy and office-holding provides a good starting point.¹ Theresa Earenfight has importantly summarised the traditional gendering of power as masculine over time.² Terminology applied to the female exercise of power often deems it to be lesser than male power, most commonly by resorting to the concept of agency, which is discussed in more detail below.³ However, across Europe, regnant, consort, and dowager queens exercised authority, and recent historiography has roundly dismissed the idea that a woman who wielded power was exceptional.⁴ Power is essential to understanding queenship, and although, at certain points of their lives, we lack evidence for Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella, we can discern they all exercised power, be it through bearing children, patronage, intercession, political negotiation, or a combination of these. Earenfight argued both kings and queens derived their power from monarchy but expressed it differently, and their ability to act depended on social and cultural restrictions.⁵ This approach is essential to understanding the different avenues of power available to women, especially when examining their diplomatic and intercessory actions. The different ways in which queens exercised their authority in the Middle Ages were explored in two essential volumes on gender and power

¹ Lois L. Huneycutt, "Queenship Studies Comes of Age," *MFF* 51 (2016): 15.

² Theresa Earenfight, "Where Do We Go From Here? Some Thoughts on Power and Gender in the Middle Ages," *MFF* 51 (2016): 116.

³ Earenfight, "Power and Gender," 116-117.

⁴ Earenfight, "Power and Gender," 124; Tanner, *Medieval Elite Women*.

⁵ Theresa Earenfight, "A Lifetime of Power: Beyond Binaries of Gender," in *Medieval Elite Women*, 271-294.

edited by Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski.⁶ Erler and Kowaleski argued self-interest is an important motive for understanding why women pursued influence, though this self-interest can be linked to the desire to improve family status, and could be tied to the men in their families, namely their fathers, husbands, and sons. This is important to the following discussions in chapters three and four.⁷ Erler and Kowaleski's consideration of power and agency is also significant here. They showed that, although women had opportunities to access power, these were overshadowed by losses as the status of aristocratic women changed.⁸ These theories have been counteracted more recently by several articles in the *Medieval Feminist Forum* special issue on women and power.⁹ Power mechanisms therefore need to be understood on multiple levels, not only focussing on male-female power relations, but also by looking at methods of agency that are not explicitly dictated by men, for example the use of ceremony and intercession, as shown in chapters three and four.¹⁰

Michel Foucault's work provides a useful basis for further understanding power in stating 'power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies', and suggesting that the ways in which a sovereign's excess power are manifested are useless.¹¹ Foucault's argument that it does not matter who exercises power is problematic, as shown below, and can be counteracted by studying the power exercised by queens. With relation to the exercise of royal power, we can use Foucault's theory here that royal women were one of several bodies whom the king might disperse power to, and who were able to exercise it. Foucault spoke explicitly of sovereign power and its visibility: sovereign power is focussed on its ability to punish, rather than surveille, operating through a legal framework.¹² Law and legal precedent are important stepping stones for female access to power, particularly in a royal context.¹³ However, if queens are not as visible as their kings due to obscurity in sources and historiography, as discussed by Earenfight, we have to look for other signs of visibility, rather than singularly their appearance in law and

⁶ Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds., *Women & Power in the Middle Ages* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1988); Erler and Kowaleski, *Master Narrative*.

⁷ Erler and Kowaleski, "Introduction: A New Economy of Power Relations: Female Agency in the Middle Ages," in *Master Narrative*, 10.

⁸ Erler and Kowaleski, "New Economy," 3.

⁹ *MFF* 51.2 (2016).

¹⁰ Erler and Kowaleski, "New Economy," 15.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 202.

¹² Foucault, *Discipline*, 48.

¹³ Elena Woodacre, "Contemplating Royal Women's Access to Power and the Transition Between the Middle Ages and the "Monstrous Regiment" of the Early Modern Era," *MFF* 51 (2016): 61-64.

enactment of this law.¹⁴ By utilising Erler and Kowaleski's approaches as analysed above, and investigating forms of agency that are not immediately visible such as affinity building and connections with ecclesiastical networks, this thesis will demonstrate the different ways the four women could access and exercise both power and agency.¹⁵ Kelleher argued we are moving towards a broader definition of female power, because the ability to take action and affect others can be used to describe the actions of more than just royal women.¹⁶ Power remains difficult to define, and Kelleher's definition is especially useful for this thesis since there are clear periods where the four women under study do not have the ability to take actions for themselves, or for others.

In the Angevin lands, as explored in this thesis, queenly power became more restricted by the Plantagenet kings, although it was not a continual decline as Eleanor of Provence exercised authority and collected revenues that Eleanor of Aquitaine had previously amassed.¹⁷ It has been posited that there was a decline in the power of English and French queens over this period: Marion Fanger argued queenly power became more restricted in France after Adélaïde of Maurienne, wife of Louis VI and queen of France (1115-1137). However, Miriam Shadis rebutted this as queens continued to exercise authority in ways not recorded by royal documents, such as informal influence and rituals.¹⁸ Jo Ann McNamara argued female power declined around the eleventh century, as the system that developed in the second millennium changed the nature of woman's position and advantaged the male, although this has been contested by recent scholarship.¹⁹ By examining women as wives and widows, McNamara posits this shift to widowhood impacted women's power, although this thesis demonstrates the impact of the change in status led to an increase in power for widows rather than a decline.²⁰ The office of queen changed throughout this period, and this thesis argues the ways power and authority were exercised changed with it, rather than a general decline of power taking place.

¹⁴ Theresa Earenfight, "Highly Visible, Often Obscured: The Difficulty of Seeing Queens and Noble Women," *MFF* 44 (2008): 86.

¹⁵ Erler and Kowaleski, "Introduction," 9.

¹⁶ Marie A. Kelleher, "What Do We Mean by 'Women and Power'?", *MFF* 51 (2016): 110.

¹⁷ Earenfight, *Queenship*, 143-144.

¹⁸ Marion F. Fanger, "A Study of Medieval Queenship: Capetian France (987-1237)," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 5 (1968): 1-48; Miriam Shadis, "Blanche of Castile and Fanger's 'Medieval Queenship': Reassessing the Argument," in *Capetian Women*, ed. Kathleen Nolan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 137-161, especially 152-153.

¹⁹ Jo Ann McNamara, "Women and Power through the Family Revisited," in *Master Narrative*, 25; Tanner, *Medieval Elite Women*.

²⁰ McNamara, "Women," 25.

Within the Anglo-Norman and Angevin domains, Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella demonstrated the multifaceted roles of queenship, by acting as intercessors, mothers, regents, and rulers, but they also showed how their positions as heiresses contributed to their political power. Although much has been written regarding Eleanor of Aquitaine, largely due to her perceived controversial life, the other three women have received minimal scholarly attention and have never been placed alongside each other to analyse how their relations as mothers and daughters-in-law affected their power and influence. The lack of comprehensive scholarly studies which connect the histories of England, France and Spain to examine these women, a trend which has been continued in recent historiography, as well as attention on kingship studies, have played a significant role in drawing the focus away from these four queens.

Memory and its construction are also crucial when analysing the lives and relationships of Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella. Depictions of women, and queens in particular, were largely shaped by the cultural background of the chroniclers writing about them. Although women played a significant role in the memorialisation of family members, they were often forgotten, intended or not, by historical writers. According to Elisabeth van Houts, this can partially be attributed to the large role women played in oral history, and also due to the reluctance of the male medieval chronicler to depend on female witnesses for their evidence.²¹ Understanding how women have been remembered, or not, is important when confronting the lack of documented recording of women's lives, by both women and men. This affects our understanding of the prominence of queens and their appearances in historical narratives at certain points. The minimal documentation of these women and their categorisation into gendered stereotypes has been continually repeated by chroniclers and historians, to the point where uncovering the history of royal women must be done by reading between the lines and placing them at the forefront of both political and gender theory. Memory is central to the study of history: without a critically engaged application of memory theory we can neither reconstruct the past nor avoid repeating stereotypes. Whilst van Houts' work is foundational to our understanding of the intersection between memory and gender, Mary Carruthers' research also challenges existing thought on the importance medieval writers placed on memory and helps in explaining why medieval writers highlighted particular events, people and places over

²¹ Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900-1200* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), 11, 39; Elisabeth van Houts, "Introduction: medieval memories," in *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700-1300*, ed. Elisabeth van Houts (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), 5-6.

others.²² My own research engages with the historiographical field of memory by building on the different approaches of van Houts and Carruthers to understand current perceptions of medieval queens and interlink theories of power and gender through the lens of memory. This approach is intrinsic to an analysis of medieval chronicles, one of the main sources for this thesis.

Theoretical approaches deriving from gender studies are essential for comprehending how the four subjects of this study were not only queens, but empresses, duchesses, and countesses too. A nuanced approach is needed to understand how these women navigated the political dynamics at different points in the social hierarchy, which is guided by the research in Erler and Kowaleski's edited volumes. Holly S. Hulburt's work exploring the control of public ritual and ceremony in late medieval Europe and its effect on our perceptions of consorts is useful in the analysis of ceremonial roles, arguing ceremonies both empowered and limited women, and drew 'attention to their gender's role in the creation and maintenance of political and dynastic ties'; an approach which has helped shape my own analysis of ceremonial roles in chapter five.²³ This is significant when considering Eleanor's dominance of ceremonial roles which often placed her above her daughters-in-law, specifically when Berengaria did not appear at Richard's re-crowning. Chronicle representations of queens in ceremonial roles has strongly influenced earlier historiography, and previous perceptions of royal women's power. Kimberley LoPrete argued several categories affected women's ability to wield power, which is an important consideration when understanding why female rulership could be restricted.²⁴

We cannot investigate the roles of medieval queens without an awareness of gender historiography: Pauline Stafford, Janet L. Nelson and Susan M. Johns have all made significant contributions to the field when it comes to examining the concept of gender in relation to the roles of royal and noble women.²⁵ As discussed below, Stafford's and

²² Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1-18.

²³ Holly S. Hulburt, "Public Exposure? Consorts and Ritual in Late Medieval Europe: The Example of the Entrance of the Dogaresse of Venice," in *Master Narrative*, 174-189, at 175, 189.

²⁴ Kimberley A. LoPrete, "Women, Gender and Lordship in France, c.1050-1250," *History Compass* 5 (2007): 1931.

²⁵ Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers, The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983); Pauline Stafford and Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, eds., *Gendering the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001); Janet L. Nelson, "Family, Gender and Sexuality in the Middle Ages," in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (London: Routledge, 1997), 153-176; Susan M. Johns, *Noblewomen, Aristocracy and Power in the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman realm* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

Huneycutt's approaches to the implications of language on our comprehension of female power are especially important when discussing the gendering of the language used to describe royal women. Stafford argued queens were not immune from criticism as they were blamed for the king's excesses, as contemporary sources were shaped by models of female action.²⁶ This is foundational to understanding why queens received criticism from chroniclers, as will be explored further in chapters two and three. Huneycutt's work on the criticism of female figures in medieval chronicles stated that chroniclers, especially Orderic Vitalis, were less concerned with the sex of a claimant to the throne than they were with their legitimacy and hereditary links.²⁷ This ties in with my own analysis of the ways in which power was wielded, and the exploration of whether power and agency were fully derived from women's relationships with men. Theoretical approaches to gender underpin this thesis, but they are especially significant to chapter three, since the analysis of co-rulership depends on understanding how power was gendered and demonstrated within such partnerships, and how the four queens defied and conformed to the roles expected of them, for example being a regent or a mother.

Sexuality is also fundamental to exploring the agency of Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella, because it deepens our understanding of how they operated within their marriages, and how they were depicted by chroniclers. Women were often on the receiving end of highly gendered criticism, some of which was directed at their sexuality as, for example, Matthew Paris' description of Isabella of Angoulême as 'more Jezebel than Isabel.'²⁸ As sexuality influenced how a queen was depicted, it is necessary to explore how sexuality affected her ability to wield power. John W. Baldwin's examination of sexual desire at the turn of the thirteenth century in France argued the papacy struggled to assert their control over marriage, and although theologians acknowledged the greater potential for female sexual desire, they viewed it as voracious and used it to support misogynistic views.²⁹ Since Ruth Mazo Karras has proven gender was fundamental in organising medieval sexuality, it is not possible to examine queenship without investigating gender, and we cannot thoroughly understand gender roles without contextualising medieval

²⁶ Stafford, *Queens*, 25; Pauline Stafford, "The Portrayal of Royal Women in England, Mid-Tenth to Mid-Twelfth Centuries," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. Parsons, 146.

²⁷ Lois L. Huneycutt, "Female Succession and the Language of Power in the Writings of Twelfth-Century Churchmen," in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. Parsons, 194.

²⁸ 'eam potius impiissimam Zezabel quam Ysabel dedere nominari,' *Chronica Majora*, iv, 253.

²⁹ John W. Baldwin, "Five Discourses on Desire: Sexuality and Gender in Northern France around 1200," *Speculum* 66 (1991): 797-819.

sexuality.³⁰ Similarly, medieval examples of royal partnerships benefit from being centred within Michel Foucault's work on sexuality and power, since his approaches to power relations emphasises how power exists outside the sovereign and can be depersonalised.³¹ Jo Ann McNamara argued for the existence of *Herrenfrage* in the eleventh to twelfth centuries, a crisis of masculinity, in which clerical misogyny peaked against the fears of female sexuality.³² McNamara's theories around masculine crisis, particularly in the wake of female sexuality, are intrinsic to my understanding of how female sexuality operated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This in turn is tied to the analysis of co-rulership and the marriages of the four women under study, whose relationships all faced allegations of excessive or non-heteronormative sexualities. April Harper's discussion of the dangers of female sexuality holds particular resonance here, as does Karma Lochrie's work on the constructions of medieval heteronormativity and sexualities.³³ As will be discussed in chapter three, several of the people under study here were subject to allegations of sexual misconduct; therefore by utilising the approaches discussed above as part of this investigation, this thesis will demonstrate how medieval perceptions of normative and non-heteronormative sexualities have in turn influenced our understanding of the dynamics of co-rulerships, and the memory and depictions of these four women.

Royal Studies and Noblewomen

As queenship studies has significantly increased over the last four decades, so the nature of biographical writing surrounding Eleanor especially changed too. Exploration of the different aspects of queenship impinged on the idea of biography as merely a chronological narrative, although queenship studies itself has a longer history.³⁴ The growth of queenship studies is partially due to developments in second and third wave feminism which produced several important works on gender and sexuality, particularly female gender and sexuality, such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Joan Wallach Scott's "Gender: A Useful

³⁰ Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe, Doing Unto Others*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 32.

³¹ Michel Foucault, *A History of Sexuality, Volume I, An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 96-97.

³² Jo Ann McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150," in *Medieval Masculinities. Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, eds. Clare A. Lees, Thelma Fenster and Jo Ann McNamara (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 1994), 4, 8, 10.

³³ April Harper, "Bodies and Sexuality," in *A Cultural History of Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Kim M. Phillips (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 39-58; Karma Lochrie, *Heterosyncracies. Female Sexuality When Normal Wasn't* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken and James A. Schultz, eds., *Constructing Medieval Sexuality* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

³⁴ Huneycutt, "Queenship Studies," 9-16.

Category of Historical Analysis?”, which have shaped the way we study and research the history of women.³⁵ Until the late twentieth century, most references to queens would be found in biographies of their husbands, sons, and brothers, if at all. The very definition of queenship is constantly under examination as the roles, duties, and expectations of what it meant to be a queen across the medieval period are in flux.

One of the most important contributions to queenship studies is Earenfight’s *Queenship in Medieval Europe* which explored the issues of defining what a queen was in the medieval period and why the voices of these women have been lost in time.³⁶ The multi-faceted role of a queen presented by Earenfight draws upon Stafford’s definition, and both exemplify that a queen was not one single entity, but could be several throughout her role or at the same time be it a wife, mother, intercessor, patron or ruler.³⁷ Earenfight argued queens could wield substantial political authority and were an integral part of the unit of monarchy, a concept which requires further research as the area of queenship studies by definition has, in some aspects, led to a division between the fields of kingship and queenship rather than a cohesive outlook.³⁸ Only through mutual comparison of kingship and queenship as a unit can we fully understand the nature and powers of both units and show powerful queens were not always the exception to the rule. Instead, queens regularly exercised power in different ways and were unexceptional when doing so.

The importance of the role as mother to the unit of queenship has most recently been analysed in Elena Woodacre’s and Carey Fleiner’s volumes on royal mothers. Woodacre argued motherhood was imperative to the role of a queen due to the expectation that the queen would maintain continuity and stability by bearing male heirs.³⁹ The position of mother was an intrinsic part of the lives of Matilda and Eleanor, and to an extent Isabella as well. As Berengaria was left a childless widow, she needs to be examined outside this maternal sphere. If motherhood is central to the power of the queen, this can explain

³⁵ Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 1053-1075; Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1988); Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: Still A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?,” *Diogenes*, 1 (2010): 7-14; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ed. and trans. H. M. Parshley (London: Vintage Press, 1997).

³⁶ Earenfight, *Queenship*, 4, 6.

³⁷ Earenfight. *Queenship*, 6; Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith, Queenship and Women’s Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 64.

³⁸ Earenfight, *Queenship*, 4-7; Theresa Earenfight, “Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe,” *Gender and History* 19 (2007): 7-10.

³⁹ Elena Woodacre, “Introduction: Royal Mothers and their Ruling Children,” in *Royal Mothers and their Ruling Children, Wielding Political Authority from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era*, eds. Elena Woodacre and Carey Fleiner (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2.

Berengaria's lack of influence in her reign, yet there were other obstacles to Berengaria's ability to obtain agency, as this thesis demonstrates. Isabella serves as an example of how queenly power can be linked to maternal influence, since her relocation to France and marriage to Hugh X de Lusignan led to a lack of matriarchal power which can be examined through the issues surrounding her 'abandonment' of her children.⁴⁰ Letters between Isabella and Henry III indicate there were attempts to re-establish influence over Henry and his political activities for the benefit of both Isabella and Henry, and despite her relocation to Angoulême she continued to work on behalf of her Plantagenet children.⁴¹

The queen who did not bear heirs could be limited in the avenues to negotiate and intercede, but was still able to do so, as seen with Maria of Castile (queen of Aragon and Naples, 1420-1458), Anne of Bohemia (queen of England, 1382-1394), and Berengaria. Childless queens have typically been viewed as less powerful; however, chapter four argues childlessness was not a definitive obstacle to power.⁴² The work of John Carmi Parsons is integral to any examination of queenship historiography, and he acknowledged the importance of familial roles in the role of a queen, and argued the political actions of queens often extended further than being viewed simply as a vessel and transmitter of dynastic rights.⁴³ Parsons', Huneycutt's and Stafford's chapters in Parsons' volume *Medieval Queenship* explored the basis of the family for queenly power, which was typically tied to marital and familial rights. As such, if we are to move away from the notion of exceptionalism, the redefining and exercise of queenly office was to be expected from queen to queen: however the dependence on a male relative to hold this office resulted in occasional restrictions on power.⁴⁴ It is accurate to state Stephen, Henry II, Richard, and John all checked the power of their female relatives. However, all four women

⁴⁰ Louise J. Wilkinson, "Maternal Abandonment and Surrogate Caregivers: Isabella of Angoulême and Her Children by King John," in *Virtuous or Villainess?*, 101-124.

⁴¹ PRO SC 1/3/182, in Anne Crawford, ed., *Letters of the Queens of England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1994), 53.

⁴² Gabrielle Storey, "Berengaria of Navarre and Joanna of Sicily as Crusading Queens: Manipulation, Reputation and Agency," in *Forgotten Queens in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Political Agency, Myth Making, and Patronage*, eds. Valerie Schutte and Estelle Paraque, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 41-59; Kristen L. Geaman and Theresa Earenfight, "Neither Heir Nor Spare. Childless queens and the practice of monarchy in pre-modern Europe," in *The Routledge History of Monarchy*, eds. Elena Woodacre, Lucinda H. S. Dean, Chris Jones, Russell E. Martin and Zita Eva Rohr (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 518-533.

⁴³ John Carmi Parsons, "Introduction," in *Medieval Queenship*, 3, 8.

⁴⁴ Tanner, *Medieval Elite Women*; Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz, "Introduction, It's Good To Be Queen," in *Queens & Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, eds. Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), xxix.

demonstrated in their dowager period the power royal women could hold and were arbiters of authority despite their change in status.

The works of Pauline Stafford and Colette Bowie have provided a useful context for an evaluation of the four queens under study. Stafford's work on Queen Emma and Queen Edith highlighted the difficulties of ascertaining the reality of queenly lives and is one of the formative works for the study of early medieval queenship. Stafford's *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers* sets a precedent for comparative queenship studies, and is an insightful framework for the workings of queenship in England and France in the Middle Ages.⁴⁵ Bowie's work continues this comparative approach by contrasting the lives of the daughters of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II.⁴⁶ Bowie's research focusses on intergenerational relationships and theories regarding medieval childhood in a move away from traditional life cycle studies of queens; a methodology rarely applied to men.⁴⁷ Her study concludes 'medieval women at all levels of society were defined by their marital as well as their social status in a way that men were not...', demonstrating that the many aspects of a queen's life allowed for further criticism by medieval writers.⁴⁸ Bowie's work emphasises the need for intergenerational studies, such as this exploration of queenly power in the High Middle Ages. Charles Beem has also used a comparative approach to examine the issues female rulers faced due to their gender. Beem's identification of how female rulers manipulated the social and political limitations imposed upon their gender resonates with this examination of how consorts wielded authority in the Middle Ages.⁴⁹ Comparative analysis of queens can afford further insight into the changing nature of queenship while also shedding light on women's agency and authority.

Kingship has typically received more scholarly attention than queenship. Kings were the primary wielders of power, the centre of the monarchical unit, and they were responsible for administrative and economic systems, and for maintaining societal hierarchy. However, they were not sole rulers; they required a queen to form a partnership, present a unified monarchy, and cement a dynasty in their name. The four kings in this study: Stephen, Henry II, Richard I, and John, each proved an additional hindrance to their queen's power rather than enabling it, particularly in the case of Stephen as he usurped Matilda's position.

⁴⁵ Stafford, *Queens*, 115-134.

⁴⁶ Colette Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).

⁴⁷ Bowie, *Daughters*, 14.

⁴⁸ Bowie, *Daughters*, 209.

⁴⁹ Charles Beem, *The Lioness Roared. The Problems of Female Rule in English History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 4.

Stephen is not examined as a co-ruler but features due to his obstruction of Matilda's authority. As noted, Matilda of Boulogne does not feature in this study since she was not a central female figure in the Angevin domains, nor was she the mother or spouse of an Angevin king. Kings remain a primary focus of historians who seek to provide an insight into the unit of monarchy, with recent historiography focussed on administrative capabilities and familial relations. However, current historiography has demonstrated the importance of evaluating monarchy as a partnership, increasing our understanding of the consorts' role in rulership.⁵⁰

Since the political contribution of the four royal women at the centre of this thesis depended heavily on their inherited possessions across western Europe, studies on noblewomen provide an essential framework for examining women's identities as heiresses and exploring how this varied across domains. The Frankish territories were more accepting of female rule. Eleanor succeeded as duchess of Aquitaine in 1137, although she was taken under the wardship of Louis VI and married to his son Louis VII swiftly after the death of her father William X. Isabella became countess of Angoulême in 1202, though her control of the lands was limited until her return as dowager in 1217. Johns demonstrated how constructions of lordship were gendered, and how this affected female lords because their power was partially based on their property. As lordship was gendered male, female lords would encounter further obstacles when exercising their authority.⁵¹ There is a clear line of demarcation between the Navarrese and Frankish rules of inheritance, on the one hand, and the English on the other, since Navarrese legal tradition made it acceptable for Berengaria to theoretically inherit there. By contrast, there was strong opposition to Matilda's accession in England, and the extent to which this opposition was gendered is discussed below. Berengaria's position in the late twelfth and early thirteenth century needs to be understood within the context of Roger Collins' work on traditions regarding female inheritance and sovereignty.⁵² Collins argued queens had a publicly prominent role in Navarre, and extant charters represented kings and queens as sharing royal authority.⁵³ Woodacre explored the legal context to Navarrese succession and inheritance by analysing the Roman and Frankish laws, and the establishment of the Navarrese *fueros* in the late

⁵⁰ Earenfight, "Persona," 1-21.

⁵¹ Johns, *Noblewomen*, 200.

⁵² Roger Collins, "Queens-Dowager and Queens-Regent in Tenth Century León and Navarre," in *Medieval Queenship*, 87, 89, 91.

⁵³ Collins, "Queens-Dowager," 90.

tenth century.⁵⁴ Given this context, it is perhaps unsurprising Berengaria fought continually for her right to her dower lands, and this is discussed at greater length in chapter five.

Biographical Studies and Political Histories

The scope and number of biographical works on Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella varies dramatically. Eleanor has been the subject of a wealth of historical scholarship, both in English and French academic circles, whereas the other three queens have received considerably less attention in comparison and deserve more extensive biographical treatment. William M. Aird has argued 'biography's popularity reflects the desire to understand some fundamental questions about the individual's place in the world' and their ability to influence change, and it is through biographies that we can begin to understand the ability of royal women to respond to political events and invoke their power.⁵⁵ In addition, biographical research can help illuminate the restrictions which affected a woman's display of power. Harold Mytum argued that despite its controversial nature as a popular medium and issues with reception, it is an important interpretative method to understanding the past.⁵⁶ For these reasons, biographies of the four queens are essential to reconstructing an understanding of their political manoeuvres and activism, especially when considering their relations as mothers and daughters-in-law. The challenges of biography lie in the limitations of exploring the personal, as the author cannot know the true motivations of their subject(s) and must rely on contemporary perceptions, which then shape the historian's interpretation.⁵⁷ Collective biographies occasionally form the few biographical representations we have of queens, notably Agnes Strickland's work on Berengaria and Isabella, but their lack of detail means they provide only the bare bones of a biographical study. I will now outline the biographical work undertaken by other scholars and to show why a comparative study of these women is preferable to a biographical account.

The most significant work written on Matilda is Marjorie Chibnall's biography, which examines Matilda's life from princess to Empress and then Lady of the English. Chibnall

⁵⁴ Elena Woodacre, "The Queen and Her Consort: Succession, Politics and Partnership in the Kingdom of Navarre, 1274-1512," (PhD thesis, Bath Spa University, 2011), 36-40.

⁵⁵ William M. Aird, *Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 3.

⁵⁶ Harold Mytum, "Ways of Writing in Post-Medieval and Historical Archaeology: Introducing Biography," *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 44 (2010): 252.

⁵⁷ For the distinction between life writing and biography in history and difficulties of interpretation, see Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography. A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

argued for the significance of Matilda's role as an heiress to the English throne, and that the most important barrier to Matilda successfully taking the crown was her sex.⁵⁸ Chibnall remains the accepted authority on Matilda and, in other works, Matilda is predominantly discussed in reference to either Henry I's or Stephen's reign or in works focussed solely on the civil war.⁵⁹ Admittedly, it is difficult to study Matilda without the contextual background of the civil war since this is one of her most politically active periods. Beem argued 'the cultural dictates of patriarchal society' alone cannot explain the reasons Matilda failed to be crowned; therefore caution must be employed against assuming sex was the primary reason she failed to gain the English throne.⁶⁰ Contemporary clerics and chroniclers remain largely silent on the matter of Matilda's sex.⁶¹ More often, Matilda's attitude after her success at the battle of Lincoln is attributed to her ultimate failure, alongside her poor political judgement and actions in London as Chibnall, King, and Huneycutt have argued.⁶² Matilda has been the subject of several German studies which are often not referred to due to their focus on her life in Germany, and the lack of attention paid to non-English works on Matilda by Anglophone scholars.⁶³ The difference between the two national interpretations of Matilda's life is reflected in the biographers' views of her as either a strong and respected empress or an aspiring queen. Catherine Hanley's new biography of Matilda takes a different approach as it focusses on her abilities as a military and political leader.⁶⁴ Modern historiography on Matilda helps us understand her political activism and the

⁵⁸ Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda, Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 205.

⁵⁹ Charles Warren Hollister, *Henry I* (London: Yale University Press, 2001); King, *Stephen*; King, *Anarchy*; Jim Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda, The Civil War of 1139-53* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1996).

⁶⁰ Beem, *Lioness*, 61.

⁶¹ *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis. Volume VI. Books XI, XII and XIII*, trans. and ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2002), frames Matilda's activities in a neutral light, 535, 547. For examples, see James H. Ramsay, *The Foundations of England, or Twelve Centuries of British History (B.C. 55-A.D. 1154)* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1898), 403-407; Nesta Pain, *Empress Matilda, Uncrowned Queen of England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), 91-93; see Huneycutt for her examination of Matilda and Orderic Vitalis: Huneycutt, "Female Succession," 194.

⁶² Chibnall, *Matilda*, 104; King, *Anarchy*, 160-163; Huneycutt, "Female Succession," 194.

⁶³ Marjorie Chibnall's monograph on Matilda provides an extensive bibliography of German works including Oskar Rössler, *Kaiserin Mathilde, Mutter Heinrichs von Anjou und der Zeitalter der Anarchie in England*, (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1897); Karl Schnith, "Domina Anglorum, Zur Bedeutungstreite eines hochmittelalterlichen Herrscherintitels," *Festschrift für Peter Acht* 15 (1972): 101-111; Karl Schnith, "Regni et pacis inquietatrix: Zur Rolle der Kaiserin Mathilde in der "Anarchie", " *Journal of Medieval History* 2 (1976): 135-157, and Ferdinand Oppl, *Stadt und Reich im 12 Jahrhundert (1125-1190)* (Vienna, Cologne and Graz: Böhlau, 1986). Please note these works have not been consulted but are flagged for interest.

⁶⁴ Catherine Hanley, *Matilda. Empress, Queen, Warrior* (London: Yale University Press, 2019).

societal views which may have impacted her accession to the English throne in the mid-twelfth century.

With the seizure of the English throne after the death of Henry I in 1135, Stephen established himself as the rightful king, which was readily accepted by most of the nobility despite their previously sworn oaths to Henry I to acknowledge Matilda as heiress. The period that followed is often referred to as the Anarchy, a concept coined by historian William Stubbs, but one which has been disputed by more recent work on the period.⁶⁵ Edmund King's argument that the concept originates within the period under study by chroniclers is valid, although the actual usage of the term itself is complex as society did not disintegrate during the period, and neither did the nobility undergo complete upheaval.⁶⁶ Character assessments of Stephen are difficult to obtain due to the nature of the sources, as with Matilda, although he has been the subject of major biographical works as well as general discussions on the Anarchy.⁶⁷ King has written several works on Stephen and his reign, and ultimately concluded Stephen was chosen by the Anglo-Norman community to become king, and remained steadfastly so in part because of the actions of his queen, Matilda of Boulogne, who raised armies and negotiated with the barons to ensure Stephen's success.⁶⁸ David Crouch's biographical study of Stephen argued Stephen's character judgements were better than his political ones, and it is as a result of being king between the two successful Henrys that has shaped historical interpretation of his reign to be overwhelmingly negative.⁶⁹ Some contemporary studies have painted a more favourable picture of Stephen, though the author of the *Gesta Stephani*, and William of Newburgh both asserted Matilda would have never gained nor kept the throne due to her poor political judgement and disruption of gender norms.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ William Stubbs, *The Constitutional History of England In Its Origin and Development. Volume I* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1897), 319; David Crouch, *The Reign of King Stephen, 1135-1154* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), 1, 4; King, *Anarchy*, 4.

⁶⁶ *Gesta Stephani*, 220; King, *Anarchy*, 4.

⁶⁷ Earlier works on Stephen include John T. Appleby, *The Troubled Reign of King Stephen* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1969) and H. A. Cronne, *The Reign of Stephen, Anarchy in England 1135-54* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970). For works on the Anarchy, see Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda*; King, *Anarchy*.

⁶⁸ King, *Stephen*, 301, 339.

⁶⁹ Crouch, *Stephen*, 340-342.

⁷⁰ William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs*, trans. and eds. Peter G. Walsh & M. J. Kennedy, 2 vols. (Warminster and Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 1988-2007), i, 63-65; William of Malmesbury *Historia Novella*, ed. Edmund King, trans. Kenneth Reginald Potter (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1998), 101; *Gesta Stephani*, 121-123. Note subsequent references to Newburgh are this edition unless otherwise specified.

Eleanor of Aquitaine has benefited from more historical, biographical, and popular interest despite the lack of definite information we possess regarding her life. Amy Kelly was one of the first English biographers of Eleanor to discuss her political activity, although Kelly's overly romanticised view and focus on the scandals which led to Eleanor's decline in reputation results in an unsatisfactory biography in light of more recent work.⁷¹ Following Kelly's work, William W. Kibler's volume focussed on Eleanor's role as a patron and politician, whereas Marion Meade developed further attributions to Eleanor's role in the courts of love in Aquitaine.⁷² Douglas David Roy Owen's biography helpfully deconstructed the legends surrounding Eleanor's life and discussed Aquitanian precedents for female rule.⁷³

Ralph V. Turner's biography of Eleanor argued she was a victim of history and misogyny as her attempts to exercise her power were often restricted by her husbands and her sex, a noteworthy comparison with Matilda.⁷⁴ Michael R. Evans' work provides a sharp contrast to the earlier biographical works which he examined and criticised. Evans concluded that the image of Eleanor created by historians is misleading, and the feminist critical approaches of the twenty first century are needed to allow more subtle interpretations.⁷⁵ His analysis of Eleanor's image presents a new reading of her portrayal in chronicles, literature and artwork as he demonstrated that sources for Eleanor are scarce but, despite this, new interpretations are needed as we are still far from understanding the historical Eleanor.⁷⁶ The diversity of biographies on Eleanor results in several differing interpretations of her life and activity, although most historians maintain she was politically active to a variable extent, as seen with the arguments posited by Elizabeth A. R. Brown, Turner, Huneycutt and Parsons in Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons' *Lord and Lady*.⁷⁷ There are

⁷¹ Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* (London: Harvard University Press, 1950).

⁷² William W. Kibler, ed., *Eleanor of Aquitaine, Patron and Politician* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976); Marion Meade, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Biography* (New York: Phoenix Press, 1977), 5, 310-311.

⁷³ Douglas David Roy Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen & Legend* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 6.

⁷⁴ Ralph V. Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (London: Yale University Press, 2009) 6, 7, 122, 313.

⁷⁵ Michael R. Evans, *Inventing Eleanor, The Medieval and Post-Medieval Image of Eleanor of Aquitaine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 67, 166, 169.

⁷⁶ Evans, *Eleanor*, 169.

⁷⁷ Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and Her Seasons," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, eds. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1-54, Ralph V. Turner, "Eleanor of Aquitaine in the Governments of Her Sons Richard and John," in *Lord and Lady*, 77-96; Lois L. Huneycutt, "*Alianora Regina Anglorum*: Comparisons between Eleanor of Aquitaine and Her Anglo-Norman Predecessors as Queens of England," in *Lord and Lady*, 115-132; John Carmi Parsons, "Damned If She Didn't and Damned When

disagreements as to whether Eleanor was an exceptional woman for her time or not in light of her political activities, though she was not unusual in comparison to other Anglo-Norman noblewomen. Douglas Boyd, Meade, and Jean Flori have all praised her 'remarkable' character, but the research in this thesis supports Evans' view that Eleanor was one of many powerful women in the High Middle Ages, and was preceded and followed by other royal women with significant authority and influence.⁷⁸ Most recently, Sara Cockerill's biography of Eleanor presents a far more balanced consideration of Eleanor's roles and exceptionalism than previous biographies, albeit lacking deeper analysis in areas.⁷⁹

Eleanor's life leads naturally into a consideration of queenship and patronage: both aspects are central to Wheeler and Parsons' volume which brought forward new analysis on Eleanor's activities.⁸⁰ Studies such as those by Karen M. Broadhurst have argued Eleanor was not as influential a literary patron as previously thought, whereas Meade has focussed upon Eleanor and the courts of love, and her artistic patronage.⁸¹ The notion of patronage is relevant to this discussion since it was a method for women to display their power, and all four queens remained patrons, particularly of religious houses, even after becoming dowagers. This thesis examines the religious and political patronage of these four women, but not their cultural patronage.

Eleanor's husband, Henry II, has also been the subject of multiple biographies and collections, some of which touch on Eleanor's role. The most extensive and still relevant biography of Henry by Wilfred Lewis Warren asserts Henry's reign was remarkable for the construction of the Angevin empire, even if its unity was tenuous, and would inevitably fall apart after his death.⁸² There has been much debate regarding the origins of the Angevin empire, namely whether it was the desire of Henry I, Fulk of Anjou, Geoffrey of Anjou, or

She Did: Bodies, Babies, and Bastards in the Lives of Two Queens of France," in *Lord and Lady*, 265-300.

⁷⁸ Douglas Boyd, *April Queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine* (Stroud: The History Press, 2004), 1; Meade, *Eleanor*, x; Jean Flori, *Eleanor of Aquitaine, Queen and Rebel*, trans. Olive Classe (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 53; Evans, *Eleanor*, 12-16.

⁷⁹ Sara Cockerill, *Eleanor of Aquitaine. Queen of France and England, Mother of Empires* (Stroud: Amberley, 2019).

⁸⁰ Huneycutt, "Alianora Regina Anglorum," 115-132; Turner, "Eleanor of Aquitaine," 77-96; RáGena C. DeAragon, "Wife, Widow, and Mother: Some Comparisons between Eleanor of Aquitaine and Noblewomen of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin World," in *Lord and Lady*, 97-114.

⁸¹ Karen M. Broadhurst, "Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patrons of Literature in French?," *Viator* 27 (1996): 82; Meade, *Eleanor*, 304-306.

⁸² Warren, *Henry II*, 627.

Henry II to create it, and whether it actually existed.⁸³ Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent's edited volume offers a diverse range of analysis of several aspects of Henry's reign, whilst acknowledging Warren's volume remains the fundamental work.⁸⁴ Henry's 'empire' faded rapidly upon his death, and responsibility for its demise has been attributed to the rule of his sons Richard and John. Their reigns, in combination with the growing strength of the French king Philip Augustus, and the disparity with which the dominions were connected, contributed to the collapse of the Angevin domains.⁸⁵

Berengaria has been the subject of only two biographies, both in English - one by Ann Trindade and the other by Marin Mitchell, and has also been the subject of few chapters and articles, usually in connection with her husband Richard.⁸⁶ Mitchell's is the first biography of Berengaria and, although it is concise due to the lack of extant records, it gives an interesting account of the relationship between Eleanor and Berengaria. Mitchell provides evidence of Berengaria's rare moments of political intervention despite Eleanor's appearance, citing Berengaria's arrangement of the defence of Normandy whilst Richard was on crusade, although no primary source documents this.⁸⁷ Trindade's biography noted Berengaria was overshadowed by Eleanor during her married life and beyond, and argued Eleanor attempted to remove Berengaria from the historical record by controlling the recording of events.⁸⁸ Trindade's exploration of the relationship between Eleanor and Berengaria is insightful, as is her commentary on relations between Eleanor and her other daughters-in-law.⁸⁹ Mitchell and Trindade agree Eleanor was the motivating force behind Richard and Berengaria's marriage. As such, the notion of Berengaria as an overshadowed queen is brought forth and then elucidated upon by discussing her increased actions once outside of Eleanor's influence. Berengaria was more active after Eleanor's death as Lady of

⁸³ Thomas K. Keefe, "Geoffrey Plantagenet's Will and the Angevin Succession," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 6 (1974): 266-274; Bernard S. Bachrach, "The Idea of the Angevin Empire," *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 10 (1978): 299; Stephen D. Church, "Was there an Angevin Empire?" (2018), 1-11, accessed 12 January 2019, [academia.edu/16498363/Was_there_an_Angevin_Empire?](https://www.academia.edu/16498363/Was_there_an_Angevin_Empire?).

⁸⁴ Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent, eds., *Henry II: New Interpretations* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), 17.

⁸⁵ Turner, "Problem of Survival," 78-96; Church, *New Interpretations*.

⁸⁶ Andre Bouton, "La reine Bérengère perdue et retrouvée," *Bulletin de la Société d'Agriculture, Sciences et Arts de la Sarthe* 72 (1969/1970): 15-25 ; Ivan Cloulas, "Bérengère de Navarre raconte Aliénor d'Aquitaine," in *Aliénor d'Aquitaine*, 231-234; Elizabeth M. Hallam, "Bérengère de Navarre," *La Province du Maine* 93 (1991): 225-237; Mariano González-Arno Conde-Luque, "Berenguela de Navarra y Ricardo Corazón de León," *Historia* 16 111 (1985): 67-75.

⁸⁷ Marin Mitchell, *Berengaria, Enigmatic Queen of England* (Burwash Weald: A. Wright 1986), 83.

⁸⁸ Ann Trindade, *Berengaria, In Search of Richard the Lionheart's Queen* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 22, 57, 63.

⁸⁹ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 63.

Le Mans, predominantly in patronage and ecclesiastical matters rather than politics. Mitchell's and Trindade's works and their commentaries on the interactions between Eleanor and Berengaria are a helpful precedent for my own examination, however both speculate where the evidence is scarce. The complexity of Navarre's position in history and whether it should be the subject of French, Basque or Iberian history has often left it neglected from all three, and thus its royal families have been similarly swept to one side.⁹⁰ Although Berengaria has been similarly ignored by English, French, and Spanish historians, the reasons for this differ between the three groups as English historians reduce the importance of Navarre when examining Iberian history.⁹¹ Conversely, French historians focus on the intersection between France and Navarre, as seen with Thibaut of Champagne, Berengaria's nephew; and Iberian historians have focussed their discussions on whether Navarre is part of the Basque states or not.⁹²

Richard I is most notable as king for his activities outside of the Angevin domains rather than his ruling of it. A heroic crusader according to medieval chroniclers, Richard spent a significant amount of his reign on crusade and fighting in France, and notably was hindered on his return from crusade because of his capture by Leopold V, Duke of Austria.⁹³ John Gillingham has provided the most noteworthy biographical study of Richard, although his overt praise for Richard's abilities as an administrator are brought to the fore instead of focussing on the fact that England, for the majority of his reign, was ruled by regents.⁹⁴ A more revisionist volume aimed at unpicking the legend surrounding Richard has been produced by Janet L. Nelson, and provides an interesting juxtaposition to Gillingham's work.⁹⁵ In Nelson's volume, Jane Martindale discussed the legends around Eleanor, as well as examining her role within Aquitaine during her husband's and sons' reigns, and the skills she demonstrated therein.⁹⁶ A recent biography by Ralph V. Turner and Richard R. Heiser has, like Gillingham, focussed on Richard's administrative abilities but has centred their work in his French territories and contributed a more nuanced and revisionist view than

⁹⁰ Woodacre, *The Queen*, 5.

⁹¹ Woodacre, *The Queen*, 5-11.

⁹² Rachel Bard, *Navarra: The Durable History* (Nevada: Nevada University Press, 1992); Theodore Evergates, *The Aristocracy in the County of Champagne 1100-1300* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Roger Collins, ed., *The Basques* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1986).

⁹³ Joseph P. Huffman, *The Social Politics of Medieval Diplomacy, Anglo-German Relations (1066-1307)* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 133-150.

⁹⁴ Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart*, 287.

⁹⁵ Janet L. Nelson, ed., *Richard Coeur de Lion in History and Myth* (London: King's College London Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1992).

⁹⁶ Jane Martindale, "Eleanor of Aquitaine," in *Richard Coeur de Lion in History & Myth*, 17-50.

previous biographical works.⁹⁷ Gillingham has also analysed the marriage of Richard and Berengaria and argued it was Richard's choice to marry Berengaria, not Eleanor's.⁹⁸ Gillingham posited the marriage was no longer useful in the immediate years prior to Richard's death as the king had made peace with Toulouse by marrying his sister Joanna to Count Raymond, he lacked an heir from his marriage to Berengaria, and Berengaria's brother, Sancho, had allied with the viscount of Tartas, a Gascon nobleman.⁹⁹ The alliance between Sancho and the viscount would potentially weaken Richard's southern borders if Sancho turned against his alliance with the king. Richard's administrative and military capabilities were extensive, as evidenced by his successes on crusade and in France. However, the stability maintained in England during his reign are due to the determination and reliability of Eleanor and his chief councillors.

Biographies of Isabella are even more scarce than those of Berengaria, with the most recent works in English being chapters by Louise J. Wilkinson and Nicholas Vincent.¹⁰⁰ Isabella has been the subject of two complete French biographies, but very little in English, due to a lack of focus on queen consorts in Anglophone historiography. References to Isabella can be found in biographies of John, with the most recent analysis of Isabella's role as queen written by Vincent.¹⁰¹ Vincent argued Isabella became more influential as a figure after John's death and was particularly weak as queen due to her lack of wealth and access to lands, partially as a result of Eleanor's longevity.¹⁰² Vincent's chapter also explored Isabella's relations with Eleanor and Berengaria, particularly with issues surrounding dower lands. Vincent's work demonstrated that issues of wealth and gender were still intrinsic to the notion of active queenship in the Middle Ages, and if relations between royal mothers and daughters-in-law were unbalanced, than the unity of the monarchy suffered.¹⁰³ It is striking so little has been written regarding Isabella's life, compared to Eleanor, given they

⁹⁷ Ralph V. Turner and Richard R. Heiser, *The Reign of Richard the Lionheart: Ruler of the Angevin Empire, 1189-1199* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), 14.

⁹⁸ John Gillingham, "Richard I and Berengaria of Navarre," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 53 (1980): 158.

⁹⁹ Gillingham, "Berengaria," 173.

¹⁰⁰ Wilkinson, "Maternal Abandonment," 101-124; Nicholas Vincent "Isabella of Angoulême: John's Jezebel," in *New Interpretations*, 165-219.

¹⁰¹ For the French biographies, see Sophie Fougere, *Isabelle d'Angoulême, reine d'Angleterre* (Aquitaine: 1998) and Gabriel Biancotto, Robert Favreau and Piotr Skubiszewski, eds., *Isabelle d'Angoulême: Comtesse-reine et son temps (1186-1246). Actes du colloque tenu à Lusignan du 8 au 10 novembre 1996* (Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, 1999); Vincent, "Isabella," 165-219.

¹⁰² Vincent, "Isabella," 187-189.

¹⁰³ Vincent, "Isabella," 204-206.

were both subjects of criticism by medieval chroniclers. Spong's forthcoming thesis on Isabella as a female lord will be a substantial contribution to this gap in historiography.

John has often been portrayed as England's despot king, responsible for the collapse of the Angevin realms, and the second outbreak of civil war in a century.¹⁰⁴ This image is largely due to the writings produced by chroniclers of the time and after, typically men of clerical background who reacted negatively against John's interference with the Church. Detailed examination of his reign has proven John was more capable than previously thought, although he was ill suited to be king according to Warren and Turner due to his tyrannical flaws.¹⁰⁵ Other than biographical studies, Stephen D. Church's volume brings forward new theories regarding John's reign, particularly with reference to the involvement of the two main women in his life, his mother Eleanor and second wife Isabella of Angoulême.¹⁰⁶ The most balanced view of John is one of a king who had great potential and capabilities for kingship, who according to Turner was a strong and capable administrator, but who was ultimately overshadowed by personality flaws which led to the baronial uprising that concluded with the Magna Carta.¹⁰⁷

Despite the attention these four kings have received and the attempts to reconstruct their reigns, their motivations remain obscured due to gaps in the historical record. In analysis of their reigns, recent investigation of administrative records has allowed for a deeper understanding of their undertakings and capabilities, particularly in John's reign. Regardless of the records, in biographies of the kings of England one fact remains clear: minimal attention has been paid to the female relatives and queens of these kings unless politics deemed it necessary for them to intervene and be put on record. Queenship studies has largely moved beyond purely biographical works: instead, it has brought to the forefront the combination of political and gender theory, highlighting the importance of a co-operative monarchical unit.¹⁰⁸ The biographical studies undertaken are highly analytical and weave together several theoretical approaches which have been discussed here.

¹⁰⁴ Warren, *John*, 258-259; Jim Bradbury's assessment of John concludes 'modern historians have been kinder to John than he deserves.': Jim Bradbury, "Philip Augustus and King John: Personality and History," in *New Interpretations*, 361.

¹⁰⁵ Warren, *John*, 259; Ralph V. Turner, *King John, England's Evil King?* 2nd ed. (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), 199.

¹⁰⁶ Jane Martindale, "Eleanor of Aquitaine: The Last Years," in *New Interpretations*, 136-164; Vincent, "Isabella," 165-219.

¹⁰⁷ Turner, *John*, 24, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Elena Woodacre and Cathleen Sarti, "What is Royal Studies?," *Royal Studies Journal* 2 (2015): 13-20.

Primary Sources and Methodology

Models of Rulership and Composite Monarchies

This first section will lay the foundations for the models of rulership discussed in this thesis, which is partially taken from Elena Woodacre's models of rulership in her monograph.¹⁰⁹ Woodacre's models are: Divide and Conquer; Team Players; and His Way. Divide and Conquer allowed the partners to divide duties and have separate spheres of influence to effectively rule their territories.¹¹⁰ The Team Players model saw co-rulers work together successfully by collaborating harmoniously to ensure strong governance.¹¹¹ The last model, His Way, is used to highlight the dominance of the king or male co-ruler in the political partnership.¹¹² For the purposes of this thesis, these are renamed as Divide and Rule; Collaborative Union, and Lord Rules All, as my definitions are slightly different, placing further emphasis on the ability of the women to exercise power equally in the first two models, as well as using these to explore mother-son co-ruling partnerships alongside marital partnerships. The Divide and Rule strategy sees the partners co-operatively choose spheres of activity where they focus their attention, although either of the co-rulers may not have overarching power in that territory. For example, Eleanor continued to be the dominant authority in Aquitaine although both Henry and Richard were the dukes. Collaborative Union allows rulers to share power and decision-making and is used to demonstrate the various ways in which rulers worked together to govern several territories. Finally, in the Lord Rules All approach, the king does not effectively utilise his wife and queen as a co-ruler, instead choosing to absorb the lands and revenues that belong to the queen into the king's household. These models can encapsulate the partnerships between mothers and sons effectively. There is precedent for joint rulership in medieval Europe: as Roger Collins noted in Navarre and León shared royal authority was evident from the tenth century onwards.¹¹³ The following analysis will demonstrate how the waning of Angevin queenly power was dependent upon the kings taking a Lord Rules All approach to royal power from the mid-twelfth century onwards. The model of Divide and Rule is used to explain the decisions made by both Geoffrey and Matilda, and Henry and Eleanor to focus on specific aims or regions to rule. This led to a largely successful outcome

¹⁰⁹ Elena Woodacre, *The Queens Regnant of Navarre. Succession, Politics, and Partnership, 1274-1512* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 166-168.

¹¹⁰ Woodacre, *Queens*, 168.

¹¹¹ Woodacre, *Queens*, 167.

¹¹² Woodacre, *Queens*, 167.

¹¹³ Collins, "Queens-Dowager," 90.

for Geoffrey and Matilda as Geoffrey captured Normandy and became its duke, and Matilda enabled the succession of the English throne to be transmitted to Henry. It was perhaps a less successful model for Henry and Eleanor, as their relationship was a Collaborative Union, wherein they worked for the benefit of the dynasty and the kingdoms until the 1173 rebellion. This Collaborative Union model is also effective for explaining Matilda and Henry's, and Eleanor and Richard's ruling relationships, although this will be discussed in more detail in chapter four. The last model of rulership that will be employed in this thesis is Lord Rules All, which is applicable to the unions of Richard and Berengaria, and John and Isabella. The Lord Rules All model is also applicable to Henry's rule whilst Eleanor was imprisoned. There are several instances where these models of partnership will overlap during periods of transition: for example, both Richard and John formed a Collaborative Union with Eleanor, which allowed her to collect the revenues that typically went to the consort. However, they applied the Lord Rules All model to their wives as neither Berengaria nor Isabella effectively exercised consistent power during their royal marriages. By utilising these three models of rulership in this comparative study, this thesis will demonstrate how these ruling partnerships, although they fluctuated and adapted to the ongoing political dynamics, did fall into these models as discussed in the following section.

The definition of a composite monarchy is one which is, by its nature, a conglomeration of territories which are ruled over by a primary monarch, with governance adhering to local customs and each territory ruled as a separate kingdom. Charlotte Backerra stated composite rule meant there were flexibilities which enabled different laws and forms of governance within what remained a unified monarchy.¹¹⁴ With the marriage of Henry and Eleanor, and Henry's accession to the English throne, they had seven territories to govern by the end of 1154. Aquitaine was widely reported to be difficult to administer, and the Aquitanian barons remained loyal to their duchess Eleanor primarily, over her husband, be it Louis or Henry. Maine, Touraine, and Anjou had been ruled over as a unit since 1109 because of the marriage of Fulk V, count of Anjou, and Ermengarde of Maine that year, and proved to be the least troublesome of Henry's domains to rule. In England, Wales, and Normandy, Henry was to face rebellion or discontent at several points during his rule. Backerra noted in order for monarchical unions to rule effectively, the elites of every part were needed as willing participants to help in government and administration, which could

¹¹⁴ Charlotte Backerra, "Personal Union, Composite Monarchy and 'Multiple Rule'," in *History of Monarchy*, 89.

take several forms.¹¹⁵ The failure of a composite monarchy can be seen most clearly in John's reign with the Barons' War, as well as the successful conquests by Philip Augustus. An effective administration with the capacity to make decisions on several pressing matters in the absence of an Angevin king was needed. However, Henry initially chose to oversee as much of the governance through personal kingship, although later in his reign more power was devolved to his administration as well as his sons. Henry attempted to adhere to local customs and governance throughout his reign for each of the regions, however it became apparent a more centralised approach was needed to ensure cohesiveness and effective rule, which developed further in John's reign. Lastly, Backerra's argument that monarchs might need to travel with their court to their differing territories and install representatives for day-to-day administration, which could lead to instability, is apparent throughout this period with the rebellions of Henry's sons against himself or their brothers.¹¹⁶ It is worth considering John Huxtable Elliott's work on composite monarchies here, wherein he highlights the struggles rulers faced when ruling multiple territories, whether adjacent or separated by sea or other kingdoms.¹¹⁷ The issue of royal absenteeism, which is prevalent in Elliott's work, was one also faced by the Plantagenets as they sought to rule their sprawling domains.¹¹⁸ It is perhaps unsurprising that despite the differing approaches the Plantagenets utilised in their attempts to rule their territories, ultimately the Angevin realms were to disintegrate in the face of Capetian invasions owing to the Capetians' vaster resources and unity.

It is useful to consider the notions of corporate monarchy and rulership. Theresa Earenfight's discussion of rulership as a partnership, in a concept she terms as the 'flexible sack' are invaluable here. The flexible sack of rulership incorporates both the king and queen, allowing the circumstances around their rulership as well as their personalities to be examined fully, which in turn enhances our understanding of how kings and queens co-ruled.¹¹⁹ Considering co-rulers as operating within a flexible sack is useful as it can be applied to all the partnerships in this period. It also allowed the king to deploy the queen, either consort or dowager, to rule other places as part of the composite monarchy. This can effectively be seen within the Divide and Rule and Collaborative Union models which are outlined in the following section and in chapter four. By sharing governance of the

¹¹⁵ Backerra, "Personal Union," 96.

¹¹⁶ Backerra, "Personal Union," 104.

¹¹⁷ John Huxtable Elliott, "A Europe of Composite Monarchies," *Past & Present* 137 (1992): 68.

¹¹⁸ Elliott, "Composite Monarchies," 55.

¹¹⁹ Earenfight, "Persona," 10.

territories, the co-rulers were able to deal with the challenges they faced as a composite monarchy and increased their dynastic representation. Some of these partnerships operated co-operatively at points but also disintegrated at others, as will be explored using the models of rulership discussed above.

By conducting a comparative analysis of the sources corresponding to these four queens, namely their charters, chronicles of the period, and letters between the queens and others, we can investigate the issues surrounding queenship in the Angevin domains and consider how each of these four women enacted their power. The source material varies from queen to queen, with more material available for Matilda and Eleanor than for Berengaria and Isabella. This disparity in records is problematic and makes it even more important to conduct a comparative study to develop our understanding of familial relationships and queenship in this era. This thesis explores why there may be a lack of extant material and the implications this has for our understanding of the four women. The primary source material for this thesis is partially published as most of the chronicles have been published in the Victorian period, or as part of the Oxford Medieval Texts series. There are several issues when working with published sources such as transcription errors. If the source has been edited, it is possible parts of the source have been removed or restructured. Regarding translated sources, it is plausible errors have been made in translation or, depending on the time of translation, particularly texts published pre-second wave feminism, that certain words may have been mistranslated due to interpretative judgements; a problem discussed by Kathryn Maude.¹²⁰ Translations, particularly antiquarian editions, need to be treated critically. For example, in both Potter's and Forester's editions the language employed is highly gendered, labelling Matilda as 'haughty' when it is possible to interpret the Latin term in a less critical way.¹²¹ Although we have to use problematic editions of medieval texts, as they are the only ones available to us, we must acknowledge the issues within the texts themselves to counteract this, as Maude has demonstrated.¹²² This is relevant when examining the criticism of Isabella: with such scant evidence, the extant writings must be probed thoroughly to understand why chroniclers

¹²⁰ Kathryn Maude, "Citation and marginalisation: the ethics of feminism in Medieval Studies," *Journal of Gender Studies* 23 (2014): 252-258.

¹²¹ *Gesta Stephani*, 117-119; *The Chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon Comprising the History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Accession of Henry II. Also the Acts of Stephen, King of England and Duke of Normandy*, trans. and ed. Thomas Forester (London: George Bell & Sons, 1909), 381-382.

¹²² Maude, "Citation," 253-254, 258.

and historians have chosen to employ certain terms when assessing her life. All translations from original manuscripts and chronicles are my own unless another source is cited.

Charters and financial records including the Pipe Rolls are the most important sources to draw upon to understand how and where queens used their power. Several edited volumes including the *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum*, the *Rotuli Chartarum in Turri Londinensi*, the *Calendar of Documents preserved in France* and the *Rotuli Litterrarum Clausarum in Turri Londinensi* are essential for tracking the financial and intercessory actions of the queens across the Angevin realm.¹²³ Some of these volumes are available online; others can be found in the British Library and National Archives alongside the original charters.

It is important to consult the original sources because of the aforementioned problems with published materials wherever possible. These can largely be found, in the case of the original and published financial rolls such as the Pipe, Close, Liberate and Patent, at The National Archives in London. The British Library has several original manuscripts relating to financial matters, such as the Patent Rolls, and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge hold copies of the records of the French kings, and the records of Henry II in France. The original copies of the cartulary charters and grants relating to French lands can be found in departmental French archives, specifically Archives Départementales de la Sarthe for charters relating to Berengaria and her control of Le Mans, Archives Départementales de Seine-Maritime for documents relating to Rouen and the surrounding area across the period under study, and Archives Départementales du Maine et Loire for charters linked to Matilda and Eleanor's activities in the region. The Archives Nationales, Paris, and Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, also hold several originals and early modern copies of charters related to all four women. All these documents have been consulted in the repositories as listed apart from the Archives Départementales de la Sarthe, who provided digital copies. This has enabled new interpretations to be made as explored throughout the study.

Chronicles and letters provide a more personalised understanding of the queens' power and give an insight into the relationships, or at least how chroniclers perceived the relationships, between these four women as they conducted their affairs across the Angevin lands. Many of the Latin chronicles from the Angevin realms in this period have been published in the Victorian period, which are now being edited and reissued by

¹²³ *CDF; Rot. Chart.; Rot. Litt. Claus.*

Cambridge University Press. Others, such as the *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre* have been published in the vernacular, although an English translation and edition is forthcoming.¹²⁴ The Spanish chronicles for this period provide tangible information on Berengaria, and are also useful for understanding the political background of Navarre. Medieval Navarrese chronicles which refer to Berengaria include Garci Lopez de Roncevalles' work and the chronicle by Príncipe de Viana, both from the fifteenth century.¹²⁵ A later, but still very influential post-medieval chronicle is the sixteenth-century writer José Moret's *Anales del Reino de Navarra*.¹²⁶ There are also several Navarrese governmental records which are of use when examining Anglo-Navarrese relations including the *Fuentes Documentales Medievales del País Vasco* collections, which have been digitised.¹²⁷

Some of the letters of the queens in this study have been published by Anne Crawford, whilst others are available through the Epistolae database or in the *Layettes du Trésor des Chartes*.¹²⁸ The letters offer an insight into the motivations of these queens and their familial and political influence, however as they were for a public audience they need to be assessed as documents which show the public representation of the writer. Further discussion of the issues facing letter writing and *ars dictaminis* is explored when the sources are utilised in the thesis.¹²⁹ Gallica is an invaluable online resource when assessing the lives of the four queens as it has digitised several French chronicles, including Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Chroniques des ducs de Normandie*, as well as collected volumes of charters and

¹²⁴ *History of the dukes of Normandy and the kings of England by Anonymous of Béthune*, trans. Janet Shirley, ed. Paul Webster (London: Routledge, 2021).

¹²⁵ Carmen Orcastequi Gros and Angel J. Martín Duque, eds., *Garci Lopes de Roncevalles, Crónica de Garci Lopez de Roncevalles. Estudio y Edición Crítica*. (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1977); José Yanguas y Miranda and Antonio Ubieta Arteta, eds., *Carlos, Príncipe de Viana. Crónica De Los Reyes de Navarra* (Pamplona: 1843).

¹²⁶ *Anales del reino de Navarra, compuestos por el P. José Moret. Tomo Décimo*, trans. and ed. Manuel Silvestre de Arlegui. Additions by Francisco de Alesón (Tolosa: Establecimiento tipográfico y Casa Editorial de Eusebio Lopez, 1912).

¹²⁷ See David Alegría Suescun, Guadalupe Lopetegui Semperena and Aitor Pescador Medrano, eds., *Archivo General de Navarra (1134-1194). Colección Fuentes Documentales medievales del País Vasco, numero 77* (Donostia: Eusko Ikaskuntza, 1997); José María Jimeno Jurío and Roldán Jimeno Aranguren, eds., *Archivo General de Navarra (1194-1234)* (Donostia: Eusko Ikaskuntza, 1998); Raquel García Arancón, ed., *Archivo General de Navarra (1234-1253) II. Comptos y Cartularios Reales* (Donostia: Eusko Ikaskuntza, 1998).

¹²⁸ Crawford, *Letters; Layettes*.

¹²⁹ Kathleen Neal, "From Letters to Loyalty: Aline la Despenser and the Meaning(s) of a Noblewoman's Correspondence in Thirteenth-Century England," in *Authority, Gender and Emotions in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 18-34; Anaïs Waag, "Gender and the language of politics in thirteenth-century queens' letters," *Historical Research* 92 (2019): 288-304.

cartularies.¹³⁰ In addition, it has digitised the records of several French abbeys and monasteries, which are fully searchable.¹³¹ The records are typically in Latin although a minority exist in Old French.

This historiographical study has highlighted the differing fields of work that need to be studied to produce a balanced interpretation of the tenures of the four queens under investigation. This discussion has also demonstrated several current historiographical gaps which this thesis will address, especially in its comparison of mothers and daughters-in-law; an unusual approach which is rarely adopted when examining queenly power. Previous scholarship on Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella has only ever considered these women in isolation; a cohesive study of all four queens has never been undertaken until now. Leveraging the existing academic studies on the period and in queenship studies, supported by extensive archival research, has enabled a comparative study of these four queens which examines their activities in the Angevin 'empire', and their relationships with one another and their immediate male relatives. This is a contribution not only to the field of queenship, but this study also demonstrates the importance of comparative and intergenerational studies in research on royal families. It signifies the importance of gender within the analysis of political activities to understand the use of power by queens and noblewomen in the Angevin realm. In sum, this research furthers knowledge around female rulership within England and Angevin and French territories and demonstrates why the personal and political aspects of partnerships need to be examined together to enhance our understanding of monarchical rule.

¹³⁰ Francisque Michel, ed., *Chronique des ducs de Normandie par Benoît de Sainte-More trouvère anglo-normand du XIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1836-1838); Samuel Georges Maurice Menjot D'Elbenne and Louis Denis, eds., *Archives Historiques du Maine, Tome IV. Cartulaire du Chapitre Royale de St. Pierre de la Cour* (Le Mans: Siège de la Société, 1907), accessed 07 August 2020, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k73689c/f4.image.textelImage>; Abel Bardonnnet, ed., "Les comptes et enquêtes d'Alphonse, comte de Poitou, (1253-1269)," *Archives Historiques du Poitou* 8 (1879): 1-160.

¹³¹ Étienne Clouzot, "Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Notre-Dame de la Merci-Dieu, autrement dite de Bécheron, au diocèse de Poitiers," *Archives Historiques du Poitou* 34 (1903), accessed 30 December 2019, gallica.bnf.fr.

Chapter Two: Biography and Background

The four women featured in this study were all royal women of central importance in the rulership of the Angevin domains during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The background to their accession to rulership and the events that took place during their tenures are essential to understanding how they navigated the mechanisations of power and agency. The relationships between the four women, their co-rulers, used here to denote both occasions when the power-sharing came from either half of the relationship, and royal sons form the central focus of this thesis, but further contextual information is provided here to lay the foundations for the discussion in the forthcoming chapters. This chapter will discuss the background of the four women in chronological order, and then outline the circumstances and position of queens in western Europe in this period to enable an understanding of how Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella performed the expected role of a ruler in this period. The exercise of queenship by these four women and their titled positions as duchesses and countesses will be discussed in chapter five. The lifecycle approach utilised by several biographers of royal women has led to it being embedded in royal studies historiography, as biographers commonly focus on the life of the royal woman as through the lens of her as a maid, wife, mother, and widow. This study does not employ a lifecycle approach and rejects the restrictions of this, as this thesis focusses on activities that occurred outside of these roles, and further highlights the nuances which can be missed when focussing on a lifecycle moment that is dictated by a woman's relative position to a man.

Empress Matilda

As the biographical information below will highlight, Matilda's formative years in Germany were intrinsic to her later political career, as she utilised the experience and authority she gained there to her benefit when claiming the English throne, and later when acting as a regent. Matilda's previous experience as empress consort in Germany placed her in good stead to provide Henry with assistance both in terms of counsel and as a regent. Her maturity when she came to claim the English throne enabled her to exercise authority effectively as she networked with the Anglo-Norman nobility for her cause.

Matilda, also known as Empress Matilda and Lady of the English, was the only legitimate daughter of Matilda of Scotland and Henry I of England, and was likely born on 7 February

1102.¹ In 1110, Matilda travelled to the Holy Roman Empire to live with her betrothed, the future Henry V, Holy Roman Emperor, whom she married in February 1114.² This alliance was an important part of Henry I enhancing his prestige, by creating a bond with one of the most powerful European monarchs. Chibnall explored Matilda's formative years in the German courts, and it can be argued that her experiences here, although limited, placed her in good stead for future co-rulership as Matilda exercised intercessory skills and took part in ceremonial roles.³ She petitioned on behalf of those who sought reconciliation with Henry V, according to Chibnall and Leyser.⁴ In accordance with the custom that if the emperor were in Rome during Easter, he should be crowned, Matilda was crowned alongside Henry at St Peter's Basilica, Rome in 1117.⁵ This union did not produce any children and after the death of Henry V in May 1125, Matilda returned to the Anglo-Norman domains to fulfil her duty as a royal daughter, as her ties to the Holy Roman Empire were weak. Henry V's successor, Lothair III, was not elected and Matilda was left with little opportunity to rule or intercede. Matilda went on to form another significant alliance with Geoffrey, count of Anjou, Maine, and Touraine, whom she married in May 1127 to secure the south-eastern border Normandy shared with these counties. The counties were a traditional point of friction between the two political entities. Orderic Vitalis stated that 'despite great reluctance' Matilda was given away in marriage to Geoffrey.⁶ The dynamics of this partnership will be a central focus of chapter three and deeper discussion of the marriage will be situated there. This union produced three sons: Henry, later Henry II of England; Geoffrey, count of Nantes; and William, count of Poitou. Geoffrey's birth in particular was a significant lifecycle moment for Matilda, and was very difficult, to the extent that Matilda requested to be buried at Bec-Hellouin in the event she died during childbirth.⁷ The next section will focus on the events from the early 1130s, including the civil war, as this forms the foundation for the following three chapters.

¹ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 9.

² *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, trans. and ed. Michael Swanton (London: J. M. Dent, 1998), 242; Chibnall, *Matilda*, 26.

³ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 28-29, 48, 50.

⁴ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 29, Karl Leyser, "The Anglo-Norman succession 1120-25," *ANS* 13 (1991): 231-239.

⁵ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 31-32; Johanna Dale, *Inauguration and Liturgical Kingship in the Long Twelfth Century. Male and Female Accession Rituals in England, France and the Empire* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), 87.

⁶ 'licet inuitam,' *The Gesta Normannorum-Ducum of William of Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*, trans and ed. Elisabeth van Houts (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1992), ii, 241.

⁷ *Gesta Normannorum-Ducum*, 245-247; Chibnall, *Matilda*, 61.

Upon the death of Henry I in 1135, Normandy was the first place to test the loyalty of the Anglo-Norman nobility to Matilda's claim, as it was a contested area of dominion. Matilda and Geoffrey resided in Anjou at the time of Henry's death, and supported a rebellion in Normandy against the royal forces.⁸ Prior to Henry's death, Matilda's dowry was disputed: it included castles along the border of Anjou and Normandy, and the revenues from Argentan, which were not granted to Matilda during Henry's lifetime.⁹ In December 1135 Matilda and Geoffrey obtained possession of her dowry castles, which comprised Domfront, Argentan, Exmes, Ambrières, Gorrion, and Neufchateau-sur-Colmont.¹⁰ Although the castles by right belonged to Matilda to hold until her son Henry came of age, Geoffrey's primary focus was on gaining control of Normandy, whereas Matilda's was focussed on claiming her inheritance in England. Several justifications have been given regarding why Matilda did not immediately travel to England to claim her inheritance, with Charles Beem stating that it may have been due to her pregnancy with William.¹¹ As Matilda did not immediately travel to England, her cousin Stephen of Blois seized the opportunity to gain the throne and was successfully crowned on 22 December 1135. Matilda sought to establish her foothold in Normandy, however with the exception of Baldwin de Redvers, she did not have open support by Easter 1136, and Stephen had also acquired papal support by this stage.¹² Chibnall argued there is no extant evidence that Matilda's first step in her challenge to the throne was to appeal for papal support for her claim, although there is evidence Stephen appealed because of the need for papal approval of the oath violations.¹³

The issue of unstable borders occupied Matilda and Geoffrey's attention for the two years after Stephen's usurpation as they sought to extend their control in Normandy. In the autumn of 1137, Matilda's brothers Robert of Gloucester and Reginald of Dunstanville rallied support for her, and it was at this point Matilda turned her attention to England as Gloucester's allegiance to Geoffrey and Matilda strengthened their base in Normandy.¹⁴ The situation in England became more precarious as Stephen faced uprisings from Welsh

⁸ Charles Beem, "'Greatest in Her Offspring': Motherhood and the Empress Matilda," in *Virtuous or Villainess?*, 89-90.

⁹ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 68-69.

¹⁰ Richard Howlett, ed., *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II., and Richard I. Vol. IV The Chronicle of Robert of Torigni, Abbot of the Monastery of St. Michael-in-peril-of-the-sea* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1889), 129.

¹¹ Beem, "'Offspring'", 86, 90.

¹² Chibnall, *Matilda*, 69.

¹³ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 75.

¹⁴ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 74.

marcher lords, and attacks on the northern border by Matilda's maternal uncle King David of Scotland. Stephen maintained control by granting several earldoms and the support of local northern lords, and this construction of networks is discussed further in chapter three.¹⁵ At this stage, several chroniclers alleged Matilda was invited to England to claim the throne, potentially by Stephen's brother Bishop Henry of Blois, which is analysed in chapter three.¹⁶

Many of the acts concerned with Normandy from 1140-1150 are when Geoffrey had secured control of the entire area, and he was acknowledged as duke of Normandy in 1144.¹⁷ The victory of Geoffrey in Normandy in 1141, completed with the peace treaty with Count Waleran of Meulan, remained intact until 1151. In 1151, an Anglo-French force invaded Normandy which resulted in a truce with Eustace, Stephen's son. Any charters from 1151 onwards were issued in Henry's name, although the duchy of Normandy was passed to him sometime between 1149 and 1150.¹⁸ A second Anglo-French invasion to Normandy in July 1152 was unsuccessful. The lack of English victories in Normandy partially demonstrates Stephen's failure to gain the support of the Normans in the early years of his reign, although the Normans initially showed opposition to Angevin rule as well.¹⁹ Despite the early misgivings of the Norman nobility about the imposition of a foreign ruler, Geoffrey won their begrudging support. The nobles supported Matilda and Geoffrey, and later Henry, their son, into battle against these invading forces as it was under the banner of Henry I's rule which gave the campaign legitimacy. It is only with the death of Geoffrey we truly begin to see Matilda's intercessory skills deployed in Normandy, as Henry established Matilda as regent, which is analysed in chapter four.

Discussion now moves to Matilda's activities in England from 1141 onwards, having briefly covered Normandy in the previous paragraph. 1141 was a year of crucial change for Matilda, as she captured Stephen. Her coronation was planned for 24 June, however her mistakes regarding church appointments and demanding money from the Londoners when they asked for their payments to be reduced led to their alienation, and Matilda was forced to flee, as discussed in chapters three and five.²⁰ The loss of London shows a lack of

¹⁵ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 78-79.

¹⁶ *Historia Novella*, 63-64; *Gesta Stephani*, 88-89.

¹⁷ For a full narrative of Geoffrey's activities, see Kathryn Dutton, "Geoffrey, Count of Anjou and Duke of Normandy, 1129-1151," (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2011).

¹⁸ Warren, *Henry II*, 38.

¹⁹ David Crouch, *The Normans* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002), 254-255.

²⁰ King, *Stephen*, 160-163.

diplomatic skills compared to the charters shown above which provide a different perspective, presenting us with a Matilda who was capable of deploying diplomatic acumen to persuade the nobility to her side. London was an exceptional case compared to other cities as it held special privileges which resulted in the citizens holding significant influence as they retained their corporate autonomy.²¹

Matilda's diplomatic skills wavered in Winchester in August 1141 as she tried to negotiate with Bishop Henry, who had defected back to Stephen. Matilda besieged Wolvesey Castle, and Stephen's forces in turn attacked her castle. Henry's forces attacked Winchester, and a militia from London also joined the siege on behalf of the king, whom Geoffrey of Mandeville had united with.²² The empress fled Winchester for Devizes, accompanied by a small force, William Marshal, and Brian Fitz Count.²³ The subsequent siege at Winchester and Matilda's establishment of her court at Oxford and Devizes until 1148 demonstrates Matilda's continued struggle to gain her inheritance. After 1148, Matilda returned to Normandy and passed the mantle to her eldest son Henry.

Matilda's power increased after her son Henry's accession in 1154 as king of England, as she was granted considerable control in Normandy and acted as regent which is analysed in chapter four.²⁴ She continued to exercise substantial religious patronage, particularly at Bec-Hellouin, which is investigated in greater depth in chapter five. The alliances Matilda had established with the nobility and the Church served Henry throughout her dowager period and beyond, demonstrating the strength of her political acumen as examined in chapter three. She provided political counsel to Henry, and occasionally intervened in matters, such as the Thomas Becket dispute. Matilda resided in Normandy, primarily at Rouen, until her death on 10 September 1167. She was buried at the abbey of Bec-Hellouin, upon which she had granted substantial patronage since her return from the Holy Roman Empire as discussed in chapter five. Discussion will now turn to her daughter-in-law Eleanor, who succeeded Matilda as duchess of Normandy and countess of Anjou, and later became queen of England.

Eleanor of Aquitaine

²¹ Bartlett, *England*, 343.

²² *Historia Novella*, 59.

²³ *Gesta Stephani*, 134; *The History of William Marshal*, trans. and ed. Nigel Bryant (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), 29.

²⁴ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 116a, 334, 711.

As with Matilda, Eleanor would draw upon a wealth of previous experience as consort to enable her successful and effective rule in the Angevin domains. In Eleanor's case, her experience as queen consort of France, discussed briefly below, enabled her to develop her skills as a diplomat and intercessor which allowed her confidence and knowledge in ruling the Angevin domains both as a co-ruler for her husband and sons, a co-ruler of her own territory, and as a regent. Eleanor's maturity and experience when she became queen consort of England at the age of thirty helped her develop her networks in the Angevin realms, and her longevity allowed her to acquire more experience with her subjects which as discussed below and in chapter four, demonstrates why she was chosen as a co-ruler with her sons Richard and John.

Eleanor was the first daughter of William IX of Aquitaine and Aénor de Châtelleraut, born at Poitiers in circa 1122/1124.²⁵ Upon the death of her father in 1137, Eleanor became duchess of Aquitaine, but was placed under the care of Louis VI, king of France in accordance with her father's will. Louis quickly acted to betroth Eleanor to his son Prince Louis, and they were married on 25 July 1137 at the Cathedral of Saint-André, Bordeaux.²⁶ The marriage produced two daughters, Marie (1145-1198), who married Henry I, count of Champagne, and Alix (1150-1197/1198), who married Thibaut V, count of Blois. Eleanor has captured the imagination of both historians and authors, largely due to two alleged scandals surrounding infidelity which took place during her marriage to Louis. Regarding Eleanor and Louis' marriage, William of Newburgh wrote Eleanor 'claimed that she had married a monk, not a king...even during her marriage to the king of France she longed to be wed to the duke of Normandy as one more congenial to her character, and that therefore she desired and obtained a separation.'²⁷ As will be explored further in chapter three, contemporary criticism of Eleanor often took the form of attributing sexual scandal to her, because of Eleanor's decisions to wield power and exercise her authority. This can be viewed as Eleanor overstepping societal boundaries. There is no substantial evidence for either of Eleanor's alleged infidelities with either her paternal uncle, Raymond of Antioch, or her future father-in-law, Geoffrey of Anjou. Tensions between Eleanor and Louis, regardless of any sexual scandal, reached breaking point upon their journey on the Second Crusade in 1147, which led to Eleanor's increased wish for separation. Despite Eleanor's

²⁵ Turner, *Eleanor*, 28.

²⁶ Turner, *Eleanor*, 48.

²⁷ '...et causante se monacho non regi nupsisse. Dicitur etiam, quod in ipso regis Francorum conjugio ad ducis Normannici nuptias, suis magis moribus congruas, aspiraverit, atque ideo præoptaverit procuraveritque discidium.' *William of Newburgh*, i, 129.

requests to Pope Eugenius III for an annulment on their return journey, Eugenius attempted to unite the royal couple. Louis agreed to dissolve the marriage two years later, with the annulment taking place on 11 March 1152 at Beaugency, though no evidence of the proceedings exists.²⁸ Marie and Alix remained in the care of Louis, and Eleanor returned to Aquitaine. During her travels to Poitiers, Theobald V, count of Blois and Geoffrey, count of Nantes, the latter brother of Henry, duke of Normandy, attempted to kidnap Eleanor.²⁹ They were unsuccessful and upon Eleanor's arrival in Poitiers she set to restore her authority over the duchy, and sent for Henry, whom she married on 18 May 1152.³⁰

Eleanor and Henry's marriage was to prove more successful than her first in terms of longevity, heirs, and the union of several domains under Angevin rulership. Henry's accession to the throne of England on 25 October 1154 further secured their powerful status, and the dynasty was cemented by the eight children Eleanor bore, though only Leonor and John were to outlive her. The finer details of Henry and Eleanor's partnership will be explored in chapter three; however, it is important to pinpoint several significant events here which affected their marital harmony. Eleanor spent much of the 1150s and early 1160s travelling around the vast domains and ensuring successful rule, as well as bearing heirs as examined in chapter three. There is little record of her activity in Aquitaine until 1168, when a flurry of charters were issued, which have been analysed by Marie Hivergneaux.³¹ It is also during this period the 'court of love' at Aquitaine increased in popularity, an idea developed by Marion Meade.³² Rita Lejeune claims Eleanor patronised several young troubadours and poets, however Ruth Harvey convincingly refutes this argument and stated the only known troubadour associated with Eleanor is Arnaut Guilhem de Marsan during this period.³³ Karen M. Broadhurst argued that although Eleanor was

²⁸ James A. Brundage, "The Canon Law of Divorce in the Mid-Twelfth Century: Louis VII c. Eleanor of Aquitaine," in *Lord and Lady*, 218.

²⁹ Meade, *Eleanor*, 180-181.

³⁰ Marie Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine: 1137-1189," in *Lord and Lady*, 63-65; Turner, *Eleanor*, 108; *Wendover*, ii, 504-505.

³¹ Marie Hivergneaux, "Aliénor d'Aquitaine: le pouvoir d'une femme à la lumière de ses chartes (1152-1204)," in *La Cour Plantagenêt 1152-1204: actes du colloque tenu à Thouars, du 30 avril au 2 mai 1999*, ed. Martin Aurell (Poitiers: Université de Poitiers, 2000), 63-88; Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 55-76; Marie Hivergneaux, "Aliénor et le Aquitaine: le pouvoir à l'épreuve des chartes (1137-1204)," in *Aliénor d'Aquitaine*, ed. Martin Aurell (Nantes: 303, 2004), 65-70; Marie Hivergneaux, "Autour d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine: entourage et pouvoir au prise des chartes (1137-1189)," in *Plantagenêts et Capétiens: Confrontations et héritages*, eds. Martin Aurell and Noël-Yves Tonnerre (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 61-73.

³² Meade, *Eleanor*, 303-311.

³³ Ruth Harvey, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Troubadours," in *The World of Eleanor of Aquitaine, Literature and Society in Southern France Between the Eleventh and Thirteenth Centuries*, eds.

associated with several works of literature, she did not commission them and her status as a literary patron has been overstated.³⁴ Therefore, we have little evidence for Eleanor's activities during her marriage to Henry, other than the births of several heirs, until 1173.

The turning point of Henry and Eleanor's relationship was to come in 1173, with the rebellion of their sons - Henry the Young King, Geoffrey, and Richard - supposedly at the instigation of Eleanor, against Henry II. Eleanor's role in this rebellion is analysed in chapter four. It would be remiss to solely lay the initiation of the rebellion at Eleanor's feet, or at the growing separation between herself and Henry. The issues of allocating the resources of an expansive dominion to four sons, as well as providing dowries for three daughters, placed great pressure on Henry and Eleanor, although the extent to which she was involved in the decision making is unknown. It is plausible she would have chosen Richard as her successor to Aquitaine as her favoured son, and this would be in line with the Frankish tradition, that sons (though not always second sons) received the land brought by the wife to the marriage.³⁵ The 1169 Montmirail conference between Henry II and Louis VII, which decided the division of Henry's lands, left both Young Henry and John landless, as Henry II refused to allow Young Henry to govern any of the territories. Henry's later decision to allocate John three of Young Henry's castles caused further tension, which ultimately resulted in Young Henry's decision to rebel. In April 1173, a three-pronged attack was launched on Normandy, combined with an incursion from King William of Scotland into northern England in pursuit of his claims to Northumberland and Huntingdon. All the attacks failed. The rebellion continued until September 1174, as after Henry II's success at the Battle of Alnwick he reached a settlement with the respective nobles and his sons. Young Henry agreed to the transferral of the aforementioned castles to John, in return for 15,000 Angevin pounds and two castles in Normandy; Richard and Geoffrey both received half the revenues from their respective territories they were due to inherit.³⁶ Eleanor remained imprisoned until the 1180s, initially at Chinon, then at Old Sarum, with occasional stays at other castles such as Winchester and Windsor.³⁷

Marcus Bull and Catherine Léglu (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 109; Rita Lejeune, "La femme dans les littératures françaises et occitanes du XIe au XIIIe siècle," *Cahiers de la Civilisation Médiévale* 20 (1977): 201-217; Rita Lejeune, "Rôle littéraire d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine et de sa famille," *Cultura Neolatina* 14 (1954): 5-57.

³⁴ Broadhurst, "Patrons," 82-84.

³⁵ Turner, *Eleanor*, 208; Amy Livingstone, *Out of Love for My Kin. Aristocratic Family Life in the Lands of the Loire, 1000-1200* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 123.

³⁶ Turner, *Eleanor*, 229.

³⁷ Turner, *Eleanor*, 235-237.

Eleanor disappears largely from the historical record until 1189 when Richard acceded to the throne. She was released and allowed greater freedom from 1183 after the death of Young Henry, however she remained under supervision as described in the contemporary records – ‘regina Alienor, quæ jam in custodia tenebatur’- and was not completely liberated until Richard’s succession.³⁸ As noted above, there is more extant evidence for Eleanor’s activities in her dowager period, and she intervened politically on several occasions for Richard and John’s benefit. During Richard’s reign, Eleanor acted as an informal regent when he was captured upon his return from crusade by Leopold V of Austria, and then ransomed to Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI, which is examined in chapter four.³⁹ Gillingham argued Eleanor was not as heavily involved in the choice of Berengaria as Richard’s bride as Elizabeth A. R. Brown has attested.⁴⁰ Regardless of whether she helped Richard choose Berengaria as a bride, Eleanor accompanied Berengaria from Navarre to Italy, if not Sicily, for the wedding ceremony.⁴¹ Eleanor was involved in the choice of bride for heir apparent Prince Louis of France, as negotiations between John and Philip Augustus, king of France resulted in a betrothal between Louis and Blanche of Castile, one of the daughters of John’s sister, Leonor. Upon her return from Castile, Eleanor spent much of her time residing at Fontevraud. Eleanor rallied in 1201 when war broke out between John and Philip Augustus, as she sought to prevent her grandson Arthur of Brittany from seizing control. Arthur besieged Eleanor in the Château de Mirabeau in 1202, and she was later rescued by John, who then imprisoned Arthur and Arthur’s sister Eleanor. During the last years of her life, Eleanor continued to patronise several religious institutions, namely Fontevraud, which is discussed in chapter five. Eleanor died on 1 April 1204 and was buried at Fontevraud, next to her husband Henry and Richard. The following section will provide context on the life of the first of her daughters-in-law under study here, Berengaria.

Berengaria of Navarre

Berengaria’s experience of rulership was different to her predecessors Matilda and Eleanor in that she did not have previous experience as a consort to draw upon when attempting rulership in the Angevin domains. She was also younger than her predecessors when she

³⁸ Jane Martindale, “Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Woman and Her Seasons,” in *Lord and Lady*, 13; *Gesta Regis Henrici*, I, 313.

³⁹ Huffman, *Medieval Diplomacy*, 133-150.

⁴⁰ Gillingham, “Berengaria,” 159; Elizabeth A. R. Brown, “Eleanor of Aquitaine: Parent, Queen, and Duchess,” in *Patron and Politician*, 20-21, 32.

⁴¹ The chroniclers disagree as to Eleanor’s disembarkment point: Howden argued Eleanor and Berengaria met Richard’s fleet in Naples and both travelled to Sicily: *Howden*, ii, 193, 196; Wendover stated Eleanor went to Reggio: *Wendover*, ii, 95, 103.

became queen consort of England, which further affected her opportunities to rule. As outlined in the following section and in chapter four, Eleanor's maturity and experience led to her superseding Berengaria on several occasions when Berengaria may have had opportunities to rule.

Berengaria, daughter of Sancho VI, king of Navarre and Sancha of Castile, was born between 1165 and 1170. As often the case for medieval queens, there is little record of her early life and activities before her marriage to Richard I. The *príncipe de Viana's* chronicle refers to the birth of Berengaria and her siblings Fernando, Constanza, Blanca, later countess of Champagne, and Sancho, later king of Navarre.⁴² Navarre was of fundamental importance as an ally due to its proximity to the Gascon border, which abutted the duchy of Aquitaine and the heartlands of the Angevin territories.

Berengaria first appears in Angevin chronicles thanks to her upcoming marriage to Richard. The circumstances behind the marriage have not been convincingly argued by any historian, although Gillingham's article on Richard and Berengaria encompassed the majority of the arguments.⁴³ Gillingham argued the marriage proposal must be viewed in the context of insecure borders, particularly around Toulouse, which were likely to become a focal point for warfare whilst Richard was on crusade.⁴⁴ The counts of Toulouse had been in dispute with the dukes of Aquitaine since the late eleventh century, in part owing to Eleanor's claim over the county from her paternal grandmother Philippa.⁴⁵ Count Raymond V of Toulouse married Louis VII's sister Constance in 1156, which strengthened the Capetian-Toulousian alliance against the Angevin-Toulousian rivalry. Conflict over claims to the region would continue until John's reign. The counts of Toulouse could ally with the Navarrese and Aragonese kings, as well as with the French king, which could tip the balance of power in the region against the Angevins if a successful conquest were launched. The Norman poet Ambroise proposed the betrothal was a love match, as Richard and Berengaria may have met before their marriage, although this has been refuted by Gillingham and Trindade.⁴⁶ It has also been suggested Eleanor instigated the marriage arrangements.⁴⁷ This betrothal was complicated as Richard was due to marry Alys, Philip

⁴² *Príncipe de Viana*, 100.

⁴³ Gillingham, "Berengaria," 157-173.

⁴⁴ Gillingham, "Berengaria," 167.

⁴⁵ Turner, *Eleanor*, 61-62, 134.

⁴⁶ *The Chronicle of Richard Lion-Heart by Ambroise*, trans. M. J. Hubert and ed. J. L. la Monte (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 72; Trindade, *Berengaria*, 67; Gillingham, "Berengaria," 166.

⁴⁷ Brown, "Parent, Queen, and Duchess," 20-21, 132; Alfred Richard, *Histoire des comtes de Poitou, 778-1204* (Pau: Princi Negue, 1903, 2005), vi, 28.

Augustus' sister. According to Trindade, Richard repudiated Alys due to her alleged liaison with his father Henry.⁴⁸ Ambroise's *Chronicle of Richard Lion-heart* and its Latin counterpart the *Itinerarium Regis Ricardi* recorded Berengaria and Eleanor's journey across the Alps, through Italy and then Berengaria's journey onwards to Sicily and Cyprus.⁴⁹ Berengaria travelled to Sicily as Richard was there to support his sister's claims to her dower as former queen of Sicily, as well as it being a strategic stopping point en route to the Holy Land. Upon their arrival in Cyprus, which was preceded by a dramatic negotiation between Berengaria, Joanna, and Isaac Comnenus after their ship was wrecked off the coast, Richard and Berengaria were married at Limassol on 12 May 1191. Descriptions of the ceremony are brief, with Roger of Howden and Ambroise the main sources of the proceedings, which are analysed in more detail in chapter three.⁵⁰ There are no grounds to believe their marriage was not consummated, despite the lack of heirs.

After the marriage ceremony, Berengaria initially joined Richard on his journey to the Holy Land. There is little record of the activities Berengaria undertook whilst Richard battled against Muslim forces. Trindade argued Berengaria and Joanna remained in Acre after it was captured in July 1191, however there is little indication of this in the primary sources.⁵¹ The most definitive extant record for Berengaria is a letter which documents Berengaria and Joanna witnessing a loan in Rome in 1193, presumably on their return to the Angevin domains.⁵² After her sojourn in Rome, Berengaria resided in Angevin lands in France, and is not known to have returned to England during her time as consort. Berengaria returned to England for Thomas Becket's translation in 1220, however we do not know the duration or length of this visit, or any others.⁵³ Her most likely residence is within Anjou, perhaps Beaufort-en-Vallée or Chinon, although Howden only listed Berengaria's journey to Poitou.⁵⁴ Adam of Eynsham recorded that he travelled to Beaufort-en-Vallée to comfort Berengaria upon Richard's death, however this is not substantive proof Berengaria resided

⁴⁸ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 79.

⁴⁹ Ambroise, 71-72; Richard de Templo, *The Chronicle of the Third Crusade: The Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi*, trans. and ed. Helen J. Nicholson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 89.

⁵⁰ Ambroise, 95; Howden, ii, 204.

⁵¹ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 101.

⁵² CDF, no. 278.

⁵³ TNA, E368/3/2, accessed 07 August 2020, http://aalt.law.uh.edu/aalt1/H3/E368no3/aE368no3fronts/IMG_2311.htm; David A. Carpenter, *Henry III. The Rise to Power and Personal Rule, 1207-1258* (London: Yale University Press, 2020), 179.

⁵⁴ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 111, 118; Howden, ii, 307.

there for the duration of her time as queen after returning to France.⁵⁵ Eleanor appeared in all other situations where Berengaria would perhaps be expected to be seen, such as the negotiations for Richard's release and his re-crowning upon his return which are discussed further in chapter five. No heirs were produced by Berengaria, and the possible reasons behind this are examined in chapter three, alongside medieval concepts of motherhood in chapter four.

After Richard's death in 1199, Berengaria slowly begins to appear in the chronicles, namely because of her negotiations with John, and later Henry III, for the return of her dower lands which was an ongoing dispute for nearly thirty years. Despite interventions from Pope Innocent III, John's struggles with France took precedence, instead of paying Berengaria the income from her dower lands, which is analysed in chapter five. The situation was further complicated by the longevity of Eleanor, who died in 1204, and the marriage of John and Isabella in 1200, as Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella all needed to be provided with an income. It is in Berengaria's dowager period that more evidence survives, which include several letters documenting her fight for her dower.⁵⁶ Ultimately in September 1204, Berengaria negotiated with Philip Augustus to hold Le Mans in return for homage, and it is here where we also see further evidence of her activities during her time as dowager.⁵⁷ Documentation around this largely focusses on Berengaria's patronage of ecclesiastical institutions, particularly the chapter of St Pierre-de-la-Cour and the Abbaye de Notre-Dame de L'Épau, which is discussed in chapter five.⁵⁸ Berengaria founded L'Épau in 1230, however

⁵⁵ Adam of Eynsham, *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis*, trans. and eds. Decima L. Douie and D. H. Farmer (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1985), i, 31-32.

⁵⁶ Berengaria of Navarre, "Berengaria of Navarre to Public (January 1204)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/1330.html; Berengaria of Navarre, "Berengaria of Navarre to Public (1215)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/764.html; Berengaria of Navarre, "Berengaria of Navarre, queen of England to Peter, bishop of Winchester (1220)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/765.html; Berengaria of Navarre, "Berengaria of Navarre to Henry III, king of England (26th October 1225)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/766.html.

⁵⁷ Léopold Delisle, ed., *Catalogues des actes de Philippe-Auguste, avec une introduction sur les sources les caractères et l'importance historiques de ces documents* (Paris: A. Durand, 1856), no. 805; Henri-François Delaborde, Charles Petit-Dutaillis and J. Monicat, eds., *Recueil des Actes de Philippe Auguste Roi de France publié sous la direction de M. Clovis Brunel par H F-Delaborde et Ch. Petit-Dutaillis et J. Monicat. Tome II Années du Règne XVI à XXVII (1 Novembre 1194-31 Octobre 1206)* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1943), no. 837.

⁵⁸ *St. Pierre de la Cour*; Le Mans, AD de la Sarthe, MS. 259, *Cartulaire de l'Eglise du Mans: Livre Blanc du chapitre*.

the foundation of the abbey was confirmed by Pope Gregory IX and the subsequent consecration took place in January 1231, a month after Berengaria's death.

Although there is no extant evidence, it is plausible Berengaria chose not to remarry, as there is no indication of her actively seeking remarriage. It is also possible that as Sancho, John, and Philip Augustus were concerned more with territorial disputes and rulership rather than arranging a marriage for her, she was forgotten. There is no surviving evidence for her marriage rights being purchased by any of the kings listed above. Little survives to indicate what her household consisted of in this period, or her relations with the rulers who held ultimate power over her lands and income. Surviving letters indicate a closeness with her sister Blanche, regent of Champagne from 1199 onwards, though none between Berengaria and Sancho are extant.⁵⁹ The only record which suggests Berengaria may have returned to her homeland is a letter from Henry III granting her safe conduct to travel to Navarre in 1219.⁶⁰ Although her residence in Le Mans was not without quarrels, due to the city being placed under interdict twice, and her disputes with Bishop Maurice of Le Mans, the twenty-six years Berengaria held Le Mans showed a tenacious and active dowager. Berengaria's sister-in-law Isabella, countess of Angoulême will now be examined as the final queen in this chapter.

Isabella of Angoulême

Isabella's young age and lack of ruling experience upon her access as queen consort of England undoubtedly affected her ability to rule in the earlier years of her marriage, particularly in the face of an experienced mother-in-law and with restricted access to the resources allocated to the consort. However, as discussed in chapters three and four, Isabella's inexperience could have been mitigated had John enabled Isabella to rule during his periods of absence from England. Both Berengaria and Isabella lacked the previous experience of being a consort and the maturity Matilda and Eleanor held when they came to England and ruled.

Much like Berengaria, Isabella's early life and later activities as queen of England are poorly documented. Isabella was sole heiress to Ademar, count of Angoulême, a semi-

⁵⁹ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 179; Félix Bourquelot, "Fragments des comptes du XIIIe siècle," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 5th séries 4 (1863): 51-79, accessed 27 February 2019, https://www.persee.fr/doc/bec_0373-6237_1863_num_24_1_445869.

⁶⁰ Henry III, "Letter from Henry III, king of England to Berengaria of Navarre, queen of England (1219)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/778.html.

independent province situated between Aquitaine and Gascony.⁶¹ She was also the daughter of Alice de Courtenay, whose father Peter de Courtenay, was son of Louis VI of France. Through the Courtenays and their marital alliances, Isabella was closely connected to several royal and noble houses of Europe, which made her a prized heiress to be allied with.⁶² The counts of Angoulême in the late twelfth century were in dispute over the rulership of the county of La Marche, which was heavily contested by the neighbouring lords of Lusignan. In January 1200, John recognised Hugh IX de Lusignan's claim to Le Marche, and Hugh was shortly betrothed to Isabella a few months later, although Nicholas Vincent argued the timing is far from certain.⁶³

The prospect of a unified Lusignan, La Marche, and Angoulême against John, at a time when he was already at war with Philip Augustus, saw John arrange a betrothal with Isabella and marry her in August 1200.⁶⁴ It is plausible Isabella was aged twelve or under at the time of her marriage to John. From the extant evidence it appears Isabella was not raised, like her mother-in-law Eleanor, and Matilda, to be as politically active as her predecessors. This, combined with John's stringent control over her dower and finances, leaves little trace of Isabella's time as queen and countess during her marriage. Although she appears to have travelled with John at certain stages during the war with France, the surviving records do not indicate that she exercised direct power over the Angoumois.⁶⁵ The absence of authority cannot be tied explicitly to a lack of children, with five sons and daughters born to John and Isabella between 1207 and 1215. As noted above with Berengaria, dower issues were to be a continual source of unease and dispute between the Angevin royal women. Due to the multiple claims for dower lands in 1200, John promised Niort and Saintes to Isabella, which Vincent argued was provisional until Eleanor's death in 1204.⁶⁶ Upon Eleanor's death, Isabella was promised further lands from the Anglo-Norman domains, however she did not receive any income from these, as the revenue passed directly to John, which is discussed further in chapter five.⁶⁷ It is only in the year after John's

⁶¹ For the county of Angoulême, see Rowan Charles Watson, "The Counts of Angoulême from the 9th to the 13th Century," (PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, 1979).

⁶² Isabella's uncle, Peter de Courtenay was Latin Emperor of Constantinople and was first married to Agnes I, countess of Nevers, then Yolanda of Flanders; through the children of Peter and Yolanda alliances were created with Andrew II of Hungary and Theodoros I, Emperor of Nicaea.

⁶³ Vincent, "Isabella," 171.

⁶⁴ Vincent, "Isabella," 172-173.

⁶⁵ Thomas Duffy Hardy, ed. *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium in Turri Londinensi Asservati. Volume I. Part I.* (London: Public Record Office, 1835), 67b, 117.

⁶⁶ Vincent, "Isabella," 186.

⁶⁷ Vincent, "Isabella," 187.

death in 1216 that we find extant charters documenting Isabella's authority, with three charters all concerned with religious grants as analysed in chapter five. Otherwise Isabella is unmentioned in most John's charters and his will, apart from an award to the cathedral church of Chichester in 1204.⁶⁸

Isabella's decision to return to France in 1217 has often been seen as a sign of abandonment of her five children by John, however the situation was more complex than has been previously stated.⁶⁹ Louise J. Wilkinson has convincingly argued the regency council excluded Isabella from any political role in her son's reign, leaving her with little choice but to return to Angoulême and re-establish herself as countess.⁷⁰ Upon her return, Isabella married Hugh X of Lusignan, son of her previously betrothed, in 1220. This decision was not without further controversy as Hugh X had been promised to Isabella's daughter, Joan, and letters between Isabella, Henry III, and Pope Honorius III indicate tension over the return of Joan in light of this development.⁷¹ The disputes were tied to the granting of Isabella's dower, namely the lordships of Niort and Saintes, which had been promised in 1200. From 1220 onwards, Isabella and Hugh frequently changed alliances between the Plantagenets and the Capetians, with promises of funds and lands which were never to be fully realised on either side.⁷² Isabella and Hugh's marriage led to nine half-siblings for Henry III, which were to cause further clashes during his reign, however this goes beyond the scope of this thesis. The political rivalry between the Plantagenets, Lusignans, and Capetians was to continue into the 1240s, with a particularly tense series of events in 1241 wherein Isabella refused to do homage to Louis IX's brother Alfonso, newly created count of Poitiers. This could be due to Isabella's desire to protect the interests of her son, Richard of Cornwall, who had held the title of count of Poitiers since 1225; it could also be due to indignities Isabella suffered upon attending court to do homage.⁷³ Rebellion swiftly followed, which ultimately resulted in Isabella being sidelined by all, with strained relationships between Isabella and Hugh, as well as her children. Much like Berengaria, Isabella appears far more active due to extant evidence in her dowager period. However,

⁶⁸ *Rot. Chart.*, i, 129.

⁶⁹ Vincent, "Isabella," 198.

⁷⁰ Wilkinson, "Maternal Abandonment," 111, 113.

⁷¹ Honorius III, "Letter from Honorius III, pope to Isabel of Angoulême (July 1222)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/463.html; Isabel of Angoulême, "Letter from Isabel of Angoulême to Henry III (1220)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/457.html.

⁷² Vincent, "Isabella," 209.

⁷³ Vincent, "Isabella," 211.

unlike Berengaria, Isabella appears to have pursued claims to her dower with much more political upheaval and dispute. This is undoubtedly tied to her decision to remarry, although her activities in her second marriage fall beyond the scope of this thesis. Having now provided a comprehensive background to the four women under analysis, this next section will discuss the office of queen and its background which is of relevance for discussions in chapter five.

The Office of Queen

Queenship in western Europe in the High Middle Ages has been a subject of voracious discussion for the last four decades, as demonstrated in chapter one. This section will briefly examine some of the central themes, namely how ceremonies and titles affect perceptions of queenship, female authority, and power. Although this thesis does not investigate queenship in the kingdom of France, the queens under study came from regions which were closely intertwined with the kingdom. Particularly in the south of France, attitudes towards female exercise of power were more accepting than in the north.⁷⁴ The main analysis of the queen's office will be in chapter five as part of the discussion of competition between the four queens as mothers and daughters-in-law. Chapter five will also focus upon the exercise of piety and patronage by these women as part of their roles as consort and dowager. The consideration of their position as mother and issues connected with maternity, which was the primary role of the queen, is examined in more detail in chapter four.

Ceremonies

Aside from their wedding, royal ceremonies were one of few recorded occasions where both the chroniclers and the public could expect to see the queen. These could be recorded in chronicles, charters if a grant were made at the ceremony, or in images, though the latter is rare for western Europe in this period. Coronation ceremonies added a sense of legitimacy to the queen's authority, as well as emphasising her status as wife of the king.⁷⁵ Janet L. Nelson discussed the significance of the developments of queenly consecration rites, the earliest example of which can be found in 751 in the Carolingian domains.⁷⁶ Stafford argued queen-making rites did not appear in England until Ælfthryth was anointed

⁷⁴ Earenfight, *Queenship*, 152-160.

⁷⁵ Earenfight, *Queenship*, 84.

⁷⁶ Janet L. Nelson, "Early Medieval Rites of Queen-Making and the Shaping of Medieval Queenship," in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1997), 302.

in the 970s; however, Julie-Ann Smith stated the protocol for the queen-making of Judith, wife of Æthelwulf, in 856.⁷⁷ Nelson named the *de Ordine Palatii* as a description of the queen's roles, namely organising the palace, granting gifts and to supervise the court.⁷⁸ Stafford also analysed the *ordos* and coronation promises of early medieval English kings, noting both William the Conqueror and Henry I were required to make a coronation promise to the populace, and stated their intent to uphold their duties as king.⁷⁹ There are no *ordines* for Matilda as she was not crowned. Eleanor was crowned at Canterbury Cathedral in December 1154, however the *ordines* for Eleanor have not survived. *Ordines* could publicly grant authority to the queen, and though these do not survive, coronations are documented in chronicles, thus we know they took place.

Coronations gave queens visibility and demonstrated their symbolic power. Being an anointed queen also enhanced the legitimacy of any children borne to the royal couple. Consecration bolstered queens' informal power as they were expected to be patrons, which allowed them to build their own networks and control access to the king, however this latter action was dependent on the relationship between king and queen.⁸⁰ Stafford argued minimal formal power was transferred through consecration, and thus the queen-making rite of coronation was focussed on enhancing queenly power through her status as a transmitter of dynastic rights.⁸¹

As discussed in the introduction, Matilda will be referred to as a queen for this thesis in shorthand, because although she was not crowned as a regnant queen, she ruled as though she were queen. Matilda is the only one of the four women to have not been crowned as queen of England: indeed, Eleanor was crowned twice, first as queen of France and then as queen of England.⁸² Perhaps the most notable of ceremonies that comes under discussion in this thesis is Richard's re-crowning in 1196 upon his return from crusade, as it is Eleanor who was at his side, not Berengaria. Berengaria was crowned shortly after the marriage ceremony in Limassol in May 1191; however, she does not appear to have been crowned in front of her English subjects. Roger of Howden noted Berengaria was crowned and

⁷⁷ Stafford, *Queens*, 127; Julie-Ann Smith, "The Earliest Queen-Making Rites," *Church History* 66.1 (1997): 19-20.

⁷⁸ Nelson, "Rites," 304.

⁷⁹ Pauline Stafford, "The laws of Cnut and the history of Anglo-Saxon royal promises," *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982): 186; Benjamin Thorpe, ed., *Florence of Worcester Chronicon ex Chronicis* (London: English Historical Society, 1848-1849), i, 228-229.

⁸⁰ Stafford, *Queens*, 99.

⁸¹ Stafford, *Queens*, 134.

⁸² Dale, *Inauguration and Liturgical Kingship*, 87.

consecrated at Limassol by the bishop of Evreux, assisted by the bishop of Bayonne and the archbishops of Apamea and Auxienne.⁸³ There have been several suggestions as to why Eleanor took precedence in 1196. Eleanor acted as regent whilst Richard was on crusade, which enhanced her authority. Berengaria and Richard had become estranged by this stage as Richard appears to have not stopped to visit Berengaria on his return from the Holy Roman Empire. Whatever the reasons behind this estrangement, this coronation ceremony allows us further insight into Eleanor's role on the political stage, and leaves Berengaria further in the shadows. However, being crowned did not automatically grant power. As is explored throughout this thesis, competition between the four women with each other and their co-rulers for power was continuous. Extant evidence for Berengaria and Isabella whilst consorts indicates that although both were legitimised through coronation, their exercise of power was limited. All four women were shortly crowned after their marriage, in the case of Matilda as empress and the others as queen, which although unexceptional was not always the procedure in this period.

Rituals marked important life stages for queens; as Parsons argued, these rituals encompassed entry pageantry, marriage, childbearing, the receiving of petitions and funerals as well.⁸⁴ There is no evidence for any churching rituals for the four women under study, so these will not be discussed. Other ceremonies where we could expect to see queens would be significant granting of lands or titles, or ceremonies associated with the Church, or intercession. Official ceremonies presented an opportunity for queens to be recorded in chronicles, which are often records of the deeds of kings. However, the presence of the queen was not necessarily noted in chronicles, as often the chroniclers focussed heavily on the king, the occasion, and the male nobles around the king, rather than the queen. The extant sources will never portray a full picture of the activities of queens. However, when queens do appear, Laynesmith noted rituals of queenship are moments where queens are most commonly visible to their subjects.⁸⁵ Parsons stated a model of queenly behaviour focussed upon rituals and symbols points to an unofficial sphere for the exercise of the queen's power, and that these rituals acknowledged that the queen did exercise power, regardless of how informal or unofficial it was.⁸⁶ It is thus unsurprising that it is difficult to locate queens in the sources, exercising official forms of

⁸³ Howden, ii, 204.

⁸⁴ John Carmi Parsons, "Ritual and Symbol in English Medieval Queenship to 1500," in *Women and Sovereignty*, ed. Louise Olga Frandenburg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 60.

⁸⁵ Joanne L. Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 73.

⁸⁶ Parsons, "Ritual," 69.

authority, when the power designated to them could be wielded in a variety of ways in multiple rituals.

As is demonstrated throughout this study, we must look for royal women in other ways apart from records of ceremonies and documents they issued. Royal women can be found in patronage and commissions, seals, and literature.⁸⁷ As records of the four women at ceremonies in this period are scarce, other sources need to be examined to gain a fuller understanding of their authority and influence. Another factor which impacted the visibility of these queens was also the fact that despite their royal partnerships, the king and queen were not often together due to the continual travelling of one or both rulers in order to govern the kingdoms, which will be explored in chapters three and four. Other factors such as warfare, including the Third Crusade, also took the king away from their domains. Thus, although ceremonies are a useful opportunity for us to view queens, especially when examining coronation and the exercise of power thereafter, they need to be considered alongside other records. Ceremonies legitimised queenly power and their dynasty; however, they were by no means a guarantee of female agency. This next section will discuss the titles these four women used.

Titles

Coronation and consecration set apart the queen from other women and allowed her to use the title of *regina* in official documents. Three of the women of this study came with titles of their own and made decisions about when to deploy them in documents, or not as the case may be. The titles of *regina*, *comitissa*, *ducissa*, and *imperatrix* dominate the charters, and each title gave the owner an added sense of authority and legitimacy over the region they ruled. This authority was dependent on access to lands and revenues associated with the title, and the extent of power granted by their lord, king, or male family member. Conversely, as seen with Berengaria, although she was later popularly known as Lady of Le Mans, this title does not appear in any charters granted by her.⁸⁸ Berengaria fully exercised power in the region regardless of the lack of title.

The granting of titles, be it queen, duchess, countess, or empress, was not an automatic indication of genuine authority. The four women, especially Matilda, were aware of the potency of their titles and how they could be deployed to navigate the avenues of power.

⁸⁷ Earenfight, "Highly Visible," 88.

⁸⁸ Trindade notes that the epithet of 'Lady of Le Mans' was bestowed on Berengaria by posterity, however the origins of the epithet are unknown: Trindade, *Berengaria*, 147.

Titular authority needed to be backed up by genuine authority, and this could be restricted by another family member, be it a mother-in-law or a husband. Royal and noble women would use the most prestigious title to enhance their authority, which explains Matilda's continued use of *imperatrix* after she left the Holy Roman Empire. In the cases of Berengaria and Isabella, where they held authority in name only during their tenures as queen, they sought different ways to wield authority and influence which will be discussed in the forthcoming chapters.

Status and Roles

Queens were expected to fulfil a multitude of roles as part of their position. The primary role was to bear an heir, preferably male, to continue the dynasty. It is unlikely a royal or noble woman would raise their children. Instead, the children would be appointed with their own household or sent to a convent or monastery for education and care until they came of age. Both John and Joanna, Eleanor's youngest children, were sent to Fontevraud at a young age to be cared for and educated. As a mother, a queen could ensure her power continued beyond her partner's death if she survived him.⁸⁹ Although maternal relationships were not always harmonious, as seen with Isabella and Henry III, they were often successful avenues to power. Failure to bear an heir was typically blamed on the female half of the partnership, and barrenness was used as a reason to cast aside a wife, particularly in royal marriages where a male heir was a crucial need due to primogeniture. A fuller exploration of motherhood in this period will take place in chapter four when considering mother-son relationships, and motherhood and childlessness.

Queens were expected to act as patrons, either to religious institutions or as political and cultural patrons. Through patronage and gift giving, queens were able to establish networks and alliances. These networks could enhance the queen's power base, as well as that of the king's if the queen's interests were allied to her husband's. Cultural patronage could increase the prestige of the court due to its association with popular poets and troubadours, as well as being a centre of literary and artistic developments. Patronage of chroniclers also held benefits for queens as a way of ensuring remembrance of their dynasty and heritage.⁹⁰ Religious patronage will be analysed in chapter five, however cultural patronage is outside the scope of this thesis and thus will only be referred to where relevant, for example the patronage of specific chroniclers, such as Robert of Torigni, by

⁸⁹ Woodacre, "Introduction," 1.

⁹⁰ See van Houts, *Memory and Gender*.

one of the women under study. Patronage, although not formalised, was an intrinsic part of queenship and could prove foundational to the exercise of power as seen with Berengaria and Isabella, lack of access to resources to enable patronage affected alliance-building.

The third position queens could be expected to fulfil which is relevant to this thesis is as an intercessor. Although there is minimal evidence to show how often queens interceded on behalf of a petitioner, it can be seen that all four queens acted on behalf of, and interceded for, members of the nobility or clergy either during their tenure as consort or as dowager. Relationships with the nobility in terms of patronage and diplomatic intercession are fully analysed in chapter three as these affected co-ruling partnerships more than mother and daughter-in-law relationships. However, there are instances where intercessory interests could overlap, for example in the case of Thomas Becket, who asked both Matilda and Eleanor for assistance in his dispute with Henry II as discussed in chapter four. Intercession can be a useful way to view the extent of queenly power and authority, if viewed in terms of success. Huneycutt demonstrated strong-willed queens who had a desire to exert influence found the ability to do so, through interceding on behalf of their allies.⁹¹ However, there are often conflicting factors which impacted the queen's ability to intercede, namely other political relationships which could be affected by the intercession, as well as the harmony of the co-ruling partnership. Lack of access to resources, such as land and the queen's gold, also inhibited the queen's ability to intercede, which is analysed in chapters three and five. Parsons highlighted how a lack of visibility has affected our understanding of twelfth century queens' intercessory skills, and the combination of this lack of visibility with the reduction in public role during this period further impacted queenly intercessory activities.⁹²

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the major events in the lives of these four women and narratives which affect our understanding of queenly patronage and political activities in this period and enables deeper analysis in the following chapters. This chapter has briefly discussed the roles of queens in this period, which will undergo further analysis, primarily in chapters four and five. The links between motherhood and intercession are also analysed in chapters four and five, as they formed a fundamental role of queenship. With this

⁹¹ Lois L. Huneycutt, "Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen: The Esther Topos," in *Power of the Weak. Studies on Medieval Women*, eds. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 126-146.

⁹² John Carmi Parsons, "The Queen's Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England," in *Power of the Weak*, 150.

foundation established, the next chapter predominantly investigates co-ruler relationships, specifically when the queen acted as co-ruler on behalf of her husband, and when the king co-ruled his partner's territories, and how these affected the wielding of power by the four women under study here.

Chapter Three: Co-Rulership and Conflict

The partnerships between the four royal couples that are under examination in this chapter were all brokered as predominantly political alliances, with the intention of enhancing the power of the male partner. The marriage between Geoffrey of Anjou and Empress Matilda at Le Mans in 1128 was conceived by Henry I in the 1120s after the death of his son William in the 1120 White Ship disaster. The union of Henry II and Eleanor was orchestrated by the couple themselves shortly after the annulment of her marriage to Louis VII, king of France, and Eleanor in 1152. It is likely both Eleanor and Henry saw the benefits of a marriage between the duchess of Aquitaine and the heir to the throne of England. Berengaria of Navarre and Richard I's marriage took place at Limassol, Cyprus, in 1193. This marriage was allegedly at Eleanor's instigation although this thesis argues it was ultimately Richard's decision.¹ The final alliance under discussion here is that of Isabella of Angoulême and John, who upset the Lusignan alliance with their union in 1200.² These unions also contained an element of personal attachment, particularly in the cases of Henry and Eleanor, and John and Isabella.

This chapter will examine rulership both in how the queens ruled in a partnership and in how they ruled solely as female lords. This investigation will encompass the different ways in which Geoffrey and the three Angevin kings – Henry, Richard, and John – utilised their wives and mothers as part of the governance of their domains (see chapter four for discussion of mother-son partnerships). The first section will then address the co-ruling partnerships between each couple in turn, building upon the foundations of gender and sexuality theories. It will explore the reception of each ruling partnership, as criticism of rulers by chroniclers can affect modern perceptions of how they exercised their power.³ The second section of this chapter is a comparison of these women as heiresses, but also focusses upon their dowager periods, with the primary discussion based upon the exercise

¹ Gillingham, "Berengaria," 158-160.

² Vincent, "Isabella," 172.

³ For historical writing in this period, see Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550 to c.1307* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974); Mary-Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Social Background* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963); Michael Staunton, *The historians of Angevin England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Michael Staunton, "Did the Purpose of History Change in England in the Twelfth Century?," in *Writing History in the Anglo-Norman World. Manuscripts, Makers and Readers, c.1066-1250*, eds. Laura Cleaver and Andrea Worm (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018), 7-27; Charity Urbanski, *Writing History for the King, Henry II and the Problems of Vernacular Historiography* (London: Cornell University Press, 2013).

of power in their own lands and how this compares with their tenure as a royal co-ruler. The third section addresses the relationships between the queens and the nobility to understand their networks and alliances, and how these were constructed, in order to assess their rulership.⁴ Taken together, this chapter examines how the queens functioned as rulers, both with their husband, but also as a female ruler in their own domains. This chapter stresses the importance of comparatively analysing co-ruling relationships to fully understand how female power was wielded, and the impact these relationships had at multiple stages of women's lives which could inhibit or encourage this.

Medieval Marriage and Sexuality

Several instances of the literature surrounding medieval marriage and sexuality have been discussed in chapter one: however, it is important to ground some of the discussions here in wider context. Medieval marriage was construed as the partnership of a man and a woman, which was surrounded by rules, including a set amount of days for sexual activities which could impact upon successful childbearing. This in turn affected co-ruling partnerships if the couple were unable to bear heirs, be they male or female. The royal marriage ceremony elevated the status of the female partner until she was crowned, although not all queens were crowned. Thereafter, the royal couple would construct the boundaries for their partnership. Amalie Föbel has stated consorts exercised partial rulership as the wives of kings, an example of the boundaries that might be established, and this rulership could be political duties alongside their kings or as their temporary representatives, which is evident in Matilda and Eleanor's exercise of power.⁵ John Carmi Parsons noted medieval royal marriage was necessary to construct social order, and that any anomalies, sexual or otherwise, were closely scrutinized, which is useful when considering the below discussion on co-rulership.⁶ Marriage unified a couple, and enhanced the authority of each half. As Lois L. Huneycutt has highlighted, a queen who had a good relationship with her husband could be influential.⁷ Marriage afforded women power if the king shared it with her and could provide stability in rulership and set the foundations for a dynasty.

⁴ For brevity, Berengaria is included in discussions of female rulership although she did not technically rule Le Mans but held it in exchange for her Norman dower lands.

⁵ Amalie Föbel, "The Political Traditions of Female Rulership," in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, eds. Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 74.

⁶ Parsons, "Introduction," 4.

⁷ Lois L. Huneycutt, "Power: Medieval Women's Power through Authority, Autonomy, and Influence," in *A Cultural History of Women*, 159.

Medieval sexuality is bound up in complexities regarding terminology.⁸ To label same-sex behaviour and attraction as homosexuality or bisexuality is to place a modern category on an premodern culture.⁹ For terms of convenience for a modern reader, homosexuality is regarded as the most effective term to use to express same-sex attraction and activities despite the fact it cannot accurately represent how people in medieval society may have chosen to identify their own sexuality. Although this thesis will not make assertions regarding the sexuality of any of the monarchs under study here, it is necessary to acknowledge that the language used to describe the alleged same-sex preference of Richard in particular is neither accurate nor definitive, as explored in more detail below. For this purpose, any reference to sexual behaviour outside the heteronormative sphere will be referred to as same-sex attraction or non-heteronormative behaviour, unless specified otherwise by the original author. Though this thesis focusses predominantly on the co-ruling relationships and how this affected the exercise of power, sexuality nonetheless would impact the relationships both in terms of ability and desire to reproduce, and to maintain a harmonious partnership.

It is worth unpacking the term 'sodomy' here as it has been used to demonstrate Richard's same-sex attraction. To many readers, both in the Middle Ages and the modern day, it is impossible to untangle it from homosexual behaviours. However, it often refers to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, a punishment which was not due to the residents' homosexuality but due to their sinful nature, or in accordance with Jewish theology, a lack of hospitality.¹⁰ The term 'sodomy' has a contested history, however we now ought to move towards a linguistically suitable description, as in the period Richard was alive, sodomite would be used to describe those who were sexual aggressors. Robert Mills analysed the concept of sodomy in the medieval period, showing that although its conception began around the fifth century with Augustine, *sodomia* was more clearly defined by Peter Damian in the eleventh century.¹¹ Ruth Mazo Karras has pointed out that

⁸ Note sexuality is used here not only as an expression of attraction and activities, but also of the state of being sexually active.

⁹ Karras, *Sexuality*, 7; for historicization of the terms under discussion here, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 2nd ed.; David Halperin, "Is There A History of Sexuality?" *History and Theory* 28.3 (1989): 257-274; Laura Doan, *Fashioning Sapphism. The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2001).

¹⁰ Genesis, 19 (King James Bible).

¹¹ Robert Mills, "Homosexuality: Specters of Sodom," in *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. Ruth Evans (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 57-59.

to medieval people, sex was something someone did to someone else.¹² This carries the implication that the receiving partner was viewed as lesser, and indeed the active participant was often punished more seriously than the passive partner.¹³ This discussion will be utilised further in the following section when analysing Berengaria and Richard's partnership.

It is important to remember sexualities are not just concerned with the acts themselves but with desires, relationships, identities; with feelings and with expression.¹⁴ Karras makes a very convincing point that if we cannot apply modern terminology to the past and label same-sex lovers as homosexual, we remove the binary and cannot call people heterosexuals either. Instead, we are faced with another binary: reproductive and non-reproductive sex.¹⁵ As same-sex relations would fall under the latter category, this could also undermine a person's reputation and if they were male, being a receiver would be viewed as effeminate. Within the past two centuries several concepts have been introduced, expressed, and reclaimed. We need to move beyond not only a sex and gender binary, but also a historicity binary. Historians face the issue of applying modern terms to a past which would not have understood or used this terminology. To move beyond such strong categorisation and labels is to be encouraged, and instead use the term same-sex when understanding the activities of past monarchs. We must ensure we acknowledge the difficulties regarding historicising terms, and the inaccuracies in past and present language when describing acts and affections between members of the same sex.¹⁶

The danger of visible sexuality was not only applicable to non-heteronormative sexualities, as excessive sexuality, especially the acts of women outside of marriage, were viewed as a threat. April Harper's discussion of Eleanor, who transforms from a sexualized body to a maternal one upon the birth of her children, similar to other medieval mothers, demonstrates her movement into an accepted arena for the exercise of power.¹⁷ This exercise was explicitly linked to motherhood, as fears around the latent sexuality of widows heightened concerns about the ability of widows to control land and exercise power.¹⁸ With

¹² Karras, *Sexuality*, 3.

¹³ Karras, *Sexuality*, 180-182.

¹⁴ Anna Clark, *Desire: A History of European Sexuality* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 3-5.

¹⁵ Karras, *Sexuality*, 8.

¹⁶ A good discussion of the further issues around this terminology is Warren Johansson and William A. Percy, "Homosexuality," in *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, eds. Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (London: Garland Publishing, 1996), 156-158.

¹⁷ Harper, "Sexuality," 44.

¹⁸ Harper, "Sexuality," 49.

the exception of Isabella, none of the queens remarried in their dowager period. However, even remarriage did not save Isabella from the slanderous pen of the chronicler when it came to sexuality, as she was criticised as promiscuous during her first marriage to John. Fears of women's power are consistently represented by sexual slander, the most potent weapon a chronicler could wield. The constant trope of viewing Isabella as a Jezebel was a form of sexual slander, which was the worst which could be laid against a woman and is explored further in the following section when analysing Isabella and John's partnership. This contextual discussion is utilised more fully in the analysis of Eleanor and Isabella's relationships.

Essentially, the choices made by monarchs are shaped by a set of prescriptions: the need to bear an heir, the need to rule, as well as societal and religious principles. Thus, the desires of a ruler, be they heteronormative or not, would not be a priority. In widowhood however, the desires of the four women could be more fully recognised. The decisions of the women in this study regarding whether to remain single or not in their widowhood is an indication not only of their power (though conceivably affected by their age and lack of male relative intervening), but also a representation of their sexuality. Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella were all subject to directives of society regarding their ability to embrace their sexual desires and needs. However, analysis of the extant evidence indicates they did not embody excessive sexuality or overstep boundaries when it came to interactions outside of marriage and it is implausible Eleanor and Isabella conducted any alleged extra marital affairs.

Co-Ruling Partnerships

This section will now examine the four co-ruling partnerships which are central to this thesis: Matilda and Geoffrey, Eleanor and Henry, Berengaria and Richard, and Isabella and John. An analysis of their political activities not covered elsewhere in the thesis will take place to understand which model of rulership their partnership falls into, as outlined above. Where practical and within the limits of extant evidence, an examination of sexual allegations against the rulers, namely instigated by contemporary chroniclers, will be presented to gain a wider understanding of how this has affected our perceptions of not only their relationships, but also of their power and ability to wield it. Through an analysis of both the personal and political aspects of these partnerships, a greater understanding of co-rulership in the Angevin realms can be developed, rather than a narrow analysis of one of these aspects.

Empress Matilda and Geoffrey of Anjou

The partnership between Matilda and Geoffrey was not initially harmonious. According to Simeon of Durham, Matilda returned to Normandy in 1129, shortly after her marriage to Geoffrey, plausibly due to personal and political differences.¹⁹ Chibnall summarised these differences were possibly owing to differences in status and age.²⁰ Despite this initial disharmony however, Matilda and Geoffrey went on to produce three sons: Henry, Geoffrey, and William. Matilda and Geoffrey went on to rule in relative unity, and their ruling partnership can be seen to follow the model of Divide and Rule. Matilda and Geoffrey's decision to focus on differing spheres of influence owing to their interests, skills, and location of their allies, was ultimately successful as Normandy and England were united under their son Henry in 1154.

Prior to the death of Henry I in 1135, Matilda and Geoffrey primarily focussed on rulership in the early Angevin domains, that of Anjou, Maine, and Touraine. Normandy remained under the rulership of Henry I at this stage, and although Matilda resided there on several occasions she did not intervene in local governance. The interim period provides little evidence to suggest co-rulership in terms of patronage in the area, and after Henry's death Matilda continued to sign her charters as *imperatrix* rather than *comitissa*, demonstrating not only her understanding of the importance of her titles but also distancing herself politically from Geoffrey. Before Henry's death, tension had arisen between Henry and Geoffrey and Matilda regarding the transfer of the castles on the Norman-Angevin border, which had been promised to Matilda as part of her dowry.²¹ These tensions escalated into rebellion, partially driven by Geoffrey's support of William Talvas, son of the former rebel Robert of Bellême, who had requested the return of some of his father's castles in Maine.²² Henry's death escalated the Plantagenets' attempts to conquer Normandy, and chroniclers including Matthew Paris report on the battles through which Matilda and Geoffrey tried to reclaim Matilda's inheritance.²³ Charles Beem argued that in 1139 Geoffrey and Matilda chose to split their campaigns.²⁴ Matilda had more allies in England than Geoffrey, which

¹⁹ Simeon of Durham. *A History of the Kings of England*, trans. and ed. Joseph Stephenson (Felinfach: Llanerch Enterprises, 1989), 202-203; Chibnall, *Matilda*, 57.

²⁰ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 55-58.

²¹ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 60.

²² Chibnall, *Matilda*, 61, 64.

²³ Frederick Madden, ed. *Matthæi Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Historia Anglorum, Sive, Ut Vulgo Dicitur, Historia Minor. Item, Ejusdem Abbreviato Chronicum Angliæ*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1866-1868), i, 255.

²⁴ Beem, "'Offspring'," 86.

enhanced her position, and it is plausible any attempts Geoffrey made into England would have been viewed as a foreign incursion rather than an intervention by a displaced heir to regain their throne. The Divide and Rule method ensured Matilda and Geoffrey could effectively expand their patrimony and ultimately guarantee Angevin governance over the various realms.

The rulership of Normandy held more complexities than England, as although it was subsumed under Stephen's rule after his usurpation, the Norman nobles did not change loyalties en masse as many of the English nobility did. In Matilda's charters, as examined in further detail below, nobles who held land in both Normandy and England frequently changed alliances based on who held the balance of power, one noticeable instance being Waleran of Meulan. Matilda approached the conquest of England as an individual, however this does not appear to have impacted her relationship with Geoffrey, who continued to make advances in Normandy on her behalf. Beem argued Geoffrey and Matilda initially agreed that the conquest of Normandy was the most practical strategy, however as noted above Matilda's attention soon turned to England which led to a division of pursuits.²⁵ Matilda had to approach the conquest of England as a sole woman, by making no acknowledgement of her marital status: she chose not to use the title of countess of Anjou as analysed in chapter five, and focussed on her position as daughter of Henry I, and then as the mother of a future king.²⁶ This decision does not appear to have negatively impacted their partnership, as Geoffrey and Matilda continued to work harmoniously until Geoffrey's death in 1151. Empress Matilda had a strong precedent of shared rulership to draw upon, with Matilda of Flanders and Matilda of Scotland both extending the office of queenship to be an embedded part of cross-Channel rule, even if their rule was far more dependent on their husbands than Empress Matilda's was.²⁷

The representation of Matilda, and her political activities, has undoubtedly affected our perceptions of power and how it is gendered, as well as her relationship with Geoffrey. Barring the allegations of Geoffrey's infidelity with Eleanor as discussed below, there are no examples of sexual scandal of merit here, which would affect our understanding of Matilda and Geoffrey's partnership. This current analysis of the chronicles will investigate how the

²⁵ Charles Beem, "'Greater by Marriage': The Matrimonial Career of the Empress Matilda," in *Queens & Power*, 8.

²⁶ Beem, "'Marriage,'" 9, 13.

²⁷ David Bates, "The Representation of Queens and Queenship in Anglo-Norman Royal Charters," in *Frankland: The Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Paul Fouracre and David Ganz (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 300-302.

actions of Matilda have been impacted by gendered representations of power. The three chroniclers of note here are Robert of Torigni, the anonymous author of the *Gesta Stephani*, a heavily pro-Stephen chronicle, and William of Malmesbury. All three chroniclers provide substantive records for Matilda's life; however, each is affected by either their support for another protagonist, or their monastic views.

Matilda's entrance to London in 1141 is an event which drew much attention from the chroniclers. The language used by the author of the *Gesta Stephani* to describe Matilda's actions upon her entrance to London is that she drove away adherents after insulting and threatening them, held 'extreme haughtiness and insolence', and asked for the money 'not with unassuming gentleness, but with a voice of authority'.²⁸ The gendered use of language here is particularly striking. It is not unsurprising to a modern reader that Matilda would try to impose her authority before her coronation; however, the unfavourable qualities that are often attributed to her character were unacceptable to the chroniclers, both ecclesiastical and secular, as well as her contemporaries, because they were qualities that were gendered masculine, and involved Matilda acting as an agent for her own power, and not on behalf of others.²⁹ Robert of Torigni noted Matilda angered the Londoners and was forced to leave London, but does not write as scathing a narrative as the author of the *Gesta*.³⁰ William of Malmesbury, more peaceably, wrote that the usually suspicious Londoners had expressed hatred, but does not report of Matilda being the cause of this consternation explicitly.³¹ Kirsten A. Fenton has conclusively argued Malmesbury stressed female vices and stereotypes as a form of criticism for those who acted in ways of which he disapproved, although the powerful women he admired became masculinised in their presentation.³² In essence, although Matilda may have been successful diplomatically in winning the nobility and some of the Londoners to her side prior to her entrance to London, and securing them afterwards, she was not able to win over all of the citizens themselves, potentially due to the combination of her personality, her actions upon entry to London,

²⁸ 'non simplici cum mansuetudine sed cum ore imperioso, ab eis exegit.' *Gesta Stephani*, 121-123.

²⁹ Kirsten A. Fenton, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the Works of William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 34, 55; Stafford, "Portrayal of Royal Women," 144, 160; Earenfight, "Power and Gender," 116-117; Huneycutt, "Female Succession," 194-196, 201.

³⁰ *Robert of Torigni*, 142; Roger Howlett, ed., *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II., and Richard I. Volume I Containing the First Four Books of the Historia Rerum Anglicarum of William of Newburgh* (London: Longman & Co., 1884), i, 40-41.

³¹ *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle of The Kings of England: From The Earliest Period To The Reign of King Stephen*, trans. and ed. John Allen Giles (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1847), 521.

³² Fenton, *Gender*, 55.

and their unwillingness to accept a female sovereign.³³ In the case of London, Matilda's understanding of the desires of the Londoners was not well grounded, as the Londoners lacked the resources to pay for further taxes. With Queen Matilda's army on the bank of the Thames, the Londoners faced pressure no matter which monarch they decided to ally with. In the face of further economic strife, and the threat of the army, the Londoners chose to return to Stephen and Queen Matilda, leaving Empress Matilda to form a new strategy with Geoffrey. Matilda and Geoffrey would have considered the effect of Matilda entering England as a married woman, whose partner was as a foreign count and perhaps unwelcome to the country. Thus, by presenting herself as a lone woman Matilda had the advantage of demonstrating her links to English throne through her father, and claiming her status as *imperatrix* to denote her power, however this risked her being viewed as a woman in a man's role and overstepping gender boundaries.³⁴

One way in which Matilda overcame these boundaries was by passing her claim to the throne to her son Henry and acting as a transmitter of dynastic rights. By removing herself as direct claimant, the Plantagenet claim would be strengthened by a male descendant contesting the throne. Although claims through a female line were not viewed as strong as those through the male line, Matilda's position as the named heir to the throne despite Stephen's usurpation enhanced Henry's claim. Throughout the late 1140s and early 1150s, Matilda and Geoffrey worked together to ensure Henry was able to rule effectively in preparation for his accession to the English throne. Henry was involved in the rulership of Normandy with Geoffrey from 1144 onwards, and it is clear Geoffrey saw Henry's accession to the dukedom as a given.³⁵ By 1148, Henry had taken over the mantle of claiming the English throne as Matilda moved to focus her interests in Normandy. Geoffrey and Matilda continued to rule jointly until Geoffrey's death in 1151, at which point Matilda effectively supported Henry's claim to the throne which was finalised in the Treaty of Winchester in 1153.³⁶ A charter granted by Geoffrey at Rouen listed the consent of Matilda and their sons, as evidence of this continued co-ruling partnership.³⁷ Matilda and Geoffrey effectively transitioned from a Divide and Rule model to a Collaborative Union from 1144 onwards, in which they worked together throughout their marriage to ensure rulership over their

³³ Huneycutt, "Female Succession," 201.

³⁴ Although we do not know if Matilda was crowned empress or queen in the Holy Roman Empire, she was crowned at Mainz in 1110; see Dale, *Inauguration and Liturgical Kingship*, 87.

³⁵ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 78, 79, 304, 729, 735; Chibnall, *Matilda*, 145.

³⁶ *RRAN*, iii, no. 272.

³⁷ *RRAN*, iii, no. 599.

territories and gained their rightful lands, as well as ensuring the inheritance for their children. Matilda and Geoffrey's political partnership can effectively be argued as the most successful through applying different models of rulership. Ultimately the Plantagenets regained Matilda's inheritance through Henry, conquered Normandy, and produced several male heirs. Their personal partnership was successful as they bore three male heirs; however, it is plausible the distance between them as they focussed on their goals enabled their political success and sidelined underlying personal tensions.

Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II

The partnership of Eleanor and Henry has been a focal point for many of their biographers and historians, particularly owing to its longevity, the union of several realms under their rule, and the rebellion of their sons, plausibly at Eleanor's instigation, in 1173.³⁸ The rebellion is examined in greater depth in chapter four. This section will provide a chronological exploration of their partnership, and how it progressed from a Collaborative Union into a Lord Rules All model after Eleanor's imprisonment in 1173, and the failure of the division of the Angevin realms between their sons. The late 1180s saw Eleanor's release from captivity and an attempt by Henry to instigate a Divide and Rule partnership wherein he maintained ultimate control. Lastly, this section will examine sexual allegations, primarily those against Eleanor and how they have affected modern conceptions of her power, but also the Rosamund Clifford scandal, and how this affected Eleanor and Henry's partnership.

Eleanor and Henry's marriage on 18 May 1152, followed by their coronations as king and queen of England at Winchester Cathedral in December 1154, marked a turning point not only in the balance of power in Europe, but also as their personal relationship became that of royal co-rulers. The addition of England to their realms would lead to several cross-Channel journeys in the following fifty years in attempts to ensure cohesive rulership. Eleanor and Henry's partnership was united for the first twenty years of their marriage, with the birth of several heirs, and Eleanor was often utilised as regent for England in Henry's absence.³⁹ Eleanor issued multiple writs in England during her periods of regency, which demonstrates her involvement in English political affairs and Henry's trust in her

³⁸ For their marriage, see Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered," 1-54; Turner, *Eleanor*, 205-230.

³⁹ Warren, *Henry II*, 260; Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered," 11.

authority during his absence.⁴⁰ There is a lack of extant evidence indicating all of Eleanor's activities during her time as consort, thus it is difficult to gauge the full extent of her authority in the Angevin realms. Eleanor regularly appears in the English Pipe Rolls, showing she did not completely slip into obscurity in the first two decades of her tenure, however childbearing in addition to the growth of an administrative system in England led to a decline in her authority.⁴¹ The frequency with which Henry left Eleanor to rule England is demonstrative of a trusting Collaborative Union, and it was undoubtedly Eleanor's previous experience as queen of France and duchess of Aquitaine which indicated Eleanor's reliability as a ruler in the first two decades of their partnership.

Eleanor was active in Aquitaine at various points during Henry's reign, however as childbearing dominated the early years of their marriage, Eleanor was primarily based in England and the northern Angevin realms. It is largely after 1168 Eleanor can be seen as more active in Aquitaine, owing to Henry's struggle to maintain control over the Aquitanian barons, as argued by Marie Hivergneaux, who provides a detailed analysis of several of Eleanor's charters which are discussed in further detail in the following section.⁴² Between 1168 and 1173, Eleanor consolidated Richard's position as her heir to Aquitaine through joint confirmations of several charters, including one such grant to Geoffrey Berland, a local merchant, of the franchises on the sale and purchase of merchandise.⁴³ This could be an indication of Eleanor beginning to distance herself from Henry's policies, by reinstating herself as primary ruler of the region, with Richard as her second in command.⁴⁴ Across the period 1154 to 1173, it can be seen that a Collaborative Union existed between Eleanor and Henry, before the turn of events in the 1170s.

Further evidence pointing to harmonious co-rulership is the payment of queen's gold to Eleanor intermittently until 1204, analysed further in chapter five, alongside regular

⁴⁰ Frank M. Stenton, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the Social and Economic History of the Danelaw from Various Collections* (London: Oxford University Press, 1920), no. 494; *The Manuscripts of His Grace the Duke of Rutland, K. G. preserved at Belvoir Castle. Volume IV* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1905), 126; Emma Mason, ed., *Westminster Abbey Charters, 1066-c.1214* (London: London Record Society, 1988), no. 43, accessed 10 August 2018, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/london-record-soc/vol25>.

⁴¹ Turner, *Eleanor*, 173.

⁴² Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 66; Hivergneaux, "Aliénor et le Aquitaine," 65-70; Hivergneaux, "Autour d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine," 61-73; Paul Marchegay, ed., *Cartulaires du Bas-Poitou (Département de la Vendée)* (Vendée: Les Roches-Baritaud, 1877), no. 24.

⁴³ 'Has eciam predictas libertates et liberas consuetudines concessit eidem G. et heredibus suis Richardus filius meus.' Édouard Audoin, ed., *Recueil de documents concernant la commune et la ville de Poitiers. Tome I, 1063 à 1327* (Poitiers: Nicolas, Renault et c, 1923), 39-40.

⁴⁴ Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 68-69.

payments for Eleanor's household, including oil, materials, and the payment of her servants.⁴⁵ Geaman noted there was an interruption of these payments, plausibly due to Eleanor's imprisonment, and as such the discontinuation of income to Eleanor even after her release is an indication of a change in the model of rulership, namely that Henry was looking to rule solely.⁴⁶ The 1173 rebellion, argued to have been at Eleanor's instigation, shattered the relations between Eleanor, Henry, and their sons. From July 1174, Eleanor was placed under house arrest at Old Sarum, at which point her activity largely disappears from the historical record.⁴⁷ Gervase of Canterbury records that Henry sought a divorce in 1174: however, he faced opposition from Eleanor, their sons, and the Church when the archbishop of Rouen refused to support Henry's plan to remove Eleanor to Fontevraud.⁴⁸ Eleanor appears to have had some freedom of movement in the 1170s, meeting her daughter Joanna at Winchester in 1176, and staying in other castles along the south coast. Henry, however, seems to have had little faith in his wife not to rebel again and although he maintained her status as consort, he did not allow her further freedom until after the death of Henry the Young King in 1183.

1183 was another turning point in Henry and Eleanor's relationship. Political tensions, which Turner noted included Philip Augustus' demands for the dower lands of Margaret of France, his half-sister and widow of Young Henry, which currently belonged to Eleanor, alongside other practical considerations upon the death of Young Henry, led to Eleanor's release, of which Roger of Howden stated Eleanor was to be freed and make progress across her dower lands.⁴⁹ Although Eleanor's freedoms grew in the six years prior to Henry II's death, she was by no means as powerful as she had been in the 1150s, and was employed by Henry predominantly to subdue the Aquitanian barons. The most notable examples of this is the family council at Alençon in 1185. Eleanor was restored to her position as duchess of Aquitaine to resolve power plays between Richard and John, as Richard was unwilling to grant Aquitaine to John in accordance with Henry's wishes. What is most telling however are the charters Eleanor granted at this time, including one for fifty

⁴⁵ *PR Henry II 5*, 35; *PR Henry II 6*, 13; *PR Henry II 11*, 40; Kristin Geaman, "Queen's Gold and Intercession: The Case of Eleanor of Aquitaine," *MFF* 46 (2010): 19-20.

⁴⁶ Geaman, "Queen's Gold," 19.

⁴⁷ Turner, *Eleanor*, 233; William Stubbs, ed., *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), i, 256.

⁴⁸ *Gervase of Canterbury*, i, 256; Turner, *Eleanor*, 234.

⁴⁹ Turner, *Eleanor*, 245; *Gesta Regis Henrici*, i, 305.

pounds to Fontevraud, with the assent of her husband and sons.⁵⁰ This is a clear indicator of her lapse of power because their assent was required, and this continued until Henry's death. The period from 1183-1189 demonstrates Henry's attempts to rule with some inclusion of his wife and sons, in part applying the Divide and Rule model discussed above but ultimately incorporating a Lord Rules All approach. Only upon her release by Richard would Eleanor be able to reclaim her prominence in the realm. This indicates Henry's approach of Lord Rules All after 1173 irreparably damaged his and Eleanor's partnership.

This next part forms an analysis of how allegations of extra-marital relations affected not only Henry and Eleanor's partnership, but also our perceptions of this. Both Henry and Eleanor faced allegations of sexual scandal throughout their marriage, with varying levels of proof, and this would undoubtedly shape their partnership. Henry's desire to divorce Eleanor after the 1173 rebellion may have been partially influenced by his desire to wed Rosamund Clifford, the daughter of a minor baron. Henry's infatuation with Rosamund has been cited as a motivation for Eleanor's part in the rebellion, however as Turner noted, the affairs of kings were not uncommon, and it seems unlikely this particular affair would be a primary cause for Eleanor to rebel in 1173.⁵¹ It is possible the affair would have partially driven Eleanor's motivations on a secondary level, with her primary motivation being the curbing of her and her sons' power. The date the affair began is uncertain, but it plausibly started after Eleanor's return to Poitou in 1168. The chroniclers remain relatively quiet about the liaison, noting Henry was more open regarding his relationship with Rosamund after Eleanor's imprisonment.⁵² The most substantive piece of evidence for Henry and Rosamund's relationship is his patronage of Godstow Abbey, the site of Rosamund's burial upon her death in 1176.⁵³ Regardless of the start date of the affair, Eleanor and Henry's partnership had begun to disintegrate in the late 1160s, largely because of Henry's restrictions on Eleanor's exercise of power as discussed below. No further heirs were produced after 1166 which is an indication of their disharmony and given Eleanor's age, she may have been unwilling or unable to bear any more. The movement of Eleanor to Poitou

⁵⁰ 'Sciatis me, assensu et voluntate domini mei Henrici, regis Anglie, et Ricardi, Galfridi et Johannis, filiorum meorum, dedisse et presenti carta mea confirmasse abbacie Fontis Ebraudi...' Paul Marchegay, "Chartes de Fontevraud concernant l'Aunis et La Rochelle," *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 19 (1858): 330-331; Hivernaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 71.

⁵¹ Turner, *Eleanor*, 185, 220-221.

⁵² *Gerald of Wales. Instruction for a Prince. De Principis Instructione*, trans. and ed. Robert Bartlett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2018), 17.

⁵³ Turner, *Eleanor*, 235.

in 1168 was driven by Henry's inability to control the Aquitanian barons without Eleanor's assistance, and this appears to be the only region in which he allowed her further control.

Eleanor also faced allegations of extra-marital affairs; like Henry's affair with Rosamund, the records are spurious, although the accusations regarding Eleanor are founded upon solely chronicle evidence. Both alleged affairs were conducted prior to Eleanor's marriage to Henry: however, as they have often informed historiography and warrant analysis to understand her partnership with Henry, they will be discussed here. Speculation regarding Eleanor's affair with her uncle, Raymond of Antioch in 1148, whilst she was on the Second Crusade with her first husband Louis VII, has been the cause of much of Eleanor's infamy. Angevin chroniclers including John of Salisbury, Gerald of Wales, and Matthew Paris all alluded to this affair. Eleanor's alleged relations with her uncle Raymond are reported by John of Salisbury: '...the attentions paid by the prince to the queen...aroused the king's suspicions.'⁵⁴ Richard of Devizes also records the alleged incestuous affair.⁵⁵ The affair was often brought up as a weapon with which to critique Eleanor's power, either during her time of rulership or after. Fear of female power is evident in many of the chronicles: Eleanor's ability to rule successfully would have been a breach of boundaries in the eyes of some of the twelfth and thirteenth century chroniclers, and thus the accusation of adulterous incest was the tool the chroniclers mentioned above chose to wield in order to discredit her ability to wield authority.⁵⁶ It is implausible Eleanor would have sacrificed her opportunities to exercise power in the future by potentially harming her reputation through an affair with her uncle, or indeed anyone else during her marriages.

It is important to note any criticism of the queen was also an implicit criticism of the king. Henric Bagerius and Christine Ekholst's work on medieval rulership and sexuality is useful as they argued a queen who was not sexually subordinate to her king was outside of his control, and therefore demonstrates the king's lack of power.⁵⁷ If the king cannot keep his wife subordinate to himself, then he was unable to rule with authority, as a powerful queen was viewed with danger.⁵⁸ Therefore any criticism of Eleanor, or indeed any criticism of the

⁵⁴ 'Sed dum ibi morarentur ad naufragi exercitus reliquias consolandas, fouendas et reparandas, familiaritas principis ad reginam et assidua fere sine intermissione colloquia regi suspicionem dederunt.' *The Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury*, trans and ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986), 52.

⁵⁵ *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes of the Time of King Richard the First*, trans. and ed. John T. Appleby (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963), 25-26.

⁵⁶ Evans, *Eleanor*, 27-28.

⁵⁷ Henric Bagerius and Christine Ekholst, "For Better or For Worse: Royal marital sexuality as political critique in late medieval Europe," in *History of Monarchy*, 640-641.

⁵⁸ Bagerius and Ekholst, "For Better," 648.

queens within this study, should be viewed with this in mind. Gerald of Wales' critique of Eleanor is part of an anti-Plantagenet dialogue, in which he fundamentally lays the sins of the Plantagenets at Eleanor's feet.⁵⁹ A criticism of the queen could be an attempt to criticise the king by presenting his authority as weak and demonstrating his lack of control, not only over his wife but implicitly his subjects as well.

The second affair which has been used to criticise Eleanor is a liaison with her father-in-law, Geoffrey of Anjou. The main source of this accusation is Walter Map, who claimed Eleanor 'shared the couch of Louis with his [Henry's] father Geoffrey' upon her return from the Second Crusade (1150-1151).⁶⁰ Map implied this infidelity and the crime of incest (in this case, sleeping with the father and the son), led to the failures in Henry and Eleanor's marriage.⁶¹ Map's chronicle is heavily anti-Plantagenet, comprised of spurious discourse which sowed seeds of speculation regarding not only Eleanor's activities but the nature of the Plantagenets as a whole. Map's attack on Eleanor is but one part of an overarching critique of the Plantagenets, however it remains a foundational piece of work for later chroniclers and historians looking to investigate Eleanor's infidelity. Turner argued the sharpening of gender definitions in the twelfth century led English writers to condemn women for assuming the masculine role of exercising authority.⁶² Eleanor's role as a regent goes largely unnoticed by the chroniclers, as only Richard of Devizes noted she held qualities rarely found in a woman.⁶³ Eleanor's exercise of power did not garner direct praise; instead it was either ignored by chroniclers, or the subject of criticism as she assumed a masculine role. It is plausible that disdain for Eleanor's instigation in the rebellion, as well as her exercise of power beyond what was accepted, led the chroniclers to try and explain why the rebellion occurred and unilaterally condemn female power.⁶⁴ RáGena C. DeAragon argued Eleanor's visible nonconformity to the standards expected of

⁵⁹ George F. Warner, ed., *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera. Volume VIII. De Principis Instructione Liber* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1891), 298-301.

⁶⁰ 'Cui successit Henricus Matildis filius, in quem injecit oculos incestos Alienor Francorum regina, Lodovici piissimi conjux, et injustum machinata divortium nupsit ei, cum tamen haberet in fama privata quod Gaufrido patri suo lectum Lodovici participasset.' *Walter Map De Nugis Curialium, Courtiers' Trifles*, trans. and ed. by Montague Rhodes James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 475-477.

⁶¹ *Walter Map*, 477; The Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council, Canon 50, accessed 10 July 2020. <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/lateran4.asp>.

⁶² Ralph V. Turner, "Eleanor of Aquitaine, Twelfth-Century English Chroniclers and her 'Black Legend'," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 52 (2008): 24.

⁶³ *Devizes*, 25.

⁶⁴ Turner, "English Chroniclers," 33-35; Evans, *Eleanor*, 19-43, especially 27-28.

the wives of powerful men led to the chroniclers' critiques, alongside repercussions, namely her imprisonment.⁶⁵

Regardless of whether Eleanor committed these infidelities, which is highly unlikely, and despite Henry's infidelities, which are more plausible and well documented due to his links with sites associated with Rosamund and her family, they do not appear to have substantially affected Henry and Eleanor's political partnership prior to the 1173 rebellion. Instead, Henry's attempts to repress Eleanor's power and the change of partnership from a Collaborative Union to one of Lord Rules All inevitably did far more damage to their political and personal partnerships. Eleanor and Henry's ability to rule effectively was frustrated by occasional noble rebellions and the difficulties of dividing their lands between their sons, however it is entirely plausible had Henry continued to utilise Eleanor as a regent and co-ruler throughout his reign, sharing royal power with her so they could co-rule effectively, as he did for the first decade, their partnership would have been successful throughout. However, Henry's concerns regarding either Eleanor's loyalty or his desire to maintain individual control over all territories changed their model of rulership. This change arguably motivated the rebellion of 1173, and as such influenced the ways in which the chroniclers chose to record Eleanor alongside the other Plantagenets. It was an easier method for chroniclers to castigate Eleanor for alleged infidelities and perceived sins, and to propagate an misogynistic rhetoric, as seen in later historiography, than it was to understand that a woman could legitimately wield power, and that the rulership of a king could be called into question. Medieval chroniclers could find fault with Eleanor and blame her for the difficulties in the partnership between king and queen, rather than soundly evaluate the other reasons which may have impacted the monarchical exercise of power at this time.

Berengaria of Navarre and Richard I

Little is known of Berengaria and Richard's partnership due to a lack of extant evidence. Several chronicles record their marriage in Limassol, as discussed in chapter five. Although there are multiple factors which have affected Berengaria's representation in the sources, as analysed in chapter five, Richard's decision to employ Eleanor as regent and co-ruler rather than Berengaria are indicative of a Lord Rules All approach to describe his and Berengaria's partnership, rather than one of Divide and Rule or Collaborative Union. Richard's relationship with Eleanor falls into the latter category, and this is explored in

⁶⁵ DeAragon, "Wife, Widow and Mother," 103.

more detail in chapter four. This section will focus predominantly on issues surrounding sexuality and how they impact our understandings not only of medieval sexuality and co-ruling partnerships, but how they have specifically changed our perceptions of Berengaria and Richard's authority.

Allegations of same-sex relations have become part of Richard's legacy amongst historians. The illustrious king of England, crusading hero, and chivalric warrior is hailed as legendary in contemporary chronicles. Much has been made by historians on the nature of Richard's sexuality, based on spurious evidence, and no work on Richard or Berengaria manages to avoid the topic. To understand Berengaria and Richard's partnership, it is necessary to assess their sexualities and sexual allegations that may have affected their marriage and ability to reproduce. This section presents an alternative view to current historiography and brings forward new perspectives on why these allegations have occurred. Through analysing the historiography and chronicles in turn, and then exploring other reasons why their marriage did not produce an heir, we can understand that although their marriage may have been impacted by Richard's non-heteronormative sexual behaviour, it was not solely limited by this as the time spent apart inevitably affected their partnership.

Roger of Howden is the most commonly cited source of Richard's same-sex activities, as he recorded an instance when a hermit rebuked Richard, stating 'remember the destruction of Sodom and abstain from illicit acts, for if you do not God will punish you in a fitting manner'.⁶⁶ Howden stated Philip Augustus and Richard shared a bed, and several modern historians have used this as evidence of both homosociality and homosexuality. Same-sex relations between men were committed by those who were 'other', again introducing a binary. It was viewed as something too French, or committed by heretics and followers of Islam.⁶⁷ However, this act of sharing a bed is viewed as an act of political closeness and not a sexual one by chroniclers of the period, as the act itself is not explicitly described, and Henry II and William Marshal were also reported to have shared a bed on several occasions. Howden's background as a priest, and the religious background of the hermit would no doubt have influenced their views of Richard's activities, be it sexual deviancy or lack of hospitality, both of which were not in line with Christian values of the period. The specific quote the hermit alludes to is Genesis 19:5 'Where are the men which came in to thee this

⁶⁶ "Esto memor subversionis Sodomæ, et ab illicitis te abstine; sin autem, veniet super te ultio Digna Dei." William Stubbs, ed., *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868-1871), iii, 288; *Howden*, ii, 356.

⁶⁷ Karras, *Sexuality*, 170.

night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.’⁶⁸ This has been translated in the twentieth century editions, including the Holman Christian Bible, as ‘we may have sex with them’, however it is a stretch of the imagination to go from knowing of a person, and then knowing them sexually.⁶⁹ It is another example of a modern interpretation of a medieval narrative which conflates the meaning to become highly sexualised.

Historiography surrounding Richard often references his sexuality, and what historians have used to support their perspective of his homosexuality is often unsubstantiated. In the eighteenth century, Laurence Echard spoke of a great intimacy and closeness between Richard and Philip Augustus, which is an ‘unnatural impurity’, making his own assertions about the monarchs’ sexuality.⁷⁰ By the mid-twentieth century, John H. Harvey based his interpretation on the exclusion of women from the coronation ceremony, not always unusual, and claimed he was breaking the cycle of silence around Richard’s sexuality.⁷¹ It is Harvey’s work which has spurred the modern myth of Richard’s alleged same-sex activities. John Gillingham interpreted Howden’s account as Richard avoiding illicit intercourse and focussing on sexual relations with Berengaria.⁷² If this was the case, the marriage did not prove fruitful. Gillingham readily dismissed the allegations, stating that thirteenth century chroniclers would be strongly aware of Richard’s heterosexuality, and then discusses several cases of Richard’s lustful nature, including an illegitimate son.⁷³ There is no evidence for Richard’s homosexuality unless we are to read into his close friendship with Philip Augustus and others at this court. Without literary evidence we cannot confidently assert Richard’s homosexuality or bisexuality.

The production of an heir was an essential part of the queen’s role, and the position of mother was one of the primary positions a queen was expected to uphold. There have been several suggestions as to why Berengaria did not bear a child, and Berengaria’s experience as a childless queen is examined further in chapter four. Richard’s alleged same-sex relations, the time they spent apart, infertility, and a lack of marital harmony have all been presented as reasons why Berengaria and Richard did not produce an heir. Richard’s

⁶⁸ “*Ubi sunt viri qui introierunt ad te nocte? educ illos huc, ut cognoscamus eos.*” 1 Genesis 19:5 (King James Version)

⁶⁹ 1 Genesis 19:5 (Holman Christian Bible).

⁷⁰ Laurence Echard, *The History of England. From the First Entrance of Julius Caesar and the Romans to the Conclusion of the Reign of King James the Second and the Establishment of King William and Queen Mary on Upon the Throne, in the year 1688*, 3rd ed. (London: Jacob Tonson, 1720), 211, 226.

⁷¹ John H. Harvey, *The Plantagenets. 1154-1485* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1948), 33-34.

⁷² Gillingham, “Berengaria,” 168-169.

⁷³ Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart*, 161-162.

fixation with being a crusading hero was worthy of the chroniclers' attention, however the details of Richard and Berengaria's marriage, and Berengaria herself, were not. In comparison with her mother-in-law Eleanor, who bore several children to Henry, and was sovereign duchess of Aquitaine, Berengaria would have been unable to dominate the political scene. Childbearing was not only a life cycle event, but an important political development which would typically appear in chronicles, and it offered opportunities for royal women to intercede. As seen in her dowager period, Berengaria was able to wield diplomatic and intercessory power regardless of the interference of Eleanor and a lack of any children to influence. However, a lack of heirs could restrict exercise of patronage for queens. Without a child, queens could be omitted from the historical narrative as although they remained visible, through charters or letters, they were often obscured, as Earenfight noted.⁷⁴

The impact of being a childless queen contributed to Berengaria's erasure from the chronicles, and even modern historical narratives. Berengaria's childlessness and access to power is examined in further detail in chapter four. Historians of the Plantagenet dynasty briefly refer to Berengaria, if at all, and focus on her as much as the Angevin chroniclers did by only referring to the fact she came from Navarre and married Richard in 1191. Regardless of Richard's sexual activities outside marriage, his close friendships with other male monarchs and companions has been partially attributed to a reason for the lack of heir. As so little is said of Berengaria, even less is known of her sexuality. In comparison with the narrative created by Angevin chroniclers regarding the perceived excessive sexuality of her mother-in-law Eleanor and her sister-in-law Isabella, Berengaria appears to us as a shadow, with no record of her desires or activities inside or outside the marriage. If Howden's assertions regarding 'sodomy' were indeed not linked with homosexual relations by a twelfth and thirteenth century audience, this would not have impacted contemporary beliefs regarding Berengaria. Instead, it is modern perceptions of Richard's sexuality which can distort our view of her. She may have chosen not to remarry, a potential indication of her strength of character, and equally she may have not had the option to. Historians have also claimed she was barren, or perhaps lacked sexual interest, which may have affected her marital choices.⁷⁵ By being a chaste widow, Berengaria was fulfilling the ideal role which would have garnered her respect and authority.

⁷⁴ Theresa Earenfight, "Highly Visible," 86-90.

⁷⁵ John Gillingham, *Richard I* (London: Yale University Press, 1999), 264.

We can infer from the lack of commentary that Berengaria's sexuality was not viewed as remarkable by the Angevin chroniclers: she is not recorded as having conducted extra-marital relations, with any gender, or had a voracious sexual appetite. A certain amount of propaganda and clerical chastisement motivated the chroniclers commenting on Eleanor and Isabella – Matthew Paris famously asserted Isabella was more 'Jezebel than Isabel'.⁷⁶ Much of the blame for the tenuous marriage and lack of heir is laid at Berengaria's door: for not being pretty enough, for being infertile, for failing to captivate Richard enough against the swathes of male companions he chose to spend time with. Whatever Berengaria's faults, and faults she would have had like any other queen, their marriage must be viewed as a partnership, with both parties responsible for the lack of marital harmony. Berengaria may have had more opportunities to wield power had her relationship been harmonious, or had she borne an heir. Given the choices made by Richard to focus on co-rulership with Eleanor and warfare, instead of on sharing power with Berengaria and his marriage, their partnership fits a Lord Rules All approach which left Berengaria scant opportunity to co-rule. The lack of record on Berengaria in comparison to her mother and sister-in-law is perhaps an indication of Berengaria's role as a chaste, perfect wife: in the eyes of the chroniclers she was the model of the chaste queen.⁷⁷ Therefore there was no need to comment on Berengaria, as she was fulfilling the role of a good wife even if she did not bear heirs.

Until we conclusively prove one way or the other that Richard did or did not have same-sex affections and conduct same sex-activities, historians will continue to wonder and speculate. When examining royal sexualities, we ought to move away from sex and gender binaries, away from terms of homosexuality and heterosexuality, and the application of the word queer as a catch all term – people in the past would not have identified as such, and it is a complex term to negotiate as it can still be consigned as a negative term. The idea of labelling monarchs, even outside of the binary, is problematic when it comes to their sexualities. We need a move towards fluidity, and a looser application of terms when describing these sexualities. Berengaria, neglected though she may have been from the historical narrative, was still a sexual being and plausibly made decisive choices regarding her future by choosing to remain a widow. Although we do not have evidence she was

⁷⁶ 'eam potius impiissimam Zezabel quam Ysabel dedere nominari,' translates as 'to give her the more impious name Jezebel than Isabel', *Chronica Majora*, iv, 253.

⁷⁷ Karras, *Sexuality*, 58.

approached for a marital alliance, she does not appear to have actively sought an alliance either.

What this analysis informs us of Berengaria and Richard's relationship is that sexual allegations centred on Richard have contributed to Berengaria's erasure. Unless further evidence comes to light, it is impossible to assert Richard's sexuality with confidence. What can be measured however is that by drawing attention to Richard's sexuality, it has further undermined our understanding of Berengaria and her partnership with Richard. Although Richard's continual travels and warfare increased the amount of time spent apart and left little opportunity for the couple to co-rule, Berengaria could have been offered opportunities to be engaged in governance but does not appear to have done so. It cannot be stated with any certainty that their partnership was harmonious or co-operative, and as highlighted in chapter four, an effective co-ruling partnership was formed between Richard and Eleanor which ensured the rulership of the Angevin realms continued effectively. Richard and Berengaria's Lord Rules All partnership demonstrates the limits kings could place on their consort's power by not involving them in the rulership of their domains, and how female rule could be wholly dependent on their male relatives if they did not have access to land or revenues. Access to land and revenues will be explored in the next section and chapter five, however this discussion will now examine the partnership between Isabella and John.

Isabella of Angoulême and John

The partnership of Isabella and John could be argued as successful if focussed purely on the number of heirs: the couple had five children, including the future king Henry III, in their sixteen-year marriage. Although later assessments of John's reign have been largely negative, Henry II's reign did not initially receive as much condemnation, potentially because of his successes in governance and expansion of the realm. This critique of John and his reign via Isabella is discussed below. Despite producing several heirs, Isabella was unsuccessful in utilising her children as an avenue to power, and returned to Angoulême shortly after John's death in 1216, as examined in chapter four.⁷⁸ John effectively employed a Lord Rules All approach to their co-ruling partnership, similar to Richard and Berengaria. Like his brother, John also utilised their mother Eleanor in the early years of his reign in the

⁷⁸ Wilkinson, "Maternal Abandonment," 101-124.

government of Aquitaine as will be discussed in chapter four. However, John's approach to his partnership with Isabella was arguably more controlling, as seen below.

The beginning of Isabella and John's relationship is one of few topics which have caused historians to pay attention to Isabella before she became dowager queen. John was previously betrothed to Isabella of Gloucester in 1176: they married in 1189, but their union had begun to disintegrate in the 1190s, and the marriage was annulled shortly after John's accession to the throne in 1199.⁷⁹ This was plausibly due to a lack of heirs, however the immediate political situation in the Angevin lands in France demonstrated a need for a marital alliance of more benefit to the English Crown. In August 1200, Isabella, sole heiress to the county of Angoulême, and John were married in Angoulême by Elias, bishop of Bordeaux.⁸⁰ This marriage drew attention not only because it was the marriage of a king, but because Isabella had previously been betrothed to Hugh IX de Lusignan, count of La Marche. La Marche was of value to the Plantagenets and the Capetians geographically and financially, and its overlordship had been contested between the Angoumois and the Lusignans. Philip Augustus had claimed overlordship of La Marche, and both the count of Angoulême and his half-brother, the viscount of Limoges, made homage to Philip and recognised his authority over that of the Plantagenets.⁸¹ The potential alliance of the Angoumois and the Lusignans against the Plantagenets was cause for concern for Richard and John. In January 1200, John recognised the Lusignan's claim to La Marche over the Angoumois.⁸² After this date, it is likely the betrothal of Isabella and Hugh IX became common knowledge, as Vincent argued it was unlikely John would have recognised the Lusignan claim as to the unification of Angoulême, La Marche, and Lusignan would have upset the balance of power in Aquitaine.⁸³ John's attempts to nullify this alliance through his marriage to Isabella backfired, as the Lusignans petitioned Philip Augustus to intervene on their behalf, setting in motion further French incursions into Plantagenet lands, combined with the rebellion of several of John's barons. The Treaty of Le Goulet, agreed by John and Philip Augustus on 22 May 1200, ensured John's recognition as Richard's successor in exchange for John's homage and the payment of 20,000 marks. The chronology here is uncertain, however Henry Gerald Richardson's assertion that John was aware of the betrothal between Isabella and Hugh seems plausible given what was at

⁷⁹ Vincent, "Isabella," 166.

⁸⁰ *Wendover*, ii, 187-188; *Howden*, ii, 483.

⁸¹ Vincent, "Isabella," 169-170.

⁸² *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, i, 24-25, 31.

⁸³ Vincent, "Isabella," 172.

stake.⁸⁴ Thus, John's decision to marry Isabella in 1200 was to have far-reaching repercussions which were to extend long into Henry III's reign.

The other point worth making here is Isabella's age at the time of her marriage to John, and how this could impact her ability to wield power during their rule. Ralph of Coggeshall commented that when Isabella appeared in England she appeared to be around the age of twelve.⁸⁵ This uncertainty has been noted by Vincent as an indication that Isabella may have been between the ages of nine and fifteen at the time of her marriage, which would also explain the seven years which elapsed between her marriage and the birth of Henry.⁸⁶ Isabella's young age can explain why John perhaps did not share power with her initially, however given the length of their marriage and her ability to bear children, it is not a legitimate explanation for why John did not encourage Isabella to administer her own lands and revenue after 1207. However, like her mother-in-law, a quick succession of births would limit the queen's ability to travel and govern. Either John viewed Isabella with uncertainty due to her position as countess of Angoulême and a foreign bride, or he wanted to maintain control of her lands to the same extent as Henry did with Eleanor from the 1160s onwards. What is of interest is although John and Richard both adopted a Lord Rules All approach to their partnership with their wives, John's implementation of this approach was arguably more controlling. Richard may have been neglectful in his treatment of Berengaria by continuing with the crusade and other military affairs, however John wilfully obstructed Isabella's paths to power by leaving her with little access to her income, and blocked her chances to become regent upon his death as analysed in chapter four.⁸⁷ Isabella was not completely forgotten upon John's death, and the frequency with which heirs were produced between 1207 and 1215 implies some level of closeness between the couple. As often as John has been castigated as a bad king, and to an extent a bad husband, despite his political sidelining of Isabella and reluctance to allow her personal rule, she was not consigned to an impoverished life and forgotten. She was kept in relative comfort

⁸⁴ Henry Gerald Richardson, "The Marriage and Coronation of Isabelle of Angoulême," *EHR*61 (1946): 299-300.

⁸⁵ 'que quasi duodenis videbatur', *Radulphi de Coggeshall Chronicon Anglicanum, De Expugatione Terræ Sanctæ Libellus, Thomas Agnellus de Morte et Sepultura Henrici Regis Angliæ Junioris, Gesta Fulconis Filii Warini, Excerpta Ex Otiis Imperialibus Gervasii Tileburiensis*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (London: Longman & Co.; Trübner & Co.; Parker & Co.; Macmillan & Co.; A & C. Black; A. Thom, 1875), 103.

⁸⁶ Vincent, "Isabella," 174-175.

⁸⁷ Wilkinson, "Maternal Abandonment," 108-111.

throughout her time as queen, as the financial records indicate regular payments for her upkeep.⁸⁸

As there is scant extant evidence for Isabella's tenure as consort, it is difficult to argue any form of Collaborative Union existed. In chapter four, it is noted there were limited opportunities for Isabella to wield power as a regent due to her age and the fact that John remained in England for large periods of time, understandable given the loss of Angevin lands in France. As mentioned above, the similarities between Richard and John's approach to rulership with their wives bore some similarities to Henry's, however noticeably Richard and John instigated this approach from the outset. The argument that both Richard and John needed an experienced, trusted relative to act as regent or decisively in local government matters holds merit here. Eleanor's longevity, experience, and authority as duchess of Aquitaine placed her as the ideal ruler across the Angevin realms in the face of an inexperienced wife. It is uncertain why John did not utilise Isabella more effectively after Eleanor's death. Like her mother-in-law, Isabella had several children in a short space of time, however she would have been able to at the very least administer her own inherited and dower lands and revenue had she been given the opportunity. The only caveat to this is the development in governmental administration during John's reign may have removed the need for Isabella to directly intervene, however given Isabella was not permitted to rule her own county of Angoulême either during this period, the emphasis on John's control of Isabella's power must be realised. This was further compounded by the loss of continental lands and Isabella's pregnancies, which would have further restricted her ability to govern her domains due to the journey time. The development of governmental administration, started by Henry II, continued into John's reign and devolved power away from the monarchs.⁸⁹

The information we have regarding John and Isabella's relationship is largely based on contemporary chronicles, and as with Eleanor, it is dominated by moments of scandal. The most prolific writer who has shaped Isabella's reputation is Matthew Paris, who notably recorded the queen as 'more Jezebel than Isabel'.⁹⁰ Paris noted John's excessive lust and devotion to Isabella kept John occupied in 1203, when he would have been better placed

⁸⁸ *PR John 7, 5; PR John 8, 128, 134; PR John 14, 129.*

⁸⁹ For more on John's administration, see Ralph V. Turner, *Men Raised from the Dust. Administrative Service and Upward Mobility in Angevin England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

⁹⁰ 'eam potius impiissimam Zezabel quam Ysabel debere nominari', *Chronica Majora*, iv, 253.

fighting against Philip Augustus.⁹¹ Roger of Wendover recorded Isabella having enraptured John with witchcraft; 'In the meanwhile, the king of the English was staying inactive at Rouen with his queen, so that it was said that he was infatuated by sorcery or witchcraft; for, in the midst of all his losses and disgrace, he showed a cheerful countenance to all, as though he had lost nothing.'⁹² Lastly, a report by Paris on the activities of Master Robert of London, an ambassador to the emir of Morocco, stated that Isabella was guilty of incest, sorcery, and adultery – a far-fetched and ludicrous tale, but nonetheless one that has shaped historians' imaginations of Isabella.⁹³ Paris' report of Robert of London's travels included one tale wherein Robert revealed Isabella was an adulterer, whose lovers had been murdered on John's orders.⁹⁴ This scandalous tale was undoubtedly an attempt to blacken not only Isabella's name by accusing her of a multitude of sins, but also John's, not only for the murders but also due to his weakness as a man for being subordinate to his wife due to her infidelity.

As seen with Eleanor, criticism of a sexual nature was often levelled at women who were perceived to have overstepped boundaries, however we have no such evidence of Isabella exercising power and thus why she would have incurred the wrath of Paris and Wendover. Vincent's statement that Isabella joins other Plantagenet rulers whose personal lives were put in the balance by English chroniclers and found wanting is of some credence here: by circulating malicious rumour about Isabella, the chroniclers could undermine John's rule and any successes of his reign (and successes there were). If John and Isabella were so enamoured of each other, it may have been an indicator of trust and potentially Isabella would have been granted a modicum of personal rule. Nevertheless, the idea of Isabella as a sexually voracious wife has proliferated and has amplified our perception of John as a bad king, unfit to rule. Similar to Eleanor, this criticism of the queen was an attempt to critique the king, as discussed by Bagerius and Ekholst, adding to the perception of John as a weak king and unable to subordinate his wife.⁹⁵ This in turn impacts our understanding of their partnership: as noted above, there must have been some amicability due to the production

⁹¹ *Chronica Majora*, ii, 481-482, 489.

⁹² 'Rex Anglorum interea apud Rothomagum morabatur cum regina imbellis, ita quod ab omnibus diceretur ipsum fore sortilegiis vel maleficiis infatuatum; hilarem cunctis inter tot damna et opprobria exhibebat vultum, ac si sibi nihil deperiisset.' *Wendover*, ii, 207.

⁹³ *Chronica Majora*, ii, 563.

⁹⁴ 'Sponsam habet sibi exosam et ipsum odientem, incestam, maleficam, et adulteram, et super hoc sæpius convictam; unde rex sponsus ejus comprehensos laqueo jussit super stratum ejus suffocari. Ipse rex nihilominus multos procerum suorum et etiam consanguineos zelotipavit violenter, et filias corrumpit nobiles ac sorores.' *Chronica Majora*, ii, 563.

⁹⁵ Bagerius and Ekholst, "For Better," 638, 640.

of five children, however this did not transfer to the political sphere. The castigation of Isabella as a bad mother, as will be explored in chapter four, has also negatively affected wider perceptions of Isabella's reputation, which can hinder our understanding of Isabella and John's partnership.

For a partnership where such little extant evidence points to harmony, it can be argued Isabella and John's relationship was dominated by a Lord Rules All approach. There were opportunities for John to allow Isabella experience of personal rule as she matured if age is to be taken as a reason for her inability to rule at the beginning of their marriage. Once Eleanor died in 1204, there was ample space for a new queen to take control. John's reluctance to share rulership with Isabella stemmed from several reasons listed above, and echoes Henry and Richard's relationships with their wives. Arguably, except for Geoffrey, all four male rulers exercised a Lord Rules All approach at stages during their tenures. Our perceptions of the four women and their ability to rule has been negatively impacted by chroniclers' writings. However, with an understanding of the reasons why the chroniclers discussed above chose to criticise queens, we can better comprehend female rulers in this period were capable of wielding substantial amounts of power should their partners give them the rein to do so, and it is this perceived overstepping of boundaries which drove fear in the words of the chroniclers.

Heiresses and their Lands

As Matilda, Eleanor, and Isabella were heiresses to various swathes of land, they were desirable partners to form a marital alliance with. Berengaria's position as potential heiress to Navarre also made her an attractive prospect. This section will examine how Matilda, Eleanor and Isabella acted as heiresses and the extent to which they were able to successfully rule their lands. It will also analyse Berengaria's role as a prospective heiress. Marrying an heiress brought its own complications, as seen when Louis VII and Eleanor separated. This annulment was of benefit to Louis as it provided him with the opportunity to remarry and hopefully beget a male heir, however with the separation came the loss of Aquitaine. Heiresses brought the potential for a union that would lead to the foundation of a dynasty and bind two families together, as well as lands, titles, revenue, or a combination of the above. Of pertinence here is Gillingham's argument that the growth in marrying heiresses who wielded substantial power in the twelfth century impacted attitudes towards marriage: some husbands could not afford to divorce their wives, unless something of

potentially greater importance such as a lack of male heir occurred.⁹⁶ This was not always the case, as seen with Louis XII and Anne of Brittany as the king's desire to retain Brittany overcame his need for a male heir.

As discussed in the previous section, Matilda was designated heir to not only England, but also the duchy of Normandy by her father Henry I after his conquest of it in 1106.⁹⁷ This was due to the death of her brother, William Adelin, in the White Ship disaster of 1120. Much of Matilda's battle for her inheritance has been relayed in the second chapter and will not be repeated here. Matilda's first marriage to Holy Roman Emperor Henry V gave her the status of empress, which she maintained for the rest of her life. This, combined with her potential to inherit a kingdom, made her an attractive prospect for an alliance. However, being an heiress did not often afford women the right to choose their prospective partner. Henry I had previously arranged a betrothal between William Adelin and Matilda, daughter of Fulk, count of Anjou, and needed the second arrangement between Matilda and Geoffrey, Fulk's eldest son to continue the alliance.⁹⁸ Matilda and Geoffrey's union, had Matilda successfully inherited the Anglo-Norman realms, would have been an impressive accomplishment for both parties as it would elevate Geoffrey to king consort and see Matilda as a regnant queen over growing Angevin dominions.⁹⁹ The notion of a female heiress to the throne was not unusual in western Europe, as Urraca of León-Castile successfully inherited the throne in 1109. However, Iberian traditions were more flexible than English ones, and Roger Collins has demonstrated that Urraca had a stronger precedent of sole female rulership to draw upon than Matilda.¹⁰⁰ Woodacre argued the marriages of queens and heiresses in medieval Navarre provided valuable alliances to impede the threat of invasion, and it is plausible this approach was what drew Henry to make an alliance with the Angevins.¹⁰¹ As heir to Anjou, Maine, and Touraine, Geoffrey could provide security around the Norman borders in the event of rebellion upon Matilda's accession to the throne, and as seen there was indeed conflict upon Henry I's death. The process of naming Matilda as heir has been discussed in the section on ceremonies in chapter five, however it is prudent to note the majority of the

⁹⁶ John Gillingham, "Love, Marriage and Politics in the Twelfth Century," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 25.4 (1989): 295-298.

⁹⁷ For more information on the battle for Normandy between Henry I and his brothers, see Kathleen H. Thompson, "From the Thames to Tinchebray: The Role of Normandy in the Early Career in Henry I," in *Henry I and the Anglo-Norman World: Studies in Memory of C. Warren Hollister*, eds. Donald F. Fleming and Janet M. Pope (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), 16-26.

⁹⁸ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 54.

⁹⁹ Hollister and Keefe, "Angevin Empire," 247-271; Turner, "Problem of Survival," 78-96.

¹⁰⁰ Collins, "Queens-Dowager," 85-87.

¹⁰¹ Woodacre, *Queens*, 169.

chroniclers acknowledged Matilda's position as heir, even if it was allegedly invalidated by the forced oaths given by the nobility, if the author of the *Gesta Stephani* is to be believed.¹⁰² Matilda was never successful in gaining control of England; however in 1144 Geoffrey was successful in his conquest of Normandy on Matilda's behalf.¹⁰³ Several of Matilda's charters are issued from Normandy, increasingly after Geoffrey's death when she appears to have taken up permanent residence in Rouen.¹⁰⁴ These charters demonstrate that although Matilda may not have gained control of Normandy through straightforward inheritance, the acquisition of the duchy by Geoffrey, and Henry II's decision to place Matilda there during his reign with a certain degree of control allowed her to maintain a sphere of influence. Unlike John, Geoffrey did not restrict his wife's access to lands, as demonstrated by their co-operation above. Arguably, Matilda was a force to be reckoned with as an heiress: she continued to fight for her inheritance for more than a decade, before ceding her rights to her son Henry. As she did not formally inherit all of her lands, Matilda may not be viewed as a successful heiress as she was unable to fully secure the throne, however given she transmitted her rights to Henry and the Anglo-Norman realms were united under a Plantagenet heir during her lifetime, Matilda demonstrated direct succession was not the only way to inherit. Matilda's position as heiress did not necessarily strengthen her power: although she was an advantageous match for Geoffrey, her lack of access to her inherited lands caused conflict between Matilda and Stephen, and she had a loss of revenue until her son Henry acceded to the throne in 1154.

The death of William X, duke of Aquitaine in 1137 was to change the shape of western Europe in the coming century. The duchy passed to his eldest daughter Eleanor, alongside the county of Poitou, endowing her with one of the wealthiest and most substantial inheritances at the time. William placed Eleanor under the care of Louis VI, king of France, to find Eleanor a suitable husband. Louis, in what Janet L. Nelson has termed a coup, quickly arranged for the marriage of Eleanor and his son Louis VII.¹⁰⁵ Shortly thereafter, Louis and Eleanor became the rulers of France, and Aquitaine became drawn into the French domains. The rulership of Aquitaine during Eleanor's period as consort has been

¹⁰² *Gesta Stephani*, 11.

¹⁰³ Marjorie Chibnall, "Normandy," in *Anarchy*, ed. King, 93-115; Daniel Power, "Angevin Normandy," in *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Elisabeth van Houts (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), 63-65.

¹⁰⁴ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 71, 72, 88, 112, 116a, 409, 432, 607, 711, 748, 824, 826, 836, 909.

¹⁰⁵ Janet L. Nelson, *Richard Cœur de Lion in History and Myth* (London: Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1992), 28; Orderic Vitalis states the union was conducted as William had ordained; *Orderic Vitalis*, 491.

explored by Marie Hivergneaux, who notes Eleanor appeared solely in four of the sixteen charters associated with the Capetians and Aquitaine, and these four are confirmations of ones issued by Louis.¹⁰⁶ Louis effectively utilised Eleanor as a conduit in her position of duchess: at the very least they appear to have ruled jointly, although Hivergneaux has argued Eleanor's power was more restricted than previously attested.¹⁰⁷ Eleanor's role as heiress to Aquitaine may have afforded her some power and authority, however as seen with Henry, both her husbands were reluctant to allow her full rein in the duchy for an unlimited period.

The interim period of 1152-1154, when Eleanor ruled Aquitaine solely, without Henry's intervention, and when she was not yet queen of England, is indicative of the power she was able to wield. Upon her separation from Louis, Eleanor was quick to remove any trace of his authority in Aquitaine by confirming the privileges of Fontevraud, Saint Jean de Montierneuf, and Saint-Maixent in May 1152, demonstrating her autonomy in her own domains and establishing Aquitaine as separate from the French crown.¹⁰⁸ At this stage, Eleanor exercised political power as an heiress and sovereign duchess and laid the groundwork for future political negotiations with her vassals, as opposed to Matilda who operated as a would-be queen regnant, not consort. Eleanor appears to have acted freely in the early years of her marriage to Henry, however Eleanor's autonomy in Aquitaine and Gascony did not last long after this. From 1157 she disappears from documentation concerned with Aquitaine entirely. This could plausibly be due to a lack of extant evidence and childbearing; however, it is likely Henry wanted to enforce his own authority in Aquitaine as part of his rule.¹⁰⁹ It was only after a decade of attempted rule that Henry, like Louis, realised Eleanor was crucial to legitimising authority in Aquitaine, and employed Eleanor as a co-ruler effectively to ensure the Aquitanians and Poitevins were brought to heel. For the majority of Eleanor's time as duchess, she co-ruled with a male partner and shared her power, and Henry needed to utilise Eleanor as her authority was paramount in the region. Henry's attempts to rule Aquitaine without Eleanor were unsuccessful, resulting in the need for Eleanor as a co-ruler to return to exercise and share power in Aquitaine. It is in the period 1168-1173 we see Eleanor fulfil her role as duchess, and on occasion in

¹⁰⁶ Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 57.

¹⁰⁷ Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 59-60.

¹⁰⁸ Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 63; Audoin, *Poitiers*, 35-36; Alfred Richard, "Chartes et documents pour servir à l'histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Maixent," *Archives Historiques du Poitou* 1 (1886): no. 335.

¹⁰⁹ Andrew. W. Lewis, "Six Charters of Henry II and his Family for the Monastery of Dalon," *EHR* 110 (1995): 659, 661.

partnership with Richard. The most potent example that Eleanor was able to administer Aquitaine solely is the inclusion of 'fidelibus suis' in her charters, demonstrating it was her followers, not Henry's or Richard's, who upheld her authority.¹¹⁰

Eleanor was keen to not only retain her authority in the region but also to have a sense of continuity amongst her court, namely through the support of her maternal uncles Hugh II of Châtellerauld and Raoul de Faye.¹¹¹ Raoul assisted Eleanor with the governance of Aquitaine until 1173, when his participation in the rebellion against Henry II saw his fall from grace. The charters from her time as consort also show a merging of the Angevin and Aquitanian courts as members of both regions witnessed Eleanor's charters, which demonstrates her diplomatic skills in weaving together both dominions whilst cementing her power base further, as she bonded nobles outside of Aquitaine to her. Although the Poitevins dominated Eleanor's charters, instances of non-Aquitainians included, most noticeably, Englishman John de Belles-mains, who held the significant bishopric of Poitiers.¹¹² Turner and Hivergneaux argued the Christmas court in Bordeaux in 1156 saw the duchy's autonomy pass from Eleanor to Henry as the vassals swore homage to Henry, an act usually preserved for the duchess alone.¹¹³ After this Eleanor largely disappeared from Aquitanian charters until 1168: partially due to Henry's attempts to impose centralised control in the region, her pregnancies, and her position as regent in England.

In 1168, Eleanor returned to Aquitaine and issued fifteen charters which are largely concerned with religious houses. All are indicative of her reasserting authority in Aquitaine, but two which relate to the mercantile classes and townsmen are of interest here to demonstrate the importance of local allegiances and support in addition to the nobility. The first, to a merchant, Geoffrey Berland, is a grant for the franchises on the sale and purchase of merchandise in Poitiers.¹¹⁴ Eleanor also granted Pierre de Ruffec, a townsman from La Rochelle, the exemptions from all tax and rents in return for a grant to Fontevraud, and these two grants inform us of a very different form of diplomacy to that seen earlier.¹¹⁵ Eleanor's intercession was very much focussed on matters to do with local churches and abbeys, however these two cases indicate Eleanor's desire to remain active in her

¹¹⁰ Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 69; Audoin, *Poitiers*, 39-40; Marchegay, "Chartes de Fontevraud," 135-136.

¹¹¹ Bardonnnet, "Les comptes," 64; Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 64-65.

¹¹² Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 70.

¹¹³ Turner, *Eleanor*, 132; Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 66.

¹¹⁴ Audoin, *Poitiers*, 39-40.

¹¹⁵ Marchegay, "Chartes de Fontevraud," 135-136.

homeland, and through retaining links with the local gentry she would continue to have their support in the event of any disputes. She was also, like Matilda, laying the foundations for her son's succession to the realm, in this case Richard, who became co-ruler of Aquitaine, as Eleanor shared power with him, in 1171 after Henry realised allotting sections of the Angevin realm to his children was the best method of ensuring all regions were ruled by an immediate member of the Plantagenet dynasty. Here we can see that Matilda and Eleanor held similar goals in support of their sons and the methods in which they sought to obtain power. It is also evident that there is not direct competition for land as mothers and daughters-in-law as Matilda resided primarily in Normandy, and Eleanor held control with Henry, and then Richard, in Aquitaine even if she did not continually reside there. Perhaps tacit co-operation can be understood here as both women worked for the stability of Plantagenet rule over the Angevin domains until Matilda's death in 1167. This rulership was interrupted by Eleanor's imprisonment in the 1170s, and as noted above, upon her release Eleanor was only allowed minimal involvement in the rulership of Aquitaine. Her status as duchess meant Eleanor was too valuable to lose, and would always be needed, even as a figurehead, to rule Aquitaine.

Eleanor's role as duchess of Aquitaine was fully realised again in her dowager period, as is evident from the number of charters recorded from 1189 to her death in 1204. Both Richard and John preoccupied themselves with military affairs and the administration of the other Angevin territories, relying on Eleanor to be a steady force in Aquitaine. A charter from 1190 recorded Eleanor's confirmation of the rights and protections of the monastery of Dalon, as previously granted by both Henry and Richard.¹¹⁶ Richard's death and John's accession within two years also led to a plethora of charters, with a particular emphasis on the protection and rights of abbeys including Fontevraud.¹¹⁷ Eleanor continued to issue charters until her death in 1204, and was well placed to intervene in Aquitanian and Angevin affairs owing to her retirement to Fontevraud. Her role as duchess made Eleanor potentially one of the most powerful heiresses and rulers in western Europe, however this power was thwarted on occasion by the determination of her husbands. Eleanor may not have been able to exercise authority continually as heiress, but she was successful in retaining her lands throughout her time as duchess and worked to protect the rights of local religious institutions in this period.

¹¹⁶ BNF, Latin 17120, 20.

¹¹⁷ Marchegay, "Chartes de Fontevraud," 134-136, 334-335, 337-338, 339-340.

Isabella's role as countess of Angoulême was the primary reason for her union with John, as discussed above. Her succession to the position was assumed as she was the sole child of Ademar, count of Angoulême and Alice de Courtenay, and as noted Angoulême's centrality to disputes between the Plantagenets and their rivals made her a prized asset, much like her mother-in-law Eleanor. After Aymer's death in June 1202, Vincent argued Alice plausibly assumed the governance of the city of Angoulême, whilst the wider county answered to the seneschal of Poitou.¹¹⁸ In March 1203, John arranged for Alice to receive a monthly pension of 50 Angevin livres and she retired to Champagne.¹¹⁹ Vincent contended thereafter, John assumed the role of count of Angoulême, although his authority was threatened by Capetian advances into northern Poitou.¹²⁰ There is no extant evidence for Isabella's direct rule over her inheritance during her marriage to John, although she received homage from the nobility in 1206.¹²¹ Much like her mother-in-law, Isabella had restricted access to her inheritance until the death of her husband in 1216. The actions of Isabella in Angoulême as dowager fall outside the scope of this thesis due to her remarriage, and a thesis is in preparation on this topic by Sally Spong.¹²² However, it is apparent Isabella was quick to act upon her new found freedom, not only through her marital alliance with Hugh X de Lusignan, which united the regions of La Marche, Lusignan, and Angouleme, but by the issue of sole charters from 1218 to 1220 prior to this alliance.¹²³ Thereafter, Isabella and Hugh appear to have ruled jointly in relative harmony.¹²⁴ Isabella successfully ruled Angoulême from 1218 until her death, and unlike the other partners in this study, Hugh does not appear to have overstepped into Isabella's sphere of rulership. Berengaria is the anomaly in this section as she was not formally set to inherit Navarre, although in accordance with Iberian precedent she would have been able to do so. Her elder brother Sancho became king of Navarre upon the death of their father Sancho VI in 1194. As Berengaria was the next eldest sibling, she was presumed heiress to the throne until the birth of her nephew, Thibaut, to her sister Blanche in 1201. However, Berengaria does not appear to have been formally recognised as a potential heiress and made no reference to her Navarrese background in any of her charters, referring to herself only as

¹¹⁸ Vincent, "Isabella," 182; *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium*, 13, 15.

¹¹⁹ Vincent, "Isabella," 182; *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium*, 28, 36; Thomas Duffy Hardy, ed., *Rotuli Normanniae, 1200-1205 and 1417-1418* (London: Record Commission, 1835), 104.

¹²⁰ Vincent, "Isabella," 182-183.

¹²¹ Vincent, "Isabella," 183.

¹²² Spong, "Female Lordship": see discussion on page 4.

¹²³ Watson, "Angoulême," 390-443.

¹²⁴ Watson, "Angoulême," 395, 397, 400.

queen of England, or on occasion lady of Le Mans. Sancho VI, despite two marriages, was unsuccessful in producing an heir, which left his sisters and their offspring as the most likely choices to inherit Navarre.¹²⁵ Blanche took over administration of Navarre from 1224 onwards once Sancho became a recluse due to illness. It is likely that due to her experience as regent in Champagne, Blanche would be the better choice over Berengaria to act as regent for Sancho. Trindade argued Sancho attempted to name Prince Jaume I of Aragon as his heir, potentially over fears of Navarre being absorbed into French hands if it passed to Thibaut.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, Blanche died in 1229, to be followed by Berengaria in 1230, so it is impossible to know if Sancho would have named Berengaria as heir prior to his own death in 1234. The crown of Navarre passed to Thibaut, who was supported by the Navarrese nobility. Much like her tenure as queen, Berengaria was not given the opportunity to be a regent or a more powerful ruler in the face of a more experienced female relative. It is possible Berengaria declined to act as regent of Navarre and was content in her position as Lady of Le Mans in relative obscurity. Without extant evidence, it is difficult to prove the exact circumstances regarding Berengaria and the regency and succession in Navarre. Letters between Berengaria and Blanche documented potential payments made to Berengaria and the journeys made by Navarrese envoys between Le Mans and Champagne, but nothing on the status of Navarre or its administration.¹²⁷ Therefore, although Berengaria had the potential to be heiress, she was never formally recognised as one, nor held any land associated with Navarre. Had family circumstances played out differently, she may have had the opportunity for rulership in Navarre, however Blanche appeared to be a better choice in the eyes of Sancho to act as regent during his incapacitation.

What this analysis has demonstrated is that despite three of the four women being heiresses to substantial amounts of land, even if succession was guaranteed it did not automatically translate to power. Each of these women faced different challenges with accessing their inheritance, and even if they did access it, this access did not always last. A male relative, be it a cousin or a husband, often threatened the succession of the heiress to their land. The only heiress largely successful in the rulership of her inheritance was Eleanor, and even this was inconsistent due to the interference of her husbands and her imprisonment. Heiresses had the ability to wield power and to be of great assistance to their partners by bringing land and revenue to their partnership. However, often their

¹²⁵ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 178.

¹²⁶ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 178; Pascual de Gayangos, ed., *James I (The Conqueror) King of Aragon Chronicle*, trans. John Forster (Cambridge, Ontario: In Parentheses Publications, 2000), 89-90.

¹²⁷ Bourquelot, "Fragments," 51-79.

partners would assume rulership of this inheritance for themselves and side-line the heiress. All four women faced challenges as sole rulers, demonstrating the complexities of female authority across the Angevin domains in this period. Unlike Eleanor, Isabella does not appear to have been required as a legitimising authority in her lands. Twelfth and thirteenth century society was not restrictive of heiresses ruling their own territory at the levels of duchesses and countesses: however, ruling a kingdom appears more problematic, as seen with Matilda. Overall, heiresses could be a considerable asset to a male ruler and could rule their domains successfully if granted the opportunity to do so, as seen in their dowager periods which will be explored in chapter five.

Diplomacy, Patronage, and Noble Affinities

This final section examines relationships with the nobility, with an emphasis on familial networks, and develops an understanding as to whether the networks the four women tried to foster were affinities, similar to the bonds kings held with their coterie. Michelle Beer argued the patronage of Catherine of Aragon and Margaret Tudor enabled them to build their own followers, which in turn provided their husbands with opportunities to foster new connections.¹²⁸ By creating affinities, Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella would be able to enhance not only their own power bases but also their husbands', and this notion will be explored in the discussion below. This investigation allows us to uncover the diplomatic and intercessory actions of these women with regards to the nobility, the impact of these actions, and the exercise of power of the four queens. It is only by understanding the relations between these four women and the nobility we can fully explore the authority and influence these women wielded. This analysis reveals how their relationships with their families and each other flourished or fell apart due to their actions, and how the queens operated as rulers outside of their co-ruling relationships. By exercising one of the central tenets of the office of queen, that as a diplomat and intercessor, queens could establish their own spheres of influence.

As explored in chapter one, power can mean different things to different people, and agency has often been used as a way of defining a woman's actions, royal or otherwise. This change in definition, as Earenfight argued, can imply a woman's power is softer because the word power itself has been perceived as gendered masculine.¹²⁹ Agency is a useful term when understanding the power, influence, and authority of everyone in society

¹²⁸ Michelle Beer, *Queenship at the Renaissance Courts of Britain. Catherine of Aragon and Margaret Tudor, 1503-1533* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018), 25.

¹²⁹ Earenfight, "Power and Gender," 116.

and what control they had over their actions, however it needs to be used with caution as it can lead to the assumption that women do not have access to genuine power, which is explored throughout this thesis.¹³⁰ Bruno Latour stated that all sentient beings and objects have agency, and that actors, those who hold agency, are driven by other agents and external forces.¹³¹ Latour's argument resonates with this thesis, which demonstrates at certain points the actions of the four women were driven by other agents, and it is plausible that as possessors of agency they were also capable of effecting their own decisions and driving other agents. Even in altered arrangements, which involve a change of hierarchy, such as a hostage taking situation, women can still be powerful as they are aware of their economic status as a hostage and exploit it.¹³² Women's power was different: this does not mean it was lesser. Women more often had to utilise different avenues to power than men, and these were predominantly through diplomatic skills which is explored throughout this study. They also had other paths to gaining authority and influence, such as participation in ceremonial roles, and the holding of property and gaining wealth through revenue as discussed in chapter five. None of these avenues were guaranteed and this is where the issue of co-operation and competition can be seen most keenly.

Diplomacy took several forms, including patronage, intercession, and negotiation for queenly spheres of authority and influence.¹³³ For Matilda, her diplomacy largely centred on binding nobles and the Church to her cause to attempt to remove Stephen from the throne, whereas Eleanor, firmly seated in power, would regularly have opportunities to intercede for others, including Thomas Becket and her son Richard. On the other hand, like Matilda, Berengaria focussed on securing the Church as an ally against interference from English and French kings, using her political acumen which had not been fully displayed during her time as queen. Examples of this include her patronage of the Abbaye de L'Épau and St Pierre-de-la Cour which demonstrated her piety, wealth, and position, as expected of a noblewoman. The diplomatic skills of Isabella when she was consort are difficult to realise due to a lack of evidence, however from the evidence in the early stages of her

¹³⁰ Theresa Earenfight, "A lifetime of power: beyond binaries of power and gender," *Verbis et Exemplis, Queens, Abbesses, and Other Female Rulers in Comparison, 800-1200*, University of Notre Dame, London, 26 April 2018, attended lecture.

¹³¹ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 50, 63-64.

¹³² Storey, "Berengaria of Navarre," 41-59.

¹³³ See Lorraine Attreed, "Gender, Patronage, and Diplomacy in the Early Career of Margaret of Austria (1480-1530)," *Mediterranean Studies* 20 (2012): 3-27.

dowager period, we can infer, like her predecessors, she focussed on the Church as a centre for her diplomatic negotiations.

All four queens were present at court from a young age and may have received some tutelage regarding diplomatic skills, a task usually reserved for male heirs. In Matilda's case, she was sent to the court of the Holy Roman Emperor as a child due to her betrothal and was instructed in the skills required of a noblewoman who would wield a significant amount of authority and influence thanks to her position as empress. Eleanor's childhood at the Aquitanian courts, followed by her position as queen of France, allowed her to acquire an intimate knowledge of the various dukes and counts of the Frankish lands, which would be useful when negotiating as an Angevin queen. Information is scant regarding the childhoods of Berengaria and Isabella, however as Isabella was twelve when she married John it is likely most of her political education took place at the English court. Her youth may be another reason for her absence in the political structures during John's reign, as she was training for rulership. Berengaria's background is equally significant as most of the political entities of the Iberian peninsula, although not Navarre at this stage, had a precedent of regnant queens. More importantly Iberia was a region where, according to Collins, queens were not constrained by canonical law to become widows and embrace religious life.¹³⁴ This may have influenced Berengaria's widowhood as Lady of Le Mans, as she would not have felt obligated to enter a religious house. These four women developed an awareness of who the most significant nobles and royal relatives would be to secure an alliance with which would be extremely important for their role as queen. This knowledge allowed the queens to enact diplomacy as part of their role as a ruler by exercising patronage, intercession, or negotiation.

Through the lens of co-operation and competition this thesis demonstrates the changing nature of English queenship throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was not solely due to the change of the office of kingship, or the king himself; it was also due to the nature of the queen and the actions of her predecessors, combined with the growth of France. The analysis of the diplomatic and intercessory actions of the four queens in this section demonstrates how they navigated and understood power, and how it has framed our understanding of the office of queenship. By examining the queens chronologically, this section shows how the actions of queens and their exercise of power changed over time. It also indicates the extent to which this power was gendered and how medieval perceptions

¹³⁴ Collins, "Queens-Dowager," 87.

of this demonstration of authority have led to criticism and concealment of the actions and lives of the four queens. Linked to this discussion is the notion of life cycle events, namely that women typically appear in chronicles for births, marriages, and deaths. The main instance outside of these events which merited a woman's appearance in the chronicles was scandal, typically sexual. As women aged, they would be able to enact certain roles dependent on their status in society. Roberta Gilchrist has argued for an extended lifecycle course, that is, from conception to after death.¹³⁵ This approach is useful in understanding how the agency of these four women changed over their lives. Drawing upon van Houts' work regarding gendered memorialisation also furthers our knowledge of how the four women have been remembered.¹³⁶ Life cycles also influenced chroniclers' perceptions of women.¹³⁷

Empress Matilda and Her Affinities

Matilda's actions during the civil war are a key indicator of her attempts to negotiate diplomatically with Anglo-Norman nobles. Her illegitimate half-brother, Robert, Earl of Gloucester, and ally, Miles, constable of Gloucester, were hugely important to the establishment of her power base in the west of England.¹³⁸ Baldwin de Redvers and Brian fitz Count were also two nobles who stayed faithful to Matilda from the outset of her attempts to gain the throne, and were similarly based in Exeter and Wallingford respectively at the outbreak of civil war. The nobility along the Welsh border by the early 1130s had been appointed by Henry I as an attempt to build a loyal, personal coterie of retainers, a practice which stretched back to William I.¹³⁹ However, upon Stephen's seizure of the throne in 1135, several of these nobles switched allegiances from the Beauclercs to the house of Blois, including the Beauchamps and the Beaumonts. This may have been partially driven by dislike of Matilda's second husband, Geoffrey, and the lack of knowledge regarding the role he would play if Matilda were crowned. As discussed in the following paragraphs, the evidence shown from charters in England in this period show Matilda's persuasion of the western English nobility to support her against Stephen.

¹³⁵ Roberta Gilchrist, *Medieval Life. Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 13, 37.

¹³⁶ Evan Houts, "Introduction," in *Medieval Memories*, 2.

¹³⁷ Susan M. Johns, "Poetry and Prayer: Women and Politics of Spiritual Relationships in the Early Twelfth Century," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 8 (2001): 17.

¹³⁸ King, *Stephen*, 117.

¹³⁹ Bartlett, *England*, 72-75; Deborah Fisher, *Royal Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 16-18.

These charters demonstrate the strength of her diplomatic skills: at the height of her success during this period, the witness lists encompassed several other leading members of the royal court who changed allegiances, including Stephen's brother, Henry, bishop of Winchester. In the case of Henry's changing allegiance, although Matilda's diplomatic skills no doubt played a significant part, his fractious relationship with Stephen after the arrest of the bishops in 1139 also affected Henry's loyalty to his brother. Church discussed the complexities of Henry's wavering allegiances, and argued the negotiations between Henry and Matilda saw her accept Henry had control over ecclesiastical and other important matters, and she would receive the temporary title of *domina Anglorum*.¹⁴⁰ By negotiating with Matilda, Henry allowed an interregnum period to begin, which ensured a temporary truce until the succession could be resolved.¹⁴¹ These negotiations show Henry as an astute politician, who was concerned with not only the protection of the Church, but also the succession to the throne and the subsequent negotiations, which after the events in London and the capture of Robert, earl of Gloucester, led to Stephen's restoration.

It must be noted that witnessing a sole charter does not indicate permanent support as Henry quickly switched sides, back to Stephen. What can be derived from the charters is the steadfast loyalty of the nobility and retainers who owed allegiance to Robert of Gloucester towards Matilda. Despite being half-siblings, Robert did not initially declare for Matilda, although he remained a steadfast supporter after late 1136 and often accompanied her around England, as shown by the several charters he witnessed.¹⁴² Chibnall argued that a reason for Robert's initial hesitation was his need to balance the threat to his recent gains in Glamorgan and mediate with the Welsh princes, and concerns of attacks from the Welsh and Scottish nobility may have affected the allegiances of Brian fitz Count, William fitz Alan of Oswestry, and Ranulf, earl of Chester.¹⁴³

It is after Matilda's arrival in England we begin to see Matilda's diplomatic skills in full force. What can be gathered from the extant charters is that Matilda's court and retainers formed a small but powerful circle. For example, the grant of Thatcham church to Reading Abbey in 1139-41 (a monastery of great importance in England which is discussed further in chapter five), and the grant of St. Briavel's Castle and the Forest of Dean to Miles of Gloucester in 1139, revealed her group of supporters included Humphrey de Bohun, William de

¹⁴⁰ Stephen D. Church, "Succession and Interregnum in the English Polity: The Case of 1141," *Haskins Society Journal* 29 (2018): 188.

¹⁴¹ Church, "Succession," 199-200.

¹⁴² *RRAN*, iii, nos. 43, 68, 111, 115, 116, 274, 275, 296, 316a and 343; Chibnall, *Matilda*, 73-74.

¹⁴³ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 77.

Pontearche and Miles of Gloucester.¹⁴⁴ Most of her charters were witnessed at her power bases in either Devizes or Oxford. Despite the assertion of Geoffrey, and later her son Henry, to the title of duke of Normandy in 1144, Matilda never included the title of duchess in her charters. Instead she referred to herself by the title from her first marriage, as *imperatrix regis Henrici filia*, and after April 1141 as *Anglorum domina*.¹⁴⁵ Further discussion of the titles is in the second chapter, however Matilda's choice of address clauses here is telling. By using the title *imperatrix regis Henrici filia*, Matilda is not only emphasising her position as heiress to the throne of England, but also her status as dowager empress and the prestige of that position. It is perhaps unsurprising Matilda chose the most prestigious titles, and those which tied her to England.¹⁴⁶ As *domina Anglorum*, a title Matilda used as an interregnum compromise according to Church, Matilda was established as a different type of female leader from the queen consort, as she ruled without being *regina*.¹⁴⁷ These titles were crucial when she was engaged in battle with Stephen during the civil war.

Geoffrey's reluctance to be involved in England had two primary causes: he was initially concerned with the conquest of Normandy for the benefit of Matilda and himself; and he was also responsible for organising the raising of their children whilst Matilda was in England.¹⁴⁸ The author of the *Gesta Stephani* stated that upon Matilda's arrival at Arundel in 1139, she was accompanied by a group of Angevin knights.¹⁴⁹ This is important as it demonstrates that she did not yet have the full support of a retinue of English knights, and could be seen as invading with a foreign force, which suited the agenda of the author of the *Gesta*. Although Brian fitz Count, lord of Wallingford and Abergavenny, and a staunch supporter of Henry I and Empress Matilda, had brought together a substantial force of his retainers and allies, the promises exacted in her charters no doubt underpinned future allegiances. Examples of these include two charters made to Miles of Gloucester in 1139-1141, in which Matilda granted him lands in London and Gloucestershire, as well as pardoning Ilbert de Lacy, plausibly for fighting against her, when he was captured after the battle of Lincoln.¹⁵⁰ 1141 was a year of crucial change for Matilda, as she captured Stephen. At this time Matilda was in a strong position with Stephen under captivity, the defection of Waleran of Meulan to the Angevins, and the alliance of Bishop Henry, and she capitalised

¹⁴⁴ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 698 and 391.

¹⁴⁵ *RRAN*, iii, xxix.

¹⁴⁶ Beem, *Lioness*, 49-54.

¹⁴⁷ Church, "Succession," 200.

¹⁴⁸ Beem, "Offspring," 91.

¹⁴⁹ *Gesta Stephani*, 86-89.

¹⁵⁰ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 391, 392 and 429.

on this by reaffirming the lands of several nobles to bind them to her cause. Many of the nobles had been loyal to Henry I and were distrustful of Stephen as a leader, including the Beaumonts, Brian fitz Count, and Miles of Gloucester, which would be of advantage to Matilda as they were potential allies which would support her.

Although the loss of London, as depicted by the chroniclers and discussed in chapter two, shows a lack of diplomatic skills, the charters provide a different perspective, presenting us with a Matilda who was capable of deploying diplomatic acumen to persuade the nobility to her side. As noted in the second chapter, London was an exceptional case compared to other cities as it held special privileges which resulted in the citizens holding significant influence as they retained their corporate autonomy.¹⁵¹ Matilda progressed towards London in the midsummer of 1141, with an underwhelming force in the face of the army of Queen Matilda, Stephen's wife. The key to Empress Matilda entering London successfully was the acquiescence of Geoffrey de Mandeville, castellan of the Tower of London, who held loyalty to the Crown rather than the monarch who sat atop the throne.¹⁵² Matilda secured Geoffrey's loyalty by granting him the earldom of Essex and several grants of lands, first at Westminster in midsummer 1141, and at Oxford between 25 and 31 July 1141.¹⁵³ She also gained the allegiance of William Fitz Otho, sheriff of Essex, by granting land in Benfleet, Essex to him which helped establish her authority and allies in the area.¹⁵⁴ Despite her success at gaining another key noble to her cause, the citizens of London on the whole were not receptive to her demands, although a delegation of Londoners had initially welcomed her. The Londoners had several objectives when meeting Matilda: they wanted lower taxes, after meeting Stephen's financial obligations for several years in order to maintain their independence, and to continue their special status.¹⁵⁵ Matilda wanted to ensure the security of London for her position, a coronation, and to establish the city as a power base, both in terms of economics and support. Matilda had to balance the requirements of several different parties. The Londoners sought to protect their own interests, primarily their privileges and right to elect the ruler.¹⁵⁶ The nobility were concerned with protecting their offices, lands, and wealth, and the churchmen sought to

¹⁵¹ Bartlett, *England*, 343.

¹⁵² Chibnall, *Matilda*, 103.

¹⁵³ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 274 and 275.

¹⁵⁴ *RRAN*, iii, no. 316.

¹⁵⁵ Bartlett, *England*, 342-344.

¹⁵⁶ King, *Stephen*, 159-160.

maintain the rights and privileges of the Church. Alongside her own desires, this was a delicate balancing act which was amplified by the uncertainty of the situation.

After her expulsion from London, Matilda continued to use her diplomatic skills to maintain the support of her existing followers and secure new supporters. She confirmed her grant of Deerhurst, a meaningful estate in Gloucestershire thanks to its longevity, and ties to the royal family, to William de Durnford, which geographically increased his power base and tied him to Matilda; rents to Ralph Fitz Picard, and she reconfirmed Miles of Gloucester's position as Earl of Hereford.¹⁵⁷ William de Mohun, according to the author of the *Gesta Stephani*, was made earl of Dorset.¹⁵⁸ Matilda also made Aubrey de Vere earl of Cambridge, another region where she had little authority.¹⁵⁹ A charter from July-August 1141 at Oxford, where the empress's forces retreated after Matilda's defeat in London, grants the shrievalty of Worcester to William de Beauchamp in return for liege homage.¹⁶⁰ This was to ensure Matilda had a wider range of support after her defeat as she attempted to regroup. The continued patronage of Geoffrey de Mandeville by both Empress Matilda and Stephen is significant as it demonstrates the importance of de Mandeville as an ally due to his position, lands, and retainers, as well as the ongoing power play between Matilda and Stephen as they sought to permanently gain allies.¹⁶¹

Matilda's position shortly after the battle of Lincoln is complex; although she was now acknowledged as Lady of the English, she was only in possession of a small number of lands in England and Normandy, and did not officially wield power over these: she was neither crowned queen nor had the backing of the pope. Stephen D. Church argued although popes did not choose to anoint kings, their authority was required in order to break with tradition, for example when Stephen wished to have Eustace anointed whilst Stephen was still alive, as it was practice in England that two anointed monarchs could not exist simultaneously.¹⁶² First of all, this meant the nobles had to place an extraordinary amount of trust in Matilda to succeed, and that they would be granted their offices and lands. Secondly, she needed the support of the Church, which is discussed in chapter five. What ought to be paid

¹⁵⁷ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 259, 316a, 393 and 394; see nos. 391 and 392 for further grants made to Miles in 1141.

¹⁵⁸ *Gesta Stephani*, 128-129.

¹⁵⁹ *RRAN*, iii, no. 634.

¹⁶⁰ *RRAN*, iii, no. 68.

¹⁶¹ Patricia A. Dark, "A Woman of Subtlety and A Man's Resolution': Matilda of Boulogne in the Power Struggles of the Anarchy," in *Aspects of Power and Authority in the Middle Ages*, eds. Brenda M. Bolton and Christine E. Meek (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 150-154, 157-164.

¹⁶² Church, "Succession," 186.

testament to here are the skills Matilda, and to an extent Robert of Gloucester, possessed in order to gain the feudal loyalty of these nobles. It is apparent that for all her intentions to build her power base, Matilda was unable to maintain the loyalty of wavering nobles and at pivotal moments such as the expulsion from London and the rout of Winchester, she lacked the skill to convince people to support her cause. Thus, Matilda's diplomatic manoeuvres here were largely unsuccessful as she did not achieve her goal to permanently gain the throne of England.

There are several other issues which affected her ability to gain the English throne other than her political skills. The decision of Henry of Blois to prioritise the Church over sole service to the monarch, owed in part to his desire to protect the Church and bishops, is particularly self-serving but not unusual given his position. Upon the arrest of the bishops of Ely, Salisbury, and Lincoln at Oxford in June 1139, Henry summoned a legatine council to hold Stephen accountable for the arrests. Edmund King argued this was the beginning of a widening rift between Stephen and Henry, which would grow when Matilda arrived in England in September 1139 and Henry once more tried to mediate between Matilda and Stephen.¹⁶³ As discussed in chapter two, Matilda's decisions regarding church appointments were not always successful and this would tie in closely with her relationship with Henry, as he would want any church appointments to be in his favour, in order to support his advancement and power, as well as ensuring his ability to protect the Church against secular intervention. King argued 'Henry did not understate his authority as a legate' and was focussed on building his power base, so it is perhaps unsurprising he chose to mediate with Matilda and later support her in order to protect his and the Church's interests.¹⁶⁴ Alexander R. Rumble has convincingly argued the compilation of the *Codex Wintonensis* supports the theory that Henry was interested in defending ecclesiastical rights against secular interference, showing Henry was not purely concerned with his own power.¹⁶⁵

After the rout of Winchester, Matilda lost momentum for continuing her campaign to reclaim the throne. This did not thwart her ambitions, but instead saw a change of focus from herself claiming the throne to passing it to her first son, Henry. After Winchester Matilda fled to Oxford: she was forced to abandon the castle in winter 1142 after Stephen gained the upper hand in the siege, Stephen having been traded for Robert of Gloucester in

¹⁶³ Edmund King, "Henry de Blois," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-), accessed 12 January 2019, www.oxforddnb.com.

¹⁶⁴ Edmund King, "Henry of Winchester: the Bishop, the City, and the Wider World (The R. Allen Brown Memorial Lecture, 2014)," *ANS* 37 (2015): 9-10.

¹⁶⁵ Alexander R. Rumble, "The Purpose of the *Codex Wintonensis*," *ANS* 4 (1981): 162.

November 1141. Matilda later established her headquarters in Devizes until she left England in 1148. From 1141-1154, Matilda continued to build her allegiances with the Anglo-Norman nobility in England. A charter dating 1144 restored the lands of Geoffrey Ridel, son of Richard Basset, one of Henry I's justiciars, in England and Normandy.¹⁶⁶ A second charter, also at Devizes in 1144, confirmed the lands and office of steward to Humphrey de Bohun, who had been captured by Stephen's forces at Lincoln and was later released.¹⁶⁷ Geoffrey de Mandeville was killed in battle in 1144 after defecting from Stephen following his imprisonment in 1143, and Ranulf, earl of Chester, another wavering supporter of Matilda's, fully committed to her party in 1146 until his death in 1153. Matilda's actions from 1144 onwards saw her gain the steadfast loyalty of several magnates from across the kingdom: Geoffrey Ridel held land across eleven counties including Leicestershire, Humphrey de Bohun in Wiltshire, and Ranulf in Chester. Although her negotiations with Stephen failed to procure her the throne, Stephen's actions saw several nobles defect to Matilda. In 1149 her son Henry began to take a more active role in securing the crown of England for himself, and took on the alliances of Ranulf of Chester and Reginald of Cornwall, his uncle.¹⁶⁸ Matilda's networking and alliance-building were a pivotal part of the office of queen, which she exercised as though she were queen in an official capacity, despite not being crowned.

Although Matilda was unsuccessful in restoring her inheritance for herself, she laid the foundations for Henry's succession and enabled him to secure the Angevin dominions for himself. Charles Beem argued contemporaries expected Matilda to behave as a consort whilst exercising the office of king; he also stated that Matilda eschewed feminine values at a time when she most needed to consolidate her position.¹⁶⁹ Chibnall has posited that although Matilda may have been proud, the words of a hostile chronicler ought to be taken lightly as they were formed by the idea that a woman had stepped outside her sphere of authority.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ *RRAN*, iii, no. 43.

¹⁶⁷ *RRAN*, iii, no. 111.

¹⁶⁸ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 150.

¹⁶⁹ Beem, *Lioness*, 54-56.

¹⁷⁰ Marjorie Chibnall, "The Empress Matilda As A Subject For Biography," in *Writing Medieval Biography, 750-1250. Essays in Honour of Frank Barlow*, eds. David Bates, Julia Crick and Sarah Hamilton (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), 187; *Gesta Stephani*, 120-121 translated 'supercilii et arrogantiae' as haughtiness and insolence; Thomas Arnold, ed., *Henrici Archidiaconi Huntendunensis Historia Anglorum* (London: Longman & Co., 1879), 275; 'superbiam intolerabilem' has been translated as insufferable pride in *Huntingdon*, 280-281.

Eleanor of Aquitaine: Duchess and Queen

This next part discusses Matilda's daughter-in-law Eleanor, and her interactions with the nobility. It draws comparisons between the aims of the two women when pursuing alliances. Eleanor's periods of exercising power are discontinuous, partially due to her successive childbearing from 1154-1160, and due to her imprisonment from 1173-1182. Aquitanian customs, which held their origins in Roman law, allowed women greater freedoms than elsewhere in France, and indeed northern Europe.¹⁷¹ Eleanor exercised power at the beginning of her second marriage, granting charters to those from her Aquitanian domains, and these were witnessed by members of her household.¹⁷² By granting land to Aquitanian nobles, Eleanor ensured the continuing support of the Aquitanian barons, who were reluctant to accept a 'foreign' overlord, as well as showing Eleanor's close ties with the nobility from her homelands. Aquitaine at this time was a sprawling mass of territory, and the nobility of the areas Eleanor presided over had long been fiercely independent vassals, their tenuous loyalty to the counts of Poitou only trumped by their mutual dislike of the Frankish king.

Eleanor's interactions with the nobility were quite different from Matilda's: Matilda had been building a power base in order to claim her inheritance, in a smaller collection of territories, namely England and Normandy, which was more closely connected than those which existed after 1154. Eleanor was part of a realm of disparate units with the addition of Anjou, Aquitaine, Brittany, and Gascony, and she sought to establish connections with the Anglo-Norman nobility as part of the wider Angevin domains, as well as ensuring her own household remained intact.¹⁷³ She acted as regent in England several times in the early years of her and Henry's rule, as he often travelled between England and the continental domains, and again as regent for her son Richard whilst he was on crusade. Both her and Matilda's actions as regents will be explored in chapter four.

Matilda and Eleanor both utilised their family links, particularly on their maternal side, to gain loyalty from the nobility. Matilda's uncle David of Scotland was an ardent supporter of Matilda's, often acting as an intercessor and providing her with retainers.¹⁷⁴ Eleanor's maternal uncles Hugh II of Châtellerauld and Raoul de Faye were also important in assisting

¹⁷¹ Turner, *Eleanor*, 11.

¹⁷² Turner, *Eleanor*, 113.

¹⁷³ Bartlett argued the Angevin and Aquitanian nobles were never enmeshed as the Anglo-Norman aristocracy were: Bartlett, *England*, 23.

¹⁷⁴ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 77-78, 111.

her rule in Aquitaine, and ensuring the vassals of the region remained faithful to the duchess of Aquitaine despite the tension of her marriage to an 'outsider', a foreign overlord, in the shape of both Louis VII and Henry II. Although the two queens did not limit their diplomatic skills to their families, the advantages of having maternal uncles onside is evident, as they allowed the power bases of both Matilda and Eleanor to develop and continue within the Angevin realms. Their uncles' assistance must be taken into consideration with their own desires, as David used the civil war as an opportunity to gain territory in northern England, endow Anglo-Norman nobles with land on both sides of the border to expand his sphere of influence, as well as support Matilda's claim to the throne.¹⁷⁵ Raoul was also rewarded for his assistance by becoming grand seneschal of Aquitaine.

It is telling that the queens both established familial networks on their maternal side, a connection which was sometimes lost, although not universally, in the face of a dominant paternal connection, or upon the movement and marriage of the bride. As maternal relatives had no claim to the lands of the women under discussion here, they were less dangerous than paternal relatives.¹⁷⁶ In Matilda's case, the links of her mother Matilda of Scotland to the late Anglo-Saxon line was intrinsic to the idea of dynastic continuance in England and could have been used by Matilda as part of her campaign to gain support for the English throne. This dynastic line through Matilda of Scotland was emphasised by William of Malmesbury, highlighting its significance to Empress Matilda's legitimacy.¹⁷⁷ The maternal connection added legitimacy to the governance and authority of Empress Matilda and Eleanor, as did the elevation of female relatives on their father's side. This can be seen in the emphasis Eleanor placed on her relation to Philippa of Toulouse when claiming overlordship of the county. Philippa was Eleanor's grandmother and heiress to the county of Toulouse, although her claim was contested and the county was bartered by her husband, William IX of Aquitaine, several times and eventually lost in 1122. As Philippa was the legal heir to Toulouse, Eleanor claimed the county through her ancestral rights.

One of the best examples we have of Eleanor's intercession outside the royal family is for William Marshal, who was captured in 1168 by Guy de Lusignan's forces in Poitou. In a similar situation to Eleanor's work to secure the release of her son Richard nearly thirty

¹⁷⁵ Bartlett, *England*, 79-81.

¹⁷⁶ Elena Woodacre, "Cousins and Queens: family ties, political ambition & epistolary diplomacy in Renaissance Europe," in *Women, diplomacy and international relations from 1500*, eds. Glenda Sluga, Giulia Calvi and Carolyn James (Routledge: Basingstoke, 2015), 34, 45-46.

¹⁷⁷ *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, 482.

years later, Eleanor interceded for William and raised the ransom, so he could be returned to England. Upon his return she bestowed him with gifts and saw him restored to good fortune, according to the author of *The History of William Marshal*.¹⁷⁸ After his release, William quickly joined Eleanor's household and would continue to serve the Plantagenet dynasty loyally until his death in 1219.¹⁷⁹ Eleanor clearly saw some gain in having William as part of her household, as did William. Networks were already established between the Marshal family and the Plantagenets, as William's father had allied with Matilda. Eleanor secured William's allegiance to the Crown by paying his ransom and rewarding him sufficiently. This case of intercession was to reap rewards beyond her life and shows the importance of networks based on inter-generational noble networks, which Eleanor continued by absorbing her mother-in-law's retainers. The relationship between Eleanor and the Marshal family demonstrate a co-operative nature: not directly with each other, but by acknowledging the need to maintain harmonious relations with the next generation of a family, which ensured stability and loyalty to the Crown, and was a highly beneficial relationship for the Marshals.

Berengaria of Navarre: Lady of Le Mans

Berengaria's opportunities for employing diplomatic or intercessory skills were limited further by her temporary stay in the Holy Land: as she travelled with Richard and the army, she did not have a chance to establish a household of her own, or a power base in the Angevin domains. It is likely Berengaria returned to Anjou in 1193 and created a household in Beaufort-en-Vallée. Knowledge regarding Berengaria's household is limited during her time as consort: therefore, it is difficult to discern her political and noble allegiances and the extent to which she used diplomatic and intercessory skills. There is evidence for her dowager household which is thought to have carried over from her time as consort, as examined below. As the chronicles reported more on Eleanor's actions than Berengaria's, it is unlikely she wielded a significant amount of power which was unreported.

On Berengaria's journey to Anjou upon her return from the Third Crusade, she stopped in Rome with her sister-in-law Joanna of Sicily. There they witnessed a charter in which they gave surety for money borrowed by Adam de Taleworth from the citizens of Rome, the only known charter for Berengaria's time as consort.¹⁸⁰ This act is one of the few surviving pieces

¹⁷⁸ *The History of William Marshal*, 46-47.

¹⁷⁹ David Crouch, *William Marshal*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 40.

¹⁸⁰ *CDF*, no. 278.

of evidence pertaining to Berengaria's intercession and authority as consort, and it is entirely plausible she made connections with the local nobility whilst she resided in Rome for six months. She does not appear to have interceded for Richard from the surviving documentation, even though Richard was held prisoner by the Holy Roman Emperor at this point. Although Trindade argued Berengaria may have met with Pope Celestine III to negotiate for Richard's release, there is no documentary evidence to support this theory.¹⁸¹ Instead, Eleanor, who acted as regent, sent several letters to Celestine to ask for Richard's freedom. Upon Richard's liberation, Berengaria remained in Poitou whilst Eleanor and Richard returned to England, where Richard was re-crowned on 27 April 1194 at Winchester. Berengaria's role as queen did not automatically lend itself to exercising power because of Eleanor's dominant status, and unlike Eleanor, Berengaria did not hold lands: she was different from Matilda, Eleanor, and Isabella because she ultimately did not inherit lands in Navarre, as explored in the previous section. This lack of access to both inherited and dower lands, as well as being a childless queen, inhibited her power. However, Berengaria did find other avenues to power, as demonstrated in chapter five.

During the period of Richard's captivity there has been much speculation about Berengaria's activities. During his return from crusade, Richard was captured by Duke Leopold V of Austria, and then sold to Henry VI, Holy Roman Emperor.¹⁸² The negotiations for Richard's release will be discussed further in chapter four. Mitchell argued Berengaria raised the money for Richard's ransom, although it was organised by Eleanor.¹⁸³ Sancho, Berengaria's brother, intervened in Gascony in 1192 to assist Richard's seneschal with suppressing a rebellion, possibly at Berengaria's instigation.¹⁸⁴ Although Eleanor was clearly more dominant in exercising queenly power during Richard's reign, Berengaria may have interceded on these two separate occasions mentioned above to assist Richard, performing the expected role of a consort. These are not the acts of a woman who was concerned with building a power base, but a queen who was more reserved and courteous, according to the Norman poet Ambroise, emphasising the trope of a virtuous noblewoman.¹⁸⁵ It is also an example of where Berengaria could intercede as she was unable to participate in higher level events because of Eleanor's assertiveness. Trindade argued Berengaria resided in Richard's castles either at Chinon or Beaufort-en-Vallée during her marriage as her dower

¹⁸¹ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 108.

¹⁸² Huffman, *Medieval Diplomacy*, 137.

¹⁸³ Mitchell, *Berengaria*, 81.

¹⁸⁴ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 111-112.

¹⁸⁵ *Ambroise*, 71-72.

castles were not available to her, because Eleanor still possessed them.¹⁸⁶ There is no evidence indicating Berengaria's residence for the majority of her married life. This would have further limited her political activity as she was not in control of lands and revenue which she could use to build networks or an affinity.

It is in Berengaria's dowager period that we find a much more active royal woman who displayed diplomatic and intercessory abilities. From 1199 onwards, Berengaria resided in Maine. She informally became Lady of Le Mans in 1204, after she negotiated with Philip Augustus for a place of residence. She was allotted one thousand marks sterling and the city of Le Mans in return for her dower properties, as John lost the majority of the Angevin possessions on the continent.¹⁸⁷ Philip Augustus allowed Berengaria to appoint her own seneschal, Hubert de Tucé, who was from a well-established local family.¹⁸⁸ This negotiation with Philip Augustus demonstrates Berengaria's diplomatic skills as she obtained her own domain and certain privileges which came with this. There is no extant evidence for the negotiations themselves, however the charter containing Berengaria's exchange of her dower lands in return for Le Mans stated that she permanently quitclaimed her rights to the lands and in return would do homage for Le Mans.¹⁸⁹ Berengaria did not plausibly work for or against the Angevin domains as ruler of Le Mans: her primary concern was obtaining her dower which is discussed in chapter five.

It is possible that members of Berengaria's household who had accompanied her from Navarre remained with her, as Trindade attested Berengaria's household in Le Mans consisted of Paulin Boutier, a knight; clerks Simon and Garsia, and Pierre Prévot, her cantor, although Trindade does not provide any supporting evidence.¹⁹⁰ Although it is unlikely

¹⁸⁶ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 118.

¹⁸⁷ Delisle, *Catalogues des actes de Philippe-Auguste*, no. 805; Delaborde, Petit-Dutaillis and Monicat, *Recueil des Actes de Philippe Auguste*, no. 837.

¹⁸⁸ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 146.

¹⁸⁹ 'Noverit universitas vestra quod he sunt conventiones inter nos et dominum nosstrum Philippum, illustrem regem Francorum, quod nos, castrum Falesie et villam cum appenditiis, castrum de Danfront et villam cum appenditiis, castrum et villam de Bonavilla super Toscam cum appenditiis et omnibus forestis trium castrorum, quitta clamamus ipsi et heredibus suis in perpetuum, que Richardus quondam rex Anglie, maritus noster nobis assignavit in dotalitium, ita quod nec in predictis castris nec in eorum appendiciis nec in forestis aliquid reclamabimus nec per nos nec per alium; et insuper instrumentis et omnibus cartis et scriptis que de dotalitio predicto trium castrorum, sicut predictum est, habebamus, renuntiamus...Vavassores autem illius civitatis facient nobis hominagium ligium contra omnes homines, salva fidelitate domini regis Francorum et heredum suorum.' John W. Baldwin, François Gasparri, Michel Nortier and Elisabeth Lalou, eds., *Recueil des historiens de la France. Documents financiers et administratifs. Tome VII. Les Registres de Philippe Auguste. Volume I: Texte* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1992), no. 47.

¹⁹⁰ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 149.

Berengaria returned to Navarre, a letter from Henry III in 1219 requested Berengaria and her household be given safe conduct to Navarre if she desired it.¹⁹¹ There is a dearth of English evidence for Berengaria's time in Le Mans, as English records do not document acts in the lands once they were out of English hands, however French records from the Archives Nationales and Archives Départementales de la Sarthe provide further insights as analysed in chapter five. Extant charters demonstrate her activity, include one appointing Pierre Prévot as cantor to the chapter of St Pierre-de-la-Cour, and another recording her intervention in a dispute between the chapel and a nobleman, Gervaise de Cogners.¹⁹² Berengaria's actions in Le Mans were primarily focussed on religious institutions within her area of influence and the preservation of her household, who may have remained with her throughout her time as Lady of Le Mans, although no evidence survives to prove this. It cannot be extensively proven what other interactions she had with local nobility due to a lack of evidence: although more evidence survives for her dowager period, it is less extensive than the evidence for Matilda and Eleanor. Berengaria kept in close contact with her Navarrese family, particularly her sister Blanche, later countess of Champagne during her time as Lady of Le Mans.¹⁹³ These kinship networks may have been crucial for Berengaria in providing both friendship and economic support as she navigated the political realm as a dowager in the thirteenth century, as well as proving a beneficial alliance due to the power and influence of the counts of Champagne. Possession of a more substantial territory, either inherited or dower lands, would have allowed her to build up a coterie of loyal retainers. As discussed in chapter two, it was unusual, though not exceptional in western Europe in the High Middle Ages, for a dowager to be more powerful than she had been as consort.

Berengaria successfully established herself as a female lord in Le Mans for several reasons. She possessed territory, acted to protect her prerogative rights, and demonstrated both agency and power. She strengthened her relations with the papacy, and her sister Blanche of Champagne, who was to be an important figure in the rulership of Navarre and Champagne, acting as regent for Navarre from Sancho's retirement in 1224, and of Champagne during Thibaut's minority from 1201 to 1222. This examination of Berengaria's actions indicates a disconnection with Eleanor and the wider Plantagenet family based on

¹⁹¹ Henry III, "Letter from Henry III, king of England, to Berengaria of Navarre, queen of England (1219)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/778.html.

¹⁹² Trindade, *Berengaria*, 161; *St. Pierre de la Cour*, no. 44.

¹⁹³ Bourquelot, "Fragments," 55.

the extant evidence, and that this mother and daughter-in-law relationship was not as unified in purpose as Eleanor and Matilda's.

Isabella of Angoulême: Dowager Queen and Countess

Berengaria's sister-in-law Isabella similarly held kinship ties with her mother's family, the Courtenays, when she resided in England, which linked closely to her diplomatic actions during her time as consort. Her cousin Robert Courtenay witnessed one of Isabella's extant charters prior to her return to Angoulême in 1217 and after John's death in 1216, in which she granted a fair to the monastery of St Nicholas in Exeter.¹⁹⁴ This emphasises, like Matilda, the importance of kinship ties and power networks as Matilda often utilised her family as witnesses in her charters to enhance the legitimacy of her acts, as well as a display of her power. It also represents the maintenance of status through patronage, as well as the desire of Robert to be affiliated with the ruling queen. Other witnesses to this charter were ecclesiastics and nobles of Exeter and the surrounding area, including Simon, bishop of Exeter, her chaplains Henry and Robert, and Walter the Thawe.¹⁹⁵ Isabella was unable to establish networks with the nobility in England as she did not have access to her lands or revenues, partially because of Eleanor's control over these until her death in 1204, and then latterly because the revenues went directly to John instead of Isabella. Nevertheless, these charters are an indication of the networks she tried to establish.¹⁹⁶ These limitations, as seen with Berengaria, led to an inability to exercise power and show diplomatic and intercessory action.

The lands and revenues Isabella was entitled to as consort would still be collected: however it is entirely plausible John used these for his own benefit, and for the campaigns in France rather than for Isabella's use, either for patronage or to spend on her household. Turner indicated that John, like Richard, continued to pressurise the barons for further revenue through scutages, a substitute payment instead of providing military service; reliefs, the payment made for inheriting fiefs; and selling the rights to wardships and marriages of noble children.¹⁹⁷ It is apparent John had a propensity for collecting income beyond what was typically owed to him as king, and caused ruptures with the barons as a result. The lack of evidence means we cannot fully understand what Isabella's relationship with the nobility was during her marriage to John; however as discussed above, the limitations that are

¹⁹⁴ Vincent, "Isabella," appendix no.2, 217-218.

¹⁹⁵ Vincent, "Isabella," appendix no. 2, 218.

¹⁹⁶ Vincent, "Isabella," 191, *PR John* 10, 19, 21, 37, 59, 73, 91, 112, 126, 164, 188, 192.

¹⁹⁷ Turner, *John*, 86-90.

recorded, for example her lack of income, are indicators as to why she would not have been able to gain patrons and engage with the nobility further.

Another reason why Isabella is absent from the governance of the kingdom is due to her young age at the time of her marriage and coronation. Like Matilda, Isabella's early years at court would have been a period of training and observation. It is plausible Isabella spent the initial years of her tenure learning how to rule, and how to successfully utilise diplomacy and patronage to build alliances later in life. This is particularly evident when she returns to Angoulême and successfully navigated the political scene, much as Matilda did upon her return to England, after her tenure in the Holy Roman Empire. It is important to recognise, as discussed above, that Isabella's training may have been immediately followed by the birth of her children in quick succession, which further limited her political involvement if she was not yet astute enough to exercise authority.

The discussion above has drawn out comparisons between Matilda and Eleanor, and Berengaria and Isabella in particular. Matilda and Eleanor were both able to establish networks with the nobility, through their access to lands and revenues which allowed them to bestow patronage across the breadth of England, Normandy, and Aquitaine. The bonds established between Matilda, Eleanor, and the Marshal family are a key example of the importance of building an affinity which would be beneficial to both parties. As Berengaria and Isabella had less access to lands and revenues, especially whilst consorts, they had limited agency and less ability to create affinities. Although the evidence from Berengaria's dowager period indicates further attempts to foster networks, it is evident a lack of resources heavily impacted the abilities of Berengaria and Isabella to connect with the nobility, both for their own benefit and for their husbands. The lack of extant evidence makes it difficult to ascertain whether queenly chanceries existed, and indeed who formed part of their regular retinue.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that all four women were able to successfully govern territories, be it as part of a co-ruling partnership or as a sole ruler, though this was heavily impacted by their male relatives, who often restricted their access to their lands and income. These women were able to effectively negotiate with their co-rulers, partners, and members of the nobility to navigate hierarchies and demonstrate influence across the Angevin realms. Although Matilda was not successful in fully accessing her territories as an heiress, she built a successful partnership with Geoffrey which enabled her to gain

Normandy, and established affinities which benefited her and her son Henry. Conversely, Eleanor held Aquitaine in name, at least, throughout her period as consort, although this was affected by the turn of her and Henry's relationship from Collaborative Union to Lord Rules All. Despite this, Eleanor continued to hold sway in her lands and was utilised as the legitimising authority by both Henry and her sons. Her networks, like Matilda's, ensured the continuance of Plantagenet dominion in the Angevin realms. Both Matilda and Eleanor demonstrated they were able to rule successfully as regents, which is discussed further in chapter four, as co-rulers with their husbands, and as sole rulers, particularly in territories where they had rulership experience, such as Normandy and Aquitaine.

Berengaria and Isabella had a similar experience of rulership as both their husbands adopted a Lord Rules All approach to partnerships, which left them with no direct control over their own territories (in the case of Isabella, her inheritance), or dower lands. Despite the restrictions placed upon them by their husbands, both were more successful in rulership after their husbands' deaths, even though Isabella remarried. Although they faced issues in establishing networks and their own power base due to the lack of authority and resources from their marriages, both were effective rulers in Le Mans and Angoulême respectively, a theme which will be explored in further detail in chapter five.

This chapter has highlighted through a comparative approach the different ways in which women could rule, initially through co-rulership and co-operation, but also when their authority was tempered by their co-rulers and they had to establish networks and new methods of rulership as dowagers. This chapter has also unpicked perceptions of co-ruling partnerships and the reasons why the chroniclers chose to criticise both rulers. Criticism of the king through slandering the queen left an impression of weak kingship on both contemporary and modern audiences. Co-rulers need to be examined together, as a unit as Earenfight has proposed, to fully understand their exercise of power together and as sole rulers. This chapter has laid the foundations for wider analysis of the familial interactions between the Angevins in the political sphere. While it has focussed predominantly on co-rulers, the following chapter will develop the models of rulership further by analysing mother-son relationships, demonstrating the different ways in which rulership functioned in the Angevin territories. Analysis of mothers and sons, and mothers and daughters-in-law, examined through the lenses of co-operation and competition, provides a greater understanding of how female power was exercised in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Chapter Four: Familial Harmony, and the Co-operation of Mothers and Sons

The nature of royal maternal and paternal relationships with their offspring, particularly during the Middle Ages, has been analysed in the context of royal biography and in works which focussed more narrowly on medieval childhood and ruling mothers as discussed in the literature review.¹ Within the Angevin domains, Colette Bowie's monograph remains the most recent and integral work, focussing on the relationships between Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine and their daughters.² As seen thus far in the thesis, the Angevin familial dynamics played a large role in the exercise of power and agency in England and their territories in France. This chapter is divided into two discrete sections. The first section will discuss the concept of regency in the Angevin realm, and explore why Henry II, Richard I, and John chose their mothers as regents, rather than their wives. The analysis here will form a comparison with the co-rulership and conflict with spouses which was examined in chapter three. Henry, Richard, and John all formed Collaborative Unions with their mothers, based on the models of rulership explored in chapter three. Isabella and Berengaria did not have this option, however, as Isabella returned to Angoulême and Berengaria did not bear heirs. The second section of this chapter focusses on medieval motherhood, with an examination of Isabella's status as a queen mother and why this did not immediately grant her power during Henry III's minority. This topic has been examined by both Wilkinson and Sally Spong, and largely falls outside the scope of this thesis.³ Lastly, the examination of Berengaria will show how she accessed other avenues to power without a son. In this section, the concept of life cycles will be employed to understand how royal women could access power and exercise authority, even if they did not undergo all expected aspects of the life-cycle course, as seen with Berengaria. This fourth chapter demonstrates how the Angevin kings continued to use the women in their families as rulers, and how familial relationships impacted the ability of these women to exercise power. It further highlights that many royal women were more powerful in their dowager period when they had the capacity to act as a regent as a queen mother.

¹ Louise J. Wilkinson, *A cultural history of childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010, 2014); *Royal Mothers; Virtuous or Villainess?*.

² Bowie, *Daughters*.

³ Wilkinson, "Maternal Abandonment," 101-124; Spong, "Female Lordship": see discussion on page 4.

Regent Mothers

The word regent is deliberately used for both Matilda and Eleanor, rather than solely queen, as they exercised fuller powers, namely those associated with a king or absolute ruler, in Normandy and England respectively. Although concepts of regents and regency are more modern terms, they are also associated with the idea of medieval child kingship, rather than only acting as a deputy or co-ruler. Matilda and Eleanor's actions during their tenures as regent can be separated from their roles as mothers in terms of tutelage and care, for all the kings were of age when they nominated their mothers as regents. Matilda and Eleanor acted with familial interests in mind: during their times as regents they worked for the benefit of the ruling king, their son, and did not increase political conflict. As regents, both women exercised considerable amounts of power which contrasts with their tenures as queens, when they were less able to do so. This supports an idea at the heart of this thesis – as discussed in the introduction - that royal women became more powerful and possessed further agency during their dowager period.

Regency is inextricably tied to the notions of kingship, power, and authority. Frédérique Lachaud and Michael Penman discussed the absence of royal authority, and how the delegation of regional powers to Plantagenet officials created difficulties in the reign of Henry III, demonstrating the importance of a continued royal presence.⁴ Henry II's earlier decisions to delegate powers to his mother and wife, and to an extent his sons, is reflective of the need to maintain royal authority across the Angevin domains. Lachaud and Penman noted in the medieval West, kings needed to be physically present to ensure authority was maintained.⁵ Despite this, there would often be times where the king would be physically absent, and a form of temporary rulership needed to be installed. The concept of a regent was usually tied to a person, or in some cases a council of selected advisors, who would rule the kingdom in either the monarch's absence, or because the present monarch was a minor. However, the use of the term regency needs to be exercised with caution: as Emily J. Ward highlighted, it does not fully cover the guardianship and the duties associated with ruling the kingdom for a child king, which is applicable to Isabella's case after John's death in 1216.⁶ Fanny Cosandey argued queen mothers were able to act as female regents in France and wield power due to their ties to the throne, and that motherhood granted them

⁴ Frédérique Lachaud and Michael Penman, "Introduction," in *Absentee Authority across Medieval Europe*, eds. Frédérique Lachaud and Michael Penman (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017), 8-9.

⁵ Lachaud and Penman, "Introduction," 19.

⁶ Emily J. Ward, "Child Kingship in England, Scotland, France, and Germany, c. 1050-c.1250," (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2017), 40-52.

a considerable amount of power.⁷ Cosandey noted, however, that female power has been obscured in the sources and this in turn has affected our understanding of why women were chosen to be regents, and how much power they truly exercised.⁸ The notion of a queen mother acting as regent is not unusual, as Maria Teresa Guerra Medici has traced female regents back to the Ottonians.⁹ The term regent does not appear in French sources until the fourteenth century, however female regents were able to act as empowered rulers, even though the chroniclers would not have recognised the queens as regents.¹⁰ Female regents were able to act as administrators, protect their lands and interests, and ensure their dynasty was secure by acting on behalf of absentee sons, brothers, or husbands.¹¹ The idea women could be excluded from leadership because they were unable to act in a military capacity is implausible, given the activities of Matilda of Boulogne and Blanche of Castile during their tenures as regents.¹²

The ideas of formal and informal authority also need to be discussed. Formal authority is understood as a documented decision wherein the regent is formally appointed by the king or the government. Informal authority can be seen as a figure acting with the powers of a ruler, and holding considerable agency and influence, without explicit nomination or official sanction for their position. Neither Matilda nor Eleanor were formally named as regent, although Matilda was clearly named as holding power bestowed by Henry. However, in this period there was also not an expectation that one would formally be named as regent, and even in the minority of Henry III a century later, arrangements were far more informal than assumed.¹³ One example of Matilda's informal regency is a charter issued between 1155 and 1158, in which the count of Eu and Walter Giffard sought to restore to the church of Fécamp lands surrendered by Nicholas de Criel, wherein Henry stated: 'let my lady and mother the empress see that it is done'.¹⁴ If the justiciars of Normandy did not enact

⁷ Fanny Cosandey, "Puissance maternelle et pouvoir politique. La régence des reines mères," *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 21 (2005): 82

⁸ Cosandey, "Puissance," 77.

⁹ Maria Teresa Guerra Medici, "La régence de la mère dans le droit médiéval," *Parliaments, Estates & Representation* 17.1 (1997): 1-2.

¹⁰ Medici, "La régence," 2.

¹¹ Medici, "La régence," 11.

¹² Ursula Vones-Liebenstein, "Une femme gardienne du royaume? Régentes en temps de guerre (France-Castille, XIII^e siècle)," in *La guerre, la violence et les gens au Moyen Âge. Vol. II. Guerre et Gens*, eds. Philippe Contamine and Olivier Guyotjennin (Paris: Éditions du CTT, 1996), 12-13.

¹³ David A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (London: Meuthen, 1990), 54; Ward, "Child Kingship," 160-166.

¹⁴ 'et nisi feceris, domina et mater mea imperatrix faciat fieri.' Léopold Delisle and Elie Berger, eds., *Recueil des actes de Henri II concernant les provinces françaises et les affaires de France*, 3 vols. (Paris: 1909-1927), i, no. 46.

Henry's mandate, Matilda was to ensure its completion. This demonstrates Henry trusted Matilda to operate on his behalf, especially in areas where she was experienced at rulership such as Normandy, having effectively wielded power alongside Geoffrey both prior and after his conquest of the region in 1144.¹⁵ However, this power was never explicitly documented in terms of being named as a regent or co-ruler.

Although Eleanor is not documented as being appointed as regent by Richard, she acted as though she was a formal regent, particularly whilst Richard was on crusade. According to Ralph de Diceto, Eleanor's powers were redefined after Henry's death, wherein Richard granted her the power to do as she willed in the kingdom.¹⁶ Although the differentiation between formal and informal authority here is defined as whether the authority was documented, namely written down and recorded, holding informal authority does not necessarily mean the power of the regent was lessened. Another point to consider here is that as Eleanor had previously been declared queen, she would continue to hold formal authority from this position which carried through when she acted as regent. Earenfight convincingly argued for an adoption of Foucauldian concepts of power, wherein influence is recognised as a form of power, including the ability to control one's own situation and responses.¹⁷ If power is not reduced to a binary, but rather conceived as a fluctuating force affected by the interplay of gender, then we can more easily view terms such as authority and influence as clear denominators of power rather than exemplars of female agency.¹⁸ Although Matilda and Eleanor's power was not formalised, it was still power. Any terminology used to discuss regency can be problematic as it is shorthand for what was a complex and changing terminology in the medieval period. Both women were fully capable of issuing charters, influencing other members of the royal family and nobles, building networks, as well as establishing areas where they could wield power, subject as it may be to royal male interruption. As Matilda and Eleanor operated in a period before queenly

¹⁵ Mark Hagger, *Norman Rule in Normandy, 911-1144* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017), 181-183.

¹⁶ 'Alienor regina, quæ per annos plurimos artæ fuerat deputata custodiæ, statuendi quæ vellet in regno potestatem accepit a filio. Datum siquidem est in mandatis regni principibus, et quasi sub edicto generali statutum, ut ad reginæ nutum omnia disponderentur.' *The Historical Works of Master Ralph de Diceto, Dean of London*, 2 vols. (London: Longman & Co. and Trübner & Co., 1876), ii, 67.

¹⁷ Earenfight, "Power," 287.

¹⁸ Earenfight, "Power," 289.

regency was formally established, they were able to exercise more power without the need for it to be formalized, as would be the case for later queens.¹⁹

Through their dual roles as queens and mothers, both Matilda and Eleanor utilised their ecclesiastical networks to ensure Angevin power bases remained secure. Matilda acted as regent on several occasions for Henry II in Normandy from 1154-1167. Chibnall argued Matilda often took Henry's place whilst he was in other dominions, and on occasion they jointly held court.²⁰ It is unsurprising Matilda chose to reside in Normandy after Henry's coronation, a place which had formed a significant part of her inheritance, as well as being a region where she had formed several ecclesiastical links through her patronage of Bec-Hellouin and Notre-Dame-en-Voeu, also known as Notre-Dame-en-Valasse. As Henry sought to establish control in England in the mid-1150s after his coronation at Winchester Cathedral with Eleanor in December 1154, he decided to utilise Matilda as ruler in Normandy in his absence.²¹ Henry's strong bond and faith with his mother can be seen through the confirmation of her charters, joint charters, and the grants of Matilda with the delegated authority she had been given by Henry, predominantly in Normandy but with some grants in England. One of the first examples we have of a confirmation by Henry of his mother's previous charters is from Matilda's confirmation of Henry I's grant of 15 marks per annum, and a further grant of 5 marks per annum to Tiron Abbey from the farm of Winchester in 1141, confirmed by Henry II in April-December 1154.²²

One of the most unequivocal examples of patronage linking the Angevin kings and their mothers is seen in the Cistercian abbey of Notre-Dame en Voeu, Normandy. A charter from 1152 recorded the foundation by Matilda and Henry II, and stated that she and her son created the abbey in honour of Henry I, Matilda of Scotland, and Geoffrey of Anjou, as well as for the souls of their heirs.²³ The abbey was created after Matilda made a vow to found a

¹⁹ Elisabeth van Houts, "Queens in the Anglo-Norman/Angevin realm 1066-1216," in *Mächtige Frauen? Königinnen und Fürstinnen im europäischen Mittelalter*, ed. Claudia Zey (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2015), 205-207.

²⁰ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 158-161.

²¹ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 161-163.

²² 'Sciatis me concessisse et confirmasse monachis de Tirun in perpetuam elemosinam xx marcas argenti annuatim de thesauro Wintonie illis reddendas, videlicet xv marcas quas rex Henricus eis dedit et mater mea confirmavit, et alias v marcas quas Matillidis imperatrix mater mea eis in incrementum dedit, sicut carta ipsius testator.' *RRAN*, iii, nos. 899, 900.

²³ 'Sciatis me et Henricum regem filium meum fundasse abbatiam Sancte Marie de Voto de ordine Cisterciensi pro amore dei et pro anima Henrici regis patris mei et Galfridi comitis Andegavensis domini mei et Matildis regine matris mee, et pro animabus antecessorum et aliorum parentum nostrorum, et pro salute nostra et heredum nostrorum...', AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0001_05 (1152); *RRAN*, iii, no. 909.

new Cistercian order after the 1142 siege of Oxford. Henry II confirmed Matilda's foundation of the abbey in a charter dating between 1170 and 1179, and placed Notre-Dame-en-Voeu under his protection in a separate charter issued between 1174 and 1182.²⁴

Eleanor also made a grant to Notre-Dame-en-Voeu between 1189 and 1191, consisting of a portion of land from the forest of Lillebonne, part of her dower settlement, though whether this was through her own instigation or Henry's is unknown.²⁵ It is plausible she would have supported the abbey as a new site of familial patronage. John also made a grant to the abbey in 1201, which was plausibly at Eleanor's instigation given the association of the Plantagenets with this institution.²⁶ This charter, in combination with a separate grant to Bec in 1203, demonstrates the importance of Normandy to John at this critical juncture of war with Philip Augustus.²⁷ This is of particular significance when contrasted with John's activities in Normandy prior to becoming king, as highlighted by Nicholas Vincent, wherein John's patronage of Norman institutions was scarce.²⁸ Given the attention paid to Fontevraud as a familial mausolea, as discussed in chapter five, and the expanse of the Angevin dominions, it is not surprising a separate site for Angevin patronage was established with Notre-Dame-en-Voeu. Situated in the Anglo-Norman heartlands, it showed the extension of Plantagenet patronage across its domains. This example of ecclesiastical patronage shows the strength of the mother-son relationships in the Angevin domains, as both Matilda and Eleanor bound their sons to patronise a specific establishment. The motivations for doing so were to ensure dynastic security in these regions and demonstrates the co-operation and familial harmony between the three kings and their mothers.

Empress Matilda: A Regent for Normandy

When Henry II assumed the throne of England in 1154, it was to become part of his already sprawling domains of Normandy, Maine, Anjou, and Aquitaine. However, Henry initially needed to devote a large amount of time to England in order to win over its nobles, as although some had supported his mother Matilda's claim to the throne, there remained

²⁴ AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_11 (1170-1179); AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_05 (1174-1182).

²⁵ AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_10 (1189-1191).

²⁶ AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_14 (1201).

²⁷ AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_003H0016_02 (1203).

²⁸ Nicholas Vincent, "Jean, comte de Mortain: le future roi et ses domaines en Normandie 1183-1199," in *1204. La Normandie entre Plantagenêts et Capétiens*, eds. Anne-Marie Flambard-Héricher and Véronique Gazeau (Caen: CRAHM 2007), 41-44.

many who had maintained loyalty to Stephen. Henry would need to consider appointing sub-rulers or regents, particularly in areas where the loyalty of the local lords was tenuous. Henry chose his mother Matilda as regent in Normandy, a role which she fulfilled on several occasions, although the need for her position was to decline as Henry grew in strength and confidence in the 1160s. Matilda was likely chosen as regent in Normandy due to her strong connections with the area, primarily as the daughter and heir of the Anglo-Norman king Henry I, and the length of time she had already ruled the area. It is perhaps unsurprising her son appointed her regent in Normandy since Henry and Eleanor were unable to rule the domains completely between them, and they were yet to have an heir of age to rule. Chibnall argued Henry was always Matilda's first consideration, and therefore she would balance her loyalty to her heir against her political judgement when it came to ruling.²⁹ Although Geoffrey had focussed on the conquest of Normandy whilst Matilda had concentrated on England during the civil war, after Geoffrey's successful conquest in 1144, Matilda took up residence in Rouen and established several networks which were to be of benefit to Henry, as discussed in further detail below.

This chapter argues the relationship between Matilda and Henry was largely a Collaborative Union, and this is best illustrated through their joint confirmations. Matilda and Henry's joint grants in the build up to his accession to the English throne demonstrate Matilda's awareness of the need to connect Henry with her networks and establish his alliances to accede to the throne smoothly. The joint confirmations of mother and son are primarily focussed on England and Normandy; this is unsurprising given these were already bases for Matilda's power, and areas in which Henry needed to consolidate his position immediately after 1154. The first instance of Matilda and Henry's co-rulership can be seen through charters from 1144; one to Geoffrey Ridel, son of Richard Basset, in order to restore all his inheritance in England and Normandy; a second confirming land previously held by a scribe at Shillingford, relating to Godstow Abbey; and the third containing a sizeable grant to Humphrey de Bohun which deserves further consideration.³⁰

In 1144, Henry and Matilda confirmed a grant to Humphrey de Bohun, stating he was to retain the rights and lands he held under Henry I.³¹ These lands included Melksham, Malmesbury, Boczam, and Stoke. Humphrey's rights as the steward in England and

²⁹ Marjorie Chibnall, "The Empress Matilda and Her Sons," in *Medieval Mothering*, eds. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland, 1996), 288.

³⁰ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 43 and 372.

³¹ James H. Round, ed., *Ancient Charters, Royal and Private, Prior to A. D. 1200* (London: Wyman & Sons, 1888), no.27; *RRAN*, iii, no. 111.

Normandy were also confirmed. He was a key ally for Matilda at this stage, as he controlled vast swathes of land in Wiltshire which was a power base for Matilda. After Matilda's losses in 1141, it was essential that she continued to maintain her networks to support her change in tactics, namely the accession of her son Henry. Geoffrey's successful conquest of Normandy with the capture of Rouen in April 1144 demonstrates a partial culmination of Geoffrey's and Matilda's efforts to gain inheritance for their children. Although we do not know the specific month Matilda and Henry granted Humphrey's rights and lands, the conquest of Normandy would have enhanced Matilda's authority as heiress, and it seems more likely that the charter was issued after Geoffrey's conquest. Beem convincingly argued the decision by Matilda and Geoffrey to focus on separate regions was an effective strategy as it enabled them to pursue their own agendas whilst fulfilling their roles as royal parents.³² As noted above, a royal mother would be expected to act in their children's political interests, and for Matilda the securing of the succession to the English throne for Henry was of immense importance. Normandy and England were both central to Matilda's campaign to regain her inheritance, and she fostered networks both sides of the Channel, dividing goals with Geoffrey to ensure the capture of Normandy and to support her advances into England as discussed in chapter three.

Other joint confirmations between Henry and Matilda include grants of lands to the abbey of Beaulieu de Chartres, and the foundation of a house of canons regular at the abbey of Notre-Dame du Pré.³³ Notre-Dame du Pré, a cell of Bec-Hellouin was especially significant for Matilda due to her long-standing relationship with Bec. It is unsurprising that Matilda fostered a relationship between Bec and Henry, as she had done with Bec and her supporters, as will be explored in chapter five, and this furnishes another pertinent example of maternal influence. These charters demonstrate the strong working partnership between Henry and Matilda during his adolescence, and before he acceded to the English throne. After Henry's succession, we can see his enduring trust in his mother as an ally and support through Matilda's actions as regent in the late 1150s and 1160s, which enabled Henry's rulership over the Angevin domains.

Henry often turned to Matilda for advice, especially in the early years of his reign, which is clear evidence of their Collaborative Union. This is seen most clearly in her transferral of noble allegiances to Henry, who maintained these allegiances in accordance with Matilda's

³² Beem, "“Offspring”," 85-99

³³ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 72, 73, 88.

wishes. However, such continuity of allegiances fell apart when it came to the promotion and laudation of Henry's ally Thomas Becket. There is no evidence to suggest either a harmonious or a discordial relationship between Matilda and Becket in the prelude to Becket's dispute with Henry. It is apparent Becket's supporters believed Matilda's influence over Henry remained strong and she would be able to intercede on Becket's behalf. An ally of Becket's and prior of the hospital near Rouen, Nicholas, intervened for Becket with Matilda on several occasions, though with limited success.³⁴ Chibnall argued Matilda was aware of the limits of her influence on her son, and it is understandable that Matilda's power had waned whilst Henry's had grown during his reign.³⁵ This is not an indication of disharmony within the mother-son relationship, but a demonstration of Henry's growth of power in the 1160s and desire to rule his domains directly.

Surviving letters between Becket and Matilda show Matilda justified her son's behaviour and admonished Becket for his actions; Matilda stated she sent her archdeacon to learn more to facilitate a reconciliation and that Becket 'cannot recover the grace of the king except by great humility and most evident moderation.'³⁶ A letter dated circa Christmas 1164 from Prior Nicholas, Matilda's secretary, to Becket, shows Matilda to be sympathetic to Becket's cause when she offered to mediate between Henry and Becket, as she disapproved of the Constiutions of Clarendon, which Henry was attempting to implement.³⁷ It is difficult to ascertain what further role or influence Matilda held within the Becket dispute, as evidence does not survive to indicate the extent of Matilda's intervention. Chibnall argued Matilda opposed Becket's appointment to the archbishopric, and after she was overruled Matilda's influence over Henry declined.³⁸ It is unlikely any further interventions would have succeeded. This letter is an indication of the changing power relationship between Matilda and Henry. Undoubtedly, Henry still used Matilda as regent in Normandy due to her influence, as she co-ruled parts of the region from 1135-1144, and later the entirety of the region from 1144 onwards, alongside Geoffrey and later Henry due to her position as duchess of Normandy, although her powers here were dependent on

³⁴ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 169-172; James Craigie Robertson, ed., *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, 7 vols. (London: Rolls Series, 1875-1885), v, 144-151.

³⁵ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 169.

³⁶ 'quia nisi per humilitatem magnam, et moderationem evidentissimam, gratiam regis recuperare non poteritis...' Matilda, empress, to Thomas Becket, "Letter from Matilda, empress, to Thomas Becket ()," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/174.html.

³⁷ Elisabeth van Houts and Patricia Skinner, eds., *Medieval Writings on Secular Women* (London: Penguin, 2011), no. 119.

³⁸ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 166-169.

Geoffrey's successes and the acceptance of her role as duchess-heiress.³⁹ Henry always needed to avoid a power vacuum, however as his position as ruler of the Angevin realms was clearly established by the end of the 1150s, it is plausible Henry came to depend on Matilda's counsel and influence less as his reign continued. Valuable comparisons can be drawn between Matilda's influence during Henry's reign and Eleanor's involvement in the reigns of her sons, Richard and John.

Eleanor: A Devoted Mother and Regent

Eleanor's strong relationships with her children, particularly Richard, can be seen through her persistence to have Richard acknowledged as heir to Aquitaine when Henry initially tried to divide his lands in 1169.⁴⁰ Richard has often been recognised as having been Eleanor's favourite son, and Bowie noted Eleanor referred to Richard as *dilectus* or *carissimus* in several letters.⁴¹ Although Eleanor also referred to John and Joanna using these terms, her preference for Richard because he was due to inherit her territory of Aquitaine is further evidence of their closeness. Eleanor acted as regent in England for Henry on several occasions according to Ralph V. Turner; in 1156 and 1157 in England, and in Maine from 1165-1166.⁴² None of these occasions have extant evidence demonstrating Eleanor's status as a formal regent. However, some writs do survive from her tenure as queen of England, documenting her exercise of power.⁴³ Turner argued Eleanor's relationships with her sons only developed during the period of rebellion in 1170-1173, however her ties to Richard in particular are evident from a young age.⁴⁴ As this section will demonstrate, Eleanor and her kingly sons effectively constructed Collaborative Unions to govern the Angevin domains.

Eleanor had clear experience of ruling vast amounts of territory as she was responsible for Aquitaine for most of her life. This, in addition to her close relationship with Richard, explains why she would have been chosen as regent when her son chose to go on the Third Crusade, instead of Berengaria. From the scant extant evidence, Berengaria appears to have been a political novice who would have needed to quickly adapt to the Angevin

³⁹ Hagger, *Norman Rule*, 179-183.

⁴⁰ John Gillingham, "Telle Mère, Tel Fils: Aliénor et Richard," in *Aliénor d'Aquitaine*, ed. Martin Aurell (Nantes: 303, 2004), 27-34.

⁴¹ Bowie, *Daughters*, 45.

⁴² Turner, *Eleanor*, 132-133, 141.

⁴³ BL, Harley, MS. 1708, fol. 113b; Joseph Stevenson, ed., *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, 2 vols. (London: Rolls Series, 1858), ii, 225.

⁴⁴ Ralph V. Turner, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and her children: an inquiry into medieval family attachment," *Journal of Medieval History* 14 (1988): 329.

dynamics, with no clearly established allies or networks, in addition to learning how to rule. Eleanor returned to England after delivering Berengaria to Richard for their nuptials, but Berengaria and Richard continued on crusade until 1193. Little is known of Berengaria's return journey other than her six month sojourn in Rome, and the extant evidence only points to Eleanor's intervention in appealing to Pope Celestine III for assistance in Richard's release after he was captured.⁴⁵

The event for which we have most evidence of Eleanor's actions as regent is for ransoming Richard when he was captured on his return journey from the Third Crusade. Richard was captured by Duke Leopold of Austria in December 1192, and later handed over to Leopold's overlord Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI in March 1193. Eleanor's active petitioning of Pope Celestine III for intervention in Richard's capture is documented in several surviving letters from this period. These letters largely comply with the *ars dictaminis*, the structures which governed medieval letter writing, although these could be transgressed to enable greater communication.⁴⁶ In her first letter, Eleanor requested that Celestine intervene since 'the only and common solace is awaited from the authority of your power'.⁴⁷ The relationship between queens and the papacy is analysed in chapter five, considering how each royal woman navigated ecclesiastical relations with contemporary popes, dependent on their power and the political situation at the time. In this instance, Eleanor was working clearly for Richard's benefit and employs several cases of biblical allusions and rhetoric in order to bring Celestine to her side and hopefully ensure he intervened to secure Richard's release. Rachel F. Stapleton has convincingly argued that Eleanor positions herself as a *mater dolorosa* in these letters, a grieving mother who is overcome with emotion.⁴⁸ Stapleton's argument that Eleanor manipulates her position as a queen, mother, and widow, in order to draw a response from Celestine demonstrates Eleanor's understanding of the political situation and the need to appeal through a set of tropes in order to achieve the desired outcome.⁴⁹ Eleanor's deferral to Celestine's authority whilst evoking references to her own

⁴⁵ Storey, "Berengaria of Navarre," 41-59.

⁴⁶ Waag, "Gender," 292, 304.

⁴⁷ 'unicum et commune omnibus exspectatur de vestrae potestatis auctoritate solatium.' Eleanor of Aquitaine to Pope Celestine III, "Letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine to Pope Celestine III (1193)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/139.html.

⁴⁸ Rachel F. Stapleton, "Motherly Devotion and Fatherly Obligation: Eleanor of Aquitaine's Letters to Pope Celestine III," *MFF* 48.1 (2012): 106-110.

⁴⁹ Stapleton, "Motherly Devotion," 116.

power indicates she was aware of how to strategically utilise her ruling emotions to achieve the desired result.

Eleanor faced multiple issues when campaigning for Richard's release. She actively worked with the nobility and other rulers to try and assist in Richard's release, primarily relying on Walter of Coutances.⁵⁰ However, the taxes needed to fund the ransom would be unpopular, and she faced the risk either of dissension or failing to secure the ransom for her son's release. In addition, Eleanor had to handle opposition from John, who opted to rebel with the support of Philip Augustus, king of France, in 1194. Philip Augustus had made several successful advances into Normandy in Richard's absence and was keen to make further incursions into the Angevin domains. Eleanor worked alongside the nominated regency council to repel these attacks, and to ensure continuity across the domains in terms of governance.

After Richard's death in April 1199, Eleanor issued several charters at Fontevraud, the site of his burial, with the intention of consolidating Angevin authority and ensuring Plantagenet rulership was maintained across the Angevin realms. Three initial grants were made to Fontevraud in April 1199, confirming the abbey's previously held rights and annual revenues, plausibly made due to its place as a dynastic mausolea.⁵¹ Eleanor confirmed in the same month the rights of Ralph of Mauléon to the castle of Talmond, and exchanged the rights of the castle of Benon and £50 annually in order for Eleanor and John to assert rights over La Rochelle.⁵² Jane Martindale has highlighted the significance of having Ralph as an ally due to his potential as a threat to the countess of Poitou.⁵³ The political acumen of Eleanor, to exchange two castles for the economic and strategic importance of La Rochelle, as highlighted by Martindale, proved of immense benefit to John.⁵⁴ Eleanor stabilised Aquitaine to ensure it could be passed to John in due course. She ensured the local nobility stayed loyal to the Angevins, noticeably in Bordeaux by suppressing the taxes which Richard had imposed during his reign, in a charter granted on 1 July 1199.⁵⁵ Martindale's argument that Eleanor was primarily focussed on preserving Aquitaine in the last years of her life is accurate: Eleanor's authority remained in her duchy.⁵⁶ Eleanor's

⁵⁰ Turner, *Eleanor*, 272.

⁵¹ *CDF*, nos. 1094, 1096, 1097; AD Maine-et-Loire, 193H1.

⁵² *CDF*, no. 1099.

⁵³ Martindale, "The Last Years," 161.

⁵⁴ Martindale, "The Last Years," 162.

⁵⁵ Henri Barchausen, ed., *Archives Municipales de Bordeaux. Livres des Coutumes. Tome Cinquième* (Bordeaux: Imprimerie G. Gounouilhou, 1890), no. 45.

⁵⁶ Martindale, "The Last Years," 153.

dedication to John's reign and position as first lady of the realm can be seen with the almost continual payments from the Pipe Rolls from 1199 until her death in 1204.⁵⁷ Despite the accession of Isabella as consort in August 1200, Eleanor's work on behalf of John ensured she maintained income as dowager.

1199 also saw Eleanor pay homage to Philip Augustus for Poitou to ensure John was recognised as her heir against the claims of Arthur of Brittany, although Philip Augustus continued to offer support for Arthur.⁵⁸ The ceremony of a queen of England, albeit in her capacity as a countess, paying homage to the king of France, was rare. After securing the south for John, Eleanor retired to Fontevraud, though she appears on the political scene again in July 1202 when Arthur, supported by Philip Augustus, attacked her castle at Mirabeau.⁵⁹ John successfully came to Eleanor's defence, and Aquitaine was preserved until Eleanor's death. Despite Eleanor's efforts to maintain the territories surrounding Aquitaine, namely Anjou and Maine, these both fell to the Capetians in 1203. The loss of Normandy in 1204, followed by Eleanor's death and the abandonment of the Poitevin and Aquitanian nobles to the Capetians, saw the collapse of the Angevin realms. Eleanor had continued to act as a co-ruler throughout John's reign, as she had Richard's, sharing power with her sons in Aquitaine whilst they shared royal power with her, though with noticeably less movement and fervour, likely due to her wish to retire and advancing years. Her political activities in the last years of her life serve as a reminder that regardless of her position as either queen, duchess, or countess, Eleanor was committed to preserving her children's inheritance as well as her own duchy.

Having examined Matilda and Eleanor's tenures of informal regency, I now assess why these women were chosen instead of their daughters-in-law to act as an informal ruler in certain areas. Henry successfully deployed Matilda and Eleanor to Normandy and Aquitaine respectively as these were their spheres of influence prior to his accession, and it was a sign of political acumen to utilise Matilda and Eleanor in areas they were experienced in ruling. However, due to a lack of mature heirs in the first two decades of Henry and Eleanor's rulership, Henry also employed Eleanor as regent outside of Aquitaine. Henry exercised greater control over Eleanor's actions from the late 1150s onwards, as explored in chapter three. Richard's close relationship with his mother undoubtedly influenced his decision to

⁵⁷ No entries are made in Eleanor's name in 1203. Eleanor appears in the Pipe Rolls until 1212. *PR John 1*, 212, 230; *PR John 2*, 92, 118, 163; *PR John 3*, 23, 115, 216; *PR John 4*, 84, 131, 172; *PR John 6*, 80-81, 113, 141-142, 145.

⁵⁸ *Rot. Chart.*, 30; Martindale, "The Last Years," 160.

⁵⁹ Turner, "Eleanor of Aquitaine," 90.

depend upon her for counsel and rulership. As Eleanor was also experienced from acting as a regent in Henry's reign, it was a practical decision for both Richard and John to grant her informal authority in the Angevin realms. Berengaria was an inexperienced ruler, with no extant evidence to support her administration of lands or any other forms of rulership prior to her accession as queen of England. At a time of precarity with rebellious nobles it was more astute to install Eleanor in a position of power. Eleanor, like Matilda, held closer bonds to and was familiar with the local nobility due to her previous experience of ruling; these aspects made both women better placed to exercise political power. A similar argument can be made as to why Isabella was not elevated to a position of authority by John: namely that Eleanor was a trusted, experienced ruler who was capable of working in her family's interests. Isabella was still very young and politically inexperienced for the infrequent periods John was away from England, which explains why she was not chosen as regent as examined in chapter three. Berengaria and Isabella's inexperience can be tied to the fact that neither Richard nor John provided an opportunity for them to learn how to rule, as Berengaria and Isabella did not have access to lands to administer.

As discussed in chapter three, the decisions made by Henry and Richard to elevate their mothers over their wives could lead to conflict. The kings did not successfully construct Collaborative Unions with their wives, with the exception of the early years of Henry II's reign. Matilda and Eleanor successfully maintained their own spheres of influence where they could rule without conflict with one another. However, Eleanor's position as informal regent allowed her prominence over Berengaria, and thus Berengaria did not have her own sphere of influence as queen. Instead, Berengaria was promptly left with her household in Anjou upon her return from crusade. The decisions to appoint Matilda and Eleanor as informal regents was understandable given their breadth of experience, however this does not erase the issue of competition between Eleanor and her two daughters-in-law. This next section discusses how concepts of life cycles in particular affected Berengaria and Isabella's appearance in the chronicles, and how their experiences of royal motherhood differed from those of Matilda and Eleanor.

Sidelined Mothers and Childless Queens

Isabella of Angoulême: Mother of the King

Despite allegations of marital discord between Isabella and John, Isabella bore John several heirs in their sixteen years of marriage: their partnership is analysed further in chapter

three.⁶⁰ Their eldest son, Henry, succeeded to the English throne upon John's death in 1216. Although historiography on Isabella is minimal, the relationship between Isabella and her children has often been a core focus of debate.⁶¹ It is entirely plausible that Isabella would have expected to be appointed regent in a similar capacity to her mother-in-law Eleanor, either during John's absences, or for Henry's minority. Isabella and Henry's relationship does not fulfil any of the models of rulership discussed above as they did not have a co-ruling partnership. This last section will foreground Wilkinson's argument that Isabella continued to work for the interests of her children after her departure from England in 1217, and will then examine in further detail why Isabella was not chosen as regent. This section will only briefly cover Isabella's activities upon her return to France as this area falls largely outside the scope of this thesis.

Although there were attempts by contemporary chroniclers, particularly Matthew Paris, to harm Isabella's reputation, Isabella's relationship with John and her children appears to have been stable during John's reign. Wilkinson's research on Isabella as a mother and the upbringing of the royal children demonstrates the obstacles which prevented her becoming regent. Primarily, John did not send for Isabella on his deathbed, nor name her as holding a position in royal government after his death.⁶² A regency council was established to govern during Henry's minority, from which Isabella was firmly excluded. Wilkinson posits the regency council was likely to prevent Isabella from exercising any influence over her children due to lack of experience, as well as uncertainty about Isabella's diplomatic abilities and loyalties.⁶³ Isabella's lack of experience was largely due to John's restrictions on her exercise of power during her time as consort. However, when compared with her mother-in-law Eleanor who took the place of her sister-in-law Berengaria as regent, plausibly due to inexperience, the decision of the regency council can be better understood. It is also likely that given the recent French conquests and Isabella's position as a French heiress, she would have been viewed with more suspicion than Eleanor may have been in the 1150s and 1160s.

Given Isabella's actions upon her return to France in 1218, namely the holding of her daughter Joan in exchange for her dower, as examined in chapter five, and her marriage to Hugh X de Lusignan in 1220, the decision to exclude her from the regency would appear

⁶⁰ *Wendover*, ii, 206-207.

⁶¹ Wilkinson "Maternal Abandonment," 101-124; Vincent, "Isabella," 198-199, 209-211.

⁶² Wilkinson, "Maternal Abandonment," 109.

⁶³ Wilkinson, "Maternal Abandonment," 111.

justified to the councillors. The significance of this alliance is discussed further in chapter three, but ultimately it was a powerful move by Isabella to indicate her independence from the English court and to place herself as a potential ally to either England or France. However, given the ongoing exclusion of Isabella from English political affairs, it is plausible Isabella felt she could work better for her children's interests in her native Angoulême, whereby she could mediate with the French royal family and nobility if required. Isabella's decision to marry Hugh threatened to rupture her relationship with Henry, initially due to her refusal to hand back Joan until she had received her dower. This continuous changing of alliances undoubtedly affected Isabella's relationships with not only Henry, but also with her other Plantagenet children who were taken under the care of Peter de Roches, bishop of Winchester and a member of Henry's powerful minority council.

In light of Isabella's actions, the regency council likely viewed their decision to exclude Isabella from the regency, despite being the queen mother, a tactical choice. If Isabella had been chosen as regent, it is entirely plausible she would have worked to ensure her children's inheritance. However, given Henry acceded the throne as a child king in the midst of a civil war, the make up of the regency council was determined by powerful men who were allied to John.⁶⁴ Ward's argument that although the arrangements for vice-regal guardianships were temporary, contemporary opposition to queen mothers had a gendered basis but was also founded upon the uncertainty surrounding a child king which inevitably heightened concerns as to who had access and therefore control over the exercise of royal power.⁶⁵ Isabella may have had an avenue to power through her royal son, however she chose to pursue power through other means, namely remarriage to a valuable ally. As Henry's succession was not completely secure, owing to the civil war, it is plausible Isabella could have lost any lands or titles she held, as well as influence, if Henry had been deposed. After sixteen years of marriage and control under John, it is understandable that Isabella wanted to regain her independence and make decisions regarding her future, much like Eleanor after her annulment from Louis VII. Isabella clearly worked in her own interests, to secure Angoulême from her nearest neighbour and to ensure she had an ally and protection, through which she could negotiate with the English and French kings. Isabella's decision to use her position as an heiress to exercise control instead of her role as a mother provides an interesting comparison to Berengaria. Although Isabella had more options than

⁶⁴ Carpenter, *Minority*, 50-127.

⁶⁵ Emily Joan Ward, "Child Kings and Guardianship in North-Western Europe, c.1050-c.1250," in *History of Monarchy*, 556.

her predecessor as queen, being a mother was not necessarily advantageous in increasing Isabella's power.

Isabella was not a bad mother by either contemporary or medieval standards, and has suffered from the sharp pen of two chroniclers. Her decisions are arguably strategic, as like Matilda and Eleanor she wanted independence and to ensure inheritance for her children. This was not exceptional by medieval standards. Isabella's reputation has been marred not purely because of gender, but because of her association with the Lusignans and frequently changing alliances. Had Isabella remained in England, it is likely she would have taken up a largely ceremonial role as dowager, with little intervention in political affairs. John's closest advisers were unwilling to place a female figure in the position of regent, and as such Isabella was forced to find alternative avenues to power, similar to Berengaria.

Not A Mother: Berengaria of Navarre

In comparison to the other three women in this study, Berengaria did not bear any children, royal or otherwise. As such, she did not experience the expected life cycles of a woman which were maid, wife, mother, and widow. However, being a childless queen does not mean Berengaria was completely powerless, as recent work by Kristin Geaman and Theresa Earenfight demonstrated. Geaman and Earenfight argued queens held a number of roles alongside providing heirs, such as being a spiritual mother and acting as an intercessor.⁶⁶ They stated that queenship consisted of subtle and important variations of power, wherein a childless queen could be a patron, an intercessor and a beloved figure who earned the loyalty of her subjects.⁶⁷ Geaman and Earenfight's conclusion that the success of childless queens 'depended on their personalities, their talent for governance and their natal families', is important, since they highlighted that concepts of dynasty encompassed more than simply the monarchs and their potential heirs.⁶⁸ The three areas noted here: personality, talent, and natal family, are worth further exploration when considering Berengaria's access to power. Of Berengaria's personality, as indeed of many medieval queens, we know little. In her dowager period it could be argued her actions demonstrated that she was a woman of great tenacity, politically aware, and considerate towards those close to her, but for the time she spent as consort the lack of extant evidence hinders our understanding. Berengaria had little opportunity to make herself beloved by her subjects in

⁶⁶ Geaman and Earenfight, "Heir," 521, 524.

⁶⁷ Geaman and Earenfight, "Heir," 528.

⁶⁸ Geaman and Earenfight, "Heir," 528.

the continental Angevin realms, and none whatsoever with her English subjects. This lack of opportunity also prevented her from exercising her talent of governance, although such acumen is evident during her time as Lady of Le Mans, as detailed in chapter five. Lastly, although Berengaria's natal family were active and able to intercede on her behalf, they do not appear to have done so. Berengaria's brother Sancho VI, king of Navarre does not appear to have held much political influence over the Plantagenet kings and worked to maintain harmonious relations with them, rather than protesting on Berengaria's behalf, indicating Sancho prioritised the relations with the English rulers above Berengaria's rights. There is evidence of alliances between Richard, John, and Sancho, but no evidence to indicate Sancho acted on Berengaria's behalf in her dowager period.⁶⁹

There is clear evidence of Berengaria negotiating with and in some cases, forming alliances with other influential rulers and nobles in western Europe in her dowager period. This was an integral part of being a royal woman, however it was even more essential to Berengaria because she did not have a child through which she could gain influence or depend upon for protection. Berengaria's relationships with both John and Henry III were tenuous owing to her dower dispute, which is discussed in chapter five. Berengaria's alliance with Popes Innocent III and Honorius III are analysed in the following chapter, but viewed within the context of building networks as a childless queen and a widow, it is perhaps unsurprising that the pope was the first powerful ruler to whom Berengaria would appeal. The papacy traditionally protected widows and those who were vulnerable, and Berengaria successfully petitioned the two aforementioned popes to influence the English kings on her behalf.⁷⁰ Although the dower struggle waged on for several years, Berengaria's diplomatic skills here enabled her to place pressure on John and Henry regarding the payment of her dower, even if they failed to follow through immediately.

Berengaria built advantageous working relationships with two powerful rulers: Philip Augustus and Louis IX, both kings of France. Berengaria, dowager queen of England, performed homage to the king of France in exchange for Le Mans in 1204, as detailed in the *Registres*.⁷¹ Le Mans, located in Maine, was previously part of the Angevin heartlands but

⁶⁹ *Foedera*, 126-127; Carlos Marichalar, ed., *Colección Diplomática del Rey de Sancho el Fuerte de Navarra* (Pamplona: Aramburu, 1934), 187-188.

⁷⁰ Henry III to Berengaria of Navarre, "Letter from Henry III, king of England, to Berengaria of Navarre, queen of England (July 1220)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/781.html.

⁷¹ *Registres de Philippe Auguste*, no. 47; Delaborde, Petit-Dutaillis and Monicat, *Recueil des Actes de Philippe Auguste*, nos. 837, 840.

had fallen to Philip in 1204. The charter from the *Registres* stated Berengaria surrendered all her rights to her French dower lands in exchange for the city of Le Mans and its environs.⁷² By choosing to ally with Philip Augustus instead of John, Berengaria ensured she had a safe haven in France in the wake of growing conquests by Philip Augustus in Angevin territory. It is not known if Berengaria resided in Le Mans prior to her permanent residency after 1204, however she quickly established links with the local nobility and ecclesiastics. Berengaria was connected to the counts of Champagne through her sister Blanche, although as Thibaut was in conflict with Louis VIII over the taxation of Jews in the early years of his reign, Berengaria was better placed to continue her alliance with the French kings. Louis IX appears to have held Berengaria in high regard, referring to her as ‘our dear queen’, and in 1228 he granted the land upon which the Abbaye de L’Épau would be established.⁷³

When considering the three facets proposed by Geaman and Earenfight wherein Berengaria could access power, it is evident that it was in her dowager period she was best able to demonstrate an ability to govern and to use her personal attributes to maintain this power. Berengaria did not have a strong co-ruling partnership which enabled her access to power, nor a son, nor a natal family committed to ensuring her rights and properties. Her relationship with the Navarrese royal family appeared tenuous, with Sancho more interested in maintaining an alliance with the Plantagenet kings than providing for Berengaria. There is no evidence she returned to Navarre after Richard’s death. She briefly maintained her relationship with Blanche as noted above, however Blanche was either not capable or does not appear to have acted to defend Berengaria’s interests, indicating that although a friendly relationship was maintained in reality it was not one of power relations. Berengaria was essentially a woman trying to carve her own place in the Angevin-French spheres of influence without ceding authority to anyone. In this, she was ultimately successful as she held control of Le Mans for twenty-four years with no dispute, and maintained harmonious relations with the French kings in this period.

Conclusion

⁷² ‘Dominus autem, noster Philippus, rex Francorum, in civitate Cenomanensi et ejus adjacentiis et forestis tenendis sicut domina tenet dotalitium, debet nobis excambire valorem reddituum trium predictorum castrorum et appenditorum quem valebant in tempore quo rex Anglie Ricardus, maritus noster, iter arripuit in partes Jerosolimitanas, sicut idem rex Ricardus cum matre sua ea tenebat quando iter illud arripuit.’ *Registres de Philippe-Auguste*, no. 47.

⁷³ ‘carissima domina nostra Berengariana quondam regina Anglorum...’ BNF, Latin 17124, fol. 6, fol. 29.

This chapter has demonstrated that although being a royal mother placed a queen in a strong position to access power, motherhood was not always a guaranteed route to this. Royal women often had to seek other methods to exercise authority. As a whole, all four women were more powerful in their dowager period, whether mothers or not. Both Matilda and Eleanor were trusted by their sons to act as regents and co-rulers on their behalf, as seen with the Collaborative Unions which they formed with their offspring. In all cases, these queens were able to operate far more effectively in their dowager period than during their marriage. Although Berengaria may stand out for being a childless queen, this did not inhibit her power as a dowager as she successfully constructed alliances which ensured she had a secure sphere of influence until her death. Her successor Isabella faced different challenges to Matilda and Eleanor as she had a royal son who succeeded to the throne during his minority, but she lacked alliances to support any attempts she may have made for the regency. There is no evidence of Isabella's Courtenay relatives intervening to recommend the regency pass to Isabella, although her half-brother Peter de Joigny was in England at the time of John's death and fought on Henry III's behalf against the barons.⁷⁴ It is apparent that previous ruling experience and a harmonious relationship with their children were the two most dominant factors which affected why some women were selected as regents in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries while others were not. Given Berengaria's and Isabella's successful administration of their lands in their dowager period, it is entirely plausible that they would have been effective regents if granted the opportunity. Instead, they sought alternative avenues to power. However, in Isabella's case, her choice of spouse led to further discord with the Plantagenets. Although this chapter has focussed upon the importance of motherhood as an avenue to power, chapters three and five demonstrate that motherhood was not the central way in which queens could demonstrate their authority. A strong partnership between a queen and her husband could be of equal merit, and, while harmonious relationships with both husbands and sons could stabilise a dowager's power, women such as Berengaria could still carve out their own sphere of influence and authority.

⁷⁴ Vincent, "Isabella," 203.

Chapter Five: Competition Between Mothers and Daughters-in-Law

Whereas previous chapters have uncovered incidences of co-operation between these queens and their co-rulers, this chapter exclusively investigates the relations between the queens as mothers and daughters-in-law through the lenses of co-operation, conflict, and competition. The first section of this chapter examines ceremonial roles and issues of precedence and presence, as ceremonies provided a vital opportunity for the queen to be visible in the historical record and to the public. This builds upon the contextual discussions in chapter two which highlighted the importance of ceremonies and titles to the queen's status and subsequent authority.¹ The second section addresses the conflict surrounding dower lands and the collection of queen's gold, which was exacerbated by the longevity of Eleanor in conjunction with the loss of Plantagenet lands in France during John's reign. Dower was an essential source of revenue for queens and their ability to fulfil their role successfully could be heavily dependent on access to funds. The final section in this chapter provides an analysis of the relationships between the four women and the Church, examining both ecclesiastical patronage and connections with local ecclesiastics and the papacy to understand how they competed for networks and support. The exceptions to this are the exchanges between Eleanor and Pope Celestine III regarding Richard I's release, and interactions with Thomas Becket, as this was analysed in chapter four. The final section of this chapter also examines piety and patronage, which were key activities the queen was expected to perform. The conclusions reached by this analysis is that while the relationships between the four queens were highly competitive, there were opportunities for co-operation between them. Although it is difficult to ascertain the motivations and the personalities of those involved, it is evident Eleanor was greatly trusted by her sons to operate on their behalf as shown in chapter four. As such, she continued to collect revenues from both lands and taxes that would have been granted to the current consort. This chapter again highlights how powerful women could be as dowagers, a time often associated with a waning of power. The delineation between power and authority as discussed here is as follows: power is the ability to influence and exercise one's will over others, often backed by the holding of an office, as well as the capacity to work with others and network. The concept of authority is tied to agency, which is the ability to make

¹ Earenfight, "Highly Visible," 86-90.

decisions and hold control over one's actions. There are several occasions where the four women under study here do not hold power, but do still have authority as they are able to act for their own interests, even if these do not directly affect others.

Titles and Ceremonial Roles

This section will focus on how the four women utilised titles in their charters to demonstrate their authority and competed over participation in ceremonial roles as part of the office of queen. Through analysis of the extant charters it can be understood all four women had a variety of titles, particularly Matilda and Eleanor, and they deployed these titles in documents at strategic points. Through examining records of ceremonies and the appearance of the queen in ceremonies, it can be demonstrated that some queens were more visible than others, as examined below.

Titles

The choices made by Matilda when issuing charters demonstrate the importance she placed on her lineage and her authority. She frequently chose to list herself as *filia Henrici*, signifying her power came from her position as daughter and heir of the previous king.² As heiress to the English throne, Matilda undoubtedly sought to remind the nobility that she was the daughter of Henry I, king of England, and ought to be queen of England had it not been for Stephen's usurpation. Matilda also referred directly to her descent from her mother Matilda in a 1141 grant, again indicating her dynastic heritage: this added further authority to her claim to the throne because of Matilda of Scotland's royal descent from the pre-Conquest house of Wessex, which was an essential link.³ Interestingly, Matilda never used *regina* in her charters, perhaps due to the lack of official grant of this title. However, Matilda employed the title of *Anglorum domina* in some of her charters from April 1141 until 1148. Stephen D. Church has argued the reception of Matilda at Winchester Cathedral on 8 April 1141 as *domina Anglorum* indicated she was an uncrowned monarch, and was now '(lady) ruler of the English.'⁴ Bishop Henry's solution to ending the interregnum brought about by Stephen's capture officially gave Matilda the power to act as queen, and the charters noted above which feature the title *domina Anglorum* are evidence of this. The importance of this ceremony should not be overlooked as a significant precedent to a coronation. Matilda's authority as Lady of the English was enhanced and

² *RRAN*, iii, nos. 253, 274, 295, 296.

³ *RRAN*, iii, no. 581.

⁴ Church, "Succession," 191.

even though she was never crowned, she continued to use the title upon her return to Normandy.

Church also discussed two charters, one for Glastonbury Abbey and one for Reading Abbey, which refer to Matilda as *regina Anglorum*.⁵ The authenticity of these two charters has been debated, however Chibnall robustly argued it is unlikely Bishop Henry would have sanctioned the use of *regina* in the Reading Abbey charter prior to Matilda's coronation, and that it may be a copyist error in the Glastonbury charter.⁶ It is also unlikely Matilda would have compromised her position by using the title of queen before she was crowned: although her power may have been sanctioned, the final step to position her as official monarch had not yet taken place.

Matilda rarely referred to herself as *comitissa Andegaviensi*, which indicates her desire to be viewed separately from her husband Geoffrey. As discussed in chapter three, Matilda and Geoffrey viewed their interests as separate campaigns and rather than Matilda's lack of usage of the countess title indicating estrangement or disdain of the Angevins, it demonstrated her intention to be viewed as a *femme sole* who claimed the throne through her father's lineage. Matilda's choice regarding the title of countess demonstrates a certain amount of political acumen, as the dislike of the Angevins by the English would have led to further disputes. Matilda's association with Geoffrey and the Angevins could have been perceived as a foreign conquest of the Anglo-Norman realm, rather than a rightful heiress taking up her throne. Matilda also rarely used the title of *ducissa Normanniae* in her charters, despite Geoffrey's conquest of the region in 1144. Her decision to forego this title can be linked to her emphasis on her association with Henry I, as this was where her claim derived, and the choice to use *imperatrix* as a signifier of power. By the late 1140s, Matilda had also changed tactics by focussing on the transferral of power and her claim to her son Henry. From 1148 Henry appears to have been recognised as the informal ruler of Normandy; however, this was not officially realised until he paid homage to Louis VII in 1151.⁷

Matilda's decision to use *imperatrix* as the opening address clause for most of her charters indicates her understanding of medieval perceptions of power. Empress was the highest

⁵ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 343, 698.

⁶ Marjorie Chibnall, "The Charters of the Empress Matilda," in George Garnett and John Hudson, eds. *Law and Government in Medieval England and Normandy. Essays in honour of Sir James Holt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 279.

⁷ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 153, 155; Warren, *Henry II*, 42.

secular status a woman could hold in the medieval world, and it was with some disapproval that Matilda married Geoffrey, who was only a count. As noted above, Matilda did not use the title of countess, nor *uxor*, though she occasionally referred to Geoffrey in her charters.⁸ It was from the status of empress Matilda could derive the most authority, even if she were no longer acting empress. This combination of titular and dynastic authority presented the strongest claim Matilda would have to the English crown. Although the inclusion of other titles may well have bolstered her authority, it was politically wise to avoid too much connection with Geoffrey, when Matilda was claiming the throne on her own merits, and not because of her marital connections.

Conversely, Eleanor utilised a full range of titles in her charters. Marie Hivergneaux has extensively examined Eleanor's charters and her use of address clauses which will be briefly summarised below.⁹ The marriage of Eleanor and Henry was a strategic political decision and undoubtedly Eleanor would have understood the authority that came from the title of queen, and deployed it in her charters, even in her dowager period.¹⁰ Eleanor exercised power within her right across the Angevin domains. However, it is worth bearing in mind as the titular authority of queen was also tied to Henry, it would remind their subjects the king reinforced Eleanor's authority. The exception to this rule would be in Aquitaine, where Eleanor was duchess before her marriage to Henry and would remain its duchess after his death in 1189. As noted above, Hivergneaux provides most of the analysis of Eleanor's Aquitaine charters. One significant point which ought to be noted here is that Henry brought Eleanor out of captivity after the 1173 revolt because he required her authority and presence to subdue the Aquitanians, although Hivergneaux argued it was a façade, used to bring their rebellious sons to heel.¹¹ Eleanor never forsook her titular authority, referring herself to queen and duchess even when her daughters-in-law became queens of England and appropriated the titles associated with rulers over the Angevin domains. Eleanor's power, as opposed to her daughters-in-law, was more than symbolic, although it was not continuous throughout her life, as is discussed in more detail throughout the thesis. Notable examples of the wax and wane of power were the period after her divorce from Louis and the initial few years with Henry, in contrast with her years of imprisonment

⁸ *RRAN*, iii, no. 371

⁹ Hivergneaux, "Aliénor d'Aquitaine," 63-88; Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 55-76; Hivergneaux, "Aliénor et le Aquitaine," 65-70; Hivergneaux, "Autour d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine," 61-73.

¹⁰ *CDF*, nos. 1091-1094, 1096-1101, 1105, 1107-1108, 1248, 1301, 1304, 1306-1307.

¹¹ Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 71.

in the 1170s and 1180s. As demonstrated, both Matilda and Eleanor successfully wielded power and authority, linked to their titles.

Both Berengaria and Isabella held the title of *regina*, and charters granted in their dowager periods referred to them as such.¹² As Berengaria and Isabella were crowned queen they ought to have been able to fully exercise the use of the title in their charters whilst consort. Given the lack of surviving evidence, it is difficult to ascertain whether they had the opportunity to do so. Unsurprisingly, both queens continued to use the title as dowagers, which indicates their understanding of the authority that came with the title and their decision to try and wield the authority they were denied as consort. They utilised the title to negotiate successfully with other rulers and deploy power in their spheres of influence. In Isabella's case, the use of *regina* when writing to her son Henry would have served as a secondary reminder of her previous position, even if she did not exercise power as queen.

The striking difference between Berengaria and Isabella is that Berengaria did not have other titles to deploy outside of the Angevin realms. Berengaria never used the titles of duchess of Normandy nor countess of Anjou in her charters. Although she was theoretically heiress to Navarre, she did not list *reginula*, the female equivalent of *regulus*, the latter meaning 'little king', or *primogenita* which was later utilised by royal Navarrese female heiresses, in any of her extant charters.¹³ Some heiresses, such as Empress Matilda and Melisende of Jerusalem, were listed as *heres Angliae* and *heres regni* respectively, demonstrating that although not a frequent practice it was not uncommon during this period.¹⁴ Berengaria's common epithet of Lady of Le Mans, like Matilda's title Lady of the English, was not a formal title, however the former does appear in an undated charter, plausibly between 1204 and 1230, whereby Berengaria confirms the sale of the vineyards of the Jew Désirée to the abbey of Saint Vincent.¹⁵ However, lacking titles did not appear to have restricted Berengaria's authority in Le Mans, as discussed throughout this study.

¹² For a charter of Berengaria's using *regina* see BL, *Additional Charter 46402* (1230) and discussion below; for Isabella's England charters after John's death see *Calendar of Patent Rolls Edward II, Volume V 1324-7* (London: Public Record Office, 1904), 128; Vincent, "Isabella," appendix nos. 1 and 3.

¹³ Charles Cawley, accessed 01 August 2020, "Foundation for Medieval Genealogy, Kings of Navarre," http://fmg.ac/Projects/MedLands/NAVARRE.htm#_ftn396, 4.1, 4.2.

¹⁴ Hans Eberhard Mayer, "The Succession to Baldwin II of Jerusalem: English Impact on the East," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 39 (1985): 144-145.

¹⁵ André Chédville, ed., *Liber Controversiarum Sancti Vincentii Cenomannensis ou Second Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Saint-Vincent Du Mans. Texte édité avec introduction, notes et index par A. Chédville* (Paris: Institut de Recherches Historiques de Rennes, 1968), no. 97.

What is interesting to note is Berengaria's self-representation in primarily French charters, whereby she referred to herself as *quondam regina Angliae*, the former queen of England, rather than solely as *regina* as her predecessors and successors did. This phrasing does not appear in all charters concerned with Berengaria during her time in Le Mans, as Trindade has asserted Berengaria always styled herself as *quondam*.¹⁶ The charter Berengaria grants concerned with the Abbey of Saint Vincent, Le Mans, lists her as queen of England, however the *Registres* refer to her as *quondam* only when John confirms a charter regarding her dower.¹⁷ The *Recueil des Actes de Philippe-Auguste* and *Registres de Philippe-Auguste* otherwise list Berengaria as 'jadis', nominally 'once' queen of England when discussing the negotiations for Le Mans.¹⁸ The *Enquête de Saint-Julien* only records Berengaria as queen of England.¹⁹ It is plausible the charters Berengaria had more control over issuing are the ones in which she referred to herself as *quondam*, which is seen in two sets of documents: BL Additional Charter 46402 (1230), and the collection of charters in BNF Latin 17124. Both are concerned with grants to L'Épau by Berengaria and the transferral of the land to Berengaria from Louis IX. The last set of documents wherein we can see variances in Berengaria's title is the cartulary of St Pierre-de-la-Cour whereby Berengaria is referred to as both *quondam regina* and *regina*.²⁰ The choice of titles is inconsistent, as it does not appear to be attached to a particular period, type of patronage, or institution. Berengaria does not refer to herself as formerly queen in all the charters she issued and is not consistently referred to by one title in set groups of documents. In most English records such as the Pipe Rolls, Berengaria is referred to as queen. It appears to be a mostly French phenomenon wherein this change in the title appears. In the thirty-five French documents examined here, Berengaria appears as queen twenty-two times and as formerly queen thirteen times, with most of these latter records coming from BNF Latin 17124.

As a single woman lacking other titles, it would seem typical that Berengaria would continue to employ the title of queen as a symbol of her status and authority. However, inputting *quondam* beforehand distances Berengaria from her previous position. She may have chosen to use this descriptor as she did not fulfil the role of queen mother, because she did not bear children. It is also plausible she wanted to disassociate herself from the

¹⁶ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 147.

¹⁷ Chédville, *Liber Controversiarum*, no. 97; *Registres de Philippe Auguste*, no. 42.

¹⁸ Delaborde, Petit-Dutaillis and Monicat, *Recueil des Actes de Philippe Auguste*, nos. 837, 840; *Registres de Philippe Auguste*, no. 47.

¹⁹ Julien Chappée, A. Ledru and Louis J. Denis, eds. *Enquête de 1245 relative aux droits du Chapitre Saint-Julien du Mans* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1922), 32-33, 41-42, 56-57, 59-61.

²⁰ *St. Pierre de la Cour*, nos. 44, 45.

Plantagenets as she carved out her new life in France. From the extant evidence Berengaria possessed little power as consort; however, as the title held symbolic authority Berengaria may have chosen to use it to reinforce her authority when required.

One distinctive charter worth examining here is the grant by Eleanor to the monastery of St Mary's, Torpenay, which is witnessed by Berengaria. This is the only occasion, apart from when Eleanor and Berengaria travelled across western Europe on the eve of her wedding, that they are recorded as being in the same place. The charter is also significant because queens rarely witnessed one another's charters, and it is indicative of the importance with which Berengaria viewed her position upon Richard's death. The charter grants the ponds of Langeais to the monastery of St Mary, Torpenay, and its monks, for perpetuity in the memory of Richard.²¹ The same charter also confirms the grant of mills and ponds as granted by Richard. It is unknown how long Berengaria was at Fontevraud, as her attendance at Richard's funeral is not recorded.²² Berengaria may well have met with Eleanor to try and establish her position and secure her rights as dowager queen, in what can be perceived as a moment of negotiation by Berengaria against a powerful female ruler and mother-in-law. Both Berengaria and Eleanor are referred to as *regina* in the charter, unsurprising as Eleanor was unlikely to diminish her status in her charter and could not downgrade Berengaria's symbolic authority when she had been consecrated as queen. Nevertheless, given the prolonged struggle Berengaria endured to gain access to her dower, it appears she was unsuccessful.

On the other hand, Isabella's titles as countess of Angoulême and countess of La Marche can be seen in her charters post-1220 which allowed Isabella to enforce her authority over her Angoumois subjects.²³ Isabella's title of countess did not allow her any influence during her marriage to John due to his control over her lands and income, as discussed in chapter three and the following section. As dowager, and with a partner whose interests were more closely aligned with hers, she was able to wield power successfully. Isabella continued to use the title of queen, like Eleanor, in her dowager period to demonstrate her influence and status, and to provide an appearance of power in this time.

Ceremonies

²¹ AN, J460, Fondations, i, no. 4.

²² Frank McLynn, *Lionheart and Lackland. King Richard, King John and the Wars of Conquest* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), 275.

²³ Thomas Carte, ed., *Catalogue de Rolles Gascons, Normans et Francois dans les archives de la Tour de Londres. Tome Premier* (Paris: Jacques Barois, 1743), i, no. 1.

The major ceremonies and rituals which queens, or queens-in-waiting, participated in during their lives include their weddings, their coronation, appearances at processions, churching, and funerals, as discussed in chapter two. For this period there are fewer records of such occurrences than for the later Middle Ages: weddings, coronations, and funerals are typically the most detailed mentions of the queens in chronicles. As this section demonstrates, twelfth-century queens were recorded in chronicles for life-cycle events which were linked to the king, or their dynasty.

The ceremonies which Matilda appears in the Anglo-Norman and Angevin chronicles for are her two marriages, the first to Henry V (1114), and the second to Geoffrey of Anjou (1128), as well as her entry to London for her coronation. However, the actual coronation ceremony did not take place. The ceremonies at which the Anglo-Norman nobility swore loyalty to Matilda as Henry I's heiress will also be discussed below. There are no detailed descriptions from Anglo-Norman writers of Matilda and Henry V's marriage ceremony: they simply stated the marriage had taken place, and Matilda was consecrated empress on 6 January 1114.²⁴ No further details of the coronation ceremony are forthcoming. The lack of information about the ceremony is not an indication that it was insignificant. However, as it fell outside the scope of the Anglo-Norman realms it is likely reports of the ceremony were second hand and limited in number. The descriptions of Matilda and Geoffrey's wedding ceremony are also brief; Orderic Vitalis notes Turgis, bishop of Avranches, conducted the ceremony.²⁵ Otherwise, there are more records in the Angevin chronicles that the marriage took place, but they are limited on details of the ceremony itself.²⁶ This is not unusual for the period, as within the next two centuries there are more detailed chronicle accounts of royal marriages. What can be derived from the accounts of Matilda's marriages is that they were significant enough to be recorded, even though Matilda was not designated heir at this point. It is a further indication that women are typically recorded for life cycle events, and as marriages were one of the most important, they merited attention from the chroniclers.

As Matilda was not crowned queen, there is no coronation ceremony to analyse, and her entry to London was discussed in chapter two. This next paragraph focusses upon the oath-swearing ceremonies in January 1127 and April 1128, where Matilda was designated heir to

²⁴ *Simeon of Durham*, 179; *Howden*, i, 204; *William of Malmesbury's Gesta Regum Anglorum*, trans. and ed. Roger Aubrey Baskerville Mynors, Rodney M. Thomson and Michael Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1998-1999), 763.

²⁵ *Orderic Vitalis*, 391.

²⁶ *Wendover*, i, 477; *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, 481; *Howden*, i, 219.

Henry I. The *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* noted at the first ceremony Henry I made the archbishops, bishops, and the most important nobles in the kingdom swear fealty to Matilda as his heir, and that they use their power to ensure her succession upon his death.²⁷ This ceremony is significant because upon Henry's death, Henry's nephew, Stephen, seized the throne, who was also one of many nobles who swore to acknowledge Matilda's claim to the throne.²⁸ Details of the first ceremony provided by John of Worcester indicated that all the loyal nobles of England, with the bishops, promised to uphold her claim to the throne and defend her in the absence of a legitimate son of Henry.²⁹ Both Simeon of Durham and William of Malmesbury record this ceremony, though date the ceremony to Christmas 1127 or January 1128.³⁰ Simeon recorded that the nobles promised that whatever the empress inherited would remain constant and unchanged; Malmesbury notes those present in the council who held influence took the oath.³¹ The pro-Stephen author of the *Gesta Stephani* argued the participants were forced to take the oath, which invalidated its authority.³² This ceremony was immensely important to officially acknowledge Matilda as Henry's heir, not only in front of witnesses but also to ensure those witnesses upheld Matilda's claim. Whether there was a second oath swearing ceremony before Matilda's marriage is disputed.³³ John of Worcester is the only chronicler who records this, and provides no additional information that was not mentioned in the previous ceremony.³⁴ As Henry I was not designated as heir, there is not an immediate comparison to make between father and daughter; however, the *Peterborough Chronicle* recorded the ceremonies associated with William Adelin. The author notes in 1115 all the chief men did homage and swore oaths of allegiance to William.³⁵ Eadmer's report of the swearing of the English magnates to William is similar, although the men present promise to do homage to William after Henry's death.³⁶ Comparatively, Matilda did not receive

²⁷ *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, 241.

²⁸ *Simeon of Durham*, 201-202.

²⁹ *Florence of Worcester*, 84-85. Note the works of Florence have now been commonly ascribed to John of Worcester.

³⁰ *Simeon of Durham*, 201-202.

³¹ *Historia Novella*, 7-9.

³² 'Ad ipsam quoque hæredandam imperioso illo, cui nullus obsistebat, oris tonitruo, summos totius regni jurare compulit potiùs quàm præcepit.' *Gesta Stephani*, 11.

³³ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 52.

³⁴ *Florence of Worcester*, 88-90.

³⁵ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, trans. and ed. John Allen Giles (London: George Bell and Sons, 1914), 183; Charles Warren Hollister, "Normandy, France and the Anglo-Norman Regnum," *Speculum* 51.2 (1976): 225.

³⁶ *Eadmer. Historia Novorum in Anglia*, ed. Martin Rule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 237.

homage from those present at any of the ceremonies, however, in essence, the swearing of loyalty and pledges to uphold the claim of the heir remained the same. Although Matilda was present at the oath swearing ceremonies, she is not depicted as an active participant in the proceedings.

These ceremonies gave Matilda power as Henry's heir, and a potentially third ceremony in August 1131, after Matilda's marriage to Geoffrey, further secured Matilda's position. Matilda received a renewal of loyalty from those who had previously sworn, as well as a new oath from those who had not.³⁷ Geoffrey's position as consort was not clarified in this ceremony – no oaths were sworn to him, and Henry made no move to position Geoffrey as a co-ruler. The implication was that Matilda would hopefully bear a male heir to whom the throne would pass to in due course. Although not unusual for oaths to be sworn to heirs to the throne, the third ceremony was undoubtedly an attempt to solidify Matilda's position as heir after her marriage to a perceived outsider. Though the ceremony provided legitimacy to Matilda's position, Stephen's usurpation and the chroniclers' statements indicate that the oaths had been taken by force or later absolved, weakened Matilda's position.³⁸ These ceremonies are an insight into succession practices within the Anglo-Norman realm and the transferral of power. Henry I had previously recognised his son William as heir to the throne in a similar process, wherein William received the homage and fealty of the local magnates in Normandy and England in 1115 and 1116 respectively.³⁹ Given the civil war that followed, it appears the nobles did not feel obligated to uphold the oaths given to Matilda at these ceremonies.

Eleanor appears more widely in the chronicles than Matilda, though again descriptions of the ceremonies she participated in are brief. Her first marriage to Louis VII in 1137 appeared in both Anglo-Norman and French chronicles. As heiress to Aquitaine, the union of Louis and Eleanor was one of great significance as it brought a vast region to the kingdom of France. Roger of Wendover succinctly records the marriage with no witness list or further elaboration.⁴⁰ Eleanor's marriage to Henry in 1152 is also briefly recorded, though given Henry's potential as heir to England it was of greater significance than

³⁷ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 59; *Huntingdon*, 252; *Historia Novella*, 10. Note there is ambiguity regarding whether the second ceremony took place as noted in the preceding paragraph.

³⁸ *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, 483

³⁹ J. F. A. Mason, "William [William Ætheling, William Adelinus, William Adelingus]," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-), accessed 06 May 2020, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-29453?rskey=CmYPoV&result=1>.

⁴⁰ *Wendover*, i, 486-487.

Eleanor's marriage to Louis, due to the breadth of domains and power the couple would wield.⁴¹ Wendover and the author of the *Gesta Stephani* comment on the union of domains accomplished by the marriage and Louis' apparent rage at the event.⁴² William of Newburgh is the only chronicler who provided brief details of the ceremony: he noted it was less solemn than their status justified, but this was perhaps owing to the need to avoid an impediment.⁴³ Biographers of Eleanor have discussed the effects of the Aquitanian-Angevin marriage, which was analysed in chapter three. What can be discerned from Eleanor's marriage ceremonies is that both were significant enough to be recorded. Due to the controversy surrounding Eleanor's second marriage as neither she nor Henry requested Louis' permission to marry, it is likely this increased the records of the event. With both Matilda's and Eleanor's marriages, there was no element of competition over precedence as they were not present at the other's wedding: plausibly Matilda continued to govern Normandy in Henry's absence. As discussed below, this analysis is also true of Berengaria and Isabella's marriages as Eleanor is not recorded as having attended either of her sons' marriage ceremonies.

Details regarding Eleanor's coronations as queen of France and England are scarce. Ralph V. Turner argued as Eleanor was crowned queen of France, she was already entitled to wear a crown as queen of England.⁴⁴ However, William of Newburgh noted both Henry and Eleanor were crowned in Westminster Abbey in December 1154.⁴⁵ Gervase of Canterbury elaborated slightly, as he stated Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury performed the coronations in front of several bishops and members of the nobility.⁴⁶ An English coronation would undoubtedly affirm Eleanor's power as consort, and impress upon her new subjects in a public ceremony her visibility as a ruler whose sphere of influence spread across the Angevin domains. As discussed in chapter two, the coronation ceremony held symbolic significance, as the queen now represented an embodiment of power through which intercession and patronage, as well as access to the king could be gained. The number of extant records for Eleanor's and Berengaria's coronations is similar, demonstrating its importance as a public display of queenly authority and a sacral performance. However,

⁴¹ Wendover, i, 532; *Gesta Stephani*, 227; Howden, i, 254; *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, 279-281; *Histoire des ducs de Normandie et des rois d'Angleterre*, ed. Francisque Michel (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1840), 81-82; *Walter Map*, 475.

⁴² Wendover, i, 504-505; *Gesta Stephani*, 227.

⁴³ *William of Newburgh*, i, 129.

⁴⁴ Turner, *Eleanor*, 123.

⁴⁵ *William of Newburgh*, ii, 15.

⁴⁶ *Gervase of Canterbury*, i, 159-160; Alison Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine, By the Wrath of God, Queen of England* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999), 107-108.

given Eleanor's took place in Westminster, which was becoming the new capital of England as power shifted from Winchester, the ceremony helped consolidate Angevin power in England.

Berengaria's marriage to Richard is the first record we have of her in Angevin chronicles. The marriage took place at Limassol, Cyprus, on 12 May 1191. Far more is recorded of this marriage ceremony than any of the others under examination here. The chronicles of Roger of Howden, Benedict of Peterborough, and the author of the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi* note the king's chaplain, Nicholas, performed the ceremony, and Berengaria was crowned the same day.⁴⁷ Although the marriage was undoubtedly significant as a continuation of the Plantagenet dynasty and the union between Navarre and England, the further detail recorded here in comparison with Matilda and Eleanor can be linked with the focus on Richard's activities whilst on crusade, which were out of the ordinary. The ceremony was also notable for its location as it was outside the Angevin sphere, which could contribute to the lack of information regarding the ceremony in other Angevin chronicles. Berengaria was unique in that she was crowned on crusade, which is a deviation from the traditional crowning of the queen in England.⁴⁸ As such, it is highly likely this impacted Berengaria's authority and connections to England as it was one less opportunity for her to travel to England and meet her subjects. The appearance of several members of the Angevin court in terms of nobility and ecclesiastics, as well as Richard's sister Joanna, former queen of Sicily, was in contrast with Eleanor and Henry's marriage where there appears to have been few nobles in attendance. It is plausible Eleanor's second nuptials were less impressive as it was hastily arranged. The marriage ceremony announced Berengaria's status as Richard's wife and soon to be queen; however, it did not immediately afford her power. The ceremony signified Berengaria's position as a potential mother of future royal children, and a transmitter of dynastic rights.

Berengaria's coronation, as noted above, took place the same day as her marriage. Roger of Howden recorded that Berengaria was crowned by John, bishop of Evreux, who was assisted by the archbishops of Auxienne and Apamea, as well as the bishop of Bayonne.⁴⁹ As with the marriage ceremony, this is documented by Benedict of Peterborough and in the

⁴⁷ Howden, ii, 204. Note the chronicle of Benedict of Peterborough is now ascribed to Roger of Howden.

⁴⁸ Although other queens such as Eleanor of Castile also went on crusade with their husbands, Eleanor and Edward were crowned upon their return to England; Sara Cockerill, *Eleanor of Castile: The Shadow Queen* (Stroud: Amberley, 2014), 188.

⁴⁹ Howden, ii, 204; *Gesta Regis Henrici*, ii, 166-167.

Itinerarium. Berengaria's coronation, although not as public as it would have been in England, granted her authority and confirmed her position as the new queen of England. John Carmi Parsons noted the investiture of the queen in England naturally claimed much attention, plausibly from both the medieval public and historians.⁵⁰ As Berengaria's coronation was outside England, this can explain why Berengaria has been so obscured from medieval and modern records and was disconnected from her subjects. Despite this, Berengaria does not appear to have exercised authority as consort as successfully as Eleanor, in part due to lack of extant records but also due to her isolation from the main courts. Like Matilda's ceremony wherein she was granted the title of *domina Anglorum*, Berengaria's coronation ceremony may have symbolically transferred power to her, and like Matilda she was unable to fully realise her powers. As Berengaria did not visit England as consort, even for Richard's crown-wearing ceremony in 1194 when he returned from crusade, she remained obscured from her subjects.

The third ceremony where Berengaria should have been of central importance was Richard's crown-wearing upon his return from crusade. Richard was captured on his journey, and the extant evidence demonstrates Eleanor's work to have Richard released as detailed in chapter four. It is not known why Berengaria did not attend the ceremony. Although a lack of closeness between the couple is understandable given they spent more time apart than together, Berengaria's attendance at a political event would indicate her attempt at presenting a united monarchy. Instead, Eleanor is recorded as being at the place of honour in Winchester Cathedral on Easter Sunday, 17 April 1194.⁵¹ The appearance of Eleanor here instead of Berengaria has led historians to speculate regarding either Eleanor's dominance, or marital estrangement between Berengaria and Richard. However, Trindade argued the coronation was arranged on such short notice it would have been impossible for Berengaria to have reached England in time, given her likely residence in Anjou at this time.⁵² The ceremony highlights Eleanor's importance, which given her actions to ensure Richard's release from captivity and her political prominence during Richard's reign is unsurprising. This ceremony would have been a critical opportunity for Berengaria to assert her position as queen of England and be visible in England. As Eleanor fulfilled this role, an instance of competition between the queens through ceremonies, it can be argued ceremonies were an important ritual where queens could possess and exercise power. As

⁵⁰ Parsons, "Ritual," 61.

⁵¹ Howden, ii, 324.

⁵² Trindade, *Berengaria*, 112; Martindale, "The Last Years," 142.

Berengaria was not visible at this ceremony, she lost an opportunity where she could demonstrate her queenly authority. As a consequence of Eleanor appearing at this ceremony, she was able to demonstrate her political significance even though she was no longer consort. Berengaria's appearance at this ceremony would have been useful when she contested her loss of dower lands with John and Henry, as she would have had opportunities to network and establish alliances while in England. Berengaria attended the translation of Thomas Becket in 1220, the only recorded instance of her in England which may have enabled her to petition Henry III further for dower payments.⁵³

Both Isabella's marriage and coronation ceremonies have been the sole topic of articles by Henry Gerald Richardson, and Fred A. Cazel Jr. and Sidney Painter.⁵⁴ The marriage of Isabella and John took place on 24 August 1200 in Normandy, amid much dispute owing to Isabella's previous betrothal to Hugh IX de Lusignan. Howden provided a more detailed description of events: he stated that Isabella and John were married immediately after her betrothal to Hugh was broken, by Elias, archbishop of Bordeaux.⁵⁵ As discussed in chapter three, the background to the marriage and the lack of information regarding Isabella's age casts doubts on how soon the marriage could be consummated, and when Isabella would be able to fulfil her role as queen through providing heirs. However, given Isabella was crowned shortly after her marriage, it is plausible she was mature enough to exercise power and act as a consort. Isabella and John's marriage was more visible than any of the previously discussed marriages, publicly taking place within the Angevin realm, with several attendees. Isabella's heightened visibility did not last as she issued few extant charters during her marriage to John. Although the ceremony would have confirmed her position as John's wife and queen, as with Berengaria the transferral of power was more symbolic than genuine.

Isabella's coronation took place a few months after her marriage, on 8 October 1200 when John was re-crowned alongside her. Richardson argued John's constitutional document, which outlined the *ordo*, indicated John shared power with Isabella and she held vice-regal power, although in reality he did not share royal authority.⁵⁶ Little has been written of the

⁵³ 'Domina Regina Berengaria receptit in propria persona sua post Translationem Sancti Thome ...' TNA, E368/3/2, accessed 07 August 2020, http://aalt.law.uh.edu/aalt1/H3/E368no3/aE368no3fronts/IMG_2311.htm; Carpenter, *Henry III*, 179. Many thanks to Richard Cassidy for providing me with this material.

⁵⁴ Richardson, "Marriage," 289-314; Fred A. Cazel and Sidney Painter, "The Marriage of Isabella of Angoulême," *EHR* 63 (1948): 83-89.

⁵⁵ *Howden*, ii, 483.

⁵⁶ Richardson, "Marriage," 309.

ceremony, its location, or attendees. Howden recorded the coronation of John and Isabella took place at Westminster and was performed by Hubert, archbishop of Canterbury.⁵⁷ If the ceremony was similar to Eleanor's coronation in 1154, it could be presumed a number of the English nobility and ecclesiastics were in attendance and that the ritual held symbolic importance in publicly showcasing Isabella as John's wife and queen. As will be discussed below, Isabella had minimal access, if any, to her lands and revenues, even as countess of Angoulême. Although the coronation ceremony may have blessed Isabella and legitimised her as queen and future mother of the king's children, this would not be the only avenue through which Isabella was able to access power, as examined in chapter four.

Marriage and coronation ceremonies were the most prominent opportunities for the queen to be visible, both to the public and in the historical record. The lack of information regarding both the ceremonies and the *ordo* obscures our understanding of how power was transferred or gained through these public displays. As Earenfight noted, coronation ceremonies emphasise the queen's status as the king's wife, and enhanced the legitimacy of the queen's authority.⁵⁸ The power acquired by being consort could be formal in terms of intercession and patronage, or informal by providing advice and guidance to the king and their heirs. Informal power is difficult to define and access, and this is particularly complicated with Berengaria and Isabella as their formal power was limited. All four queens would have power as a transmitter of dynastic rights and mother of the heir, a power granted to them through the marriage ceremony. However, given Berengaria did not bear heirs this was another avenue closed to her. The ceremony where Matilda was acknowledged as *domina Anglorum* was crucial in advancing her position as claimant to the throne of England. Ceremonies can be conduits of power, but they are not guarantors of it: the actions a queen or their co-ruler takes, when their co-ruler is the one predominantly holding royal power, can result in loss of power. Examining ceremonies is a useful method to understand the public visibility of queens and their authority, and it is apparent through this examination that although symbolic power may have been granted, in reality it was not always transferred.

Royal Finances: Dower Lands and Queen's Gold

Dower Lands

⁵⁷ Howden, ii, 501.

⁵⁸ Earenfight, *Queenship*, 84.

The terminology of dower has been the subject of much debate, particularly as it changes in the medieval period for lands which are intended to support the queen as both consort and dowager, to lands which support the queen in her widowhood only. These lands were also inalienable and returned to the Crown at her death.⁵⁹ Stafford argued lands were provided to the queen for her time as consort and as dowager, not solely for their dowager period, in the High Middle Ages.⁶⁰ In the period under study in this thesis, it would be expected that land would be held by the queen until her death, which would inevitably cause issues when providing the new consort with land from the royal demesne. Due to a lack of extant evidence and the longevity of Eleanor's life, we can only assert that Eleanor administered some of the dower land during her time as consort and as dowager, however we cannot conclusively prove Berengaria and Isabella had the same opportunities. Indeed, Henry III resolved to grant cash to Berengaria and Isabella on several occasions owing to the need to provide for several queens amid a civil war and its aftermath.

The dower lands of queens in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries have been the subjects of examination by Lois L. Huneycutt, Heather J. Tanner, RàGena C. DeAragon, and Lida Townsley, and builds upon the foundational discussions of the dower lands of the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman queens and their European contemporaries.⁶¹ There is little extant evidence for the English dower lands of twelfth-century queens and it is difficult to draw comparisons between each consort. However, we can draw some modest conclusions about the land they held. In addition to this, the four queens of this study also gained lands through either conquest or negotiation, however these lands fall outside the scope of this section as they were not subject to competition. This section will first discuss their dower lands, followed by an examination of their access to the queen's gold. It will then conclude with a comparison of their ability to exercise power due to their resources.

⁵⁹ Stafford, *Queens*, 103.

⁶⁰ Stafford, *Queens*, 102. It is worth noting here Stafford employs the term dowry rather than dower, however given that the discussion is regarding land granted to the queen by the king, dower is the accurate term to employ here. Dowry is land granted by the wife's family to her husband upon marriage.

⁶¹ Stafford, *Queens*, 102-105; Janet L. Nelson, "Les douaires des reines anglo-saxonnes," in *Dots et Douaires dans le Haut Moyen Âge*, eds. François Bougard, Laurent Feller and Regine Le Jan (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2002), 527-534; Regine Le Jan, "Douaires et pouvoirs des reines en Francie et en Germanie (VI^e et X^e siècle)," in *Dots et Douaires*, 457-497; Huneycutt, "*Alianora Regina Anglorum*," 115-132; Heather J. Tanner, "Queenhip: Office, Custom, or Ad Hoc? The Case of Queen Matilda III of England (1135-1152)," in *Lord and Lady*, 133-158; RàGena C. DeAragon, "Power and Agency in Post-Conquest England: Elite Women and the Transformation of the Twelfth Century," in *Medieval Elite Women*, 19-44; Lida Sophia Townsley, "Twelfth-century English queens: charters and authority," (MPhil diss., Trinity College Dublin, 2010).

As Matilda did not become queen, she did not have formalised access to lands from the royal demesne, although she secured areas such as Devizes as bases. She did not face an element of competition over her dower lands as Eleanor's dower lands were those typically been apportioned to the queen consort of England, and Matilda would have accessed lands as queen regnant. Therefore, Matilda would have owned lands the dominant ruler (the king, usually) would have. Matilda's dower from her marriage to Geoffrey is unknown, although Chibnall argued Geoffrey's donation to Le Pré in 1148 was for Matilda's benefit, which is plausible given that Matilda was to reside in either Rouen itself or Le Pré from 1148 onwards. Chibnall also noted Matilda's dower from her marriage to Geoffrey may have been made up of revenues as many of her gifts were in the form of cash or lands Matilda had purchased.⁶² Matilda's religious patronage is discussed in a later section, and as discussed below it is apparent Matilda successfully established a sphere of influence. It is plausible her sphere of influence was based primarily on income rather than lands, however as there is no extant dower charter for Matilda or financial records listing her income, we cannot prove which revenues her authority stemmed from. As Matilda did not amass dower lands from the royal demesne, she was not in competition with the future queens of England for access to these. As will now be discussed with Eleanor, from 1191 onwards there would be substantial competition for access to dower lands.

What exactly comprised the dower lands, and particularly the English dower lands, of the twelfth-century English queens has been discussed by Cloulas, Tanner, and Huneycutt.⁶³ Dower could be designated at the time of the marriage for the wife to hold until her death, or for her subsistence as a widow.⁶⁴ Cloulas argued the dower lands in England which were assigned to Berengaria were the same as those apportioned to Eleanor, and consisted of lands from Somerset, Rutland, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Sussex, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Devonshire, Southampton, Essex, London, Lincolnshire and Gloucestershire.⁶⁵ The basis for this argument is a copy of Berengaria's dower charter which was granted on 12 May 1191, the day of Berengaria and Richard's wedding.⁶⁶ The charter lists the Norman lands as Domfront, Falaise, Bonneville-sur-Tocques, in addition to lands in Touraine, Maine, and Poitou. There is little evidence to indicate what revenues Eleanor would have acquired from

⁶² Chibnall, *Matilda*, 179.

⁶³ Ivan Cloulas, "Le douaire de Bérengère de Navarre, veuve de Richard Cœur de Lion, et sa retraite au Mans," in *La Cour Plantagenêt*, 89-94; Huneycutt, "*Alianor Regina Anglorum*," 115-132; Tanner, "Queenship" 133-158; see appendix for list of dower lands.

⁶⁴ DeAragon, "Power and Agency," 27.

⁶⁵ Cloulas, "Le douaire," 90-91.

⁶⁶ *Veterum Scriptorum*, i, cols. 995-997.

these lands, or how involved she was with the governance and administration of them. Whatever the income was, Eleanor continued to collect this revenue until her death in 1204, and there is no evidence any of the lands were granted to Berengaria or Isabella before this date. As discussed below with Berengaria, Eleanor continued to hold the English and Norman dower lands after Richard's and Berengaria's marriage, which indicates she held the lands from 1189, and plausibly before then as well.⁶⁷ It is certain Eleanor exercised some control over her dower lands in her dowager period, although the full extent cannot be known. Due to Eleanor's close relationships with her sons, it is unlikely they would have removed the lands from Eleanor's administration without recompense, yet there is no evidence of this. Records in the Norman Pipe Rolls show Eleanor was paid rents from Domfront, Falaise, and Bonneville-sur-Tocques during Richard's reign.⁶⁸ This, in addition to her resources in Aquitaine, are indicative of her power in this period as heiress and queen, as she continued to exercise control over lands both inherited and dower, the former of which was examined in chapter three. Jane Martindale explored Eleanor's exercise of power in Aquitaine during Richard and John's reigns, and successfully argued Eleanor politically intervened to preserve her inherited lands to pass to her children, as well as granting lands from her dower through patronage, which benefitted her sons.⁶⁹ Arguably Eleanor collected her dues from her dower lands, and continued to work in the interests of her family through grants from both her inherited and dower lands. However, as Henry and Eleanor found during their marriage, the issue of too many heirs to grant lands to and provide dowries for would cause conflict, not just between their children, but also between Eleanor and her daughters-in-law.

Although Berengaria was theoretically heiress to Navarre, she never inherited the kingdom as she predeceased her brother Sancho. The issues surrounding Berengaria's dower have been briefly summarised by Cloulas.⁷⁰ Berengaria was granted Gascony to provide her with revenue until Eleanor's death, however Cloulas noted these lands were apportioned to her

⁶⁷ Tanner notes Anglo-Norman queens were expected to call upon revenues from their lands, and it is unlikely this would have stopped with Eleanor. Matilda III was not apportioned large quantities of lands from the royal demesne in part to her own inheritance and due to Adeliza of Louvain continuing to hold dower lands. Tanner, "Queenship," 136-138. Eleanor appears to have exercised control over the Malmesbury estates before Henry II's death: J. S. Brewer and Charles Trice Martin, eds. *Registrum Malmesburiense. The Register of Malmesbury Abbey; preserved in the Public Record Office*, 2 vols. (London: Longman & Co., 1879-1880), i, 335.

⁶⁸ Thomas Stapleton, ed., *Magni Rotuli Scaccarii Normanniae sub Regibus Angliae*, 2 vols. (London: London Antiquarian Society, 1840-1844), i, clix, membrane 6; clxiv-xv, membrane 7; II, lix, membrane 5; xviii-cix, membrane 9.

⁶⁹ Martindale, "The Last Years," 137-164.

⁷⁰ Cloulas, "Le douaire," 89-94.

sister-in-law Leonor as part of her dowry upon her marriage to Alfonso, king of Castile.⁷¹ Ultimately Eleanor of Aquitaine continued to hold Gascony. Upon Eleanor's death, Berengaria would have rights to all the dower lands that belonged to the English queen, and Gascony would pass to Leonor and Alfonso. There is no evidence Berengaria received any income from either set of lands, before or after Eleanor's death. After Richard's death in 1199, Berengaria began to petition John and Pope Honorius III for her dower lands to be granted to her, with limited success. Berengaria later exchanged her Norman dower lands for Le Mans, in 1204, with Philip Augustus. The copies of the charters documenting this exchange exist in the *Veterum et Scriptorum* collection.⁷² The lands listed are the castle of Falaise and its appurtenances, the castle of Domfront and appurtenances, and the castle and town of Bonneville-sur-Tocques and its appurtenances. The charter noted Eleanor held the lands during Richard's reign, which is an indication of the competition between the queens, but also the problems of having two dowagers who needed financial resources.⁷³

In return for Berengaria giving up her rights to the lands within France, Philip Augustus agreed to grant her Le Mans and its castle with appurtenances, with the exception of the bishopric.⁷⁴ As discussed in chapter three, Berengaria successfully wielded power in Le Mans from 1204 until her death in 1230, and was clearly the recipient of revenues from Le Mans to enable her to do so. Regarding her English dower, letters from Berengaria to John, and later Henry III, demonstrate her unwavering attempts to be compensated for the loss of these lands. In 1215, John agreed a new settlement in which he would pay Berengaria an upfront payment of 2000 marks, followed by 1000 marks annually.⁷⁵ However, in 1216, John asked to postpone the payment due to the outbreak of rebellion in England.⁷⁶ After John's death in 1216, Berengaria then pursued this settlement with her nephew Henry. Following several exchanges, Henry agreed in 1220 that he would arrange for payment of the settlement, with additional payments made due to arrears.⁷⁷ This arrangement also fell

⁷¹ Clouas, "Le douaire," 90.

⁷² *Veterum Scriptorum*, i, cols. 1045-1047.

⁷³ *Veterum Scriptorum*, i, col. 1046.

⁷⁴ *Veterum Scriptorum*, i, col. 1046.

⁷⁵ Berengaria of Navarre, "Letter from Berengaria of Navarre to Public (1215)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/764.html; *Foedera*, 208-209.

⁷⁶ John, "Letter from John, king of England to Berengaria of Navarre (1216)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/770.html; *Foedera*, 213.

⁷⁷ Henry III, "Letter from Henry III, king of England to Berengaria of Navarre (1218)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/777.html; Berengaria of Navarre, "Letter from Berengaria of

through, with a statement from Berengaria in 1225 requesting the payment of 1000 marks be made.⁷⁸ Ultimately Berengaria was paid partially what she was owed, as evidenced by Close Roll records documenting a first payment of 1000 marks in March 1225.⁷⁹ A second payment of 1000 marks was made in December 1225, followed by another payment of 30 solidii the same month.⁸⁰ A final payment of 1000 marks was made in March 1226.⁸¹ Although Berengaria may have never garnered direct revenue from the dower lands she should have possessed, her determination to be paid what she was owed was successful as she received a full payment of 2000 marks, as noted in the initial two payments of 1000 marks above, although little in the way of arrears. Both Berengaria and Isabella's cases highlight issues of competition with their mother-in-law Eleanor, but also bring to the fore the financial issues facing England during the early thirteenth century as both John and Henry struggled to make payments. If Berengaria had received revenue from her dower lands, she may have made further appearance in the financial records to give us an indication of her authority if she was able to administer the lands. As it stands, her negotiations with Innocent, Honorius, John, Philip Augustus, and Henry demonstrated an ability to ask for intercession and negotiate, which was successful as she gained a sphere of influence in Le Mans, and payment for her dower lands in 1225 and 1226.

A copy of Isabella's dower charter is also listed in the *Veterum et Scriptorum*, granted in 1200 upon her marriage to John. This noted Isabella's dower lands consisted of the cities of Saintes, Niort, Saumur, La Flèche, Beaufort-en-Vallée, Baugé, Château-du-Loir, and Trou, with all their appurtenances and liberties.⁸² Niort and Saintes were new additions to queen's dower lands, and Vincent argued as two rich Poitevin lordships these were granted to Isabella partially to spite the Lusignans.⁸³ Due to the loss of the lands in Anjou to the

Navarre to Peter, bishop of Winchester (1220)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/765.html; Henry III, "Letter from Henry III, king of England to Berengaria of Navarre (July 1220)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/781.html; *Foedera*, 241-242.

⁷⁸ Berengaria of Navarre, "Letter from Berengaria of Navarre to Henry III, king of England (26 October 1225)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/766.html.

⁷⁹ 'Liberate de thesauro nostro fratri Waltero Capello Regine Berengarie ut Martino servienti ipsius Regine mille marcas ad opus ipsius Regine quas ei debemus de hoc ad Ascensi Domini anno regni nostri nono.' *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, ii, 38.

⁸⁰ 'Liberate de thesauro nostro fratri Waltero Capellano Regine Berengarie mille marcas ad opus ipsius Regine qua sei debemus de hoc termino Omnium Sanctorum anno tunc x^o.' *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, ii, 85; 'Liberate de thesauro nostro fratri Waltero Capellano nuncio Regine Berengarie xxx. solidi ad expensas suas versus pertinentes suas de dono nostro.' *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, ii, 88.

⁸¹ Wording as in footnote 79, *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, ii, 115.

⁸² *Veterum Scriptorum*, i, col. 1032; *Rot. Chart.*, i, 74-75.

⁸³ Vincent, "Isabella," 185.

Capetians, and because of Eleanor's death, Isabella was granted a second settlement in 1204.⁸⁴ This second charter contained several of the English and Norman lands that had previously been assigned to Eleanor and Berengaria, however not all: the towns of Northampton, Grantham, and Stamford, alongside other honours and manors, were not granted to her.⁸⁵ Isabella appears to have exercised little authority over her dower lands, as there is no evidence she collected income from any of the lands granted to her in 1200, or 1204 onwards during her marriage to John. All the lands granted to her in France were soon captured by the Capetians. The English dower lands owed to her were consistently granted away by John, who was undoubtedly focussed on balancing baronial allegiances and income rather than making provision for Isabella.⁸⁶ One example of this is the manors from Rutland which John granted to Ralph de Normanville and his heirs in 1205.⁸⁷ As John bartered away sections of the queen's dower, and with no income reassigned to Isabella as a result of this, it can be surmised that Isabella enjoyed no control or influence over her dower lands, similar to Berengaria. It is plausible both Berengaria and Isabella were not able to campaign more actively for their dower rights during their marriages due to their relationships with their co-rulers, the nature of which is discussed in chapter three. Although Berengaria and Isabella were in competition with each other for the dower lands, there is no evidence of communication between them or direct conflict because of this.

After John's death in 1216, Isabella returned to Angoulême and began to campaign, albeit more forcefully than Berengaria, for her dower. The city of Saintes, originally granted to Isabella in 1200, had been assigned by John to their daughter Joan in 1214 as part of her dowry to Hugh X de Lusignan, shortly to become Isabella's husband. Upon Isabella and Hugh's marriage, they pressed for their claim to Saintes to be upheld, to which the minority council responded with the seizure of Isabella's English dower lands and a request for the return of Joan and Saintes.⁸⁸ A standoff continued until 1222 when the minority council agreed to restore Isabella's English dower.⁸⁹ In 1224, a letter from Henry III recorded the exchange of the tin-mine of Devon and the revenues of Aylesbury in return for Isabella's Norman dower and Niort, the latter of which Isabella would be recompensed 200 marks

⁸⁴ Vincent, "Isabella," 186.

⁸⁵ *Rot. Chart.*, i, 128; Vincent, "Isabella," 187; see appendix for full list of dower lands and grants.

⁸⁶ Vincent, "Isabella," 187-189.

⁸⁷ Vincent, "Isabella," 189; *Rot. Chart.*, i, 149.

⁸⁸ Henry Churchill Maxwell Lyte, ed., *Patent Rolls of the Reign of Henry III. A.D. 1216-25* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1901), 302, 318.

⁸⁹ *Patent Rolls. 1216-25*, 329-330; Vincent, "Isabella," 208.

annually.⁹⁰ In the event of Isabella or Hugh's death, the lands and income would pass to the other.⁹¹ Later that year, Louis IX, king of France, offered Isabella 2000 livres tournois annually for her English dower lands and revenues from Langeais in exchange for her rights to Saumur.⁹² This appears to have trumped whatever offers the English made, including a letter from Henry in 1226 granting Isabella 3500 marks, which John had willed her prior to his death.⁹³ The following year, Henry granted Isabella's English dower lands to his brother Richard of Cornwall, which based on the extant evidence, heralded the last of communication regarding Isabella's dower.⁹⁴ The disputes regarding Isabella's dower were far more widespread than Berengaria's had been, as she openly played the French and English kings against one another in her pursuit of financial security and obtaining what was owed to her. Undoubtedly this caused conflict with her Plantagenet children and led to her isolation from the English court. Despite obtaining considerable sums of money from both Louis IX and Henry III, Isabella never regained her English dower lands. As noted above, Isabella and Berengaria were in competition with one another for possession of the lands, but due to Anglo-French conflict and political revolt, a cash alternative was preferred as a resolution by the English kings, which was slow in being delivered.

Ultimately, there was strong competition between Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella for control of dower lands in England and France. Eleanor was the only consort who truly possessed the dower lands and gained revenue from them in the 1180s until her death in 1204. Examining both dower and inherited lands, and the extent to which the queens were able to exercise authority over these highlights that the Angevin kings continued to struggle with resources and revenue. The kings of France intervened in the dowager queens' disputes if it could be of use to themselves politically. The kings of England were not beyond reallocating the dower lands and its revenues to themselves, or to members of the nobility if it could bring about an alliance or neutralise an opponent. Thus, the queens, particularly Berengaria and Isabella, were often unable to negotiate with their co-rulers during their tenures. The ability to exercise authority was heavily affected by their co-ruling partnerships which has been investigated in chapters three and four. Only in their dower

⁹⁰ Henry III, "Letter from Henry III to Isabel of Angoulême (27th March 1224)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/466.html.

⁹¹ Henry III, "Letter from Henry III to Isabel of Angoulême (27th March 1224)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/466.html.

⁹² *Veterum Scriptorum*, i, cols. 1162-1163.

⁹³ Henry III, "Letter from Henry III to Isabel of Angoulême (18th December 1226)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/467.html.

⁹⁴ *Rot. Litt. Claus.*, ii, 197-198.

lands would dowagers be able to rule independently. Although Matilda was an exception to this examination as she did not fully inherit her lands or access dower lands from the royal demesne, she did possess a sphere of influence in Normandy in which she exercised power. As with Eleanor and Aquitaine, Berengaria and Le Mans, and Isabella and Angoulême, these four women were able to negotiate with kings either in their dowager period or during their second marriage in order to successfully obtain revenues owed to them, be it in the form of lands or financial income. This next section will now move on to discuss a particular method of financial income, that of the queen's gold.

Queen's Gold

The subject of the queen's gold during the medieval period has been greatly advanced by Kristin Geaman and Louise Tingle's analyses.⁹⁵ This builds upon the foundational work by Hilda Johnstone, who examined queenly finances and highlighted the disparities in the collection of the queen's gold.⁹⁶ As such, a deeper exploration of the collection of queen's gold has not been covered here. The queen's gold was a ten per cent surcharge taken by the exchequer on all voluntary fines paid to the king, which Geaman argued made the queen's gold a public and important source of revenue to the crown.⁹⁷ Queen's gold was collected prior to the twelfth century, however it was only when Eleanor was queen consort that it became a fixed income, although its collection remained difficult.⁹⁸ Similar to her position with the dower lands, as Matilda was not crowned queen she did not have access to this form of revenue, which would have affected her ability to wield power. Instead, Matilda was dependent on other forms of income from her dowry lands, such as Argentan, which was a royal treasury, and Geoffrey's assistance.⁹⁹ As Matilda did not receive the queen's gold, it did not comprise an area of conflict or competition with the other queens in this study.

⁹⁵ Geaman "Queen's Gold," 10-33; Louise Tingle, "Aurum reginae: Queen's Gold in Late Fourteenth-Century England," *Royal Studies Journal* 7.1 (2020): 77-90.

⁹⁶ Hilda Johnstone, "The Queen's Household," in Thomas Frederick Tout, ed., *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England*, v (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1930), 262-267. See more recent work by Amalie Föbel, "The Queen's Wealth in the Middle Ages," *Maiestas* 13 (2005): 23-45 and Attila Bárány, "Medieval Queens and Queenship: A Retrospective on Income and Power," *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU* 19 (2013): 149-200.

⁹⁷ Geaman, "Queen's Gold," 11; *Dialogus de Scaccario (The Dialogue of the Exchequer) and Constitutio Domus Regis (The Disposition of the King's Household)*, trans. and ed. Emilie Amt and Stephen D. Church (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 121-122.

⁹⁸ Geaman, "Queen's Gold," 16.

⁹⁹ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 67.

As Geaman noted, Eleanor's collection of the queen's gold is clearly marked and goes beyond her tenure as consort.¹⁰⁰ The Pipe Rolls contain an entry which cites Telarius of Oxford, who owed one mark of queen's gold on a fine of six pounds.¹⁰¹ The collection of queen's gold during Eleanor's tenure is fragmented, though this could be in part due to her imprisonment in the 1170s and early 1180s. What is more apparent is her collection of the queen's gold in Richard's reign when she was dowager. Although not noted in the Pipe Rolls, the chronicle of St Edmund's Abbey highlighted that Eleanor received an equivalent gift to one hundred marks in return for her intercessory action on behalf of the abbot of St Edmund's who wished to purchase the manor of Mildenhall.¹⁰² What this entry clearly demonstrates is Eleanor continued her role as the primary female ruler and intercessor in the Angevin domains, and this role was to last beyond Richard's reign. There is no evidence Berengaria collected queen's gold, however given she never entered England as consort it is perhaps unsurprising. Eleanor's position here as a trusted advisor and her continued revenue demonstrates her ability to influence Richard and is an indicator of her power and authority.

Both Berengaria and Isabella were initially hindered in their collection of the queen's gold due to Eleanor's dominance in political affairs. With Berengaria, Eleanor's precedence at Richard's second coronation demonstrated her presence as the leading female figurehead in Angevin politics, which afforded her the rights typically associated with the consort. In the case of Isabella, both Vincent and Geaman have discussed the lack of collection of queen's gold during her period as consort. As noted above, this was in part due to continued competition from Eleanor, as Eleanor held a substantial amount of influence over her son and Geaman argued Eleanor received the income at the beginning of John's reign.¹⁰³ After Eleanor's death in 1204, the competition over queen's gold between the mothers and daughters-in-law was over. The collection of the queen's gold should have moved to Isabella and the Pipe Rolls from John's reign clearly document income listed as queen's gold.¹⁰⁴ However, Vincent argued on the occasions where Isabella received gold, it was due to being a gift from John rather than because of it being her right to collect the revenue.¹⁰⁵ There remained an element of competition here between John and Isabella,

¹⁰⁰ Geaman, "Queen's Gold," 19.

¹⁰¹ *PR Henry II*, 2/3/4/5, 83.

¹⁰² Jocelin de Brakelonde, "Cronica," in *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey*, ed. Thomas Arnold (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890), 250-251.

¹⁰³ Geaman, "Queen's Gold," 21-22.

¹⁰⁴ *PR John 10*, 19, 21, 37.

¹⁰⁵ Vincent, "Isabella," 192.

and given John's need to raise taxes for the wars in France and attempt to erase the debts of Richard's crusade, it is perhaps understandable John utilised the queen's gold to this end.

As this brief examination of the queen's gold has shown, it was an area of competition largely due to Eleanor's continued collection of the revenue beyond her tenure as consort. Although Eleanor's position as intercessor and informal regent during Richard's reign allotted her a certain amount of power, by right the revenue should have gone to Berengaria. With Isabella, the poor finances of the Angevin domains may have influenced John to reallocate the queen's gold from Isabella's income to his. Collection of the queen's gold was also a highly unstable form of revenue, as people were reluctant to pay this additional tax and many medieval queens struggled to receive their dues from this unless the king enforced the payment of the fine.¹⁰⁶ Although the queens had other expected sources of revenue, these were also largely dependent on the king's generosity or political stability, and as such queenly income was variable and subject to competition.

Relationships with the Church

All four women patronised religious foundations, either during their tenure as consort and/or beyond into their dowager period. The expressions of piety and religious patronage were also expressions of power, and the creation of sculptures, such as tombs and effigies, contributed to their family legacy as a form of memorialisation, which is most notably seen at Fontevraud. Miriam Shadis argued Eleanor, her daughter Leonor, and Leonor's daughters, Berenguela and Blanche, built and maintained necropolises as a way to perpetuate their own personal influence indefinitely, gaining power for themselves as well as for their families, and Shadis highlighted that by establishing mausolea for themselves and their families, they would be able to remind all spectators of their lineage and family structure, the foundation of their power which is intrinsic to this discussion.¹⁰⁷ Although none of the queens under study are saints or were commemorated in hagiographies, they all understood the importance of using acts of piety as a complement to militant kingship.¹⁰⁸ Queenly piety shifted from the earlier Middle Ages with a more dominant focus on the maternity of the queen, rather than purely her chastity, in line with the changing

¹⁰⁶ Johnstone, "Household," 266; Tingle, "Aurum reginae," 79-81.

¹⁰⁷ Miriam Shadis, "Piety, Politics and Power: The Patronage of Leonor of England and Her Daughters Berenguela of León and Blanche of Castile," in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June Hall McCash (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 203.

¹⁰⁸ Earenfight, *Queenship*, 37.

aspects of the Marian cult.¹⁰⁹ Chastity and maternity were closely interconnected in order to preserve the legitimacy of the dynastic line, and the ties between queenship, sanctity, and piety were all emphasised by the new focus of the Marian cult, combined with the development of kings taking on saintly attributes.¹¹⁰ Religious patronage was another route in which queens could exercise influence and allowed for the public exhibition of piety and charity. Queens were expected to donate to ecclesiastical establishments to pay for masses to be said for the souls of their family members. They were expected to assist the poor through alms giving as a form of benevolence, although this was not exclusive to queens. As will be discussed below, royal women could patronise institutions to establish them as family mausolea, as well as supporting religious orders.

The establishment or benefaction of religious institutions also linked strongly with the commemoration of royal relatives, and as discussed below, queens endowed institutions and created a personal relationship with them to cement their role as a virtuous queen. Royal women would be expected to be responsible for certain aspects of the memorialisation of the royal family if we follow van Houts' approach, who argued that although men and women both played a role in the commemoration of families, women were often responsible for recording genealogical details.¹¹¹ This navigation also contributed to the role of dynast and family commemorator, highlighting their positions as mother, queen, and patron.¹¹²

Drawn together, the patronage and foundation of religious institutions and exhibition of piety allowed for the establishment of power and authority for queens in the Middle Ages, as they navigated the intersections of gender, power, and piety. Susan M. Johns argued the relationships between churchmen and noblewomen allowed for indirect female influence and could facilitate religious patronage.¹¹³ This statement is essential to understanding how the four women operated. The queens were distinctive as they chose to patronise different institutions. They chose institutions which had ties to the Angevin counts and dukes of Normandy with Bec and Fontevraud, or lands tied to the royal demesne as seen with Matilda and Isabella. There are several institutions that could have been examined here, such as Stanley Abbey, the monastery of Dalon, Dordogne, or Malmesbury Abbey as they all

¹⁰⁹ Earenfight, *Queenship*, 130, 151.

¹¹⁰ Earenfight, *Queenship*, 130.

¹¹¹ van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, 96-97, 150.

¹¹² Shadis, "Piety," 217.

¹¹³ Johns, "Poetry and Prayer," 10.

benefited from queenly patronage.¹¹⁴ The institutions chosen here are examined because of their strong personal connections to the four women under study, and as they provide a novel perspective on royal religious patronage in this period due to previous lack of examination in a comparative nature.

The women in this study also had diplomatic relations with ecclesiastics on a regular basis, both on a local and international level, and they often communicated with the pope as discussed below. As demonstrated in the following paragraphs, the papacy frequently championed the rights of western European queens and noblewomen; however, it was not solely motivated for the benefit of these women as each pope had their own agendas. This section discusses how the interactions of the four women with religious institutions and churchmen was part of fulfilling the office of queenship, as well as how it contributed to their power base as they continued to wield authority in the changing political realm. Relations with the Church within and outside the Angevin realms allowed the queens to establish networks, exercise patronage, and perform ceremonial roles in an official capacity. The interventions of the papacy on several occasions were often in favour of the queens, and assisted them in successfully obtaining their goals, be it lands, revenues, or a peaceful outcome in a religious orientated situation. Particularly in the case of Berengaria, Honorius III acted as a protector and intercessor, who often negotiated with both John and Henry III for the restitution of her dower lands. As mentioned above, such an alliance was critical due to the power of the papacy and the threat of interdict and excommunication which could be held over disobedient monarchs. However, this threat was not always effective, as seen with Philip Augustus and John. Honorius also intervened in Isabella's relations with Henry and the English court, offering her protection as a dowager. The involvement of the papacy on behalf of Berengaria and Isabella from John's reign onwards was part of their role as overlord, owing to the fact that John did homage to Innocent III in 1213, after which England was recognised as a papal fief.¹¹⁵ Thereafter, the pope had both a lordly and spiritual role in which they could act as a protector and intervene as they saw appropriate.

Both Matilda and Eleanor made significant grants to religious foundations and abbeys: Matilda had a strong affinity for Bec-Hellouin, and Eleanor for Fontevraud, which became the resting place of several members of the Plantagenet family. There are several charters

¹¹⁴ *RRAN*, iii, no. 836; BNF, Baluze 375, fols. 27v-28r; *Registrum Malmesburiense*, i, 335, 430.

¹¹⁵ Warren, *John*, 208-209.

attesting the patronage of these institutions, usually through grants of land, and through them we can establish the importance of the abbeys to the Plantagenets.¹¹⁶ Both abbeys had an illustrious history; Bec-Hellouin was a favoured institution of the Norman ducal families, and the benefaction Fontevraud received from Eleanor indicates its closeness to her specifically, as discussed later in this chapter.¹¹⁷ Although the town of Le Mans was no longer held by the Angevins when Berengaria was Lady of Le Mans, she exercised considerable patronage towards local institutions, notably St Pierre-de-la-Cour and L'Épau, a sharp contrast to her role as consort where there is no extant evidence of her patronage, possibly due to lack of revenues as noted above.¹¹⁸ Isabella's few charters from her tenure all attest to religious patronage within England as she confirmed the grant of a vill and the site of the castle of Malmesbury to Malmesbury Abbey, and a fair to the monastery of St Nicholas at Exeter.¹¹⁹ However, she did not hold a strong religious affiliation with any specific institutions, unlike her predecessors. Exeter was a plausible choice for Isabella's patronage as the city of Exeter formed part of her dower lands, as did Malmesbury.¹²⁰ Both Eleanor and John granted several lands as favours which left Isabella with a depleted amount of resources to give in patronage, and Exeter was granted to Robert Courtenay, Isabella's cousin, by John, who was then asked to surrender it to Isabella in 1217, before her grant of the fair.¹²¹

Matilda, Anglo-Norman Churchmen and Abbeys

Matilda's relationship with Bishop Henry of Winchester was pivotal in her attempts to regain power in England during the civil war. Although no letters between the pair survive, Anglo-Norman chroniclers have recorded some of the interactions between the two. Henry's primary concern was for the protection of the bishoprics and ecclesiastical privileges, and although he initially supported Stephen, he changed sides after relations with Stephen soured around 1139-1141, as discussed in chapter two.

¹¹⁶ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 77, 80; *CDF*, nos. 1100, 1101 and 1105.

¹¹⁷ For Matilda's support of Bec-Hellouin, and the patronage of Bec and its cells by Matilda and her adherents, see *RRAN*, iii, nos. 77, 80; Marjorie Chibnall, ed., *Select Documents of the English Lands of the Abbey of Bec* (Camden: Royal Historical Society, 1951), 10. For Eleanor's patronage of Fontevraud, see *Recueil des actes d'Henri II*, i, no. 24; Jean-Marc Bienvenu, Robert Favreau and Georges Pons, eds. *Grand Cartulaire de Fontevraud: pancarta et cartularium abbatissae et ordinis Fonti Ebraudi. Tome I* (Poitiers: Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest, 2000), nos. 808, 825, 872.

¹¹⁸ Geaman, "Queen's Gold," 10-33.

¹¹⁹ Vincent, "Isabella," 198, appendix, nos.2 and 3.; *Calendar of Patent Rolls Edward II*, 128.

¹²⁰ Vincent, "Isabella," 186.

¹²¹ Vincent, "Isabella," 202.

The alliance with Henry would have been crucial for Matilda as he was one of Stephen's main supporters and an important figure not only in government and in the English church, but also as papal legate. Henry's concerns were also focussed on his career: he had ambitions to become archbishop, which had failed after the election of Theobald, abbot of Bec, to the archbishopric of Canterbury in 1138. However, Henry's wavering alliance to Stephen does not highlight the lack of Matilda's diplomatic skill on this occasion, but instead his unfaithfulness to either claimant and his seeking of the best opportunity to improve his own position, both as a landowner and within the Church. Craig M. Nakashian argued Henry maintained the rights of the Church, even against the interests of Stephen.¹²² If Henry's prevarication about who to support was partially down to self-interest, then Matilda's inability to keep him as a permanent part of her ecclesiastical networks is understandable. However, her interactions with Henry demonstrate her political acumen as she appreciated the importance of having the support of one of the key English churchmen.¹²³ He appears to have been welcomed back by Stephen, perhaps unsurprisingly due to their fraternal connections, and continued his role as Bishop of Winchester until his death in 1171.

Interactions with the pope also played a significant part of the office of queenship, as papal intervention could add substantial weight to any decision the queens made and show their intercessory skills. With the exception of Matilda, the popes intervened primarily in dower and related financial disputes which are examined in the previous section, or in instances of monarchical crisis such as when Richard was held captive during his return from the Third Crusade, which is discussed in chapter four. As these examples chiefly relate to the other queens in this study, the relations between the papacy and Matilda in the mid-twelfth century will be briefly examined here for balance. The papacy intervened in the succession crisis in 1135 when Stephen sent a delegation to Pope Innocent II, and Innocent allowed Stephen and the barons to override their oaths to Matilda, which enabled Stephen to succeed legitimately to the throne of England and the duchy of Normandy.¹²⁴ Chibnall argued Matilda may have asked Ulger, bishop of Angers, to intercede with Innocent on her behalf in December 1135, however no evidence exists to prove whether Matilda requested support, instead leaving the intervention to the papal legate.¹²⁵ The legitimisation of

¹²² Craig M. Nakashian, "The Political and Military Agency of Ecclesiastical Leaders in Anglo-Norman England: 1066-1154," *Journal of Medieval History* 12 (2014): 76.

¹²³ *Gesta Stephani*, 119, 121-123.

¹²⁴ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 69.

¹²⁵ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 68-69.

Stephen's claim by Innocent, as well as the appointment of Bishop Henry as papal legate in March 1139, shows a clear line in favour of Stephen as the papacy added security to Stephen's claims.

The one relevant documented interaction between the papacy and Matilda is in 1153, when Pope Anastasius IV appealed to Matilda to intercede on behalf of Richard, abbot of Mont Saint Michel, who duke Henry removed and replaced with his favourite.¹²⁶ Anastasius appealed to Eleanor on the same grounds, although it is not known whether the letters were sent simultaneously or with a gap between petitions.¹²⁷ These appeals were ultimately unsuccessful as Robert of Torigni was made abbot in 1154 by Henry's mandate. Due to his brief tenure as pope, Anastasius did not have time to establish connections with many European rulers, and it is plausible that he may have sought to foster networks and build relations with Matilda and Eleanor, two of the strongest noblewomen in western Europe, whilst intervening in the dispute. The failure of these appeals shows that although Matilda and Eleanor may have been powerful women in the 1150s, even they could not overrule Henry's desire when it came to royal appointments. It is not known if they favoured the abbot Henry had installed at Mont Saint Michel, though it is plausible due to Matilda's patronage of Robert of Torigni, from Bec, she would have favoured Robert over Richard.

Moving on to Matilda's patronage of religious institutions, the institution with which she was most closely tied was Bec Abbey, where she was buried in 1169. Bec was patronised by the Norman dukes, and it was founded in 1034 by Herluin, a Norman knight, and received the benefaction of many donations by prominent Norman families.¹²⁸ The decision of the four women to be buried in institutions they patronised, instead of natal or marital mausolea, is significant as it demonstrates further agency. By being laid to rest in an institution of their choice, these four women all highlighted their continuing links to places where they had been ecclesiastical patrons. They benefited from further agency as they outlived their royal husbands, who therefore could not dictate their burial place. Matilda established this trend, which was part of a wider western European pattern, for the women

¹²⁶ Anastasius IV, "Letter from Anastasius IV to Empress Matilda (1153)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/207.html.

¹²⁷ Anastasius IV, "Letter from Anastasius IV to Eleanor of Aquitaine (1153)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/142.html.

¹²⁸ Marjorie Chibnall, "The Empress Matilda and Bec-Hellouin," *ANS* 10 (1988): 36.

in this study.¹²⁹ Matilda's patronage of religious institutions was an intrinsic part of her exercise of power, and importantly it laid the foundations for future religious networks for the Plantagenets, which was a specific strategy that assisted Henry II's consolidation of power when he became king. Matilda had previously requested to be buried at Bec after an illness in 1134.¹³⁰ Although she endowed several English religious houses with lands and money, her patronage of Bec is an interesting case study as it is the institution she held the longest affiliation with.¹³¹ She patronised both Benedictine and Augustinian houses, including Cluny in her earlier years as a noblewoman. This is significant as she continued the paternal patronage that had been bestowed on both orders, and established further ecclesiastical support, as seen with Cluny.¹³² Chibnall extensively explored Matilda's ties to Rouen Cathedral and Bec Abbey, and how she established an administrative centre at Emendreville and Quevilly which allowed her to patronise both institutions.¹³³ Cross-Channel relations were crucial here, as although Matilda was not in Normandy for the majority of the 1140s, Bec established four priories and several cells with her support, demonstrating her continued connection with both Bec and England.¹³⁴

Matilda's allies were often patrons of Bec, which is indicative of their wish to stay in favour with Matilda. This is seen with Matilda of Wallingford, wife of Brian fitz Count, who granted two manors in Ogbourne, an area under Matilda's control near Devizes, to Bec in either 1150 or 1151.¹³⁵ These networks with both the nobility and the Church benefited each other, as the religious foundations gained patronage and influence, and the nobility benefited from intercessory acts by the monks and nuns. Matilda also benefited from a cordial relationship with Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, who had been prior at Bec during the 1130s.¹³⁶ The abbey was also closely linked with Le Pré, Normandy, a Cluniac cell for which there is further evidence of Matilda's connections to religious foundations. Le Pré was established in 1149 by Geoffrey of Anjou, possibly at Matilda's instigation according to

¹²⁹ John Carmi Parsons, "'Never was a body buried in England with such solemnity and honour': The Burials and Posthumous Commemorations of English Queens to 1500," in *Queens and Queenship*, 317-338. Bowie argued the burial of royal spouses together did not become the norm until the end of the fourteenth century: Bowie, *Daughters*, 193.

¹³⁰ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 61; *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ii, 247.

¹³¹ For patronage of English religious houses, see *RRAN*, iii, nos. 115, 116, 190, 363, 368-372, 377-378, 419, 497-498, 517-518, 529, 571, 587, 628-633, 644-647, 697-703, 711, 791-792.

¹³² Chibnall, *Matilda*, 177-179.

¹³³ Chibnall, "Bec-Hellouin," 37.

¹³⁴ Marjorie Morgan, *The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 22, 40.

¹³⁵ *RRAN*, iii, no. 31.

¹³⁶ Chibnall, "Bec-Hellouin," 41-42.

Chibnall.¹³⁷ Several of Matilda's charters are produced here, some of which are discussed in chapter four.¹³⁸ Matilda's relationships with Bec and its related cells demonstrate not only her exercise of power, as she patronised religious institutions and gained their allegiance. It also linked closely with her noble networks, as members of her alliance patronised the same institutions, binding them closer together. Bec was a highly important institution on both sides of the Channel as it provided several archbishops of Canterbury within the first century of its foundation, and it was not only Matilda's familial ties with the abbey which affected her patronage of it.¹³⁹ These relationships strengthened Matilda's claim to the throne of England, not only through the power both groups held, but also through the economic strength they could provide. Matilda's influence over religious institutions throughout the Anglo-Norman dominions from her position as heir to the throne, through to regent and honoured mother of the king, ensured she continually exercised influence. It is unlikely this patronage would have caused conflict with Eleanor, who had her own favoured religious institutions.

From the extant charters we can demonstrate how Matilda used her religious patronage to establish further religious networks in England when the institutions were loyal to Stephen. It is evident both Matilda and Stephen battled to assert dominance over abbeys including Bordesley and Reading, by confirming their own charters for these specific institutions when they were in power, as discussed below. Matilda also exercised religious patronage over institutions within her sphere of influence, such as Bordesley Abbey, to whom she confirmed their lands, in 1141, at Devizes.¹⁴⁰ Bordesley was established by Waleran of Meulan, and when Waleran surrendered to Matilda in 1141 it fell under her control. Matilda re-established the abbey's foundations the same year, asserting that she had founded it, not Waleran.¹⁴¹ Waleran's defection, as discussed above, was a key victory for Matilda and Geoffrey, and Waleran's continued support of Matilda can be seen with the grant of the La Haye-de-Lintot to the church of Notre-Dame-en-Voeu, another foundation of Matilda's in Normandy.¹⁴² Waleran later fell from favour with Henry II and was stripped

¹³⁷ Chibnall, "Bec-Hellouin," 44; *RRAN*, iii, no. 77.

¹³⁸ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 116a, 168, 432 and 607.

¹³⁹ Chibnall, "Bec-Hellouin," 35-36.

¹⁴⁰ *RRAN*, iii, no. 115.

¹⁴¹ *RRAN*, iii, no. 116; Marjorie Chibnall, "The Empress Matilda and Church Reform," *TRHS* 38 (1988): 110.

¹⁴² AD Seine-Maritime, HP0007_08 (1142-1163); note *haia* de Lintot, assumed to be hedgerows or an enclosure here, was part of the family lands of the counts of Meulan and its importance to the family highlights the significance of the grant here. For more on *haia* de Lintot, see Geoffrey H. White, "The Career of Waleran, Count of Meulan and Earl of Worcester (1104-66)," *TRHS* 17 (1934): 19-48.

of his Norman possessions in 1153 after he assisted Louis VII with Frankish campaigns.¹⁴³ Waleran is an example of the ever-changing fidelities of the Anglo-Norman nobility in the civil war period: although some would remain steadfast to one side or the other, several would support whichever monarch was likely to be of most benefit to them, favouring land over loyalty alongside further considerations of personal safety and prevention of attacks during the civil war.

An instance of the competitive nature between Matilda and Stephen over religious institutions is Reading Abbey. From 1139 to 1159, Matilda confirmed several grants of lands to the abbey, from Gloucestershire, Berkshire, and Hertfordshire.¹⁴⁴ Stephen's grants included freedom from tolls, a confirmation of the manor and church of Aston in Hertfordshire and several other grants of land and protection of rights.¹⁴⁵ As a centre of royal patronage, Reading Abbey was closely associated with the Norman and Plantagenet royal families into the thirteenth century and beyond.¹⁴⁶ Reading Abbey had strong ties to Matilda as it had been refounded by her father as an intended mausoleum for his dynasty, which was begun by the burial of Henry I and Adeliza there.¹⁴⁷ Matilda made donations to Reading prior to the civil war, as seen with her gift of the hand of St James, which she brought back upon her return from the Holy Roman Empire and donated to Reading at the request of her father.¹⁴⁸ These links between Reading and Matilda emphasised her legitimacy. Stafford argued further for Reading Abbey's connections to Matilda and its previous basis as part of queen's lands, which supports the familial links between the house of Blois and the abbey.¹⁴⁹ Stafford convincingly argued Reading was a dynastic church as its favour by Matilda and Henry II was a way to seek legitimacy through Henry I, which is credible when examining the links between royal women and familial necropolis, such as Bertrade of Montfort (queen of the Franks, 1092-1108) and Hautes-Bruyères, and later Eleanor and Fontevraud.¹⁵⁰

A charter evidences Matilda jointly granting land with her son duke Henry, in 1150-1151, when it had become clearer Henry was more likely to be the future monarch of England,

¹⁴³ Chibnall, *Matilda*, 185.

¹⁴⁴ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 699, 701, 702 and 703.

¹⁴⁵ *RRAN*, iii, nos. 676-694.

¹⁴⁶ Brian Kemp, "The Seals of Reading Abbey," *Reading Medieval Studies* 14 (1988): 139-162.

¹⁴⁷ Ron Baxter, *The Royal Abbey of Reading* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), 39.

¹⁴⁸ Brian Kemp, "The Hand of St James at Reading Abbey," *Reading Medieval Studies* 16 (1990): 77-98; Baxter, *Reading*, 48-49.

¹⁴⁹ Pauline Stafford, "'Cherchez la femme'. Queens, Queens' Lands and Nunneries: Missing Links in the Foundation of Reading Abbey," *History* 85 (2000): 10, 14, 24.

¹⁵⁰ Stafford, "'Cherchez la femme,'" 27.

rather than herself.¹⁵¹ Both Stephen and Matilda strived to found both Cistercian and Benedictine monasteries; the monasteries of Bordesley and Stanley were both Cistercian foundations, indicating Matilda's favour towards that order.¹⁵² The foundation of Stanley Abbey was an attempt to further cement her south-western power base, and evidence survives of her granting further land to the abbey between 1150 and 1151: the original date of foundation is unknown but was confirmed by Henry II in 1186.¹⁵³ Janet Burton proposed the development of the Cistercian order in England was largely affected by political events, and in times of political crisis such as the civil war, the political effect on monastic patronage is heightened which led to an increase in Cistercian patronage and foundations.¹⁵⁴ Although religious patronage was an important method of influence, it did not have a significant impact on the civil war: ultimately it was nobles and retainers which would lead to Stephen's success, though the importance of Bishop Henry as a significant member of the Church and the nobility must not be understated. The patronage over religious establishments would serve Matilda well as it provided ample opportunities for her to exercise power and lay the foundations for future Plantagenet ecclesiastical networks.

Eleanor and Fontevraud Abbey

Comparatively, Eleanor's religious patronage was more successful in not only establishing family commemoration, but also in bolstering her power.¹⁵⁵ Eleanor exercised patronage over religious institutions such as St Albans during her time as queen of England, however the abbey which she is most famously associated with is Fontevraud, near Chinon.¹⁵⁶ Discussion of the relationship between the Plantagenets and Fontevraud is well documented. Fontevraud was founded by Robert of Arbrissel in 1100, and was distinct in its foundation as the men and women lived there in co-operation, and it was a primarily

¹⁵¹ *RRAN*, iii. no. 536.

¹⁵² Graham Brown, "Stanley Abbey and Its Estates, 1151-c.1640," (PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2011), 77.

¹⁵³ *RRAN*, iii, no. 836; *Recueil des actes d'Henri II*, ii, no. 682.

¹⁵⁴ Janet Burton, "English Monasteries and the Continent in the Reign of King Stephen," in *King Stephen's Reign (1135-1154)*, eds. Paul Dalton and Graeme J. White (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 112.

¹⁵⁵ See Nicholas Vincent, "Patronage, Politics and Piety in the Charters of Eleanor of Aquitaine," in *Plantagenêts et Capétiens*, 17-60 for a comparative examination of Eleanor's patronage.

¹⁵⁶ Vincent, "Patronage," 24-26; Lionel Landon, ed., *Cartae Antiquae rolls 1-10*, (London: Pipe Roll Society, new series, 17, 1939), ii, no. 376.

female order.¹⁵⁷ According to Berenice Kerr, Fontevraud was the only twelfth century female order to have a group of chaplains and lay brothers to specifically serve the nuns.¹⁵⁸ Before Robert died in 1115, he appointed Petronilla of Chemillé as its abbess to ensure its foundation continued, and abbesses were regularly elected from a select group then onwards.¹⁵⁹ Fontevraud was a place of retreat for Eleanor's grandmother Philippa of Toulouse when her grandfather William IX embarked on his liaison with Dangereuse/Dangerosa, his mistress, and would continue to be held in particular affinity by Philippa's descendants.¹⁶⁰

Fontevraud became the resting place of several Plantagenets who lived during the twelfth century, and many of its abbesses were members of the Plantagenet family including Eleanor's granddaughter Alix.¹⁶¹ There was a long-standing tradition to place royal daughters as abbesses of powerful institutions.¹⁶² This was not unique to the Plantagenets as Marie of Boulogne, daughter of Stephen and Queen Matilda, was plausibly made abbess of Romsey thanks to her high status and connections, and later became countess of Boulogne.¹⁶³ Fontevraud had ties with the Angevins through Fulk of Anjou who favoured it, but it was Eleanor's patronage and decision to retire here in 1200 which strengthened its links to the Plantagenets. Several letters from 1199 show Eleanor's commitment to the abbey. She confirmed grants of money, one from Oléron, near Aquitaine, of £10, and another of £100 from William de Mauze, a retainer of Richard's, to Fontevraud in 1199.¹⁶⁴ Eleanor confirmed that Peter Foucher, a bourgeois of La Rochelle, and his heirs, would be free of military service in order to serve the abbey in 1199, for the salvation of the souls of

¹⁵⁷ Berenice M. Kerr, "Religious life for women from the twelfth century to the middle of the fourteenth century with special reference to the English foundations of the Order of Fontevraud," (PhD thesis, St Anne's College, University of Oxford, 1995), 26.

¹⁵⁸ Kerr, *Religious life*, ii.

¹⁵⁹ Kerr, *Religious life*, 50.

¹⁶⁰ Flori, *Eleanor*, 20-21.

¹⁶¹ Eleanor of Aquitaine, "Letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine to Public (1179)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/890.html; Eleanor of Aquitaine, "Letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine to Public," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/888.html.

¹⁶² For other examples outside the Angevins, see Penelope Nash, *Empress Adelheid and Queen Matilda. Medieval Female Rulership and the Foundations of European Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

¹⁶³ Linda D. Brown, "Inaudito Exemplo: The Abduction of Romsey's Abbess," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 42:1 (2016): 24

¹⁶⁴ Eleanor of Aquitaine, "Letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine to Public (1199)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/886.html; Eleanor of Aquitaine, "Letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine to Public (1199)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/887.html.

Henry, Richard, and herself.¹⁶⁵ The bequest of money to an abbey for religious salvation was expected of royal women. Like Matilda, Eleanor tied the nobility involved in these grants closer to her and the Plantagenet dynasty by involving them directly with the religious institutions and Plantagenet patronage. Beyond this expected piety, in a similar way to Matilda, Eleanor chose to retire to an abbey with which she had an ongoing relationship. Eleanor's connections with Fontevraud intertwined intra and extra-dynastic relations with royal piety and patronage, creating a multifaceted exercise of power.

Robert Favreau argued Eleanor made a donation to the abbey during her marriage to Louis VII, with his agreement.¹⁶⁶ Eleanor visited Henry II's paternal aunt Matilda (daughter of Fulk of Anjou), abbess of Fontevraud, after the annulment of Louis' and Eleanor's marriage, in 1152.¹⁶⁷ This confirmation exemplifies the importance of the abbey and familial links to Eleanor throughout her life, as it was situated in the Angevin heartlands. It also demonstrates her continued connections with the French royal family, despite Eleanor's remarriage, as her granddaughter Alix, whom Eleanor later confirmed as abbess of Fontevraud, was the daughter of Alix of France, Eleanor's second daughter from her marriage to Louis. This confirmation is indicative of Eleanor's political acumen as she maintained ties with the Capetians through her granddaughter, as well as the house of Blois, as Eleanor's daughter Alix was married to Theobald V, count of Blois. Although this research is focussed predominantly on the relations between co-rulers, mothers and sons, and mothers and daughters-in-law, Eleanor's relationship with her sons and daughters is of immense importance as these strong maternal relationships allowed her to supersede her daughters-in-laws' relationships with their husbands, which is discussed in chapter four. Eleanor placed her two youngest children, Joan and John, into the care of the abbey whilst she was absent governing in Poitou and Aquitaine.¹⁶⁸ Eleanor's continued patronage of Fontevraud benefited not only herself through the alliance and the heavenly salvation she paid for, but also for her children via promotion in the Church. Kathleen Nolan argued Fontevraud remained a power base for Eleanor, and she held control over the death and memorialisation of the royal family, as she chose a resting place that would benefit their souls, as seen in the aforementioned charters where Eleanor paid for masses to be said for

¹⁶⁵ Eleanor of Aquitaine, "Letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine to Public (1199)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/880.html.

¹⁶⁶ Robert Favreau, "Aliénor d'Aquitaine et Fontevraud," in *Aliénor d'Aquitaine*, 41; *Recueil des actes d'Henri II*, i, no. 24.

¹⁶⁷ Flori, *Eleanor*, 68

¹⁶⁸ Andrew W. Lewis, "The Birth and Childhood of King John: Some Revisions," in *Lord and Lady*, 167.

the benefit of the Plantagenets.¹⁶⁹ As discussed above, Shadis' argument that Fontevraud is an example of a royal necropolis demonstrates the importance of exercising religious patronage and acts of piety in order to prove queenly power.¹⁷⁰

Fontevraud was not only distinct in its establishment as a female order with male servants, and its selection of abbesses: it was closely tied to the Aquitainians despite its Angevin location and became a centre for Plantagenet commemoration. Similar to Bec, it had cells in England, namely: Nuneaton, founded by Robert Beaumont, 2nd earl of Leicester; Amesbury, which Henry II converted to a house for the Fontevraud nuns after expelling the Benedictines; and Westwood, founded by the de Say family from Hampshire, demonstrating Fontevraud's wider influence and importance.¹⁷¹ The decision by Henry II to expel the Benedictines in favour of the Fontevraud nuns demonstrates his favour towards the institution, and the close ties he held with the abbey.¹⁷² It could also be linked to the monastic reforms of the twelfth century, which emphasised a focus on personal reform across all orders and Henry held a personal interest in.¹⁷³ This demonstrates both Matilda's and Eleanor's understanding of maintaining a strong relationship with religious institutions and endowing them for the benefit of both themselves and their connections. Relationships with religious foundations also allowed queens to gain spiritual privileges whilst fulfilling their expected role as a pious female and patron. Fontevraud is a perfect example to understand how patronage and kinship networks intertwine, and how the relationship of Eleanor and the abbey lasted throughout her time as queen of France and England, and beyond.

Berengaria of Navarre, Papal Interactions and the Abbeys of Le Mans

As seen above, relations with the Church formed an integral part of being a royal woman, and this tradition was continued by Berengaria. Monastic patronage is one of the few aspects of the regal office Berengaria was able to exercise, albeit not until her dowager period. By holding Le Mans, Berengaria had a specific area of control for the first time in her life, where, although she still had to pay homage to Philip Augustus as her overlord, she

¹⁶⁹ Kathleen Nolan, "The Queen's Choice: Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Tombs at Fontevraud," in *Lord and Lady*, 395.

¹⁷⁰ Shadis, "Piety," 217; Flori, *Eleanor*, 282.

¹⁷¹ Kerr, *Religious life*, ii.

¹⁷² Jean-Marc Bienvenu, "Henri II Plantagenêt et Fontevraud," *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 37 (1994): 25-32.

¹⁷³ Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32-34; Elizabeth M. Hallam, "Henry II, Richard I and the Order of Grandmont," *Journal of Medieval History* 1 (1975): 165-186.

was an empowered noblewoman. She is most famously associated with the Abbaye de L'Épau. Berengaria commissioned the construction of L'Épau in 1229, with the abbey incomplete at the time of her death in 1230. The land which the abbey was built upon was granted to her by Louis IX, whom she had close relations with through his mother and her niece, Blanche of Castile.¹⁷⁴ The brothers of Coëffort, a local hospital, claimed in 1230 to have been granted the lands by Arthur of Brittany (d. 1203), however this was later resolved by Berengaria paying for the deeds the same year.¹⁷⁵ This is politically significant owing to the allegations that Arthur was killed on John's orders: by acknowledging the previous ownership of the land by Arthur, Berengaria involved herself further in the politics of the region, which could cause disfavour with the advisors of her nephew Henry III, due to allegations that John had caused Arthur's death.¹⁷⁶ The abbey was confirmed by Pope Gregory IX in January 1231, a month after Berengaria's death, and she was buried here in accordance with her wishes. Berengaria's burial at L'Épau is a continuance of the trend whereby the Angevin women chose to be buried at an institution they had patronized rather than a familial necropolis, plausibly Fontevraud as she was more likely to be buried with her marital rather than natal family. Berengaria's choice of burial site indicates a strength of commitment to her domains. The confirmation of this abbey represents the apex of Berengaria's influence in the region and is a primary example of the power Berengaria might have wielded as consort.

The second religious institution Berengaria had strong ties to is the Abbey of St Pierre-de-la-Cour, the chapel of the counts of Maine, which was founded at the end of the tenth century. As seen in chapter three, she appointed members of her household to positions within the chapter of the chapel of St Pierre-de-la-Cour. Berengaria, in her role as patron and protectress, was often involved in the chapel's dealings, some of which are recorded in the chapel's cartulary. The cartulary documented the interdicts the chapel was placed under when Berengaria arrested a man known only as André, who had declined to pay tax due to his allegiance with the cathedral chapter of St Julien, which is discussed further below.¹⁷⁷ This resulted in the cathedral chapter placing all other churches under interdict and was only resolved by papal intervention after St Pierre-de-la-Cour continued to defy

¹⁷⁴ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 183-184.

¹⁷⁵ Louis Piolin, *Histoire de l'Eglise Du Mans*, 10 vols. (Paris: Imprimeurs - Libraires au Mans, 1851-1871), iv, 583-585, accessed 28 May 2018, archive.org.

¹⁷⁶ Carpenter, *Minority*, 138, 251.

¹⁷⁷ *St. Pierre de la Cour*, nos. 34 and 36.

the cathedral.¹⁷⁸ The relationship between Berengaria and St Pierre-de-la-Cour is an example of her growth in authority and influence as she was confident to intervene for the benefit of herself and her abbey on numerous occasions, not only with André but also with taxation disputes, which is discussed below. As examined later in this section, Honorius III intervened on several occasions in Berengaria's favour regarding ecclesiastical matters linked to her, particularly disobedient churchmen.

Berengaria disagreed on several occasions with Bishop Maurice of Le Mans, who was elected in 1216, although he was an active participant in ecclesiastical affairs before this. Maurice's origins are uncertain, however Jörg Peltzer has argued the unlikelihood of Maurice coming from outside the Angevin lands.¹⁷⁹ One dispute between Berengaria and Maurice in the initial years of his position arose over the bishop's attempts to claim revenues from the city's parishes, which Berengaria was entitled to as she held Le Mans, as later confirmed by a jury created by Philip Augustus, which indicates a defence of her prerogatives.¹⁸⁰ Another quarrel between Maurice and Berengaria before he became bishop was over the customs Berengaria tried to collect from a fief belong to the chapter of St Pierre-de-la-Cour, which was challenged by the cathedral chapter of St Julien. Berengaria refused to give the money to the cathedral chapter, and an interdict was imposed on all the city churches by the chapter of St Julien.¹⁸¹ In this instance, the chapter of St Pierre-de-la-Cour appealed to the papal legate, and then Pope Innocent III.¹⁸² In 1206 Innocent responded and allowed the chapter of St Pierre-de-la-Cour to hear mass in private.¹⁸³ This was to be one of many clashes between the two chapters, as a second interdict was placed by St Julien on the city of Le Mans in 1216 and lasted eighteen months. This was a response to Berengaria's bailiff attempting to collect taxes on sales within a fief belonging to St Pierre-de-la-Cour, which was challenged by St Julien as Berengaria did not hand the money to the cathedral chapter.¹⁸⁴ This was only resolved by Berengaria's agreement to pay the chapter of St Julien, followed by the interdict being lifted.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁸ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 164.

¹⁷⁹ Jörg Peltzer, *Canon Law, Careers and Conquest. Episcopal Elections in Normandy and Greater Anjou, c.1140-c.1230* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 192-193.

¹⁸⁰ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 164.

¹⁸¹ AD de la Sarthe, MS. 259, *Cartulaire de l'Eglise du Mans: Livre Blanc du chapitre*, no. 34.

¹⁸² Trindade, *Berengaria*, 166.

¹⁸³ *St. Pierre de la Cour*, no. 34.

¹⁸⁴ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 164-165.

¹⁸⁵ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 170.

Regarding other interactions with Maurice, the *Histoire de l'Église du Le Mans* includes a charter showing the agreement reached between Maurice and St Pierre-de-la-Cour, indicating a cordiality between Berengaria and Maurice and the willingness of both to negotiate.¹⁸⁶ This is demonstrated by the phrase 'amicabiliter initam' in the 1230 charter, which translates to 'beginning in a friendly manner', which emphasises the cordiality between the two parties and a shift in their relationship.¹⁸⁷ This negotiation and ability to concede demonstrates Berengaria's political acumen as she navigated the ecclesiastical networks well and reached a solution which was beneficial to both parties. It appears hostilities between Maurice and Berengaria had ceased towards the end of her time in Le Mans, as Maurice confirmed two grants, one in 1229 and one in 1230, both resolving sales of soldiers previously confirmed by Berengaria.¹⁸⁸

Like Matilda, Berengaria's relationship with the papacy was one of intercessory action by the popes on behalf of the queen, although in Berengaria's case it was far more effective than it had been for Matilda. The pope championing the queen's cause was critical in establishing both the action's legitimacy and for bearing down upon the kings, noblemen, and churchmen who obstructed the queen's rights. Throughout these disputes, Berengaria had the support of Pope Honorius III, who intervened in her dower disputes on several occasions as analysed in the preceding section. A 1217 letter from Honorius supported Berengaria's punishment of clerics in Le Mans, who had led secular lives, an example of Berengaria exercising her authority in the region.¹⁸⁹ A letter dated 10 April 1218 showed Honorius' intervention in local affairs as he mediated between Berengaria and Maurice regarding clerics who sought to overrule Berengaria's authority by enforcing law in their favour and excusing themselves from tax collection.¹⁹⁰ Honorius overruled both Berengaria and Maurice, stating he would take the final decision in such matters. Honorius began the letter 'on your part it was put forth to us', demonstrating Berengaria requested assistance in this matter.¹⁹¹ Another letter from Honorius, also dated 10 April 1218, reinforced Berengaria's wish to treat the aforementioned clerics as laymen so they paid secular

¹⁸⁶ Piolin, *Histoire de l'Église Du Mans*, iv, no. 70.

¹⁸⁷ Piolin, *Histoire de l'Église Du Mans*, iv, no. 70.

¹⁸⁸ BNF, Latin 17124, 27-28, 28.

¹⁸⁹ Honorius III, "Letter from Honorius III to Berengaria of Navarre (1217)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/772.html.

¹⁹⁰ Honorius III, "Letter from Honorius III to Berengaria of Navarre (10/4/1218)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/774.html.

¹⁹¹ 'Ex parte tua fuit propositum coram nobis'. Honorius III, "Letter from Honorius III to Berengaria of Navarre (10/4/1218)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/774.html.

taxes.¹⁹² The conflict here between the ruler treating the clerics as secular landowners, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy maintaining that money goes to the Church, has been discussed in another case in chapter two, that of Stephen and the arrest of the bishops in 1139. Berengaria's will to exercise her authority and collection of revenue in Le Mans in this case demonstrates her agency, as she had the capacity to make and enforce her own decisions.¹⁹³ In these letters it is evident the papacy wanted to maintain its power at all levels. However, it was not beyond supporting the authority of other individuals regarding ecclesiastical matters. The resolution reached between Berengaria and Maurice would have been unlikely without Honorius' intercession.

According to Trindade, Berengaria worked with Maurice on several matters concerning religious orders and the conversion of Jews in Le Mans, indicating they were able to work co-operatively outside of the chapter dispute.¹⁹⁴ However, this is poorly substantiated and largely speculative due to a lack of evidence. It is more plausible Berengaria gave lands that had belonged to Jews of Le Mans to individuals, for example the undated sale of a Jewish property by converts to a cleric named Geoffrey, and this property was within the fief of Berengaria's liegeman Paulin Boutier.¹⁹⁵ Berengaria's interactions with the Jewish community are not well documented, however we can draw comparisons with the actions of her relatives. From this case it can be interpreted that Berengaria was involved with the conversion of the Jewish community of Le Mans, as seen with the following example by her nephew Teobaldo. There are other cases for the confiscation of land belonging to the Jewish community and granting it back again, as Leroy presents a 1236 charter of Teobaldo I of Navarre, where he granted land confiscated from Jews by Berengaria's brother Sancho back to the Jewish community.¹⁹⁶ In Navarre, Jews were welcomed from France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; however tensions erupted in Tudela in the 1220s and 1230s between the Jewish and Christian communities.¹⁹⁷ Other areas of France demonstrated high levels of persecution for Jews, however this is not evidenced in Le Mans which may indicate that Berengaria was more sympathetic to them.

¹⁹² Honorius III, "Letter from Honorius III to Berengaria of Navarre (10/4/1218)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/775.html.

¹⁹³ *Enquête*, 32-33, 56 for examples of Berengaria's administration in Le Mans.

¹⁹⁴ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 164.

¹⁹⁵ Trindade, *Berengaria*, 176; André Bouton, *Le Maine. Histoire économique et sociale* (Le Mans: 1962), i, 764.

¹⁹⁶ *Archivo General de Navarra, Cajón III, folios 268-269 (December 1236)*, in Béatrice Leroy, *The Jews of Navarre in the Late Middle Ages* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1985), 149-150.

¹⁹⁷ Leroy, *Jews*, 132, 139.

A final letter which demonstrates the importance of the relationship between Berengaria and Honorius is also from April 1218. In this letter Honorius declared Berengaria would be taken under his protection because 'we are compelled to offer care and sollicitude [sic] of widows showing special grace': namely because of Berengaria's piety, and her vulnerable position as a widow, as well as her wealth and possibly influence in Le Mans.¹⁹⁸ By acknowledging Berengaria's religious devotion, and as referenced below with Isabella, it is plausible Berengaria recognised the importance of displaying piety in order to gain ecclesiastical support, which as seen here, would offer security to women in need without a male protector. Although Honorius did not always act as Berengaria may have desired, namely mediating between her and Maurice rather than explicitly siding with her, Honorius often defended her interests, as seen with his intervention against John and Maurice. Carpenter noted the spring of 1218 was a time where the regency in England failed to keep control of wardships and fiefs, and were facing disputes on all sides with threats to the regency.¹⁹⁹ In light of this ongoing tension, it is perhaps unsurprising Honorius continued to intervene with urgency to ensure Berengaria's rights were upheld as ongoing political disputes in England would relegate the issue of her dower to the sidelines.

As the letters are one-sided it is difficult to gauge Berengaria's requests unless we read between the lines. She continued to push for the return of her dower lands, or suitable compensation. From her tenacity, it is plausible that she was confident of her position and her rights to continually request, or at least accept, intercession on her behalf to ensure her prerogatives were upheld. Berengaria's rights to dower were threatened by Isabella's claims to the dower lands. Berengaria was keen to exercise her authority and influence in religious matters and Honorius' intervention provides additional information regarding disputes: as the letters from 1217 and 1218 indicate, the local clergy were not particularly obedient to Berengaria, and would utilise their relationships with the higher-level bishops to secure their privileges. It might be expected their first obedience would be to the pope, and their ecclesiastical responsibilities would overrule any secular ones, such as paying taxes to the local lord. However, as seen with other ecclesiastical-secular relationships, these conflicting loyalties often meant that allegiance to the Church did not always take primacy.

¹⁹⁸ 'quo curam et sollicitudinem gerere cogimur viduarum specialem gratiam exhibendo,' Honorius III, "Letter from Honorius III to Berengaria of Navarre (9/4/1218)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/773.html.

¹⁹⁹ Carpenter, *Minority*, 78-81.

These incidents show us a very different Berengaria compared to her depiction during her marriage to Richard. She exercised substantial authority on religious matters and was quick to defend her rights and the interests of matters close to her, especially the chapel of St. Pierre-de-la-Cour. She worked effectively with both Honorius and Maurice, from the extant evidence. Berengaria is not as absent from political life as previously thought given the lack of Anglophone scholarship, but her life needs to be brought under further examination. Although Eleanor undoubtedly wielded more authority in the Angevin realms during Berengaria's time as consort, Berengaria's governance as Lady of Le Mans exemplifies a woman with considerable political and diplomatic skills, who was not dependent on cordial familial connections for her power.

Isabella of Angoulême: Religious Patronage in England, and Interactions with Honorius III

As previously mentioned, a substantial lack of extant evidence for Isabella's time as consort results in an unclear picture of her activities during her tenure. It is only in her dowager period when she negotiated with her son Henry for the restitution of her dower lands, and exhibited her power, that we see further documentation of her political activity. John's restrictions on Isabella's power and his imposition of a seneschal in Angoulême meant Isabella could not patronise religious institutions, as the money allotted to her by John was so minimal that she could not pay for masses for the salvation of her and John's souls, let alone endow an abbey or chapel with lands from Angoulême.²⁰⁰ The control of her dower lands are discussed in the previous section, however these were contested between John, Berengaria, Eleanor, and later Henry III, with little thought for Isabella's position, or indeed Berengaria's.

There is little extant evidence for Isabella acting as a joint benefactor for a religious institution, although John issued a confirmation charter on 7 March 1204 to the bishop and chapter of Chichester for his and Isabella's souls.²⁰¹ Joint confirmations were not unusual: Eleanor and Henry II have three listed in Aquitaine.²⁰² As this is one of the few extant charters naming Isabella, it can be viewed as John and Isabella performing the expected roles of rulers: as noted previously, queens were expected to organise masses and donations for the memorialisation of themselves, the king and their close family.²⁰³ Most contemporaries believed John had played a role in the disappearance of his nephew Arthur

²⁰⁰ Vincent, "Isabella," 183-187.

²⁰¹ *Rot. Chart.*, i, 129.

²⁰² Hivergneaux, "Queen Eleanor and Aquitaine," 66.

²⁰³ van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, 11, 65-66, 71.

of Brittany, particularly due to the ominous wording of a charter from Philip Augustus to Guy de Thouars.²⁰⁴ John had also lost the majority of the Angevin lands in France, so it is perhaps expected that he confirmed a charter for the souls of himself and Isabella, given the uncertainty he faced at this time. Isabella's appearance in the political scene here could be due to her coming of age, as she would plausibly have been sixteen in 1204. It is possible Chichester was chosen as a place of patronage as it formed part of Isabella's dower lands, however it was also assigned by John to the local ecclesiastics, demonstrating his control of Isabella's dower.²⁰⁵

Discussion now turns to the charters solely granted by Isabella. One of the few charters of Isabella's we have in the immediate period after John's death, before her return to Angoulême, gives us a brief indication of her religious activity. Isabella confirmed a previous charter of John's, in which the town and castle of Malmesbury were granted to Malmesbury Abbey for the salvation of her and John's souls, a not insignificant grant given the importance of Malmesbury at this time as a royal institution.²⁰⁶ Such a display of piety was expected of a queen and shows Isabella was capable of fulfilling the role, had she been allowed to fully exercise power. Indeed, her actions beyond 1220 demonstrated an impressive display of authority and influence, and with the resources of Angoulême and La Marche behind her, Isabella was a force to be reckoned with. However, in the brief glimpse of Isabella's regal power here, her short interplay with ecclesiastical affairs is for the benefit of both herself and the abbey, as she endowed them with an amount of land which would further demonstrate the importance of Malmesbury Abbey.

The second of her charters after the death of John was also religious in nature, and confirmed the grant by Geoffrey fitz Peter, of the tithes of Berkhamstead mills, to the order of St Thomas Acon at Berkhamstead, lands which Geoffrey held custody of though they were part of Isabella's dower.²⁰⁷ The third charter, as mentioned above, concerns the grant of the fair of Exeter to the Benedictine monastery of St Nicholas, Exeter, which also formed part of Isabella's dower lands.²⁰⁸ All three of these charters give an indication of Isabella's political acumen, as she attempted to gain the support of the Church, as she knew the

²⁰⁴ Delisle, *Catalogues des actes de Philippe-Auguste*, no. 783; Katherine Weikert, "The (Truncated) Life of Alice de Solers Rufus née de Huntingfield," in *Writing the Lives of People and Things, AD 500-1700, A Multi-disciplinary Future for Biography*, eds. Robert F. W. Smith and Gemma L. Watson (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2016), 18.

²⁰⁵ *Rot. Chart.*, i, nos. 127b, 222; Vincent, "Isabella," 189.

²⁰⁶ Vincent, "Isabella," appendix, no.3.

²⁰⁷ *Calendar of Patent Rolls Edward II*, 128; Vincent, "Isabella," 198.

²⁰⁸ Vincent, "Isabella," 198.

vulnerability of her position as dowager given the difficulties Berengaria had faced. As all three grants were from her dower lands, it is notable that in the few months before she returned to France, Isabella took advantage of regaining control of her dower by exercising religious patronage and demonstrating her authority and influence. Like Matilda, Eleanor, and Berengaria, these charters show a more powerful woman in her dowager period. As Isabella was denied regency in England, she returned to Angoulême where she was able to be more independent and continued to work in the interests of Henry, in lands which were rightfully hers and not disputed, as was the case with Isabella's English dower lands. Due to the lack of extant evidence, it is not known which individuals Isabella tried to foster an affinity with whilst she was consort. Isabella was aware of the importance of maintaining religious and familial networks and as discussed below, the significance of establishing cordial relations with the papacy to secure inheritance and revenues, as well as intercessory action for her own benefit.

This last section focusses on how the relationship between Isabella and Honorius compared with the relationship between Berengaria and Honorius, given their similarities in status. Isabella's opportunity for power by acting as regent for her son Henry was denied to her as a regency council was established soon after John's death. Similar to Berengaria, Honorius offered to protect Isabella in her vulnerable position, as he stated in 1217 that 'inclined therefore to your just prayers, we take your person and all your goods under the protection of St. Peter and ourselves.'²⁰⁹ This demonstration of protection to a dowager, as with Berengaria, indicates both the role of the papacy to defend the rights of widows and orphans and the importance of dowagers establishing relationships either with the papacy or prominent churchmen, by exhibiting piety and religious patronage. By protecting royal widows, Innocent and Honorius established mutually beneficial connections as they extended their authority and influence. This extension of influence would include intervention in local ecclesiastical disputes, where the queen could be heavily involved through links due to patronage, as well as collection of tithes, which as seen above were a regular cause of dispute. Although it is unknown during her time as consort what religious patronage Isabella exercised, if any, it is plausible her actions as a pious queen helped to gain the support of Innocent and Honorius, as she engaged in forms of Christian piety such as attending church and giving alms. Unlike the other three queens, we do not know if

²⁰⁹ 'Tuis ergo justis precibus inclinati, personam et omnia bona tua sub beati Petri et nostra protectione.' Honorius III, "Letter to Isabel of Angoulême (1217)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, <http://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/459>.

Isabella established relationships with other churchmen, either in the Angevin realms or Angoulême. As such, the beginnings of her interactions with Honorius indicate not only the vulnerability of her position, but also the significance of the pope when acting as an intercessor and defender of dowagers.

A second letter, dated in 1218, is further evidence of Honorius' protection of Isabella's rights. Honorius 'grants that when her land should be under general interdict, it would be permitted to her to hear the divine offices celebrated by her chaplain, with doors closed and excommunicates excluded.'²¹⁰ A further letter in 1219 allowed Isabella protection against excommunication unless it is decreed by the Pope.²¹¹ As Isabella was a widow when these letters were written, as she did not marry Hugh until 1220, it is likely these grants were an extension of Honorius' protection of Isabella and to ensure her salvation. The phrasing of the 1219 letter is significant as Isabella would be excommunicated by the Bishop of Saintes the same year, which according to Vincent may be due to her claim to Saintes as part of her dower lands, which had been reassigned as her daughter Joan's marriage portion.²¹² In 1220 Isabella received the first threat of excommunication from Honorius due to her attack on Cognac, a castle which had belonged to the lords of Angoulême prior to the 1180s, and the imprisonment of Henry III's seneschal.²¹³ Honorius wrote that unless Isabella restored the castle, freed the hostages, and ended her harmful actions against Henry, Isabella would be punished 'by excommunication of person and interdict of land, without appeal.'²¹⁴ Isabella at this stage complied with the papal edict, which showed her awareness of the need to balance political players, as she was also undoubtedly conscious of how John's authority had been compromised by the papal interdict in 1208, however later actions demonstrated her will to exercise her claims to

²¹⁰ 'Indulget ut cum eius terra generali supposita fuerit interdicto, ipsi per capellanum suum celebrantem divina officia, clausis ianuis et excommunicatis exclusis, audire liceat.' Honorius III, "Letter to Isabel of Angoulême (1218)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, <http://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/460>.

²¹¹ Honorius III, "Letter to Isabel of Angoulême (1219)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, <http://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/461>.

²¹² Vincent, "Isabella," 208.

²¹³ Honorius III, "Letter to Isabel of Angoulême (1220)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 14 December 2019, <http://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/462>.

²¹⁴ 'per excommunicationem in personas et interdictum in terras, appellatione remota, compellant.' "Letter to Isabel of Angoulême (1220)."

dower lands and her authority, over political acumen. These letters are an example of how the relations between the papacy and Isabella were once cordial.²¹⁵

The excommunication of Isabella and Hugh in 1221 arose as a chain of events, started by Isabella's decision to marry Hugh, an act which required the permission of the regency council. She did not receive permission and married Hugh despite this. In retaliation, the regency council confiscated Isabella's dower lands, and in response, Isabella and Hugh threatened to keep her daughter Joan, who had been betrothed to Hugh originally, instead of permitting Joan to return to England. Joan was later proposed as a bride for Alexander II of Scotland. A delay to the marriage could potentially rupture the Anglo-Scottish alliance and caused further tension between Isabella and the English court.²¹⁶ Through these letters we can see how the relationship between Honorius and Isabella was one of dowager and protector at first. After her marriage to Hugh, which has often been viewed as in opposition to the wishes of Henry and the regency council, Angoumois-papal relations quickly soured.²¹⁷ As Isabella's position had changed from dowager to wife, she was no longer in need of protection. Isabella's unwillingness to respond to checks placed on her power would result in further disharmony with both Henry and the papacy.

What can be surmised from these few letters is that Isabella was aware of her power and its limitations due to her position. After the death of John and her decision to return to Angoulême, she needed a male intercessor to ensure her protection. As only the letters from Honorius have survived, we do not know if she asked for intercession but plausibly a petition was needed to garner papal intervention. She appeared to have willingly accepted the involvement of the pope and continued to demonstrate piety with her exercise of religious patronage in the year after John's death, plausibly to seek protection as a dowager. However, once she was firmly established as countess of Angoulême and married Hugh, she appeared more confident in her authority, and acted against both Henry and Louis IX to retain her own power, as discussed in chapter two.

Shortly after Isabella's remarriage, her relations with the papacy quickly disintegrated, due to actions which go beyond the scope of this thesis. Isabella's desire to protect her own

²¹⁵ The exact date of excommunication of Isabella and Hugh is not known, however as Honorius III threatens to place Isabella and Hugh under excommunication in 1220, and then to excommunicate them again in 1222, it is plausible that they were under excommunication between 1220 and 1222 for a brief period.

²¹⁶ M. A. Pollock, *Scotland, England and France after the Loss of Normandy, 1204-1296: 'Auld Amitie'* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), 98-99.

²¹⁷ Vincent, "Isabella," 208-209.

interests, evidence for which does not survive from her first marriage, were at the forefront of her decision making. Like Berengaria, Isabella willingly used the protection of the pope to defend her actions, however by comparing the two case studies we can see Honorius' intercession and defence of rights continued with Berengaria until his death in 1227, most likely due to her dowager status and continued widowhood. On the other hand, once Isabella had married Hugh, papal intervention stopped on behalf of Isabella, especially when Isabella acted against Henry's interests. This is not entirely surprising as Isabella had a new male protector in her husband. Isabella exercised religious patronage as expected by a royal woman, and her interactions with the papacy were not exceptional as seen with the other three case studies under discussion here. Isabella had a keen political acumen and, in this period, worked for her own self-interest and power where she was able to do so.

Control of religious patronage reveals the competitive nature of queenship in this period. These four women were in competition with each other for control of resources, and also with their kings. Matilda was able to patronise religious institutions on both sides of the Channel but enjoyed a larger amount of control in Normandy after Geoffrey's death. She was also able to do so without threatening Eleanor's power base, as Eleanor held sway not only in Aquitaine, but also in Anjou and England whilst Matilda lived. Matilda and Eleanor appear to have co-operated as they worked for the benefit of the Angevin domains. After Matilda's death however, queenly patronage of religious institutions was strictly reserved to Eleanor, as Eleanor retained power over all aspects of the office of consort in her own tenure and beyond until her death in 1204, as the period from 1189 onwards was a clear time of conflict between England and France due to increased expansion by France, and Richard's absence on crusade.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that there was conflict and competition between the four women regarding participation at ceremonies, collection of income, and the establishment of affinities. Although there are limited detailed records regarding queenly ceremonies, each queen's ceremony did not cause conflict with the other queens, except for Richard's re-crowning in 1194 where Eleanor took precedence. Though Eleanor's presence at this ceremony can be viewed as competitive in that she took the position and precedence that one would have expected Berengaria to have as the current queen consort, it is not unwarranted given she had acted informally as regent during Richard's captivity. Money was a key asset to rulership, and without access to this from dower lands or queen's gold,

which Eleanor monopolized, Berengaria and Isabella were severely limited in their ability to be patrons or build affinities as consorts. Thus, competition over which institutions to patronise may not have been explicit but was indirectly affected by income. Apart from Isabella, each queen had a specific institution which benefited from queenly patronage. Eleanor's dominance is a continual feature of this chapter, as she was plausibly less restrained by Matilda both due to Matilda's lack of queenly authority, and because Matilda and Eleanor held specific spheres of influence. Eleanor's refusal to grant power or cede precedence to either of her daughters-in-law is an indication of her desire to maintain control, though whether this was due to insecurity regarding her status or to ensure the continuity of the Angevin dynasty is uncertain. Eleanor continued to work in the best interests of the realm and dynasty, although this caused tensions within the family. Had Eleanor been content to return to Aquitaine, her personal seat of power, further opportunities may have arisen for Berengaria and Isabella to exercise authority in the Angevin realm as consorts.

Due to a lack of extant evidence it is also difficult to surmise what the relationships between Eleanor and her daughters-in-law were. This chapter has also demonstrated, however, the ways in which the queens indirectly co-operated with one another for the benefit of the dynasty. Both Matilda and Eleanor granted lands and incomes to nobles whose alliance would be of use to the Plantagenets, as seen in chapter three. Co-operation did not extend further than Matilda and Eleanor however, as Berengaria was removed from directly working with the Plantagenets and instead focussed on her own survival, after Richard's death. Isabella's actions were limited in the extreme by John, and her patronage after John's death, discussed above and in chapter three, was tied loosely to John but also to her family, indicating a sense of self-preservation. Thus, when understanding how royal mothers and daughters-in-law operated in the twelfth and thirteenth century Angevin realm, competition is a vital lens for analysing the actions of these four women.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The research in this thesis demonstrates the political activities of the four queens can be understood more effectively through a comparative study. There are significant similarities between the aims of Matilda and Eleanor, and between Berengaria and Isabella, partially due to the models of rulership utilised in their co-ruling partnerships. This analysis of conflict and competition between queens for access to resources, as well as the repurposing of their lands by their partners, brings to the forefront the complexities women faced when attempting to build networks with the Church and the nobility. It highlights the importance of utilising both chronicles and extant charters together; it is only by adopting this methodology we can overcome the relative scholarly neglect of Berengaria and Isabella in comparison to Matilda and Eleanor. The research undertaken here has the potential to drive new comparative studies which analyse familial relationships between mothers and sons, and between spouses. This thesis provides a much broader understanding of elite familial relationships in the Angevin realms in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and importantly shows how these relationships impacted upon female rulership through competition over resources or co-operative rule.

Discussing queenship through the lenses of conflict, co-operation, and competition adds a new perspective to the personal and political aspects of female rulership by accounting for how women's relationships with their husbands, sons, mothers-in-law, and daughters-in-law shaped their power. Greater analysis of how female authority was wielded and obstructed both by male monarchs and female relatives moves our understanding of these women past a purely biographical study to one which comparatively addresses a wide range of structural factors. This research highlights that all four women reached the apex of power as dowagers, yet this period of queenship is often ignored. This study increases our understanding of the development of the queen's role in this period and the crucial part these women played in the dynamics of Angevin monarchy.

The exercise of power by Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella largely depended on the authority and resources granted to them by their sons and husbands. Despite this, all four queens showed they could rule successfully by approaching their relationships with their co-rulers and one another in either a co-operative or a competitive manner, or a combination of the two. This research has shown that Angevin royal women could develop effective partnerships to aid rulership, as in the cases of Matilda and Eleanor, and all four

women carved their own spheres of influence and pathways to power. Despite contemporary attempts to discredit female power in the chronicles, and the queens' limited access to financial resources due to competition, that these women were able to govern disproves arguments that female authority declined in this period. My analysis has also dismissed the notion that Berengaria and Isabella merit little attention due to political inaction. Instead, once outside of a restrictive co-ruling partnership and the Angevin domains, both queens were able to exercise their authority further. For twelfth and thirteenth century Angevin queens, their dowager period is precisely when we see not only an increase in their political activity but also in their power and authority, despite no longer operating as consort, the period typically associated with female power.

This thesis highlighted the issues faced by the four queens as they tried to build networks and shows the importance of such networks to establishing a power base. Bringing these issues to light through a comparative methodology addresses some current historiographical gaps. Comparisons between mothers and daughters-in-law have not been utilised often when examining queenly power, but viewing these relationships through the lenses of co-operation, competition, and co-rulership is an effective tool for understanding the different aspects of being a female lord, namely patronage, intercession, and administration of lands. It shows how the exercise of power could fluctuate at different life cycle stages. My research makes a new contribution to queenship studies both through its comparative approach to mothers and daughters-in-law and through highlighting the lives of understudied queens such as Berengaria and Isabella.

Understanding Co-Rulership

Chapter one introduced new models of rulership to be utilised when analysing co-ruling relationships, be they husbands and wives or mothers and sons. These models can be applied to a variety of co-ruling relationships to better understand not only the remit of monarchy, but also how female rulership functions within this. Both the Divide and Rule and Collaborative Union models proved successful for both partners, while the Lord Rules All model sidelined both Berengaria and Isabella. The result of this was that these two queens opted to prioritise their own power over working for Plantagenet interests, although Isabella's loyalties remain difficult to reach a firm conclusion upon. The notion of composite monarchies has helped effectively contextualise how these partnerships needed to operate. All four women in this thesis were able to navigate political structures in order to wield power. As seen with Berengaria and Isabella in particular however, their husbands

limited their sphere of influence. It is important to note that examining both the personal and political aspects of the partnerships under study here enhance our understanding of rulership, making this approach a useful methodology for further research. The personal dynamics of partnerships undoubtedly impacted a woman's ability to rule effectively, and in some cases, as seen with the 1173 rebellion, could also impact the king's political ability.

Female regency and governance were especial assets to the Plantagenet kings, and, as I have demonstrated, Matilda and Eleanor were employed effectively within composite monarchies to ensure the stability of the Angevin territories. The Collaborative Unions employed by the Plantagenets enabled a continuance of power for the female half. The discussion around regency has highlighted that while gender could be perceived as an issue when nominating a regent, the Plantagenet kings were confident that their mothers' experience would allow them to effectively rule in their absence. The Lord Rules All approach utilised by Henry II, Richard, and John allowed resources and power to be vested in the king and his administration, but nominally sidelined the consort in favour of the queen mother. The one area in which the kings struggled to maintain authority without a female figurehead was Aquitaine, and Eleanor's strong familial relationships and networks enabled her status as a queen to continue into her widowhood. Access to female rulership could be limited and fluctuated, but it remained accessible, particularly during the dowager periods of these four women.

This comparative study has brought to the fore some of the complexities surrounding female regency in the Angevin domains. Although the Plantagenet kings utilised their wives and mothers to rule with them and on their behalf when the king was travelling, they never officially named them as a regent in any extant evidence. As I have shown, harmonious relationships with one's children and previous experience of governance increased the chances of being chosen as a regent. Matilda and Eleanor had the most successful co-ruling partnerships with their husbands and sons, even though Eleanor and Henry's disintegrated halfway through their reigns. Richard and John both faced challenges which may have dissuaded them from sharing power with their wives, but the examination of their personal relationships has also indicated why Eleanor, as their mother, was a likely choice as regent.

Familial Competition

I have shown the importance of recognising the fluctuating nature of familial relationships between husbands and wives, mothers and sons, and mothers and daughters-in-law. These

relationships were essential to the exercise of power, and Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella competed with one another for access to resources, such as land and political influence. Yet it is also evident that there was a level of co-operation between the four women to maintain the structures of the Angevin domains. In the wake of growing losses to the Capetians, Berengaria and Isabella's allegiances shifted, plausibly because of their poor partnerships with their husbands and their poor treatment as dowagers by their in-laws. Matilda and Eleanor's engagement with rulership through their husbands and sons led to greater investment in the domains. Without access to income or without children, women struggled to gain authority and influence, although Berengaria serves as a timely reminder that even these challenges could be overcome. More comprehensive analysis of the ceremonies and titles these queens had access to has shown ceremonies were key moments for public visibility and opportunities for building networks, as well as displaying power.

Female Rulership

This investigation of gender, power, and authority in relation to ecclesiastical and noble networks has demonstrated that, although there were similarities between the ways the four queens exercised their authority and influence, the surviving evidence is so disparate we need to combine extant letters, charters, and chronicles to reconstruct how the exercise of queenly office changed in the Angevin territories across the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Through a comparative chronological examination, we can see not only how the authority and influence of the four queens changed during this period, but also the competitive nature of queenship as each queen sought primarily to protect their own interests over those of their daughters-in-law. The queens established networks and patronage of institutions which proved beneficial for future generations. The interests of Matilda and Eleanor were aligned, even if they did not co-operate in the sense of working together explicitly. The influence of the consort waned with Berengaria and Isabella since they did not have access to their lands to create affinities and give patronage, but there is a clear consensus that all four women had increased authority as dowagers. This thesis has contributed to our knowledge of sole female rulership by arguing women were capable of wielding authority through their position as heiress or dowager, and that they ruled effectively in their spheres of influence. Although monarchical rulership is viewed as a partnership, all four women successfully navigated the political structures jointly and

independently to govern their domains, either their inherited lands or the lands they negotiated to acquire.

Areas for Further Research

In this study, I have demonstrated the importance of examining royal familial relationships through a comparative approach to fully understand the exercise of power by women. Comparisons between queens permits a more detailed picture of the mechanisms of power and the changing office of queenship than a singular biographical study would allow. It would be interesting to examine in further detail the co-ruling partnerships that have formed the basis of this study, with a particular emphasis on gender and sexuality. There is a wealth of evidence in the chronicles that could be supplemented by growing theoretical work, some of which has underpinned discussions here. It would be useful to utilise the models of rulership which have informed the analysis in chapters three and four in other medieval co-ruling partnerships to understand broader patterns of rulerships in this period: it could have particular benefit when understanding the French monarchy, especially given the growing domains after the thirteenth century. While this study has gone a considerable way to illuminating the often neglected lives of Berengaria and Isabella, there is a need for an extended biographical study of both women.

It could also be fruitful to conduct wider examinations of royal motherhood: although as noted, Eleanor and her daughters with Henry II have already attracted some study, it would be valuable to unpick Matilda and Isabella's relationships with their other children in greater depth. Research on childless queens is also a growing area of interest, and more investigations in this area can enhance our understanding of the many avenues to power which royal women could access, and how they successfully ruled in spite of the lack of an heir. It is clear from my research on Berengaria of Navarre that being a childless queen was not a limitation to wielding authority.

Further analysis of the incomes and revenues of these four women may prove profitable. Although the evidence is limited, surviving documents from the Pipe Rolls and charters in England and France can be employed to provide a more in-depth analysis. This approach would be particularly applicable to an examination of the dower lands of the four women as currently there is a shortage of comparative research for twelfth century dower lands. The work undertaken here would add to the growing body of research, perhaps alongside an examination of other financial records and rolls to broaden our understanding of

queenly incomes and revenues. This would contribute to an understanding of how dependent female power was on access to financial and landed resources, and by demonstrating the ways in which women utilised these resources to rule effectively.

This study has demonstrated that the terms of power and agency need further analysis when investigating the relationships between royal women and the nobility. Applying the lenses of conflict, co-operation, and competition to notions of power has proven a valuable approach for examining the activities of the four royal women, and these lenses can be deployed elsewhere to analyse other familial relationships. Through this comparative approach to royal women in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, I have highlighted the activities of four women, two of whom have been marginalised within modern historical study and have rebutted the notion of queenly exceptionalism. The study of royal families can inform new perspectives and knowledge regarding gender and power, by emphasising the different ways in which royal women can exercise agency and enhancing our understanding of the complex relationships that were the foundation of their political activities. The queen's role developed across the period under study, but women remained important to the dynamics of the Angevin monarchy. Placing Matilda, Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella into comparison with one another has proven the importance of investigating royal families and partnerships comparatively to better understand female rulership and the exercise of power in the High Middle Ages, as well as providing an insight into the lives of each of these women.

Appendix

The tables below list the dower holdings of Eleanor, Berengaria, and Isabella, as documented in their dower charters. A denotes properties issued in Isabella's 1200 dower charter (Rot. Chart. 74-75), B denotes properties granted in her 1204 charter (Rot. Chart. 128).

Eleanor of Aquitaine¹	Berengaria of Navarre²	Isabella of Angoulême
Lillebonne (Normandy) ³		
Falaise (Normandy)	Falaise (Normandy)	Falaise (Normandy) ^{b4}
Domfront (Normandy)	Domfront (Normandy)	Domfront (Normandy) ^b
Bonneville-sur-Tocques (Normandy)	Bonneville-sur-Tocques (Normandy)	Bonneville-sur-Tocques (Normandy) ^b
		Saintes (Poitou) ^{a5}
		Niort (Poitou) ^a
Loches (Touraine)	Loches (Touraine)	Saumur (Anjou) ^a
Montbazou (Touraine)	Montbazou (Touraine)	La Flèche (Anjou) ^a
Mervent (Poitou)	Mervent (Poitou)	Beaufort-en-Vallée (Anjou) ^a
Jaunay (Poitou)	Jaunay (Poitou)	Bauge (Anjou) ^a
Château-du-Loir (Anjou)	Château-du-Loir (Anjou)	Château-du-Loir (Anjou) ^a
Oléron (Poitou)	Oléron (Poitou)	
Ilchester (Somerset)	Ilchester (Somerset)	Ilchester (Somerset) ^b
Monkton (Somerset)	Monkton (Somerset)	
Recene (Rutland)	Recene (Rutland)	Recene (Rutland) ^b
Bradecost (Rutland)	Bradecost (Rutland)	Bradecost (Rutland) ^b
North Luffenham (Rutland)	North Luffenham (Rutland)	North Luffenham (Rutland) ^b
Lambourne (Berkshire)	Lambourne (Berkshire)	
Wilton (Wiltshire)	Wilton (Wiltshire)	Wilton (Wiltshire) ^b
Malmesbury (Wiltshire)	Malmesbury (Wiltshire)	Malmesbury (Wiltshire) ^b
		Biddesden (Wiltshire) ^b
Arundel (Sussex)	Arundel (Sussex)	
Chichester (Sussex)	Chichester (Sussex)	Chichester (Sussex) ^b
Stanton (Oxfordshire)	Stanton (Oxfordshire)	
Rockingham (Northamptonshire)	Rockingham (Northamptonshire)	Rockingham (Northamptonshire) ^b
Northampton (Northamptonshire)	Northampton (Northamptonshire)	
Kenton (Devonshire)	Kenton (Devonshire)	Kenton (Devonshire) ^b
Linton (Devonshire)	Linton (Devonshire)	Linton (Devonshire) ^b
Addiscott (Devonshire)	Addiscott (Devonshire)	Addiscott (Devonshire) ^b

¹ Lands listed based on the *Veterum Scriptorum*, cols. 995-997 wherein Berengaria was to hold all the lands listed, that belonged to Eleanor.

² *Veterum Scriptorum*, cols. 995-997: note that all lands granted to Eleanor by Henry II are to pass to Berengaria.

³ AD Seine Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_10.

⁴ Rot. Chart. 128, *Foedera*, I, 132-135.

⁵ Rot. Chart. 74b-75, *Veterum Scriptorum*, col. 1032; *Registres de Philippe Auguste*, no. 39.

Exeter (Devonshire)	Exeter (Devonshire)	Exeter (Devonshire) ^b
Slocombe and Wyke (Devonshire)	Slocombe and Wyke (Devonshire)	Slocombe and Wyke (Devonshire) ^b
Weston (Southampton)	Weston (Southampton)	
Berkhamsted (Hertfordshire)	Berkhamsted (Hertfordshire)	Berkhamsted (Hertfordshire) ^b
Waltham (Essex)	Waltham (Essex)	Waltham (Essex) ^b
Queenhithe (London)	Queenhithe (London)	Queenhithe (London) ^b
Grantham (Lincolnshire)	Grantham (Lincolnshire)	
Stanford (Lincolnshire)	Stanford (Lincolnshire)	
Berkeley (Gloucestershire)	Berkeley (Gloucestershire)	

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Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_007H0012_08
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_007H0012_04
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_007H0012_09
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018Hp0001_05
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_05
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_10
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_11
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_12
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_14
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_018HP0007_08
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_020H0025_02
Rouen, AD Seine-Maritime, FRAD076_020H0058_01
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