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Moving Elites: Women and Cultural Transfers
in the European Court System

Proceedings of an International Workshop (Florence, 12-13 December 2008)

Giulia Calvi and Isabelle Chabot (eds)

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE
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Abstract

The overall evaluation of the formation of political decision-making processes in the early modern period is being transformed by enriching our understanding of political language. This broader picture of court politics and diplomatic networks – which also relied on familial and kin ties – provides a way of studying the political role of women in early modern Europe. This role has to be studied taking into account the overlapping of familial and political concerns, where the intersection of women as mediators and coordinators of extended networks is a central feature of European societies.

The focus on informal power and influence has been of great concern to the study of gender and women's history in early modern European societies, making visible the manifold indirect ways of exercising political roles through religious patronage, familial connections, ritual practices and rhetoric. However, because of their lineage and upbringing, women from princely dynasties were political creatures who had been prepared to fulfil important functions of government as consorts, regents and governors as well as that of ruling in their own right. They exercised formal powers connected to their legal status which gave them precise jurisdictions connected to their life cycle: as adolescent brides, wives, mothers and widows, the exercise and prerogatives of power changed.

Positioning women at the centre of court life and in the complex dynamic of state formation encourages us to rethink the ways in which women accessed and exercised political power.

A gendered history of the courtly world has not yet been written. While courts have been overlooked in their capacity to integrate “migrating” foreign princesses, female courts have been neglected as spaces where the young members of aristocratic families were integrated through service, ritual and arranged marriages, into wider European networks of alliance. The cultural, linguistic, performing, artistic space of female courts thus functioned as a powerful – and empowering – element of political integration in Europe.

Women rulers were viewed both in terms of moving elites and as the movable element in the framework of international politics. Only as rulers in their own right they did not migrate into foreign dynasties, but remained in their home countries eventually choosing to integrate foreign incoming husbands. Language, agency, self-reflexivity and the complex process of self-fashioning required by crossing borders, entering into a foreign dynasty and integrating into a new and distant court culture, while in time promoting integration, are the central questions the workshop aimed to address.

Keywords

Women rulers – European courts – Political power – Dynastic families

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Introduction

Giulia CALVI, European University Institute

In the last decade a relevant amount of research focusing on the relation between the discourses and practices of power in a gender dimension has enriched the cultural approach to political history. Historiography has opened up questions and issues pertaining to the gendering of State formation processes in Europe, enhancing the relevance of a public sphere of ritual and representation, and the changing roles and prerogatives of power for men and women.

Innovative studies in the field of legal and institutional history have tackled notions of royalty through the lens of gender focussing on women as regents, consorts, and rulers in their own right in the process of consolidating and transmitting royal prerogatives. In so doing, research has shed light on the neglected formal political roles exerted by the women of princely and royal dynasties as ruling consorts and governors during specific phases of their life cycle. One of the results of this field of research is the shared assumption that formal roles of power have to be analysed in connection with the life course and as part of the broader life cycle of the dynasty itself. This entails considering European ruling dynasties and families as complex subjects of historical and anthropological research where the familial roles of men and women overlap and structure political action in the interconnected spaces of the court and the State.

Therefore both family history and anthropological analysis of kinship ties, vertical and horizontal, have to be taken into account in rethinking the gendering of political culture and the specific features of women's rulership and political agency in Europe. This entails that not only the vertical genealogy of the dynasty has to be taken into account when analysing the functioning and practice of court life, but the cognatic ties embedded in marriage alliances and kin that can enrich and empower a ruling family, as well as endanger the internal coherence of its strategies. The functioning of the European court system was based on well orchestrated exchanges of women among dynasties. Transnational marriage alliances were indeed at the core of international relations, and a distinguishing feature in the study of early modern female elites is the systematic displacement which the marriage exchange produced. Looking at women moving across European borders as young brides, (widowed) consorts or exiles, encourages us to analyse the manifold and dislocated forms of power connected to space and family roles changing along the life cycle. Women marrying into foreign dynasties brought with them a dynastic capital made of status, wealth, material culture, court rituals and etiquette, religion as well as their own entourage. While enriching and transforming the court cultures they became part of, foreign brides and consorts of higher status and royal or imperial origin enhanced difference, distinction and hierarchy. The mounting tensions around clothes leading to the refusal to wear local sartorial fashions while insisting on one's own dynastic colours and styles was a common way of asserting notions of deeply ingrained superiority vis-à-vis a court and a husband of lower status. Moreover, the territorial property rights that many princely women brought with them as part of an inheritance they were entitled to could give way to legitimate claims to rule faraway lands and ensuing transnational conflicts.

The process of integrating foreign brides was long, and at times difficult. It was often fraught with tensions and rivalries, as Laura Olivan Santaliestra shows in her essay on the

French and Spanish courts bitterly competing over the composition and dimension of the entourage of their young princesses.

Focussing on female moving elites in the early modern period induces us to rethink the connections between space, gender and power in the broader perspective of cultural transfers across national and regional borders. As Guido Guerzoni's essay shows, circulating from one court to another was a shared experience among the adolescent aristocratic elites of both sexes. Boys were accepted and trained in foreign courts at an early age under the supervision of older and more experienced courtiers. Yet the exchange and placement of girls at court highlights a largely unexplored dimension in the history of female elites calling for a pressing set of questions that point to displacement as a key element in acquiring manners and languages, in the fashioning of identities, as well as in the active integration to foreign court rituals and spaces. Sara Galletti's contribution reconstructs the ways in which Maria de' Medici changed the internal architecture of her apartments in the Luxembourg palace, transforming the traditional layout of internal space in accordance to her personal and perhaps Italian notions of privacy and symmetry.

The internal composition, hierarchy and dimension of female courts has been largely under researched, and the connection between the circulation of women within the European dynastic system and the parallel negotiated construction of female courts is one of the central questions that this working paper addresses. Ruling women are seen as the moveable element in the definition of political culture, and in the multiple processes leading to its cosmopolitan features, in the broader framework of State formation processes. Female moving elites highlight the paradox which situates "foreignness" at the core of the highest form of delegate political power (regency) and at the heart of the transmission of royalty itself. Only queens ruling in their own right occupied unmovable positions rooted in their own hereditary lands. Foreign brides, queen consorts, queen mothers of male and or female progeny, childless wives and widows, ruled as governors, as monarchs in their own right or acted as regents – for fathers and brothers, for husbands and in the name of their sons. The positioning of women in the courts of Europe opens up a complex set of questions connected to the fashioning of their political identities where agnatic and cognatic lines intersect in the long process of state building and legitimation.

Rank, age, gender and status (marriage, motherhood, and widowhood) structured the hierarchies of the manifold female courts where issues of rule and expenditure cannot be separated from the life cycle and the wider, cognatic connections of kin. Indeed, continuing transnational ties to one's own family and dynasty of origin bring to light practices of political ambivalence, financial autonomy and conflicting allegiances. Smaller in size, subjected to tense negotiations, often fragile and short lived, female courts were however also potentially autonomous spaces for the exercise of a cosmopolitan practice of networking, patronage, and mediation.

Female courts have been largely overlooked in their capacity to integrate foreign princesses, uprooted from their home and at times progressively isolated from all former connections to their families of origin. These were parallel yet gendered spaces where women from the local nobility gradually substituted the foreign entourage that accompanied the young bride in the first stage of her marriage. In this way, her integration into the language and etiquette of the court was generally accomplished, while, in turn, the bride herself became an active agent of the European strategy of integration and mediation between the dynasty she had entered into, her own family of origin, local and international elites. Female courts functioned as enclaves where the adolescent daughters of aristocratic families were integrated through service, ritual and arranged marriages, into wider local and European networks of

alliance. At a later stage in the life cycle, consorts and widows as regents or governors, while coordinating a broad network of secular and religious clients and brokers, used their own influence and prestige, as well as financial resources, to intervene in local politics and family affairs and conflicts, through charity, gift giving and the distribution of offices and charges. The cultural, linguistic, performative, artistic space of female courts thus functioned as a powerful – and empowering - element of political integration in Europe.

In a recent work on Elisabeth I, Louis Montrose wrote “The feminine gender of the ruler had profound impact upon the relations of power and upon their representation. Such representations, however, were not merely the consequences of the ruler’s gender, but were themselves particular constructions of it”. A range of strategies was generated by which the tension between the pervasive patriarchal character of ancien régime’s societies and this “contradiction in the cultural logic”, i.e. female rule, could be articulated. In this perspective, these papers focus on ruling women both as subjects and objects of discourse, as subjects fashioning their political role throughout the life cycle, and as objects of a collective strategy of interpretation, i.e. of public consensus, critique and satire, deeply imbedded in the contested processes of the representation of gendered forms of power.

Language, agency, self reflexivity and the specific processes of self fashioning required by crossing borders, entering into foreign dynasties and, “changing clothes” with the aim of integrating or being assimilated, are central questions in the first part of this working paper. Contributions address the voyage of the young bride, entailing the separation from her family, dynastic culture and living environment. Leaving was often without return, as she left and would rarely come back to where she was borne. Cultural transfer is a distinguishing feature of this passage, as intense diplomatic negotiations among the two courts prepared the transfer of dowry, property, and entourage. The status of the bride was important in defining the quality and quantity of the transfer itself.

Christiane Coester, Laura Olivan Santaliestra, and Clarissa Campbell Orr’s papers focus on the voyage and arrival of the bride across territorial and symbolic borders from the early modern period to the late XVIII century in a broad European area covering France, Italy, Spain, Britain, Germany and Poland. Caroline zum Kolk looks at Catherine de Medici’s political use of travelling inside and across the kingdom of France. Papers address the planned processes of change and the domestication of the young bride as well as innovative political styles aimed at inventing national traditions.

The process of integration into the new dynasty was aimed at the gradual and negotiated construction of the consort’s court, as a separate yet parallel sphere which differed in size, hierarchy and internal composition depending on status and income. A changing convergence of strong and/or weak powers marks this phase. Thus widowhood could entail regency for a minor son (Catherine and Maria de Medici), as well as exile, return, flight, or voyages to govern distant territories. Youth, maturity, maternity, as well as childlessness, widowhood, and old age were defined by different prerogatives of power and influence and were in turn constructed and represented through movement across physical and symbolic spaces, inside the territory of a national monarchy as well as across inter regional and transnational areas.

At all stages space was connected to the life cycle. Both shaped the specific prerogatives of power and rule. In the second session of the Working Papers Fanny Cosandey, Sara Galletti, and Marion Lemaignan address the practices connected to the internal space of the court – in France and Italy in the late XVI and XVII centuries. Cosandey focuses on space

as an area of political negotiations where gender and rank set the stage for the “querelles de préséances”. While women of aristocratic lineages mostly favoured the interests of their husbands in the public and ritualized display of rank, at times they engaged in self-promoting agendas where personal upward mobility took the lead in the competition for prestige. Sara Galletti works on Maria de Medici’ Parisian apartments at the Luxembourg, addressing the ways in which ruling women participated in shaping the ceremonial, cultural and political use of space. Besides being the “queen’s masterpiece – she argues- the palace marks a crucial episode in French architectural history, denoting the queen’s fundamental role in the shaping of early modern ritual space”. Marion Lemaignan, focussing on Mathurine at the court of Henry IV in Paris, investigates the role of the female jester both within the court and in the texts producing political anti catholic critique of the court itself. The ambivalence of her madness, which she plays out between the court and the city testifies “d’une manière très particulière d’être femme à la cour, d’expérimenter le pouvoir et de déplacer les frontières en s’inscrivant dans un espace transversal”.

The third session of the Working Papers – defining identity, constructing power- opens with a focus on the practices of ruling women in the Medici and Este courts. Sarah Bercusson discusses the experiences of three sixteenth century duchesses in, Mantua, Ferrara, and Florence: Eleonora, Barbara and Giovanna of Austria. The essay identifies some of the obstacles that brides had to face in constructing independent courts. A permanent tension between male control over the composition and internal dynamics of their wives’ courts and the latter’s attempts at independence is highlighted. Guido Guerzoni, arguing for a prosopographic analysis of court records, introduces us to the courts of the Este princesses in Ferrara between the XV and the XVII centuries. On the basis of a quantitative analysis of court personnel he stresses their political independence, financial autonomy and cosmopolitanism owing to the presence of a vast “foreign” entourage.

Adelina Modesti, who works on grand duchess Vittoria della Rovere in late XVII century Florence, intersects gender and cultural practices of exchange and patronage in the construction of transnational networks and the public sphere. The essay focuses on the artistic, diplomatic and political alliances that Vittoria della Rovere was able to construct as a cultural broker for her family in the wider European context.

All of the articles highlight that owing to their lineage and upbringing royal and princely women were political creatures, taking part in the complex dynamic of state formation in early modern Europe. Lineage, family and kin together with competence and service to a dynasty were essential components of court culture and life, long-lasting in time and blending into processes of political professionalisation. Positioning women at the centre of court life throughout the different phases of their life courses, these contributions encourages us to rethink the ways in which historians have understood the avenues to political power and specifically the ways in which women accessed it.

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Part I

Moving Elites

Crossing Boundaries and Traversing Space. The Voyage of the Bride in Early Modern Europe¹

Christiane COESTER, Deutsches Historisches Institut, Paris

In 1468, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan, married Bona of Savoy. Because the bride to be was living at the court of France, the marriage ceremony was celebrated *per procura* by the groom's half-brother, Tristano Sforza. The bride then set off to a long journey, which led through France and by ship to Genoa. When Bona finally arrived in Genoa, Galeazzo Maria would not welcome her there, because the city, at this time, was under the rule of the French king. Galeazzo Maria, however, wished to welcome his consort on his own territory. Thus, the young woman had to continue her voyage without her husband until she reached Milanese territory where the duke would join her.²

A couple of days after their first meeting, which had taken place at the end of June 1468, and to commemorate this event, Galeazzo Maria gave order to erect a column at the place where he and his wife first met. Promptly, an argument arose between four rivaling parties. Firstly, two nearby communities claimed that the meeting had taken place on their respective territory. Then, Francesco Visconti of Assaretto, a distant cousin of the Duke of Milan, claimed the same. On July 9th, 1468, Galeazzo Maria wrote a letter to him asking to settle the question whether the territory was really his and, if so, to erect the column. Two days later, he wrote a letter to the fourth party involved, the *podestà* of Alessandria, and gave him the same order.³

The example I have chosen demonstrates that there was a lot of confusion about who would have the honor to mark the place where the ducal couple first met. However, I do claim, this dispute over the erection of the column has a larger meaning beyond mere territorial interests. It shows the centrality of space in the process of the bridal voyage and the importance of the crossing of symbolic boundaries done by the bride during her journey. It furthermore demonstrates the significance of the bridal voyage for the political representation of the nobility of early modern Europe, as will be outlined in the three points that follow.

1. Centrality of space in the process of the bridal voyage: The place of the first meeting of a woman and her future husband was of great significance. Galeazzo Maria Sforza did not want to meet his bride on foreign territory, but on his own. And, more important, he wanted to mark the place of their first meeting with a column. Furthermore, there was an argument between different parties as to where the meeting had taken place and who would erect the column. The confusion about this question shows that there was more to it than just the putting up of a column. More likely, it was about who would have the privilege to create this important *lieu de mémoire*.⁴

2. Importance of (symbolic) border-crossing for a bride on her journey: During her voyage, Bona of Savoy did not only cross geographical borders but also symbolic boundaries. The farewell to her family, the handing over of the princess to the representatives of her husband, the first meeting with Galeazzo Maria Sforza and so on – all these events were carefully staged as official crossing of symbolic boundaries. The bride on her voyage did not only move through space, she also changed from daughter to wife and from a Savoyan princess to a Milanese one. She thus changed the system of cultural reference in which she moved and in which she was perceived by the people around her.

¹ Thanks to Claudia Stein for commenting on an earlier version of this paper.

² G. LUBKIN, *A Renaissance Court. Milan under Galeazzo Maria Sforza*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1994, p. 47-59.

³ Letter from Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Francesco Visconti of Assaretto, July 9th, 1468, and to the *podestà* of Alessandria, July 11th, 1468, cited by G. LUBKIN, *A Renaissance Court...* cit., p. 53.

⁴ See P. NORA, "Entre Mémoire et Histoire. La problématique des lieux", in P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. 1: *La République*, Paris, 1984, p. XV-XLII.

3. Centrality of the bridal voyage for the (political) representation of the nobility: Before arriving at the place of their first meeting, Bona of Savoy had to travel a long distance, accompanied by a big cortege of followers. The ship on which she sailed to Genoa had been prepared for 300 persons, in Genoa she was expected by almost 160 courtiers sent by her husband to welcome her. There were so many horses that part of them had to be accommodated outside the city. Because of the death of her father, the Duke of Savoy, three years before, it was the King of France, Louis XI, who sent the princess on her journey towards her future husband. Louis XI had married Bona's sister, Charlotte, and his sister Yolande was married to Bona's brother, the Duke of Savoy. For the King of France this bridal voyage was thus a family affair and he attached much importance to it. To send Bona across half of Europe was, for Louis XI as well as for Galeazzo Maria Sforza, a good opportunity for political representation.

By sending their female members all over the continent, the European nobility displayed the networks to which they belonged. Furthermore, by managing to let huge groups of people, horses and carts cross great distances, they showed their power to symbolically reduce space, thus controlling it. The bridal voyage can therefore be regarded as one of the best means for studying the aspect of space and of border-crossing as well as the self-fashioning of the ruling families of early modern Europe. In my paper, I will examine four key moments of the bridal journey, all of them representing a symbolic boundary that had to be crossed by the bride. Beforehand, I will give a short introduction to some fundamental facts about the bridal journey, and I will discuss the normative side of the question by presenting a 15th century "manual" of bridal behavior during the voyage.

The Voyage of the Bride

What exactly is a bridal voyage? The bridal voyage is a social act. Its hidden symbolic value is much more important than what can be seen on the surface. Both, the father and the future husband of the bride were interested in demonstrating the family's network all over Europe. Moreover, the two families used the bridal voyage for showing off their political reputation and their wealth by means of this journey. Therefore, in order to represent the father's or the husband's power, the cortege following the princess on her voyage was in most cases a more or less exact copy of the princely court and of its ceremonial.⁵ Almost always, the bridal journey is marked by an aspect of political rivalry between the two families. For the nobility of early modern Europe the contest consisted in demonstrating wealth and power through the size of the bride's entourage or the splendor of her coach or ship. In other times and other cultures there were other things to compete about. For the Berber people in North Africa for example, as Pierre Bourdieu has shown, a number of ritualized and institutionalized competitions took place at the moment when the party of the husband arrived in the village of the bride to fetch her.⁶

The bridal journey is also one of the oldest cultural acts of European societies. The tribe of the Teutons married in phases, one of them was called the *traditio*. It described the official handing over of the girl from her father to her husband, when the fiancée was guided in public by her father to the house of her future husband.⁷ When, in 584, the Frankish king Chilperic I married his daughter Rigunth to the son of the Visigothic king, the ceremonial steps to be taken were the same as in early modern Europe. First, the legates of the two kings negotiated the conditions of the marriage and the dowry. This legal act was followed by the wedding ceremony at the court of the bride. The princess

⁵ On the bridal voyage in general see K.-H. SPIESS, "Unterwegs zu einem fremden Ehemann. Brautfahrt und Ehe in europäischen Fürstenhäusern des Spätmittelalters", in I. Erfen, K.-H. Spiess (ed.), *Fremdheit und Reisen im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart, 1997, p. 17-36; K.-H. SPIESS, "Fremdheit und Integration der ausländischen Ehefrau und ihres Gefolges bei internationalen Fürstenheiraten", in T. Zotz (ed.), *Fürstenhöfe und ihre Außenwelt. Aspekte gesellschaftlicher und kultureller Identität im deutschen Spätmittelalter*, Würzburg, 2004, p. 267-290; K.-H. SPIESS, "Reisen deutscher Fürsten und Grafen im Spätmittelalter", in R. Babel, W. Paravicini (ed.), *Grand Tour. Adeliges Reisen und europäische Kultur vom 14. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart, 2005, p. 33-51.

⁶ P. BOURDIEU, "Le sens de l'honneur" (1960), in P. Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique, précédé de Trois études d'ethnologie kabyle*, Paris, 2000, p. 19-60, here p. 30.

⁷ R. LE JAN, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VII^e-X^e siècle). Essai d'anthropologie sociale*, Paris, 1995, p. 264-265.

then set off to her journey accompanied by an enormous cortege of followers and conveying lots of money and valuable objects. Before crossing the border of the Visigothic kingdom, she stopped to prepare herself. She changed into ceremonial clothes and her coach was decorated, so that she would appear in all her splendor before her husband and his court.⁸

There are three types of the bridal journey, which are (as well as any other wedding rituals) part of the ceremonies of separation and of reception, designed to help the princely couple to cope with the change in its legal and social status. In the "classic" type of the bridal journey a representative of the future husband presents himself at the court of the parents of the bride and marries the girl *per procura*, in the name of his prince. The princess then sets off to her bridal voyage, and it is only after her arrival at the court of her husband that the wedding is celebrated in a ceremonial act and afterwards "consumed". In the second type of the bridal journey the prince is traveling to the court of his future wife, where the marriage is celebrated and where he will reside after the wedding. This is the case when the bride is reigning over a country and her husband is not, as, for example, Mary, Duchess of Burgundy, who, in 1477, married the Archduke Maximilian. Finally, there is the third type, which in the German language is called "Heimführung" or "Einholung". Here, the future husband presents himself at the court of his bride to accompany her on her bridal voyage. This is the case when the woman, in the hierarchy of the nobility, outranks her future husband, as for example Renée of France, daughter of King Louis XII, who, in 1528, married Ercole d'Este, son of the Duke of Ferrara.

The "classic" type of the bridal voyage, which was the most common and will therefore mainly be dealt with in the following text, developed in different phases. The first phase consisted in the part of the voyage from the parent's residence to the place where the bride was handed over to her husband or to his representatives. During this first part of the journey, the princess was under the supervision of the representatives of her father, and she was still recognised as her father's daughter. During the second phase of the voyage, from the place of the handing over to her future residence, she was under the supervision of the representatives of her husband, and she was now recognized as her husband's wife. The phases of the voyage were separated by symbolic boundaries, and the crossing of these was carefully staged.

Several situations represented a symbolic boundary to be crossed by the bride: the farewell from her parents, the surmounting of problems encountered during the journey, the handing over to her husband, the first meeting with the husband, the sending back of the cortege to her father's court, and the changing in her clothes and hairdo. The crossing of hidden borderlines evoked a strong sentiment of alienation in the traveling women, and even though most of the time this sentiment was based more on expectations and attributions than on real cultural differences, it was rather real to them. It was reinforced by the fact that the bride, by crossing these invisible boundaries, changed from daughter to wife, from one family to another, and she therefore changed not only her legal status but also her frame of cultural reference.⁹

Codes of Bridal Behavior: De institutione vivendi by Diomedes Carafa (1476)

Despite the fact that almost every noblewoman in early modern Europe did at least some kind of bridal voyage, crossing several hidden boundaries and most of the time encountering a lot of practical problems, no normative texts exist to help the bride to cope with her symbolic and geographical journey. Authors like Christine de Pizan (1405) or Anne of France (1505) gave their female readers advice on their duties as a married woman, but they do not say anything about the bridal voyage.¹⁰ The only text dealing with this question is "De institutione vivendi", written by

⁸ G. EPISCOPI TURONENSIS, *Libri historiarum X*, ed. B. Krusch, W. Levison, Hanover, 1951 (= Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, vol. I, 1), book VI, chap. 18, 34, 45; book VII, chap. 9.

⁹ See F. BARTH, "Introduction", in F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Boston, 1969, p. 9-38; D. NOLDE, "Vom Umgang mit Fremdheit. Begegnungen zwischen Reisenden und Gastgeber im 17. Jahrhundert", in R. Babel, W. Paravicini (ed.), *Grand Tour... cit.*, p. 579-590.

¹⁰ C. DE PIZAN, *Le Livre des Trois Vertus*. Édition critique, ed. C.C. Willard, E. Hicks, Paris, 1989; A. DE FRANCE, *Enseignements à sa fille, suivis de l'Histoire du siège de Brest*, ed. T. Clavier, É. Viennot, Saint-Étienne, 2006.

Diomedes Carafa in 1476 for Beatrice of Naples. Before parting on her bridal journey for Hungary, where she was to marry Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, Beatrice asked her father's counselor for written advice on how to behave correctly during the voyage and in her life as a married woman. The main idea of Carafa's Latin *memoriale* is thus obvious. It aims at preparing, already during her bridal voyage, Beatrice's future life and the relationship to her husband. According to Carafa, her behavior and the way she will be perceived by her Hungarian cortege during the journey will be the basis of her life as Queen of Hungary. This normative text will be presented in the following because it shows how a "perfect" bridal journey should be organized, anticipating most of the possible difficulties.¹¹

According to Carafa, there are two things that the princess can influence during the long voyage. The first is the acquisition of the Hungarian language. As she will have troubles to communicate as long as she does not speak Hungarian, Carafa recommends to use the long journey to learn the language. Secondly, already during her voyage, Beatrice will be able to influence her future relationship with the Hungarians. She is therefore supposed to make inquiries about her husband and to show interest in his person, which, so Carafa promises, will be reported to him and will give him great pleasure. On the same line, he suggests to write letters to her future mother-in-law telling her how much she was looking forward to meeting her, because the queen-mother will be a very important mediator between Beatrice and her husband. The princess should furthermore show very much interest in the Hungarian members of her cortege, speaking to each one of them during her journey. All this, Carafa recommends, will influence the public image of her prior to her arrival.

Carafa also gives some advice on the very practical aspects of the bridal voyage. He suggests to Beatrice to meticulously organize the next day the evening before. By knowing the time of departure, for example, she will have enough time to prepare and will not let anyone wait. Moreover, she should report to her husband and to her father about the progress of the journey. However, the most interesting aspect of Carafa's *memoriale* is the fact that he suggests to Beatrice to see her bridal voyage as a chance: "longinquum iter in summa fortuna reponendum est".¹² She will leave Italy and travel through regions where manners and customs are totally different from what she had known before. Beatrice will therefore have the possibility, Carafa argues, to prove her wit and her intellect. Moreover, he urges her to gain as much as possible from it, because, he reminds her, she might not have very often such a unique chance of demonstrating and developing her qualities and her talents.

While some of the women traveling through half of Europe to reach the territory of their future husband did indeed consider their bridal voyage as a chance of personal growth, for the greater part of them the journey represented a situation full of dangers and unpleasant unpredictability. Even though the process of the crossing of boundaries was carefully staged to symbolically prepare the bride for her new life, the sentiment of alienation felt by most of the young women during this process was strong, as will be shown by the examples that follow. Four moments of border-crossing were especially important in this process and will be dealt with in the following: 1. The parting of the princess from her family and hometown, 2. The problems encountered during the journey, 3. The handing over of the young woman from the representatives of her father to those of her future husband, 4. The change in the bride's clothing and hairdo during the voyage or after her arrival at the court of her husband.

The Parting: Farewell to the Family

The bride's farewell to her parents, siblings as well as to her hometown began with a celebration and ended with the procession of the princess and her cortege to her coach or boat. At the beginning of the journey, the bride was accompanied by members of her own family who, however, left her one by one in the course of the voyage. This crossing of the first symbolic boundary, from the comfort of the family and the hometown to the unpredictability of a long journey, was generally accompanied by distinct signs of sorrow. The farewell of Yolande of Lorraine to her brother and her

¹¹ D. CARAFA, "De institutione vivendi", in D.C., *Memoriali*, ed. F. Petrucci Nardelli, Rome, 1988, p. 211-243.

¹² D. CARAFA, "De institutione vivendi" ... cit., p. 226.

sister-in-law in 1497 was marked by "grans pleurs et gemissemens".¹³ When Anne d'Este quit Ferrara in 1548, Cyprian de Rore wrote a song on this occasion, dramatizing her mother's and sisters' emotions: "En voz adieux, dames, cessés voz pleurs [...]. / Ne plourés plus de sa beaulté l'absence, / Dont vous pensés estre privez vos yeulx".¹⁴ Even more dramatic was the farewell of Barbara Gonzaga to her cousin Gentilia in 1474. The two girls had been raised together and were like sisters. A chronicler of Mantua explains that Gentilia, at the moment of the departure of her cousin, suddenly died of sorrow.¹⁵ These examples explain perhaps why Diomede Carafa recommends to Beatrice of Naples not to exaggerate her sorrow and not to shed too many tears, but to merely ask her father for his blessing and to kiss him the hands and feet to say goodbye.¹⁶

The examples demonstrate how the crossing of this first boundary, from the family into an uncertain future, was staged by publicly showing grief and sorrow. Although we have very few sources that reveal the feelings of the bride taking her leave forever from her parents, we know that the "real" sorrow felt by these women sometimes outlasted their arrival at their husband's court by many years. In a letter written by Marie Antoinette to her mother in 1776, for example, she expresses her feelings in the face of their separation six years before: "Quand je suis partie de Vienne, j'étais encore enfant, mon cœur était bien déchiré de me séparer de ma chère mère".¹⁷

Practical Troubles: Logistic and Emotional Problems Encountered by the Princess on her Voyage

The bridal voyage represented always a situation full of practical and emotional problems. The ambassador of the Duke of Ferrara, who was among those accompanying Renée of France to Italy, wrote in 1528 that only the idea of soon meeting the family of her husband had given her the force to continue, otherwise she would never have arrived safely because of the difficulties encountered during her journey.¹⁸ These problems consisted mainly in bad roads and bad weather. Quite often, it was difficult to find food and a place to sleep for everybody because of the size of the cortege following the bride. In 1474, Barbara Gonzaga was followed by more than 70 persons and 200 horses, Bianca Maria Sforza passed the alps in 1493 accompanied by more than 600 horses, Anne d'Este in 1548 by 400 persons and 350 horses.¹⁹

Sometimes there was so little room that the bride's entourage was forced to sleep on the naked floor. When the sisters Barbara and Joan of Austria, both married to Italian princes in 1565, arrived in a little village called Dolce, most of their ladies had to sleep on the ground, because there were no beds

¹³ *Discours des ceremonies et autres choses qui se passerent à la conduite de Madame Yoland de Lorraine et au festin des noces d'elle et de Guillaume, landgrave de Hesse, en l'an M.CCCC.XCVII*, in H. LEPAGE, "Mariage d'Yolande de Lorraine avec Guillaume, Landgrave de Hesse", in *Recueil de documents sur l'histoire de Lorraine*, Nancy, 1855, p. 23-42, here p. 26.

¹⁴ C. DE RORE, "En voz adieux – Hellas, comment", in C.d.R., *Opera omnia*, ed. B. Meier, vol. 8, Neuhausen, 1977, p. 39-43.

¹⁵ C. D'ARCO, "Cronaca di Mantova di Andrea Schivenoglia dal MCCCCXLV al MCCCCLXXXIV", in *Raccolta di cronisti e documenti storici lombardi inediti*, vol. 2, Milan, 1857, p. 117-194, here p. 180: "quando questa spoxa volia e foe per partirsi da Mantova una soa choxina zermana la vene per vedirla, fiola de messer Carlo fradelo de lo marchexo, ge prexe una doia et subito morite quela zovene che era".

¹⁶ D. CARAFA, "De institutione vivendi"... cit., p. 220.

¹⁷ Letter from Marie Antoinette to Maria Theresa, January 14th, 1776, in É. LEVER (ed.), *Correspondance de Marie-Antoinette (1770-1793)*, Paris, 2005, p. 239.

¹⁸ Letter from Bartolomeo Prosperi to Alfonso d'Este, November 3rd, 1528, cited by B. FONTANA, *Renata di Francia, Duchessa di Ferrara*, vol. 1, Rome, 1889, p. 68: "non haveria possito mai giungere viva per la difficultà del viaggio".

¹⁹ J. FISCHER, P. AMELUNG, W. IRTENKAUF (ed.), *Württemberg im Spätmittelalter*, Stuttgart, 1985, p. 20-21; H. WIESFLECKER, *Kaiser Maximilian I. Das Reich, Österreich und Europa an der Wende zur Neuzeit*, vol. 1: *Jugend, burgundisches Erbe und Römisches Königtum bis zur Alleinherrschaft, 1459-1493*, Munich, 1971, p. 367; C. COESTER, *Schön wie Venus, mutig wie Mars. Anna d'Este, Herzogin von Guise und von Nemours (1531-1607)*, Munich, 2007, p. 105.

and not even enough benches or tables where they could have slept.²⁰ For Yolande of Lorraine it was even worse. When she arrived in 1497 at a village in Hesse where it had been planned to stay overnight, there was not enough room for everybody. As a consequence, the princess continued her travel until she arrived at a monastery. However, the monks were determined to keep to their vows of chastity and did not let the women enter. In the end, Yolande was forced to sleep in the house of a poor man, "en chambre si bien tapissée que les quatre ventz y venoient".²¹

Other situations of logistic crisis were evoked by military conflicts in the regions crossed by the bride. When Margaret of Savoy passed the Jura mountains in 1445 during the so-called Old Zurich War, she had to be protected by 600 armed men from marauding groups of soldiers.²² Moreover, there were often rivalries arising from the accompanying cortege, such as, for example, between the members of the court of the father of the princess and those of her future husband. The bride usually found herself in the uncomfortable middle position, unable to intervene. In 1565, Joan of Austria had to watch helplessly several fights between the men of her cortege who would not pay attention to her attempts at conciliation.²³ Diomedes Carafa thus advises Beatrice of Naples to avoid all reason for trouble by encouraging the Neapolitans following her to be modest and courteous and to try to agree with the Hungarians on every detail regarding the journey. Recognizing the problem but misjudging the authority of the bride, he suggests that the princess, if something bad should happen to one of her escorts, should take care of the situation by settling disputes, attending the sick or trying to help if someone lost his horse.²⁴

The reference to the horse seems strange, but this really could become one of the biggest problems of a bridal voyage. When, for example, the cook accompanying Yolande of Lorraine in 1497 lost his horse, the men of her future husband would not want to buy him a new one, even though they were the only ones to have the money to buy a horse. Their explanation shows that there must have been arguments going on even before the cook lost his horse: "si Madamoyselle vouloit avoir ung tel cuisenier pour elle, qu'elle le pourveust de cheval, car ilz n'avoient point d'argent pour luy en acheter, dont Madamoyselle fust aucunement estonnée".²⁵ Finally, a more emotional problem for the brides consisted in the fact that many of them, once arrived at their destination, had to wait a long time for their husbands to come and meet them. Some of them waited for weeks, others for months, like Bianca Maria Sforza who stayed three months in Innsbruck before Maximilian I finally arrived to fetch her.²⁶

An extreme example of a bridal voyage which went wrong dates from the early Middle Ages. Gregory of Tours, contemporary witness as well as historian, tells us about the wedding arranged in 584 between Rigunth, the daughter of Chilperich I, King of Neustria, and Reccared, the son of the Visigothic King Liuvigild. The first problems seemed to have arisen at the very beginning of the journey. Chilperich had to use violence to force his people to follow the bride in order to be able to provide his daughter with an impressive enough entourage. When the cortege left Paris, the axle of one of the carts broke, which was interpreted by many of the escort as a bad omen. That night, the first men deserted the bridal cortege, taking horses and valuable objects with them. This was only the beginning of a continuous desertion and theft which undermined the moral of the entire travel group. Theft was made easy due to the fact that the dowry of the bride was so substantial that it had to be transported on fifty carts, which made it impossible to travel as a cohesive group. Since Chilperich

²⁰ M. VON FREYBERG (ed.), "Herzog Ferdinands, dritten Sohnes Herzog Albrechts V von Bayern (geboren den 21 Jän. 1550), im Jahre 1565 unternommene Reise nach Italien", in *Sammlung historischer Schriften und Urkunden*, vol. 4, Stuttgart, 1834, p. 277-362, here p. 288: "frauen Zimmer auf der Erd mehrtails geschlaffen, dann khaine benckh noch Tisch, vil minder Peth verhanden gewest darauff sie schlaffen hetten mögen".

²¹ *Discours des ceremonies et autres choses...* cit., p. 34.

²² E. CORNAZ, *Le mariage palatin de Marguerite de Savoie*, Lausanne, 1932, p. 35-36.

²³ M. VON FREYBERG (ed.), "Herzog Ferdinands Reise" ... cit., p. 297-298.

²⁴ D. CARAFA, "De institutione vivendi" ... cit., p. 226.

²⁵ *Discours des ceremonies et autres choses...* cit., p. 32-33.

²⁶ Letter from Bianca Maria Sforza to Ludovico Sforza, December 28th, 1493, cited by F. CALVI, *Bianca Maria Sforza-Visconti, regina dei Romani, imperatrice germanica, e gli ambasciatori di Lodovico il Moro alla corte cesarea*, Milan, 1888, p. 48-50.

feared for his daughter's well-being, he had her travel under the protection of more than 4000 men, who, to be able to feed themselves and their horses, robbed and plundered everywhere they passed. But this was not all. By the time Rigunth arrived at Toulouse, she received the message of her father's death. Having lost all her authority and protection, the princess was taken prisoner by a rival duke, deprived of all her treasures and locked up in a house with only the necessary to live.²⁷

When Fredegund, the bride's mother, learned about the disgrace brought on her daughter, she got into a rage and cruelly punished everybody who had been accompanying the bride she could get her hands on. But that could not change the fact that Rigunth's marriage to the prince of the Visigoths was off, her bridal voyage had miserably failed, and the princess returned home to her mother. Even if we consider that Gregory of Tours did not appreciate Fredegund and that much of his depiction regarding her daughter's marriage-project is exaggerated, the misfortune of the journey is still quite evident. The extreme punishments imposed by Fredegund on those who had been unable to protect the princess show that the attack of a bridal cortege was among the biggest offenses which could be done to a family, because by dishonoring the bride the whole group she belonged to was dishonored.²⁸

Transitional Spaces: Handing Over to the Husband

The first part of the bridal journey ended at the place where the official handing-over of the princess, from the representatives of the father to the future husband, took place. The husband himself was not always present at the handing-over, in many cases he sent a legal representative, for instance a brother or a cousin, to welcome his bride. The place of the handing-over was generally carefully chosen by the two parties and established in the marriage contract. The handing-over of Maria Theresa of Spain to Louis XIV in 1660 took place on an island in the middle of the Bidasoa river, the border between France and Spain. Marie Antoinette was handed over to the future King Louis XVI in 1770 on an island in the Rhine, where a cabin had been erected for this special occasion. The neutral zone between two territories played an important role for the symbolic transition from one family to the other. The coach that carried Sophia Dorothea of Hanover in 1706 to Prussia stopped for a moment in the deserted lands between Lüneburg and Brandenburg, a fact which was later interpreted as an encounter of two differing acts: a welcome and a farewell.²⁹

During the handing-over, the two families paid great attention as to the mutual acknowledgement of their respective rights and political claims. This becomes clear for example in November 1615 when Anne of Austria and Elisabeth of France, future wives of the French king Louis XIII and of the Spanish infant Philipp IV, were exchanged at the border between France and Spain. The camps on the banks of the Bidasoa river were put up in exactly the same way, the boats carrying the princesses left their points of departure precisely at the same moment and met exactly in the middle of the river. Here, the two women exchanged their boats and left simultaneously for the other side of the river.³⁰

The crossing of the boundary from one family to the other was so important, that if the territories of the two families did not have a common borderline, a symbolic border was constructed. When the French princess Anne de Foix met her husband Vladislaus II, King of Bohemia and Hungary, in 1502, it was a simple carpet that became the symbolic frontier between the two reigns. At the moment when the princess stepped on one side of the carpet, the king left his tent that had been

²⁷ G. EPISCOPI TURONENSIS, *Libri historiarum...* cit., book VI, chap. 45; book VII, chap. 9.

²⁸ G. EPISCOPI TURONENSIS, *Libri historiarum...* cit., book VII, chap. 15. See N. PANCER, *Sans peur et sans vergogne. De l'honneur et des femmes aux premiers temps mérovingiens (VI^e-VII^e siècles)*, Paris, 2001, p. 247-248.

²⁹ *Die grosse Preußisch- und Lüneburgische Vermählungs-Freude*, Berlin, 1707, cited by D. SCHÖNPFLUG, "Verhandlung, Inszenierung und Erleben kultureller Unterschiede: Die 'europäischen' Heiraten der Hohenzollern 1767-1817", in D. Nolde, C. Opitz (ed.), *Grenzüberschreitende Familienbeziehungen. Akteure und Medien des Kulturtransfers in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Cologne-Weimar-Vienna, 2008, p. 17-37, here p. 27: "zwey widrige Actus, nemlich eine Bewillkommnung und ein Abschied".

³⁰ T. RAHN, "Grenz-Situationen des Zeremoniells in der Frühen Neuzeit", in M. Bauer, T.R. (ed.), *Die Grenze. Begriff und Inszenierung*, Berlin, 1997, p. 177-206, here p. 190-191.

erected on the other side of the carpet. Husband and wife then approached each other until they met exactly in the middle of the carpet, where Anne fell on her knees before the king.³¹

The first encounter between the princess and her future husband represents a key moment of the bridal voyage, as the story about the column of commemoration cited at the beginning of this paper shows. Usually, the couple had never laid eyes on each other before, thus the tension was great. The prince sometimes tried to see his future wife *incognito* before the official first meeting. Diomede Carafa advises Beatrice of Naples, in case she should see through her husband's disguise, to remain silent about it and to wait until he would reveal himself to her.³² The example of Elisabeth of Austria, who married the King of France in 1570, shows that not all women did discover their future husbands among the crowd. When Charles IX came *incognito* to observe his future wife the night before their first official meeting, the princess did obviously not realize that one of the young men serving her at table was the King of France, disguised as a German.³³

Sometimes the princely couple tried to smoothen the tension of the border-crossing by deliberately playing with their identities. When Galeazzo Maria Sforza (the one who later gave order to erect the column) first met Bona of Savoy, he sent his brother ahead to welcome her, but after a couple of minutes the princess recognized her real husband among the men watching the scene.³⁴ Sometimes, it was the bride making fun on the groom, as in December 1548, when Anne d'Este and Francis of Lorraine first met. With the help of her father-in-law, who had been accompanying her on the last part of the bridal voyage, the princess disguised one of her ladies and sent her ahead to meet her future husband, while she, dressed modestly, stood and watched. The poor prince, not realizing that he was being fooled, kissed his alleged bride, and only when Anne threw off her mask he recognized his real future wife. The laughter that followed helped to smoothen the tension of the situation.³⁵

Metamorphosis: Physical Changes

In the process of border-crossing during a bridal voyage, it was the change in the bride's clothing and hairstyle that was most noticed by the contemporaries. In the reports of the observers, its description takes up a lot of space. The princesses were aware of the importance given to their clothes and their hairdo by their husband and his court. Renée of France even sent her measurements to Ferrara before leaving for Italy in 1528, because she wanted to arrive at her husband's court dressed according to Italian fashion.³⁶ The changing of the clothes in one precise act is known mainly for the brides of the French kings. Elisabeth of Austria, for example, was dressed according to the fashion of the court of her father, the Emperor, when she first met Charles IX in 1570, but she was right away led by the queen-mother to a separate room to change her clothes. Marie Antoinette had already changed and was dressed "à la française" when she arrived on French territory in 1770.³⁷

³¹ A. LE ROUX DE LINCY (ed.), "Discours des cérémonies du mariage d'Anne de Foix, de la maison de France, avec Ladislas VI, roi de Bohême, de Pologne et de Hongrie, précédé du discours du voyage de cette reine dans la seigneurie de Venise, le tout mis en écrit du commandement d'Anne, reine de France, duchesse de Bretagne, par Pierre Choque, dit Bretagne, l'un de ses rois d'armes (mai 1502)", *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 21, 1861, p. 156-185, 422-439, here p. 428-429.

³² D. CARAFA, "De institutione vivendi" ... cit., p. 228.

³³ *Neue Zeitung*, 1570, cited by K. VOCELKA, *Habsburgische Hochzeiten 1550-1600. Kulturgeschichtliche Studien zum manieristischen Repräsentationsfest*, Vienna-Cologne-Graz, 1976, p. 109.

³⁴ G. LUBKIN, *A Renaissance Court...* cit., p. 53.

³⁵ C. COESTER, *Schön wie Venus...* cit., p. 112-113.

³⁶ Letter from Bartolomeo Prosperi to Alfonso d'Este, July 14th, 1528, cited by B. FONTANA, *Renata di Francia...* cit., p. 58: "Madama Renea vorria venire in Italia al modo di La".

³⁷ *Neue Zeitung*, 1570, cited by K. VOCELKA, *Habsburgische Hochzeiten...* cit., p. 109: "darauff die alte Königin sampt deren Frawnzimmer die Junge Königin hinweg geführt vnd ihre Königliche Würden verkleiden lassen"; S. BURKARD (ed.), *Mémoires de la baronne d'Oberkirch sur la cour de Louis XVI et la société française avant 1789*, Paris, 1970, p. 44; M. REID (ed.), *Mémoires de Madame Campan sur la vie privée de Marie-Antoinette (extraits)*, Paris, 2007, p. 29.

Even though in France the changing of the clothes was most practiced, we have examples for it also for other countries. Maximilian I gave order that his wife, upon her arrival in 1494, was to be dressed "alla tedesca". Jadwiga of Poland, when she arrived in Landshut in 1475, was led into a side-chapel of the church to change her clothes. This act evoked such a feeling of estrangement in the bride that she cried all along the wedding ceremony.³⁸ We also have some examples for a change of clothes little by little during the journey or after the arrival of the bride at the court of her husband. Clothes and hairdo of Anne d'Este changed slowly during her voyage. When she left Ferrara in October 1548, she was dressed according to Italian fashion, but when she arrived at the court of France two months later, she was dressed "alla francese".³⁹ Obviously, the bride could be perceived by the people around her as acceptable only if she conformed to the cultural system of her husband's court, corresponding to its norms and values and thus dressing like everybody else.

The slow transformation of Anne d'Este calls in mind the marriage of Louis XIV and Maria Theresa of Spain in 1660. When the French and the Spanish courts met to hand over the bride, the observers attested the bride's metamorphosis, who changed from the Spanish "Infanta María Teresa" to the French queen "Marie-Thérèse". When the princess first met the French court, she was dressed according to Spanish fashion. Before being introduced to her future husband she had to change, so that she would please the king and appear "aymable", desirable, to him. The next day, Maria Theresa was still dressed according to Spanish fashion, but already "coiffée moitié à la Française". The next day, which was her wedding-day, she wore a French dress, but was "coiffée encore un peu à l'Espagnole". According to the source that tells us these details, from day to day the princess became more and more beautiful, until she corresponded exactly to the French image of a "real" Queen of France.⁴⁰

Maria Theresa of Spain was not the only bride who showed a certain resistance to cross the symbolic border of the changing of the clothes. On the day of her wedding with the son of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, in 1565, Joan of Austria was dressed according to the fashion of her husband's court. The next day however, her clothes were of a strange mixture. While her body was dressed in Florentine fashion, her head was decorated according to the fashion of the imperial court, where she had grown up.⁴¹ In 1475, Jadwiga of Poland had to change her clothes for the wedding, but in the evening, for the ball, she appeared in a dress which corresponded to the fashion of her parents' court. Most noticed by the observers was the bride's strange hairdo upon her arrival in Landshut, her long hair being braided in one big plait. Apparently, during the ceremony of the changing of the clothes, the princess had managed to keep her Polish-fashioned hairdo, which, for the wedding, was hidden under some kind of decoration.⁴²

In many cases, the husband's men escorting the bride on her journey commented quite negatively on the clothes and hairdo of the bride. The French escorts accompanying Anne d'Este in 1548 wrote to her future husband that she did not have anybody to help her dress and adorn herself correctly, and that she urgently needed a French lady in waiting to assist her with her toilet.⁴³ Anne d'Este was the daughter of one of the richest dukes of Italy, it is therefore improbable that something was wrong with her clothing. We have here another good example for the fact that the bride could be perceived as pretty and thus acceptable by her husband's court only if she corresponded to the norms

³⁸ Letter from Erasmo Brasca to Ludovico Sforza, March 15th, 1494, cited by F. CALVI, *Bianca Maria Sforza...* cit., p. 62; *Beschreibung der Solemni bey dem Beylager Herzog Georgens von Beyern, des Reichen*, in S. HIERETH, "Zeitgenössische Quellen zur Landshuter Fürstenhochzeit 1475", *Verhandlungen des historischen Vereins für Niederbayern*, 85, 1959, p. 3-64, here p. 25: "und da sie Sie geschmuecket hetten nach iren Sitten, fuerten sy sie hinauf zu dem hohen Altar, und sie weinet gar ser".

³⁹ Letter from Georgio Conegrani to Francesco Gonzaga, December 7th, 1548, in Archivio di Stato di Mantova (ASMan), Archivio Gonzaga (AG) 641, fol. 276r.

⁴⁰ *La Pompe et Magnificence faite au mariage du Roy et de L'Infante D'Espagne*, Toulouse, 1660, cited by A. ZANGER, "Fashioning the Body Politic: Imagining the Queen in the Marriage of Louis XIV", in L.O. Fradenburg (ed.), *Women and Sovereignty*, Edinburgh, 1992, p. 101-120, here p. 104, 111.

⁴¹ M. VON FREYBERG (ed.), "Herzog Ferdinands Reise" ... cit., p. 327.

⁴² *Beschreibung der Solemni...* cit., p. 25.

⁴³ C. COESTER, *Schön wie Venus...* cit., p. 99, 106, 110.

and values of this court. Very often therefore, the changing of the clothes was accompanied by a change in the observers' perception of the beauty of the bride. Jadwiga of Poland was described as a well-shaped young girl who, once dressed according to German fashion, should become a very beautiful woman. Anne de Foix, once wearing the Hungarian crowning gown, became more beautiful than she had already been before: "sa beauté augmenta quand elle fut couronnée", as a report mentions.⁴⁴

Finally, the metamorphosis of the bride included not only a change in her clothing and hairdo, it could also mean a changing of her character and her behavior. The metamorphosis of Anne d'Este seems to have taken place during her bridal voyage. After her arrival at the court of France, the Italian observers described her as French "visu, verbo et opera". They reported that she had adapted herself so well to the customs of her new home that one would think she had been raised at this court. In the eyes of the contemporaries, the Ferrarese princess had become a credible French duchess.⁴⁵

Conclusions

The quoted examples make clear that the bridal voyage was a process of individual transformation embedded in a larger process of transfer between two courts. One of its main characteristics lies in the fact that the princesses almost never returned to the point of their departure. The bridal journey represented thus a rupture with the bride's court of origin, her parents and her hometown. During her voyage, the princess did not only move through space, she also changed the frame of cultural reference. During this process of change she had to cross a couple of symbolic boundaries which were very carefully staged by the parties in question.

Although most of the boundaries crossed by a bride on her voyage were symbolic, the spatial aspect was very important for the families and persons involved, and the two courts paid very much attention to the space occupied by the other party in the process of the symbolic border-crossings. The handing-over of the princesses had to take place exactly at the border between the territories, and if there was no common frontier, it had to be specially constructed. The importance of the place of the first meeting of the bride with her future husband is demonstrated by the fact that it was already determined in the marriage contracts, and, as the example of the column of commemoration quoted at the beginning of this paper shows, it had to be specially marked, so it would be remembered and eventually become a *lieu de mémoire*.

By sending their daughters all over Europe, the ruling families displayed not only their power to symbolically reduce space but also the networks to which they belonged. Moreover, as the cited sources have shown, the bridal voyage was one of the best means for political representation. It can therefore be considered as a good example for the interaction of space, crossing of boundaries and self-fashioning of the nobilities of early modern Europe.

⁴⁴ A. LE ROUX DE LINCY (ed.), "Discours des cérémonies"... cit., p. 433. For Jadwiga of Poland see: *Beschreibung der Solennien...* cit., p. 36: "so sie gecleydet wird nach Deutschen Sitten, so wirt sie ser ein wolgestalte und wolgeschickte Fuerstin".

⁴⁵ Letter from Giulio Alvarotti to Ercole d'Este, November 29th and December 5th, 1548, in Archivio di Stato di Modena, Cancelleria ducale, Ambasciatori Francia 45: "ella non è più la princessa di Ferrara ma Madama di Umala". Letter from Georgio Conegrani to Sabino Callandra, December 12th, 1548, in ASMan, AG 641, fol. 286v-287r: "par' propriamente che sia nata e nodreta in questa corte".

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Retour souhaité ou expulsion réfléchi ? La maison espagnole d'Anne d'Autriche quitte Paris (1616-1622)

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Introduction

Pour se marier avec Louis XIII, Anne d'Autriche avait franchi la frontière française en compagnie d'un groupe important de domestiques espagnols à la tête duquel se trouvaient le Duc de Monteleón¹ et la Comtesse de la Torre², cousine du Duc de Lerma, ministre favori de Philippe III. Le retour en Espagne de ces domestiques se produisit en trois moments différents entre 1616 et 1618, les raisons de chacun de ces trois départs variant selon la conjoncture politique marquée par les factions courtoises de Paris.

Les historiens qui ont étudiés ce sujet l'ont fait en se basant sur les exemples d'autres cours du XVII^{ème} siècle dans lesquelles les domestiques d'une reine étrangère (entendons comme étrangère, d'une dynastie différente) étaient expulsés de la cour d'accueil à la fois pour éviter l'espionnage et favoriser l'adaptation de la nouvelle reine. Ainsi, Jean-François Dubost et María José Del Río ont analysé le départ des serviteurs espagnols comme une expulsion décrétée à cause des soupçons d'espionnage qui reposaient sur ces domestiques considérés comme étrangers. De plus, leur expulsion serait la conséquence d'un manque d'adaptation et aurait favorisé la «nationalisation» de la reine «étrangère» Anne d'Autriche. Concernant la dernière expulsion des domestiques, Dubost et Del Río soulignent que «l'expulsion des suivantes espagnoles de la cour de France en 1618 fut avant tout une mesure politique, une déclaration de principe tournée contre l'Espagne»³ et que «l'expulsion [...] semble plutôt le dénouement brutal, sinon inopiné, d'une question plus large concernant le processus de naturalisation de la reine [...] étrangère»⁴.

En ce qui concerne le départ des Espagnols de Paris, cette explication est cohérente. Toutefois, il nous semble qu'elle souligne, parfois avec trop d'insistance, le statut d'étrangers de la reine et de ses domestiques ainsi que le manque d'adaptation de ces derniers aux habitudes françaises. En effet, selon cette analyse, les départs successifs des Espagnols et de leurs domestiques seraient une stratégie politique ayant pour but «la nationalisation» de la reine et son affranchissement de toute influence espagnole. Pourquoi alors des personnages aussi importants que le confesseur espagnol seraient-ils restés à Paris?

Cette interprétation est correcte mais il me semble qu'elle masque d'autres raisons importantes. Le dernier départ des Espagnols de Paris, par exemple, serait plutôt dû à un refus de la politique du Duc de Lerma qu'à la xénophobie d'un roi qui attendait d'avoir le pouvoir ; de même, l'échange des domestiques en 1617, une stratégie qui visait à faciliter l'adaptation d'Anne d'Autriche aux domestiques français, a pu également annoncer le changement politique qui allait arriver en France par la suite. En fait, ni le duc de Monteleón, ni la comtesse de la Torre, ni Lerma ne se sont opposés à cette décision. Cette résolution ne devrait donc pas être considérée comme « anti-espagnols » (Monteleón et Lerma, ont pensé, à tort, que la reine réussirait à entretenir de bonnes relations avec Louis XIII et que, de cette façon, elle pourrait influencer le roi afin de favoriser les intérêts espagnols), mais comme une

¹ Ettore Pignatelli, Napolitain. J. PAZ, *Capitulaciones con Francia y negociaciones diplomáticas de los embajadores de España en aquella corte*, Madrid, 1914, pp. 735-739. M. J. DEL RÍO et J. F. DUBOST, «La présence étrangère autour d'Anne d'Autriche», CH. GRELL (ed), *Anne d'Autriche, infante d'Espagne et reine de France*, Perrin, Paris, 2009. p. 113.

² Doña Inés Enríquez de Sandoval.

³ J.F. DUBOST et M. J. DEL RÍO, «La présence étrangère...» cit, p. 120.

⁴ J. F. DUBOST et M. J. DEL RÍO, «La présence étrangère...» cit, p. 121. afin

opposition à la politique de Marie de Médicis et de Lerma, ainsi qu'à la politique de partenariat entre la Monarchie espagnole et la Monarchie française. En 1617, l'expulsion des Français (qui représentaient la politique de Marie de Médicis et de Philippe III) quelques mois après le départ des domestiques espagnols conforte cette thèse. La politique intérieure et la politique extérieure des deux monarchies se mêlent donc aux conflits domestiques de la cour de Paris et aux obsessions d'un souverain adolescent, le roi de France.

L'étude du départ des domestiques de la Maison de la reine nous permet ainsi d'analyser tout d'abord le choc de cultures politiques différentes et les luttes entre les deux monarchies pour le prestige et la reconnaissance politique. D'autre part, les résistances que la cour de Paris opposa à l'entêtement de la monarchie espagnole qui souhaitait imposer ses conditions lors de la formation de la Maison de la reine Anne d'Autriche ne semblent être qu'une démonstration de force de la part de la monarchie française, émergente, face à la monarchie espagnole qui amorçait alors sa décadence. Le fait que la monarchie espagnole ne soit pas parvenue à imposer ses règles à la cour de Paris indique que les choses avaient changées. L'Espagne dut reconnaître que son pouvoir n'était plus ce qu'il était et qu'elle ne pouvait plus imposer ses conditions aussi facilement qu'elle l'avait fait jadis. On sait, par exemple, qu'au XVI^{ème} siècle Éléonore d'Autriche, mariée avec François I^{er}, s'était toujours vêtue à l'espagnole et avait conservé ses domestiques à ses côtés⁵. Dans le contexte politique international de l'époque, la cour de France n'avait pas osé contrer le pouvoir de la monarchie des Habsbourg: avec Anne d'Autriche elle pouvait se le permettre. Ainsi, l'expulsion de la domesticité espagnole sans contestations de la part de la monarchie espagnole peut être interprétée comme la reconnaissance du prestige acquis par la monarchie française par les monarchies étrangères.

Ma recherche montre également que la politique intérieure et étrangère des deux monarchies exerçaient une influence certaine sur les problèmes domestiques des différentes cours. La fragilité de la paix entre les deux monarchies aurait favorisé les premières tensions. Si on considère la cour comme un microcosme qui reflète la politique internationale et ses enjeux de prestige tout en en subissant les conséquences, il faut alors situer les départs des domestiques espagnols dans un contexte plus large et envisager l'influence des guerres de Savoie (dans lesquelles étaient impliquées la France et l'Espagne), de la formation de la maison d'Élisabeth de Bourbon, ou encore les problèmes politiques internes des deux cours (les guerres entre la mère et le fils à Paris ou la chute de Lerma à Madrid).

Enfin, cette recherche nous permet d'étudier les processus d'adaptation d'une reine "étrangère" à une monarchie autrefois rivale. À la fois objet et sujet des deux monarchies, la reine Anne d'Autriche dut construire son réseau politique dans un environnement hostile où elle ne se sentait protégée que par son groupe de domestiques dirigés par la Comtesse de la Torre et le Duc de Monteleón, personnalités soigneusement choisies par Lerma et Philippe III. Peu à peu, Anne d'Autriche apprit à jouer son propre rôle sur la scène politique de la cour de Paris. Fille chérie de Philippe III, Anne d'Autriche aimait sa famille et était prête à suivre les ordres transmis par son père, par le Duc de Lerma ou par l'ambassadeur espagnol⁶. Cependant, la reine innocente et docile, n'a sans doute pas toujours satisfait les désirs de son père. Son orgueil, peut-être dû à son rang élevé (aînée des princesses Habsbourg, elle pouvait hériter de la monarchie) fut source de conflits qui auraient contribué à discréditer les dames espagnoles. Cette petite fille qui ne savait pas parler français mais avait traversé la Bidassoa la tête haute et le pas ferme dut tempérer son orgueil et apprendre les subtilités de la langue française, c'est ce que lui demanda par lettre son père Philippe III ; tandis que le Duc de Monteleón, témoin et guide de tous ses mouvements à la cour de Paris tenta de mener à bien ces résolutions.

Nous analyserons les trois départs successifs des domestiques espagnols, chacun étant différent et se produisant dans un contexte politique spécifique; on notera également des différences

⁵ J. SEBASTIÁN, "Espacios visuales del poder femenino en la Corte de los Austrias", I. MORANT, M. ORTEGA, A. LAVIN et P. PÉREZ CANTÓ (coord.), *Historia de las mujeres en España y América Latina. Edad Moderna. II. Historia Moderna*, Cátedra, Madrid, 2005, p. 430.

⁶ Sur les sentiments amoureux des Habsbourg voir A. HUGON, «Mariages d'État et sentiments familiaux chez les Habsbourg d'Espagne», I. POUTRIN et M. K. SCHAUB, *Femmes et pouvoir politique. Les princesses d'Europe XV-XVIII siècle*, Bréal, Paris, pp. 80-99.

selon le rang des suivantes expulsées: le premier départ concerne celles de rang inférieur, le second, des dames de rang supérieur et le troisième celui des femmes les plus importantes de la Maison de la reine et coïncide avec le départ du Duc de Monteleón de l'ambassade à Paris.

Janvier 1616- juin 1617: le nombre excessif des domestiques, un problème de prestige ?

Anne d'Autriche avait franchi la Bidassoa accompagnée de plus d'une centaine de domestiques espagnols, soit le double du nombre prévu dans le contrat de mariage, un excès qui avait provoqué les premières protestations de Marie de Médicis. Celle-ci, ainsi que ses partisans dont faisaient partie les maréchaux d'Ancre (Concini et la célèbre Éléonore Galigai⁷), avaient reçu l'Infante-Reine avec un enthousiasme mesuré car Marie de Médicis tenait à conserver son prestige face à l'introduction d'une reine Habsbourg à la cour de son fils, Louis XIII. Elle ne manqua pas de réagir à la première démonstration de pouvoir de la monarchie espagnole: le nombre de domestiques que l'Infante-Reine avait amené avec elle fut jugé excessif.

À Tours, lors d'un entretien avec le Duc de Monteleón, ambassadeur espagnol en France, Marie de Médicis se montra contrariée par la présence de tant d'Espagnols⁸. La reine, qui ne souhaitait pas que sa bru soit aussi entourée, argua du manque de place à Paris et de l'impossibilité de payer toutes les suivantes. Lors de ce même entretien, la reine fit remarquer qu'à la cour de Madrid sa fille se plaignait qu'on ne la laissait pas faire suffisamment d'exercice, qu'on ne la laissait pas voir son époux le prince Philippe aussi souvent qu'elle le voulait et que ses domestiques français n'étaient pas bien traités. Il semble que les Espagnols qui accompagnaient la reine Anne avaient écrit à leur famille en disant que Louis XIII ne s'occupait pas de l'Infante-Reine et qu'en France, on ne les aimait pas. Monteleón essaya de démentir ces informations en disant que Philippe III aimait beaucoup la princesse et que les Français étaient appréciés à la cour⁹. À Madrid, le marquis de Senecey, ambassadeur français en Espagne, lors d'un entretien tendu avec don Iñigo de Cárdenas¹⁰, avait accusé la cour espagnole de souhaiter le départ de tous les français de Madrid. Il se peut que ces tensions aient participé d'une stratégie mise en place par la France pour faire partir les domestiques espagnols: prétendre que les Français étaient maltraités à Madrid aurait facilité l'expulsion des Espagnols.

Les questions matérielles ou le comportement désobligeant des Espagnols ne furent pas les seules raisons qui amenèrent Marie de Médicis à protester. Cette querelle cachait aussi des raisons politiques, en particulier la crainte de l'espionnage. Le Duc de Monteleón avait, en effet, plusieurs objectifs diplomatiques à atteindre:

1- La reine devait apprendre le français: Monteleón considérait que cet apprentissage était urgent et essentiel pour qu'Anne d'Autriche puisse communiquer avec son mari. En janvier de 1616, il écrivit au roi Philippe III:

Le e suplicado con muchas veras [a Ana de Austria] que procure aplicarse a tomar la lengua françessa como cossa en que no va solo gusto sino mil combeniencias de arta consecuençia, al fin lo va haçiendo y tendria por açertado que su Magestad y su excelencia alabandole que lo haga y muestren mucho gusto¹¹

Dans une autre lettre adressée à Lerma, Montéleon se plaignait du peu de maîtrise de la langue française de l'Infante-Reine:

harto daña no hablar la lengua ni entenderla sino podo y me estoy haciendo pedazos porque aprenda [Ana de Austria] hazerlo ya su Magestad mejor de lo que solia y los días pasados le dixen

⁷ P. CHEVALIER, *Louis XIII*, Fayard, Paris, 1979.

⁸ AGS. Estado, Francia, K. 1471, Monteleón à Lerma, 28 février et 2 mars 1616, n° 27-58.

⁹ AGS. Estado, Francia, K. 1471, mars 1616, n° 59-82.

¹⁰ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471. Don Iñigo de Cárdenas à Juan de Ciriza, Madrid 20 mai 1616. K. 1417, Iñigo de Cárdenas au roi, Madrid, 15 avril 1616.

¹¹ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471, Monteleón au roi, 16 janvier 1616,

que de quanto procuraba y deseaba açertar servir la no quería otra paga sino que se aplicase eficazmente a ello [a aprender la lengua francesa]¹²

2- Le Duc devait également contrôler la formation de la Maison de la reine et essayer de placer des Espagnols aux postes les plus proches de l'Infante-Reine. En janvier 1616, Lerma avait proposé que l'on donne un code secret à la comtesse de la Torre, choisie pour être la dame d'honneur de la reine:

...si sera bien mandar a la Condesa de la Torre tenga secretario capaz y aya con ella alguna cifra particular de manera que las palabras se sepan quanto y mas el estado de las cosas y el secretario se le enviase de aca disimuladamente¹³

Le Duc de Monteleón en personne devait être le grand majordome de l'Infante-Reine, un poste qui lui permettait d'accéder aux appartements privés d'Anne d'Autriche et de contrôler tous ses faits et gestes¹⁴.

3- Enfin, il devait trouver des appuis à la cour de France pour servir l'Infante-Reine. Les soupçons d'espionnage n'étaient donc[?] pas infondés: au cours du voyage à Paris, Monteleón essaya de s'attirer les faveurs de la maréchale en lui offrant des cadeaux et des bijoux¹⁵ sans pour autant perdre de vue le favori du roi, Luynes, ami intime du jeune Louis XIII¹⁶. Ainsi, Cárdenas disait à Monteleón: «ayudese de Luynes conservandole y grangeandole y a la prudencia y maña del duque se remite esto»¹⁷. Ce dernier était éclipsé par sa mère mais les choses pouvaient changer à l'avenir et Monteleón devait obtenir l'appui des amis du roi au cas où le vent tournerait.

Les premiers débats au sujet de la formation de la Maison de l'Infante-Reine eurent lieu pendant le voyage vers Paris. Le poste de dame d'honneur était celui qui inquiétait le plus les deux cours. Monteleón dut faire tout son possible pour que la Comtesse de la Torre soit amenée à exercer les fonctions de dame d'honneur et que la candidate de la cour de France, la veuve du Connétable Montmorency¹⁸, ne figure comme dame d'honneur que dans certaines cérémonies publiques. L'autre sujet de dispute fut la présence de la nourrice du roi dans les appartements de l'Infante-Reine. Marie de Médicis exigeait, en effet, que cette femme dorme avec sa bru. Monteleón affirmait que la nourrice¹⁹: «es realmente extravagante y quiere y estima grandemente a la Reina [...] falta de prudencia y sobra de arrogancia, se ha procurado obligarla con todos los regales y buen tratamiento que no llegara a vaxezas»²⁰. La nourrice était, paraît-il, «corruptible»²¹, et Monteleón ne pouvait permettre qu'elle dorme avec la reine. Il espérait l'éloigner de la cour et souhaitait que ses fonctions

¹² AGS, Estado Francia, K. 1471, Monteleón à Lerma, 28 février 1616, n° 27-58.

¹³ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471. Cité aussi par A. HUGON, *Au service du Roi Catholique «Honorables ambassadeurs» et «divins espions» Représentation diplomatique et service secret dans les relations hispano-françaises de 1598 à 1635*. Casa de Velázquez, Madrid, 2004, p. 163.

¹⁴ M.J. DEL RÍO et J.F. DUBOST, «La présence étrangère...», cit, p. 113.

¹⁵ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471, 14 mai 1616, Monteleón à Lerma.

¹⁶ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471, mars 1616. Don Iñigo de Cárdenas à Monteleón.

¹⁷ AGS, K. 1471, réponse de don Iñigo à la lettre du 28 février 1616, n° 53.

¹⁸ Laurence de Clermont. Voir: E. GRISSELLE, *État de la Maison du roi Louis XIII, de celle de sa mère, Marie de Médicis, de ses sœurs, Chrestienne, Élisabeth et Henriette de France, de son frère, Gaston d'Orléans, de sa femme Anne d'Autriche, de ses fils de Dauphin et Philippe d'Orléans, comprenant les années 1601 à 1665*, Paris 1912, [3343], p. 89

¹⁹ Nous croyons que el «ama» était la nourrice du roi, Antoniette Joron, madame de Boquet, celle-ci appelée "Doudon", elle fut la première femme de Chambre d'Anne d'Autriche de 1616 à 1618. Joron est citée de nombreuses fois par Héroard: HÉROARD, Jean (sous la direction de Madeleine Foisil), *Journal de Jean Héroard, médecin de Louis XIII*, Fayard, 1989. pp. 75-1390. Aussi: E. GRISSELLE: *État de la Maison du roi Louis XIII... cit*, p. 56.

²⁰ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471, Monteleón à Lerma, 11 avril 1616.

²¹ Lerma considérait la famille du «ama», corruptible. Le mari était le seigneur du Bocquet et la fille, Mademoiselle Loyse du Bocquet, future femme de chambre d'Anne de Autriche. AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471, Réponse de Lerma à la lettre de 28 février 1616 du duc de Monteleón..

soient exercées par une autre femme plus proche des intérêts politiques de l'Espagne. Le duc de Monteleón suggéra de remplacer l'«ama» par Madame de Boyan, celle-ci étant une femme «muy santa», «de muy buena intención» et plus proche des intérêts espagnols. Ce fut l'occasion parfaite pour l'Infante-Reine de commencer son cheminement politique: le Duc de Monteleón l'encouragea à demander à Marie de Médicis de dégager la nourrice de ses obligations et il lui fallut insister plusieurs fois avant qu'Anne d'Autriche, bien qu'embarrassée, ose parler à la reine mère.

En arrivant à Paris en mai 1616²², Monteleón déploya tous ses talents de diplomate pour éviter le départ des premières suivantes espagnoles, pas tant à cause de la perte politique que cela pouvait entraîner puisqu'elles étaient de rang inférieur, mais pour éviter le déshonneur que cela impliquait. Tous ses efforts furent vains et les raisons invoquées furent rejetées par la reine mère. Monteleón alléguait que les suivantes n'étaient pas si nombreuses - d'autres reines Habsbourg en avaient emmené beaucoup plus -, certaines allaient se marier ou entrer au couvent, d'autres tomberaient malades et mourraient: avec le temps, la question du nombre excessif de suivantes allait se résoudre sans qu'il soit nécessaire de les renvoyer en Espagne. Leur départ fut pourtant inévitable et le duc dut se résoudre à l'accepter. Philippe III et Lerma donnèrent finalement leur assentiment pour le retour de ces servantes qui étaient d'un rang modeste. La tentative de la monarchie espagnole d'imposer son pouvoir sur le protocole de la cour de France subit son premier coup d'arrêt. Toutefois, le départ de ces servantes se fit dans la plus grande discrétion afin de limiter le déshonneur qui en résultait: le Duc de Monteleón voulut utiliser le carrosse de la marquise d'Aplincourt qui revenait d'Espagne avec des servantes françaises²³. Ce départ avait-il été souhaité? Il semble que certaines domestiques, peu à l'aise à la cour, désiraient retourner à Madrid. C'est en tout cas la raison invoquée par Monteleón pour justifier le départ de ces cinq femmes. Seule l'une d'entre elles, Elvira de Pardina, est peinée de ce départ selon Monteleón ; selon des citations de l'Ambassadeur, elle était là «por gusto y no por obligación»²⁴. Ainsi, nous pouvons considérer ce premier départ des servantes comme «souhaité» par les servantes espagnoles et par le duc de Monteleón. De plus, il semble peu probable que leur expulsion soit imputable au fait qu'on les soupçonnait d'espionnage dans la mesure où, du fait de leur rang, elles ne pouvaient sans doute exercer aucune influence sur l'Infante-Reine qui provenait d'une cour étrangère et était connue pour sa naïveté. Ainsi, en juin 1616 cinq servantes espagnoles, Doña Elvira de Pardina²⁵, Ana de Conca, Constanza de Villaquirán, María Sánchez et Petronila Villaquirán, escortées par un écuyer à pied, quittèrent Paris dans le carrosse qui avait amené Madame d'Aplincourt de Madrid.

Avec le départ de ces servantes, les hostilités contre les domestiques espagnols ne firent que commencer: réputation et politique allaient se mêler dans la «guerre des Maisons».

Juin 1616-mai 1617: L'échange des domestiques: l'annonce d'un changement politique?

Après le départ de ce premier groupe d'Espagnoles, la formation des Maisons de l'Infante-Reine à Paris et de la princesse Isabelle à Madrid fit l'objet de débats enflammés. La France n'était pas disposée à voir la princesse Isabelle moins bien traitée qu'Anne d'Autriche et les domestiques français à Madrid devaient donc être considérés de la même manière que les Espagnols à Paris. Les discussions sur la formation de la Maison de la reine provoquèrent de grandes tensions entre les deux cours. Marie de Médicis voulut imposer ses règles en plaçant des domestiques français et en évitant que les Espagnoles, telle la Comtesse de la Torre, puissent accéder aux sphères de pouvoir les plus recherchées. La comtesse de la Torre se sentit mise à l'écart lorsque la reine mère décida, qu'en sa présence, elle ne devait pas accompagner l'Infante-Reine en carrosse. Ces décisions ne pouvaient satisfaire le Duc de Monteleón et la comtesse elle-même qui écrivit à Lerma pour lui signifier combien une telle situation la contrariait²⁶. La Connétable, veuve de Montmorency, devint alors dame

²² L'entrée de la reine à Paris. AGS, Estado, Francia, K 1471. 16 mai 1616. Monteleón à Lerma 18 mai 1616.

²³ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 147, Monteleón à Lerma, juin 1616.

²⁴ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471, n° 129. Monteleón à Lerma, 15 juin 1616.

²⁵ M. J. DEL RÍO et J. F. DUBOST, «La présence étrangère autour d'Anne d'Autriche... », cit, p. 147.

²⁶ Doña Inés Enríquez de Sandoval, comtesse de la Torre, au duc de Lerma. AGS, Estado, K. 1471, n° 59. 15 juin 1616.

d'honneur de l'Infante-Reine en France. Monteleón constate ainsi que la veuve remplissait ses obligations sans aucune restriction, ôtant ainsi une grande partie de son pouvoir à la Comtesse de la Torre. Cette situation contrevenait aux accords initiaux qui stipulaient que la veuve de Montmorency n'aurait fait son apparition que dans certaines circonstances publiques et pour y jouer un rôle purement protocolaire²⁷. D'autre part, dans la mesure où la nourrice dormait toujours dans les appartements de l'Infante-Reine et puisque Marie de Médicis se réfugiait derrière la « tradition » pour que la nourrice du roi reste aux cotés de sa bru, à Madrid on essaya d'utiliser la princesse Isabelle pour faire sortir la nourrice des appartements de l'Infante-Reine: Don Iñigo fit croire à la jeune princesse qu'une vieille femme allait dormir dans sa chambre, dans l'espoir que face à cette menace la princesse écrirait à sa mère et provoquerait le départ de la duègne de la chambre d'Anne d'Autriche. On ne sait pas si elle écrivit cette lettre, mais le fait est que la nourrice demeura avec l'Infante-Reine qui, d'après Monteleón, ne fermait pas l'œil de la nuit à cause des ronflements de la dame²⁸.

Pendant le voyage, la reine mère s'était montrée disposée à collaborer avec Monteleón afin que l'Infante-Reine puisse choisir à son gré les membres de sa Maison (sans que le roi le sache, pour ne pas accentuer une méfiance déjà importante envers la reine espagnole). À Paris, elle changea d'attitude. Le retard dans la formation de la Maison et la dispute pour les postes importants déconcertèrent Monteleón qui considéra qu'il s'agissait sans doute d'une stratégie pour empêcher que l'Infante-Reine prenne quelque pouvoir. Marie de Médicis décida que la domestication d'Anne d'Autriche devait commencer et que la meilleure façon de favoriser son adaptation à sa nouvelle cour serait de l'entourer d'un bon nombre de domestiques français. Sous l'air innocent, obéissant et angélique d'Anne d'Autriche se cachait un esprit orgueilleux et l'âme hautaine d'une princesse Habsbourg, aînée et héritière potentielle de la couronne, élevée au sein de la cour aux côtés de son père et de ses frères dans le sentiment de l'amour familial et de la soumission à la dynastie. Elle était ainsi sans aucun doute beaucoup plus dangereuse que sa belle-sœur, Isabelle de Bourbon, élevée loin de la cour de Paris et éduquée comme une princesse sans droits de succession, loin de ses parents et de leurs vies politiques; docile et facilement malléable, c'était selon Lerma un ange:

La princesa mi señora es un ángel y muy virtuosa y gran cristiana, guardale Dios que procede en todo admirablemente de bien y ha hecho Dios grañidísima merced a estos Reynos en darnos tal princesa y señora²⁹.

La princesse s'était vite adaptée à sa nouvelle cour, en témoigne le fait qu'elle avait rapidement accepté de se vêtir à l'espagnole contrairement à Anne à Paris. À Madrid, on ne s'étonna pas que cette dernière refuse de s'habiller à la française. Iñigo de Cardenas écrivit à Monteleón que si cela ne gênait personne que la reine s'habille à la française, il fallait cependant qu'elle le fasse de son plein gré. Ainsi, si les Français souhaitaient que l'Infante-Reine s'habille à la française, il leur faudrait gagner ses faveurs comme eux l'avaient fait avec la princesse Elisabeth³⁰.

La composition de la Maison de l'Infante-Reine fut définitivement établie au début du mois de juillet³¹: le poste le plus important, celui de dame d'honneur, devait être partagé entre la veuve de Montmorency et la Comtesse de la Torre. Le partage d'un poste d'une telle envergure entre une Française et une Espagnole ne pouvait que mener à de graves conflits protocolaires. L'Infante-Reine ne dissimula pas sa fierté à ce sujet et malgré les avertissements de son père et de Don Iñigo de

²⁷ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1472. Monteleón à Lerma, 2 septembre 1616.

²⁸ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471. Monteleón à Lerma, 31 mai 1616, n° 117.

²⁹ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471. Réponse du Lerma à la lettre du duc de Monteleón 28 février 1616.

³⁰ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1471, n° 121-159, Réponse de don Iñigo à la lettre de Monteleón du 31 mai 1616.

³¹ E. GRISELLE, *État de la Maison du roi Louis XIII, de celle de sa mère, Marie de Médicis, de ses sœurs, Chrestienne, Elisabeth et Henriette de France, de son frère, Gaston d'Orleans, de sa femme Anne d'Autriche, de ses fils de Dauphin et Philippe d'Orléans, comprenant les années 1601 à 1665*, Paris 1912. Sur la Maison de la reine voir aussi: M. DA VINHA, «La Maison d'Anne d'Autriche», CH. GRELL, *Anne d'Autriche. Infante de Espagne et reine de France*, Perrin, Paris, 2009, pp- 155-185. Et aussi: R. KLEIMAN, "Social Dynamics at the French Court: The Household of Anne of Austria", *French Historical Studies*, 16 (1990), pp. 517-35.

Cárdenas, elle commença à privilégier la Comtesse de la Torre afin de discréditer la connétable. Un de ces gestes provoqua l'alarme quand, lors d'une audience avec des ambassadeurs, et devant toute la cour, Anne d'Autriche donna à la Comtesse de la Torre, et non à la veuve de Montmorency, les lettres que les ambassadeurs d'Angleterre venaient de lui remettre³². Lerma écrivit à l'Infante-Reine pour l'inciter à la prudence et lui demander d'accorder quelques faveurs à la veuve de Montmorency afin de contenter la reine mère et le roi Louis XIII. Ce conflit ne fit qu'annoncer d'autres tensions dont résulta un pacte visant à l'échange de domestiques espagnols contre des français au service d'Isabelle de Bourbon.

Une des raisons qui favorisa l'échange du deuxième groupe de dames espagnoles réside donc dans les conflits internes à la Maison de la reine. Ces dames, y compris la Comtesse de la Torre, manquèrent de prudence et firent preuve d'une certaine arrogance qui provoqua le courroux de la reine Marie de Médicis et du roi. Dès septembre, Lerma rapporte que dix dames espagnoles avaient causé quelques conflits à la cour de France³³. Le roi, déjà suspicieux à l'égard des Espagnols, se montrait méfiant. Monteleón reçut de Madrid l'ordre de s'attirer la bienveillance du jeune Louis XIII, il devait approcher Luynes et amadouer tous les ministres de l'entourage du jeune monarque. En octobre 1616, le conflit entre le roi et les dames espagnoles provoqua finalement un affrontement avec la Comtesse de la Torre qui, semble-t-il, ne dura pas: le Duc de Monteleón avec la comtesse de la Torre avaient envoyé à Madrid une liste des domestiques qui devaient être échangés contre les Français présents à Madrid. Cette décision, la plus sûre, contribua à améliorer les relations entre les deux pays. On peut, toutefois, se demander si cet échange ne cachait pas des intérêts politiques plus importants. En effet, si l'échange était conçu pour favoriser l'adaptation d'Anne d'Autriche, peut-être Louis XIII envisageait-il d'autres conséquences à cette initiative. Il est fort probable que, pendant l'hiver 1616, le contentement que Louis XIII manifestait ne tenait pas seulement au décret d'échange des domestiques. Sur le plan politique il changea d'attitude: lassé de la position hégémonique des partisans de Marie de Médicis, Louis XIII décida que le moment était venu d'évincer sa mère et d'exercer lui-même le pouvoir. Entre janvier et avril 1617, une conspiration fut ourdie contre les maréchaux d'Ancre, Concini et Éléonore Galigai, responsables avec Marie de Médicis des «mariages espagnols» et de la présence à la cour d'étrangers (des Espagnols «lermistas», ceux choisis par le Duc de Lerma) favorables à une alliance avec la Monarchie de Philippe III. Louis XIII, qui rêvait de revenir aux temps glorieux anti-espagnols du *Vert Galant*, considérait l'échange des domestiques comme le signe de la décadence de l'époque de Marie de Médicis et des Espagnols. Peut-être était-il temps de revenir à la politique des ministres d'Henri IV?

On ne saurait donc envisager l'expulsion du second groupe de la Maison de la reine Anne sans tenir compte de cette nouvelle conjoncture de la cour de Paris. Le deuxième départ des domestiques espagnols de la Maison d'Anne d'Autriche fut, en fait, l'annonce d'un changement de politique intérieure. Le 14 mars 1617, quittèrent Paris la gouvernante des filles espagnoles, Margarita de Córdoba³⁴; la demoiselle espagnole María de Aragón; six femmes de chambre: Constanza Villquirán, María Tercero, Gregoria de Oviedo, Catalina Sarmiento, Lucía Gastalla et María de Gibara; le premier aumônier Pedro de Castro, l'écuyer Bernardo Gómez Riguera qui fut remplacé par Antoine Bertin (seigneur de Dreslincourt)³⁵; le médecin Francisco Álvarez (qui quitta son poste à la Maison mais resta à Paris: il n'était pas arrivé avec Anne d'Autriche, car il appartenait à la Maison de Marie de Médicis depuis 1613³⁶); et le valet de chambre Antonio Hermosilla³⁷.

³² AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1472. Réponse du duc de Lerma à Monteleón, 21 septembre 1616.

³³ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1472.

³⁴ AGS. Estado, Francia K 1473. Lettre de Monteleón, 14 mars 1617.

³⁵ E. GRISELLE, *État de la maison...* cit [37-88-3816], p. 103.

³⁶ J.F. DUBOST, «La cour de France face aux étrangers. La présence espagnole à la cour des Bourbons au XVII^e siècle», CH. GRELL et B. PELLISANDRI (études réunies par), *Les cours d'Espagne et de France au XVII^e siècle*, Casa de Velázquez, Madrid, 2007, p. 150.

³⁷ E. GRISELLE, *État de la maison...* cit, [3564-3592] p. 96.

Tout juste un mois après de ce départ, le 24 avril 1617, le maréchal d'Ancre, Concino Concini, favori de Marie de Médicis, était assassiné. Le jour même, Monteleón écrit à Lerma et décrit cet événement tragique:

Por lo que escribo su merced verá el trabajoso fin del mariscal de ancre y tengo por desdicha particular la alegría que se muestra deste suceso, todo está ya mudado. El rey manda y no devoto de su madre...³⁸

L'assassinat du maréchal signifiait la fin de la politique pro-espagnole dont le favori de Marie de Médicis était le représentant: Le 3 mai, la reine-mère fut exilée à Blois et en juillet de la même année Leonora Galigai fut arrêtée et exécutée.

À la suite de ces événements, Louis XIII convoqua au Conseil «les barbons», ces anciens ministres de son père qui représentaient bien la politique d'affrontement avec la monarchie espagnole³⁹. Enfin, pour tenter de “nationaliser” plus activement la cour de France, Louis XIII n'hésita pas à procéder à certains réajustements dans la Maison de son épouse, formée sous les ordres de sa mère. Ainsi, certains serviteurs français qui avaient été placés par la reine mère furent également chassés de la Maison d'Anne d'Autriche, le cas le plus significatif étant celui de Richelieu. Le médecin napolitain Paul Emilio Ferille fut également expulsé⁴⁰ et Luynes prit le poste de Concini (il avait été premier gentilhomme du roi⁴¹). Cependant, Louis XIII n'osa pas renvoyer la Comtesse de la Torre ni Louise d'Osorio, toutes deux très proches du Duc de Lerma, de peur de provoquer un grave incident diplomatique. Louis XIII souhaitait nationaliser sa cour, sans pour autant offenser Philippe III qui demeurait l'un des monarques les plus puissants d'Europe.

Entre 1616 et 1617, la Guerre de prestige, les conflits protocolaires, l'imprudence des dames espagnoles et l'orgueil de la reine Anne renforcèrent la méfiance du roi. Marie de Médicis parvenait à tenir cette méfiance sous contrôle mais lorsqu'elle fut exilée, le roi se sentit libre de recomposer la maison d'Anne d'Autriche en expulsant une grande partie des domestiques choisis par sa mère (et pas seulement les Espagnols)—Les dames espagnoles qui faisaient partie de ces domestiques étant les symboles d'une politique favorable aux Habsbourg et à la présence d'étrangers, on peut donc considérer l'expulsion, en mars 1617, des suivantes espagnoles comme l'annonce d'un changement politique qui se préparait depuis longtemps.

Mai 1617-décembre 1618: L'expulsion des Espagnols les plus proches du Duc de Lerma.

Après la chute de Concini et l'exil de la reine mère, la rumeur de tensions entre le roi et la reine commença à courir. L'absence de relations conjugales entre le roi et son épouse était la source d'un conflit diplomatique de grande envergure qui risquait de se solder par l'annulation du mariage et la répudiation d'Anne d'Autriche. La propagande politique qui divulguait la mésentente entre les époux avait pour but évident de favoriser l'affrontement entre les monarchies française et espagnole afin de servir les intérêts des vieux ministres appelés au gouvernement par Louis XIII après le départ de Paris de Marie de Médicis. Les “Barbons” ont sans doute accentué ces déboires conjugaux dans leur propre intérêt, afin d'atteindre leurs objectifs politiques. Cette propagande diffuse, en effet, des informations très différentes de celles que le Duc de Monteleón écrit à la même date: en juillet 1617, il raconte à Lerma que la reine et le roi passaient de longs moments ensemble et s'amusaient comme de vrais amis⁴². Si la propagande politique ne produisait pas les effets escomptés, les vieux ministres profitaient de l'amélioration des relations entre les époux en utilisant Anne d'Autriche comme intermédiaire avec la cour de Madrid.

³⁸ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1473, Monteleón à Lerma, 24 avril 1617.

³⁹ P. CHEVALIER, *Louis XIII...* cit, p. 177.

⁴⁰ M. J. DEL RÍO et J. F. DUBOST, «La présence étrangère...» cit, p. 125

⁴¹ E. GRISELLE, *État...*, cit, [389-413], p. 10.

⁴² AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1473, Monteleón à Lerma, 11 juillet 1617.

C'est ainsi que la reine Anne, privée d'une partie de ses servantes et loin de la reine mère, devint l'instrument de la cour de Paris et des membres du Conseil de Louis XIII. Lors de l'aggravation de la guerre de Savoie, les ministres de Louis XIII demandèrent à la reine d'écrire à son père afin que celui-ci favorise les intérêts de la France ou, pour le moins, ne les entrave pas. L'Infante-Reine, toujours aussi obéissante, renvoya les ministres au Duc de Monteleón qui autorisa la reine à écrire à son père à ce sujet. Si le Duc n'empêcha pas la reine d'agir en faveur des ministres de Louis XIII, c'est que Philippe III désirait qu'elle commence à agir en politique avec son mari et que la mission n'était guère dangereuse venant des ministres et non du roi Louis XIII, jeune et influençable. En Espagne, la lettre d'Anne fut portée devant le conseil d'État qui estima que le roi devait répondre à sa fille par lettre familiale afin d'éviter tout soupçon d'influence politique du roi sur sa fille⁴³.

Anne commençait à prendre des initiatives politiques, mais il lui manquait l'essentiel, à savoir des relations avec son époux, pour mettre fin aux menaces de rupture du mariage, sceller définitivement l'alliance entre les deux pays et assurer sa position comme reine consort. Les ministres de Louis XIII surent alors jouer de cet atout pour faire renvoyer les dames espagnoles restantes, les plus importantes du point de vue politique, en arguant que le roi aurait des relations conjugales avec la reine lorsque les Espagnoles auraient abandonné la cour de Paris. Les menaces se firent croissantes au fur et à mesure que la disgrâce du Duc de Lerma, cousin de la Comtesse de la Torre et principal appui des dames espagnoles à Paris s'accélérait, tandis que le Duc de Monteleón, dernier bastion de Lerma, était sur le point d'abandonner l'ambassade en France. Le mois de juin 1618 fut décisif, le Duc de Lerma abandonna la cour de Madrid⁴⁴, Louis XIII et ses ministres en profitèrent pour faire pression sur la cour de Madrid et en octobre la Comtesse de Lanoy, femme de chambre française de la princesse Elisabeth, demanda à Philippe III la permission de rentrer en France où elle devait, paraît-il, s'occuper d'affaires familiales. Philippe III, peu disposé à laisser sa fille seule, refusa ce départ qui serait le prétexte à l'expulsion des Espagnols à Paris⁴⁵, tandis que Louis XIII faisait répéter par Luynes la promesse de la consommation du mariage après le départ des Espagnoles. Afin de convaincre Anne d'Autriche, on lui dit même que son père approuvait le départ des dames espagnoles et Philippe III accepta finalement que la comtesse de la Torre et le reste des femmes quittent Paris, privilégiant la vie conjugale du couple royal au détriment de la présence espagnole à la cour de France. Les dames espagnoles, qui avaient été envoyées en France pour favoriser politiquement Anne d'Autriche, avaient provoqué un véritable conflit diplomatique et ne servaient plus les intérêts politiques pour lesquels elles avaient été placées ; sans compter que Lerma, dont elles étaient proches, était tombé en disgrâce. En décembre 1618, la comtesse de la Torre quitta donc Paris, elle fut remplacée par Madame Charlotte de Villiers ; la dame d'atour, Luisa Osorio (qui se rendit en Flandres pour être la servante de Isabel Clara Eugenia)⁴⁶ remplacée par Madame Antoniette d'Albert, dame du Vernet, la sœur de Luynes⁴⁷ ; la comtesse de Castro, Antonia de Mendoza⁴⁸ ; les femmes de chambre: Doña Ana de Guzmán, doña Catalina de Castro, Estefanía Riguera et Luisa Miranda⁴⁹ qui furent remplacées par la femme de chambre française Opportune Oudé, dame du Tot (ancienne nourrice de Isabelle de Bourbon, revenue

⁴³ AGS, Estado, Francia, K. 1473, le duc de Uceda à Juan de Ciriza, 22 juillet 1617.

⁴⁴ Sur la chute de Lerma: A. FEROS, *El duque de Lerma. Realeza y privanza en al España de Felipe III*, Marcial Pons, Madrid, 2002, pp. 413-437.

⁴⁵ Lettre de Philippe III à Anne de Autriche, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, 18 août 1618. R. MARTORELL TÉLLEZ-GIRÓN, *Cartas de Felipe III a su hija Ana, reina de Francia (1616-1618)*. Imprenta Helénica, Madrid, 1929, pp. 51-52.

⁴⁶ Sur Luisa Osorio: AGS Estado, K. 1475, J.F. DUBOST et M.J. DEL RÍO, «La présence étrangère...»... cit, p. 149. Aussi: CL. RICO OSÉS, «Mesdemoiselles Ozoria y Mendoza: dos damas de honor españolas y el Ballet de Cour francés a principios del siglo XVII», *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, 29 (2004). pp. 147-165.

⁴⁷ Isabelle de Bourbon avait demandé à son frère de remplacer Luisa Osorio par la Capela, celle-ci ayant été sa servante en Espagne. BNF. Mss Fr. 16113, Elisabeth de Bourbon à Louis XIII.

⁴⁸ Fille de la comtesse de Castro. J. F. DUBOST et M. J. DEL RÍO, «La présence étrangère...»... cit, p 114.

⁴⁹ E. GRISELLE, *État de la maison...* cit. [3564-3592], p. 96.

d'Espagne en 1623); et enfin, l'huissier de cabinet Lorenzo Villaquirán, remplacé par Charles Montvallou⁵⁰.

En 1618, de nombreux Français quittèrent également leur poste, en particulier, de manière assez surprenante, la famille Boquet: la nourrice du roi, très aimée par le souverain, son mari et sa fille. On ne connaît pas la raison de leur «retraite» due, peut-être, à des conflits politiques avec Louis XIII.

Après ce dernier départ, il ne restait à Paris que quatre Espagnols: Doña Estefanía Villaquirán, vieille dame espagnole qui mourut au cours des années 1630 ; le confesseur, don Francisco Arribas, qui abandonna son poste en 1622 ; le franciscain Francisco Fernández qui mourut en 1652 ; et l'apothicaire Miguel Deanco (Dansse)⁵¹, qui demeura au service de la reine jusqu'à sa mort en 1649⁵². Un seul Espagnol rejoindra la Maison d'Anne d'Autriche après ces expulsions: il s'agit de Miguel Rivera⁵³, qui sera le médecin de la reine après avoir rempli cette fonction à Madrid, auprès d'Isabelle de Bourbon. Il est ainsi fort probable que Philippe III l'ait envoyé en France pour être le médecin de sa fille; Rivera fut accepté par Louis XIII et il, quitta son poste en 1626⁵⁴.

Louis XIII eut enfin des relations conjugales avec Anne le 25 janvier 1619⁵⁵: «Monsieur de Luynes vient pour le persuader à coucher»⁵⁶, écrit le médecin Héroard. Ce fut le début de la lune de miel des époux⁵⁷, au cours de laquelle la reine Anne d'Autriche renforça son influence politique⁵⁸.

Conclusion: une expulsion souhaitée

Le dernier départ des dames espagnoles fut-il un retour souhaité en plus d'un pacte d'expulsion ou bien le pacte d'expulsion devint-il un retour souhaité? Ce fut sans doute une expulsion souhaitée. Les domestiques espagnols d'Anne d'Autriche, qui auraient dû être une voie de communication et d'influence, étaient devenus une barrière infranchissable entre la reine et sa seule raison d'être, le roi de France. Le départ des domestiques espagnols d'Anne d'Autriche était donc nécessaire et la cour de Madrid n'avait d'autre possibilité que d'accepter cette expulsion, voire même de la désirer. En effet, un groupe de serviteurs étrangers pouvait tout autant être un instrument politique intéressant que devenir une prison pour la reine étrangère.

Mais comment et pourquoi la domesticité espagnole était-elle devenue un obstacle insurmontable dans les relations entre le roi et la reine ? Cette situation résulte en fait de processus d'adaptation conditionnés par les pressions exercées par la cour d'une dynastie autrefois rivale et soumise à des conditions "extraordinaires" de gouvernement : un roi jeune et une reine mère qui avait été régente et conservait une grande influence et une conjoncture politique intérieure et extérieure complexe pour la monarchie française. Cette situation rendait difficile l'assimilation de la domesticité espagnole, cellule fragile et facilement en butte aux problèmes internes, qui n'était préparée ni à l'humiliation ni à la soumission aux lois d'une cour étrangère qu'elle considérait inférieure, qui n'avait pas l'habitude d'être traitée avec moins de privilèges et voulait imposer ses dignités et ses offices. L'unité était un autre point faible de la domesticité espagnole, entièrement dépendante du favori, le Duc de Lerma, qui pouvait tomber en disgrâce à tout moment. C'est ainsi que cette domesticité fut

⁵⁰ E. GRISELLE, *État de la maison...* cit, [4627-4664], p. 125.

⁵¹ J. F. DUBOST, «La cour de France face aux étrangers...», cit, p. 158.

⁵² J. F. DUBOST et M.J. DEL RÍO, «La présence...»... cit, p. 125.

⁵³ BNF, Mss, fr, 16113. Lettres de Rivera (1617-1618). Sur Rivera à la cour de Madrid: H. PIZARRO LLORENTE, «Isabel de Borbón: De princesa de Francia a reina de España (1615-1623)», J. A. MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN et M. P. MARÇAL LOURENÇO (coord), *Las relaciones discretas entre las monarquías hispana y portuguesa: Las Casas de las reinas siglos (XV-XIX)*, Polifemo, 2009, pp. 339-394.

⁵⁴ E. GRISELLE, *État de la maison...* cit [4700-4726], p. 127.

⁵⁵ J. HÉROARD, *Journal...* cit, vol II. 25 janvier 1619, p. 2591.

⁵⁶ J. HÉROARD, *Journal...* cit, vol II. 25 janvier 1619, p. 2591.

⁵⁷ R. KLEIMAN, *Anne d'Autriche*, Fayard, Paris, 1993. pp. 87-107.

⁵⁸ Sur cet sujet: J. F. DUBOST, «Anne d'Autriche, reine de France: mise en perspective et bilan politique du règne 1615-1666», CH, GRELL, *Anne d'Autriche...* cit, pp. 44-111.

“respectée” ou “supportée” avec plus ou moins de patience en fonction de la situation de Lerma à la cour de Madrid et, de fait, dès la disgrâce de Lerma, la cour de Paris se sentit libre d’expulser le reste des domestiques. De plus, ceux-ci n’avaient pas toujours su faire preuve de la finesse qu’on leur demandait, ni agir avec l’astuce nécessaire à leur délicate mission. Tout ceci, à quoi il faut ajouter un destin politique hasardeux à la cour de France durant les premières années de mariage de Louis XIII et Anne d’Autriche, fut la cause de ces expulsions que la monarchie de Philippe III finit par désirer également. Le départ des domestiques espagnols donna finalement la victoire à la France dans cette guerre de prestige.

Making a new start: Queen Charlotte, Popular Politics, and the fear of ‘Petticoat Power’ in Britain c. 1760-1770

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Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz was the only queen consort in modern British History to be married, and share a coronation with her husband, almost immediately on her arrival in Britain in 1761. George III, Charlotte’s husband, had outlived his father, Frederick Prince of Wales, who died in 1751, though his mother, Augusta, Dowager Princess of Wales, lived until 1772. Also surviving from this older generation of royal women were the king’s unmarried aunt Amelia, and his grandfather’s two mistresses, Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk, and Sophie van Walmoden, Countess of Yarmouth. Beyond the expectation that a foreign consort would adapt to her husband’s country, learn the language, and be allowed only a few attendants from her native realm, there were no set rituals a new queen had to observe comparable to the ceremonial disrobing and robing at the French frontier experienced by French brides. And in many respects George III was determined to signal a break from tradition. This was the first choice of a bride from the Mecklenburg dynasty, repudiating previous Brunswick, Orange or Saxe-Gotha precedents or Hohenzollern links.¹ Some of the architectural setting for this would be new, as his bride’s dower house, Buckingham House, renamed the Queen’s House, was a replacement for the moribund Somerset House previously conferred on consorts. Nor did the couple live at Hampton Court, as George II had done. As well as setting a more moral tone to court life than his grandfather had conveyed, George III also hoped to re-establish clearer royal control over the appointment of ministries. He wanted a consort with whom he could establish a compatible domestic and family life, which also would be an exemplary Christian family, as befitted a devout king who was Defender of the Faith in an age when libertine behaviour and intellectual free-thinking threatened the theory and practice of Christianity. He also wanted a queen who would *not* meddle with the factional aristocratic politics of Britain’s parliamentary monarchy (which allowed for women to have quite a lot of scope in managing family political interests), or dole out political advice, unlike Princes Augusta, Queen Caroline, or the Duchess of Yarmouth.

Charlotte’s determination to fulfil these expectations must have been heightened by her awareness of the degree to which her mother-in-law had become a figure of loathing and insinuating caricature in the popular press, implying that George’s appointment in 1761 of his former tutor, John, 3rd earl of Bute, as Prime Minister, was assisted by the Dowager’s alleged sexual entanglement with him. Charlotte had to behave differently, and concentrate on the social role of a consort. Furthermore the royal court did not have the monopoly of cultural patronage; as well as aristocratic women, the Bluestocking hostesses were filling the vacuum left by the death of Queen Caroline in 1737, and Britain was also an advanced commercial society—especially in the metropolis.² Nor should we discount the adjustment necessary for a princess from a dynasty whose entire court and disposable income was smaller than that of some of the grander aristocratic women in her Household. As the ceremonies bidding her farewell in Mecklenburg acknowledged by their symbolism of world empire, she was also moving to a much larger country which had vastly increased its overseas empire in 1759 through its victories in the Seven Years War. That she and George were largely successful in adapting and inventing British royal traditions and setting a moral tone to court life was due in no small part to Charlotte’s willingness to perform as was expected of her; to her intelligence and character; and to the good fortune that a propitious choice had been made as to how well-suited the royal pair would be.

¹ Clarissa Campbell Orr, ‘Dynastic Perspectives’, in Torsten Riotte and Brendan Simms, (eds.), *The Hanoverian Dimension to British History*, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 213-51.

² Idem, ‘The Queen of the Blues, the Bluestocking Queen, and Bluestocking Masculinity’ in E. Eger, (ed.) *Bluestockings Displayed: portraiture, patronage and performance 1750-1830*, Cambridge, forthcoming 2010.

The Court, Ceremony and Rank

The Hanoverian monarchy did not function with a lot of public ceremony, especially when compared with their restored Stuart predecessors.³ This muted public character was partly because George I (r.1714-27) had disliked formality and realised that within the framework of the British parliamentary monarchy he could function quite well without very much of it.⁴ It was also related to the fact that after Whitehall Palace, which had been the largest palace complex in Europe, was burnt down in 1698, there was no very adequate London palace to act as a setting for the display of dynastic rule or political energy.⁵ St. James's became the official seat of the court, but it was cramped and old-fashioned. Due to his asthma, which made the choked air of London objectionable, William III had reoriented the presentation of kingly rule away from Whitehall and further down the Thames riverine 'highway' to Hampton Court. He had also built Kensington Palace, west of St. James's, creating a new royal axis, along the royal parks and toward rural outskirts. The palace served mainly as a retreat in the fresher air of Kensington village, but courts were held there as well as at St. James', and William Kent, together with Thornhill, created a suitable Baroque setting for court occasions, although it was modest by continental standards.

However the coronation of George III was an occasion for solemn splendour. It was also one concerned to display the king and queen theatrically to their people as they arrived and departed from Westminster Abbey, by means of the new gilded state coach, which facilitated maximum visibility of its passengers, through its innovative use of glass panels. It was a glamorous exercise in the presentation of royal brilliance. In Jonathan Marsden's words, it was like a moving *baldachino*, decorated with rococo exuberance, displaying symbols of maritime dominion, prosperity and peace.⁶

Aside from the coronation, there were few occasions when the monarch needed to put himself on display. As a Protestant denomination, the Church of England did not include regular processions or feast days. The court worshipped at St. James's chapel, when in London, to which there was public access, but the routines of worship were relatively plain and simple. The obsequies of 18th century monarchs were not grand state funerals and were not preceded by a lying in state: the state funeral for Lord Nelson far surpassed them in grandeur.⁷ The Order of the Garter's ceremonial headquarters was St George's Chapel, Windsor, less available to public view, though important to George III. The other Christian ceremony was the annual Maundy Thursday ceremony, which usually took place in old Banqueting Hall at Whitehall Palace. The king enacted Christly simplicity before the paupers chosen to have their feet washed; this was nothing like the processions of Episcopal personnel, confraternities and guilds on display in a Catholic diocese at Easter.

Arguably, the relative paucity of royal and/or religious ceremonial occasions in the state calendar meant that the routines of the court acquired more significance in the choreography of power, though this has not until recently been the perception of historians. The prevailing historiography of the eighteenth century court has been on the decline of the court and the importance of parliamentary politics, though this is now being challenged.⁸ On the one hand there was the political drama at

³ Anna Keay, *The Magnificent Monarch*, London 2008; Edward Corp, 'Catherine of Braganza and Cultural Politics' in Clarissa Campbell Orr, (ed.), *Queenship in Britain 1660-1837: Royal Patronage, Court Culture and Dynastic Politics*, Manchester, 2002, pp. 53-73.

⁴ Ragnhild Hatton, *George I, Elector and King*, London 1978, pp. 170-3, 209-10, 260-7.

⁵ Simon Thurley, *The Lost Palace of Whitehall*, Royal Institute of British Architects, Exhibition Catalogue, 1998.

⁶ Jonathan Marsden and J. Hardy ' "O Fair Britannia Hail!" The "Most Superb" State Coach', *Apollo* CLIII, February, 2002, pp. 3-12.

⁷ Michael Schaich, 'The Funerals of the British Monarchy' in M. Schaich, (ed.), *Monarchy and Religion*, Oxford, 2007, pp. 421-51.

⁸ R. O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture*, Stanford, 1993; Prof. Bucholz would now describe the court as 'at the centre, not the centre' of British life (private communication); Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture*, Cambridge, 2006 Hannah Smith, 'The Court in England, 1714-1760: A Declining

Westminster Palace where Parliament met in annual session, opened by the monarch in November, with a speech read from the throne at the House of Lords. The king also presided at the closing session. On the other hand were the regular levées held by the king and attended only by men, and the drawing rooms held by him and Queen Charlotte, for both sexes. These took place during the parliamentary season, and were a significant venue where the relationship of the crown and the elite could be enacted. Entry was regulated by the Lord Chamberlain so they were not fully public occasions. Important dates in this court calendar were anniversaries of the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, and the birthdays of the king, his consort, and his heir. Members of the elite would make an especial point of being present for the king's and the queen's birthday, on which it was conventional to wear new clothes, thus linking the calendar of state to the new rhythms of fashionable commercial society. During George III and Charlotte's long reign the court regained its social importance partly because a living consort could assist regularly at drawing rooms and thereby amplify its importance for ambitious families.

The link between the two theatres of power, those of the court and of Parliament, is illustrated by the fact that once a minister was appointed, he appeared at a levée to kiss hands, and wore court dress when attending Parliament. Ideologically, there were differences of interpretation which came to the fore in the first decade of George III's reign as to how far a minister was a servant of the king, analogous to a personal servant to an aristocrat, and to what extent a minister was also responsible to the nation, through Parliament.⁹ Britain was both a parliamentary monarchy, whose political culture had been evolving since the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which had resulted in a greater degree of parliamentary partnership with the crown, and also a court-centred monarchy whose hierarchical society looked to its king as its traditional apex and source of rewards. It is pertinent that in his sociology of political culture, *L'Esprit des Lois*, (1748), Montesquieu diagnosed honour as the vitalising principle of monarchies. True, there was a growth in the British state administrative apparatus after 1688: more pen-pushing posts in tax offices, the Treasury, Customs and Excise, the Admiralty and War office, all of whom had new buildings in the capital, reflecting these enlarged functions of the emerging 'fiscal-military state' anatomised by John Brewer.¹⁰ But the mainspring of action, the focus of loyalty and the source of reward remained the monarchy.

Hanoverian monarchs still had much socially to offer their grandees and their emulators. The reward of titles, promotion in the peerage, or membership of the three, very prestigious, chivalric Orders (of the Garter, Bath and Thistle), was still important. Families like the Grenvilles, in George II's reign among the leading opponents of the ministry Walpole, spent the rest of the century aspiring successfully to become a Marquis and then a Duke.¹¹ George III carefully calibrated what peerages he could bestow. He was alert to questions of status and precedent, and to keeping his promises in strict order. A title could be a way of rewarding loyalty and local standing even where there was no additionally meritorious achievement in statecraft or arms to recognise. He knew that Irish peers longed for English titles and sometimes deserved them, or that women might qualify to be peeresses in their own right, to keep alive a title. When the full history of George III's court is written, he may well emerge as the most judicious manager of his elite after Louis XIV.

The king, patronage and court sociability

As the head of British society, and the apex of patronage, the king was thus an active manager of all kinds of patronage: political, administrative, naval and military, ecclesiastical. Offers of peerages or peerage promotions as well as political and ecclesiastical appointments were usually made through the current head of the ministry, to preserve the convention that a king could not be refused. Anyone quibbling at what was being offered, or on what terms, could therefore discuss it with a leading

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Political Institution?' *History*, 90:1, No. 297, 2005, 23-41; Clarissa Campbell Orr, 'New Perspectives on Hanoverian History', *The Historical Journal*, 52, 2, 2009, pp. 513-529.

⁹ John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the accession of George III*, Cambridge, 1976, pp. 112-122.

¹⁰ John Brewer, *The sinews of power: war, money and the English state 1688-1783*, London, 1989.

¹¹ John Martin Robinson, *Temples of Delight of Delight: Stowe Landscape Gardens*, Andover and London, 1990.

political figure acting in the king's name. Nevertheless, the king appointed his own Royal household, and initially, that of his wife, together with that of his adult children when they first had their own establishments, and by convention the king made his own choice with less intervention or mediation from ministers, though as noted above some appointments might have a more political rationale behind them.

The king's powers of patronage in conjunction with a consort's regular access to him in private moments and places gave, in theory, opportunities for a queen to be one of those tugging and tweaking the networks. She might want to influence appointments in order to reward her Household members or their families; she was also potentially open to more overtly political lobbying from Ladies of the Bedchamber whose husbands held simultaneously political office; or from discontented peers who might think they could develop a 'queen's party' to advance their interests. George II's consort Queen Caroline had often met ministers beforehand when they were waiting to attend on the king and thereby facilitated their access to him. In this way Sir Robert Walpole had succeeded in staying in power after George I died.¹² The risks of petticoat government were exactly what George III wanted to avoid, and Charlotte succeeded in keeping to this restriction. The point is, though, that there was nothing *structural* in the British system to prevent a determined consort to make political or quasi-political interventions. The concentration of patronage power at the royal apex of the system meant that it was really a matter of personal chemistry or policy by a king whether he permitted this female intervention or not. George II was seen as subject to petticoat government; Frederick, Prince of Wales, and his son after him were determined to prevent this pattern repeating itself.

If the king and queen strove to greet and remember as many people as possible at his levées and drawing rooms, the role of the court in elite sociability was reciprocally important for those thronging them. Court attendance punctuated the life cycles of the aristocracy: young men were presented before going on the Grand Tour; indeed, until the threat of a Stuart restoration receded, anyone who had been received at court who then travelled abroad would attend a court beforehand to signify they were not slipping away from the country to support the Pretender. Marriageable girls were presented by their mothers, no matter how wrinkled these matrons were, as the writer Mme du Bocage observed; and on getting married were presented again in their marital status.¹³ The cycle would then continue on the occasion of their children's emergence into society, and *their* marriages. Indeed another function of the court was to act as a marriage market drawing on the whole pool of potential partners, and not just a handful of county connections. Monarchs had a vested interest in the marital suitability and personal character of their pool of courtiers, and George III and Queen Charlotte were particularly keen to show their appreciation of the virtuous, faithful, domestic, and pious—those who in other words shared their values and behaviour. This could start very young, sometimes with the royal couple being godparents, and subsequently taking a kindly interest in the talents and promise of those godchildren. Any child attending school at Eton, just below Windsor Castle, was within the purview of the king and queen. The court was an informal school of manners and morals, and the education of royal children, and also of the young aristocrats who would come to serve them, was of intense concern.

Royal Topography

Topography both reflected and facilitated the creative tension between court, Parliament, and the nation, resulting from the character of the British monarchy as a 'mixed' one, with a tripartite balancing of power between Crown, Lords and Commons, or to put it differently, between the monarchical, aristocratic and democratic principle. The public buildings and spaces associated with each of these elements were all within easy reach of each other. The court was not a separate secluded world; London was not a *residenz-stadt* or residential capital like Versailles or Mannheim. It was in any case two cities, those of London and Westminster. The latter was situated along the Thames as it curved to the south west. A pentagon-shaped collection of buildings between the river to the east and

¹² J. H. Plumb, *Sir Robert Walpole*, 2 vols., London, reprinted 1972.

¹³ Mme du Bocage, *Letters Concerning England, Holland and Italy*, 2 vols., London, 1770, Vol. 1, p. 28-9.

St. James's Park to the west included on the west side what remained of Whitehall, such as the Banqueting House; Horse Guards' parade, one of the few replacement buildings for Whitehall commissioned by George II; and the new Admiralty Buildings, while Westminster Hall and the old Houses of Parliament were adjacent to the river on the other. The park was defined along its northern side by Pall Mall, going diagonally from north-east down to the south-west. Near the bottom corner was the Stable-yard entrance to St. James' palace. It was not therefore in a secluded enclave, nor was it, like the *Hof Residenz* in Vienna, an adapted fortress. It had originally been a salubrious royal residence for Tudor and Stuart consorts to bear their children and have them nursed there. The palace was old fashioned and not very impressive, apart from its Tudor gateway, and although it was surrounded by its own park, the public were allowed access to this. It had not been rebuilt by the Hanoverians, mainly for prudent financial reasons. So St James's, while functioning as the ceremonial centre of the monarchy, where diplomats presented their credentials and where regular court functions were held, was not impressive architecturally; it was rather a jumble of buildings, and once courtiers and politicians started to live near there, the small streets could be extremely overcrowded as carriages and sedan chairs set down their illustrious occupants. Yet the roads near the palace became a new circulation centre of court life. Pall Mall was the key thoroughfare, linking Carlton House, residence first of the Dowager Princess of Wales, and then of George Prince of Wales when he came of age, to St. James's. Ladies and Gentlemen could promenade along it and exchange the news and gossip of the day or be carried in a sedan chair to their destination. Birdcage Walk, running east-west along the south side of the Park, provided an alternative route between the palace and Westminster Bridge. Parliament, government offices, and royal residences were all within easy reach of each other and none was hidden behind fortified walls.

At the southwest end of the Mall was Buckingham House, built originally as 'a country' house on the outskirts of London for the Duke of Buckingham—a *rus in urbe* in alternative location to the older courtier houses along the Thames. It was built partly on land leased from the crown and when this lease expired George III was able to purchase it as a new house for the Queen, replacing the now shabby Somerset House in the Strand, to the north-east of Whitehall.¹⁴ Queen Caroline had always preferred Kensington and Richmond, but George was determined to use none of the royal residences associated with his grandfather. Charlotte's residence therefore became associated with the elegance and modernity of the expanding west end, a combination of elegant squares with central gardens, town houses of the nobility, some with extensive gardens of their own, and green spaces. Adjoining St James's Park was Green Park and beyond that the eastern end of Hyde Park, stretching west to Kensington Palace. The 'quality' could ride, drive or stroll in these spaces; so could humbler tradesfolk, such as servants and soldiers, and dairy-maids selling fresh milk from their cows, which were pastured in Islington, one of the north London villages.

Buckingham House was supposed to be a private retreat, not a ceremonial space, and indeed all but the first of the Queen's children were born there, whereas the ceremonial lying-in occasions took place at St. James's. But the queen's house was only separated from Green Park by an elegant forecourt behind railings. Looking east from the front of her house, the queen had uninterrupted views towards Horse Guards' Parade, and of St Paul's Cathedral on the distant skyline.¹⁵ The Mall and the parks are commonly depicted as thronged with people, busily chatting and greeting, passing on family news and, in modern terms, networking. It cannot have felt very private. Moreover the whole building was much smaller than her home at the palace of Neustrelitz. Nor was it really the queen's exclusive space: it was the private home equally of the queen *and* king, for the latter installed his library on the ground floor. The rooms needed for this continually expanded, and as a result of the king's bibliomania, Buckingham House has been described as a library with a flat attached. But then, acquiring and reading books was a pleasure common to both George and Charlotte.¹⁶ The queen's new

¹⁴ Edna Healey, *The Queen's House: A Social History of Buckingham Palace*, London, 1997.

¹⁵ See *King George III's Topographical Collection*, vol. 27, 7 e, London, British Library.

¹⁶ John Brooke, *King George III*, London, 1974, p. 485. The Prince of Wales had a separate suite of rooms before he became of age and moved to Carlton House. It was he who developed the house into a Palace. It was he developed the house into a Palace. S. Parissien, *George IV*, London, 2001.

house became the new domestic headquarters of a new royal couple, signalling a break from the previous generation of the royal family. It was also where an arranged marriage fortunately blossomed into an affectionate companionship.

Although St. James's and Buckingham House were the main London venues for George and Charlotte, it is always important to realise how polycentric courts are, since as well as the reigning monarch there will also be the need for residences to house other royals: dowagers, uncles and aunts, siblings, and eventually grown children, and their cousins. George and Charlotte married so young and lived so long that there was even one legitimate grandchild by the end of the reign (and considerably more illegitimate ones). Each of these residences can be where royal individuals hold their own court; and they can consequently be places of different political faction. This is again what George III hoped to avoid. The pattern of the reign was of the king's levées on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and Drawing Rooms—where the queen accompanied her husband, and women attended with their husbands—on Thursdays and Sundays. We should always imagine these royal spaces, inside and out, as full of eager watchers and listeners, including servants and coachmen, who would decode body language and dress, and pass on insider information if they could.¹⁷

Members of the courtly world would all think of it as integrally linked to its opposite, retirement: that is to say, they would all perceive it through the classical trope of *negotium*—business—and *otium*—leisure. Neither made sense without the other, and both were built into the calendar and geography of court life. By tradition, the monarch held court in London when the parliamentary season opened in November. Most landed families returned to their estates at Christmas and then London life resumed in the New Year. By June, London was getting smelly and unpleasant and the hay harvest created extra demand for horses. Country life resumed, coupled with visits to spas and seaside resorts, until the late autumn. Geographically, when the court was based at Whitehall under the Tudors and Stuarts, it also depended on the river axis for visits to seats at Richmond, Hampton Court, or further down river at Windsor, for fresh air and hunting. The newer 'parks axis', from St. James' to Kensington, did not make this riverside life redundant. George III remained very attached to Kew and the royal couple was peripatetic, spending part of the week there and later at Windsor, and travelling up to London, sometimes only for the day, to hold court. Effectively Kew was a cluster of modest villas and life was lived within very *gemütlich* apartments: but this was evidently what the king and queen liked, and it reproduced what the king had grown up with.

Retirement from the calendar of court life was therefore built into the weekly and seasonal routine, and it is closely connected with privacy. But just as the concept of the public sphere has multiple meanings, so too does the idea of the private sphere. It cannot simply be equated with women's world. Elite women had a role in public life, as courtiers and as partners in the public business of Britain's political culture.¹⁸ Privacy can therefore be equated with private domesticity and intimacy of men *and* women from families who at other times were all very much in the public gaze, and whose rites of passage were a matter of larger public significance. Yet at both Kew and Windsor royal privacy was also publicly displayed. At Kew, the public could see the royal family dining; at Windsor, the family walked on the terrace in the evenings and could be approached by courtiers, guests, and petitioners. It is significant then that Queen Charlotte created her own, much more private space at Frogmore, in Windsor Park, purchased after the king's serious illness, 1788-9, where she could be withdrawn from any public gaze, and accompanied by a few chosen attendants and her unmarried daughters. Concentrating on her garden was also a solace when five of her seven sons were fighting abroad.

The Court and Popular Politics

¹⁷ See e.g. Aubrey Newman, 'Leicester House Politics, 1750-60, from the papers of John, Second Earl of Egmont', *Camden Miscellany*, 4th series, vol. 7, London, 1969, 85-88, Item xxii, Lord Egmont's Diary, October 25th -3rd December 1760.

¹⁸ Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c. 1754-1790*, Oxford, 2005.

Parliament, as a theatre of power, was not directly open to the public gaze any more than was the court. Until the 1770s it also protected its proceedings from direct reportage, a legacy of the struggles to maintain parliamentary freedom against coercion by Charles I. However, reports thinly disguised as fictional appeared in newspapers and periodicals. Proceedings and speech summaries were of course freely shared in the conversation and correspondence of peers and MPs with their family and friends, and women were by no means excluded from this knowledge. Joseph Levine has emphasised how theatrical were the speeches and demeanour of MPs and peers. They imagined themselves as Romans declaiming in the senate, and the classical studies that dominated gentlemanly education introduced future parliamentarians to the rhetorical tropes as well as the moral and political themes of civic behaviour. Gesture, deportment and facial expression could all add to this theatricality, as could dress. William Pitt the Elder's final speech was a truly dramatic set-piece, culminating in his physical collapse.¹⁹

The parliamentary character of the British monarchy was most visible in public spaces at election time, when temporary hustings were built in cities or boroughs which could choose MPs. The contests at Westminster, which had a large quantity of ratepayers eligible to vote, were particularly lively. Elections had a carnivalesque character, when normal working routines were relaxed and time was spent on listening to candidates, cheering or lampooning them, canvassing and being canvassed, voting in the open, and charring successful candidates. In this way the electorate, the 'people out of doors', made their engagement with the parliamentary representatives 'within doors', i.e. within parliament. Although elections were accompanied by all kinds of 'treating' and the manipulation of influence, the freeholding voter had his own scenario in mind, insisting on his independence as a manly Briton, even when he was all too aware of the power of patrons and the necessity of deferring to them.²⁰ Mme du Bocage astutely remarked,

In France we cringe to the great, in England the great cringe to the populace, but to compensate for this, people of inferior rank often stand in need of the patronage of the great, and for that reason they pay them voluntary homage.²¹

It was in many ways an elaborate pantomime, a reminder that an MP or peer could not take a client or a voter for granted. Astute politicians knew that they had to press the flesh locally and appear affable, and they relied on their wives and daughters to help entertain locally and keep electors sweet.²²

John Brewer's seminal book on Georgian political culture, *Party ideology and popular politics at the accession of George III*, brought fresh perspectives to understanding the popular dimension to politics after 1760.²³ It was also designed to challenge Lewis Namier's contention that Georgian politics was mainly about patronage and clientage, by elaborating the differing ideologies held by political opponents, and by anatomising the new configurations of party in the first decade of George III's reign. He argued that opposition to George III's ministers in the first decade, followed by the divisive issue of America, constituted a qualitatively and quantitatively different kind of radicalism from what had preceded it. He also showed how popular politics utilised the press and became part of the consumer culture of the metropolis, and the nation. Subsequently feminist historians have added a gendered dimension to this understanding of popular politics, notably Anna Clark's *Scandal: the*

¹⁹ Joseph M. Levine, 'Why Neoclassicism? Politics and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England', *The British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 25, 2002, 75-93.

²⁰ Matthew McCormack, *The Independent Man: Citizenship and gender politics in Georgian England*, Manchester, 2005.

²¹ Mme du Bocage, *Letters Concerning England, Holland and Italy*, 2 vols., London, 1770, vol. I, p. 44.

²² Elaine Chalus, '“That epidemical madness”: Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century England' in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, Harlow, 1997, 151-78; for Elizabeth Montagu's involvement alongside her husband, MP for Huntingdon, a seat in the gift of his patron the 4th earl of Sandwich, see Clarissa Campbell Orr, 'Queen of the Blues'.

²³ See note 9.

Sexual Politics of the English Constitution.²⁴ Her book shows how concerns about whether the achievements of the Glorious Revolution in establishing limited monarchy were being betrayed by oligarchic Whig politicians and their allies in the City of London, were often represented dramatically in the press by highlighting the sexual scandals associated with them. A salacious story, once probed, could reveal the inner workings of what came to be known as ‘old corruption.’ There were therefore sound political reasons why the manners and morals of the monarchy and the political elite should be beyond reproach, even if the public indulged the rakish daring of opposition politicians like John Wilkes, who, as characterised by John Brewer, ‘appeared determined to play the malicious court jester at the court of George III’.²⁵

The politics of the street constitute therefore another theatre of power in Georgian Britain. In the metropolis, some of the most vocal criticism came from political activity in the City of London, which had its own powerful city government, the City of London Corporation, with a Mayor and Alderman elected by the common councilmen in each city district, or ‘ward’. The Mayor was elected annually from the Aldermen, and had a handsome base for official entertainment. As Mme du Bocage observed in 1750, it too was a theatre of power:

There is a large palace built for his reception, but though he does not inhabit it, it serves him upon Court-days, and when he is called upon by any ceremony. On the day of his installation he treats the Nobility and the Royal Family at this palace, which is called the Mansion House.²⁶

Banquets and other receptions during Beckford’s stints as mayor were particularly lavish.²⁷ The city was also the physical headquarters of the new ‘monied interest’, that is to say the financial institutions of the 1688 revolution: the Bank of England, and the new merchant banks like Hoare’s bank in the Strand; the East India Company; the Royal Exchange; and the coffee houses that acted as sites of share dealing and insurance broking. By the end of the reign there was also a new ‘palace’ of public finance—the new Bank of England building, designed by John Soane, begun in 1788 but still under construction in 1820 at the end of George III’s reign. However Parliament’s willingness to finance this building contrasted with the fact that the king and queen went without a new royal palace at Kew to house their growing family. Sir William Chambers designed one for them, but it was never timely to ask Parliament to vote public money for it. As Grayson Ditchfield has argued, the political contention of the Wilkesite opposition to the king, that he was trying to increase royal power, was at odds with the fact that his acceptance of a fixed civil list actually reduced it.²⁸

Reading printed matter belongs to a ‘virtual world’, the Republic of Letters, but purchasing and talking about it had its physical and public locations. The coffee houses contained newspapers, pamphlets and other political ephemera, as well as the periodicals, sometimes in bound volumes, and catered to different political clienteles: Tories and country gentlemen frequented the Cocoa Tree, while Whigs went to Arthur’s. The government would take care to saturate the coffee houses with favourable propaganda when a crucial vote was imminent, and when the peace preliminaries concluding the Seven Year’s War were first introduced into parliament, William, 1st earl Talbot, rallied the Cocoa Tree habitués to attend levées at court where the king took good care to notice them.²⁹ The

²⁴ Anna Clark, *Scandal: the sexual politics of the British constitution*, Princeton-Oxford, 2004.

²⁵ John Brewer, *Party Ideology ...cit.*, p. 163.

²⁶ Mme du Bocage, *Letters...cit.*, vol. 1, p.44.

²⁷ Richard B. Sheridan, ‘Beckford William (bap.1709, d. 1770)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online edition, 2004-9, accessed 18.4.2009.

²⁸ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power...cit.*; John Harris and Michael Snodin, (eds.), *William Chambers, Architect to George III*, Exhibition Catalogue, New Haven and London 1996; Margaret Richardson and MaryAnne Stevens, (eds.), *John Soane, Architect, Master of Space and Light*, Exhibition Catalogue, New Haven and London, 1999; G. M. Ditchfield, *George III: An Essay in Monarchy*, Manchester, 2002, pp. 53-5.

²⁹ John Brewer, *Party Ideology... , cit.*, p. 102.

thoroughfares between the Cities of London and Westminster therefore acted as the principal 'media corridor' of the capital. In Brewer's evocative sentence,

A half-hour walk from St. Paul's Churchyard, down Fleet St, through Temple Bar, [the boundary of the City of London], up into the stews of Covent Garden and then onto the Strand would have enabled the eighteenth century Londoner to visit a sizeable majority of the city's pamphlet shops and political print-sellers.³⁰

He might also have added the artistic quarter around St Martin's Lane and Leicester Square, where many artists had their studios. For there was a great deal of fluidity between various types of media. A political issue which could be discussed at length in pamphlets replete with historical precedent and classical allusions, which might be too abstruse for a skilled or semi-skilled worker, could also be distilled into a raunchy cartoon. Plays attracted audiences from up and down the social ranks, from the royal family in its box flanked by aristocratic subscribers in theirs, to the artisans in the pit. There was no exclusive court theatre so the king and queen went out to the theatre like anyone else if they wanted to see a play. One play, whose subject had nothing political about it, such as Arthur Murphy's romantic comedy, *All in the Wrong*, gained political traction while Wilkes's popularity was at its height from its mere title, when it was announced as forthcoming the night after the king was there. Quick as a flash the wits in the gallery cried out, 'Let us be all in the right! Wilkes and Liberty!'³¹

Neo-classical dramas could be interpreted as analogous to contemporary events. The play, *Agrippina*, about the widow of Germanicus, the Roman general, and his crafty opponent Sejanus, advisor to the megalomaniac Emperor Nero, which was staged by Garrick in 1765, could be taken to allude to George III's friend the 3rd earl of Bute and to George's mother Princess Augusta. The artist Benjamin West, seeking a suitable theme for a grand history painting, provided an alternative representation of Augusta/Agrippina by his depiction of her as a chaste and devoted widow in *Agrippina landing at Brindisium with the Ashes of Germanicus* (1770), excluding Sejanus from the composition. The painting then attained wider exposure through prints of it. At the same time there were contrasting lascivious cartoons circulating about Augusta and Bute, and praising the Rev. James Scott's satirical, anti-Bute pamphlet, *Anti-Sejanus*.³² Popular tunes and ballads could always be given topical words, and John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, originally a satire on Walpole, continued to have currency.³³ Thus it was as easy for MPs to socialise in the City as to attend the king at St. James', and conversely, for the court to be well informed about public opinion. Any mis-step Charlotte made in her first years as queen had the potential to be translated into a ballad, a broadsheet, a cartoon or an historical-political disquisition on interfering queens in British history. It was her mother-in-law who became a martyr to the press, but Charlotte's grasp of what was required of her—never to give any occasion for criticism—should not be underestimated.

Wilkes, as Brewer discerned, also revelled in the political theatre that could be choreographed on a popular level. So, as an increasingly popular hero, he attracted gifts from his adoring public in multiples of 45, in reference to the controversial issue no.45 of the *North Briton*, which criticised the peace terms negotiated by the ministry. Entrepreneurs quickly caught on to the commercial possibilities of Wilkesite memorabilia: handkerchiefs, teapots, cockades, joke-books. Demonstrations deployed symbols such as a jackboot—satirising the name and Scottish origins of John [Jack] Stuart, earl of Bute, (pronounced the same as boot by the Scots), and a petticoat, symbolising Princess Augusta. Crowd behaviour inverted the rituals of civic and legal activity, by holding feasts, usually

³⁰ Ibid, p. 7.

³¹ John Brewer, *Party Ideology...cit.,*, p. 157, citing Horace Walpole.

³² Philip Hicks, 'The Roman Matron in Britain: Female Political Influence and Republican Response ca. 1750-1800', *Journal of Modern History*, 77, 2005, 35-69, p. 46; Ann Uhry Abrams, *The Valiant Hero, Benjamin West and Grand-Style History Painting*, Washington, 1985, 134-145. See also Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the reign of George III*, New Haven and London, 1996.

³³ John Brewer, *Party Ideology...cit.,*, p. 157.

staged for normal civic celebrations of councils or of London's Lord Mayor, or loyal toasts to Wilkes, not the king. In 1771, effigies of Bute, Augusta and the Speaker of the House of Commons were taken to Tower Hill and executed as if they were traitors. Crowd power could be very coercive: Wilkesite supporters demanded that houses be illuminated when Wilkes was elected MP for Middlesex, just as they were when there was a military victory, and refusal to do so invariably meant broken windows and other damage. Princess Amelia, the king's aunt, gained kudos among court circles by refusing to bow pressure to illuminate her house.³⁴ In 1763, the crowd near St. James's halted the Spanish Ambassador's carriage, forced him out and chalked no. 45 soles of his shoes. Graffiti was even chalked on the walls of the palace and posters insinuated into its precincts.³⁵ Like all episodes of misrule, there was a threatening undertow to the carnivalesque support the crowds gave to its anti-king and unofficial jester, Wilkes.

The royal residences at St James' and Buckingham House were thus not insulated from this popular ferment. It was geographically impossible for a new young queen to be unaware of posters, placards and demonstrators, who could throng a royal carriage once outside the courtyard of St. James's, for instance as it made its way through Piccadilly to Covent Garden if the king and queen attended the theatre. George III may not have regarded his queen as his principal political confidante—this was the role of the earl of Bute—but however assiduously Charlotte tried to refrain from interference in public matters, cognisance of Britain's ebullient and sometimes violent political culture could not have escaped her, and in the first years of the reign it must have occasionally seemed very alarming.

The fear of Petticoat Power

Given the death of Queen Caroline as far back as 1737, Charlotte became queen in 1761 in a kind of royal vacuum, and she and George had had no prior waiting time as Prince and Princess of Wales, in which they might have developed a role as the focus of the reversionary interest. This meant that George III's mother Augusta had the unprecedented role for the Hanoverians as Dowager Princess of Wales. It is crucial to bear in mind that George II's reign had been associated with petticoat power—with the influence of a politically astute and intellectually sharp queen, with the successive presence of two mistresses, and then, in its last decade, with the spectacle of the Dowager Princess of Wales and a royal favourite, the Earl of Bute, controlling the heir to the throne. The two dangers to monarchy in *ancien régime* Europe were precisely these two dangers: the illicit power of women, and the egregious power of a political favourite and/or overweening first minister. So Charlotte stepped into a court and a political culture where the public imagination as well as the political elite associated monarchy with *both* of these dangers. Fortunately for Queen Charlotte, the old king's mistress, the Countess of Yarmouth, tactfully returned to Hanover when she arrived in London. And the king was able to make clear to his aunt, the politically astute princess Amelia, and to his mother, that they were not to have visible roles at court. The former seldom attended, and his mother did not take part in the drawing-rooms, though it was known that the king regularly visited her at Kew. Yet for all this apparent cordiality, Augusta was in essence the chief counter-example for the young queen. George may have been under the influence of the earl of Bute, but he was sufficiently clear-headed himself to recognise that his mother's ability to seem innocent of interference, but actually to pursue her own agenda, needed to be carefully watched. To grasp this fully we need to consider the role his mother had played when George's father Frederick was alive, and how she had played her hand after his death.

In 1738, Frederick had asked the poet and moralist Alexander Pope, through their mutual friend George Lyttelton, the prince's secretary, to approach Henry St. John Viscount Bolingbroke to write his thoughts on how a king should conduct himself. This was the genesis of the book, finally

³⁴ *Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 48 vols., New Haven, 1937-1983, vol. 23, p.7, Letter 31 March 1768.

³⁵ John Brewer, *Party Ideology*,...cit., pp. 152-3.

published in revised format in 1749, *The Idea of a Patriot King*.³⁶ Subsequently there has been much discussion of how far the book may have influenced George III too, and indeed whether he had even read it.³⁷ But this is beside the point: whether he had read it or not, until he was twelve he had been directly shaped by his father's behaviour and attitudes, and even if Frederick did not carry out all Bolingbroke's prescriptions to the latter, much of his demeanour is consistent with the book. The king's formative years up to early adolescence were inevitably moulded by what he would have absorbed by his parents' behaviour to each other, and to him and his siblings.

On the face of it, the book has virtually nothing to say about the role of the consort. There is no advice about the kind of woman a Patriot king should marry (perhaps because its intended recipient had been married for two years already), how his wife should behave, and what could be gleaned from examples of consorts from British history: none are in fact cited. Nevertheless two key pieces of advice emerge: first, the Patriot king should be a patriarch in the nation, and thus also in his family; and secondly, he must preserve decorum. Deploring party as a political evil, and faction as the worst of all parties, Bolingbroke explains,

The true image of a free people, governed by a Patriot King, is that of a patriarchal family, where the head and all the members are united by one common interest, and animated by one common spirit...³⁸

Extrapolating from the state to the family, this endorses the widely shared Aristotelian assumption that the household is the basic unit of society, not the individual, and that the head of each household, as also of the biological family within it, is the father. Wives, children and servants must therefore defer to male authority: implicitly, royal wives also. By *implication*, also, a wife must be a fertile mother for there to be a family at all. But *explicitly* in Bolingbroke's text women appear most often as *danger*: as the coquette seducing by flattery, or as the mistress directing policy. The biggest danger to the Patriot King is therefore the male or female favourite, who will come between him and wise counsellors.³⁹

He can never fill the character of a Patriot King, though his personal great and good qualities be in every other respect equal to it, who lies open to the flattery of courtiers, to the seductions of women, and to the partialities and affections which are easily contracted by too great indulgence in private life.

Even the suspicion that he has favourites will lower his reputation in public opinion. The remedy therefore is for the Patriot King to practice decorum in his private life, and ceremony in his public one.⁴⁰

Frederick's marriage in 1738 had signified the end of his less seemly bachelor days, and as John Bullion has explored in a very penetrating article, the seventeen year old Augusta soon grasped what was required of her. Essentially she was to take her cue from her husband. But she was no doormat even in the earliest days of her marriage, when she was still a young bride with barely an attendant from her native Saxe-Gotha. For example, she was persuaded rather than compelled to conform to the Church of England.⁴¹ As their family grew, she and Frederick took care to display themselves publicly as affectionate parents to their children, to appear, to be described thus in the press, and to be painted as a family. For instance in 1749 when it was George Prince of Wales'

³⁶ The publishing history is discussed in David Armitage, (ed.), *Bolingbroke, Political Writings*, Cambridge, 1997, pp. xli-xliv.

³⁷ Romney Sedgwick, (ed.), *Letters from George III to Lord Bute*, London, 1939, p. lvi.

³⁸ Armitage, (ed.), *Bolingbroke*, p. 258.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 291

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 291-2, (for quote), 290.

⁴¹ John L. Bullion, ' "To play what game she pleased without observation" in Clarissa Campbell Orr, (ed.), *Queenship in Britain ...cit.*, pp. 207-235, p. 216 for quote.

birthday, the children were rowed in their own barge on the Thames following their parent's magnificent royal barge.⁴² She also appeared with him in public when he courted support from the mercantile classes in Bristol or the West Country, helping him by conversing in good English to the women, and by wearing British textiles. All this created an image of co-operative domesticity in contrast to his widowed father's taking of Lady Yarmouth as a mistress and political confidante. Augusta was a partner but not a dominator: the idea that Frederick was controlled by women was something he was determined to avoid.⁴³ Yet she was also his companion in various cultural pursuits, such as his interest in astronomy and botany, which were also popular in Saxe-Gotha.⁴⁴

Augusta was therefore well prepared to act decisively when Frederick suddenly died in 1751. Knowing that legally her children were all wards of the crown, and that she might be removed from them if George II became aware of the extent of Frederick's opposition planning, her first action was to send Lord Egmont, her husband's main advisor, to get Frederick's political papers and have them destroyed, and after that to ensure that Egmont was *persona non grata* in her Household. She then played her cards adroitly with her father-in-law and contrived to keep her children with her. This is not to suggest cynically that she was unmoved by her sudden widowhood: only that she kept her wits assuredly about her at this unexpected juncture. Observers such as the Earl Waldegrave, George III's Governor, noted her 'prudence' but as Bullion has discerned, prudence is the outward indication of strategic calculation.⁴⁵

However it was his mother's determination to provide her son with the right kind of personal development as well as formal instruction that was to produce an even worse scenario, because it was this concern which led to her making a friend of the 3rd earl of Bute and thereby enabling the political gossips and then the popular satirists to allege they were lovers trying to control the young king, who in turn was over-reliant on the Scottish favourite. For Augusta was deeply concerned about her son's education, as he seemed to be so lacking in self-confidence. In 1755 she therefore risked her reputation for prudent and chaste widowhood by enlisting Bute informally, as a friend, to augment Prince George's education. He was not given a formal appointment—she did not want to risk disrupting the existing arrangements, but to bypass them. Bute's regular and lengthy private visits to Kew were consequently misconstrued as the assignations of a lover.⁴⁶

It is highly likely George saw Bute as being the eponymous Mentor of one of the most widely read books of princely instruction of the century, Fénelon's *Télémaque*, which he would have read as part of his grounding in French as well as kingship.⁴⁷ The book was written for the grandson of Louis XIV, the duke of Burgundy, who however predeceased his grandfather. It was written partly as a critique of French absolutism, emphasising constitutional monarchy, a peaceful foreign policy, and the desirability of nurturing trade and agriculture. As a story it took its cue from Homer's *Odyssey*, and described the educational travels of his son Telemachus with his tutor, Mentor, to observe the different types of government and their shortcomings and merits. It contains several stories demonstrating the dangers of seductive women, and reinforces the lesson that male and female favourites are to be

⁴² Ibid, p. 219; Christine Gerrard, 'Queens-in-waiting: Caroline of Anspach and Augusta of Saxe-Gotha as Princesses of Wales' in Clarissa Campbell Orr, (ed.), *Queenship in Britain...* cit, pp. 143-161, see esp. pp. 156-7.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 154-6.

⁴⁴ Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, Oxford, 1994, p.60.

⁴⁵ Bullion, ' "To play what game she pleased" ', pp. 222-4.

⁴⁶ John L. Bullion, 'The Origins and Significance of Gossip about Princess Augusta and Lord Bute, 1755-6' in Patricia B. Craddock and Carla H. Hay, (eds.), *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 21, East Lansing, Michigan, USA, 1991, pp. 245-65.

⁴⁷ John L. Bullion, 'The Prince's Mentor: A New Perspective on the Friendship between George III and Lord Bute during the 1750s,' *Albion*, 21, 1989, 34-55. However Bullion looks at mentors in the light of 20th century understandings of the role and does not specifically relate this to Fénelon's *Télémaque*. In his illuminating essay, ' "George, Be a King!": The Relationship between Princess Augusta and George III' in S. Taylor, R. Connors and C. Jones, (eds.), *Hanoverian Britain and Empire*, Woodbridge, 1998, Bullion discusses the sexual morality enjoined on the young king by his mother but I think this can be put into the wider context of concern about petticoat government expressed in Telemachian discourse as well as by the determination of Fredrick and his son to avoid this.

avoided. Like his father before him, Telemachus learns to withstand the charms of Calypso, then nearly succumbs to her rival, Eucharis, but Mentor drags him away. This teaches him that 'love alone is more to be dreaded than a thousand shipwrecks.'⁴⁸ The story of Pygmalion in Egypt shows how he meets his end through the intrigues of his mistress Astarbe. When Telemachus finds a suitable princess to marry, Antiope, daughter of the worthy King Idomeneus of Salentum, she is almost more of a comrade than a bride, and certainly lacks obvious sexual charisma. She even enjoys hunting, when she reveals herself to be brave and bold. But this rather androgynous type of female therefore obviates the risk of a consort who is a glamorous seductress who could attract rivals. In other words she does not exploit her sexuality--indeed, she is scarcely aware of her charms, and scorns gaudy clothes. She is modest, silent, and pious, and contents herself in managing her widowed father's household. All this bodes well for the future, and Telemachus feels for her a rational esteem, not passionate obsession. In addition to these female types, the book contains repeated warnings against the 'effeminacy' brought about by luxury.⁴⁹

It is therefore significant that when George found himself attracted to young women in general George wrote to his 'Dear Friend', Bute, in terms of the *danger* this represents:

You have often accused me of growing grave and thoughtful, it is entirely owing to a daily increasing admiration for the fair sex, which I am attempting with all the philosophy [sic] and resolution I am capable of to keep under, I should be ashamed after having so long resisted the charms of these divine creatures now to become their prey; Princes when once in their hands make miserable figures, the annals of France and the present situation of Government in the Kingdom I the most love, are convincing proofs of...⁵⁰

The remedy was marriage: hence the instigation of the search for a Protestant, foreign bride. Unfortunately George continued to rely on his dearest friend after his accession to the throne the following year, and even to give him political office. The public perception naturally was that Bute was a Favourite supported entirely by the king's wish, without a political following or even popular appeal. Soon the controversies orchestrated by Wilkes over the Peace of Paris, created a frenzy of protest, since the government attempted to arrest anyone connected with publishing or distributing it, using a General Warrant. Wilkes was able to challenge their legality and emerge as a defender of liberty. The court gossip that had rumbled on since 1755 was now out in the open and mutating constantly into new forms as it became bound up with the issues of Wilkes and Liberty. It took until 1765-6 for George to outgrow his friendship with Bute and perceive it as a liability. To ministers succeeding Bute in office the myth of his secret influence persisted to the end of the decade.⁵¹

There could have been no more vivid initiation for a young consort into the perils of Queenship, and the scathing power in British political culture of parliamentary criticism and populist misrepresentation if she created the slightest impression of petticoat government, than the treatment of her mother-in-law during Charlotte's first decade as queen. Its warning lesson must have imprinted itself firmly on her mind. For Augusta, it was a tragedy that her principled attempts to give her son the right education should have ballooned into an apparently uncontrollable frenzy against her and her trusted confidante, Lord Bute.

Conclusion: A Patriot Queen

Over fifty years later in 1813, Charlotte recalled to her friend Lady Harcourt,

⁴⁸ François de Fénelon, *Telemachus, son of Ulysses*, edited and translated by P. Riley, Cambridge, 1994, p. 96.

⁴⁹ Ibid, Books III and XVII.

⁵⁰ Romney Sedgwick, (ed.), *Letters...cit.*, p. 37.

⁵¹ Brewer, *Party Ideology...cit.*, 90-2, 123, 127, 251; Romney Sedgwick, *Letters, ...cit.*, p. xlix-lxviii.; Frank O'Gorman, 'The Myth of Bute's Secret Influence' in K.W. Schweizer, (ed.), *Lord Bute: Essays in Re- Interpretation*, Leicester, 1988, pp. 57-81.

I am most truly sensible of the dear king's great strictness, at my arrival in England, to prevent my making many acquaintances: for he always used to say, that in this Country, it was difficult to know how to draw a line, on account of the politics of the Country; & that there never could be kept up a society without party, which was always dangerous for any woman to take part in, but particularly so for the Royal Family...The Party's at the Queen's House have of course been guided by the Ins & Outs of the moment, by the King's orders, but He allowed and encouraged me to be Civil to all...⁵²

The king must have made it clear to the new bride that she was not to be a political intermediary, or to facilitate political access to him, or cultivate her own patronage network. This was a bargain Queen Charlotte kept as far as domestic politics was concerned. Instead her role was to be a gracious and attractive partner on public occasions: not an obvious beauty, she could nonetheless dress the part well and was given magnificent jewels to help her perform her role. At the court drawing rooms, she was to help as much as possible in integrating the different groups within British society and help raise the monarchy above party. On a personal level, happily she and George quickly proved compatible and fertile and she was soon able to produce a son and heir—and fourteen more children. Finally, the range of cultural pursuits they both enjoyed in the arts, music, the sciences, and the theatre, gave her plenty of scope to occupy herself, improve and develop her mind with the help of the library she purchased, and use its resource to help in the education of her children, especially her daughters. Like Antiope, she also had recourse to needlework in the evenings.

Charlotte's personal correspondence in England was destroyed at her death and what survives of her letters to her Mecklenburg brothers does not include the early years of the reign. While her conversation to Lady Harcourt is the nearest evidence available in her own words for the kind of advice George III must have given her, her reaction to a dilemma of her Lady of the Bedchamber, Lady Egremont, also demonstrates that she mastered very quickly how to be a Patriot queen who nevertheless took no initiative in politics. Lady Egremont was a strong advocate for educating young aristocratic women. Her wealthy and ambitious husband, Charles Wyndham, 2nd earl of Egremont, was not a particular protégé of Lord Bute, even though the latter made him Secretary of State for the South in 1761, with Lady Egremont being appointed to Queen Charlotte's household in the same year. In negotiations for the peace terms of the Seven Years War, Egremont and his brother-in-law George Grenville became critics of Bute, and of concessions he proposed to end the war quickly. From September 1762 Egremont became increasingly despondent as the French seemed to be going back on their agreed position in the negotiations, and there was much disunity in the cabinet. On 22 October a Privy Council meeting considered how to present an ultimatum to the French government. The next day, the king wrote to Bute saying that Lord Egremont, evidently depressed and frustrated, was considering resignation. George had learnt this from the queen, who had been approached by Lady Egremont, in tears because she would have to resign her Bedchamber position if her husband left the government: in this crisis she had only managed to persuade her husband not to act too precipitately.⁵³

Lady Egremont's *demarche* was an opportunity for a consort to intervene in ministerial disagreements: siding with the Egremonts would have put her at odds with Bute and the king, and Egremont's resignation would have led to that of his brother-in-law, helping to unravel Bute's ministry, but intervening too overtly to make Lord Egremont stay would equally make Charlotte a partial partisan in a factious cabinet. But Charlotte had immediately said to Lady Egremont 'she never did nor ever would presume to meddle in state affairs'. As reported by her husband, Charlotte added that she had represented to Lady Egremont that her husband's 'conduct was very improper, but more so at an hour like this when every true lover of his King and Country ought to prepare for battle against those who would fetter their king'.⁵⁴ Evidently Lady Egremont agreed, or thought it prudent in

⁵² Edward William Harcourt, (ed.), *The Harcourt Papers*, 14 vols., Oxford, 1880-1905, vol. VI, pp. 109-110.

⁵³ Romney Sedgwick, (ed.), *Letters...cit.*, p. 150.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

any case to discourage her husband's resignation, which is why she assured the queen she had counselled delay.

George's account of his consort's behaviour shows that Charlotte was sufficiently versed in the view of George III and Bute, that they wanted to make a break from the politics of George II's reign, whom they considered to be too much constrained by his ministers.⁵⁵ She was therefore on the king's side: he should not be pressured by ministers abandoning office. But rather than argue herself with Lord Egremont, she referred the whole business back to the king. It was his sphere, not hers, and she subsequently closed down further opportunity to be involved with Lady Egremont's dilemma. Five days later, George reported to Bute, 'Lady Egremont has been with the Queen and says her lord is come to himself and is in good humour, but gave no reason how that came, the Queen asking no questions.'⁵⁶ It is not impossible that Lady Egremont represented to her husband that the queen had considered his idea of resigning to be improper, and that she had underlined to her husband that the king would see it that way as well. The queen's loyalty to her husband's point of view may have been utilised in discussions between the Egremonts, and if Lady Egremont wanted her husband to retain royal favour, she undoubtedly used the rhetorical weapons at her disposal. But Charlotte's subsequent avoidance of being drawn into the whys and wherefores of this change of heart shows that prudently she was going to keep to the course of 'not presuming to meddle in state affairs'. Even if a weeping Lady of the Bedchamber gave her the chance to 'meddle' on behalf of the king, she firmly drew back after her initial loyal reaction that her husband should not have his hand forced by a despondent and frustrated minister.

When Charlotte married George III neither could have foreseen the unprecedented extent, in quantity and quality, of political activity the next two decades would bring. The king's difficulty in achieving ministerial stability and in achieving a morally purged political culture, the unpopularity of Bute and its repercussions on the Dowager Princess Augusta, and the issues raised by Wilkes and his identification with popular liberty, were succeeded by the controversies over taxation, parliamentary representation and America. The monarchy's ability to weather these storms were due not only to improved political management by George III, skills he took some time to master. He was also able to maintain the decorum of the court. This was as much the achievement of Queen Charlotte in accepting the role outlined for her, in being able to act as a faithful wife, prolific mother, suitable co-hostess at royal drawing rooms, and an apolitical consort. She was not perceived by, or used as, an intermediary in George's reconstructions of his ministries in the way that Queen Caroline had been in George II's day. Unlike her mother-in-law, she was not perceived as, nor lampooned as, a power behind the throne in alliance with Bute, in the difficult first decade of the reign. She only figures in caricatures in the 1780s. The apotheosis of George III in the decade of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars described by Linda Colley would have been impossible without the three decades of the queen's achievement preceding it.⁵⁷ The cultural interests in education, literature, science and sensibility that she held in common with George enabled them to enjoy a patriarchal marriage and family life, tempered by the newer ideals of friendship and companionate marriage. Although neither she nor George could succeed in maintaining Households entirely free of immoral connections, largely because of the king's brothers, the composition and role of the Queen's Household was largely free of personal scandal and preserved remarkable female continuity above the vicissitudes of politics.

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⁵⁵ John Brewer, *Party Ideology*, ...cit., pp. 47-54.

⁵⁶ Romney Sedgwick, (ed.), *Letters*...cit., p.153.

⁵⁷ Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820, *Past and Present*, 102, 1984, 94-129.

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Catherine de Médicis et l'espace : résidences, voyages et séjours

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À la fin du XV^e siècle, la cour de France entre dans une ère nouvelle. L'importance croissante du principe dynastique et de la représentation sort les femmes de la famille royale de la pénombre dans laquelle elles avaient vécu sous les règnes de Charles VII et Louis XI. Au siècle suivant, les princesses et leur suite sont un élément incontournable de la cour : essentielle pour la représentation, mais aussi pour la sociabilité d'un groupe qui éprouvait pour la première fois les plaisirs et les dangers de la mixité.

Lorsque Catherine de Médicis intègre la famille royale en 1533, elle découvre une cour structurée en « maisons » fortement hiérarchisées et autonomes qui disposent de tous les services nécessaires à l'entretien de leur maître ou maîtresse. Chaque membre adulte de la famille royale disposait d'une telle maison, appelée aussi *hôtel*, dont la structure répondait non seulement aux besoins de la vie matérielle, mais aussi à ceux de la gestion administrative et politique : elle intégrait des officiers responsables de la gestion des finances, un secrétariat et un conseil doté de représentants des institutions politiques et juridiques du royaume.

Leur maison permettait ainsi aux femmes de la famille royale de vivre de manière autonome et de connaître une certaine indépendance dans l'exercice du patronage et la gestion de leurs terres et de leurs biens. Officiellement, leur marge de manœuvre était certes limitée par l'autorité des aînés de la famille et de leur mari, mais les interventions de ces derniers n'étaient pas toujours admises sans protestations et pouvaient provoquer de vifs conflits à l'intérieur de la famille royale.

Catherine de Médicis s'accommode fort bien de cette structure et réussit à éviter toute confrontation relative à sa maison sous les règnes de François I^{er} et d'Henri II. Elle fait de son entourage un pôle d'attraction pour la cour, tout en veillant avec fermeté à la bonne conduite des dames et des nombreux visiteurs. La manière dont elle occupe l'espace, tant en ce qui concerne son environnement immédiat (appartements, jardins et parcs autour des châteaux) que les espaces plus lointains (sillonnés lors de voyages) est significative. Elle témoigne d'une part de l'évolution du statut politique de Catherine de Médicis qui modifie la fonction et la portée symbolique de l'espace qu'elle investit et d'autre part, son usage est marqué par un besoin d'ordonnance et d'étiquette qui formalise progressivement le quotidien des courtisans. L'intégration massive des femmes à la cour des derniers Valois a joué un rôle non négligeable dans la définition de l'étiquette.

La gestion des espaces intérieurs

L'accroissement des effectifs de la cour est significatif pour l'avènement de la cour de l'époque moderne. En France, les maisons du roi, de la reine, des princes et princesses s'agrandirent à partir des années 1490. En 1555, l'hôtel du roi comptait mille membres, celui de la reine quatre cent, alors qu'au milieu du XV^e siècle, l'ensemble des deux maisons ne dépassait pas deux cent personnes¹. Avec l'agrandissement des maisons des princesses, c'est le nombre de femmes séjournant à la cour qui s'envole : la maison de la reine comptait dix-huit femmes et filles nobles en 1494, elle en compte quatre-vingt-dix-neuf en 1589².

¹ Voir sur l'évolution des deux ensembles, et plus spécifiquement celle de la maison de la reine : C. zum Kolk, "The household of the Queen of France in the Sixteenth Century", *The Court historian*, 14, no. 1, juin 2009, p. 3-22.

² M. Chatenet, *La cour de France au XVI^e siècle : vie sociale et architecture*, Paris, 2002, p. 27, et C. zum Kolk, "Les femmes à la cour de France au XVI^e siècle. La fonction politique de la maison de Catherine de Médicis (1533-1574)" in

Les espaces occupés par la cour doivent s'adapter à cette assemblée qui, avec les délégations et les visiteurs, peut compter plus de huit mille personnes lorsque toutes les maisons sont réunies. L'organisation verticale des châteaux médiévaux impliquait bien souvent un logement par étage : la reine occupait une suite qui se trouvait au-dessus de celle où séjournait le roi. Avec la Renaissance apparaissent des projets d'architecture qui privilégient un développement à l'horizontal avec la construction de vastes ailes dont une est dédiée au logement de la reine et l'autre à celui du roi. Cette parfaite symétrie est encore respectée au XVII^e siècle et marque l'organisation des espaces du château de Versailles.

Monique Chatenet a été une des premières historiennes en France à s'intéresser à la distribution des logements dans un château royal³. Son étude du château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye sous le règne d'Henri II démontre que les logements sont presque également répartis entre hommes et femmes (44 suites pour les dames contre 50 pour les hommes), alors que ces dernières ne constituent qu'un quart des maisons des reines et princesses. De plus, les femmes les plus haut placées de la suite de la reine obtiennent plus facilement un logement proche du couple royal que les princes du sang qui résident généralement à l'extérieur du château. Certaines, comme la dame d'honneur, la dame d'atour et les femmes de chambre, partagent la suite de leur maîtresse et dorment dans sa chambre. Les membres moins élevés dans la hiérarchie de l'hôtel s'installent près du château, dans des maisons de particuliers⁴.

Il revient aux maîtres des logis de la reine d'attribuer les logements aux membres de sa suite. D'autres charges sont prises en considération dans la gestion de l'espace. En théorie (car dans la pratique ces dignitaires peuvent être absents et se faire remplacer par un subalterne), la reine est accompagnée dans tous ses déplacements par les trois officiers tenant les rangs les plus élevés de sa maison : son chevalier d'honneur, son grand écuyer et sa dame d'honneur. Parmi bien d'autres responsabilités, le chevalier d'honneur a le devoir de l'assister lors de ses déplacements « en la tenant par le bras⁵ ». Si la reine quitte le château, c'est le grand écuyer qui prend le relais : celui-ci l'accompagne quand elle monte à cheval, en litière ou en carrosse⁶.

La responsabilité de la dame d'honneur concerne davantage les intérieurs. Elle est chargée de « commander et gouverner » la suite féminine de la souveraine et doit « se tenir constamment dans la chambre de la reine, ou ailleurs au milieu des demoiselles, et servir et assister la reine en toute occasion⁷ ». Plus intéressant pour la question de l'espace est le fait que la dame d'honneur introduit les visiteurs et leur indique la place dans la salle ou à la table qui leur a été attribuée par sa maîtresse.

Le contrôle de l'accès à la souveraine est un volet important de la gestion de l'espace et c'est au XVI^e siècle qu'apparaissent les prémisses d'une étiquette ainsi que les premières traces écrites sur la journée du roi et de la reine. Elle rythme la vie de la cour et définit les moments où les deux protagonistes sont accessibles et se rencontrent avec leurs suites.

La journée du roi et de la reine

(Contd.) _____

A. Nayt-Dubois, E. Santinelli-Foltz (ed.), *Femmes de pouvoir et pouvoir des femmes dans l'Occident médiéval et moderne*, Valenciennes, 2009, p. 237-258.

³ M. Chatenet, "Une demeure royale au milieu du XVI^e siècle. La distribution des espaces au château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye", in *Revue de l'art*, 81, 1988, p. 20-30.

⁴ M. Chatenet, *La cour de France...* cit., p. 67-68 et, du même auteur, "Les logis des femmes à la cour des derniers Valois" in W. Paravicini, J. Hirschiegel, *Das Frauenzimmer : die Frau bei Hofe in Spätmittelalter und früherer Neuzeit*, Stuttgart, 2000, p. 175-192.

⁵ D. L. Potter, P. R. Roberts, "An Englishman's view of the court of Henri III, 1584-1585 : Richard Cook's description of the court of France", *French History*, 2, 1988, p. 341.

⁶ D. L. Potter, P. R. Roberts, "An Englishman's view"...cit., p. 342.

⁷ D. L. Potter, P. R. Roberts, "An Englishman's view"...cit., p. 342.

Le premier document relatif à la journée du roi est une lettre (non datée) que Catherine de Médicis adresse « au roi », Charles IX ou Henri III⁸. Si nous suivons ses indications ainsi que celles de certains mémorialistes de la cour, la journée du roi commence par le lever. L'assistance à cette cérémonie est réservée aux plus grands de la cour qui arrivent le matin dans sa chambre alors qu'il est encore couché. La personne la plus élevée en rang donne au souverain sa chemise ; le roi fait ensuite ses prières, s'habille et prend une collation. Après le lever, le roi se rend au conseil privé et traite les affaires courantes pour assister vers dix heures à la messe, accompagné des grands seigneurs. Le *dîner* (l'actuel déjeuner) est pris vers onze heures et en public ; le roi est seul à table. Sous Henri III, la reine se joint parfois à son époux⁹.

Le début de l'après-midi est consacré aux audiences qui sont suivies d'une visite du roi et de ses gentilshommes chez la reine ou la reine mère. Après un repos pris en privé, le roi se montre de nouveau en public vers quinze heures, se promenant ou faisant quelque « honnête exercice ». Le soir, le souper est suivi, deux fois par semaine, d'un bal afin de « tenir joyeux » les courtisans.

Ce programme, que Catherine présente comme une tradition immuable déjà observée par François I^{er} et Henri II, correspond dans ses grandes lignes à la pratique telle qu'elle a été rapportée par les ambassadeurs et mémorialistes du temps. Ceux-ci témoignent aussi du fait que Catherine observe un ordre similaire dans l'organisation de sa propre journée. Son lever a lieu entre « huit et neuf heures¹⁰ » et comporte le don de la chemise par la personne la plus élevée en rang. Diane de France témoigne ainsi de sa joie lorsqu'un jour, elle arrive à temps à la cour pour « donner la chemise à la royne¹¹ ». Catherine accepte, comme le roi, qu'un grand nombre de courtisans assistent à cette cérémonie, « admettant chacun indifféremment avec grande familiarité¹² » et elle se rend ensuite à la messe¹³. Nous sommes moins renseignés sur la suite de son emploi du temps, toutefois Brantôme rapporte que, si nécessaire, la reine travaillait avant le déjeuner : « Je la vis une fois, estant embarquée à Blaye pour aller disner à Bourg, tout du long du chemin lire un parchemin, comme un rapporteur¹⁴ ».

La matinée s'achève avec le déjeuner qui – comme pour le roi – est pour la reine et la reine mère un moment de représentation. Les membres de la famille et de la maison ainsi que les invités mangent à distance respectueuse de leur hôtesse. Après le déjeuner, la reine reçoit les ambassadeurs qui ne manquent jamais de se présenter à elle après leur audience chez le roi ; Catherine n'a certainement pas aboli cette tradition que, selon Brantôme, Louis XII avait instauré :

Le roi l'honorait [Anne de Bretagne] de telle sorte, que [...] il ne venait jamais en sa Cour Prince étranger, ou Ambassadeur, qu'après l'avoir vu et ouy qu'il ne l'envoya faire la référence [révérence?] à la Reyne, voulant qu'on luy porta le même respect qu'à lui, et aussi qu'il connaissait en elle une grande suffisance pour entretenir et contenter tels grands personnages, comme très-bien elle savait faire ; et y prenoit très grand plaisir¹⁵.

L'après-midi, les nobles des différentes maisons de la cour se réunissent pour les exercices, la chasse, les jeux et autres passe-temps. Pour la reine, ces heures ne sont pas toujours consacrées aux loisirs car bien souvent Catherine se remet au travail : « Je la vis une fois, pour une après-dinée, écrire

⁸ *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis*, éd. par H. de la Ferrière-Percy et G. Baguenault de Puchesse, Paris, 1880-1895, dix tomes ; tome 2, p. 90 – 95. Cette lettre comporte des conseils concernant le « bon gouvernement », la gestion des affaires ainsi que l'organisation de la cour. Quant au destinataire, on tend actuellement à penser qu'il s'agirait d'Henri III plutôt que de Charles IX. Concernant les journées du roi et de la reine voir aussi M. Chatenet, *La cour de France...* cit., p. 112-133 (journée du roi) et 187-190 (journée de la reine).

⁹ M. Chatenet, *La cour de France...* cit., p. 118.

¹⁰ M.-N. Baudouin-Matuszek, « La famille italienne : les Strozzi et les Duci », in M. N. Baudouin-Matuszek (dir.) *Paris et Catherine de Médicis*, Paris, 1989, p. 58.

¹¹ M.N. Baudouin-Matuszek, *La famille italienne...* cit., p. 58. Diane de France est la fille naturelle d'Henri II et de Filippa Ducci, née le 25 juillet 1538 à Moncalieri.

¹² Lettre du secrétaire du cardinal Alexandrin, vers 1570, citée par M. Chatenet, *La Cour de France...* cit., p. 187.

¹³ P. de Bourdeilles, abbé de Brantôme, *Recueil des Dames, poésies et tombeaux*, Paris, 1991, p. 57.

¹⁴ P. de Bourdeilles, abbé de Brantôme, *Recueil des Dames...* cit., p. 56.

¹⁵ P. de Bourdeilles, abbé de Brantôme, *Recueil des Dames...* cit., p. 14.

de sa main vingt paires de lettres, et longues¹⁶ ». Richard Cook précise qu'Henri III et sa mère se retiraient ensemble après le dîner si des affaires importantes étaient à traiter¹⁷.

À la fin de la journée, Catherine assiste aux vêpres¹⁸ et participe, après le souper avec ses dames, aux bals, concerts et autres divertissements. Le *coucher*, qui comme le lever (bien que moins documenté) se déroule en public, clôt la journée. Marguerite de Valois y assistait dès qu'elle eût atteint l'âge adulte : « ne manquant un seul jour d'être des premières à son lever, des dernières à son coucher¹⁹ ». Ces cérémonies, d'« ancien usage chez le roi et la reine de France²⁰ » ouvrent et closent la journée d'une maison royale. La nuit, la chambre de Catherine est interdite aux courtisans si Henri II la rejoint, règle qui accorde au couple une intimité généralement absente pendant la journée²¹.

Cette organisation définit les moments où la suite de la reine, ou de la reine-mère, se joint à celle du roi. Pour Catherine de Médicis, c'est uniquement lorsque les hommes et les femmes se réunissent que l'on 'tient cour'. Ainsi Catherine conseillait au roi de « venir chez moy ou chez la Royne, *affin que l'on cognoisse une façon de court*, qui est chose qui plaist infiniment aux François, pour l'avoir accoustumé²² ».

Un autre témoignage confirme que le mot *cour* pouvait être employé dans ce sens. Brantôme raconte que ses amis et lui-même se fâchaient au plus haut point quand le roi se séparait de la reine et de ses dames pour la chasse ou pour toute autre raison car, d'après l'auteur, la guerre, l'État, la chasse et le jeu sont des exercices qui « ennuient en peu de temps : mais jamais on s'ennuie de converser avec les honnetes dames ». Sa conclusion rappelle la définition de la cour donnée par la reine mère : « Pour fin, une cour sans dames est une cour sans cour²³ ».

C'est ainsi autour de la reine et de la reine mère que se constitue au XVI^e siècle une sociabilité nouvelle fondée sur la réunion des hommes et des femmes. Catherine de Médicis a joué un rôle non négligeable dans l'organisation de cette société, d'une part par la discipline qu'elle y faisait régner, d'autre part par le soin qu'elle apportait aux distractions et loisirs : sa chapelle était réputée pour la qualité de ses musiciens et les bals, banquets et festins qu'elle donnait étaient nombreux.

Promiscuité et intimité

Les espaces parfois réduits pouvaient rendre ces assemblées de dames et gentilshommes physiquement éprouvantes. Il ne faut pas attendre les grandes réceptions de Versailles pour voir défaillir des femmes oppressées par la foule : le chancelier Philippe Hurault raconte que son épouse, Anne de Thou, enceinte de neuf mois, « se trouvant en la presse des dames, et dans une extrême chaleur qui était en la chambre de la reine mère du Roy », contracte une fièvre qui, peu après l'accouchement, lui coûta la vie²⁴. Il est vrai que la reine est constamment entourée d'une partie de ses dames auxquelles s'ajoutent les visiteurs, huissiers et autres officiers de service. Dans ces conditions, comment trouver le calme pour travailler ? Catherine de Médicis rédige parfois une dizaine de lettres par jour et en lit au moins autant ; elle se réunit quotidiennement avec le roi et ses conseillers, reçoit des émissaires et mène des négociations qui nécessitent un minimum de discrétion.

¹⁶ P. de Bourdeilles, abbé de Brantôme, *Recueil des Dames...cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁷ D. L. Potter, P. R. Roberts, "An Englishman's view" ...cit., p. 340.

¹⁸ P. de Bourdeilles, abbé de Brantôme, *Recueil des Dames...cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁹ M. de Valois, *Mémoires & Discours*, éd. par E. Viennot, Saint-Etienne, 2004, p. 58.

²⁰ Lettre du secrétaire du cardinal Alexandrin, vers 1570, cité par M. Chatenet, *La Cour de France...cit.*, p. 114.

²¹ Mémoires du maréchal de Vieilleville, cité par M. Chatenet, *La cour de France...cit.*, p. 194.

²² C. de Médicis, *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis...cit.*, tome 2, p. 92.

²³ P. de Bourdeilles, abbé de Brantôme, *Recueil des Dames...cit.*, p. 258.

²⁴ P. Hurault, *Mémoires*, in M. M. Michaud et Poujoulat (éd.), *Nouvelle collection des mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France*, Paris, 1854, tome 10, p. 481.

Si aucun cabinet n'est disponible, la reine se fait aménager un espace par le montage de cloisons de bois. L'isolation phonique d'une telle construction est évidemment toute relative, ce que démontre une scène décrite par Marguerite de Valois dans ses mémoires: Marguerite, accusée par Henri III d'avoir eu un rendez-vous galant, décrit la fureur que cette rumeur suscite chez sa mère. Elle se rend dans la chambre de Catherine et se voit arrêtée par les dames de Catherine, dont Anne d'Este qui lui conseille de ne pas aller plus loin : « Mon dieu, Madame, la reine votre mère est en si grande colère contre vous, je ne vous conseille pas de vous présenter auprès d'elle²⁵ ». Marguerite ignore l'avertissement et entre dans le cabinet « qui n'était fait que d'une cloison de bois, de sorte que l'on pouvait aisément entendre de la chambre tout ce qui se disait ». À la vue de sa fille, Catherine « commence à jeter feu, et à dire tout ce qu'une colère outrée et démesurée peut jeter dehors ». Les protestations de Marguerite n'ont aucun effet ; sa mère « ne cesse de taxer, crier et menacer [...] ce qui était entendu de sa chambre toute pleine de gens ».

La présence des dames et demoiselles donne à cet événement un caractère public qui renforce l'ampleur de la correction infligée. On peut se poser la question de savoir si Catherine se servit alors, sciemment ou non, de son entourage comme d'une « caisse de résonance » afin d'amplifier l'humiliation infligée à sa fille. C'est en tout cas pour cette raison que, une fois Marguerite innocentée et l'orage passé, celle-ci ne se trouva guère apaisée : « j'ai reçu un affront trop public de cette calomnie pour pardonner à ceux qui me l'ont causé²⁶ ».

Le système des cloisons n'est donc pas très efficace quand il faut se réunir en toute discrétion. Pour ce faire, Catherine adopte un autre moyen si le temps et la saison ne s'y opposent pas : les promenades. Elles permettent à la reine d'échapper au gros des courtisans et Catherine n'hésite pas, si nécessaire, à faire aménager des passages ou des passerelles pour créer un accès à des terrains propices à cet exercice. Elle aime marcher et se plaint amèrement si un lieu ne s'y prête pas, comme à Agen, où elle écrit à Anne d'Este : « si j'étais dans vos allées, je ne laisserai de m'y promener, car j'en suis affamée, n'ayant trouvé en ce pays lieu où l'on puisse faire cent pas de long²⁷ ».

En étudiant l'itinéraire de Catherine de Médicis des années 1533 à 1588, identifiable grâce aux lieux de rédaction indiqués dans les lettres²⁸, on observe trois types de déplacements. Catherine suit d'abord l'*itinérance traditionnelle* de la cour de France qui se déplace en Ile de France, dans la vallée de la Loire et, moins fréquemment, dans la vallée du Rhône. Ces voyages peuvent être interrompus par des *séjours dans des résidences secondaires* appartenant à Catherine ou à ses amis et alliés. Enfin, apparaissent des *voyages* qui sortent du cadre habituel de l'itinérance de la cour et qui répondent à des besoins politiques. Suivons l'évolution de ces déplacements en les [ou « la » si se réfère à évolution] mettant en relation avec le cycle de vie de Catherine de Médicis.

L'itinéraire de la dauphine (1536-1547)

Le 10 août 1536, quand meurt le Dauphin François, la jeune femme passe du statut de bru du roi à celui de dauphine. Les années qui suivent ont laissé très peu de traces dans la correspondance de Catherine de Médicis: seules 41 lettres fournissent des indications relatives à leur lieu de rédaction. Le gros de la documentation concerne les années de fin de règne, alors que la cour, peu mobile, réside avant tout en région parisienne. François I^{er} est immobilisé par de fréquentes maladies et la situation

²⁵ M. de Valois, *Mémoires & Discours...*cit., p. 87.

²⁶ M. de Valois, *Mémoires & Discours...*cit., p. 87-88.

²⁷ Lettre du 8 mars 1579, *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis...*cit., tome 6, p. 296.

²⁸ 5050 des 6046 lettres de Catherine de Médicis éditées au XIX^e siècle par Ferrière-Percy et Puchesse indiquent leur lieu de rédaction. Après extraction des doublons et de cinq lieux qui n'ont pu être identifiés avec certitude, restent 3595 indications uniques de lieux. Une base de données qui regroupe ces informations est consultable en libre accès sur Internet : C. zum Kolk, *Itinéraire de Catherine de Médicis. Les lieux de séjour de C. de Médicis d'après sa correspondance (1529-1588)*. Base de données publiée en ligne sur Cour de France.fr le 25 janvier 2008 (<http://cour-de-france.fr/article249.html>).

financière, très tendue, ne permet plus les déplacements de grande envergure. Plusieurs chantiers entamés par le roi sont à cette époque achevés : Fontainebleau, Saint-Germain-en-Laye et le château du bois de Boulogne, aussi appelé *Madrid*. De toutes ces résidences, le roi préfère Fontainebleau ; les lettres de Catherine confirment qu'il s'agit là du lieu de séjour le plus fréquenté à la fin du règne. Six séjours y sont attestés, contre cinq à Paris, trois à Villers-Cotterêts et deux à Blois et à Saint-Germain-en-Laye qui se partagent ainsi la quatrième place.

Les voyages sont moins bien documentés. Rappelons que Catherine commence sa vie itinérante dès son arrivée en France puisqu'elle accompagne la reine Éléonore dans le voyage qui la conduit de Marseille à Paris. Occasion formidable de découvrir le pays et que le pays la découvre, le passage de l'Italienne qui venait d'intégrer la famille royale ayant certainement suscité un vif intérêt. D'autres voyages feront sortir Catherine de la région parisienne : nous la rencontrons ainsi en Haute-Normandie et en Bourgogne (1540), à Lyon (1544), en Normandie (1545) et en Picardie (1545, 1546, 1547). Dans ces années-là, Fontainebleau et Saint-Germain-en-Laye commencent à jouer un rôle qu'ils conserveront par la suite : c'est dans ces châteaux que naîtront les enfants de Catherine de Médicis. La correspondance permet de lever le doute qui subsistait au sujet des lieux de naissance de Claude, de Charles et des jumelles Jeanne et Victoire : il est très probable que les deux premiers soient nés à Saint-Germain-en-Laye et les jumelles à Fontainebleau²⁹. Les deux châteaux sont ainsi utilisés comme des « *Stammsitze* », des sièges dynastiques, par les Valois.

L'itinéraire de la reine de France (1^{er} avril 1547-10 juillet 1559)

Le règne d'Henri II apporte des changements notables dans les déplacements de son épouse. Cent soixante-dix-neuf missives mentionnent leur lieu de rédaction, ce qui permet de suivre le parcours de la reine avec plus de précision que sous le règne de François I^{er}. Une tendance observée lors du règne précédent se confirme : la région parisienne accueille plus que toute autre la cour, avec toutefois un changement en ce qui concerne les lieux de résidence préférés : Saint-Germain-en-Laye dépasse maintenant, avec quatorze séjours, les autres résidences. L'écart avec Paris est important (dix séjours) tandis qu'à la troisième place figure Fontainebleau, suivi de Villers-Cotterêts et de Compiègne³⁰. En outre, Catherine demeure régulièrement chez les favoris de son mari : Anne de Montmorency (Ecouen, La Fère-en-Tardenois, Chantilly), la famille des Guise (Joinville) et même chez Diane de Poitiers à Anet, en 1547. Fréquentes sont aussi les visites dans la vallée de la Loire où sont installés les enfants du couple royal³¹.

En ce qui concerne les voyages, notons qu'en dehors de la vallée de la Loire, Catherine se rend à Reims pour le sacre de son mari et participe aux entrées de Lyon et de Rouen. Lors de ces grands voyages, Catherine emmène souvent l'ensemble de la cour avec elle, permettant ainsi au roi, entouré d'une suite réduite, de se déplacer avec plus de liberté³². Le cortège de la reine compte alors plusieurs milliers de personnes auxquelles s'ajoutent chevaux et bétail. Ces déplacements sont entrecoupés par les naissances des enfants, nombreuses au cours de cette période, qui ont toujours lieu à Fontainebleau ou à Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

²⁹ La source majeure à ce sujet est une liste conservée à la BNF (ms. fr., actes Dupuy 137, folio 125) qui indique les dates, et parfois les lieux de naissance des enfants. Les lieux de rédaction des lettres fournissent les indices suivants : Claude naît le 12 novembre 1547 ; Catherine envoie des lettres de Saint-Germain-en-Laye en octobre 1547 et en janvier 1548 ; il est possible qu'elle y séjourne aussi en novembre, à l'approche de son accouchement. Charles naît le 27 juin 1550 ; le jour qui précède sa naissance, sa mère écrit une lettre de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Les jumelles naissent le 24 juin 1556 ; les lettres de Catherine attestent sa présence à Fontainebleau en mai et en août. La liste indique les lieux de naissance des autres enfants : François, Élisabeth, Alexandre Edouard et Hercule sont nés à Fontainebleau, Louis et Marguerite à Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

³⁰ Nombre de séjours par lieu : Fontainebleau : 9 séjours. Villers-Cotterêts : 8 séjours. Compiègne : 6 séjours.

³¹ Ces séjours sont documentés pour les années 1550, 1551, 1552, 1556 et 1557.

³² L. Lalanne (éd.), *Œuvres complètes de Pierre de Bourdeilles, seigneur de Brantôme*, Paris, 1864-1882, 11 vol. ; tome 7, p. 379.

Une nouveauté apparaît en 1555, lorsque Catherine de Médicis échange les revenus du comté de Boulogne contre le château de Monceaux-en-Brie, situé à proximité de Meaux,³³. Elle dispose ainsi pour la première fois d'une résidence personnelle en Île-de-France, ce qui correspond parfaitement à sa dignité de reine. Catherine commande des constructions à Philibert de l'Orme³⁴ et se rend à plusieurs reprises dans son château en 1558, ce qui témoigne de l'enthousiasme qu'a dû lui inspirer la vie de propriétaire et de maîtresse d'œuvre, une passion qui s'accroîtra par la suite³⁵. Aucune lettre n'est en revanche rédigée à Chaumont-sur-Loire, château que Catherine possède depuis 1550, année où elle l'a acheté à Charles-Antoine de la Rochefoucauld et Antoinette d'Amboise³⁶.

Une autre particularité apparaît quand Catherine revêt à plusieurs reprises la dignité de régente lors de la guerre contre Charles Quint qui ravage le Nord-Est de la France dans les années 1552-1554. Dans ces années-là, en assurant le ravitaillement de l'armée, Catherine se fait « munitionnaire³⁷ » et vit proche des zones de combat. En 1552, elle séjourne à Châlons-en-Champagne, Rethel et Sedan ; en 1554, nous la retrouvons à Reims.

L'itinéraire de la reine mère et régente (11 juillet 1559 - 30 mai 1574)

Le bref règne de François II a laissé quarante-quatre lettres avec mention de leur lieu de rédaction. Le sacre à Reims et un voyage dans la vallée de la Loire dominent cette documentation. La cour réside ensuite à Fontainebleau et à Saint-Germain-en-Laye avant de prendre en octobre 1560 la route pour Orléans où se réunissent les États Généraux. Le décès de François II, le 5 décembre 1560, place Catherine à la tête du gouvernement ; elle conserve le titre de régente et de gouvernante du royaume jusqu'au 17 août 1563, date de la majorité de Charles IX. Comme l'on sait, elle continue à diriger les affaires jusqu'à l'avènement sur le trône de son troisième fils, Henri III, en 1574.

Avec plus de 1690 lettres portant mention de leur lieu de rédaction, les déplacements de ces quinze années sont richement documentés. L'itinéraire de Catherine de Médicis change de caractère et ressemble maintenant davantage à celui d'un roi qu'à celui d'une reine. Ainsi arrive-t-il que le gros des courtisans suive le jeune Charles IX, alors que sa mère se déplace avec une suite réduite pour gagner en mobilité comme l'avait fait auparavant son époux. Concernant la guerre, Catherine ne se déplace plus en arrière du front mais avec l'armée. Elle séjourne dans des camps militaires, en témoignent les nombreuses lettres écrites des camps à Lazenay (proche de Bourges, 1562), au fort Sainte-Catherine (à Rouen, 1562), à Saint-Mesmin (proche d'Orléans, 1563) et à Luret (près de Tonnay-Boutonne, 1569). L'élargissement du réseau des résidences secondaires de la reine mère est également significatif : Catherine ajoute à Monceaux-en-Brie les châteaux de Chenonceaux (1560), Saint-Maur-des-Fossés (1563), Hyères (1564) et un hôtel à Paris (1570). Sous le règne suivant, elle complètera cet ensemble avec une maison sur la colline de Chaillot (1583).

Suivons les déplacements de la reine mère de 1560 à 1574 plus en détail. La mort de François II surprend la cour à Orléans ; le départ pour la région parisienne ne se fait qu'en février 1561, après l'achèvement des États généraux. Dans les deux années qui suivent, Catherine privilégie les châteaux de la région parisienne, en particulier Saint-Germain-en-Laye, où elle réside de manière quasi permanente de juillet 1561 à mars 1562. En termes de voyages, la reine mère se déplace au mois de mai à Reims pour le sacre de son fils et séjourne quelques jours à Fère-en-Tardenois chez Anne de Montmorency³⁸.

³³ Soulignons qu'il ne s'agit pas d'un don : Catherine de Médicis reçoit Monceaux en dédommagement des revenus du comté de Boulogne qu'elle cède à la couronne (Y. Clouas, *Henri II*, Paris, 1985, p. 383).

³⁴ J.-M. Pérouse de Montclos, *Philibert de l'Orme. Architecte du Roi*, Paris, 2000, p. 69.

³⁵ Catherine séjourne à Monceaux en mars, mai, juin et décembre 1558.

³⁶ Y. Clouas, *Les châteaux de la Loire au temps de la Renaissance*, Paris, 1996, p. 198.

³⁷ C'est ainsi qu'elle se nomme dans une lettre du 20 mai 1552 à Anne de Montmorency, *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis...cit.*, tome 1, p. 56.

³⁸ Lettre à Anne de Montmorency du 30 avril 1561, *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis...cit.*, tome 1, p. 194.

Lorsque la première guerre de religion éclate, un mode de vie radicalement différent est introduit. En juin 1562, Catherine se joint à l'armée qui s'est installée à Étampes³⁹ et se déplace ensuite pour rencontrer le prince de Condé, d'abord à Toury (le 9 juin 1562), puis à Talcy (le 30 juin 1562). Dans les mois qui suivent, la reine mère reste à proximité de l'armée et ne retourne que rarement en région parisienne ; lorsqu'elle y séjourne, elle s'installe non seulement à Saint-Germain-en-Laye, mais aussi au château de Vincennes, qui allie la sécurité d'une forteresse médiévale au charme d'un environnement propice à la chasse et aux promenades. Catherine traverse à nouveau le pays avec l'armée lors de la troisième guerre de religion. En revanche, la deuxième et la quatrième guerre ne provoquent aucun déplacement notable : la reine mère reste à Paris d'avril à juillet 1568 et laisse à ses fils le soin d'accompagner et de diriger l'armée.

Un autre fait marquant de ces années est le grand tour royal qui se déroule du 24 janvier 1564 au 1^{er} mai 1566 et qui a fait l'objet de deux études détaillées⁴⁰. Périples formidable qui compte parmi les plus grands voyages jamais effectués par un souverain en France. La cour part d'abord en direction de l'Est, longe les frontières du royaume jusqu'à Lyon pour atteindre ensuite Avignon, puis Arles. Le voyage continue début 1565 en direction de Toulouse et de Bayonne où a lieu une rencontre avec Elisabeth, fille aînée de Catherine de Médicis et reine d'Espagne. En passant par Nérac et Bordeaux, le cortège rejoint ensuite la Loire et s'installe pour l'hiver 1565-1566 à Moulins, ancienne résidence d'Anne de France. Après avoir visité Clermont, le voyage s'achève à Saint-Maur-des-Fossés début mai. Notons que Catherine passe aussi par Anet pour rendre visite à la fille de Diane de Poitiers, Françoise de Brézé, son ancienne dame d'honneur⁴¹. D'autres voyages, en 1571 et 1572, conduisent la reine mère dans la vallée de la Loire, à Chenonceau notamment, où elle passe plusieurs jours de la belle saison.

En dehors de ces voyages, Catherine séjourne de préférence à Paris et délaisse progressivement les châteaux des environs. Avant 1566, les séjours dans la capitale sont d'une courte ou moyenne durée, dépassant rarement trois mois. Par la suite, leur nombre et leur durée augmente, allant jusqu'à quatorze mois (septembre 1567-décembre 1568). Avec vingt-trois séjours, Paris domine alors largement la liste des lieux de résidence hors voyages, suivi de Monceaux, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Fontainebleau et Saint-Maur-des-Fossés⁴². Ces données confirment que l'installation de la cour à Paris n'est pas réalisée sous le règne d'Henri III, comme certains auteurs l'affirment, mais dès la fin des années 1560, sous l'influence de la reine mère.

³⁹ Lettre à Antoine de Bourbon du 31 mai 1562, *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis...*cit., tome 1, p. 326 et à Monsieur de Tavannes du 4 juin 1562, tome 1, p. 327.

⁴⁰ J. Boutier, A. Dewerpe, D. Nordman, *Un Tour de France royal. Le voyage de Charles IX (1564 – 1566)*, Paris, 1984, et P. Champion, *Catherine de Médicis présente à Charles IX son royaume (1564-1566)*, Paris, 1937.

⁴¹ Lettre rédigée à Anet le 3 octobre 1566. Diane de Poitiers est morte peu avant, le 26 avril 1566.

⁴² Monceaux : 13 séjours ; Saint-Germain-en-Laye : 11 séjours ; Fontainebleau : 9 séjours et Saint-Maur-des-Fossés : 7 séjours.

L'itinéraire de l'auxiliaire du roi (13 février 1575-5 janvier 1589)

La mort de Charles IX marque pour Catherine de Médicis la fin de son statut de « chef de famille » et de gouvernante du royaume, un titre qu'elle ne porte plus officiellement depuis la majorité du roi, mais dont elle a conservé une part importante des fonctions. Henri III est un roi énergique qui entend régner par ses propres moyens, contrairement à Charles IX qui avait laissé sa mère agir à sa guise et dont le désir d'autonomie semble avoir été fort réduit. Néanmoins, Henri ne souhaite pas que sa mère se retire de la cour ; elle y conserve une place et des fonctions importantes dont les contours ont été définis rapidement. Assister ce fils en son gouvernement était un exercice particulièrement difficile car la reine mère devait faire coexister trois positions qui pouvaient entrer en conflit : en tant que *mère du roi*, elle représentait l'autorité parentale et les intérêts familiaux ; en tant que *sujet du roi*, elle devait respecter l'autorité de son fils ; en tant que *femme politique*, elle pouvait être amenée à être la conseillère privilégiée de son fils, à condition de négocier ce statut avec doigté. Catherine réussit ce réaménagement de sa position à la cour et détient un rôle qui évoque celui des cardinaux ministres] du XVII^e siècle : elle devient l'*auxiliaire* du roi, qui effectue les tâches que celui-ci ne souhaite pas prendre en charge personnellement et qui dispose d'une autorité importante émanant du roi lui-même. Ainsi Catherine reçoit en double la correspondance royale et assiste à toutes les réunions d'importance. C'est elle qui mène généralement les négociations avec les protestants et qui se déplace en province ; Henri, roi sédentaire, délègue régulièrement à sa mère la charge de sillonner le pays.

Pour les années 1574-1588, 1635 lieux de rédaction permettent de suivre les déplacements et séjours de la reine mère. Catherine séjourne dans 141 villes et villages: 84 lieux n'ont fait l'objet que d'un simple passage, tandis que les autres comptent parmi les lieux de séjours de durée moyenne avec, en tête de liste, Paris et les résidences personnelles de la reine mère. En effet, la tendance des années 1566-1574 se confirme : Catherine réside désormais de manière presque permanente à Paris. Ses séjours s'y prolongent, ce qui explique le nombre élevé de lettres qui y sont rédigées. Catherine délaisse progressivement les châteaux royaux qui ont marqué la vie de la cour sous François I^{er} et Henri II : Fontainebleau et Saint-Germain-en-Laye ne reçoivent que cinq visites de la reine mère (contre neuf et onze sous Charles IX), Villers-Cotterêts qu'une seule.

Ce sont les résidences personnelles de la reine mère qui, avec Paris, profitent le plus de sa présence : Saint-Maur-des-Fossés est largement en tête avec onze séjours (contre sept sous Charles IX), dont un d'une durée de cinq mois et deux d'une durée de trois mois. Monceaux, assez éloigné de la capitale, est en retrait avec sept séjours (contre treize sous Charles IX).

Sous le règne d'Henri III, Catherine effectuera trois voyages importants. En octobre 1575, elle quitte la cour pendant quatre mois pour mener des négociations avec son fils François d'Anjou, qui, à la tête des « malcontents », a pris les armes contre le roi. La « paix de Monsieur » met un terme à sa révolte, mais en 1578 encore la reine mère se plaint qu'elle doit régulièrement « courir après mon fils, qui souvent me donne de telles peines, de peur qu'il fasse encore le fou⁴³ ».

Le deuxième voyage a lieu du 13 septembre 1578 au 18 novembre 1579 et rappelle, par son itinéraire, le *grand tour* effectué au début du règne de Charles IX. Catherine explique à Henri de Navarre ses objectifs : « je suis venue par deçà que pour deux choses [...] : c'était pour lui amener ma fille, sa femme, [...] et l'autre pour l'exécution et établissement de l'édit de pacification⁴⁴ », l'édit de Poitiers. Il s'agit de ramener le calme dans le Sud et le Sud-Ouest de la France, théâtre d'affrontements violents depuis l'abolition de la « paix de Monsieur » et centre d'un mouvement d'autonomie qui met en danger l'intégrité du royaume.

Le troisième voyage, du 13 novembre 1586 au 8 mars 1587, a lieu pendant la huitième guerre civile, déclenchée par la mort de l'héritier du trône, François d'Anjou. Catherine traverse un pays ravagé par la guerre pour rencontrer Henri de Navarre, chef d'un parti composé de protestants et de catholiques « politiques », afin de négocier son adhésion au camp royal.

Les objectifs de ces déplacements peuvent rappeler les voyages effectués dans les années 1560, lorsque Catherine sillonnait le pays afin d'imposer la politique royale et de resserrer les liens

⁴³ Lettre à Anne d'Este du 20 mars 1578, *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis...cit.*, tome 6, p. 9.

⁴⁴ Lettre à Henri III du 28 janvier 1579, *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis...cit.*, tome 6, p. 239.

entre la couronne et ses sujets. Mais les missions effectuées sous le règne d'Henri III seront d'un ton très différent en ce qui concerne tant les conditions matérielles que le contexte dans lequel elles se déroulent. S'ajoutant à la pénurie, aux ravages de la guerre et aux épidémies, apparaissent les menaces et attaques qui visent la reine mère et sa suite. Des situations dangereuses se présentent dans le Sud du royaume, surtout à Montpellier, ville hostile à la politique royale, ainsi qu'autour de Cognac et Niort, où des serviteurs de la reine sont pris en otage, voire même tués. Le déclin de l'autorité royale et la désacralisation du roi touchent donc également les membres de sa famille.

L'itinéraire de Catherine de Médicis est ainsi profondément marqué par l'évolution de son statut à la cour de France, par les espaces dont elle disposait et par la manière dont elle les aménageait. Peu de reines de France ont été si « mobiles » et ont autant influencé le choix des résidences de la cour ainsi que leur organisation interne. La cour implique non seulement une organisation de l'espace mais aussi du temps : quand et où se réunissent les hommes et femmes de la cour, quand et comment utilise-t-on les espaces des châteaux ? Catherine de Médicis est le premier membre de la famille royale à rédiger un texte qui traite de ces questions, prémisse d'une étiquette. Certaines des décisions prises par la reine mère auront un impact sur les règnes suivants : la sédentarisation de la cour à Paris en fait partie et mérite une étude approfondie car ce fait est peu connu, de même que les raisons qui expliquent cette évolution. Une telle découverte démontre l'intérêt de l'étude de cet itinéraire d'une richesse exceptionnelle pour l'étude de la cour et la vie de Catherine de Médicis.

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Part II

The Uses of Space

Honneur aux dames.

Préséances au féminin et prééminence sociale dans la monarchie d'Ancien Régime (XVI^e-XVII^e siècles)

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Mobiles, amenées à passer d'une maison à l'autre, voire d'un pays à l'autre pour celles qui sont mariées en familles étrangères, les femmes de l'aristocratie apparaissent volontiers comme des vecteurs des pratiques culturelles au sein des différentes cours européennes. Elles contribuent de la sorte, par leurs déplacements et leurs associations en autres lignages, à transformer imperceptiblement les mondes dans lesquels elles évoluent, tendant ainsi à unifier, par des références communes, la société des princes marquée par les échanges dynastiques¹. Leur participation reste pourtant discrète ; le caractère patrilignager des structures familiales tendant à effacer, avec le nom, la richesse que représentent pourtant les lignées féminines. Les travaux récents ont cherché à restituer la visibilité sociale des femmes en insistant sur une présence qui, pour être discrète dans les sources, n'en est pas moins conséquente².

L'inscription des femmes dans le champ politique est ici abordée en examinant les apports que peuvent représenter les femmes dans le fonctionnement d'un monde particulier, celui de la cour, plus que par la circulation des savoirs ou des pratiques à l'échelle européenne. Dans la mesure où la femme mariée, intégrant la famille du mari, adopte les qualités de celui-ci, sa nature « étrangère » s'efface au bénéfice d'une fusion des époux qui constitue à chaque génération le socle d'une cellule destinée à faire des héritiers. Mais cette perspective patrimoniale suppose aussi que la mère conserve des droits potentiels sur son lignage, droits susceptibles d'être transmis à sa descendance, et qui s'expriment aussi par les rangs accordés à la cour.

C'est cette ambivalence de statut révélée dans les querelles de préséances qu'il s'agit ici d'examiner, en étudiant les enjeux et les modalités d'assignation des places dans la hiérarchie curiale³, et donc ce que la femme dit du rang de l'époux dans un monde beaucoup plus mixte qu'il n'y paraît de prime abord, ce qu'apporte la femme en termes de droits et de prestige, mais aussi comment les acteurs jouent sur l'ambiguïté du statut féminin pour promouvoir, éventuellement, le lignage dans son ensemble. Bien plus qu'un simple pion sur l'échiquier politique, la femme se révèle un agent actif de la célébration lignagère.

L'analyse qui suit repose sur un matériel empirique tiré des conflits de préséances. La contestation des places assignées dans le cérémonial a produit une abondante littérature, essentiellement manuscrite, qui offre un angle d'approche original de la société d'Ancien Régime dans sa dimension hiérarchique⁴. De ces nombreux recueils sont extraits les événements qui, directement ou indirectement, impliquent la population féminine. La démarche, en se focalisant sur la participation des femmes, conduit nécessairement à une surévaluation de leur présence dans l'espace politique. Il convient d'en tenir compte, et de conserver à l'esprit que la grande majorité des écrits sur les rangs concerne activités et querelles masculines, lesquelles d'ailleurs masquent parfois l'engagement féminin. Mais les mentions relatives aux femmes sont cependant des indices forts de leur capacité d'intervention. Celle-ci est observée à travers le rang accordé aux épouses, filles et veuves, la

¹ L. Bély, *La société des princes*, Paris, Fayard, 1999.

² La bibliographie sur le sujet s'est profondément renouvelée ces dernières décennies. Pour la France, voire par exemple G. Dermenjian, J. Guilhaumou, M. Lapied (dir.), *Femmes entre ombre et lumière. Recherches sur la visibilité sociale (XVI-XXe siècles)*, Paris, Publisud, 2000.

³ L'adjectif « curial » est retenu ici préférablement à aulique. D'un usage plus ancien, il correspond mieux au vocabulaire de l'époque moderne et rend plus précisément compte de ce qui est en jeu.

⁴ Ainsi, les références relatives à l'histoire des femmes et du genre, comme celles qui concernent le cérémonial, figurent peu dans les notes afin d'alléger l'appareil de référence en réservant l'essentiel des renvois aux côtes des manuscrits.

protection des patrimoines mobilisant les lignées féminines, et les modalités de promotion, des femmes et par les femmes.

I. Le rang des femmes

L'épouse et le mari

Dans le domaine des préséances, la position des femmes répond comme en écho à celle qu'elles occupent dans la société : puisque l'ordre institué reflète l'organisation de toute la société, il donne à voir aussi la nature des rapports hommes/femmes pour ce qui est de la hiérarchie. Les règles sont relativement simples, mais pourtant assez subtiles en ce qui concerne les termes de la subordination. Le principe d'association qui préside au mariage opère encore dans l'attribution des rangs : « la femme ne devant faire qu'un avec son mary suit sa condition »⁵ dit un mémoire qui s'inscrit dans le cadre des généralités. Valable pour tous, cette règle s'adapte aussi bien à la première dame de France qu'à la dernière de ses sujettes. C'est pourquoi les reines « ont en elles tous les principes de la puissance royale par le rang qu'elles ont acquis lors de leur mariage »⁶. Ici, le rang est la garantie de leur statut, et justifie qu'elles bénéficient du « même degré de respect et d'obéissance » que les rois eux-mêmes⁷. Ailleurs, ce sont les acquis du mariage qui légitiment leur place : parce que « leurs femmes participent à leur honneur, [elles] ont le même rang [que leurs maris] »⁸. L'adéquation est parfaite ; « le rang des femmes des princes du sang étant le même rang des princes du sang leurs maris, leur rang dépend du même principe »⁹.

Les noces entraînent donc un changement d'état qui n'est pas toujours favorable ; celui-ci peut même s'avérer une étape difficile lorsque les princesses perdent à cette occasion les prérogatives de leur naissance. La symbolique des signes extérieurs de la dignité est si forte qu'elle provoque les larmes de Mlle de Clèves, de la maison de Nevers, consciente de la dévalorisation de son statut à l'occasion d'un mariage qu'elle juge hypogamique. Le 4 octobre 1560, Catherine de Clèves épouse Antoine de Croÿe en grande cérémonie : en allant à l'église, elle porte un manteau doublé d'hermine, comme l'y autorise sa dignité de princesse. « Mais après avoir été épousée, sortant de l'Eglise, ledit manteau lui fut ôté de dessus les épaules, lui faisant connoître par là qu'elle changeoit sa condition en celle de son mary, dont elle pleura. C'est qu'alors comme il est dit dans le même manuscrit, toute femme [...] tiroit son rang de son mary. Cependant Catherine de Cleves put se consoler dans la suite, lorsqu'elle reprit son état de princesse en épousant en secondes noces Henri le Balafre Duc de Guise »¹⁰. La place de l'épouse est donc celle du mari, sans considération pour son lignage d'origine, comme en témoigne encore cette explication relative aux officiers : « les rangs vont selon la condition et qualité des personnes, et par ainsy, que si le premier president precede le marquis et le Conte, sa femme precedera celle du marquis et du Comte »¹¹. L'ordre cérémoniel évoqué ici suppose une séparation des genres, selon un parallèle exact entre les hiérarchies masculines et féminines. La symétrie est manifeste dans l'organisation de la procession menée à l'occasion des Etats Généraux, le 26 octobre 1614. Le document se présente ainsi :

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A main droicte | A main gauche |
| Le Roy | La Royne |
| Les Princes | Les princesses |
| Les Ducs et Pairs | Les Duchesses |
| La Cour de Parlement | La Chambre des comptes |
| derriere les Ducs, un peu plus | un peu moins avancée |
| esloignée d'eulx | que la Cour de Parlement |

⁵ BNF, Ms. Clair 515, p. 605.

⁶ BNF, Ms. Fr. 14013, « De l'autorité des reynes de France », fol. 24 v°.

⁷ BNF, Ms. Fr. 7012, « Reynes de France », fol. 373.

⁸ BNF, Ms. Clair 515, p. 564.

⁹ BNF, Ms. Fr. 16214, « Mémoire », fol. 45.

¹⁰ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20824, fol. 188.

¹¹ BNF, Ms. NAF 7236, fol. 42 v°.

En suite la Cour des Aydes. Le prevost des Marchans
Faict a Paris le 23 octobre 1614¹².

Il n'est pas rare non plus que les hiérarchies se jouent dans un milieu strictement féminin, comme à la cour de la reine par exemple. Dans ce cas, la préséance se règle selon les mêmes critères, et comme en miroir, des préséances masculines. Mais nombre de cérémonies peuvent mêler hommes et femmes et les places assignées prennent moins en considération le sexe que la dignité de chacun. Disposés de part et d'autre du roi, les convives qui participent au repas donné pour le baptême se répartissent autour de la table en fonction de leurs qualités¹³. Il est à noter que le roi est sans rang, tandis que la reine occupe, à sa droite, la place la plus honorable. Lorsque les époux sont associés dans l'ordre des préséances, la femme passe toujours après le mari. Elle représente ainsi l'ultime degré de distinction hiérarchique, aux côtés de l'époux mais en position inférieure.

Il apparaît donc que, si la femme est subordonnée à son mari, elle n'est pourtant pas en position d'absolue infériorité dans un monde masculin puisqu'elle précèdera toujours un homme de qualité inférieure. La place occupée par l'épouse rend tout autant compte de celle de l'époux que l'inverse, et il n'est pas rare de voir un homme défendre l'honneur de sa femme, lequel est également le sien. Le processus de réciprocité qui engage l'assignation des places unit finalement les époux dans un même intérêt de défense de leurs droits et de l'honneur de leur maison.

Les filles et le père

Si le rang des femmes semble relativement simple, celui des filles est plus compliqué ; il contribue alors à brouiller le paysage cérémoniel. En théorie, les filles n'ont pas de rang, et la femme mariée passe naturellement en premier. Pourtant, dans les lignées prestigieuses, les demoiselles ne peuvent se trouver hors de rang à la cour, et c'est précisément sur ce point que l'affaire se complique. Les principes de la préséance imposent que la femme suive son mari, et que les épouses et mères précèdent les filles. Mais cette simple affirmation suppose déjà de reconnaître une place aux filles, ce qui se vérifie dans nombre de cérémonies. Il convient ici de distinguer le sort des princesses, en particuliers celles du sang qui gardent de leur naissance des marques de prééminence. Du Tillet précise dans son *Traité* que « le premier rang est entendu après les Roynes, Messeigneurs fils et Mesdames filles de France, personnes censées les mesmes des rois »¹⁴. La progéniture royale est naturellement hors compétition, et les filles une fois mariées ne se trouvent sans rang que parce qu'elles quittent le royaume pour s'allier à des dynasties étrangères. Les situations se déclinent ensuite, par ordre de naissance : la fille aînée du premier prince du sang tient le rang de son père, mais pas ses sœurs cadettes qui passent après les princesses mariées¹⁵. Toutes, cependant, ont un statut supérieur qui célèbre leurs origines, y compris celles des maisons étrangères vivant à la cour, car « les filles dans les maisons de princes issus de souverains ont toutes les prérogatives de Princesses comme leurs mères »¹⁶, au moins depuis le milieu du XVII^e siècle. Le rang de naissance est un privilège que certains conservent quel que soit leur état. Ainsi en est-il des princesses du sang « qui seules avoient le droit de garder leur rang si celui de leurs maris étoit moindre. Les autres princesses le perdoient en pareil cas »¹⁷. Descendantes en ligne masculine des rois de France, elles célèbrent leur appartenance à la tige royale au-delà du mariage, échappant au déclassement que provoque habituellement une alliance hypogamique.

¹² BNF, Ms. Fr. 18514, fol. 151 : « Extrait de l'ordre que le Roy veult estre observé en la procession generale que sa majesté entend faire dimanche 26 octobre 1614 ».

¹³ Cf. BNF, Ms. Clair 718, p. 204 : « ceremonies observees au baptesme de Mr le Dauphin le 4 septembre 1606. Assiette de la table du roi ».

¹⁴ Jean Du Tillet, « Recueil des rangs des grands de France, dédié au Roy Charles neufiesme », dans *Recueil des Roys de France, leurs couronne et maison* Paris, Houzé, 1601 (bnf 4-L35-54B), p. 9.

¹⁵ BNF, Ms. Fr. 18514, « Mémoire pour le rang des princes et grands », fol. 25.

¹⁶ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20826, fol. 8 v°.

¹⁷ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol 103.

Afin de clarifier l'exposé, il est possible de récapituler la situation de la progéniture de sexe féminin, au risque d'une répétition peut-être pas inutile. Si les filles n'ont en principe guère de place assignée, elles bénéficient cependant au plus haut niveau de rangs spécifiques, selon quelques règles bien établies. Il s'avère donc que les filles de France sont supérieures à toutes les dames, exceptée leur mère. Les filles du premier prince du sang passent devant toutes, sauf les reines et filles de France. Les princesses du sang précèdent les autres princesses non du sang, même mariées ; une fois mariées, elles peuvent garder le rang de leur naissance (à condition de rester dans le royaume, car seules les princesses du sang gardent leur rang)¹⁸. Les princesses étrangères (filles de princes issus de maisons souveraines étrangères) marchent avant les duchesses mariées non princesses¹⁹ ; une fois mariées, elles perdent leur rang, sauf si le roi leur accorde un brevet pour le conserver. Il en est de même pour les filles naturelles des rois, légitimées (elles ont un rang intermédiaire entre princesses du sang et princesses étrangères, mais se plient aux règles qui valent pour les princesses filles étrangères).

L'échelle des privilèges accordés aux filles de familles souveraines se mesure bien à l'aune des qualités princières. La proximité au trône de France, voire la capacité successorale des pères, détermine encore la place des filles, selon une gradation des valeurs qui émancipe à divers degrés de la règle commune. La monarchie n'entend pas traiter les enfants de France comme de simples sujets, fussent-ils de hautes lignées, et leur accorde un statut dérogoire dont les effets s'atténuent en s'éloignant du trône. Elle associe bientôt les princes souverains à de tels privilèges, mais le titre de princesse se limite à leurs filles tant qu'elles restent sous l'autorité paternelle²⁰. Mariées, les princesses étrangères se rangent aux côtés du mari²¹, à moins qu'un brevet ne les maintienne dans leur place initiale²². Il en est de même des filles légitimées des rois de France, qui trouvent avec Henri IV une position intermédiaire entre princesses du sang et princesses étrangères, sans bénéficier cependant des avantages de ces premières²³.

En sommes, seules des demoiselles issues en lignes masculines (et légitimes) de la prestigieuse maison de France portent toute leur vie, par droit de naissance, les marques de leurs illustres origines²⁴. Leur incorporation en autre lignée à l'occasion des noces n'est jamais absolue ; elles l'expriment clairement par le rang qu'elles occupent. En termes patrimoniaux, cela tire peu à conséquence : elles n'ont aucun droit à la succession paternelle et il ne s'agit là que de distinctions purement honorifiques²⁵.

¹⁸ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 24 & 103 ; BNF, Ms. NAF 7236, fol. 42.

¹⁹ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 263 ; BNF, Ms. Fr. 20826, fol. 27.

²⁰ Par ex. BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 152 (« Mlle de Nevers, non mariée, au-dessus de Mme de Retz, duchesse et mariée ») et fol. 174 v° (« les filles des princes de la maison de Lorraine non mariées précèdent les duchesses mariées qui ne sont princesses »).

²¹ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 27 v° « les autres dames meme princesses de naissance, mais non du sang, perdoient leur rang en pareille circonstance ».

²² C'est le cas pour Marguerite de Lorraine-Vaudémont, lors de son mariage avec le duc de Joyeuse, le 24 septembre 1581. Cf. BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 103. Il est à noter cependant que, par le règlement du 12 mars 1710, une princesses du sang autre que fille de France se maintient à son rang de naissance « pourveu toutefois que le Roy le luy ait conservé », BNF, Ms. Fr. 16214, fol. 76.

²³ F. Cosandey, « Ordonner à la Cour. Entre promotion du sang et célébration de la personne royale », à paraître dans les actes du colloque *Réconciliation et reconstruction en France aux lendemains des conflits religieux* (Université de Laval, Québec).

²⁴ BNF, Ms. Fr. 16214, fol. 49 v° : précise ce qui est réservé exclusivement aux « filles qui [ont] l'honneur de toucher de si près à la personne de la Majesté royale ». Dans le BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 27 v° : « c'étoit même un privilège qui leur étoit particulier. ». Ailleurs (BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 108, sur feuille volante) : « Car la maison Royale est au-dessus de toutes les autres ».

²⁵ Cela peut être considéré comme une sorte de compensation sans frais pour leur totale exhérédation. Il est d'ailleurs à noter que les lignes maternelles sont absentes du processus, et que les filles elles-mêmes ne transmettent rien de ces distinctions à leur descendance. Pour autant, ce n'est pas sans problème, car cela revient à faire passer l'épouse devant l'époux. Cf. BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 27 v° : « les princesses du sang mariées à des princes issus de maisons souveraines ont constamment conservé le rang de leur naissance ».

Les veuves

Pour ce qui est des veuves, elles conservent en principe le rang de leur mari, à condition qu'elles ne se remarient pas²⁶. Concernant les princesses du sang, l'ambiguïté demeure car certains documents stipulent que seules les filles de rois ont le droit de reprendre leurs qualités de naissance (seulement si elles sont plus favorables²⁷), ce qui semble une hypothèse peu convaincante si l'on tient compte du fait qu'elles bénéficient déjà du privilège de conserver leur rang, même mariées. D'autres textes affirment que cette possibilité est accordée « aux veuves des princes du sang ou autres »²⁸. Il semble en définitive que les princesses (du sang, de maisons souveraines étrangères), puissent choisir entre le rang de l'époux et celui du père lorsqu'elles sont veuves.

Ainsi, pour la très grande majorité des femmes du royaume, leur sort dans le cérémonial se joue lors du mariage : elles acquièrent alors le rang et dignité de l'époux, occupant une même place (bien que toujours derrière lui), représentant les mêmes valeurs sociales, jusque dans le veuvage qui les maintient dans la position acquise avec les noces²⁹. À la cour, cependant, en ces lieux de pouvoir où évoluent les détenteurs des plus hautes dignités, et où de ce fait les tensions cérémonielles se font les plus aiguës, la destinée des femmes varie selon la naissance. Et si là encore la plupart d'entre elles partagent le sort de l'époux, nombre disposent aussi de ressources personnelles qui leur réserve une marge de manœuvre propre à leur sexe. En effet, la position des hommes est strictement conditionnée par leur capacité successorale et par le statut que leur confère la détention d'un fief, d'un office, d'une fonction. Celle des femmes est à la fois plus restreinte (car liée à l'époux) et plus large puisque la dérogation royale, voire les choix dont elles disposent, peuvent constituer des alternatives qui modifient leur inscription dans l'espace social. De cela, elles savent jouer, comme elles savent, aussi, s'imposer à travers les ressources de leurs propres lignages afin de promouvoir la lignée à laquelle elles sont associées par le mariage, puis par la maternité.

II. Protéger le patrimoine

Moins visibles que les hommes sur la scène politique, tant par la limitation des lieux d'expression qui leur sont accordés que par le fait qu'elles sont bien souvent implicitement comprises dans le rang du mari³⁰, les femmes sont cependant tout autant impliquées dans les querelles de préséances. Seulement, elles apparaissent essentiellement dans des conflits qui les opposent entre elles, et les occasions sont alors plus rares de manifester les tensions que pour des hommes constamment confrontés à des rivalités qui mettent aussi en jeu leurs fonctions politiques. La défense d'intérêts communs les implique pourtant elles aussi, et les couples savent mobiliser les atouts des deux sexes pour faire valoir leurs droits. Car le rang est aussi affaire de patrimoine. Il s'agit chaque fois de dire son état, d'engager son héritage, de préserver l'honneur et la dignité de ceux qui sont en cause. Dès lors, et considérant que l'épouse est partie prenante dans la constitution des patrimoines (par leurs dots, mais aussi par leurs propres capacités successorales)³¹, les différentes branches réunies par l'alliance peuvent fournir des arguments de poids pour justifier d'une place contestée. La mobilisation des femmes intervient à un double niveau : elle s'explique par la nécessité de maintenir des droits sur

²⁶ Voir par exemple, Affaires Etrangères, Mémoires & Documents, France, 190, p. 23 : « les femmes tiennent entr'elles le rang de leurs maris, et aussy font les veuves si elles ne se remarient à personne de moindre qualité ». Sur la condition de la veuve, S. Beauvalet-Boutouyrie, *Etre veuve sous l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, Belin, 2001, notamment ch. 5.

²⁷ BNF, Ms. Fr. 18514, « Mémoire pour le rang des princes et grands », fol. 25.

²⁸ BNF, Ms. Fr. 4338, « Reigles des ceremonies de France », fol. 51.

²⁹ Cette affirmation mérite d'être étayée par une étude élargie à l'ensemble de la société. Les conclusions présentées ici ne reposent que sur l'analyse de la société curiale, et ne font à ce titre que proposer des pistes de réflexion.

³⁰ Cf. BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 42 v° : l'auteur précise que « les rangs y estoient gardés dans l'ordre suivant » en ne faisant référence qu'aux hommes.

³¹ M. Nassiet, *Parenté, noblesse et Etats dynastiques*, Paris, Ed. de l'EHESS, 2000 ; E. Haddad, *Fondation et ruine d'une « maison »*. *Histoire sociale des comtes de Belin*, Limoges, Pulim, 2009.

l'héritage de leurs ascendants, qu'elles peuvent un jour faire valoir et transmettre ; elle est motivée aussi par la valeur ajoutée qu'elles apportent aux lignages dans lesquels elles s'intègrent.

Défendre ses droits

Ainsi, dans un régime dynastique où l'organisation familiale forme la base des structures politiques³², l'intervention des femmes sur la scène du pouvoir passe essentiellement par l'affirmation de leurs propres qualités lignagères associées à celles de l'époux. C'est bien ce dont rendent compte les rangs en donnant à voir la puissance du couple dans toute sa profondeur généalogique. Maintenir une position prééminente dans la hiérarchie curiale est une manière d'exprimer sa place dans l'ordre de succession. Le champ lexical de la transmission est encore celui qui détermine l'attribution des rangs : la préséance de la princesse Louise de Savoie s'explique par le fait qu'elle « étoit fille d'un prince étranger et d'une princesse du sang de la branche de Soissons, cadette des Condé »³³ ; quant à la duchesse de Longueville, elle « étoit de la maison de condé, et précédoit la princesse de Carignan, de la maison de Soissons branche cadette des Condé »³⁴. Les exemples peuvent être multipliés, il en est des filles comme des garçons, celles de la branche aînée passent devant celles de la branche cadette, et ainsi de suite par ordre de naissance³⁵.

Plus qu'une simple prérogative d'honneur, il y a là des enjeux qui peuvent s'avérer considérables. Le cas de la querelle entre la Grande Duchesse de Toscane et ses sœurs pour la succession de Mme de Guise est éclairant. Mariée à l'étranger au Grand-duc de Toscane, Marguerite-Louise d'Orléans, fille de Gaston, perd théoriquement dans le royaume son rang et ses droits³⁶. Mais le roi voulant cependant l'admettre à la succession de sa sœur, les juristes développent une argumentation hasardeuse, malgré « les lois du royaume qui excluent une femme française mariée en pays étranger de recueillir des successions dans le royaume pendant la vie de son mari lorsqu'il n'est pas naturalisé »³⁷. Ce qui conduit l'auteur de ce mémoire à préciser : « Droits d'une P. du sang. Bon pour le rang comme pour les biens »³⁸. Sans équivoque, conserver un rang dans le royaume permet d'y affirmer ses droits, selon un procédé qui fait pendant aux principes d'attribution des rangs en fonction de son inscription lignagère.

Mobiliser les lignages féminins

De fait, le raisonnement fonctionne dans les deux sens, et l'affirmation des droits plaide aussi en faveur de la préséance. Mr et Mme de Vendôme présentent en 1662 un mémoire « pour la conservation des droits de leur naissance, et celle de messieurs leurs enfans »³⁹, argumentant « pour ceux a qui on veut oster le rang qui leur appartient »⁴⁰. Après avoir évoqué « l'avantage de sa naissance », Vendôme mobilise les qualités de sa femme, développant sa généalogie et soulignant son

³² A. du Crest, *Modèle familial et pouvoir monarchique*, Aix en Provence, P.U d'Aix-Marseille, 2002 ; M.-T. Guerra Medici, *Donne di governo nell'Europa moderna*, Rome, Viella, 2005.

³³ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20826, fol. 14 (29 juillet 1648 : Au Te Deum à Notre-Dame pour la prise de Tortose).

³⁴ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20826, fol. 12 (15 janv. 1648 A l'entrée et seance du Roy au Parlement).

³⁵ Cf. BNF, Ms. Fr. 16214, par exemple.

³⁶ Querelles entre Mlles d'Alençon et de Valois d'une part et la princesse de Carignan d'autre part pour porter la queue de la reine, 1660, BNF, Ms. Fr. 20826, fol. 27.

³⁷ BNF, Ms. Fr. 16214, fol. 93 (A propos de la querelle entre la grande Duchesse de Toscane et de Mesdemoiselles d'orleans pour la succession de Mme de Guise sa sœur).

³⁸ BNF, Ms. Fr. 16214, fol. 87 (même querelle).

³⁹ BNF, Ms. Fr. 16215, « Memoire présenté au Roy par Monsieur et Madame de Vandosme, pour la conservation des droits de leur naissance, et celle de Messieurs leurs Enfans, le douzieme fevrier 1662 », fol. 37.

⁴⁰ BNF, Ms. Fr. 16215, fol. 37 (même mémoire).

appartenance à une souveraineté qui tombe en quenouille⁴¹. Tout est dit, des règles successorales à l'inscription dynastique de celle qui transmet à ses enfants « le rang et les prérogatives » attachés à ces droits considérés comme autant de bénéfices dont profite également l'époux. Le prince de Talmont insiste lui aussi sur la branche maternelle de ses aïeux (descendants de Charlotte d'Aragon, fille du dernier roi de Naples) lorsqu'il réclame la jouissance de « prérogatives légitimement dues »⁴². C'est encore par droits de naissance et par la possession de fiefs hérités de sa mère que la grande Mademoiselle, fille de Gaston d'Orléans et de Marie de Montpensier, prend rang parmi les ducs et pairs⁴³.

Affaires de familles, questions de biens, les querelles de préséances sont des entreprises collectives auxquelles les femmes n'hésitent pas à prendre une part active. Ici, Mme de Mercoeur défend le titre de prince que l'avocat Servien conteste à son mari⁴⁴; là Monsieur de Longueville mandate sa femme pour rassembler les preuves de leur prééminence⁴⁵. Il arrive aussi que « le rang qu'elle tient dans le royaume » n'étant pas respecté, telle dame s'abstienne de participer à une cérémonie, pour ne préjudicier ni à elle, ni à son mari, ni à ses enfants, procédant exactement comme un homme, et pour les mêmes raisons⁴⁶. Un mari peut aussi quitter la cour, et éloigner sa femme d'une manifestation qui ne célèbre pas à sa juste valeur la dignité de la maison : le comte de Soissons préfère se retirer en sa demeure de Montigny que de laisser sa femme paraître au couronnement de Marie de Médicis sans un manteau orné de trois rangs de fleurs de lys « pour faire distinction de leurs manteaux à ceux des autres princesses »⁴⁷. Mieux encore, les querelles de préséances peuvent dépasser le cadre familial pour engager tout un corps qui se vit menacé par une contestation relative à l'épouse de l'un d'entre eux : dans un « Memoire sur les rangs et seances de Mrs les ducs et pairs.... », le duc d'Uzes est prié d'envoyer une relation exacte du conflit qui a opposé la duchesse à la dame d'honneur de la reine, « le corps estant porté d'une grande affection pour tout ce qui regarde les interets de la dignité »⁴⁸. En guise de garantie, les ducs et pairs ajoutent « qu'il ne faut pas douter [qu'ils] ne fassent leur devoir avec chaleur pour conserver les honneurs et prerogatives appartenants à leur dignité ». Cet épisode dit assez combien les femmes sont intégrées au processus politique de représentation par le rang ; leur participation à la hiérarchie curiale les implique dans la sphère du pouvoir au point de mobiliser tout un corps, à l'instar d'une querelle entre membres d'institutions concurrentes. Parce que constitutives du lignage, les femmes sont participatives de la vie politique.

Leurs qualités intrinsèques accroissent celles du lignage, et il n'est pas rare de voir invoquées les généalogies pour prouver, par le prestige des maisons alliées, la valeur d'un nom soutenu par le rang. Ainsi, dans un recueil consacré aux querelles de préséances, figure un document relatant les « Rangs et alliances de la maison de Rohan depuis 600 ans », sorte de catalogue prouvant par l'ascendance la place occupée⁴⁹. Au milieu du XVI^e siècle, le crédit des Guises, confirmé par l'honneur de s'asseoir au cercle de la reine, doit beaucoup à la parenté qu'ils ont avec Marie Stuart⁵⁰. Le cardinal de Lorraine explique aux plus grands princes de la cour, et jusqu'au roi, qu'en vertu des

⁴¹ Une affaire assez proche qui mobilise à la fois les questions de transmissions féminines et de droits est bien analysée par S. Hanley, « La primauté masculine en question : Longueville contre Nemours », I. Poutrin et M. K. Schaub (Dir.), *Femmes et pouvoir politique. Les princesses d'Europe, XVe-XVIII^e siècle*, Rosny-sous-Bois, Bréal, 2007, p. 146-162.

⁴² BNF, Ms. Clair 719, « Pretention de Mr le Prince de Talmont », p. 111.

⁴³ BNF, Ms. Clair 721, « Memoires du rang des Princes, noms et Dignitez de la maison royale de France 1662 », p. 349.

⁴⁴ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 168.

⁴⁵ Bibl. de l'Institut, Fonds God. 396, « Extrait d'une lettre de son Al. Mons le duc de Longueville qui a pour adresse A Mons. Aubert, Aumosnier de ma femme. De Rouen le 25 fev. 1662 », fol. 349.

⁴⁶ Bibl. de l'Institut, Fonds God. 396, « Brevet de Charles IX en faveur de Mme de Longueville, à l'occasion des noces royales à Mezières en 1570 », fol. 329.

⁴⁷ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, « Couronnement de Marie de Médicis », p. 216.

⁴⁸ BNF, Ms. Clair 721, « Memoire sur les rangs et seances de Messrs les Ducs et Pairs dans les ceremonies d'entrées et autres », p. 237.

⁴⁹ BNF, Ms. Clair 721, p. 457. Document imprimé.

⁵⁰ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20824, fol. 180. Voir aussi fol. 91 où, sous Louis XIV encore, les Guises se targuent d'être « honorés de quelque alliance avec la famille de nos rois ».

multiples alliances matrimoniales conclues avec eux, ils sont tous parents, et qu'à ce titre, il estime, leur dit-il, que « vous tous devez garder mon honneur qui est le votre »⁵¹. Par le règlement de 1572, Charles IX n'autorise l'entrée à cheval ou en chariot dans la cour du Louvre qu'à ses plus proches parents et les trois princes étrangers (de Lorraine, de Savoie et de Ferrare) qui ont épousé des filles de France⁵². La remarquable promotion de la duchesse de Mantoue, qui obtient, lors de sa visite à la cour de France, le pas sur tous les princes, y compris ceux du sang, tient à ce qu'elle est la sœur de la reine Marie de Médicis. Cela provoque la fureur des princes du sang, lesquels « trouvoient fort extraordinaire que les Princes de la première maison de l'Europe fussent précédés par un Duc de fraîche date descendu d'un simple bourgeois de Mantoue »⁵³. Bien que la duchesse soit promue pour elle-même, le duc est décrié pour cet exorbitant privilège. Chaque fois, la valeur sociale de l'épouse rehausse celle du mari.

Les femmes sont ainsi sources d'honneurs à la cour, en particuliers lorsqu'elles s'apparentent aux souverains régnants. Elles peuvent aussi apporter la preuve d'une prééminence (« les filles de ceste maison ont eu de tout temps le tabouret et ensuite tous les autres honneurs qui l'accompagnent » affirme le comte de Fleix pour défendre son rang⁵⁴) ou, à contrario, n'être d'aucun soutien aux prétentions d'une maison, comme dans l'affaire des Rupelmonde où il est bien montré qu'ils ne se distinguent ni par les hommes, ni par les femmes⁵⁵.

III. Une promotion par les femmes ; une promotion des femmes

Outre le prestige qu'apporte une alliance, et le renforcement, finalement, d'un monde du pouvoir relativement fermé par des mariages homogamiques, le jeu des unions lignagères peut aussi être l'occasion d'une promotion qui passe par les femmes quand elle ne peut se faire par les hommes. En effet, la position plus souple dévolue à ces dernières (notamment par l'ambiguïté d'un statut qui doit au père et au mari), le changement d'état inhérent au parcours féminin (de fille à épouse, et parfois à veuve), le poids des lignages et des patrimoines dont elles sont porteuses (les valeurs de leurs ancêtres associés à ceux des maris), permettent finalement à la monarchie de miser sur les femmes en octroyant des privilèges qui sont de subtiles touches de distinctions accordées à ses serviteurs. Les femmes apparaissent alors comme des agents de la distinction quand elles ne sont pas actrices de leur propre ascension.

Passer par les femmes

En fait, la dépendance féminine à l'égard de l'autorité masculine, interprétée comme une faiblesse, peut également apparaître comme une force lorsqu'elle est analysée en termes d'association, et donc d'addition de potentialités⁵⁶. La réciprocité des statuts entre époux, qui fait que la position de l'un engage celle de l'autre, n'empêche pas une distinction de ces deux individualités, distinction qui se vérifie au dernier degré de la structure hiérarchique puisque à niveau égal la femme passe toujours

⁵¹ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 61 : « V. M. sire est le 1er de notre parenté car encore que je ne sois pour parvenir à la couronne, si ai-je l'honneur d'être de votre sang et de vos plus proches (au dessus : prochains) parens, et vous Madame, dit il a la Reine, scavez tres bien que j'ay aussi cet honneur d'être votre Parent ; vous M. le Prince de Condé et vous M. le Card. de Bourbon êtes mes deux cousins germains. Vous M. de Montpensier, m'êtes bien proche parent ; vous Mrs de Nevers, Nemours et vous Mr de Longueville avez epousé mes nieces. Par quoi V. M., premiere, et vous tous devez garder mon honneur qui est le votre. » (Discours du cardinal de Lorraine au conseil du roi tenu à Moulins le 12 janvier 1566.)

⁵² BNF, Ms. Clair 721, « Memoire sur les honneurs dont jouissent chez le Roy les princes, Ducs et Pairs, Ducs non pairs, officiers de la Couronne et autres seigneurs qui vont estre raportez », p. 491.

⁵³ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, p. 214 (baptême du Dauphin, 1606).

⁵⁴ BNF, Ms. Clair 718, « Memoire du Comte de Fleix pour defendre son rang », p. 248.

⁵⁵ BNF, Ms. Clair 719, « Manteaux ducaux, manteaux comtaux », p. 107.

⁵⁶ Cette proposition vaut d'ailleurs tout autant pour le monde masculin ; si la femme est liée au mari, c'est bien que l'homme est lui aussi lié à la femme, et de ce point de vue il n'est pas plus libre qu'elle : leurs actions engagent le couple, et au-delà tout le lignage, dans les deux cas.

après le mari, et la fille derrière le père. La monarchie se saisit de cette ultime disjonction dans un rapport hiérarchique pour reconnaître à la femme une position d'exception qui n'interfère pas sur le statut de l'époux ou du père, mais le valorise pourtant, par ricochet.

Aux revendications de Mr de Monaco d'être reconnu comme prince étranger alors qu'il a rang au titre de duc de Valentinois, Louis XIV répond par une faveur accordée à sa fille (laquelle peut s'asseoir devant la reine⁵⁷) ; en 1707, le prince de Talmont fait reconnaître, à travers son épouse, les qualités qu'il invoque en raison de ses ancêtres et qui justifient ses privilèges, puisque le roi « luy a accordé cette grace pour sa femme, a condition que cette mesme grace ne pourra passer a aucun de leurs enfans, et Sa Majesté n'ayant voulu luy donner pour cela aucun Brevet ny autre expedition, m'a commandé d'en faire mention sur le present Registre »⁵⁸. La princesse de Talmont jouit alors « de tous les honneurs au Louvre » selon les vœux du prince, mais c'est bien sur elle seule que repose l'honneur de célébrer les origines de son mari⁵⁹. La distinction, purement personnelle, n'implique en rien la lignée, et reste suspendue aux volontés du monarque. Quant au chancelier, les prérogatives dont il peut se targuer chez le roi trouvent sa traduction au féminin puisque « sa femme jouy de quelques honneurs à la toilette de la Reyne »⁶⁰.

Dans les affaires diplomatiques, l'alternative offerte par la condition féminine (la femme occupant à la fois une position équivalente et légèrement inférieure à l'homme) offre bien des solutions de sortie de crise. En accordant à l'épouse ce qui est refusé au mari, le cérémonial comble les deux partis puisque aucun ne cède vraiment : la supériorité de l'un n'est pas absolument reconnue ; la renonciation de l'autre n'est pas enregistrée non plus. En 1634 par exemple, le nonce Bologneti refuse de visiter le premier M. le Prince (Henri de Bourbon, duc de Condé) et ce dernier n'entend pas se déplacer d'abord. Finalement, le nonce se rend chez la princesse de Condé, et y rencontre le prince, par un hasard soigneusement orchestré. Ils se font alors les civilités d'usage à la satisfaction générale⁶¹. Les mémoires de Saintot, introducteur des ambassadeurs, regorge d'anecdotes de cette sorte qui montre l'utilisation des positions féminines pour résoudre les tensions que provoquent les préséances.

À un autre niveau, la qualité de l'épouse entraîne parfois la réévaluation du statut de l'époux. Les mariages peuvent servir à récompenser de fidèles serviteurs en élevant celui qui doit être en mesure de s'allier à des lignages nettement supérieurs. Les filles des familles souveraines accréditent ainsi la promotion des grands. Un « brevet de préséance » est accordé au duc de Montmorency « a cause de la proximité et affinité dont il appartient à sa Majesté, ayant épousé sa sœur naturelle et légitimée de France »⁶². S'il y a une part de compensation pour des noces conclues contre la volonté de ce prince, il s'agit aussi de donner des distinctions à l'époux d'une sœur (bien que par la main gauche) du souverain régnant, et honorer l'alliance. L'érection de la terre de Joyeuse en duché-pairie procède du même principe : promis à Marguerite de Lorraine-Vaudémont, sœur cadette de la reine, ce favori d'Henri III bénéficie d'une ascension qui le rende digne d'une telle alliance, et lui permette de prendre

⁵⁷ BNF, Ms., Clair 719, « Memoire », p. 103 « Mr. de Monaco, dont nous venons de parler, n'a de rang que comme Duc de Valentinois, la seule distinction qu'on luy a donnée a été de faire asseoir sa fille comme Mr de la Trimouille fait asseoir les siennes ».

⁵⁸ BNF, Ms. Clair 719, « Pretention de Mr le Prince de Talmont », p. 111, daté du 28 novembre 1707.

⁵⁹ Nous sommes là dans un processus d'inversion des représentations par rapport à la règle ordinaire, qui veut que « le mari tient le rang des terres et seigneuries qui appartiennent à sa femme », *Affaires Etrangères, Mémoires et Documents*, France, 190, p. 23.

⁶⁰ BNF, Ms. Clair 721, « Memoire sur les honneurs dont jouissent chez le Roy les princes, Ducs et Pairs, Ducs non pairs, officiers de la Couronne et autres seigneurs qui vont estre raportez » (1696), p. 509.

⁶¹ BNF, Ms. Fr. 14117, « Mémoires de Mr de Saintot », p. 96-97 : « En 1634, le Nonce Bologneti faisoit difficulté de visiter le premier M. le Prince qui estoit Henry de Bourbon, et M. le Prince ne vouloit pas aussi estre le premier à le visiter : On convint que le Nonce iroit voir Mad.e la Princesse, que M. le Prince surviendroit à la visite, où il demeureroit pour avoir occasion de le conduire à son carosse qu'il verroit partir ; que de la le Nonce prendroit pretexte de venir le remercier de ses honestetés et qu'ensuite M. le Prince iroit luy rendre sa visite ou il seroit receu par le Nonce en camail et en Rochet, ce qu'on exigea de luy tant pour la visite qu'il devoit faire à M. le Prince que pour celle que M. le Prince luy devoit rendre. Il n'estoit venu qu'en habit ordinaire voir Madame la Princesse ; mais depuis les Nonces sont venus voir en Rochet, et en Camail les Princesses, et ont continué a rendre visite les premiers aux Princes ».

⁶² BNF, Ms. Fr. 18515, « Brevet de préséance pour M. de Montmorency » (décembre 1577), fol. 31. Original sur parchemin.

place à la table royale. Le duc de la Valette suit l'exemple de Joyeuse, voit à son tour sa terre d'Epéron érigée en duché-pairie, et obtient lui aussi de précéder partout les autres ducs et pairs « en considération du mariage de ce seigneur avec une autre princesse de Lorraine-Vaudémont »⁶³. C'est donc bien en se mariant au plus haut, et parce qu'il ne convient pas de dévaluer la parentèle royale, que les ducs obtiennent une préséance qui se confirme encore au règne suivant, puisque Villeroy, dans son *Traité des rangs*, rappelle la prééminence de Joyeuse et d'Epéron sur tous ceux qui ne sont pas princes⁶⁴.

Promotion des femmes à la cour

L'interaction des mondes féminins et masculins dans l'espace de la cour permet aux dames de se faire ambassadrices de la puissance lignagère. Mais la séparation des maisons royales autorise par ailleurs la co-existence de deux cours, celle du roi et celle de la reine, au sein desquelles hommes et femmes œuvrent séparément à leur prééminence. Autour de la souveraine gravite ainsi une population féminine qui rivalise avec la même ardeur pour faire valoir ses droits que dans les cercles du pouvoir masculin. Car si la reine n'a « que les principes de la puissance royale », elle reste pourtant maîtresse chez elle. L'organisation hiérarchique se structure sur les mêmes bases que dans l'entourage du roi, la majesté constituant le point focal à partir duquel se déclinent les degrés d'honneurs. En cela, la maison de la reine offre aux familles admises à la cour une autre source de grâces, et l'occasion de promotion qui ne passe pas par l'exercice d'un pouvoir politique ou militaire mais par le service (charges féminines) et la capacité à imposer son rang. Là, les femmes agissent par elles-mêmes, quelquefois pour elles-mêmes, et la question des préséances au féminin, si elle est moins présente que celle qui révèle les rivalités masculines, fait pourtant l'objet d'une attention particulière qui se traduit notamment par la collation d'informations à ce propos⁶⁵. Les contestations qui surviennent entre les dames peuvent provoquer des changements dans le cérémonial, d'autant plus lorsque les disputes mettent en scène princesses et duchesses. Elles entraînent parfois la disparition d'une coutume (les nonces cessent ainsi de visiter duchesses et princesses étrangères sous Louis XIV « à cause des contestations de préséances qui arrivoient souvent entre elles »⁶⁶), parfois la victoire d'une dignité en particulier, tel ce triomphe des princesses du sang à propos de la queue de leur manteau, afin de présenter « des distinctions plus marquées »⁶⁷.

Les dames de la cour savent aussi profiter de l'inexpérience de la reine pour modifier les rangs. Les mazarinades qui circulent sur les querelles de tabouret et la valse des brevets lors des premières années de la régence d'Anne d'Autriche sont bien significatives des désordres provoqués par des ambitions féminines qui accompagnent celles des hommes exprimés sur d'autres terrains⁶⁸. Dans le domaine des préséances, où toute brèche est occasion d'inversion de places, le potentiel qu'offre aux familles l'espace féminin de la cour royale multiplie encore les possibilités de déplacements, et donc de promotion. Ce monde mouvant traversé d'incessantes querelles qu'entretient l'incertitude des places au regard des multiples critères d'attribution est aussi une extraordinaire source d'ascension sociale, ou bien de déclassement. Les femmes, porteuses des valeurs du lignage, savent mobiliser les codes de la représentation et les instruments politiques pour favoriser ceux auxquels elles sont liées par mariage ou par filiation.

⁶³ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 84 & 85. Sur la carrière des favoris, voir N. Le Roux, *La faveur du roi. Mignons et courtisans au temps des Valois*, Seyssel, ChampVallon, 2001.

⁶⁴ Bibl. de l'Institut, Fonds God. 389, par exemple, qui résume les conclusions de Villeroy. Il existe une multitude de copies manuscrites de ce traité.

⁶⁵ Dans BNF, Ms. NAF 9632, par exemple, est inséré au fol. 346 un petit cahier de notes prises en continue sur divers sujets et divers époques, jusqu'au règne de Louis XIV, et intitulé « des dames de la cour et autres choses ».

⁶⁶ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20825, fol. 249.

⁶⁷ BNF, Ms. Fr. 20826, fol. 19 (en marge : « changement dans le cérémonial en faveur des princesses du sang », sous le règne de Louis XIV).

⁶⁸ F Cosandey, « Les préséances à la cour des reines de France », I. Poutrin et M. K. Schaub (Dir.), *Femmes et pouvoir politique. Les princesses d'Europe, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, Rosny-sous-Bois, Bréal, 2007, p. 267-278.

Il est encore un champs qui, traditionnellement attribué aux hommes, est pourtant investi par les femmes : celui des charges, qui ne sont pas offices. La question de la dame d'honneur a fait couler beaucoup d'encre⁶⁹. Car la nature de la charge, et les obligations de service, impliquent des privilèges qui permettent à certaines de s'élever au-dessus de sa condition, ce qui suscite des conflits innombrables. Si, traditionnellement, la monarchie est attentive à mettre en adéquation les qualités du lignage et la dignité de dame d'honneur (en prenant une duchesse par exemple), il n'en a pas toujours été ainsi, et se pose alors, exactement comme pour les hommes, le problème de la valeur intrinsèque de celle qui exerce ses fonctions au plus près de la majesté royale. Outre des revenus substantiels, cette charge crédite sa détentrice d'un pouvoir qui se mesure à la proximité qu'implique ses devoirs auprès de la souveraine. Si elle a la confiance de celle-ci, c'est plus que de l'honneur : elle peut à son tour placer et récompenser et devient ainsi, pour son époux, pour ses proches, une source de bénéfices⁷⁰.

Le monde de la cour est celui du pouvoir ; en évoluant dans les cercles féminins, les dames trouvent là à s'engager dans le combat incessant pour la valorisation des lignages.

Conclusion

À travers les questions de préséances, les femmes apparaissent actrices du jeu politique. La subordination dans laquelle elles sont placées au regard de l'époux ne les paralyse pas ; compris comme une association, le couple défend des intérêts dans des espaces conjoints ou différents qui offrent de multiples possibilités d'affirmation lignagère et/ou individuelles. Car si la femme est inférieure au mari, cela n'induit pas que les femmes soient inférieures aux hommes. Dans la mesure où elle partage rangs et dignité, l'épouse est naturellement placée, à l'instar de son mari, au-dessus de tous ceux qui sont de moindre qualité. Trop souvent, la transposition du modèle familial à une structure étatique conduit à assimiler la subordination des femmes dans le couple à une position générale dans la société. La part féminine de la population devient ainsi dominée par la part masculine, dans une configuration qui entre en contradiction avec l'organisation dynastique de l'Ancien Régime. La famille prise comme référence pour justifier l'ordre politique relève d'un registre métaphorique qu'il convient de traiter comme tel, et non comme une réalité qu'aucun changement d'échelle ne modifie. Dès lors, les femmes retrouvent une position sociale qui rend compte de leurs origines.

La reconnaissance d'un monde féminin (cour de la reine), régi par les règles d'organisation, et disposé hiérarchiquement selon les critères qui prévalent encore dans le monde masculin, offre aux dames qui évoluent dans les sphères du pouvoir l'occasion d'agir par elles-mêmes, et pour elles-mêmes. Si elles sont soumises au rang du mari, elles sont aussi détentrices d'un capital social et économique qui leur confère un certain nombre d'atouts susceptibles de les démarquer, voire de les mettre en position de prééminence. Pour les filles, les mariages hypogamiques peuvent s'interpréter comme des déclassements ; ils peuvent aussi s'avérer un moyen de prendre le pas sur le mari et d'affirmer une certaine autonomie. Le choix laissé aux princesses du sang sur le rang qu'elles occupent, la mobilisation des qualités lignagères pour valoriser une alliance, la capacité à se mouvoir dans une hiérarchie mixte ou féminine, les potentialités offertes par les charges qu'elles occupent, sont autant d'éléments qui prouvent la part importante réservée aux femmes dans un contexte réputé masculin. En cela, la circulation des princesses dans le cadre restreint d'un espace politique focalisé sur les personnes royales donne à voir la complexité d'un statut de la femme investie des valeurs lignagères de l'époux et du père. Les préséances en portent témoignage.

⁶⁹ Il n'est question ici que de l'évoquer. Il s'agit d'un énorme dossier, qui mérite un traitement particulier.

⁷⁰ Ceci est manifeste dans les mémoires de Mme de Genlis. Stéphanie du Crest, comtesse de Genlis, *De l'esprit des étiquettes de l'ancienne cour et des usages du monde de ce temps*, édition du Mercure de France, 1996, notamment page 80.

Architecture and Ceremonial in Early Modern France: The Court of Maria de' Medici

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In the conclusion to a seminal article on the French gallery, Jean Guillaume observed that “in order to understand the French gallery one should not think first of the Galerie Francois I^{er} and the *Galerie des Glaces* [fig. 1], nor should one believe that the two had similar functions.”¹ Not only, the author pointed out, because they were both exceptional – and therefore not representative of the majority of galleries built in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries – but above all because their location within the respective royal apartments characterized them as radically different spaces in regards to ceremonial, accessibility, and use. Whereas the *Galerie des Glaces* preceded the *chambre du roi* (the king’s bedchamber) and was largely accessible to courtiers and visitors, the Galerie Francois I^{er} was located after the bedchamber, in an area of the apartment whose accessibility was far more limited. Using a current (and useful) terminological anachronism, the author called the latter a *private* gallery and the former a *public* one.²

Guillaume’s study explored two notions which are fundamental to the present article: first, the distinction between *shape* and *space* that the understanding of architecture in relation to function implies – since identical shapes may apply to significantly different spaces (that is, conceived and experienced in significantly different ways). Second, the transient nature of space when compared to construction – since space, in its interaction with social rules and habits, participates of the shifts in form and meaning of those rules and habits.

While galleries have drawn much attention from historians because of their often grandiose decorative schemes as well as because of their intrinsic fascination as ambivalent spaces (“passageways where one sojourns,” in André Chastel’s famous expression), they were far from being the only spaces that went through significant changes in function, location, and decoration in seventeenth-century France. The expansion of the royal apartment spatial sequence, the multiplication of rooms both preceding and following the bedchamber, the shifting of some spaces from the realm of private into that of public, the introduction of queens’ galleries paralleling the kings’, and the appearance of “exotic” features – such as summer apartments, *salons à l’italienne* (Italianate chambers) and *plafonds à l’italienne* (Italianate vaulted ceilings) – are all phenomena that emerged between the reign of Henri III (1574-1589) and that of Louis XIV (1643-1715). Yet, the majority of studies concerned with relations between architecture, social structures, and ritual in early modern France has focused on the courts of the last Valois and Versailles, thus leaving the reigns of Henri IV (1589-1610) and Louis XIII (1610-1643), as well as the regencies of Maria de’ Medici (1610-1617) and Anne of Austria (1643-1651), largely unexplored subjects.

In the present article I will explore a central chapter in the history of relations between architecture and society: the court of Maria de’ Medici. I will do so by analyzing the Luxembourg Palace, the queen’s Parisian residence (fig. 2-4). I will argue first, that scholars have misinterpreted the architectural layout of the palace both in its relation to social structures and in its distribution and use of space; and, second, that this misinterpretation has affected the reading of both the building and its decorative schemes, in particular with respect to Maria’s ambitions in the fashioning of her own image

¹ I am very grateful to John Martin and Andrew Hibbard for revising and editing my text. John has helped me also with the English translations of the early modern Italian and French sources. I also wish to thank the organizers and participants of the workshop *Moving Elites, Cultural Transfers and the Life Cycle* for their valuable observations. J. GUILLAUME, “La galerie dans le château français: place et fonction”, *Revue de l’art* 102 (1993), p. 40.

² Evidently, neither term is to be understood in its present-day sense. *Public* are called here those spaces whose accessibility was regulated by the ceremonial – that is, spaces courtiers could freely enter on the basis of rank, such as the *salle* (presence chamber), the *antichambre* (antechamber), and the bedchamber of a royal suite. Conversely, are called *private* those spaces whose accessibility was regulated by the sovereign (or the *maître des lieux*) instead of the ceremonial – that is, spaces which no one, no matter their social rank, could enter without his or her express invitation.

as queen and regent. I will then propose a new interpretative reading based on an integrated analysis of architecture, decorative schemes, space accessibility, and ceremonial.

Designed for Maria de' Medici by Salomon de Brosse, Jacques Lemercier (for the annexes), and Tommaso Francini (for the gardens) the Luxembourg Palace stands as one of the icons of early modern French architecture. Its renown is also due to the interior decoration, in which the queen employed some of the finest artists of the time, among them Philippe de Champaigne, Simon Vouet, and Peter Paul Rubens. It was for the galleries of the Luxembourg that Rubens received the commission for the famous painting cycles celebrating the queen and her late husband – the *Life of Maria de' Medici* (1622-1625) and the *Life of Henri IV* (1628-1630). The most important of Maria's enterprises as a patron of the arts, the palace absorbed her attention (and finances) for two decades, from 1611 to 1631. Thus, it not only acted as an agent in the queen's definition of her own identity as a public figure, but its history developed as inextricably intertwined with her biography and political career. Maria commissioned it in 1611, one year after the assassination of Henri IV and her nomination to the regency of the throne on behalf of their son, Louis XIII, who was then nine years old. Construction began in 1615 – one year after Louis, upon coming of age, confirmed Maria's position in government, thus *de facto* prolonging her regency – and continued throughout the political crises of the following years, including the queen's temporary estrangement from court, in 1617-1619, and the following *Guerre de la mère et du fils* (War of the mother and the son). Work on the interior decoration began upon the queen's return to court, in 1620, and to government, in 1622 (the year Rubens was summoned to Paris), as a member of the Council. The clash between Maria and her former ally cardinal Richelieu known as the *Journée des Dupes* (Day of the Dupes, 10 November 1630) took place in the Luxembourg and determined the destiny of both the queen and the palace: after her definitive exile, in 1631, work on the *basse-cour* (service courtyard) and the garden was interrupted and Rubens' *Life of Henri IV* left unfinished.³

The history of the Luxembourg is fairly well known, as the palace has been the subject of several studies.⁴ Yet several questions about its architecture have remained either unexplored or unresolved. Among them, the origins, significance, and functional aspects of a layout characterized by two features which were unprecedented in French architecture: the perfect symmetry of the two royal apartments, and their *logis doubles* – the identical clusters of rooms contained in the twin pavilions at the south end of each apartment (fig. 4).⁵

Twin apartments

Even though symmetry played a central role in Renaissance architectural theory, sixteenth-century French royal residences were typically asymmetrical buildings. The reason for this is that architects translated into planning the unique status of the king, whose apartment was distinct from everyone else's in size, position, access, external appearance, or a combination of these factors. In essence, space was not to be laid out in ways that might undermine, or fail to underline the status of

³ For Maria de' Medici's biography, see M. CARMONA, *Maria de Médicis*, Paris 1981, and J.-F. DUBOST, *Maria de Médicis: la reine dévoilée*, Paris 2009.

⁴ See especially, A. HUSTIN, *Le Luxembourg: son histoire domaniale, architecturale, décorative et anecdotique*, Paris 1910-1911, G. HIRSCHFELD, *Le Palais du Luxembourg. Le Petit Luxembourg. Le Jardin*, Evreux-Paris 1931, R. COOPE, *Salomon de Brosse and the development of the classical style in French architecture from 1565 to 1630*, London 1972, p. 110-134, M.-N. MATUSZEK-BAUDOUIN, "La succession de Maria de Médicis et l'emplacement des cabinets de peintures au Palais du Luxembourg", *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Ile-de-France* 117 (1990), p. 285-293, M.-N. MATUSZEK-BAUDOUIN (ed.), *Maria de Médicis et le palais du Luxembourg*, Paris 1991, and S. GALLETTI, *Le palais du Luxembourg, 1611-1642*, Paris forthcoming 2010.

⁵ The 1696 plan shown here is the earliest known thus far for the first floor of the palace, containing the royal apartments. A color code has been used in the drawing to distinguish the original building dated to Maria de' Medici's time, in black ink, from later additions, in grey ink (e.g. the projecting volume adjoining the east gallery, to the left of the drawing).

the monarch – no royal residence was to be experienced as perfectly symmetrical, and no apartment within it was to be perceived as equal to that of the king. Whereas “paper architecture” – projects which were never realized or collections of models such as Jacques Androuet du Cerceau’s – did not always abide to this principle, buildings did, even those which at first appear to stand out as exceptions, as, for instance, the Château of Chambord (fig. 5). The *donjon* of Chambord is indeed a symmetrical construction: its elevations are equivalent, if not identical, and each floor contains two sets of identical apartments – four in the corner pavilions and four around the Greek cross of the central hall. None of these *logis* was the king’s, though. Francis I’s apartment was much larger in size and it was located in the outer wing of the châteaux, to the north of the donjon (fig. 6). It comprised a *salle* (presence chamber) and a gallery and it was provided with an independent access through an external monumental staircase. Therefore, the “paper symmetry” of the building was denied in the architectural reality by the hierarchical distribution of both space and decorative features.

As tantalizing as it might be to explain the Luxembourg symmetry through the Italian origins of its patron, one would have to admit that, south of the Alps too, symmetry was often an outward rather than an inward feature in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century residential architecture, especially when considering urban buildings. The symmetry of the facades and courtyard elevations of many Roman and Florentine palaces was not matched by their interiors, including in the archetypical Palazzo Medici and Palazzo Farnese as well as in the Pitti, where Maria de’ Medici had grown up.

Jean-Maria Pérouse de Montclos has interpreted the Luxembourg exception as the outcome of the exceptional status of its patron as queen dowager. Since the palace was conceived during the minority of Louis XIII (1610-1614), Montclos has construed its symmetrical layout as the expression of the comparable status of the king and his mother during the regency.⁶ And he has pointed out that the Tuileries Palace (fig. 7) and the Châteaux of Saint-Maur (fig. 8a) and Charleval (fig. 9), conceived for Catherine de’ Medici during the minority of Charles IX (1560-1563) or in the years preceding his marriage to Elisabeth of Austria (1570) – that is, in the absence of a queen consort – were also symmetrical buildings. Montclos concluded that “the Luxembourg’s is a simple matter: Maria de’ Medici commissioned a perfectly symmetrical palace, half of which she reserved for herself and the other half for the king [Louis XIII].”⁷

Henri III’s ceremonial of 1585 supports Montclos’ reading by granting the queen mother a number of privileges, among them the possibility of annexing a gallery to her *logis*,⁸ thus establishing that the only apartment that can compete with the king’s is his mother’s. Since the rule might have simply formalized what was already common practice, it might also retrospectively explain the layouts of earlier buildings, as proposed by Montclos. Nevertheless, one can raise several objections to this interpretation. First, construction work took generally longer than regencies lasted, with the result that, by the time a residence conceived for the royal couple constituted by mother and son was ready to use, the royal couple had usually already changed into one constituted by king and queen consort. Patrons were certainly aware of this simple fact, but Montclos’ thesis does not explain how they would have incorporated it into their plans. Second, not all the rules of the 1585 ceremonial reflected existing practices and many of them were in fact never put into practice.⁹ No sixteenth-century royal residence was provided with parallel galleries for the king and the queen, for instance. Queens and *favorites* only enjoyed the use of galleries in their private residences – such as the Hôtel Saint-Pol or the Châteaux of Anet and Chenonceau – and even there only in the absence of the king, since it was customary for the

⁶ J.-M. PÉROUSE DE MONTCLOS, “Logis et appartements jumelés dans l’architecture française”, in J. Guillaume (ed.), *Architecture et vie sociale: l’organisation intérieure des grandes demeures à la fin du Moyen Age et à la Renaissance. Actes du colloque tenu à Tours du 6 au 10 juin 1988*, Paris 1994, p. 235-244.

⁷ “J.-M. PÉROUSE DE MONTCLOS, “Logis et appartements jumelés...” cit., p. 238.

⁸ “Que l’appartement du logis de la reine mère de ladite majesté soit, s’il est possible, à plain pied de celui de leurs majestez, sinon le plus près et commode qu’il se pourra, où il y ait salle, antichambre, chambre et cabinet, et s’il y a moyen qu’il y aye une galerie”, *Règlement fait par le roy a Paris le 1er jour de janvier 1585...*, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Na fr. 7225, f. 97, published by E. GRISSELLE, *Supplément à la Maison du roi Louis XIII, comprenant le règlement général fait par le roi de tous les états de sa maison et de l’état général de paiement fait en 1624*, Paris 1912, p. 11.

⁹ M. CHATENET, “Etiquette and architecture at the court of the last Valois”, in J. R. Mulryne, E. Goldring (eds.), *Court festivals of the European Renaissance: art, politics, and performance*, Aldershot-Burlington, VT, 2002, p. 92-93.

court members to let the sovereign use the main apartment of their private residences in the event of a visit. In this as well as in other instances, the discrepancy between ceremonial and architectural practice is wider than Montclos' thesis suggests. Third, the Tuileries, Charleval and Saint-Maur are more problematic precedents for the Luxembourg symmetry than Montclos has acknowledged. The Tuileries royal apartments were not, strictly speaking, identical: while they both comprised a sequence of seven rooms (fig. 7), the apartment to the right of the entrance terminated against the wall of a *salle de bal* – a large room for ballet and theatrical spectacles which of course was not part of the apartment itself – whereas room n. 6 in the apartment to the left of the entrance gave access to a gallery, seemingly the king's. Although unexpressed on the façade, this gallery would have designated both on paper and in the experience of the visitor the difference in rank between the son and the mother. Saint-Maur was not symmetrical either. Philibert Delorme's first project, which included two identical apartments both provided with galleries, was modified – undoubtedly at the request of Catherine de' Medici herself – into a second, asymmetrical layout in which the set of rooms preceding the gallery was not the same for the two apartments (fig. 8a). In the following revision of the project, commissioned from Jean Bullant, the twin galleries disappeared (fig. 8b). Finally, the project of Charleval was left on paper; its symmetry was therefore an abstract feature which, as shown by the case of Saint-Maur, might have easily been compromised in the translation to built reality.¹⁰ Hence, rather than fitting Montclos' category of “dowagers residences,” the Luxembourg stands out for its actual (as opposed to “paper”) symmetry and for its twin galleries.

The most significant precedents for the Luxembourg are found not in Catherine de' Medici's residences but in Henri IV's. In particular, the Château of Fontainebleau and the Château-Neuf of Saint-Germain-en-Laye as modified for the king in the early 1600s – that is, significantly, around the time of his marriage to Maria (December 1600). Amongst the king's favorite, both châteaux underwent major transformations, including the addition of a queen's gallery in Fontainebleau (fig. 10) and, in Saint-Germain, the conversion of two loggias facing the garden into symmetrical galleries annexed to the royal apartments (fig. 11).¹¹ As a result of these works, Fontainebleau became the first royal residence featuring a queen's gallery and the Château-Neuf of Saint-Germain the first featuring twin galleries. Neither building is formally similar to the Luxembourg in plan, but they both provided the queen and her architect with a new functional model. Moreover, a model which was simultaneously highly evocative with regards to *status* and risk-free with regards to *decorum*. While a layout featuring double galleries for the king and the queen suggested a relative rise in the status of the latter, the model could not be called inappropriate because it had been established by the king himself.

The origins of the queen galleries of Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain are far from clear. Seemingly, Henri IV broke a long-lasting association between galleries and male privilege without otherwise making any major change to court ceremonial. Nor does it seem that the status of the queen changed in any significant way from Catherine's time to Maria's. Hence, the two residences read ambiguously within the current understanding of the interplay between status and space: in a context where rank finds expression in architecture, so that higher rank translates into more, better, or different space as illustrated earlier on, what does an upgrade in space reflect if not an upgrade in rank? What does the appearance of the queen gallery indicate if not a change in the queen's status? Possibly, Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain hint at a change in the status of royal galleries rather than their owners. Ritual use of space at the court of Henri IV is a largely unexplored subject, therefore only a cautious hypothesis can be formulated here. There is evidence, though, that a change took place in the use of royal galleries in France around the turn of the seventeenth-century. Differently from his predecessors, Henri is known to have used galleries for ceremonies such as public audiences and public receptions of ambassadors. Luigi Bevilacqua, a Medicean envoy to the court of France, gives testimony of this in a letter of October 1607 in which he reports his own reception in the Louvre:

¹⁰ The construction of Charleval started in 1570, but almost nothing was actually built. See F. BOUDON, “Le château de Charleval”, in B. Beck, P. Bouet, C. Etienne (eds.), *L'architecture de la Renaissance en Normandie. Actes du colloque de Cerisy-la-Salle, 30 septembre-4 octobre 1998*, Condé-sur-Noireau 2003, p. 95-111.

¹¹ F. BOUDON, J. BLECON, *Le Château de Fontainebleau de François 1er à Henri IV: les bâtiments et leurs fonctions*, Paris 1998, p. 74-80, M. KITAEFF, “Le Château-Neuf de Saint-Germain-en-Laye”, *Fondation Piot. Monuments et mémoires*, 77 (1999), p. 73-139.

In the king's courtyard there were armed guards. I was met in the *salle* by the lieutenant and in the first room by the captain of the guards. Once we entered the gallery, I was given a public audience.¹²

Later correspondence shows that Louis XIII continued the practice established by his father. A large number of courtiers attended such public ceremonies, as well as several members of the royal family, as testified by Camillo Guidi in September 1618:

Monsieur de Bonneuil came (...) and led me to the Louvre and to the room of the ambassadors. Then at the right time he led me to His Majesty whom I met midway down the gallery as he was coming towards me (...) The audience was long and favorable (...) and one might say that the whole court and nobility was there (...) Monsieur de Bonneuil then took me to the brother of the king, who was on one side of the gallery.¹³

The introduction of public galleries (i.e. galleries designed for public ceremonies, as the Galerie des Glaces) did not imply the disappearance of private ones (i.e. galleries designed for personal use, as the Galerie François I^{er}). Rather, public and private galleries coexisted as separate spaces. At the Louvre Henri IV had two galleries at his disposal, the *petite* and the *grande*: one he used to give audiences before the court to Bevilacqua, Guidi and other visitors; the other to break away from the very same crowd, to take a stroll on his own or in the company of a few intimates,¹⁴ to “set his thoughts in motion together with his legs” as in Montaigne's expression,¹⁵ or to let Louis XIII play indoor on bad-weather days.¹⁶ Access to the former gallery was regulated by the ceremonial – “at the right time” as Guidi writes, those who were expected, by rank, to enter the room could do so. Access to the latter was regulated by the king alone – admission was upon his invitation only, regardless of rank. This differentiation in use was accompanied by a proliferation of new royal galleries built or planned during Henri IV's reign – in the Louvre, Fontainebleau, the Chateau-Neuf of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Blois – as well as by the introduction of the queen's gallery – in Fontainebleau, Saint-Germain, and later the Luxembourg. The two phenomena might be directly connected. Possibly, the inauguration of a new kind of gallery, serving new purposes, might have loosened some of the traditional connotations of the royal gallery, including its standing as a marker of male privilege.

Regardless of the intended symbolic significance of the double galleries of Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain-en-Laye, in the Luxembourg Maria de' Medici made the most out of the ambiguity that they both conveyed with regards to status. Henri IV's double galleries became full twin apartments in the queen's residence, perfectly identical in size, layout, access and external appearance. Furthermore, their decorative schemes matched one another: Rubens' *Life of Maria de' Medici* and *Life of Henri IV* were commissioned for the west and east gallery respectively; Maria's and Henri's sculpted portraits each stood on the façade of the palace in correspondence of the twin apartments – the queen's on the west pavilion, the king's on the east,¹⁷ and their interlaced ciphers decorated the entrance door on the

¹² “Alla piazza del re herano le guardie armate, nella sala fui incontrato dal luogotenente e nella prima camera dal capitano della guardia, et introdotti nella galleria ho havuta l'audienza publica”, letter from Luigi Bevilacqua, 16 October 1607, Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Miscellanea Medicea 96/53, 19.

¹³ “Monsieur di Bonoel venne (...) et condottomi al Louvre nella camera delli ambasciatori, quando fu tempo mi condusse da Sua Maestà, la quale riscontrai a mezza la galleria che veniva verso di me (...) L'audienza fu lunga et favorita (...) et essendovi, si può dir, tutta la corte et nobiltà (...) Monsieur di Bonoel mi condusse poi al fratello del re, che era da una parte della galleria”, letter from Camillo Guidi, 18 October 1618, ASF, Mediceo del Principato (MP) 4866, f. 589.

¹⁴ L. SIEBER (ed.), *Description de Paris par Thomas Platter le jeune de Bale (1599)*, Paris 1896, p. 28.

¹⁵ “Mes pensées dorment si je les assis, mon esprit ne va pas seul, comme si les jambes l'agitent”, M. de MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, III: 3, translated by M. A. Screech, *Michel de Montaigne. The Complete Essays*, London-New York 1993, p. 933.

¹⁶ Several occurrences are found in M. FOISIL (ed.), *Journal de Jean Héroard*, Paris 1989, for instance in v. I, p. 902 (17 March 1610).

¹⁷ The sculptures are now lost. They are listed in the 1645 appraisal of the palace (“Deux figures de marbre blanc, l'une représentant le feu roy Henry quatrième et l'autre la feue reyne Maria de Médicis”, *Procès-verbal d'estimation des biens immeubles de la succession de la feue reyne Maria de Médicis*, 18 November 1645, Arsenal 6613, f. 139-162, published by M.-N. MATUSZEK-BAUDOUIN (ed.), *Maria de Médicis...* cit., p. 263) as well as in Richard Symonds' description of 1649 (“At each end of y^e first building [gate] under an arch stand the statues in white marble of. Henri 4. and his queene, sister to y^e duke of Florence”, *Description de la ville de Paris*, British Museum, Harl. 1278, published by O. MILLAR,

rue de Vaugirard (fig. 12). Not only did the residence celebrate the royal couple once constituted by Maria and Henri, but it did so in an unprecedented way: its layout and its decorative schemes suggested a perfect symmetry of status, a perfect equivalence in *dignité royale*, between the monarch and his consort. This was only possible, of course, because Henri was dead at the time Maria's project was conceived. Dedicated to a king who was no longer alive, the palace was *de facto* emancipated from the practical requirements related to the presence of the king with regards to the expression of rank and the staging of court ceremonial. As to the living king, the location of the building in Paris, not far from the Louvre, made it superfluous to provide apposite quarters for Louis XIII. The unique layout of the Luxembourg is due not to the peculiar status of its inhabitant(s) but to the uniqueness of its function as a *memorial residence* – that is, a residence dedicated not to a royal couple but to the *memory* of a royal couple.

A fabricated memory, of course – since the Luxembourg can be described in many respects as an idealized depiction of Maria's union to Henri IV as one in which political aims and views were shared, together with status and access to power. This idealized image was meant to support the queen's controversial political role during and after the regency. By representing her ascension to power as not only dating back to the reign of Henri but, especially, as the expression of the king's own will within a Golden Age-like context of "shared authority," Maria defended her position in government as the legitimate outcome of his legacy, rather than the questionable product of her own ambition. Many of Rubens' paintings served this scope, such as the *Consignment of the regency* (fig. 13), in which a serenely smiling Henri on the eve of war hands over the globe of power and the heir to the throne to a confident, towering Maria whose exaggerated size (Louis was eight when the episode took place, in March 1610, and must have reached higher than his mother's hips) was possibly intended as reassuring about the destiny of both the child and the crown. The image also conveys an illusion with regards to the nature of the couple's union – Henri and Maria are represented as being equally tall and staring intently into each other's eyes, neither defined as the dominant figure. Neither of them shows preoccupation as to the threat posed to the king's life – as if such event was not to entail any disruption in the practical business of government – and their hands share both the symbol of their power as well as the incarnation of its continuity. *Their* power is the notion the viewer comes away with. This notion is also found in the depiction of the *Coronation* (fig. 14) – which reminds Maria's audience that Henri IV had honored her with the consecration not all queens of France had received¹⁸ – as well as in the concluding scene of the *Life of Henri IV* (fig. 15), where the couple is portrayed as walking away from the battles and triumphs represented in the gallery (and as walking out of the gallery itself, since the access to the room was located to the left of the painting, fig. 28), as if into a new life. As if, that is, the union to Maria was not only the capstone of Henri's biography but also the key to the resolution of France's religious and political troubles.

Similar images of Henri and Maria's union but with broader circulation, were the dynastic medals carrying their double portraits, such as Guillaume Dupré's spectacular one of 1603 (fig. 16). Produced in a number of variants and replicas in the following years,¹⁹ these medals were unusual in their featuring the royal couple, as in antiquity,²⁰ instead of the king alone, as typically in the Renaissance. As such, they served exceptionally well Maria's later idealized depiction of her union with Henri and, unsurprisingly, kept on circulating well after the king's death, as shown by a 1614 letter of the Medicean envoy Matteo Bartolini:

(Contd.) _____

"The Notebooks of Richard Symonds", *Studies in Renaissance and Baroque Art presented to Anthony Blunt on his 60th birthday*, London-New York 1967, p. 162).

¹⁸ On the differences between the *sacres* of the king and queen of France, see F. COSANDEY, *La reine de France: symbole et pouvoir, XV^e-XVIII^e siècle*, Paris 2000, p. 131-142.

¹⁹ See the examples illustrated in M. JONES, "Guillaume Dupré", *Medal 9* (1986), p. 22-47, as well as the anonymous 1607 one of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF, Médailles, Valton 2104b).

²⁰ Several ancient examples are found in C. B. ROSE, *Dynastic commemoration and imperial portraiture in the Julio-Claudian period*, Cambridge, New York 1997 and R. R. SMITH, *Hellenistic royal portraits*, Oxford, New York 1988. I am grateful to Sheila Dillon for her help on this topic.

I am sending to Your Lordship a drawing of a medal in which one sees the portraits of King Henri IV and of the queen struck on the same side, and if His [Her?] Highness will want [the medal] I will send it immediately, and the price will be around fifty *scudi*.²¹

It is within the context of these visual fabrications of *correspondance* between king and queen that the Luxembourg and its symmetry are best understood – as architectural fabrications reflecting the queen’s ambitions rather than her standing (be it social or political), and as active agents in the production of a collective (counterfeit) memory rather than mirrors of a glorious past and present.

Logis doubles

The layout of Maria de’ Medici’s apartment in the Luxembourg (fig. 19) was inconsistent with sixteenth-century French practice: first, because it contained an extraordinarily high number of rooms (thirteen versus the seven of Charles IX’s apartment in Fontainebleau, fig. 17); second, because the rooms were not distributed in an *enfilade* (a chain-like succession) – from the queen’s *antichambre* (fig. 19, ACH) the visitor could access *either* the group of rooms to his left, in the south pavilion facing the garden, *or* those to his right, in the pavilion facing the courtyard and leading to the gallery.

Following Alphonse de Gisors’ interpretation of 1847, historians have accepted this exceptional plan as resulting from the juxtaposition of two distinct apartments in the queen’s quarters, one formal (*appartement de parade*, fig. 18, n. 8-10) and the second one private (n. 6).²² According to this hypothesis, Maria would have had both a *chambre* and a *chambre de parade* (state bedchamber) at her disposal and, as proposed by Jacques Thuillier and Jacques Foucart in their study of the *Life of Maria de’ Medici*, Rubens’ gallery would have served as “a sort of waiting room preceding the queen’s apartments”.²³

No documentary evidence supports this interpretation. No graphic or textual evidence hints at the existence of state and/or private apartments at the Luxembourg, nor, for that matter, at the existence of two apartments *tout court*. Besides, several contextual objections can be raised against it. First, no examples of double state-and-private apartments (or of state-and-private bedchambers) are known in early seventeenth century France. Thus, according to Gisors’ interpretative scheme, the Luxembourg would stand out as an extraordinarily early, as well as perfectly isolated, model for Louis XIV’s double apartment in Versailles (fig. 20) – a thesis difficult to support in the absence of documentary evidence. Second, the scheme contains substantial flaws with regards to the spatial relation between rooms, or groups of rooms. One of these concerns the location of the gallery in regard to the *grand escalier* (main staircase) of the palace (fig. 19, GE). According to Thuillier and Foucart, the queen’s “apartments” were accessed via the gallery, which functioned as a “waiting room.” The authors do not explain though how a visitor would have reached the gallery from the staircase: would he have walked through the *salle* (S), then past a service stairway into the queen’s *garde-robe* (GR), and finally through her *oratoire* (private chapel, O)? Or was he to access the queen’s quarters via a service stairway located in the corner pavilion on the entrance wing of the palace, thus bypassing the

²¹ “Mando a Vostra Signoria un disegno d’una medaglia nella quale si vede impresso nel medesimo scudo le due teste del re Arrigo quarto et della regina, et se Sua Altezza la vorrà la manderò subito, et il prezzo sarà intorno a 50 scudi”, letter from Bartolini, 20 November 1614, ASF, MP 4629, f. 462.

²² A. de GISORS, *Le Palais du Luxembourg, fondé par Maria de Médicis, régente, considérablement agrandi sous le règne de Louis-Philippe I^{er}. Origine et description de cet édifice, principaux événements dont il a été le théâtre depuis sa fondation, 1615, jusqu’en 1845*, Paris 1847, p. 37 and *Plan du premier étage sous la régence de Maria de Médicis*, between p. 28 et p. 31, J. THUILLIER, J. FOU CART, *Rubens: la galerie Médicis au Palais du Luxembourg*, Milano, Paris 1969, p. 33, pl. 21, R. F. MILLEN, R. E. WOLF, *Heroic deeds and mystic figures: a new reading of Rubens’ Life of Maria de’ Medici*, Princeton, NJ 1989, p. 8, M.-N. MATUSZEK-BAUDOIN, “Un palais pour une reine mère”, in Id. (ed.), *Maria de Médicis...* cit., p. 207-208, S. SMITH, “Rubens and the *Grand camée de France*: the *consecratio* in the Medici galleries of the Luxembourg palace”, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 120, 1485 (Oct. 1992), p. 127-136, M.-N. MATUSZEK-BAUDOIN, “Le palais de Maria de Médicis”, in P. Martial, M.-N. Matuszek-Baudouin, D. Jardillier, et al. (eds.), *Palais et jardins du Luxembourg*, Paris 1994, p. 24-25, P. MARTIAL (ed.), *Le Sénat et le Palais du Luxembourg, de la tradition au modernisme*, Paris 2001, p. 32, L. PERICOLO, “Philippe, homme sage et vertueux”. *Essai sur l’art et l’œuvre de Philippe de Champaigne, 1602-1674*, Tournai 2002, p. 53.

²³ J. THUILLIER, J. FOU CART, *Rubens...* cit., p. 30.

grand escalier and the *salle*? Both hypotheses are unconvincing. Rubens' gallery could not and did not serve as the queen's "waiting room," a function which was instead that of the *salle* (S) and, to an extent, of the antechamber following it (ACH). Even taking this correction into account though, Gisors' scheme is still problematic with regards to the respective location of private and state rooms. For it seems an inconvenient arrangement for the queen to have had to go through the antechamber – a crowded room at most times – in order to retire from her state apartment into her private one. During both the sixteenth- and the seventeenth-centuries it was customary for private rooms – such as *cabinets* (closets), *garde-robés* (wardrobes), galleries, and secret stairways and passages – to follow the bedchamber, as in Charles IX's Fontainebleau (fig. 17). Apartments would typically develop between a "public pole and a private pole,"²⁴ following a progression in privacy which provided the owners and their intimates with alternative ways to access or leave the premises. In a complex double-enfilade layout, this was also true for Louis XIV's apartments in Versailles (fig. 20).

Gisors' interpretative scheme can be described on the one hand as a projection of later, better known interior distribution models (i.e. Louis XIV's Versailles) onto the earlier, less-known epoch of Maria de' Medici; on the other hand, as a misconception of the role played by the queen's Italian origins within the context of French ceremonial. In fact, one might reasonably expect a Medici princess to require a private apartment where to recreate the conditions of greater privacy (compared to France) she had known in her household of origin. It would be a misplaced expectation though, since queens of foreign origins would embrace French custom with regards to approachability. This was the case also for Catherine de' Medici who reportedly:

gave audience continually while eating, admitting all comers indiscriminately and with great familiarity, each entering as he wished without difficulty, and the king's goodwill towards his subjects is such that they enter his chamber even as he is putting on his shirt, and the queens are equally free in this respect, following the traditional custom of kings and queens of France.²⁵

While causing much commotion amongst the Italian diplomats, this *familiarité* was an essential trait of the French monarchy – one that Francis I had claimed symbolic of the bond of *vraye amour* (true love) between the king and his subjects and one the court members would not easily relinquish. Henri III's failure in imposing the elaborate ceremonial of 1585 revolved precisely around the fact that the new rules were perceived as breaking the fundamental ties of familiarity by distancing the sovereign from the court.²⁶

The interior distribution of the queen's apartment at the Luxembourg can be reconstructed on the basis of the evidence offered by court chronicles, diplomatic correspondence, and building contracts (fig. 19).²⁷ These sources indicate the existence of only one, exceptionally large apartment and the presence of only one bedchamber (CH), which, as in the sixteenth-century, served both for treating the affairs of state and as the queen's sleeping room. They also indicate that, as in the sixteenth-century, this bedchamber served as the boundary between the public and the private areas of the apartment: while rank regulated access to the bedroom itself and the rooms that preceded it (*salle* and antechamber), the queen regulated access to the rooms that followed it – the *Cabinet des Muses* (CM), the private chapel (O), the *garde-robe* (GR), the *arrière garde-robe* (privy), Rubens' gallery (G), and, at the north end of the gallery, the *cabinet* and *arrière cabinet* (closet and rear closet, possibly used as study rooms) comprised in the pavilion on the rue de Vaugirard (C and AC). The *arrière cabinet* opened with a balcony on the spectacular two-storied interior of the *volière* (aviary, V),

²⁴ J. GUILLAUME, "La galerie..." cit., p. 33. See also M. CHATENET, *La cour de France au XVI^e siècle: vie sociale et architecture*, Paris 2002, p. 142-154.

²⁵ "[La reina madre, la reina regnante] et il re similmente mangiando davano di continuo audientia, admettendo ciascuno indifferentemente con molta domestichezza, entrando ciascuno a suo piacere senz'alcuna difficoltà, et è tanta la piacevolezza del re con gli sudditi, che gl'entrano in camera sin quando si mette la camisia, et le reine anch'elle sono in questo facilissime, uso antico delli re et reine di Francia", letter from the secretary of Cardinal Alessandrino, c. 1570, Vatican Library, Urb. lat. 1697, f. 302, cited in M. H. SMITH, "Familiarité française et politesse italienne au XVI^e siècle. Les diplomates italiens juges des manières de la cour des Valois", *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 102, 3-4 (1988), p. 206-207, and translated in M. CHATENET, "Etiquette and architecture..." cit., p. 88.

²⁶ M. CHATENET, *La cour de France au XVI^e siècle...* cit., p. 135-141.

²⁷ S. GALLETTI, "L'appartement de Maria de Médicis au palais du Luxembourg", in P. Bassani Pacht, T. Crépin Leblond, N. Sainte Fare Garnot (eds.), *Maria de Médicis: un gouvernement par les arts*, Paris 2003, p. 124-133.

located in the building to the west of the palace's entrance wing (visible also in fig. 2 and 3).²⁸ The aviary also served as a discrete passageway between the Luxembourg and the adjoining residence, the Petit Luxembourg, which, in 1627, the queen had given to Richelieu. The same private stairway that gave access to the aviary from the queen's apartment also lead to her private garden (JP), a walled-in portion of the park adjoining the residence located south of the aviary itself (visible in fig. 2 and 3). As to the so-called private apartment, comprised in the south pavilion overlooking the garden's central parterre, the texts identify the larger room, symmetrical to the bedchamber and located on the opposite side of the antechamber, as a *grand cabinet* (large closet, GC). Comparison with the interior distribution of Maria's apartment in the Louvre suggests, as shown further on, that the rectangular room following this *grand cabinet* was a *petit cabinet* (small closet, PC). Finally, while none of the above mentioned sources specifies the function of the remaining two rooms contained in the pavilion, it seems reasonable to think of them as auxiliary spaces that might have provided for further degrees of privacy or that might have served to store the queen's belongings (as *cabinets*, study rooms, and/or wardrobes).

In the multiplication of *cabinets* and private spaces following the bedchamber, Maria's apartment in the Luxembourg followed a trend initiated under Charles IX and Henri III,²⁹ albeit unprecedented in its expanse. The addition of the *grand cabinet* to the sequence of rooms was, instead, an essential novelty. The first occurrence of a "grand cabinet" dated to Henri III's reign, and it designated a room in the Louvre where the king kept his arms' collection and where he treated private affairs in the company of his intimates. Distinct from the *cabinet* following Henri's bedchamber, this room was also larger in size and it was located above the king's apartment, on the last floor of the pavillon Lescot, which is why it was often referred to as the "cabinet haut" (the upper *cabinet*).³⁰ Florentine diplomats reported that Maria de' Medici too had a *grand cabinet* at her disposal in the Louvre, but its function was different; it was a public, not a private, room which the queen used to hold the *Conseil* (the Council meeting) and to give audience to her guests.³¹ Maria's *grand cabinet* shared some of the characteristics and the functions traditionally associated with the bedchamber: it was an often crowded (and loud) room where courtiers gathered in the presence of the queen and where the affairs of state were also treated:

Her Majesty summoned me and when I arrived in her *gran gabinetto*, where she was, she started to congratulate me, and [Your Highness the grand duke] is the main reason for it. In the meanwhile the duchesse de Guise, the princesse de Conti and the marquise de Garbinille (sic) strode up to us and started making a terrible racket, and at times they spoke all together;³²

In the name of our lord his Most Serene Highness the Grand Duke, I presented the king [Louis XIII] with the arbalest, the arquebuses, and their appurtenances in the *gran gabinetto* of the queen. The king was present, as were several princesses, princes, and members of the nobility.³³

The *grand cabinet* was adjoined by a *petit cabinet* which enabled small groups to withdraw in confidential gatherings:

²⁸ The original layout is not shown on the 1696 plan because the aviary was modified in 1641-1642, when the double-storied interior was divided into two floors, the lower one destined to an *orangerie* (orangery) and the upper one to a *salle de bal* (*Ouvrages conduits au Luxembourg par Nicolas Messier et autres, 1641-1642*, Archives Nationales, Z^{1j} 262, 150, LVI-VII, *Estimation des travaux de maçonnerie faits par Nicolas Fouet au palais du Luxembourg*, 13 novembre 1642, AN, Z^{1j} 260 n. 326).

²⁹ M. CHATENET, *La cour de France au XVI^e siècle...* cit., p. 184-185.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ "Il signor marchese d'Anchre m'ha introdotto all'udienza della maestà della regina, la quale io ho trovato nel suo gran gabinetto" (letter from Matteo Bartolini, 22 March 1612, ASF, MP 4764); "Fui condotto in un gabinetto, dove la regina suol tenere molte volte il consiglio" (letter from Matteo Botti, 31 August 1612, ASF, MP 4624a, f. 155-155v).

³² "Sua Maestà mi fece chiamare e arrivando io nel suo gran gabinetto, dove ell'era, cominciò a rigioirmi, che voi n'havete più causa di tutti. Intanto la duchessa di Guisa, la principessa di Conti e la marchesa di Garbinille si accostorno di gran passo e cominciorno a fare un fracasso terribile, e qualche volta parlavon tutte a un tratto", letter from Botti to the grand duke, March 1612, ASF, MP 4871.

³³ "Io feci il presente al re in nome del serenissimo granduca nostro signore della balestra, archibusi et loro appartenenze nel gran gabinetto della regina, davanti a Sua Maestà, dove erano principesse, principi et signori", letter from Matteo Bartolini, 12 August 1615, ASF, MP 5974.

The queen was in the *grand cabinet*, where she had Monsieur de Vendôme informed through those who were before her. [Then] she entered the *petit cabinet* where, immediately after, she summoned Monsieur de Vendôme by means of Mlle Catherine, one of her ladies;³⁴

During the day, right after supper, most times the queen retires to her *petit cabinet*, where she has private discussions with [chancellor] Sillery and the *maréchale* d'Ancre [Leonora Galigai];³⁵

[Monsieur le Fèvre] was introduced to the king [Louis XIII] by the queen in her *petit cabinet*, in the presence of Monsieur the count of Soissons, Monsieur de Villeroy, Monsieur le président Janin, and Monsieur de Souvray.³⁶

Since these reports date between the summer of 1611 and the summer of 1615, the apartment they refer to must be the queen consort's, which Maria occupied before Louis XIII's marriage. Upon the arrival of Anne of Austria, in the fall of 1615, Maria moved to the quarters traditionally destined to the queen mother, on the ground floor of the château's south wing. In view of this move, the apartment that had been Catherine de' Medici's (fig. 21) was significantly enlarged and modified, as shown in a 1629 drawing by Jacques Lemercier (fig. 22). The entrance was moved from the central bay to the east end of the courtyard elevation, and a *salle* (S) and antechamber (ACH) were added to the previous layout. The antechamber was partitioned in order to make room for an *oratoire* (O) and a *cabinet* (C) both facing the queen's private garden (JP). Catherine's bedchamber (CH) was maintained, while her antechamber was converted into a *grand cabinet* (GC) and her *cabinet* into a wardrobe (GR). Catherine's wardrobe became a *petit cabinet* (PC) which could only be accessed from the *grand*, the door formerly opening onto the bedchamber having been walled up. Finally, a corridor (c) was created in order to connect the antechamber directly to both the *grand cabinet* and the bedchamber, thus providing the visitor with two alternative routes: antechamber-bedchamber, and antechamber-grand cabinet.

There is no reason to doubt that the pair *grand cabinet-petit cabinet* served the same functions in all three of Maria de' Medici's apartments, the two in the Louvre and the one in the Luxembourg. Florentine diplomats use alternatively the Gallicism "gran gabinetto" and the Italian "gabinetto dell'audienza" (audience chamber) to refer to the *grand cabinet* of the Luxembourg,³⁷ thus confirming that, similarly to a Florentine (or Roman) audience chamber, this room was largely accessible to courtiers as part of the public sequence preceding the bedchamber. As in the Louvre, the queen must have used it to hold the Council, to give audience to her guests, and to gather the court members on a variety of other formal occasions. The official function of the room is also explicitly referred to in the discussion concerning its decorative program, in particular the series of paintings known as the *Medici marriages*.³⁸ The ten scenes were executed in Florence in 1624-1627 as a "summoned gift" offered by

³⁴ "La reine étoit dans le grand cabinet, où ayant avisé Monsieur de Vendôme au travers de ceux qui étoient devant elle, elle entra dans le petit cabinet, où incontinent après, elle fit, par une de ses femmes Mademoiselle Catherine, appeler Monsieur de Vendôme", letter from François de Malherbe, 13 February 1614, published by L. LALANNE (ed.), *Œuvres de Malherbe*, Paris 1862-1869, v. III, p. 390.

³⁵ "Il giorno, subito doppo desinare, il più delle volte la regina standosene ritirata nel suo piccol gabinetto, negotia molto alla stretta con il commendator di Sillery, et con la marescialla d'Ancre", letter from Luca Fabbroni, 16 June 1615, ASF, MP 5974.

³⁶ "[Monsieur le Fèvre] fut présenté au roi par la reine, Monsieur le comte de Soissons, Monsieur le chancelier, Monsieur de Villeroy, Monsieur le président Janin et Monsieur de Souvray, dans le petit cabinet de la reine", letter from François de Malherbe, 14 August 1611, published by L. LALANNE (ed.), *Œuvres de Malherbe...* cit., v. III, p. 250.

³⁷ "[La regina madre] ringraziava affettuosissimamente [i granduchi di Toscana] di così bel regalo che le volevano fare con il donarle l'ornamento intero per il suo gran gabinetto" (letter from Giambattista Gondi, 29 March 1624, ASF, MP 4637, published by D. MARROW, "Maria de' Medici and the Decoration of the Luxembourg Palace", *Burlington Magazine* 121 (Sept. 1979), p. 787, n. 10); "Questi dieci quadri hanno da stare nel gabinetto dell'audienza, che è il luogo più nobile et più degno di qualsiasi altro" (letter from Giambattista Gondi, 8 February 1624, ASF, MP 4637, published by D. MARROW, "Maria de' Medici..." cit., p. 787, n. 6). The paintings Gondi refers to belong to the series of the *Medici marriages*.

³⁸ In their studies of the series, both A. Blunt and D. Marrow misinterpreted the archival sources in regards to the location of the *grand cabinet*, which they both confused for the antechamber (A. BLUNT, "A series of paintings illustrating the history of the Medici family executed for Maria de Médicis", I and II, *Burlington Magazine* 109 (Sept. and Oct. 1967), p. 492-498 and 562-566, D. MARROW, "Maria de' Medici..." cit., p. 783-791). The location of the room was correctly identified by M.-N. MATUSZEK-BAUDOIN, "La succession de Maria de Médicis..." cit.

the grand dukes to the queen, who chose their subjects. The series was not intended as a dynastic celebration, as its (modern) title misleadingly suggest. Instead, it depicted the diplomatic relations between the house of Medici and the French crown – as in Giovanni Bilivert's *Interview of Leo x and Francis I* (fig. 23) – and the marriages fitted in as a means of political alliance. As clearly expressed in a letter addressed to the Florentine court by one of her intermediaries, Maria had a very specific audience in mind for the paintings, one that suited the public and political function of the room:

Of those deeds of the Most Serene House of the Medici that are to be represented in these paintings [for the *grand cabinet*], Her Majesty would be most pleased by those that would show and remind the French that France is not without obligations to the Most Serene House of Her Majesty.³⁹

Maria's apartments in the Luxembourg and in the ground floor of the Louvre were very dissimilar in shape, due to the fact that the former was a new residence built on a suburban plot clear of all the limitations of the inner-city, while the latter was the result of a refurbishment within the predefined architectural frame of the old château. However, the two layouts were similar in regards to the distribution of space. The sequences leading from the entrance to the bedchamber, in particular, were identical: they both comprised a *salle*, followed by an antechamber which led to a *grand cabinet* on one side and to the bedchamber on the other side (fig. 19 and 22). Also, precisely because of the parallel location of bedchamber and *grand cabinet* as each independently accessible from the antechamber, both layouts were atypical, because in both of them the common enfilade arrangement had been intentionally avoided. The intentionality is especially evident in the case of the Louvre, where it would have been easier (and more elegant) to dispense with the corridor (c) and to place antechamber (ACH), *grand cabinet* (GC) and bedchamber (CH) in an enfilade. This would also have provided the queen with a *grand cabinet* larger than the one realized and better lit, since its windows would have opened on two exterior walls instead of only one. Besides, the enfilade was a clearer spatial solution in the social context of the court because, consisting simultaneously of a progression towards the sovereign and of a regression in the size of rooms, it reflected the court's pyramidal structure as well as the values attached to spatial relations of distance and proximity. On the contrary, the anomalous parallel disposition of *grand cabinet* and bedchamber constituted a significant ambiguity, since the two rooms – set at the same distance from the apartment's entrance and sharing some of the same functions – seemed equivalent with regards to the social ranks of those who could access them. Yet, evidently – given the architectural straining it took to realize it in the Louvre and the fact that it was reproduced in the Luxembourg – this laborious and ambiguous solution met the functional requirements set by the queen.

Maria de' Medici never issued a ceremonial; hence there exist no textual evidence of what such requirements might have been. However, the comparison with earlier layouts suggests the sequence of public rooms in her apartments to have been an ingenuous response to two potentially contrasting objectives: on the one hand the desire to reorganize the court, as Henri II had done by adding the antechamber to the royal suite; on the other hand the need to avoid the fiasco Henri III had occurred into when trying to further extend the same suite with a *chambre d'état* (state chamber) and a *chambre d'audience* (audience chamber). The introduction of the antechamber had enabled Henri II to restructure the ceremonial by dividing the courtiers into three groups: "those who remained in the *salle*; those entitled to enter the antechamber; and those who merely pass through the antechamber on their way to the king's chamber."⁴⁰ However, the scornful mocking Henri III had drawn upon himself in 1585 proved that reorganizing the court by simply multiplying the number of rooms of the royal suite was not always a solution: courtiers might perceived it (and reject it) – as they had – as a mere means for the king to isolate himself at the end of a long suite of rooms in a pompous (Spanish-like) fashion that they did not see fit within their own tradition of *familiarité*. The function and location of

³⁹ "Che delle azzioni della serenissima casa da rappresentarsi nei sopraddetti quadri quelle sarebbero più grate a sua maestà che potessero far vedere et ricordare ai franzesi che la Francia non sia senz'oblighi alla casa serenissima di sua maestà", letter from Giambattista Gondi, 29 March 1624, ASF, MP 4637, published by D. MARROW, "Maria de' Medici..." cit., p. 788, n. 10.

⁴⁰ M. CHATENET, "Etiquette and architecture..." cit., p. 85. See also, M. CHATENET, "Architecture et cérémonial à la cour de Henri II: l'apparition de l'antichambre", in H. Oursel, J. Fritsch (eds.), *Henri II et les arts: actes du colloque international, École du Louvre et Musée national de la Renaissance-Écouen, 25, 26 et 27 septembre 1997*, Paris 2003, p. 355-380.

Maria's *grand cabinet* in both the Luxembourg and the Louvre denote the queen's (her architects', and her master(s) of ceremonies) ingenuity in implementing some of the innovations introduced by Henri III while circumventing the obstacles that had determined the failure of his ceremonial. To place the *grand cabinet* parallel to the bedchamber so that both rooms could be accessed directly from the antechamber, meant placing it *off* the enfilade *salle*-antechamber-bedchamber thus, *de facto*, not interfering with the traditional royal suite. With this subtle arrangement the queen gained an extra room, which made it possible for a number of official ceremonies (and the crowd associated with them) to be transferred out from the bedchamber, while, since the new room was not in sequence with the others, the court members could still perceive themselves as at the usual distance from the sovereign. As in the case of Henri II, it was a change in the "scenery, not in the script"⁴¹ that enabled Maria to modify the staging of the ceremonial and to reorganize her court not simply *in* space but *through* space.

Rubens' galleries

In conclusion to the present article, I will explore how what argued thus far on the distribution and use of space at the Luxembourg affects the interpretation of its decorative schemes, particularly with regards to Rubens' *Life of Maria de' Medici* and *Life of Henri IV*.

Historians have dedicated much attention to the biographical scenes executed by Rubens for the queen's gallery; issues of iconography in relation to identity, gender, and political context – amongst others – have been, and still are, the subject of a rich scholarly debate⁴². This is especially true for those images that have been called *controversial* – that is, depicting contentious episodes of the life and political career of Maria de' Medici's, such as the *Flight from Blois* (fig. 24) and the *Council of the Gods* (fig. 25). The *Flight* depicts an act of disobedience: in February 1619 the queen had fled the Château of Blois, where Louis XIII had confined her in 1617 following the political turnover which had started off with the assassination of Maria's minister, Concino Concini. Maria's flight set off a civil war (the War of the mother and the son) the resolution of which took a long negotiation process, represented by Rubens in the following paintings, the *Treaty of Angoulême*, the *Peace at Angers*, and the *Reconciliation after the death of the Constable*. The *Council* depicts a major political controversy. The scene has been traditionally read as a representation of Maria's wisdom in her role as regent. Yet, Rubens's correspondence makes it clear that the theme of the painting is "the marriage treaty with Spain"⁴³ – that is to say, the arrangements for the marriages of the heirs of the two crowns, Louis XIII and Philip IV of Spain, with the infanta Anne of Austria and Elisabeth of France respectively (the marriages themselves, celebrated in 1615, appear in a subsequent scene, *The exchange of the princesses*). Accordingly, Ronald Millen and Robert Wolf have interpreted the scene as referring to "the long-range policy of peace which the queen regent envisioned as her great contribution to the Europe chess-game" (that is, the placation of the power competition between France and Spain supported by marital ties) – and as asserting Maria's "Olympian vision of world

⁴¹ M. CHATENET, "Etiquette and architecture..." cit., p. 85.

⁴² The literature on this topic is an ocean. Amongst the fundamental works, O. VON SIMSON, *Zur Genealogie der weltlichen Apotheose im Barock: besonders der Medicigalerie des P. P. Rubens*, Leipzig 1936, J. THUILLIER, J. FOUCART, *Rubens...* cit., S. SAWARD, *The golden age of Maria de' Medici*, Ann Arbor, MI 1982, R. F. MILLEN, R. E. WOLF, *Heroic deeds and mystic figures...* cit., and M. WARNKE, *Laudando praecipere: der Medicizyklus des Peter Paul Rubens*, Groningen 1993. Amongst women and gender studies, see in particular G. A. JOHNSON, "Pictures fit for a queen: Peter Paul Rubens and the Maria de' Medici cycle" *Art history* 16/3 (Sept. 1993), p. 447-469, F. COSANDEY, *La reine de France...* cit., p. 333-360, and S. R. COHEN, "Rubens's France: gender and personification in the Maria de Médicis cycle", *Art bulletin* 85/3 (Sept. 2003), p. 490-522

⁴³ "Per conto della transpositione del *Consiglio delli dei avanti l'Imprese di Giuliers*, ci siamo poi chiariti che, oltre le considerationi allegate da Vostra Signoria, la verità dell'istoria vi conviene benissimo, havendo trovato un trattato delli detti matrimonii reciprochi con Spagna conchiuso prima di quello di Giuliers", letter from Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, 26 May 1622, published by M. ROOSES, C. RUELENS, *Correspondance de Rubens et documents épistolaires concernant sa vie et ses œuvres*, Antwerp 1887-1909, v. II, p. 415. Cassiano dal Pozzo also refers to this scene as a depiction of the "reciprocal marriage negotiated between France and Spain" (S. A. ZURAWSKI, *Peter Paul Rubens and the Barberini, ca. 1625-1640*, Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University 1979, p. 251).

affairs, of the divine sanction she could claim as its inspiration, and, above all, of her declaration that her policy would have had the approval of her sainted spouse.”⁴⁴ As the authors have pointed out, this policy perpetuated the ideals of the late Henri IV but conflicted with Louis XIII’s orientations, and was a matter of bitter contrasts between mother and son. Thus, they have concluded, the painting was a public provocation of the king. The same applied, of course, to the less-than dignifying nighttime episode of the *Flight from Blois*. Overall, according to Millen and Wolf, the cycle was too audacious of a “political challenge”; hence, it became an “embarrassment” once on the walls of the “main public room” of the Luxembourg.⁴⁵ While not all of Rubens’ scholars agree with Millen and Wolf’s reading of the *Life of Maria de’ Medici* as primarily a political statement, it is a generally accepted notion that there was an intrinsic bravado quality in the queen’s choice of the scenes to be represented. It has also been generally assumed that the queen’s gallery was a public room, as claimed by Thuillier and Foucart.⁴⁶ Such claim, though, was never questioned despite the fact that Thuillier and Foucart themselves (or anyone after them) never provided any evidence in support of it. Nor is there any evidence linking the end of Maria’s political career to the paintings, nor any indication that the “embarrassment” they supposedly produced was a determining factor in Rubens’ inability to carry out the project for the second gallery, as Millen and Wolf have suggested.⁴⁷

The controversial quality of an image depends heavily on its audience. The composition of the audience is what ultimately determines whether a disrespectful political provocation results in a career-ending, self-inflicted humiliation or in a consensus-generating exploit. The determining factor is of course the quality, not the size, of the audience – what could have been foolish for Maria to show to the undifferentiated audience of a public room might have been astute to show to the selected elite of a private one. As mentioned earlier on, private is not to be understood as *off limits*: the prestigious collections and artworks housed in private rooms (such as *cabinets*, study rooms, galleries, etc.) in early modern times were not *hidden objects*, nor *objects without an audience*, nor *objects with small audiences*. Rather, they were objects whose audience – be it small or large – was selected by their owners. A gallery which, as the one of Maria de Medici in the Luxembourg, had no direct connection with the public rooms of the apartment – the *salle* (fig. 19, S) and the antechamber (ACH) – and could only be accessed from the private ones – the *Cabinet des Muses* (CM) and *oratoire* (O) to one end, the *cabinet* (C), *arrière cabinet* (AC), and private stairway to the opposite end – could not be (and was not) a public room. This is also confirmed by the fact that occasionally Maria used the gallery as discreet access to her quarters – that is, an access which allowed selected visitors to receive audience without passing through the *salle*, the antechamber, and the bedchamber where the courtiers gathered. This was the case, for instance, of the private (and secret) visit Cardinal Richelieu and Cardinal Bagno paid to the queen after the *Journée des Dupes*:

On the 23 [November 1630], the king spent the entire morning with President Souffran in the apartment of the queen [Maria de’ Medici] in order to convince her to look favorably on the cardinal [Richelieu]. After Their Majesties had dinner, they retired in private in the *Cabinet des Muses* (...), and after a little while Cardinal Bagno and Cardinal Richelieu joined them, but they passed through the gallery [of the queen] so that no one could enter and witness this ceremony.⁴⁸

At the queen’s wish, the same gallery might have been populated and crowded, but its location implied that the queen controlled its access, thus the audience of Rubens’ paintings. The *Life of Maria de’ Medici* was never intended for the undifferentiated multitude imagined so far – to the contrary, it was reserved for an elite selected by the heroine of the narrative herself.

⁴⁴ R. F. MILLEN, R. E. WOLF, *Heroic deeds and mystic figures...* cit., p. 143.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8-13.

⁴⁶ See note 23.

⁴⁷ R. F. MILLEN, R. E. WOLF, *Heroic deeds and mystic figures...* cit., p. 12-13.

⁴⁸ “Il giorno sopradetto del 23 [novembre 1630], il re fu tutta la mattina col presidente Souffran dalla regina per disporla di vedere di buon occhio il suddetto cardinale, et doppo che loro maestà hebbero desinato, si ritirorno sole nel gabinetto delle Muse [...] et poco tempo appresso il cardinale di Bagno col cardinale di Richelieu arrivò in detto gabinetto passando per la galleria, affinché alcuno non potesse entrare a vedere questa cerimonia”, letter from Giambattista Gondi, 20 December 1630, ASF, MP 4643.

Furthermore, Rubens' correspondence shows that the complex allegorical language of the paintings was used to regulate intellectual access to the series when physical access could not be impeded – such as on the inevitable occasion of Louis XIII's first (and apparently last) visit to the brand-new gallery, in May 1625. Rubens being confined in bed by a foot injury, the person appointed as the king's guide to the cycle – who was to translate and interpret the painter's allegories for him – was Claude Maugis, the queen's chaplain and closest adviser. In a letter to Peiresc in which he relates the outcome of the visit, Rubens reports how *artfully* Maugis had *diverted* and *dissimulated* the images' real meaning for (or, rather, from) the king:

The king too honored me by coming to see our gallery, and it was the first time he had set foot in the palace, which has now been under construction for sixteen to eighteen years. His Majesty was very pleased with our paintings as well, as I was told by all those who were present and, in particular, by Monsieur de Saint-Ambroise [Claude Maugis] who served as an interpreter of the subjects and who most artfully diverted and dissimulated their real meaning.⁴⁹

Hence, Louis XIII was simultaneously received and deceived in the queen's gallery; the real content and meaning of the paintings (or at least some of them) was deliberately distorted for him in order to conceal what he might have perceived as a controversial, provocative or offensive message. Maria was not naïve, and this episode shows that hanging the *Life* in her Luxembourg gallery was no foolish act; not only was access to the room under her control, but Rubens' language was complex enough that access to the paintings' "real" meaning could be manipulated at her wish.

Finally, physical and intellectual control combined made it possible for the gallery series to be widely publicized as the prestigious, spectacular masterpiece it was (and whose limited accessibility was, incidentally, a surplus value), without compromising the confidentiality of part of its content. Indeed, it comes at no surprise that the early descriptions of the gallery either do not grasp or do not disclose any insight into the "real" meaning of the paintings. The first commentators, Mathieu de Morgues (*Vers latins sur les tableaux qui sont en la Gallerie...*, 1626) and Claude-Barthélémy Morisot (*Porticus Medicaea*, Paris 1626 and 1628) both identify the *Council of the Gods* as having to do with the regent's wisdom, for instance, and they both cruise through the scenes depicting the conflict between mother and son. Morgues was the queen's panegyrist, which leaves little doubt that his text had been concerted with her. As to Morisot, the *Porticus* had been submitted for approval to Rubens himself. As "authoritative" texts – that is, not only written during the lifetime of both the artist and his patron, but also in collaboration with them – the *Vers latins* and the *Porticus* were used as primary sources in later descriptions, such as Bellori's (*Le vite de' pittori...*, 1672), Félibien's (*Entretiens...*, 1685), Moreau de Mautour's (*Description de la galerie du Palais de Luxembourg*, 1704), and others'. This, in turn, perpetuated the initial dissimulation in meaning up to modern times, which in itself is a proof that it was feasible to broadcast images (and the prestige they brought along) while simultaneously censoring content.

The undifferentiated audience scholars have thus far associated with the *Life of Maria de' Medici* was instead intended for the parallel cycle, the *Life of Henri IV*.

Both the interior of the east gallery and the paintings were left unfinished in 1631, when the queen was exiled,⁵⁰ but the function of the room is provided by the contract for the construction for the

⁴⁹ "Il re ancora mi fece l'onore di venire a vedere la nostra galeria, per la prima volta che giammai pose gli piedi in quel palazzo, che sono più de 16 o 18 anni che si comincio a fabricare. Mostrò ancora Sua Maestà d'haver ogni soddisfattioni delle nostre pitture, come mi è stato riferito di tutti che si trovarono presenti e particolarmente di Monsieur di Sant'Ambrosio che servì d'interprete degli soggetti con una diversione e dissimulatione del vero senso molto artificiosa", letter from Rubens, 13 May 1625, published by M. ROOSES, C. RUELENS, *Correspondance de Rubens...* cit., v. III, p. 351.

⁵⁰ In 1645 the interior of the gallery was still described as "sans aucun parquetz, lambris ny croisées" (*Procès-verbal d'estimation des biens immeubles...* cit., published in M.-N. MATUSZEK-BAUDOIN, *Maria de Médicis...* cit., p. 264). As to the paintings, only five unfinished canvas are extant (the *Battle* and the *Triumph* in the Uffizi, the *Siege of Caen* in the Kunstmuseum in Goteborg, the *Battle of Arques* in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, and the *Battle in the faubourgs of Paris* in the Rubenshuis) together with several sketches (J. S. HELD, *The oil sketches of Peter Paul Rubens: a critical catalogue*, Princeton 1980, p. 123-136). On the *Life of Henri IV*, see I. JOST, "Bemerkungen zur Heinrichsgalerie des P. P. Ruben", *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 15 (1964), p. 175-219, J. THUILLIER, J. FOUCAULT, *Rubens: la galerie Médicis...* cit., p. 59-69, N. VAN HOUT, "Henry IV valait bien une Galerie! Rubens' unfinished Luxembourg project", in

basse-cour (service courtyard) of the palace, located to the east of the gallery itself.⁵¹ The courtyard was designed by Jacques Lemercier and it comprised a *salle de bal*, a kitchen, and two loggias for the connection of these buildings to the main residence. Construction started in 1630 and by 1631, when all work on the Luxembourg came to a halt, only the kitchen had been erected (fig. 26). Lemercier's drawings are lost, but the text of the building contract is specific enough to allow reconstructing the outline of his project (fig. 27). The kitchen and the east wing of the palace, containing the king's gallery, stood along the north and west sides of the courtyard respectively; the *salle de bal* (sb) was to be constructed on the east side, across the yard from the gallery; and the two connecting loggias (p1 and p2) were to close the square along its north and south sides. The south loggia (p2) is described as a two-storey building providing a "lower" (ground floor) passage, and an "upper" (first floor) passage, both vaulted and 3.24m in width. The upper passage was to open off Henri IV's gallery and to give access to the *salle de bal*:

The upper-storey passage will be vaulted in the same manner as the one on the ground floor, and the descent from the palace to the *salle de bal* will be from the entrance of the gallery [of Henri IV] into the upper-storey passage.⁵²

The door to this passage (b) would thus have opened next to the first painting of the series dedicated to king, the *Birth of Henri* (fig. 28).

Leading to the *salle de bal* of the palace, the east gallery was thus conceived as a largely accessible room in which Rubens' *Life of Henri IV* was to have the same audience of the *divertissements* organized by the queen – that is to say the court at large. Henri's actions though, differently from Maria's, were suitable for such a setting because they didn't lend themselves to controversy; not because they hadn't been controversial *per se* though, or less controversial than Maria's, but rather because they were located in the past instead of the present. Yet again, the *memorial* quality of the east wing reveals itself a key feature of the Luxembourg project – it not only generated the symmetrical layout of the palace but it also determined the functional distribution of some of its interiors, as well as the nature of their decorative schemes.

The Luxembourg Palace has been described as "a testimony to the magnificence of a consort and mother of kings who associated to her royal dignity the government of one of Europe's most powerful kingdoms"⁵³. Indeed, the building and its decoration were designed to glorify Maria de' Medici's multifaceted identity: as queen, regent, and member of the government of France; as the founder, with Henri IV, of the dynasty of Bourbon kings as well as a Medici of imperial descent; and, of course, as a patron of the arts.

But the Luxembourg is more than just a "testimony" and it conveys more than just "magnificence" once the complexity of the relations between its architecture, its functional layout and its decorative schemes is restituted. More than testimony, because the palace did not simply project an image of Maria de' Medici but it also played an active role in the production and definition of that image. More than magnificence because, besides being the queen's masterpiece, the palace marks a crucial episode in French architectural history and significantly contributes to our understanding of how royal residences were planned to both serve and manipulate the structure of courts. The size and layout of Maria's apartment in the Luxembourg, the complexity of its articulation in a variety of differently accessible spaces and visual programs, and its subtle relation (both spatial and symbolic) to the memorial wing dedicated to Henri IV resonate with notions of power, control, and access which are central to our construal of court societies and denote the queen's fundamental role in the shaping of early modern ritual space.

(Contd.)

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⁵¹ *Devis et marché de Jean Thiriot*, 30 April 1630, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Nouv. Acq., 123, f. 34-41v.

⁵² "Le passage d'en hault sera couvert a voulte de mesme celluy du rez-de-chaussée, et la descente dudit pallais a ladict grande salle du bal sera faicte dès l'entrée de la galerie dedans ledit passage", *Devis et marché de Jean Thiriot...* cit., f. 35v.

⁵³ F. COSANDEY, *La reine de France...* cit., p. 337.

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Fig. 1 – Galerie François I^{er} (left) and Galerie des Glaces (right)

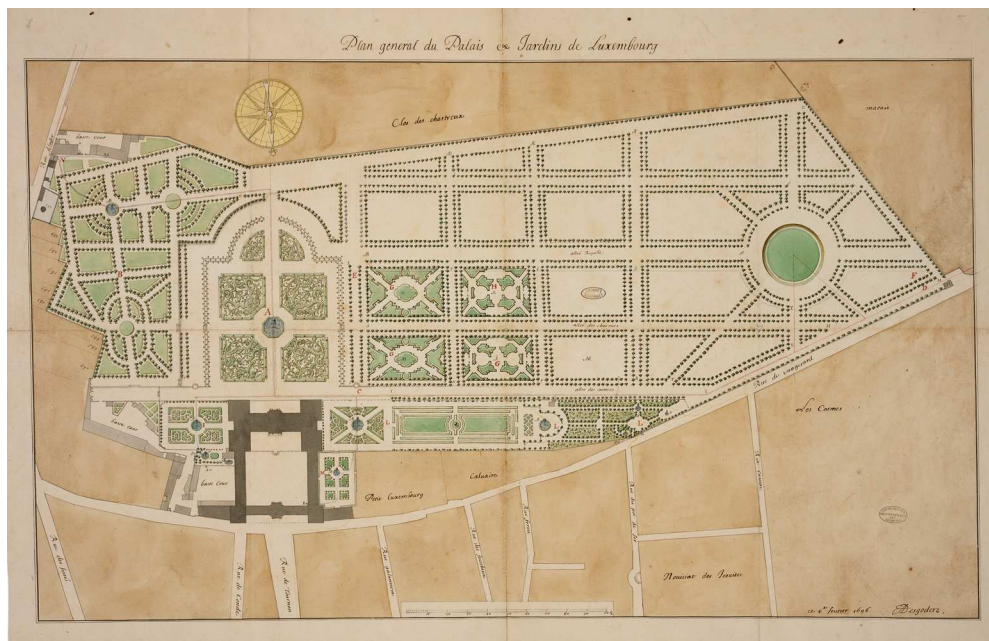


Fig. 2 – Desgodets, *Plan général du palais et jardins de Luxembourg*, 1696. The plan is oriented with South at the top.

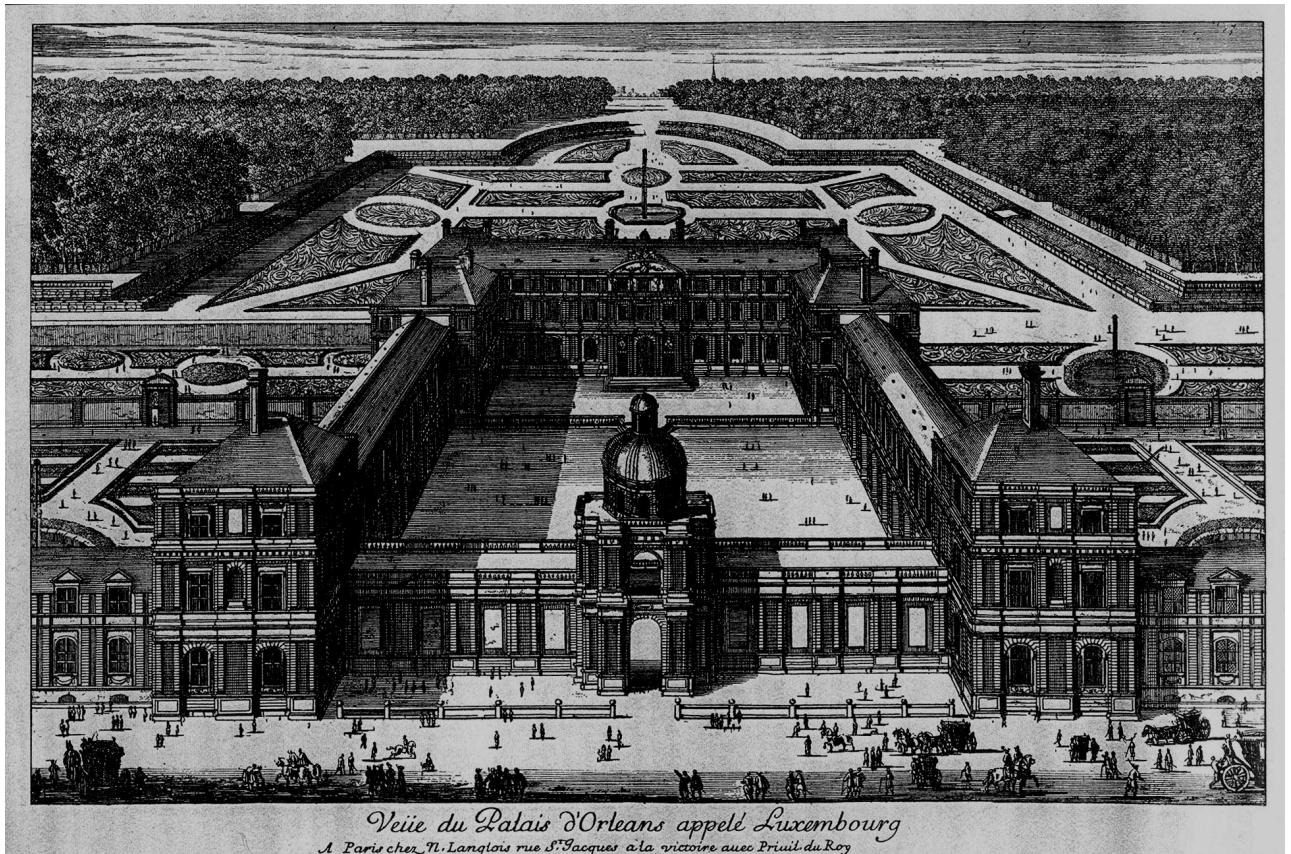


Fig. 3 – Israël Silvestre, *Veüe du Palais d'Orléans appelé Luxembourg*.

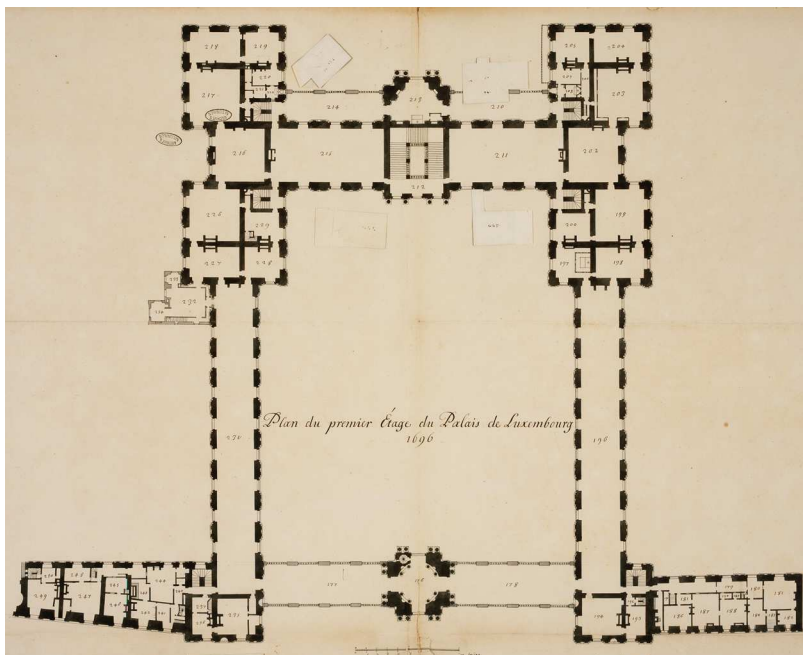


Fig. 4 – Desgodets, *Plan du premier étage du palais de Luxembourg*, 1696. The plan is oriented with South at the top.

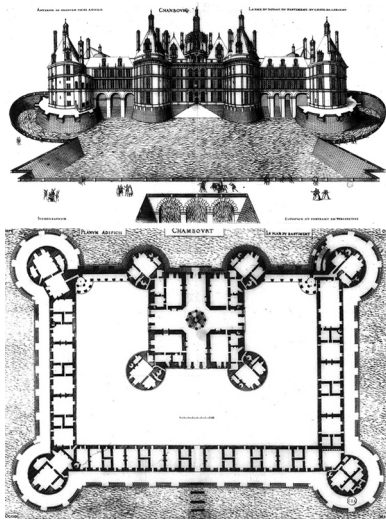


Fig. 5 – Chambord, Plan and elevation (J. Androuet du Cerceau, *Les plus excellents bastiments de France*, 1576-1579).

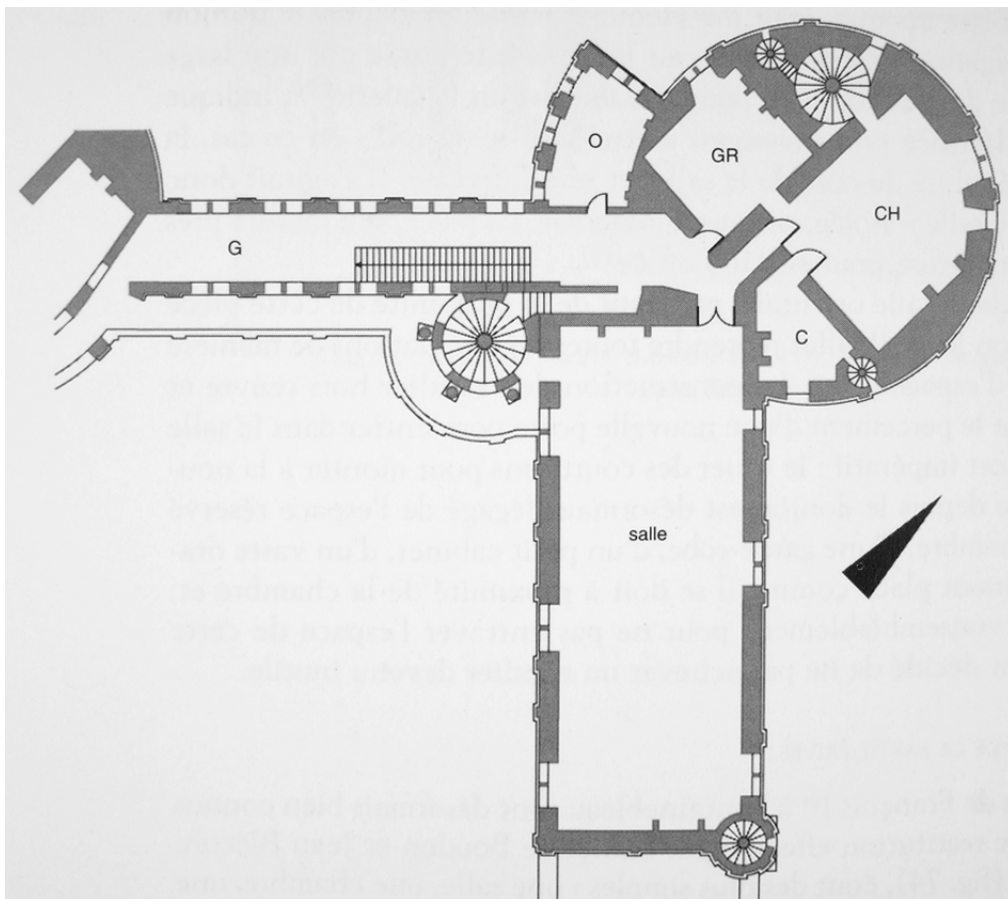


Fig. 6 – Chambord, Francis I's apartment (M. Chatenet, *La cour de France au XVI^e siècle: vie sociale et architecture*, 2002). CH, chambre; C, cabinet; GR, garde-robe; O, oratoire; G, galerie.

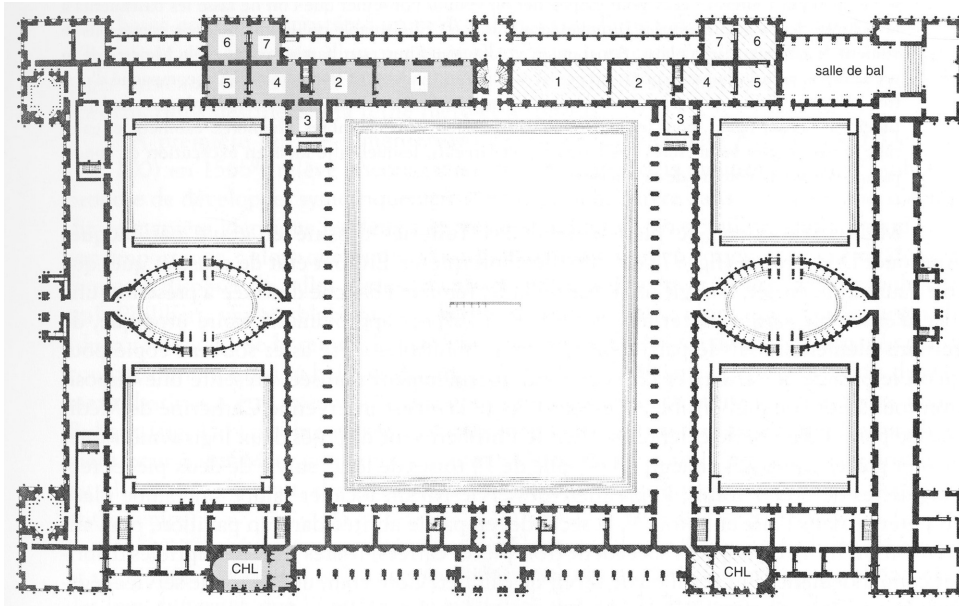


Fig. 7 – Tuileries, Royal apartments (M. Chatenet, *La cour de France au XVI^e siècle: vie sociale et architecture*, 2002).

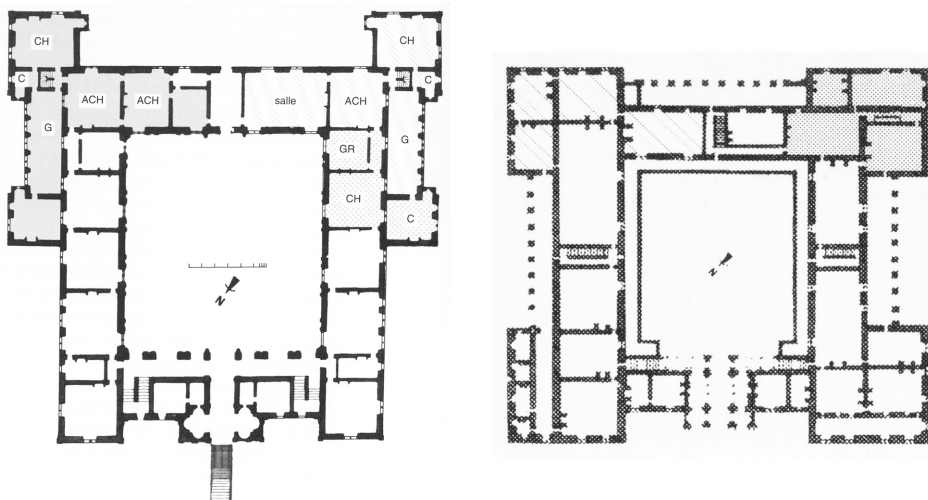


Fig. 8 – Saint-Maur: *a* (left) Royal apartments in Philibert Delorme's second design; *b* (right) Jean Bullant's design (Monique Chatenet, *La cour de France au XVI^e siècle: vie sociale et architecture*, 2002).

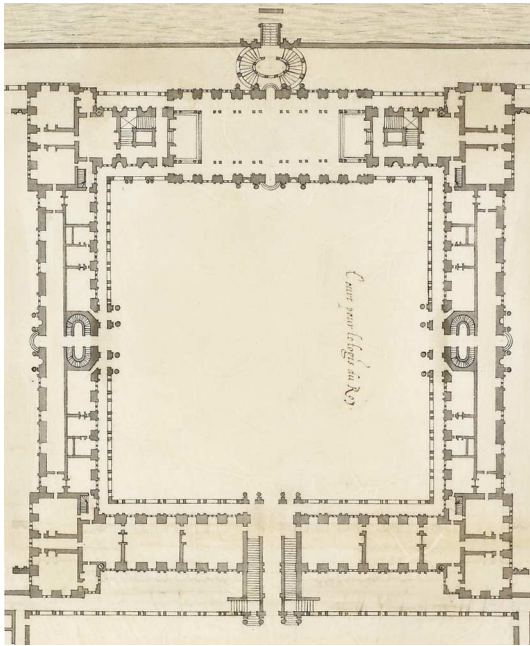


Fig. 9 – Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, *Charleval*.

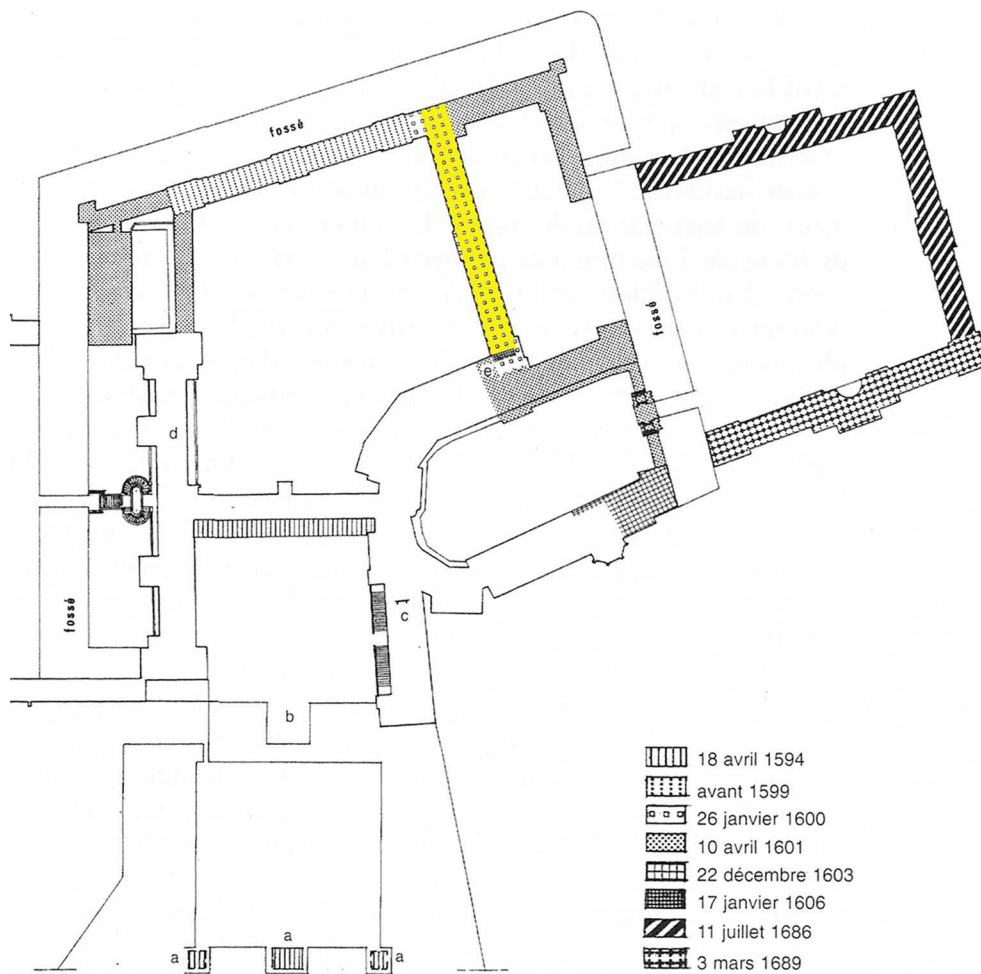


Fig. 10 – Fontainebleau, Works commissioned by Henri IV (F. Boudon, J. Blécon, *Le Château de Fontainebleau de François 1er à Henri IV: les bâtiments et leurs fonctions*, 1998). The queen's gallery is highlighted.

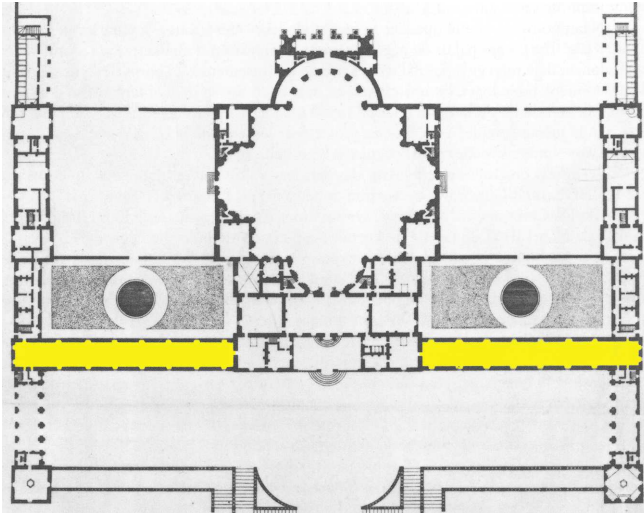


Fig. 11 – Israël Silvestre, *Plan du château de Saint Germain en Laye*. The twin galleries are highlighted.

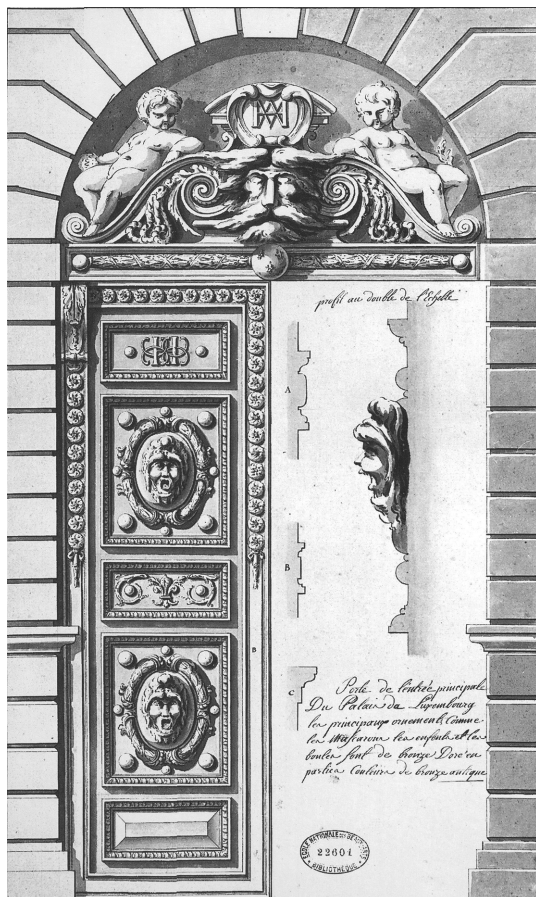


Fig. 12 – Anon., *Porte de l'entrée principale du Palais du Luxembourg*.



Fig. 13 – Peter Paul Rubens, *The consignment of the regency*.



Fig. 14 – Peter Paul Rubens, *The coronation* (detail).



Fig. 15 – Peter Paul Rubens, *Henri IV and Maria de' Medici*.



Fig. 16 – Guillaume Dupré, Medal portraying Henri IV and Maria de' Medici (obverse), and Henri IV, Maria de' Medici, and Louis XIII (reverse), 1603

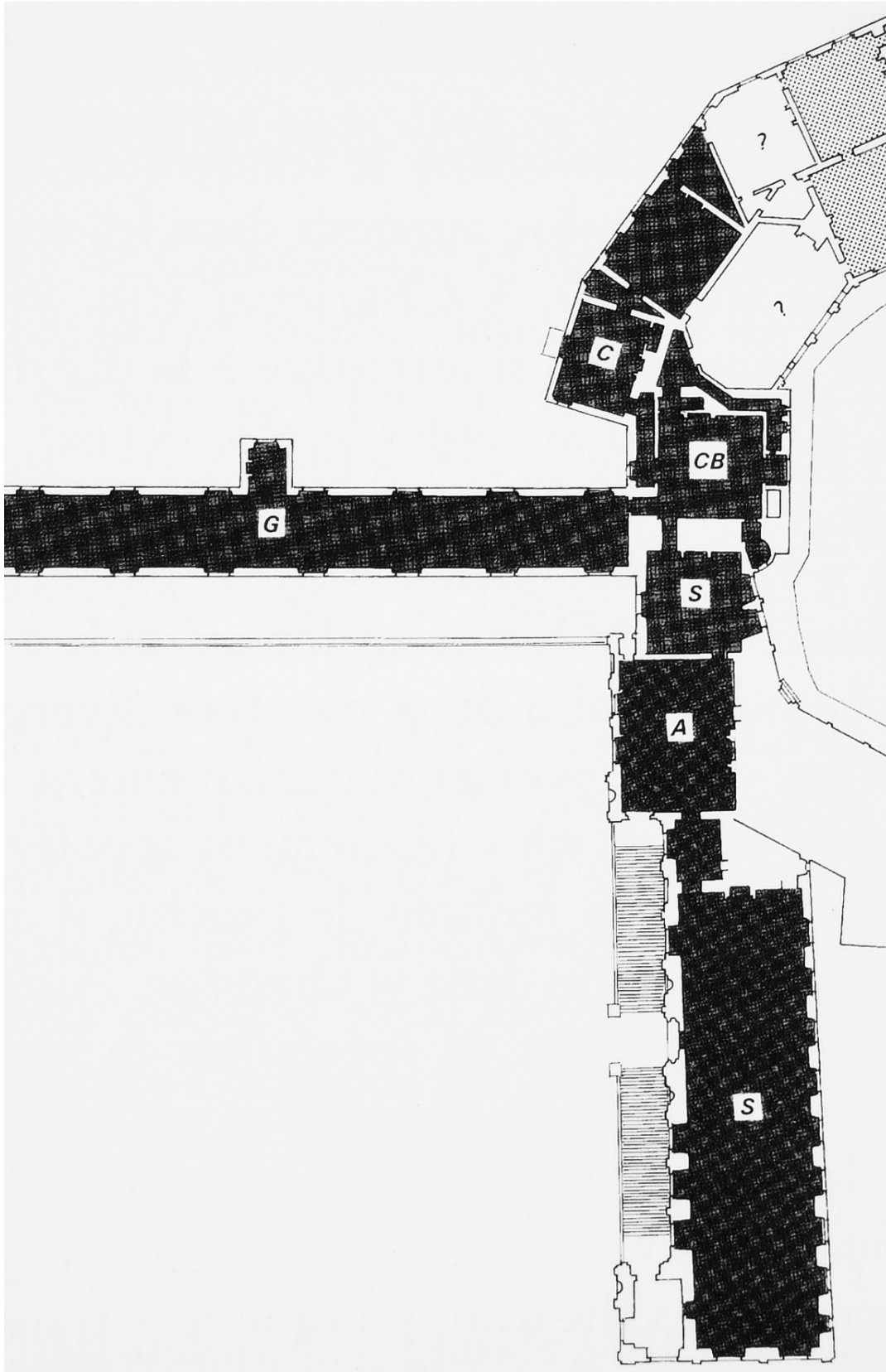


Fig. 17 – Fontainebleau, Charles IX's apartment (F. Boudon, J. Blécon, *Le Château de Fontainebleau de François 1er à Henri IV: les bâtiments et leurs fonctions*, 1998). S, salle; A, antichambre; CB, chambre; C, cabinet; G, galerie.

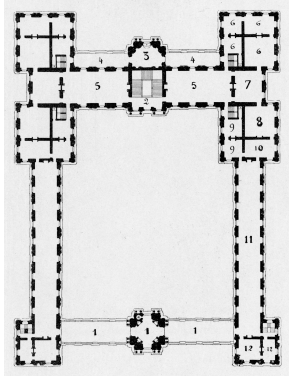


Fig. 18 – Luxembourg, Maria de' Medici's apartment (A. Hustin, *Le Palais du Luxembourg: ses transformations, son agrandissement, ses architectes, sa décoration, ses décorateurs*, 1904). 2, grand escalier; 5, salle; 6, appartement privé; 8, chambre d'apparat.

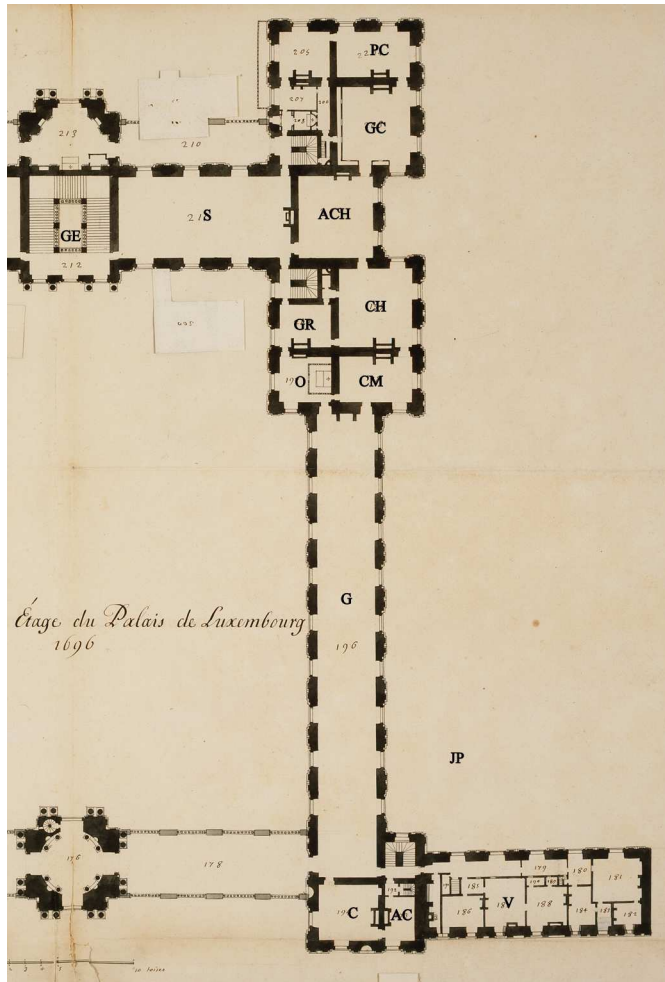


Fig. 19 – Luxembourg, Maria de' Medici's apartment (S. Galletti, "L'appartement de Maria de Médicis au palais du Luxembourg", in P. Bassani Pacht, T. Crépin-Leblond, N. Sainte Fare Garnot, et al. (eds.), *Maria de Médicis: un gouvernement par les arts*, 2003). GE, grand escalier; S, salle; ACH, antichambre; GC, grand cabinet; PC, petit cabinet; CH, chambre; CM, Cabinet des Muses; O, oratoire; GR, garde-robe; G, galerie; C, cabinet; AC, arrière cabinet; V, volière, JP, jardin privé.

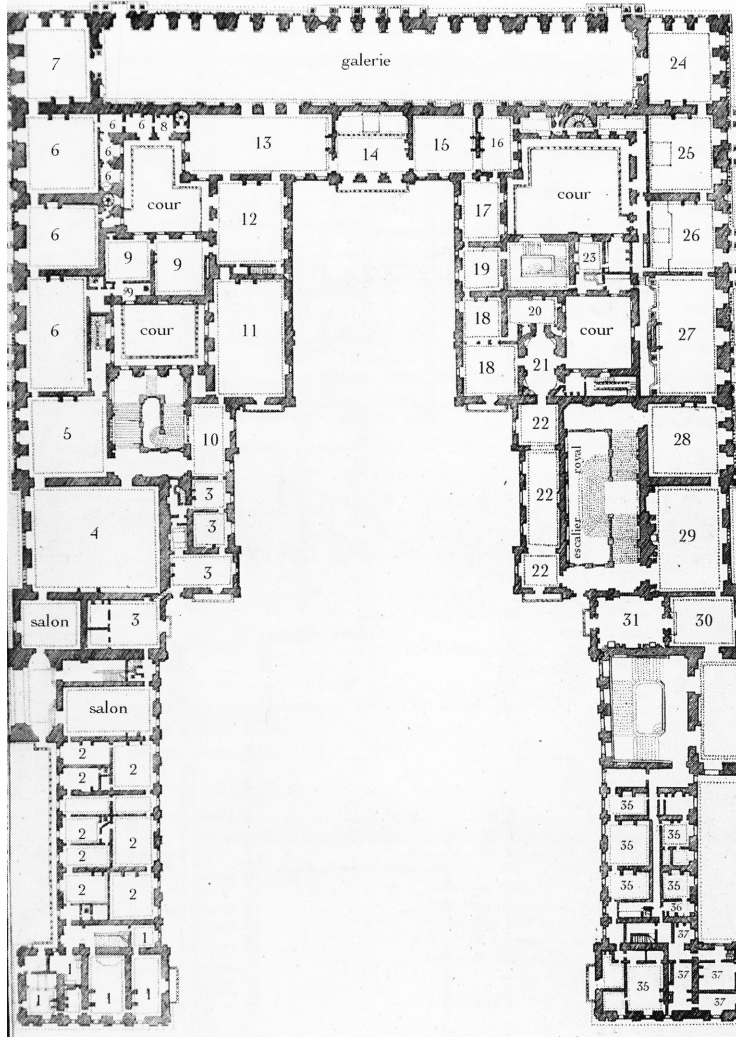


Fig. 20 – Versailles, Royal apartments (Mortin, ca. 1709). 25-30, grand appartement du roi; 11-15, appartement de commodité du roi; 16-23, cabinets du roi.

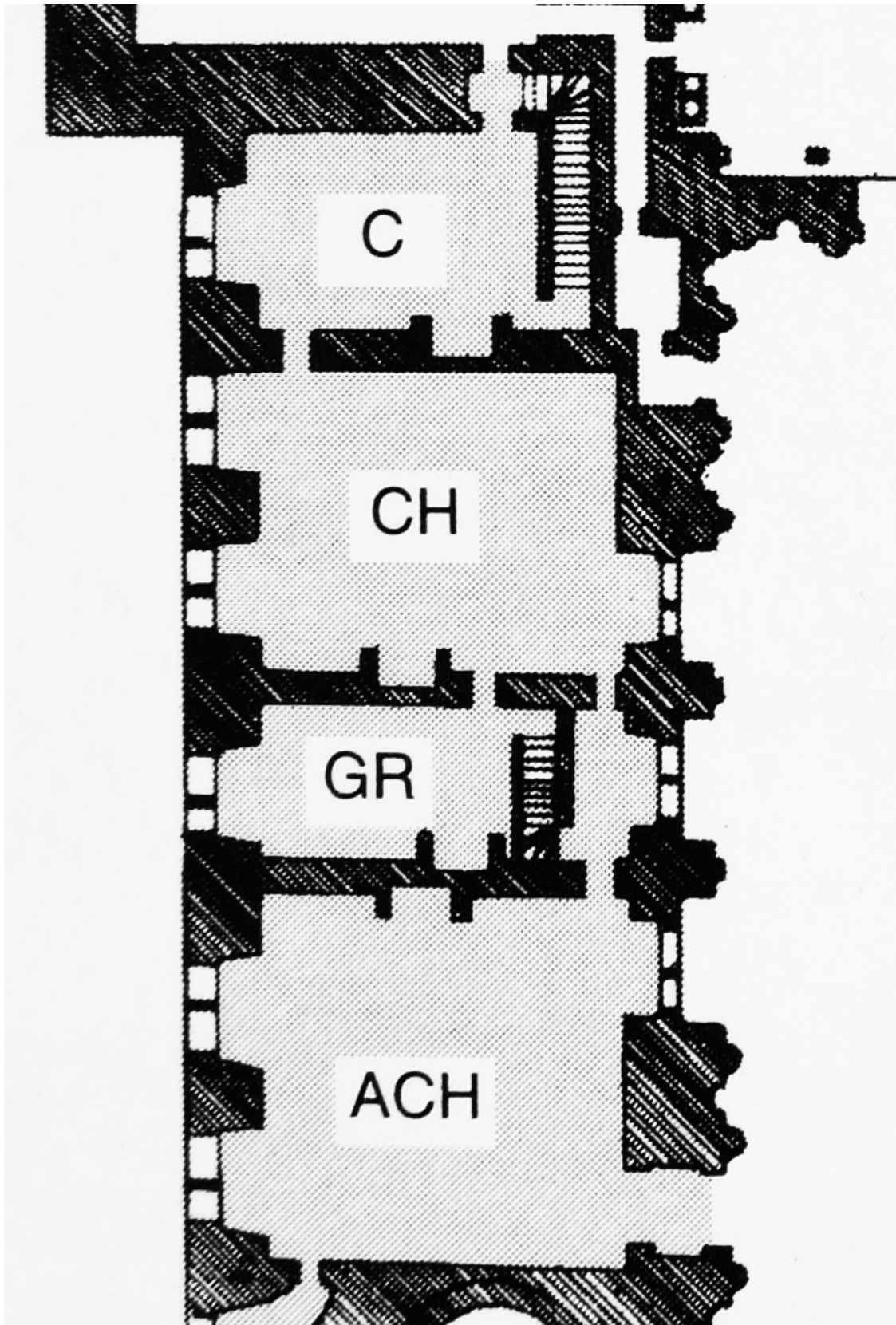


Fig. 21 – Louvre, Apartment of the queen mother, Catherine de' Medici's layout (M. Chatenet, *La cour de France au XVI^e siècle: vie sociale et architecture*, 2002). ACH, antichambre; CH, chambre; GR, garde-robe; C, cabinet.

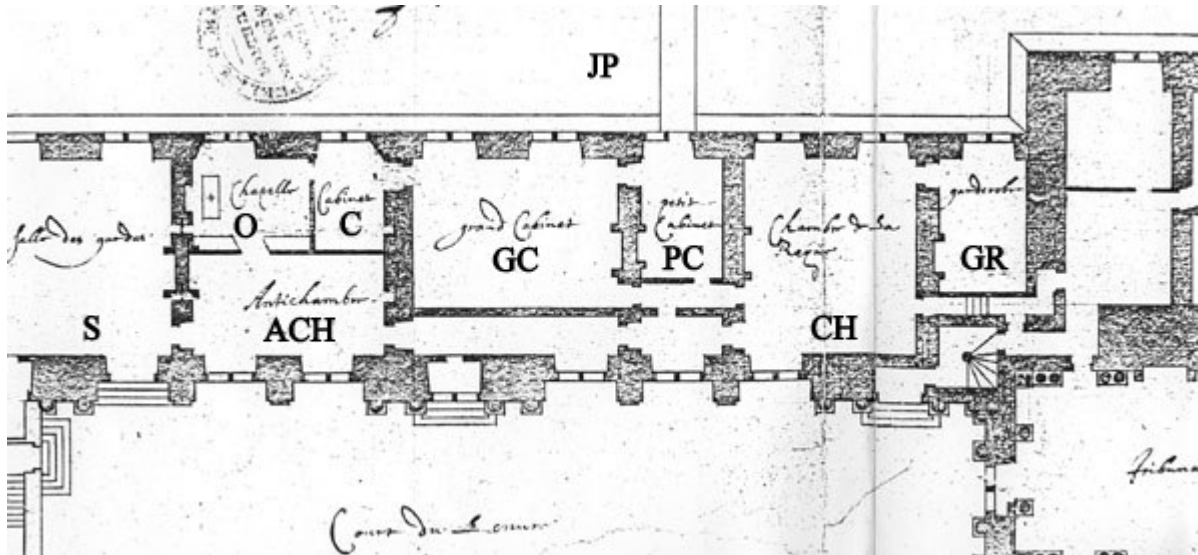


Fig. 22 – Louvre, Apartment of the queen mother, Maria de' Medici's layout (J. Lemercier, ca. 1629). S, salle; ACH, antichambre; O, oratoire; C, cabinet; CH, chambre; GR, garde-robe; GC, grand cabinet; PC, petit cabinet; JP, jardin privé.



Fig. 23 – Giovanni Bilivert, *The interview of Leo x and Francis I*.



Fig. 24 – Peter Paul Rubens, *The flight from Blois*.



Fig. 25 – Peter Paul Rubens, *The council of the gods*.

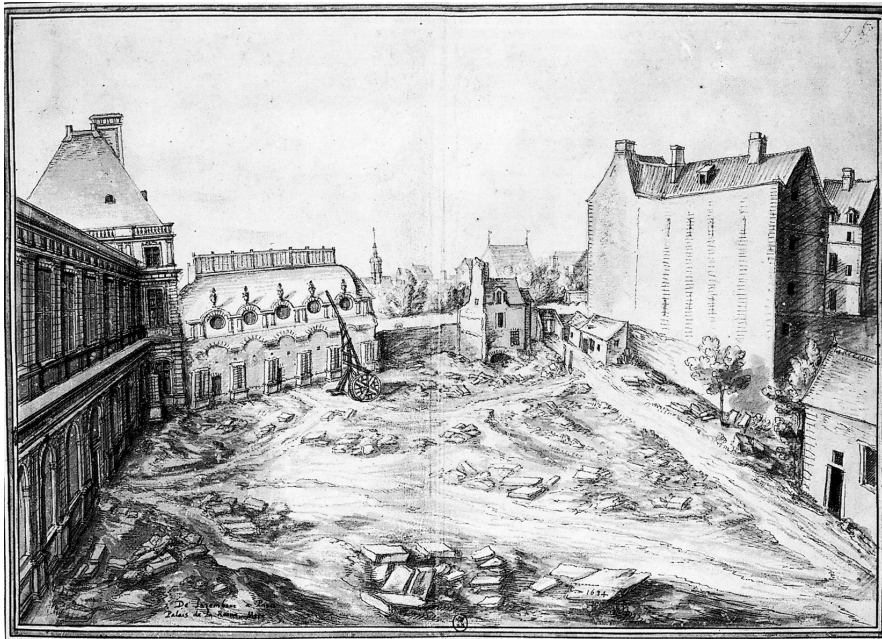


Fig. 26 – Luxembourg, *The basse-cour* (E. Martellange, 1634). To the left, the east gallery; on the background, the building containing the kitchen.

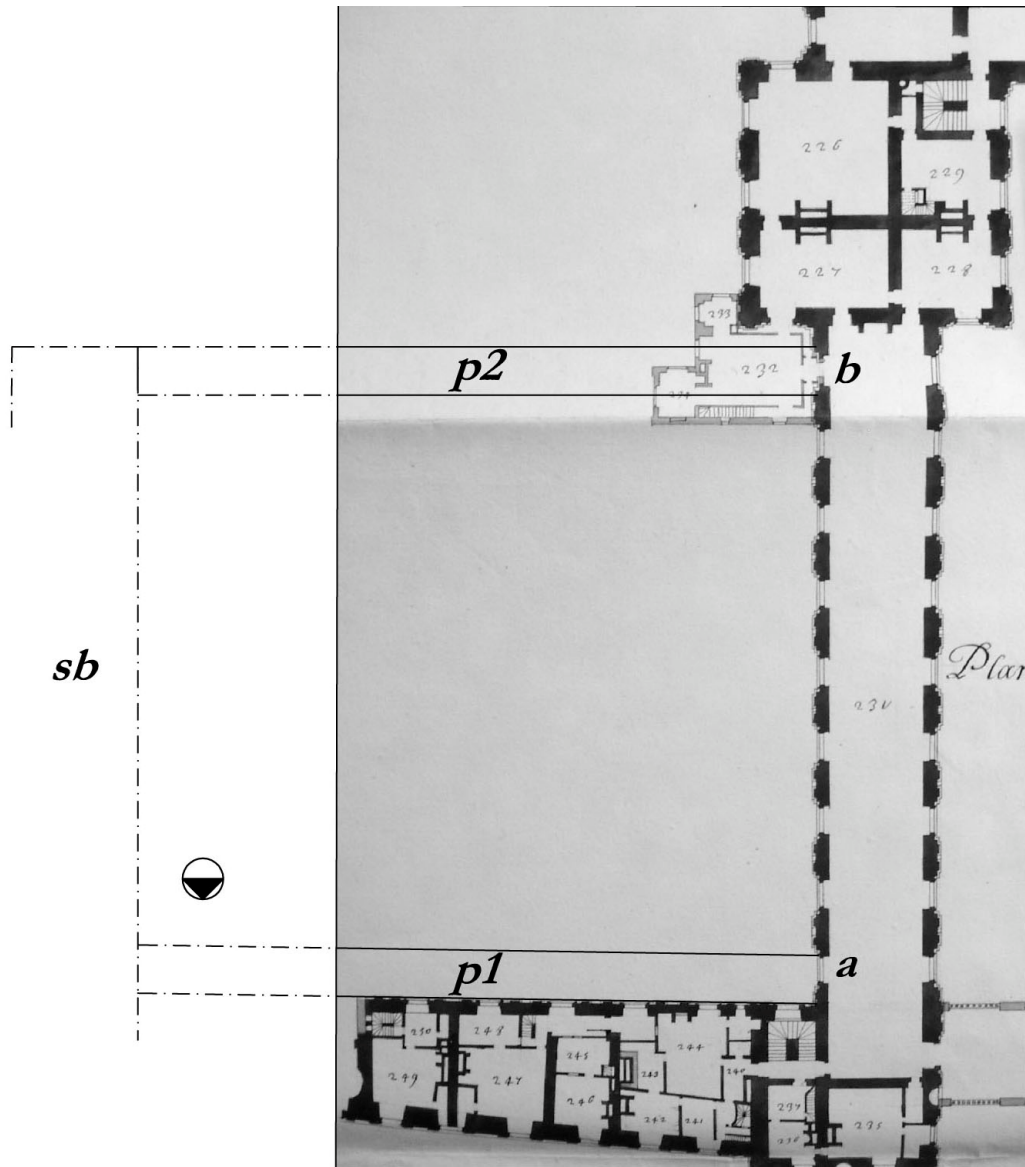


Fig. 27 – Luxembourg, Reconstruction scheme of Jacques Lemercier’s design for the *basse-cour* (S. Galletti, “Rubens et la galerie de Henri IV au palais du Luxembourg, 1628-1630”, *Bulletin Monumental* 2008).
sb, salle de bal; p, portique.

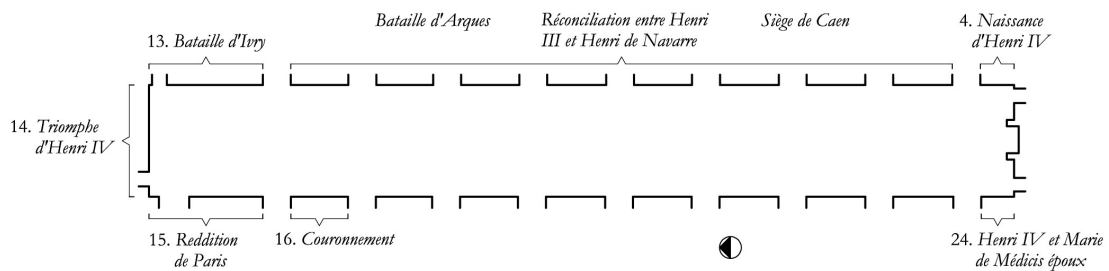


Fig. 28 – Luxembourg, Reconstruction scheme for the paintings’ order in Henri IV’s gallery (S. Galletti, “Rubens et la galerie de Henri IV au palais du Luxembourg, 1628-1630”, *Bulletin Monumental* 2008)

Un espace au cœur du pouvoir. Mathurine et sa folie à la cour d'Henri IV : Marginalité, rituel et politique

Marion LEMAIGNAN, EUI, Florence

Folle en titre auprès d'Henri IV, Mathurine fut un important personnage de la Cour d'Henri IV et des rues de Paris au tournant du XVII^e siècle. Réputée pour son goût pour le travestissement, ses chevauchées dans Paris, le port de l'épée ou encore ses prises de parole énergiques et burlesques dans les multiples libelles et petites pièces satiriques qui ont circulé sous son nom, ses comportements transgressifs sont étroitement liés à sa fonction de folle de cour et l'on souhaite ici étudier l'articulation entre ses écarts à la norme, les espaces de la cour dans lesquels elle s'inscrit et les liens spécifiques qu'elle entretient avec le pouvoir.

La folie domestique est, depuis le XIV^e siècle, un office à part entière avec son statut et ses fonctions¹. Le fou doit divertir le roi et son entourage; amuseur, musicien, danseur, acrobate, sa fonction lui offre en outre le droit à une parole libre de contraintes. A partir du règne d'Henri III les attributions de divertissement tendent toutefois à s'estomper et l'influence politique du fou s'amplifie dans le contexte de l'affirmation du pouvoir absolu. Mathurine, dont la personnalité a marqué l'histoire des fous en titre, s'inscrit donc dans une longue généalogie de fous en titre dont la fonction tend toutefois à décliner au début du XVII^e siècle : Maître Guillaume, son comparse, lui survivra suivi par Angoulevant, et Angely sous Louis XIV sera le dernier à remplir l'office de fou en titre.

Signalons dès à présent que l'une des spécificités de Mathurine réside dans sa présence auprès du Roi. Si les reines avaient leurs folles au même titre que leurs homologues masculins – Catherine de Médicis par exemple entretenait deux folles, La Jardinière et Jacqueline² – Mathurine est la première femme (et la dernière) à remplir la fonction auprès d'un roi. Tout d'abord au service d'Henri III, puis de Henri IV, et enfin de Louis XIII, sa pension est avérée jusqu'en 1622, date à laquelle elle perçoit encore une rente de 1200 livres³.

Encore au XVII^e siècle, l'ambiguïté demeure au cœur de cette folie institutionnalisée : les mythes et les légendes se mêlent aux faits et si la folie de cour est de moins en moins synonyme au XVII^e d'une quelconque pathologique⁴, l'incertitude sur la frontière qui sépare folie réelle et simulée demeure constitutive de la fonction de fou de cour. C'est bien cette ambiguïté même que l'on rencontre au cœur des discours sur Mathurine :

Baste, si je suis folle, c'est à l'occasion, laquelle j'ay sceu empoigner si bravement, qu'il m'en revient tous les ans plus de vingt et treize jacobus de rente foncière.⁵

Assumant un désordre évoquant pour ses contemporains le désordre mental, Mathurine touche cependant une pension pour remplir la fonction de folle en titre auprès du roi et revendique son rôle institutionnel.

¹ C'est Philippe V qui crée en 1313 le statut administratif du « fol en titre d'office » institutionnalisant ainsi une fonction qui perdure jusque sous Louis XIV. Voir Maurice Lever, *Le sceptre et la marotte. Histoire des Fous de Cour*, Paris, 1983.

² Alfred Canel, *Recherches historiques sur les Fous des rois de France, et accessoirement sur l'emploi du Fou en général*, Paris, 1873. Les deux folles sont signalées dans les comptes de la reine respectivement en 1554 puis 1561 et en 1556, 1570 et 1576.

³ Les fous en titre étaient payés sur le fond des Menus Plaisirs, cette somme est indiquée dans le *Sommaire du revenu et dépenses des finances de France* publié par Nicolas Rémond. S'il est difficile de comparer les salaires des folles (pour les reines) et des fous (rois), Maurice Lever souligne que maître Guillaume, fou en même temps que Mathurine auprès d'Henri IV était en 1620 payé 600 livres de plus que cette dernière. Maurice Lever, *le sceptre et la marotte*, cit. p.143.

⁴ Voir Maurice Lever, *Le sceptre et la marotte*, cit. pp. 102-107 sur l'ambiguïté entre folie réelle et simulation et le passage de l'un à l'autre qui se fait progressivement au XVI^e siècle.

⁵ *Les essais de Mathurine*, Paris, 1622, p.1.

On connaît Mathurine par le biais de sources variées et les témoignages ponctuels de Mémorialistes ou d'écrivains tels Pierre Colins⁶, Bassompierre, ou encore Agrippa d'Aubigné qui la met en scène dans un chapitre de *La Confession du Sieur de Sancy* intitulé le « Dialogue de Mathurine et du jeune Du Perron »⁷, qui circule sous forme manuscrite au tournant du siècle et sur lequel l'on reviendra plus amplement dans un second temps. À son tour, Jean Heroard l'évoque à plusieurs reprises dans son célèbre journal partageant les jeux voire les repas du Dauphin, comme le 5 décembre 1603 :

Le Roi se lève pour aller à la chasse, le Dauphin va achever de dîner avec la Reine. Mathurine arrive, il la considère froidement ; elle joue avec lui, il en rit ; elle se retrousse, il lui voit un haut de chausse, il se prend à rire et s'en moque.⁸

On sait par Pierre de l'Estoile qu'elle est déjà aux côtés du roi en 1594, il la signale partageant sa table en 1596, à nouveau en 1607, lorsque le roi lui confie un enfant et enfin, en 1608, il dit avoir acheté

un Arrest du Conseil d'Etat, nouvellement imprimé, en faveur du syndicat des trois Etats du pays de Provence ; qui m'a cousté avec une nouvelle fadèze, intitulée *La sagesse de Mathurine*, dix-huit deniers.⁹

De nombreux libelles ont en effet circulé sous le nom de Mathurine. Ces textes caractéristiques – polémiques religieuses ou politiques au ton satirique et burlesque – sont tout à fait similaires à d'autres écrits également attribués à partir de la fin du XVI^e siècle à des fous en titre tels Chicot, maître Guillaume ou Angoulevant. Outre la *Sagesse de Mathurine*, déjà évoquée, circule dès 1605 *L'Appointement de Querelle, Faict par Mathurine, entre le Soldat François et Maître Guillaume*, imprimé de dix-neuf pages in 12. Puis suivent *Le feu de joye de Madame Mathurine* (1609), la *Cholere de Mathurine contre les difformez reformez de France* (1615), deux in 8^o, et enfin en 1622 *Les essais de Mathurine*, un in 8^o de seize pages. Ces écrits, couramment appelés « maturinades », semblent avoir été plusieurs fois réimprimés. Si l'on ne peut établir avec certitude l'auctorialité de ces pièces, ces écrits se font porte parole de la voix attendue du Fou, une voix politique dont la parole libre et transgressive est autorisée. Ces écrits, qui participent de la construction d'un discours politique et du personnage social de fou, sont malgré tout marqués, concernant la Folle, par les spécificités propres à Mathurine que sont sa position innovante de Folle à la cour d'un roi et ses prises de positions religieuses très marquées contre les huguenots et la Ligue.

Quelques historiens du dix-neuvième siècle et vingtième siècle évoquent Mathurine et retracent son histoire grâce à des recherches approfondies¹⁰, cependant elle demeure généralement considérée comme simple figure excentrique ce qui nous incite à proposer une analyse plus élaborée de son rôle singulier et complexe à la cour. L'on souhaite donc ici s'intéresser à cette ambivalence de la folie de Mathurine entre fonction sociale et désordre mental, ce qui invitera à identifier la teneur de son pouvoir au sein de l'espace spécifique de la cour d'Henri IV, avant de proposer une analyse d'un espace textuel dans lequel elle est mobilisée : *La Confession catholique du sieur de Sancy* d'Agrippa d'Aubigné.

⁶ Pierre Colins, *Histoire des choses les plus mémorables advenues en l'Europe depuis l'an onze cens XXX jusques à notre siècle*, Tournay, 1643.

⁷ Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné, *La confession catholique du Sieur de Sancy*, Gallica (ed.E.Réaume et F.de Caussade) : <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k873600>.

⁸ Jean Heroard, *Journal*, ed E.Soulié, et E. de Barthélémy, 1868, T.I, p.56.

⁹ *ibid.* T.IX, p.125.

¹⁰ Il y a relativement peu de choses dans l'historiographie sur les Fous de Cour excepté Maurice Lever, *le sceptre et la marotte*, cit. et plusieurs travaux d'érudits du XIX^e siècle, tel par exemple Alfred Canel, *Recherche historique sur les fous*, cit..

L'espace trouble de la folie de Mathurine

Une folie ambiguë

La folie de Mathurine, publiée dans les libelles, donnée à voir et largement diffusée conserve en permanence les ambivalences propres à la figure du fou : ambiguïté entre folie pathologique et simulation, ainsi qu'entre exception monstrueuse cristallisant le bestial, l'anormal, l'irresponsabilité et incarnation rituelle nécessaire du désordre et de sa violence. La folie de cour qui fait écho au rôle bien défini du fou du carnaval est clamée et jouée :

Messieurs ne vous estonnez pas de me voir esprinse d'une saicte fureur, ie parle d'un esprit prophetique,¹¹ ie vous en veux compter, car ie viens de loing, ie viens d'un pays où ie n'ay iamais esté, c'est aux Antipodes, où i'ay veu le monde renversé, chose estrange : le vallet commande au Maistre, le subject faict la loi à son Prince, les poissons vont denicher les oyseaux. [...] A propos d'asnes, messieurs revenons à nos moutons, ce monde renversé m'a tellement bouleversé le cerveau que i'en suis toute enthousiasmée.¹²

Cette folie est institutionnalisée dans un espace bien défini : « les Antipodes », c'est-à-dire le monde à l'envers du carnaval, qui offre à Mathurine les espaces traditionnels de sa fonction. Le fou du roi, qui s'inscrit dans le domaine de la représentation de la vérité, du pouvoir et de l'ordre est en charge d'une fonction publique dans l'espace politique. Il forme un couple antithétique avec le roi dont il est à la fois l'envers et le miroir. Mathurine est l'image renversée du roi dans un espace libre de contraintes. Cette dimension institutionnelle doublée du désordre dont fait preuve Mathurine est l'illustration de ces ambivalences entre pathologie et fonction sociale ainsi qu'entre peur du désordre et nécessité de sa ritualisation

Quand je considère ma vie, je la trouve assaisonnée de beaucoup d'utilitez, encore que passant par les ruës, les petits enfans clabaudent après moy : Aga ! Mathurine la folle !¹³

Déjà dans ce passage affleure cette ambivalence, plus marquée encore dans le récit – donné par Pierre de l'Estoile – d'une tentative d'assassinat sur d'Henri IV.

A l'instant, le Roy se sentit blessé, regardant ceux qui estoient autour de lui et, aiant advisé Mathurine, sa folle, commença à dire : « au diable soit la folle, elle m'a blessé », mais elle, le niant, courust tout aussi tost fermer la porte, et fut cause que ce petit assassin n'eschapast¹⁴.

On retrouve l'écho, dans le récit de cet incident, de l'aspect insaisissable et imprévisible qui structure la folie ; ce qui explique pourquoi Mathurine, pourtant très proche du roi, est d'abord spontanément accusée d'avoir commis le crime : sa folie semble rendre probable et pouvoir expliquer un potentiel retournement contre le roi. Même institutionnalisée, la folie qui demeure ontologiquement de l'ordre de l'inattendu et remet sans cesse en cause l'ordre du monde, semble rendre probable une telle action aux yeux des témoins de l'événement¹⁵ avant que l'on ne s'aperçoive que la Folle bondit fermer la porte afin d'éviter que l'assassin ne s'échappe.

¹¹ La « sainte fureur » et « l'esprit prophétique » évoquent également la dimension sacrée et religieuse qu'ont pu avoir les fous, les simples d'esprits, dans le discours catholique. M. Lever, *Le sceptre et la marotte*, cit. p.24.

¹² *La cholere de Mathurine, contre les difforme reformateurs de la France, à sa grande Amye*, Paris, Jean Milot, 1615 ; Bordeaux, 1616. pp. 8-10.

¹³ *Les essais de Mathurine*, cit.

¹⁴ Pierre de l'Estoile, *Mémoires- Journaux*, T. VI, Tallandier, reprise de l'édition d'Alphonse Lemerre, 1982, p. 247.

¹⁵ Lever, *Le sceptre et la marotte*, cit. pp. 66-67.

Ce court passage dans lequel elle passe donc du statut de coupable au statut de « sauveur » illustre cette ambivalence sur la teneur de la folie de Mathurine. L'allusion de Tallemant des Réaux, une génération plus tard, alors que la fonction de fou en titre s'essouffle, vient renforcer cette lecture ambivalente de Mathurine lorsqu'il semble hésiter sur le statut de cette folie : « cette Mathurine avoit été folle puis guérie, mais non pas parfaitement »¹⁶. On lit ici les interrogations que suscite l'ambivalence de la frontière entre une folie ouvertement pathologique et un rôle institutionnalisée, et qui rend délicate l'appréhension du fou dont l'extravagance interroge.

Ce contraste, voir cet antagonisme, entre les deux termes de la folie s'ancre dans un important travail de construction ou de manipulation de la figure du Fou. De plus, peut-être le *topos* du monde inversé qui fait de sa folie une expression rituelle dénuée de charge subversive a-t-il offert à Mathurine un espace d'autonomie exceptionnel autorisant l'expression des comportements marginaux dont elle fait preuve. Mathurine, par cette articulation, demeure donc sur la frontière entre inclusion et exclusion, intégration grâce à son statut et marginalité par des comportements transgressifs – et notamment en termes de genre.

Un genre trouble

La pratique du travestissement, le port de l'épée et son usage de l'argot font de Mathurine un personnage à l'identité de genre ambivalent. Si elle est reconnue comme femme, l'ambivalence masculin/féminin est perpétuellement associée au personnage de Mathurine et à sa folie créant un « espace-genre » spécifique sur lequel on souhaite s'arrêter un instant.

La gravure que l'on propose ici¹⁷ est particulièrement intéressante dans la mesure où elle propose une représentation physique de Mathurine associée à des caractéristiques symboliques de genre. C'est en premier lieu la dualité qui est mise en valeur dans cette gravure : la main droite tient le mouchoir tandis que la gauche dresse l'épée (l'épée n'est pas au côté, mais brandie) ; la jupe tranche avec le pourpoint dans une dichotomie haut/bas – le lieu du sexe (bas) est féminin mais la poitrine et le cœur (haut) sont masculins¹⁸ ; enfin lorsqu'on regarde plus attentivement, le visage lui-même est dissymétrique : l'œil et le sourcil gauches sont plus épais que le côté droit. On note dans un second temps la prégnance des attributs masculins dans cette représentation de Mathurine : hormis l'épée et le pourpoint déjà cités, le chapeau à plume, les cheveux courts, ainsi qu'une attitude « sans pudeur ni retenue » que dénotent un regard déterminé, la position du corps fortement marquée par le port de l'épée et la position de garde exprimée par l'orientation des pieds caractérisent fortement la lecture. Enfin, une lecture en termes de physiognomie, classique à cette période, vient renforcer l'image masculine de Mathurine¹⁹. Les yeux foncés et déterminés, les « sourcils gros et forts », la bouche « plutôt grande », le nez un peu plus gros à l'extrémité, le menton allongé (*vs* rond pour les femmes) sont autant de caractéristiques masculines. Les bras, quant à eux, épais et fermes dénoteraient un tempérament sanguin tout masculin.

Ce type de description corporelle de Mathurine est fréquent et témoigne de l'importance donnée à la lecture sexuée du corps (et pas seulement du vêtement). Ici le corps de Mathurine est bien à l'image de son statut (ou l'inverse : son statut à l'image de son corps ?) : ambivalent, oscillant entre

¹⁶ Tallemant des Réaux, « Lisette », in *Historiettes*, T.I, ed. Antoine Adam, Paris, 1980, p.81.

¹⁷ Voir à la fin. Gravure présentée notamment par E. Fournier, *variétés historiques et littéraires, recueil de pièces volantes rares et curieuses en prose et en vers*, Paris, 1855-1863.

¹⁸ On retrouve par ailleurs cette construction dans *La sagesse approuvée de madame Mathurine* : « Il verroit que d'un homme elle tient tout le corps, fors le bas seulement, qu'elle tient d'une femme ». *La sagesse approuvée de Madame Mathurine, à elle mesme*, Paris, 1608.

¹⁹ On s'appuie pour cette lecture sur les traités de physiognomie qui se développent au XVII^e siècle. Sylvie Steinberg dans son ouvrage propose des tableaux synthétisant les critères de différenciation des genres selon Porta et Cureau de la Chambre. Les physiognomistes définissent alors le genre dans la relation entre les caractéristiques physiques et les humeurs, offrant une lecture des caractéristiques physiques des individus en termes de genre ; il faut connecter ces tableaux à la notion de genre en construction dont ils sont une illustration intéressante avec notamment le « genre de transition » qu'est l'homme efféminé. Sylvie Steinberg, *La confusion des sexes, le travestissement de la Renaissance à la Révolution*, Paris, 2001.

homme et femme comme le fou fait le lien entre le roi-masculin et mari du corps social féminin ; bouffonne, mal bâtie et parfois ridicule elle reste acceptable et adaptée à la fonction qu'elle représente. La représentation du corps physique de Mathurine est donc en adéquation avec sa fonction sociale et politique, révélatrice de son statut et du pouvoir qui lui est conféré de faire lien entre différents espaces.

De plus, ces caractéristiques ambivalentes sont renforcées par la pratique du travestissement fréquemment associé à Mathurine. Ce travestissement prend plusieurs formes dont prédomine la représentation en femme guerrière, en soldate, en cavalière armée d'une épée. On peut ainsi lire dans l'un des nombreux libelles dont elle est le sujet si ce n'est l'auteur

Quelque ignorant dira : Mais cela n'est pas beau,
Contre l'ordre commun, de voir porter un chapeau,
Une épée un pourpoint ; fi le fait est infâme. (...)
Elle porte un chapeau comme une sage done ;
elle porte un tranchant comme une autre Amazone²⁰

On rencontre ici une première allusion aux Amazones – image récurrente au XVII^e siècle de la femme guerrière²¹ – dont la figure à son propos est très fortement marquée:

Suis-je pas ceste Mathurine quy ay renversé les escadres les plus animez de la ligue, quy ay tousjours montré que j'estois une autre pallas, que d'une main je portois la lance et l'estoc et de l'autre l'olive ?²²
Venons maintenant aux comparaisons, tous dementies à part, d'autant que mon espée commence à tenir au fourreau depuis la paix.²³

On est donc en présence, dans nombre de ces occasionnels, d'une « mise en spectacle » de la Folle dans son ambivalence de genre. Elle est fréquemment représentée dans un travestissement ostentatoire associé à une revendication des valeurs masculines de l'honneur, du prestige, et du contrôle de soi et des passions.

La nouveauté de la présence d'une folle auprès du roi doit sans doute être connectée à cette « masculinité » de Mathurine ; il est difficile de savoir s'il s'agit d'une relation de cause ou de conséquence dans la mesure où elle semble avoir eu un comportement masculin avant même d'être folle auprès d'Henri III, mais l'insistance sur ses ambiguïtés doit être mise en lien avec sa situation particulière de femme à la cour. Or, on ne peut au sujet de Mathurine dissocier la folie de ces ambiguïtés de genre et c'est ensemble qu'il faut les saisir et les lire. Ainsi, le travestissement et l'aspect androgyne de Mathurine apparaissent comme constitutifs de sa folie ; illustration de l'incongruité de sa présence à la cour du roi tout en demeurant cohérent avec son personnage et participant de son rôle de lien entre les différents « organes » de la cour.

Enfin, cette ambivalence de genre est très présente dans les libelles publiés sous son nom que l'on a déjà évoqué. Or, ces discours satiriques et populaires lui attribuent souvent une voix masculine et sont ainsi particulièrement révélateurs des ambiguïtés portant sur le genre de Mathurine²⁴. Il en va ainsi par exemple dans *La Cholère de Mathurine*, la colère, qui donne la tonalité du texte, est

²⁰ *La sagesse approuvée de Madame Mathurine, à elle mesme*, cit. 1608.

²¹ On retrouve ici la figure de l'Amazone dont le mythe à largement alimenté la littérature du XVII^e siècle. Le terme est régulièrement associé à des grandes figures féminines indépendantes, guerrières ou marginale. Pour ces questions là se référer en particulier à : Guyonne Leduc (dir.), *Réalité et représentations des Amazones*, Paris, 2008 ; et Sylvie Steinberg, *La confusion des sexes*, cit.

²² *Le feu de joie de Madame Mathurine ou est contenue la grande et merveilleuse réjouissance faite sur le retour de Maître Guillaume revenu de l'autre monde*, Paris, 1609, pp. 273-274. Soulignons d'ailleurs que Pallas fait partie des figures récurrentes associées aux « femmes fortes » et femmes guerrières.

²³ *Le feu de joie de Madame Mathurine*, cit, p.277.

²⁴ Insistons ici sur le fait, qu'il ne s'agit en aucun cas d'ambiguïtés sur son sexe, mais bien d'une *construction* de Mathurine dans une ambiguïté de genre. .

considérée illégitime dans la sphère publique pour les femmes²⁵ et incarne une forte masculinité. De plus, on l'a évoqué, ces textes sont caractéristiques des libelles publiés sous le nom de fous – mais non de folles. Mathurine semble donc endosser un rôle de fou masculin ; mais dans une certaine mesure seulement car elle conserve son sexe de femme (très sexualisé) et, on va le voir, elle partage les espaces féminins.

Mathurine est donc définie dans et par ses ambiguïtés : de genre, de langage/écriture, et de folie. Ce sont ces ambiguïtés qui tout en lui permettant d'importantes marges d'autonomie, en fait un lieu de pouvoir : elle incarne le pouvoir royal – ou son envers, détient un pouvoir certain sur la cour, et est elle-même un lieu de pouvoir politique par la libre parole qui lui est autorisée. La folie de Mathurine émerge donc comme un espace profondément politique dont il nous faut appréhender les enjeux.

Mathurine à la cour : un pouvoir féminin alternatif

On l'a vu, le fou est par définition dans le domaine de la représentation : représentation de la vérité, du pouvoir et de la tension entre ordre et désordre. Or, cette fonction de représentation qui s'inscrit dans l'espace collectif entretient des liens intimes et singuliers avec la cour et le pouvoir royal. C'est la teneur de ce pouvoir ainsi que ses espaces que l'on souhaite désormais prendre en considération.

Mathurine : le pouvoir des mots

La place cruciale que détient Mathurine au cœur du pouvoir est liée à sa parole, omniprésente dans les textes : parole débordante, populaire et burlesque, ses mots sont constitutifs de son personnage. En ce sens, Mathurine émerge des sources comme parole vivante qui se situe dans un jeu dialogique entre les différents acteurs et espaces du pouvoir : le roi, la cour et le peuple.

Mathurine possède les pouvoirs rituels du fou, elle est le miroir du pouvoir et de sa dérision, de la vérité et de sa folie. Le fou est celui qui, par sa folie, dispose du privilège de tout dire²⁶, elle est donc détentrice d'une parole ritualisée l'autorisant à dire ce qui ne peut être dit autrement sans toutefois être subversive. Elle détient alors tout à la fois le pouvoir de dire et de conserver dans et par ce « dit », l'ordre social. Le personnage de la Folle comme vecteur de parole sociale est donc tout à fait significatif et cette parole légitime la situe au cœur du pouvoir même. C'est ce dialogue possible, cette parole transgressive autorisée qui est spécifique au couple roi/Mathurine ; elle représente le dialogue entre ordre et désordre, sacré et subversif.

Mathurine apparaît également comme lien entre le roi et la cour. Les mémorialistes l'évoquent dans leurs récits présente à la table du roi et dans son entourage proche, y compris lors de ses déplacements ; non sans réticences de certains devant sa quasi omniprésence qui paraît parfois incongrue voir déplacée:

à l'autre bout de la table s'osa mettre une audacieuse Folle, plus impudente que sotté, laquelle l'année suivante, vint voir la sérénissime Infante à son entrée de Bruxelles, qui la gratifia d'une robe de velour rouge passémentée d'or ; ie la vis avec mesme robe près de la Royne de Navarre à Madrid. L'on dit bien vray, que les impudens emportent les plus grandes faveurs de la Cour.²⁷

À la fois extérieure par sa folie à la cour et à ses codes tout en étant au cœur de cet espace et de ses pouvoirs, cette présence aux côtés du roi et son pouvoir de parole peuvent alors être mobilisés par

²⁵ Sur ce sujet, voir Roxanne Roy, « Une femme en colère – représentation de la colère féminine d'après trois lettres de femmes au XVII^e siècle », in R.G Hodgson (ed.), *La femme au XVII^e siècle*, actes du colloque de Vancouver, university of British Columbia, 5-7 octobre 2000, Tübingen, 2002.

²⁶ Maurice Lever, *Le sceptre et la marotte*, cit.

²⁷ Pierre Colins, *Histoire des choses les plus mémorables...*, cit, p. 729.

des personnalités de la cour. Ainsi, Pierre de L'Estoile donne à lire ce rôle de lien entre la cour et la roi que joue Mathurine :

le jeudi 19^e, le Roy disna, aux Thuilleries, avec Mathurine, laquelle, moiennant cinq cens escus qu'on lui promist, fist parler au Roy (encores qu'il l'eust très-expressément défendu) Mademoiselle de Placi, femme du controlleur de Bes, de laquelle le mari estoit appelant de la mort, pour avoir rompu les coffres de son beau père, où estoient les deniers du Roy²⁸.

Mathurine fait donc figure de vecteur de parole, elle est un intermédiaire avec le souverain.

Or, Mathurine affirme des convictions politico-religieuses très fortes et sa présence à la cour en est d'autant plus significative. Se positionnant simultanément contre les huguenots et contre la Ligue, plusieurs des libelles qui lui sont attribués, tels la *Cholère* (1609) et le *feu de joye* (1615) sont des prises de positions virulentes dans ce sens. Quel qu'en soit l'auteur, ces textes reprennent des opinions qui lui sont unanimement attribuées. Dans le contexte de la fin de la Ligue, de la conversion et de l'accession au trône d'Henri IV, ses positions contre les huguenots associées à sa présence à la cour d'Henri IV ont pu avoir une influence politique non négligeable. En effet, la Folle, qui fait le lien entre le roi et le peuple et le roi et la Cour, dans le contexte des tensions politico-religieuses du tournant du XVII^e siècle (guerres de religions et tension royauté/papauté) incarne alors le pouvoir monarchique, catholique et légitime. Ainsi, Mathurine détient une importante dimension politique.

Mathurine : une présence féminine au cœur du pouvoir

Si Mathurine est bien présente à la cour et auprès du roi, l'espace urbain, lieu de visibilité et d'exposition, est également un espace politique pour Mathurine. C'est un espace de transgression visible lorsqu'elle y circule à cheval et en armes par exemple, espace d'autonomie où sont mises en scènes ses actions marginales et lieu de circulation des libelles qui participent de la construction du personnage. D'autre part, c'est également un lieu primordial d'exercice de sa fonction de Folle dans le lien qu'elle représente entre le roi et le peuple ; Mathurine dans la rue, c'est un peu de la présence royale. Ainsi, l'espace urbain est un espace politique d'interaction entre le roi, Mathurine et le peuple.

À la cour également, Mathurine est impliquée dans différents espaces et lieux de pouvoir. On la rencontre dans les espaces spécifiquement féminins comme la chambre de l'accouchée dans les *Caquets de l'accouchée*²⁹ où elle est femme parmi les femmes. On la retrouve également dans la chambre du Dauphin : elle est souvent décrite jouant avec le dauphin dans une relation de proximité avec l'enfant³⁰. Enfin, on l'a vu, elle est également à plusieurs reprises signalée à la table du roi où elle peut être conduite à faire lien entre le souverain et les courtisans. Elle semble donc évoluer dans divers espaces de la cour en tant que femme et en tant que Folle. Ainsi, Mathurine semble alors presque être un personnage socialement asexué – ni seulement femme, ni homme – dont la Folie ferait presque figure de « tiers-genre ». Elle s'inscrit dans un espace décloisonné qui lui donne accès à différentes sphères de pouvoirs et réseaux d'influence ; entre visibilité et invisibilité, influence et absence, intériorité et extériorité, espace urbain et cour, elle évolue finalement dans des espaces transversaux. Elle joue sur les frontières de la marginalité et de la folie sans aller à l'encontre des institutions ; au contraire, son pouvoir réside dans sa capacité à agir au cœur du pouvoir et de l'espace de l'autorité royale. Par sa folie, un espace au cœur et au service du pouvoir est donc aménagé.

Mathurine détient donc un pouvoir des mots, incarne le pouvoir royal dans sa légitimité, et ces lieux de pouvoir qui se cristallisent sur la folle font de ce personnage un espace de discours très politisé, qui peut être amené à être mobilisé dans des textes afin de porter un discours politique. L'on souhaite donc maintenant s'attacher à cette présence textuelle de Mathurine en étudiant la façon dont elle est mobilisée voire manipulée par Agrippa d'Aubigné et investie par l'auteur comme espace de pouvoir au cœur de la cour.

²⁸ Pierre de L'Estoile, *Mémoires-Journaux*, cit., T. VII, p. 71, sept. 1596.

²⁹ E. Fournier (annotateur), *Les caquets de l'accouchée*, 1624, Paris, 1855, pp. 168-173.

³⁰ Jean Heroard, *Journal*, cit.

Agrippa d'Aubigné et la manipulation de la folie de Mathurine comme espace discursif

La Confession catholique du sieur de Sancy, d'Agrippa d'Aubigné, s'inscrit dans le contexte des multiples conversions qui s'opèrent dans l'entourage d'Henri IV au tournant du XVII^e siècle ; parodie de ces professions de foi, l'ouvrage suit et ridiculise la conversion du Sieur de Sancy. Pourtant, dans le second chapitre du second livre, l'auteur s'écarte de ce sujet initial et met en scène Mathurine et le jeune frère du cardinal Du Perron dans un dialogue burlesque profondément hostile à l'Église Catholique qui, donnant la tonalité, débute ainsi

On m'a donné une piece nouvelle de Theologie moderne, digne, à mon advis, de tenir place en cette marquerie. C'est une honneste conference entre les conferences que ce siecle a conferees : et vous verrez par là combien la bonne mesnagere Sainte Eglise Romaine employe de gens à ramener le monde à la grand voye. Mathurine sortoit de faire une leçon à Vignolles, chez Madame de Montluc : Du Perron alloit faire la sienne, qui changea de couleur à la veuë de Mathurine, passa la main sur son front chauve, puis commença. Perron. Et à vous, belle Dame : on m'a dit que vous vous vantez par tout que vous avez converti Sainte Marie du Mont. Mathur.. Et qui seroit ce donc, mon bel amy ? Perron. Par ma foy il y auroit bien de l'apparence, vous estes une belle Theologienne. Mathur. Oüy, comme s'il falloit convertir les gens par la Troulogie . C'estoit du vieux temps, quand on faisoit à la pareille. Hé ! pauvre Job, te souvien-tu pas qu'il me le promit la nuict et que j'en allai donner la bonne nouvelle à ton frere, si matin que je trouvai là de La Court, qui sortoit de sa chambre ? Perron. Tout beau, Madame la galande, parlez-vous ainsi d'un tel prelat ? Mathur.. . O mon ami, cela n'empesche point la conversion, tesmoin Chesnaye, qui pour estre venu trop matin, vit un chapperon dans les sacrees besongnes de ton frere.³¹

Tous deux se disputent en effet la plus grande efficacité à convertir par le sexe et la débauche les courtisans – ici Bernard de Vignolle qui s'était fait catholique afin de pouvoir épouser Marguerite de Balagny, veuve de du Seigneur de Montluc. Le texte, marqué par l'irrévérence et la satire, alimenté par les nombreux jeux de mots et contrepèteries, vise à stigmatiser le vice au sein de la religion catholique et la débauche au sein de la cour pour dresser une forte critique sociale et politique. On ne peut offrir ici une l'analyse détaillée de ce texte³², mais l'on souhaite esquisser quelques pistes d'analyses qui viendront soutenir les réflexions proposées. En effet, dans ce texte, Agrippa d'Aubigné mobilise le personnage de Mathurine et il nous semble que ce choix n'est pas anodin. Mathurine du fait de sa fonction détient un rôle politique dans ce texte et l'auteur investit le personnage comme espace discursif bien particulier.

La Folie de Mathurine : mobiliser l'espace du carnaval

La présence de Mathurine dans ce chapitre offre la possibilité d'une mise en scène carnavalesque de la cour comme monde inversé. Mathurine devient la reine du carnaval quotidien qu'est la cour pour Agrippa d'Aubigné. Sur ce modèle, l'auteur mobilise les personnages de Mathurine et du jeune Du Perron pour illustrer un monde bouleversé ; les inversions sexuelles notamment viennent servir ce discours : Mathurine incarne la femme masculine tandis que Du Perron, bien connu pour son homosexualité³³, est associé dans le texte à une sexualité féminisante, la « troulogie » (allusion évidente à la sodomie). Mathurine incarne à la fois la femme à la sexualité dévorante et

³¹ *Ibid*, p 307 – 308.

³² On a proposé une analyse plus détaillée de ce texte et de ses enjeux lors de la journée d'étude « Femmes, irrégion et dissidence religieuse au début de l'époque moderne », organisée par J.P Cavallé, S. Houdard, A.Mothu, X.von Tippelskirch : « Mathurine ou la question d'un tiers espace de l'hétérodoxie, dans *La Confession catholique du Sieur de Sancy* d'Agrippa d'Aubigné », *L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques*, 04 | 2009, [En ligne], mis en ligne le 26 juillet 2009. URL : <http://acrh.revues.org/index1234.html>.

³³ Madeleine Lazard nous apprend à son propos qu'il était à la Cour qualifié d'hermaphrodite et nommé « l'Ambigu », Agrippa d'Aubigné dans son cas mobilise donc une figure sociale. M.Lazard, *Agrippa d'Aubigné*, Paris, 1998.

l'Église catholique qui, de la conservatrice des vertus morales, devient mère de tous les vices³⁴. Par la voix de Mathurine, l'œuvre de conversion de l'Église Catholique est associée à la vénalité et à la prostitution.

Allez, /morbieu, vous estes une maquerelle pour tout potage,/ et qu'on die à Rome que c'est vous qui avez / converti les Huguenots. Ils diroyent bien que pour / amener les paillards à la grand putain de Rome, / que les maquerelles seroyent nos Docteurs. [...] Tu as donné un chancre au Pont de Courlay, et à Engoulevent,/ et la verole enfin au Baron de Vignolles, / en traittant de vos conversions. [...] / Il m'a bien montré / dans un cabinet ce qu'ils appellent l'oeuvre de creation ;/ mais de verolle, attends que les cheveux te / soient revenus, et puis nous en parlerons.³⁵

Ainsi, non seulement l'Église devient femme à la sexualité dévorante et prostituée, mais l'auteur fait également de la conversion une maladie vénérienne.

De plus, Mathurine ridiculise dans le texte toute la cour et les Grands ; ce discours est d'autant plus fort qu'il est assumé par le bouffon qui connaît parfaitement la cour de l'intérieur. Le statut de Mathurine lui permet ainsi de la tourner en dérision : de la « belle âme » au « bel asne »³⁶, des « porcs d'eslite » aux « prosélytes »³⁷, elle transforme littéralement la Cour en « Basse Cour »³⁸. Le texte évoque ainsi l'institutionnalisation d'un « contre-ordre » : l'église catholique, vecteur d'ordre et de cohésion sociale devient dans le texte la garantie du désordre social et moral.

Enfin, la présence de Mathurine donne à la dénonciation une force qui dépasse le carnavalesque ; Mathurine, souvent considérée par les historiens et littéraires comme simple prostituée³⁹, s'avère en fait proposer un cadre discursif à Agrippa d'Aubigné. C'est bien la folle en titre qui est mobilisée et la dimension carnavalesque du personnage est associée à son rôle politique afin de donner une tonalité très engagée au texte.

La folie de Mathurine : mobiliser l'espace politique et discursif

Au-delà de son rôle de reine du carnaval de la cour qui mène la danse et la débauche, Mathurine, grâce à son statut, est investie d'un pouvoir spécifique qu'utilise Agrippa d'Aubigné. C'est bien la Folle du roi qu'il met en jeu ici en plus de la débauche sexuelle.

La parole du fou est une voix de dérision mais aussi d'une vérité qui ne peut être proférée et entendue que dans ce contexte ; de plus, parole rituelle, elle est non subversive et permet de dénoncer tout en conservant l'ordre social ; enfin, le fait qu'Agrippa d'Aubigné mobilise Mathurine, connue pour son hostilité envers les protestants, est particulièrement significatif : en la ridiculisant, il ridiculise le catholicisme, le discours contre les protestants et les conversions « opportunistes ». Il mobilise et détourne alors la parole de la folle, parole politisée et ritualisée, pour la retourner contre ce qu'elle incarne. C'est l'espace des mots et de la folie de Mathurine que semble solliciter Agrippa d'Aubigné

³⁴ L'hostilité de Mathurine au protestantisme fait notamment l'objet du libelle *La Cholère de Mathurine*, cit.

³⁵ Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné, cit., p. 313.

³⁶ *Ibid*, chapitre I, livre II, p. 309.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.317.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.316.

³⁹ Une citation parmi d'autres : « Sancy cède la parole à deux théologiens qui ne sont autres qu'une prostituée, Mathurine et le jeune frère Du perron » c'est là une présentation réductrice qui constitue une limite de poids à l'analyse produite par Éliane Kotler, « La sexualité et ses désordres dans la *Confession de Sieur de Sancy* d'Agrippa d'Aubigné », in *Ordre et désordre dans la civilisation de la renaissance*, Actes du colloque « *Réforme. Humanisme. Renaissance* », Nice, septembre 1993, ed. par G.A. Pérouse et F.Goyet, Publications de l'Université de Saint Etienne, 1996. Marie Madeleine Fragonard ou Madeleine Lazard également s'en tiennent à une telle situation, seul Henri Weber évoque, et s'en tient à l'évoquer, la folie de Mathurine. Cette insatisfaction à l'égard de ces études est du même ordre pour les quelques écrits produits sur Mathurine par des historiens qui se contentent de mettre en récit les citations qui l'intègrent sans jamais interroger leur construction ni leur signification sociale.

pour produire la critique sociale et religieuse. L'auteur fait de la sexualité, du corps et des mots de Mathurine des espaces hautement politiques ; la folie féminine institutionnalisée à la cour de Henri IV autorise un discours religieux et social très engagé. L'auteur mobilise donc la folie comme un espace alternatif permettant la dénonciation sans pour autant entraîner la subversion et Mathurine comme incarnation d'un pouvoir religieux qu'il conteste.

La folie de Mathurine témoigne donc d'une manière très particulière d'être femme à la cour, d'expérimenter le pouvoir et de déplacer les frontières en s'inscrivant dans un espace transversal. C'est un autre langage au cœur et au service du pouvoir royal que l'on voit se dégager ; l'ambivalence construite de la folie, associée à un jeu sur le genre et à l'investissement de discours politique sur son personnage en font un personnage féminin extrêmement politique. La richesse et la complexité de son propre pouvoir résident dans la fonction de folle en titre, sa féminité et ses prises de positions politiques à la cour de Henri IV. Elle incarne le pouvoir royal légitime ; elle détient un rôle politique auprès du roi, un pouvoir politique de lien entre le monarque et la cour et le peuple ; et elle peut être mobilisée comme espace politique avec ce qu'elle représente. Mathurine incarne alors un espace de discours « libre », et devient une figure féminine au cœur de la cour et du pouvoir qu'Agrippa d'Aubigné, par exemple, manipule pour en faire le porte-parole d'un discours profondément engagé.



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Part III

Defining Identity, Constructing Power

The Duchess' Court in Sixteenth-Century Italy: A Comparison of Female Experiences

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Introduction

The organization of the conference 'Moving Elites, Cultural Transfers and the Life Cycle' indicates the increasing attention paid by early modern historians to the lives and roles of aristocratic women: not only those who exercised power directly as queens or regents, but also those who, as consorts, did not govern but headed courts of their own and strove to extend their agency through patronage and informal channels of influence. Until recently, court historians have tended to focus their analysis on the principal, male, arena of power, rather than the satellite female courts. Indeed, scholars have tended to bypass any prolonged discussion of the female court in favour of arguing that it merely replicated the court of the ruler, although in reduced format, and including only those courtly offices that pertained to the administration of sectors within the palace doors.¹ With this sweeping statement, scholars have avoided making the connection between the complex issues that arise from the particular position of the female court and the consort's ability to engage in a range of activities, extend patronage, and express her power and identity. My own research focuses on the three duchies of Florence, Mantua and Ferrara and aims to build on recent literature on the court by investigating the relationship between the duke's and duchess' households and examining a socio-political context where the male ruler drew his authority from his designation as sovereign, while the female consort was forced to rely on a variety of shifting, less formal factors to exert influence. In this paper I will look at some aspects of the creation and organisation of the female court and some of the factors that could affect the position of the consort. My analysis focuses on the lives and activities of three women in particular: Eleonora, Barbara and Johanna² of Austria, the daughters of the Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand I, who married into the ducal dynasties of the Gonzaga, Este and Medici families, in the second half of the sixteenth century. I will discuss the negotiations that took place prior to their arrival in Italy, the creation of their courts and their relationships with other women already present at court. I will also analyse their financial situations, the potential interference they faced in running their courts, the extent to which they were able to assert their control over their courtiers and their own persons, and whether changes occurred over the course of their lives. My approach is comparative and aims to identify some of the issues that affected the position of the female consort and defined her ability to construct an independent power base at court.

Marriages and Dowries

While an excellent genealogy was crucial to an elite marriage, material concerns were vital to its successful negotiation. However elite, the Austrian Habsburgs faced severe financial strains in providing dowries for all their daughters. Marriage alliances were carefully considered. They were essential to acquiring financial and military support amongst electors and other powerful nobles for the ongoing war against the Turks who were constantly threatening the eastern borders of the empire. In 1564 the Habsburgs had debts mounting to 12 million *Gulden*.³ Suitable connections (ones which had limited financial burdens) were therefore deemed necessary. Eleonora was the first of the three sisters to be married. In 1561 she agreed to wed Guglielmo I, Duke of Mantua and Monferrato.

¹ See for example: Sergio Bertelli, 'L'universo cortigiano', in *Le corti italiane del Rinascimento*, ed. by Sergio Bertelli, Cardini, Franco, Garbero Zorzi, Elvira (Milan: Mondadori, 1985), pp. 7-37.

² In this essay, I will call Johanna by her Italian appellation, Giovanna, as this is the version of her name that appears in almost all of the available documentation.

³ K.H. MacHardy, *War, Religion and Court Patronage in Habsburg Austria: The Social and Cultural Dimensions of Political Interaction, 1521-1622*, (New York: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 55-56.

Giovanna and Barbara had almost simultaneous marriages to Francesco de' Medici and Alfonso II d'Este respectively. Initially, it was unclear which daughter's hand was being sought. It was impossible for the suitors to see the archduchesses in person and so envoys were sent in their stead to give their advice on the most suitable candidate. The Medici envoy reported from Innsbruck on the characteristics of each one in turn, saying that Magdalene was 29 and did not want to marry, Helena had a hunchback, Barbara was skinny and not very cheerful, and Giovanna looked like a nine year old, even though she was actually 13 or 14. The envoy added that he had watched them eat and noted down their physiognomy, actions and tastes. Based on his observations he would propose Margherita (Margareta) as the best of them; she was plump with a good complexion and a cheerful disposition.⁴ The envoy's report highlights the particular characteristics that were considered essential for a good consort: physical maturity, beauty and good humour, the first two necessary for the essential task of producing healthy heirs, the third perhaps for dealing with the often difficult transition to an alien court and the confrontation with foreign customs. These descriptions, together with those provided by the Venetian ambassadors demonstrate the openness with which the physical characteristics of these women were discussed. Lorenzo Priuli, in his report of 1566, described Giovanna as small and thin, and said that for this reason it was thought that she might be unable to have children.⁵ This prediction was to reveal itself as curiously accurate, as the post-mortem conducted on Giovanna's body in 1578, after her death in childbirth showed that she had a physical deformity of the lower spine and pelvis that impeded delivery.⁶ The struggle to provide an heir was a central issue in both Barbara and Giovanna's marriages, and it was a key factor in choosing which archduchess to marry, as the interest in the physical characteristics of the sisters displayed by both Venetian and Florentine envoys proves. Despite the envoy's recommendations, however, it appears that Ferdinand wished to offer only Giovanna and Barbara as possible brides, and both Francesco de' Medici and Alfonso d'Este attempted to lay claim to Giovanna. The Este envoy, however, found he was too late when he made his request – the Medici had already made their bid and been promised the younger and more attractive sister.⁷ These marriages were typical of inter-dynastic alliances in that they were far from being love matches. Francesco visited Giovanna once prior to her wedding and was already conducting an affair with the Venetian Bianca Cappello, whom he would marry less than two months after Giovanna's death. Alfonso also met his future wife for the first time in July 1565 when he went to visit her, five months before the wedding was due to be held.

The marriage negotiations for the Habsburg archduchesses started in 1564 and continued right up to the end of 1565 when the two weddings took place. Their dowries were set at 100,000 Rhenish florins each, half to be delivered in the year following the consummation of the marriage, and the rest a year after that;⁸ the same arrangement that had earlier been put in place for Eleonora.⁹ Each archduchess was also accorded an annual provision, also set out in the contracts, *pro libito suo uti*; Giovanna was allocated the amount of 10,000 *scudi*, as was Barbara, while Eleonora was allocated 7,000 *scudi*. In return for the dowries, the archduchesses renounced any claim to the Habsburg lands; however, as the dowry was administered and invested by their husbands, this left them entirely dependent upon their allowances, apart from what they might accrue by gifts or legacies. Their

⁴ ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie 1, Filza 41, pp. 95-96.

⁵ *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato*, ed. by Eugenio Alberi (Florence: Società editrice fiorentina, 1841), Series 2, vol. II, p. 79.

⁶ Riguccio Galluzzi, *Storia del granducato di Toscana* (Florence: Marchini, 1822), III, p. 74; and Fabrizio Winspeare, *Isabella Orsini e la corte medicea del suo tempo* (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1961), p. 72.

⁷ Luigi Carcereri, *Cosimo primo granduca* (Verona: M. Bettinelli, 1926), I, pp. 135-36.

⁸ ASMo, ASE, Casa e Stato 330, folder entitled 'Documenti concernanti il matrimonio di Alfonso II con Barbara d'Austria' (sottofascicolo 1969-II), document 1969.II.3: 'Originale dello Stromento Dotale di Madama Barbara d'Austria, sorella dell'Imperador Massimiliano II destinata in Isposa ad Alfonso II Duca di Ferrara', p. 4. ASF, MM 16, Inserto 6, p. 33v.

⁹ ASM, AG 200, Rubrica 17, Fascicolo 1, p. 5.

economic situation was a factor that could and did have a profound impact on their ability to exert influence and assert their identity, and strongly affected their relationships with those around them.

The Composition of the Female Court

In almost all marriages contracted between ruling elites, the bride left her family and joined her husband in his country. Throughout the early modern period, noblewomen played a vital role, circulating around the courts of Europe and constructing networks of alliances for their natal families that spread not only across the top levels of kings and high nobles, but permeated all of court society, as women brought members of their households with them as they settled in their new cities and countries. This in itself could be a threat to the ruler, who had no claims to their loyalty, and to the other courtiers who might not welcome rivals for the rewards and privileges offered at court. The paranoia associated with female consorts and their courts is powerfully illustrated by a rumour which circulated regarding Philip III of France's second wife, Mary of Brabant, in 1276. The story accuses her of poisoning Philip's son by his first wife:

It is said throughout Paris that Madam the young Queen and the ladies of her household who she brought with her from her own country, have poisoned and murdered Louis the King's son, and no one doubts as many people say that they will do the same, if they can, to the King's other children by his first wife, with the intention of ensuring that the children that this queen has and will have will be heirs to the kingdom of France.¹⁰

Alongside the traditional *topoi* of fear of poisoning, and of the 'wicked, unmaternal woman', there is clearly much anxiety about what one might call a coup d'état by the Queen and the ladies she brought with her from her own country, and with whom she had formed a network outside male control. The ruler was fully aware of the potential conflict that could arise with an inimical court and might take increasingly aggressive steps to ensure his control over his wife's actions and the members of her household. One way of effectively isolating the consort and ensuring that her relationships were formed under the guidance of her husband was by attempting to control the composition of her court at the start of her married life. The thorny question of who was allowed to accompany the bride and the composition of her court therefore arose frequently in marriage negotiations.

As previously discussed, Eleonora came down to Italy before her two sisters. The negotiations for her marriage were already taking place in 1560 and a body of letters dating to this period details the contest that took place between the duke of Mantua, Guglielmo Gonzaga, and the emperor, Ferdinand I, over the courtiers to be allocated to her.¹¹ It appears from these letters that the future duchess of Mantua had little or no command over who came with her to her new residence in Mantua, or at least her voice appears to be completely absent from the Gonzaga archives on this matter. During the marriage negotiations in 1560, Guglielmo wrote to his envoys at the imperial court in Vienna saying that he would provide the service that his wife would have in Mantua, as had been done for his brother's wife Katharina, Eleonora's sister, at her marriage.¹² In a letter of early 1561 to Guglielmo regarding the negotiations taking place in Vienna, his emissary wrote that Eleonora would be accompanied by four ladies-in-waiting and the *matrona di camera*, but that Guglielmo would be able both to add to these at his pleasure and to substitute his own choices when positions became vacant.¹³ However, a slightly later letter demonstrates that the matter was not definitively settled, as the

¹⁰ 'L'en dit tout communement part tote la cité de Paris que madame la royne la jeune et les fames de son ostel lesqueles elle amena de son pais, empoisonerent et mistrent à mort mon seigneur Lois, le filz du roi, et si se doute l'en, si comme l'en dit communement, que eles ne facent autel, se eles puent, as autres enfanz le roi que il a de sa premiere fame, en cele entencion que li enfant que li rois a et aura de ceste roine soient hoir dou reyaume de France.' Georges Minois, *Le couteau et le poison: l'assassinat politique en Europe (1400-1800)* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), p. 21.

¹¹ ASM, AG 200, Rubrica 17, Fascicolo I, II.

¹² Ibid., Fascicolo II, p. 135.

¹³ Ibid., p. 157.

Mantuan ambassador Cavriani wrote to Guglielmo that the emperor was insisting on sending various courtiers down with Eleonora.¹⁴ That this was considered unacceptable is proven by another letter, unfortunately undated, from Guglielmo to one of his negotiating team, saying that he would provide her service (i.e. those courtiers who would form her court) when she arrived.¹⁵ Last in the file is a bitter letter from Guglielmo complaining that none of his requests had been granted by the emperor:

We requested that her *family* (i.e. her household) should be assembled entirely from those here and it seems that they wish to take those from there.¹⁶

A struggle was clearly taking place over the allocation of courtiers to the duchess' retinue. Apart from ensuring that the members of his wife's court were known and trusted, in this case an extra incentive for Guglielmo would have been the opportunity to reward his own followers, rather than the emperor's, with positions in his wife's court. This would enable them to be paid either through the allowance he granted his wife or through general court funds. In either circumstance, it was far more advantageous to Guglielmo for courtiers loyal to the Gonzaga to be paid with Gonzaga money than to reward courtiers whose first loyalty was to the Habsburgs. Finances were a serious issue for the Mantuan duke who was faced with having to replenish his treasury after the excessive expenditure of his predecessor, his brother Francesco III Gonzaga. Many of the letters addressed to his agents in Vienna mention his financial difficulties and ask for the emperor's help in curtailing his expenditure for the wedding.

This situation is reflected in the arrangements made for the courts of Eleonora's two sisters, Barbara and Giovanna. As I have demonstrated above, the duke of Mantua discussed the question of his consort's court repeatedly with his envoys at the imperial court, and the Medici too appear to have communicated with their ambassadors on the matter. A letter from Sigismondo de Rossi, Count of San Secondo to Francesco confirms this interest:

During various discussions with people who have a lot of close contact with the majordomo, and were perhaps sent to me on purpose, they have asked if I thought that when Her Highness [Giovanna] chose anyone to be in her service, either as a majordomo or as a riding master or in other similar offices, they would be confirmed with Your Excellency's approval. Since I didn't have any orders or instructions, I answered that Her Highness [Giovanna] was to be mistress of everything and that whatever she did would always meet with Your Excellency's approval, and I spoke thus only in general terms.¹⁷

This passage demonstrates that although there was to be no overt interference at this point in Giovanna's appointment of her courtiers, the Medici envoy was fully aware that the duke might wish to intervene in arranging the composition of his wife's court. As with Eleonora, it is also questionable how much choice Giovanna herself had in selecting her courtiers. However, whether it was Giovanna herself or her father would have been less of an issue to the Medici – the heart of the problem lay in whether her court would be composed of people chosen by them or by the Habsburgs.

The Medici may have been amenable to a large contingent of Austro-German courtiers accompanying the young duchess down to Florence as a public demonstration of the status and prestige of the bride. Issues were more likely to arise when they confronted the question of who would stay and serve her in her new home. The evidence contained in the diary of a Bavarian courtier

¹⁴ Ibid., p.170.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 280.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 296. 'Si dimandava che la famiglia si facesse intiera tutta qui, et par se ne vuole menare di quelli di là...'

¹⁷ 'In vari ragionamenti da persone che intrinsecamente praticano con il Signor Maiordomo, et forse mandati sotto a posta, hanno fatto interrogazione che quando Sua Altezza eleggesse al servizio suo persona nessuna in officio o di maiordomo o cavallerizzo o altri simili offizi se io pensavo che fussino confermati et con buona soddisfazione di Vostra Eccellenza. Io che sopra di ciò non ho ordine nè commissione nessuna risposi che Sua Altezza haveva a esser padrona d'ogni cosa, et che credevo che quello la facesse avesse a essere sempre con buona soddisfazione di Vostra Eccellenza et la passai così in generale.'. Carlo Odoardo Tosi, 'Del matrimonio del principe Francesco de'Medici con l'arciduchessa Giovanna d'Austria', *Rivista Fiorentina*, 1.2 (1908), 10-19, (p. 16).

asserts that the main contingent of Giovanna's entourage left shortly after the wedding.¹⁸ Further evidence is provided by letters of safe conduct Giovanna wrote on behalf of some of her gentlemen and her servants, such as her chaplain and her litter bearers, upon their departure in January and February 1566, as well as certain letters contained in the archives in Vienna.¹⁹ The information provided by the latter also demonstrates that Giovanna was ultimately unable to assert her own wishes over those of her male relatives, whether Florentine or German, in the composition of her court. The young duchess of Florence wrote to her brother the archduke Ferdinand asking to retain the count of Helfenstein, as both Cosimo and Francesco, she asserted, were willing to allow her to retain some German courtiers for a time.²⁰ However, Ferdinand wrote back demanding that the count return immediately after the wedding, and the diary entries confirm that this is what occurred. Giovanna also wrote to her brother-in-law, the duke Albrecht of Bavaria, asking to keep the count Eitel Friedrich von Zollern in her service, but this request too was denied.²¹ These letters highlight some of the obstacles the female consort might face in attempting to organise her own court and the multiple factors that could influence its composition. The duchess' repeated requests also suggest that she may have been frightened at the thought of being abandoned in Florence and anxious to retain those with whom she had already formed relationships of mutual trust and loyalty.

As a consequence of this struggle and their husbands' insistence upon the inclusion of Italians in their courts, one of the key tasks the archduchesses faced was the establishment of relationships with people whom they did not know and with whose language they were unfamiliar. Their courtiers might have already belonged to previous courts, and have established ties with other members of the ruling dynasty. Courtiers often circulated from one court to another, and the archduchesses had to create links not only with them but with the other members of the extended ducal court.

Female Networks and Patronage

The three archduchesses were despatched to their new courts and expected to adapt swiftly to them, despite the barriers presented by both language and culture. An aid in adapting to their new lives could be provided by the presence of their predecessors, who might act as mentors and supports to the new incumbents. The situation in Mantua offers a key example of the way in which such arrangements might operate. In Eleonora's case, her mother-in-law, Margherita Paleologa was alive and active at her arrival and once the young Habsburg archduchess had settled in, it appears that Margherita took on the role of instructing her on her duties.²² These duties would have included, for example, the arrangement of marriages for the ladies in her court, such as Lucrezia von Sprinzenstein, for whom there is a note in the archive detailing a debt of 500 gold *scudi* taken on by Eleonora in order to supply her dowry:

On our side we declare and confess to be debtor to the Magnificent Girolamo Aldegati, our treasurer, for the sum of 500 gold scudi...on the 13th May 1562, which 500 scudi we have taken to give to the Magnificent Count Paolo di Hippoliti da Gazuoldo towards the dowry of the Magnificent Lucretia von Prinzenstein our *cameriera*.²³

¹⁸ M.A. Katritzky, 'The Florentine Entrata of Joanna of Austria and other Entrate described in a German Diary', *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 59 (1996), 148-73, (p. 155, note 69).

¹⁹ ASF, MdP 5927/A, Fascicolo 1, pp. 11, 21.

²⁰ Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien, Ältere Ceremonialakten I, fol. 196r-197v. These references are taken from Hilda Lietzmann, 'Der florentinische Wagen: eine Kutsche für Giovanna d'Austria', *Munchner Jahrbuch der bildenden-Kunst*, LIV (2003), 151-81.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

²² Adele Bellú, 'Le due Eleonore del quadro della Trinità di Rubens', in *Per Mantova una vita: studi in memoria di Rita Castagna*, ed. by Anna Maria Lorenzoni and Roberto Navarrini (Mantua: Publi-Paolini, 1991), pp. 157-70, (p. 158).

²³ 'In virtù delle presenti nostre Dechiariamo, et confessiamo esser' vera debitrice del Magnifico messer Girolamo Aldegati nostro Thesauriere de scudi cinque cento d'oro in oro...sotto il xiii di Gennaro M.D.lxii, li quali scudi 500 si sono pigliati per dare al Magnifico Conte Paolo di Hippoliti da Gazuoldo a conto della dote della Magnifica Lucretia Princestaina

Such marriage arrangements enabled the consort to create alliances between members of her court, and by extension herself, and powerful native families. The promise of advantageous marriage alliances also encouraged the loyalty and service of high-ranking courtiers. Marriage negotiations were therefore a key element in the range of patronage activities available to the female consort and through which she established and sustained her position at court.

There is also evidence from Eleonora's own correspondence that she in turn guided and supported her daughter-in-law Eleonora de' Medici when she arrived in Mantua as the bride of Vincenzo Gonzaga. This is suggested by letters present in the Mantuan archive which are signed by both women, in which they combine their intercessory powers on behalf of supplicants who have addressed letters to them both, and also send out orders to ducal servants, in this case the ambassador Pomponazzi in Venice, instructing him in financial matters.²⁴ In this way the young duchesses appear to have served a species of informal apprenticeship under the guidance of their predecessors – an arrangement which fostered a smooth transition and may have been helpful to both as the younger member was able to learn how to deal with the complexities of her new role and the elder was not forced out completely from her position in favour of the new arrival. This policy appears also to be reflected in the financial arrangements put in place for the Mantuan duchesses who, as I will discuss further, were not immediately provided with the full annuity specified by their marriage contracts, but spent their 'formative' years at court with a smaller allowance.

Amongst the duties and responsibilities incumbent upon the consort, intercessory activities played a key role in giving the consort a voice and a level of public visibility that allowed her to exert a degree of power both within her immediate court environment and beyond it. Intercession on behalf of others was a valuable means by which she could create and sustain relationships with courtiers with whom she did not have previous ties and ensure that she retained their loyalty and support. An example of the way in which such activities might be articulated is given by the following extract:

May Your Highness...condescend, through your goodness, to enjoin the Magnificent Sir Pompeo Strozzi, who is presently residing in Rome on behalf of His most Serene Highness your husband, to entreat this favour and use the word and authority of Your Highness as you see fit in this affair...Which, if I obtain this favour as I hope, I will think it a singular favour and gift from Your Highness....²⁵

This letter, written by Livia Peverara da Bagno, contains the key words 'authority' and 'word'. Eleonora's authority here sprang from her privileged access to people who wielded concrete power, like her husband, brothers, or other men in positions of direct authority. However, in order to ensure that this was an effective means of exercising patronage, the duchesses had to be able to demonstrate to potential petitioners that these intercessory powers were effective. Unlike their male counterparts, who were able to appoint and grant favours directly, women had to rely on the goodwill of those who had direct access to power. They also faced the very real possibility of usurpation by an alternative source of feminine patronage – the mistress. While the presence of other women in positions of power and influence at court could be beneficial to the new arrivals, it could also be problematic. Although Eleonora appears to have been supported by her mother-in-law and to have enjoyed a relatively positive relationship with her husband, her sister Giovanna was less lucky – confronted as she was with an extremely powerful rival at the Florentine court, her husband's mistress, Bianca Cappello. Bianca's Giovanna was forced to compete for the role of ducal intermediary. Ercole Cortile was the Ferrarese resident ambassador in Florence in the years between 1575 and 1577. During his correspondence for these years he describes a situation in which Bianca was receiving the attention

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nostra camariera...'. ASM, AG 200, Rubrica 17, Fascicolo I, p. 104. The names of court members in all three duchesses' courts present several variations in spelling. I have attempted wherever possible to provide the correct name, as in this case, and have otherwise provided the variant spelling that occurs most frequently.

²⁴ ASM, AG 2152, p. 458 and 2153, p. 2.

²⁵ 'che Vostra Altezza ... si degni per bonta sua commettere al Magnifico signor Pompeo Strozzi, qual di presente risiede in Roma per l'Altezza del Serenissimo Signore suo consorte, a voler impetrare tal gracia, et spendere l'auttorità et parola di Vostra Altezza in quello ch'egli giudicherà ispediente in questo negocio... Il che ottenendo, come spero, lo riputerò a singolare Gracia et dono da Vostra Altezza...'. ASM, AG 2147, fascicolo III.2, p. 312.

and loyalty which would otherwise have been awarded to Giovanna. The duchess' predecessor, Eleonora di Toledo, had died long before Giovanna's arrival in Florence. While the duke's surviving sister, Isabella, was resident in the city, she could not be a strong ally to the duchess – indeed she, as did the rest of Florence according to the Ferrarese ambassador, went to Bianca for help and to gain positions and prestige.²⁶ This was the role that Giovanna was supposed to undertake and its removal and the duke's lack of interest in her meant that her powers to run her court and ensure the loyalty of her courtiers were severely curtailed. The presence or absence of rival mistresses was therefore a key factor that affected the position of the female consort. However, there were also other issues that determined the duchess' ability to construct an independent power base at court; one of these was her economic situation.

Financing the Consort

The individual financial situation of the female consort influenced and determined to a great extent her ability to wield influence and extend patronage. The receipt of the dowry by the husband was by no means a guarantee of the regular payment to the consort of the allowance stipulated in the marriage contract. Eleonora, for example, despite the fact that her dowry was paid, frequently struggled to ensure payment of her provision by her husband's court. The Venetian ambassador, Vincenzo Tron, reported back to the Council in Venice in 1564 that:

It is true that he does not treat this wife as he should, considering both her high lineage and her goodness, since she is a very saintly lady, and also considering that she has given him such wonderful offspring; because truly, and I don't know why, he keeps her more like a private woman than as a lady of that family to which she belongs, nor has he so far given her the 10,000 ducats of her allowance, as he agreed to do in the marriage contract....²⁷

This passage highlights the importance of providing an heir as one of the main duties of a good duchess, but it also signals the peculiar position of the female consort. Just as the duke had a dual role: public and private – the 'two bodies of the king', head of his family and head of his state, so too did the duchess. She was expected to participate in charitable activities and to govern her court as well as behave as a good wife in private by providing him with children. But by withholding her allowance, Guglielmo was guilty in Tron's eyes of impeding the duchess in fulfilling her official role – the public part of her being. What we may in fact be seeing here, however, is a specific Gonzaga policy; looking at the registers of expenditure, it appears that the new young duchess, Eleonora de' Medici, was also only allocated a small allowance in the early years of her marriage. She married Vincenzo Gonzaga in 1584, but we only have records for her from 1588 onwards.²⁸ These records list monthly or two-monthly payments to Eleonora de' Medici Gonzaga of sums varying from 2,400 *lire* in January 1588, to 5,410 *lire* in June 1589,²⁹ while it appears that Eleonora Habsburg was awarded much larger sums from around 1577 (the first year for which we have information) onwards.³⁰ We can conclude from

²⁶ For example: 'Here...one must go through Bianca for everything'. ASMO, *Cancelleria Ducale Estense: Ambasciatori, Agenti e Corrispondenti Estensi, Italia*: Firenze: Busta 24, letter dated 28 April 1576.

²⁷ 'È vero che a questa mogier poi non usa quel trattamento che doveria e per la qualità del sangue suo e per la bontà di lei, che è santissima signora, e finalmente per averli fatto così bella prole; perchè di verità non so per quai rispetti, la tien più tosto come zentildonna privata che come signora di quel sangue qual è, nè sinora li ha assignati li 10.000 ducati di sua provision, sì come si obligò nel matrimonio....'. See Aldo de Maddalena, *Le finanze del ducato di Mantova all'epoca di Guglielmo Gonzaga* (Milan: Istituto Italiano Cisalpino, 1961), p. 105 note 5. It is worth mentioning that according to the marriage contract, Eleonora was supposed to be awarded 7,000 not 10,000 ducats a year, but the significance of the extract is the same nonetheless.

²⁸ ASM, AG 3141, p. 391 r, 408v, 419r, 429v, 443r, 456r, 468r, 477r, 500v and following.

²⁹ ASM, AG 3141, p. 391r, 618r.

³⁰ Maddalena, *Le finanze del ducato di Mantova*, p. 105. In this year she appears to have been paid 64,800 *lire*. Unfortunately financial archival records in Mantua are much depleted, so we can only find information relating to Eleonora for some years and not others. However, the amount of 64,800 *lire* corresponds to an allowance of 5,400 *lire* a

this information that it may have been Gonzaga policy to only provide a small allowance at first, perhaps while the duchesses were being instructed by their mothers-in-law on how to run their courts; only afterwards were they entrusted with larger sums of money.³¹

However, while the allowance awarded to the consort might change and indeed increase during the course of her life, she was still ultimately dependent on the duke for its receipt. It is in this light that we should consider the rumours of miserliness that surrounded Guglielmo Gonzaga, evidence for which has already been encountered in the letters documenting his struggle with the emperor over the marriage contract. Although the payments to Eleonora increased, they were not always regular – the amounts varied and she did not always receive her allowance every month. There are two letters dating to March and August 1583 in which the duchess was forced to plead with her husband to give the money of which, she argued, she was in desperate need. In the first of these she expressly set out a problem female consorts faced:

I beg Your Highness again to concede this favour and not show me such a hard heart, as I am yet Your Highness' wife and I have nothing on which to live on if not what Your Highness gives me...³²

And in the second she reiterated her troubles, writing in exasperation:

May Your Highness advise me what I am supposed to do because it is not possible to live like this...³³

The list of payments contained in *busta* 3141 show an unusually large sum of 11,400 *lire* being awarded to Eleonora in May 1583,³⁴ so her pleading must have had some effect, especially as the wording of the entry mentions 'allowance' in the plural, i.e. 'in consideration of her allowances', but there is nothing thereafter until after the duke's death in 1587, so we unfortunately do not know if there was any response to the letter she sent him in August. However, another letter dating to September 1584 regarding the pawning of a jewel, which again mentions her financial difficulties, indicates that her effort to ensure her allowance was an ongoing one, and was not always successful.³⁵ This inability to ensure the prompt payment of her allowance could have a serious effect on her ability to run her court and extend patronage.

Not only were the dukes able to intervene in, and to some extent control, the financial position of the consort, they were also able to influence her expenditure. Barbara received an annual allowance from her husband and, like her two sisters, she was involved in patronage and could potentially be regarded as an advantageous contact for religious orders who frequently benefitted from financial help from aristocratic women.³⁶ However, the letters from the Jesuits who resided in Ferrara indicate that they were cautious about contacting the duchess. The Jesuit Father Polanco warned his fellow priest and Rector of the Jesuit College in Ferrara, Fulvio Androzzi, to be wary in any approaches made to Barbara, advising him to speak to her only through her confessor and to make sure that if he wished for her help in some matter, he first obtained the duke's consent.³⁷ Despite these precautions, the

(Contd.) _____

month which is what she appears to receive in 1580, which would suggest that she received the same amount from 1577 to 1580 and then the sums increased after she became Dowager Duchess.

³¹ Eleonora Habsburg's mother-in-law, Margherita Paleologa, died in 1567. Unfortunately we do not have the financial information for the years immediately following this time, so it is not possible to tell whether an increase in the allowance occurred following her death.

³² 'prego Vostra Altezza un'altra volta conceder questa gracia e non mostrarmi cuor cusi dura volso da me che son pur molgier di Vostra Altezza e non ho altro di viver se non quel che me da Vostra Altezza...'. ASM, AG 2149, p. 675.

³³ 'Vostra Altezza me consugli quel che a da far perche a questa maniera non e possibile da viver...'. ASM, AG 2149, p. 691.

³⁴ ASM, AG 3141, p. 349r.

³⁵ ASM, AG 2150, p. 237.

³⁶ For a discussion of the active relationships between noblewomen and the Jesuits, see Olwen Hufton, 'Altruism and Reciprocity: the Early Jesuits and their Female Patrons', *Renaissance Studies*, 15.3 (2001), 328-53 (pp. 332-33, 339).

³⁷ Mario Scaduto, *L'opera di Francesco Borgia, 1565-1572*, Storia della compagnia di Gesù in Italia, v. 5 (Rome: Edizioni 'La Civiltà Cattolica', 1992), p. 301.

situation could still be difficult; on Christmas Eve 1565, soon after the duchess' arrival in Ferrara, Androzzi wrote to the head of the order, Borgia, telling him of the duke's irate message to the Jesuits, in which he told them:

To mind our own business and leave the duchess alone, threatening to send us away from here [Ferrara] and that he wished to govern her in his own way and not ours, accusing us of ambition.³⁸

The situation had not changed by the following year: in May the Rector gloomily reported of Barbara that:

Her great desire to help...has more the will to do so than the power, because though she is very much inclined to hand out alms (which is no longer a customary activity) she will not be given the opportunity to do so.³⁹

This indicates that Barbara depended to a great degree on her husband for her access to patronage and in this case he was preventing her from employing almsgiving as a means of asserting her status and position. Instead, it appears that the duke monopolised this activity, giving out all the alms himself: 'The duke...having ordered all the alms that were normally given to be handed out...'.⁴⁰ The Jesuits may have wished Barbara had greater control over almsgiving as they felt they had more influence with her and could direct her patronage activities towards themselves and the causes they favoured. However, the key point here is that the consort faced a whole series of potential limitations on the means through which she might create a visible and independent persona at court and outside, or build and sustain patronage relationships. In Barbara's case, she was barred from distributing financial patronage in the duchy which meant that her capacity to set herself up as a public patron was curtailed.

The examples provided by the three Habsburg archduchesses clearly illustrate some of the factors which could affect the position of the female consort and heighten her dependence on the duke for access power and influence, both at court and outside. However, such dependence was not only visible in the composition of the consorts' court, her intercessory activities and in her economic situation; she also faced potential interference in other key areas, such as the ongoing governance and organisation of her own court. The next section of this essay will address the fluidity of the boundaries that separated the consort's court from that of her male counterpart and her lack of a defined space of independent power.

Running the Female Court

We have already seen that there was substantial ducal intervention in the composition of the duchesses' households at the beginning of their married lives. However, there is also evidence to indicate that such interference did not disappear as the duchesses acclimatised to their new environments and settled into their new roles. Instead, it appears that the dukes were able to exert a degree of permanent control over the appointment of courtiers in their wives' courts. Thus, for example, Alfonso appointed officials to Barbara's court, intervening in one of the key patron-client relationships between courtier and ruler and demonstrating the effective lack of a true separation between the male and the female courts in the early modern period. This is evidenced in a letter which he sent to Barbara, bidding her send for a certain Hipolito Bevilacqua:

I find that the Count Hercole Rangone has come down with gout and since I think that Your Highness, for the sake of your reputation, should have with you a Gentleman well advanced in years, I have hit upon the

³⁸ Ibid. 'Che attendessimo a far fatti nostri et lasciando star la duchessa, minacciando di cacciarne di qua et che egli voleva governarla a suo modo et non al nostro, notandoci d'ambitione...'.

³⁹ 'Il suo grande desiderio di giovarne...avrà più animo che forze, perchè si dubita che vedendosi ella molto inclinata a dare elemosine (il che è andato in desuetudine) non se li dia molta comodità di poterne fare'. Ibid, p.302.

⁴⁰ 'Il duca ... avendo ordinato se diano tutte l'elemosione che soleva dare...'. Ibid, p. 301.

Count Hipolito Bevilacqua, who is of good habits and a good age, as well as everything else that Your Highness already knows, and if he is at the country house you can order him to come immediately...⁴¹

However, instead of appointing the Count himself and sending him to Barbara, the duke informed Barbara of his choice and told her to send for him herself. This may indicate a certain ambiguity and the necessity for careful negotiation between the public and private relationships involved. I have already mentioned the Venetian ambassador's disapproval of Guglielmo's failure to treat his wife according to her rank and role. Alfonso was clearly aware that while in private, as husband, he was the head of the family and therefore chose his wife's companions, as a duchess, Barbara held a position of high status and was head of her own court, so it was more appropriate for her to officially summon her new courtier, even though she was doing so under private direction from her husband. This situation is mirrored to a certain extent in the Florentine court, where Giovanna, although she was able to request and petition for certain people to join her court, did not have the final say over appointments. Her lack of control is illustrated by a letter dating to 1566 and kept in the Mantuan archive. Here the duchess apologises for not being able to take on Pietrogio Visconti's daughter, explaining that her husband Francesco has said she already had enough ladies-in-waiting.⁴²

The explanation for this situation can be sought in the methods of government employed in the duchies. In Florence, as in the other courts of central and northern Italy, by the late sixteenth century the state was not differentiated from the ruling family. Justice was administered by the duke, and all governing bodies were appointed according to his wishes. For such a system to function successfully the duke had to be the undisputed head of his state and of his court, which was a version of the state in miniature; any rival figure could jeopardize the ruler's control. In such circumstances, the duchess was a potentially problematic figure. She had the potential to bring courtiers with her upon her marriage whose alliances circumvented the duke to link back directly to their native land, and hence to a powerful figure who was not always on good terms with his son-in-law and did not necessarily have the best interests of the dynasty in mind. Furthermore, as the duchess also ran her own court, financed to a certain extent independently according to the terms of her marriage contract, this instituted a separate court within the wider court which had the potential to create divided loyalties and again to divert control from the duke. For these reasons, the duke attempted to ensure that the members of the duchess' court did not depend exclusively on her for privileges and maintenance. In the case of Florence, the Medici duke may have been particularly anxious about keeping control because of the city's relatively recent republican past.

Male control over the female court was not only manifest in ducal interference in the appointment of courtiers – it was also revealed in the payment of courtiers' salaries. A letter dated after the death of the Florentine duchess reveals, for example, that both Giovanna and Francesco paid provisions to the members of her court, and gives a clear indication that the female court was not considered, at least from a bureaucratic point of view, as a completely separate entity.⁴³

In Barbara's case, her male courtiers also appear to have had their salaries paid by the duke,⁴⁴ indicating yet again that, while individual arrangements might vary, the female court was clearly not as autonomous an entity as has often been supposed. The consort faced a series of challenges to her control – if her courtiers relied on the duke for the payment of their salaries, this naturally affected their allegiances and their relationships with the duchess.

⁴¹ 'Io trovo che il Conte Hercole Rangone e impedito dalla gotta et parendomi che sia pur bene che Vostra Altezza per riputatione habbia seco un Gentilhuomo atempato mi e parso che sia a proposito il conte Hipolito Bevilacqua che e di buoni costumi et d'eta con tutto il resto che e noto a Vostra Altezza, la quale quando egli fosse alla villa potrà ordinare che subito sia fatto venire...'. ASMo, ASE, Sezione Casa e Stato 83, 'Lettere di Alfonso II d'Este Duca di Ferrara alla moglie Barbara d'Austria', letter dated 15 March 1571 (unpaginated).

⁴² ASM, AG 1087, Fascicolo 5, p. 309.

⁴³ ASF, Depositeria Generale, Parte Antica 643, Fascicolo dated 1577-1578, p. 818.

⁴⁴ ASMo, Camera Ducale, Bolletta dei Salariati 70, 76.

Control over the female court might even extend as far as control over the consort's own person and her freedom of movement. The archive in Mantua provides evidence that Eleonora had to request permission to travel abroad, as a letter dating to April 1582 demonstrates:

Most Serene and Dear Consort, I have received a letter from my brother the archduke [Ferdinand of Tyrol, who was about to marry Eleonora's daughter, Anna Caterina] ... that he wishes greatly for me to come with our daughter to Innsbruck...and so I cannot refrain... from begging Your Highness to grant this favour to the archduke, to me and to our daughter, and to give me licence to go with our daughter...⁴⁵

Eleonora was in fact allowed to go on this occasion, and indeed also paid further visits outside the duchy: to her sister in Ferrara and her relatives in Innsbruck. Giovanna, on the other hand, appears never to have returned to Germany, and never to have visited either of her sisters after her marriage. The conclusion to draw, once again, is that female consorts faced a series of potential restrictions on their independence.

Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to discuss the experiences of three sixteenth-century duchesses and identify some of the difficulties female consorts could face in defining their own separate identity and constructing an independent power-base at court. My research has highlighted the fluidity of the boundaries that separated the male and the female court and the potential overlaps between the duchess' area of control and that of her husband, with consequent erosion of the duchess' autonomy. The consort faced competition from the duke over the initial composition of her court, the subsequent selection of her courtiers and their financial remuneration. She also faced potential interference in her public patronage, such as almsgiving and the presence of potentially hostile alternative female patrons, such as mistresses, who might block the consort's access to the duke and reduce her ability to intercede successfully with him. The economic situation in which the consort found herself might also shift during the course of her life and, unless she had private means of her own, she, as well as her courtiers, was very much dependent on her husband's support.

While individual positions might vary, each duchess faced similar pressures to conform and assimilate. The reason for this lies in the fact that she was a foreigner, she brought courtiers with differing loyalties with her, and she might come from a family that was an ally, but there was always the risk that this would change. She was always, therefore, a potential threat. This might not be a problem if she came as a private citizen, without an official role, but in reality, while she might be barred from holding administrative roles, she still came as a counterpart to the ruler. As such all these elements could interfere in the delicate balance that existed in every court between the ruler and the courtier. Each court was intended to operate with one head alone, and the binary dialogue of patronage and service that bound courtier to ruler could be distorted and even broken through third-person intervention. This was as much a reality for the male court as for the female, and the ducal intervention that we have seen taking place can be understood as being in part a preventative measure designed to ensure his continued dominance in his own court through the subordination of his partner's and the restriction of her access to independent patronage activities, such as almsgiving. The female court could co-exist in a stable and measured way even with such intervention, and in many cases did so, but because the successful management of the female court did not depend on well-established rules and laws but on financial arrangements and relationships which clearly changed according to the particularities of place, time and person, the consort's position and influence was very much at the mercy of her husband.

⁴⁵ 'Serenissimo Signor et Consort mio Carissimo, io ho havuto litera dal archiduca mio signor fradelo...chel desidara asaj che io venga con la figliola fora a insprug...cosi non pos manchara ...a pregara Vostra Altezza che voi far questa gracia al archiduca a me e alla figliola e dar me licencia aciocha poso andare con la figliola...'. ASM, AG 2149, p. 312.

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Abbreviations:

ASF = Archivio di Stato di Firenze
MdP = Mediceo del Principato
MM = Miscellanea Medicea
ASM = Archivio di Stato di Mantova
AG = Archivio Gonzaga
ASMo = Archivio di Stato di Modena
ASE = Archivio Segreto Estense

Nota bene: in my transcriptions from the archival sources all original spellings have been maintained; abbreviations have been expanded where known; the punctuation has been modernised.

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Strangers at Home. The courts of Este Princesses between XVth and XVIIth Centuries

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Premise

The following article sets out to underline the advantages offered by a combination of traditional lines of research into court history, developments from prosopographic research and new avenues suggested by the analysis of career histories. I am convinced that this approach can produce significant results and might move beyond the state of impasse, essentially of a methodological nature, that has characterised it for some time.

The decision to adopt this methodology was by no means a casual one. It arose from the desire to overcome the limitations characteristic of many historiographical approaches to the Italian Renaissance and Baroque courts¹, which waver between bold declarations of intent and texts that often indulge in a taste for juicy literary morsels or the meticulous carving of biographical cameos. As a consequence, such studies often remain bound by a descriptivism that, no matter how refined and

¹ I refer to the works by P. Larivaille, *La vie quotidienne des courtisanes en Italie au temps de la Renaissance*, Paris, Hachette, 1975; P. Rossi, ed., *Il Rinascimento nelle corti padane*, Bari, De Donato, 1977; M.A. Romani, ed., *Le corti farnesiane di Parma e Piacenza 1545-1622*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1978; H.G. Koenigsberger, "Republics and Courts in Italian and European Culture," in *Past and Present*, 83, 1979, pp. 32-56; C. Ossola and A. Prosperi, ed., *La corte e il "Cortegiano"*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1980; G. Lubkin, *A Renaissance Court: Milan under Galeazzo Maria Sforza*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994; E. Fasano Guarini, "Modellistica e ricerca storica. Alcuni recenti studi sulle corti padane del Rinascimento," in *Rivista della letteratura italiana*, 1, 1983, pp. 605-634; C. Mozzarelli, "Corte e amministrazione nel principato gonzaghese," in *Società e Storia*, 5, 1982, pp. 245-262; G. Papagno and A. Quondam, eds., *La corte e lo spazio: Ferrara estense*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1982; M. Cattini and M.A. Romani, eds., "La Corte in Europa. Fedeltà, favori, pratiche di governo," in *Cheiron*, vol. I, 1983; C. Mozzarelli and G. Olmi, eds., *La corte nella cultura e nella storiografia. Immagini e posizioni tra Otto e Novecento*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1983; *L'epoca delle Signorie. Le corti*, Milano, Silvana Editoriale, 1985; S. Bertelli, F. Cardini and E. Garbero Zorzi, eds., *Le corti italiane del Rinascimento*, Milan, Mondadori, 1985; S. Bertelli S. and G. Crifò, eds., *Rituale, cerimoniale, etichetta*, Milan, Bompiani, 1985; G. Cerboni Baiardi, G. Chittolini and P. Floriani, eds., *Federico di Montefeltro*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1986; P. Merlin, "Il tema della corte nella storiografia italiana ed europea," in *Studi storici*, 27, 1986, pp. 203-244; C. Stango, "La corte di Emanuele Filiberto: organizzazione e gruppi sociali," in *Bollettino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino*, Turin, 85, 1987, pp. 445-502; C. Mozzarelli, ed., *Famiglia del Principe e famiglia aristocratica*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1988; J.E. Law, ed., *The Courts of Northern Italy in the XV Century*, monographic issue of *Renaissance Studies*, 3, 1989; G. Fragnito, "La trattatistica cinque e seicentesca sulla corte cardinalizia," in *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento*, XVIII, 1991, pp. 135-185; P. Merlin, *Tra guerre e tornei. La corte sabauda nell'età di Carlo Emanuele I*, Turin, SEI, 1991; T. Dean, "Le corti. Un problema storiografico," in G. Chittolini, A. Molho, and P. Schiera, eds., *Origini dello Stato. Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo e età moderna*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1994, pp. 437-447; M. Fantoni, "Corte e stato nell'Italia dei secoli XIV-XVI," in G. Chittolini, A. Molho and P. Schiera, eds., *Origini dello Stato. Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo e età moderna*, cited above, pp. 449-466; M. Fantoni, *La corte del Granduca. Forma e simboli del potere mediceo tra Cinque e Seicento*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1994; M.A. Romani, *Una città in forma di palazzo. Potere signorile e forma urbana nella Mantova medievale e moderna*, Quaderni di Cheiron no.1, Edizioni Centro di ricerche storiche e sociali Federico Odorici, Brescia, Mantua, Publi-Paolini, 1995; G. Podestà, *Dal delitto politico alla politica del delitto. Finanza pubblica e congiure contro i Farnese nel ducato di Parma e Piacenza dal 1545 al 1622*, Milan, Egea, 1995; C. Mozzarelli, R. Oresko, and L. Ventura, eds., *La corte di Mantova nell'età di Andrea Mantegna: 1450-1550*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1997; M. Aymard and M.A. Romani, eds., *The Court as an Economic Institution*, Editions de la Maison des sciences des hommes, Paris, 1998.

erudite, has difficulty grasping the new directions of research that the subject can offer,² despite the excellent results that have been achieved in neighbouring fields³ through a happy union between the qualitative-narrative dimension and mass prosopography.⁴

Unfortunately, the high-level international debate that in the course of the last twenty years has reawakened interest in the prosopographic approach⁵ has not had a wide following in Italy, neither in

² Notable exceptions are R.G. Asch, "Courtiers, Patronage and Faction in Early Stuart England. The Caroline Court and the Limits of Prosopography (c.1625-40)," in J.P. Genet and G. Lottes, eds., *L'Etat moderne et les élites XIIIe-XVIIIe siècles. Apport et limites de la methode prosopographique*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996, pp. 149-163, with interesting bibliographical references in notes 2-4 on p.150; C. Bozzolo and H. Loyau, *La cour amoureuse dite de Charles VI*, vol. I, Paris, Ed. Léopard d'Or, 1982; A. Demurger, "L'apport de la prosopographie à l'étude des mécanismes des pouvoirs XIIIeme-XVeme siècles," in Françoise Autrand, ed., *Prosopographie et genèse de l'état moderne, Prosopographie et genèse de l'état moderne*, Paris, L'École, 1986, pp. 289-301, especially note 7 on p. 290; I. Lazzarini, *Fra un principe e altri stati. Relazioni di potere e forme di servizio a Mantova nell'età di Ludovico Gonzaga*, Rome, Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo, 1996; I Lazzarini, "'Palatium juris' e 'palatium residentie.' Gli ufficiali e il servizio del Principe a Mantova nel Quattrocento," in C. Mozzarelli, R. Oresko and L. Ventura, eds., *La corte di Mantova nell'età di Andrea Mantegna: 1450-1550*, cited above, pp. 147-155; B. Leroy, "Le personnel au service des rois de Navarre aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles," in Françoise Autrand, ed., *Prosopographie et genèse de l'état moderne*, cited above, pp. 131-141; Paravicini W., "'Ordonnances de l'Hôtel' und 'Escroes des gaiges.' Wege zu einer prosopographischen Erforschung des burgundischen Staats im fünfzehnten Jahrhundert," in N. Bulst and J.P. Genet, eds., *Medieval Lives and the Historians: Studies in Medieval Prosopography*, Kalamazoo, Western Michigan University Press, 1986, pp. 243-266; A. Paravicini-Bagliani, "Pour une approche prosopographique de la cour pontificale du XIIIeme siècle. Problèmes de méthode," in N. Bulst and J.P. Genet, eds., *Medieval Lives and the Historians: Studies in Medieval Prosopography*, cited above, pp. 113-120.

³ The most recent Italian work should be cited, namely the essays in the excellent monograph *Gli ufficiali negli Stati italiani del Quattrocento*, in the series "Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa," serie IV, Quaderni, 1, 1997, and the works by G. Castelnuovo, *Ufficiali e gentiluomini. La società politica sabauda nel tardo medioevo*, Milan, F. Angeli, 1994; M. Folin, "Il sistema politico estense fra mutamenti e persistenze (secoli XV-XVIII)," in *Società e Storia*, 77, 1997, pp. 505-549; Folin, "Note sugli ufficiali negli stati estensi (secoli XV-XVI)," in *Gli ufficiali negli Stati italiani del Quattrocento*, cited above, pp. 99-154; Folin, "Studio e politica negli Stati Estensi fra Quattro e Cinquecento: dottori, ufficiali, cortigiani," in P. Castelli, *Due studenti ferraresi: Giovanni e Giovan Francesco Pico. L'opera e la fortuna*, Florence, Olschki, 1998, pp. 59-90; F. Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo dello Stato. I "famigli cavalcanti" di Francesco Sforza (1450-1466)*, Pisa, Gisem ETS, 1992.

⁴ Besides the essays which have appeared in the last thirty years in journals such as *Medieval Prosopography*, published since 1980 by Western Michigan University, and *Médiéviste et l'Ordinateur*, noteworthy among texts providing a more general discussion are F. Autrand, ed., *Prosopographie et genèse de l'état moderne*, cited above; G. Beech, "Prosopography," in J.M. Powell, ed., *Medieval Studies*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1976, pp. 151-184; N. Bulst and J.P. Genet, eds., *Medieval Lives and the Historians: Studies in Medieval Prosopography*, cited above; T.F. Carney, "Prosopography: Payoffs and Pitfalls," in *Phoenix*, 27, 1973, pp. 156-179; J.P. Genet and G. Lottes, eds., *L'Etat moderne et les élites XIIIe-XVIIIe siècles. Apport et limites de la methode prosopographique*, cited above; K. Goudriaan, K. Mandemakers, J. Reitsma and P. Stabel, eds., *Prosopography and Computer. Contributions of medievalists and modernists on the use of computer in historical research*, Leuven, Garant, 1997; K.S.B. Keats Rohan, ed., *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: the Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1997; L. Stone, "Prosopography," in *Daedalus*, 100, 1971, pp. 46-79, and W.F. Wevers, *Isaeus: Chronology, Prosopography, and Social History*, Paris, Mouton, 1968.

⁵ This interest is evident in the more technical literature, which has made real strides in the past two decades, including essays by J.A. Barman, R.J. Barman, and W.T. Kershaw, "Prosopography by Computer; the Development of a Database," in *Historical Methods*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1977, pp. 102-108; L. Breure, *SOCRATES, Data Modelling for Historians*, Utrecht, Utrecht University Press, 1993; G. Croenen, "Prosopography and Source Oriented Data Processing with KLEIO," in K. Goudriaan, K. Mandemakers, J. Reitsma and P. Stabel, eds., *Prosopography and Computer*, cited above, pp. 195-210; P. Denley, "Source Oriented Prosopography: KLEIO and the Creation of a Data Bank of Italian Renaissance University Teachers and Students," in F. Bocchi and P. Denley, eds., *Storia e multimedia*, cited above, pp. 150-160; J.P. Genet and M. Hainsworth, "Prosop: un système de traitement automatique des données prosopographiques," in Millet H., ed., *Informatique and Prosopographie*, cited above, pp. 279-297; D.I. Greenstein, "Multi-sourced

court history, nor in the subfield of female courts. This has hampered the evolution of fields of research that would have benefited the most, from the study of *élites*⁶ to the union between micro-history and macro-quantification,⁷ from case studies on the personnel of political institutions⁸ to longitudinal investigations of socio-professional groups.⁹

Nevertheless, despite agreeing with those who emphasise the complementary nature of this type of experiment and the fact that it cannot claim to be exhaustive,¹⁰ I feel that studies of the courts in the modern age cannot postpone the inevitable – even though it may represent

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and Integrated Databases for the Prosopographer,” in E. Mawdsley, N. Morgan, L. Richmond and R. Trainor, eds., *History and Computing III*, cited above, pp. 60-66; C. Harvey and J. Press, *Databases in Historical Research. Theory, Methods and Applications*, cited above; R.W. Mathisen, ‘Medieval Prosopography and Computers: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations,’ in *Medieval Prosopography*, no. 9, vol. 2, 1988, pp. 73-128; T. Schijvenaars, “Computerized Prosopographic Research,” in K. Goudriaan, K. Mandemakers, J. Reitsma and P. Stabel, eds., *Prosopography and Computer*, cited above, pp. 1-24; M. Woollard and P. Denley, *Source-oriented Data Processing for Historians: a Tutorial for KLEIO*, St. Katharinen, Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1993.

⁶ See P.S. Bearman, *Relations into Rhetorics: Local Élite Structure in Norfolk, England, 1540-1640*, New Brunswick-N.J., Rutgers U.P., 1993; A. Demurger, “L’apport de la prosopographie à l’étude des mécanismes des pouvoirs XIIIème-XVème siècles,” in F. Autrand, ed., *Prosopographie et genèse de l’état moderne*, cited above, pp. 289-301; S. Guilleme, ed., *Les élites fin de siècle: XIXe et XXe siècles. Actes de la journée d’études du 31 janvier 1992*, Paris, Edition de la Maison des sciences de l’homme d’Acquitaine, 1992; C. Harvey and J. Press, “The Business Elite of Bristol: a Case Study in Database Design,” in *History and Computing*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1991, pp. 1-11; K.F. Werner, “L’apport de la prosopographie à l’histoire sociale des élites,” in K.S.B. Keats Rohan, ed., *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics*, cited above, pp. 1-22; the essays by M. Van Den Noortgate, *A Database as an Instrument for a Prosopographic Study on Élite Groups of Financial Experts in Fifteenth-century Ghent*, pp. 87-96, H. Brand and D. Schippers, *Facing Urban Elites in Late Medieval Leiden*, pp. 121-134, K. Goudriaan, “The Elite of Gouda in the Late Medieval Leiden,” pp. 135-144, and R. Alma, “A Multi Level Database: Study on the Elite of 15th and 16th Century Groningen,” pp. 185-194, published in K. Goudriaan, K. Mandemakers, J. Reitsma, and P. Stabel, eds., *Prosopography and Computer*, cited above.

⁷ In this context I should mention J. Carvalho, “Soluzioni informatiche per microstorici,” in *Quaderni Storici*, 26, vol. 78, 1991, pp. 761-792; S.B. Edgington, *Micro-history: Local History and Computing Projects*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1985; R. Metz, “Global Data Banks: a Wise Choice or Foolish Mistakes,” *Historical social research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 16, 1, 1991, pp. 98-102; J. Morsel, “Histoire lignagère et non-genèse de l’État en Allemagne du Sud: entre prosopographie et micro-histoire,” in J.P. Genet and G. Lottes, eds., *L’Etat moderne et les élites XIIIe-XVIIIe siècle*, cited above, pp. 139-148, particularly the reflections on pp. 145-147, and D. Oberwittler, “From Coding to Decoding? An Analysis of Historical Social Research in Germany in the 1980s and Early 1990s,” in *Historical Methods*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1997, pp. 182-196; equally stimulating from the methodological point of view are the studies carried out by H. Medick H., *Weben und uberlenen in Laichingen 1650-1900: Local geschichte als allgemeine Geschichte*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996, and W.D. Sabeian, *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870*, Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1997.

⁸ See, besides the works already cited, E. Brizio, “Analisi prosopografica di una classe di governo. Siena sotto i riformatori, 1368-1385,” in F. Bocchi and P. Denley, eds., *Storia e Multimedia*, cited above, pp. 146-149; M. Cattini, ed., *Al governo del Comune*, cited above; D. Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Factions in Florence, 1426-1434*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978; R. Savelli, “I giudici delle rote in Italia (secoli XVI-XVIII),” in F. Bocchi and Denley, eds., *Storia e Multimedia*, cited above, pp. 182-188.

⁹ As examples, see J. Bradley, “Relational Database Design and the Reconstruction of the British Medical Profession: Constraints and Strategies,” in *History and Computing*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1994, pp. 71-84; the research by O. Nicholas, *English Schoolmasters, 1100-1500*, and K. Wriedt, “Amsträger in norddeutschen städten des spätmittelalters,” published in B. Neithard and J.P. Genet, eds., *Medieval Lives and the Historians*, cited above, pp. 303-312 and pp. 227-234; O. Itzcovich, *Masters and Apprentices in Genoese Society, 1450-1535*, in P. Denley, S. Fogelvik, and C. Harvey, eds., *History and Computing II*, cited above, pp. 209-219, especially pp. 214-216.

¹⁰ The concept has been clearly presented by Manfred Thaller in “Databases and Expert Systems as Complementary Tools for Historical Research,” in R. Metz, E. Van Cauwenberghe, and R. Van der Voort, eds., *Historical Information Systems*, cited above, pp. 21-31, especially pp. 22-25.

a compromise – merging of quality and quantity, biographical portrait and institutional panorama, events involving individuals and epics involving the collective, so long as the prerequisite conditions for the success of such experiments are respected, especially in the spheres of research pivoting around relationships and social/relational capital,¹¹ such as studies of clientary mechanisms, careers, relationships of credit and supply, factions and coalitions and so on.

In this sense, to refute the thesis, accepted by many modernists, that the court is the “place of ambiguity,”¹² a “system that is less well described the more it is circular and capillary,”¹³ it is necessary to understand that “la prosopographie permet, comme nous l’avons dit en 1977, de combiner l’histoire politique des hommes et des ‘événements’ avec l’histoire sociale ‘anonyme’ des évolutions à long terme, par l’étude des individus qui sont le support des deux”¹⁴. Furthermore, although “prosopography” as a “social history of institutions” is a path rarely followed in Italian historiography, it is a fundamental one for whoever wishes to investigate administrative structures or to use Guenée’s words, “to take apart the cogs and wheels of the mechanism on which the monarchy... based its power.”¹⁵

This is not a question of slavishly following the latest fad in historiography by displaying one’s own – badly applied – skills with computers and statistics, but of recognizing the ineluctable nature of this step. As Francois Autrand pointed out as early as 1979 in an essay entitled, significantly, *De l’histoire de l’État à la prosopographie*,¹⁶ the history of institutions coincides with the history of its members and “only a better understanding of the participants can lead us to a better appreciation of the functioning, success, or failure of medieval or early modern institutions.”¹⁷

It is obvious that this type of approach sometimes demands the formulation of bold hypotheses that can border on the risky and result in a diminished overview of the details. Nevertheless, too often we know the most minute details about the life of third and fourth-rank courtiers and almost all there is to know about a very obscure poem, a wooden chest, the *editio princeps* or the spare set of dishes, but we are often in the dark as to the nature of the court itself, how far it extended, how many people lived there, and how and what were the rights, duties, and privileges of the courtiers, how they were hired, paid, dismissed and so on.

These paradoxes are evident in the Este historiography where, nonetheless, excellent work has been done on the history of the states¹⁸ and the courts,¹⁹ already in the past the subject of careful

¹¹ In this regard, see G. Guerzoni and A. Usai, “Relational Capital and Economic Success in Early Modern Institutions. The d’Este Courts in the XVIth Century,” in Feldenkirchen W. and Gourvish T., ed.s, *European Yearbook of Business History*, n.2, Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot - UK., 1999, pp. 211-236.

¹² S. Prandi, *Il “cortegiano ferrarese”. I discorsi di Annibale Romei e la cultura nobiliare nel Cinquecento*, Florence, Leo S. Olschki, 1990, p. 35.

¹³ G. Mazzacurati, “Percorsi dell’ideologia cortigiana,” in C. Ossola and A. Prosperi, ed., *La corte e il “Cortegiano”*, cited above, vol. I, pp. 149-172, this quotation is found on p. 151.

¹⁴ K.F. Werner, “L’apport de la prosopographie á l’histoire sociale des èlites,” in K.S.B. Keats Rohan, ed., *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics*, cited above, pp. 1-22, the quotation is from p. 5.

¹⁵ Quoted by F. Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo dello stato. I “famigli cavalcanti” di Francesco Sforza (1450-1466)*, cited above, pp. 9-10.

¹⁶ Published in G.A. Ritter and R. Vierhaus, ed., *Aspects de la recherche historique en France et en Allemagne; tendances et méthodes*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck et Ruprecht, 1981, pp. 43-53.

¹⁷ N. Bulst, “Prosopography and the Computer: Problems and Possibilities,” published in P. Denley, S. Fogelvik, and C. Harvey, eds., *History and Computing II*, cited above, pp. 12-18, the quotation is from p. 15.

¹⁸ Solid benchmarks in this area are L. Chiappini, *Gli Estensi*, Varese, Dall’Oglio, 1967, and L. Marini, “Il governo estense nello stato estense,” in P. Rossi P., ed., *Il Rinascimento nelle corti padane. Società e cultura*, cited above, pp. 53-60, and “Lo Stato estense,” in L. Marini, G. Tocci, and A. Stella, “I ducati padani. Trento e Trieste,” in *Storia d’Italia*, Turin, Utet, vol. XVII, 1979, pp. 1-212.

¹⁹ I am referring to the contributions made by G. Papagno and A. Quondam, eds., *La corte e lo spazio: Ferrara estense*, cited above; J. Salmons and W. Moretti, eds., *The Renaissance in Ferrara and its European Horizons*, Cardiff-Ravenna,

investigation.²⁰ However, despite studies on the Middle Ages and the fifteenth century that have been particularly attentive to the political and institutional themes most closely concerned with events involving the court,²¹ research into the early modern period has mainly prioritised analyses with an artistic and cultural slant,²² in which the court appears merely as a background or even the setting for events that were extraneous to it.

In order to fill this lacuna, it is worthwhile tracing a “collective biography” that embraces the entire human spectrum populating the court stage. I do not believe there is a more effective tool for achieving this goal than a prosopographic approach. It may be lacking in specific chronological referents or biographical details, but it can furnish precise and valuable information about institutional structures, the mechanisms through which they functioned, career dynamics, the demographics of power, and the strategies of its members.

As is so often the case, it is necessary to take a stand, to make choices and assume responsibilities, given the existence of significantly differing approaches. This is the result of the gap between the interpretation of prosopography as a mere “investigation of the common background characteristics of a group of actors in history by means of a collective study of their lives”²³ and that proposed by Neithard Bulst, particularly characteristic of German scholars, which assumes a distinct

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University of Wales Press-Edizioni del Girasole, 1984; M. Pade, L.W. Petersen, and D. Quarta, eds., *La corte di Ferrara e il suo mecenatismo 1441-1598*, Modena, Edizioni Panini, 1987; T. Dean, “Notes on the Ferrarese Court in the later Middle Ages,” in *Renaissance Studies*, XIII, 1989, pp. 357-369; S. Prandi, *Il “Cortegiano” ferrarese. I “Discorsi” di Annibale Romei e la cultura nobiliare nel Cinquecento*, Florence, Olschki, 1990; M. Bertozzi, ed., *Alla corte degli Estensi. Filosofia, arte e cultura a Ferrara nei secoli XV e XVI*, Ferrara, Università degli studi, 1994; T. Dean, “Court and Household in Ferrara 1494,” in D. Abulafia, ed., *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494-95*, Aldershot, Variorum, 1995, pp. 165-187; R. Gorris, “D’un château à l’autre’: la corte di Renata di Francia a Ferrara (1528-1560),” in L. Olivato, ed., *Il Palazzo di Renata di Francia*, Ferrara, Corbo, 1997; G. Ricci, *Il principe e la morte*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1998.

It is nonetheless curious that only M. Cattini and M.A. Romani in “Le corti parallele: per una tipologia delle corti padane dal XIII al XVI secolo,” in G. Papagno and A. Quondam, eds., *La corte e lo spazio: Ferrara estense*, cited above, pp.47-82, and L. Chiappini in *La corte estense alla metà del Cinquecento. I compendi di Cristoforo di Messisbugo*, Ferrara, Sate, 1984, have tried to explain the nature and structure of the Este court.

²⁰ For instance C. Chledowski, *Der Hof von Ferrara*, Berlin, Verlag Julius Bard, 1903; L. Gandini, “Saggio degli usi e delle costumanze della corte di Ferrara al tempo di Niccolò III (1393-1441),” in *Atti e memorie della reale deputazione di storia patria per le province di Romagna*, 3rd series, IX, 1868, pp. 148-169; A. Lazzari, *Le ultime tre duchesse di Ferrara e la corte estense a’ tempi di Torquato Tasso*, Pistoia, Officina Tipografica Cooperativa, 1913, and A. Solerti, *Ferrara e la Corte Estense nella seconda metà del secolo decimosesto*, Città di Castello, S. Lapi tipografo–editore, 1891.

²¹ See the works by T. Dean, *Land and Power in Late Medieval Ferrara: the Rule of the Este 1350-1450*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, Italian trans., *Terra e potere a Ferrara nel tardo medioevo*, Modena-Ferrara, Deputazione provinciale ferrarese di storia patria, 1990, and Dean, “Lord, Vassals and Clients in Renaissance Ferrara,” in *English Historical Review*, C, 1985, pp. 106-119; M. Folin, *Il sistema politico estense fra mutamenti e persistenze (secoli XV-XVIII)*, cited above; Folin, “Note sugli ufficiali negli stati estensi (secoli XV-XVI),” in *Gli ufficiali negli Stati italiani del Quattrocento*, cited above, pp. 99-154; Folin, “Studio e politica negli Stati Estensi fra Quattro e Cinquecento: dottori, ufficiali, cortigiani,” in P. Castelli, *Due studenti ferraresi: Giovanni e Giovan Francesco Pico. L’opera e la fortuna*, cited above; J.K. Laurent, *The Este and Their Vassals: a Study in Signorial Politics*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Un. Microf. Int., 1980; I. Lazzarini, “Un’Italia di feudi e città? Alcune considerazioni attorno al caso ferrarese,” in *Società e Storia*, 51, 1991, pp. 125-152; R.M. Tristano, “Vassals, Fiefs, and Social Mobility in Ferrara during the Middle Ages and Renaissance,” in *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s., no.15, 1987, pp. 43-64.

²² Distinguished examples of this are the essays by W. Gundersheimer, *Ferrara. The Style of a Renaissance Despotism*, Princeton-New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1973, Italian trans., *Ferrara estense. Lo stile del potere*, Modena, Panini, 1988, and Gundersheimer, “Art and Life at the Court of Ercole I d’Este: The ‘De triumphis religionis’ of Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti,” in *Travaux d’Humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. CXXII, Geneva, 1972; L. Lookwood, *La musica a Ferrara nel Rinascimento*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1987; A. Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara 1579-1597*, Princeton, Princeton U.P., 1980; T. Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara. Ercole I d’Este (1471-1505) and the Invention of a Ducal Capital*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

²³ L. Stone, *Prosopography*, cited above, p. 46.

separation between “prosopographie” as the “collection et relevé de toutes les personnes d’un cercle de vie délimité dans le temps et dans l’espace” and a *Historische Personenforschung* presented as “la mise en valeur des données prosopographiques sous des aspects divers de l’interprétation historique” with the former being “subordonnée à la *Personenforschung* et la précède ce qui en conséquence la rend indépendante de la *Personenforschung* et la classifie en science auxiliaire” to the point that “si dans la suite nous employons le terme prosopographique nous entendons par là – contrairement à sa signification en allemand, la combinaison entre Prosopographie et *Personenforschung*”.²⁴

In the case outlined here, my position is close to that of Bulst, even though additional elements have made the methodological framework of reference more complex. Indeed, even with access to a broad-ranging and complete mass of data, it was not a simple task to decide how it should be employed to study the careers of Este princesses’ courtiers.

Who is a courtier?

The major obstacle was to define the limits of the group being investigated, given that “every prosopographic catalogue should posit at the outset an aim of research and knowledge. Before beginning to collect and search out the data and to establish a database, it is necessary to know who should fit into it”²⁵ and “all prosopographic study starts from a group, which in my case, the study of the mechanisms of power, is defined by its role in the service of the state and by its place in society: a socio-professional group, let us say, if the expression coined only recently, does not lend itself to confusion, or a ‘milieu,’ a word used by Francois Autraud for his parliamentarians.”²⁶

In the case of the female courts, the first obstacle the scholar faces is the difficulty of recognizing the identity and limits of these institutions and the relative criteria for inclusion and exclusion, limits and criteria which were much more distinct and clear-cut than has previously been thought. Far from being a melting pot in which men, ranks, and powers of different sorts all co-existed, the court instituted and protected differences. Indeed, it found its true reason for being in its ability to create or destroy them. To respect this propensity for order, it is thus opportune to clear up possibly ambiguous issues, namely who acted within the Este female courts and who could legitimately claim the title of courtier?²⁷ In addition, what differences were there between the Este *corte* (court), *familia* (household) and *casa* (house)?

Now, to answer these questions, it must be noted that the word *corte* is insufficient,²⁸ almost misleading; even though ambassadors, chroniclers, agents, and writers of treatises sometimes indiscriminately used the terms *familia*, *corte*, *seguito*, *adherenti*, or *casa* to designate the group of

²⁴ N. Bulst, “La recherche prosopographie récente en Allemagne (1250-1650). Essai d’un bilan,” in F. Autraud, ed., *Prosopographie et genèse de l’état moderne*, cited above, pp. 35-52; the quotation is from p. 37. The author made this same distinction in “Prosopography and the Computer: Problems and Possibilities,” published in P. Denley, S. Fogelvik, and C. Harvey, eds., *History and Computing II*, cited above, pp. 12-18, especially pp. 13-14, and “Objet et méthode de la prosopographie,” in J.P. Genet and G. Lottes, eds., *L’Etat moderne et les élites XIIIe-XVIIIe siècle*, cited above, pp. 467-482, especially pp. 471-473.

²⁵ N. Bulst, “La recherche prosopographie récente en Allemagne (1250-1650). Essai d’un bilan,” in F. Autraud, ed., *Prosopographie et genèse de l’état moderne*, cited above, pp. 35-52, this quotation is taken from p. 37.

²⁶ A. Demurger, “L’apport de la prosopographie à l’étude des mécanismes des pouvoirs XIIIeme-XVeme siècles,” in F. Autraud, ed., *Prosopographie et genèse de l’état moderne*, cited above, pp. 289-301, the quotation is on p. 290.

²⁷ For further details, I refer the interested reader to my article, “The Courts of Este in the first half of XVIth century. Socio-economic aspects,” in M. Aymard and M.A. Romani, eds., *The Court as an Economic Institution*, Paris, Editions de la Maison des sciences des hommes, 1998, pp. 89-113, and to an essay written with M.A. Romani, “Looking for a Model: the Court as an Economic Institution. The Cases of Gonzaga, d’Este, and Farnese from Fifteenth Century to the Seventeenth Century,” forthcoming in H. Medick, ed., *Beyond Elias? Court Society: The Center as Symbol and Locus of Power*, Berkeley, California U.P.

²⁸ On this, see R.J.W. Evans, “The Court: A Protean Institution and an Elusive Subject,” in R.G. Asch, A.M. Birke, *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility*, cited above, pp. 481-493.

individuals bound by a permanent relationship of service to a prince, a princes, a lord, or a cardinal, these terms had different meanings. Therefore, the problematic definition of what a court was, where its boundaries could be traced and who was legitimately a part of it merits some attention. Sigismondi, for example, explains the *distintione della corte*, saying that the term *corte/court* is applied to “the *familia/household* of a great, absolute ruler, whether pope, emperor, king, cardinal, duke, marquis, count, or other absolute monarch and is made up of various officials as part of a hierarchy. Some of these serve only for honor and glory, receiving no pay, while others are salaried. All live under the protection of the Prince and enjoy numerous privileges including exemption from many taxes”. Raising the question as to whether the *familia/household* of a high-ranking nobleman might call itself a *corte/court*, he answers that those who aspire to this have little understanding of what it means, giving the requisite conditions for a *familia/household* to be considered a *corte/court*. Namely, it is not sufficient to be first in rank after the Prince himself as such individuals must also be in the line of succession to the throne, or at the least absolute rulers in their own states, with the power to coin money, administer absolute justice and other similar acts, without having recourse to a superior power.²⁹

Therefore, even before the *corte/court* came the *familia* or *famiglia* (*household*),³⁰ the clan founded on ties of kinship or patronage that provided support for every aristocrat and magnate, whether layman or ecclesiastic. However, two different meanings and usages for the term *familia/household* were current at the same time: sometimes it was used *latu sensu* as a synonym for *corte/court*³¹ and sometimes it identified a restricted circle of courtiers, called *familiari/es*, *famulantes*, or *famigli*,³² who enjoyed particular economic, jurisdictional, and fiscal treatment. The existence of a *familia/household* was thus a necessary condition, but was not sufficient in itself to constitute a

²⁹ “...questo nome di Corte si piglia per la famiglia di un Prencipe grande assoluto ò sia Papa, ò Imperatore, ò Re, ò Cardinale, ò Duca, ò Marchese, ò Conte, ò altro titolo di potenza assoluta; la quale sia formata di diversi offitii e ministri gl’uni subalternati a gl’altri: e frà questi alcuni sieno principali, altri mezzani, alcuni inferiori, alcuni che se esercitino per proprio honore e senza mercede, alcuni stipendiati; et esser tutti sotto l’ombra e protettione di quel Principe vivino con molta libertà et privilegi, et esenti da molt’impositioni.”...“non può dunque la famiglia di un’altro Cavalliero di molta entrata chiamarsi Corte? come per esempio si dice: la corte del Signor Marchese tale, del Signor Conte tale, ancorche non sia Prencipe assoluto?”... “Propriamente non si deve chiamar Corte, et quelli che la chiamano con questo nome hanno poca intendenza di simil cosa” ... “si deve chiamare la famiglia del Signor tale, del Signor quale”... “a me pare un grande abuso, che si come hoggidì molti pretendono titoli non convenienti, al grado loro; così anco ambiscono che le loro famiglie sieno chiamate col nome di Corte.”... “se non si devono anco chiamar Corti le famiglie di quei Signori e Cavallieri, i quali nelle loro Città, dopo il Principe hanno il primo luogo? Come per esempio a Mantova molti Conti: a Parma il simile, e fuore d’Italia ancora...”... “Non basta solamente l’esser primo dopo la persona del Prencipe: ma è necessario che vi sieno altre due conditioni; la prima: che essi sieno successori nello Stato, come sono i Cardinali in Roma, et altrove i Primogeniti de Prencipi, ò altro del loro sangue; le famiglie de quali degnamente si chiamano Corti; la seconda, che non essendoci questa prima conditione sieno almeno per loro stessi Prencipi assoluti ne’ loro Stati... onde battono moneta: ministrano giustizia assoluta e fanno altre cose simili, senza che si dia ricorso ad altro Prencipe superiore”; S. Sigismondi, *Prattica cortigiana, morale et economica nella quale si discorre minutamente de’ Ministri, che servono in Corte d’un Cardinale e si dimostrano le qualità, che loro convengono*, Ferrara, Vittorio Baldini, 1604, pp. 15-16.

³⁰ The term *familia* is borrowed from the Latin surviving in Patristic literature and Church circles, and later reappeared also in the secular sphere, as is confirmed by the history of the late medieval *familie* of governors.

³¹ Especially in the treatises on the courts of cardinals; for example, Paolo Cortesi (*De cardinalatu*, Castro Cortesio, Symeon Nicholaus Nardi, 1510), in the chapter *de familia*, while distinguishing the *famulantes* into *gentes maiores et minores*, uses *familia* and *corte* interchangeably, imitated by Francesco Priscianese, who in his work *Del governo della Corte d’un signore in Roma* (*Dove si ragiona di tutto quello che al Signore e a’ suoi Cortigiani si appartiene di fare, opera non manco bella, che utile e necessaria*, Rome, Francesco Priscianese Fiorentino, 1543, in the edition published in the series *Biblioteca dei Bibliofili*, Città di Castello, S. Lapi editore 1883) once again uses the two terms as synonyms.

³² The term *famiglio* as well could easily be misinterpreted, identifying according to the context a *familiare strictu sensu*, i.e., a member of the ducal *familia*, or a generic servant: in ducal documents, the stable hands were called *famigli di stalla*, personal servants *famigli ai servizi*, the pages’ servants *famigli ai ragazzi*.

corte/court. While it is true that in every court there was a *familia/household*, not all *familie/households* could legitimately be considered *corti/courts*. This could happen only if the conditions imposed by Sigismondi were met: that the *pater familiae* (or *mater familiae*) be a great, absolute ruler, or a successor to the throne, or at least absolute ruler in his or her own state, with the power to coin money, administer justice and unanswerable to a higher power.

Nonetheless, the clarification of the relationship between *familia/household* and *corte/court* is counteracted by confusion relating to other terms. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the expression *corte/court* was used not only to identify the places, the architectural space (Latin *chors* or *cohors*), in which the members of the *Casa/House* of Este lived but also all the people who worked and resided there. Even the word *cortixano* (*cortesano/courtier*), substituted in official documents by *curialis* and/or *aulicus*,³³ did not distinguish a precise category of dependents, but indicated generically all those who *served* at court, independently of their office or their position in the hierarchy. The *corte/court* therefore included a broader group of dependents than those attached to the *familia/household*, but just the same required opportune forms of delineation and defense of its outer boundaries.

These are not insignificant examples of linguistic hair-splitting: the *enjoyment of many liberties and privileges*, the fact of being *exempt from many taxes* and of being *absolute monarchs* in their states, and of coining money and administering justice, demonstrate that this debate masked a question of fundamental importance, that of the relationships between the Este *corti/courts* and *stato/state*, the delineation of their respective spaces, and the establishment of the timing and manner of their respective interaction. Lorenzo Ducci highlighted this well, basing his statements on theoretical positions already sustained by others, when he said that “not all those who serve the Prince can be called courtiers, since the Prince has both a private and a public personality; only those who serve him in his private function are courtiers, while those who serve in the public sphere (thus including soldiers, judges and other magistrates, etc.) are not”.³⁴

³³ *Aulicus* and *curialis* were also not synonyms, but referred to two different spheres of pertinence: in the *patente di familiarità* issued by Duke Alfonso I in favour of the “civem et nobilem virum Ioannem Iacobum ex ea bebiorum familia (Giangiacomo Bebio)”, the two terms were meaningfully distinguished: “...in nostrorum familiarium et nobilium numero et inter nostros curiales at aulicos deputavimus et descripsimus” (in ASMo, ASE, CAD, Leggi e Decreti, series B, no. XIII, *Alphonsi I decreta exempla 1505 ad 1533*, pp. 47-48), even if the reasons for this distinction are not totally clear to us. In this regard, the *Lexicon totius latinitatis* gives among other things on pp. 399-400 the following definitions of *aula*: “Hinc aula regia era locus in scaenae medio ceteris ornatior, qui regum praesertim in tragicis domilium referebat” and “Hinc speciatim, quia domus principum utpote amplior ceteris, plures aulas sed atria haber solet, factum est, ut aula nomine a latinis appellaretur”, translating it as “sala signorile di palagio, sala di palazzi vescovili dove i canonici fanno capitolo” (stately room in a palace, room in bishops’ palaces where the canons hold their chapter); *aulicus* was something that *ab aula est, ad aulam seu domum principis pertinens*, *aulici* were the *ministri aulae*, the prince’s most intimate and eminent collaborators, those who handled the most serious and delicate matters, which distinguished them from the *curiales*. *Curiales* was in fact a generic term, the equivalent of *cortegiano* (the *Lexicon totius latinitatis* on p. 920 agrees with the definition given by Azzi: “Curialis vocabantur decuriones ex coloniis et municipiis”). The difference in definition between *aulicus* and *curialis* seems to have been accepted by Eberhard von Weyhe (Duri de Pascolo), who in his *Aulicus politicis Diversis Regulis Praeceptis (sive ut ictus Iavolenus loquitur, Definitionibus selectis, videlicet CCCLXII. Antiquorum et Neotericorum prudentiae Civilis Doctorum instructus*, in *Speculi Aulicarum atque politicarum observationum*, Argentinae [Strasbourg], Lazaro Zetzeno, 1599, pp. 167-261) identified the *aulici* as the most eminent members of the court, who were assigned the most prestigious functions. Reflecting on the above document of the ducal chancellery, we could take up again the interesting parallel *familiarium/curiales* vs. *nobiliorum/aulicos*, to maintain a distance from the confused usage in 16th-17th century treatises, where the two terms are often interchangeable.

³⁴ “Pero dobbiamo dire non essere Cortigiani, tutti quelli che servono, ...(il comprenderci li Soldati, i Giudici, et altri magistrati...) ma solo alcuni di loro, tra quali non si può negare comunemente esser tenuti per tali quegli, che privatamente lo servono, in modo che par necessario considerare nel Principe due persone, una pubblica, che lo fà essere Principe, l’altra privata, con la quale lo presupponiamo capo d’una famiglia, ...quelli dunque i quali lo servono come Principe, cioè in attioni appartenenti al beneficio pubblico, non furono mai appellati per nome di cortigiani, ma solamente coloro, che lo servono privatamente, e che sono compresi nella famiglia, o Corte di lui...”. L. Ducci, *Arte aulica di Lorenzo Ducci, nella quale s’insegna il modo che*

This “dual personality” of the Prince, public and private, theorized and recognized also at a juridical level, had an impact on two distinctly separate spheres: the *stato/state*, in which he was the “political” ruler, and the *corte/court* and the *Casa/House*, where he was *pater/father* in the physical sense of the term. Corresponding with this dual nature was an analogous partition of the *two bodies of the King* (political and natural), which, although forming “an indivisible unity, since each of them is fully contained in the other,”³⁵ gave rise to two different orders of relations and dependencies, political-state, and domestic-family respectively. I have deliberately mentioned the dimension of the *Casa/House* because *familie/households* and *corti/courts* did not exhaust the range of levels of government and dependence embraced by the domestic-family sphere: these were included in the higher order of the *Casa/House*, the equivalent of the Latin *domus*. Here, too, the word did not possess a univocal meaning, as it also indicated the physical place of residence (the *oikos* in the literal sense of the term), and the family, stock, descendants, dynasty.

The *Casa/House* extended beyond the boundaries of the ducal *familia/household* and the ducal *corte/court* to include all the members of the *familie/households* and *corti/courts* which every prince and princess of the Este blood maintained from the end of the fifteenth century, when the rapid evolution from the *domestico-consortile*³⁶ model still typical of the fifteenth century *signorie* brought about the explosion of the extended family into many *familie/households* and *corti particolari/particular courts*, each one distinguished by its own special dimensions and habits. Thus, only those who permanently³⁷ served the duke, duchess, and various princes and princesses of the House of Este inside their *private* and *domestic* spaces were courtiers. The continuity of the relationship between prince/princess and courtier and physical and residential proximity, independently of the reasons for their service,³⁸ constituted the principal parameters for selection.

The *Casa/House* thus included the two underlying levels of *familia/household* and *corte/court*. While all the *Casa/Houses* were made up of more than one court, one sole court was not sufficient to

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deve tenere il cortegiano per divenir possessore della gratia del suo Principe, Ferrara, Vittorio Baldini, 1601, pp. 13-14.

³⁵ E.H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957, traduzione italiana, *I due corpi del Re*, Turin, Einaudi, 1989, p. 9.

³⁶ The term “*corte domestico-consortile*” was coined by M. Cattini and M.A. Romani in their essay “Le corti parallele: per una tipologia delle corti padane dal XIII al XVI secolo,” in G. Papagno and A. Quondam, *op.cit.*, vol. I, pp. 47-82. On p. 48, they identify this as “a highly coherent social structure – the extended family – keystone of social, economic, and political behaviour. Undivided patrimonies and jointly-administered *signorie* are the foundation of political strategies aimed at obtaining and consolidating the primacy of the dynasty, in the common interest of its many branches and the no less numerous adherents and clients which gather around it.”

³⁷ The stability of the relationship of service was perceived as a determining factor for the recognition, whether accepted as habit or formalized, of the relationship as a *famiglio* and courtier, as can be deduced from the positions of Bonacossa, *Bonacossae Hippolyti, nobilis ferrariensis, De servis vel famulis tractatus*, Venice, Damiano Zenaro, 1575, expressed in the quaestio XXX (p. 12v): “Qui tenetur servire Principem. An possit per substitutum servire? Respondit quòd non. Nisi de eius voluntate. Bal.in usibus feudorum tit.Episcopum, vel Abb.§.mutus, nu.3” and Andrea Canonhiero (*Il perfetto Cortegiano, et dell'uffizio del Prencipe verso'l Cortegiano*, Rome, Bartolomeo Zannetti, 1609, p. 218), when he underlines the importance of tenure at court as a discriminating factor, quoting Commendone: “a different case are those who, having left the Court, call themselves Courtiers, because they have been there for some time, and albeit improperly they apply this name to themselves.”

³⁸ The motives for service occupied a very prominent position in the debate discussed in sixteenth and seventeenth century treatises. Excellent examples of this are the positions taken by Lorenzo Ducci, who in *Arte aulica di Lorenzo Ducci*, cited above, states on p. 15 that: “Per due cose principalmente, contrahersi et esercitarsi le servitù; per utilità, e per honore; Alcuni servono per l'utile, non pregiando l'honorevolezza, come sono i mercenarii; alcuni per l'honore, come i nobili, ò per nascita, ò per altezza d'animo e di spirito; alcuni per l'uno, e per l'altro”; and by Sigismondo Sigismondi, who in *Della distinzione de cortigiani della Prattica cortigiana, morale et economica*, cited above, p. 26, distinguished between “i ministri che servono per proprio honore, e quali servono per la sola mercede”; the first were those who “servono per gentil'huomini, et immediatamente alla persona del Prencipe, e che non riconoscono direttamente altro superiore, servono sotto nome d'honore; et per lo contrario tutti quelli, che non servono per gentil'huomini, né immediatamente al Prencipe: ma sono subalternati ad altri uffici maggiori, servono sotto nome di mercede”.

constitute a *Casa/House*. In this sense, the *Casa d'Este/House of Este* was the sum total of various *familie/households* and *corti particolari/particular courts*, whose components enjoyed the same privileges,³⁹ legal statutes, and consideration as the courtiers who depended directly on the duke.⁴⁰ In granting Ferrarese citizenship to a *familiare* of his brother Sigismondo, Duke Ercole explained the motives behind his decision with the eloquent statement; “cum et familiares ipsius illustris fratris nostri non minus quam nostros diligamus et ad beneficia eis conferenda promptu et parati sumus.”⁴¹ In many other official documents as well, the components of the various Este courts were mentioned expressly as members *de domo et familia nostra estense*:⁴² for example, in the “Litterae creationis domini Ludovici Martinotii senensis de Ill.ma domo estense,” Martinozzi is first of all called “consiliarium nostrum secretum,” assigning to him those “privilegiis, beneficiis immunitatibus commodis et honoribus quibus reliqui consilarii nostri segreti funguntur et gaudent...” and later “ipsum dominum Ludovicum eiusque filios et descendentes legitimos et naturales de domo et familia nostra estense facimus et constituimus atque in eam plene assumimus et ita eum cum suis ut supra ab omnibus habendum esse ac appellandum.”⁴³

These elementary distinctions permitted a classification of the various categories of individuals who had working relationships with the court milieu. While the necessity for continuity excluded the majority of suppliers of goods and services,⁴⁴ co-residence and *privato servire/private service*

³⁹ See, for example, the decrees concerning the prohibition against bearing arms (State Archive of Modena, Archivio Segreto Estense, Gridario, serie B, registri di gride manoscritte dal 1436 al 1596, primo tomo, *Gride per gl'archibusi e per l'arme pubblicata sotto il di XXVIII giugno*, 1558, p. 102, point 10, and *Gride per gl'archibusi e per l'arme* del 1563, p. 111, point 7): “Dalla presente grida si eccettuano tutti li cortigiani immediate salariati li quali sono al servizio di S.A. et ancora quei salariati che stanno al servizio della Serenissima madama sua consorte e delli ill.mi s.ri suoi fratelli e figlioli, alli quali è permesso portare la notte la spada et pugnale honestamente nel fodero” and “Della presente grida si eccettuaranno tutti i cortigiani immediate salariati, i quali stanno al servizio di S.E. ed i loro servitori, li quali saranno dati in lista al Capitano della Piazza, o vero al suo Cancellero, i quali haverano ordine da S.E. di quanto haverano da fare intorno ad esse liste, et che saranno accettati, et ancora i salariati che stanno al servizio di Madama Eccellentissima sua Madre, et degli Ill.mi suoi zii et fratello a quali è permesso portar la notte la loro spada, et il pugnale nel fodero honestamente ma non alcuna altra sorte d'arme offensibili”.

⁴⁰ This is attested by the letters patent issued by Alfonso I to the *agenti* and *proveditori* of Renée of France, the wife of Ercole II, duke from 1534: “Facendo far ogni anno la provisione di vettovaglie ad uso suo et de la sua corte et famiglia, la Ill.ma Madama di Ferrara (Renée) n.ra nuora honoratissima... in virtù delle presenti lettere patenti comandiamo expressamente a tutti gli ufficiali et sudditi nostri de li detti territori et loci.... che tutte le dette robe di qualunque sorte siano trattate, expedite, rispettate e favorite, in ciascun passo e luoco del dominio nostro per terra e per acqua come se fussero nostre proprie, che non altrimenti volemo che siano reputeate et stimate quelle de la prefata madama...”. In ASMo, ASE, CAD, Decreti e chirografi sciolti, busta 1b, *Sec.XVI senza data e dal 1501 al 1540*, patent of 22 August 1532.

⁴¹ In ASMo, ASE, CAD, Leggi e Decreti, serie B, no. IX, *Herculis I decretorum archetypa 1473 ad 1482*, p.222.

⁴² As confirmed by the revealing passage “nell'investitura fatta dal S.re Duca Alfonso I di Ferrara l'anno 1534 d'alcune possessioni, palazzi, cose et ortarie al S.r Conte Alfonso Mosti agregato alla fameglia Serenissima d'Este...”. In ASMo, ASE, CAD, Esenzioni e privilegi, serie I, busta n.1, 1417-1658, document of 1534.

⁴³ The letters patent aspired to validity also beyond the borders of the duchy, as they were addressed to the “Serenissimos reges illustrissimos duces et principes excelsosque dominatus et reliquos dominos patres fratres et amicos nostros quibus haec nostrae (litterae patentium) fuerint exhibitae ex animo precamus ut quandocumque ipsi domino Ludovico Martinotio estensi aut alicui ex suis ut supra: ad eorum urbes, terras, et loca proficisci congerit cum omnibus suis familiaribus impedimentisque cum vestibus vasis argenteis, armis et aliis rebus quibuscumque et equis die nocteque et tam per aquas quam per terram liberrime et expeditissime sine solutione alicuius datii, passus et gabellae aut alius oneris: amoris nostri causa transire permittant: omnibus in rebus commendatissimos habentes: eis de expeditissimo et liberrimo transitu salvoconductu et idonea cohorte providere velint: quod si fecerint ut speramus nobis erit ad modum iocundum et gratum ad omnia eorum qui ita se habuerint iocunda et grata semper paratissimis.” In ASMo, ASE, CAD, Leggi e Decreti, serie B, n.XII, *Herculis I decretorum registrum 1486 ad 1488*, pp.235-236.

⁴⁴ The term suppliers of goods and services refers to both the merchants who furnished the ducal court with manufactured goods and foodstuffs, and the technicians, artisans, and craftsmen involved in the execution of projects of various sorts. These latter were divided between occasional and seasonal workers, known as *straordinari* (porters, transporters, *aquaroli*, specialized maintenance and repairmen, boatsmen, carters, muledrivers, and wagoners), and those who, although working all year long on court commissions, were not

discriminated against individuals who, although on a regular salary from the duke or the duchess, did not appear among the *cortigiani immediate salariati*, since they worked at a distance from his/her House and his/her person. Among these, one can find the 200 officials (notaries, governors, commissars, captains, etc.) who operated in the territory of the duchy, the 200 members of the financial magistracies in and outside Ferrara, the 400 members of the permanent militia and the ducal fleet, the faculty of the *Studium Ferrariensis*,⁴⁵ the more than 2,000 people employed in agricultural work and animal husbandry,⁴⁶ the 2,500 employees of the Este manufactories (the wool and silk guilds, glassblowers, soap factory, mint, foundries, kilns for making building materials),⁴⁷ the 700-800 workers in the salt mines of Longastrino, in the Comacchio valleys, the mines and kilns located on the slopes of the Apennines.

(Contd.) _____

hired permanently but were paid by the day or the job, with renewable short-term contracts. A preliminary estimate of the induced work deriving from the ducal court alone gives the number of these workers as about 1,600, showing what a driving force the presence of the courts was in the urban economy. Among the suppliers of goods, it is possible to count an average of about 200 persons, besides the sellers of foodstuffs who operated in the *mercato de piazza* of Ferrara (whose precise number is impossible to estimate), divided by category of goods (grains and legumes, wines, fruit and vegetables, dairy products, preserved meats and animal fats, oil, spices, firewood, hardware, ropes, barrels and vats, copper, glass, and pottery kitchenware, soaps, candles and torches, textiles, clothing, footwear, leather goods, weapons, clay and sand, charcoal, etc); this number underestimates the actual persons involved, since there were wide networks of sub-suppliers managed by one agent-principal supplier. For example, the ducal court bought fish for its table from the *superiore del datio della pescaria*, who in turn bought it from more than two hundred individuals between *sprocani* and *pescaduri*, and the same was true of the *ufficiale al pollaro* or the *beccaro di corte*, who “filtered” the relationships with the smaller sellers. In this way, instead of having to carry out and record thousands of transactions of minor financial import (two chickens, three capons, fifty eggs and so on) and clogging the account books with the transcription of hundreds of very small sums, the ducal administrators could deal with only one person, to whom they delegated the burden of handling the administration and account keeping of the network of sub-suppliers. A prudent global calculation of the suppliers of goods enables us to identify easily 800-900 individuals.

This number is practically identical to that of the suppliers of services: technicians, artisans, and craftsmen constantly employed in the execution of ducal commissions; for example, an average of 450 persons worked in the engineering-hydraulics and architecture-construction sectors (engineers, surveyors, building and land-clearing overseers, architects, painters, sculptors, carvers, stonecutters, turners, stonemasons, roofers, glaziers, carpenters, blacksmiths, brickmakers), while more than 200 (tailors and seamstresses, goldworkers, embroiderers, plume-makers, shoe and stocking makers) were involved in making footwear and clothing for the ducal wardrobe. These individuals, too, despite the fact that their major source of income was these ducal commissions, were paid by the day or by the job, and thus do not appear among those drawing a regular salary. For further details, see the essays “The Demand for Art of Italian Renaissance Court: The Case of Este (1471-1560),” in M. North and D. Omrod, eds., *Markets for art, 1400-1800*, Proceedings of the Twelfth International Economic History Congress, Madrid, 1998, pp. 55-69 and (with A. Usai), *Relational Capital and Economic Success in Early Modern Institutions. The d’Este courts in the XVIth century*, cited above

⁴⁵ At least until 1471, the salaries of professors and lecturers at the renowned university in Ferrara were paid by the dukes, who subsequently, after passing this burden to the coffers of the commune, reserved for themselves control of the governing body which saw to the appointment of the teachers and the establishment of the curriculum.

⁴⁶ It should be noted that this number refers exclusively to the individuals who worked on the farms directly dependent on the duke. It thus excludes all those who carried out similar functions for other members of the House of Este, whose total is much higher than the number working for the duke. For further details, see my essay *Angustia ducis, divitiae principum. Patrimoni e imprese estensi tra Quattro e Cinquecento*, in I. Lo Pane, ed., *Tra rendita e investimenti. Formazione e gestione dei grandi patrimoni in età moderna e contemporanea*, Bari, Cacucci, 1998, pp. 57-87.

⁴⁷ The comment made in the preceding note is valid here too: Cardinal Ippolito I, through his managers, directly headed his manufactories of woolen and silk cloth, while Sigismondo d’Este, the brother of Duke Ercole I, (and his heirs after him) held the monopoly on paper production, printing activities, and bookselling. These points are discussed further in my essay “Le saline di Comacchio nella prima metà del Cinquecento,” in F. Cecchini, ed., *Fratello Sale. Memorie e speranze della salina di Comacchio*, Bologna, Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1997, pp. 61-71.

All these people were the duke's dependents, but were not considered members of his court, and the same was true for the members of the courts of the duchess and the other princes and princesses of the blood. Although they did not enjoy the same political and social centrality as the ducal court, the other courts replicated on a smaller scale the same organizational, economic, and relational scheme, ensuring their members benefited from the same economic and fiscal regime as the duke's courtiers.

Sources and methodology

Having outlined the inclusive perimeters of the ducal and particular courts, it is worthwhile explaining in greater detail the meaning of the term *cortigiani immediate salariati*. The courtiers listed as *salariati di bolletta* and registered in the various *ruoli dei salariati di bolletta*,⁴⁸ enjoyed particular benefits, receiving a salary in cash and one in goods, which distinguished them sharply from the court dependents who were paid only with food rations, the so-called *bocche* (mouths).⁴⁹

I decided to concentrate on the *salariati di bolletta*, who represent almost all the courtiers. I made a prosopographic reconstruction of the composition, periods of permanent presence at court, pools from which they were drawn and procedures for cooptation, and dynamics of their careers within the court, for the 2,645 members, divided into six social groups, of the ten courts⁵⁰ of:

1) *Eleonora d'Aragona*, duchess and wife of Ercole I, married in 1473 and died in 1493, in which 235 individuals served, those already present in 1478 and hired up to 1494; the data is the result of the elaboration of records made in the years 1478, 1484, 1485, 1488, 1494.

2) *Anna Sforza*, princess and first wife of Alfonso I, married in 1491 and died in 1497, in which 59 individuals served, present in 1494; the data is the result of the elaboration of records made in the year 1494.

3) *Lucrezia Borgia*, princess, duchess and second wife of Alfonso I, married in 1501 and died in 1519, in which 236 individuals served, those already present in 1501 and hired up 1519; the data is the result of the elaboration of records made in the years 1501 (Guardaroba), 1502 (Guardaroba), 1503 (Guardaroba), 1504 (Guardaroba), 1505 (Guardaroba), 1506 (Guardaroba), 1508 (Guardaroba), 1514 (Memoriale), 1515 (Memoriale), 1517 (Memoriale), 1518 (Memoriale), 1519 (Memoriale).

4) *Laura Eustochia Dianti*, never entitled and third wife of Alfonso I, died in 1573, limited to the 23 courtiers who served in the period 1569-1573.

5) *Renée of Valois*, duchess and first wife of Ercole II, married in 1528 and died in 1575 but returned to France in 1560, in which 267 persons served, those already present in 1531 and hired up to 1560; the data is the result of the elaboration of records made in the years 1531, 1532, 1534, 1535, 1536, 1540, 1542, 1544, 1548, 1549, 1550, 1551, 1553, 1554, 1555, 1556, 1558, 1559, 1560.

6) 7) 8) *Alfonso II (1533-1597)*, first son of Ercole II and fifth duke of Ferrara from 1559, in which 1,656 persons served, those already present in 1555 and hired up to 1597; in this case the data comprises the courtiers of the princesses and the duchesses: Lucrezia Medici, married

⁴⁸ Beginning with the reign of Alfonso I, every prince and princess of the blood maintained his or her own independent payroll of salaried employees.

⁴⁹ In the ducal court, the position of *bocche* was held by some 25-30 pages, 20-30 *garzoni* and *garzoncelli* of the Camera Ducale, 120-150 among the servants of the lords and gentlemen, *garzoni* and relatives of the craftsmen and officials.

⁵⁰ All these data could be downloaded at www.guidoguerzoni.org/database/carriere.

1558 and died in 1561; Barbara d'Austria, married in 1565 and died in 1572; Margherita Gonzaga, married in 1569 and died in 1618. The data is the result of the elaboration of records made in the years 1555, 1556, 1558, 1559, 1560, 1562, 1563, 1564, 1565, 1567, 1568, 1569, 1574, 1576, 1578, 1582, 1583, 1585, 1588, 1589, 1590, 1592, 1594 (Spenderia 397 and Spisanti 78), 1596 (Spenderia 417 and Spisanti 80), 1597 (Antolini).

9) *Lucrezia d'Este (1535-1598)*, second daughter of Ercole II and Duchess of Urbino from 1570 (divorced in 1574), limited to the 65 courtiers mentioned in her will dated 1598.

10) *Marfisa d'Este (died 1608)*, second daughter of Francesco d'Este. In 1578 she married Alfonso, second son of don Alfonso Marchese di Montecchio and her cousin, who after four months of marriage died. 104 persons served in her court, those already present in 1585 and hired up to 1605; the data is the result of the elaboration of records made in the years 1585, 1586, 1588, 1589, 1590, 1591, 1592, 1598, 1602, 1603, 1604, 1605.

Data analysis

If compared with the dukes' and princes of blood courts, the first striking element is represented by the reduce scale: against the 350-450 courtiers maintained by the duke, the courts of the Duchesses⁵¹ were more contained: Eleonora d'Aragona and Lucrezia Borgia's were usually around 110-120 *bocche*, with high points of 140, while that of Renata of France "occupied one hundred sixtyseven persons and one hundred eighteen mules and horses",⁵² to which I must add stableboys and servants. The courts of the first two wives of Alfonso II, Lucrezia Medici and Barbara of Austria counted less than one hundred *bocche* each, as opposed to that of Margherita Gonzaga which had more than one hundred *bocche* in the early Ferrarese years, after which it dropped to around ninety.

Despite the contained numbers, these nuclei were entirely independent of those of the relative consorts. Already in the early 1400's the Marquis and the *marchexana* of Ferrara resided in separate spaces, each with his following, and conducting largely independent existences. On special occasions like festivals and banquets, intra-town contests, religious celebrations, and arrivals of important guests, the two *entourages* would join forces with other Este courts, but for the greater part of the time they were separate, and sometimes for months at a time.

The arrival in Ferrara in early Cinquecento of Lucrezia Borgia and Renata of France, facilitated the encounter, and sometimes collision, with distant realities and quite different cultures. But these relationships required frequent voyages, continual visiting and long periods of reunion with the homeland or native city, and increased the occasions for the individual's testing himself against different traditions and customs. The cases of Isabella d'Este marquess of Mantua, who could stay in Ferrara more than ten months to help her sister-in-law Lucrezia Borgia through her pregnancy and delivery, and the Duchess Eleonora d'Aragona, who in 1477 gave birth to her son Ferrante at Naples during a visit to her father's court, were not extraordinary events but rather the natural *pendant* of the whirling about of the respective consorts.

This the reason why the Duchesses' courts were in fact completely self sufficient, even though there were at least two characteristics that differed significantly between the consorts' courts. While the Duke's *entourage* was predominantly masculine,⁵³ the Duchesses' were equally divided in gender.

⁵¹ From an almost total lack of studies, I recommend the essay by Chemello A., *Donna di palazzo, moglie, cortigiana: ruoli e funzioni sociali della donna in alcuni trattati del Cinquecento*, in Prosperi A., a cura di, *La corte e il "Cortegiano"*, vol.II, "Un modello europeo", Roma, Bulzoni, 1980, pp.241-253.

⁵² Chiappini L., *Gli Este. Mille anni di storia*, Ferrara, Corbo Editore, 2001, p. 281.

⁵³ There were not more than 12-15 women: three or four washwomen, one or two *massare ai malati*, six or seven *massare ai servizi*, the sons' wet-nurses.

The roles and functions were symmetrical and only some positions were always attributed to males: the pages were male, as was the *compagno* of the Duchess, the *ufficiali di bocca* (cooks, *coppiari*, seneschals, *trincianti*, *imbanditori*) and those of the *guardaroba*, the accountants and administrators, some artisans (bakers, butchers, tailors, embroiderers), and the hands (porters and stable hands).

Nevertheless the female courts showed a greater cosmopolitanism, given to the remarkable homogeneity of geographical origin. Just as an example, of the 82 persons in Eleonora of Aragon's service between 1478 and 1484, 40 were not from places within the Duchy. They came from Albania (1), Bagnocavallo (1), Bologna (1), Caravaggio (6), Carpi (1), Como (2), Cortona (1), Este (1), Florence (2), Milan (3), Naples (7), Piacenza (1), Spain (1), Trento (1), Vicenza (1). Furthermore Renata maintained a French Court in the middle on nowhere, for more the 30 years.

The motive for this accentuated cosmopolitanism lies in the special nature in which feminine courts were formed. When marriages were contracted with foreign potentates, the Este princesses arrived at the fiancé's house accompanied by a large group of lords, ladies, gentlemen, and courtiers from Reggio, Modena, Carpi, and Ferrara. Just a glance at the list of followers of Isabelle or Beatrice reveals how many of the Duke's subjects were ready and willing to move to Mantua or Milan. At the end of the first year abroad, or sometimes after the second, the delicate phase of "acclimatization" of the new wife was considered complete and the followers could be partially let go. After the firings, a part of the original group would return home to the Este territories, and the others would remain with *madama*, thus establishing a strong Este colony. It is certainly not an accident that, in looking over the 1598 will of Lucrezia d'Este,⁵⁴ Duchess of Urbino, one finds many noblewomen from Ferrara among her ladies: the ladies Laura Montecuccoli, Isabella Laciosi, Anna, Barbara Cassandra, Lucia and Lucrezia Trotti, Ippolita Tedeschi, Ginevra Avogadri, Paola and Maddalena Canani, Agnese and Chiara Cappelli.

This practice was followed by all courts and it, with the added help of marriages contracted with local *élites*, aided and abetted the construction of Este networks in diverse Italian and foreign domains, and at the same time increased the already notably cosmopolitan character of Ferrara. In fact, in an exactly like manner the foreign consorts of the lords of the House of Este arrived in Ferrara with large followings, often more than 500 *bocche*, of ladies, lords, artisans and servants from their own territories. At the end of the first year in the capital, or sometimes slightly later, and after having negotiated the terms of the operation with the Duke or with the husband, the princesses chose which of the followers to let go. They could not sustain courts larger than consonant with their allowances, as any integration of income from private sources was indeed minimal. From this point of view it should be noted that the smaller the allowance the more difficult it was to integrate with the local *élite*, given also the pre-existence of understandable jealousies and rivalries, as is well illustrated in the tensions that marked the early relationships between Lucrezia Borgia's ladies and those of Ferrara. There was in fact the danger that compression of feminine courts into their smallest possible terms, motivated by the Dukes' and Princes' financial positions, might push the Duchesses to tie themselves even more exclusively and radically to their faithful origins and create separate enclaves, with distinct customs, languages, and clientele. This element explains the care with which the releasing of the followers and the negotiation of the annual allowance was treated, as its consistency varied relative to the wife's family's power. In 1493 the Duchess Eleonor of Aragon received 25,050 lire annually,⁵⁵ in 1512 and in 1513 Lucrezia Borgia received only 18.600,⁵⁶ compared to the 33.500 received annually up to 1555 by Renata of France, who, after the hiatus of 1558-9, during which her allowance dropped to 21.500, again received 38.250 in 1562, before her definitive return to France.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the heterogeneous origin of the courtiers was more stressed in feminine groups: it's remarkable the number of individuals who came from numerous Italian and foreign areas, with an

⁵⁴ In A.S.Fi, Ducato d'Urbino, Classe III, f. III, pp. 262 ff.

⁵⁵ And precisely 9,475 lire for herself, 8,000 lire for the *guardaroba* and 7,575 lire for her courtiers' salaries. In A.S.Mo., C.D.E., Significati, n.1, *Significati del 1493*, Deputazioni di spesa.

⁵⁶ In A.S.Mo., C.D.E., B.S., nos. 25-6.

⁵⁷ In A.S.Mo., C.D.E., B.S., nos. 44-67.

accentuated tendency to local specializations. There were cooks, *bottiglieri*, *trincianti*, and tailors from France, Flemish musicians, singers, tapestry-makers and painters, Swiss halabardiers and clock-makers, cavalrymen from Albania, Spanish servants, Jewish doctors and dance teachers, as well as black more and Muslim slaves. The same kind of composition existed within national groups: there were “colonies” from Emilia and Romagna, Lombardy, Piedmont, Liguria, the Veneto, Tuscany, Roma, Naples; each subdivided into “town groups” of Milanese, Pavese, Genoese, Ferrarese, Bolognese, and Venetian, just to cite some examples.

But the cosmopolitan character of the feminine courts was even more accentuated by the specific modalities of the formation of their *entourages*, as they were not formed by addition but rather by subtraction: the courts of Eleonore of Aragon and of Lucrezia Borgia boasted a remarkable presence of ladies, officials, Spanish, Neapolitan and Roman servants, and that of Renata of Valois “was a French court transplanted wholesale onto the plains of the Po”,⁵⁸ the *famiglie* of Anna Sforza and Margherita Gonzaga were Lombard colonies and Barbara of Austria’s seemed a little “German” island.

Nevertheless, careers were less steady: the duchesses courts were marriage clearing houses and the daughter remained few years in the same city; in this regard the formation of a new court followed precise patterns. In some cases, at about seven-eight years of age, sometimes a bit later, the young daughters had their own courts, when the young lords were sent to be pages in other Italian or foreign courts,⁵⁹ as happened in the late *Quattrocento* to Alfonso I and Ferrante, sent to Naples with a escort of Ferrarese courtiers chosen from among the oldest, calmest, and most expert. In these cases there was a progressive enlargement of the original circle which is very clear from the number of courtiers admitted from year to year to the *tavola* of the *principesse*. This period of communion in any case lasted only to the age of fourteen or fifteen, the age at which the princesses were married or promised and the princes finally given their own *famiglie*, of thirty to forty elements. At the beginning this group included the preceptor and chaplain, a group of noble companions, a master of the chamber with his valets, stable boys, pages and bodyguards, a seneschal with accompanying cook, *credenziere*, *bottigliere*, *coppiere* and *trinciante*. From year to year new officers were added, some fresh and some brought in from other courts, until a “normal” complement was reached (it varied according to the type of court): dukes ranged between 550 and 750 *bocche*, duchesses stayed between 80 and 160 depending on the case, cardinal courts numbered 150-300 elements, and cadet branches counted 50-200.

The growth of the “young” courts was in this way counterbalanced by the decrease in the “older” ones, created by moving some “veterans” from the old to the new circles and by not replacing deceased or transferred functionaries. The practice was facilitated by the fact that many courtiers were contemporaries of their *mater familiae*, having begun to serve them in youth and aged together. These remained active as long as they were capable: cases of firing or pensioning for old age were very rare and had only practical motivations such as the obvious inability to move continuously or sustain the work load. In these cases, the loss of the position was not followed by a sudden interruption of assistance, but was mitigated by medical care and furnishing of food rations, clothing and firewood which were regularly assigned to the *cortixani vechi* and to the widows of deceased servants, as can be seen in the *significati* from the early XVIth century.

The seriousness of these conditions is caused by the fact that female courtiers could not count on the continuity of generations in the way of male courts: not only the careers patterns were shorter, but they were riskier, has happened to the courtiers of deceased duchesses and princesses, who often suffered the same misfortunes visited on the women of the Este court. In fact Eleonora of Aragona, Anna Sforza, Lucrezia Borgia, Lucrezia Medici, Barbara d’Austria, Virginia de Medici and Isabella di Savoia all predeceased their husbands. These events almost always provoked the partial firing of members of their courts: it was necessary to “make way” quickly for the followers of princesses

⁵⁸ Chiappini L., *Gli Este*, op.cit., p.281.

⁵⁹ See the essay by De Maddalena A. and Romani M.A., *Vivre à côté du Roi; premières expériences et émotions de Louis Gonzaga à la Cour de France*, in AA.VV., *La France d’ancien régime. Etudes réunies an l’honneur de Pierre Goubert*, Toulouse, Privat, 1984, pp.15-30.

married the second or third time. In the cases of the duchess being widowed, as happened to Renata of Francia,⁶⁰ the allowances and personnel could be reduced because the court of the new duke's wife came to stand beside that of the duke's mother.

In order to react to this condition the patronage networks created and maintained by female courts were stricter, more focused on few ferrarese families, clients and suppliers. There were, then, dynasties of squires, equerries, gentlemen, doctors, herbalists, treasurers, book-keepers, craftsmen, stewards, counsellors, falconers, horsemen, collectors, treasurers, and so on. This phenomenon can be explained without recourse to traditional theories of the mercenary nature of court positions. It is possible that some people paid to be accepted at court, but the family nature of the selection mechanisms encouraged the employment of people who were already part of the Este power system. In this sense there were two converging desires at work. The courtiers were interested in sponsoring relatives or clients in order to strengthen their negotiating force and the influence of their own faction. The duchesses, on the other hand, supported the engagement of known elements, who were guaranteed by the knowledge of those introducing and recommending them. The secrets, dangers and interests of court life imposed absolute loyalty as the criterion for the selection and promotion of employees. It therefore seems logical that there was a willingness to keep to a minimum the number of outsiders within the customary circle of recruitment, giving preference to those already linked to people in service.

In such circumstances, court service did not come as just an option. It was, presumably, a duty that no one could refuse without seriously damaging his own family. Just for this reason, those who were in the duchesses's service remained the primary points of reference for familial and factional strategies. They could defend the positions acquired and ensure the enlargement of their sphere of influence, sponsor those they protected, strive to increase the strength of the coalitions to which they belonged, and struggle against those of competing factions. For these reasons they concentrated on establishing long-term relationships only with one court: the strategy was riskier, but the payoff higher.

⁶⁰ In truth, in Renata of France's case, the reduction of perquisites (decided by Ercole II and carried out for some years by his son Alfonso II) was part of a political plan which meant to keep certain openly reformistic individuals in the duchess' circle away from Ferrara: Calvin's sojourn in the spring of 1536, the repeated demonstrations of insufferance for Catholicism and proven acts of heresy of some of the members of the duchess' court, explain the tough and drastic measures taken by the Dukes.

Diplomatic and Cultural Partnerships in Early Modern Europe: Vittoria della Rovere and Cosimo III de' Medici*

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Introduction

At Florence and Siena, every wife goes abroad in the company of her husband, mother or aunt. All widows are known by their black habit, with wide sleeves...French modes are follow'd here; and it is the custom (used in a few places besides in Italy) to salute the ladies by pulling off hats when the men pass by them...

Philip Skippon, A Journey through part of the Low Countries, Germany, Italy and France, 1665

In 1661 Maria Vittoria Eleonora della Rovere (1622-1694), Grand Duchess of Tuscany, commissioned the delightful painting, *Amorino trionfante nel mare* (known as the *Medici Amorino*), from the internationally renowned Bolognese female artist, Elisabetta Sirani (1638-1665)¹. It was intended as a bridal gift for the marriage of her son Crown Prince Cosimo III de' Medici to Marguerite-Louise d'Orleans (1645-1714), grand-daughter of Marie de' Medici Queen Mother of France, and cousin to King Louis XVI. Strategic Medicean marital policy had forged a union between the young French princess and the crown Prince of Tuscany - symbolised by the iconography of Sirani's *Triumphant Cupid* who holds an oyster shell displaying the Medici coat of arms represented by 6 large "Margherita" Baroque pearls - cementing further these two ruling European dynasties, thereby ensuring continuing peace between the Grand Duchy and France (especially at a time when Spain was contesting the ascendancy of power in Europe). The oyster pearl was also Vittoria's own personal symbol, thus Sirani at the same time incorporated a reference to her matron, the bearer of the wedding gift². In this way, the young Bolognese artist diplomatically combined in one allegorical symbol an exotic visual reference to all three patrons: mother, son and daughter-in-law. In 1663, two years after this marriage between the young cousins, and soon after the French Princess had [reluctantly] established herself at the Florentine

¹ * This paper is part of an Australian Research Council (Discovery Project) funded interdisciplinary study of matronage and women's cultural networks, which I am undertaking in the School of Historical and European Studies, La Trobe University as Australian Postdoctoral Fellow (2008-2011). The project aims to add an important historical dimension to contemporary debates concerning social capital, female leadership and empowerment. In particular it addresses women's political influence and statecraft as expressed through their cultural activities and policies. It retrieves women's significant public engagement and community building in the realm of public taste: historical precedents show how female networks and agency contribute to the community and public sector. The project will analyse the display strategies and sites of female matronage/power: the "gendered spaces" these women adopted, created or negotiated for themselves through their matronage of art and architecture, social and religious institutions, cultural organisations, and their spiritual philanthropy. The archival research here presented was also made possible by the generous award of an Australian and European University Institute Fellowships Association Inc. Postdoctoral Fellowship (2008), in the Department of History and Civilization, EUI, Florence. I wish to thank my supervisor Prof. Giulia Calvi for inviting me to present my findings at this forum, and the staff at the EUI and Archivio di Stato di Firenze for their assistance during my residency. My thanks also to Natalie Tomas, Christina Strunck, Lisa Goldenberg Stoppato and Patrizia Urbani. All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

□ For this extremely talented and highly successful baroque artist, see A. MODESTI, *Elisabetta Sirani. Una Virtuosa del Seicento Bolognese*, Donne Nell'Arte I, Bologna, 2004 (for the *Medici Amorino* p. 27, fig.12). Documents relating to Vittoria's commission and other Sirani works for the Medici, have been published in A. MODESTI, "Patrons as Agents and Artists as Dealers in Seicento Bologna", in M. FANTONI, L. C. MATTHEW, and S. MATTHEWS-GRIECO (eds.), *The Art Market in Italy, 15th to 17th centuries*, Modena, 2003, p. 367-388; See also A. MAZZA, in *Tesori Ritrovati. La pittura del ducato estense nel collezionismo privato*, exhibition catalogue, Milan Editore, 1998; J. BENTINI, V. FORTUNATI (eds.), *Elisabetta Sirani "Pittrice Eroina" 1638-1665*, Ex. Cat., Bologna, 2004, p. 230-31, cat. n.84, with bibliography.

² For Sirani's witty use of allegorical references to her patrons in the works she painted for them, see A. MODESTI, *Elisabetta Sirani...cit.*, p. 22, 134-135.

court as the future grand duchess of Tuscany³, Vittoria began commissioning and importing French luxury goods through her agents and Medici ambassadors resident at the Paris court, for which she paid out of her personal independent finances⁴. These included portraits of illustrious personages for her son Cosimo: humanist books, political memoirs and genealogies of the French Royal family and court members to add to the Crown Princes' growing collection of tomes; as well as furnishings; clothing, fashion accessories and jewellery for herself, Medici court functionaries, family members and friends. Such artworks and luxury objects often served a ritualistic function as diplomatic gifts that circulated in the courts of Italy and Europe, aiding the establishment and/or consolidation of local and international political alliances, as well as constructing long-lasting affective relationships and friendships, especially amongst dynastic women.

In this paper I will show that in grand ducal Florence, with its inward looking mentality and *campanalismo*, the intelligent and "urbane" Vittoria della Rovere, Principessa di Urbino, looked beyond the Tuscan state to follow the latest trends that were influencing European design internationally. This newfound attitude, I should add, was partly in response to Marguerite Louise's consideration of Florence as a provincial backwater in comparison to the vibrant court of Louis XIV she had left behind, with the young French Princess refusing to dress in the Florentine manner or adopt Medici court customs⁵.

We know that the Vittoria della Rovere was a highly pious yet worldly and cultured woman: she learnt Latin, French and Spanish as a child, taught by the Agostinian padre Arsenio dell'Ascensione, after her grandmother Dowager Grand Duchess Cristina di Lorena appointed him language tutor to the young princess⁶. As ruler, Vittoria's personal qualities as a "politically astute", knowledgeable and generous benefactor are highlighted in two letters from the Ambassadors of Lucca in 1653 and 1665, writing that the grand duchess "is to the highest degree, devout, charitable, compassionate to the poor; has delicate manners; speaks with such eloquence as to make her listeners marvel; [and] has a total knowledge of history....The qualities of Her Most Serene Grand Duchess are humane and benign, but also most astute and politic; she considers every word from those she is treating and to all she corresponds with an appropriate reply, her dexterity and prudence keep her presently considered in total high esteem"⁷. Vittoria's erudition and modern literary taste can be gleaned from the texts in her private library, the only female Medici library for which we have extant documentation⁸: from hagiographies and lives of important historical figures such as Joan of Arc (*Pucelle d'Orleans*) to Philippe Le Moyne's

³ Marguerite-Louise became the reigning grand duchess at upon the death of Vittoria's consort, Grand Duke Ferdinand II in 1670.

⁴ See below, note 52

⁵ Chronicalists of the period continually noted her public appearances dressed "alla francese"; there is only one official portrait of her in Florentine dress (Sustermans, 16.); whilst the English visitor Philip Skippon wrote: "The prince (Cosimo) married *Margarita*, second daughter of the duke of *Orleans*. She is now in great discontent, and displeased with her husband and the court of Florence, because her French servants were sent away for their great insolencies. She never appears in publick without her mask on, and has scarce seen her husband this half year, who is also displeased at her nurse lying with her. When the duke of Crequi (the French ambassador, lately at Rome) was here, she desir'd a divorce, and repayment of her portion [dowry], which was 40,000 pistoles", P. SKIPPON, *A Journey through part of the Low Countries, Germany, Italy and France*, 1665, from extract on Florence, pp.642-643, published in P. BAROCCHI e G. GAETA BERTELÀ (eds.), *Collezionismo Mediceo e Storia Artistica, II: Il Cardinal Giovan Carlo, Maria Maddalena, Don Lorenzo, Ferdinando II, Vittoria della Rovere*, Florence, 2005, Doc. 136, p.1083-1084.

⁶ F. MARTELLI and C. GALASSO (eds.), *Istruzioni agli ambasciatori e inviati medicei in Spagna e nell' "Italia spagnola" (1536-1648): II 1587-1648*, Florence, 2007, p. 522, note 1. M.M. PAOLI, "Di madre in figlio: per una storia dell'educazione alla corte dei Medici", *Annali di Storia di Firenze*, III, 2008, p.65-145: 112. Padre Arsenio later became official *predicatore* to Grand Duchess Vittoria in 1637, with a salary of twenty scudi a month: F. MARTELLI, "Padre Arsenio dell'Ascensione. Un agostiniano scalzo alla corte di Cristina di Lorena", in G. CALVI and R. SPINELLI (eds.), *Le Donne Medici nel Sistema Europea delle Corti: XVI-XVIII secolo*, Florence, 2008, I, p. 100, and note 66.

⁷ Cited in G. PIERACCINI, *La stirpe de'Medici di Cafaggiolo: saggio di ricerche sulla trasmissione ereditaria dei caratteri biologici*, Florence, 1986, II, p. 507.

⁸ See M.M. PAOLI, "Di madre in figlio" ...cit., p. 114-116

famous *Gallerie de Femmes Fortes*, and the political memoirs of leading statesmen, such as those of Cardinal Richelieu (1650), a new edition of which, “pochi mesi sono, qui ristampato...in tre volumi” bound in “Vitello pulito con filetto d'oro” and costing 50 Francs, the Grand Duchess ordered straight off the Royal Press from her agent the Abbé Filippo Marucelli in Paris in December 1664⁹.

During her long lifetime, spent between Florence, Siena, Livorno, Pisa, the Medici villas at Poggio Imperiale and Artimino, and the Villa Imperiale at Pesaro¹⁰, Vittoria was extremely active as a matron of the arts, especially supporting female cultural production¹¹. As Grand Duchess, Vittoria was the “protettrice” of a number of confraternities, female congregations (Le Montalve) A. MODESTI, *Elisabetta Sirani. Una Virtuosa del Seicento Bolognese*, Donne Nell'Arte I, Bologna, 2004 (for the *Medici Amorino* p. 27, fig.12). Documents relating to Vittoria's commission and other Sirani works for the Medici, have been published in A. MODESTI, “Patrons as Agents and Artists as Dealers in Snd convents, as well as patroness of literary academies, including the all female *Le Assicurate* in Siena (1654)¹², which she referred to as “La nostra Accademia” and “la mia Accademia Muliebre” in autograph letters to her brother-in-law Cardinal Prince Leopoldo de Medici¹³. Furthermore Vittoria, imparted her deep religiosity, learned culture and aesthetic tastes onto her family and the Medici court. Following an established matrilineal tradition, and against the wishes of her husband grand Duke Ferdinand II, the Grand Duchess took independent charge of the education and cultural formation of her sons, Cosimo and the much younger Francesco Maria¹⁴. Vittoria also exercised considerable influence on the cultural and diplomatic patronage of the future Grand Duke, such as his preference for the court artist Carlo Dolci.

“Sua infocata devotione”: Vittoria della Rovere and the Reliquary Chapel of Santa Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi Nobile Fiorentina.

This was the case when as widow, the dowager Grand Duchess played a not insignificant role in the refurbishment of the Chapel of Santa Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi (1566-1607), which has yet to be examined by cultural historians. The Carmelite Convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli in Florence, with

⁹ Archivio di Stato di Firenze (hereafter ASF), Mediceo del Principato (hereafter MdP) 6186, letters from Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris 12 December 1664, 23 Jan 1665

¹⁰ “...in questa reale villa fu molto delizia alla Serenissima granduchessa Vittoria della Rovere...” (M. ORETTI, ms B290, c. 229r, BCABO, see C. Prete, “Il Patrimonio Artistica Privato Marchigiano nelle carte di Marcello Oretti, in F. CAZZOLA and R. VARESI (eds.), *Cultura nell'età delle Legazioni*, Florence, 2005, p. 725-726). Located a few miles from Pesaro, the villa was built and decorated in the 16th by one of Vittoria's female ancestors, Eleonora Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, as a gift for her consort Duke Francesco Maria I della Rovere. See C.E. KING, “Architecture, Gender and Politics: the Villa Imperiale at Pesaro”, *Art History*, 29 (5), 2006, p. 796-826. On Urbino's female rulers see M. BONVINI MAZZANTI, “Contesse e Duchesse d'Urbino: Politica e Potere”, and E. TOSI BRANDI, “La moda e il potere femminile nelle corti rinascimentali tra Urbino e Mantova”, in A. GIALLONGO (ed.), *Donne di Palazzo nelle corti europee: tracce e forme di potere dell'età moderna*, Milan, 2005, p. 133-156, 183-189.

¹¹ For example, Elisabetta Sirani, Arcangela Tarabotti, Giovanna Garzoni, Margherita Caffi, Camilla Guerrieri Nati, and Giovanna Fratellini.

¹² S. MALSCALCHI, “Vittoria della Rovere”, in J. TURNER (ed.), *Grove Dictionary of Art*, New York, 2000, vol. 21, p. 28. Vittoria's female academy was an off-shoot of the Siense literary academy of the Intronati: M. MAYLENDER, *Storie delle Accademie Italiane*, Bologna, 1926, I, p. 366

¹³ ASF, MdP 6145: *Lettere della granduchessa Vittoria ai cardinali Giovan Carlo e Leopoldo de Medici 1643-1673*: Pisa 29 January 1668: “La Nostra accademia...per tre sere è stata migliorata dal buon modo di sonare del Cappellini...”; Artimino, 3 April 1668: “...ho fatto in San Nicola gli Ofizzi dove anno cantato la mia accademia le lezioni et i Misereri...”; Pisa?, pre 1667?: “...la mia Accademia Muliebre si chiamerebbe FAVORITA se Vostra Altezza gli mandassi qualche canzone per la Luisa [her grand-daughter, the future Electress Palatine] la quale forza di voce potrà avere a paragone con quelli che Vostra Altezza à sentito et se la canzone fusse non Amoroza sarebbe il favore maggiore”. This filze unfortunately is unpaginated, unnumbered, with many letters undated.

¹⁴ On the role of the Medici grand duchesses in the education of their children, see M.M. PAOLI, “Di madre in figlio”...cit., and p. 116-119 for Cosimo III's education.

its famed reliquary chapel dedicated to the newly sanctified Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, in Borgo Pinti, was just one of many female monasteries Vittoria sponsored during her 57 year reign as grand duchess. Whilst her son Grand Duke Cosimo III's patronage of this chapel has received substantial scholarly attention, Vittoria's involvement in the 1679-1685 decorative program and its liturgical function has been largely overlooked¹⁵. Even less known is Vittoria della Rovere's particular devotion to the Cult of Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi, which quickly developed in Florence after her death in May 1607 leading to beatification in 1626 (Urban VIII), and then Santification (1669, Clement IX). Nor has the Grand Duchess' role in Pazzi's canonisation process been acknowledged, though recently it was noted that the Granduchess was quite an "estimatrice" of the saint, but without elaboration¹⁶.

The convent *Ricordi* and contemporary memorials, in fact, reveal that Vittoria networked with the Carmelite nuns "le buone religiose" on their Pazzi project, with a number of aristocratic Florentine families in the years prior to the inauguration of the new chapel. These wealthy patriciates included not only Saint's own noble family, but also the Rucellai, Albizzi, Cantucci, Riccardi, and Della Gherardesca¹⁷. Together they were involved in gaining financial support and gifts for the gold and silver decoration, the expensive reliquies¹⁸, and the necessary liturgical accessories, vestments and church *adobbe* (furnishings) made of rich fabrics like silk, damask and taffeta, required for the elaborate ceremony planned for the saint's glorification¹⁹. Vittoria, in particular, was responsible for the manufacture of the sumptuous "Strato" (tapestry) that was to adorn the "Altar Maggiore". Given Vittoria's deep spirituality combined with an epicurean taste for and expert knowledge of the applied arts and other precious objects, gemstones and fabrics (as shall be examined in the following section), combined with her financial possibilities, the Grand Duchess was more than qualified for such an honoured assignment.

These sacred reliquaries included Maddalena's preserved uncorrupt body, encased in the "Santo Sacello" to be displayed on a marble plinth at the chapel's main altar, as related in Jacopo Lapini's manuscript *Descrizione della nobile e riguardevole Cappella della Gloriosa Santa Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi Carmelitana di Firenze, dove di presente riposano le di Lei Sante Reliquie, divisa in due parti*. This document contains detailed descriptions of the chapel's reliquies and extensive decorations, along with the receipts of payments made by the "Reverende Monache degli Angioli" over the many years to the various artisans and artists, and a series of letters in the Florentine State Archives (MdP 3948) between Medici agent Paolo Falconieri and the Canonico Appollonio Bassetti, Cosimo's secretary, in late 1682, discussing payment for Ciro Ferri's altarpiece, in which Ferri is assured that the commission "era delle Monache non del Padrone Serenissimo", that is from the Carmelite nuns and not from Cosimo III²⁰. Falconieri had in fact met with the convent *madri* after his return from Rome in March 1675,

¹⁵ See, for example, the otherwise excellent series of articles by Piero Pacini, especially P. PACINI, "L'oro e i simboli della fede per la glorificazione di Santa Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi", *Mitt. Ksthist. Inst. Florenz*, xlix, 2005, p. 155-215, where Cosimo III is described as the Carmelite nun's "principale sostenitore", and his patronage of the chapel discussed within the text (p. 158-166), with only passing reference to Vittoria's role in a footnote (note 29). Related documents have been published in E.L. GOLDBERG, *Patterns in Late Medici Patronage*, Princeton, 1983, p. 191-226; and for an iconographical analysis of the artistic decorative program in relation to Pazzi's spiritual ideas and devotional writings, see K.-E. BARZMAN, "Devotion and Desire, the reliquary chapel of Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi", *Art History*, 15, 1992, p. 171-196.

¹⁶ P. PACINI (ed.), *Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi: santa dell'amore non amato*, Ex. Cat., Florence, 2007, p. 106.

¹⁷ Again it is Pacini who refers to the patronage of these Florentine elites, but only in association with Grand Duke Cosimo III. P. PACINI (ed.), *Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi...cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁸ See L. CASPRINI GENTILE, "Vestigia Memoriae: le reliquie di Santa Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi", in P. PACINI (ed.), *Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi...cit.*, p. 172-182.

¹⁹ Archive of the Convent of the Carmelitane di Santa Maria degli Angioli, Florence (hereafter AMC), *Ricordi del Giornale "S, 1682-1693*, referred to by P. PACINI, "L'oro e I simboli della fede" ... cit., p. 166, note 29.

²⁰ J. LAPINI, *Descrizione della nobile e riguardevole Cappella della Gloriosa Santa Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi Carmelitana di Firenze, dove di presente riposano le di Lei Sante Reliquie, divisa in due parti*, especially Cap. 14: *Del Santo Sacello dove riposa l'incorotto Corpo della Verginella Gloriosa S. Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi*, AMC, ms, f.103;

negotiating over the following years the role to be played by the Roman artist, as Edward Goldberg has discussed²¹. Related correspondence also examined by Goldberg, confirms the Carmelite nuns' ultimate responsibility for the project.

Whilst acknowledging Cosimo's "profound personal interest" in the Pazzi chapel's "lavish rebuilding", Goldberg concludes that the Grand Duke's specific role was "ambiguous", being one of "protection" and leaning towards supervision of the artistic decoration, as Piero Pacini has indeed since shown, with the expensive material costs of the architectural work in marble, *pietre dure*, silver and gold, largely being "met by private donations"²². That is, by the Florentine nobility together with Vittoria della Rovere with whom the Carmelite nuns networked to raise the necessary thousands of *scudi* over the years through regular offerings ("*oblazioni*") to the "buone madre"²³, as confirmed in the convent records. After six years of protracted negotiations and building works, the *traslazione* of Pazzi's body and relics to the new chapel at Borgo Pinti finally took place on the saint's feast day 25th May 1685²⁴, with her body displayed for "public veneration" during the three-day festivities, fulfilling the "focosa" desire Vittoria had publicly fostered for many years to see the local cult which had developed soon after the visionary's death, spread to embrace all Catholic devotees.

Female patronage of Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi *Nobile Fiorentina* continued into the following century. When the Carmelite Convent of Santa Maria degli Angeli moved once again many years later, to its present site at Careggi, the saint's body and relics also had to be transferred. The *traslazione* took place on 22 May 1705, with the ceremony including the Madre Priore of the new convent handing a crown to the then "Serenissima", Grand Duchess Violante di Bavaria, to place on Maddalena's head. In 1716 the saint's urn was elaborately refurbished, in honour of the miraculous salvation of suor Angiola Teresa Cantucci, her family generously providing for a new bronze base by the Florentine court sculptor Massimiliano Soldani, with Princess Maria Anna di Savoia also donating 150 *scudi*, and the Elettrice Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici a further 571.3 lire, for its "doratura"²⁵. It was at this time that another edition of Padre Luigi Puccini's *Vita di Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi* was published in Lucca dedicated to the Electress Palatine²⁶, who in 1731 also donated to the Carmelite nuns forty-six prints by the Dutch artist Theodor ver Cryus²⁷. These depicted the "teatro sacro" that had been created in the Cappella Maggiore and through the Carmelite church in Borgo Pinti, during the lavish 8-day festivities held in Florentine in June 1669 to celebrate Maddalena's recent canonization in Rome on 28 April, planned by the nuns and Madre Superiore, Maria Minima degli Strozzi, and sponsored by a

(Contd.) _____

letters of Paolo Falconieri and Canonico Bassetti, ASF, MdP 3948 (1682). These documents have been published as an Appendix by P. PACINI, "L'oro e i simboli della fede"... cit., p. 199-206, though they are not considered from this gendered perspective.

²¹ The Madre Superiore together with the Priore were also consulted when Falconieri sent the plans of Ferri's *modello* for the chapel from Rome. See E.L. GOLDBERG, *Patterns in Late Medici Patronage*, Princeton, 1983, p. 195-197.

²² IBID., p. 192, 218, 360, note 45.

²³ See letter from Bassetti to Falconieri, dated Florence 1 September 1682 in IBID., p. 216, 383, note 158.

²⁴ The full decoration for the chapel, however, took another fifteen years to complete, as pointed out by Goldberg (IBID. p. 224).

²⁵ P. PACINI, "L'oro e i simboli della fede"... cit., p. 182

²⁶ *Vita, e Ratti di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi Nobile Fiorentina, Monaca nel Monastero di S.Maria degli Angeli di Firenze, di nuovo ristampata...dedicata all'Altezza Elettorale della Serenissima Principessa Anna Maria Luisa di Toscana...*, Lucca, 1716. See Libro n.4 in P. PACINI, "L'oro e i simboli della fede"... cit., p. 186.

²⁷ ASF, Depositeria Generale 463, 12 luglio 1731. For Ver Cryus' print of the Chapel's "ALTAR MAGGIORE" see P. PACINI (ed.), *Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi*...cit. p.34, where the Florentine 1669 celebrations are described. Vittoria's role is not discussed.

number of Florence's elite families, together with the Pazzi and members of the Medici court, whom the nuns had gathered together in order to render due honour to their new Saint²⁸.

The ephemeral church decorations for this spectacular event had been entirely designed by Medici court artist, the Florentine Baldassare Franceschini (Il Volterrano), whose extant drawings would have informed ver Cryus' later etchings. Il Volterrano, who also frescoed the lunettes of the Carmelite church with episodes from Pazzi's life for the occasion, may have received this commission from Vittoria della Rovere, whom we now know provided some of the funds for the Florentine festivities. In an unpublished letter from Vittoria to the Padre Generale of the Carmine in Florence, dated 2 October 1668, the Grand Duchess expresses her wish to personally contribute to the costs of said celebrations, declaring her "*buon'animo per professarmi non ordinariamente devota di sì gran Santa...*"²⁹. This, it should be noted, was around the same time that the Carmelite nuns had started to implement their plans³⁰. During the festivities Vittoria, together with her family, Grand Duke Ferdinand, Cardinal Leopoldo, and Princess Marguerite Louise, followed by a "splendid and noble retinue", visited the church every day to pay their respects to the Saint, whilst after the final Mass was celebrated with great ceremony by "eight choirs of musicians" presided over by the Florentine Arciprete Soldani, the Grand Duchess Vittoria, accompanied by her daughter-in-law and their court ladies, "assisted at Vespers from the Tribune"³¹.

Vittoria della Rovere's grand-daughter, the Elettrice Anna Maria Luisa's early C18th *dono*, in fact culminated a long tradition of Medici patronage and generational female devotion to the saint in Florence. Medici devotion of the Beata and later Santa Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi, had been particularly evident in the Florentine court's women³², including Marie de'Medici with whom Maddalena corresponded³³, Grand Duchess Cristina di Lorena, who also would have known the Carmelite visionary personally, and later Archduchess Maria Maddalena d'Austria, who played an important role in her name sake's 1626 beatification, a precondition for sainthood. Inspired by her own mother-in-law's efforts, Vittoria took it upon herself to continue this matrilineal family tradition, actively promoting the Beata Maddalena's cult. Most significantly, the Grand Duchess enthusiastically and tirelessly petitioned for Pazzi's canonization, with letters and *suppliche* to Pope Alexander VII (d.1667), in order to expedite the process, in which she prayed the pontiff "*di muoversi col suo solito paterno zelo a consolare il Cattolichismo nella pubblica aspettativa di veder esposta all'adorazione il corpo gloriosa di sì gran Serva di Dio e remunerati in terra non meno che in cielo gl'eccelsi meriti suoi mediante l'onorarla condegnamente dell'attributo di Santa*"³⁴. In a *Memoriale* for Vittoria's secretary Alessandro de'Cerchi accompanying the above letter of July 1664, we find written: "Havendo la Serenissima Gran Duchessa altra volta supplicato Sua Santità per la Canonizatione della Beata Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi Fiorentina ed essendo già trasmesso il Processo à Roma alla Sacra Congregatione de Riti è aperto la medesima

²⁸ Based on contemporary *memorie*, the celebrations and spectacular decorations for this magnificently staged event are described in P. FABRINI and A. ISOLARI (trans.), *The Life of St. Mary Magdalen De-Pazzi, Florentine Noble Sacred Carmelite Virgin compiled by the Rev. Placido Fabrini*, Philadelphia, 1900, p. 307-329

²⁹ ASF, MdP 6175, *Minute di lettere alla Serenissima Granduchessa Vittoria della Rovere dal 1667 al 1669*. Since the presentation of this paper, I have uncovered further archival evidence of Vittoria's devotion to Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, and her active involvement in the saint's canonization process, delivered in a revised paper at the RSA Annual Meeting, LA, March 19, 2009 (session: *Women's Political partnerships in early modern Italy II: Ducal Florence and Bologna*), where I was able to discuss my thesis with Karen-Edis Barzman, author of an important study on the Pazzi reliquary chapel (see above note 15).

³⁰ P. PACINI (ed.), *Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi...*cit. p. 42

³¹ P.FABRINI and A.ISOLARI (trans.), *The Life of St. Mary Magdalen De-Pazzi...*cit., p. 327-329.

³² As revealed by K-E. BARZMAN, "Devotion and Desire "...cit., p. 192, note 8, citing Balducci (1681)

³³ See P.FABRINI and A.ISOLARI (trans.), *Life of St. Mary Magdalen De-Pazzi...*cit., p. 162-163, 330-331. The first edition (1609) of Padre Vincenzo Puccini's *Vita di Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi* was also dedicated to Queen Maria de Medici.

³⁴ ASF, MdP 6174, *Minuti di Lettere della Gran Duchessa Vittoria della Rovere, 1664-1666*: letter dated Florence, 4 July 1664 (unpaginated, unnumbered).

Seremissima Altezza reiterà le suppliche à fine che Sua Santità si degni, con occhio benigno, e sollecito riminar simil causa, acciò quanto questa si veda esposta al adoratione del Mondo Cattolico la gloria di detta Beata, e honorati i di lei meriti con l'attributo di Santa. Honori Vostra Signoria Illustrissima ricordarci che lei è tutta la sua Casa à devota della Religione, e *pò distinguere nella lettera parte della sua infocata devotione*" (my emphasis)³⁵. The Grand Duchess and Gran Duke's formal petitions representing the Tuscan state ("instantiæ pro Canonizat. S. Mariæ Magdal."), furthermore, were presented in the Saint's published canonization act, with the Medici "insignia" displayed on the *sacro tempietto* and throughout the Roman basilica's decorations during Pope Clement's official ceremony at St Peter's on April 28, 1669³⁶.

The Grand Duchess had already commemorated her "passionate devotion" to the Carmelite visionary by having her portrait included in a painting by Carlo Dolci, her favourite religious painter, who depicted Vittoria as the Samaritan woman at the well being blessed by Christ in the presence of a kneeling image of the Beata Carmelite Maddalena de' Pazzi³⁷. Vittoria would have been well aware of the spiritual writings and many documented visions of the Florentine mystic visionary³⁸. Pazzi's reformatory religious ideas as well as her accounts of her ecstatic unions with Christ, would have resonated with Vittoria's own deep spirituality. In these mystical visions, as recorded in Puccini's *Vita*, Maddalena often commented on the stories from the New and Old Testaments, providing an intellectual exegesis of particular passages and events. Especially relevant for the painting under discussion, is that which recounts the Samaritan's encounter with Christ at the well, in which the water collected by the Samaritan is equated by Pazzi with Christ's saving blood, shed during his Passion and Crucifixion³⁹.

Vittoria's identification with la Samaritana "who led her people to God", and holds out the ewer towards Christ who blesses its contents, thus equates the Grand Duchess with the saving Grace of both Christ and his earthly servant, Maddalena, via whom the faithful can attain eternal salvation through the veneration of the Saint's body presented unto them. Vittoria's role in interceding on the Tuscan people's behalf, and facilitating Pazzi's canonization, thus parallels the Saint's intercessory role as "Serva di Dio" and earthly conduit to Divine Eternity, as the above cited letter to Pope Alexander hints, which Vittoria

³⁵ IBID.

³⁶ See *Acta Canonizationis Sanctorum Petri de Alcantara et Mariæ Magdalena de Pazzis. S.S.D.N. Clementi IX Pont. Max. Domenico Cappellus D.D.C.*, Rome 1669, p. 59, 89, 275, 281

³⁷ Carlo Dolci, *La Samaritana e Cristo al Pozzo con Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi*, c. 1650, oil on canvas, 85x70 cms, private collection Florence, reproduced and discussed in F. BALDASSARI, *Carlo Dolci*, Turin, 1995, p.187-188.

³⁸ The Grand Duchess may have known about these via Pazzi's own manuscript writings (eg. *Libro della Rivelatione e Intelligentie*), but certainly from the saint's biography first published in 1609 by Padre Vincenzo Puccini, Maddalena's confessor, which recall her visions and ecstatic utterances and which appeared in five editions before her 1669 canonisation, as well as through the abundant visual art and print culture of the period from 1620s, which generated and circulated images of the saint and her visions widely throughout Florence and Tuscany. For example, the large series of drawings depicting *Vita della Santa Madre* by Francesco Curradi donated by the artist to the Carmelite nuns in the 1610s, which were later etched and presented to Archduchess Maria Maddalena d'Austria, and which Vittoria would have inherited via Ferdinand. For these, see P. PACINI, "La creazione e la diffusione delle immagini di Maria Maddalena de'Pazzi", in P. PACINI (ed.), *Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi...cit.*, p. 35-48, illustrated p. 18-19.

³⁹ "Stava un'altra volta con divoto affetto assorta a pensare alle pene del suo Gesù, e si rappresentò in estasi alla sua vista il suo Sposo Crocifisso sul monte Calvario, e dopo proferite alcune parole, che non furono intese, disse: *Venit Jesus civitatem Samarie, quae dicit Sicar, juxta proedum, quot dedit Jacob, Joseph filio suo: erat autem ibi fons Jacob, Jesus ergo fatigatus ex itinere sedebat sic supra fontem; hora erat quasi sexta(...)* Ora si vuol riposar Gesù sulla croce per fare a noi fonte (...) Alla Samaritana sedeva sopra il fonte per darle l'acqua della grazia; ma noi salendo sulla croce si fa acqua di fonte e di Sangue per purificarci: l'acqua scende, così la grazia scende da lui fonte vivo nell'anime nostre: ma prima il sangue ci purifica (...) Disse alla Samaritana, che beverà dell'acqua, ch'io le darò: *Fiet in eo fons aquae salientis in vitum aeternam (...)* La Samaritana condusse i popoli della sua città a Dio (...) La Samaritana ebbe di più, che non dimandò, chiese acqua, ed ebbe la sua grazia. Così dà Gesù all'anima sempre più, che non dimanda...". From Puccini's 1893 edition of Maddalena's *Vita*, II, chapter XIII, cited in P. PACINI (ed.), *Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi...cit.* p. 106. For an English translation see P. FABRINI and A. ISOLARI (trans.), *Life of St. Mary Magdalen De-Pazzi...cit.*, chapter XXII, p. 387.

concludes with “*Universali saran le lodi, e le benedizioni, che ne verran sempre date al Santità Vostra*”⁴⁰.

Vittoria’s and Cosimo’s patronage of the new Reliquary Chapel of 1685 did not, however, initiate without some potential difficulties and possible rivalry. The patronage rights over the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli were in fact held by the powerful Roman Barberini family, with whom the Medici were already in strained relations over the ceding of the della Rovere Duchy of Urbino to Pope Urban (Barberini) in 1631, and then his taking of Castro⁴¹. The pope’s brother, Cardinal Francesco Barberini, had assisted in the Carmelite convent’s search for a new site in 1628, with Urban VIII confirming Maria Maddalena’s beatification in 1629. Years later, in 1637, his sister-in-law, Donna Costanza Magalotti, whose daughters Camilla and Clarice had entered the Florentine convent, donated to the Carmelite nuns a series of precious gifts for their Oratorio, including a number of Roman paintings dedicated to the saint, as a sign of the Barberini family’s spiritual and economic support of their community’s transfer to the larger monastery complex at Borgo Pinti, where the Barberini arms graced the new church facade⁴². Vittoria and her son thus needed the Cardinal’s collaboration in order to proceed with Medici patronage of the chapel’s later refurbishment. Fortunately, Barberini did not prove to be resistant, with Bassetti reporting to the Grand Duke that he requested only that some vestige of his family’s association with the Carmelite convent remain. The Medici obliged by moving the Barberini *stemma* to the church’s inside wall⁴³.

For their part, in thanks for Medici patronage of the Pazzi Reliquary Chapel, Grand Duchess Vittoria and Grand Duke Cosimo, together with other members of their family, themselves received “donazioni” of the saint’s relics and memorabilia from the Carmelite nuns on the occasion of the 1685 inauguration, in a highly orchestrated ritual that culminated the religious festivities. The Grand Duchess, after already having taken central stage during the *traslazione* ceremony, in which she “distinguished herself by removing from the head of the Saint the old crown, keeping it as a pledge of celestial favour and replacing it with her own hands by the gift of a new one set with the most precious gems”⁴⁴, was presented with a painting by Maria Maddalena de’Pazzi depicting Christ carrying the cross seated on a flaming red heart, signifying the saint’s special devotion and appreciation of God’s sacrifice. The nuns also presented other paintings by Maddalena’s hand to Vittoria’s youngest son Prince Francesco Maria, and her grand-children (Cosimo and Marguerite-Louise’s children), Princes Ferdinand and Gian Gastone, whilst Princess Anna Maria Luisa, the future Elettrice then 18 years old, was given, amongst other reliquaries, a ceramic plate which the saint had used during her last years of illness, when confined to the convent infirmary⁴⁵. Such ritualistic exchange of *doni* thus operated within a reciprocal symbolic economy, reinvesting Santa Maria degli Angeli and its female religious with a Florentine Medicean identity.

As this discussion has attempted to illustrate, the Medici refurbishment of the Pazzi Reliquary chapel and its decorative program, together with the many celebratory and liturgical rituals organised by the Carmelite nuns that were staged in their church in honour of *la santa* over the years, suggest that traditional patronage studies that focus on the male protagonist as sole, or most significant, patron of a project, run the risk of losing sight of the fuller picture, with its complex interweaving relationships,

⁴⁰ And I should add which the Grand Duchess shall also receive, as such visual memorials as this painting would ensure that Vittoria’s patronage of the Florentine saint would remain etched in the popular imagination.

⁴¹ The choice of the Roman artist Ciro Ferri to design and decorate the new reliquary chapel is telling here.

⁴² P. PACINI (ed.), *Maria Maddalena de’ Pazzi...cit.*, p. 41-42

⁴³ E.L. GOLDBERG, *Patterns...cit.*, p. 191-192

⁴⁴ Most probably designed and commissioned by Vittoria her self: see discussion in following section. The description is from P. FABRINI and A. ISOLARI (trans.), *The Life of St. Mary Magdalen De-Pazzi...cit.*, p. 329.

⁴⁵ See L. CASPRINI GENTILE, “Vestigia Memoriae”...cit. p.174-175, with illustrations of the numerous saint’s relics still at the Carmelite convent, and reliquaries that were donated to over the course of the C17th, or manufactured by the nuns for the various celebrations held in Florence honouring Pazzi over the years.

interactions and networks across the social spectrum and gender divide. The comparative examination of a project in which both male and female family members were involved enables us to determine the impact of gender in creating alternative patronage networks and systems, and to identify the gendered cultural practices not only of early modern political leaders, but also of their citizens. It suggests that the Medici family, men and women, over generations, successfully practiced a collaborative form of patronage, that if examined contextually from the perspective of all its agents, also takes into account the significant role of those participants, who till now, have been considered marginal to the entire process.

In this particular case, Cosimo III did not act independently. The commission was instigated by the Carmelite abbess and convent nuns in collaboration with his mother Vittoria, the dowager Grand Duchess also mediating with a larger network of noblewomen and their families to generate funds and acquire the expensive materials. This collaboration embraced Vittoria's son the Grand Duke, who undertook the supervision of and responsibility for other aspects of the artistic program. Furthermore, the 1685 glorification of the saint, for which the refurbishment of the chapel was planned, and in which the Grand Duchess took such a central part, was a fitting *finale* to the Medici women's personal devotion to the local saint, and symbol of the efficacious agency of both Archduchess Maria Maddalena and Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere in their dedicated efforts over the years to materialise their citizens' collective worship. In this enduring collaborative process the Carmelite nuns, and all members of the Medici family, benefited by working towards a common goal, the consolidation of grand ducal Florence's civic identity combined with the enrichment of the local religious community, through the public celebration and commemoration of one of the city's spiritual heroines.

“Oltralpe o per mare”: From France to Florence, Vittoria della Rovere as Transnational Medici Cultural Agent

her secretaries and international agents I hope to highlight female agency in both the public and private sphere, and the gendered nature of cultural exchange and diplomatic networks. I will argue that, just as in the Pazzi chapel redecorations, Vittoria acted as cultural broker and “arbiter of taste”, as she indeed wished to be remembered⁴⁶, not only for her son Cosimo, but for the wider Medici family and court, their friends and associates.

The previously unpublished correspondence between Vittoria and her agents in France, the Abbot Giovanni Filippo Marucelli, Medicean ambassador, resident at the French court from 1661 to 1666⁴⁷, and Antonio Vacchelli⁴⁸, via the Grand Duchess' personal secretary in Florence, Senator Cavalier Alessandro de' Cerchi⁴⁹, reveals the highly mediated, intricate, and sometimes precarious nature of the prolonged process involved in trans-national cultural transfers of such luxury goods, and highlights the increasing influence of French trends and taste on Florentine design in the middle of the Seventeenth century. A long series of letters were exchanged between Florence and Paris (and sometimes Fontainebleau, Lyons, Livorno, and Turin) from 1663 to 1666⁵⁰, as Vittoria was kept informed

⁴⁶ See Epilogue below.

⁴⁷ M. DEL PIAZZO, *Gli Ambasciatori toscani del Principato (1537-1737)*, Rome, 1953, p. 70. Marucelli also served as Grand Duke Ferdinand's personal secretary in 1662, and later became Florentine Head Secretary of State from 1670-80, as noted in the Medici Court Rolls: ASF, Manoscritti 321, *Cariche d'Onore Concesse da S.Ser:mi G.G.DVCHI Tomo Secondo che contiene l'Arrolati della Corte B*, c. 680.

⁴⁸ I have not yet been able to find any other record of Vacchelli in the Medici documents or literature, whose name only appears in these letters.

⁴⁹ Listed in the Medici Court Rolls as Secretary to Vittoria in 1675, for whom he worked from at least 1663, after having been one of Ferdinand's personal secretaries in 1662, ASF, Manoscritti 321, c. 680, 735.

⁵⁰ Over 100 of these letters have so far been examined (January 1664 to December 1665) in ASF, MdP 6168, n°3: *Lettere scritte al Sig^{re} Sen^{re} Cerchi Seg^{rio} della Ser:^a Gran Duchessa Vittoria da 2 jennaio 1663 (ab inc^e)*

of the efforts made by both Marucelli and Vachelli, through their own local contacts and intermediaries, such as Monsieur Mendet in Lyons, to locate and procure, or to supervise the manufacture and production of, the specific art objects, books and diverse luxury items, clothing and accessories desired by the Grand Duchess, Cosimo and the Medici family, and their circle of friends and political associates⁵¹.

These letters, together with Medici account books and inventories of Vittoria's *Guardaroba*, especially reveal the range of highly fashionable luxury objects as well consumer goods and domestic necessities that the grand Duchess considered to be indispensable at the sumptuous female court she had established in her villa at Poggio Imperiale, in the Florentine hills, and at the family's city residence in Florence, Palazzo Pitti. There were furnishings and manchester sets ("perrucca per il letto") of damask, velvet, taffeta, silk and linen to adorn Vittoria's beds, private apartments and chapels at both Poggio and the Pitti, as well as those of her family and ladies-in-waiting, all furnished by the Grand Duchess at her own expense, as revealed in unpublished documents in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze⁵². These daily account records and the Medici Court Rolls indicate that the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess were personally morally and financially responsible not only for the salary and pensions of their individual courtiers, but also for their marriage dowries, education and artistic training⁵³, and other material and spiritual requirements.

Vittoria's female attendants had been selected from the most distinguished Florentine nobility, and as indicated in Palazzo Pitti inventories and plans by Medici *Guardaroba Generale* Diacinto Maria Marmi, they also resided at the Medici family palace in their own small apartments or rooms. These women included Emilia Rondinelli Neretti "*matron in charge of the Grand Duchess Vittoria's ladies-in-waiting*", Francesca Buonacorsi "*second matron in charge*", Ortensia Guadagni (who slept in the so-called "Camera Buia", which led into Vittoria's Winter apartment on the "Piano Reale"⁵⁴), and Vittoria's personal "*mistress of the*

(Contd.)

al 31 Xbre 1666. Four related letters exchanged between Marucelli and Appollonio Bassetti (Cosimo's secretary) in Florence from January to April 1665, regarding the importation of these French luxury material goods on Vittoria's "orders", are in ASF, Miscellanea Mediceo (hereafter MM) 366: *Servizio, e Ordini della Ser:ma Gran Duchessa Vittoria 1664 (& 1665)*, c. 5-12, referred to in part by G. BENADUSSI, "Carteggi e negozi della granduchessa Vittoria della Rovere (1634-1694)", in G.CALVI, R. SPINELLI (eds.), *Le Donne Medici...cit.*, I, p. 421, note 21.

⁵¹ A version of this part of the paper was presented at the Durham Centre for C17th Studies conference *Friends and Enemies: Conflict and Collaboration in Early Modern Europe*, July 2009: "Family Friends and Associates. Transnational cultural collaboration in early modern Europe: Vittoria della Rovere and her French Connections".

⁵² In addition to Vittoria's own personal finances as sole heir of the Della Rovere patrimony, which included annual rent of over 5,171 Ducats derived from her properties in the State of Urbino, the Grand Duchess was also allocated 14,200 Ducats each year from the Grand Duke's treasury, paid in two instalments. ASF, Dipositaria Generale 1600: *Giornale e Ricordi di Vittoria della Rovere (1655-1685)*, entries dated 5 May, 1655, 1/17 and 30 March, 1658, 16/22, 1-2. On the devolution of the Della Rovere patrimony see, M. MIRETTI, "Dal ducato d'Urbino al granducato di Toscana. Vittoria della Rovere e la devoluzione del patrimonio", in G.CALVI, R. SPINELLI (eds.), *Le Donne Medici...cit.*, I, p. 313-326.

⁵³ As was the case for the miniature painter and pastellist Giovanna Marmocchini Fratellini (1666 - 1731), who as a child was taken into her court as *dama* and educated by Vittoria. The Grand Duchess also arranged that the young girl be taught drawing and painting by Medici court artists Livio Meus, Pier Dandini, and "miniare in fiure" by the Capuccin miniaturist Padre Ipolito Galantini, after which, assisted by Anton Domenico Gabbiani, she pursued a long professional career working for Grand Duke Cosimo, Princess Violante di Baviera "sua patrona e molti altri Principi oltramontani": "Notizie di Giovanna Marmocchini", in B. SANTI (ed.), *Zibaldone Baldinucciano*, Florence, 1980, I, p. 493. See also note 111 below.

⁵⁴ See BNCF, Manoscritto Magliabechiano XIII, 36, G.F.20: *Libro di Piante di tutte gl'Appartamenti Principali de'Serenissimi Padroni e Forestieri del Palazzo de Pitti di SAS. Fatto dà me Dacinto Maria di Francesco Marmi*

bed-chamber (maestra di camera)” Donna Gostanza Sforza Bentivoglio, who had six people in her service. Donna Gostanza’s apartment at Palazzo Pitti was located in the mezzanine between Vittoria’s ground-floor Summer Apartment⁵⁵ and her Winter quarters on the piano nobile, “to the left halfway up the stairs at the entrance of the Palace, where the Most Serene Prince don Lorenzo once lived (*salito la scala che si trova al entrare del Palazzo a man manca a mezza scala, che già l’abitava il Ser.mo principe don Lorenzo*)”⁵⁶. Hidden internal stairs (“*scalette segrete*”) from behind the small chapel in Vittoria’s ground floor Summer suite led up to Gostanza’s apartment, then above to the piano reale into an alcove next to the “Camera Buia” of the Grand Duchess’ Winter Apartment, continuing further to the third level, where from 1661 Crown Prince Cosimo and his new bride had their winter apartment, passing via Princess Marguerite-Louise’s dressing-room, and finally all the way to the upper-most attic rooms (“*sottotetto*”) of the more junior “Signore dame” and their matron⁵⁷, architecturally linking all the female members of Vittoria’s family and court retinue over five levels. This created a seamless path through the gendered quarters of the Pitti Palace⁵⁸, which would have facilitated the moral supervision of the household’s young and largely unmarried women.

All these internal domestic as well as the semi-public representational spaces, Vittoria almost single-handedly furnished and decorated, with the assistance, from time to time, of her beloved brothers-in-law, Cardinals Giovan Carlo and Leopoldo de’Medici⁵⁹, who themselves turned to the grand duchess for artistic advice. The great Medici collector Cardinal Leopoldo must have thought very highly indeed of Vittoria’s creative flair and architectural acumen, for he sent her a number of drawings and plans for his Roman residence for her consideration, for which the grand duchess thanked him personally: “Accuso a Vostra Altezza la ricevuta della sua cortisissima lettera con i Disegni, e Pianta della sua grand’abitazione, sopra la quale le diro le mie riflessioni quando haverò avuto più tempo di considerarle”⁶⁰.

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Sovragnarobara in detto Palazzo per Servizio della med:ma Guardaroba....1658, Plan C. “Piano Primo, a sinistra”, n.17, published in P. BAROCCHI e G. GAETA BERTELÀ (eds.), Collezionismo Mediceo...cit., Doc.106, p. 855-856

⁵⁵ Vittoria’s Summer Apartment was located on the ground floor of the Pitti Palace to the immediate left of the main entrance and grand courtyard [thus forming the façade of the palace], and in addition to her private bedroom was made up of a “*Camera dell’Audienza*” with its “*baldachino da residenza*”, looking onto the frescoed loggia of the internal Gran Cortile; a frescoed “*Grotticina*” containing a small fountain with “*la finestra in su la piazza [Pitti]*”; and a bedroom which opened onto the large Salone to the left, frescoed by Giovanni da San Giovanni, leading into Ferdinand’s Summer Apartments. BNCF, Manoscritto Magliabechiano XIII, 14-II, I. 284: Diacinto Maria Marmi, *Norma per il Guardarobe del Gran palazzo nella Città di Fiorenza dove habita il Ser:mo Gran Duca di Toscana, 1662-1667*, Plan A. “Pianterreno, sinistra”, nn.A,B,C,1,2, published in P. BAROCCHI e G. GAETA BERTELÀ (eds.), *Collezionismo Mediceo...cit.*, Doc. 127, p. 914-915, 936-938. See also R. SPINELLI, “L’ appartamento terreno di Vittoria della Rovere a Palazzo Pitti”, in M. GREGORI (ed.), *Fasto di Corte: La Decorazione Murale Nelle Residenze Dei Medici e dei Lorena*, Florence, 2006, III, p. 20-28.

⁵⁶ From the 1663-64 Pitti Palace inventory, as published by S. BERTELLI, “Palazzo Pitti dai Medici ai Savoia”, in A. BELLINAZZI and A. CONTINI (eds.), *La Corte di Toscana dai Medici ai Lorena*, Florence, 1997, p. 27.

⁵⁷ BNCF, Manoscritto Magliabechiano XIII, 14-II, I. 284: Diacinto Maria Marmi, *Norma per il Guardarobe del Gran palazzo nella Città di Fiorenza dove habita il Ser:mo Gran Duca di Toscana, 1662-1667*, published in P. BAROCCHI e G. GAETA BERTELÀ (eds.), *Collezionismo Mediceo...cit.*, Doc. 127, p. 902, 914-916

⁵⁸ For as Bertelli writes: “dobbiamo pensare ad un’ospitalità offerta a nubili e celibi, grosso modo divisa in un gineceo ed in un androceo”, S. BERTELLI, “Palazzo Pitti”...cit., p. 27

⁵⁹ See letter cited below, at note 102. Vittoria’s sincere affection for her brothers-in-law, and their mutual respect, are demonstrated in a series autograph letters located in ASF, MdP 6145. G. PIERACCINI, *La Stirpe...cit.*, II, p. 506, who offers a very different (negative) reading of Vittoria’s personality and capacities, from these same letters.

⁶⁰ ASF, MdP 6145, Autograph letter to Cardinal Leopoldo, Pisa, 9 February 1668,

From 1663 to 1667 and again from 1687 to 1690⁶¹, a continuous stream of furniture made of rich wood and inlaid in “pietre dure”, a Florentine specialisation, furnishings and draperies (“*paramenti*”), decorator items and devotional objects in silver, gold and ivory, paintings, sculpture, jewellery and gemstones were sent to the Pitti Palace, as well as to her recently renovated villa at Poggio⁶² on Vittoria’s “ordini”, such as the “four gold altar candelabras” which her favourite goldsmith, the German Arrigo Brunich, had “dismantled and reworked for Her Most Serene Highness to place at Poggio Imperiale...” in April 1663⁶³; the “large Tortoiseshell cabinet with its gilded copper ornamentation” forwarded to Poggio on the 17th of the same month; or the “57 meters of white moire taffeta (*tafeta rasata*) by command of Her Illustrious Highness” for Vittoria’s bedroom at the luxurious villa and “lapislazuli” for her youngest son Prince Francesco Maria, transferred from Florence on the 13th July that year⁶⁴. We know that Vittoria commissioned similar ornamented cabinets from Medici court ebanist Leonard Ven de Winne as well as the French craftsman Amman: an especially magnificent example by the latter dating from the late 1670s remains on display at the royal apartments at the Pitti (Galleria Palatina)⁶⁵.

The Grand Duchess’ bedroom in her winter apartment on the piano nobile of the Palazzo Pitti, the Medici family’s city residence, is described in a late 1663-64 inventory drawn up for Marmi⁶⁶, as containing “a four poster bed in walnut...with gilded columns and its own wooden cover...mounted by three vases incised with four heads in a quadrangle, with festoons below, and with the arms of Her

⁶¹ ASF, MdP 6263: *Quaderni ed Inventari della Guardaroba della Ser.^{ma} Gran Duchessa Vittoria della Rovere*: Quadernaccio D: Guardaroba della Ser.^{ma} Gran Duchessa Vittoria della Rovere 1663-1667; Quaderno F: Quad(ernac):^{cio} della Guardaroba della Ser.^{ma} Gran Duchessa Vittoria della Rovere 1687-1690.

⁶² The Villa del Poggio Imperiale in the Florentine hills, purchased and refurbished in 1622 by Archduchess Maria Maddalena of Austria, Vittoria’s aunt and mother-in-law, was “acquired” by the Grand Duchess in 1659, after which she continued to systematically restructure, amplify and embellish it according to her own particular tastes, as it became her principal place of residence. See O. PANICHI, “Due Stanze della Villa del Poggio Imperiale”, *Antichità Viva*, 5 (September-October), 1973, p. 32-43; R. SPINELLI, “Vittoria della Rovere e la villa del Poggio Imperiale: i primi interventi artistici” and “La villa del Poggio Imperiale, “buen retiro” della granduchessa madre Vittoria della Rovere”, in M. GREGORI (ed.), *Fasto di Corte...cit.*, II, p. 148-50; III, p. 28-40. In addition to the documents cited by Panicchi and Spinelli, see also the contract in ASF dated 29 June 1659 (Miscellanea Medicea, 464, Inserto 17: *Trattato della Vendita dell’Imperiale di Firenze alla G.Duchessa Vittoria, da farsi dal G.Duca Ferdinando II*) confirms the complicated transfer of this *villa suburbana* from Ferdinand to Vittoria at this time, for which she paid 40,000 Ducats together with agreeing to cede her husband some of her personal territories in the State of Urbino. For the political dimension of Archduchess Maria Maddalena’s decorative and architectural program, see now the essays by R. SPINELLI, “Symbologia dinastica e legittimazione de potere: Maria Maddalena d’Austria e gli affreschi del Poggio Imperiale”, and I. HOPPE “Uno spazio di potere femminile. Villa di Poggio Imperiale, residenza di Maria Maddalena d’Austria”, in G.CALVI, R. SPINELLI (eds.), *Le Donne Medici...cit.*, II, p. 645-679, 681-689.

⁶³ ASF, MdP 6263, Quadernaccio D, c. 1. According to Spinelli, Brunich’s name appears throughout Vittoria’s account books from December 1667 to 1680 (see R. SPINELLI, “Vittoria della Rovere: passione collezionistica e mecenatismo della granduchessa madre”, in M. GREGORI (ed.), *Fasto di Corte...cit.*, III, p. 15 and note 30). This early payment record, here published for the first time, thus indicates that the Medici goldsmith was already working for Vittoria from at least the first half of 1663.

⁶⁴ ASF, MdP 6263, Quadernaccio D, c. 2: “*Stipo di Tartaruga grande con suo adornam^{ti} di Rame dorato....*”; “*57 braccia di Taff.a rasata bianco di Comand° di S.A.I. port^{ti} in Cam^a e lapiz.li dice p. far suone p.mezzo serve essertizo Ill.^{mo} Pnpe Franc^o*”.

⁶⁵ See M. BOHR, “Lo Stipo Della Granduchessa Vittoria”, *Antichità Viva*, 28 (no. 5-6), 1989, p. 68-71.

⁶⁶ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 725, *Inventario di tutti i mobile che si trovano Palazzo Pitti di Sua Altezza Serenissima...fatto questo dì [23 novembre 1664] da me Lorenzo Betti ministro di detta Guardaroba Generale*, 30 December-23 November 1664, published in P. BAROCCHI e G. GAETA BERTELÀ (eds.), *Collezionismo Mediceo...cit.*, vol.2, Document 129, p. 934-1047.

Highness between each head, and surmounted with a lily and crown”⁶⁷. Whilst the latter, the granducal crown and the Florentine *fleur-de-lis* was utilized also by the Medici men (we find it on both Ferdinand’s and Cosimo’s beds⁶⁸), the Grand Duchess was especially eager to inscribe her own signifier of princely identity and courtly power on her private belongings: Vittoria’s personal *insigna* was the granducal crown surmounting the monogram “V”, which was also imprinted on her porcelain dinner services and engraved on silverware, including a foot warmer⁶⁹. Vittoria’s bed, furthermore, was lavishly decorated with a “cortinaggio” (bed hanging) and matching coverlet, the former made of 14 pieces of linen shot through with shimmering gold and silver: one forming the canopy with double hangings on all four sides, six shorter drops shot through with white, flesh and gold, 4 sleeves and a valance in 3 pieces “gathered in gold and silver”, and lined in linen. The whole was edged with a red silk fringe threaded with gold, with silver tiebacks, and braided above in red and gold silk damask. The matching bed cover, made of similar materials and colours, was decorated with red and gold silk fringing, and lined in highly prized Persian fine red silk (“*ermesino*”)⁷⁰. Whilst the furnishings at Vittoria’s villa at Poggio Imperiale, in the guest apartment (“dei forestieri”, later resided by her grandson Prince Gian Gastone), included two sets of drawing room chairs (14 in all), the first beautifully upholstered in yellow damask, decorated with gold and turquoise silk, and gold silk fringing: the second set with back and seats embroidered in “punto di francese”, with multicoloured silk thread representing floral designs and arabesques on a gold background, also with gold fringing⁷¹. Many of the luxurious textiles that furnished these Medici apartments, including her own, Vittoria had begun importing from France in 1663, as the letters under examination reveal, such as the “tapeti, che si fabbricano alla Sovoneria”⁷², or swathes of prized taffetas, especially the rarer moire silks newly developed in Lyons, referred to in the documents as “tafeta rasata”, to distinguish it from the more common “tafeta semplice”⁷³.

The letters further attest to Vittoria della Rovere’s astute and discerning eye, avant-garde taste in the most “modern” artistic genres and design, and expert knowledge of the quality and refinement of artworks and other luxury pieces, in particular jewellery and precious gemstones, which were her passion. “Her Highness”, wrote the Abbot Marucelli to Cerchi in February of 1664, “proves to be highly

⁶⁷ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 725: “[627] Una cuccia di noce, da 4 $\frac{1}{6}$ e 3 $\frac{2}{3}$, con suo piano d’albero, regoli e ferri e colonne tutte dorate, con tre vasi intagliati, con quattro teste di quadrangolo, con festoncino sotto, con un’arme di Sua Altezza tra una testa e l’altra, con un giglio e corona in cima, alti braccia $\frac{2}{3}$ incirca...”, c. 64 v.

⁶⁸ The Grand Duke Ferdinand’s bedroom in his summer apartment at the Pitti, which looked out onto the smaller internal “cortile nuovo”, contained a similar “cuccia di noce, da 4 $\frac{2}{3}$ e 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ con colonne dorate, con suo piano d’albero, regoli e ferri, e ferri per zanzariere, con 3 vasi di legno intagliati, con 4 teste di liono dintornate con l’arme di Sua Altezza Serenissima, con un giglio e corona in cima per ciascuno, alti braccia $\frac{2}{3}$ e tutti dorati...” also swathed in red taffeta drapes with matching bedcover. ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 725, c.5 (in P. BAROCCHI e G. GAETA BERTELÀ (eds.), *Collezionismo Mediceo...cit.*, p. 942-943).

⁶⁹ See ASF, MdP 6263, *Inventario Seg. D della Guardaroba della Ser.^{ma} Gran Duchessa Vittoria di Toscana per l’amministrazione del Sig. Lorenzo Giacobini Guardaroba dell’ A.S. fatto q.sto di p.° Aple 1663*, items nn. 15, 71-77.

⁷⁰ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 725: c.65: “[628] Un cortinaggio, da 4 $\frac{1}{6}$ e 3 $\frac{2}{3}$, di teletta, d’oro e argento a tre cangi, in quattordici pezzi, cioe’, cielo piano con pendenti doppi, sei cortine, 4 maniche e tornaletto in tre pezzi, ch’e’ il cielo piano con i pensenti per di dentro, un pendente dalla banda di dietro e quello da capo...con arricciato d’oro e argento e tutto guarnito di frangia di seta rossa retata d’oro, legata con canutiglia ‘argento, con passamano sopra di seta rossa e oro alla dommaschina, alte, mezzane e basse...”, in P. BAROCCHI e G. GAETA BERTELÀ (eds.), *Collezionismo Mediceo...cit.*, p. 1001-1002

⁷¹ ASF, Guardaroba Medicea 991, *Inventario della Villa del Poggio Imperiale 1692-1695*: items 209, 210, in P. BAROCCHI e G. GAETA BERTELÀ (eds.), *Collezionismo Mediceo...cit.*, Doc. 146, p. 1204

⁷² ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris December 1664, 16 January 1665

⁷³ ASF, MdP 6186, Vachelli to Cerchi, Paris 11 January 1664

knowledgeable of every type of gemstone and curiosities applicable to new ornaments”.⁷⁴ Victoria had her specialised knowledge of gemstones in particular glorified in a ceiling fresco decoration representing Winged Victory (with her name “...A ROBORE VICTORIA” scrolled around an oak tree, the Della Rovere emblem), painted by leading Florentine painter Baldassare Franceschini in the Sala delle Allegorie, the salon of her Winter Apartment at the Pitti (c.1658), the left frame of which is inscribed with the latin epitaph: INCIUS CORUM SAPIENTE LAPIS, whilst in a side panel is an *Allegory of Sapienza*⁷⁵.

Filippo Baldinucci, the C17th biographer of Florentine artists and patrons, and keeper of the Medici collection of drawings, confirms Vittoria della Rovere’s connoisseurship, describing her as a dynamic matron, who could discern between the various *maniere* or personal styles of different artists, such as the speedy execution (*speditezza*) of the Neapolitan Luca Giordano (who painted the *Vision of S Bernardo* for Vittoria during his Florentine stay in the 1680s), or the diligent refinement (*diligenza*) of her most favoured court artist Carlo Dolci⁷⁶. Of all the Medici patrons, the Grand Duchess was also the most “passionate estimator” of the new vogue for miniatures and still life painting, especially those of Andrea Scacciati, Giovanni Stanchi, Margherita Caffi, and Giovanna Garzoni⁷⁷. Vittoria owned at least twenty autograph examples of the latter’s works, produced when Garzoni was Medici court painter in the 1640s, including an unpublished miniature portrait of the Grand Duchess as Judith on vellum, recently on the international art market⁷⁸. Vittoria’s discernment is also evident when these artworks did not meet with her satisfaction. When Cardinal Gian Carlo offered her portraits of some Roman noblewomen, she refused them on the grounds that they did not prove to be a good likeness, not rendering sufficient justice to their beauty: “Rendo grazie a Vostra Altezza dell’offerta, che mi fa de ritratti di coteste Dame, alle quali non havendo gran fede di bellezza, non starò a darli quest’ incomodo”⁷⁹.

Early conservative historians of the Medici, such as Riguccio Galluzzi and Gaetano Pieraccini, have dismissed Vittoria’s expertise in the decorative and applied arts and her love of fashion and jewellery as evidence of her vanity and “frivolous” nature⁸⁰. Yet the pursuit of fashion was by no means a light-hearted pastime during this period. It was a highly serious enterprise, a significant cultural

⁷⁴ ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris 15 February 1664: “...essendo stato più volte pregato doppo la mia dimora in Francia, a proporre in compera all Altezza Sua diverse curiosità di pregio non avevo scorto, che egli prove dotissimo d’ogni sorte di pietre e di curiosità applichi a nuove ornamenti si fatte...”

⁷⁵ For this commission see M.C. FABBRI, “La sala delle Allegorie a Palazzo Pitti”, in M. GREGORI (ed.), *Fasto di Corte...cit.*, II, p. 151-165, and illustrations on p. 361, 365

⁷⁶ As Riccardo Spinelli and Eve Straussman-Pflanzer have both recently demonstrated: R. SPINELLI, “Vittoria, principessa d’Urbino, granduchessa di Toscana”, in M. GREGORI (ed.), *Fasto di Corte...cit.*, II p. 147; E. STRAUSSMAN-PFLANZER, “A Preference for *Diligenza*: Medici Grand Duchess Vittoria della Rovere’s Patronage of the Florentine Painter Carlo Dolci”, Renaissance Studies of America Annual Meeting, Los Angeles 2009, conference paper presented Thursday 16th March. Dolci’s most recognised work for Vittoria is his portrait of the Dowager Grand Duchess just before her death (Uffizi).

⁷⁷ R. SPINELLI, “Vittoria della Rovere: passione”...cit. p. 16-17, 23

⁷⁸ Christie’s London, 4 July 2006, Lot. 32

⁷⁹ ASF, MdP 6145, autograph letter from Vittoria to Cardinal Giovan Carlo de’ Medici, dated Florence 2 may 1670

⁸⁰ They see no merit or positive aspects to Vittoria’s character, consider her extremely bigoted and mean-spirited, refute also her political astuteness, concluding that she contributed nothing to the Florentine court, a view that is belied in the Ambassadors’ comments cited above. In fact, according to these early historians, Vittoria and other granduchesses, are held responsible for the decline of the Medici dynasty in the C17th and C18th (cf. also comments by Giovanni Baccini below, cited in note 105). This is the common historical and popular view, which recent studies such as those by Spinelli and Benadussi are attempting to redress. I have also discussed the discourse of magnanimity that surround traditional historical accounts of elite male patronage, whilst accounts of female rulers engaging in similar activities are couched in the language of selfservience, decadence and *lussuria*, in a paper which examined the epistolatory networks of Vittoria della Rovere (1641-1682), presented at La Trobe University, School of Historical and European Studies, 9 October 2008 (History Staff Research Seminars).

practice, in which costume and dress functioned as a complex signifying system richly embroidered with symbolic social and cultural meanings, incorporating public image and identity, social self-fashioning and the visual politics of dynastic display, evidence of “princely” and courtly magnificence, and manipulated equally successfully by male and female political leaders. The luxury items and clothing Vittoria requested not only shaped her own self-image under the public gaze of the Medici courtiers and her Tuscan subjects, but also stylishly fashioned a collective visual identity for her own court, which extended to her ladies-in-waiting: their clothing and furnishings were to reflect the style and taste of their Most Serene Highness⁸¹.

The Grand Duchess, furthermore, often provided her own designs for these ultra-fashionable pieces, as revealed in correspondence from Vittoria to the Medici Cardinals Matthias and Leopoldo in Rome in the 1670s, in which, according to Pieraccini, she requested jewelry and other female ornaments “*specifying the particular quality she wanted, and send[ing] designs/dava i particolari sulle qualita’; inviava i disegni etc.*”⁸². In the abovementioned letter from Marucelli, in reference to a jewelled monstrance Vittoria had ordered, the Medicean ambassador reassures Cerchi it was worked by the French goldsmith to “comply” with the “design” Vittoria had forwarded to France via her secretary. Vittoria also personally provided the topazes⁸³, for this gold sacred monstrance, normally used to display holy relics, which she wished to be encrusted in both semi-precious gemstones and diamonds, and have especially “accommodated” into a clock by the French “Maestro”. The total cost of this creative transformation was “550 francs, which consists of the cost of the said monstrance, as well as the diamonds which were necessary to add to it in order to comply with the supplied design, as much in gold, the [clock] movement, craftsmanship and labour involved in working the gemstones”⁸⁴. Madame d’Angouleme⁸⁵, to whom Marucelli had shown the piece before sending it to Vittoria, “found the workmanship utterly refined and most graceful and well suited to the quality of the gemstones”.⁸⁶ The

⁸¹ As Sarah Bercusson has shown for Giovanna d’Austria’s court, a century earlier (q.v.)

⁸² G. PIERACCINI, *La Stirpe...*cit., II, p. 506. Vittoria clearly inherited her mother Claudia de Medici’s creative flair, for in a letter from Austria to Marchese Luigi Vettori, dated 7 November 1627, the new Archduchess requested a number of luxury goods be sent to her from Florence, including six turkish silk dresses, seven turbans of brocade and rare silk, and two pairs of matching gloves, to be fashioned “come io vi mando [in]questo disegno”. ASF, Aquisti e Doni, F/59 Inserto 4. n. 41.

⁸³ For examples of these exquisite Medici topazes, both gifts from her son Cosimo and weighing a total of 76 carats, see original designs in ASF, MdP 6145, undated autograph letter from Vittoria to Cardinal Leopoldo de’Medici; for designs for a string of pearls and brooch: P. BAROCCHI e G. GAETA BERTELÀ (eds.), *Collezionismo Mediceo...*cit., Doc. 110, p. 873-875. Topazes and pearls also adorn the dresses of Vittoria della Rovere, as seen in the many portraits by Medici court artists: M. SFRAMELLI (ed.), *I Gioielli dei Medici: dal vero e in ritratto*, Livorno, 2003, cat. nn. 81, 82. Diamonds were the gift of choice from the Medici and French courts for the wedding in Bavaria in 1688, of Prince Ferdinand Maria, Cosimo III and Princess Margherita’s first-born, to Violante Beatrice of Bavaria, daughter of Ferdinand Maria Elector of Bavaria and Henrietta Adelaide of Savoy, and future Grand Duchess of Tuscany. ASF, MM, 366, *Miscellanea di affari diversi trattati da Apollonio Bassetti, segretario di Cosimo III de’Medici (1664-1693): Donazioni fatta alla Corte di Baviera in occasione dello Sponsalizio*, 1688, c. 438-447.

⁸⁴ Whilst I have yet to identify this particular monstrance in the Medici inventories, or establish if indeed it is still extant, there is a jade mask from Central America, worked and mounted by French artisans into a diamond and enamel encrusted, gold stand circa 1650-1660, believed to have belonged to Vittoria, in the Pitti Museo degli Argenti, Florence. The trunk of the gold stand and the mask’s branching frame is formed of a jewel studded oak tree, in reference to the granduchess’ family arms. See reproduction in C. ACIDINI LUCHINAT (ed.), *Tesori dalle Collezioni Medicee*, Florence, 1997, p. 165.

⁸⁵ Françoise d’Angoulême (1631-96), wife of Louis de Guise, Duc de Joyeuse..

⁸⁶ “...La mostra gioiellata della Ser.^{ma} Gran Duchessa secondo la commissione che da Lei ne tengo, e a tale effetto l’ho fatta aggiustare al medesimo, che l’ha lavorata in una custodia di Latta, p.assicurarla dai cattivi incontri. L’ho io oggi fatta vedere a Madama d’Angouleme, che da un mese in qua travaglia d’una pena nel fianco, et essa l’ha sommamente indata e trovatone il lavoro vago e gentile al possibile p. la qualità delle pietre. Sente ella quanto il Maestro mi hanno obbligato a suggerire all’Altezza Sua, che p. accomodarsi alla moda, sarebbe necessario il cappio e la catena compagni. Confermo a V.S. Ill.^{ma} che i topazzi avanzati furono da me incluso in una Letters p. V.S. Ill.^{ma} nel mio dispaccio p.

same letter also refers to a large diamond family heirloom from her “*eredità materna*” that the Duchess of Guise, Marie de Lorraine⁸⁷, reluctantly wished to sell for the exorbitant amount of 100,000 *scudi* to the Grand Duchess Vittoria, who is said to have admired it on a number of occasions. The French duchess preferred that her distant relatives the Medici, from whom she herself had inherited such a curiosity for “*aquisti si rari*”, acquire the precious jewel.

The luxury items Vittoria imported from France also included men’s and women’s suede gloves, “perfumed” and “ornately decorated in taffeta”⁸⁸, which served as diplomatic gifts for both Grand Duchess and her son Cosimo, for the French women, friends and relatives she corresponded with, and for the visiting foreign ambassadors (and their wives), whom the Grand Duke received at court; masks of “black velvet”, to be worn by both Vittoria and her daughter-in-law when in public, as confirmed above in Skippon’s account, and in his description of Florentine festivities where he observed that “the duchess (Vittoria) was always masked, and rides in a coach with six horses”⁸⁹; men’s periwigs and female hairpieces (“*ricci*”); and literally thousands of meters of satin ribbon “that here is called *faveur*”, all “for service of the Grand Duchess”⁹⁰. *Faveur* is very narrow silk or satin ribbon used in bridal decorations and for other festive occasions, such as christenings⁹¹, but also for creating the ever increasing number of bows (sometimes in the hundreds!), known as “*galantes*”, that began to adorn French dress during this period. In another letter dated 5 September 1664, Vacchelli complains to Cerchi, of the difficulty he has had in finding such a large continuous amount of this highly fashionable but extremely expensive “*faveur*”!⁹²

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ordinario passato. Al mio fratello invio la ricevuta di 550__franchi, che importa il conto di detta mostra, tanto in diamanti che è bisognato aggiungerli p. supplire al disegno, quanto in oro, movimento, fattura e riduzione di pietre, come porta le predeta ricevuta...”. ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, 15 February 1664.

⁸⁷ Marie de Lorraine, Duchesse de Guise (1615-88), was the daughter of Charles, Duc de Guise and Henriette Catherine de Joyeuse. Known as Mademoiselle de Guise, Marie was a vibrant musical patron, who promoted the work of Marc-Antoine Charpentier amongst her family and friends, as well as a savvy businesswoman, acting as one of the *donneur d’avis* (tax advisors to increase court revenue) to King Louis XIV. See S. KETTERING, “The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen”, *The Historical Journal* 32, no. 4, Dec.1989, p. 832, 835, with relevant bibliography. As a young woman, from 1634 to 1643, Mademoiselle de Guise had lived alongside Vittoria in Florence, where her family had been exiled before returning to France, where she maintained an intense epistolatory relationship with the Medici, with whom she was *imparentado* on a number of levels. It is reported that she wrote weekly and was kept informed of the family’s well-being by the Medici residents in Paris, which finds support in the number of minuted letters I have come across in the ASF from Vittoria to the “Principessa di Guisa”, whom the grand Duchess affectionately addresses as “mon cousine” or “mia cugina”, especially in the 1660s and 1680s. Not to be confused with Madame de Guise, Elisabeth Louise d’Orleans, Duchess of Alençon, the younger sister of Vittoria’s daughter-in-law, Princess Margherita Louise d’Orleans, and daughter-in-law of the afore mentioned Françoise d’Angoulême (Elisabeth married Françoise’s son Louis Joseph, the 6th Duc de Guise, in 1667, after which she is referred to as either Madame de Guise or Duchess of Angoulême).

⁸⁸ ASF, MdP 6186, Antonio Vacchelli to Alessandro Cerchi, Paris 11 January 1664: “*due paia di guanti di camoscio profumati guarniti alla moda per homo, uno di tafeta rasato, et l’altro di tafeta semplice, ed il tutto costa undici doppie et un’ sedola la sud:a perocula et sette doppie li guanti con le guarniture, che fanno in tutto di moneta di Francia cento venti et quattro lire...*”.

⁸⁹ “Almost every summer evening there is a tour of coaches in the chief streets, and on festivals the great duke, duchess, Ec. are present, the duke always rides in a coach drawn but by four horses, with a postilion; the *duchess was always masked*, and rides in a coach with six horses...”, P. SKIPPON, *A Journey...cit.*, pp.642-643, published in P. BAROCCHI e G. GAETA BERTELÀ (eds.), *Collezionismo Mediceo...cit.*, Doc.136, p. 1083-1084.

⁹⁰ ASF, MdP 6186, Vacchelli to Cerchi, Paris 21 Aug. 1664

⁹¹ The hundreds of letters I have so far examined reveal that Vittoria was often being invited to act as godmother at christenings in Florence and throughout Northern Italy, for which she often supplied ample provisions, such as lending her coach, on top of the customary gift of gold jewellery for the child.

⁹² ASF, MdP 6186, Vacchelli to Cerchi, Paris 5 September 1664

There was also fine wool, procured for the Grand Duchess by “Madama du Chemein”⁹³ clothing supervisor for Mademoiselle de Montpensier (Anna Marie Louise d’Orleans, *la Grande Mademoiselle*, Princess Marguerite-Louise’s elder paternal sister), whom Vittoria’s French agents consulted for the latest court fashion trends⁹⁴; and interchangeable lace collars and cuffs in “*Punto di Inghilterra*” and “*Punto di Spirito*” lace, the needlework of which “was of the same workmanship as those for the queen”⁹⁵. This comes a month after Vacchelli and Marucelli had already forwarded “*una pegola da collo nera con trina finissima d’Inghilterra et dalla più novella moda et conforme la misura trasmittarmi*”, to accompany the two pairs of perfumed suede and silk taffeta gloves referred to above⁹⁶.

Vittoria in particular requested dresses made to order by the French court tailors⁹⁷, described as being styled in the latest fashion (“*alla più novella moda/le mode le più nouvelle*”), both in the fabrics used (silk, moire taffeta and lace) and in their mode of manufacture, all “designed in the same way as worn by all the grand ladies and Princesses here and by the Queens [Queen Mother Anna of Austria, and Queen Marie Therese of Spain]”⁹⁸. These were both for herself and her daughter-in-law Marguerite-Louise, who, as already noted, refused to wear anything but French *haut couture*.

The Grand Duchess similarly ordered lavish French outfits in taffeta, linen and lace for her son Cosimo, such as the leisure suit “secondo la moda per la campagna” guarnished in “fire red” *faveur* ribbon complete with gloves, plumed hat, matching shoes and leggings, forwarded to her by Marucelli in November 1665⁹⁹. This consignment also contained two separate “scatoline” with miniature

⁹³ 27 June 1664 from Gio: Filippo Marucelli to Cerchi, in Fontainbleau

⁹⁴ ASF, MdP, 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris 24 April, 1665: “*Per servir dunque l’Altezza Sua fui subito a trovare Madama du Chemein, peritissima delle gale, e mode, correnti per le Principesse, e Dame Grandi, essendo lei, che soprantende al vestiario di Mademoiselle di Montpensier, e gl’esposi il desiderio della Serenissima Gran Duchessa pregandola anche di prendersene l’incumbenza, e venendo a divisar seco sopra i lavori, commessi, come sopra, conforme si fanno per le Regine, e Principesse, vi calcolo esserci necessario l’impiego, e tramezzo di molti pizzi, e trine di considerabil valore, senza le quali non si può in un certo modo esprimere la Moda, et in specie in riguardo alla Cornette, che tutta si fa di giglietto senza punto di Tela...*”. A copy of this letter is in ASF, MM, 366, c. 12.

⁹⁵ ASF, MdP. 6186 Vacchelli to Cerchi, 8 February 1664: “*In conformità di quanto V.S.III.^{ma} mi ha ordinato con la sua lettera delli 22 del caduto ho rimesso nelle mani del P^e Presid^{te} Marucelli una picciola scatoletta coperta di tele cerata et griza, la quale contiene trei pezzuole da collo nere picciole due senza pizze et l’altra con triva picciolo et due punte con le scuffiette et ghirlande il tutto da bruno et il tutto conforme la moda corente delle gran dame, il tutto è beniss^{mo} accomodato et spero che ariverà anche beniss^{mo} condizionato, le punte et le scuffiette con le ghirlande sono della medesima operai della regina...*”

⁹⁶ See above at note 88.

⁹⁷ ASF, MdP 6186, Vacchelli to Cerchi, 29 February 1664: “*...ho parlato alli sarti delle regine per informazione di quello credono che a quel tempo porteranno le loro maestà et il tutto si farà conforme le mode le più novelle che coreranno...*” In 1663, the court tailors to Queen Marie Therese numbered four. See N. BESONGE, *L’État de la France, nouvellement corrigé et mis en meilleur ordre (...)*, Paris, E. Loyson, 1663, 2 vol.; vol. 1, p. 24. Published on line by the Centre de recherche du château de Versailles, Versailles, 2009 (<http://chateauversailles-recherche.fr/curia/documents/reine1663.pdf>). Only one of these Pierre L’Hospital, (father of the mathematician Alexandre L’Hospital), can be identified in the letters, referred to by his title Comte de Mesme.

⁹⁸ Vacchelli to Cerchi, 21 March 1664, 24 March 1664: “*...con tutte le sue appartenenze come usano qui le regine et gran Principesse et il tutto alla più novella moda tanto per le robbe che per le fature*”.

⁹⁹ ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris 27 November 1665: “*...al Corriere di questa notte si pretende di consegnare una cassetta ben difesa, entrovi il Giustacor, et il Vestito, ordinatomi per il Serenissimo Signor Principe di Toscana accomodatovi con fogli, e tela, acciò, per quanto vaglian le diligenze, non possa ne gualcirsi, ne altrimenti patire. Item una scatola minore, dove è la guarnitura di color di fuoco, tanto per l’habito, che per il Cappello scarpe, Guanti e Legaccio, e vi sono i Guanti ancora, e calzette del color dell’ habito. Secondo la moda per la campagna si son fatti i calzoni, come qua si chiamano alla pantolona, da legarsi sotto il Ginocchio, e per la sera, vi è il modo d’allargarla, ò stringerla, si che toreranno benissimo et il Giustacor ancora. Circa al Giubbone più difficile a farsi giusto senza misura si è pure havuto avvertenza, che si possa allargare e stringere quando ve ne sia il bisogno.*” For a similar dashing outfit worn by Crown prince Cosimo see Justus Susterman’s half length portrait at the Pitti (Galleria Palatina, inv. 1890, n. 2875), a later version of that commissioned by Vittoria della Rovere from the Medici court artist, and sent to France in

portraits of Madame La Valiere and the Duchesse de Subise. Vittoria and Cosimo, furthermore, both adopted in their residences the current European vogue for French alcoves and niches, like those seen in the French royal houses visited by Cardinal Lorenzo Magalotti during his 1668 voyage and reported in letters to the Medici court¹⁰⁰. It is not yet clear if this is the same Magalotti, for whom Vittoria commissioned a pair of French leather boots in 1665: "...Gli Stivali per il Signor Magalotti son comandati, e si lavorano, e il tutto mentre possa, e voglia s'incaricherà il Giaminet..."¹⁰¹. Even as late as 1672, Vittoria sends Cardinal Gian Carlo de' Medici a fan "*venuto ultimamente di Francia*", being dissatisfied with the decorative quality of the local one her brother-in-law had forwarded from Rome for a certain young *dama*. The Grand Duchess gives her brother-in-law one of her own French fans, so that he could see how they should be "istoriato" with floral patterns and *a la mode* figures¹⁰².

It is not fortuitous that Vittoria's desire for the latest fashion from France and all things French began soon after the grand duchess acquired a new foreign rival at the Tuscan court, her French daughter-in-law, the aforementioned Marguerite-Louise d'Orléans, who married Cosimo in 1661. Comparable portraits from this period reveal that Marguerite d'Orléans's French clothing differed from that of the other women of the Medici court¹⁰³. The forty two-year old Vittoria clearly would not have wanted to be overshadowed at court, where she had been Grand Duchess for almost thirty years since her marriage to Ferdinand II in 1637, so engages the very same French tailor employed by then 18 year old "Most Serene Princess" Marguerite herself¹⁰⁴, to manufacture the *moiré* taffeta, lace, muslin and *faveur* ensembles that the Grand Duchess desired for herself and her daughter-in-law, 23 years her junior. Despite these gifts, their acknowledged mutual animosity is said to have been one of the major causes of Marguerite's return to France, abandoning crown, husband and children, preferring life in a convent in her native Paris rather than as the new Grand Duchess of Tuscany at the Florentine court!¹⁰⁵

(Contd.) _____

September 1658, documented in a 1671 list of unpaid accounts. See L. GOLDENBERG STOPPATO. *The Grand Duke's portraitist: Cosimo III de' Medici and his "Chamber of paintings" by Giusto Suttermans*, Livorno, 2006, cat. n.1.

¹⁰⁰ S. BELLESI and M. VISONÀ, *Giovacchino Fortini: scultura, architettura, decorazione e committenza a Firenze al tempo degli ultimi Medici*, Florence, 2008, p. 102-103

¹⁰¹ ASF, MdP 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris 15 May 1665

¹⁰² ASF, MdP 6145, autograph letter dated Florence 2 May 1670. "La Giovannina la ringrazia umilmente del Ventaglio, ma p.che VA veda come vadine storiato di fiori, e figure alla Moda, gle'ne mando uno venuto ultimam:te di Francia, portato dal Sig:re di Tanbonò, non guardi alla piccolezza, p.che la mmisura di qllo mandato da VA sta benissimo"

¹⁰³ For example, both the cut and style and the more reflective satin sheen of Marguerite's *moire tafet* dress, seen in a portrait by Sustermans after she became grand duchess in 1670 (Uffizi deposits, Florence, inv. n.2724, illustrated in K. LANGEDIJK, *Portraits of the Medici: 15th – 18th centuries*, Florence, 1984, II, p. 1231, n.18.13/a) are decidedly French, with its boned and sharply pointed waist bodice, puff sleeves, dress skirt and matching underskirt, similar to the court dress of the late C17th described in François de Garsault's *L'Art du tailleur* published in 1769 (see illustration in C. HARU CROWSTON, *Fabricating Women: the seamstress in Old Regime France*, Durham NC, 2001, Fig.1.2)

¹⁰⁴ ASF, MdP. 6186, Marucelli to Cerchi, Paris, 7 March 1664: "...la Ser: ^{ma} Gran Duchessa, in servizio della quale mi vien consegnata da un sarto della Ser: ^{ma} Sig:^{ra} Principessa, una scatola lungo entravi un'abito p.la prefata Ser: ^{ma} Gran Duchessa".

¹⁰⁵ Recall Skippons comments above, note 5. Marguerite had never been compatible with her extremely pious, taciturn and melancholy husband, or comfortable in her new home, considering life in Florence to be "provincial" in comparison to the gaiety and worldliness of the Parisian court. Her inability to integrate into Florentine court life and conform to the obligations of her inherited marital dynastic family, and the dynamics of her marriage and official separation from Cosimo in 1675 have most recently been examined by J. C. WAQUET, "L'échec d'un mariage: Marguerite-Louise d'Orléans et Côme de Médicis", in I. POUTRIN and M. K. SCHAUB (eds.), *Femmes & Pouvoir Politique. Les Princesses d'Europe XV^e-XVIII^e Siècle*, Rosny-sus-bois, 2007, p. 120-132, based largely on French documents. Florentine archival records and letters have been published in a curiously entitled work, *Vita Scandalosa di Margherita d'Orléans*, in *Documenti Inediti tratti dall'Archivio di Stato di Firenze con un discorso proemiale di Giuseppe Baccini*, Milan, 1923. According to Baccini (echoing Galluzzi et al), the responsibility for the claustrophobic atmosphere of the Florentine court and strained relationship between Cosimo and his French bride lay entirely with Vittoria: "Fu tutta colpa della madre, che coltivò nel giovane Principe la funesta ipocrisia e il bacchettonismo. Se il Granduca Ferdinando era buono, affabile, generoso e magnanimo, la moglie al contrario fu la negazione di tutte queste virtù, bigotta sempre, superba e intollerante...", going so far as to call her "una falsa devota". (p.10).

After the departure from Florence of Vittoria's French daughter-in-law in 1675, we find the Grand Duchess returning to Italian fashion and interior decorating tastes: in relation to a new bed she wanted for her apartments in Livorno, Vittoria writes to her brother-in-law Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici, "*se a Roma usasse qualche nuova moda, ne ammanderò gli avvisi*", providing him with "*un disegno del lettino...se à qualche cosa di più Galante volentieri ne ritorni favorita*"¹⁰⁶.

I would like to finish with a list of French objects that the Abbot Marucelli sent to Vittoria via her secretary Cerchi in March 1664¹⁰⁷, for it highlights in one document the Grand Duchess' role as cultural agent and artistic advisor to her immediate family and Medici court retainers and diplomats. The consignment consisted of a number of items in addition to the numerous portraits (83 paintings

¹⁰⁶ ASF, MdP 6145, autograph letter, dated Livorno, 17 March (post 1667).

¹⁰⁷ The list, dated 5th March 1664, accompanies the letter of 7th March from Marucelli to Cerchi cited above, note 104:

A 5 Marzo 1664

Lista delle Robe nella Cassa diretta all' Ill.me Sig. Cav.e Cerchi, e prima

N. 74 Libri p. il Ser.^{mo} Sig. Principe di Toscana [Cosimo III]

N. 1 Involto p. il medesimo dove sono n.° 83 Ritratti

N. 1 Involto p. L' Ill.mo Sig.^{re} Sen:re Balì Gondi nel quale sono 3 carte di Corografia, e 3 carte grandi dei ritratti dei Re di Francia, p. S.S. Ill.^{ma}, sotto alle quali sono n.° 17 Carte di Ritratti p. il Ser.^{mo} Sig. Principe suddetto

N. 1 Libro intitolato Pragmatica Sanction, p. Ser.^{mo} Sig. Principe Leopoldo

N.1 Scatola p. la Ser.^{ma} Gran Duchessa, piena di cera di Spagna, e di polvere da scritto, nella quale è un scatolino p. il Sig.^{re} Abate Luigi Strozzi

N.1 Scatola p. Orazio Murucelli [brother of Abbot G.Filippo Marucelli]

N.1 Fagottino di Ritratti p. il Sig.^{re} Conte Ferdinando Del M[aest]ro

N.1 Pacchetto di Libri p. il Sig.^e Cristofano Buonfanti

N.1 Pacchetto d'una perrucca p. il letto [ie: manchester bed set]

N.1 Pacchetto di Libri)

N.1 Spada e una Canna)

N.1 Pacchetto d'una parrucca)

N.1 Pacchetto di Nicchi) (all) Per il Sig. Fran.^o Minacci

N.1 Pacchetto di Bazzecole)

N.1 Cappello)

N.1 Libro grande sciolto)

N.1 Libro grande p. il Sig.^{re} Conte Ferdinando del Maestro

N.1 Scatolino p. la Ser.^{ma} Principessa [Cosimo's consort Marguerite-Louise d'Orleans]

N.1 Pezza di Filendente p. la Ser.^{ma} Gran Duchessa

N.1 Ferro da spianare p. la medesima Altezza

N.1 Pacchetto di Libri p. i Padri Teatini

N.1 Busta p. la Sig.^{ra} Isabella Fiorilli

[On separate small sheet]:

Costo del ~~Sig~~ Tommaso a chempio(?) Legato in sommacco rosso, che si manda fra i Libri del Ser.^{mo} Sig. Principe di Toscana (Cosimo III), al Sig.^{re} Conte del Maestro, p. il Sig. Cav.^{re} Girali.

Per il Libro sciolto Lire nove £ 9__

Per Legatura di d.° £ 14__

In tutto £ 23

and pastels¹⁰⁸, and 20 prints) Vittoria had requested for her son Crown Prince Cosimo, including humanist and scientific books, etchings, wigs, hats, a sword, Spanish wax, and even an iron. These objects were destined not only for Vittoria and her son, but also various members of the Medici court and household, including Cosimo's new bride Princess Marguerite, and his uncle Prince Leopoldo de' Medici, the court diplomats Senatore Bali Giovanni Battista Gondi, Grand Duke Ferdinand's Secretary of State (1641-64)¹⁰⁹ - who received maps and "three large portraits of the King of France" Louis XIV - and Signor Cristoforo Buonfanti, who had been in the service of Prince Mattias de' Medici since 1640, the family retainers Isabella Fiorilli and Francesco Minacci, and nobility associated politically with the Medici such as the Cavalier Giralì and Conte Ferdinando del Maestro from Spanish-ruled Milan (who accompanied Prince Cosimo during his travels through Northern Italy in 1664¹¹⁰), as well as the "Padri Teatini" and Abbot Luigi Strozzi, the French court's ambassador in Florence. It is clear from this document, as well as the above discussion, that Vittoria della Rovere, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, mediated as international agent not only for her son, but also for many of the Medici retinue, friends and political allies in Florence and throughout Northern Italy.

Cosimo III in turn, continued Vittoria's cultural legacy and the exchange of luxury goods and artworks between Florence and France, which had flourished under his mother's entrepreneurship¹¹¹. The Grand Duke even successfully negotiated via the new Medici Ambassador in Paris, Domenico Zipolo¹¹², for French custom laws to be relaxed for these consignments, since he found that the goods, initially inspected prior to being packed in Paris, and then again in Lyon, if they were being couriered by land "oltralpe", or Marseilles if shipped by sea, were arriving in Tuscany damaged or in poor condition ("mal conditionato")¹¹³. From the 1680s, the luxury goods arriving from France intended for the Medici family and their entourage, were sealed after their initial customs inspection in Paris under

¹⁰⁸ Two of these can be identified with the pastel portraits by Robert Nantieu, the finest portrait engraver to have worked in the early modern period and a favourite of the king, depicting the French military hero Marshall Henry de la Turenne and King Louis himself, documented in Cosimo's private collection in a 1683 inventory, and now in the Uffizi deposits (nn. inv. 822, 824). These were previously believed to have been acquired by Grand Duke Cosimo himself during his trip to France in 1669-70 (see inventory entry). An unpublished letter dated 8 Jan. 1664 from Marucelli to Cerchi (ASF, MdP 6168) indicates that the Medici agent intended to personally visit Nantieu in his studio so as to obtain some of his more rare portraits directly.

¹⁰⁹ Medici Court Rolls, ASF, Manoscritti 321, 690.

¹¹⁰ See for example, the unpublished letters from Medici Spanish agent, Monsignor Giovanni Jaminez, to Alessandro Cerchi, Vittoria's secretary, re the continuing ill-health of both del Maestro and Prince Cosimo whilst at the count's home in Milan in the winter of 1664. ASF, MdP 6186, 13 & 27 Feb. and 5 March 1664. The Milanese count eventually died in late 1665

¹¹¹ Human resources were also involved in this transnational cultural exchange between Italy and France, as highlighted by the embroiderer and lacemaker "Sig.a Caterina Angiola", whose services Vittoria had engaged, offering her a position at the Florentine court as chambermaid, and whom she sent to Paris to specialise her skills. A series of letters dating from January till October 1664 reveal the increasing frustration the Grand Duchess felt, as time and time again the "Maestra" Angiola's repatriation to Florence was delayed by the young girls's need to finish her training and perfect her technique under her French "Matrona", to whom Vittoria paid a pension of 80 lire also to teach the young girl how to dress one's hair "ala mode...a sum" which Marucelli informs Cerchi "this woman considers modest compared to what she usually is paid". "Maestra" Caterina Angiola herself was provided with a 200 lire "pension" every "two trimesters" by Vittoria for the time she lived in Paris, "in a small house on the third floor", and was referred to by Marucelli as "a person dependent of the Most Serene Grand duchess" (cf. comments above at notes 52 & 53). Letter dated 25 Jan 1664, from Giovan Filippo Marucelli in Paris, to Alessandro de' Cerchi, ASF, MdP 6186.

¹¹² Domenico Zipolo, was secretary to Medici Resident Carlo Antonio Gondi, from 1671-1682, before becoming French ambassador himself (1682-89). see F. MARTELLI (ed), *Il Viaggio in Europa di Pietro Guerrini (1682-1686)*, Florence, 2005, Index of names, II, p.495.

¹¹³ See *Regolamenti presi à Parigi et Ordini dati da quei Fermieri Generali alle Dogane di Marsilia, e Lione p.che tutte le robe del Gran Duca adanti, e venenti sian lasciate passar senza aprirsi con doversi il tutto riconoscere è pagare solam:te in Parigi*, 1683, in ASF, MM 366, cc. 458-465

the Medici ambassador's supervision, and not re-opened again till they arrived safely in Florence, passing freely through customs at other French ports, untouched and intact.

Postscript: "A refined arbiter of taste and judge of delight and elegance":

Over the door of the *salone* of Vittoria's favourite residence, Villa del Poggio Imperiale, was placed an inscription dating from her renovations of the late 1680s which defines the "Principessa d'Urbino Granduchessa di Toscana Vittoria Montefeltro Della Rovere" as an "amoenitatum elegantiarumque arbitra"¹¹⁴. Vittoria, now approaching her 65th year, intentionally has herself remembered in this "locus amoena" which she has constructed for herself and her family, for being a "refined judge of all things delightful and elegant"¹¹⁵. The example today presented of Vittoria della Rovere, Grand Duchess of Tuscany, as a transnational cultural broker, a cultivated patron of the arts, and discerning consumer of luxury goods, reveals how women, especially elite women with position and wealth, could be counted amongst the most avant-garde arbiters of public taste and significant shapers of humanist culture during the early modern period¹¹⁶. In fact, historically, the first person to put together a major collection of art works by the leading artists of the day, the antecedent of the great private collections of the 17th and 18th centuries, was a woman, Isabelle d'Este Gonzaga, Marchioness of Mantua. It was also a woman, the last member of the Medici dynasty, Vittoria's grand-daughter Anna Maria Luisa, whom she raised and educated¹¹⁷ after her mother Marguerite Louise d'Orleans returned to France, who continued Vittoria's legacy as inspired patron of the arts, ensuring through her Family Pact of 1737, that the family's vast artistic and cultural patrimony was not dispersed after her death in 1743. Anna Luisa bequeathed all to the following generation of Grand Dukes of the House of Lorraine, on the proviso that these Medici luxury goods (which included paintings, sculpture, objets d'art, pietre dure, furniture, jewellery and so on) never leave the city of Florence, that they would remain with the Tuscan people¹¹⁸. It is thanks to Anna Luisa's magnanimous gesture that we can all still see today in the public

¹¹⁴ G. PIERACCINI, *La Stirpe...cit.*, II, 506.

¹¹⁵ My thanks to Professor Constant Mews for his kind assistance in the translation of this latin phrase.

¹¹⁶ In my ARC study, I contend that the women, perhaps even more so than the men of these early modern Italian courts, were the driving force behind much of the state's cultural and diplomatic patronage, thereby challenging traditional historiography and art historical views that men, such as the more well-known Medici patrons Lorenzo "the Magnificent" and Cardinal Leopoldo, were the sole creators, promoters and cultural custodians of Western European Civilization.

¹¹⁷ Vittoria affectionately referred to her young charge as "Luisa mia fanciulla". See ASF, MdP, 6174: *Minute di Lettere della Gran Duchessa Vittoria della Rovere, 1664-1666*, letter to Christina Dudley Paleotti, Duchess of Northumberland, Florence 14 April 1665

¹¹⁸ Article three of the Convention between the Electress Palatine and the first Grand Duke of the Hapsburg-Lorraines, Francesco Stefano, stipulated that the new reigning dynasty was to neither move "*nor remove from the Capital of the Grand ducal State...Galleries, Paintings, Statues, Libraries, Jewels and other precious objects...of the succession of His Serene Grand Duke*", so that they could remain "*as ornament of the State, for Public utility and to attract the curiosity of Foreigners*" (the document is published in the Appendix of S. CASCIU, "Principessa di gran saviezza" in S. CASCIU (ed.), *La Principessa Saggia: l'eredità di Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici Elettrice Palatina*, Livorno, 2006, pp. 30-57. Unfortunately, the Family Pact was not strictly adhered to, some of the patrimony dispersed by the incoming Lorraine-Hapsburg rulers. Much more was also confiscated during the Napoleonic sackings at the end of the C18th (see S. BERTELLI, "Palazzo Pitti"...cit., p.57). Nothing remains, for example, of the magnificent costumes and clothing accessories that I have been examining here, nor belonging to any other Medici women. The only extant examples in the Pitti Galleria del Costume are the tattered remains of Eleonora de Toledo and Cosimo I's burial clothes. In recompense we still have the Medici portraits through which we can admire the finery of the costumes so beautifully rendered by Sustermans and other court portraitists, scattered in collections, both public and private, in Florence and beyond.

galleries of Florence, the Uffizi and Pitti, a part of all that the Medici collectors, patrons and matrons had commissioned and acquired over three centuries, thereby establishing what is perhaps the first public collection, forerunner of the present day state museums.

In fact, it was thanks to Medici women, that some of the more important artistic figures and cultural advisors of the day were introduced to their courts (Artemisia Gentileschi - Cristina di Lorena; Philipp Hainhofer and Justus Sustermans - Maria Maddalena d'Austria; Elisabetta Sirani - Margherita de' Medici and Vittoria della Rovere; Giovanna Garzoni - Cristina di Savoia and Vittoria della Rovere; Luca Giordano - Vittoria della Rovere), that palaces and villas were built and refurbished (Pitti Palace - Eleonora de Toledo; Villa del Poggio Imperiale - Maria Maddalena d'Austria and Vittoria della Rovere), and that female conservatories, academies and colleges flourished (Villa la Quiete - Cristina di Lorena and Vittoria della Rovere; Ursuline College, Piacenza - Margherita de' Medici; *Le Assicurate*, Siena - Vittoria della Rovere). If we acknowledge these women's significant contribution to the arts and education and their formation of social and cultural policies that shaped early modern public taste and sensibilities, as historians are now doing, then we begin to see that the cultural landscape of western European society, traditionally considered to be constructed and dominated by male elites, indeed takes on a radically different topography and gendered dimension.

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