QUEENSHIP AND POWER

Queenship and Counsel in Early Modern Europe

Edited by

Helen Matheson-Pollock,
Joanne Paul
and Catherine Fletcher

Queenship and Power

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Helen Matheson-Pollock • Joanne Paul
Catherine Fletcher
Editors

Queenship and Counsel in Early Modern Europe

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Editors
Helen Matheson-Pollock
University College London
London, UK

Joanne Paul
University of Sussex
Brighton, UK

Catherine Fletcher
Swansea University
Swansea, UK

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Notes on Contributors

Michelle L. Beer is an independent scholar and part-time lecturer living and working in the San Francisco Bay area. She earned her Ph.D. in history from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and she is currently working on her first monograph, *Queenship at the Renaissance Courts of Britain: Catherine of Aragon and Margaret Tudor, 1503–1533*, which will be published as part of the Royal Historical Society's *Studies in History* series. Her work focuses on the creation of queenly identity, authority and power and the thematic connections between queenship at the English and Scottish royal courts during the early sixteenth century.

Susan Broomhall is Professor of History at The University of Western Australia, where she specialises in the history of women, gender and emotions in early modern France. She has published most recently (with Jacqueline Van Gent) *Dynastic Colonialism: Gender, Materiality and the early modern House of Orange-Nassau* (Routledge, 2016) and *Gender, Power and Identity in the Early Modern House of Orange-Nassau* (Ashgate, 2016). She currently holds an Australian Research Council award through which she is researching emotions in the letters of Catherine de' Medici, with an edited collection, *Women and Power at the French Court, 1483–1563,* forthcoming from Amsterdam University Press. She is undertaking, with Carolyn James and Lisa Mansfield, an Australian Research Council project, "Gendering the Italian Wars."

Hannah Coates is a historian of early modern political culture, with a particular interest in rhetoric and political argument and in the relationships between the constituent parts of early modern Britain and Ireland. She has

recently completed her PhD, 'Sir Francis Walsingham and Mid-Elizabethan Political Culture', at the University of Leeds.

Catherine Fletcher is Associate Professor in History and Heritage at Swansea University. She is the author of two books on early modern diplomacy: *Our Man in Rome: Henry VIII and his Italian Ambassador* (Bodley Head, 2012) and *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome: The Rise of the Resident Ambassador* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). Her current research concerns politics and material culture in the period of the Italian Wars, 1494–1559. She has written a biography of Alessandro de' Medici, *The Black Prince of Florence* (Bodley Head, 2016) and is now working on the early history of the handgun.

Alexandra Nancy Johnson is a doctoral candidate at the University of Edinburgh. She is working on the court and household of Mary Queen of Scots and her current research focuses on the politics of access at Holyrood Palace during the sixteenth century. Her other publications include "Mary Stuart's inner chamber at Holyrood, as an embodiment of power", in Krista de Jonge et al. (eds.), *The Interior as an Embodiment of Power: The Image of the Prince and its Spatial Setting, 1400–1700* (PALATIUM, forthcoming) and "Mary Stuart's Holyrood state apartments: performance of ceremonial ritual", *Rituals of Power: The Ceremonies for Courts and States from the Late Medieval Period to the Modern Era* (Warsaw, forthcoming).

Katarzyna Kosior is a historian of early modern Europe, particularly France and Poland-Lithuania, specialising in the culture and politics of royal courts, ceremony, diplomacy and gender. She is currently an honorary fellow at Durham University and working on her book, the first work to compare the Polish and French ceremonies accompanying royal weddings, coronations and childbirth, for Palgrave's 'Queenship and Power' series.

Helen Matheson-Pollock is an Honorary Research Associate at University College London. She has published on the rise of the female courtier in mid-Tudor England, Elizabethan female courtiers as diplomatic agents (Brill, 2014) and the question of whether women had a Renaissance (*Journal of Early Modern Women*, 2013). She is currently working on a monograph arguing for Elisabeth Parr, marchioness of Northampton, as the idealised female courtier.

Susanna Niiranen is a Senior Researcher at the Department of History and Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her publications concern various aspects of medieval and early modern literature, medicine, gender, vernacularisation and transmission of knowledge. In 2015–16 she worked for the ERC-project "The Jagiellonians. Dynasty, memory, identity", affiliated with the University of Oxford, UK, where she investigated Catherine Jagiellon as a member of the Jagiellonian dynasty in Sweden. She is currently participating in an international book historical project working on late medieval and early modern libraries.

Joanne Paul is Lecturer in Early Modern History at the University of Sussex. She has written widely on counsel in Early Modern England, including a forthcoming monograph, *Counsel and Command in Early Modern English Thought* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming) and articles on "Counsel, Command and Crisis" in *Hobbes Studies* (2015) and "The Best Counsellors are the Dead: Counsel and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*" in *Renaissance Studies* (2015). She has also published a monograph on *Thomas More* (Polity, 2016) and is working on a book on the Dudley family (Michael Joseph, Penguin, 2020).

John Walters is a Visiting Lecturer in the Department of English at Indiana University, Bloomington. His research examines the literature of counsel in England during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, exploring the efforts of authors such as Spenser, Donne, and Thomas Elyot to re-imagine the acts of reading and writing as methods for counseling a variety of publics in ethical, political, and religious virtue. His article "Human, All Too Human: Spenser and the Dangers of Irish Civilization" was published in *Spenser Studies* in 2016.

Anna Whitelock is a Reader in Early Modern History at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her research focuses on monarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She is the award winning author of *Mary Tudor; England's First Queen* (Bloomsbury, 2009) and *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court* (Bloomsbury, 2014). She co-edited *Tudor Queenship: The Reigns of Mary I and Elizabeth I* (Palgrave, 2010). She is currently writing a book on James I and Jacobean politics.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Helen Matheson-Pollock, Joanne Paul, and Catherine Fletcher

Political theory and political reality were forced into an awkward encounter across the courts of Europe in the early modern period. The disjuncture between a theory of political counsel predicated on male participants and a political reality of female political actors—due to an unprecedented number of Queens regnant and other powerful women in the early modern period—requires scholarly scrutiny. Although the topic has been studied with reference to individual queens, this collection represents the first attempt to study the relationship between queenship and counsel from a pan-European perspective.

H. Matheson-Pollock (✉)
University College London, London, UK

J. Paul
University of Sussex, Brighton, UK
e-mail: j.paul@sussex.ac.uk

C. Fletcher
Swansea University, Swansea, UK
e-mail: c.l.fletcher@swansea.ac.uk

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For centuries before the period in question here, counsel had been an essential part of European political thinking.[1] Medieval theory placed it into the hands of the politically disengaged philosopher—Aristotle serving as the model[2]—but also made it the political right of the noble class, as a means of ensuring that they were given a voice in the decisions of the state.[3] When this right was not respected, monarchs could be justifiably overthrown, as was the case with Richard II—Richard the "redeless" (or adviceless)—in England in 1399.[4] With the spread of Renaissance humanism, philosopher was married with courtier in the crafting of a new kind of counsellor, who tempered truthful advice with an awareness of *decorum*, as evidenced in Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528; English translation 1561). Such a figure ought to combine "knoweleage of the truth" with "Courtliness" so "In the wise maye he leade him, throughe the toughe way of vertue (as it were) deckynge yt aout with boowes to shadowe yt and strawinge it over wyth sightlye flouers".[5] A similar sentiment is expressed in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), through the character of Morus, who recommends an "indirect approach" and a "more civil philosophy" (*philosophia ciuilior*)[6] "that takes its cue, adapts itself to the drama in hand and acts its part neatly and appropriately" or "*cum decoro*".[7]

By the middle of the sixteenth century, however, such a figure became the object of deep suspicion. The reason was the rise of Machiavellianism—a political perspective based on, though not always faithful to, the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli, primarily *Il Principe* (written in 1513 and published posthumously in 1532). Machiavelli reversed the humanist model of counsel, in which the prince is "led" or "instructed" by his counsellor, instead suggesting that "it is an infallible rule that a prince who is not himself wise cannot be soundly advised, unless he happens to put himself in the hands of a man who is very able and controls everything" in which case the prince "would not last long, because such a governor would soon deprive him of his state".[8] Rhetoric, the tool of the humanist counsellor, was especially distrusted for its ability to "move" or manipulate the emotions of the hearer. In such a case, who truly ruled: prince or counsellor? For this reason, the middle of the century onwards saw an increase in the recommendation of books of history as counsel/counsellors, as well as counsellors who simply related the lessons of such books. Hence the popular maxim "the best counsellors are the dead", for "the penne is of a more free condition then the tongue".[9] In the later sixteenth century, the rise of Reason of State literature—a phenomenon first described in print by Giovanni Botero in 1589—meant that the attention shifted to the

"observations" of neighbouring states, including their geographical positions, policies and "interests" with the aim of advancing one's own state interest over that of the others. It was, in short, a far cry from the virtuous courtiers of the humanist tradition and began to look much more like the realist political "science" of the modern period.

In the middle of the century, these changes in the discourse of counsel collided with an evolving political reality: the accession of several queens regnant (including Mary and Elizabeth Tudor of England and Mary, Queen of Scots), the rising power of Catherine de' Medici in France, and significant roles for women (Margaret of Austria and Margaret of Parma) as governors of parts of the Holy Roman Empire. The discourse of political counsel, in all of its forms, was based on the participation of men, both as counsellors and the counselled.[10] Women were not only thought of as external to the political sphere, but also were not seen to have the requisite skills to give political counsel, and thus their counsel was largely feared and rejected.[11]

In the humanist tradition, counsel was meant to impart reason, and prudence was the primary virtue associated with the counsellor. Women were almost consistently thought to lack both.[12] Partly, this was because they could not possibly have the political experience requisite for such a virtue—women end up excluded from politics because they had been excluded from politics—but it also had to do with a long-standing tradition of seeing women's advice on many matters as irrational, self-interested and dangerous. One of the best known rejections of women's counselling abilities and activities was provided by John Knox in 1558 as a reaction to what he saw as the failing state of Europe. According to Knox, women's

> sight in civile regiment, is but blindness: their strength, weaknes: their counsel, foolishenes … Nature I say, doth paynt them furthe to be weake, fraile, impatient, feble and foolishe: and experience hath declared them to be unconstant, variable, cruelle and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment.[13]

Knox's perspective that women lacked the spirit and discipline for counsel reflected the historical perspective that arguably dated from St Paul. As the discourse of counsel shifted across the sixteenth century from humanism to Machiavellianism to Reason of State, women's counsel was further mistrusted and excluded, as many of the contributions to this volume will show.

Furthermore, throughout the early modern period, counsel was often presented figuratively as the female counterpart to male sovereignty.[14] The most famous and explicit example of this is in the work of Francis Bacon, who in his essay on counsel writes

> … they say Iupiter did marrie Metis (which signifieth Counsell.) … shee conceiu'd by him, and was with childe, but Iupiter suffered her not to stay till shee brought fourth, but eate her vp; whereby hee became with child and was deliuered of Pallas, armed out of his head. Which montrous fable containeth a secret of Empire: How Kings are to make vse of their Counsell of state.[15]

Female counsel was married to male sovereignty, with sovereignty the superior, but this was all figurative; women were not meant to be any part of this process.

Yet, as this volume shows, they were participants in the complex interplay between counsel and sovereignty. This volume includes essays analyzing more than 300 years of European royal history through the lens of the relationship between queenship and counsel. The study of queens and queenship, alongside that of women and early modern politics, has been a lively field of research in recent years. Works on individual queens are too numerous to list but scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of considering all queens—consort, regnant and dowager—as political agents with significant roles to play in governance and diplomacy.

England's queens regnant, Mary and Elizabeth Tudor, have been the focus of particular attention. In a volume celebrating the quincentenary of Mary Tudor as England's first ruling queen, Joanne Paul highlighted the "conciliar compromise" reached by Mary as she navigated her unprecedented position.[16] Valerie Schutte has published on *Mary I and the Art of Book Dedications*, noting the advice given to Mary I in dedicatory epistles.[17] Anna Whitelock and Alice Hunt's collection *Tudor Queenship* analyzes the dynamics of counsel in the reigns of these queens; while limited to that context, the collection as a whole offered early discussion on several topics addressed in the present volume.[18] Worthy of particular note is Ralph Houlbrooke's essay asking "What happened to Mary's councillors?", which highlights Elizabeth's own attitude that a multitude of councillors "make rather discord and confusion than good counsel".[19]

Queens regnant, however, are far from the whole story. The *Marrying Cultures* project has turned attention to the role of foreign born consorts as "agents, instruments or catalysts of cultural and dynastic transfer in

early modern Europe (1500–1800)".[20] This ongoing research seeks to explore cultural interplay across shifting political borders, in the process generating new insight into the roles consorts played. The work of the Royal Studies Network via the *Royal Studies Journal* and the *Queenship and Power* series has significantly advanced the study of queens and their queenships. Elena Woodacre's collection on *Queenship in the Mediterranean* highlights the politicized nature of queenship in the period c. 1100–1500[21] while Woodacre and Carey Fleiner's volume *Royal Mothers and their Ruling Children* spans an even broader period of time and highlights the extent to which royal women could leverage their motherhood and presume to advise and influence their reigning offspring.[22]

Wider-ranging studies of noblewomen, political culture and the royal household offer further insights on which the present volume builds. Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben's collection *The Politics of the Female Household* emphasizes the importance of a queen's female attendants to all aspects of queenship but particularly the political, making reference to royal and noble women engaging in conciliar activity: Helen Graham-Matheson highlights the figure of the "counselloress" amongst Elizabeth Tudor's female courtiers; Una McIlvenna refers to an incident of Catherine de' Medici desiring to counsel a lieutenant general; and Katrin Keller presents a case-study of Viennese high stewardess Maria Elisabeth Wagensberg, who used her influence at the court of Empress Eleonora to place her son-in-law in a position as councillor.[23] Anne McLaren's *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I* and Natalie Mears's *Queenship and Political Discourse in the Elizabethan Realms* examine Elizabeth's relationship with her advisers in terms of the dynamics of counsel noted above, although they make only passing mention of other female monarchs.[24] In short, there has been a growing interest in the subject of political counsel, and the acknowledgement of its awkward relationship with female rule. Article-length contributions by John Guy and Jacqueline Rose have attempted to provide surveys of counsel in the period, though, once again, solely in England.[25]

A recent major work edited by Jacqueline Rose, *The Politics of Counsel in England and Scotland, 1286–1707*,[26] takes stock of an impressively wide period and breadth of sources to construct a new framework for discussions of both the council as an institution and the discipline and activity of counsel; two contributions to the volume have particularly relevance to this collection because of their focus on Elizabeth Tudor. Through an assessment of Elizabeth I's own words, Susan Doran makes a convincing case that the Queen valued good counsel and factored it into her activity,

an argument that tallies with the findings on Elizabeth that follow below (particularly Chap. 9).[27] Paulina Kewes' essay[28] uses the concept of kingship to draw insights relating to the counsel of the Queen and the kingdom from early Elizabethan drama, findings complemented by John Walter's Chap. 10 in this volume on Spenser.

The specifically gendered dynamics of counsel have, however, received rather less attention. *Women and Tudor Tragedy: Feminizing Counsel and Representing Gender* by Allyna E. Ward examines the intersection of gender and counsel primarily within Tudor drama,[29] but its focus on ideas of queenship is limited and the geographical scope restricted to England. Recent work on gender and diplomacy has done much to point to the important role played by women in this sphere (which entailed, though was not restricted to, counsel). Much of this scholarship considers women of lower ranks than queen but its emphasis on informal practices offers methodological insights.[30] Greater work has been done on gender and counsel in the medieval period, primarily by Misty Schieberle, though often this is limited to the role female counsel plays in the private sphere, such as in the works of Rosemarie Deist and Judith Ferster.[31]

This volume offers a sampling of the rich reflections that are possible by examining the intersection between queenship and counsel in early modern Europe. Chapters consider queens as counsellors and as recipients of counsel, both from within their courts and internationally: the epilogue summarizes the findings and proposes lines for future research. The volume also places new emphasis on the nature of counsel itself. Seeking to engage with the existing scholarship, it shines a spotlight on counsel as a specific element or dimension of female rule, highlighting this key aspect of queenship and exploring the myriad ways in which queens and their counsellors engaged in the giving and receiving of counsel across the landscape of early modern Europe.

Queens enjoyed a variety of relationships of counsel. They counselled their husbands: indeed there was a certain expectation that women in dynastic marriages would act as liaison between their natal family and their husband. Queens might also counsel other rulers. This was not always as risky a position as a queen counselling her ruling husband. Francis Bacon, for instance, noted in a letter that Elizabeth I's "faithful advice, continual and earnest solicitation" to the king of France and his mother, Catherine de' Medici, "Which counsel, if it had been happily followed as it was prudently and sincerely given, France at this day had been a most flourishing kingdom, which now is a theatre of misery" (c. 1592).[32] Susanna Niiranen's

Chap. 5, however, points out the risks that ensued when a queen counselled across the confessional divide. Queens, as well, were recipients of counsel, from ministers and from courtiers. Hannah Coates' chapter sets the relationship between Elizabeth I and Sir Francis Walsingham in this context, while John Walters explores the idea of the queen as the counsellor's muse.

In the practice of counsel, women deployed a variety of strategies. Margaret of Austria, offering counsel to her father, the Emperor Maximilian, said she was prepared to give "my little opinion on this affair, not in the form of advice nor or counsel, but as some little remonstrance to render my duty as I have always done, also as a most humble daughter should do".[33] Margaret's correspondence with her father shows that she hedged her counsel around with modest allusions to her limited experience. Maximilian, however, was clear in correspondence with his son that Margaret was a good source of "advice and counsel". Other women looked to networks to support them in their counsel. The chapters by Niiranen (Chap. 5), Matheson-Pollock (Chap. 4) and Kosior (Chap. 2) emphasize the importance for queens of surrounding themselves with a group of sympathetic courtiers (male or female). These courtiers might counsel the queen and support her counsel of others by echoing it to decision-makers. Counsel might also be expressed through cultural initiatives. Whitelock shows how Anna of Denmark's masques provided the queen with a mechanism for political expression alongside counsel provided through the more traditional means of meetings with foreign ambassadors. For Mary, Queen of Scots, as Johnson shows, careful configuration of palace space helped establish her status in relation to former rebels turned counsellors. Gifts and hospitality were also important aspects of queenly counsel, as Beer shows in the case of Catherine of Aragon. Understanding political action in this broad sense, rather than only in the narrow confines of institutions, helps appreciate the full extent of queens' influence.

The extent to which queenly counsel was necessarily different from the counsel of men is a question underlying a number of the chapters. Anyone engaged in counselling a king necessarily did so from a position of inferiority: in this sense queens were no different from any other sort of counsellor. Women might lack the experience to counsel prudently on certain topics, but then so did many men. That said, a number of chapters highlight gendered strategies of counsel: the use of female networks at court, the employment of particular spaces, the privileged access that a queen enjoyed. There are a number of challenges in recovering evidence of counsel. Much advice was provided orally and survives in the written record

only at second hand or through fragmentary references. Letters provide a key source for many of the chapters but it is often necessary to read between the lines to infer when counsel may have taken place, or to rely on second-hand accounts from, for example, foreign diplomatic observers. There is a more substantive challenge, too. As Matheson-Pollock's chapter shows, the better a queen was at giving counsel, the less notice was paid to it—the less it registered as counsel—and thus the more difficult it is to recover it. Yet the chapters in this volume demonstrate that through consideration of a wider variety of sources, including literary texts, material culture and architecture, and by exploring topics such as rhetoric, relationships and performance, it is possible to infer more about the ways that queens counselled and were counselled.

This volume has been organized chronologically, while also taking into account thematic elements, including the role of queenly counsel in diplomacy, queen regents as counsellors and the performance of counsel. It opens with Katarzyna Kosior's chapter (Chap. 2) on Bona Sforza's role as counsellor in Poland, which challenges the historiographical assumption that Bona was a manipulating counsellor. Despite creating a network of courtiers and diplomats to support her political agenda, her counsel succeeded only so far as it suited the interests of her husband, Sigismund the Old. Perhaps the most famous example of a sixteenth-century queen whose interests drifted apart from those of her king was Catherine of Aragon. Her early career, however, notably her entry into England, and her delicate role as wife to first Arthur and then Henry VIII of England, as well as being a member of a powerful Spanish family is often neglected in more popular accounts. Michelle L. Beer, in Chap. 3 notes the ways in which Catherine was unusually experienced as a counsellor and diplomat, taking on the official position of ambassador on behalf of her father, Ferdinand of Aragon, in 1507, and offering him advice on relations with England. The next chapter (Chap. 4) also considers the conciliar role of a queen adrift in a foreign country along with the crucial role of female courtiers in counselling a queen; Helen Matheson-Pollock's analysis of Mary Tudor's correspondence during her brief time as Queen of France reveals her role as counsellor to Louis and his court on dealings with Mary's brother, Henry VIII. Matheson-Pollock places such a role in the context of Mary's upbringing, noting particularly the influence of Mary's mother, Elizabeth of York, and grandmother, Margaret of Beaufort, as well as the crucial role of her female household. Also responsible for diplomatic counsel was Catherine Jagiellon, Queen of Sweden, considered by

Susanna Niiranen in Chap. 5. A Catholic queen married to a Lutheran king, Catherine faced the delicate task of counselling across the confessional divide in the later sixteenth century. Like many of the queens discussed in this volume, she was less than successful, but like that of Bona Sforza her case reveals much about the role of courtiers and diplomats in supporting queenly counsel.

Catherine Fletcher and Susan Broomhall turn to the role of regents as counsellors. Fletcher revisits the "Ladies' Peace" of 1529, unique in its status as a treaty negotiated by two women, as a starting point to explore the counselling roles of its protagonists, Louise of Savoy and Margaret of Austria. Exploring Margaret's self-representation in correspondence, in Chap. 6, Fletcher argues that while the rhetoric of her counsel needs to be understood with reference to her gender, these female diplomats were in fact assessed by contemporaries in strikingly similar ways to men. Broomhall takes up the case of a later regent of France, Catherine de' Medici, in the chapter that follows (Chap. 7). She opposes existing scholarship which maintains that Catherine de' Medici wielded little power in these periods, instead mounting an argument for Catherine's increasing political involvement at this time, both giving and receiving counsel.

The final chapters examine counsel and queenship in the British Isles, focusing particularly on how counsel was framed and performed in contexts of female power. Alexandra Johnson's Chap. 8 brings reflection on the spatial to a consideration of counsel-giving, by examining the ways in which Mary, Queen of Scots created a space, Holyrood Palace, that supported her authority over unruly counsellors. It expands studies of counsel-giving to include this notion of "conciliar space", which is often overlooked. Hannah Coates in Chap. 9 examines the relationship between Elizabeth and Francis Walsingham, her principal secretary. Challenging the prevailing interpretation of their relationship as infamously stormy and unsettled, Coates suggests that it was only tempestuous when Walsingham failed to frame his advice according to established expectations of counsel, highlighting the powerful role such performative frameworks had on the realities of political processes and decision-making. Also assessing counsel in the reign of Elizabeth I, John Walters' contribution (Chap. 10) examines the way in which counsel was offered to Elizabeth through the paratexts of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. Walters suggests that the nature of Spenser's advice changes throughout the text, as he grapples with challenges to the efficacy of counsel as he writes. The volume ends with a consideration of Anna of Denmark in her role of Queen of England, and

the performance of political counsel through her court masques. Challenging a view that sees such performances as frivolity, Anna Whitelock (Chap. 11) suggests that they were instead sites of meaningful political counsel that had an influence on James I and his court. The volume ends with a short epilogue, considering the encoded and hidden nature of much of the counsel related to queenship, by Joanne Paul. Paul examines the visual tradition of counsel and queenship, and especially a frontispiece by John Dee, to think about how gendered power altered traditional expectations of good political counsel. The message of this epilogue, and perhaps this volume as a whole, is that the apparently non-political nature of much of the counsel surrounding queenship should not discount it as political counsel, but instead generate an expansion of that category.

The chapters in this collection have been gathered together with the aim of beginning to address the major lacuna in scholarship that is the neglect of women's roles in delivering and receiving counsel at early modern European courts. Queenship and counsel is a complex and nuanced subject worthy of significant critical attention and analysis. Drawing together the narratives and activity of a variety of women across the courts of Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this volume highlights the intersection between female rule and political discourse, beginning a conversation that is long overdue about the value of the relationship of queenship and counsel.

Notes

1. For a more detailed account of the changing discourse of counsel in the Early Modern period see Joanne Paul, "Counsel and Command in Anglophone Political Thought, 1485–1651" (PhD diss., Queen Mary University of London, 2013), forthcoming as a monograph with Cambridge University Press.
2. See M. A. Manzalaoui, *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
3. See John Guy, "The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England," in *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. Dale Hoak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 292–310.
4. See *Richard the Redeless, in Richard the Redeless and Mum the Sothsegger*, ed. James M. Dean (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000).
5. Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Thomas Hoby, ed. Virginia Cox (London: Everyman, 1994), 338, 299. Notably, Castiglione still holds Aristotle (as well as Plato) to be an example of such a counsellor. They both "practiced the deedes of Courtiershippe and gave them selves to

this ende, the one with the great Alexander, the other with the kynges of Sicilia" (337). This is opposed to Calisthenes, "who bicause he was a right philosopher and so sharpe a minister of the bare truth without mynglinge it with Courtlinesse, he lost his lief and profited not, but rather gave a scaundler to Alexander" (338).

6. Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. Edward Surtz and J. H. Hexter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 99. Our translation.
7. Thomas More, *Utopia*, ed. George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 34–5. Latin from Yale (1977) edition.
8. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, eds. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 82.
9. Matthew Coignet, *Politique discourses upon trueth and lying*, trans. Edward Hoby (London, 1586), 69–70. See Joanne Paul "The best counsellors are the dead: counsel and Shakespeare's *Hamlet," Renaissance Studies*, 30, no. 5 (2016): 646–665, online at: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rest.12157/full.
10. The consistent use of the male pronoun in the paragraphs above was, thus, conscious and intentional.
11. Personal counsel, on the other hand, could be seen as being the purview of women; see Rosemarie Deist, *Gender and power: counsellors and their masters in antiquity and medieval courtly romance* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003), 171, 229, 231. For female counsel in medieval literature see Deist, *Gender and power*; Misty Schieberle, *Feminized Counsel and the Literature of Advice in England, 1380–1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014). For the counsel of Pisan and Dowriche see Cary J. Nederman, "The Mirror Crack'd: The *Speculum Principum* as Political and Social Criticism in the Late Middle Ages," *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 3.3 (2008): 28–9; Mihoko Suzuki, "Warning Elizabeth with Catherine de' Medici's Example: Anne Dowriche's French Historie and the Politics of Counsel," in *The Rule of Women in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Anne J. Cruz, and Mihoko Suzuki (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 174–93.
12. Leah Bradshaw, "Political Rule, Prudence and the 'Woman Question' in Aristotle," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 3 (1991): 563–70.
13. John Knox, *The first blast of the trumpet against the monstruous regiment of women*, (Geneva: J. Poullain and A. Rebul, 1558), 9–10.
14. Schieberle, *Feminized Counsel*, 58 points out that this "marriage metaphor" had been utilized in by Ricardian poets in order to speak submissively and persuasively through female personae.
15. Francis Bacon, *Essayes* (London, 1612), 59–60.

16. Joanne Paul, "Sovereign Council or Counseled Sovereign: The Marian Conciliar Compromise," in *The Birth of a Queen: Essays on the Quincentenary of Mary I*, eds. Sarah Duncan and Valerie Schutte (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 135–53.
17. Valerie Schutte, *Mary I and the Art of Book Dedications* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
18. Alice Hunt and Anna Whitelock, eds. *Tudor Queenship: The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth* (New York: Palgrave, 2010).
19. Ralph Houlbrooke, "What happened to Mary's councillors?" in Hunt and Whitelock, *Tudor Queenship*, 210.
20. For further details see the project website: http://www.marryingcultures.eu/about.
21. Elena Woodacre, ed. *Queenship in the Mediterranean* (New York: Palgrave, 2013).
22. Elena Woodacre and Carey Fleiner, eds., *Royal Mothers and their Ruling Children: Wielding Political Authority from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era* (London: Palgrave, 2015).
23. Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben, eds., *The Politics of the Female Households: Ladies-in-Waiting Across Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Helen Graham-Matheson (now Matheson-Pollock), "Petticoats and Politics: Elisabeth Parr and Female Agency at the Early Elizabethan Court," 31–50; Una McIlvenna, "'A Stable of Whores'? The 'Flying Squadron' of Cathrine de Medici," 181–208 and Katrin Keller, "Ladies-in-Waiting at the Imperial Court of Vienna from 1550 to 1700: Structures, Responsibilities and Career Patterns," 77–98.
24. A. N. McLaren, *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Natalie Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse in the Elizabethan Realms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
25. Guy, "Rhetoric of Counsel," 292–310; Jacqueline Rose, 'Kingship and Counsel in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal* 54, no. 1 (2011), 47–71.

    Notably, the vast majority of items on this list of scholarship focuses on England, including those which look at counsel as distinct from queenship. Although the prevalence of minor and female monarchs during the sixteenth century may have placed more importance on the role of counsel in England, the discourse was by no means specific to it, and there is need for more work on its expression on the continent and, indeed, beyond. The editors are aware that this volume too exhibits a certain Anglocentric bias and is limited to Europe, though there was an effort to expand this scope. We hope that the studies presented here provide foundation for examinations of the topic in other geographical areas.
26. Jacqueline Rose, ed., *The Politics of Counsel in England and Scotland, 1286–1707* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

27. Susan Doran, "Elizabeth I and Counsel," in *The Politics of Counsel*, ed. Rose, 151–161.
28. Paulina Kewes, "Godly Queens: The Royal iconographies of Mary and Elizabeth," in *Tudor Queenship: the Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth,* eds. Alice Hunt and Anna Whitelock (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 47–62.
29. Allyna E. Ward, *Women and Tudor Tragedy: Feminizing Counsel and Representing Gender* (Plymouth: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013).
30. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James, eds. *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (London: Routledge, 2016). Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox, eds. *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Tracey Sowerby and Jan Hemmings, eds. *Practices of Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe, c. 1410–1800* (London: Routledge, 2017).
31. Schieberle, *Feminized Counsel*; Deist, *Gender and Power*; Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).
32. Francis Bacon, "Mr. Bacon's Discourse in the Praise of his Sovereign," in *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts), 134.
33. See below, Fletcher, Chap. 6.

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CHAPTER 2

Bona Sforza and the Realpolitik of Queenly Counsel in Sixteenth-Century Poland-Lithuania

Katarzyna Kosior

Women of early modern Italy are famous for being clever and devious political players on the European political scene. Catherine de' Medici, who effectively ruled France for decades, and Lucrezia Borgia, who exerted influence by marrying into the Sforza, Aragon and d'Este families, are perhaps the most famous examples. Other familiar names include Caterina Sforza, who occupied Castel Sant'Angelo after Pope Sixtus IV's death in 1484, and Isabella d'Este, known for her patronage of art and effective regency of Mantua. There is substantial English-language literature about these women, but their close relative, Bona Sforza (b. 1494–d. 1557), whose counsel and actions influenced the fate of the largest composite monarchy on the continent, remains largely obscure in English literature.[1] The only surviving child of Duke Gian Galeazzo Sforza of Milan and Duchess Isabella d'Aragona of Bari and Rossano, Bona lived with her mother under the protection of the Neapolitan Aragons following her

K. Kosior (✉)
Durham University, Durham, UK
e-mail: katarzyna.kosior@durham.ac.uk

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father's death. Her marriage to King Sigismund I the Old of Poland was arranged by the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I, as result of the alliance agreed between the Habsburgs, Sigismund and his brother, King Vladislaus II of Hungary, at the Congress of Vienna in 1515. In April 1518, Bona entered a country very different from her own, governed as an elective monarchy with a strong parliament that gave much political privilege to the nobility, who could hold the royal couple accountable for their actions.[2]

Polish historians make much of Bona's political position and often write of her in terms that might as well describe a powerful sixteenth-century man. The exhaustive interwar research of Władysław Pociecha, since augmented by Maria Bogucka, Anna Sucheni-Grabowska and my own contribution, shows Bona as a wife to a weak king and an active politician who bought the crown lands pawned to wealthy senators for royal debts to turn them into the Jagiellonian dynasty's private property, conducted wide-ranging economic reforms in Lithuania, governed her Italian duchies (Bari and Rossano) from afar and took complete charge of raising her children.[3] But even though there is much evidence of Bona's political action, such as buying lands or appointing officers, there are few documented occasions of her giving direct advice or counselling the king. Even when this evidence of Bona directly counselling her husband is lacking, historians tend to assume that she was the master-puppeteer behind Polish internal and foreign politics. The view of the Polish historians is strongly grounded in the aura of unbreakable political fortitude that surrounds the queen in reports of her contemporaries. Giovanni Marsupino, the Habsburg ambassador at the Polish court, wrote that "Dear God, talking to the old king is like talking to nobody. The king has no will of his own, he is so curbed. Bona holds everything in her hands, she alone rules the country and gives orders to everyone".[4] This chapter demonstrates that while Bona pursued a comprehensive political programme and mounted her own political faction which included some of the most powerful Polish nobles, she was only successful in implementing her political agendas insofar as it suited her husband, Sigismund the Old.

Bona's political programme had three main aims. First, she attempted to strengthen the position of the Jagiellonians as a dynasty by buying out crown lands pawned to some of the wealthiest of the realm's nobility for royal debts. But instead of returning them to the state, she converted them into the private property of the Jagiellonians, which was seen by the republican Polish nobility as an attempt to introduce absolute monarchy.

Part of this agenda was also the manipulation of the elective system to solicit the election and coronation of the couple's son, Sigismund August, to the Polish throne in 1530 while his father was still alive. Strengthening of the dynasty at home was connected to consolidating its position in the European context. The dynastic expansion of the Jagiellonians was directed towards the Hungarian and Czech territories, where it collided with the dynastic politics of the German Habsburgs. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the kings of Poland (Alexander I Jagiellon until 1506, then followed by Sigismund I the Old) and Hungary (Vladislaus II Jagiellon) were brothers, but by the end of the sixteenth century Hungary was under control of the Holy Roman Emperors. The Vienna Congress in 1515 between the Jagiellonian brothers and Emperor Maximilian I was a defeat for Jagiellonian diplomacy. Due to the dynastic marriages agreed during the meeting, the Jagiellonians virtually gave up control over Hungary and Bohemia's future. The marriage between Bona and Sigismund was an indirect result of the congress, as she was Maximilian's niece by his marriage to Bianca Maria Sforza. Bona defied expectations to become a quasi-ambassador for her natal family at the Polish court, which was the traditional role fulfilled, for example, by Catherine of Aragon at Henry VIII's court (see Michelle L. Beer's, Chap. 3 in this volume). Despite her Habsburg connections, Bona understood that Poland must counter the growing influence of the Habsburgs in the region or be swallowed by the empire. She thought that Poland should fight the growing influence of the Habsburgs by pursuing two of her other aims—a strong alliance with France sealed with a dynastic marriage and the provision of support to the anti-Habsburg faction in Hungary led by the Zapolya family.

By demonstrating how Bona's political action was dependent on the success of her counsel, this chapter offers a more nuanced analysis of Bona's political activities and the dynamic between the royal couple. Ultimately even Bona, despite her undoubted sway, was hindered by gender constraints. Pursuing her ends often exposed her vulnerability and it is not always easy to distinguish the counsel she offered her husband from her efforts to solicit his approval for her political projects. Despite Bona's political fortitude, the historical evidence suggests that her husband often refused her wishes outright, or that she had to revise her plans on the basis of a significant compromise. This was all complicated by Bona's refusal to constrain her counsel and the manner of giving it by the prescriptions of her gendered office. She notoriously disregarded the tenets of queenship as

they were epitomized in the coronation ritual, particularly in the symbolism of the queen's regalia.[5] The Polish coronation book, according to which Bona was crowned, states that the crown symbolized her new status as "the consort to royal power" and her duty to provide "good counsel".[6] "Good" meant guarded by virtue, meaning high moral standards, propriety and goodness, as befitted the "guardian of humility and custom" rather than practically beneficial. The restrictions on how the queen was permitted to give counsel were gendered and dominated by the concept of intercession, but in practice the lives of consorts were often fraught with political challenges that could not be resolved with feminine virtue and mitigation. The world of early modern high politics favoured the devious over the meek. This was linked to the masculine virtue conceptualized by Machiavelli as *virtù*, or the ability to "do wrong, and use it and not use it according to necessity".[7] Early modern virtue was subject to a gendered double standard, but not all queens, including Bona, would allow themselves to be ruled by it. This chapter thus examines the realpolitik of queenly counsel as practical or even self-interested rather than guided by ideals of queenly virtue and as an instrumental tool in carrying out the queen's political plans, if only she could influence and compromise with her husband.

Throughout Bona's time as the queen of Poland, numerous reports concerning the influence of her counsel survive, written by her enemies as well as supporters. In April 1519, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, who travelled with Bona to Poland for her wedding in April 1518, wrote to Alfonso I of Ferrara, then Lucrezia Borgia's husband, that: "Everyone wants to be of service to the queen, expecting much good from her favour, because the king displays an extraordinary love for her and she never speaks on someone's behalf in vain, but he always fulfils her wishes most attentively".[8] This was a golden period in the royal couple's marital life. Bona had just given birth to the couple's first daughter, Isabella, and was soon to conceive their first son, Sigismund August. Bona was not lax in her wifely duties and she took good care of Sigismund's daughters from his first marriage to Barbara Zapolya as well as his illegitimate daughter, Beata Kościelecka, from his relationship with Katarzyna Telniczanka.[9] The king was so pleased with his new wife that in 1519, a year after the wedding, he made her a gift of the duchies of Pińsk and Kobryń to use for life. He continued to endow her with, for example, Sielce in 1521 and castle Teteryn in 1523.[10] Two factors were key in Bona's initial success: the strength of the couple's relationship and Sigismund's amenable character.