

Gender and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1400–1800



Edited by **JAMES DAYBELL**
and **SVANTE NORRHEM**

ROUTLEDGE

GENDER AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE, 1400–1800

Gender and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1400–1800 investigates the gendered nature of political culture across early modern Europe by exploring the relationship between gender, power, and political authority and influence. This collection offers a rethinking of what constituted ‘politics’ and a reconsideration of how men and women operated as part of political culture. It demonstrates how underlying structures could enable or constrain political action, and how political power and influence could be exercised through social and cultural practices.

The book is divided into four parts – diplomacy, gifts and the politics of exchange; socio-economic structures; women and gendered politics at court; and voting and political representations – each of which looks at a series of interrelated themes exploring the ways in which political culture is inflected by questions of gender. In addition to examples drawn from across Europe, including Austria, the Dutch Republic, the Italian States and Scandinavia, the volume also takes a transnational comparative approach, crossing national borders, while the concluding chapter, by Merry Wiesner-Hanks, offers a global perspective on the field and encourages comparative analysis both chronologically and geographically.

As the first collection to draw together early modern gender and political culture, this book is the perfect starting point for students exploring this fascinating topic.

James Daybell is Professor of Early Modern British History at Plymouth University. His previous publications include *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512–1635* (2012) and (as editor) *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450–1700* (2004).

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For Anne Laurence

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CONTENTS

<i>Contributors</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>Conventions</i>	<i>xvi</i>
<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	<i>xvii</i>
Introductions	1
1 Introduction: rethinking gender and political culture in early modern Europe <i>James Daybell and Svante Norrhem</i>	3
2 Gender, politics and archives in early modern England <i>James Daybell</i>	25
PART I	
Diplomacy, gifts and the politics of exchange	47
3 The gendered power of porcelain among early modern European dynasties <i>Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent</i>	49
4 Diplomats and kin networks: diplomatic strategy and gender in Sweden, 1648–1740 <i>Peter Lindström and Svante Norrhem</i>	68

PART II

Socio-economic structures, gender and politics 87

- 5 The opportunity to profit from favourable circumstances: a widow's benefits of holding crown fiefs in Norway in the 1520s 89
Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl
- 6 Regional and family networks: the hidden role of sisters and sisters-in-law 107
Barbara Harris
- 7 Widows' political strategies in traditional communities: negotiating marital status and authority in eighteenth-century France 123
Elise Dermineur

PART III

Women and gendered politics at court 141

- 8 'For ye, young men, show a womanish soul, yon maiden a man's': perspectives on female monarchy in Elizabeth's first decade 143
Victoria Smith
- 9 Strategies for survival: women at the court of the Medici (1565–1578) 158
Sarah Bercusson

PART IV

Voting and political representation 177

- 10 Gender, place and power: controverted elections in late Georgian England 179
Elaine Chalus
- 11 Gender, politics and voting in early modern Scandinavia 197
Peter Lindström, Hilde Sandvik, and Åsa Karlsson Sjögren

CONCLUSION	
Global perspectives	215
12 Gender and cultural power in global perspective <i>Merry Wiesner-Hanks</i>	217
<i>Index</i>	237

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JRTD and SN

CONVENTIONS

Original spelling and punctuation have been retained throughout in quotations from manuscripts. Insertions are indicated by upward arrows ^{^^}. Modern translations of eccentric spellings have been provided in square brackets. Roman numerals are retained in quotations, but otherwise supplied in Arabic form.

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

7.1	Local custom versus legal innovation in the division of community property in eighteenth-century Delle and Florimont	131
9.1	A Select Genealogy of the House of Medici	159

Tables

4.1	Votes cast in Privy Council 25 February 1735	80
6.1	The Scrope Sisters and their immediate families	109
6.2	Mary Scrope's Marriages	113
6.3	Anne Harling Chamberlain Wingfield Scrope (d. 1498)	116
11.1	Age swearing the oath to the constitution	213
11.2	Percentage of men categorised as farmers at three ages in the 1801 census of Norway	213

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Introductions

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1

INTRODUCTION

Rethinking gender and political culture in early modern Europe

James Daybell and Svante Norrhem

This book investigates the gendered nature of political culture across early modern Europe for the period 1400 to 1800. In so doing, it looks at the relationship between gender, power and political authority and influence, and contributes to a rethinking of what constituted ‘politics’, and a reconsideration of how men and women operated as part of political culture. At the heart of the volume is an awareness of the family or household as a basic political unit which allowed women to have informal (and sometimes formal) access to power and to play important socio-cultural roles in politics. In a society where birth was central and inheritance systems integral to power, it is perhaps worth noting that the family also functioned as a basic political unit for men, who additionally operated in spheres often closed to their female counterparts. At a very basic level, political culture is defined here as the prevailing conditions – social, economic and cultural – that governed the sorts of agency possible at a given time. We are thus concerned with underlying structures that enabled or constrained political action, as well as with social and cultural practices, the ways and modes in which political power and influence might be achieved. Political culture is thus broadly defined and extends far beyond any reductive sense of politics as represented by male-dominated political institutions, war and statecraft. Part of this study is a reconceptualising, for example, of power and diplomacy, to incorporate soft cultural and economic power, and recognise the importance of leading political families across Europe which created conditions that allowed not only male, but also female influence to flourish.

Central to the book is an excavation of early modern European political culture from a gendered perspective to uncover the kinds of differentiated roles undertaken by men and women; recognising the political contribution of social activities such as marriage-arranging, placing children in other households, gift-giving, sociability, networking, hospitality and letter-writing; the uncovering of gendered spaces, socio-economic structures and the ideas and ideologies that permitted or inhibited women’s political involvement in particular. These interlocking themes

are encapsulated in many ways through an example such as the Elizabethan noblewoman Lady Penelope Rich (1563–1607), who through her familial and court networks (and in many ways her unique and dazzling personality) was an expert operator well-versed in the political culture of the period.¹ Representative of her political agency is the role that she played in 1589 in making overtures to James VI of Scotland on behalf of her brother Robert Devereux, second earl of Essex and his friends at a time when it was thought that the current and unmarried, heirless sovereign Elizabeth I was not long for this world. During this time, Lady Rich secretly corresponded with the Scottish King through the auspices of Richard Douglas (nephew of the Scottish ambassador to England, Archibald Douglas) and Jean Hotman, a former secretary of the earl of Leicester (himself her stepfather), who acted as an emissary. The weekly letters written in secret code – Lady Rich using the name ‘Ryalta’ – were on Essex’s behalf and addressed to Douglas to be passed onto James VI, who ‘commended much the fineness of her wit, the invention and well writing’. Her role in opening up informal diplomatic channels with Elizabeth’s eventual successor was perhaps aided by the fact that she was a woman, and could thus operate in a way that if undertaken by a man might occasion charges of treason.² The whole episode, however, failed and James lost interest when Douglas, whose credit had always been poor with the Scottish king, proved indiscrete and William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Elizabeth I’s chief minister, soon learned of the moves from his agent in Edinburgh, Thomas Fowler.³ While the escapade was without success, it nonetheless illustrates to good effect the way in which Lady Rich interceded in politics at the very highest level: as a woman she could act as a political intermediary, was asked to do so by her brother, and this mediation was accepted by James (at least at first).

This example of Lady Rich’s covert correspondence with James VI of Scotland highlights not only the gendered practise of diplomacy – themes at the heart of the chapters in this present volume by Broomhall and Van Gent, and Lindström and Norrhem – but also the need to reconceptualise diplomatic activity for the early modern period, in order to recognise the significance of informal channels of communication, the political potential of familial and kinship networks to ambassadors and the degree to which women as well as men might act as important conduits where more formal (and male) diplomatic links might encounter censure. Letter-writing and gifts taking manifold forms (such as material objects, offices, honours, subsidies and other perquisites) were a key part of political culture of the period across European states in opening up links and fostering networks. Crucial to what might be described as Lady Rich’s ‘political potency’ were the socio-economic structures that conditioned her social position, and in many ways undercut the harsher prescripts of patriarchal thought which constrained female action. As the daughter of Walter Devereux, first earl of Essex and his wife, Lettice (née Knollys), later countess of Leicester, and as sister of Robert, earl of Essex, Penelope Rich enjoyed powerful family connections. From 1581, she was a Maid of Honour, which generated further political networks at Elizabeth’s court.⁴ These important contacts allowed her to act as a political intermediary, operating through her brother and influential

court contacts such as Lord Burghley, Sir Robert Cecil and Sir Julius Caesar in patronage affairs that include requests for male spaces, such as military posts, as well as offices, knighthoods and wardships.⁵ The fact that her brother was the queen's favourite (an informal male socio-political role) perhaps also allowed Lady Rich to flout gendered behavioural norms and enter into a public affair with Sir Charles Blount, later Baron Mountjoy and earl of Devonshire (1563–1606), from which relationship issued six children who were brought up alongside the offspring that she had by her husband Robert Rich, who appears to have long accepted their peculiar marital situation, which raises issues of masculinity and sexuality.⁶ Lady Rich's perceived influence transcended Essex's tragic death, and her fall from favour due to her involvement in his ill-fated coup d'état in 1601, when he and his followers attempted to march on London. Her standing at court was restored under James VI and I; she accompanied Queen Anna from the border and was awarded the precedence of the earldom of Essex.⁷ Sir Humphrey Ferrers also considered Penelope Rich to have sufficient power to ask her to move the king or queen on his behalf for a barony.⁸ Such activities indicate the suppleness of her political influence, and the degree to which early modern women might on occasion act independently outside of family networks. At the root of Lady Rich's political experience lay a blistering and mesmerising personality, as well as an able intellect, sharpened by an extensive education. She was a skilled linguist and well-versed in the literary arts and sophisticated forms of courtly writing indispensable in a patronage society; she operated within a literary milieu, had dedicated to her a range of works, and was familiar with the peculiarities of manuscript culture and enjoyed close connections with those active in printing. She also enjoyed a wide-ranging correspondence with writers across Europe; and as we have seen conducted secret correspondence (employing ciphers and codes) and utilised her letters to patronage and diplomatic ends.⁹ In many ways, these educational characteristics mark her out as in some ways exceptional, but far from unique, during the early modern period.

More broadly though, throughout the period, the dominance of the household and the court – as loci of sociability and political contact – gave women access to political arenas and created distinctly female political spaces. It was a political culture based on patronage systems, where interpersonal relationships between monarchs and other heads of state, and members of the ruling elite and office-holders and their families, meant that access and face-to-face contact was of paramount importance. Sociability rituals therefore provided a key mechanism for female (as well as male) to advance political agendas. Throughout her life, Lady Rich maintained a presence at court, as a Maid of Honour under Elizabeth I, and later through contact with Anna of Denmark, consort to King James. At the outset of James's reign she participated in Queen Anna's court masques (alongside male and female courtiers), which were themselves the site of informal diplomatic engagements.¹⁰ Networking and occasions of sociability are further detectible in Lady Rich's involvement in the abortive Essex rising of 1601; she was accused of being one of the chief conspirators, having dined with the leaders the night before at Essex House and fetched the earl of Bedford on the morning of the revolt.¹¹ Her role in the affair is in many

ways difficult to reconstruct fully, partly because such activities are by their very nature informal and clandestine, and because they are often conducted in person, in private they therefore often go unrecorded in the historical record. What survives then is only fleeting glimpses of female agency reconstructed through fragmentary documentation, our interpretation of which is further complicated by the rhetorical gestures that enact the prescribed gender roles of the participants. In the aftermath of his trial, the earl of Essex allegedly accused his sister of taunting him as a coward in the eyes of his friends and followers – a direct challenge to active masculinity – while Lady Rich in her own defence downplayed her involvement, arguing that she was more a slave, counteracting the claims against her with stereotypical images of female domesticity. The degree to which the reassertion of gender norms threw a veil over Lady Rich, masking the true extent of her involvement in the turbulent politics at the end of Elizabeth's reign is unclear. However, it is suggestive of the ways in which women might operate within a political culture that did not necessarily and publicly acknowledge women's power and agency, in ways that were differentiated from their male counterparts. After a brief imprisonment and questioning by the Privy Council – not least for her part in composing an incendiary letter addressed to Queen Elizabeth that circulated widely in manuscript and print under Lady Rich's signature – she was released, while her brother and co-conspirators were executed for treason.¹² The political activities of Lady Rich within the wider context of the Essex circle highlight many of the aspects of the gendered nature of political culture (especially in this case at court) in the early modern Europe with which this volume is above all concerned. Through a series of detailed case studies the volume argues for the importance of various gendered spaces for political activities. Within the household it highlights the importance of family and kinship contacts as key networks through which men and women could operate, as part of coordinated strategies, and the degree to which diplomacy and gift-giving were gendered rituals and practices. Finally, the book emphasises the significance of patterns of landholding and inheritance, as well as how gender assumptions shaped men's and women's political involvement, including in the area of voting.

Gender and political culture in context

In turning to outline the main historiographical developments in the area of gender and political culture, Merry Wiesner-Hanks has helpfully pointed at three successive stages in the development of research in the history of women and political agency. The first concentrating on the formal level of politics, which in practice narrowly focussed on studies of female rulers or their equivalents; the second, looking at informal power structures and thus broadening the concept of politics. This included women who moved in circles where they had access to people, both men and women, with formal power; the third stage defines politics as a power relationship. This is not only between ruler and subject, but also in many other human relations, not least between men and women.¹³ Gender history is by now a well-established field of research in many countries, and the historiography both

too long and richly diversified to do it justice here. When Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott published their influential study *Women, Work and Family* (1978) it showed brilliantly how gender as an analytical category could open up so far unknown perspectives of the past.¹⁴ By focusing on the family as the most important setting for women in the early modern period, and how family strategies coincided with women's work it has become a classic in gender studies and an inspiration for many to follow. The household has since become a starting point for many studies of early modern gender, but also a focal point. Lyndal Roper's pioneering 1989 study of the impact the Reformation had on gender relations in households in early sixteenth-century Augsburg showed conversely that the status of women rather than being enhanced by religious change was in fact worsened by the Reformation.¹⁵ Early studies like these paved the way for more general overviews of gender history in Europe. In *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (1993) Merry Wiesner-Hanks took a broad perspective on women's lives in not only the 'great nations' of Europe, but also in Scandinavia, Russia, Eastern Europe and the Italian peninsula. Comprehensive works on women and gender covering numerous European countries were to follow.¹⁶ Work by scholars studying early modern England, Russia, Poland, France, Germany and Sweden, among other geographical territories, aimed not only at making women in history visible by a process of archival recovery, but also contributed to changing the perspectives on the history of whole societies by reinstating women, and reconceptualising male behaviour too, and therefore gender as a legitimate category of analysis that complemented and in many ways challenged traditional historical narratives. By doing this, these scholars were to become theoretical inspirations for gender-oriented research in many fields such as early modern work, religion, family, sexuality, economy – and importantly for the purposes of this volume – politics and political culture.

Research on women and work became important for those historians that wished to broaden the concept of politics and go beyond political historians' traditional focus on institutions such as parliaments, offices and other decision-making bodies – institutions that for the early modern period (nearly entirely) excluded women. One of the few exceptions from this was royal courts where women either as queen regnants, queen consorts or queen dowagers were able to become formal political agents, and such topics of inquiry have a long-standing historical interest.¹⁷ It is therefore not surprising that the study of women and politics began with court studies (Merry Wiesner-Hanks in her chapter in the present volume makes a comprehensive overview of queen studies). Queens are, however, in so many ways exceptional as women; their status and position being different from women in general. New questions, however, were raised about the role of queens, and the confessional upheavals wrought by both the protestant and catholic Reformations saw gender presenting ideological challenges to late medieval and early modern models of monarchical power, issues treated in Victoria Smith's chapter on perspectives of female monarchy in England in the 1560s.¹⁸ Stemming from this focus on royal women, scholars also began to look at the evident political role of women within a queen's court or other royal households, thus questioning the

idea of a male hegemony of high politics.¹⁹ At the same time scholars were trying to look beyond the institutions and the formal decision-making within these, and involve the informal setting surrounding a politician – such as the household. The household carried the possibility for women to become influential political agents. The premise was that it was socially and financially strong, and that it gave women within it access to people with power. Scholarship of this sort has emphasised women's operation through family court networks, of which they were an integral part. Such an approach, stressing the importance of marital alliances, kinship and wider social contacts, has developed alongside the kinds of more socio-political studies of politics and patronage undertaken by historians of early modern Europe, including Roland Mousnier, which have stressed the underlying social structures of politics and emphasised the importance of inter-personal connections, as definitions of what constituted political were broadened, and historians engaged in what might be termed, at least in a British context, 'new political history'.²⁰

Historians noted that there often was a gap between the early modern ideology of gender relations and how women and men practised their everyday lives. This difference in norms and practice seemed to have established a political culture that was in some ways less rigid in gender terms than it had appeared to be. In Germany Heide Wunder's concept 'arbeitspaar' (1992) became influential.²¹ The concept is based on how the ideal relation between husband and wife was described in the early modern era: the husband being the superior with the right to make final decisions, but with the wife expected to act as 'fellow-helper' or 'fellow'.²² The household was to be an 'organisatorische Solidarität' (organisational solidarity).²³ A woman was not only expected simply to obey her husband, but she also had the right and the obligation to act as a semi-head of the household; the social roles that women assumed as wives, mothers, kinswomen and mistresses of the household (with authority over male servants) authorised female agency in various ways. If the husband was incapacitated his wife became the head of household with his authority. From this position as semi-head, and at times head, of households women had the opportunity to act politically given that they had the social and financial standing necessary. This point has since been made in many studies from different parts of Europe. In Spain, as Grace Coolidge has shown, noblemen needed the active collaboration of noblewomen to maintain and expand their authority, wealth and influence.²⁴ While in a study of peasants in Spanish Galicia, Allyson Poska points out that there was a gap between the ideals of a 'natural order' of female subordination and the way people lived there lives.²⁵ For Scandinavia, Anu Lahtinen has shown how women within the nobility in the late sixteenth century acted as army leaders in the absence of their husbands;²⁶ Grethe Jacobsen for Denmark and Svante Norrhem for Sweden, have shown how women within the elite took part not only in managing estates while their husbands were absent, but also how they could use their position as wives of politically influential men to become political agents themselves.²⁷ Norway's lack of a nobility makes it stand out in not only a Scandinavian but also in a more general European context, but as Ida Bull and other scholars have shown, women within the land-owning or trading elite had possibilities to

act politically at least on a local level.²⁸ In Germany, France and Britain, similar studies have again shown women's capacity to act politically through connections with men or through positions near the court.²⁹ A common factor among female political agents is that they must own or in other ways control land or business. We know that women's authority in localities came through landownership, the financial resources and social standing that often were conditions for acting informally at a national or even international level as well. Women's right to vote in pre-industrial Europe was given to them not as women, but as owners of businesses or land, as is discussed in the final section of this book.³⁰

In addition to analysis of patterns of landholding and inheritance and studies which have looked at the balance power between husbands and wives within the early modern household – in effect studying the household as a crucible of patriarchy, where gendered power was negotiated and renegotiated – other studies have moved further in reconceptualising the household more broadly as political, and the family as a political unit, which further links to the socio-political approaches of *Annales* historians among others. The work of Barbara Harris in an English context for example has been influential in redefining the household in political terms, and broadening the range of female or domestic activities that might be constructed as political in a patronage society where politics was defined in personal terms, as much as influence over policy, and one of the markers of success was acquisitive aggrandisement of family wealth and standing.³¹ The great household itself, with seigneurial courts, religious advowsons, lands and estates and various offices within the gift of its owners was far from a reductively domestic space, but rather allowed elite women real opportunities as political helpmeets working in tandem with husbands, or as independent widows, to take on political roles. Furthermore, in their roles as wives, mothers and kinswomen, such women were key in forwarding the careers and interests of their offspring and family, and increasingly historians have recognised the crucial importance of what have been described as 'secondary' patronage functions, such as marriage arrangement, gift-giving, networking, hospitality and other examples of sociability as part of the functions that might be played by women to work in tandem with other members to advance the political interests of their family.³² Several of the chapters in this volume (including by Harris, Lindström and Norrhem, Broomhall and Van Gent) explore these themes. In challenging traditional male-dominated, policy-making and institutional approaches to politics, work in this area also borrows from scholarship that has extended definitions of political culture as they relate to socio-cultural structures, ideas and ideologies, images and rituals.³³

Relatedly, a perspective on political agency that has caught historians' attention more recently is women as intermediaries within and between dynasties, sometimes acting to keep contacts over long geographical distances, working to oil the wheels of kinship and patronage networks. Female letter-writers could, as James Daybell has shown in several publications, play a variety of political roles, such as writing petitions, supporting the suits of others and sometimes supplying advice to friends and family on timing and tactics, and as purveyors of news and intelligence.³⁴ The letter form was an important political tool, useful in networking, and the letter

itself as a material object functioned in many ways as a diplomatic or symbolic gift; facility with the pen, and mastery of the epistolary arts – rhetorical, literary, linguistic and material – were key components of women’s involvement in political culture.³⁵ Studies of women’s correspondence have created a new interest in diplomacy and women’s involvement in transnational dynastic affairs. Beyond the chambers of a queen and beyond the court lay other courts and other countries, and often through their position and actions within a noble or royal dynasty, women, as Rayne Allinson among others has shown, became involved in diplomacy.³⁶ Tudor England was far from unique: studies from Spain, France, Germany, northern Italy and Sweden show convincingly that there seems to be a common European pattern in that women sometimes could be important agents in negotiating diplomacy.³⁷ Importantly here Nadine Akkerman has brilliantly demonstrated the ways in which Elizabeth of Bohemia negotiated the gendered protocols of diplomacy and letter-writing, enabling her to play an important role on the European political scene.³⁸

Another topic that has developed recently that connects to gendered power, and which relates closely to diplomacy, is the role of women as cultural mediators. Recent studies of dynastic politics and gendered practices within elite families is proof of how the use of gender and *histoire croisée* (‘entangled history’) with its transnational focus helps give an insight into how women’s agency in court life, patronage of the arts and politics could act to the social and political advantage of a dynasty.³⁹ It is safe to say that individual women could be politically influential as agents in their own right, as informal agents acting through others, as petitioners, as promoters for their dynasty and as acting in diplomacy and as cultural mediators. However, political inclination and political agency were not spread out evenly among women (and nor among men). Individual case studies often concentrate on the women who were successful in what they undertook, but more seldom do they highlight the failed attempts or the women who could not do so due to practical or ideological barriers that existed. Recent studies of authority, power and influence in medieval and early modern European society have stressed the complexity of these three inter-related concepts, the degree to which influence was unstable, contested and transient. In their study of the negotiation of power, Michael Braddick and John Walter usefully suggest an ‘early modern power grid’ as a meaningful way of conceptualising the layered, multi-dimensional way in which people acting in various roles had access to and exercised power and authority.⁴⁰ Moreover, several studies, including by Susan Broomhall, have argued for the importance of recognising the gendered nature of authority as a negotiation practice, that influence could be achieved by other (softer, but nevertheless intended) means than coercion, and that gender codes and emotions played an important role in exerting power.⁴¹ This volume thus builds on the wide variety of works that have been published about gender and political agency over the years. It aims at broadening our knowledge by asking questions not so much about the individual agent in history, but more so about the structure – which we here call the political culture – in which the individual, female and male, acted. How was the political culture at a certain time and at a certain place gendered, and to what extent can we talk about an early modern

European political culture from a gender perspective? What was possible to do and to achieve, and what were the main obstacles for women who sought influence in early modern Europe?

Structure and summary

Collectively the chapters in this volume aim to focus on Europe in their geographical coverage, and examine gender and political culture over the period 1400 to 1800, with individual contributions that look forward to modern-day developments in voting patterns. Contributors range in their analysis of these themes and cover Austria, the Dutch Republic, England, France, the German and Italian States and Scandinavia, while Merry Wiesner-Hanks' chapter sets the topic in a global perspective, with analysis of recent scholarship beyond Western Europe's borders, including among other areas such as Japan, Central America, the Andean region, South Asia and West Africa. The book comprises four distinct sections, each of which looks at a series of interrelated themes, exploring the ways in which political culture – modus operandi, spaces and institutions, underlying structures and ideas, practices and protocols – are inflected by questions of gender. These include diplomacy, gifts and the politics of exchange; socio-economic structures, gender and politics; gendered politics at court; and voting and political representation. In addition, the book contains what might be described as an opening and closing 'meta-chapter', each of which tries to locate the study within a broader conceptual context. The first of these chapters, by James Daybell, looks at the gender politics of the archive. While it focusses specifically on early modern England for its exemplary materials, it nonetheless draws on a theoretical and historiographical framework that has a much broader resonance. It takes as its starting point the commonplace notion that archives are related to politics and power, not only in the sense of formal power exercised by elites through record-keeping, but also in an amorphous Foucauldian sense of power stemming from the concentration and ordering of knowledge. Thus, political power and authority is at once legitimated culturally as well as institutionally, and the chapter focusses on the ways in which the relationship between archives and power is impacted by considerations of gender. It begins by examining the degree to which women were often marginalised from early modern archives, as we have seen with the opening case study of Lady Rich, their documents and writings often excluded from formal institutional archives as a result of prevailing social norms that prejudiced against female activity. Such patriarchal thought systems were perpetuated until recently in modern-day archival policies and practices, which were often either gender-blind or discriminated against women's records in systems of cataloguing and entry-level description. As a case study, the chapter considers how women's letters as a class of document survive, and the ways in which the conditions of archival survival constrain the kinds of narrative histories of women's political involvement that can be written. Moving away from institutional and formal archives, the chapter secondly considers women's relationship to household archives – in other words, patrimonial

archival records connected to land, inheritance and family – the kinds of access women had to such papers, as well as their roles as archivists. Finally, the chapter contributes towards a reconceptualisation of what constituted women's archives during the early modern period, interrogating categories of personal archives. It argues that definitions of archives need to be more porous to incorporate a broader range of archival forms that included printed books, such as herbals and especially bibles used for record-keeping, but also extended to manuscript books and separates (single leaf manuscripts), and material forms such as embroidery, furniture and architecture. It argues that only through recognition of the manifest material forms of early modern archives can we truly reconstruct the gendered political culture and memorialisation of early modern women.

Having considered the raw materials of gender history, the first section of the volume, entitled *Diplomacy, Gifts and the Politics of Exchange* contains a pair of chapters, each of which looks at the ways in which the giving of material gifts oiled the wheels of diplomacy and politics in a decidedly gendered manner. The first chapter by Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent investigates the ways in which the early modern House of Orange-Nassau, the Dutch Republic's leading political dynasty, sought to impose cultural and economic power and influence throughout its territories and the German Empire through gendered strategies connected with the giving, collecting, consumption and display of porcelain. In so doing, the authors avowedly move away from traditional approaches to political power as viewed through military campaigns, statecraft, male-dominated institutions and hard power to consider the role of informal or soft political power, an area of cultural influence that was decidedly gendered, with women playing a crucial role in commissioning and display. Influenced by the 'material turn', the chapter further highlights the political significance of material objects that operated in distinctly gendered ways. In contrast to other long-established and well-entrenched European Houses, such as the Bourbons or the Hapsburgs, the Orange-Nassau ruled over a relatively fledgling nation, and therefore actively sought to promote their family name through a cultural politics that utilised 'the exchange and display of objects in palaces, gardens, galleries, or menageries to generate for themselves status and authority on par with other European figureheads'. Borrowing from the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, the chapter looks at the role of porcelain as one particular kind of object among many which was designed to 'shape the preferences of others' 'on the power of attraction', arguing that it acted not only as 'a significant form of cultural capital', but also that 'its production and exchange had direct and significant economic and political consequences'. The chapter focusses in particular on the ways in which men and women among ruling dynasties used material culture as a gendered tool of political power.

Following in the footsteps of this consideration of the diplomatic impact of soft cultural and economic power exerted by the Orange-Nassau, in the second chapter of this section Peter Lindström and Svante Norrhem consider the nature of French and Austrian diplomatic activities in Sweden for the period 1648 to 1740. In this study, these two scholars demonstrate the ways in which subsidies, patronage and

gifts were central strategies in influencing policy and the political elites in Scandinavia during the second half of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century. It shows the ways in which diplomats established and managed long-term patronage relations among Swedish political elites, focussing especially on kinship networks and political households from a gendered perspective in order to elucidate the different ways in which men and women were targeted by diplomats as a strategy of gaining influence, as well as assessing the kinds of roles that elite Scandinavian women were able to play in the realm of international politics. Central to the chapter, as with the previous study, is the crucial role of elite families at the apex of political life, with Swedish politics dominated by transnational kinship groups and patronage networks that merged familial, national and international interests, interests that might clash as well as mesh. Leading Swedish political families, such as the Oxenstiernas and De la Gardies were key targets for French and Austrian diplomacy, and structurally this allowed women to have informal political roles through their relationship with powerful men. Relations between diplomats and Sweden's leading families were reciprocal, accruing mutual benefits to both sides. Gifts in the form of material objects and offices garnered tangible loyalties in terms of policy, and diplomats were crucial in the formation of transnational patronage networks, and worked to map the influence and fortunes of Sweden's ruling elites. It is shown how women and men acted in various ways: in cash-strapped families they actively advanced the careers of children; others acted effectively as emissaries abroad and operated as intermediaries with or on behalf of male family members; women were also singled out as recipients for gifts, such as jewellery, targeted as a way of forging alliances with future generations. In other capacities, women effectively acted as hostesses of occasions of sociability that facilitated politics and the exchange of information; such gatherings were part of the political culture across early modern Europe, and these kinds of informal channels activated women's agency. During the late seventeenth century, it is shown that diplomats tended to travel more frequently to Sweden with wives and families than in the first half of the seventeenth century, which meant that women's visibility in diplomatic discussions of the 1690s was far more pronounced than earlier periods. Women were active as networkers and might have access to female spaces to which their husbands were denied as men; such women were therefore interesting conduits and contacts for diplomats seeking to work through less formal channels of power. Diplomatic strategies were in many ways gendered, since women could at times, and within certain spheres, operate with greater freedom (in an informal way, sometimes under the radar) than could men, allowing women and diplomats to circumvent both standing and temporary regulations which restricted men's actions.

The second section, *Socio-Economic Structures, Gender and Politics*, explores the underlying sociological structures – such as patterns of landholding, rights, systems of inheritance and kinship networks – that conditioned and shaped power and agency in early modern Europe. Such considerations are central to an understanding of the social dynamics of political cultures as well as to our consideration of how men and women achieved power and influence. Comprising three

chapters, the first by Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl studies the complex interrelationships between land-holding, power and gender in Norway in the 1520s. During this period, regional and local administration in Norway (and indeed in the rest of the Nordic region) was based on a system of *len* or fiefs, which were controlled by the crown. In this system, the king assigned relatively fixed administrative districts of different size, type and importance to a *lensmann* or fief holder who was responsible not only for the collecting of royal duties and taxes, but also for the management and supervision of local law enforcement, and for providing soldiers to the crown. The fief was thus a key component in the extension of royal authority and jurisdiction, as well as in building close connections with landed elites. In this manner, fief distribution and fief holding were key factors in political influence in the Scandinavian kingdoms, and Norwegian fiefs were generally held by the realm's most influential and high-ranking noblemen. One such notable female exception, however, was Lady Ingerd Ottesdotter (c. 1475–1555), who provides the main subject of this chapter. She was one of Norway's wealthiest landowners and businesswomen in the later Middle Ages, and from 1524 to 1529 she was also one of the greatest fief holders in the country. Importantly Wærdahl's chapter offers a useful corrective to past historians who have failed to acknowledge the wider implications of Lady Ingerd's fief holding, rather assuming that she only held fiefs because of her son-in-law's leading political position in Norway and the newly-appointed King Frederik I's lack of influence in the country. Her chapter cogently argues that rather than being the lucky result of favourable political circumstances, in a passive sense, Ingerd's fief holding can also be interpreted more constructively as an expression of female agency. The chapter makes clear the degree of Ingerd's willingness and ability to profit from Norway's political situation and secure endowments and positions that enabled her to reach her private financial and political goals and to hold a formalised position of power in Norway.

While land was a foundational basis for power throughout Europe, so too interpersonal relationships generated by ties of blood and marriage could assume socio-political significance. In Barbara Harris's study we turn our attention to early Tudor England to consider the ways that aristocratic women drew upon and cultivated relationships with extended kin. This kind of networking activity, with women and men operating through family contacts, was a predominant mode of political activity across all parts of Europe through the early modern period. In her chapter, Harris complements work that over the past three decades has persuasively shown that early modern English marriages, far from demanding unquestioning obedience from submissive wives, were in many cases in actual practice rough and ready partnerships in which wives played major roles in rearing their children and arranging their futures, in managing their husbands' and their estates and acting as intermediaries with the crown on behalf of their husbands, kin and tenants. Adding to this new interpretation of aristocratic wives, the chapter focusses on another dimension of their activities, namely those that stemmed from their relationships with sisters and sisters-in-law, brothers and brothers-in-law and less frequently, their marital and natal aunts, uncles and cousins. These social ties created what Harris terms the

'horizontal' (as opposed to lineage) family. By concentrating on two branches of the Scrope family – the daughters of Sir Richard Scrope of Bentley, a younger son of Henry Lord Scrope and Anne, Lady Scrope, the third wife of Sir Richard's brother older brother, John Lord Scrope – the chapter argues significantly that women served important, if neglected, functions by cultivating and drawing on these relationships. These relationships were based on a complicated mixture of affection and practical exchanges, and sometimes straddled generations. On the affective side of the spectrum, women and their horizontal kin visited each other, lived together after the women were widowed and occasionally chose to be buried together. On the practical side, women and men connected in these ways acted as each other's executors and bequeathed property to each other. By working to cement the ties between their natal and marital families, the chapter highlights the ways in which they helped to assure that one of the core goals of their marriages was achieved, that is, extending their natal families' local and regional political influence and in some cases at least, their position at court.

Finally, the chapter by Elise Dermineur considers eighteenth-century France and moves down the social scale to study the political strategies of widows in traditional communities as they negotiated marital status and authority. Widowhood throughout the period, not just in early modern France, was characterised by a paradoxical dichotomy in terms of women's social and economic status. On the one hand, widows gained social and political authority not only within their household, but also within their communities through their new social position, which granted them a wide spectrum of rights and duties. Indeed, widows could enter into contracts, sue for justice, appear on tax rolls, lend and borrow money and serve as collaterals. On the other hand, however, they sometimes occupied a somewhat liminal position within the society, garnering suspicion as women living without men, and were subject to caution. Witchcraft trials in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for instance, have particularly highlighted the fact that their marital status could make them potential targets. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, civil and criminal judicial records continued to underline the conflict and difficulties that many widows encountered in their daily life and exchange with men, as their changed marital status sometimes weakened widows and engendered social resentment towards them. Through an analysis of loans and civil judicial records from 1700 to 1789, Dermineur demonstrates that as a result of this potentially ambivalent situation, French widows gradually came to negotiate their social position within their community, especially through economic means and extensive cooperation such as the re-allocation and redistribution of capital in the credit market, for instance, contributing not only to the security of old age but also, and above all, to achieve social authority and honour, and deflate resentment.

The third section, *Women and Gendered Politics at Court*, approaches the overall theme from two different angles; one, how advisors to queens regnant handled the fact that they had to work with a female monarch, and two, how women collectively within a princely dynasty worked towards the consolidation of the family's position in culture and politics. The opening chapter by Victoria Smith discusses

the image of an all-encompassing hostile view of female monarchs during the Elizabethan age. Too much focus, Smith argues, has been on John Knox and others who were against female rule arguing that such a rule would destabilise the natural patriarchal order of society and therefore threaten to diminish male pre-eminence by subverting the status quo. If a woman ruled, Knox feared an emasculation of men. At the same time, the rule of Elizabeth I must by most standards be seen as successful. True, there was opposition to her but nevertheless she managed to stay on the throne longer than most monarchs, even by modern-day standards. The ‘monstrousness’ of her government was maybe not so grave. Smith’s chapter looks at the contrasts to the fears of those who believed female rule would emasculate men, through two Elizabethan ambassadors, Nicholas Throckmorton, Resident Ambassador at the French court (1559–64), and Thomas Randolph, English agent at the Scottish court (1560–66). As diplomats they both had to face facts: political reality at the time was that female rulers existed not only in England, but also in other parts of Europe. In many respects, diplomats out of necessity had to be pragmatic, and, as Smith argues, this pragmatism also extended to their attitudes towards female rule. It was not only a matter of grandstanding, but also a matter of conviction of their behalf. Throckmorton saw in a female ruler someone who could learn anything, even the managing of war. The problem faced by a queen regnant was not primarily that she was a woman, but her ability to resist her feminine inclinations. If she could do that, and become masculine, she would be able to rule well. Thomas Randolph even went so far as to say that a monarch’s sex was less important than his or her ability to exhibit masculine character traits. Whoever did that would be best suited to rule. What Victoria Smith admirably addresses in her chapter is the need to go beyond established truths and look deep into the sources. Unlike Knox, who had an agenda and publicly declared his aversion to a female monarch – and who in many ways has received a disproportionate and unjustified amount of scholarly attention – other people’s feelings on the same topic may have been opposite, but hidden unless carefully looked for in archives. By doing this she comes back again with a broader picture of partially conflicting ideologies, or norms, on the one hand, and an excellent example of how full-mouthed ideology and practice, as so often in history, are not necessarily the same. Thus, by looking at women as agents in political culture the boundaries restricting agents of both sexes are revealed. In moving beyond past ideals to study practice, a more nuanced gender structure can sometimes be revealed, justifying more broadly why women are the focus of gender studies.

Unlike the Elizabethan court where the queen herself was the only royal female – or indeed the only royal person – the contemporaneous Medici court in Florence was full of women in residence belonging to the ruling dynasty. Attention, as Sarah Bercusson rightly points out in her chapter, is often directed at the wives or widows of influential politicians, whereas the role of sisters, sisters-in-law or mothers – or women as a collective within a household or dynasty – have been less investigated (a focus shared by Barbara Harris’s chapter). Bercusson in her chapter looks at the connections between five Medici women who lived within the same court

from 1565 to 1578 in order to see how working together and forming alliances, they could attain particular aims. She raises the question of whether women acted together and, if so, to what end. Central to this chapter is dependency; dependency between the women themselves as well as the women's dependency on the men within the dynasty. In this way the chapter connects well to other contributions within the volumes which have household and gendered strategies as focal points. Important for the Medici women was the extent to which they participated in court ceremony – plays and masques – and how being present at the right time and in the right place, and having access, were fundamental for the gendered strategies of women all over Europe in the early modern period. However, things had to be done right, as Sarah Bercusson points out. Being too fun-loving could make you vulnerable to gossip, whereas maintaining a chaste and pious demeanour was beneficial. In order to be able to participate in court life women even at this top level were dependent on male members of the dynasty, and a change of head of family could lead to drastic changes in what financial support one could expect. As a way to balance this dependency on men, the Medici women, for most of the time, supported each other. Bercusson shows that the female strategy towards gaining a more independent role, which in turn could be used not only for the individual's benefit but also for strengthening the Medici dynasty, was active dependency on other women. Competition and conflict would have lessened the value of the Medici women, and they were therefore expected to be involved in a lively court which in turn contributed to the glory of the house of Medici.

The last section of the volume concerns *Voting and Political Representation* in England and the two Scandinavian countries Norway and Sweden. In early modern Europe the right to vote for local, regional or national assemblies was restricted to the very few – if it existed at all.

In the first essay of this section, 'Gender, Place and Power: Controverted Elections in Late Georgian England', Elaine Chalus studies sources from the controverted elections in Hindon (1774) and Taunton (1830). The English example shows striking similarities to the Scandinavian (discussed in the next chapter) in that both women's and men's right to vote was built on ownership, and that this formed the basis for widows' opportunity to take part in elections as voters. Other similarities are that where women had the right to vote, they often used it by proxy. In 35 of 203 English boroughs women who met the property requirements had the right to vote, but in altogether more than 60 percent of all boroughs women, Elaine Chalus shows in her chapter, had a direct investment in the outcome of an election. Besides the formal right to take part in elections, women were also involved in the formal process of elections by being asked to act as witnesses. Chalus gives a fascinating insight into the gendered practice of voting and the interaction between candidates, election agents, voters and people around voters. One of the practices used in elections, and a very important one to win the voters' sympathy, was canvassing. The targets for candidates and their agents were not just voters themselves, but also the voters' families. While much of the organised canvassing occurred in public places in front of a crowd, it might also involve gift-giving to wives or children of

voters, or straight attempts to buy votes by paying voters' wives. Altogether, Chalus's account of the elections in Hindon and Taunton broadens our understanding of local political cultures which involved both formal and informal elements.

Whereas most of the chapters in this volume look at different kinds of informal gendered strategies within different political cultures, Peter Lindström, Hilde Sandvik and Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, in their comparative study of Norway and Sweden, look at women's right to vote in a time when women were deprived of nearly every possibility to take part in formal political decision-making, and long before voting became a universal human right. In Sweden, as the authors show, women did to some extent have the right to vote in parish elections, in towns and for the Diet already in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The right to vote for a commoner was based on his or her position within a tax-paying household and therefore widowed women could not only take over the right to land or business, but also the tax-payers' right to vote. Again the household is at the centre. However, women's right to vote was never a right for women as such to vote – it was an unintended outcome of a political system where ownership and tax-paying decided your position in society. It was also, as the authors tell us, a right that in the late eighteenth century would be disputed with gendered arguments. In 1771 'sex' was mentioned in the Diet for the first time as an argument against female participation in elections, something that by then had already started to become more restricted.

Norway and Sweden had very different political systems up to 1814 when Norway by force was moved from being in a union with Denmark to being in a union with Sweden. While the Swedish eighteenth century was dominated by a period where the parliament, much like in Great Britain, dominated, Norway was under Danish autocratic rule. Lindström, Sandvik and Karlsson Sjögren argue that under absolutism men and women were equally powerless under the king. Voting was not an issue for anyone. This may under the new Norwegian constitution have paved the way for the suggestion in the 1830s that widows as tax-payers should have the right to vote in local elections. The opposition was, as the authors show, surprisingly low key. Women had, contemporaries would testify, the ability to make contemplated decisions, they had shown patriotism and, perhaps most importantly, tax-paying – contributing to society – was more important than gender. In the end widows were not given the vote, and the argument that seems to have won was that women, after all, usually had little insight into public affairs. Thus, gender was not necessarily an issue when it came to voting during the early modern era, but became one – and to the disadvantage of women. The main issue was ownership and taxpaying, and the male dominance in these areas explains why they voted and not women.

The final chapter in the volume by Merry Wiesner-Hanks assumes the status of meta-chapter, which broadens the horizons of the field, raising the European examples to a global level and context, and encouraging comparative analysis both chronologically and geographically. The early modern period saw, as Wiesner-Hanks rightly points out, an increase in large-scale cultural encounters globally. The political as well as cultural interconnectedness between for example the Ottoman

empire, the Mughal empire and the Safavid dynasty in Persia increased, as did the encounters, conflicts and co-operation between these and different European states. Europe's dependency on both political and cultural contacts with the world outside its own borders became more and more visible. These encounters, Wiesner-Hanks points out, were to a great extent gendered. By looking at female rule, female religious leaders and intermarriage within a global context, she identifies three main features of gendered political culture that highlight contrast as well as similarity in different parts of the world. Beginning with female rule she shows how women could become rulers either by independent inheritance, or because there were no eligible men, or ruled in tandem with a male relative. Mothers or other female relatives of 'great men', such as Sultan Mehmet IV in the seventeenth-century Ottoman empire or Emperor Akbar in the sixteenth-century Mughal empire, were in many parts of the world able to gain influence not only on culture but also on the sort of hard-core military politics we often think was the prerogative of men. Isabel of Castile, Elizabeth I of England, Catherine de Medici or Christina of Sweden should therefore be put in a larger context together with Aminatu of Zazzau, Taj al-Alam in Aceh or Gulbadan Banu Begum at the Mughal court. Recent and on-going research is broadening our perspective and making it possible to go beyond the debates of Elizabeth I and John Knox and include them in a larger global context.

Turning to the area of religion, Wiesner-Hanks demonstrates that within and through the leadership of convents, some of which were both wealthy and independent, women could exercise considerable political, financial and cultural power. Until such major German abbeys as Essen, Quedlinburg, Herford or Gandersheim, with great landed wealth, were dissolved in 1802 they were important centres for learning, but also oases of female power. Once female convents were started in South and North America, their leaders played a less positive, but yet powerful, role as parts of the European colonial enterprise. In other parts of the world, women could either act as key figures in supporting or working against the spreading of new religions. In Japan female Christian converts seem to have actively played a part in helping Christian missions, whereas in areas of South East Asia, women took an active role in stopping foreign missions.

Finally, in reformation Europe the topic of religious intermarriage inevitably became crucial and the official stance on which religious leaders agreed was that a married couple should have the same faith: if spouses were of different religions it would cause marital conflict. Even so, some twenty percent of marriages were mixed in parts of Europe. In parts of the world which Europeans had colonised, race was added to religion. After a brief attempt to encourage French women to travel to French North America to marry with French settlers there, it was decided that one instead should make an effort to assimilate, through the Frenchification of Native Americans and thus make them eligible religiously and culturally, for marriage with French colonisers. Even this attempt failed in the way that mixed marriages did not occur solely on the conditions of the French man: true, native women as wives of Frenchmen adopted some of French culture but also added

their own. Much the same pattern can be found among African kingdoms where men adapted to women's culture, and later in contact between Portuguese traders and people in the Upper Guinea. In her conclusion Wiesner-Hanks makes a strong case for global gender studies. The focus on intersectionality may make scholars hesitate from making generalisations, but the complexity of intersectional study, Wiesner-Hanks argues, should not prevent us from moving beyond the local and making broader comparisons, but rather encourage us to do so.

Thus, in addressing political culture from a gendered perspective both temporally as well geographically across early modern Europe, the book significantly argues for a range of distinctive features that were common across borders and times to the ways in which men and women had access to and exercised power and political influence. The volume demonstrates the centrality of the household and family for men as well as women as a genuinely political sphere that intersected in important ways with diplomacy and court politics. Connectedly, it highlights the ways in which spaces – such as royal courts, distinct areas within the household, as well as the salon – were gendered in complex ways that impacted on male and female roles and spheres of influence. The book also reconceptualises power and diplomacy, in order to incorporate soft cultural and economic power (which could be expressed materially as well as textually), alongside more violent acts of coercion, and to recognise the key roles of leading political families across Europe, which created conditions that allowed both men and women influence. At all levels, patterns of landholding and inheritance were closely linked to different forms of authority, which was continually negotiated and unstable. Moreover, the book emphasises that at an elite level, at least, power, land and resources during this period were concentrated in the hands of the crown, state and powerful families, and were centred on royal courts, landed estates and patronage systems. These were the very conditions that generated a gendered political culture, in which interpersonal contacts and informal as well as formal modes were privileged, providing a complex spectrum of opportunities for female as well as male involvement.

Notes

- 1 For recent studies of Lady Rich see James Daybell, 'Women, Politics and Domesticity: The Scribal Publication of Lady Rich's Letter to Elizabeth I', in *Women and Writing, c.1340–c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. by Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillippa Hardman (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), pp. 111–130; Andrew Gordon, 'Copycopia, or the Place of Copied Correspondence in Manuscript Culture: A Case Study', in James Daybell and Peter Hinds (eds) *Material Readings of Early Modern Culture, 1580–1730: Texts and Social Practices* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 65–82. Alison D. Wall, 'Rich [née Devereux], Penelope, Lady Rich (1563–1607)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Michelle Margetts, 'Stella Britannia: The Early Life (1563–1592) of Lady Penelope Devereux, Lady Rich (d. 1607)' (PhD diss., Yale University, 1992); eadem, 'A Christening Date for Lady Penelope Rich', *NE&Q*, 238 (1993), 153–154. See also, S. Freedman, *Poor Penelope: Lady Penelope Rich, An Elizabethan Woman* (Abbotbrook, 1983); James M. Purcell, *Sidney's Stella* (Oxford, 1934); M.S. Rawson, *Penelope Rich and Her Circle* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1911); S. Varlow, *The Lady Penelope: The Lost Tale of Love and Politics in the Court of Elizabeth* (London: Andre Deutsch, 2007); Grace Ioppolo, "'I desire to be helde in your memory": Reading

- Penelope Rich Through Her Letters', in *The Impact of Feminism in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. by Dymphna Callaghan (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), pp. 299–325.
- 2 Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, Cecil Papers, 18 fol. 51: Thomas Fowler to Lord Burghley, 7 October 1589; Cecil Papers, 18, fol. 58: John Colville to [Lord Burghley], 24 October 1589.
 - 3 Paul E.J. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585–1597* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 91; H.R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 289–290.
 - 4 Wall, 'Rich, Penelope, Lady Rich (1563–1607)'.
 - 5 W[arwick] R[ecord] O[ffice], Coventry, 'Essex Letter Book c.1595–1600', unfoliated: June 1596, June 1596, n.d.; Cecil Papers, 109, fol. 24, n.d., 32, fols. 87, 95: 7 and 12 June 1595, 33, fol. 67, 30, fol. 96, 103, fol. 50, 40, fol. 42, 43, fol. 30, 48, fol. 49: July 1595, February 1596, [c. April 1603], April 1596, July 1596, 1596, 55, fol. 56, 24 September 1597, 193, fol. 15, [September 1606]; B[ritish] L[ibrary], Lansd. MS, 57, fol. 51: 10 September 1588, BL, Add. MS, 12506, fol. 421, BL, Stowe MS 150, fol. 192–193; Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, HEH (Hastings Papers), HA 860: [c. early 1605]; Cecil MS, 111, fol 22, 31 May [1605].
 - 6 Questions related to sexuality are not covered per se in this volume. However, Victoria Smith in her chapter discusses how masculinity was seen as essential to anyone who wished to be a political agent.
 - 7 *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1603–10*, pp. 32, 42.
 - 8 BL, Stowe MS 150, fol. 192–193. See also, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, HEH (Hastings Papers), HA 860: [c. early 1605]; Cecil MS, 111, fol 22, 31 May [1605], 193, fol. 15, [September 1606].
 - 9 Lady Rich's foreign correspondents included Jean Hotman, former secretary to the earl of Leicester and his wife Jeane, her servant, to whom she wrote in French: Haarlem, Teylers Stichting, Hotman Letters, No 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46. She also corresponded in Spanish with Antonio Pérez, the exiled former secretary of Philip II of Spain: G. Ungerer, ed., *A Spaniard in Elizabethan England: The Correspondence of Antonio Pérez's Exile*, 2 vols (London, Tamesis Books, 1974), vol. 1, No. 41, 42, 44, 45, 48, 50, 51.
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 - 11 Wall, 'Rich, Penelope, Lady Rich (1563–1607)'.
 - 12 Daybell, 'Women, Politics and Domesticity'; Wall, 'Rich, Penelope, Lady Rich (1563–1607)'.
 - 13 Merry Wiesner Hanks, *Gender in History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 145–147.
 - 14 Other influential works that in a similar fashion questioned established knowledge using gender theories are Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Women on Top', in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), pp. 124–151; Joan Kelly, 'Did Women Have a Renaissance?', in *Women, History and Theory*, ed. by Joan Kelly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 19–50; Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds, *Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 1–13; Mary Beth Rose, *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988). See also Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *American Historical Review*, 91/5 (1986), 1053–1075; Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Alexandra Shepard and Garthine Walker, *Gender and Change: Agency, Chronology and Periodisation* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).
 - 15 Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
 - 16 For England: Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550–1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Anne Laurence, *Women in England*

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- 17 Agnes [and Elizabeth] Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England, from the Norman Conquest, 12 vols* (London: Henry Colburn, 1840–48).
- 18 Amanda Shephard, *Gender and Authority in Sixteenth-Century England: The Knox Debate* (Keele: Ryburn Publishing, 1994); Sharon L. Jansen, *Debating Women, Politics, and Power in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).
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2

GENDER, POLITICS AND ARCHIVES IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

James Daybell

In 1593, in the knowledge that he was not long for this world, the Devon yeoman farmer Robert Furze (c.1535–1593) set his worldly affairs in order and produced a remarkable manuscript book for his son and heir based on ‘evidences’, a cross between a medieval cartulary and family history. In it he assembled details of all the lands and properties that his heir was to inherit, as well as character sketches and biographical details of many members of the family. Partly acting as a book of remembrances and paternal advice, it also provided his nine-year-old son with a salutary lesson concerning the husbanding of paper records, which is recounted in a story related to the fortunes of the evidences connected to estates belonging to his own wife’s family. Furze praised his father-in-law, Edmond Roland for his archival habits, describing him as the only one among his forbears ‘to make wrytynges, he commonly kepte iij clarke for that purpose and yt he hymselfe toke grett paynes’, writings that were kept in a locked coffer. On his death, Edmond’s widow Joan remarried, a ‘wicked’ man named Edward Drewe, who quarrelled with her, forsaking her company for that of ‘his olde mates’. Perhaps distrustful of her new husband, Joan had her dead husband’s papers (locked with a key) conveyed to a neighbour’s house for safe-keeping, yet Drewe by deceitful persons was informed of their whereabouts and promptly stole the coffer, conveying it to his own mother’s house whereupon

there the cofer remayned comon to everye person in the howse a longe tyme for wante of the loke the myse in truthe did gretely spoyle the wrytynge so when we sholde have our wrytynges there was no thyng perfytt, some eten som loste, yt was grett happpe that we had anye. . . . here you maye lerne what hit is to leve your evyden to wemen, he was not content to spoyle the mother of all, but her herres also as farr as in hym was.¹

This story of the early modern archive (as a body of documents) and the manuscript volume in which it features is telling in several ways that permit exploration

of the relationship between written records, gender and politics, issues with which this chapter is concerned. Firstly, the paper archive is represented as an important locus of power: written evidences are legal proof of property ownership and upheld patterns of inheritance. The importance attached to making, preserving and safeguarding such records – indeed this is the very archival impulse at the heart of Furse's own book of remembrances – is connected to the family's fortunes. Here the symbolic value of the meticulous assembly of writings by the father-in-law, and the locked coffer, safely guarded is contrasted with later descriptions of the broken lock and spoiled writings open to all and sundry, which resulted in the undoing of the family. Secondly, it highlights women's fraught and vulnerable relationship to archival documents relating to property, with the two women here represented either as the victim of an unscrupulous new husband, or else as the unreliable custodian of valuable written records associated with neglect, decay and appalling archival conditions. The phrase 'here you maye lerne what hit is to leve your evyden to wemen' is suggestive of contemporary prejudices associated with women's guardianship and care of written records. Nonetheless, an examination of the transmission history of Robert Furse's manuscript volume itself reveals a third perspective to consider, related to its archival afterlife and re-appropriation of the volume for a different function by a woman. On the death of Robert Furse, the book passed as a form of patrilineal inheritance to his son and heir, John (1584–1610) who appears to have maintained the book and recorded in the flyleaf the genealogical details of the children from his marriage to Welthian Snelling.² At a later stage the volume appears to have been owned by one of their sons, who kept up-to-date notes on the land transactions associated with the book, recording 'a Particular of my Landes in Chaddlewood wch came by my mother' among other entries and throughout noting lands sold.³ By the early eighteenth century, however, the volume passed into the Worth family through Elizabeth Furse (b.1688), the sole daughter and heir of John Furse, Esq, through her marriage to John Worth of Worth, Esq in Devon. Elizabeth's own natal details are recorded on the flyleaf, after the notes on John Furse's children, and are followed by the names and birth dates of her own offspring. This collection documenting family lands now acted as a personal archive recording genealogical history. The exact provenance and later history of the volume is not known, but it appears to have remained in the Worth family until the late nineteenth century, before it was deposited at Devon Record Office among a group of unrelated papers by Penny and Harward solicitors of Tiverton in 1975. Its present-day survival attests the status that the manuscript assumed for successive generations of the Furse and later Worth families, but also perhaps for its nineteenth-century editor H.J. Carpenter who records viewing it in a 'West Country house'.⁴ While this example opens up an interesting range of issues about gender and archives, it also forces us to reflect on the serendipity of archival survival and the many hands that were at work as manuscripts passed eventually to more stable and permanent, official archival environments.

Long before the 'archival turn' in early modern studies, scholars were aware of the complex relationship between archives and power.⁵ Indeed, Jacques Derrida

reminds us of the ‘politics of the archive’, the relationship of archives to knowledge, power and belief systems, connected as they are to custody, access, preservation and the use of materials of memory: ‘There is’ he writes ‘no political power without control of the archive, if not memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation’.⁶ Such a formulation has trans-historical application and resonates in discussions as wide-ranging as Patrick Joyce’s conceptualisation of the ‘liberal archive’ through studies of imperial and postcolonial archives to public history debates about ‘whose archive is it anyway?’⁷ To Joan Wallach Scott, ‘the feminist archive’, those collections assembled in the nineteenth and twentieth century in Britain, France and the US, which created libraries or archives documenting the accomplishments of women, connects archives in a very real sense with modern day politics. ‘The collections’ she wrote ‘are arsenals of intellectual weaponry, assembled to push forward the struggle for women’s rights’.⁸ Across Europe and beyond, the early modern period was marked by a vast expansion of record-keeping and new innovative techniques of organising knowledge, which saw the formation and systematisation of archives – at all levels, national, regional and local – connected with the state and diplomacy, religion and the church, trade, business and finance, scholarship and knowledge, land and estate management as well as lineage, genealogy and the family. The sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, as scholars such as Filippo de Vivo, Jacob Soll and Randolph C. Head have shown, saw the rise of the ‘information state’, with archives employed as ‘tools of government’ related to the extension of power and authority and to news, intelligence and propaganda.⁹ Alongside these narratives of archival expansion and improvement, scholars (partly responding to postmodern challenges to historicist epistemologies) have begun to recognise that the ‘archive’, broadly defined, does not constitute a neutral body of documents, in the empirical sense of G.R. Elton’s set of ‘master documents’ or state papers.¹⁰ Archives, as Alan Stewart has recently shown in his study of the setting up of the State Paper Office in England during the reign of James VI and I, were essentially constructed, records selectively preserved for particular purposes, which necessarily generates gaps, omissions and silences in the record.¹¹ Such partial and fragmentary survivals are compounded by archival practices and methods of classification by successive generations, which in seeking to impose order are inevitably conditioned by modes of thinking about factors such as race, class and importantly for this chapter, gender.

Considerations of early modern women’s relationships to archives is at the heart of analyses of gender and politics, as many of the chapters in this volume highlight, not least because fragmentary archival traces restrict or shape the kinds of histories that can be written about women in the past. Earlier generations of scholars were confronted by the daunting obstacle of women’s ‘invisibility’ or ‘silence’ in traditional archives, the fact that they were, to borrow Sheila Rowbotham’s apt phrase, ‘hidden from history’.¹² Part of the problem faced was in physically finding materials, since past systems of classification often occluded women. Although less likely to survive than men’s, where they do, women’s writings are often poorly catalogued

and only now are archivists and custodians of records really thinking about how to introduce gender as an archival and search category.¹³ Over the last several decades, archives have been mined for traces of women's lives and experiences, a process of recovery that has done much to overcome the invisibility of women from the historical record, though recovery is uneven across Europe for the early modern period.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the non-survival of materials once extant is still a major problem, one not necessarily symptomatic of the fact that they were not preserved at the time, but that they were discarded by later generations of custodians, perhaps less interested in women's documents than in men's, as Katrinette Bodarwé has shown in her study of early medieval charters belonging to women's religious communities.¹⁵ Similarly, Martine J. van Ittersum working on the 'household academy' of the well-known seventeenth-century jurist in the Dutch Republic, Hugo Grotius, has convincingly shown that the writings of the female family members were valued less than those of their male relatives and therefore much less likely to survive than those of their male counterparts.¹⁶ Survival of documents relating to women is therefore often closely tied to archival practices and habits, policies of collection or preservation, many of which privileged men's records. In light of the distorting effects of the partial record generated by this scramble for the archives, the question of gender also necessitates reorienting how we approach archives (institutions that often preclude women), how we read what survives, and also how we conceptualise precisely *what* constitutes an archive.

Silences in official archives have required reading strategies (as with other marginal groups) to deal with muted voices, by reading against the grain, paying attention as much to what is unsaid as well as said, and by thinking laterally, what might be quaintly referred to as use of 'the historical imagination'.¹⁷ Natalie Zemon Davis has encouraged us to pay attention to 'fiction in the archives', in other words, the rhetorical or strategic quality of documentary evidence that further belies its apparent transparency.¹⁸ Moreover, the paucity of women's 'voices' in official or state archives – traditionally constructed by historians as more 'authentic' or 'reliable' than other archival forms – led to trawls for materials further afield and the development of more permissive definitions of archives, elastic enough to incorporate personal and private documents.¹⁹ While traditional archives, generally based on the state, construct women's lives and experiences in particular ways, the writings that they produced themselves and which often survive within the home are a useful corrective to dominant narratives, and point to the 'provisional' and 'in the end fundamentally unreliable' nature of all archives, in the sense that they are all constructed and partial, as has been argued by Antoinette Burton in her brilliant and pioneering study of postcolonial women's domestic archives.²⁰

Generally speaking the 'fetish' for the archive, has meant that we now have a much better sense of the range and nature of materials relating to early modern women that survive, which allow us to sketch the contours of European women's involvement in political culture at all levels from roles of queens regnant and consort, and female courtiers, to the social and political elites involved in patronage and kinship networks, recognising the politics of the family unit, down to women at

the lower end of the social scale involved as petitioners, writers and in direct action of public protest. Nevertheless, there are a range of issues relating to what might broadly be termed the gendered politics of the archives that still demand investigation, and here my concern is less with the phenomenon of modern-day archives as they survive to us today and more with early modern women's, and specifically English women's, relationship and involvement with the archives, which has key implications relating to questions of female agency and access to knowledge and power. There are a series of questions that this chapter will explore. First, it will look at the archiving and survival of documents produced by English women compared with men. By focussing on women's letters as a category of document, it will investigate the conditions influencing survival, considering the extent to which women's writings were thought worthy of preservation. It will delineate the range of repositories where letters ended up, and demonstrate how these different archives – as imperfect, partial constructions of the past – conditioned the kinds of correspondence that remains and shaped the kinds of histories that one can write about early modern women. Second, the chapter is interested not only in the archiving and survival of women's writings, but also the nature of early modern English women's relationship to the archive and by implication their relationship with knowledge and power. Key questions here relate to the extent of women's access to and use of archival materials and papers. While women were largely excluded from official archives or repositories, my analysis will excavate the extent to which women had access to papers and materials relating to family and estates within the household. What kinds of access did women have to family papers? To what extent were women involved in the preservation and transmission of bodies of writings or trusted as custodians of documents? Third, and finally, the chapter examines the degree to which women accumulated what might be conceptualised as their own 'personal archives'. It focusses in particular on women's own record-keeping, which was usually connected with the family and genealogy. Analysing women's manuscript writing and the way in which they recorded family histories in bibles and other household books and manuscripts that were passed from one generation to the next, the chapter argues for a potential form of *matriarchive*, to borrow a Derridean formulation, which formed the basis of a matrilineal transmission, and formed a key way in which women constructed and controlled knowledge.²¹

I

Letters as a category of document are readily associated with political culture, evidencing as they do networking and petitioning, news and intelligence. Yet just as the kinds of roles that women played were inflected by structures of gender, so too our reconstruction of them was shaped by the conditions of archival survival, which privileged particular forms of female activity. Analysing the kinds of early modern women's letters that survive more broadly, they fall into several main categories of repository, which explains their preservation, and impacts on their nature and content. First, one of the largest collections is the state papers, which contains letters of

petition or request and intercepted documents, which emphasises women's broadly political and patronage roles, but also evidences women's roles in crises, plots or uprisings. It is here too that we find secret letters, employing codes and ciphers, suggestive of female covert operations and roles in intelligencing. Second, and in some ways related (since 'official' and 'private' papers are not easy to untangle for this period, especially in archival terms), letters are found among the papers of government officers, such as the Cecils and Sir Julius Caesar, and there is a clear overlap in terms of the kinds of gendered political activities highlighted by the state papers. Correspondence from court commentators and ambassadorial dispatches detail news and gossip relating to elite women. Third, letters survive in legal archives, such as Chancery, Exchequer, Requests and the Court of Wards, where they are classified as exhibits and kept as legal records. Much of the extant correspondence of Mary Lady Scudamore (née Shelton), who served as chamberer in the Elizabethan privy chamber, survives in this manner among the 'duchess of Norfolk's deposit' in the Chancery Exhibits held at The National Archives, Kew.²² Two collections of family correspondence from the first half of the sixteenth century survive in this way – the Lisle letters from the 1530s and the mid-Tudor mercantile Johnson family correspondence – the former confiscated as evidence when the Lord Deputy of Calais, Lord Lisle, was accused of treason, the latter taken as evidence during a bankruptcy case. Although some destruction of papers may have taken place before the searchers arrived, in both cases what we have is largely intact runs of correspondence unfiltered by bureaucratic impulse or else discarded by later generations.²³ Here survival relies upon the institutional impulse for record-keeping, with letters preserved as documents relating to matters of state or law. Fourth, educational and philanthropic institutions preserve women's letters: the letters of Dorothy Wadham foundress of Wadham College, Oxford survive in the college archives; the letters of Joan Alleyn, from her husband the Elizabethan actor Edward Alleyn survive in Dulwich College archives.²⁴ As the founder of Charterhouse Hospital, Sir Thomas Sutton received correspondence from unfortunate female kinswomen, and a number of ordinary women beseeching him to assist them financially, and these letters are preserved among the hospital's records, which highlight female petitioning. Such institutional archives, in addition to correspondence classified as legal exhibits afford a small seam of non-elite women letter-writers.²⁵ Fifth, letters also survive as part of case notes of physicians and astrologers. Several women's letters survive among the papers of the Manchester-born astrologer John Booker, incorporated as working papers with nativities written on blank manuscript space of the bifolia.²⁶ In most of these cases, it is outgoing letters by women that are preserved in institutional archives. Religion is another major archiving force, both institutionally (such as convents that preserved pre-Reformation and post-Reformation continental nuns letters), but also a driving impulse to document for posterity women's religious roles. Letters survive among papers of confessors or spiritual advisers; letters of female 'sustainers' of Marian Martyrs survive in manuscript, but were not printed by John Foxe and Henry Bull.²⁷ Interestingly it is mainly the men's side of the correspondence that survives in these printed collections, kept and published

for posterity, testimony of their religious contributions.²⁸ Collectively these examples or categories suggest the highly partial survival of women's correspondence, only a fraction of which remains in contrast to male letter-writers who were either in political office or whose writings were deemed more worthy of record, and therefore left their mark on the historical record. The reconstruction of women's political involvement is therefore fragmentary, privileging particular roles, and is further marked by other kinds of silences, gaps or other archival distortions. Rarely, for example, is it possible to reconstruct both sides of a correspondence; letters often evidence political requests rather than fulfilment of favours. Moreover, during this period many informal political transactions were conducted face-to-face leaving little written record.

While state and legal archives had a clear imperative to preserve records intact as a form of national or institutional heritage, within the realm of household the survival of letters is more revealing of the status that women's letters attained within the family. As landowners in their own right, women amassed records connected to estates. Thus, as Lord of the manor of Stanford-in-the-Vale, Berkshire, Margaret Knollys received numerous suits and complaints preserved in connection with the estates.²⁹ Such letters survive as part of estate records, in the way that charters, title deeds, manorial and estate management records were preserved as an important part of record-keeping among the landed elites, and maintained in muniment rooms, as an important part of what Eric Ketelaar has termed 'cultural patrimony', in other words, the idea that 'records created for current business be transferred as a heritage to future generations who will value those records as cultural assets'.³⁰ Letters unrelated to estate business were often discarded, not thought worthy of preservation; correspondence archived with estate records contains very few letters by women. Others destroyed letters that shed a poor light on the family; Edward, fourth Earl of Dorset burned incriminatory papers in the aftermath of the Civil War.³¹ The destruction of letters clearly played a role in constructing family identity and memory, and may explain the lack of sex in the archives! Other families, such as the Verneys, Thynnes, Treshams, Newdigates, Pagets, Bagots and Gawdys preserved vast caches of family correspondence, among which survives women's letters.³² Within family collections, women's correspondence to male heads of households (fathers, sons, and uncles) is most likely to survive, which privileges these sorts of relationships and power structures; equally runs of letters from husbands, since they tended to write to the household, survive in greater quantity than those from wives. Few letters survive from young children or girls, with letters privileging the married or widowed state. There were clear efforts, however, to preserve women's letters by close family members and future generations of relatives. As Marie-Louise Coolahan has demonstrated wives' writings (including letters) were edited and 'scribally' published by widowed husbands, as an act of remembrance, a form of literary memorialisation.³³ The archiving and preservation of women's letters was often part of wider strategies of family memorialisation and history writing. Thus, the antiquarian Hannibal Baskerville preserved many of his mother Mary's letters in a manuscript miscellany, annotating the backs of them with her life history, the

correspondence acting as a material site for family biography.³⁴ Similarly Anne Clifford during the 1650s went through her mother Margaret, Countess of Cumberland's letters, annotating them with details, and collecting them into a letter-book, as an act of memorialisation.³⁵ The survival of private letters by women in this manner in family archives suggests that they were 'monumentalised', considered worthy of preservation and assumed a particular status within the household.³⁶

Correspondence was undoubtedly a quotidian activity for early modern women, connected as it was to household and family in the broadest sense. However, only a small fraction of women's epistolary output survives, since the main categories of document preserved relate to office and law, areas that often excluded or marginalised women. Within family collections, husbands' rather than wives' correspondence was more likely to survive since they wrote to the household from 'abroad', as was women's correspondence to male heads of households, which privileging these sorts of relationships and power structures. Archival conditions were thus uneven, which again shapes the gendered narratives of female political agency.

II

While the previous section was concerned with the ways in which women's letters survived within institutional and household archives, and the ways in which these different archives shaped the kinds of materials that survive, the chapter moves now to consider women's relationships with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century archives more broadly, focussing on their involvement with and use of archives as a source of knowledge and power. Traditionally women have been identified as repositories of oral knowledge, the custodians of genealogical, family and household memory and tradition bequeathed from one generation to the next.³⁷ This is a marked feature of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century family histories, produced mainly by family patriarchs, who upon occasion relied on ancient female family members for details. Such women were especially useful as transmitters of transgenerational knowledge of the maternal side of the family. Sir Edward Rodney in his *Memorials of the Rodney Family* cites his mother as evidence of the family tradition 'that wee came into this land with mavid the Emprisse'; Sir John Reresby learned about Lady Mary Reresby's scheme to get her son George arrested on his sickbed from one of her gentlewoman, Mrs Skinner.³⁸ Much of the gossip and anecdotal information about family members written down by Robert Furse was probably gleaned from his long-lived grandmother Nicole Moorshead.³⁹ As Daniel Woolf has shown, the eighteenth-century Essex antiquary William Holman was greatly assisted especially by women in his epistolary quest for genealogical knowledge concerning local families.⁴⁰ This kind of rich oral tradition of women's knowledge was a marked feature of early modern society, as well as more broadly in societies where literacy was less well entrenched.⁴¹ Women were constructed as custodians of family history in a way that they were not for customary history, where their reliability as observers was doubted; and a gendering was built into the practice, with boys being taken on the perambulation by the ancient men.

Beyond their function as living archives of memory, a number of studies have emphasised women's exclusion from archives, in particular their lack of access to key records relating to property (normally held by the family patriarch) during litigation cases. These obstacles clearly disadvantaged women involved in disputes over property and inheritance, and it was something that equity courts, such as the Court of Requests, as Tim Stretton has shown, attempted to circumvent (although this was often emphasized for rhetorical effect).⁴² An entry book of petitions for the court of wards dating from October 1640 to May 1641 contains a series of complaints from widows who attained the wardship of their children, but found difficulty in getting the evidences of lands into their hands.⁴³ Clearly such claims also formed part of rhetorical pleading strategies. The potency of documents connected to property rights and land-holding, however, is reinforced by the opening example recounted in the Furse remembrance book, and during her separation from her husband, the Elizabethan gentlewoman Elizabeth Bourne was anxious for the return of her 'writings', and Eleanor Wheathill wished to return to Lady Baskerville papers and writings in her care, lest 'I feare me greatly I have therein done the poore Lady more wrong then I am aware'.⁴⁴ Despite the clear barriers of entry, there is evidence to suggest that women did enjoy access to family archives of which men were often the custodians. Thus in 1627 when Theophila Coke was embroiled in a court case concerning the manor of Portbury she was able to use a large number of documents from Berkeley castle archive.⁴⁵ A series of deeds, leases and other documents relating to the lands of Hook Norton in Oxfordshire were assigned to the use of Lady Croker in a suit between John Croker, son of Sir Gerard Croker, deceased, and Richard Lee, late husband of the Lady Croker.⁴⁶ Correspondence often records women's requests to see documents or papers. Lucy, Marchioness of Winchester wrote to George Paulet asking him to send her 'court rolls and other material writings'; on the death of her husband, Dorothy Pakington received from her brother, the Suffolk gentleman Sir Thomas Kitson, 'a remembrance of all such writings touching yor joyuncture as I can find to read in my hands the deeds themselves I have put into a boxe & sealed the same with my seale of Armes'.⁴⁷ Writing to the commissioners from the Court of Wards after the death of her husband in response to their warrant to have delivered to the bearer 'all evidences in her possession belonging to either of the late earls', Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland replied that she doubted that she had any such documents except as concern her own lands, adding that 'my experience of reading them is little, and my understanding is less'.⁴⁸

While in cases of wardship granted to third parties women had to hand over papers relating to their late husbands' land, other women, as Jan Broadway has argued, sometimes controlled access to archives, particularly papers of the heir of an estate while a minor and those belonging to their late husbands.⁴⁹ Wives might also have access to their husbands' papers, lockable desks, studies or closets.⁵⁰ In 1634, Edward Dering wrote to his wife asking her to send with the messenger 'a little firre boxe with a few papers and some evidence in itt' which he informed her was

‘upon the nearest corner of my study table’, while in 1623 the Norfolk gentleman Thomas Knyvett sent his wife the key for his closet asking her to ‘looke for 2 letters which my cousin Abrahall writ, one to my selfe and the other to my cousin Knyvett, and send them to me’.⁵¹ Perhaps even more telling was that after his arrest and imprisonment in the Tower for involvement in the Bye Plot, Lord Cobham’s wife was in custody of his papers in their London home of Blackfriars, though as she informed the earl of Salisbury:

ther ar so many papars and writtings cast and lad about that if it might ples you lordship I shwld be very glad to be holy dispossesed of them for that many letters consarne foren cases wer of wes [use] might be maed thee ar un fit for women to see or men of mene juegment for thee concerne state causis I shwld be much bound to your lordship if you woldd procour a com-manddyment from the king that I shwld be frely acquitted of them all if anyn evidences consarne me, I presume of your hannorabell concenes to rit me in all things.⁵²

This last example while it illustrates access to her husband’s papers, also argues for a clear division between papers that concerned her and those that were effectively state papers, which were not in her opinion the concern of women. Wives were also entrusted with the preservation and transmission of husband’s documents. Thus, John Penry the Elizabethan religious controversialist during his capture by the authorities and under a series of examinations urged his wife Helen to see that all his ‘dispersed papers’ and letters be published.⁵³

In addition to enjoying access to papers elsewhere within the household, women were also active in assembling and preserving materials. An autobiographical note dated 1657 from Hannah Smith written to herself survives tucked into an embroidered cabinet now housed at the Whitworth Art Gallery at the University of Manchester.⁵⁴ The survival of the letter in this instance is related to the collectability of a rather elaborately decorated and expensive upright chest with doors and drawers and a lock, associated with the safe-keeping of secret correspondence. The existence of such personal items of furniture owned by women and manufactured intentionally for storing early modern writings – which survive as material objects and ownership of which is recorded in probate and household inventories as well as in correspondence and diaries – attests the degree to which women archived their own correspondence. The closet of Lady Margaret More contained ‘a fayre deske’ and ‘a borded capcas’ or small trunk for holding papers; Mary Walpole wrote of ‘all the writtin[g] in the stude wiche belong to me & all those that were in the flatte boxe’.⁵⁵ Within the household, correspondence and other papers were frequently stored in studies and closets fitted with locks for security. In 1601 John Littleton’s wife kept in a desk in her closet a packet of letters ‘fast sealed wth hard wax’; while in 1636 Elizabeth Ratcliffe had a closet at her residence in the Savoy, in which she kept a lockable little desk.⁵⁶ In 1647, the Countess of Cork left two trunks of writings in the care of William Collins in the household of the earl of

Salisbury.⁵⁷ The inclusion in household manuals of the period of instructions for how to preserve paper and how to treat it to prevent it from being eaten by mice indicates the importance of record-keeping within the early modern household.⁵⁸

Moreover, women can also be seen sorting and archiving records for various purposes. Lady Margaret Hoby described a morning spent in her closet 'sorting out papers'.⁵⁹ Lady Anne Dennis wrote to her brother the marquis of Winchester requesting that he remember when he came to London 'to bring with you the bargain and sale of the land sold by the power of the will to my lo[rd] my father my lord and your self together and the leases themselves and other deeds and writings touching my lords business with my lo[rd] mountjoy', saying that she will have particular use of them in London, adding 'I am taking a course for the ordering and settling of my lo[rd's] evidence to be certainly knowne and readely founde, wch nowe ar soe dispersed that besids the troble yt maye turne to my lo[rd's] great prejudice in his estate and doth much hinder him in his present occasions'.⁶⁰ Records and deeds were a key part of protecting landholdings and lineage, as the Irish widow Joan Ky Kiff was painfully aware in a plaintiff petition to Robert Cecil in which she described a sea-journey back from Ireland during which she lost not only all her money, but also all 'writings and orders for the possession of her lands & jointure in Ireland'.⁶¹ Women thus actively sought to acquire paperwork and evidences that belonged to them or touched their properties because they were an important source of power and legal security. Mary Lady Digby, wife of the gunpowder plot conspirator, after the execution of her husband petitioned the Privy Council that 'such wrightinges and evidences as are now in the Sheriffes possession, or delivered by him into the Exchequer (w[hi]ch any may appertayne to me and myne) may be redeliuered to me, or the true coppied therof'.⁶² There is ample evidence of women employing paper evidences – both literally and rhetorically – in legal disputes. Elizabeth, Dowager Lady Russell informed her nephew Sir Robert Cecil that she had 'good evidences' to support her in a dispute over land.⁶³

While women might be excluded from archival evidences (often to obstruct justice in the case of litigation or dispute over property or titles), many were trusted by husbands to have access to papers, and others organised documents within the household (which they distinguished from state papers), and had personal furniture and filing systems to archive their own materials. Many of the examples discussed thus far have suggested an archival paradigm associated with property, land-holding and titles, and the need to provide evidences as proof of right of legal ownership, all of which was bound up with lineage and inheritance. Running alongside (and often connected with) this very pragmatic use of archives was a concern with family identity and memory, and there is clear evidence of several women involved in the organisation and utilisation of genealogical records as a form of family history. Indeed, the indomitable and in many ways exceptional Lady Anne Clifford is well-known for her archival activities as part of her disputed inheritance claim, during which period she had compiled a series of Great Books of Record, documenting the Clifford ancestry as well as two histories of her ancestors compiled by the judge and antiquary Sir Matthew Hale, two copies of Earl George's voyages, a book of

heraldry and genealogies.⁶⁴ Her own annotations of her mother's letters – which were compiled into a letter-book as a form of memorialisation – illustrate her own archival work and the perhaps sentimental meaning of personal documents on which she drew for more practical and communal purposes. A letter she received from her mother was endorsed 'the last leter whiche I reseued from my dere mother of her o[w]n hand writinge, it beeing towards the later end of Aprell 1616', another 'the Letter my Father writt to my Mother presentlay after my berth when hee then laye att Bedford howse att London'.⁶⁵ By the eighteenth century family papers were becoming the raw materials, or historical sources for family histories, histories often written by women: Cassandra Willoughby, for example, kept a small quarto volume entitled 'An Account of the Willughby's of Wollaton, taken out of the Pedigree, old letters and old Books of Account in my Brother Sir Thomas Willoughby's study, Dec., A.D. 1702', into which she transcribed family letters, many of the originals of which are no longer extant, since as private rather than legal in nature they must not have been deposited in the muniments room and therefore were discarded. In addition to access to her brother's study, she also refers to the authority of 'my fater in a manuscript of his which gives an account of some antiquities of our Family', and loaned to William Derham, letters between her brother Francis Willoughby, the natural philosophy and John Ray and other scholars, which he published as *Philosophical Letters Between the Late Mr Ray and Several of His Ingenious Correspondence. . . . to which are added those of Francis Willoughby, Esquire* (1718).⁶⁶ Clearly then family archives were an important source of memorialising the family.

III

While there is evidence of women's involvement in archival activities, custody of and access to family papers was often controlled along gender lines, which sometimes excluded women, especially during periods of conflict. Such narratives suggest women's marginalisation from formal institutional archives, as well as official documents within the household connected to land. Yet women clearly amassed bodies of papers and were involved in record-keeping activities, which indicates an urgent need to reconceptualise what constituted archives during the early modern period, away from institutional definitions, and to rethink the categories of writings kept by women, which have often not been viewed as traditional forms of record-keeping. In conceptualising what constitutes 'personal archives' – simply defined as writings, records or papers kept outside of formal muniments rooms – we must be mindful of the varied material forms that women appropriated as a means of record-keeping, preserving information with the intention of memorialising and preserving it for posterity and future generations. These include collections of manuscript notes preserved in miscellanies, commonplace books and recipe books; annotations in printed books; as well as, less obviously, inscriptions embroidered into samplers or tapestries, or carved or chipped into wood or stone. Scholars have demonstrated the ways in which domestic medical knowledge and culinary know-how was transmitted from one generation to the next via the medium of

the manuscript receipt book, a form that assumed a central role within the household and was added to by successive owners before it was bequeathed to the next generation.⁶⁷ The remainder of this chapter, however, focusses in particular on the kinds of material forms that facilitated women's own record-keeping, which was usually connected with the family, genealogy and the household. Women, as Adam Fox has persuasively argued, were 'frequently custodians of family history and were responsible for its transmission', as they undoubtedly were of the family's domestic knowledge and practice; this transmission while often oral was also written down and 'archived'.⁶⁸ Analysing the ways women recorded family histories in printed bibles and other household books and manuscripts that were transferred generationally, it highlights a potential form of Derridean *matriarchive*, which could form the basis of a matrilineal transmission alongside and often overlapping with circulation within the family.

Printed bibles acted as one of the key mechanisms utilised by women to record and preserve information connected to the family, and as such represent a form of personal archive that passed from one generation to the next as a form of inheritance, attaining a degree of archival permanence not achieved by more ephemeral forms of record-keeping. It is hardly worth rehearsing here the ubiquity and range of bibles in early modern England, from the Matthew's Bible of 1537 which received approval from Henry VIII, the Great Bible in 1539, the Geneva Bible, first printed in Geneva in 1560 then printed from 1575 in England (with an estimated 150 editions printed between 1575–1644) and the 1611 King James Bible.⁶⁹ It has been estimated that during this period, approximately half a million copies were printed, and Femke Molekamp has argued that 'in the second half of the sixteenth century more households than not which had the resources to own and read books would have had a copy of the Geneva Bible'.⁷⁰ The evidence of probate documents and ownership marks indicate high levels of female ownership of bibles, and scholars have ably demonstrated women's complex engagement with biblical texts.⁷¹ The bible was thus a central sacred text within the early modern household, often occupying a physically central place spatially, in a hall or parlour, often on some kind of table or stand, as testified by probate inventories.⁷² The 1583 and 1606 inventories of the Ipswich widows Margaret Lowe and Jane Ward, respectively, describe 'In the hall', 'Item a byble a service boocke and a lecterne of woode' and 'Item i bybell with the deske ytt lyeth on'.⁷³ Such tomes were passed as a form of inheritance, from one generation to the next, which ensured their survival. A small 1640 bible among the holdings of the Bible Society at Cambridge University Library, was bequeathed by its original owner Mary Bradley to her daughter Mary Arbuthnot (1654–1701), who in turn bequeathed it to her son, who inscribed the volume 'The Gifft of my Dear and tender Mother, Mrs Mary Arbuthnot who had it from her mother being her mothers work she vallued it very much, and has often charg'd me to preserve it and to continue it down to posterity in her family in case I have no Children of my own'.⁷⁴

These characteristics affirm the importance of the bible within the household, its communal everyday use and pivotal roles in the spiritual lives, and social and cultural worlds of women and their families, but also its status as a sacred possession

or heirloom that ensured its archival qualities.⁷⁵ My interest, however, is less with bibles as religious texts, but more in their role as repositories of information, in other words the ways in which they functioned as personal archives to which women not only had access (as part of their religious duties) but also were instrumental in constructing. These were treasured sacred objects that were part of women's everyday lives, which explains why they were used to store information about the lives of families, their births, deaths and marriages. As William H. Sherman among others has demonstrated, the blank space around texts in Renaissance Books was used to record not only 'comments on the text, but also a range of annotations including penmanship exercises, prayers, recipes, popular poetry, drafts of letters, mathematical calculations, shopping lists and other glimpses of the world in which they circulated', and has argued that 'the white space around texts would have been an important place to store memoranda: certain books were likely to occupy special places in the households – and memories – of Renaissance readers'.⁷⁶ The bible is a good example of exactly this kind of appropriation of printed books as archives, and as Molekamp has shown in her survey of 106 Geneva Bibles at the British Library, almost a quarter were used in the construction of family memories and as storehouses of genealogical information, with owners recording births, deaths, marriages and baptisms.⁷⁷ Notes of this sort were annotated on the flyleaves, pastedowns and end papers at the back and front of the volume, and also in the blank pages intentionally left by printers, especially those occupying space between the Apocrypha and the start of the New Testament. Recording genealogy in this manner was common practice in early modern England and beyond continuing a tradition begun with medieval books of hours, and which accelerated with the rise of the family bible, and indeed continues today.⁷⁸

Bibles were thus a common site of recording of family genealogies, and women were active in noting down the births of their children and grandchildren. The fly leaf of a mid-seventeenth-century bible with tapestry cover belonging to Elizabeth Saunders contains entries relating to the Perry family.⁷⁹ Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough recorded the dates and times of births of her children over the period 1681 to 1690, also including the identities of their godparents.⁸⁰ As bibles passed from one generation to another, so the successive owners utilised them for recording new generations. A 1615 bible connected to the Hickling family which listed births of members of that family and associated with Ann (née Midleton) Hickling who appears to have carried the possession with her to her next marriage to William Stonicke, during which marriage it was used to record births, deaths and baptisms of the Stonicke family.⁸¹ This illustrates how bibles were passed down the generations and continued to be used for purposes of record. A bible belonging to the Howard family was used by several generations between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries as it was passed down the generations, and it includes the note on the front flyleaf signed by Robert Howard in 1649 'This was my mothers bible & the old closures being decayed I gott it newe bounde'.⁸²

In addition to bibles, other printed books assumed a central permanent place within the household, were bequeathed to future generations and assumed a role as archives. Genealogical and other kinds of notes are found in other religious texts,

such as Books of Common Prayer, as well printed herbals and household manuals and manuscript receipt books, texts associated with household provisioning and production.⁸³ A Folger copy of Gerard's *Meditations* (1640) contains birth records on the back flyleaf beginning with that of Jane Charlton, born 27 of December 1646, and including the births of Dorothy, Frances, William, Robert, Job and lastly Mary Charlton, who was born on 22 December 1656. These handwritten records of a generation of children, written in distinctly different inks as they were penned years apart, were in addition to manuscript notes of the Ten Commandments, which were listed on the first blank page of the book, and they recorded not only the date but also the time of the birth, which may suggest a form of recording at or close to the time of birth, rather than memorialising as a chronological list at a later date: 'Robert Charlton borne this 2 of February being munday betweene 11 and 12 a Clock att night in the year of our Lord 1651'. This was obviously a book that assumed an important place within the family that passed from one generation to the next, and performed multiple functions both spiritual and practical.⁸⁴

In addition to printed books of this nature, so too were manuscript household receipt books used as troves of genealogical information, including personal details of the deaths and births of children. Dorothy Philips' manuscript miscellany included family records, alongside sermon notes and receipts.⁸⁵ Representative of this type of manuscript is Anne Glyd's receipt book dated 1656, which in addition to medical recipes includes at the back 'A memorial of our childrens births: Sept. 1650'. It records the births and deaths of her own children before the death of her husband Richard in 1658 (which she recounts in some detail praising him as an 'emenant Christan and a deare loueng Loyal exceeding Eminant in the relation of a husband both to the soul and Body of mee his wife'), and includes the touching yet brief records of infant deaths, including 'Elizabeth Glyd brone ye 24th day of August being ye lords day 1652 who liued no longer then til she was just 7 wekes old', and later notes of her grandchildren by her daughter Martha Drake. On occasion, national events sit alongside the personal, in one instance 'The 4 of November the Prince of Orange began to land his army' was scrawled in the margin. As well as a memorial of life and death, the manuscript appears to have performed a spiritual function to Anne during her lifetime, a way of reconciling herself to the death of family members and God's will: in a passage after recording her husband's death, she called on God 'to inable mee whill I liue to beleue. . . . in thee', adding to

My Dear husband allways laboured firmly to beleue that all the promises in the gossell made to the righteous and ther seed should one time or other be made good to him and his seed now I bessech my good god to inabell mee whill I liue to beleue this and giue them grace my good God to intreat thee firmly to beleue in thee and to Rule them selves one thy promises and all things our Blesed sauioir hath told us. . . . O my Dear Children fear and trembell and beg of god one your knees that hee wold giue you grace to hear him that God your marker and man your father may no pronounce that sentenc aganst you Depart you cursed into hel fier prepared for the Diuell and his angells.⁸⁶

There is a sense also here that the archive offered not just a record of generational lives and deaths, but also functioned as a form of maternal spiritual advice literature, itself indicative that it would be passed to the next generation, witnessing a desire to be preserved.

In conclusion, the relationships between archives and power as it intersects with issues of gender are extremely complex, and are in many ways at the heart of how we reconstruct and recover women's involvement in early modern political culture. As has been argued, women were often marginalised from formal state and other institutional archives. These conditions have resulted in a scramble for the archives in order to assemble corpora of documents relating to women's political roles, as well as reading strategies that infer 'against the grain' and overcome silences, gaps and omissions in the historical record. The structure of archives themselves – as identified in looking at the survival of women's letters, which is partial and fragmentary – necessarily shapes the kinds of histories that we can write about the past, emphasising particular categories and roles, while having little to say about others. Moving away from state and municipal archives to the household, women's involvement with and access to family papers (either those in formal muniments rooms or kept by husbands in studies, closets or locked desks) was intricately bound up with questions about the balance of power within individual relationships. While some wives were clearly trusted confidantes, others were excluded from the male preserve of the study, and many female family members were disadvantaged during legal disputes by a lack of access to papers or evidences. Power within the family was thus negotiable and dependent on local circumstances. Alongside these communal archives, women were active record-keepers in their own right, which necessitates an important reconceptualisation of what constitutes an archive, to incorporate many of the material forms connected with the household – functioning as personal archives – that women utilised for preserving genealogical and domestic household knowledge to be passed on to future generations. Thus, within the sphere of the family and household women were often the custodians of genealogical knowledge that was key to matters of inheritance, the transfer of lands and titles and to lineage and family identity, all of which leant them a degree of power and influence within early modern society.

Notes

- 1 Devon Record Office, D2507, fols 118, 119, 122.
- 2 DRO, D2507, flyleaf.
- 3 DRO, D2507, fols 138, 140.
- 4 For discussion on provenance see, Anita Travers, ed., 'Robert Furse: A Devon Family Memoir of 1593', *Devon and Cornwall Record Society*, 53 (2010), xvi–xviii; H.J. Carpenter, 'Furse of Moreshead: A Family Record of the Sixteenth Century', *Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art*, 26 (1894), 168–184.
- 5 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (1969; London: Routledge, 2002). See also, Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, 'The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the

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 - 11 Alan Stewart, 'Familiar Letters and State Papers: The After-Lives of Early Modern Correspondence', in *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by James Daybell and Andrew Gordon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), pp. 237–252. See also, de Vivo, *Information and Communication*, pp. 7–10, 48–70; Stephen J. Milner, 'Partial Readings: Addressing a Renaissance Archive', *History of the Human Sciences*, 12/2 (1999), 89–105.
 - 12 Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Against It* (London: Pluto Press, 1973).
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PART I

Diplomacy, gifts and the politics of exchange

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3

THE GENDERED POWER OF PORCELAIN AMONG EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN DYNASTIES

Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent

This chapter analyses how porcelain became a tool of power for early modern women and men, in specific and distinct ways, over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We explore porcelain's trajectory as a gendered political tool as it was displayed, exchanged and maintained by elite dynasties, particularly those connected with the House of Orange–Nassau, and as it was adopted by other ruling families to convey messages of power.¹ We argue that neither men nor women were passive consumers of such material objects but instead used porcelain to make and display power and to perform political work. Considering porcelain in this way requires a conceptualisation of the political that encompasses both formal and informal modes of power relating to a wide range of economic, legal, military, cultural, aesthetic, religious and dynastic objectives. As we shall explore, porcelain was employed by elite women and men to signal European leaders' achievements in diplomatic relations, access to global markets, new knowledge, economic industries and their current, aspirational and changing political affiliations.

Art historians have long understood that porcelain has conveyed a political role. Nevertheless, Alden Cavanaugh and Michael E. Yonan have commented on the lack of vibrancy of porcelain scholarship compared to art and sculpture, despite its important presence in Europe and referencing in contemporary social and artistic discourses.² Certainly the importance of porcelain as a 'princely collector's item' and the power relations that were shaped by the giving and receiving of porcelain between dynastic and royal households has, surprisingly, not yet been fully explored within an analytical framework of gender.³ So far, historical studies of the cultural politics of the House of Orange–Nassau, whose fortunes rose and fell through the period from 1600 to 1800, have highlighted their extensive and important building programme, their patronage of painters, painting collections and gardens and to a lesser extent the role of porcelain in their creation of cultural capital.⁴ However,

increasingly scholars are recognising the key contributions of women associated with the House of Orange-Nassau in commissioning and displaying porcelain, so that analysis of this prominent Protestant dynasty whose interactions with porcelain were longstanding and extensive offers the possibility to conceptualise gendered power and materiality.⁵

The materiality of the object that we have thus far simply termed porcelain requires careful consideration because it was not only its consumption but the materials that made up its composition as well as its colouration and the processes of its manufacture that shaped its political meanings in crucial ways.⁶ Until the seventeenth century, porcelain, the hard-paste product made from kaolin-petuntse, was only available to Europe as an export from Japan or China and the Eastern ports through which it was traded. In Europe, tin-glazed earthenware and soft-paste porcelains were produced, particularly as Delftware, and from such factories as Rouen, Liseux, Saint-Cloud, Vincennes and initially Sèvres – significant developments that were political as well as economic acts. By the early eighteenth century, the secret of hard-paste porcelain had been delivered to European elites eager to seize on its production for directly political reasons. Materiality mattered because choices of which product to import, display or consume, its modelling on Asian examples or European designs and even its colours, were both a reflection and enactment of the high stakes politics of Europe.

Gendering the art of global access and political power

In the sixteenth century, porcelain conveyed access to global markets and unique commodities that only certain European nations possessed. Portugal had benefitted from close trading ties with Asian nations to accrue large collections of porcelain. After his successful claim to the Portuguese crown in 1581, Philip II of Spain (1527–1598) sent his daughters, Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566–1633) and Catalina Micaela (1567–1597), ‘new types’ of porcelain from Portugal: ‘I am sending back for you and your brother’s service some porcelains inside the box, these are porcelains of a new type, at least, I haven’t seen anything like that.’⁷ Such gifts signalled Spanish control over Portuguese access to these new varieties. Philip II owned more than 3000 pieces, constituting the largest collection of the later sixteenth century, used in his dinner service.⁸ However, this collection did not remain intact. Some pieces were damaged in everyday use, and Philip III (1578–1621) also distributed pieces as gifts, including a substantial 100 pieces to his mother-in-law, the Archduchess Maria Anna of Bavaria (1551–1608), in June 1599, and later sold much of the collection at public auction.⁹

These ways were some of the only means for other rulers to access these exotic products. François I (1494–1547) of France owned only a limited number of pieces that he had received as gifts or had purchased from public auctions. Nevertheless, these objects could still serve as evidence of the diplomatic

reach of French monarchs, as the Jesuit historian Gabriel Daniel (1649–1728) claimed in 1642:

some vases and dishes of porcelain and crystal, most curiously worked, with a multitude of little details, which were given as gifts to this king [François] and to Henri II with some works from the Indies, China and Turkey, and other cabinet curiosities.¹⁰

The porcelain pieces listed among the items in François' cabinet of curiosities at Fontainebleau, a number of which were in European mounts, were clearly prized possessions.¹¹ During the 1560s, Catherine de Medici (1519–1589), widow of Henri II of France (1519–1559), also promoted local ceramic production, via the Protestant artist Bernard Palissy (c1510–c1590) whom she installed in a Paris manufactory under her patronage.¹² In this, she followed a dynastic strategy. The Medici held a collection of over 400 pieces of Chinese porcelain by the mid sixteenth century but Grand Duke Cosimo I (1519–1574) likewise encouraged local experimentation with hard-paste porcelain production. Under his son Francesco I (1541–1587), in 1575, the Venetian ambassador to Florence, Andrea Gussoni, reported the dynasty's success:

Francesco has found the way to produce 'Indian' porcelain and in his experiment has equalled its quality – its transparency, hardness, lightness and delicacy; it has taken him ten years to discover the secret but a Levantine showed him the way to success.¹³

The secrets of porcelain were clearly of sufficient political interest to warrant notification in diplomatic correspondence. 'Medici porcelain', fashioned in the blue and white style best known to the Italian peninsula via Turkish ceramics (the Iznik style modelled on Chinese products), became a signature diplomatic gift of the Medici dynasty rising to new heights as the Grand Dukes of Tuscany.¹⁴ European rulers responded to their lack of direct access to porcelain by supporting local products that could rebalance ceramic economic and cultural power in their favour.

At the same time, other modes of porcelain use were emerging among Europe's leaders. Philip II's elder daughter, Isabella Clara Eugenia, employed porcelain in a different way to her father and brother, or indeed to that of earlier Governor of the Habsburg Netherlands Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), whose porcelain pieces had similarly largely comprised pieces suitable for dinner service.¹⁵ Isabella purchased additional porcelain for her dinner service before her marriage to Archduke Albert VII of Austria (1559–1621) in 1596. When the couple became joint sovereigns of the Spanish Netherlands, she brought the impressive collection and displayed it in her *Kunstammer*. Albert, who had been the first viceroy of Portugal after the dynastic union, was known also for his interest in exotic objects and collection of Chinese porcelain.¹⁶ Their practice merged the scale of Iberian rulers' collections with display modes of porcelain as an art object and a rarity common to northern Europe in a

powerful new way. After all, porcelain had first reached the United Provinces only in 1602 when the cargo of the Portuguese carrack *San Jago* was brought to Middelburg. When the *Catharina* was captured off Patani in 1604, its cargo of precious porcelain was sold at auction at which Henri IV of France (1553–1610), on the advice of Louise de Coligny (1555–1620), fourth wife and widow of William the Silent, Prince of Orange (1533–1584) (who had a collection of porcelain of her own), acquired a ‘a fine porcelain service, of the best possible quality’. He was joined by a number of his ministers as well as James I of England (1566–1625).¹⁷

Gifts of exotic porcelain gave donors a persuasive means of political influence. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) presented all manner of porcelain tableware to government and legal officials, alert to the possibilities of porcelain’s political potential among female recipients.¹⁸ In 1639, the directors in Amsterdam requested of the Zeeland chamber that they set aside some of their finest and most unusual pieces to make as a present to Amalia von Solms-Braunfels (1602–1675), the wife of Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange (1584–1647), William the Silent’s youngest son.¹⁹ Such gifts reflected her power as an informal channel of influence. Amalia assembled an extensive collection for display, with over 1200 pieces by 1673, including many pieces given to her as gifts by the VOC and European diplomats.²⁰ Amalia had special locations in her palaces designed for porcelain display, expanding from a cabinet in 1632, to a gallery by 1634, and into a large and small porcelain cabinet at Noordeinde in her widowhood.²¹ Her rooms at Huis ten Bosch displayed some 398 pieces of porcelain in an intimate space next to her bedchamber, in a small cabinet room using exotic lacquer work and which was painted in blue, orange, yellow and gold combinations that were Orange-Nassau heraldic colours.²²

With the establishment of their own representational court, Frederick Henry and Amalia promoted the political ascendancy of the princely House of Orange within the United Provinces, modelled on the contemporary practices of French, Bohemian and English rulers. This was an explicit political act to heighten their status in a nation in which they served as non-hereditary stadholders. As C. Willemijn Fock has shown, architectural programs under Amalia’s commission adopted French spatial arrangements through a suite of rooms that denoted degrees of access and intimacy to power.²³ Both Frederick Henry and Amalia placed particular attention on patronising Dutch artists and architects and celebrated products to which they, the Dutch, had for a long time almost exclusive monopoly, especially Japanese porcelain after 1641, when other trading companies were refused access to Japan. Both before and after Frederick Henry’s death, Amalia’s own collecting, display and gift exchange practices were critical to the presentation of the House of Orange-Nassau.²⁴ She was the first member of this House to utilise porcelain specifically in a range of spatial and material settings, from highly visible galleries and cabinets to exclusive female areas that linked porcelain to new forms of elite power.

Already during this era, Amalia’s style of porcelain display was imitated by others. Frederick Henry’s elder sister, Catharina Belgica (1578–1648) who resided in the Stadholder’s palace for over twenty years displayed her porcelain on red and gilt stands.²⁵ In England, massed porcelain displays in these ways were considered

a Dutch style, as suggested by the extensions made at Tart Hall under Alatheia Talbot, Countess of Arundel (1585–1654), for her ‘Dutch Pranketing Room’.²⁶ She had accompanied Frederick V, son of Frederick Henry’s elder sister Louise Juliana (1576–1644), and his bride Elizabeth Stuart to Heidelberg upon their marriage in 1613 and later lived in the Netherlands during the English Civil War.

The House of Orange–Nassau may have modelled its adoption of porcelain upon Iberian precedents concerning the type of exotic commodities that could be obtained from Asian trade, but how its members used it to establish the political position of the House in the United Provinces was very different. Their display techniques expanded the practices of elite curiosity collectors of northern Europe, including women in positions of rule such as Isabella Clara Eugenia. Thus, both Louise de Coligny, the widow of William the Silent who maintained his children and legacy after his untimely death, and especially Amalia von Solms–Braunfels who carefully managed the reputation of the House of Orange–Nassau during a difficult period in which it lacked an adult male leader, promoted the high value of porcelain that reflected their own status as women of power and political significance, and their dynasty’s claims to pre-eminence in the United Provinces. Porcelain displayed in a range of exclusive spatial settings reflected and created the power of these individuals. Indeed their ever-expanding collections marked their growing power as influential political interlocutors worthy of the most exclusive gifts to which Europe had access.

Conspicuous consumption: materialising political allegiances

After her death, Amalia’s porcelain, like her other movable possessions, was divided among her four daughters Louise Henriëtte (1627–1667), Henriëtte Catharina (1637–1708), Albertine Agnes (1634–1696) and Maria (1642–1688). Three of these daughters were married into affiliated German dynasties in lands that had been impoverished by the Thirty Years War. All four daughters furnished their palaces in a shared style, displaying their porcelain collections in special cabinets, subterranean kitchens and garden grottos. The conspicuous display of Amalia’s porcelain by her daughters in new territories signalled not only the powerful House from which these women came, but it also conveyed Orange–Nassau financial and cultural supremacy and the imposition of its political objectives over these lands. Moreover, these women used distinct material forms in specific ways to enhance the standing of the Dutch earthenware manufactories as well as the Dutch East India Trading Company. Over time, these styles and sites of porcelain display became widely understood as cultural styles of dynasties linked by intermarriage and a shared Protestant faith.

Under Louise Henriëtte, Amalia’s eldest daughter, who had married Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg (1620–1688), the first porcelain cabinet in Germany was installed during 1662/3 at Oranienburg, a palace designed in Dutch style and named in honour of her natal family.²⁷ Louise Henriëtte added extensively to her significant inheritance from Amalia and accrued what is seen by scholars today

as the most important porcelain collection of the Hohenzollern.²⁸ Louise Henriëtte evidently took to heart the construction of her porcelain cabinet as an extension of her personal and political connections to the Orange-Nassau, writing many letters to her husband's First Minister in Brandenburg, Otto von Schwerin (1616–1679), inquiring both broadly and as to specific details of its arrangement and gilding of its special consoles.²⁹ Henriëtte Catharina, married to Johann Georg II of Anhalt-Dessau (1627–1693) in 1659, also asserted her own identity as an Orange-Nassau princess in her new home, and between 1663 and 1687, luxury goods including Asian porcelain as well as Delftware were sent from The Hague to decorate her palace in Dessau and then her newly built palace in nearby Oranienbaum.³⁰ There, she had a special cabinet with gilded wooden shelves which echoed designs by the French Huguenot designer Daniel Marot (1661–1752) in the employ of her nephew, William III (1650–1702).³¹ About thirty pieces of Japanese *Kraak* porcelain came from the collection of her mother, but by her death, Henriëtte Catharina had amassed a collection of several hundred pieces of Delftware and imported porcelain.³²

Equally impressive were the princesses' summer kitchens decorated from floor to ceiling with earthenware blue and white tiles imported from the Netherlands.³³ The architect Christoph Pitzler (1657–1707), who visited Oranienbaum in 1695, described its summer kitchen as containing about 5000 white and 2500 painted 'Dutch' tiles.³⁴ Pitzler also noted a more exclusive room 'with porcelain and this is only for the Duchess'.³⁵ These summer kitchens pre-dated the fashion for pleasure dairies of eighteenth-century France that were associated with a reform of aristocratic femininity into more domestic forms.³⁶ These female spaces designed for products and activities of Dutch colonies and trading companies, such as tea and sugar and display of exotic flowers, performed a clear political function: promoting both their owners' allegiance to Orange-Nassau objectives and the dynasty's social and cultural superiority.³⁷ The princesses employed these kitchens to prepare jam and candied fruits, such as orange peel, which were offered to guests at the end of entertainments and balls and given as exclusive gifts.³⁸ Albertine Agnes, who had married her cousin Willem Frederick of Nassau-Dietz (1613–1664) likewise used these same material and spatial signals to emphasise which branch of the dynasty held superior status in her marriage. In her private residence named Oranienstein built at Dietz, she had a 'confiturcammer' constructed, a kitchen devoted specially to making jam and marmalade, and which included 310 jam bowls made of Delftware.³⁹

Henriëtte Catharina also displayed luxury porcelain in another exclusive, restricted space to which only the closest members of the princess' courts had access. Her grotto, an independent building located in the garden, contained several rooms, including bedchambers and a bathroom, which all contained porcelain objects, but one room was mentioned as specifically designed to display porcelain on four triangular porcelain stands or pyramids. Henriëtte Catharina also used this space to assert her identity and power as a member of the House of Orange-Nassau through exotic commodities and novel consumption practices.⁴⁰ The Dutch were

the first to import tea into Europe and to develop tea drinking into a social habit of the upper class. In 1679, Henriëtte Catharina bought from a leading Delft workshop a teapot, cups and other earthenware vessels.⁴¹ Dutch artist Abraham Snaaphaen (1651–1691), in his painting *Die Teegesellschaft*, c.1690, highlighted how Henriëtte Catharina and her daughters employed such objects, depicting the exclusive group taking tea from a porcelain set and enjoying candied fruit laid out on a porcelain plate.⁴² The depicted objects echo the ‘six blue and brown small porcelain cups and saucers’, and the ‘Indian black lacquered small table with gilded legs’ that are mentioned in the inventory of the Oranienbaum grotto.⁴³

Significantly, Henriëtte Catharina gave the image that documented these politically resonant gatherings to her daughter Marie Eleonore (1671–1756), a pedagogical tool as well as a memorial to her own actions designed to emphasise her political affiliation as an Orange–Nassau princess.⁴⁴ The several hundred pieces of earthenware and porcelain listed in the 1709 inventory compiled after Henriëtte Catharina’s death were also distributed to her daughters, following a dynastic tradition of matrilineal inheritance. Moreover, Henriëtte Catharina gave specific instructions to preserve the grotto and its contents exactly as they were – a memorial to the House of Orange–Nassau which displayed its financial and cultural power in forms appropriate to, and accrued by, its female members. The princesses of Orange asserted their House’s political ascendancy and dominance status using porcelain and Delft-manufactured pottery. This had direct economic impact on the economy of the Dutch Republic and its major trading company, the VOC, and increased the status of the House who led the fledging nation by making these luxury objects desirable to others both within and beyond The Netherlands.

Both men and women continued to employ porcelain and Delftware to signify their affiliation with the Orange–Nassau dynasty. They used pieces they inherited from Orange–Nassau ancestors, showing their direct descendency and close alliances at times when this mattered for their own political claims. Such inheritance practices often broke up the collections that women amassed but in doing so, these objects, displayed in similar ways and sites, became powerful advocates for the political objectives of such affiliates. Mary II Stuart (1662–1694) who married William III of Orange promoted Delftware and porcelain at most of the palaces with which she was associated in both the Netherlands and in England. At Honsellaarsdijk, most of the Asian porcelain could be found in Mary’s rooms, in the audience chamber and in the *Indianse* closet.⁴⁵ The Swedish architect Nicodemus Tessin the Younger (1654–1728) visited in 1686 and described the Audience Chamber as ‘richly decorated with Chinese work and pictures. . . . The chimney-piece was full of precious porcelain, part standing half inside it, and so fitted together that one piece supported another’.⁴⁶ Here, the intended effect of porcelain in impressing visitors had certainly been achieved. William and Mary renovated Het Loo as a magnificent representation of the power of the Orange–Nassau, with prominent display of Delftware and Asian porcelain above fireplaces, as vases, and in a summer kitchen in the basement,

with direct access to the queen's side of the garden. Mary appears to have used the basement kitchen for exotic flower display but it was also described, in 1705, as 'Her majesty's tea room'.⁴⁷ Mary's use of such Orange-Nassau material culture of power, rather than Stuart ones, was important in defining a place for herself as an incomer to the House and to the Dutch Republic.

Delftware and Asian porcelain were also an important feature of the particular form of aesthetics and display culture that Mary and William brought across the Channel after 1689. In the redecoration of Hampton Court, Mary created a similar, private outbuilding known as the 'dairy' within the Water Gallery, which functioned as her private retreat. It was re-tiled in Delftware created to Daniel Marot's designs by the famous Dutch Grieksche A factory and was where she kept some of her collection of blue and white japanned stands also attributed to Marot.⁴⁸ He had been chief architect at Het Loo and had designed the porcelain cabinets in Oranienburg, Oranienbaum and Oranienstein. Marot had published an engraving of a 'china-closet' design in 1702, creating further publicity for himself and for his patrons among contemporaries and disseminating their style of luxury furnishings and objects to other potential patrons.⁴⁹ Mary also created a dedicated series of 'Porcelain Rooms', in her apartments at Kensington Palace. The gallery alone contained some 154 pieces, situated over doors and fireplaces, and displayed on specially designed tiered stands.⁵⁰ After her early death, the collection of 787 pieces at Kensington Palace were formally transferred to one of William's favourites, Arnold Joost van Keppel Earl of Albemarle (1669–1718), in 1699.⁵¹ It seems that Albemarle transferred the collection back to the Netherlands to be displayed at Huis de Voorst in Gelderland where Daniel Marot was once again connected to the interior decoration that included overdoor arrangements, porcelain brackets and tea table displays similar to those utilised by the Orange-Nassau women.⁵² Albemarle's display of Mary's collection clearly signalled his own powerful personal connections to William and his affiliation with the political fortunes of the Orange-Nassau.

The collection of Frederick Henry's elder sister, Catharina Belgica of Nassau, was likewise distributed to her daughters. Amalia Elisabeth (1602–1651), who married William V, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel (1602–1637), accrued a collection of over 1000 pieces by her death while ruling as regent for her son, William VI (1629–1663).⁵³ His daughter, Charlotte Amalia (1650–1714), was the wife of Christian V of Denmark (1646–1699). She held a collection of some 663 porcelain pieces at her death that were conspicuously displayed to create a massed effect at Rosenborg Castle in the areas that she redeveloped after the death of her father-in-law, Frederick III (1609–1670). As Cordula Bischoff notes, Frederick had taken an interest in Asian exotica, demonstrated through lacquered objects and furnishing, but there was no evidence of porcelain among his collection.⁵⁴ However, Charlotte Amalia's son Frederick IV (1671–1730) who had succeeded to the throne in 1699 and his wife Louise of Mecklenburg (1667–1721) displayed his mother's bequest in a range of spaces and planned a new porcelain cabinet in 1709, shortly after visiting Berlin where Frederick I had developed a series of extensive porcelain displays.⁵⁵ The wife of Charlotte Amalia's brother, Charles (1654–1730),

who became Landgrave in 1670, Maria Anna Amalia of Courland (1653–1711), expanded these porcelain practices further, collecting more than 2600 pieces over her lifetime and mounting them in rooms that included a special display kitchen.⁵⁶ Porcelain and pottery display mechanisms and practices that signalled ancestry through inherited material objects were introduced into these dynasties through female members, who were descendants of the Orange-Nassau dynasty.

After the death of Mary's husband William III, an inheritance dispute arose over the title Prince of Orange. William's nephew in Prussia, Frederick I, strategically used porcelain in self-promotion first to position himself to gain the princely title and later as king. Frederick commissioned the elaborate porcelain cabinet that is the culmination of the enfilade in Charlottenburg Palace, designed by Johann Friedrich Eosander (1669–1728), but he had already previously enlarged Oranienburg, directing special attention to the porcelain cabinet, designed by German architect Johann Arnold Nering (1659–1695), and executed around 1695, that was located in Frederick's apartment, as the highlight of the newly added northwest pavilion. This pavilion was depicted in a 1733 etching by French architect Jean Baptiste Broebes (1660–1733) which shows porcelain displayed, as in the earlier cabinet of his mother Louise Henriëtte, on eight *étagères* for maximum effect. In 1697, Dutch artist Augustinus Terwesten (1649–1711) completed the ceiling painting *The Triumph of Porcelain* for the cabinet, an allegory on the introduction of porcelain to Europe.⁵⁷ The porcelain held by Orania in her orange dress in this painting has been identified as belonging to Frederick's collection, and some of which had come originally from the collections of his grandmother Amalia.⁵⁸ A ceiling painting in Frederick's study showed three allegorical figures with a porcelain vase.⁵⁹

Frederick's porcelain consumption, aimed at emphasising his political allegiances to the House of Orange-Nassau, demonstrates how material culture practices previously associated with the dynasty's women, including his mother, could now be developed to signal elite male power. At Caputh Palace, the Orange princesses' signature practice of special display rooms for Dutch and imported Chinese and Japanese porcelain was also copied, with its own porcelain room, and the display of porcelain above fireplaces. Caputh's porcelain collection contained the rare Japanese porcelain from the early seventeenth century that had originally been part of the collection of Amalia von Solms-Braunfels. Caputh also boasted an imposing ceiling painting attributed to Dutch artist Jacques Vaillant (1643–1691) or his workshop, added around 1690–1700, in which Borussia (a personification of Brandenburg-Prussia) holds a precious Chinese porcelain bowl. The four corners of the ceiling each depict a magnificent Chinese blue and white porcelain vase. Frederick also added the Tile Room, or *Fliesensaal*, a low-ceilinged room used as a summer dining hall, which was completely tiled in over 7500 Dutch blue and white tiles, made for Frederick around 1720. The tile motifs included iconography of ships, windmills, children's games, animals – all common motifs of Dutch tiling. Samuel Wittwer has argued that, with 'all their political significance these rooms had far more than a simply fashionable and decorative purpose. This is what makes the Prussian

porcelain “cabinets” almost unique.⁶⁰ We argue, by contrast, that Frederick adopted and adapted porcelain display practices already employed by women for political purposes within the Orange-Nassau network and its affiliates.

Porcelain at war: masculinising consumption

New political realities began to see porcelain emerge in the eighteenth century as a key instrument of elite male power. European rulers had not ignored porcelain and earthenware while Orange-Nassau affiliates amassed their collections. However, their access to this luxury commodity had often been limited, causing them to interact with imported porcelains and European earthenware differently. Sourcing porcelain remained a challenge for the Stuart monarchs of the later seventeenth century although the capture of Dutch vessels during the Anglo-Dutch wars, and display of their precious porcelain cargo, presented opportunities to celebrate English maritime supremacy. In 1673, Charles II (1630–1685) had gained ‘two barrels of China’ for the royal collections in such a way.⁶¹

In France, Louis XIV (1638–1715) created the Trianon de Porcelaine which seems to have been intended as a provocative display of French manufacturing capacity and a unique interpretation of Chinese style. These were a short-lived series of pavilions constructed by architect François d’Orbay (1634–1697) between 1670 and 1671 that were to be clad in blue and white ware ‘in the Chinese style’.⁶² This Trianon has been described as a product of Louis’ Chinese obsession, a folly of his youth before he shifted to the more sober neoclassical style that characterised its replacement, the Trianon de marbre.⁶³ However, its construction occurred at a time when the Dutch had signed the Triple Alliance with England and Sweden in 1668, against French interests, and by May 1672, war broke out between France and the Dutch Republic. Contemporary illustrations depict the Trianon’s roof with alternating massed arrangement of painted ceramic vases, birds and flower pots, using the potteries of Nevers, Rouen, Liseux and Saint Clément.⁶⁴ The interior flooring was likewise paved with earthenware and decorated in a colour scheme of blue, white, yellow and gold, described by court historian and art devotee André Félibien (1619–1695) as:

a Salon having all the walls clad in highly polished white stucco with azure ornaments. The cornices and ceilings are also ornamented with diverse figures of azure on a white background, all worked in the style of pieces that come from China, to which the paving and wainscot respond, being made of tiles of porcelain.⁶⁵

The 1674 *Mercure galante* observed that blue and white colour schemes had become the latest fashion.⁶⁶ The luxurious furnishings were produced by a Dutch migrant ebenist, Pierre Gole (c1620–1684) (whose nephew, Daniel Marot, left France after the revocation of the edict of Nantes and was successfully employed among the Orange-Nassau and their affiliates).⁶⁷ The precinct was completed by floral gardens,

sustained by massive shipments of bulbs, studded with earthenware pots and fountains, as well as cultivation of orange trees on the slope on south-facing slope.⁶⁸ Louis appeared to be reclaiming commodities, colours and Asian aesthetics until then associated with the Dutch and Orange-Nassau dynasty to assert his political dominance in Europe. The popularity of Japanese porcelain only increased after the diplomatic visits of ambassador of the King of Siam in 1684 who presented many pieces that enriched elite French collections, not least the king's.⁶⁹ Display of these objects emphasised Louis' global connections.

Just months after the construction of the *Trianon de Porcelaine*, Louis's brother, Philippe, Duke of Orléans (1640–1701), completed his own *Trianon* at Saint-Cloud which shared its Chinese aesthetic, earthenware work and blue and white colour scheme.⁷⁰ In fact, the Duke and Duchess already owned a large porcelain collection.⁷¹ Raised a Protestant, the Duchess of Orléans, Elisabeth Charlotte, (1652–1722), was daughter of Charlotte of Hesse-Kassel and Elector Palatine Charles 1 Louis, and descendant through both her parents of the House of Orange-Nassau. Under Orléans patronage, the manufactory at Saint-Cloud developed successful production of soft-paste ware. Elisabeth Charlotte took a keen interest in the usage of porcelain at court, reporting how Louis made porcelain a political instrument. At war against the allied English, Dutch and Austrians in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), Louis produced a series of edicts that tea services of precious metals were to be replaced by porcelain ones, but also forbidding the importation of foreign porcelain and earthenware: 'The king is so determined to continue the war that yesterday he gave up his gold service and now uses porcelain; he has sent every gold thing he has to the mint to be turned into coin.'⁷² Her son, Philippe II, the Regent of France (1674–1723), later inherited and expanded his parents' porcelain collection, with his wife, Françoise Marie of Bourbon (1677–1749), daughter of Louis XIV and Françoise-Athénais de Rochechouart, marquise de Montespan (1640–1707), for whom the *Trianon de Porcelaine* had in part been designed.⁷³ Elisabeth Charlotte corresponded with her half-sister in Germany about her son's latest purchases of tea and chocolate service in *blanc-de-chine* (possibly Saint-Cloud) for his wife.⁷⁴ Interestingly, the elaborate, massed displays in Françoise Marie's personal apartments at the Palais Royal, over chimneys and on tea tables in a 'profusion of porcelain', and the singular display of 10 one-metre high vases, were reminiscent of the decorative, ornamental usages of the Dutch aesthetic tradition to which this branch of the Bourbon dynasty were connected.⁷⁵

When Frederick Augustus I of Saxony (1670–1733) became king of Poland as Augustus II the Strong, he converted to Catholicism and ceded his role as the leading German Protestant leader to the Brandenburg-Prussia-Orange family. Augustus was well known for the scale of his cultural display, creating a magnificent palace at Dresden, and renowned for lavish art patronage. His small pleasure palace on the banks of the Elbe would eventually uncouple porcelain display from its Dutch Protestant origins and make it stand for elite power more broadly. Augustus had visited the palaces at Oranienburg, Caputh and Charlottenburg in 1709 with the King of Denmark as the guest of Frederick I.⁷⁶ In 1717, he purchased the *Holländisches*

Palais to display his Asian porcelain acquisitions in ‘Dutch-style’ holdings. Augustus had gained precious porcelain objects, 154 porcelain pieces including 22 large vases, from the Prussian collections that year, in return for sending a regiment of dragoons to Frederick William I of Prussia (1688–1740), who was not known for excessive love of the arts, but instead his ambition to amass a large army.⁷⁷ Ministers were also known to have acquired porcelain for Augustus when travelling in the Netherlands.⁷⁸ Augustus’ collection included porcelain on a far grander scale than had been seen to date. A 1721 inventory demonstrates that he had amassed some 13,000 pieces of both Japanese and Chinese porcelain for what was now known as his Japanese Palace, a collection which was to reach 21,000 pieces by 1727.⁷⁹ Interestingly, not long after Augustus’s conversion and before his lavish new porcelain display, in 1709, Anton Ulrich, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel (1633–1714), had also converted to Catholicism. His Protestant wife, Elisabeth Juliana (1634–1705), had died some years earlier, leaving a porcelain room described in 1690 as using bracketed mounts with silk wall-coverings. In the year of his conversion, Anton Ulrich created an impressive, new display, with over 2000 porcelain objects and 600 pieces of Italian majolica in a single room.⁸⁰ Porcelain had become an elite male tool: one that, in these cases of male converts to Catholicism, was (perhaps explicitly) being uncoupled from its link to Protestant dynasties.

The lower floor of Augustus’ Japanese palace was dedicated to his Asian collection that he had gained through a careful acquisition strategy, while the upper floor celebrated his new contribution to the European earthenware market, Meissen. Augustus realised the economic power that the Dutch held through their importation of Asian porcelain and their local manufacture of Delftware. He sponsored a young alchemist Johann Friedrich Boettger (1682–1719) who created a hard-paste European ware, using local quartz feldspar. Augustus established a manufactory in Meissen in 1710 and it would dominate European production until 1756.⁸¹ Meissen became a leading competitor to Asian products, having in the 1720s sent undecorated pieces to Holland to be painted ‘in the taste of the colours of old Japan’ and returned to the factory as samples to be modelled by the Meissen painters.⁸² Augustus celebrated his hard-paste ware as gifts, just as Asian porcelain had been, now performing as a political vehicle that highlighted the advanced technology and industry of his realm. In a painting ceiling proposed for the Japanese Palace by Zacharius Longuelune (1669–1748) but never executed, Minerva was to be depicted selecting porcelain offered by Saxony and Asia, and presenting the crown of victory to Saxony while the Asian porcelain was taken back to the ships.⁸³ This was intended as an explicit statement of the new global, aesthetic, economic and political power that European hard-paste ware such as Meissen could represent.

Determined to outdo Saxony, and recognising the power of material culture that his father had not, Frederick II (1712–1786) first attempted to access Asian porcelain directly. He set up the (unsuccessful) Prussian Asiatic Trading Company (1751–1756) to trade with Canton.⁸⁴ When this failed, he looked to develop his own porcelain manufactory, the *Königliche Porzellanmanufaktur* (KPM). In 1756, during the Seven Years’ War, Frederick’s troops held Dresden and Frederick used the opportunity to coax many artisans to Berlin. He took over a struggling Berlin

hard-paste manufactory in 1763, became its main customer, and thus enabled its commercial survival, ordering in 1765, for example, twenty-one extensive dinner sets for the court, more than anyone else owned at this time.⁸⁵ For Frederick, porcelain was almost an extension of his personal identity; he took personal interest in the design and his favourite colours were reproduced on KPM porcelain. Like Meissen before it, diplomatic presents in the form of porcelain soon made KPM well-known internationally.⁸⁶ When William V, Prince of Orange (1748–1806), married Wilhelmina of Prussia (1751–1820), the favourite niece of Frederick II, they received a KPM porcelain dinner set from her uncle in Berlin. Now it was the Orange-Nassau in the Netherlands who received high-quality earthenware gifts from Prussia. Clearly, Frederick's ambitions as Prussian king extended to the control and possession of porcelain as cultural, economic and political forms of power.

The pattern of royal patronage over European soft- and hard-paste ware operated similarly in France. Louis XV (1710–1774) boldly and pointedly declared in letters patents granting Circaire Cirou the right to produce his Chantilly Japanese-style soft-paste ware in 1735 that 'there is no room to doubt that his porcelain is superior to that of Saxony . . . and the eagerness with which foreign countries like England, Holland and Germany ask for it, tend to confirm the superiority of his porcelain over any which has so far appeared in this manner'.⁸⁷ Later Louis, encouraged by an enthusiastic Madame de Pompadour (1721–1764), supported the soft-paste manufactory at Vincennes from 1751 and then declared it the royal manufactory by edict of 1753. Moving to Sèvres near Pompadour's château de Bellevue, the factory's wares carried not only the royal device, but the privilege to gild its products.⁸⁸ Lacking the technical capacity until 1768 to produce hard-paste ware in the manner of Meissen and KPM (when Louis paid for the trade secret), Sèvres focussed its attention on the development of new colours and designs, drawing particularly upon the expertise of the celebrated chemist Jean Hellot (1685–1766).⁸⁹ Nothing signalled the decreasing fortunes of the House of Orange-Nassau and Dutch blue and white ware more than the development of new and distinctive shades of blue. A member of the Academy of Sciences, Hellot created in 1753 a pale turquoise blue hue termed *bleu céleste* that would come to complement other pastel shades such as violet, yellow and *rose Pompadour* developed afterwards. Just a few years later, Louis was the designated recipient of a rich, cobalt hue that became widely known as *bleu du roi*, Sèvres or royal, blue.

Conclusion

The history of porcelain and earthenware products among the ruling dynasties of early modern Europe provides rich evidence of the complex gendered nature of power and materiality. These objects, in all their diverse forms, enabled women and men to signal their political allegiances through display, gift exchange, patronage of particular manufactories and trading networks. The display conventions, in particular those attached to the House of Orange-Nassau, shifted the meanings of Asian porcelain and Dutch-manufactured Delftware from Spanish and Portuguese precedents. In doing so, these commodities cemented that dynasty's claims to status

as the leading political dynasty of the United Provinces, embedded them in a key mutually beneficial relationship with the powerful Dutch trading company, and enabled members and affiliates to display their shared Orange-Nassau, Dutch and/or Protestant interests far and wide across Europe. Other dynasties would later transmute these modes of porcelain and earthenware consumption and, in the process, the power attached to them in provocative political ways.

Earthenware production in Europe was supported by a wide range of male and female patrons from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Technologies of composition and colouration represented power that European leaders were prepared to pay, and pay spies, for. The introduction of these new products, from Medici to Meissen, Saint-Cloud to Sèvres, into the elite political sphere provided new access to a significant form of cultural power to both dynasties and individuals without guaranteed access to imported varieties. Their political significance was reflected in the many eyewitness descriptions, diplomatic reports and correspondence exchanged among Europe's elite families regarding ceramic novelties and their aesthetics, design, display modes and their architectural location.

The cultural significance of porcelain and earthenware objects in the early modern European political world provides evidence of the gendered nature of power relations in and between early modern dynasties. Access, display, use and transmission of porcelain were gender-specific. Elite women employed porcelain and earthenware to advance presentations of their political identities – asserting the superiority of their natal kin, defining a place for themselves as incomers to dynasties such as the House of Orange-Nassau who could be relied upon to serve its interests, bolstering the status and authority of their husbands or signalling their confessional allegiance. They typically displayed porcelain within specifically female-oriented spaces within palaces, near bedchambers, in gardens, subterranean kitchens and grottos, to which access was exclusive and understood by those who saw them and those who modelled other spaces in their image, as key places of power. This did not mean that such representational rooms with porcelain display were necessarily modest in size or scale. Indeed, for women connected with the House of Orange-Nassau, such displays ranged in size from corner 'closet' rooms to large, ambitious settings, depending on the political context and climate and the authority of the dynasty over the lands in which they were constructed. Likewise, women's porcelain and earthenware objects were tailored for conventional female-oriented activities as tea sets, jam-pots and vases, but despite their small size, these objects were powerful materialisations of the immense global reach of the dynasty and its powerbase in the United Provinces, as accoutrements for consuming or storing the new commodities of the colonial world in Dutch control.

When elite male rulers embraced porcelain in the eighteenth century as a symbol of power, they did so on a grand scale – investing in manufactories and technical knowledge, controlling the economic value of porcelain through legal restrictions and creating deliberately ostentatious collections in suites and even dedicated palaces for porcelain, as did Augustus. They gave gifts of porcelain to other political figures in ways that were intended to shape power relations between them. These gifts were typically large in scale, such as complete dinner sets with figurines for

table display, which were central in the ritual of dinner receptions. Those in strong positions of power employed such objects as displays to bear witness to their wealth, global reach (or lack of need for it) or unique access to these goods or as gifts to position themselves publicly above others in social, cultural and political hierarchies within Europe.

Notes

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4

DIPLOMATS AND KIN NETWORKS

Diplomatic strategy and gender in Sweden, 1648–1740

Peter Lindström and Svante Norrhem

Introduction

Studies of gender and political culture in early modern Western Europe, as well as studies of early modern Sweden, show convincingly that women in leading political households – and not only women within a royal or princely family – could play a role as agents of political significance.¹ These actions could take place in different forms, from leading armies or rebellion to writing petitions or holding salons. Building on research on female political agency, historians and other researchers have recently become increasingly interested in the role of women in diplomacy. Studies of what can best be called informal diplomacy show that women using their agency was very much part of European diplomatic culture.² Regardless of whether or not women acted in national politics, or in the more transnational arena of diplomacy, the basis for their agency was the connection they had with powerful men. This explains why wives of politicians are often visible agents since their position as the joint head of an elite household was used as a platform from which they had the possibility to act.³ As a widow, a woman sometimes could take this even further and lead armies, but more often losing the husband meant losing influence.

Sweden was in essence not different from the rest of Western Europe when it came to women as political agents during the early modern period. This study, however, does not focus on women solely, but on the kin networks of which they were part.⁴ In this chapter we will argue that women in families in which there were politicians belonging to the political elite became increasingly essential and were given the opportunity to act through their own, and their families', interaction with foreign diplomats. Diplomats using patronage towards Swedish elite families and kin networks, sometimes aimed at both women and men within these families or networks with the intention of creating bonds between a certain family and the ruler of which the diplomat was a representative. By actively seeking out women,

diplomats included them in informal diplomacy – sometimes formal – which had implications both for the women's own families, the Swedish state and the relations between Sweden and other European countries.

The case of the Oxenstierna family

During the second half of the seventeenth century, and the first half of the eighteenth century, Austria and France competed in getting Sweden to ally with them in their struggle to achieve hegemony in Europe. One essential strategy, which was not used only towards Sweden, was to work through patronage towards leading political Swedish noble families.⁵ In that sense, Swedish politicians could become resources for either Austria or France, but contacts with representatives for Austria and France could in turn be of great value for the politicians. In a study of French-Austrian diplomacy in Scandinavia we have shown how Swedish noble families – in which both women and men could be agents – interacted with foreign diplomats not only to promote specific political aims on a state level, but also more personally to promote their own family's dynastic, political, financial and social position within Sweden.⁶ A prominent example of this from the late seventeenth century is that of the president of the Chancery count Bengt Oxenstierna (1623–1702) and the family to which he belonged. Oxenstierna, a distant relative of the more famous Lord High Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna, was, next to King Charles XI, the country's leading politician from 1680 to 1697. He remained president of the Chancery until his death, although in the last few years with less influence than before. Bengt Oxenstierna followed an Austria-friendly line that stemmed from a conviction that France needed a strong counterweight if the balance of power in Europe was to be maintained. Over the course of his career, he spent nearly twenty years outside Sweden: he was sent as an emissary to various negotiations in Nuremberg, Frankfurt, Mainz, Oliva and Nijmegen; was president of the Wismar Tribunal on numerous occasions; and was governor-general of, variously, Warsaw, Livonia and Chelмно. He amassed considerable experience as a diplomat, and for a while was the Swedish ambassador to the Imperial court in Vienna. His business as a public official thus largely concerned the Holy Roman Empire: he spent several years of his life there, and politically he was a proponent of Swedish support for the Emperor.⁷ Furthermore, in his family relationships, he was also clearly oriented towards the Holy Roman Empire. Through his wives and siblings, Oxenstierna had family connections, and family interests, in many parts of Germany, including Pomerania, Württemberg, Mecklenburg and Brandenburg.⁸

Over the years, Bengt Oxenstierna became well-known in parts of the Holy Roman Empire, which he utilised when he and his second wife, countess Magdalena Stenbock, wanted to help advance their children's careers. Ultimately, several of his and his siblings' children were to have careers in the Holy Roman Empire. His son Gabriel became captain in the Imperial army and died in Vienna; a son-in-law was also commissioned into the Imperial army; another son served with the Dutch army,

in a post considered to be above his level of ability and therefore a mark of favour; and one of the daughters became a canoness in Gandersheim in Brunswick-Lüneburg, and received pensions from both Lüneburg and Holstein totalling 1,100 riksdaler a year.⁹

Of the wider family, one nephew was in service in Baden and another in Hanover and Saxony. When his and his wife's son-in-law count Magnus Stenbock wanted an army commission abroad, the Oxenstiernas mobilised several established contacts. Count Franz Ernst and countess Clara Elisabeth von Platen-Hallermund, acquaintances from their time in Nijmegen, had gradually advanced: he was now minister-president of Hanover, she was Elector Ernst August's mistress, and together with Otto Grote von Schauen, one of the Elector's principal advisors, they were key allies in the efforts to find an officer's commission for Stenbock. The players in this drama were Magnus Stenbock's parents-in-law and his wife, all of whom contributed in different ways. Eva Oxenstierna, Magnus Stenbock's wife, approached the countess Platen-Hallermund to make her act through her connections; Bengt Oxenstierna went to the lengths of writing personally to the Emperor asking that Stenbock be allowed to enter Imperial service; by then, the family's good friend, the Imperial ambassador Franz Ottokar von Starhemberg in Stockholm, had already lobbied Vienna for an offer of Imperial service to be made to Stenbock.¹⁰ Starhemberg, who was stationed in Sweden from 1690 to his death 1699, was a key person in speaking for Oxenstierna with the Imperial court. He, his wife and children developed a close friendship with the Oxenstierna family and they spent much time together. The joint efforts of all the above mentioned operators were successful and Magnus Stenbock got a commission in the Imperial army. It was the likes of Oxenstierna and his family who Austria and its allies apparently considered worth rewarding with pensions and offices.

The reason for Oxenstierna and his family to be on the receiving end of support was not primarily political. Bengt Oxenstierna did not have to be convinced by bribes to support the anti-French party among the Swedish elite. However, he was from his two marriages the father of 18 children of whom 10 reached adulthood. Also, being the central political figure in Swedish society demanded that he and his wife kept a large household not only at their city palace, but also at their country estate on the outskirts of Stockholm. This together with the strain that the Great Reduction¹¹ put on many noble households put the Oxenstierna family in dire need of finding additional income and support in order to maintain its political and social standing.¹² The family's financial situation was well known among foreign powers who sought Swedish support thus opening for foreign offers such as career opportunities for the Oxenstierna children and in-laws, or pensions to other family members.¹³

The activities which aimed to maintain and strengthen the family's position within Swedish politics and society, and the activities that sought to strengthen Sweden's ties to Austria, were in various ways gendered. When Bengt Oxenstierna for political reasons could no longer leave Sweden without having his position threatened, his children and their spouses acted effectively as his emissaries abroad, as the examples of the activities of daughters Anna Margareta and Charlotta amply illustrate. When Anna Margareta Oxenstierna became canoness at Gandersheim,

this both worked as a way of supporting her economically and socially and giving her father eyes and ears in Germany. Gandersheim housed women from German princely and aristocratic families and was visited by their relatives, thus offering a possibility to network.¹⁴ Keeping in touch with old friends was as important: the countess von Platen-Hallermund in Hanover was helpful in getting Anna Margareta settled at Gandersheim, but the relationship was very much mutual. In the same way as the countess had been asked to pull strings to help the Oxenstiernas find employment for Magnus Stenbock, Anna Margareta was asked by the countess to act as an intermediary with her father Bengt Oxenstierna to help a young German to be employed in his service.¹⁵ While Anna Margareta Oxenstierna is an example of women involved in family politics, her sister Charlotta Oxenstierna became more involved in state politics. During her travels through Germany she was informally tasked with discussing potential royal marriage prospects for the young Charles XII on behalf of her father.¹⁶

The material and financial support the family had from various agents abroad, which aimed at strengthening the Holy Roman Empire's cause in Sweden, targeted both women and men; Bengt, Magdalena Stenbock and one of their daughters received individual pensions; Magdalena and their daughters received gifts of jewellery;¹⁷ while their sons, one of the sons-in-law and at least one daughter were offered and took advantage of career opportunities abroad.¹⁸ In this way Austria and German states not only made allies with Oxenstierna and his wife, but also with the next generation – a pattern that is discernible even more acutely in other Swedish kin networks at the time. This sort of state patronage could continue for three, four or, as in the case of the De la Gardie family network, up to seven generations.¹⁹ The De la Gardie family who came to Sweden from France in the late sixteenth century used its position at the centre of Swedish politics to promote its less fortunate relatives in France. The members of the Swedish branch supported strongly a pro-French Swedish policy and benefitted greatly, generation after generation, from French patronage long into the late eighteenth century. As for the Oxenstiernas, it is obvious that their contacts with Austria favoured the younger generation in their future careers with foreign regimes. It seems equally clear that the various factions within the Swedish political elite – the Anti-French and the Pro-French – saw diplomacy as a vital means to strengthen their own political position. A closer look at Swedish diplomatic representation in Vienna in the seventeenth century reveals that it was dominated by the Oxenstierna family, centred on Bengt Oxenstierna. He was the envoy there (between 1652–1655 and 1674–1675), as was his nephew (between 1681–1685, 1687–1688, and 1694–1699) and his brother-in-law count Dohna (in 1688 and 1689), and he got his client Christoph Heinrich von Weissenfels posted to Vienna as a representative in 1686–1687 and again in 1690. It is clear that from 1680 to the late 1690s, when Bengt Oxenstierna was the strongman of Swedish foreign policy, he kept a firm grip on Sweden's diplomatic relations with Vienna. At the same time several envoys to Sweden from different parts of the Holy Roman Empire were his close relatives. Brandenburg in 1690–1691 sent his niece's husband Alexander von Dohna-Schlobitten, and 1698–1701 his nephew. In 1698 another acquaintance arrived in Stockholm:

baron Thomas von Grote, brother of the friend of Oxenstierna and his wife. Grote was Brunswick-Lüneburg's envoy for three years initially, but returned later on numerous occasions. For much of the 1690s, Oxenstierna's own secretary at the Chancery, Baltzar Ehrenstolpe, served as secretary to the duke of Holstein's legation in Stockholm. For a while Ehrenstolpe held both Holsteinian and Swedish office at the same time. By filling Swedish missions in Vienna and other places in the Holy Roman Empire with his own relatives and clients, and to some degree also get family and clients appointed as German envoys to Sweden, Bengt Oxenstierna seems to have aimed at monopolizing the relation between the Empire and Sweden. It would put him in control of Swedish policy towards the German states, as well as making him an invaluable asset to them and to the Emperor. This in turn made the women in the Oxenstierna family more important to work with.

Targeting women and female agency

Where a diplomat acted in cahoots with women, the initiative sometimes came from a politician's wife. Bengt Oxenstierna's wife Magdalena Stenbock who played a visible yet informal role in the diplomatic and political life in Stockholm in the 1680s and 1690s is an example of the role a woman could play. She became known in diplomatic circles for her card parties, during which she would discuss politics and exchange information about events in Sweden and abroad, and even bring up concerns about Habsburg policy.²⁰ These occasions of sociability, whether they took place at the family's palace in Stockholm or in the countess's garden pavilion at Rosersberg, gathered the anti-French diplomatic corps in what was perceived as political meetings. The fact that women could act as facilitators and organisers of such meetings was an apparent part of political culture across Europe.²¹ That it was known in the Scandinavian countries is well documented, and what the diplomats did by using these informal channels was simply to help activate women's agency. Without anyone asking for their services, informal agents often had limited powers, but once asked to act, they could become important not only as instruments for diplomats, but also as agents acting to advance the position of their political household. Thus, once diplomatic channels had been opened up by others, women could exploit these channels in their own interest and those of their families. Magdalena Stenbock with her social standing and her position near the very core of Swedish politics may be seen as both agent and instrument. Thus there was a common interest between diplomats and women with access to the male political elite that can help explain why relatively speaking more women were visible in discussions of foreign policy issues in the 1690s compared with the mid seventeenth century. One practical difference between the earlier period and the later was that visiting foreign diplomats in the Scandinavian region late in the seventeenth century were far more likely to bring along their wives and children, which also increased the envoys' points of contact in Stockholm. The Imperial ambassador Starhemberg's wife was an equally important link between his masters in Austria and the Swedish

political circles. The close friendship with the Oxenstierna family also had political implications. One such occasion was during the freeze in diplomatic relations between Vienna and Stockholm in the spring of 1697 after an incident in Mecklenburg, when an Imperial envoy had been thrown out of Güstrow by Swedish troops. The Swedish envoy in Vienna was forbidden to appear at court, and the Emperor's envoy in Stockholm was forced to stay away from court. With a view to interceding on behalf of Starhemberg, the wife of the president of the Chancery, Magdalena Stenbock, smuggled countess von Starhemberg in to visit the Queen Dowager in order to see if she could act on behalf of the von Starhembergs. When the French ambassador found out from his contacts among the royal servants, he immediately contacted a number of councillors, and the whole business prompted considerable anger. In that sense, the women's actions were a failure. At the same time it shows that women were not always acting towards men in their efforts to make a difference. It also shows that the actions of countess Stenbock and countess Starhemberg were seen as serious attempts to intervene in diplomatic affairs by the French ambassador's spies at court, himself as well as members of the Swedish royal council. Besides the Imperial ambassador's wife, the countess von Starhemberg, the Danish ambassador's wife baroness Juel was, according to her husband's reports to Copenhagen, an active player in the Swedish capitol in the 1690s. If we are to believe him she sought friends at court and made connections with senior men's wives. She had long conversations with the king's spiritual advisor and made gifts to servants at court.²² As a woman she had access to a female space that her husband could not as easily enter. Perhaps the most prominent of the women that baroness Juel not only met with, but also interacted with in a plot to make Charles XII marry a Danish princess, was the countess Beata Elisabeth von Königsmarck.²³ In order to be able to build these connections, based among other things on trust, it was essential to have time. A further important factor was that during the Thirty Years War, and the 1650s, the key political agents that the diplomats attended were based in the field – a place that by its very nature excluded women – rather than at court where women lived permanently when it was stationed in the capital. A third key difference was that the diplomats of high rank tended to stay longer in the later periods and thus had greater opportunities to network. Women's political agency, as part of the major political households, made them interesting for diplomats. That women used their possibility to act in informal diplomacy – whether they were married to diplomats stationed in Stockholm, or women associated with leading political households in Sweden, was by all accounts very much part of European diplomatic culture in general.²⁴

A French diplomat for whom contacts with Swedish politicians' wives played a crucial role for a time was the envoy François Gaston de Béthune. In 1692, Swedish councillors were banned from returning envoys' courtesy calls and from attending public meetings where diplomats were present, both measures intended to reduce the contacts between Swedish politicians and the diplomatic corps, and at the time believed to be directed specifically at the French. Since there was no rule against

diplomats visiting, or meeting with, members of a councillor's family, Béthune decided to circumvent the new regulations by paying calls on the councillors' wives to be able to keep in touch with political families. It was in early March 1692 that he began his strategy by calling on the president of the Chancery's wife, where he was well received.²⁵ Béthunes actions show that in his eyes wives acting as joint heads of households were indeed part of the political culture at the time, and potentially important allies in his diplomatic work.

A gendered transnationality

What has been discussed above can be seen as part of a transnational struggle over resources. For Austria gaining resources meant building patron-client relations with politically influential agents such as the Oxenstierna family, while France did the same towards the De la Gardie family and other kin networks. It can be seen as a struggle between Austria and France, but it could also be seen as a struggle over resources among the prominent kin networks in Sweden. Both Austria and France offered networks, career opportunities, money and valuable gifts. Austria and France became resources for Swedish kin networks with the aim that networks in Sweden would become resources for Austria and France by offering political support and giving valuable information.

Foreign agents worked on two levels towards Sweden: a state level in which they aimed to ally with Sweden through subsidies, and at a family level, aiming at allying with influential political families. The two levels were interconnected. Gift-giving, which was used to create patron-client-relations, and state subsidies, which were used to forge alliances between states, often belonged together because the gifts were part of the strategy of any foreign power to achieve success in subsidy and other negotiations. Gifts to various members of a kin network – gifts here meaning materials, financial gifts, as well as career offers – could be given in several instalments over a longer period of time, and could be extended to younger generations. It thus appears that there was an interest in creating longer-term ties to certain families. Meanwhile, it has also been noted that some families such as the Oxenstiernas and De la Gardies had considerable transnational interests. Through family connections and landed or commercial interests, there were long-term benefits in looking beyond the actual borders of the kingdom.

In their efforts, for example, to use subsidies to recruit armies, or to prevent armies falling under enemy control, France and Austria negotiated with representatives of various states. In this context it is clear that noble families, and more specifically their leading figures, were also of great interest for the opportunities they presented of gaining access to armies or military leaders. When the Imperial ambassador Hermann von Basseroode, who was stationed in Stockholm in the 1660s, described the situation in Sweden, he attached great importance to the aristocratic households' role in relation to the armies. His analysis that Sweden was biding its time, weighing up an alliance with France or with Austria and Spain, was by all accounts correct. Interestingly, however, he wrote that he feared that the Lord High

Constable Karl Gustav Wrangel and his army would side with the Spanish if the money came from Spain. Wrangel himself was the focus, not the Swedish state or its government. In another context, Basserode wrote to Vienna that General Otto Wilhelm von Königsmarck was gathering a regiment in Germany to be deployed on the French side.²⁶ The individual's political attitude was here accorded a crucial significance. In both cases, Basserode linked the two generals to the countries they had argued that Sweden should take subsidies from: Wrangel was clearly anti-French, while Königsmarck, who was close to the De la Gardie family, was an advocate of French relations.²⁷ When it came to Wrangel, Basserode wrote that there was a clear link between his personal financial needs and the fact that it was thought he wanted the army to see action. Karl Gustav Wrangel was one of the largest property developers at the time. The Wrangel Palace on Riddarholmen in Stockholm and Skokloster Castle were perhaps the largest and most lavish of his buildings, but besides these he built or renovated a number of castles and manors in many different places. He was also the Governor-general of Pomerania, where his chosen style of living was perceived to have princely ambitions. He was among those who built up a conglomerate estate of goods and offices in the growing Swedish empire. War had been kind to him and contributed to Wrangel's personal wealth, but peace was expensive. Königsmarck was in a similar situation, but his actions should also be seen against the background of his pro-French position and close connection to the very French-oriented family centred on Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie.²⁸ In neither of these two cases did ambassador Basserode mention women, or suggest any action to be taken towards Wrangel or Königsmarck. The point here is merely that Swedish political families were seen as key players for anyone who wished to influence Swedish war politics which in turn allowed for women to be involved in informal diplomacy.

The pro-French field marshal Nils Bielke's action to prevent Swedish auxiliaries from reaching the Emperor 1691 may also fall into the category of private enterprise combined with Swedish foreign politics. Ragnhild Hatton gives Bielke's order to his army as a clear example of how the money the French paid to Bielke had a very specific outcome. Bielke was given 50,000 écu to delay the Swedish troops, and an enraged Starhemberg had to just sit in Stockholm and watch. With the help of hard cash, the French were able to persuade Bielke to dissolve the two regiments he had previously put at the disposal of the Grand Alliance, and his recompense was generous to say the least. In the course of the Nine Years War, Ragnhild Hatton calculates that Bielke received approximately 220,000 livres, or about 150,000 daler silvermynt – equivalent to more than ten councillor's annual salaries – in addition to the money he was paid to disband his regiments.²⁹

It is not hard to imagine considering this example in the light of studies by theorists Charles Tilly and Kenneth Waltz, who see war as central to, or an effect of, resource mobilisation.³⁰ A family could bind, exploit, be exploited by or try to influence far more than one state could. These examples show that states' interests were mixed and competed with individual or family interests. When Swedish armies joined the one or the other country or alliance in a conflict, this could be dictated by the families' need

to protect their existing resources or to acquire new ones in order to create a political platform from which to operate. There was no reason why a war fought in alliance with another party could not also be in the national interest. A state and a family might share interests, but they could also be contradictory; equally, peace, rather than longed-for, might be an undesirable condition that spawned conflict between the family and the state. Subsidy policy – the availability of armies – was thus intertwined with the availability of political contacts at the familial level. It was by being co-head of leading noble households with transnational as well as national claims that elite women were able to play a political role.

Patrons and clients

It is obvious that the princes outside Scandinavia had an interest in trying to win over the political elite in Sweden by various means. Council discussions show that Sweden was well integrated into the European power struggle and the debates in the Swedish Privy Council also show that the people who in the 1690s or 1730s received gifts from foreign powers then argued in favour of the gift-givers in various contexts.

It was not only tangible worth in the shape of pensions or gifts used to recruit politicians' support that was important, but also there were offers to their sons of military commissions and the like, as well as honours and titles, which, despite their mainly symbolic significance did not exclude material advantages. Royal or Imperial letters close – letters from a monarch with a royal seal – were also perceived as marks of honour, which not only conveyed good wishes and, occasionally, information, but also were freighted with symbolic significance. When the Austrian Council of War in 1692 decided that the Swedish Marshal of the Realm Johan Gabriel Stenbock should be honoured with an Imperial letter close, the symbolic importance of this was likely far greater than the letter's contents.³¹ The fact that the young Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie received letters from a number of French potentates led by King Louis XIV himself, or that Bengt Oxenstierna received letters from the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I, should therefore not be read only as clear marks of appreciation, but also of their expectations and hopes for future loyalty. Such letters also fall into the bracket of flattery, which was sometimes resorted to in order to win the favour of those who were not receptive to money or material gifts.

The princes' envoys, the diplomats, were crucial to the construction of these patron–client networks as they were the negotiators and mediators. They can be said to have negotiated the terms of the relationship between patron and client, and often mediated the contact between them. Their mission was to map Sweden's political elite: who was in, who was out; who was known for their personal sympathies or antipathies; who had the most disastrous finances or the most malleable conscience; who was related to whom; which women was it possible to work with and operate through. One such type of information that was passed from one Imperial ambassador to another was that the chancellor's wife Magdalena Stenbock was politically well informed and indeed a person wiser than both her husband and her sex.³² In other words, these political middlemen had to be apprised of the kinds of basic information prerequisite for anyone on the lookout for prospective clients.

Yet the interest was far from one-sided. The relationship between an individual politician, or an entire family, and another state was a reciprocal one.

There could thus be a mutual interest on the part of a diplomat and leading figures in the country where he was active in creating long-term relationships. The examples of foreign patronage in Sweden also show evidence of something highlighted in an early study of French conditions, where Cardinal Richelieu's power is primarily described not in terms of the institutional changes he accomplished, but rather in terms of the control he exercised over key people in France's political and administrative institutions – often over several generations.³³ In the diplomatic game, the ability to control key people in other countries' institutions – those who were politically influential and/or those who had access to crucial information – was sometimes the only effective way to exert influence. Understandably, the experience of patron–client relationships was to be important. It is also striking how many of the contacts that at first glance seem temporary were, in fact, part of a long-term pattern, even if there were a great many temporary contacts in Sweden that never led to long-term relationships on either an individual or generational basis, nor were they meant to.

Based on our study of letters, diplomatic reports and council minutes a pattern can be deduced among families who had close contacts with the representatives of the great powers Austria and France.³⁴

- 1 Leading members of the family showed a clear political preference for a particular country. They advocated alliances between their own country and one of the great powers (France or Austria).
- 2 As office-holders, members of the family had contacts with the foreign power they supported, and had the opportunity to meet its representatives. The same was true of women, often by virtue of their husbands' official positions.
- 3 There was mutual exchange between at least one member of a family and the representatives of another state.
- 4 The mutual exchange benefited the finances, standing and/or career of individual family members, and thus there was no distinction made between state affairs and family business.

It must be emphasised that it is not straightforward to establish the connections between these factors. It is often unclear from the surviving evidence precisely who took the initiative in striking up a particular relationship. Likewise it is hard to discern the extent to which a family's politics was the result of individual choices or of gifts and services offered by a particular country. There are endless ambiguities. What can be said, however, is that in some cases there was an interweaving of interests on the part of office-holders in a given family, and a mutual exchange between that family and another state.

Although this could last more than a generation, it was never fixed – the relationship was recreated generation after generation, and only if there was a mutual interest to do so. The way diplomats from both Austria and France often not only offered gifts to one generation, but also to a family's younger generation – and then to a third or

fourth – make it evident that the general intention was to create long-term relationships. After all, as Ragnhild Hatton points out, several of the Swedish recipients of foreign gifts in the 1690s were worried about what would happen when they died, and therefore actively sought guarantees for their descendants from their foreign patrons.³⁵

Transnational kin networks

The Swedish nobility, who also constituted the political elite, for several reasons exhibited a high mobility across borders; a mobility that shows that national borders, despite being very much an elite concern – monitoring them, moving them, as politicians, diplomats and warriors – were not the slightest impediment to their freedom of movement. The young Swedish noblemen who served in other countries' armies were part of this. They were the personification of factional struggles between pro-French and anti-French politicians in Stockholm, a very concrete and very violent expression far beyond the Swedish kingdom's borders: the scions of families who supported France found themselves pitted against those who did not. While baron – later to become count – Erik Sparre was serving in France in the mid-1690s, Bengt Oxenstierna's son-in-law Magnus Stenbock had a command of Imperial troops; count Magnus Julius De la Gardie, who during the War of the Spanish Succession led French troops in the field, the younger Bengt Oxenstierna was among the enemy; and when the latter was killed at the Battle of Ramillies in May 1706, Conrad Sparre – one of Erik Sparre's nephews – fought on the French side. Families' competition for the control of Swedish politics, supported by France or the enemies of France, thus extended to the battlefield.

The mobility that came of study, service (to the own country or another's) and landownership gave ample opportunities to make connections with people in other countries. Historians such as Almut Bues have pointed to the existence of noble networks that spanned national borders in early modern Europe.³⁶ Contacts with foreign countries did not have to derive from their own travel or own transnationality, however. Since both the royal and noble families were strongly transnational, those who were associated with them were connected to the transnational network by affiliation. Anyone who served at a queen's court would sooner or later come cross her political relationships with other courts; anyone who married into, say, the De la Gardie family would inevitably have had contacts in France.³⁷

After 1648, when Sweden was brought into the centre of European politics, a transnational elite created the conditions for the kind of transnational patronage that existed above all between French and Swedish noble families. It is interesting that ambassadors engineered this not on their own account, but as representatives of their monarchs. The client enjoyed a direct relationship with the monarch, who just happened to be represented by a diplomatic envoy. In November 1697, Louis XIV wrote to count Jean Antoine d'Avaux, French ambassador to the court of Charles XII in Stockholm, that the group of pro-French politicians in Sweden in itself was enough to satisfy the French interests. He did not feel it was necessary to conclude an alliance with the Swedish state as well.³⁸ The letter can be construed as meaning that in Versailles they felt they had

such control over the Swedish state through individuals and families that a formal treaty was redundant. Although Louis soon changed his mind and instructed d'Avaux to contrive a formal alliance with Sweden, that earlier letter is a clear expression of the importance he attached to the alliances he was able to forge with Swedish politicians with his envoy's help.

The advantages and constraints of formal power

The reduction in Sweden during the seventeenth century caused an intensified struggle over resources and power among the prominent kin networks in Sweden. In turn, the importance of transnational recourse-making increased. Both women and men acted through kin networks. In regards to formal politics men had political privileges that women lacked. Only men sat in the governmental Privy Council, attained high positions and thus could act through the state from a formal position. Austria and France aimed at getting control over kin networks which then hopefully would act on their behalf through family members in formal positions. Reaching and influencing men was thus always the ultimate goal while women were instrumental in using their influence as co-heads of political families. Sometimes it was spelled out exactly how this was supposed to be done, but more often not.³⁹

It is impossible to conclude decisively from the surviving sources whether the members in the Privy Council acted in favour of the country with whom they were allied simply as a result of financial or other support, or if they would have acted favourably anyway by conviction. What can be established is two things. First, the power-struggle between the great powers and the Swedish interactions with these countries reinforced a polarisation between Pro-French and Anti-French factions among the Swedish elite. It should also be pointed out that the strategy of winning over Swedish politicians strengthened these politicians' ability to act so the great powers' actions thus helped influence the composition of the political elite. Second, the members of the Privy Council never voted against the country with whom they were allied. This is obvious in our study of the activity in the Privy Council in the 1650s, 1690s and 1730s – most obvious in the two latter periods. One example of this from the 1690s is when Sweden was leading the peace-negotiations at Rijswick. Those in the Privy Council who were in some sort of alliance with France stressed the opinion that Sweden should treat France with respect and by no means jeopardise the good relationship between France and Sweden. Bengt Oxenstierna, who was in an alliance with Austria, gave voice to the opinion that Sweden should not worry too much about France. Oxenstierna stressed the fact that France had broken some of the conditions stated in the peace-treaty of Westphalia. Thus, France should not be trusted, according to Oxenstierna. Another example is from the 1730s, when Sweden got proposals from both Britain and France regarding subsidies. These proposals were discussed in the Privy Council on several occasions and the question arose, which of the two envoys to answer first – Britain or France? Or should the envoys get their answers at the same time? The Privy Council could not reach a unanimous decision.⁴⁰ The question was put to the vote. One group favoured the decision

TABLE 4.1 Votes cast in Privy Council 25 February 1735⁴¹

<i>Family Name</i>	<i>Answer both envoys at the same time</i>	<i>Answer France first</i>
Creutz	X	
Cronstedt		X
Bielke	X	
Hårdh	X	
Bark	X	
Törnflyckt	X	
Strömfelt		X
<i>Gyllenborg</i>		X
Lagerborg		X
<i>Ekeblad</i>		X
Banér		X
<i>De la Gardie</i>		X
Meyerfeldt	X	
Cronhielm		X
Horn	X	

that both Britain and France should get the answer at the same time. The majority favoured the decision that France should get the answer first. And among this majority, who argued for the importance of good relations with France, we also find the members of the Privy Council that were part of kin networks closely allied with France on a long-term basis. That is, those family names italicised in Table 4.1.

Even though men in the political elite had many ways to act one has to take into account the limits in the form of rules and regulations. The members of the Privy Council all swore an oath by which they promised never to act against the interest of the state and, in this case most importantly, never to act for the interest of members of their kin network.⁴² During the late seventeenth century there was also some sharpening of the rules regarding interaction with foreign diplomats, which frightened these politicians. Bengt Oxenstierna was openly accused of being biased in favour of Austria in the 1690s, and Arvid Horn, the leading politician of the 1730s explained that he did not want to meet with the English envoy, even formally, because of the risk of being accused of being bought by England.⁴³ But these are rare examples. In most of the cases the members of the Privy Council did not openly accuse each other of being bought or being biased. Thus for the men in the kin networks possibilities to act were both formally granted and formally restricted by oath and other regulations.

A woman's place

On the one hand, unlike their male counterparts, women's political agency was naturally limited by the fact that they did not have access to formal power in their

own right, in the sense of holding public office – with few exceptions such as the dowager queen Hedvig Eleonora. On the other hand – they had not sworn any oath of loyalty to the king. This made it possible for women such as Magdalena Stenbock to create spaces where they could interact with diplomats or people near diplomats: giving and receiving information at card tables; discussing politics at court; organizing contacts between people (most often men); promoting their relatives' careers. Gifts or benefits of various kinds given to wives or children were most likely often intended to influence the husband who needed to stand clear of any accusations of corruption. These were positions that women could obtain simply because they were acting informally and on behalf of their families. The interaction between women and diplomats (or people near diplomats) gave way for both parties to circumvent both standing and temporary regulations which restricted men's actions. By actively approaching women, diplomats also offered a platform from which women could act in a way that they otherwise could not have done. This platform was beneficial for the woman's household through her, as well as for the diplomat.

Andreas Suter and Hillard von Thiessen talk about an early modern system of double discourses: the ideal was that a person was never allowed to act against the king – as was stated in the oath – but at the same time the king and the state understood that an individual also had obligations toward kin networks and clients.⁴⁴ This helps explain why very few men were tried for transnational contacts that easily could be said broke the oath, but also helps explain why women were the target of diplomatic activity. However it also highlights women's position as representatives foremost of their families, not the state, which sometimes offered a pathway to influence over politics, through a household which held both public and private authority.

This place in a noble household was not regulated by any oath, thus offering women a position which men did not have. True, some women were ladies of the court but the regulations around such court posts were less strict than the oaths sworn by civil servants and especially by members of the royal council. The court regulations did not forbid the receiving of gifts or using the position for advancing relatives, which the oath for members of the royal council explicitly did.

Women as political agents are often seen as somebody you only contacted when you wished to influence her husband – not an agent in her own right. She may have been seen as influential but limited in her possibility to act whereas her husband was not. It is true that women were often more limited in the kinds of political influence or power that they could wield than men, but one of the points here is that men sometimes could be limited in a way that women were not. Men and women held different positions in society as well as within the family which in combination gave them broader possibilities to act. They both gave each other access to power by the complementarity of gender roles and gendered spaces. Historians have pointed out that husband and wife in early modern society were seen as 'fellows', 'fellow-helpers' and the relation between the two that of an 'Arbeitspaar' who organised their work in solidarity with each other.⁴⁵ This study shows how

this not only affected how Swedish noble families operated within the gendered structures of politics, but also how foreign diplomats sought to deal with politically important families.⁴⁶

The double discourse which allowed families to act for its own benefit even though they primarily should act only for the king and the state, became more accentuated in Sweden after the reduction in the seventeenth century. The loss of resources which the reduction brought with it made way for the nobility to seek compensation elsewhere. For some France and for some Austria, and for some – but to a lesser degree – England or the Netherlands, offered the financial and/or the career support which the Swedish state no longer guaranteed. At the same time the state turned a blind eye to the fact that the elite compensated for the loss of land with transnational benefits. However, the relations between Swedish noble families and foreign states were not only a simple matter of compensation. It was also a way for the political elite among the nobility to gather resources in a power struggle between king and nobility. The combination of foreign actors attempting to work through noble families to gain control over Swedish politics, the need for some of those families to increase their resources and a tradition of transnational contacts among the Swedish elite all worked towards the inclusion of women into the political culture of the times.

Notes

- 1 Several historians have made this point, among others for Britain: Anne Laurence, *Women in England 1500–1760: A Social History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1994); James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); for France: Sarah Chapman, *Private Ambition and Political Alliances: The Phélypoux de Pontchartrain Family and Louis XIV's Government* (Rochester: The University of Rochester Press, 2004); for Sweden: Anu Lahtinen, *Anpassning, förhandling, motstånd. Kvinnliga aktörer i släkten Fleming 1470–1620* (Stockholm: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2009); Svante Norrhem, *Kvinnor vid maktens sida 1632–1772* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2007); and for the Holy Roman Empire: Katrin Keller, (ed.), *Gynäkokratie. Zu politischen Handlungsmöglichkeiten von Frauen in der höfischen Gesellschaft der Frühen Neuzeit*, Heft 2/2009 *Zeitenblicke*.
- 2 For example: *Das Geschlecht der Diplomatie. Geschlechterrollen in den Außenbeziehungen vom Spätmittelalter bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Corina Bastian, Eva Kathrin Dade, Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag 2014); Robin Adams and Rosanna Cox, *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011); Katrin Keller, 'Mit den Mitteln einer Frau. Handlungsspielräume adliger Frauen in Politik und Diplomatie', in *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, ed. by Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler, Externa. Geschichte der Außenbeziehungen in neuen Perspektiven, 1 (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag 2010), pp. 219–244.
- 3 Hillard von Thiesen, 'Korrumpierte Gesandte? Konkurrierende Normen in der Diplomatie der Frühen Neuzeit', in *Korruption. Historische Annäherungen*, ed. by Niels Grühne and Simona Slanička (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), pp. 205–220 (pp. 214–220); Andreas Suter, 'Korruption oder Patronage? Außenbeziehungen zwischen Frankreich und der Alten Eidgenossenschaft als Beispiel (16.–18. Jahrhundert)', *Korruption. Historische Annäherungen*, ed. by Niels Grühne and Simona Slanička (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), pp. 167–204 (p. 201).

- 4 In this chapter, we develop further arguments first made in our volume Lindström and Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances: Scandinavia, Diplomacy and the Austrian–French Balance of Power, 1648–1740*, translated by Charlotte Merton (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2013).
- 5 Lindström and Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances*, pp. 81–110. For further examples, see: Christian Windler, “‘Ohne Gold keine Schweizer’ Pensionen und Söldnerrekrutierung auf den eidgenössischen Patronagemärkten”, in *Nähe in der Ferne. Personale Verflechtung in den Aussenbeziehungen der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler, *Zeitschrift für historische forschung*, 36 (2005), pp. 105–133 (pp. 115–118); Suter, ‘Korruption oder Patronage?’, pp. 172, 177–178; Klaus Müller, *Das kaiserliche Gesandtschaftswesen im Jahrhundert nach dem Westfälischen Frieden (1648–1740)* (Bonn: Bonner historische Forschungen, 1976), p. 316; Daniel Schläppi, ‘Diplomatie im Spannungsfeld: Das Beispiel von Zug’, in *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, ed. by Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler, Externa. Geschichte der Außenbeziehungen in neuen Perspektiven, 1 (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag 2010), pp. 95–112 (p. 105); Almut Bues, ‘Patronage fremder Höfe und die Königswahlen in Polen–Litauen’, in *Nähe in der Ferne. Personale Verflechtung in den Aussenbeziehungen der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler, *Zeitschrift für historische forschung*, 36 (2005), pp. 69–85 (pp. 75, 79–82).
- 6 Lindström and Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances*, pp. 207–215.
- 7 Gustaf Jonasson, *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* (Stockholm: Svenskt biografiskt lexikon, 1994), p. 458.
- 8 Ibid. p. 458; *Riddarhusets stamtavlor* (CD-version 3.0; Stockholm: Riddarhuset, 2002).
- 9 Riksarkivet (Stockholm), Ericssbergarkivet, Bengt Oxenstiernas arkiv, vol. 25: Anna Margareta Oxenstierna to Bengt Oxenstierna, 31 October 1694, 31 December 1694, 8 March 1695, 3 July 1695, 6 June 1696, Gandersheim. 1 100 riksdaler amounted to one-tenth of a councillor’s annual salary.
- 10 Österreichisches Staatsarchiv: Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna (OeStA/HHStA), Staatenabteilungen, Schweden vol. 9: Franz Ottokar von Starhemberg to Vienna, 22 June 1695; Anders Fryxell, *Handlingar rörande Sverges historia, ur utrikes arkiver samlade och utgifvna, vol. iii* (Stockholm: L.J.Hjerta, 1839), p. 222: Bengt Oxenstierna to the Emperor, 5 May 1694; *Magnus Stenbock och Eva Oxenstierna. En brevväxling*, ed. by Carl Magnus Stenbock (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söners förlag, 1913): Eva Oxenstierna to Clara Elisabeth von Platen, 18 July 1693.
- 11 The decision to ‘reduce’ noble land was taken by Parliament in 1680, and meant that all Crown land granted to the nobility after 1604 would be re-enseffed. The Reduction applied to land in Sweden and Swedish possessions in the Baltic and German provinces. It applied to almost half the land held by the nobility. Its implementation paved the way for Absolutism, and left the nobility politically and economically weakened.
- 12 In the early 1680s Bengt Oxenstierna’s household cost was 20,200 daler silvermynt and his salary 7,500. By 1697 his salary was 11,250 daler silvermynt but still only covered about half of his expenditures. Riksarkivet (Stockholm), Statskontoret, kansliet, Personalstater, vol. 18, 1697; Anders Fryxell, *Berättelser ur svenska historien, xx: Karl den elftes historia. Sjette häftet, Karl den elftes samtida, sista regerings-år och död. Till ungdomens tjänst utgifven af And. Fryxell* (Stockholm: Hjerta, 1853) p. 39.
- 13 Fryxell, *Berättelser ur svenska historien, xx*, pp. 40–43; William Duncombe, ‘William Duncombe’s summary report 1692’, in ‘John Robinson’s Account of Sweden, 1688’, *Karolinska Förbundets Årsbok, 1996*; Fryxell, *Handlingar rörande Sverges historia, iii: Johann Baptist de Lancier to Vienna*, Stockholm 3 October 1683.
- 14 Riksarkivet (Stockholm), Ericssbergarkivet, Bengt Oxenstiernas arkiv, vol. 25: Anna Margareta Oxenstierna to Bengt Oxenstierna.
- 15 Riksarkivet, Ericssbergarkivet, Bengt Oxenstiernas arkiv, vol. 25: Anna Margareta Oxenstierna to Bengt Oxenstierna 31 December 1694, Gandersheim.
- 16 For Charlotta Oxenstierna see, Sigrid Leijonhufvud, *Ur svenska herrgårdsarkiv. Bilder från karolinska tiden och frihetstiden* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söners förlag, 1902), p. 3.

- 17 Anna Margareta Oxenstierna was Bengt's daughter from a previous marriage, whereas Eva Magdalena and Charlotta were from his marriage with Magdalena Stenbock.
- 18 For example Riksbiblioteket, Ericssbergarkivet, Bengt Oxenstiernas arkiv, vol. 25; Riksbiblioteket, Ericssbergarkivet Familjen Stenbocks papper, vol. 57 (Eva Magdalena Oxenstiernas arkiv). For a general discussion on this topic see Lindström and Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances*, pp. 99–107.
- 19 Lindström and Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances*, p. 90.
- 20 Fryxell, *Handlingar rörande Sverges historia*, iii, p. 90; Anders Fryxell, *Handlingar rörande Sverges historia, ur utrikes arkiver samlade och utgivna*, vol. iv (Stockholm: L.J.Hjerta, 1843), p. 198; J.A. Wijne (ed.), *Négociations de Monsieur Le Comte D'Avaux, Ambassadeur Extraordinaire à la cour de Suède, pendant les années 1693, 1697, 1698, publiées pour la première fois d'après le manuscrit conserve à la Bibliothèque de L'Arsenal à Paris. Tome deuxième* (Utrecht: Kemink&Fils, 1882), p. 119–127; Jean Antoine d'Avaux to Paris, 15 May 1697.
- 21 For references, see footnote 1.
- 22 Fryxell, *Handlingar rörande Sverges historia*, iv, p. 218.
- 23 Ibid., pp. 163, 207, 218.
- 24 For example: *Das Geschlecht der Diplomatie*, ed. by Bastian et al.; Robin Adams and Rosanna Cox, *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011); Katrin Keller, 'Mit den Mitteln einer Frau. Handlungsspielräume adliger Frauen in Politik und Diplomatie', in *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, ed. by Hillard von Thiesen and Christian Windler, Externa. Geschichte der Außenbeziehungen in neuen Perspektiven, 1 (Köln, Weimer, Wien: Böhlau Verlag 2010), pp. 219–244.
- 25 Fryxell, *Handlingar rörande Sverges historia*, iii, pp. 246–247.
- 26 Ibid., pp. 79–80, 87–88.
- 27 Otto Wilhelm von Königsmarck did not only share his pro-French attitude with the De la Gardie family. His sister Beata Elisabeth had married Pontus Fredrik De la Gardie in 1655 and Otto Wilhelm himself married a daughter of Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie in 1682.
- 28 The French had made sure to befriend the von Königsmarck family already in the 1650s when they were keen to let young count Otto Wilhelm von Königsmarck enter the French army. AMAE, Archives des affaires, CP, Suède, 21, 18 March 1656 (all three documents).
- 29 Ragnhild Hatton, 'Gratifications and Foreign Policy: Anglo-French Rivalry in Sweden During the Nine Years War', in *William III and Louis XIV: Essays 1680–1720 by and for Mark A. Thomson*, ed. by Ragnhild Hatton and J.S. Bromley (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1968), pp. 68–94 (p. 77).
- 30 Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and the European States, AD 990–1990* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).
- 31 OeStA/HHStA, Staatenabteilungen, Schweden vol., 8: 3 and 9 January 1692.
- 32 Fryxell, *Handlingar rörande Sverges historia*, iii, pp. 90–91.
- 33 Orest Ranum, *Richelieu and the Councillors of Louis XIII. A Study of the Secretaries of State and Superintendents of Finance in the Ministry of Richelieu 1633–42* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), a study that is discussed in William Beik, *Absolutism, and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 15. Sharon Kettering has demonstrated the importance of patron–client relations, and between the central administration and local elites: see *Patrons, Brokers and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). More recently, this revisionist view of Absolutism in France has been nuanced, without completely rejecting the importance of personal relationships between centre and periphery, see William Beik, 'The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration', *Past & Present*, 188 (2005), 195–224.
- 34 For a detailed description of sources, see Lindström and Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances*, pp. 247–250.

- 35 Ragnhild Hatton, 'Presents and Pensions: A Methodological Search and the Case Study of Count Nils Bielke's Prosecution for Treason in Connection With Gratifications from France', in *Politics and Culture in Early modern Europe: Essays in Honor of H. G. Koenigsberger*, ed. by Phyllis Mack and Margaret C. Jacob (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 101–117 (pp. 102–103).
- 36 Bues, 'Patronage fremder Höfe und die Königswahlen in Polen-Litauen', pp. 69–85.; Jane Couchman, "'Give birth quickly and then send us your good husband'": Informal Political Influence in the Letters of Louise de Coligny', in *Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400–1700: Form and Persuasion*, ed. by Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 163–184.
- 37 The De la Gardie family had relatives in France and towards the end of the seventeenth century a sister of Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie and her family settled in France. The contacts between the family and France were thus close. For example: Ebba Brahe (1596–1674) who married Jacob De la Gardie gave and received gifts from the highest social and political circles in France, such as Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin, and Queen Anne; she also imported luxury goods from Paris. See: Lunds universitetsbibliotek, Samling De la Gardie, vol. 81; Riksarkivet (Stockholm), De la Gardieska samlingen, E1382: Ebba Brahe to Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, 11 April n.a.; For Ebba Brahes daughter-in-law Beata Elisabeth von Königsmarck who married Pontus Fredrik De la Gardie, see her correspondence with the French ambassador to Stockholm count Jean Antoine D'Avaux after he had left Sweden, Riksarkivet (Stockholm), Rydboholmssamlingen, E7675.
- 38 *Négociations de Monsieur Le Comte D'Avaux, Ambassadeur Extraordinaire à la cour de Suède, pendant les années 1693, 1697, 1698, publiées pour la première fois d'après le manuscrit conserve à la Bibliothèque de L' Arsenal à Paris. Volume 3:2* ed. by J.A. Wijne (Utrecht : Kemink&Fils, 1883), pp. 94–98: Louis XIV to Jean Antoine d'Avaux, 21 and 28 November 1697. Versailles.
- 39 Lindström and Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances*, pp. 174–175; Svante Norrhem, *Kvinnor vid maktens sida, 1632–1772* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2007), pp. 84–86.
- 40 Riksarkivet (Stockholm), RPU, 19 February 1735 and RPU, 25 February 1735.
- 41 Riksarkivet (Stockholm), RPU, 25 February 1735.
- 42 Riksarkivet (Stockholm), Eder, vol. 3. For the importance of the oath, see *Dela Gardiska Arkivet eller Handlingar ur Greff. Dela Gardiska Bibliotheket på Löberöd*, vii, ed. by Peter Wieselgren (Lund, 1836), pp. 67, 69, 74, 92.
- 43 RA, Det odelade kansliet, Rådsprotokoll, vol. 94, 1 and 22 June 1697; RA, Utrikesexpeditionen, Rådsprotokoll i utrikesärenden, vol. 1735, 28 February 1735. Lindström and Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances*, pp. 135–138, 145, 159.
- 44 von Thiessen, 'Korrupte Gesandte? Konkurrierende Normen in der Diplomatie der Frühen Neuzeit', in *Korruption. Historische Annäherungen*, ed. by Niels Grühne and Simona Slanička (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2010), pp. 205–220 (pp. 214–220); Suter, 'Korruption oder Patronage?' p. 201.
- 45 For example: Susan D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society. Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Blackwell 1988), pp. 41–45.; Anke Hufschmidt, *Adlige Frauen im Wäseerraum zwischen 1570 und 1700: Status-Rollen-Lebenspraxis* (Münster: Aschendorff 2001), pp. 189–195.
- 46 We cannot really say if our results regarding Sweden reflect the political culture in other countries. We have, however, done a comparative study with Denmark. Our results show that kin networks in Denmark did not have the same amount of long-time contacts ('patron-client' relationships) with other countries as the Swedish case. See, Lindström and Norrhem, *Flattering Alliances*, pp. 207–215.

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PART II

Socio-economic structures, gender and politics

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5

THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROFIT FROM FAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES

A widow's benefits of holding crown
fiefs in Norway in the 1520s

Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl

Ingerd Ottesdotter (c. 1475–1555) was one of Norway's greatest landowners and business women in the Late Middle Ages. Her husband, Nils Henriksson, played a relatively important role in Norwegian politics in the reigns of King Hans (1483–1513) and his son King Christian II (1513–1523). Both Ingerd and her husband were the sole heirs of families with similar economic interests. They had five daughters, and, as neither Ingerd nor her husband had close male relatives or other male heirs, Ingerd was left in control of her unmarried daughters' paternal inheritance in addition to her own fortune when she became a widow in 1523.¹ The 1520s were characterised by political instability in the wake of King Christian II's ousting from his Scandinavian kingdoms in 1523. With no sons, the widowed Ingerd relied on her sons-in-law to represent and safeguard the family's political interests. From 1524 to 1529 she was involved in the political schemes of the most prominent of them, Vincens Lunge, who had joined forces with the Norwegian archbishop, Olav Engelbrektsson, in order to profit from the new king's limited influence on the political developments in Norway.²

The actions of Vincens Lunge and the Archbishop have been subjected to constant scrutiny by Norwegian historians. Although it has not been studied explicitly, historians generally assume that Ingerd's involvement was the result of her son-in-law's strong influence and that she was just a passive participant in his and the Archbishop's quest to establish and maintain his hold of the country.³ This understanding of Ingerd's role can be confirmed in a comment made by Vincens Lunge in a letter to Archbishop Olav in 1525. Vincens asks the Archbishop to be an understanding master to his mother-in-law for his sake, and tells him that if she is not cooperative, he should let Vincens know. Vincens would then write to his mother-in-law in order to make sure that she will let herself be guided.⁴ Despite the portrayal of Ingerd as a woman that was held in check by the chief male members of her social network, historians also refer to Ingerd as a covetous

and ruthless business woman and landowner.⁵ Although these characteristics represent a dated and biased view of women, they reflect her opponents or, more often, victims' descriptions of her conduct, which leave the impression that Ingerd apparently shied away from little to satisfy her financial ambitions.⁶ Based on the contradictions in the assessment of Ingerd's position and conduct, this chapter's main objective is to identify whether a noble widow of Ingerd's stature had the opportunity to realise her private financial and political ambitions within a society where the ambitions of husbands, sons and sons-in-law were the chief concerns of the family.⁷ Was Ingerd really just a passive supporter of the decade's leading political figures, or is it possible that Vincens Lunge's remark to the Archbishop reflects that Ingerd did not necessarily keep to their direction? That the Ingerd we meet in her opponents' negative accounts represents a more accurate picture of her scope of action than her son-in-law's aspiring depiction of their relationship? In order to answer these questions, I chose to concentrate on Ingerd's career as a fief holder in the 1520s.

The Norwegian crown fiefs were controlled by the king and functioned as administrative districts, but they were also the key to political and financial influence. I argue that even though Ingerd's fief holding was a result of her son-in-law's ambitions and Ingerd's wish and need to support the leading political figure of the family, it can also be seen as a product of her private financial and political ambitions. Holding fiefs enabled her to exercise royal authority in the areas where she owned and controlled vast landed property and had great financial interests. It formalised and enhanced Ingerd's independent position of power in the same area and it probably enabled her to play an active role in politics. Ingerd's fief holding is an example of how a widow from the high nobility had the opportunity to profit from favourable circumstances and the autonomy and independence a woman of Ingerd's social and marital status could realise within a highly patriarchal society. Ingerd's involvement and position serves as examples of what women could achieve when circumstances were to their benefit.⁸

Female fief holders in Norway

In the later Middle Ages, regional and local administration in Norway and the rest of the Nordic region was based on a system of *len* or fiefs, relatively fixed administrative districts of different size, type and importance controlled by the crown. The king assigned *lensmenn* or fief holders who would manage the fiefs and pay the king a fixed annual payment and/or render service in exchange for all or a varying proportion of the royal revenue. Fiefs were also held as securities for loans to the crown.⁹ The distribution of the crown fiefs was a key element in political influence in the Scandinavian kingdoms and consequently a recurring feature in the power struggles that characterised the relationship between the king and the high-nobility in the region during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Although the three kingdoms were, as a rule, united dynastically and politically from 1397 to 1523, the national nobilities of Norway, Sweden and Denmark tried to monopolise

the holding of castles and fiefs in their respective realms. In Norway, important fiefs were generally held by prominent noblemen and prelates, that is, members of the ecclesiastical-aristocratic Norwegian Council of the Realm. However, in the sixteenth century, Norwegian fiefs were increasingly held by members of the Danish Council of the Realm or others with strong ties to the Danish king. In times of a strengthened central government, even the strategically important castle fiefs were held by the king's loyal servants of non- or lower-noble birth, generally Danes.

In addition to their political importance, the crown's fiefs were of great financial significance to the grantees, as they offered numerous opportunities for private enrichment in addition to the income derived from royal revenue, especially when there was a geographical correlation between the fiefs and the areas where the fief holder owned or controlled the majority of the land.¹⁰

In general, fiefs in Norway were held by, or were to be held by, men. There were, however, some exceptions. Research on female fief holders in late-medieval Norway (1350–1550) is still limited.¹¹ However, information provided by recent studies of female fief holders elsewhere in the Nordic region, give us a general idea of the circumstances in which noblewomen of Ingerd Ottesdotter's marital and social status were given and held crown fiefs.¹² When we supplement this with the information provided by the, admittedly, limited source material concerning women who held fiefs in Norway from the first half of the sixteenth century, we gain a fairly good understanding. The holding of crown fiefs was reserved for the highest-ranking widows, that is, women who were born and married into the high-nobility and whose husbands had been councillors, castellans, great landowners, fief holders and leading political figures, and who had occasionally been mentioned as grantees alongside their husbands on deeds when regular crown fiefs were granted. Furthermore, the noblewomen who held fiefs in their own right in Norway between 1524 and 1555 had no sons or their sons or step-sons were too young to hold fiefs.¹³ Usually, widows who held crown fiefs in Norway received and held one or two fiefs from the king (occasionally, in addition to inherited securities) after having appealed to him in order to keep fiefs that had formerly been held by their husbands or jointly by the married couple. In addition to securities, women held fiefs that required the payment of annual duties and service to the crown, but they were also granted fiefs where all the revenue went entirely to the holder. A widow who had held fiefs together with her husband clearly felt entitled to retain the fiefs after her husband had passed away, provided the grant was valid for the wife's lifetime as well as the husband's.¹⁴ However, a rightful claim to fiefs in Norway when widowed did not necessarily suffice in an environment where widows were forced to compete not only with Norway's, but also Denmark's, most powerful men over fiefs. To enhance their odds, the widows seem obliged to mobilise their most influential relatives, friends and contacts as go-betweens, in addition to their own petitions, in order to persuade the king.¹⁵

In a Nordic context, it is chiefly Danish historians who have studied women's fief holding exclusively for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Even though these studies do not necessarily address the question of female fief holders' motivation

directly, they discuss why noble widows held fiefs. In line with the assumption that Ingerd's fief holding was a result of her son-in-law's position, Danish research confirm that widows' fief holding was a consequence of a strategy where the powerful noble families mobilised all their human resources to maintain and enhance their financial and political status.¹⁶ A male holder of regular crown fiefs exercised delegated royal authority on behalf of the king and was, in principle and usually in practice, the chief figure of authority in his fiefs. Danish studies confirm that even though their fief holding was part of their families' strategies, noble widows who held fiefs in Denmark were delegated royal authority on behalf of the king like their male counterparts.¹⁷ Although there were some differences between the fief systems in Norway and Denmark in the first half of the sixteenth century, the results of the Danish research confirm that Ingerd's fief holding is a suitable subject of study in order to assess whether she was able to realise her private financial and political ambitions. However, first we need to establish how Ingerd received her fiefs.

The circumstances of Ingerd's fief holding

From 1524 to 1529 Ingerd held six fiefs that had formerly been held by her husband; two securities; Stjørdal (with Selbu) and Herjedalen, and four so-called duty- and service fiefs; Sunnmøre, Romsdal, Edøy and Fosen. The fiefs were all located in Mid-Norway.¹⁸ She was the third greatest fief holder in the northern and western regions of Norway, after Vincens and the Archbishop. She held more fiefs than the average Norwegian councillor, and she was the only woman who held fiefs in Norway in her own right in this period.¹⁹ How did Ingerd manage to retain six of her late husband's fiefs in 1524? And what role did Vincens's position and the political circumstances play in the process?

Contrary to royal preferences, securities increasingly became hereditary in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Most likely, Ingerd inherited her two securities directly from her husband; which was a typical way of receiving fiefs for widows.²⁰ However, with regard to Ingerd's four duty- and service fiefs, the circumstances were less conventional and can be linked directly to political circumstances in 1524.

Neither the initiative to give Ingerd the four fiefs nor the grant that gave them to her in March 1524 came from the king originally. King Frederik I received a letter from Vincens Lunge, his governor to northern and western Norway, who informed him that he had granted some of the fiefs left by his father-in-law to his widow.²¹ King Frederik then chose to confirm the grant. What circumstances enabled Vincens to grant his mother-in-law these fiefs?

It is obvious from royal letters to Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson that King Frederik had insufficient knowledge about the distribution of fiefs in northern and western Norway in the first half of 1524. In fact, King Frederik had little influence on the distribution of fiefs and political developments in Norway in general between 1524 and 1527. In the spring of 1523, King Christian II of Denmark, Norway and Sweden had been ousted from his kingdoms, Gustav Vasa was in the process of taking over the Swedish crown and Christian II's uncle, Frederik,

the duke of Schleswig and Holstein, became king of Denmark with the help of the Danish nobles and prelates. King Frederik requested to be accepted as king of Norway, but the members of the Norwegian Council of the Realm, who elected the Norwegian king, bided their time. A pressured King Frederik decided to act and sent two Danish noblemen with governor's authority to Norway in order to secure royal control of the country.²² Vincens Lunge, knight and member of the Danish Council of the Realm, as well as an academic and former rector of the University of Copenhagen, became King Frederik's special envoy to northern and western Norway. Shortly after his arrival in Bergen, Vincens married Margrete, the eldest daughter of Ingerd Ottosdotter and Nils Henriksso. ²³

Although Vincens apparently fulfilled his obligations to the crown by making the inhabitants of northern and western Norway swear fealty to Frederik I, he was an ambitious man who seized the opportunity to profit from the frustration of the Norwegian councillors. The Council's influence over government had been reduced to practically nothing prior to 1523, but it had taken charge in the months following King Christian's fall, profiting during the interregnum from the numerous challenges facing the new king to obtain what the councillors believed to be their rightful position within the realm. In addition, the previous two kings' policy of giving fiefs and bishop's sees to foreigners and men of non-noble birth had led to a situation where several leading nobles and prelates in Norway had lost their fiefs and offices and had had to endure harsh demands from the crown. The councillors were therefore receptive to plans which strengthened their influence in government and their position in relation to the crown. When his father-in-law died in December 1523, Vincens took his place in the Council and he was later appointed castellan of Bergen castle by his fellow councillors. Vincens Lunge and Olav Engelbrektsso, the newly appointed archbishop and the Council's chairman, took leading positions when the Council embarked on a policy designed to promote the greatest possible autonomy and influence for itself and its members. King Frederik, as king elect, gave Archbishop Olav fiefs which were traditionally held by the Norwegian archbishop, and Vincens requested and was granted the majority of the remaining fiefs in northern and western Norway in May 1524. The distribution of the remaining Norwegian fiefs was dealt with at a meeting of the Council in Bergen later that year, where the councillors divided between themselves and their followers both vacant fiefs and fiefs which in principle were held by Danes. In his Norwegian accession charter from November 1524, King Frederik granted the Norwegian Council of the Realm great influence over Norwegian government, and he agreed, with a few important exceptions, to reserve Norwegian castles, fiefs and council membership for Norwegians or men married to Norwegians, like Vincens. ²⁴

The four fiefs Ingerd was granted for life in 1524 would, under normal circumstances, have been held by prominent noblemen, bishops and/or trusted royal servants. A king who, a few years later, would only reluctantly grant one or two Norwegian crown fiefs to women simply accepted and confirmed Vincens's distribution of his late father-in-law's fiefs. ²⁵ In hindsight, King Frederik's confirmation of Vincens's decision probably contributed to Vincens achieving the position he

held in Norway from 1524 to 1529, but King Frederik had no reason to be suspicious of Vincens's motives in March 1524. It was not until the turn of the year that Vincens and the Council's policy became a concern for King Frederik when they chose to change tactics and embarked upon a much more active policy of independence, initiated by Vincens, in order to secure the Council's control of the realm and to safeguard against future undermining of the accession charter's clauses. This policy involved going against the king's wishes in the distribution of fiefs by placing their choice in charge of the strategically important Akershus castle in Oslo and carrying out the forfeit and redistribution of fiefs held by Danes who were not married to Norwegians.²⁶

However, the king indirectly acknowledges that the distribution of the fiefs in 1524 was special and temporary in a letter to Archbishop Olav by stating that 'it will remain as he [Sir Vincens] has done on Our behalf in Our absence'.²⁷ The last segment of the sentence can in retrospect be seen as a prediction of the changes which were to take place from 1527, when a greater royal presence in Norway involved the redistribution of fiefs and castles to King Frederik's loyal, Danish-born servants, and made it difficult for Ingerd to hold on to her fiefs. The king requested that she transfer her fiefs to yet another Danish son-in-law in 1528, which she did, in exchange for compensation, in 1529.²⁸ King Frederik's policy was undoubtedly that Norwegian fiefs were to be held by – not only men – but men that were loyal to him.

The political circumstances surrounding the grant of 1524 were special. Vincens's strong political position in northern and western Norway gave him the opportunity to ensure that the majority of the fiefs formerly held by his father-in-law were retained by his widowed mother-in-law. While Vincens Lunge, the Archbishop and a couple of other councillors held a large proportion of the Norwegian crown fiefs from 1524, it is striking that the majority of the councillors and other men who held fiefs in Norway until 1529 held fewer than Ingerd.²⁹ Given the persistent competition over fiefs, it may seem odd that the other councillors, including the Archbishop, who we know wanted to hold the fiefs left by Nils Henriksson himself, apparently accepted that Ingerd held six fiefs.³⁰ We have already seen that King Frederik respected Vincens's decision, at least for the time being. What is more, with the possible exception of Archbishop Olav, few, if any, were in a position where they could safely challenge Vincens decisions in the 1520s. The forfeit of the Dane Henrik Krummedike's ten Norwegian crown fiefs in 1524 and the harsh treatment the Norwegian councillor Johan Kruckow received from Vincens over his fief in 1528, show that Ingerd's son-in-law did not hesitate to take action against absent and weaker councillors to secure his own interests.³¹ But why did Vincens make sure that Ingerd held six fiefs?

Vincens's motives

Vincens Lunge was a Dane, and in Denmark women's fief holding, both together with their husbands and as widows, was a part of the overall strategy of noble

families to secure and preserve their financial and political position over generations; especially in periods of transfer between a deceased father and an underage son.³² Ingerd's fief holding ought to be seen as a result of the family members' wish to secure Vincens a dominant position within northern and western Norway in order to maintain and improve the position of the family.³³ The moment his father-in-law passed away, Vincens Lunge became the acknowledged patriarchal head of the family, as Nils Henriksson did not leave a legitimate son.³⁴ His brother-in-law, Erik Ugerup, had neither the background nor the connections to rival Vincens's position within the family. Vincens was the greatest fief holder in northern and western Norway from 1524 to 1529. Moreover, through his own and his mother-in-law's fiefs and the fief he gave his brother-in-law, Vincens was in direct and indirect control of almost the whole coast from Norway's southernmost to its northernmost point.³⁵ The necessity of supporting the principal male member and political figure of the family explains why Ingerd backed Vincens's ambitions, but it does not necessarily explain why Vincens gave Ingerd fiefs he could have held himself or given to his brother-in-law or to the councillors whose support he had initially relied on for his position in Norway. Sons-in-law were expected to support their widowed mothers-in-law and were on occasion reminded by others of their responsibility; but it is hardly likely that Vincens gave his mother-in-law fiefs out of duty and goodness alone.³⁶

When Vincens's successor at Bergen castle, Eske Bille – another Dane – unsurprisingly ran into trouble with Vincens, who did not resign his position voluntarily, his mother-in-law in Denmark pointed out that Vincens had an advantage for he had his family in Norway.³⁷ In the complicated and treacherous politics of sixteenth-century Scandinavia, any man with political ambitions depended on his family for support and success. As a Dane, Vincens Lunge was an outsider when he arrived in Norway in 1523, with few, if any, connections. Vincens's brothers and members of his extended family were in Denmark. In Norway, he had to rely on his in-laws, and after his father-in-law passed away, on Ingerd and his brother-in-law, who would owe his position to Vincens.³⁸ But how did Vincens benefit from his mother-in-law's support and what made her a suitable candidate as a political ally?

It is difficult to ascertain what position Ingerd held in northern and western Norway at the time she was widowed, but through her birth, her marriage and her vast economic resources she belonged to the Norwegian power elite with close ties to other members of the nobility, to the clerics at the archbishop's seat in Nidaros and through her business activities to the merchants in Bergen and abroad and the town's local officials.³⁹ Furthermore, Ingerd had been actively involved in the management of her own and her husband's estates and other financial interests before he passed away.⁴⁰ As a widow, she was an active landowner and business woman who obviously knew how to profit financially from the fisheries and the related industries typical of coastal Norway, of which Vincens presumably had little or limited experience.⁴¹ Ingerd's wealth and activities as a landowner and business woman would in themselves have given her a key position in the region, and made her a valuable ally to Vincens. What is more, Vincens was no stranger to women with power and influence. Vincens

and his brothers had been actively supporting a paternal aunt who had been heavily involved in Norwegian and Swedish politics as a result of the political activities of her husbands.⁴² Although Vincens did give the impression of being an authoritative head of his Norwegian family, the sources also paint a rather different picture of his relationship to his mother-in-law. Ingerd was well-informed about her son-in-law's financial and political activities, and was one of, if not, his closest and most loyal ally and adviser.⁴³ They collaborated extensively, although Ingerd did not hand over the control of her property, financial interests and business activities to Vincens. In hindsight, this was a wise precaution. Vincens was habitually referred to as a crook and a villain by the Danish councillors, who spitefully referred to him as "the Doctor", and he is generally characterised as a man with limited political and financial abilities by Norwegian historians. When he was killed in 1536, his finances were in disarray and he left his widow with a substantial debt to the crown. Nevertheless, it is likely that Vincens's motive for granting Ingerd the four fiefs was to strengthen her position and thereby create a powerful ally for himself. An ally that made him less dependent on the Archbishop and the other Norwegian councillors, whose enthusiasm for his political project rapidly wore off after 1525.

Ingerd received and held her fiefs in favourable political circumstances that had allowed her son-in-law to secure her four fiefs in addition to the two she inherited. Hence, Ingerd held fiefs as a result of her son-in-law's position and influence in northern and western Norway and her fief holding contributed to establishing and maintaining Vincens's dominant role in Norwegian politics in the 1520s. Even though Vincens saw himself as a man whose mother-in-law should follow his orders, it is also clear that he deliberately gave her fiefs that allowed her to act not only with autonomy, but also, as we shall see, with authority. But in order to confirm that she was more than a passive supporter of her son-in-law, we need to establish whether Ingerd had private motives for holding fiefs and whether holding fiefs contributed to giving her an independent position of power and a role in political life.

Ingerd's private financial motives

While most noble widows dealt with estate management and were responsible for the family's financial welfare on some level, Ingerd's chief occupation in life was to manage and expand her landed property and to convert the profits of her lands and the booming Norwegian fishing trade into marketable goods.⁴⁴

Although the sources does not allow us to calculate how the profit Ingerd made from her fiefs compares with that of her other sources of income, we know from calculations of other Norwegian fief holders' income that when fiefs were held on favourable terms, it may have exceeded the income of their landed property.⁴⁵ However, in Ingerd's case, it is likely that the overwhelming majority of her income came from the fishing trade. Although not always explicitly stated, it is fairly obvious that retaining as much as possible of the married couple's income was the main reason widows wanted to retain fiefs. It may be hard to differentiate between

supplicant/relator formula and actual financial distress in letters from the sixteenth century, but we know from examples from the 1530s that widows retained and received fiefs in Norway because their new marital status left them in financial difficulties, and that fief holding was, for instance, used to pay off inherited debt to the crown.⁴⁶ We must assume that fief holding accounted for a large proportion of the family's income before Nils Henriksson's death and that Ingerd wanted to retain as much as possible of that income. The limited information we have about Ingerd's life as a married woman tells us that she had taken an active role in the family business while her husband was still alive.⁴⁷ Ingerd was undoubtedly aware of the necessity of retaining fiefs within the family and of the custom of letting widowed noblewomen hold one or two fiefs, which seems to have been more common in Denmark than in Norway in the first half of the sixteenth century. It is highly unlikely that Ingerd would have sat back and passively accepted that her late husband's fiefs and the income they generated were lost.⁴⁸ Ingerd kept the royal revenue from her two securities in its entirety. She paid a fixed annual sum to the king for her duty and service fiefs, but kept the bulk of the numerous regular duties and taxes and the fines the inhabitants owed their king. Thus, on this basis, it seems that Ingerd had a private financial motive for holding fiefs. However, in order to determine whether she was able to exploit her position as fief holder financially, it is more interesting to look beyond the regular return of the fiefs.

Ingerd's six fiefs covered a considerable part of Mid-Norway, including areas where she owned and controlled vast landed property and had great fishing interests. To any beneficiary, holding fiefs was especially rewarding when there was a geographical correlation between the fiefs and the areas where the fief holder held private landed property. This correlation made it possible to economise on management, but most importantly it provided the combined fief holder and landowner with the best basis for economic exploitation of an area and its inhabitants away from watchful eyes.⁴⁹ Thus, Ingerd and her employees had ample opportunity to exploit her tenants and the fiefs' inhabitants and to treat them unlawfully, crimes Ingerd was accused of both as a landowner and a fief holder.⁵⁰ But Ingerd's financial benefits as a fief holder went beyond the opportunity to take advantage of the local inhabitants. It is when we compare the geographical location of Ingerd fiefs with the location of estates she controlled unlawfully in the 1520s that we begin to grasp the extent of Ingerd's financial benefits of fief holding, and her private motives for holding the fiefs she received in 1524.

Ingerd's legacy as greedy and ruthless originates in her ability to acquire and maintain control of estates and landed property that rightfully belonged to other members of the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish nobility in the 1520s. Somehow Ingerd gained control of one of Norway's greatest estates, Giske, and its manor house on Giske Island, off the coast of Sunnmøre fief, in the early 1520s. In addition, Ingerd gradually began to take control of the estate of Ingerd Erlendsdotter, an elderly, widowed noblewoman, before she died in 1526.⁵¹ Although Ingerd claimed to be the rightful heir to both estates, others had far stronger claims. The unlawful

acquisitions led to an influx of requests, subpoenas, court cases and demanding negotiations with the heirs and their representatives throughout the 1520s. To no avail, King Frederik repeatedly intervened on behalf of the rightful heirs, partly as a consequence of his desire to increase his influence in northern and western Norway. Even if the king recognised the rightful heirs' rights, it was in vain as long as his chief representatives in the area, Vincens and Archbishop Olav, did nothing to stop Ingerd in the 1520s.⁵² As the Giske estate had been controlled by King Christian II's castellan in Bergen around 1520, we cannot exclude that Vincens had been involved in the takeover when he acquired this post in 1524.⁵³ However, even though King Frederik, the rightful heirs in Denmark and Sweden and modern-day historians repeatedly blame Vincens (rather than Ingerd) for keeping the heirs away from their inheritance, statements from Ingerd Erlendsdotter and people close to Ingerd Ottensdotter document that, though she was supported and assisted by Vincens, Ingerd herself had been the driving force behind the takeovers. Besides, it was Ingerd's men who had physical control of the manor of Giske in the 1520s.⁵⁴

The Giske estate was largely composed of landed property, fishing stations and the right to claim fisheries participation tax in Sunnmøre and Romsdal fiefs – the two largest of her four duty- and service fiefs. The need to safeguard her control of Giske may have been one of the reasons Ingerd wanted to hold Sunnmøre and Romsdal, but it might equally be that she wanted the fiefs in order to gain control of Giske. Either way, holding the fiefs was probably one of the factors which enabled Ingerd to maintain full control of the manor of Giske, the estate and its returns, and to prevent the heirs from gaining access to what was rightfully theirs. Despite the constant pressure, Ingerd retained control over the disputed estates and their revenue throughout the 1520s.

Ingerd's ability and willingness to benefit financially from her fiefs tell us that there was more to her fief holding than Vincens's need for support. As any well-informed and experienced noblewoman of Ingerd's standing and marital status knew, fief holding provided the opportunity to fulfil financial ambitions and to protect local interests. But did fief holding contribute to giving her a role in politics?

An independent position of power and an active role in political life

Ingerd exercised power and influence indirectly through Vincens and other members of her network, but by looking more closely at the terms on which Ingerd held her fiefs and how she managed them, it becomes clear that she held and exercised delegated royal authority on behalf of the king as a fief holder and that this provided her with an independent position of power in northern and western Norway: A role that is confirmed by her active role in political life in the 1520s.

As we have already seen, widowed noblewomen who held fiefs in late medieval Scandinavia exercised delegated royal authority on behalf of the crown.⁵⁵ From the royal copy book's summary of the grant Ingerd received from King Frederik in 1524 (as a confirmation of Vincens' grant), we know that Ingerd was to hold

the four fiefs for life in exchange for the same duty, service and burden that was derived from them in King Hans's time (1483–1513), when fiefs had been held on more favourable terms than in his son, Christian II's, reign.⁵⁶ A grant for life was an arrangement which greatly favoured the grantee.⁵⁷ From the entry in the copy book it is also clear that Ingerd was to manage the fiefs on behalf of the king, pay a fixed annual duty to the crown, but keep the rest of the revenue. In addition, she was to render service, that is, equipped soldiers, when it was called for.⁵⁸

That Ingerd in fact provided service and paid an annual duty for the four fiefs is confirmed by a receipt to Vincens Lunge for payments he made on behalf of Ingerd and other fief holders in northern and western Norway to the king in 1525, and by two financial deals she struck with the son-in-law she transferred her fiefs to in 1529.⁵⁹ In addition, Ingerd's bailiffs handled the management of her fiefs and her correspondence confirms that she was responsible for and prepared and organised the collection of both the regular revenue and any extraordinary taxes requested by the crown.⁶⁰

In Norway the local law enforcement process was handled by the local communities' institutions in cooperation with royal officials, that is, the fief holders and their local representatives.⁶¹ Ingerd's men would have supervised the organizing of local assemblies, prosecuted criminals, executed punishment and collected fines, but the only explicit example in the sources of her responsibility in this area from the 1520s, is that one of her men did his best to undermine a local priest's enforcement of canon law in 1529.⁶² Nevertheless, between 1524 and 1529, Ingerd managed her six fiefs and made sure that the king received what he was due from them. She held and exercised delegated royal authority and did in practice function as her male counterparts, in fact, as a royal official. Thus, fief holding provided Ingerd with an actual position of power in northern and western Norway. Did it also provide her with an active role in political life? Or was she merely a passive participant?

Ingerd's correspondence reveals that she was knowledgeable and interested in politics and expressed her opinions freely in letters to Vincens and the Archbishop.⁶³ But unlike other noblewomen in Norway in the 1520s, Ingerd's participation was also more direct. She was heavily involved in the negotiations of compensation to Scottish merchants who had fallen victim to Archbishop Olav's privateering activities in 1527. In a letter to the Scottish king, the bishop of Bergen, Vincens Lunge, Erik Ugerup and Ingerd, in association with the Council and the German merchants in Bergen, announced that they would negotiate on behalf of the Scots with the Archbishop's representatives for compensation and punishment of the guilty. Following the announcement, Ingerd took the initiative to start negotiations with the Archbishop's representatives in Bergen in which she participated actively.⁶⁴ That Ingerd was a figure of authority in northern and western Norway is also apparent in the task she performed in 1528 when she, at the Archbishop's request, made an attempt to reconcile Vincens Lunge and Johan Kruckow, another councillor, who argued about the latter's fief, which Vincens tried to gain by force.⁶⁵ Furthermore, her active involvement in a political scandal where she, together with Vincens and Archbishop Olav, supported and assisted a pretender to the Swedish throne was

acknowledged by both King Frederik and King Gustav Vasa of Sweden when the latter demanded that the former should punish her for her role.⁶⁶ That Ingerd had a strong, and enduring, influence amongst the members of the political elite, not only in western and northern Norway, but in the whole realm is confirmed in a letter Bishop Hans Rev of Oslo sent to Archbishop Olav in 1535. He found it necessary to warn the Archbishop to deal lightly with Ingerd as ‘she has the ability to speak and write well of Your Grace to Sir Vincens and to others’.⁶⁷

Regardless of the examples above, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent fief holding in itself gave Ingerd an active role in politics and the opportunity to act as a figure of authority in public life. However, given the political importance historians ascribe to fief holding and the fact that it entailed the exercise of delegated royal authority; it is likely that holding six crown fiefs formalised and enhanced her position and allowed her to participate in situations we normally associate with castellans, councillors, bishops and prominent royal officials. Even so, if we compare Ingerd with a councillor like Johan Kruckow, it is not evident that the councillor was the most influential. While Ingerd held six fiefs Kruckow only held one. Kruckow was a member of the Council, a post unattainable for women, but unlike the councillor, who was constantly harassed by Vincens, Ingerd enjoyed his support.

Passive supporter or covetous figure of authority?

Although the king preferred to assign his loyal servants to the crown fiefs of Norway, high-ranking widows were occasionally allowed to hold one or two crown fiefs in the first half of the sixteenth century. Still, Ingerd Ottesdotter did not hold six fiefs in the 1520s as a result of royal benevolence. She held them because of her son-in-law’s dominance of Norwegian politics. Due to the lack of female fief holders prior to 1524 and what we know of their circumstances after 1529, I find it unlikely that Ingerd would have been allowed to hold six crown fiefs if King Frederik’s control of Norway had been stronger or if someone other than Vincens had controlled events. Consequently, Ingerd’s fief holding confirms that noble families in Scandinavia made use of all their human resources to establish or maintain a dominant position within the realm, and that noblewomen belonging to the dominant family or political faction had the opportunity to benefit from a situation in which the king had little or no influence on government.⁶⁸

It might seem futile to distinguish between a noblewoman’s individual ambitions and those of her family, but the aim of this chapter was to identify whether a noble widow of Ingerd’s stature had the opportunity to profit from favourable circumstances in order to realise her private financial and political ambitions within a society where the ambitions of husbands, sons and sons-in-law were the chief concerns of the family. Even though Ingerd’s fief holding was a result of her son-in-law’s ambitions and Ingerd’s wish and need to support the leading political figure of the family, this study corroborates the theory that Ingerd had her own motives for holding fiefs in the 1520s and that she was more than an ally and passive supporter

of her son-in-law. Fief holding formalised and enhanced Ingerd's independent position of power in the region of northern and western Norway and it probably enabled her to play an active role in politics.

That Ingerd held fiefs in order to fulfill her private financial and political ambitions, may also cast a different light on Vincens's remark to the Archbishop about making sure Ingerd would let herself be guided.⁶⁹ It may well be that the remark came because Vincens knew that his mother-in-law would object to the Archbishop's guidance, and that the negative assessments of her conduct render a more accurate description of her scope of action than Vincens's words may hint at. After all, and although it was probably primarily done to serve his own interests, Vincens made sure Ingerd held six fiefs and thus acquired the opportunity to transcend the boundaries that restricted women's ability to achieve autonomy and independence. We still need more research, but Ingerd's position as a fief holder serves to illustrate the ambiguity that may have characterised her contemporaries' attitude towards women of her standing. Vincens Lunge could actually have had a pragmatic and contradictory attitude towards women of power, as long as it served his own purposes.⁷⁰

Ingerd's involvement and position serve as examples of what a woman of Ingerd's social and marital status could achieve when circumstances were to their benefit within the confinement of a highly patriarchal society, rather than what they were prevented from achieving.⁷¹ However, Ingerd's fief holding is an example of *one* noblewoman's ability to profit from weak or weakened kingship and the opportunities provided by an administrative system which allowed for a correlation between private and official financial interests. Although Ingerd shares several characteristics with widows who held fiefs in Norway after 1529, she is not a typical representative of the group. There were no women comparable to Ingerd in terms of financial, social and political resources in Norway in the 1520s.

Within the field of feminist history there is a tendency to caution against the study of individual women, as it tends to highlight the autonomy and independence available to an individual woman and say little or nothing about women's opportunities in general.⁷² However, several women held crown fiefs in Scandinavia in the sixteenth century. Although it is problematic to use Ingerd's experiences to discuss noblewomen's opportunities in general, they nevertheless provide us with more knowledge about the select group of female fief holders and further explain their role in society and the factors that enabled them to hold positions they in principle should not have been able to attain. This underscores that some women, agreeably, by widowhood and/or political circumstances, found themselves in positions and with resources that in certain respects would make it more useful to compare them to the powerful men with whom they competed over fiefs to truly assess their scope of action and position within society. By drawing attention to the exceptional, it also becomes possible to challenge the absence of Ingerd and other female fief holders of her caliber within the framework of the general political history of Scandinavia.

Notes

- 1 Due to the relative generosity of Norwegian inheritance and marriage laws on the part of women and the fact that noble spouses usually had agreements of joint ownership, Ingerd probably inherited half of what she and her husband had acquired together during their marriage when he passed away. In addition, the Norwegian king had no feudal tenure or say in a noble widow's remarriage or wardship over minor heirs. Rudolf Keyser and Peter Andreas Munch (eds), 'Den nyere Lands-Lov, udgiven af Kong Magnus Haakonssön', in *Norges gamle Love indtil 1387* II, Ifølge offentlig Foranstaltning og tillage med Understøttelse af det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab (Christiania: Grøndahl, 1848), pp. 73–103, 149–167; Ingvild Øye, 'Kvinner, kjønn og samfunn. Fra vikingtiden til reformasjonen', in *Med kjønnsperspektiv på norsk historie*, ed. by Ida Blom and Solvi Sogner, (Oslo: Cappelen akademiske forlag, 2005), pp. 21–101 (pp. 81–89).
- 2 See Knut Helle (ed.), *Prehistory to 1520. The Cambridge History of Scandinavia* Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), for an English presentation of Norwegian and Scandinavian history until 1520, and Rolf Danielsen, Ståle Dyrvik, Tore Grønlie, Knut Helie, Edgar Hovland, Rolf Danielsen, *Norway: A History from the Vikings to Our Own Time* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), for a short English account of events in the 1520s.
- 3 Ludvig Daae, 'Fru Inger Ottesdatter og hendes Døtre', (Norwegian) *Historisk Tidsskrift*, III (1874), pp. 224–336; Edvard Bull, *Vincens Lunge*, in series Nordmænd; biografier av norske mænd og kvinder (Oslo: Steen, 1917); Halvdan Koht, 'Ingerd Ottesdatter', in *Norsk biografisk leksikon*, ed. by Edvard Bull, 6 (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1934), pp. 519–522; Øystein Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen 1520–1660*, in series Aschehougs Norgeshistorie 5 (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995), p. 23; Lars Hamre, *Norsk politisk historie 1513–1537* (Oslo: Samlaget, 1998), pp. 248, 312. The exception is Lars Hamre, who gives her a more central role (Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, e.g. pp. 353, 362–368).
- 4 *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (hereafter DN), ed. by C.C.A. Lange et al. (Christiania: P. T. Mallings Forlagshandel, 1874), vol. 8, no. 538.
- 5 See especially Daae, Bull and Koht for this interpretation. Ingerd's social network is presented in Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl, 'Fru Ingerd Ottesdotters bruk av nettverksforbindelser i 1520- og 30-årenes Norge', *Den Jyske Historiker*, 125 (2010), pp. 53–72.
- 6 See Wærdahl, 'Fru Ingerd' and below about her conduct towards the rightful heirs of estates she held unlawfully.
- 7 Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 193–194, 203.
- 8 Cf. Anne Laurence: '[...] What Women Were Able to do, Not What They Were Prevented from Doing', in *Women in England 1500–1760: A Social History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995), p. 273; Tim Stretton in *Women Waging Law in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 2, where he gives an account of the main lines of inquiry within feminist history.
- 9 Norway was divided into six castle fiefs and approximately thirty lesser crown fiefs. In addition to regular crown fiefs, where the fief holder exercised local authority on behalf of the king, fief holders also held so-called property fiefs from the crown, typically a farm or an estate which would sometime be tied to an office as payment. See *Prehistory to 1520. The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, Vol. I and Grethe Jacobsen, 'Formal and Informal Power – Danish Noblewomen in Sixteenth-Century Denmark', in *Liber Amicorum Ditlev Tamm. Law, History and Culture*, ed. by Per Andersen, Ditlev Tamm and Helle Vogt (Copenhagen: DJØF Publishing, 2011), pp. 133–142 (p. 136), about the fief system.
- 10 Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, p. 311; Erik Ulsig, 'The Nobility of the late Middle Ages', in *Prehistory to 1520. The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. by K. Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), I, pp. 651–652 (pp. 635–652); Jens E. Olesen, 'Inter-Scandinavian Relations', in *Prehistory to 1520. The Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, ed. by K. Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), I, pp. 710–770 (pp. 712–713).

- 11 Randi B. Wærdahl, 'Why Did Ingerd Ottesdotter Let Go of Her Crown Fiefs in 1529? King Frederik I and Female Fief Holders in Norway', in *Medieval Gender History – A Nordic Research Network Presents: Interpreting Endeavours, Assessing Agency in Late-Medieval Relations*, ed. by Elina Räsänen and Kirsi Kanerva, *MIRATOR* 14:2/2013 (open access, www.glossa.fi/mirator). The summaries of Norwegian historical research on women provided by Ingvild Øye ('Kvinner, kjønn og samfunn. Fra vikingtiden til reformasjonen', pp. 21–101) and Hilde Sandvik ('Tidlig moderne tid i Norge 1500–1800', pp. 105–155) in *Med kjønnspektiv på norsk historie*, ed. by Ida Blom et al. (Oslo: Cappelen akademiske forlag, 2005), primarily reveal the striking lack of empirical research on women's influence and power, or any subject related to women, in Norway in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Cf. Ida Bull, 'Politiske kvinner – fra regional administrasjon til familiens politikk. Forskningsstatus i Norge', in *Kvinnor och politik i det tidigmoderna Norden, Rapport till 26:e Nordiska historikermötet i Reykjavik den 8–12 augusti 2007*, ed. by Å.K. Sjögren (Reykjavik: Islands universitets förlag, 2007), pp. 55–72.
- 12 Grethe Jacobsen, 'Køn og magt i dansk senmiddelalder', in *Konge, kirke og samfund. De to overighetsmagter i dansk senmiddelalder*, ed. by Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir, Per Ingesman and Bjørn Poulsen (Århus: Aarhus universitetsforlag, 2007), pp. 158–168 (pp. 151–176); Jacobsen, 'Formal and Informal Power'; Anu Lathinen, *Anpassning, förhandling, motstånd. Kvinnliga aktörer i släkten Fleming 1470–1620* (Stockholm: Bokförlaget Atlantis, 2009), p. 90; Johanna Andersson Raeder, *Hellre hustru än änka. Äktenskapets ekonomiska betydelse för frälsekvinnor i senmedeltidens Sverige* (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2011), p. 62. *Dansk kvindebiografisk leksikon*, www.kvinfo.dk/side/170/ (accessed 1 December 2014) provides insight into the background and life of female fief holders in Denmark in the sixteenth century: see e.g. articles about Anne Meinstrup, Birgitte and Eline Gøye, Sidsel Ulfstand, Ellen Marsvin, Anne Rosenkrantz and Gørvel Fadersdatter Sparre.
- 13 Information about female fief holders in Norway is found in *Norske Rigs-Registrarer tildeels i Uddrag* (hereafter *NRR*) and *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*. For instance, Ingerd Ottesdotter held six fiefs 1524–29, one to two fiefs 1531–55 (e.g. *NRR* I, pp. 3, 17, 28–29). Her eldest daughter and Vincens Lunge's widow, Margrete Nilsdotter, held one fief 1537–[1551] (*NRR* I, 53; *DN* 22, vol. 2, no. 436). Anne Jorgensdatter Rud, widow of the Norwegian and Danish councillor Henrik Krummedike, held three fiefs 1530–33 (*NRR* I, pp. 2–3, 23; *DN* e.g. 12, no. 460; 23, nos. 223, 224; 18, no. 295; 23, nos. 218, 221, 233), while fellow Dane Anne Pedersdatter Halvegge/Væpner, Norwegian councillor Olav Galle's widow, held Råde parish 1531–[1543] (*NRR* I, 31; *DN* 2, 1107). Swede Margrete Nilsdotter Krumme, the widow of Otte Henriksen Brockenhus, held Råde parish [1551]–1557 (*NRR* I, pp. 193, 212, 219). Unlike the Danes, the Norwegian nobles were not usually addressed or referred to by family names in this period, although historians sometime apply the Danish custom. The patronymics are here rendered in their traditional national form (–dotter and –son for Norwegians and Swedes; –datter and –sen for Danes).
- 14 Lathinen, *Anpassning*, pp. 87–91; Jacobsen, 'Formal and Informal Power'; See *DN* 12, no. 460; 23, nos. 223, 224; 18, no. 295; 23, nos. 218, 221, 233, and Wærdahl, 'Why Did Ingerd'. All of Ingerd's fiefs had formerly been held by her husband, Nils Henriksson. Anne Rud held three fiefs formerly held by her husband. Anne Pedersdatter held a fief formerly held by her husband Olav Galle (*DN* 2, no. 1107; *DN* 22, vol. 1, no. 180). There were exceptions: Ingerd's daughter, Margrete Nilsdotter, received a fief formerly held by her brother-in-law (*NRR* I, pp. 16–17, 53).
- 15 See Wærdahl, 'Why Did Ingerd' about Anne Rud's struggle to retain fiefs and the following diplomas for Anne Pedersdatter, *DN* 2, no. 1107 and 22/1, no. 180.
- 16 Lathinen, *Anpassning*, pp. 19, 30–33. Mikkel Leth Jespersen, 'På vor nådige frues vegne. Dronning Christines administration i senmiddelalderens politiske kultur' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Århus, 2005), and 'Dronning Christine og kong Hans. Len, magt og fromhed i dansk senmiddelalder', (Danish) *Historisk tidsskrift*, 106/1 (2006), pp. 10–32 (about dowager queens), Jacobsen, 'Køn og magt' and 'Formal and Informal Power'.

- 17 Jacobsen, 'Køn og magt' and 'Formal and Informal Power', Jespersen, *På vor* and 'Dronning Christine'.
- 18 Fosen, Edøy, Romsdal, and Sunnmøre roughly covered what is today the county of Møre and Romsdal on the northernmost part of the west coast and the southernmost coastal part of what is today the county of Southern Trøndelag. Stjørdal (with Selbu) is located in the inland parts of Trøndelag, while the adjoining Herjedalen is today a part of Sweden. Information about Ingerd and her fiefs can be found in King Frederik I's copy book, published as *Norske Rigs-Registranter tildeels i Uddrag I*, in various account books, here in *Norske regnskaber og jordebøger fra det 16de aarhundrede* (hereafter NRJ), H.J. Huitfeldt-Kaas et al. (eds), Det Norske historiske Kildeskriftfond: Christiania 1887–1983, and diplomas published in *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* vols. 1–23. Her fiefs and the management of them are also described and commented on in her contemporaries' correspondence.
- 19 From the later Middle Ages, Norway was divided in two administrative-territorial units, the *nordafjelske* (northern and western Norway) and the *sønnafjelske* (southern and eastern Norway): The *nordafjelske* refers to the land west of Lindesnes and the central mountain chain in southern Norway, Mid-Norway (north of Dovre Mountain) and northern Norway.
- 20 Ole Jørgen Benedictow, *Fra rike til provins 1448–1536*, in series *Norges historie*, vol. 5 (Oslo: J.W. Cappelens forlag, 1977), p. 102; Herman Schück, 'The Political System', in *Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, I, ed. by Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003), p. 703. Nils Henriksson held Herjedal as a security from 1518–19, at the latest. Rolf Fladby, *Fra lensmannstjener til Kongelig Majestets Foged* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1963), pp. 55, 65; Erik Opsahl, 'Nils Henriksson', http://snl.no/.nbl_biografi/Nils_Henriksson/utdypning (accessed 1 July 2015). In NRR I, pp. 28–29, the two fiefs are explicitly referred to as Ingerd's securities. For instance, Danish noblewoman Anne Rud inherited her father-in-law's Norwegian security, Brunla fief, from her husband in 1530.
- 21 NRR I, p. 3; DN 7, no. 579. Although some of the fiefs might have been controlled by the governor of Bergen, the following fiefs are generally associated with Nils, and referred to as his at the time of his death in December 1523: Vardø castle (with Finnmark), Sunnmøre, Romsdal, Edøy, Fosen, Stjørdal (with Selbu) and Herjedalen.
- 22 The most detailed account of political developments in Norway in the 1520s and the institutions and people that influenced them can be found in Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, pp. 179–383.
- 23 They had probably met at court when she served as lady-in-waiting to the former queen. Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, p. 229.
- 24 *Ibid.*, pp. 268–269, 286–290.
- 25 Wærdahl, 'Why Did Ingerd'.
- 26 Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, pp. 288–290, 296–302.
- 27 DN 7, no. 579. Author's translation.
- 28 Wærdahl, 'Why Did Ingerd'.
- 29 Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, pp. 312–313.
- 30 DN 7, no. 579.
- 31 Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, pp. 351, 368.
- 32 Jacobsen, 'Køn og magt' and 'Formal and Informal Power'.
- 33 Opsahl, 'Nils Henriksson', DN 11, no. 603, Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, pp. 639–643.
- 34 DN XI, no. 603. There was an illegitimate son, Henrik, who was one of Archbishop Olav's chief officials.
- 35 Vincens also held Vardø castle with Finnmark, originally given to his brother-in-law Erik Ugerup, who preferred to hold and was granted Tønsberg fief in southeastern Norway instead. Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, pp. 226–227, 243–249, 312, 448.
- 36 DN 23, no. 229, where a Danish councillor reminds a widow's son-in-law of his responsibilities.
- 37 DN 23, no. 247.
- 38 Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, p. 377.

- 39 Wærdahl, 'Fru Ingerd'.
- 40 NRJ X, p. 346; XIV, p. 552.
- 41 In addition to her own property, Ingerd controlled a large proportion of what had formerly belonged to her husband, including her daughters' paternal inheritance and Austrått manor and estate, her husband's family seat, which she did not pass on to the next generation until 1551. Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, p. 227–232 about Vincens's background.
- 42 Their aunt, Mette Iversdatter Dyre, was widowed for the third time in 1512. Her husband had been the Swedish regent Svante Nilsson Sture. When Mette fell out with her step-son and her husband's heir over her property in Sweden, Vincens and his brothers helped her furnish a privateer, which captured a ship belonging to her step-son. The episode contributed to a breach in the relationship between Denmark and Sweden. Thelma Jexlev, 'Tre senmiddelaldrige kvindeprofiler', in *Profiler i nordisk senmiddelalder og renaissance. Festskrift til Poul Enemark*, ed. by Svend E. Green-Pedersen, Jens Villiam Jensen and Knud Prange, Arusia – historiske skrifter II (Århus: 1983), pp. 49–62; Jacobsen, 'Formal and Informal Power', p. 139. Incidentally, Mette's first husband had been Ingerd's maternal uncle, Anders van Bergen, a Norwegian councillor.
- 43 E.g. DN 8, nos. 413, 538, 657, 732; 9, no. 614; 14, no. 622. Wærdahl, 'Fru Ingerd'.
- 44 Eljas Orrman, 'The Condition of the Rural Population', in *Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, I, pp. 581–610 (pp. 592–593); Göran Dahlbäck, 'The Towns', in *Cambridge History of Scandinavia*, I, pp. 611–634 (pp. 615–616, 618–624); Halvard Bjørkvik, 'Ingerd Ottesdotter', *Norsk biografisk leksikon* 2, vol. 5 (2002), pp. 29–30.
- 45 Ole Jørgen Benedictow, *Hartvig Krummedikes jordegods: en studie i senmiddelalderisk adeløkonomi* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1970); Benedictow, *Fra rike*, p. 104.
- 46 When Mogens Gyldenstjerne, governor at Akershus, mentions assisting Anne Pedersdatter in his letter to the king's secretary in 1531, Mogens states that he is pleased to help poor members of the chivalry to endowments if it is within his power. (DN 22, vol. 1, no. 180. From later letters we know that Anne had run up a large debt after her husband's death and that she, like most landowning widows, had to defend her ownership and right to inherited landed property (DN 5, nos. 1104). Margrete Nilsdotter, Ingerd's daughter and Vincens Lunge's widow, was supposed to hold Troms fief until she had paid off the substantial debt Vincens left behind (DN 22, vol. 2, 436).
- 47 In addition to her involvement in her husband's payments to the crown, she had her own bailiffs and managed her own landed property. NRJ X, p. 346; XIV, p. 552.
- 48 In addition, the marriages of her daughters meant that she had to part with their paternal inheritance, which was substantial as there was no male heir. For instance, Margrete Nilsdotter's inheritance gave the substantially less well-off Vincens a financial basis on which to establish himself as a great landowner in Norway. Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, pp. 229–232.
- 49 Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, p. 311; Ulsig, 'The Nobility', pp. 651–652; Olesen, 'Inter-Scandinavian Relations', pp. 712–713.
- 50 DN 9, no. 636; 23, no. 198.
- 51 DN 8, no. 538; 10, no. 514; 13, no. 413.
- 52 Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, pp. 330–333.
- 53 See Per-Øyvind Sandberg, *Gørvel Fadersdatters regnskap over Giske og Giskegodset 1563* (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1986); Hamre, *Norsk politisk*: e.g. 326–349, 411, 649 about Giske estate. Giske was mainly the Norwegian part of the inheritance of the Swedish nobleman Karl Knutsson (Tre Rosor).
- 54 E.g. Bull, 'Politiske kvinner', p. 54; Koht, 'Ingerd Ottesdotter', p. 519, Esben Albrechtsen, *Fellesskabet bliver til 1380–1536*, vol. 1, in series Danmark-Norge 1380–1814 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997), p. 319. DN 8, no. 538; 9, nos. 568, 637; 12, no. 428; 13, no. 413. Cf. Sandberg, Wærdahl, 'Why Did Ingerd'.
- 55 Lathinen, *Anpassning*, p. 90; Jacobsen, 'Formal and Informal Power', pp. 133–142.
- 56 NRR I, p. 3.
- 57 In principle, the holder would retain the fiefs until she died. In practice, the grant had to be confirmed by a new king, and a king evidently had to compensate the holder if he withdrew the grant. A king could not have the disposal of the realm's resources beyond

- his own lifetime. Benedictow, *Fra rike*, p. 102; NRR I, pp. 17, 28–29; Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, p. 133; Wærdahl, ‘Why Did Ingerd’.
- 58 Fladby, *Fra lensmannstjener*, pp. 20, 55; Benedictow, *Fra rike*, pp. 101–102. The women who held fiefs in Norway in addition to Ingerd from 1529 to 1555, held their fiefs on varying terms, although service fiefs seem to have been most common. See e.g. NRR I, pp. 2–10, 17, 23, 28–29, 31, 53, 193, 212, 219; DN 2, no. 1107; 12, no. 460; 18, no. 295; 22, vol. 2, no. 436; 23, nos. 218, 221, 223, 224, 233.
- 59 Ingerd paid 412 Danish marks annually and equipped at least three to four soldiers for the crown. NRR I, pp. 9, 17, 28–29. Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, pp. 149, 313–314.
- 60 For instance, she prepared for negotiations with the inhabitants of her fiefs on payment of extraordinary taxes in 1528 (DN 9, no. 607). While the nobility were in general exempt from paying regular taxes for their property, they had to supply soldiers. Benedictow, *Fra rike*, pp. 101–102. Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, p. 151.
- 61 ‘Len’, in Steinar Imsen, *Norsk historisk leksikon* (Oslo: Cappelen akademiske forlag 2004)/dig. edition, <http://lokalhistoriewiki.no/index.php/Leksikon> (accessed 1 December 2014); Jacobsen, ‘Formal and Informal Power’, p. 136.
- 62 DN 5, no. 1056. Fladby, *Fra lensmannstjener* pp. 20, 55.
- 63 E.g. DN 6, no. 620; 8, no. 538; 11, no. 627.
- 64 DN 8, nos. 562, 564, 565.
- 65 DN 9, no. 607.
- 66 Hamre, *Norsk politisk*, pp. 359–374, 381–383; Wærdahl, ‘Why Did Ingerd’.
- 67 DN 8, no. 732. Author’s translation.
- 68 Albrechtsen, pp. 319–322; Ulsig, ‘The Nobility’, pp. 650–652; Schück, pp. 703–711; Olesen, ‘Inter-Scandinavian Relations’, pp. 710–713; Jacobsen, ‘Køn og magt’; Wærdahl, ‘Why Did Ingerd’.
- 69 DN 8, no. 538.
- 70 Cf. Merry Wiesner Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 19.
- 71 Cf. Laurence, *Women in England*, p. 273.
- 72 Raeder, *Hellre hustru*, pp. 19–20.

6

REGIONAL AND FAMILY NETWORKS

The hidden role of sisters and sisters-in-law

Barbara Harris

Patriarchal, patrilineal, primogenitural families constituted the structural boundaries of aristocratic women's lives in late medieval and early modern England. Enshrined in the common law, the passage of property and titles from father to eldest son created a conception of the family as a line that extended from the past through its current head into the future. In this model adult women's most important role was as wives and mothers who bore the sons essential to the survival of the lineage.¹ While it is accurate as far as it goes, this linear conception of the elite family overlooks the horizontal orientation of aristocratic families created by marriage. Marriage ties were the foundation of the patronage networks and political alliances that empowered noblemen and knights in their localities and counties. They enabled the most powerful of them to control large areas of the country for the crown and, in tumultuous periods, to intervene in central politics.

Noblemen and knights carefully arranged their daughters' and sons' marriages to enhance their political and financial positions. On the financial side, they negotiated the relative size of the bride's dowry or marriage portion and her dower or jointure, the provision for her if she survived her husband. Dower was the default provision for widows under the common law. It entitled them to life-long use of one third of their husband's land. Alternatively they received the income from their jointures, land granted in joint tenancy to couples at the time of their marriage. The survivor continued to hold it until his or her death. While the jointure supported the couple during their lives, its primary purpose was to provide for widows, who continued to receive the income from their jointures or dower if they remarried. When they died, the land reverted to their husband's family.²

As wives, mothers and widows, aristocratic women played key, if largely invisible, roles in sustaining the bonds between their natal kin and marital kin and, when

their own children married, between their natal kin and their sons' and daughters' in-laws. This chapter focuses specifically on one of these relationships, that between sisters and sisters-in-law, and the crucial part they played in creating and sustaining the horizontal connections between aristocratic families. Studying sisters and sisters-in-law is particularly rewarding because they have received relatively little attention from historians of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century women or the family. Their interactions with each other often continued for decades after their first marriages and included everything from visiting and living with each other to exchanging gifts, arranging and funding each other's marriages and appointing each other as their executors. The most frequent evidence of their affection and mutual support appears in their wills, which are full of bequests to their sisters, sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews.

Wills, the source of most of the information in this chapter, are incomparable documents for studying Yorkist and early Tudor aristocratic women. Far more of them wrote wills than letters, the other major document for learning about their material and emotional lives. Their major drawback is that only unmarried women, effectively widows, could write them. Wives were prevented from doing so because they did not exist as separate legal persons under the common-law doctrine of coverture. They were 'covered' by their husbands, or, as the law sometimes called them, their barons. Since most women outlived their last spouses, however, the majority did have the opportunity to write wills. In the decades I have been studying aristocratic Yorkist and early Tudor women, I have read 309 of their testaments. With few exceptions, they opened with a statement of the date and name of the testator and a commendation of her soul to God, the Virgin Mary and the saints. Thus, the will of Mary Scrope Kingston, who will be discussed at length below, opened her testament,

In the name of God, Amen. I, Mary Kingston, widow, the 12th day of July in the year of Our Lord God a thousand five hundred forty and six, and in the 38th year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King Henry the Eight, being of whole mind & perfect remembrance, thanked be Our Lord God, do make and declare my last will and testament in manner and form as hereafter doth follow:

First, I bequeath my soul unto Almighty God, my Maker and my Redeemer, and to Our Lady Saint Mary, and to all the holy company of heaven . . .³

From that point on, wills were highly individualized, both in the women's choice of where they wanted to be buried, their beneficiaries, the detail with which they itemized their legacies and their provision for their offspring, particularly if they were still under-age or unmarried. Their wills prove beyond any doubt that English aristocratic women were far more than 'passing guests' in their natal and marital families.⁴ Rather they accumulated families as they married and remarried and remembered them all when they died.

Remarriage was frequent among the aristocracy. Fifty-eight percent of peers' widows and eighty-five percent of the widows of parliamentary knights remarried.⁵ The frequency of remarriage resulted from the combination of women's longevity

compared to men's and their freedom to choose their second and third spouses.⁶ Those who married more than once and survived two or three spouses were among the richest, best-connected and most powerful women of their class. The dowers or jointures they carried into their subsequent marriages made them extremely attractive on the marriage market. Sixty-three percent of 351 of the widows of knights and noblemen survived their first husbands by ten years, thirty-seven percent by twenty.⁷ Of the women discussed in detail in this chapter, eight of the nine who married survived their first husbands and four of the eight married again at least once.

This chapter will concentrate on two related family groups, where close ties between married women and their sisters, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-laws, nieces and nephews existed over long periods of time: first, the nine daughters of Sir Richard Scrope of Bentley, a younger brother of John, Lord Scrope of Bolton; second, Anne, Lady Scrope, John Lord Scrope's third wife. The Scrope sisters are an ideal choice for this study because there were so many sisters and sisters-in-law, three of them wrote surviving wills, and their relations continued for decades after their marriages.⁸ They also appear in their step-brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Wyndham's, will after their sister, his wife died.⁹ The wills of their long-lived aunt, Anne Lady Scrope, an only daughter who married three times, illustrates how multiple marriages created horizontal families through ties between women and their in-laws in the absence of siblings. Because the argument of this chapter involves discussing the interactions between dozens of people, I have included three genealogical tables to assist readers in following it.

Sir Richard Scrope of Bentley (d. 1485) had nine daughters by Eleanor Washbourne, the daughter and coheir of a Worcestershire family. His only son died young. After she was widowed, his wife married Sir John Wyndham as her second husband. The Wyndhams come into the story of the Scrope sisters because one of them, named Eleanor after her mother, married Thomas, her stepfather's eldest son by *his* first wife. Of the Scrope sisters, Dorothy died unmarried in 1491 and another, Anne, was a nun at Barking. The other seven women married, in two cases twice. Six of them had children. Three of the seven sisters outlived their husbands and wrote the wills that provide most of the information we have about them (see Table 6.1).

TABLE 6.1 THE SCROPE SISTERS AND THEIR IMMEDIATE FAMILIES

Daughters of Sir Richard Scrope of Bentley (d. 1485) and Eleanor Washbourne, daughter and coheir of Norman Washbourne of Wichfield, Worcestershire

Dorothy (d. 1491), unmarried

Eleanor (predeceased husband)

m. Sir Thomas Wyndham (d. 1522)

Sir Edmund
Sir John
Margaret m. Sir Andrew Luttrell
Mary m. Sir Erasmus Paston
Elizabeth died young

Margaret (d. 1515) Prob11/18/6 (1515)

m. Edmund de la Pole, earl of Suffolk (d. 1513)

Anne, nun at Minories in London
All three of them were buried there

Elizabeth (d. 1537) Prob11/27/11

m. 1) William Viscount Beaumont (d. 1501)
m. 2) John de Vere, 13th earl of Oxford (d. 1513)

no children

Anne, nun at Barking

Katherine (date of death unknown)

m. Richard Audley, esq. of Swaffham, Norfolk (d. 1530)

Edmund, esq.
m 1). Mary daughter of Sir Philip Paris of Linton, Cambridge
she his first wife; he survived both his wives
m. 2) Anne daughter of Sir Thomas Tyrell
John, esq. (d. 1536)
Robert, Archdeacon of Berkshire
Thomas, a priest
Philip
Ela m. Thomas Derham of Crimplasham, Norfolk esq.
Jane m. Henry Hunston of Walpole, Norfolk
Anne, nun at Shrewsbury

Mary (d. 1548) Prob11/32/22

m. 1) Sir Edward Jerningham (d. 1515)

Sir Henry (royal official under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth)
Ferdinand
Edmund (gentleman of bedchamber to Henry VIII)
Edward
Elizabeth (maid of honor to Queen Mary)

m. 2) Sir William Kingston (d. 1541)

Frances (alive 1548)

m. Sir John St. Clere (d. 1546)

Sir John
Giles
Edwin
Elizabeth
Anne
Florence

Jane (alive 1548)

m. Thomas Brews (d. 1514) grandson of Sir Thomas whose daughter married John Paston III)

son and heir Sir John, d. 1585 m. Catherine Wingfield, d. Sir John
(d. 1481)
Giles, d. 1559
Ursula, nun at Denny (d. 1598)

Elizabeth Scrope Peche, first cousin (d. 1544); daughter of Robert Bentley, their father's brother; Prob11/30/12

m. Sir John Peche
no children

What is most striking about the relations between the Scrope sisters is their persistence for decades after they married. When one of them died, the connections were transferred to their sisters' children. The first of the seven women to die and write a will was Margaret, widow of Edmund de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, whom Henry VIII executed in 1513 after imprisoning him for seven years in the Tower of London. Despite her spouse's disgrace, Margaret was a member of Katherine of Aragon's household along with her sisters Elizabeth, countess of Oxford and Mary, then married to her first husband Sir Edward Jerningham.¹⁰ At the time of her husband's execution, the countess was living at Lullingstone, Kent with her first cousin Elizabeth Pechey and her husband, Sir John. She remained there until she died two years later.¹¹

Margaret was relatively poor for a woman of her rank because of her husband's attainder and the consequent forfeiture of all his property to the crown. However, she retained her jointure, land put in enfeoffment that was beyond the reach of the government.¹² Despite her comparative poverty, the duchess had an impressive

amount of jewellery, gold and silver plate, and luxury clothing to bequeath. With the exception of Sir John, in whose household she was living, and her favourite cleric, all the beneficiaries of these goods were women – Elizabeth Pechey, the Pecheys' daughter, the countess's daughter, a nun at the Minories in London, the duchess's sisters, her stepsister, her sister-in-law, her goddaughter Margaret and the Pechey's sister-in-law, Elizabeth Hart. The largest bequests went to her hosts, a gown with leopard fur to Lady Pechey and numerous pieces of silver plate, including three gilt goblets with covers, and an 'M' of diamonds to Sir John. The other women received pieces of plate or jewellery except for Mary whose legacy consisted of table and bed linen.¹³

Over two decades later, in 1537, Elizabeth, countess of Oxford, was the next Srope sister to write an extant will.¹⁴ In the intervening years Mary was widowed and remarried, Jane was widowed and remained single and Eleanor, Katherine and Anne died. The countess purchased the wardship of Katherine's son, John Audley, for £300 in 1531.¹⁵ During these decades, two of the sisters, Mary, Lady Kingston, and the countess were both members of Catherine of Aragon's household. Mary's career began during her first marriage to Sir Edward Jerningham (d. 1517), chief cupbearer in Catherine of Aragon's household and continued during her second marriage to Sir William Kingston. Ultimately she served the first four of Henry VIII's wives.¹⁶ Both sisters accompanied the court to the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520.¹⁷ The next year the king, who referred to the countess as 'the old lady Oxford', considered appointing her as Princess Mary's governess. The description differentiated her from the fourteenth earl's widow Anne. In any case, she lived for another sixteen years!¹⁸ Shortly before the countess's death in 1537, she and Lady Kingston were mourners at Jane Seymour's funeral.¹⁹ The countess's relationship with Mary and her second husband was apparently a close one, perhaps because of their frequent contact at court. She included them both among her executors and Kingston was one of three men who actually probated her will.²⁰

The countess, who was far richer than her deceased sister, the countess of Suffolk, bequeathed enormous amounts of jewellery, gilt and silver plate, particularly cups and goblets with covers, religious tablets and crosses and expensive hangings for beds. In addition to documenting her enormous wealth and her desire to distribute her jewellery and plate widely, she occasionally indicates the additional emotional or familial value of the items she was bestowing. Her testament also reveals her concern for her nieces and nephews. Finally, in contrast to the countess of Suffolk, whose marital family the Tudors had wiped out, the countess was surrounded by de Veres, the family of her second husband, the thirteenth earl of Oxford. In fact she lived at Wivenhoe, Essex, which she held as dower property from him and where she was buried with her first husband, William Viscount Beaumont.²¹

The countess's bequests to members of the de Vere family immediately followed her directions for her funeral and religious and charitable gifts, giving priority to her marital kin, perhaps because of their higher rank. Her distant marital relative, the fifteenth earl of Oxford, headed the list with the largest bequest to any

TABLE 6.2 MARY SCROPE'S MARRIAGES**Sir Edward Jerningham=1st wife Margaret Bedingfield (d. 1504)**

Anne (Lady Grey) stepdaughter of Mary Scrope, bequest from her
 Sir John Jerningham, bequest from Mary Scrope
 Margaret, bequest from Mary Scrope
 5 other sons: Thomas, Nicholas, Henry, Ferdinand, Robert

1st husband, Sir Edward Jerningham (d. 1515), =his 2nd wife Mary Scrope, married c. 1509, died 1548

Sir Henry of Cotesby Hall (1512–73), royal official under Henry VIII,
 Edward VI, Mary, & Elizabeth
 Elizabeth (d. after 1558), maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth, bequest
 from half-sister, Lady Anne Grey
 Edmund, gentleman of bedchamber to Henry VIII, bequest from his aunt,
 Elizabeth, countess of Oxford
 Mary m. Edward Stanhope

2nd husband, Sir William Kingston=2nd wife Mary Scrope Jerningham =

Children by his first wife: Sir Anthony,
 Bridget

Kingston received a bequest from his sister-in-law, Elizabeth, countess of
 Oxford

Lady Anne Jerningham Grey (d. 1558)

Mary Scrope's Jerningham stepdaughter, an important marital connection

1st husband, Lord Edward Grey (d. 1517)
 2nd husband, Henry Barlee (d. 1529)
 3rd husband, Sir Robert Drury (d. 1535)
 4th husband, Sir Edmund Walsingham (d. 1550)

She was always referred to as Lady Anne Grey; her first husband was a
 younger son of Thomas Grey, 1st marquess of Dorset. She had no children.

individual. It included a huge amount of bedclothes and hangings, one silver bowl and 'for a special remembrance, my little cross of gold, having closed in the same a piece of the holy cross, which I daily wear about my neck'. The phrase 'for a special remembrance' reveals the necklace's value because it contained a relic and her hope that the current earl of Oxford would continue to remember – and almost certainly pray for – her. She also remembered his children. His heir, Lord Bulbeck, and one

of his daughters, Elizabeth, were her godchildren. Most of the gifts to his daughters consisted of religious jewellery.

Only after she finished her legacies to the de Veres did the countess turn to her natal family. Here her beneficiaries included her three surviving sisters, Mary, Jane and Frances, four of their daughters and seven of their sons. One of her nieces, Ursula Brewes, may have been a nun, although she doesn't identify her as such, since the countess left her 40 shillings to pray for her. Almost all of the other bequests consisted of jewellery, much of it religious, or silver and gilt plate. The detail with which the countess described each item and named the person to receive it suggests that she had thought carefully about what to give to whom. From the point of view of a twenty-first century historian, what is most interesting is that there is little distinction between the bequests to her sisters, nieces and nephews along gender lines. Only one gift was clearly gendered – the legacy of her samplers to be divided equally between her sisters Mary and Jane, which could hardly have gone to a man. Turning to men, the countess bequeathed Mary's second husband Sir William Kingston and Edmund Jertingham, her younger son by her first husband, two items of special family significance. She gave Kingston two silver flagons with the earl of Oxford's arms on them and Edmund a silver goblet with her arms and those of her first husband, Viscount Beaumont. The legacy of these pieces, noteworthy because they bore the noblemen's arms, reflected the testator's close relationship to Mary and her family, and perhaps her belief that items displaying arms should go to men rather than women. In addition, the countess left Edmund the substantial sum of £50 'in ready money'. Her only other large cash gift was £100 for the dowry of her niece Elizabeth St. Clere, her sister Frances' daughter. In both these cases, she contributed significantly to the young people's futures.

The countess also remembered the families of her deceased sisters, providing detailed evidence of the continuation of women's horizontal families into the next generation. These beneficiaries included Katherine Audley's son-in-law Philip Parys, esq., and one of her daughters, identified simply as her niece Audley. The niece received a standing cup of silver and gilt with a cover. Parys, who was treasurer to Bishop Gardiner in the 1530s and receiver-general of the Court of Augmentations in the 1540s, was already embarked on a distinguished career. He was knighted in 1553.²² The countess gave him an impressive basin and ewer of silver, partly gilt, weighing 78 ounces and provided carefully that if it weren't worth £20, her executors should make up the difference in money. She also remembered two of her deceased sister Eleanor's children, her son John and her daughter Margaret, wife of Sir Andrew Luttrell. She gave John a gold hoop with a pointed diamond and Margaret a gold tablet with a picture of the crucifix, our lady and St. John.

The third Scrope sister to make a will, Lady Mary Kingston, wrote hers in 1546. When she died two years later, she was at least 64 years old. Her sisters Frances St. Clere and Jane Brewes were still living, but her largest bequests went

to Jerninghams, her elder son, Sir Henry, his wife, and his daughter Mary, probably the testator's namesake and goddaughter. Her younger son Edmund, whom we have just seen as one of the countess of Oxford's beneficiaries, may well have predeceased her, since he does not appear in her will at all.²³ From the Jerninghams, Lady Kingston turned to her surviving sisters. She gave Frances St. Clere a black velvet gown and tawny satin kirtle and Frances's daughter Elizabeth a pair of beads. Her legacy to her other sister, Jane Brews, was a gold hoop with the five wounds of Christ engraved on it and a book covered with purple velvet. Jane's son John, received a gold brooch with a picture of Mary Magdalen.

Taken together, the Scrope sisters' wills document their commitment to each other and the considerable wealth that circulated among them for decades after their marriages. Indeed, if one adds up the number of jewels and items of plate that they gave each other and their respective children, the figures are quite impressive. In addition, Jane Brews may well have lived in her sister the countess of Oxford's household. When her husband, Thomas Brews, Esq., died in 1515, many of his movable goods were at the countess's manor at Wivenhoe; twenty-two years later, his widow was there to witness the countess's will.²⁴ The countess also contributed substantially to the futures of three of her sisters' children, providing a dowry for Elizabeth St. Clere, purchasing John Audley's wardship, and leaving a substantial amount of cash to Edmund Jerningham. Although the countess did not include any comments about her feelings toward her nieces and nephews, her bequests to them indicated that her sisters could count on her to help secure their futures. Over their long lives, therefore, sisterhood provided the Scrope women with a financial and emotional safety net outside their marriages and sustained the ties between their marital and natal families that were so important in Yorkist and Tudor politics.

In contrast to the Scrope sisters, Anne, Lady Scrope, wife of their father's elder brother, John Lord Scrope, was an only daughter and wealthy heiress with no children of her own, although she married three times. Of necessity, therefore, she relied much more heavily than they did on the marital kin she collected as she moved from one husband to another. This alternative pattern gave her considerable choice as well as influence in her large circle of kin.

First, a brief summary of Lady Scrope's family and marriages. Lady Scrope was the only daughter of Sir Robert Harling and Joan Gonville, who was also an only daughter and heiress. After Sir Robert died in 1435, his uncle, Sir John Fastolf, purchased Anne's wardship for 500 marks, a huge sum that gives us some idea of how much property she inherited. Six years later, when Anne was about sixteen, Sir William Chamberlain paid Fastolf £1000 for the right to marry her.²⁵ The two purchases of Anne's wardship, first from the crown, and then from Fastolf, demonstrate both the high value placed on unmarried heiresses and on how much members of the aristocracy were willing to pay to secure them and their property for their own children.²⁶ When Chamberlain died in 1462, she married Sir Robert Wingfield, a younger son of an enormous and distinguished Suffolk family, who was controller of Edward IV's household. As a widow she

had the right to choose her own husband. After Sir Robert died in 1481, she remained single for a decade and then married her third husband, John Lord Scrope. She died in 1498 a few weeks after him at the age of seventy-two or seventy-three.

Lady Scrope's wills and related documents are the only source of information about her relationships to the families most important to her – Chamberlains, Wingfields, Scopes and Bedingfields. They include three wills.

TABLE 6.3 ANNE HARLING CHAMBERLAIN WINGFIELD SCROPE (D. 1498)

Anne Harling Chamberlain Wingfield Scrope (d. 1498)

Anne was the daughter of Sir Robert Harling (d. 1435) and his wife Joan Gonville

She was the sole heir of both her parents

1st husband Sir William Chamberlain (d. 1462); married c. 1441

2nd husband Sir Robert Wingfield (d. 1481)

3rd husband John, Lord Scrope of Bolton (d. 1498)

Lord Scrope was the older brother of the Scrope sisters' father; she was therefore their aunt

She had no children

Lady Anne's closest Harling relative, the Bedingfields, descended from her father's sister Margaret

John Harling

Joan Gonville=Robert Harling ————— Margaret Harling=Sir Robert Tuddenham

Anne, Lady Scrope, d & heir

Margaret Tuddenham (d. 1476)=Edmund Bedingfield, esq. (d. 1451)

Thomas (d. 1453); predeceased mother

Sir Edmund (1443–1496)

Sir Edmund Lady Scrope's cousin twice removed

He was heir of her land

Lady Scrope wrote her first will in 1479 during her second marriage to Sir Robert Wingfield. The other two, a will of land and a testament of her movables, were written in 1498, the year that she died. Most of the evidence comes, of course, from the bequests themselves, but in a few places Lady Scrope was quite revealing about her feelings. She openly expressed her love for Sir William Chamberlain in her 1479 will when she explained that she was leaving a manor to Thomas Chamberlain and Elizabeth his wife 'for the love she bore her first husband'.²⁷ Twenty years later, she asked to be buried with Chamberlain, 'according to my promise made unto him afore this time', a decision that reveals the strength of her continued attachment to him over many decades.²⁸ She also left land to another Elizabeth Chamberlain, widow of Sir Robert, for 'the good love, will and confidence which she had towards her cousin . . .'.²⁹ In addition she gave Elizabeth a more personal gift, a girdle (i.e. belt) decorated with gold.³⁰ No information exists about Lady Scrope's relationship to any of these Chamberlains. The term cousin, used for the second Elizabeth, designated a wide range of relatives in the period.

Lady Scrope was equally warm about her nephew Robert Wingfield, Esq., the godson, namesake and nephew of her second husband. The younger Robert was a younger son, probably the seventh, of Sir John Wingfield, her husband's older brother and head of the family.³¹ The childless woman noted affectionately that she had 'brought [him] up of a child since he was three years of age'. Describing him as her 'beloved and faithful cousin . . . and godson of her dearly beloved husband', she bequeathed him both her manor of Stanford in Norfolk and patronage of the College of Rushworth in the same county.³² She appointed him as one of the co-executors of the testament of her movable goods. In addition to a reward of £20 for accepting the appointment, she gave him a huge number of luxury goods, including her red crimson bed with all its hangings and coverlets and a number of pieces of plate. She also passed on a cup she had received from Robert's father and asked him 'to keep it during his life for a remembrance to pray for his father and me'.

Although Robert was clearly her favourite Wingfield, she included a number of other members of her second husband's family among her beneficiaries. She was the godmother of his sister Elizabeth whom she gave a pair of gold beads and a piece of jewellery set with a diamond and a ruby that had originally belonged to Elizabeth's mother. Her legacy to Robert's older brother, Sir John (d 1509), a gilt standing cup, was a valuable item appropriate to his status as head of the family. The gifts to Robert's siblings underscore how jewellery and plate circulated among women and men related through marriage and solidified their relationships. The other Wingfields among her beneficiaries included Robert's mother, his wife, all his brothers, three of his other sisters and his elder brother's wife.³³

Lady Scrope's third marriage to John, Lord Scrope of Bolton, connected her to another large family. Her husband had seven children by his first wife. She remembered them all in the bequests of her movable goods. But more pertinent to the emphasis of a chapter on the horizontal connections between families were her legacies to two of his brothers, two of his sisters and three of the daughters of his younger

brother Richard whom we discussed above. All of her legacies to the Scopes were relatively modest and were clearly meant to recognize their kinship rather than to transfer large amounts of wealth to them as her bequests of land to members of the Chamberlain and Wingfield families did. The reason is probably that Lady Scrope was over sixty when she wed for the third time and her marriage to Scrope was much shorter than the other two. She was single for close to a decade between the death of her second husband in 1481 and her marriage to Scrope, which suggests she was not in a hurry to wed again.³⁴ She may well have been tempted by gaining a title and entering the nobility. Lord Scrope's will, which acknowledged £100 that she lent him before their marriage as well as 'other charges which I know well I have put her to' suggests that their union was a classic exchange of his title for her wealth. The money she gave him may well have exhausted her generosity to his family.³⁵

The largest beneficiary of Lady Anne Scrope's estate was not, however, anyone from her marital families, but rather Sir Edmund Bedingfield, a second cousin twice removed, who was descended from her father's sister, Lady Margaret Tuddenham (see Box 6.3). In 1476, shortly before she made her first will, she 'bargained and sold' the reversion of most of her land, including her principal manor at East Harling to Edmund for one pence. Her feoffees were directed to transfer title to him a year after her death. The symbolic price of the land was apparently a mechanism for carrying out the transaction. Its effect was to keep the land in the hands of descendants of the Harlings.³⁶ In disposing of most of her inheritance in this way, Lady Scrope recognized the power of lineage in the passage of land from one generation to another. There is no evidence of any personal connection between her and Sir Edmund or anyone else from the Bedingfield family. Although she distributed vast amounts of jewellery, plate, clothing and cash to scores of people in the will of her movables, not a single Bedingfield is among them. Because the relationship between the Harlings and Bedingfields was so distant – their common ancestor, John Harling, died in 1403 – the gift effectively transferred land between distinct families, much like Lady Scrope's bequest of land to her Chamberlain and Wingfield in-laws.

Lady Anne Grey (d. 1558) was the last of the women closely connected to the Scopes to die although she was not related to them by blood. Rather she was Mary Scrope Jerningham Kingston's stepdaughter (see Box 6.2). Early in Henry VIII's reign, the two women were involved in a scandal that infringed on the king's rights over one of his wards. At the time Lady Anne was a maid-in-waiting in the household of Mary Tudor, Queen of France, then married to Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk. Her stepmother orchestrated a marriage between her and the ward, who was in Brandon's care. When the duke discovered what had happened while he was accompanying Katherine of Aragon to his household, he was both apoplectic and terrified, because ignoring the king's rights over a ward was a serious offense. Brandon wrote to Cardinal Wolsey immediately to explain that he had nothing to do with the offense and begged him to assure Henry of his innocence,

yesterday Monday the 16th of March Mistress Jerningham came to the french queen diverse times before the queen my mistress coming thither. And after that she had been with the said queen my wife, she took her daughter-in-law

aside with her and called young Berkeley unto him. And there privily ensured the said Berkeley unto the Lady Anne Grey one of the queen my wife's ladies and mine. Which is no little displeasure unto me seeing he is the king's ward. And that it pleased his grace to put him to my rule and guiding. I had lever have spent a thousand pounds than any such _____ should have been done in the queen's house and mine. My lord I heartily desire and pray your good lordship that if misinformation be made unto the king's grace hereof that it will please you to show his grace hereof as I have written unto you. Lest his grace should give credence unto some other light information herein. Which I would abide by upon my honor and that it will please you to stay the matter unto my coming to London. Also that it will please your lordship so to order this matter that it may be an example to all other how they should make any such marriages within any noble man or woman's house hereafter. And in especially with any other king's wards. And thus fare ye well my very good lord and beseech Jesus to send you long life and good health.³⁷

The marriage was disallowed and there is no record that either of the women were punished. Almost forty years later, however, when Lady Anne wrote her will, she left bequests to Sir John and William Berkeley, whom she described as her sons.³⁸ She obviously considered the marriage valid though it was invalidated almost immediately. Another possibility is that she was in love with young Berkeley and had life-long fond memories of him.³⁹

Lady Anne's will also showed her continued connection to her deceased stepmother, Mary Scrope Jerningham Kingston. She bequeathed a gold ring with a turquoise and a silver and gilt bowl to Sir Henry Jerningham, Mary's eldest son by her father and Lady Anne's stepbrother. She gave Sir Henry's wife a gold ring with a diamond. One of Sir Henry's sons, Lady Anne's godson, was bequeathed a gold heart that had a picture of Henry VIII, and another son given a gold tablet. Her gift to Sir Henry's daughter Mary was a silver and gilt goblet with a cover that her stepmother had given her. Mary's sister received a ring with a square diamond enamelled with black. She included her stepbrother Sir Henry Jerningham and one of his sons among her co-executors. Lady Anne's testament reveals the way in which relationships between women and their children continued over long periods of time and the way that valuable objects circulated among women from generation to another.

The kinship between aristocratic families that began with the marriages of their daughters and sons were the building blocks of the noble and knightly affinities that dominated England's counties and local regions in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Their ties enabled the most powerful families to govern large areas of the country on behalf of the crown and in unruly periods to maintain order and intervene in central politics. At every level wives and widows played important, if largely invisible, roles in maintaining these networks by the kind of relationships explored in this chapter. In addition they boosted their spouses' position at court by placing their daughters as maids-in-waiting in the queen's household. They could succeed only if they received vigorous support from the queen's ladies and the

gentlewomen of her privy chamber.⁴⁰ In addition to receiving generous remuneration, the maids were in an unrivaled position to make advantageous marriages and to intervene with the king and queen on behalf of their families.⁴¹

Few families are as well documented as the Scropes, but evidence for the period is full of examples of the kind of mutual support and circulation of goods and land among sisters and sisters-in-law seen so fully in their cases. As this chapter demonstrates, the best sources for discovering and uncovering these relationships are wills. In addition to legacies, requests for burial and prayers provide evidence for the connections among them. With a little bit of luck, additional information can be found in the State Papers, Chancery Cases, Calendars of Close and Patent Rolls, and more infrequently in this period, letters and household accounts. Strengthening and preserving the ties between their families was not dramatic work but it gave considerable hidden power to wives and widows. Both in placing their daughters at court and in creating and maintaining their husbands' affinities, aristocratic women's relations with their horizontal families – their sisters and sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews – played a significant role in Yorkist and early Tudor politics.

Notes

- 1 Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450–1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 1 provides a concise overview of the patriarchal regime as it affected women in the key areas of inheritance and marriage. It discusses primogeniture, coverture, male entail; dowries, jointures, dowers; and the development of feoffments or uses. John H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* (London: Butterworths: 1979), pp. 226–229 on rules of descent.
- 2 Baker, *Introduction to English Legal History*, pp. 229–230.
- 3 TNA, PRO, Prob11/32/22.
- 4 Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Women Work and Family in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 117–118.
- 5 Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, p. 162.
- 6 S.J. Payling found similar patterns of female longevity and wives surviving their husbands in Lancastrian Nottinghamshire. *Political Society in Lancastrian England: The Greater Gentry of Nottinghamshire* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 56–57.
- 7 Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 128, 283, n. 4.
- 8 Margaret de la Pole, countess of Suffolk (d. 1515), Prob11/18/6; Elizabeth de Vere, countess of Oxford (d. 1537), Prob11/27/11; Mary Kingston, d. 1546, Prob11/32/22 (1546).
- 9 TNA, PRO, Prob11/21/3; Sir Thomas's father Sir John Wyndham (d. 1505) married their mother as her second husband. Their sister Eleanor married her step-brother, Sir Thomas.
- 10 *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, J.S. Brewer, et al. (eds), 21 vols and *Addenda* (London: HMSO, 1862–1932), pp. 1, 82, 1509: list of members of Queen's household. Hereafter cited as L&P.
- 11 L&P, I, 2055 (95).
- 12 L&P, I, 2055 (95). An enfeoffment or use was an early form of the trust; the owner of the land conveyed legal title to (i.e. enfeoffed) persons known as feoffees for specific purposes designated in the deed of conveyance. The use separated legal ownership from receipt of the profit or benefit of the land. The common law did not recognize the use and therefore did not protect the beneficiaries of the use if the feoffees violated the terms of the feoffment. However, Chancery recognized and enforced the use as a matter of equity. The spread of the use in the fifteenth century thus led to a massive shift of

- litigation about real property from the common law courts to Chancery. The use permitted landowners to devise their land by will at their deaths, which was not possible under the common law. Baker, *Introduction to English Legal History*, pp. 210–219; Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 37–38.
- 13 TNA, PRO, Prob11/18/6, Margaret, countess of Suffolk (pr. 1515).
 - 14 TNA, PRO, Prob11/27/11, Elizabeth, countess of Oxford (1537; pr. 1537).
 - 15 C.E. Moreton, *The Townshends and Their World: Gentry Law, and Land in Norfolk, c. 1450–1551* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 125. Wardship resulted from the fact that noblemen and knights held virtually all their land as feudal tenants of the crown. When they had minor heirs, custody of the heirs and the right to arrange their marriages and collect the income from their land belonged to the king. Members of the aristocracy competed fiercely for the privilege of purchasing the wardships from the crown because they would be able to marry the heir or heiress to one of their own children and add their property to the family estates. The purchasers could also profit from selling the wardship to someone else. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 31–32; also Baker, *Introduction to English Legal History*, pp. 206–207.
 - 16 L&P, 2nd edition, I (1), 82 (38); Stanford Lehmborg, ‘Kingston, Sir William (c.1476–1540)’, *ODNB*; Muriel St. Clare Byrne (ed.), *The Lisle Letters*, 6 vols (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1981), II, 56–57; e.g. L&P, IV (2), 2971 (p. 1332), 1527; L&P, XII (2), 1060; Rutland Papers, Original Documents, ed. by William Jerdan, *Camden Society*, XXI (London, 1842), p. 38.
 - 17 e.g. L&P, I, 82 (41); L&P, XII (2), 1060; *Rutland Papers, Original Documents*, XXI (1842).
 - 18 George E. Cokayne et al., *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom, Extant, Extinct or Dormant*, 13 vols in 14 (London: St Catherine’s Press, 1910–59) [reprint, Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1982–98], X, 244, note b; hereafter cited as GEC, *Complete Peerage*.
 - 19 L&P, XII (2), 1060.
 - 20 TNA, PRO, Prob11/27/11 (1537) is the countess’s will and the source for the next three paragraphs.
 - 21 GEC, *Complete Peerage*, II, 63–64: TNA, PRO, Prob11/17/11, John, thirteenth earl of Oxford (1512; pr. 1513).
 - 22 Victoria County History, *The County of Cambridge*, ed. A.P.M. Wright (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), VI, 85.
 - 23 TNA, PRO, Prob11/28/32, Sir William Kingston (1539; pr. 1541); Prob11/32/22 (her will).
 - 24 TNA, PRO, Prob11/18/4, Thomas Brews (1515); TNA, PRO, Prob11/27/11, Elizabeth, countess of Oxford (1537).
 - 25 Rev. Dr. Bennett, ‘The College of St. John the Evangelist of Rushworth, co. Norfolk’, *Norfolk Archaeology*, 10 (1888), pp. 277–382 (p. 296); Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Eighth Report* (London: HMSO, 1881), Appendix, p. 216; Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), p. 96.
 - 26 See footnote 12 for an explanation of wardship.
 - 27 CCR, Edward IV, Edward V, and Richard III, 1476–85, #479 (137).
 - 28 *Testaments Eboracensia*, IV, ed. by James Raine, Surtees Society, 53 (1869), no. 75, p. 149.
 - 29 *Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII* (London: HMSO, 1915), II, #114, 73–76.
 - 30 *Testaments Eboracensia*, IV, no. 75, p. 152.
 - 31 Mary L. Robertson, ‘Wingfield, Sir Robert (b. in or before 1464, d. 1539)’, *ODNB*.
 - 32 *Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII*, II, no. 114, pp. 73–76.
 - 33 *Testamenta Eboracensia*, IV, no. 75, p. 154.
 - 34 GEC, *Complete Peerage*, xi, 545, n. e.
 - 35 *Testaments Eboracensia*, IV, no. 46, p. 95.
 - 36 Francis Blomefield, *An Essay Toward a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk . . .* 2nd. ed., 11 vols (London: William Miller, 1805), I, pp. 316–344.
 - 37 TNA, PRO, SP 1/15, fol. 33 (1517).

- 38 TNA, PRO, Prob11/42B/17 (1558).
- 39 Lady Anne's marriage to Berkeley was annulled since they had almost certainly not had sexual relations. She was therefore free to marry again. In fact, she married four times: 1) Lord Edward Grey, a younger son of the first marquis of Dorset (d. before 1517); Henry Barlee of Albury, Hertfordshire (d. 1529); Sir Richard Drury (d. 1536); Sir Edward Walsingham (d. 1550). She survived her first husband by at least 41 years. She used his title throughout her life.
- 40 Byrne, *The Lisle Letters*, IV, chapter 8, for a detailed description of Lady Lisle's successful effort to secure her daughter Anne's position in Jane Seymour's household. Her niece, Mary, countess of Sussex and daughter of her sister Katherine was one of Queen Jane's ladies and one of Lady Lisle's key contracts her household.
- 41 Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 224–227.

7

WIDOWS' POLITICAL STRATEGIES IN TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES

Negotiating marital status and authority in eighteenth-century France

Elise Dermineur

The social and economic status of widows in early modern France is characterized by a paradoxical dichotomy. On the one hand, a widow had social and political authority not only within her household but also within her community through her new marital position and status – widowhood – which granted her a broad spectrum of new rights and duties. Indeed, widows could make contracts, ask for justice, appear on the tax roll, lend and borrow money or serve as collateral in contracts.¹ Widowhood, in theory, implied therefore, a time of opportunities for women without the constant supervision and authority of men. Yet, on the other hand, in practice, not only was a widow considered incapable of managing her own affairs because of the intrinsic nature of her sex,² but also her new marital status often equaled deprivation.³

Recently, however, historians have begun to reassess widows' position not only within their household but also within their community. Janine Lanza convincingly demonstrates that within their families, widows 'shifted from a status of dependence to one of power and influence'.⁴ But as widows encountered difficulties in assuming the role of head of their household, they garnered support from the state, the guilds and their communities, prompting Lanza to conclude that 'authority may have been articulated in strictly gendered terms in certain cultural sources and expressed itself and expressed as such in practice at certain levels of society, but if we widen our view of the question we cannot see authority as a solely male prerogative'.⁵ In early modern France, therefore, despite the patriarchal framework, widows managed to assert their new position and their authority.⁶ But, despite this gradual social recognition of their prerogatives, the economic situation of widows often remained precarious.⁷

This chapter examines the survival strategies – especially regarding financial resources – widows adopted in rural communities in order to cope with the death of a husband, with particular reference to the legal and social changes affecting their

marital status in the eighteenth century. It is my contention that peasants gradually increased the legal protection of women/widows through new legal provisions in their marriage contracts, pressured to do so in order to protect the integrity of their capital and that of their heirs, which was challenged by a growing indebtedness in the eighteenth century.⁸ Widows benefitted therefore from greater legal protection, which in turn contributed not only to insure their economic viability and that of their household but it also contributed to assert their authority within their family and their community. In order to understand the mechanisms at stake in this process, I analyze a sample of approximately 300 marriage contracts (for the period 1673–1789) from rural communities located in the northeastern part of the kingdom.⁹ Critical remarks regarding the evolution of their legal and social status will ensue as the examination of marriage contracts (and to a lesser extent donations and wills) shows a tangible evolution of the role of widows, and the consideration they received. Marital status is, of itself, a useful category of historical analysis. Single and married women had rights and daily experiences that were different to those of widows. Focusing on widows, we can emphasize the changes of status that occurred for these women but also, and more importantly, the changes experienced over time throughout the eighteenth century. First, I focus on the traditional legal and social roles of widows within society. Then, I concentrate on the legal and social changes that occurred in the eighteenth century and highlight how these changes were implemented in practice. Finally, I explain how these modifications impacted on widows and question the dynamics behind the new legal and social norms.

I. The legal status of widows in early modern France: between freedom and constraint

The legal status of women in early modern France formed a gargantuan mosaic, a giant *millefeuille*, in which different legal, social and regional layers applied, meaning that women underwent diverse experiences regarding their access to inheritance and resources.¹⁰ This legal mosaic not only implied great diversity over the kingdom but also its framework and nature allowed the emergence of new legal dispositions and changes across time, as we shall see in the second part.¹¹ In the eighteenth century, the French kingdom counted more than 200 autonomous legal systems.¹² In the north, local traditional customs, a set of commonly accepted legal dispositions, prevailed, while in the south, the *droit écrit* was loosely based on Roman law and on the Justinian Code. Other layers overlapped these jurisdictions, such as canon law, royal decrees and edicts, parliamentary arrests and even some corporate rules.¹³ Customary law usually played a critical role in civil matters as it covered a wide range of familial and household issues, such as inheritance practices for instance. ‘Royal’ law prevailed where customary law neglected matters, and where customary law remained silent.¹⁴

In the French kingdom, women were considered legally incapable, under perpetual tutelage and placed under the sovereign authority of their fathers and (if married) then of their husbands.¹⁵ In theory, minors of either sex (under

twenty-five years old) could not sign contracts without the express authorization of their fathers. Once they reached their majority, men and women could make contract and manage their property, if they had any, under their own name. Unmarried women above twenty-five years old could, for instance, borrow and lend money in the credit market without being accompanied by a male relative.¹⁶ In practice, however, young and unmarried people had limited access to capital, as marriage remained the determining moment for the transfer of parental assets to wedded couples and the acquisition of sufficient authority and moral credit for future business transactions. Rural young men and women could seek employment as domestics in neighbouring farms and save money before getting married.¹⁷ Young women in particular were numerous in turning to this option as their domestic wages contributed to their dowries.¹⁸ In early modern Europe, marriage was socially considered mandatory and a positive option to be pursued in the normal run of circumstances.

As married women, women could not make contract or go to court without the express authorization of their husbands. But since the sixteenth century, jurists reinforced the protection of married women, especially over their patrimony, protecting them from deprivation.¹⁹ The institution of marriage, thus, defined and refined women's roles within society. As James Farr has argued, 'marriages were the centrepieces of familial strategies designed to protect and expand the all important patrimony'.²⁰ And as Pierre Bourdieu points out, marriage "was not the product of an obedience to an ideal rule, but the completion of a strategy".²¹ Most customary rules, indeed, mentioned almost systematically legal marriage dispositions. As a result, marital status for women assumed a critical role in their legal access to resources and property.

The legal status of married women proved, notwithstanding, to be complex and deserves further comments. In the majority of regions in early modern France, family property was divided into two groups: community property and lineage property. First, in theory community property belonged to both spouses and was constituted by the *conquêts*, that is, the property acquired by the spouses during their marriage, and the *acquêts*, the property acquired by one of the spouses, and which entered the community property temporarily. In some regions, the origins of the assets (*acquêts* or *conquêts*) did not matter when they entered the community property as they formed one single unit. Active and passive debts, incomes and wages, and non-familial donations also entered the community property regime.²² In certain areas, especially in the north and in the Parisian basin, the community property regime was the rule and spouses enjoyed their patrimony conjointly throughout the duration of their marriage. In some regions such as in Normandy, for instance, this community property regime was restricted, favouring therefore individuals and not the household.²³ Husbands were traditionally held responsible for the management of the community property.

Second, the lineage property, on the other hand, consisted of inherited property, and it remained the sole property of the spouse to whom it had been bequeathed, and as such did not in theory enter the community property. But, in certain regions, around the Parisian basin and in the Eastern part of the kingdom for instance,

husbands were in charge of managing their wives' lineage property, and as a consequence, their lineage property entered the community property for the duration of the marriage but returned to the original branch when the community property ended. Married women could not, on their own, sell, alienate or mortgage their own property, nor make contract without their husbands' permission.²⁴ Husbands, nonetheless, could not alienate their wives' property without their consent and were not supposed to allow it to deteriorate in any way. They were held responsible if, for instance, they did not take good care of a piece of land, which therefore lost value, or if a house was ruined by lack of sufficient care.²⁵ Dowries and *trousseaux* were also assimilated to lineage property. On April 2, 1783, Catherine Muller from the village of Seppois-le-Haut came before the judge to ask for separation of property. Her husband, Thomas Frery, and Catherine herself had great financial difficulties and had started to sell some of her lineage property. Muller showed her marriage contract to the judge who ruled that she could take back her lineage property and that her husband should replace the property that had already been sold.²⁶ A married woman, therefore, was not completely dependent on her husband's household management. Legal separation of property between spouses before a judge was possible and women almost always initiated such separation.²⁷ In most of these legal proceedings, a woman claimed that her husband had mismanaged the assets with which he had been entrusted and asked for the separation, which, if granted, entitled the wife to administer her own patrimony.²⁸ A married woman, consequently, had an overview of her household's administration. It is thus important to remember that in many early modern French families, women were held responsible for logistical matters and therefore had to deal personally with the household resources, which accustomed them to provisioning and household management.²⁹ It seems clear now that over the duration of marriage both spouses worked in partnership, pooling their efforts in managing the household assets and revenues.³⁰

A widow, however, escaped most of the constraints imposed on married women; she regained full legal capacity after the death of her husband.³¹ Almost always granted legal guardianship of her minor children, she became *de facto* the head of the household.³² As such, she was able to make contract, extend credit, borrow money under her own name, administer her estates and patrimony, manage the property of her minor children and could also serve as collateral in loans. With the death of her partner, the community property was divided between the widow and the legal heirs of her spouse, his children.³³ The lineage property then returned to the branch it had come from and the widow kept the property she brought into the match, called *paraphernaux*, and additionally her dowry. As with property laws for married women, those regulating widows varied widely according to region and legal jurisdiction. The custom of Paris entitled the widow to half of the community property, but in the south of Alsace, for instance, and as in other regions, widows received only a third of the community property while the heirs received two-thirds.³⁴ There were also gendered nuances. In Southern Alsace, a widower received two-thirds of the community property and the legal heirs the remaining third. In many cases couples were able to circumvent legal norms, and the marriage

contract, for example, specified the conditions of inheritance and spouses were able to donate property and cash to each other and divide the community property as they pleased. The marriage contract also specified what applied in terms of usufruct and lifetime holdings. In the customs of northern France, a widow usually retained the usufruct of the totality of the community property during her lifetime.³⁵ Other contracts such as *donations entre vifs* – *inter vivos* donations – and wills could be written up, reinforcing existing legal dispositions between spouses and thus modifying legal practices, as argued below.³⁶

A large range of notarized documents such as marriage contracts, wills and donations were therefore available to couples in order to manage their property during their marriage but also, and more importantly, these legal tools served to prepare their succession carefully. A widow, nevertheless, might not have enough resources to cope with the death of her husband and insure the survival of her household. In certain cases, the share of the community property could be unfavourable to widows, especially if the household was deeply in debt.³⁷ The *douaire* (dower) could help her and her household to maintain the same conditions as before the death of her husband.³⁸ For instance, the dower could be the use and lifetime holding of a house, which ceased with the widow's death. Most of the dower rights were included in the customary rules or determined in the marriage contract. Despite these legal dispositions, widowhood for many was tantamount to an entrance into poverty. Scarlett Beauvalet-Boutoury estimates that a widow and her family could live decently for three years with 500 livres.³⁹ After the three-year period, she had to find a paid position, seek assistance or remarry.⁴⁰ Many widows, indeed, had no other choice than to work. This picture, however, has to be nuanced as urban and rural widowhood differed tremendously. Any generalization of the legal status of women is complex and has to be confined to some broad features. Not only were regional legal differences critical, but also the practice of law and legal norms could be dissimilar from one community to another. Therefore the main question behind legal dispositions granting certain rights was the management of property and resources and its transmission between generations. In traditional societies, access to resources was fundamental for most individuals in the context of survival. Access to land, cash, supply and credit, among other things, were essential to peasants in order to work, meet their obligations and above all to make ends meet. In this context, women were not the best armed to get access to these resources, mostly because their status – as women – legally prevented them from accessing a wide range of resources.⁴¹ Many scholars have now shown that there was a dichotomy between theory and practice regarding the status of widows. In practice, a widow regained full legal capacity but in theory her access to labour, resources, lands and money remained extremely difficult.⁴² Julie Hardwick states that 'widows often found it difficult in daily practice to take advantage of the autonomy their legal position promised'.⁴³ Despite existing legal provisions, widows' access to resources, therefore, remained problematic. The granting of a third of the community property was in some cases not enough to live on. If a widow's children had already reached their majority, she would have to rely on their help and assistance; many widows, indeed, gave up their

property to a specific child in exchange for room and board.⁴⁴ In 1745, Joseph Hoiné married Marie Anne Maître. His widowed mother entrusted him, on the occasion of his marriage, with part of her house and ownership of some pieces of land in exchange of room, board and the payment ‘of ten mass services for the rest of her soul’ after her death.⁴⁵ Similarly, in 1703, Pierrot Fleury and his new spouse moved into his mother’s house and lived together under the same roof, ‘*en communauté*’. In his marriage contract, Fleury was promised he would inherit this house upon his mother’s death in exchange for caring for her.⁴⁶ In 1779, Henri Acremen married Catherine Jobin. A few years before, he had moved in with his widowed aunt, Marie Catherine Acremen, upon her widowhood. On the occasion of his upcoming marriage, she gave her nephew pieces of land and also tools, a plough, household items, cookware, a clock, a bed and clothing items. In exchange, her nephew and his wife would take care of her and were ‘to take care of her burial’.⁴⁷ In a last example, Joseph Jeanmaire married Marie Rose Marion in 1780. Jeanmaire’s widowed mother bequeathed him her share of the house but he would be liable for the taxes, would have to pay for ten masses on her behalf after she passed away and his mother would keep ‘*ses allers et venirs*’ in the house.⁴⁸ This legal situation, in which widows might potentially need support and assistance, could create conditions that weakened widows, who were left with no political power, with little autonomy and latitude. And yet, in the second half of the eighteenth century, we observe a change in the legal provisions in marriage contracts and this contributed to a strengthening of the position of widows and granted them greater access to resources.

II. Widowhood revisited: the evolution of legal and social norms in the eighteenth century

In early modern France, inheritance practices and the transmission of property through marriage, donation, gift or inheritance, constituted a fundamental and major means through which to acquire wealth and property. In this regard, marriage contracts constitute an essential source through which to analyze this mechanism of transmission at work; not only was transmission vertical – from parents to their legal heirs, that is, their children – but also horizontal – property arrangements between wives and husbands. The famous jurist, Claude de Ferrière, in 1684, describes the marriage contract as ‘without doubt the most important contract established among people because it served as one of the pillars of civil life, to the rest of families and to the goodness of the State’.⁴⁹ David Sabeau underlines the complexity of such contracts and argues that ‘a pact was necessary only when a couple agreed from the beginning to exclude one of them from the rules of intestate inheritance, to set up a special endowment for the survivor, or to exclude the husband from the administration of part of the wife’s property. It was a public instrument, and of course, would have to be included or abstracted in any marriage or postmortem inventory’.⁵⁰

A marriage contract was above all a contract establishing an official partnership between two spouses and also between two families, signed at the notary’s

office. Indeed, one can note that a lot of relatives were present in this office when both spouses agreed on the conditions of the contracts, their parents but also their extended families – uncles, aunts, grandparents and other siblings – who had also often participated in the prenuptial negotiations. Sarah Hanley argues that families, not individuals, played a key role in the matrimonial process and the formation of new households.⁵¹ Since the royal ordinance of 1639, parental consent was required for all marriages.⁵² According to Hanley,

the most pressing business of early modern times was the maintenance and extension of family networks, which were agencies of both social reproduction and economic reproduction; and the negotiation of proper marriage alliances, critical to that endeavor, depended on effective parental authority.⁵³

In cases where families did not have sufficient property to pass on, marriage contracts were useless, but it seems that gradually peasants came to sign more and more marriage contracts in the second half of the eighteenth century.

In early modern France, as in many regions in Europe, marriage contracts covered two key areas in the administration of patrimony: the transmission of assets from one generation to the other and the management and transmission of assets between spouses. In the *pays de droit écrit* (mainly the south of France), the eldest male child received his parents' patrimony. In the northern part of France, in the *pays de droit coutumier*, partible inheritance was generally the rule and each child received a portion of the familial patrimony. As Bernard Derouet explains, in the south of France one succeeded to a person while in the north one acceded rather to a set of rights and goods.⁵⁴ In the north of France, parents decided on the endowment of their children upon their marriage in various ways. Some families chose to give away to the bride or the groom their share of their parents' inheritance on the occasion of their wedding (*avancement d'hoirie*). In some cases, this disposition excluded the newly wed from any claim on the inheritance at their parents' death. In other cases, children had to return the portion they received upon their marriage so that it joined the mass of all their parents' assets and could then be divided again among the heirs. Yet some other parents endowed their children regardless of the prospect of inheritance; the heirs would be able to claim their share of their parents' patrimony without restriction and without deductions from their dowry. Overall, families freely chose the best option of patrimony division to suit their own needs and expectations. But this question had to be settled well before the death of one of the parents and was the subject of negotiations not only within each family but also between the betrothed couples' families. These different legal arrangements can be found in the same village in our sample, highlighting therefore not only the variety of situations and family decisions but also the greater latitude in the design and application of legal norms. In 1780, for example, when Joseph Taburon got married, his parents decided to give him their house as sole owner. But for this preference (or *preciput*) over the other heirs, the groom had to pay 1000 *livres*, regardless of sex, to each of three

sisters and two brothers, as compensation. His bride, Marie Catherine Arnoux, however, benefited from her father of an '*advancement d'hoirie*', that is, an early inheritance, and received several pieces of land. Her marriage contract specified that she would not mention the lands received on the occasion of her marriage upon her parents' death and her share of the inheritance would not suffer in any case from this early donation.

If marriage contracts served above all to transfer the family patrimony from one generation to the next, they were also useful legal tools for the protection of each spouse, especially in the case of widowhood, and constituted a fundamental and major means by which to acquire wealth and property in one's own name. Indeed, marriage contracts stated the rules for the division of community property and the various dispositions, ensuring protection and possible usufruct of the deceased partner's assets to the surviving partner, often left to their discretion. In northeastern France, customary law applied and the division of the community property was one-third/two-thirds (widow/widower).⁵⁵ There, one can observe that the provisions stated in these contracts *became* increasingly favourable to women, and especially to widows, during the eighteenth century, especially after 1760. It is worth noting that, in the majority of cases, the surviving spouse was in fact the wife.⁵⁶ Therefore, the increasing protection afforded to the surviving partner did intentionally protect widows. We can distinguish two key aspects regarding changes in these contracts. First, the division of the community property became more egalitarian, and second, the progressive introduction of new provisions granted women more security and greater insurance in the second half of the eighteenth century. The division of community property, which traditionally entitled a widow to a third of the community property, was modified by the soon to be wed couples, granting half to each spouse. In my sample, this new provision was progressively applied in the 1720s and gradually came to be used by the majority of betrothed couples; in the 1760s it was at 53.13 percent and it continued to grow until finally it came to dominate the marriage contracts of the 1780s at 81.4 percent. In October 1705, Henry Bernard and Jeanne Riche were about to walk to the altar. The couple agreed beforehand on legal provisions that would regulate their marriage, including following the customary rule of this province.⁵⁷ If Bernard died first, his widow would receive a third of the community property, while if Riche died first, her husband would get two-thirds of the community property. Almost eighty years later, Nicolas Grimont le Jeune married Anne Marie Matin in June 1784. The young couple chose to ignore the custom and instead shared the community property, with half going to the surviving spouse, regardless of sex.⁵⁸ Grimont and Matin's choice was a decision made by many newly-wed couples towards the end of the eighteenth century (see Figure 7.1) and this choice progressively replaced the older, traditional customary provision.

Second, other new legal provisions were progressively introduced. Marriage contracts were written according to the economic and familial situation of each couple but the emergence of new practices, regarding the protection of the surviving

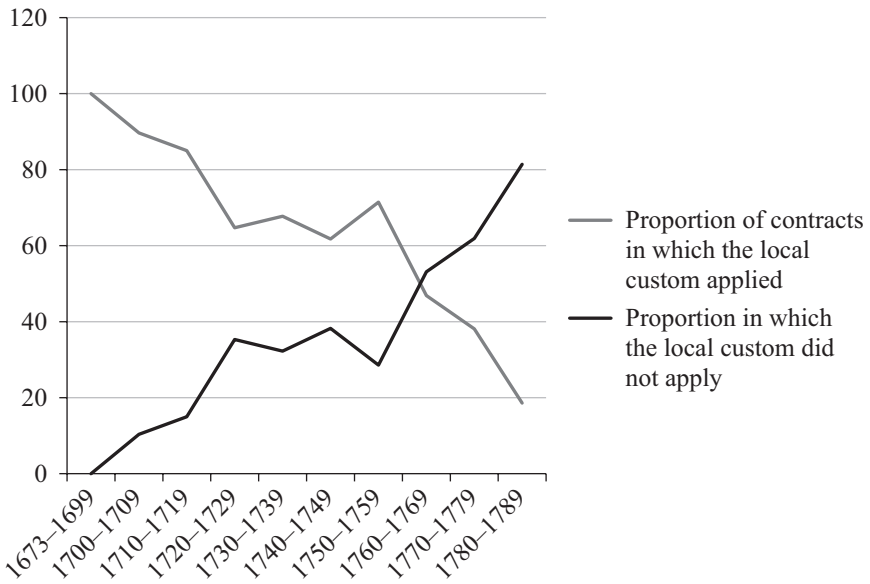


FIGURE 7.1 Local custom versus legal innovation in the division of community property in eighteenth-century Delle and Florimont

spouse, appears to have gradually increased in the eighteenth century to the benefit of the surviving partner. For instance, in their marriage contract in 1726, Louis Porchelet, a carpenter in the village of Courtelvant, and his bride Elisabeth Babey each promised to donate their lineage property to the surviving spouse if they did not have children.⁵⁹ In another contract, Jean Patingre assured his bride the usufruct of his house and three *journeaux* of land if he died before she did. He specified that this donation *inter vivos* took place because he had 'a great friendship with his future wife'.⁶⁰ Louis Rosé and Marguerite Bourquin, another couple, agreed that the surviving spouse would take 150 livres of the deceased spouse's patrimony.⁶¹ Jean Georges Bourquin and Marguerite Mougín also consented to allow the withdrawal of 300 livres of the deceased spouse's assets. In addition, the surviving partner would also keep all the hay found in the barn, and the manure available at the time.⁶² In January 1778, Jean Pierre Cuisinier married Catherine Rossé. Their marriage contract did not contain any specific endowment, but it did specify that in the case that they did not have children, the survivor, regardless of sex, would be entitled to the usufruct and lifetime holding of the deceased's property and assets and could also take 300 *livres* of the late spouse's lineage property.⁶³

As these few examples show, the provision of the survivor's benefits embraced a wide range of possibilities, usually decided upon and negotiated by the contracting parties themselves.⁶⁴ Among the types of insurance available for the surviving spouse, we find the following: the dower, a discretionary provision which could be unilateral,

usually in favour of the widow; mutual donation, which was egalitarian regardless of sex, provisions in case there were children and in case there were none; usufruct, unilateral or mutual; and a possible combination of several of these features, along with other gifts that did not respond to clear legal norms but rather to specific familial situations. A mutual donation could take on at least two forms. The first was the mutual donation in full of all the deceased spouse's property and the couple's acquired property, usually in cases where there were no surviving children. The second was the mutual donation of the usufruct and lifetime holding of the same assets as previously. In this event, couples also specified whether this usufruct clause would occur in the case of surviving children or not. In any case, this mutual donation ceased at the death of the remaining spouse and the patrimony subjected to the usufruct was then reallocated to the legal heirs. This provision became gradually more and more popular in the eighteenth century. Jean Pierre Monnier and Jeanne Maigrat stipulated in their marriage contract, for instance, that they agreed to give to the surviving partner the totality of the deceased's assets whether or not there would be children 'in such a way that the surviving spouse would enjoy (the assets) and would be the absolute master'.⁶⁵

Widows, therefore, progressively had access to more resources through a change in the inheritance pattern and the creation or adjustment of new legal provisions. It is worth noting that these new dispositions were not imposed from above but came from below and the families themselves in fact did mould legal norms. But why did this change occur? What triggered these major changes in the 1760s?

III. Widows' agency and the empowerment process

How can we explain the fact that widows gradually received more legal protection? What happened in the 1760s that triggered more legal protection for widows? Did women have agency concerning their social and marital status? It is first essential to underline that the authorities did not implement these legal changes, and that peasants for the most part implemented them on their own, thereby creating a new legal reality that fitted better their daily experiences. The process of drawing up marriage contracts gave them enough legal latitude to do so. Indeed, in the early modern period, notaries, who were in charge of writing a wide range of contracts – such as donations, loans, wills and marital agreements – adapted themselves to the wishes of their clients.⁶⁶ There was not yet a standardization of contracts.

Marie-Lyse Storti, who has studied this particular custom and found the same legal improvement for widows in another *seigneurie*, argues that this shift was mainly urban and was principally influenced by the foreign merchants and soldiers living in the province who, she argues, imported their local legal norms through intermarriages.⁶⁷ The people in the area, in turn, she argues, adopted these legal clauses for themselves, recognizing its advantage. Despite the fact that this argument could be interesting, Storti does not explain why the egalitarian share would be of greater benefit to the couples.⁶⁸ What were their reasons for challenging a traditional legal norm in the first place? Foreign influence alone does not appear to be a satisfactory

explanation, especially not in our rural sample where foreign troops and outsiders were to be found only in limited numbers.

Two main reasons for the legal improvement of the condition of widows could lie, paradoxically, in the difficult economic situation emerging in the eighteenth century. First, the equal share of the community property, and the adoption of new legal measures protecting widows, could be a direct consequence of the economic change. Indebtedness, indeed, grew substantially in the eighteenth century, especially in the second half.⁶⁹ In this particular region, peasants increasingly borrowed more money and had difficulty in meeting their repayment deadlines. Many of them, then, associated their wives with the loan, in order to bring greater guarantees to the deeds and to reassure creditors; as a consequence, wives then became accountable for half of the debt. As a husband and a wife borrowed money together, the loan was secured through their borrowing capacity as a couple, that is, through the property held in common, and also through the lineage property of each (including women's dowries).⁷⁰ Leaving the widow half of the community property could potentially discharge the heirs of a greater debt – at least for a smaller proportion at once – and above all made the wife fully responsible and accountable for her actions, transforming her into a joint economic partner, while reassuring potential creditors and business partners.

The strategies adopted by peasants to secure the position and status of widows did not originate from widows alone, but was most probably the result of a consensus reached in the community, derived from other complex social and economic strategies employed by peasants in order to cope with external economic effects, such as growing indebtedness. The association of women to the economic viability of the household and farm did crack the traditional paradigm of patriarchy allowing for the survival of the family and of the *lignée*. Everyone in the community contributed to fighting the effects of indebtedness, and to the search and creation of capital, especially in a world where access to cash became tremendously important. Women, regardless of their marital status, became associated with this process, more by necessity than by will. Wives were increasingly associated with their husbands in the search for capital in the credit market, and they became key economic partners. Widows were similarly solicited to extend credit just as single women did.⁷¹ Everyone in the community participated in the effort to ensure its survival and to cope with indebtedness. Such consensus is not surprising, as norms of cooperation and reciprocity were high in traditional communities.⁷²

Second, another complementary explanation could possibly lie in the prevention of widows from selling and mortgaging their own properties in order to cope with new difficult conditions – especially indebtedness. By preserving women's patrimony and preventing its alienation, couples protected the interests of their heirs.

In both explanations, the main driving force for change rested upon growing indebtedness and difficult economic conditions. But in both cases, the protection of the heirs' prospective patrimony appeared paramount and benefitted women collaterally. The portion due to the heirs had for effect to reinforce the authority of the mother. Moreover, an equal division of the community property changed the dynamic of the household and it could be argued that it also modified the position,

influence and involvement in the household management of women during marriage and not just when they became widows.⁷³

Enhancing the access to resources for widows improved their living conditions and certainly contributed to their empowerment both socially and economically. Measuring and evaluating empowerment proves to be extremely difficult. But we can observe the effects of these changes for widows in other documents. For instance, it appears that widows did serve progressively more often as guarantors to back loans in the credit market, indicating the social credit they benefited from.⁷⁴ We also see that towards the end of the eighteenth century widows were more numerous in negotiating the marriage contracts of their children. About 24 percent of the brides had their marriages arranged solely by their widowed mother. Alyson Poska has found similar figures in early modern Galicia.⁷⁵ Widows who negotiated the marriages of their children played a key role in the negotiation process and their authority was asserted more or less with force, depending on how successful they were. Widows similarly appeared less often before judges in the last decades of the eighteenth century, perhaps indicating that their status and wider access to resources preserved them from conflict.⁷⁶

We might ask whether the evolutions of legal provisions favourable to widows could be observed in other regions in early modern France. Similar evolutions of social and legal norms are to be found but it may prove difficult to make comparisons in the end. The area under investigation here, the southern part of Alsace, responded to local legal criteria, which often developed subject to a specific economic and social context. The inhabitants of this region choose freely their modes of property transmission between spouses and this choice was the direct result of their living conditions. In a neighbouring county, Belfort, Marie-Lyse Storti found notable differences between the countryside and the city. In Belfort, the inhabitants also progressively opted for an egalitarian mode of transmission between spouses but in its countryside, eight out of ten peasant couples preferred to stick to custom and chose an unequal mode of transmission. Storti assumed they did so because of the conservative mentalities of the peasants, while urban dwellers were more influenced by the foreign and the modern.⁷⁷ We have seen clearly that this explanation is not at all satisfactory as peasants a few kilometres away opted for an equal share. Yet, the reason for this shift may have been embodied in the local economy, but ultimately its implementation there and not a few kilometres away remains to be resolved. In any case, further investigation should confirm that widows, as well as women in general, did benefit from the new partnership formed with men, especially the joint credit access, and that in order to combat economic factors women, and especially widows, became empowered – despite themselves.

Conclusion

The status of widows, often portrayed as unenviable, did evolve in the early modern period. As the examination of marriage contracts has shown, widows benefitted from greater legal power and access to resources towards the end of the eighteenth

century. The need for peasants to adopt new strategies in order to cope with growing indebtedness triggered this change. The combined effects of the development of the credit market in rural areas and the progressive indebtedness of peasants, the penetration of the market economy and the progressive monetization of exchange, the development of legal tools and the standardization of contracts appeared as key to understand the equalitarian division of community property.

The modifications brought to the provisions of marriage contracts insured the surviving spouse, in most cases women, some revenue and assets that would guarantee the continuity of not only the household and its successful management but also of more or less the same living standard for her and her children. The new egalitarian provisions guaranteed women a better life insurance, removed the obligation to remarry and kept intact the heirs' patrimony.

As a result, widows were better protected and became more empowered both economically and socially. *De facto*, these legal changes empowered a widow not only as the new head of her household, but also as the manager of the farm, which recognized her – valuable – worker status. All these new clauses regulating life after marriage, and signed at the beginning of the union, must have played a role in the couple's dynamic and their management choices, changing the dynamic of household interaction and allowing for greater female latitude and a reinforcement of the partnership, eroding therefore the patriarchal model. The widow became the patriarch in charge of protecting her children's inheritance. If she was in old age, the new dispositions maintained her dignity and insured her a pension. A non-equal share of the community property meant that a woman too often assumed the management of the assets in the heirs' names – the children – a task that not only was habitually overseen by male relatives but which also stopped when children reached majority. By introducing equality between spouses upon the division of the community property, peasants gradually conferred on women more power, latitude of action and prerogatives regarding the management of the couple's estate and reassigned to her the role of a capable individual rather than that of a mother. By so doing, peasants also flaunted their will to retain parental authority for longer, turning the surviving female spouse into the head of the household. In this respect, widows were rather empowered as mothers, not so much as women.

Notes

- 1 On widowhood in early modern Europe see Sandra Cavallo, and Lyndan Warner, *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Longman, 1999). For early modern France, see among others Janine M. Lanza, *From Wives to Widows in Early Modern Paris: Gender, Economy, and Law* (London: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2007). Nicole Pellegrin, and Collette H. Winn, *Veufs, Veuves et Veuvage dans la France d'Ancien Régime : Actes du Colloque de Poitiers, 11–12 juin 1998*. Colloques, congrès et conférences sur la renaissance; no. 32. (Paris: Champion, 2003).
- 2 James R. Farr. *Authority and Sexuality in Early Modern Burgundy (1550–1730)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 25.
- 3 John Henderson, and Richard Wall, *Poor Women and Children in the European Past* (London: Routledge, 1994).

- 4 Janine M. Lanza, 'After Father's Death: Authority and Conflict in the Eighteenth-Century French Household', *The History of the Family*, 13, no. 1 (2008), 71–84 (p. 73).
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- 6 See among others Julie Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy: Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); Beatrice Moring, 'Widowhood Options and Strategies in Preindustrial Northern Europe: Socioeconomic Differences in Household Position of the Widowed in 18th and 19th Century Finland', *History of the Family*, 7/1 (2002), 79–99.
- 7 See for instance, Ariadne Schmidt, 'Survival Strategies of Widows and Their Families in Early Modern Holland, C. 1580–1750', *History of the Family*, 12/4 (2007), 268–281. Julie Hardwick, 'Widowhood and Patriarchy in Seventeenth Century France', *Journal of Social History*, 26/1 (1992), 133–148.
- 8 On indebtedness in the eighteenth century, see Jean-Yves Grenier, *L'Economie d'Ancien Régime : Un Monde de L'échange et de L'incertitude* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996); Philip T. Hoffman, Gilles Postel-Vinay, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, *Priceless Markets: The Political Economy of Credit in Paris, 1660–1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
- 9 Archives Départementales du Territoire de Belfort (ADTB hereafter), 2E4/3, 25, 39, 56, 66, 74, 84, 101, 106, 107, 108, 111, 119, 122, 124, 125, 126, 141, 143, 144, 189, 190, 191, 192, 204, 210, 276, 287, 342, 344, 345, 346, 347, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 359, 362, 391, 392, 393, 432, 457.
- 10 For an overview see among others, Scarlett Beauvalet-Boutouyrie, *Les Femmes à L'Epoque Moderne* (Paris: Belin, 2003).
- 11 Legal diversity was not a characteristic to be found only in the French kingdom. See among others, Bridget Hill, *Women Alone: Spinsters in England, 1660–1850* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001); Allyson M. Poska, *Women and Authority in Early Modern Spain: The Peasants of Galicia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Sheilagh Ogilvie, *A Bitter Living: Women, Markets, and Social Capital in Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- 12 Janine M. Lanza, *From Wives to Widows in Early Modern Paris: Gender, Economy, and Law* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 23. Customary laws were ancestral, regional, legal sets of rules, oral by tradition and were written down at the end of the Middle Ages in various French regions in an effort to institutionalize law and make sure legal rules were respected by all.
- 13 Lanza, *From Wives to Widows*, p. 24.
- 14 For an overview of the French legal system see Elise M. Dermineur, 'The Civil Judicial System in Early Modern France', *Frühneuzeit-Info*, 22 (2011), 44–53.
- 15 A longer discussion can be found here: Scarlett Beauvalet-Boutouyrie, *Les Femmes à L'Epoque Moderne* (Paris: Belin, 2003).
- 16 See especially Elise M. Dermineur, 'Single Women and the Rural Credit Market in Eighteenth-Century France', *Journal of Social History*, 48/1 (2014), 175–199.
- 17 Labour service was a common feature for early modern young women. Poska, *Women and Authority*, p. 60.
- 18 Rural domestics received usually room, board and clothing in addition to a small salary every year.
- 19 Laurence Fontaine, *L'Economie Morale: Pauvreté, Crédit Et Confiance Dans l'Europe Préindustrielle* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2008), p. 138.
- 20 Farr, *Authority and Sexuality*, p. 25.
- 21 Pierre Bourdieu, 'Les Stratégies Matrimoniales Dans le Système de Reproduction', *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 27/4 (1972), 1105–1127 (p. 1107).
- 22 Scarlett Beauvalet-Boutouyrie, *Etre Veuve Sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Belin, 2001), p. 189.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 183.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 187.
- 25 Many separation of property proceedings highlighted the husband's mismanagement of property. On this, see in particular Julie Hardwick, 'Seeking Separations: Gender, Marriages, and Household Economies in Early Modern France', *French Historical Studies*, 21/1 (1998), 157–180.

- 26 ADTB 8B, 158.
- 27 Julie Hardwick has shown that 95 percent of the individuals who requested a separation of property were females: 'Seeking Separations'.
- 28 A woman could also ask for a separation *de corps* if she was abused by her husband and if her life was threatened by their coexistence under the same roof.
- 29 Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and Their French Revolution*. Translated by Katherine Streip (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
- 30 See especially, James R. Farr, *The Work of France: Labor and Culture in Early Modern Times, 1350–1800* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008); Daryl M. Haffer, *Women at Work in Preindustrial France* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2007).
- 31 This aspect can be found in other parts of Europe as well. For the Dutch Republic, see for instance, Schmidt, 'Survival Strategies of Widows and Their Families in Early Modern Holland, C. 1580–1750', 268–281.
- 32 Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy*; Julie Hardwick, *Family Business: Litigation and the Political Economies of Daily Life in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- 33 This applies almost everywhere in early modern France. Normandy, however, was the exception as girls were excluded from the succession. In some regions, the repartition of the parental inheritance between girls and boys could vary greatly, especially to the advantage of the elder boy. On this topic see Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, 'Structures Familiales et Coutumes D'héritage En France Au XVIe Siècle : Système de La Coutume', *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 27/4 (1972), 825–846.
- 34 Edouard Bouvalot, *Coutumes de la Haute-Alsace dites de Ferrette* (Colmar: Barth et Held-Baltzinger, 1870).
- 35 Beauvalet-Boutouyrie, *Etre Veuve*, p. 196.
- 36 See Bernard Vogler, Georges Livet, and Colloque Société savante d'Alsace et des régions de l'Est. *Les Actes Notariés* (Strasbourg: ISTR A, 1979).
- 37 Beauvalet-Boutouyrie, *Etre Veuve*, p. 197.
- 38 The dower was a usufruct, a limited real right, of the spouse's assets and generally applied to the husband's property.
- 39 Beauvalet-Boutouyrie also calculates that in the second part of the eighteenth century, a widow from a *manouvrier* family received in average 602 *livres* after the death of her husband. Beauvalet-Boutouyrie, *Etre Veuve*, p. 266.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 267.
- 41 James Daybell argues the same thing in his chapter.
- 42 Scarlett Beauvalet-Boutouyrie is quite enthusiastic about the status of widows and talks about 'la capacité retrouvée', *Etre Veuve*, p. 195.
- 43 Julie Hardwick, 'Widowhood and Patriarchy in Seventeenth Century France', *Journal of Social History*, 26/1 (1992), 133–148 (p. 133).
- 44 Male widowers had recourse to this option as well in their old days. But it was likely their old age that was the main determinant factor instead of the lack of resources.
- 45 ADTB, 2^E4/126.
- 46 ADTB, 2^E4/342.
- 47 ADTB, 2^E4/432.
- 48 ADTB 2^E4/392.
- 49 Claude de Ferrière, *La Science Parfaite Des Notaires* (Paris: Charles Osmont, 1682), vol. 1, p. 251: 'Sans doute l'acte le plus important de tous ceux qui se font entre les hommes, puisqu'il sert de fondement à la vie civile, au repos des familles et au bien de l'Etat'.
- 50 David Sabeau, *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 200.
- 51 Sarah Hanley, 'Family and State in Early Modern France: The Marital Law Compact', in *Connecting Spheres. European Women in a Globalizing World, 1500 to the Present*, ed. by Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 61–71 (p. 65).
- 52 James Collins, 'The Economic Role of Women in Seventeenth-Century France', *French Historical Studies*, 16 (1989), 436–470 (p. 438).

- 53 Hanley, 'Family and State in Early Modern France', p. 62.
- 54 Bernard Derouet, 'Les Pratiques Familiales, Le Droit et La Construction Des Différences (15e-19e Siècles)', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 52/2 (1997), 369–391 (p. 373).
- 55 About this specific region see especially Bouvalot, *Coutumes de la Haute-Alsace dites de Ferrette* (Colmar: Barth et Held-Baltzinger, 1870); Marie-Lyse Storti, 'Coutume de Ferrette et/ou coutume du comté de Belfort', *Revue d'Alsace*, 132 (2006), 205–244. When it comes to the transmission of assets between spouses, the custom generally set the rights of each party. A whole chapter of the *Coutume de Ferrette* is dedicated to the '*règlements concernant les biens des époux décédés*' (rules concerning the property of deceased spouses): 'When one of the two spouses dies without legal heirs (children), his or her own property brought into the community property goes to the closest relatives. But all the goods belonging to both spouses, inherited goods (lineage property), goods that both spouses bought or acquired together, represent one unit. The husband, after the death of his wife, takes two thirds of this unit, and the remaining third goes to the closest relatives of his wife. The wife, after her husband's death, takes a third of this community property unit, and the two other thirds go the closest relatives of her deceased husband'. Cited in Bonvalot, *Coutumes de la Haute Alsace*, pp. 189–190.
- 56 For figures see, Brigitte Maillard, 'Les Veuves Dans La Société Rurale Au XVIIIe Siècle', *Annales de Bretagne et Des Pays de l'Ouest*, 106/1 (1999), 211–230.
- 57 ADTB, 2^E4/344.
- 58 ADTB, 2^E4/432.
- 59 ADTB, 2^E4/346, 17 July 1726.
- 60 ADTB, 2^E4/347, 24 April 1728.
- 61 ADTB, 2^E4/189, 3 February 1753.
- 62 ADTB, 2^E4/189, 14 June 1756.
- 63 ADTB 2^E4/276.
- 64 As many studies have by now shown, the surviving spouse was in most cases the woman. See for example, Brigitte Maillard, 'Les Veuves Dans La Société Rurale Au XVIIIe Siècle', *Annales de Bretagne et Des Pays de l'Ouest*, 1 (1999), 211. Nicole Pellegrin and Collette H. Winn, *Veufs, Veuves et Veuillage dans la France d'Ancien Régime: Actes du Colloque de Poitiers, 11–12 juin 1998*. Colloques, congrès et conférences sur la renaissance, 32 (Paris: Champion, 2003).
- 65 ADTB, 2^E4/125, 23 January 1741. '(. . .) Se donnent réciproquement tous leurs biens meubles et immeubles qu'ils aient des enfants ou non, de telle sorte que le survivant jouira et sera le maître absolu'.
- 66 See for instance, Abel Poitrineau, 'Institutions et Pratiques Successorales En Auvergne et En Limousin Sous l'Ancien Régime', *Études Rurales*, 110/1 (1988), 31–43.
- 67 Marie-Lyse Storti, 'Coutume de Ferrette et/ou coutume du comté de Belfort', pp. 214–216.
- 68 Marie-Lyse Storti, 'Coutume de Ferrette', pp. 214–216.
- 69 See among others Laurence Fontaine, *L'Economie Morale*; Jean-Yves Grenier, *L'Economie d'Ancien Régime: Un Monde de L'Echange et de L'Incertitude* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996). And for this particular area see especially Jean-Michel Boehler, *Une Société Rurale en Milieu Rhénan: la Paysannerie de la Plaine d'Alsace (1648–1789)* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1995); Elise M. Dermineur, 'Female Peasants, Patriarchy, and the Credit Market in Eighteenth-Century France', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 37 (2009), 61–84.
- 70 Elise Dermineur, 'Women in Rural Society: Peasants, Patriarchy and the Local Economy in Northeast France, 1650–1789' (Unpublished PhD diss., Purdue University, 2011) [<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/dissertations/AAI3477344>].
- 71 See especially Dermineur, 'Single Women and the Rural Credit Market', pp. 175–199.
- 72 See Elise Dermineur, 'Trust, Norms of Cooperation, and the Rural Credit Market in Eighteenth-Century France', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 45/4 (2015), 485–506.

- 73 I have found no evidence of any inter generational conflict following the allocation of greater legal protection for widows in my sample. But Janine Lanza has found conflicts between mothers and sons in Paris over this question, Janine M. Lanza, 'After Father's Death: Authority and Conflict in the Eighteenth-Century French Household', *The History of the Family*, 13 (2008), 71–84.
- 74 Dermineur, 'Women in Rural Society'.
- 75 Poska, *Women and Authority*, p. 119: 'In my examination of approximately 300 marriage and dowry contracts in the province of Ourense, only about one-third of the brides had two living parents at the signing of the marriage contracts'. 'More than 28% of brides had their marriages arranged and/or dowries arranged solely by their widowed mothers'.
- 76 Dermineur, 'Women in Rural Society'.
- 77 Storti, 'Coutume de Ferrette'.

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PART III

Women and gendered politics at court

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8

'FOR YE, YOUNG MEN, SHOW A WOMANISH SOUL, YON MAIDEN A MAN'S'

Perspectives on female monarchy in Elizabeth's first decade¹

Victoria Smith

During the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, active female rule was a feature of monarchies and governments throughout Europe: Scotland was governed first by Mary of Guise and then by her daughter, Queen Mary; Margaret of Parma had charge of the Netherlands, and, as Queen mother, Catherine de Medici was an influential figure in the government of France.² As a result, Elizabeth's diplomatic personnel were in a unique position to observe, engage with and comment upon the practice of female rule throughout the courts of Europe. Their perception of the practice of female rule was not only based on their opinion of Elizabeth's conduct, but also by comparison with, and observations on, the behaviour of these other queen regnants. This chapter will consider the nuanced perspective on, and reaction to, female monarchy taken by two Elizabethan ambassadors, Nicholas Throckmorton, resident ambassador at the French court (1559–1564), and Thomas Randolph, English agent at the Scottish court (1560–1566).

Elizabeth's accession followed closely on the heels of the publication of John Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*: a book that was aimed at the Catholic female monarchs Mary of Guise and Mary Tudor but attacked the concept of female rule in general.³ Knox argued that the accession of a female ruler threatened to subvert the patriarchal order of society: that the rule of a woman contravened the laws of nature, or as he put it, 'that it is a thing moste repugnant to nature, that women rule and governe over men'.⁴ As a result, Knox and some of his colleagues, were concerned about the destabilising effect a female monarch might have on the patriarchal nature of society: that a woman forced to transcend normative gender roles in order to take on the traditionally masculine role of monarch would encourage instances of gender inversion more broadly and consequently threaten to diminish male pre-eminence.⁵ It was this deep-seated fear about what female rule meant for men's role in society – the fear of emasculation – that underpinned attacks on the concept of female rule: Knox argued that men became effeminate under the rule of a woman, likewise David Lindsay feared that men became 'womanlye' in the face of 'manlye' women; and Christopher Goodman

lamented how his 'wayne & miserable' male readers had been made 'bondemen' by their acceptance of a female ruler.⁶ As a result, scholarly analyses of contemporary literature on the subject of female rule have resulted in a tendency to emphasise the fear Elizabethan men exhibited at the prospect of a queen regnant; even works written to defend female monarchy, or Elizabeth's rule in particular, have been found to be underpinned by anxiety at its nature.⁷ Moreover, Knox, and more obviously Goodman, provided a plat for resistance to female rule on the grounds that it was against God's law.⁸ This problematic stance was reflected in the providential, and thus exceptional, way in which Elizabeth's own right to rule was often explained: she was god's 'handmayden', an instrument through which God ruled.⁹ Elizabeth's exceptionality as a providential monarch was a way for men to accept the queen's monarchical authority without advocating female rule in general: Knox spoke of the care that must be taken in 'establishing on[e] judged godlie' not to 'mack Enteress and titill to many'.¹⁰ Indeed Anne McLaren has argued that as a result Elizabeth was forced to define herself in providential terms.¹¹ Moreover, she went so far as to suggest that these concerned Elizabethans were obsessed with the 'quest for a king' to replace their female monarch.¹²

Some contemporaries found an antidote to the problems posed by a female ruler in their conception of the nature of Elizabethan government. John Aylmer defended Elizabeth's monarchical authority on the grounds that England was a 'mixed monarchy' and therefore the queen's ability to act with political autonomy was constrained by her counsellors' advice.¹³ Aylmer was not alone in emphasising the important role counsellors played in a female monarchy: Thomas Smith argued that it was important that queens 'never do lack the counsel of such grave and discreet men as be able to supply all other defaults', and Heinrich Bullinger went so far as to declare that a queen 'holds the reins of government by means of her counsellors'.¹⁴ Such sentiments have encouraged many scholars to view this approach to female monarchy by Elizabeth's servants and counsellors as commonplace, conditioning how men viewed their queen's authority and consequently restricting Elizabeth's political action. For the most part, Elizabeth continues to be represented as a monarch 'bounced' into action by the threatening reports of her counsellors and, at the same time, a queen at a remove from the process of policy negotiation.¹⁵ Underpinning this perception of Elizabeth's queenship is the notion that her counsellors responded to the rule of a female monarch in a homogenous manner: that they collectively advocated Aylmer's 'mixed' form of government and saw themselves as key policy-makers thereby limiting the Queen's political influence.

An analysis of Throckmorton's and Randolph's individual perceptions of female monarchy in general, and the female rulers with which they engaged, will question how widely held, and uniform, these opinions were and emphasise the pragmatic distinction Elizabethan statesmen were forced to make between political theory and the political reality of a female ruler. For instance, Throckmorton's reaction to Elizabeth's rule suggests that no two Elizabethan statesmen responded identically to the practicalities of female rule: Elizabeth's counsellors had their own nuanced views of the extent of the Queen's role in government and consequently

the way in which they should engage with her. These differences at times surfaced as clear points of contention: in November 1560, Throckmorton sent a messenger to Elizabeth with a report containing 'mater of such weight' that her principal secretary, William Cecil, rebuked the messenger for telling the Queen information he deemed 'unmete . . . for a womans knowledge'.¹⁶ At the heart of this disagreement was a fundamental difference between Cecil's and Throckmorton's perception of the extent to which Elizabeth should be involved in the receipt of foreign intelligence and the process of foreign policy formation.

From the very start of Elizabeth's reign Throckmorton saw the Queen as having a central and active role in government and, in particular, in the direction of foreign policy: in the summer of 1560, he informed her that the endurance of an Anglo-Scottish alliance 'dothe cheffely depend uppon your majesties order & conducte'.¹⁷ Throckmorton's belief in Elizabeth's political centrality is further emphasised by phrases from his letters that exemplify the importance he placed on Elizabeth personally receiving his foreign intelligence and advice. In one letter he wrote 'I thowgght yt mete I advertyse these partycularities specially to your selfe'; and in 1559 when he requested to return to England, he did so 'to speake wythe youe'.¹⁸ Throckmorton prioritised his direct channel of counsel to the Queen, sending the majority of his intelligence and advice straight to her in letter or verbal form, and jealously guarded its privacy: in one letter he asked the Queen to preserve the privacy of his 'lyberall speeche'; some letters he wrote himself in order to add a modicum of privacy to the letters contents; and on another occasion he sent his secretary Robert Jones with a verbal message, designed to be delivered to the Queen alone, complaining that intelligence he had sent her privately was publicly known.¹⁹ Throckmorton usually referred Cecil to Elizabeth's letters for information, which frequently, but not always, passed through his hands before reaching the Queen.²⁰

Throckmorton's belief that Elizabeth's own political role was central to the process of formulating and implementing foreign policies is further evidenced by his desire to tutor the Queen in matters of foreign policy. Initially Throckmorton saw Elizabeth as 'young' and inexperienced: she needed political guidance in affairs of state.²¹ In 1561, when discussing the continuance of Elizabeth's friendship with Spain, Throckmorton betrayed his perception of the Queen's political inexperience. He complained that '*Dulcis inexpertis cultura potentis amici, Expertus metuit*': Elizabeth was 'inexpertis' attempting to befriend the powerful Philip II, Cecil – to whom he was writing – and Throckmorton were 'expertus' in foreseeing the political dangers of such a friendship.²² During the first years of the reign, in an attempt to offset this inexperience, Throckmorton encapsulated his advice to the Queen within an explanatory framework. In February 1560, Throckmorton wrote to persuade the Queen to sanction military intervention in Scotland. He argued that expelling the French forces and their regent, Mary of Guise, from Scotland would enable Elizabeth to establish an Anglo-Scottish alliance and thereby secure England's position within the archipelago. Throckmorton explained that if the French were driven from Scotland 'French practises with Irland [would] dye withall', which would

enable Elizabeth 'to reduce the people and countrey to more service and profit then your majestie now hath them or your predecessors ever had'. Equally, Throckmorton pointed out that by winning Scotland as an ally, Elizabeth would not have to fight a war on two fronts next time she had to deal with France for Scotland would 'sit still'.²³ Following the conclusion of the Treaty of Edinburgh in July 1560, Throckmorton advised Elizabeth

to reamember that theyre ys no tyme so fytt & apte for a prynce to aske subsydy off hir people as when the pryncis entrepryse & the chargis theroff ys freshe yn theyre memories . . . For the multytude off subgettes be always better inclynyd to aide the prynce yn prosperity then yn adversytie.²⁴

This was, in effect, a political lesson; one, in the event, that Elizabeth chose to ignore.

Throckmorton's approach to advising the 'young' queen did not constitute an attempt to mitigate the effect of a female ruler.²⁵ His misgivings about Elizabeth's youth and contingent inexperience were genuine and should not be equated with concern about the political ability of a female monarch: Throckmorton employed the same explanatory model of counsel when, in early 1562, the young Robert Dudley began to involve himself in Anglo-French policy. Throckmorton advised Dudley that any preparations to intervene in the war between the Huguenots and the French government ought

to be done with as smal shewe as may be. [For] Some tyme occasions be offered that a greater dede must be ment then is shewed: Of this nature is the affairs in this tyme. Another tyme a greater shewe then meaning is necessary, after which maner the King of S[pain] and other papistical princes do procede here now.²⁶

Throckmorton's explanatory advice was not designed to restrain the Queen's political action *à la* Aylmer; it was meant to facilitate Elizabeth's learning the political management of foreign affairs, in particular the conduct of war, and it was in this vein that, following the successful completion of English intervention in Scotland, Throckmorton declared that Elizabeth ought 'now [to be] so well experimentyd in the politicke managing of your weightye affaires'.²⁷ Throckmorton's emphasis on a female monarch's ability to learn through experience the art of statecraft serves as a precursor to the works of Henry Howard, who argued that through 'education and exercise' queens could learn the art of war, and Thomas Craig, who believed that through experience a woman could learn the necessary skills to govern as an equal to her male counterparts.²⁸

The role of a female ruler in the conduct of war has been a contentious subject for contemporaries and historians alike: Knox feared the 'Amazones'; Aylmer half-heartedly drew attention to women who had successfully engaged in warfare and Christopher Haigh and, more recently, Anna Whitelock have emphasised that

female monarchs were too removed from the frontlines to perform as effective military leaders.²⁹ When Throckmorton wrote to advise the Queen to make war on the French in Scotland in 1560, he drew on the notion that as a monarch Elizabeth, like her male predecessors, had ‘the swerd [of state] in your hande’ and with it the authority to protect herself and her people militarily.³⁰ For Throckmorton this authority did not manifest itself in Elizabeth’s physical presence at the head of her troops but in her political oversight: thus he advised her on managing diplomatic engagements, raising taxes and rewarding those who served her.³¹

Throckmorton’s dispatches to Elizabeth also shed light on how diplomatic practice, in terms of letter-writing, adapted to the letters’ recipient being a queen and not a king. The different rhetorical strategies applied can be garnered from Throckmorton’s advice to Cecil on how to frame letters to effeminate individuals, including Catherine de Medici, her son the child-king of France, and the ‘womanshe’ King of Navarre. He argued that those of ‘suche natures . . . do pleasure & be drawn with swete words’ *ergo* Cecil should use his ‘judgement & enchantmentes’ to craft letters that would recommend ‘the cause gently & plausibly . . . with intysements’.³² The notion of advising ‘gently’ was one Throckmorton tried to employ in his own letters to Elizabeth, though at times his desire to be frank with her overrode this tactic. Although Throckmorton’s reports of the French threat to England in 1559–1560 have often been portrayed as a key part of Cecil’s strategy to bounce Elizabeth into action in Scotland, this assertion undermines the careful way in which Throckmorton couched his advice to the Queen.³³ In February 1560, Throckmorton deliberately toned down the language he used to persuade the Queen to attack the French in Scotland. Originally Throckmorton had written of the ‘evill meaning’ of the French ‘to deprive your Majestie and to make your realme subject unto them’; he later edited the letter to remove the implicit sense that the French intended to depose Elizabeth, replacing it with ‘ther evill meaning to ‘wardes’ your Majestie’.³⁴ Two months later, when Philip II voiced his disapproval of Elizabeth’s intention to intervene in Scotland, Throckmorton warned the Queen that ‘he doth as he doth rather to make yow affrayde then for other respect’ and although ‘I wold not take upon me to perswade your highnes to over muche securitie so wold I not wyshe the same to be afraid of these great woordes’.³⁵ Throckmorton evidently believed that as a woman Elizabeth was predisposed to fear and that her advisers should seek to provide reassuring advice to counter that fear rather than harness it to provoke her to act. The importance Throckmorton placed on persuading the Queen and directing his intelligence to her underscores the key role Elizabeth was perceived to play in directing English foreign policy. Moreover, this is further emphasised by the way in which some of Elizabeth’s counsellors allegedly felt the need to ‘bounce’ her into pursuing particular policies: after all, Cecil worked from the principle that ‘our partes is to counsell, and after to obey the commandor’.³⁶

Throckmorton’s pragmatic perception of Elizabeth’s active role in government was not misguided. His advice was, at least in part, a response to political reality: the Queen’s involvement in, and oversight of, high-level foreign policies and her active engagement with her ambassadors. Far from being at a remove from the

process of policy formation, as Stephen Alford has argued in his analysis of English intervention in Scotland in 1559–1560, Elizabeth was central to it.³⁷ This was made immediately apparent to Throckmorton who, within weeks of his appointment as ambassador to France, was imploring Elizabeth not to write any more letters in favour of her incarcerated subjects there as they ‘doth rather hinder then further the Suters’.³⁸ In July 1563, at the height of the Newhaven debacle, Throckmorton was the recipient of a personal letter from the Queen, written in her ‘owne racked hand’, in which she exhorted him to begin negotiations for the surrender of Newhaven and, in doing so, to remember ‘how muche it toucheth our honor, our mens lives and my particular comfort’.³⁹ The following month, Elizabeth personally amended Randolph’s instructions to offer the examination of Queen Mary’s title to the English throne in exchange for Mary choosing a husband in consonance with English interests.⁴⁰ And, in 1567, during the crisis in Anglo-Scottish relations provoked by the rapid downfall of Queen Mary, Elizabeth took an active role in directing English policy towards Scotland: in May she privately gathered intelligence and advice from her counsellors who were most familiar with Anglo-Scottish affairs; Elizabeth kept close tabs on ‘every days Jorney’ in Throckmorton’s progress towards Edinburgh, and, in Cecil’s absence, she personally directed instructions to Throckmorton at all times of the day and night.⁴¹ Throckmorton responded with frequent letters detailing ‘what hath passed, and how far forthe I have proceeded’ in a blatant attempt to assuage Elizabeth’s ‘expectacyon . . . to heare from hence’.⁴² Elizabeth was able to control the knowledge of this foreign intelligence at will: on one occasion in 1560 when Cecil sent Throckmorton’s unopened letters to Elizabeth, he was perturbed to find that she returned fewer pages to him than he had sent in; in November 1559, it was observed that Elizabeth made very few people privy to her counsels on Scotland, and in 1567 Leicester observed that Elizabeth would make ‘no other creature . . . prevye’ to Throckmorton’s latest dispatch from Scotland.⁴³ Thus, Throckmorton’s belief in Elizabeth’s pre-eminent role in government was supported by Elizabeth’s own authoritative behaviour.

Throckmorton’s approach to the central role Elizabeth, as a monarch, played in government was more pragmatic than some of his colleagues, but nevertheless his attitude was born of political necessity. This is evident in his belief that a queen regnant’s ability to rule effectively hinged upon her willingness to eschew her feminine inclinations and adopt the masculine character traits typically associated with a successful monarch. As England waged war against the French government in Scotland in 1560, Throckmorton praised the Scottish regent, Mary of Guise, for having ‘the hart of a man of warre’.⁴⁴ He was not alone, John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, admired Guise as ‘a woman with a man’s courage’.⁴⁵ The way in which these men admired Guise’s masculine leadership contrasted sharply with their frustration at what they perceived to be Elizabeth’s own feminine conduct. Throckmorton complained that Elizabeth’s ‘womanishe tollerations . . . and unwarlyke proceedinges’ – her willingness to treat for peace and her hesitation to commit to action – had resulted in a ‘maner of wares unseene’: a woman’s war. Conversely, Guise displayed ‘greate courage and queenly mynde . . . [for] she mislykith all compositions but such

as shall render the realme of Scotland and people of the same Subjectes absolutely to the queene her doughter'. He underscored his point by adding 'the like magnaminie I wulde wishe the Q[ueen's] majestie'; in other words, Throckmorton wished Elizabeth would eschew her feminine proclivity for toleration and vacillation and take on the masculine traits of courage and resolution.⁴⁶ Thus, although Throckmorton believed Elizabeth was capable of learning how to manage warfare politically, her success in doing so, he thought, depended upon her ability to resist her feminine inclinations. Throckmorton's approach was reflected in Elizabeth's self-representation. It is well known that the Queen sought to embody masculine character traits in her own propaganda in order to appear more acceptable to her male subjects: in a speech to parliament in 1566, Elizabeth argued that she possessed the 'courage' of a king.⁴⁷ The Queen went further in her speech at Tilbury in 1588, masculinising her vital organs – 'the heart and stomach of a king' – in order to project a show of masculine physical strength.⁴⁸

Randolph too supported this model of female monarchy: he argued that a queen regnant had an active choice whether to 'tayke the brydle of womenhoode upon her' or not.⁴⁹ The implication was that femininity or 'womenhoode' restrained, or bridled, a female monarch's ability to rule effectively. This sentiment is markedly different from other contemporary writers on female monarchy, who used the concept of a bridle in their efforts to impose restraints, via law or counsel, on the arbitrary will of a female ruler; in the words of Christopher Goodman they feared most of all the 'unbrydled woman'.⁵⁰

Randolph went further still than Throckmorton and some of his contemporaries, who only supported the principle of gender inversion in the person of a queen regnant. In 1561, on the eve of Queen Mary's return to Scotland, Randolph wrote a remarkable letter that, in the context of female rule, considered the position of women in society more broadly:

what wonder is yt unto your L[ordship] thoughe tholde sayde verse be trewe *vos nos geritis muliebres, illa virgo viri*.⁵¹ seinge the *Copernicus* revolution is founde more probable then those that before have wrytten of the motions of the skyye. I thynke not the contrarie my self but when somever I marrie, my wyf wilbe my maister.⁵²

He began by drawing on a passage from Cicero's *De officiis* – 'For ye, young men, show a womanish soul, yon maiden a man's' – that was customarily used to insult effeminate men; but, for Randolph, this attribution of masculine qualities to a woman was a 'trewe' fact. By proposing that the masculinised Mary was more suitable to rule than the effeminate men, Randolph was advocating the notion of reciprocal gender inversion that many of his contemporaries feared: that men were emasculated under the rule of a masculinised female monarch.⁵³ Randolph was not only suggesting, like Throckmorton, that queen regnants should assume masculine qualities but also that the individual who best embodied masculine characteristics was most fit to rule regardless of their sex. This proposition resonates with that of

Randolph's contemporary, Richard Bertie, who, in evaluating female rule, argued that 'we must behold reason and not the sex'.⁵⁴

At first glance Randolph's argument might appear applicable only to Mary, a queen regnant, but its broader implications are made clear when considered in conjunction with Randolph's declaration that his wife would be his master. Randolph was advocating what opponents of female rule most feared: the explicit subversion of the patriarchal system, not only in the exceptional circumstances of a female monarch but also, by extension, in his own household.⁵⁵ Randolph's belief that 'my wyf wilbe my maister' may have had some substance in reality, for when he later married he openly admitted 'my wyef[']s . . . power is greate over me'.⁵⁶ Randolph's unique attitude stemmed from the way in which he interpreted the challenge a female monarch presented to a patriarchal society within a wider framework of conceptual upheaval in which long-standing contemporary beliefs (religious, scientific and socio-political) were being persistently disputed and overturned. Thus, Randolph posited the idea that female rule – in government and in the household – might not be such an extraordinary development by comparing it to another equally contested scientific advancement, Nicolaus Copernicus's theory of Heliocentrism: one threatened the pre-eminence of a patriarchal society, the other overturned the primacy of the earth's position in the solar system.⁵⁷ In effect Randolph suggested that if the sun could displace the earth as the centre of the universe then surely women could replace men at the head of government and society. Randolph's unique interpretation had far-reaching implications that he acknowledged 'other menn' would find disconcerting: his underlying argument disregarded common fears about the destruction of patriarchy to suggest that if the Ptolemaic theory of the universe had been disproven then the belief that society should be patriarchal could also be incorrect.⁵⁸

Randolph's uniquely enthusiastic support for the concept of female rule in theory was tempered by his individualised, and more normative, approach to female monarchy in reality. He believed, like Bertie, that a queen regnant's suitability for rule depended upon the aptitude, policies and beliefs of the monarch in question.⁵⁹ Hence, at the accession of the Protestant Elizabeth, Randolph took the opportunity to mock Knox, whose general attack on female monarchy had targeted the Catholic queens of Europe: 'The Genevians repent ther hast theire blue ther triumphe before ther victorie'.⁶⁰ But, it was as English agent at the Scottish court of Queen Mary that Randolph demonstrated how his approach to the rule of a particular queen regnant was entirely dependent upon his perception of her behaviour, the policies she espoused and the political circumstances of her reign. At her return to Scotland how Mary would rule was uncertain, but she was suspect for her Catholicism, her claims to be Elizabeth's heir and her close relationship with England's French enemies. As a result, Randolph's perception of Mary's queenship hinged on his analysis of Mary's behaviour, the relationships she established with her councillors and how she handled key issues in Scottish government and Anglo-Scottish affairs. He believed that if Mary was to be a successful queen then she must not only cast off the 'brydle of womenhoode' but she must also 'be content to imbrace religion, to be ruled by the

Councill of her own nobles and natyve counsellors of thys Realme' and marry with their consent.⁶¹ These clauses were necessary to protect Scottish interests and prevent the difficulties wrought by Mary's French marriage recurring; and the latter two were especially pertinent for a female monarch. Many defenders of female monarchy stressed the importance of the Queen's councillors in restraining her absolute power, but Randolph went further: he was not advocating a mixed polity, like Aylmer, that inferred a process of negotiation between the monarch and her advisers, but rather suggesting that Mary should have no role in negotiating policy and should be 'ruled by' her councillors. For Randolph, Mary did not just have a responsibility to hear her councillors advice, as all monarchs, male or female, were supposed to do, but to follow their counsel. This is particularly important for understanding Randolph's changing perception of Mary's queenship and the varying ways in which he used gendered rhetoric to describe it during the 1560s, but it was also unique to England's diplomatic relationship with Scotland. The 'nobles and natyve counsellors' Randolph sought to empower were men who favoured pro-English policies and shared his concern that Mary's policy decisions might endanger the establishment of Scottish Protestantism and threaten the newly established Anglo-Scottish alliance.

At first Randolph was pleasantly surprised by Mary's queenship: within a week he was able to report that she was taking counsel from her pro-English nobility, principally Mary's half-brother, James Stewart, Earl of Murray and William Maitland, Lord of Lethington. He would later reflect on 'that majestie that [I have] seen in her . . . [and] that modestie that I have wondered at in her'; this compliment combined favourable masculine and feminine traits, majesty and modesty.⁶² Randolph's reports were complimented by those of Throckmorton, who had sent glowing accounts of Mary's 'wisdom and queenly modesty' before she departed France. Throckmorton's praise was in part intended as a rebuke to Elizabeth, who was at the time considering a marriage to Robert Dudley. Writing to the English Privy Council, Throckmorton observed that unlike Elizabeth, who wilfully desired to marry Dudley, Mary

thinkethe her self not to wise, but is content to be ruled by good counsell, and wise men (which is a great vertue in a prince or princesse, and which arguith a greate judgement and wisdom in her).⁶³

Throckmorton underscored the point that the principal 'vertue' of a good monarch, their willingness to receive counsel, was applicable to both male and female rulers. This was to be one area in which Randolph would later judge Mary to have failed.

By early 1565 Elizabeth's refusal to make Mary her heir and the Scottish queen's new courtship with Henry, Lord Darnley signalled a change away from a pro-English policy and, consequently, Mary's pro-English councillors. Randolph blamed the failure of his diplomatic objectives on, what he perceived to be, the altered character of Mary's queenship. He argued that Mary was now 'so myche chaynged in her nateur that she berrethe only the shape of that woman she was before': she had,

in his opinion, taken upon herself the objectionable 'brydle of womenhoode'.⁶⁴ Consequently, Randolph began employing pejorative gendered rhetoric, tarnishing her as a queen who had succumbed to 'the naturall dysposition that is in the whole kinde', her feminine inclinations: 'she is a woman and in all thynges desyerethe to have her will' he lamented.⁶⁵ Randolph's concerns were reflected in the comments of his closest allies at Mary's court: the Earl of Argyll observing Mary's burgeoning relationship with Darnley complained to Randolph 'that the affections of women are uncertayne'.⁶⁶ By October 1565, with Mary married to Darnley and her leading pro-English nobles ranged in rebellion against her, Randolph opined 'that a wylfuller woman, and one more wedded unto her owne ^opinion^ with owte order, reason, or dyscretion I never dyd knowe or hearde of'. Her desire for vengeance on the English queen was such 'that she cared nether what became of her self or her Countrie, so that she myghte do anye thyng that myghte greeve them with whome she was and yet is offended'.⁶⁷ Randolph's depiction of Mary's queenship now echoed the stereotypical attacks on female monarchy made by contemporary writers: William Whittingham argued that a female ruler 'glorieth in her owne wisdom . . . loueth her owne counsel . . . [and] deliteth in her owne imagination and policie', and, Randolph's friend, George Buchanan contended that women were prone to 'vehement Affections . . . they love with excess, and hate without measure' and as a result 'they are not governed by advised Reason, but carried by violent Motion'.⁶⁸ Randolph described Mary thus because her actions did not comply with his diplomatic objectives and his own opinion on how she should behave. Mary had violated the three conditions that Randolph had deduced would make her a successful queen on her return to Scotland. She had married without the consent of her whole nobility and she now replaced the advice of those pro-English councillors Randolph had deemed most fit with that of her Catholic nobles and her foreign secretary, David Rizzio. Men, Randolph complained, who 'never were esteemed for wysedome or honestie'.⁶⁹ By early 1566, as Mary began to pursue pro-Catholic policies, Randolph compared her rule to the tyranny of Mary Tudor, warning Throckmorton that

yf you fynde other in this Q[ueen] and her howsbonde but that which you have experimented and felte in the laste of her name that rayned in Engl[and] nether is ther judgement in those here that knowe her beste nor wysedome in anye man to perceve whear unto she tendethe.⁷⁰

Leicester, in whom Randolph had been confiding, warned him of the dangers of airing his derogatory opinion of Mary. However, Randolph argued he was only reporting the bare minimum and admitted he was unwilling to report the entirety of his perception of Mary's behaviour, for fear of being deemed 'malicious foolyshe and unadvised' and 'the worce lyked for the wrytinge'.⁷¹ He was right to be wary. Following Darnley's murder in early 1567, Mary's depravity as a woman became a pivotal issue in depictions of the Queen. Gender presented an easy way to voice

disapproval of a queen's rule or behaviour, but Mary had made it easier still by acting in what could be construed as a sexualised fashion and, as a result, playing upon fears about the transgressive nature of female rule.⁷² Buchanan portrayed Mary's 'outrageous Lust' as violating not only her marriage but also her royal majesty, and thus precipitating her political failure.⁷³ In a similar vein, a Scottish courtier, William Kirkcaldy, Lord of Grange, openly accused Mary of orchestrating Darnley's murder: he argued that Mary had intended that 'Bothwell ravishe hyr to the ende that sche may the soner ende the mariage, quhilk she promesit before sche causit murder her husbände', and that she was 'so far past ^all^ shame' that she had said she would follow Bothwell 'to the warldes ende' in nothing but her petticoat.⁷⁴ Yet, understandably, such sentiments were ill-received by Elizabeth, who vented her fury at Kirkcaldy for making Mary 'worce then anye comen woman' and underscored her distaste for men that voiced such opinions by warning Randolph off his friendship with Kirkcaldy.⁷⁵ Over the six years of Mary's personal reign it is clear that Randolph's perception of the impact of Mary's gender on her ability to rule was heavily influenced by his own diplomatic objectives: while she pursued a pro-English policy she was a wise queen, when she deviated from this she became a stubborn woman driven by her own personal desire, be it affection for Darnley or vengeance on Elizabeth.

Randolph and Throckmorton, concerned with the practicalities of working with multiple female rulers, both adopted a more accommodating approach to female monarchy than contemporary political theory would permit. Their reactions suggest that Elizabethans did not react homogeneously to the prospect of female monarchy; rather, the contrast between Randolph's support for female rule in general and his critique of Mary's rule in particular underscores the fact that reactions to female rule were inherently varied. Not all Elizabethans were perpetually afraid of female rule or its potential to encourage gender inversion: rather, some men, like Randolph and Throckmorton, believed a queen regnant was more acceptable as a ruler if she embodied masculine characteristics that were traditionally associated with the ideal male monarch. Yet, when a queen regnant fell short of such ideals, or deviated from favoured policies, it was easy to resort to gendered slander in order to voice disapproval or censorship of a queen's rule or behaviour. Throckmorton's perception of Elizabeth's role in government and the way in which he pragmatically adapted his diplomatic dispatches to accommodate their receipt by a 'young' female monarch suggests that if we are truly to understand how Elizabeth's gender affected the day-to-day operation of government we must consider further the nuanced and, at times, conflicting reactions of individuals within the regime to the practicalities of female rule.⁷⁶ Equally, Randolph's interpretation of the advent of female rule and the consequent subversion of a patriarchal society within a broader framework of conceptual upheaval in the sixteenth century, epitomised by Copernicus's theory of Heliocentrism, provides a new angle for understanding the wider cultural backdrop to contemporary reactions to female monarchy.

Notes

- 1 M.T. Cicero, *De officiis*, ed. by Walter Miller (English Edition, London: William Heineman, 2014), Book One, p. 61. The author would like to thank Tracey Sowerby and Susan Doran for their comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.
- 2 William Monter, *The Rise of Female Kings in Europe, 1300–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 94–155; *Queen and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. by Carole Levin and Robert Bucholz (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2009).
- 3 John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (STC (2nd ed.) 15070; Geneva, 1558).
- 4 Knox, *First Blast*, p. 12^v.
- 5 Jennifer Richards, ‘“To Promote a Woman to Beare Rule”: Talking of Queens in Mid-Tudor England’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 28 (1997), 101–121 (p. 121); for a summary of work on the subject of inversion see Susan D. Amussen, ‘Turning the World Upside Down: Gender and Inversion in the Work of David Underdown’, *History Compass*, 11 (May 2013), 394–404.
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 - 21 TNA, SP 70/21, fol. 140^v: Throckmorton to Cecil, 31 December 1560.
 - 22 Horace, Epistle XVIII, 'The cultivation of a powerful friend is sweet to those without experience; those with experience know to be afraid'. TNA, SP 70/26, fol. 8^v: Throckmorton to Cecil, 1 May 1561.
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 - 24 TNA, SP 70/17, fol. 41^r, Throckmorton to Elizabeth, 9 August 1560.
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 - 26 TNA, SP 70/37, fol. 56^r: Throckmorton to Robert Dudley, 8 May 1562.
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 - 35 TNA, SP 70/13, fol. 227^v: Throckmorton to Elizabeth, 28 April 1560.
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- 51 A slightly altered version of 'For ye, young men, show a womanish soul, yon maiden a man's' from Cicero, *De officiis*, Book One, 61.
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- 61 BL, Add. MS, 35830, fols 82: Randolph to Throckmorton, 28 April 1561.
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9

STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL

Women at the court of the Medici (1565–1578)

Sarah Bercusson

Within Italian court studies, there has been an increasing amount of research on the roles and activities of rulers' wives and widows and their influence on all aspects of court life.¹ However, there has been less interest in investigating the other key women who formed part of the court, such as the ruler's mother, sisters or sisters-in-law, and their interactions. Yet many early-modern courts had more than one female member of the ruling family in residence at the same time. During the second half of the sixteenth century the Gonzaga dynasty in Mantua, for example, saw the dowager duchess Eleonora Habsburg Gonzaga living alongside her daughter-in-law, Eleonora Medici Gonzaga, who was later joined by her widowed sister-in-law, Margherita Gonzaga d'Este. In Ferrara, the duchesses Lucrezia de' Medici d'Este and then Barbara Habsburg d'Este lived in close proximity to their two sisters-in-law, Eleonora and Lucrezia d'Este. As members of ruling dynasties, both native and spousal, these women were able to influence internal family dynamics, impacting on both male and female members of their extended families, as well as to act as patrons, mediators and prominent figures on the court stage. It would therefore be misleading to exclude them from an analysis of the strategies and structures of power within the early modern court.

Nevertheless, such power was also far less stable than that of their male counterparts; female members of a dynasty were required to negotiate a range of expectations and rules specific to their sex, and their position was constantly subject to negotiation and depended on a variety of shifting factors. The complexity of their positions makes them a valuable subject for research, as an analysis of their networks and activities can shed new light on gendered strategies of power and allow us to identify previously unsuspected loci of influence. Although they headed their own independent households, they did not operate in isolation.² Female peers belonging to the same court might join forces to attain particular aims; they might also take up conflicting alliances or substitute for each other in the fulfilment of particular activities. Their choices were often dependent and contingent upon other women's choices and roles, and consequently they could find their functions changing over time. Women within the wider

family group might also cooperate to a greater or lesser extent with other male members of the family, for example siblings supporting each other against another family member. Given this constant interaction, it is no longer sufficient to focus on the ruler's wife in relation to the male centre of power, which has until now been viewed by historians as the primary *modus operandi*. In order to understand how the early modern court functioned more fully and the role of women within the family, it is necessary to broaden our field of investigation and to undertake a comparative analysis that reflects on the actions and interactions of multiple female relatives. The roles they adopted and the choices they made provide key information on family strategies, gender roles and sibling relationships, and the success or failure of particular tactics sheds light on the limits placed upon female agency, and the risks taken by women at court.

The court of the Medici in Florence will be the focus of this chapter. During the period from 1565 to 1578, up to five women related or closely linked to the ruling family lived within the duchy at the same time and played active roles at court. The relationships between these women are mapped out in Figure 9.1. In

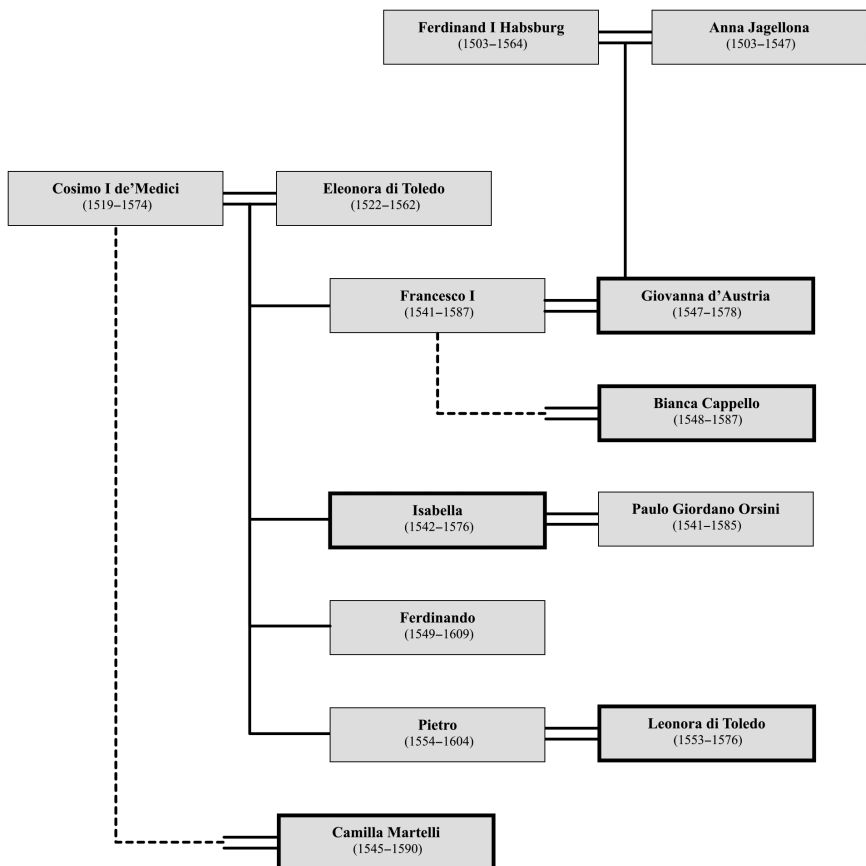


FIGURE 9.1 A Select Genealogy of the House of Medici.

1565 the Habsburg archduchess, Giovanna of Austria, married the Medici son and heir, Francesco, and joined a court where her sister-in-law, Isabella de' Medici Orsini, Duchess of Bracciano was already in residence. Leonora di Toledo, Francesco's cousin also joined the court, marrying Duke Cosimo's youngest son Pietro in 1571 while Duke Cosimo himself took a second wife in 1570, Camilla Martelli, his former mistress.³ Alongside these official connections, Francesco also kept a mistress, Bianca Cappello, whom he would marry after Giovanna's death in 1578. The number and variety of the relationships outlined above provide the opportunity for a valuable case-study. While two of the figures mentioned, Isabella and Leonora, have been the subject of recent publications, the tendency has been towards a very narrow biographical account, which, as I will demonstrate, has led to the misunderstanding of a very complex living situation where a mixture of powerful female relatives resided at court and undertook shifting and sometimes overlapping roles.⁴

The first two women I will focus on in this chapter are the duchess Giovanna d'Austria and her sister-in-law Isabella de' Medici, wife of the Roman noble, Paolo Giordano Orsini, Duke of Bracciano. They are the closest in terms of status and position and an analysis of their networks, roles and relationships can be helpful in revealing the ways in which women at court might divide up the spaces of power between them, whether they supported or collaborated with each other and what factors might influence the strategies they chose to pursue.

Participation and reputation

Isabella's mother, the duchess Eleonora di Toledo had died in 1562. Isabella was thus the highest-ranking female member of the Medici family when her brother's wife, Giovanna of Austria, arrived in 1565. The two most recent biographies of Isabella have followed a centuries-old historiographical tradition in emphasising the omnipresence of Isabella and the isolation and lack of participation of the Austrian archduchess in Florentine life.⁵ However, if we look at the archival sources for Giovanna alongside those for Isabella, a different picture emerges, starting with the young archduchess's presence on the social scene. Contradicting what historians from Saltini onwards have argued, the Ferrarese ambassador repeatedly confirms Giovanna's and Isabella's presence at each other's events, ranging from dances to theatrical performances and banquets to celebrate the weddings of household members.⁶ Leonora di Toledo de' Medici, Isabella's cousin and sister-in-law, was also an active participant, in particular from 1573 onwards when she took up stable residence in Florence.⁷ This suggests that rather than a single woman (Isabella) taking a dominant role, all three were active participants in the social life of the court and their presence at each other's events was seen as a marker of support, given the disapproval directed towards Giovanna's own husband for his absence in favour of spending time with his mistress.⁸ Evidence suggests that all members of the ruling dynasty, both male and female, contributed towards the splendour of the court by putting on banquets, staging plays and sponsoring events. Thus, in 1567, the

Ferrarese ambassador wrote that as well as Francesco, his brother, Cardinal Ferdinand, and his sister, Isabella, were also putting on parties, while for the carnival masque of 1574, he reported that while Giovanna sponsored six of the costumes, her husband sponsored four, as did his brother Pietro, and various other gentlemen of the court took responsibility for the rest.⁹ A very different picture of the early modern court, one predicated on the involvement of the entire dynasty rather than the traditional duo of ruler and ruler's wife, emerges from a comparative analysis of the extant correspondence, accounts and chronicles.

While Isabella and Giovanna were both active participants in a concerted dynastic social policy, at the same time, they pursued separate strategies in the field of arts and culture and this had significant repercussions on their individual reputations and indeed on their lives. Again, historiography has left us with a distorted view of the two women. Elisabetta Mori has argued that Isabella and not Giovanna was the person to whom intellectuals, musicians and poets dedicated their works, and that Isabella was the true heart of the Medici court and not Giovanna, who was too reserved and foreign to fulfil that role.¹⁰ This kind of characterisation is influenced primarily by the lasting effects of Saltini's nineteenth-century work and it profoundly distorts both Giovanna's role at court and her relationship with her sister-in-law. In fact, there is plenty of evidence that Giovanna was both interested and participative in the Florentine intellectual arena.¹¹ For example, in 1568 she requested a commentary from Antonio degli Albizzi, a member of the *Accademia degli Alterati* and known by the pseudonym 'Vario', on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, while in 1574, she received papal authorisation to read all books on the Index of Prohibited Books and was allowed to have members of her household, as long as they were devout and Catholic, read them too.¹² Her interests seem to have been geared towards two key areas: philosophy and theology, and in this she differs from Isabella, whose intellectual activities lie primarily in the field of music. Isabella was an accomplished musician and composer. Her interest in music was sufficiently well-known that she had various books of madrigals dedicated to her, and in 1565 she commissioned a portrait of herself holding a sheet of music from the workshop of the artist Alessandro Allori.¹³ Such an action is significant, given that music was associated with loose living and lack of chastity: courtesans rather than noblewomen had themselves painted with music or musical instruments.¹⁴

Isabella's behaviour provides a strong contrast with that of Giovanna, who balanced her intellectual interests and activities with a vigorously projected image of chastity and piety. She was careful to cultivate an image of public modesty and Christian behaviour, for example by refusing to wear an open collar that revealed the neck and chest, as was customary in Florence, and as she appears in the few paintings that have survived of her.¹⁵ She also repeatedly visited the various churches of Florence and performed public acts of charity.¹⁶ In attending mass in the public churches of Florence, she diverged from the habits of her predecessor, Eleonora di Toledo, who always worshipped in private.¹⁷ The pope's gift to her of the golden rose, a reward traditionally allocated to 'defenders of the faith', was celebrated with great ceremony in the Duomo and there are notes in her account books detailing

the commission of a gilt and crystal tabernacle in which to display it.¹⁸ In these activities she was not joined by her two sisters-in-law, Leonora and Isabella, who do not appear to have cultivated pious reputations.

While Giovanna and Leonora were both active in the debate over Aristotle's *Poetics* that gripped the Italian courts in the sixteenth century, neither Leonora nor Isabella accompanied Giovanna on her much-publicised pilgrimage to Loreto.¹⁹ Indeed, Felice Faciuta, who published a eulogy of Giovanna's pilgrimage, commented on their absence, remarking that they probably preferred music or dancing.²⁰ Isabella's lack of a public reputation for piety is also revealed by an episode where she and her women were refused access to the icon of the Madonna by the monks of the Santissima Annunziata in Florence, in strong contrast with Giovanna, who was granted special access to various monastic institutions by order of the pope himself.²¹ I would argue that their public image as lively, fun-loving and not particularly pious, together with the known disdain of one husband and the continual absence of the other, made both women vulnerable to gossip and rumour.²² Scurrilous stories about their behaviour sprang up in the immediate aftermath of their sudden deaths within a few days of each other in July 1576, alongside rumours that Francesco was responsible for their murder, but there are indications that such gossip was already present prior to 1576.²³ Giovanna herself, according to the Ferrarese ambassador, talked of Isabella's lack of honour in December 1575, in a fit of anger after one of her own German ladies-in-waiting was sent away from court by Francesco, while in February 1576, the ambassador reports that Leonora's cup-bearer was banned from court by the duke as well, either, in Cortile's opinion, because of his adulterous relationship with Leonora or because he was helping to pass messages between her and her lover.²⁴ It is in this context that we should view the chronicler Bastiano Arditi's report that Leonora and Isabella went out on foot together in March 1576 through the streets of Florence collecting for charity.²⁵ I would argue that this was an attempt by both women, realising their vulnerability, to collaborate in restoring their reputation by engaging in publicly visible pious activity, following in the footsteps of their sister-in-law Giovanna. I would suggest that the two portraits of Isabella, dating to 1574, were also commissioned with this intent. One of these shows Isabella standing with her young son Virginio in a scene that aims at reinforcing the child's legitimacy and emphasises Isabella's fidelity through symbols such as the red carnation embroidered on her chemise.²⁶ The other is a recently-discovered portrait of Isabella from the Carnegie Museum of Art, where she is represented with a halo and holding a small alabaster jar in her hands, an attribute of the penitent Mary Magdalene. The chief curator Lulu Lippincott believes that the picture was painted around 1574, and that the halo and urn were added shortly after the work was completed.²⁷ The symbolism in these two portraits contrasts strongly with that in which the young Isabella is shown with a sheet of music in her hands and adds weight to the hypothesis that Isabella felt the need to alter her image from 1574 onwards.

Women, even at the top of the social ladder like Giovanna and Isabella, lacked any form of independent institutional authority, which made them ultimately dependent

on the goodwill and cooperation of the male members of the family. Cosimo, Isabella's father, had always been highly supportive of her. He repeatedly supplied her with money, for example by paying her debts in 1567 and providing her with additional funds when she was overwhelmed by her creditors in 1568, and in 1565 he forced Francesco to give her the villa of Baroncelli after he had initially refused to do so.²⁸ After his death in April 1574, all three women faced a far more interventionist and controlling male figure of authority. Francesco was not afraid to meddle in the composition of their households, as in the case of both Leonora and Giovanna, to refuse funds, as in the case of Isabella, and finally to sanction the ultimate punishment, death, as a response to inappropriate behaviour, in the case of Leonora.²⁹ Isabella's portraits can be seen as an attempt to placate Francesco and quieten public gossip by promoting herself as a pious and faithful wife. It is within this context that we should also view the description of Giovanna by the Venetian ambassador as:

*di singolar bontà, e di esemplar religione, ed altrettanto bella d'animo quanto le è stata la natura scarsa delle bellezze corporali, essendo piccola di statura, di faccia pallida, e di non molto vago aspetto; d'ingegno piuttosto placido e quieto che vivo ed alto*³⁰

This extract has been used time and again to consign the Florentine duchess to obscurity and highlight the contrasting splendour and liveliness of her sister-in-law.³¹ Yet, this description dates to 1576, and therefore the duchess that the ambassador met was one whose sister-in-law was about to be murdered, and who felt under increasing threat from her own husband. She was desperately petitioning her own brothers to intervene on her behalf.³² It is not surprising that she appeared subdued during this particular period of her life. Indeed, I would suggest this outward display of reserved piety was a conscious enactment of her ongoing strategy of emphasising her honour in order to avoid the kind of accusations that would lead to the death of at least one of her sisters-in-law. In another of Cortile's letters, he reports that Giovanna had voiced this anxiety to him, saying that she feared that Francesco might accuse her of adultery in order to get rid of her.³³

The evidence left by Isabella, Leonora and Giovanna suggests that while all three were active in the social and cultural life of the court, the interests and activities of the former contributed to the creation of a highly dangerous public image, over which they were unable to retain control. This highlights the balancing act required of noblewomen who were expected to perform as lively, visible and potentially accessible members of court but at the same time maintain an impeccable reputation. If circumstances changed, the same activities which they espoused in order to exercise agency, create and sustain networks of relationships and maintain a position of influence could also be used against them. Although Giovanna was active in the debates and intellectual life of the court, she was more cautious than her sisters-in-law and chose to foster an image that minimised the risk of damaging her reputation. While it has posthumously led to her characterisation as submissive and lacking in intelligence, in her own context, hers was undoubtedly the most successful strategy for survival.

Networks and relationships

Isabella, Leonora and Giovanna were for the most part mutually supportive, even in the face of male antagonism, as I have discussed above.³⁴ However not all relationships between the women at court were so positive. Problems arose with the presence of another two figures intimately connected with the Medici family. One of these is Camilla Martelli, who married Giovanna's father-in-law, Duke Cosimo de' Medici in 1570. Isabella and Giovanna took diametrically opposite attitudes towards Camilla Martelli, attitudes which were profoundly shaped by their own positions and needs in the context of Medici family dynamics. Camilla was a young woman from a Florentine patrician family of no great renown. The Medici family as a whole, including both Isabella and Giovanna, resented the marriage and felt it was an embarrassment. Giovanna made her views known in no uncertain manner and protested at the marriage, encouraged by her brother, Emperor Maximilian II.³⁵ Her decision to do so is likely to have been motivated by her position within the Medici family and within the wider socio-political sphere. First of all, Giovanna was an import into the Medici family and she was not particularly beloved by her husband. The Medici had not received her dowry and so far she had failed to provide an heir to the duchy, giving birth only to girls.³⁶ This meant that her value to the Medici rested almost completely on her identity as a Habsburg. For the Medici to arrange another marriage, this time to a woman of far lower status, seemed to indicate a lack of interest in the kind of marriage Giovanna represented and as such it may have been read as a threat, as well as an insult, by Giovanna, whose entire value rested on her pedigree. Furthermore, Giovanna, as I will discuss later on, operated on the international political scene; as such she could not afford to be seen associating with someone of low rank as an equal; therefore, while she was happy to consort with the duchess of Bracciano, Isabella, she refused to be seen in the company of Camilla, and indeed she outright banned her from appearing in public with her or attending festivities and events at which she would be appearing.³⁷ Thus, in order to protect herself, Giovanna had to treat Camilla as an outcast. This strategy seems to have worked to a certain extent. Cosimo did keep Camilla away from court functions at Giovanna's request, although, as we shall see later, the two women clashed again in another sphere, that of patronage.

Given that Isabella was also of far higher rank than Camilla, one might have assumed that she too would refuse to engage with her new mother-in-law; however, this does not appear to have happened; indeed Isabella adopted a very different strategy. She never expressed any public opposition to the marriage, counselling her brother Ferdinando in Rome to also keep his true opinions of the marriage to himself.³⁸ Instead, as the Ferrarese ambassador writes, she openly welcomed Camilla into the family, highlighting her willingness to acknowledge her as a peer by visiting her and even, according to the ambassador, professing a desire for Camilla to precede her in public, although he expresses doubts about how this could happen in reality.³⁹ Just as in Giovanna's case, there are precise reasons for Isabella's behaviour and they lie within her position within the family and her personal and political networks.

First of all, Isabella was in the unusual position of living apart from her husband. Despite her marriage to Paolo Giordano Orsini, she appears to have been unwilling or unable to leave Florence to live with him in Rome. Why this was the case is still not entirely clear, however, it was definitely an unusual position for a woman to be in.⁴⁰ It was therefore essential for Isabella to be on good terms with her brothers and especially her father and to make herself valuable to them, in order to ensure continued support for her choice of residence and to mitigate her financial troubles. This can be seen as the rationale for Isabella's decision to pacify key Medici figures rather than challenge the decisions they made, and it can explain why Camilla turned to Isabella rather than Giovanna when asking for help in resolving an issue that arose after the death of her primary supporter, Duke Cosimo. She asked Isabella to intercede with her youngest brother Pietro de' Medici, to ensure that certain items belonging to her were returned.⁴¹ She chose not to ask Giovanna, not because the latter was powerless or unimportant, but because Isabella's strategy while living in Florence had been to try and conciliate rather than challenge the other women and she had therefore always been friendly towards Camilla.

Camilla also chose to ask Isabella because of the latter's particular role and position within the family. It is clear from both this letter and from the many others that Ferdinando exchanged with his sister that Isabella was successful in positioning herself as a key figure within the internal dynamics of the Medici family, in particular prior to 1574, when she was able to operate as advisor and mediator between her various brothers and with her father. Extracts such as the following from Ferdinando to his sister suggest that her advice on how to deal with other members of the family was sought on a regular basis and her opinions deferred to:

*mi son preso molto contento vedendo che nostro padre si sia risoluto di dare il carico di queste galere a Don Pietro . . . quanto a quello che la mi mette in considerazione che non diebbia andare Don Pietro sotto Marcantonio mi piace assai . . .*⁴²

Not only did Isabella advise her brothers on various matters, she also looked after their interests, as the following excerpt from Ferdinando demonstrates:

*Prego Vostra Eccellenza che dapoi che non posso con la presentia mia veder et intender le cose mie, la mene dia un poco di conto et mi consigli come mi ho da governare . . .*⁴³

As these letters indicate, Isabella seems to have fulfilled a particularly important role for her brother, Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, and I would suggest this is because of his position as a junior male member of the family. This close and mutually supportive relationship between sisters and their brothers is also found in other courts, for example in Ferrara, where Leonora d'Este was a close confidante and ally of her brother, Cardinal Luigi and often looked after his affairs.⁴⁴ Following this trend, Giovanna's brother, Archduke Ferdinand, rather than her eldest brother, Emperor Maximilian, was also her most vocal supporter within her native family while Francesco's mistress, Bianca Cappello, appears to have repeatedly turned to her

male cousin and her brother in her difficult negotiations with her Venetian father. I would suggest that this may indicate a natural alliance between junior members of the family who might support each other in an effort to counter-balance the power of the dominant male figure, whether duke, emperor or father.⁴⁵ This dynamic also provides a reminder of the importance of these women's relationships and strategic involvement with male members of the family as well as with each other.

Camilla was not the only one to recognise Isabella's influence within the Medici family and her willingness to intervene on behalf of the other women at court. Giovanna too was not above asking for Isabella's help herself when it came to family matters. This is apparent, for example, in Isabella's letter to Cosimo's steward in response to an appeal from the duchess:

Illustre Signor Compare . . . dovete sapere che Sua Altezza sta afflittissima per haver inteso che Balencio vole domani metter sopralla sua porta dicasa uno scudo drentovi larme del Gran Duca mio Signore e quella della Signora Cammilla e questa cosa da tanta alteratione a Sua Altezza che non si può credere se Sua Altezza si contentassi compiacerla . . . farebbe opera caritativa e degnia di lei

At the top of the letter in another hand is a scrawled response from Cosimo's Steward in Chief:

*Vostra exellentia vede quanto escrivo e potra mostrar deta lettera asua Altezza per piu sua sodisfatione . . .*⁴⁶

I have already mentioned Giovanna's aggressive and uncompromising approach to her father-in-law's marriage and her request to Isabella clearly reveals her recognition that she needed Isabella's help as the family mediator.

Isabella's letters reveal that, as a native of Florence and a blood relative of the Medici, she focussed most of her efforts on mediating the often difficult relationship between her Roman husband and her family, and ensuring that peace reigned between her cardinal brother and Francesco.⁴⁷ Isabella's primary loyalty was to her Florentine family. Both she and her Orsini husband were dependent on the Medici financially and Saltini's account of a fight that took place between Isabella and Paolo Giordano in which she stated that the Medici were the first princes of Italy after the pope, while he was merely a feudatory of the Church highlights her view of her family's superiority.⁴⁸ This self-identification as a Medici first and foremost led to conflict with her husband, as she tried to manoeuvre him into acting in Medici interests.⁴⁹ However, while it is clear from her many letters to her husband that she found having to negotiate continually with Cosimo and later Francesco for more money on her own and her husband's behalf a taxing task, the importance of her own native family within the spousal dynamic, and Paolo Giordano Orsini's reliance on her to negotiate with them, also gave her a degree of power and control over her relationship with her husband, resulting, for example, in her continued ability to reside in Florence rather than in the Orsini family home in Bracciano.⁵⁰

Giovanna's situation was different and again it becomes clear that her specific circumstances drove her selection of networks and her relationships with the other women at court. Giovanna was tolerated rather than welcomed by the male members of the Medici family. Francesco, who had begun his relationship with his Venetian mistress, Bianca Cappello, around the time of his marriage, became increasingly distant over the course of Giovanna's lifetime in Florence and while Cosimo was generally supportive of his daughter-in-law and mediated in some of the rifts between the couple, he was not above telling Giovanna to accept the status quo.⁵¹ In keeping with the uncertainty of her position in Florence, Giovanna seems to have been far more ambiguous in her loyalties than her sister-in-law Isabella. While Giovanna's native Habsburg family were clearly far superior in status to the Medici, they were also reliant on the Florentine dukes' willingness to provide large loans to subsidise their wars with the Turks on the eastern front of the Empire. As a consequence, the Habsburg Emperor was unwilling to risk damaging his profitable relationship by rebuking Francesco for his mistreatment of his sister, something that Francesco was well aware of.⁵² However, he was also keen to use Giovanna as his agent in Florence when possible.⁵³ Thus, Giovanna faced pressure to act on behalf of Habsburg interests as well as Medici interests, without necessarily receiving a great deal of support from either. Faced with this complex situation, but at the same time armed with the weight of her impressive pedigree, which enabled her to take on an active role outside the family, Giovanna was a far more volatile force than Isabella. Sometimes she appears to have chosen to act to benefit the Medici, sometimes the Habsburgs, while at other times pursuing her own personal interests, which might intersect with either. Thus we see her supporting the Medici aim of attaining the title of grand duke. Her actions in this context openly benefit the Medici, but there is also a clear advantage for Giovanna herself. Upon marriage, she had become Duchess of Florence, rather than Archduchess of Austria, and it was clearly in her interests to upgrade her own title alongside that of her husband.⁵⁴ We see her pursuing this policy when sending gifts to the elector of Saxony's wife to help with the Medici's aim of attaining the title of grand duke, or when sending gifts to the pope, with the same aim in mind. As these examples suggest, while Giovanna's position granted her access to a great number of people, as a woman, it was easiest to focus her attentions on women and on the clergy, with whom it was considered appropriate for her to take on an active role. Thus we also see her interceding on behalf of a member of her own household, for her secretary's uncle, with Giacomo Boncompagni, Gonfalonier of the Church and son of Pope Gregory XIII, and with Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle on behalf of a Neapolitan baron, Lorenzo Battaglino, who would marry one of her ladies-in-waiting two years later.⁵⁵ As Duchess of Florence she was highly involved in the intercessory activities that were expected of female members of the family, and the surviving correspondence suggests that she was more active in this arena than any of the other women at court.⁵⁶

While there is some evidence of Isabella interceding on behalf of Florentine citizens, there are far fewer indications of her participation in international networks.⁵⁷ While this may have been in part due to the fact that she could not rely

on the cachet of the Habsburg name, it may also have been to do with her attitude towards the Church.⁵⁸ While Giovanna, as I have discussed, was famed in Florence and beyond for her piety and involvement in religious affairs, Isabella's blasé attitude is perhaps best exemplified by the following extract from a letter to her husband on the death of Pope Pius V:

*ho preso dispiacere infinito della morte di sua santità ma poiche sono cose ordinarie bisogna pigliarsele come vengono hora so che sene ha da far unaltro et desidererei saper qualche cosa di certo perche voglio pigliar certe scommesse . . .*⁵⁹

Although the clergy were normally a key focus of noblewomen's patronage and networks, Isabella does not appear to have been interested in participating in this arena. Nevertheless, she is not completely absent from international relations and the following example provides a valuable reminder of the importance of examining these women's activities alongside those of their peers.

Isabella's correspondence with Marguerite de Valois, Duchess of Savoy has been presented by previous biographers as evidence for her primacy at the Florentine court, over her sister-in-law Giovanna, as Marguerite chose to get in contact with and maintain a relationship with Isabella rather than Giovanna.⁶⁰ Taken in isolation, that is without examining Giovanna's correspondence, and ignoring what we know of Isabella's interests and choice of networks, such an assumption might appear valid. However, if we look at who Marguerite of Savoy was, we find out that she had marked Protestant interests and her entourage included many of the reformed faith.⁶¹ Meanwhile, further investigation into Isabella de' Medici and her household reveals that not only did she herself harbour a somewhat cynical stance towards the Catholic Church, but her personal secretary, Fausto Sozzini, was the founder of the anti-trinitarian Socinian movement, and strongly sympathetic to Calvin's ideas.⁶² Giovanna, however, was a strong supporter of the Counter-Reformation, and thus unlikely to respond well to appeals from Marguerite. This puts Marguerite's choice to correspond with Isabella in a completely different light. It demonstrates the presence of a network of women present at the Florentine court who could be selected as the recipients of requests or who might be called upon to act in particular spheres, according to their personal values and interests, their strengths and backgrounds, and their strategic aims.

While Marguerite's correspondence with Isabella reveals the availability of a number of influential women who could be called on to intercede or mediate, it also suggests that there was the clear potential for overlap, whether in a positive or negative manner. The Mantuan court provides an example of official collaboration between the dowager duchess Eleonora Habsburg Gonzaga and her daughter-in-law Eleonora de' Medici Gonzaga. While there is no clear duplicate of this in Florence, there are occasions in which informal alliances, substitutions or indeed conflicts could and did arise. For example, by 1576, the relationship between Francesco and Giovanna was at a very low ebb and Giovanna's cooperation in terms of supporting Medici policies was in question. As a result, I would suggest that Giovanna's gift-giving duties in relation to the negotiation of the granducal title with

Philip II were undertaken by other, more compliant, female members of the Medici family, first by Isabella early in 1576, to thank Don Antonio Alvarez de Toledo for his efforts to ensure the recognition of the title by Philip II, and later in the same year by Giovanna's own daughters to Philip II's daughters, after Isabella's death.⁶³ This demonstrates perhaps some of the advantages, both to the women themselves and to the other members of the dynasty that could arise from having a network of women within a single court whose positions were separate but of comparable social standing. While Francesco's gift, sent alongside those of his daughters, consisted of a very prestigious object: a crucifix by the hand of Benvenuto Cellini, his daughters sent silk and gold flowers, hair ornaments and other objects which Francesco calls 'trifles'.⁶⁴ The informality of these kinds of objects, often home-made or associated with female handiwork, were seen as eminently suitable gifts to and from women rather than between men. Again here we see another advantage of having female members of the family who could both send and receive these gifts, adding a layer of symbolic closeness and a personal touch to the calculated and often rigidly hierarchical exchanges that characterise male gift-giving.⁶⁵

However, while having multiple female actors at court could be a valuable asset, conflicts could also arise in this environment. An example of such a conflict occurs in the case of Camilla and Giovanna when the position of rector opened up at a local church:

*Hiermattina recevei una lettera di Vostra Altezza Serenissima . . . nella quale mi commetteva che per uno de miei officiali facessi subito intendere . . . a chi s'aspetta in ogni caso l'elettione del Rettor di quella chiesa rispetto la morte di prete Bartolomeo Benricevuti Rettor di essa, che quella harebbe molto caro per questa volta sola si contentassino di farla procurare a proveder' la detta Chiesa d'un Prete da bene . . . onde per far avisata Vostra Altezza Serenissima del seguito, le dico h'io non mancai incontinenti mandar' il decto mio Notaio alla detta Chiesa, alla quale non vi trovò nissuno di quei popoli, per essersi ciascuno ragunato in casa d'un Abbate, ove v'era il Cavalier Bartolini con dua altri Fiorentini, quali tenevano una lettera della sig.ra Camilla in raccomandazione d'un prete che medicava secondo che dicono il Gran Duca . . .*⁶⁶

This letter provides evidence of the competition for influence that could result from having a number of available female patrons at court. In this case, two different people turned to two different women in order to obtain a position. Duke Cosimo's doctor turned to Camilla as the woman he had the closest connection to. Camilla herself may have been willing to respond to his overtures because she was keen to develop a position as a patron. While Isabella mostly left religious patronage to Giovanna, Camilla had fewer options to choose from and therefore decided to challenge Giovanna on her own ground.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the correspondence does not reveal who won that particular contest, but it does demonstrate the problems that could arise when a number of women sought to carve out a space for themselves in a relatively limited arena and were not necessarily prepared to collaborate. This was particularly true when two women were essentially rivals for the same role.

Mistresses occupy an unusual position because of the unofficial nature of their relationship with the ruling family, however, it is impossible to deny their influence. Medici women were aware of this in their dealings with Bianca and again we can see circumstance and position guiding the relationships the women formed with each other. Bianca and Giovanna can be said to have had the most straightforward relationship simply because they were both attempting to occupy the same space. Bianca presented too close, too direct, a threat to the duchess – for it seems that she was not interested in being an unobtrusive mistress, a private figure only. There are strong suggestions that, as her position became more entrenched, Bianca started to rival Giovanna on her own territory, not just in terms of attempting to push forward her own nominees for positions within Florence, as Camilla had, but also on the international political stage. For example, in 1574 Bianca challenged Giovanna publicly by undertaking a pilgrimage to the shrine of Loreto on the east coast of Italy, replicating the visit that Giovanna had made the previous year.⁶⁸ In an even more provocative challenge, in 1576, the Ferrarese ambassador reported that Bianca had entertained the Venetian ambassador who was on an official visit to Florence:

*La signora Bianca le ha fatto recitare quella comedia che fece recitare questo Carnevale per trattenerlo et gli fa hoggi un banchetto che dicono è molto bello et di grandissima spesa.*⁶⁹

Giovanna could not attend such an event without damage to her own image and status. It was not the same as attending a banquet put on by Isabella, whose status as a duchess in her own right and also Giovanna's sister-in-law gave her the right and authority to do so. It is clearly an attempt by Bianca to substitute herself for Giovanna, rather than provide a supporting role to the Medici family.

While Bianca was a highly problematic rival for Giovanna, her relationship with Isabella is more complex. The surviving correspondence suggests that Isabella befriended Bianca and did not stand in the way of her relationship with Francesco.⁷⁰ This is very much in line with her policy towards all female members or associates of the Medici family. Their close relationship is made manifest by multiple letters, including from Cardinal Ferdinando, and from Bianca's brother Vittorio Cappello, the former asking Isabella to convey his greetings and goodwill to Bianca, the latter thanking Isabella for protecting and supporting Bianca.⁷¹ It was a sensible policy for Isabella to be seen to support Francesco's mistress rather than take a stand with Giovanna against her, as, within the family circle, Giovanna herself was not particularly liked, and also because Giovanna's previous attempt to take a stand against Camilla had been only a qualified success, and had certainly not increased her popularity with Duke Cosimo. Both Isabella and Ferdinando seem to have taken care to behave well towards Bianca, as she had the ear of the future power-holder, Francesco. Bianca, as well, had clear reasons for wishing to undertake an alliance with Isabella. As Francesco's mistress, Bianca did not occupy a legitimate position. She needed a public link to the ruling family that was morally acceptable. Giovanna's uncompromising hostility made her an impossible choice while Camilla's position was too vulnerable. Isabella instead provided the perfect cloak

for her adulterous relationship. Bianca's relatives were able to write to Isabella, and Bianca was able to present Isabella to her brother, cousin and father as an important Medici patron and protector.⁷² By fraternising with Isabella and advertising her as her patron, Bianca could remain in Florence and maintain a public link to the Medici family that was entirely suitable. In this way, Isabella becomes an official stand-in for the real relationship in Bianca's life, and two women who occupied positions that were questionable or might be subject to censure by contemporary society – the wife who lived apart from her husband and the mistress – might support each other, and we can again see the range of strategies these women adopted in order to survive and thrive at court.

Conclusion

The documentary and visual evidence these women have left conclusively demonstrates their value and importance to the dynasty. Whether as intellectual patrons or society hostesses, models of piety or political negotiators, not just the ruler's wife but all female members of the dynasty were expected to be actively involved in promoting and maintaining a respected dynasty and a lively court. Such an expectation meant that women at the Medici court had to choose whether to cooperate or to compete with each other, and they did so according to their own particular circumstances and interests, which could change over time. By undertaking a comparative study of their surviving correspondence and accounts, it has been possible to gain a clearer picture of the reasons behind the strategies they espoused and to dispel some of the myths that have built up around them. Giovanna emerges as a figure far more involved in court life than she has so far been seen to be and a more complex picture also emerges of Isabella, who is no longer to be seen as the unrivalled first lady of the court, but as a woman who had to contend with and negotiate relationships with a number of different male and female peers. By studying these women, it has also been possible to see the impact of gender norms on their lives and activities, and particularly the importance of reputation. This study has highlighted the particular pressures women faced when operating in the court environment. Above all, it has demonstrated the importance of family relationships at the heart of the sixteenth-century court.

Notes

- 1 See for example Letizia Arcangeli and Susanna Peyronel (eds.), *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento* (Rome: Viella, 2008); and on the Medici in particular: Giulia Calvi and Riccardo Spinelli (eds.), *Le donne Medici nel sistema europeo delle corti* (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2005); Christina Strunck (ed.), *Medici Women as Cultural Mediators (1533–1743)* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan: Silvana, 2011); Giovanna Benadusi and Judith Brown (eds.), *Medici Women: The Making of a Dynasty in Grand Ducal Tuscany* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2015).
- 2 On courts and their organization, see Guido Guerzoni, 'La corte gonzagesca in età moderna: struttura, ordini e funzioni', in *I Gonzaga: moneta, arte, storia*, ed. by Silvana Balbi de Caro (Milan: Electa, 1995), pp. 90–96; Guido Guerzoni and Guido Alfani, 'Court History and Career Analysis: A Prosopographic Approach to the Court of Renaissance

- Ferrara', *The Court Historian*, 12/1 (2007), pp. 1–34. On female households in particular, see Sarah Bercusson, *Gift-Giving, Consumption and the Female Court in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 2009).
- 3 The family tree provided includes only the figures essential to this chapter. There is some debate over when Leonora di Toledo arrived in Florence. The nineteenth-century archivist and historian, Guglielmo Enrico Saltini stated that she was born and brought up at the Florentine court and this version has been followed by many contemporary historians; however, a recent biography of Leonora by Vanni Bramanti, convincingly argues that she only arrived in the Tuscan duchy in 1568. See Guglielmo Enrico Saltini, 'Due Principesse Medicee del secolo XVI', in *Rassegna Nazionale*, vol. 3 (Florence: Ufficio della Rassegna Nazionale, September–October, 1901), p. 562; Gabrielle Langdon, *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008, first printed 2006), p. 171; Caroline Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici: The Glorious Life and Tragic End of a Renaissance Princess* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 190–191; Vanni Bramanti, *Breve vita di Leonora di Toledo, 1555–1576* (Florence: Le lettere, 2007), pp. 53–57.
 - 4 See Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*; Bramanti, *Breve vita*; Elisabetta Mori, *L'onore perduto di Isabella de' Medici* (Milan: Garzanti, 2013, first printed 2011).
 - 5 See for example: Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, pp. 185, 300; Mori, *L'onore perduto*, p. 127.
 - 6 See for example: Archivio di Stato di Modena (ASMo), Cancelleria Ducale Estense (CDE), Ambasciatori Italiani a Firenze, Busta 22, Fascicolo 6, letter dated 15 February 1567; Fascicolo 7, letter dated 3 December 1569; Busta 23, Fascicolo 7, letter dated 9 January 1574; Busta 24, Fascicolo 11, letter dated 17 February 1575.
 - 7 Prior to 1573, she and her husband Pietro had their principal residence in Pisa. See: ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 23, Fascicolo 6, letter dated 10 October 1573.
 - 8 ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 24, Fascicolo 11, letter dated 29 January 1575.
 - 9 ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 22, Fascicolo 5, letter dated 5 February 1567 and Busta 23, Fascicolo 7, letter dated 27 February 1574.
 - 10 Mori, *L'onore perduto*, p. 127.
 - 11 For a recent discussion of Giovanna's intellectual activities, see Lisa Kaborycha, 'Expressing a Habsburg Sensibility in the Medici Court: The Grand Duchess Giovanna d'Austria's Patronage and Public Image in Florence', in Strunck, *Medici Women*, pp. 89–109. Kaborycha provides a strong critique of some of the myths surrounding Giovanna, although I would argue that she sometimes over-emphasises her linguistic prowess and intellectual leanings.
 - 12 See Bramanti, *Breve vita*, p. 110, footnote 66; on permission to read prohibited books, see Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Mediceo del Principato (MdP) 6355A, p. 83.
 - 13 On Isabella's involvement in music, see Donna G. Cardamone, 'Isabella Medici-Orsini: A Portrait of Self-Affirmation', in *Gender, Sexuality and Early Music*, ed. by Todd Michael Borgerding (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 1–26.
 - 14 See Langdon, *Medici Women*, pp. 164–165.
 - 15 See Sarah Bercusson, 'Giovanna d'Austria and the Art of Appearances: Textiles and Dress at the Florentine Court', *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 29, issue 5, doi: 10.1111/rest.12089, 683–700.
 - 16 Mario Scaduto, *Storia della Compagnia di Gesù in Italia*, vol. V (Rome: La Civiltà Cattolica, 1992), p. 218.
 - 17 See Alice Sanger, *Art, Gender and Religious Devotion in Grand Ducal Tuscany* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), p. 25.
 - 18 ASF, Miscellanea Medicea (MM) 16, Inserto 13. On the tabernacle, see ASF, GM 101, Fascicolo dated 1568, fols 136^v, 148^v and 149^r.
 - 19 In 1575 Giovanna was scouring Italy for a copy of Castelvetro's commentary on the Poetics, while Leonora requested an opinion on Piccolomini's commentary, which was strongly opposed to Castelvetro's. On Castelvetro, see ASF, MdP 5923, p. 148 and MdP 5925, p. 530. On Piccolomini, see Bramanti, *Breve vita*, p. 109.
 - 20 Langdon, *Medici Women*, p. 177. Ridolfo Conegrani, the Ferrarese ambassador resident in Florence for many years writes with longing of the happy days he spent in Isabella's

- company, enjoying the dancing and games she put on: Mori, *L'onore perduto*, p. 254, Archivio Storico Capitolino (ASC), Archivio Orsini (AO), Serie I, 158 parte seconda, letter n. 193.
- 21 See Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, p. 96; ASF, MdP 6366, p. 210. For Giovanna, see ASF, MdP 5094, Inserto 1, p. 155.
 - 22 The Ferrarese ambassador who replaced Ridolfo Conegrani in 1575, Ercole Cortile, reported on the ill treatment of Leonora by her husband, see for example: ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 24, Fascicolo 11, letter dated 8 February 1575.
 - 23 Leonora was murdered by her husband in July 1576. Once rumours started spreading through the courts of Europe, Francesco chose to inform the king of Spain and Leonora's relatives that Pietro had been forced to kill his wife because of her inappropriate behaviour and adultery. Elisabetta Mori has convincingly argued that Isabella, who died a few days later, wasn't murdered by her husband, but at the time and in the centuries that followed, chroniclers and all those who had a bone to pick with the Medici took the golden opportunity of her sudden death to decry both the women and their scandalous family. See Mori, *L'onore perduto*, p. 292. For reports in the immediate aftermath of events, see Bastiano Arditì, *Diario di Firenze e di altre parti della Cristianità (1574–1579)*, ed. by Roberto Cantagalli (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1970), pp. 109–111; ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 24, Fascicolo 14, letter dated 29 July 1576.
 - 24 ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 24, Fascicolo 12, letter dated 19 December 1575 and Fascicolo 13, letter dated 11 February 1576.
 - 25 Arditì, *Diario di Firenze*, p. 91.
 - 26 Langdon, *Medici Women*, pp. 149–152.
 - 27 www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Not-fake-but-tarted-up/32874 (accessed 12 December 2014).
 - 28 ASF, MdP 221, p. 29; Miscellanea Medicea (MM) 508, p. 22v. R.e: Baroncelli, see Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, p. 144, ASC, AO, Serie I, 157, parte seconda, letter n. 121.
 - 29 For evidence of Francesco refusing to help Isabella financially, see Mori, *L'onore perduto*, p. 234, ASC, AO, Serie I, 158, parte seconda, letter n. 200, dated 30 July 1574. Francesco ordered his ambassador in Madrid to explain to Philip II that Pietro had killed his wife for her behaviour 'unfitting for a gentlewoman' and quite rightly too: see Bramanti, *Breve vita*, p. 160.
 - 30 "of singular goodness, and exemplary religiosity, and as beautiful in spirit as nature has made her plain in appearance, being small, pale-faced, and not very pretty; in intelligence more placid and calm than bright and lofty." Eugenio Alberi (ed.), *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato* (Florence: Società editrice fiorentina, 1841), Series 2, vol. II, p. 376.
 - 31 See for example Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, p. 185.
 - 32 Her brother Archduke Ferdinand even threatened to invade the duchy to retrieve his sister. ASF, Carte Stroziane 359, p. 118. See Bercusson, *Gift-Giving*, chapter 5.
 - 33 ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 24, Fascicolo 14, letter dated 12 September 1576.
 - 34 Although Giovanna complained of being targeted instead of Isabella when her own lady-in-waiting was sent away, she bitterly reviled Francesco for the deaths of her two sisters-in-law, stating that they were cruel and unjustifiable. ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 24, Fascicolo 14, letter dated 29 July 1576.
 - 35 Saltini includes a transcription of the letter from Maximilian II to his sister Giovanna and Cosimo's response to her protest. Guglielmo Enrico Saltini, *Tragedie mediche domestiche, 1557–87. Narrate sui documenti . . . Premessavi una introduzione sul governo di Cosimo I* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1898), pp. 251–252.
 - 36 The ambassador Cortile chronicles the problems in their marriage from 1575 onwards, but there are previous indications that their relationship was troubled, for example a letter dated to January 1572 in which she thanks her father-in-law Cosimo for brokering peace between her and Francesco, ASF, MM 16, Fascicolo 21, unpaginated. Giovanna's first son was born in 1577. Evidence that Giovanna's dowry was never paid is contained in: ASF, MdP 6355A, p. 154.

- 37 See, for example: ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 22, Fascicolo 9, letter dated 29 August 1570 and Busta 23, Fascicolo 5, letter dated 27 June 1573.
- 38 ASC, AO, Serie I, 157, parte seconda, letter n. 267. See Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, pp. 207–208.
- 39 ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 22, Fascicolo 8, letter dated 29 April 1570.
- 40 Caroline Murphy and Elisabetta Mori provide two different interpretations of the evidence.
- 41 Pietro states in his letter to Isabella that he has received the letter from Camilla which Isabella had passed on to him and he asks her advice as to whether he should do what Camilla asks. ASC, AO, Serie I, 158, parte seconda, letter n. 202.
- 42 'I was delighted to hear that our father has decided to award the charge of these ships to Don Pietro [de' Medici, Ferdinando's brother] . . . ; with regards to your point that Don Pietro should not be placed under the command of Marcantonio, I agree with you wholeheartedly . . .'. ASC, AO, Serie I, 158, parte seconda, letter n. 163. In my transcriptions original spellings have been maintained and abbreviations have been expanded.
- 43 'I beg Your Excellency [Isabella], since I cannot personally oversee and hear about my own affairs (in Florence), to let me know about them and advise me on how I should act . . .'. ASC, AO, Serie I, 158, parte seconda, letter n. 176.
- 44 Documents discussing Isabella's debts after her death indicate that her brother Ferdinando was one of her main creditors, supporting the idea of mutual support between junior members of the family, see ASF, Acquisti e Doni 296, unpaginated. On Leonora d'Este, see Angelo Solerti, *Ferrara e la corte estense nella seconda metà del secolo decimosesto* (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1891), p. Lii.
- 45 On Archduke Ferdinand's interventions on behalf of his sister, see: ASF, Carte Stroziane, Serie 1, Filza 359, c. 118, 120. On Bianca's letters to her cousin regarding her father, see ASF, MdP 5947B, Inserto 1, p. 1 and following.
- 46 'Illustrious Sir (and) friend . . . you should know that Her Highness [Giovanna] is most afflicted having heard that Balencio [Camilla Martelli's father] wishes tomorrow to set up an escutcheon showing the arms of the Grand Duke my lord and those of the Lady Camilla and one could not believe how much this thing infuriates Her Highness (and) if His Highness [Cosimo] were to satisfy [Giovanna] . . . he would do truly a charitable and worthy thing . . .'. 'Your Excellency will see what I write and can show this letter to Her Highness for her satisfaction . . .'. ASC, AO, Serie I, 158, parte prima, letter n. 43, Mori, *L'onore perduto*, p. 187.
- 47 Both Murphy and Mori discuss the issues that arose between Paolo Giordano Orsini and the Medici, mostly over debts and doubts over his loyalty to Spain.
- 48 For Saltini's account of the argument between the pair, see Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, p. 139. Isabella and Paolo Giordano's problems with money are amply discussed in both Murphy and Mori.
- 49 For example, she urges him not to accept a French commission, as the Medici were traditionally allied with the Spanish, Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, pp. 135–136.
- 50 See for example ASC, AO, Serie I, 158, parte seconda, letter n. 200.
- 51 ASF, MdP 639, p. 336.
- 52 See ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 24, Fascicolo 14, letter dated 12 September 1576.
- 53 Giovanna received a request from her brother, the Emperor, to act as his agent in interceding with Duke Cosimo in order to obtain his aid in quelling a revolt in Finale, an imperial fiefdom in Liguria, ASF, MdP 5926, p. 82.
- 54 See 'Joanna of Austria and the Negotiation of Power and Identity at the Florentine Court', in *Medici Women*, ed. by Benadusi and Brown, pp. 129–153. Although Cosimo was awarded the title of grand duke by Pope Pius V in 1569, it was not unanimously recognized, hence the variation amongst sources with some calling Cosimo and later Francesco 'grand duke' while others only acknowledge the ducal title. For the purposes of clarity, I have kept to the latter throughout this chapter. Giovanna's interest in supporting this bid for the grand ducal crown may have been later outweighed by her unwillingness to collaborate with her husband.

- 55 ASF, MdP 5925, pp. 230, 33, 68 and MdP 5923, p. 142.
- 56 For more examples of Giovanna's intercessory activities, see Bercusson, *Gift-Giving*, chapter 4.
- 57 Most of her surviving correspondence consists of letters to her husband and other family members.
- 58 Giovanna was able to make use of her Habsburg identity in her patronage. For example, Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle highlights his loyalty to the House of Austria in his letter to Giovanna in June 1571, ASF, MdP 5923, p. 142.
- 59 'I infinitely regret the death of His Holiness but, as these things happen, one must take them as they come. Now I know that they must appoint another one [pope] and I would like to find out something more certain because I want to make some bets . . .'. ASC, AO, Serie I, 158, parte prima, p. 151.
- 60 See ASC, AO, Serie I, busta 484, fascicolo 3, letters 100 to 104.
- 61 Mori, *L'onore perduto*, pp. 216–217.
- 62 See Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, pp. 335–336.
- 63 Mori, *L'onore perduto*, p. 256; Rosemarie Mulcahy, *Philip II of Spain: Patron of the Arts* (Dublin: Four Courts Press Ltd, 2004), p. 97.
- 64 Mulcahy, *Philip II of Spain*.
- 65 For more on this subject, see Renata Ago, 'Donne, doni e public relations tra le famiglie dell'aristocrazia romana del XVII secolo', in *La donna nell'economia, sec. XIII a XVIII*, ed. by Simonetta Cavaciocchi (Florence: Le Monnier, 1990), pp. 175–183.
- 66 'Yesterday morning I received a letter from Your Most Serene Highness [Giovanna] . . . in which you ordered that via one of my officials I should let you know immediately . . . who is in charge of the election of the rector of that church after the death of the priest Bartolomeo Benricevuti its previous rector, since it would be very dear to you if, on this occasion alone, they would be happy to let you arrange to provide the said church with a priest of good character . . . so, to keep Your Most Serene Highness informed of what occurred, I did not fail to immediately send the said notary to the said church, where I found no one, as they had gathered in the house of an abbot, where Sir Bartolini was with two other Florentines, who had a letter of the Lady Camilla [Camilla Martelli Medici] recommending a priest who, they say, was a doctor of the Grand Duke [Cosimo] . . .'. ASF, MdP 5925, p. 410.
- 67 The grand ducal secretary Serguidi reports disapprovingly on Camilla's attempts to gain positions for her family members and her fury at her failure. ASF, MdP 613, p. 268.
- 68 Arditì, *Diario di Firenze*, p. 31.
- 69 'The Lady Bianca put on that comedy which she had performed this Carnival to entertain him [the Venetian ambassador], and today she has arranged a banquet for him which they say is beautiful and extremely expensive'. ASMo, CDE, Ambasciatori, Busta 24, Fascicolo 13, letter dated 25 March 1576.
- 70 See Mori, *L'onore perduto*, pp. 254–255. Murphy takes a more cynical approach, arguing that Isabella sought to control her: Murphy, *Isabella de' Medici*, pp. 239–242.
- 71 ASC, AO, Serie I, 158, parte seconda, letters n. 163 and 248.
- 72 See for example, ASF, MdP 5947B, pp. 9–11.

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PART IV

Voting and political representation

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10

GENDER, PLACE AND POWER

Controverted elections in late Georgian England

Elaine Chalus

I

The Taunton election of 1830 had left servant, Ann Whitfield, unimpressed. Like other hotly contested elections in Georgian England, it had inflamed the town, upsetting the normal routine of life; politicizing the streets, inns, shops and homes; and sweeping a wide cross-section of the town's inhabitants into the electoral process. For Ann, whose master's house was located across the street from the noisy polling booths which had been set up in front of the Market House, the six days of the poll (31 July to 5 August 1830) had been the most wearing. Her master's landlord had turned all the property he owned alongside the passageway next to their house into the election headquarters for his favoured candidate, E.T. Bainbridge; consequently, their passageway and courtyard, as well as the rooms leading off them, had been continuously crammed with voters, witnesses, political agents and the members of Bainbridge's election committee. When Ann needed access to her master's cellars at the end of the passageway, she had to weave her way through the crowds. They were, she informed the Committee of the House of Commons, which tried the election in February 1831, 'quite an annoyance to the neighbourhood',¹ particularly as they comprised 'not any of the respectable people in the Town.'²

Yet Ann had personally done quite well out of the election: she had been recruited by one of the local businessmen, a member of Bainbridge's election committee, to serve bread, cheese and cider to Bainbridge supporters for the last four days of the poll, and she had earned a half-sovereign (10s.) for her efforts. Her elderly spinster neighbour, Miss Sarah Slocombe, had been in charge of providing the refreshments. Ann's job had been to take breakfast tea to the gentlemen of the Committee and the agents in the Committee Room, and then to the tallies of voters who were mustered in the house adjoining it. She had spent the rest of the day running between the pantry in the passageway, where she cut the cheese and bread

(twelve loaves a day), and the back kitchen where the cider was kept, in order to keep the witnesses supplied.³ When the tallies returned from voting at one or two in the afternoon, they too had needed cider. The back kitchen and the yard had been full of people, 'from top to bottom, from nine o'clock in the morning, till the Polling was over at night.' As if this was not bad enough, some of them stayed nearly all night, forcing her master to lock his front door. The whole thing had been, Ann reiterated, 'quite an annoyance to his house'.⁴

As treating voters after the *teste* of the *writ* (21 July, in this case) was illegal and would have served as proof of the charges of bribery and corruption that had been brought against Bainbridge, the Committee was keen to know whether any food and/or drink had been given to Bainbridge's voters prior to voting.⁵ Miss Slocombe testified that she had never knowingly served a voter herself; nor, she claimed, had Ann, whose movements she had supervised. Indeed, steps had been taken to mitigate against the groups mixing. Space in the passageway and the courtyard had been carefully allocated; the yard had been filled with new stools, made purposefully to provide seating for the voters; and the voters and witnesses had been physically separated: 'the witnesses were on one side of the court, and the voters below, so as to make no mistake; the witnesses were in the upper part on the right hand side, and the voters on the left below, they were kept detached.'⁶ Anyone coming in from the street would have had to make his or her way through the voters and then across the courtyard to the back kitchen, which was being used as the witnesses' room, in order to obtain refreshments.⁷ Furthermore, while the voters were male, 'a great many' of the witnesses were female.⁸ Not, of course, that either Ann or Miss Slocombe was willing to acknowledge that she knew these women personally. Here, the reality of class and gender in a small town was played out in front of the Committee. Despite having worked as a servant in Taunton for eight years, Ann denied being acquainted with any of the women, claiming rather haughtily that the campaign had attracted 'all the stuff in the town'. Miss Slocombe, rather more politely, agreed under questioning that the women were people of an 'inferior station of life'.⁹

These responses reflected the social mix of the borough. As the county town of Somerset, Taunton's broad, well-paved central streets and tidy townhouses exuded gentility but, as a potwalloper borough, its franchise extended to include artisans, tradesmen and labourers from the town's crowded, impoverished back lanes and courts.¹⁰ Moreover, these 'poor voters' mattered in a borough that was repeatedly, often hotly, contested through the long eighteenth century. They were consequently assiduously wooed by candidates and their agents, and regularly recruited as witnesses to prove or challenge votes.¹¹ Taunton was not unusual either in recruiting women to serve as witnesses and play an official (and, in this case, paid) role in the election.¹² Prior to the legislative reforms of 1832 and 1835, women in England frequently played a recognised, though historically still under-appreciated and understudied part in the electoral process, particularly in the localities. Not only did women who met the property requirements in the 29 burghage and 6 freeholder boroughs have the legal right to vote (though by custom they appointed proxies), but women in freemen's families also had various customary electoral privileges

in the 92 freeman boroughs. In 125 of the 203 English boroughs (61.6 percent), therefore, women might have a direct investment in the outcome of an election.¹³ In addition, women from voters' and non-voters' families often served as witnesses during elections and post-election scrutinies, and travelled to London to testify in the House of Commons at the trials of controverted elections.¹⁴ In cases of disputed franchises, they acted as sources of electoral memory, using their knowledge of local people, places and electoral practice over time to prove or disprove votes.¹⁵ In cases of bribery and corruption, they were the eyes and ears of the borough, testifying to their personal experiences and reporting on what they had seen and/or overheard that was relevant to the validity of a vote or the qualifications of a voter. The women who served as witnesses at the election in Taunton would have been expected to do either, as needed. According to Charles John Cox, who had been responsible for supervising them, at least some of the women had been the wives of voters:

Do you mean to say that every voter's wife you saw there was a witness? Yes.

You take upon your oath to say that? Yes.

Did you see them go over to the Assessor's booth?

No; but I had the names; they called them over.¹⁶

Cox may not have seen the witnesses at work, but Ann Whitfield had. From her vantage point in the pantry, she had been able to see the women accompanying the tallies of men as they were led across the street to vote. They had accompanied the voters first to the Assessor's booth, where their evidence might be called upon to prove or reject voters, and then on to the hustings, where they would hear each man give his votes in front of the gathered crowd.¹⁷

Frustratingly for historians of pre-Reform gender and political culture, it is exactly at this point that these women vanish from English electoral history. The pollbook for the Taunton election of 1830 does not appear to survive and neither do any of the notes or minutes that had been taken of the witnesses' depositions during the election. Even Cox's list of female witnesses had been destroyed by the time that the petition came to trial in the Commons. The verbatim reporting of the trial proceedings, conveniently preserved in the printed *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition, before a Committee of the House of Commons, February 23rd. 1831*, is thus an invaluable source. Without it, our knowledge of the intimate detail of the places and spaces of the campaign, or of the often emotionally freighted, gendered and classed experiences of people like Ann Whitfield and Sarah Slocombe, and the other sixty-four local witnesses (including another eight women), would have been lost to posterity.

Indeed, while there has been a recent resurgence in interest in the histories of radicalism and protest,¹⁸ and while two decades of research into gender and politics have done much to expand our understanding of the extent, nature and meaning of women's political involvement¹⁹ – and have also begun to unpick the relationship between masculinity and politics²⁰ – work on the cultural history of elections

remains patchy.²¹ That ‘teeming underworld of electoral politics . . . the level at which “politics” was most commonly experienced in this period,’ which Frank O’Gorman argued in 1989 needed to be ‘prised open and penetrated’, still has much to reveal.

The second half of this chapter seeks to do just. By drawing upon witnesses’ depositions from two well-documented controverted elections, Hindon (1774) and Taunton (1830),²² it uses the interweaving of gender, place and power revealed in these sources to present late-Georgian elections as highly gendered, transactional, even collusive, events that were superimposed upon, and had their outcomes shaped by, complex spiderwebs of local circumstances. While community traditions and ideological dynamics mattered, voter choice in the face-to-face political world of the period was often the result of long-standing personal relationships, with decisions determined by histories of favours, obligations, debts and animosities.²³ Thus the canvassers, the places that they chose to solicit votes or distribute favours, and the responses that they received, all need to be considered. Hard-fought elections blended the exceptional and the symbolic with the everyday, politicizing both public and domestic places to create a variety of politicised ‘spaces’. Taverns, streets and homes became the scene of public canvasses, ‘favours’ and private canvasses, with the latter – private canvasses in homes – arguably being the most intense and intimidating. Women, who were included at every step of the electoral process as workers, witnesses and the wives of voters, were frequently the objects of private canvasses and their responses to the gendered assumptions which shaped canvassers’ actions bear noting, not least for their ability to turn them back on the canvassers themselves. Power relations between canvassers and voters were similarly imbued with gender, but there, too, voters might draw upon positive gender traits to bolster confidence, resist coercion and/or speak their minds.

II

Canvassing was, according to David Eastwood, ‘the critical electoral institution of later-Hanoverian England’, or, as O’Gorman has argued, the ‘critical point of contact’ between the electoral system and the voters prior to Reform.²⁴ Canvasses were organised by local election committees and carried out by committee members, election agents and, usually at least once during a campaign, by the candidates. Public canvasses ideally took place early in the campaign to introduce the candidates to individual voters and determine whether there was enough support to contest the election all the way to a poll. They were usually impressive pieces of political street theatre, designed to attract attention and generate excitement: the canvassing group, often in party colours and bedecked with ribbons and cockades, would be accompanied by an assortment of local dignitaries and hired stavesmen, flagbearers and musicians. After gathering in a central public location, such as at the market cross, where introductions would be made, proclamations given and speeches delivered, the group would process through the town, calling on voters in a grand show of polite condescension.²⁵ By hiring local men to fill the supporting roles, public canvasses encouraged community involvement in the campaign. The

size and quality of a display spoke to the candidate's commitment to the town and – as with his willingness to treat liberally – to his future generosity and service to its voters. In Taunton, by the 1820s, candidates were accompanied about the town by bands of musicians and a minimum of thirty-two local men carrying the various 'Stand[s] of Colours' from the town's sixteen Friendly Societies. All were paid, but the clubmen's service was put to a collective as well as a personal good. They paid their wages to their club Stewards, who returned each man half a crown per day's employment; the remaining money went in to the Society's coffers to cover members' illness and burial costs.²⁶

Public canvasses tended to mop up the easy votes. A second public canvass might take place closer to polling day in especially contentious areas, or in towns such as Hindon, where the first canvass had been conducted by election agents and the candidates themselves did not appear until several weeks before the election. In the lead-up to contested elections, local public houses were usually recruited by opposing candidates and became politically aligned spaces. They provided election committees with rooms in which to conduct election business and offered agents, voters and their families venues for months of alcohol-fuelled social politics. In addition to dinners and treats, voters who had promised to plump for a candidate or interest (that is, they had pledged both their votes) were also frequently given signed vouchers or 'tally tickets', which could be redeemed for drink. In Taunton in 1830 the promise of a plumper netted eight quarts of beer.²⁷ All of this contributed to politicizing the town and embedding allegiances and rivalries. In 1754, for instance, the 'houses of entertainment' in Taunton had been open to voters and their families for six months prior to the election, reputedly resulting in 'great injury' to the town's woollen manufactory and exacerbating ill will to the extent of bloodshed and several deaths.²⁸ Over seventy years later, in 1826, there was no violence, but little else had changed: the public houses had been kept open throughout the nine-month campaign, leaving contemporaries to bemoan both the 'enormous' expense and the 'habits of idleness and licentiousness' this produced among the voters.²⁹

Public houses featured prominently in the notoriously corrupt 1774 election in Hindon (Wilts.). Hindon was a two-seat borough with about 200 voters, the vote being in householders not receiving poor relief.³⁰ The 1774 election saw most householders, and some of their wives and children, receive approximately 20 guineas each during the campaign, which extended from February 1773 to October 1774.³¹ In addition to the usual public and private canvasses, the candidates rivalled each other in doling out 'Favours' in cash to voters or representatives of their families. The latter were usually voters' sons, but money also went to some voters' wives, who attended in place of their husbands.³² These were carefully orchestrated events that relied upon complicity between agents and voters and implied a shared desire to circumvent charges of bribery and corruption.

News that a Favour was to be given for a certain candidate, from a specified public house, was spread through the town by 'a general Oration'.³³ Doorkeepers were appointed to control the crowd and let recipients in, up to four at a time, usually through an adjoining house or back entrance. Once indoors, they were escorted

upstairs to a room where several of the candidate's agents were present. Votes were seldom directly canvassed during Favours, as there was a shared understanding of why the money was given, and for whom. The masking fiction was that the Favour was a loan, 'Money lent in Charity', a sign of the generosity and Christian good will of the candidate; it was, however, also general knowledge that the loans would not be called in.³⁴ Despite this, the recipients signed formally witnessed notes before the money was disbursed. In Hindon, money was given out in one of two ways. At its most basic, the agent simply 'took out of a Box a Paper screwed up' and gave it to the voter to take home. William Crabb claimed, with questionable naiveté, that he had been given a twist of paper, 'which they told us was Tobacco for us. I put it in my Pocket; and when I came to examine it, I found it was Five Guineas'.³⁵ The 'usual Way of lending Money on Election Affairs' in Hindon involved rather more subterfuge, however.³⁶ Once the notes had been signed and witnessed, the recipients were taken from the first candlelit room into a second, sometimes unlit, room. At the George and Dragon and the White Horse they were then directed towards a hole in a door that led into another darkened room. At the eponymous Hole in the Wall malthouse, several bricks had been knocked out over the door to the pantry. As Charles Simpson's testimony demonstrated, the actual experience of receiving the money varied little according to place or candidate. Simpson was one of many Hindon voters who received a Favour from General Smith at the White Horse and Richard Brand Hollis at the Malthouse:

[at the White Horse] . . . they bid me come and set my Hand to a Paper – afterwards I was told to turn about, and hold up my Hand – something was put in it – it came out of the Hole in the Door – they directed me to the Hole – it was in a Paper – when I came Home I opened it, and found Five Guineas in it – I understood it was for General *Gold* – and was for voting –³⁷

The same thing occurred later at the Malthouse:

I signed it [the note] for Money – know the Hole above the Door of the Malthouse – I put my Hand at the Hole, and found a Paper drop into it – as it did before – did not look at it till I got home – when I found it was Five Guineas . . . there was no Candle in the Room, where we put our Hands to the Door – there was a Light in the Room where I put my Hand to the Notes –³⁸

By keeping the room on the other side of the hole unlit and ensuring that the individual distributing the money stayed silent, the agents could truthfully deny that they had seen money change hands; similarly, the voters could variously claim that they had no knowledge of who gave them the money, or what it was for. Some, such as Jeremiah Lucas, proclaimed their independence even while accepting the cash: 'It was understood to be for Hollis – They had no Business to ask me for my Vote – I had no Occasion to trouble my Head about it, till the Election Morning'.³⁹

The system was not foolproof, though, particularly as the agents were well-known local men. Thomas Dukes had no question about who had given him money at the Malthouse – and was under no illusion about its relation to his vote: ‘*Thomas Bye* gave me the Money out of the Hole, and shook Hands with me through the Hole, and said, I am very glad I have got you at last.’ When asked how he knew it was Bye, he responded simply: ‘I knew *Bye’s* Voice.’⁴⁰

As if disembodied hands distributing packets of cash through holes in walls were not enough to generate political interest and feed venality, the 1774 Hindon campaign culminated with the antics of an extraordinary cross-dressed figure. ‘Madam’ or ‘Mrs Punch’ appeared in the town the evening of General Smith’s canvass, less than a week before the polls opened. ‘She’ spent two evenings making the rounds of voters’ houses, accompanied by some of Smith’s leading agents and, at least on the Saturday night, by a guard of eight to ten men armed with sticks and clubs.⁴¹ Wearing women’s petticoats, a light-coloured cloak, a straw hat and questionable footwear, Mrs Punch was generally assumed to be a man in disguise,⁴² but the confusion of ‘her’ appearance was neatly captured in the witnesses’ confusion of pronouns when speaking about her: ‘It was a Woman’s Apparel – a very extraordinary Figure – he had Boots on’.⁴³ As George Spender testified, news that Mrs Punch was going to ‘dance’ spread quickly through the town:

the Cry was, “That *Punch* was to dance” – People understood by that, that they were going to receive more Money . . . it looked as though it was dressed in Woman’s Petticoats – I had Five Guineas put into my Hand – this was the Thing I expected when I heard *Punch* was to dance –⁴⁴

Not only did the figure of Mrs Punch draw upon the customary practice of male cross-dressing for purposeful disguise, as adopted in early-modern food riots and rough music, but it also suggested a shared familiarity with Punch as a popular subversive and political figure.⁴⁵ Punch’s ‘dance’ in Hindon was conveniently anonymous and wordless, as the cutler, William Crabb, testified: ‘. . . somebody knocked [at his door] – opened it, and *Thomas Spender* pointed to me to go to Mrs. *Punch* – she gave me something wrapped in a Paper – opened it when I went in, and found *Five Guineas* – Punch said nothing to me –’⁴⁶ Some families did particularly well out of it. John More and his sister, for instance, netted 30 guineas between them. On the first night of Punch’s dance, Mrs Punch had caught More by the hand and given him three twists of paper totalling fifteen guineas: ‘not explained what for – I understood it was for the Election –’.⁴⁷ The next night, Punch called at More’s father’s house. As his father was away, General Smith’s agent sent More to get his sister instead: when she came to the door, she too received fifteen guineas from Mrs Punch.⁴⁸

Frustratingly for the Calthorpe interest, who wanted to pin Punch’s actions firmly on General Smith at the trial, Mrs Punch’s disguise remained unbreached. The agents’ attempt to persuade a poor labourer, John Hacker, to perjure himself on this point provides a glimpse of the way that gender and power were interlinked at the time. The agents’ actions assumed a stereotype of labouring-sort masculinity

that was both deferential and avaricious: they made Hacker promises of immediate cash and vague future prospects from men of substance if he agreed to lie to the Committee. Hacker responded with righteous indignation. Whether this was real or fabricated for the benefit of the Committee is impossible to determine, but it too played to a masculine ‘type’ that the Committee would have recognised: that of the honest independent, the rough and ready, incorruptible figure of John Bull. Hacker testified that after the election William Penny, the publican who owned the Queen’s Head, had summoned him to his house. Penny had asked him if he would be willing to swear anything. He had refused. Penny then tried blandishments – ‘He said, if I would swear it should be the making of me’. Andrew Farrett had then promised him £30, a substantial amount of money for a poor labourer. Hacker refused again, angered that he was being asked to lie about what he had not seen:

I was angry with him for wanting me to swear what I did not know – I said to him, I would not swear – I did not drink with him . . . He said immediately, as soon as I came into the Room, “If you will swear who *Punch’s* Wife was, I will be the Making of you” – I have seen *Punch*, but could not guess who *Punch* was.⁴⁹

Instead, he took 6*d.* from Penny, presumably for his time, and testified against him.

The task of securing a borough’s uncertain, truculent, mutinous or venal voters fell largely to the lot of local election agents like William Penny through private canvasses and face-to-face encounters between neighbours. These could take place anywhere people met – be that in the public spaces of the town (the streets, shops, pubs, places of worship and the like) or in the domestic spaces of the home. The descriptions of the latter in controverted election trials are particularly interesting, not only because they often provide additional details about domestic interiors and living arrangements, but also because they often reveal a subtle shift in power, as the agents entered as supplicating guests – welcome or not – into the voter’s family’s personal space. To what extent this bolstered the latter’s confidence is impossible to determine, but the Taunton election of 1830 demonstrates that poor voters and their families were capable of a good degree of resistance.

Taunton was a substantially larger borough than Hindon: a potwalloper borough where 739 inhabitant householders had polled in 1826.⁵⁰ The retirement of Henry Seymour, one of the sitting members, and the withdrawal of Sir Thomas Lethbridge’s patronage from the second, William Peachy, had left the borough open to a contest in 1830. Henry Labouchere, a moderate Whig reformer, quickly stepped in to revive the longstanding interest of his uncle, the banker Alexander Baring. As his election was secure, the contest in 1830 centred on the second seat. Peachy was a Tory, well-known for his opposition to Catholic emancipation; for the election he tried to repackage himself as open to modest reform. He lost by nearly sixty votes to a stranger to the borough, another rich London banker and pro-reform Whig, Edward Bainbridge. Peachy promptly petitioned, charging Bainbridge (ultimately unsuccessfully) with bribery and corruption.⁵¹

Bainbridge was a hands-on candidate and, perhaps because he was new to the borough and had plenty of money at his command, his agents were enthusiastic and persistent canvassers. One of these was the publican, John Upham, whose attempts to secure the vote of Mary Godfrey Treby's husband are revealing of the interplay of personal relationships, gender and class in Georgian elections.⁵² Mary was an incomer to Taunton, a French woman who had married a local tailor and set up as a washer-woman, employing local women who came to her house and worked under her supervision. She had little time for Upham, perhaps because of her husband having had financial dealings with him in the past, but chiefly because she deemed his behaviour ungentlemanlike, intrusive and impolite. When Upham came to canvass her the first time, he made the mistake of offering her a sovereign if she would 'make my husband in a mind to vote for Mr. Bainbridge'.⁵³ Angered, she ignored his request. When he called again two days later, once again offering her money for her husband's vote, she bridled at his assumption that her influence could be bought:

No Mr. Upham, I have got too much bother on my work; I have plenty of trouble of my own, and I did not take notice of such a little trifle as that, and I said he would vote for who he liked.⁵⁴

As if Upham's requests were not enough of an imposition, she had also been angered by his lack of respect for her and her house as a place of work: 'he made fun with my washer-woman; and I do not like gentlemen to come in, and make fun with my working woman.'⁵⁵ Just what sort of 'fun' Upham was having remains unclear, but it may well have been ribald, as Mary was asked at the trial if he had also 'joked' her about 'going upstairs'. Suffice to say she left the Committee in no doubt of her refusal.⁵⁶ In fact, she had clearly been so provoked by Upham's offer of money and his effrontery that she had called in a local attorney just before the polls closed and made her statement to him. When Upham discovered several months later that she had been summoned to London to give evidence at the election trial, he had stormed over to her house, furious that she had dared to testify against him:

He came and asked me, what business I had to go to the gentlemen, and put my name down in the book; he asked me, what I was going to London for? I told him, if he would come to London too, he would hear? (*sic*)

As far as she was concerned, Upham's behaviour throughout had not been that of a gentleman and this final 'abuse' in her own personal space was simply unacceptable: 'I think it is very improper for a gentleman to come to my house in that way . . . Swearing and cursing, all sorts of wicked words not proper to be used.'⁵⁷ Nor was she alone in resisting intimidation. Her laundress, Sarah Lenthall, who had been working throughout one of Upham's canvasses, was similarly pressured by another of her employers to change her story at the trial in order to support Upham. She too refused, putting her reputation for honesty above her employment: 'Yes; I would tell any one, because I was coming to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth.'⁵⁸

While Mary had refused to be swayed or intimidated by Upham, and had not allowed him to take ‘liberties’ with her washer-women or herself, the trial records indicate that both committee members and gentlemen canvassers assumed that the taking of liberties with good-looking women of the electorate was one of the fringe benefits of canvassing. The most common of these would probably have been the customary election kiss.⁵⁹ As the examination of Edward Walker illustrates, the gentlemen presumed desire on the side of the lower-class women. Walker, who was a friend of Bainbridge’s and had accompanied him on the first three days of his public canvass, spelled this out when questioned about Bainbridge’s unsuccessful canvassing of Ann Tames, ‘a very nice looking woman’:⁶⁰

Your attention perhaps, was drawn to the females there.

I would certainly rather canvass the ladies, than the gentlemen.

Were you going into any other house, were there were any females?

There were females in most of them; the ladies in Taunton rather made a point of being in during the canvass.⁶¹

Whether it was because of Ann’s good looks or Bainbridge’s bull-headed determination to get her husband’s vote, Bainbridge canvassed Ann once during the public canvass and then another three times privately. Ann, however, refused to try and influence her husband: ‘He asked me for my husband’s vote repeatedly . . . and I could not give him any answer, for he had not made up his mind to give his vote to any one’. Eventually, Bainbridge found her husband at home and interrupted his steak dinner to canvass him. He promised to pay their outstanding rent and their next year’s rent if Tames would give him his vote. Tames refused. As a result, Ann scrambled to raise the £4 that they owed. She emptied her savings and called in some debts. By election week, she had raised enough money and paid the debt. She knew what the consequences would have been otherwise: ‘my Landlord is one of Mr. Bainbridge’s party, and he would have distrained my goods.’⁶²

This sort of intimidation was used against poor voters by the agents on both sides. In the case of the Coppingers, however, a visit from the bailiff, who threatened to distrain the family’s goods immediately for unpaid rent, masked an involved back-story reflective of power and community tensions.⁶³ Richard Coppinger posed a challenge to the established hierarchy in a number of ways: foremost, as a Catholic in 1830, the first election after Catholic Emancipation, he was the embodiment of the political unknown. Although his indifferent health meant that he was often behind on his rent and forced to rely upon his wife’s work as a dyer, his birth and education also set him far apart socially from other poor voters. The son of a wealthy West India merchant who had fallen on bad times at the turn of the nineteenth century, he had been educated in a Catholic college and had articulated as an attorney for nine years before his father’s financial problems had disrupted his career. After some years in the navy, he had established himself in Taunton as an accountant and dyer. When he was well enough, he performed legal work for local

businessmen and was frequently involved in their business affairs, both in the collection of outstanding debts and in ensuring that they did not cheat the Exchequer through sharp dealings using unstamped paper. Unsurprisingly, this meant he had made enemies: he was, according to his landlord, a 'troublesome' man.⁶⁴

At the time of the campaign, Coppinger was living with his wife and family in a house owned by a Taunton grocer, Richard Turle, who was a strong supporter of General Peachy. Turle was determined to secure Coppinger's vote, but Coppinger refused Peachy's public canvass and promised a plumper, 'with great pleasure', to the pro-Reform Bainbridge.⁶⁵ While Peachy's well-known, long-time opposition to Catholic Emancipation may have contributed to Coppinger's decision, Coppinger's stated reason for refusing to support Peachy was personal: he had not forgiven Turle for actions taken against his family the previous December. With Coppinger 'lying very ill, confined to my bed in Barnstaple', thus miles away from his family in Taunton and unable to help them, Turle had distrained the family's possessions in mid-winter for a debt of £10. This action had struck at the very heart of his patriarchal role as husband, father, provider and protector of his family:

He [Turle] met me at the corner of the White Hart Inn; he said Coppinger, I thought I could have counted on you; I said certainly not Mr. Turle: I used those words in allusion to what had passed in the December before.⁶⁶

Turle remained intent on obtaining the vote, however. After several subsequent unsuccessful canvasses by a Peachy agent, Turle arranged for his namesake and relative, the bailiff, to meet Coppinger and pointedly 'advise' him to call on the agent. When Coppinger ignored this hint, the landlord then called on him one morning, declaring 'I am not going to be trifled with', and demanding payment that day of a pound Coppinger owed him.⁶⁷ While Coppinger was out that afternoon to collect the money, he then sent in the bailiff and the Sheriff's Officer to demand the immediate payment of all the outstanding rent (£6 2s. 6d.), giving the bailiff instructions to distrain the Coppingers' goods forthwith if they could not pay. As Mrs Coppinger, who was home alone with her children had no money to hand, the bailiff immediately began an intimidatory inventory of the Coppingers' possessions. While sudden distraints of this sort were not unheard of, the speed in this case was unusual.

Mrs Coppinger promptly took action, sending one of the children to find her husband. Coppinger had already been informed of the distraint by yet another neighbour and had gone in search of the ubiquitous John Upham. As one of Bainbridge's primary agents, Upham might easily have arranged to have had the Bainbridge interest pay off Coppinger's debt – which was exactly what the Peachy interest tried to prove at the trial – but that would have involved Bainbridge in demonstrable bribery and corruption. Instead, Coppinger went to Upham as an equal, businessman to businessman, to call in a favour. Several years earlier Upham had been owed a debt, which had been paid to Richard Turle, the bailiff; when Turle refused to turn the money over to him, he had sought Coppinger's legal assistance and Coppinger had not charged him for the service.⁶⁸ Knowledge of

the bad blood between Upham and the Turles, and the chance that this would give Upham to even the score, might also have played some part in Coppinger's decision.

Unfortunately, Upham was not at home. Coppinger left a message with Upham's wife and returned home, where the bailiff gave him one final chance to change his vote:

Turle then said to me, take my advice, I will get you ten pounds in five minutes, and I will insure you a guinea a day of General Peachy's Committee, if you will give them your plumper.

What answer did you give to Turle?

No Sir, I will do no such thing; he repeated the offer two or three times, I said at last "No, let the last chair go, I will not do it."⁶⁹

Shortly after this Upham arrived, went briefly into the kitchen with the Coppingers (that is, away from the bailiff who was in the front room) and then left again to make the necessary arrangements. Coppinger went upstairs to change into his best suit to prevent the bailiffs from taking it. He was just putting on his trousers when Upham joined him in the bedroom:

"How much do you want?" Seven pounds: "Send for a stamp for a note of hand, and meet me next door at Clarke's, and I will give it you – that is the public house.

...

Had you completed your change of dress before Upham left the room?

...

No; I had not even put my braces on my trousers before he left the room, and I was in the act of putting them on when he came.⁷⁰

Within minutes, the affair was settled and Coppinger had paid off the bailiff, making sure to get receipts as evidence. His vote was secure and, despite the best efforts of the Peachy interest, no charge of bribery or corruption was proven. Of course, the money that Upham loaned Coppinger might have originated in Bainbridge's committee, but it was ostensibly money given by one respectable businessman to another for services rendered. As with Hacker's refusal to perjure himself, Coppinger's experience speaks to personal integrity rooted in independent, honest masculinity. It also, however, underlines the importance of personal relationships, rivalries and grievances in explaining why voters might give, or obstinately refuse to give, votes to particular candidates.

Conclusion

The records of controverted elections provide historians with unrivalled access to late-Georgian political culture, illuminating its rich complexity and restoring the

personal dimension to electoral politics by exposing the acts, thoughts and feelings of the individuals who brought it to life. They not only give voice back to many who would otherwise remain voiceless, but they also restore agency, demonstrating beyond doubt the 'reach' of elections prior to Reform and delivering insights into the how, where and why of election campaigns. They suggest that the male act of voting in contested elections was the final outcome of an often extended, transactional process that operated across both commercial and domestic locations, and involved the candidates, their local agents, the voters and their womenfolk, as well as a varied cast of servants, neighbours and others. Public canvasses, 'favours' and private canvasses were carefully calibrated and made use of increasingly private or domestic, often one-to-one, locations as the pressure for votes increased. While the most persistent and intimidatory canvasses tended to take place in the domestic space of the home, the home was also a seat of power and authority for voters and their families, providing private spaces for intimate discussions and possibly bolstering confidence and resistance.

Women were active at all stages of local election campaigns as workers, witnesses and objects of canvassing. They played a formal legal role in a political system that recognised them as rational and reliable witnesses and officially privileged their local knowledge and personal experience; they also played an informal, but recognised and potentially powerful, role as figures of influence through their traditional links to men, be it their husbands or other male family members. Their interactions with committee members, candidates and agents, like those of their male counterparts, were expressions of gender and power. Gender operated from the bottom up as well as the top down, enabling labouring-sort men and women to make moral claims to respectability, honesty and independence in the face of rude, improper, corrupt and ungentlemanlike behaviours. While deference, ideological allegiance and sheer venality all played their parts in pre-Reform elections, it is only by gaining a better holistic understanding of electoral politics at the time – be that through the interplay of gender and power, the influence wielded by personal friendships and animosities, or the influence of networks of debts and obligations – that we will gain a fuller appreciation of what political agency and the exercise of the vote actually meant to Georgian contemporaries.

Notes

- 1 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition, Before a Committee of the House of Commons*, 23 February 1831 (Taunton: W. Bragg, 1831), p. 19. For Ann Whitefield's evidence, see pp. 18–25.
- 2 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 19.
- 3 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 22.
- 4 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 25.
- 5 John David Chambers, *A Complete Dictionary of the Law and Practice of Elections* (London: Saunders and Benning, 1837), pp. 657, 664. *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 261.
- 6 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, pp. 24, 264. For Sarah Slocombe's evidence, see pp. 264–267.
- 7 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 265.
- 8 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 262.

- 9 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, pp. 24, 266.
- 10 The vote in Taunton was in the 'Potwallers', that is, in the inhabitants of the borough, as Householders or Lodgers, who had a legal settlement, were not receiving alms or charity and had the facilities required to cook for/feed themselves: James Savage, *Manual for the Electors of Taunton* (Taunton: n.pub., 1826), pp. 16–17. See also the biography of the borough available at History of Parliament online: www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/taunton [accessed 1 January 2015].
- 11 Somerset Record Office [hereafter SRO], DD/X/WLM/3/C/1352: 'In the House of Commons. Before a Select Committee 10 March 1807 . . . Brief for the Sitting Members', hand paginated, pp. 7–9.
- 12 According to the testimony of Anthony Loins, witnesses in the previous general election in Taunton had each received 5s. per diem: *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 80.
- 13 Edward Porritt with Annie G. Porritt, *The Unreformed House of Commons: Parliamentary Representation: Before 1832*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), i, pp. 79–80. In the 92 freeman boroughs, women who were the eldest (or eldest living) daughters of freemen, or in some cases the widows of freemen, brought to their (re) marriages the right to make their husbands freemen and voters. See Chalus, 'Women, Electoral Privilege and Practice in the Eighteenth Century', in *Women in British Politics, 1760–1860: The Power of the Petticoat*, ed. by Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 19–39.
- 14 'Upwards of two hundred persons, among whom were several females, have within the last few days, taken their departure for London, for the purpose of giving evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons . . .': *Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser*, 23 February 1831. On 2 March 1831, the newspaper expanded on the subject: 'Additional witnesses have, since our last, been daily sent for, and have been required to set off for London at a very short notice. In some instances whole families have been summoned . . .'.
- 15 Women also continued to serve as witnesses to select committees on controverted elections well after Reform. Matthew Cragoe has identified women making up to as much as 25 per cent of the witnesses to the controverted elections he studied at mid-century: Matthew Cragoe, "'Jenny Rules the Roost': Women and Electoral Politics, 1832–68", in *Women in British Politics*, pp. 153–168 (p. 162). See also Zoe Dyndor, 'The Political Culture of Elections in Northampton, 1768–1868' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Northampton, 2010). Dyndor's article 'Widows, Wives and Witnesses: Women and their Involvement in the 1768 Northamptonshire Borough Parliamentary Election', *Parliamentary History*, 30/3 (2011), 309–323, provides the most detailed study to date of women as witnesses in an eighteenth-century English election.
- 16 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 263.
- 17 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, pp. 24–25. The Assessor was usually a solicitor or barrister brought in by the returning officer, i.e., someone whose knowledge of electoral law for the borough would be used to determine disputed votes. See Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: The Unreformed Electorate of Hanoverian England, 1734–1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 127.
- 18 For an overview of recent publications, see Katrina Navickas, 'What Happened to Class? New Histories of Labour and Collective Action in Britain', *Social History*, 36/2 (2011), 192–204; also 'Protest and the Politics of Space and Place': http://protesthistory.org.uk/?page_id=91 [accessed 16 May 2015].
- 19 See, among others, works by Elaine Chalus, Anna Clark, Linda Colley, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Amanda Foreman, Kathryn Gleadle, Katharine Glover, Anne Laurence, Judith Lewis, Clarissa Campbell Orr, Sarah Richardson, Kim Reynolds, Hilda Smith, Anne Stott, Ingrid Tague, Amanda Vickery, Rachel Weil and Kathleen Wilson.
- 20 For masculinity and Georgian political culture see Matthew McCormack, *The Independent Man: Citizenship and Gender Politics in Georgian England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 76, 80, 90–91, 20–22; Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

- 21 For example, John Brewer, 'Theater and Counter-Theater in Georgian Politics', *Radical History Review*, 22 (1979–80), 4–40; H.T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1994); James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Frank O'Gorman, 'Campaign Rituals and Ceremonies: The Social Meaning of Elections in England, 1780–1860', *Past and Present*, 135 (1992), 79–115; O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*; John A. Phillips, *Electoral Behavior in Unreformed England: Plumpers, Splitters, and Straights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c.1815–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 22 *Report from the Select Committee appointed to try and Determine the Merits of the Petition of James Calthorpe, Esquire, and Richard Beckford, Esquire . . . for the Borough of Hindon, in the County of Wilts* (London, 1775); *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*. The outcomes of both elections were challenged on accusations of bribery and corruption: the former under the Parliamentary Elections Act 1770 (commonly known as the Grenville Act); the latter under the subsequent, consolidating Controverted Elections Act 1828 (9 Geo IV c. 22). The Grenville Act devolved the responsibility for trying controverted elections to separate select committees composed of two nominated MPs (one for each side of the case) and thirteen MPs chosen from a ballot of forty-nine: Philip Lawson, 'Grenville's Election Act, 1770', *Historical Research*, 53/128 (1980), 218–228; Thomas Erskine May, *The Constitutional History of England since the Accession of George III*, ed. and extended by Francis Holland, 3 vols (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), I, p. 245; Richard Burn, with Joseph and Thomas Chitty, *The Justice of the Peace and Parish Officer*, 26th edn, 6 vols (London: S. Sweet & A. Maxwell, 1831), V, p. 30.
- 23 David Eastwood has spoken of the 'highly visible, frequently intimate world of the parish', when examining public life in rural England in this period: David Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700–1870* (Houndsmills: Macmillan, 1997), p. 30.
- 24 David Eastwood, 'Parliament and Locality: Representation and Responsibility in Late-Hanoverian England', *Parliamentary History*, 17/1 (1998), 68–81 (p. 76); O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 67. The following discussion of canvassing draws upon O'Gorman, pp. 90–105.
- 25 The duke of Buckingham's records for the 1832 Buckinghamshire county election include payment for 104 local men; two bands of eighteen and fourteen men, respectively, eight flagbearers and sixty-four stavesmen: Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, Stowe Papers, STG Elections Box 8(1).
- 26 SRO, DD/X/WLM/3/C/1352, Disputed parliamentary Election, Taunton 1807: 'In the House of Commons. Before a select Committee 10 March 1807 . . . Brief for the Sitting Members. . . .'
- 27 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, pp. 116–117. For a copy of a tally ticket from the Worcester election of 1774, see *A Circumstantial and Impartial Account of the Grand Contest for a Member to Serve in Parliament for; With the Depositions of Evidences. . . .* 2nd edn (London: J. Swan, 1775), p. 14.
- 28 Notes on Taunton elections added in handwriting at the back of SRO, T/PH/UP1, James Savage, *Manual for the Electors of Taunton* (Taunton: printed for and sold by the author by A. Glanvill, 1826).
- 29 Savage, *Manual for the Electors of Taunton*.
- 30 J.A. Cannon, 'Hindon', in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1754–90*, ed. by L. Namier and J. Brooke (London: Secker & Warburg, 1964): www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/constituencies/hindon [accessed 28 May 2015]. All four candidates were found guilty of 'the most flagrant and notorious acts of bribery and corruption', and the borough was threatened with disfranchisement. Beckford and Calthorpe were subsequently acquitted at the Salisbury Assizes in 1776, but Smith and Hollis were each fined 1000 marks and sent to prison for six months. Smith also had to post a £2,000 surety for future good behaviour. Thirteen election agents, including

- Hollis's agent 'Jobber' Stevens, were found guilty and permanently disenfranchised. See John Disney, *Memoirs of Thomas Brand Hollis* (London: T. Gillet, 1808), pp. 11–12, 21; *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 3; T.B. Howell, *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings . . .*, 21 vols (London: T.C. Hansard, 1816), XX, No. 559. For the candidates, see *The House of Commons, 1754–90*.
- 31 Perry Gauci, 'The Attack of the Creolian Powers: West Indians at the Parliamentary Elections of Mid-Georgian Britain, 1754–74', *Parliamentary History*, 33/1 (2014), 201–222 (p. 220).
 - 32 Mrs Shore, Mrs Erwood and Mrs Farrett all appear to have received money for their husbands from General Smith in February 1773: *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, pp. 7, 20, 38. A Mrs Hart is also mentioned in Howell, *Complete Collection of State Trials*, XX, col. 1243.
 - 33 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 33.
 - 34 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 40.
 - 35 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, pp. 31, 48. The narrative above has been compiled from the depositions given by Crabb, Penny, Mead, Lambert and Simpson.
 - 36 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 40.
 - 37 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 33.
 - 38 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 33.
 - 39 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 36.
 - 40 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 83. In 1774 in Shaftesbury, eight miles from Hindon, money was also given to voters out of a hole in a wall. Here, the dispensing alderman disguised himself as 'Punch'. The Shaftesbury election preceded Hindon's by three days, but which campaign originated the Punch/Mrs Punch tactics remains unclear. Grego, *A History of Parliamentary Elections and Electioneering*, pp. 242–243. See also the contemporary print, *The Shaftesbury Election or the Humours of Punch* (1775) in the British Museum collection.
 - 41 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, pp. 25, 45, 60.
 - 42 Thomas Spencer claimed she was wearing women's shoes, whereas Daniel Lambert remembered her wearing men's boots: *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, pp. 25, 45.
 - 43 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, pp. 25, 57.
 - 44 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 42.
 - 45 See, for instance, Jonathan Swift, 'Punch's Petition to the Ladies' [c.1722–4], *Poetical Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. John Mitford, 3 vols (London: W. Pickering, 1834), vol. 3, pp. 222–225; *Politics in Miniature: Or, The Humours of Punch's Resignation* (London: n.pub., 1742).
 - 46 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 50.
 - 47 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 57.
 - 48 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, p. 57.
 - 49 *Report from the Select Committee . . . for the Borough of Hindon*, pp. 86–87.
 - 50 *Parliamentary Papers* (1830–1), X, p. 8.
 - 51 Terry Jenkins, 'Taunton', in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820–1832*, ed. by D.R. Fisher (2009): www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/taunton [accessed 9 October 2014]; *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 298.
 - 52 For Mary Treby's evidence, *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, pp. 90–96. Her testimony is corroborated by her washer-woman, Sarah Lenthall, pp. 96–98.
 - 53 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 90. Upham wants Mr. Treby to give him 'one word', i.e., one vote, for Bainbridge. He uses the same language when he (also unsuccessfully) canvasses Mary Baker on the second day of the poll. He asks Mary if her husband had promised his vote – had he 'given a word'? Mary replied, 'yes one, and I had given the other'. Although she had no legal right to her husband's second vote, her response reflects the fact that the vote was frequently viewed as family property and that wives had a say in how it was exercised. For further examples of this see Cragoe, 'Jenny Rules the Roost'.

- 54 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 90.
- 55 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 93.
- 56 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 95.
- 57 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 91.
- 58 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 97.
- 59 Elaine Chalus, 'Kisses for Votes? The Kiss and Corruption in Eighteenth-Century English Elections', in *The Kiss in History*, ed. by Karen Harvey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 122–147.
- 60 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 207.
- 61 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, pp. 206–207.
- 62 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, pp. 50–51.
- 63 For Coppinger's case, see *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, pp. 115–121, 124–125, 270–287.
- 64 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, pp. 119, 277.
- 65 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 270.
- 66 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, pp. 270–271.
- 67 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 271.
- 68 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 271.
- 69 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 272.
- 70 *Trial of the Taunton Election Petition*, p. 272.

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11

GENDER, POLITICS AND VOTING IN EARLY MODERN SCANDINAVIA

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Introduction

This chapter examines the complex ways in which divergent political developments in Norway and Sweden from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century impacted upon women's ability to take an active part in politics. We focus on women and votes – not the modern struggle for enfranchisements and universal voting as a human right, but on the previous political logic where political rights were for the few, as in Scandinavia where the right to vote for a commoner was a right reserved for heads of households who contributed to society with taxes. In early modern Sweden widows in the position of taxpaying household heads also held this right. Widows could vote in several elections, even in elections to the Diet, the *Riksdag*. In Norway local votes for taxpaying widows came on the political agenda and were debated after Norway received political freedom in the early nineteenth century, but failed to become law in the end. An analysis of early modern political systems and the transition to modern citizenships affords a gendered perspective on the meaning of political rights for men and women. Our gendered perspective deals with marital status and the implication of obligations and rights for those in household positions, both male and female. Analysing early modern politics allows us to regard votes and elections as parts of a political culture that also included political means such as supplications, court cases and riots. We begin our chapter in Sweden, analysing the election of local clergy and elections of chief magistrates, magistrates and members of the Diet. Then we turn to Norway and discuss political rights and practices from a gendered perspective during the transition from an early modern to a modern political system, with a special focus on the question: how could widows' votes come onto the political agenda without protests and why did it fail in the end?

Elections of local clergy in Sweden 1650–1800: from consensus to majority

The right of Swedish parishes to participate in and exert their influence on local church elections has a long history and is recorded at least as far back as the medieval law-rolls of the Swedish Provinces. Until legal reforms of the 1730s it was the *parishes* that made their voices heard in these matters. The prevailing consensus ideology did not leave any space for disagreements – the parish's demands on the clergyman to be appointed were assumed to be the result of unanimous decisions taken within the local society. The decision-making process itself was not regulated by legislation, which in reality meant that the *informal* structures were very important for the rural political culture.¹

A small number of leading local actors were able to make decisions relatively unimpeded as representatives of local society, and act as spokesmen in communications with the authorities. The role of the larger parish collective was more obscure. Of course, the nobility constituted the natural leading actors in nobility-dominated places. However, in Northern Sweden there was hardly any nobility. Other groups, such as county sheriffs and lay assessors, took on the nobility's leading positions in connection with appointments of the local clergy. Also the cleric's widows enjoyed influential positions, although at the informal level. As part of the clergy household they enjoyed respect within the parish and on several occasions they used that position to influence key members in the local society to act in their favour. A cleric's widow's future well-being was very much dependent on the goodwill of her late husband's successor, so it's easy to understand why she wanted to have a say in these matters.²

During the major part of the seventeenth century, the diocesan leaders (the bishop and the chapter) upheld a relatively pragmatic approach to the parishes' demands, and the demand that a vicar's widow was to be supported by her late husband's successor was often met with a positive response.³ During the first few decades of the eighteenth century, disputes in connection with cleric's appointments grew fiercer. The parishes kept raising their voices in the demand to use their prescriptive rights – their liberty of choice – at the same as the dioceses leaders tried, in practice, to limit the parishes' voting possibilities by claiming that the parishes' constant wish to protect the vicars' widows' position led to a neglect of the most merited clergymen.⁴

The diocese board's altered approach to the parishes' demand for support for vicars' widows should be seen as an expression of the clergy's general professionalisation during this period. The demand for a limited parish election was also carried by the clergy in the Swedish *Riksdag* of the 1720s – that is, in the first *Riksdag* sessions after a 40-year period of absolutism.⁵ After the death of the autocratic Swedish king Charles XII in 1718, new forms of local as well as national institutions for political influence developed and changed. During a period known as the Age of Liberty (1718–1772), the power of the crown diminished at the cost of the *Riksdag*, a diet of four estates (nobility, clergy, burghers and peasants). In practice, several

actions were taken, both centrally and in the various dioceses, in order to overcome the parishes' constant demands to preserve the widow's position.⁶

Another measure that became prominent during the 1720s was the arrangement of more organised local church elections at which *each and every member* of the parish was encouraged to express their opinion. They were also requested not to elect any other clergyman than the candidates advocated by the diocesan board. The board's opinion was that many congregational demands of preservation of the widows' position really arose due to strong influence affected by the widows themselves and those who favoured them, that is to say the local elite. Therefore, this new practice should primarily be regarded as a conscious strategy used by the diocesan board in order to reduce the dominant role of the local elite in these matters.⁷

When the local decision-making process concerning clergy elections was adjusted in detail through various regulations in the 1730s and 1740s, the conditions for the local political culture changed. Elections of the clerics were to be conducted through proper election events in accordance with the majority principle – informal gatherings to debate appointment issues were expressly prohibited. With that, the right to vote was tied to *ownership*, which in rural areas meant the farm estate and in the urban areas the town houses. The decision-making process was formalised, which decreased the significance of informal structures in these matters. The formerly leading actors – among them the small group of clerical widows – lost parts of the relatively strong influence that they once had on this process. Hence, the connection between local political culture and changes in legislation is clear as far as elections of the clerics are concerned – the legislation fostered a local political culture, which contributed to changes in the legislation, which in its turn contributed to changes in the local political culture.

The legislative reforms of the early 1700s increased the possibilities for larger groups of widows (as landowners) to take an active part in the local decision-making process. A primary question is, then, when or if women were at all entitled to vote in the elections and whether they used their right to vote. As head of the household, the yeoman's widow was formally entitled to participate in the local political arena. Earlier research does not provide a clear picture of whether the widows actually participated as actors at the *parish meetings*, which constituted the primary arena of the local autonomy after the professionalisation of the local courts in the first part of the seventeenth century.⁸ Then, what happened at the cleric elections – was a yeoman's widow entitled to take part? With the legislative reforms of the 1730s and onward the right to vote formally belonged to yeomen. This meant that women – mostly widows – farm owners were given an official right to participate in church elections. Hence, the legislation can be said to have been gender neutral in its formulation, in that it did not bar women from political participation.

Unfortunately, the extent to which the widows actually attended the electoral events and submitted their votes in person is not always evident from the electoral registers. In general, widows represented between two and seven percent of the total number of voters in rural parts of northern Sweden during the later part of the investigated period, 1730–1800.⁹ Judging from the electoral registers most women

who were entitled to vote exercised their right to vote to the same extent as men. The total poll number in church elections was above 80 percent during the whole period. Proxy voting was only registered in just over 30 percent of all electoral registers. From these it can be observed that widows voted by proxy to a much larger extent than the men. In fact only a small number of widows were registered as having voted in person – about three-quarters voted by proxy. Men would also vote by proxy, but to a far lesser extent, amounting to around one-quarter of the total number of male voters. It is apparent from the examined electoral registers that, on the whole, widows hesitated to submit their votes in person at the elections and would prefer to use a proxy – a son, brother or in-law, a neighbour or a spokesman. Widows do not seem to have assumed the same political status as the men, which manifested itself in the widows' much wider use of proxy voting.

In conclusion it can be established that yeoman's widows did own a vote in connection with local church elections, although the vote was not linked to the widow personally, but to her estate, and was primarily conveyed by a male proxy. Owning a farm and having the right to vote meant that female farm owners were officially entitled to vote, but the local political culture was not as gender neutral as the legislation. Women farm owners were simply not given the same scope in the local decision-making process as the men in the rural areas of northern Sweden.

So far this chapter has looked at the gendered aspect of the rural church elections. A question remains, however, about women's involvement in urban church elections. In contrast to the role of women in rural church elections, the urban women constituted an average of ten percent of the total number of voters in church elections during the eighteenth century, proportionally higher than those voting in the countryside. The simple explanation for this apparent difference between the urban and rural areas is that it was easier for a widow to make a living in the town than in the countryside – the legislation favoured urban women. Daughters in the countryside inherited half of their brother's/brothers' shares, with the result that sons would usually inherit the estate while daughters would have to settle with the outlying fields. The urban daughters and sons inherited equally, following the regime of community of property. Hence the women in the urban areas had a better financial starting point, which in the long run meant that more widows had the chance to make a living in the town than in the countryside.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the differences between town and countryside should not be exaggerated in regard to the gendered aspect of election participation. Although there were, generally speaking, twice as many widow voters in the towns as in the countryside, their total number was quite small, at least in the small towns in the northern and eastern part of Sweden that we have studied.¹¹ In those elections where proxy voting had been registered the urban women are overrepresented just like the rural women. Another tendency is that women were absent from the elections to a somewhat higher degree than the men. The small number of women voters makes it difficult to come to any far-reaching conclusions regarding the relation between women's and men's electoral participation, but the tendency towards

a relatively high absence and the relatively frequent use of proxies does indicate that women were not accepted as standard participants at the church elections to a much higher degree than other urban elections. But, nevertheless, the urban widows continued to take part in these elections during the eighteenth century, even though they were prohibited to take part in other elections. We will return to a discussion about the question of why later on.

Elections of chief magistrates, magistrates and members of the *Riksdag* in Sweden

The development from consensus to majority was part of a larger political transition in Swedish politics. During the Age of Liberty and, especially by the end of the period, the two commoner estates of burghers and peasants got political influence, not least through the party system of 'hats' and 'caps'. In 1766 a freedom of press act was introduced, which in turn made society more politicised. The political influence and power increased significantly within the Estate of Burghers, which besides the estates of nobility and clergy had a place in the 'secret committee', and therefore influence over state finance and foreign policy.¹²

During the 1720s and 1730s, elections of officials and members of the *Riksdag* were introduced at local levels. From now on elections of chief magistrates, city court judges and members of the *Riksdag* were introduced in cities and towns, and elections of members of the *Riksdag* were held in the countryside. There were, however, vague regulations of these elections, and there was a wide variety of local practice on how to proceed with the elections. They could be carried out through electorates, or be direct. The votes could be given per capita or be counted according to a graded scale, which as in the clergy elections meant that the more you paid in taxes, the more votes you had. The regulations were gender neutral as written, which also meant that there were openings for female participation.¹³ In some cities and towns women participated in elections, whereas in others not at all. As there has been an irregular as well as geographically scattered preservation of the electoral rolls, we find it difficult to construct models for how and why the local political cultures differed.¹⁴ Two criteria for voting seem, however, to have been most important: one which opened up for female participation, taxpaying, and another which was more ambivalent towards women or even excluded them, burghership, the local citizenship that was based on residence and traditional urban occupations. In the towns there was a development where it became increasingly common to use the graded scale instead of votes per capita when voting. This in turn made female participation in the elections more common. Regarding the chief magistrate elections, the proportion of elections in which women were allowed to participate increased from 55 percent of all elections in the 1720s and 1730s to slightly more than 70 percent until 1758, when female voters lost their right to vote. As may be concluded from the numbers, women were totally excluded from many elections. When elections were made within male corporate bodies, such as societies of merchants or craftsmen, no women participated at all.¹⁵

The vagueness of the regulations tended to cause conflicts at local levels, as for example in towns there were a lot of people who tried to be included in the burghership to get specific privileges, and no clear line between 'proper burghers' and others existed. In these conflicts, burgher widows was also questioned, which in 1758 meant that burgher widows lost their rights to vote in elections of chief court magistrates. No specific discussion at a national level has been recognised about this decision. As a matter of fact, the 1758 ordinance said that 'neither absent burghers nor burgher's widows' would be allowed to vote and the interpretation in the towns was that women disappeared from elections of chief magistrates.¹⁶ The women voters were almost always burgher widows and they voted sometimes in person, sometimes by proxy. An overall pattern compared to men is that women voted to a lesser extent, and in elections where proxies were used, it was more common for women not to appear in person at the election, but use proxies. One explanation for this is that a female voter on average was older than a male voter and therefore probably preferred to stay home or send another person instead of voting in person. Another explanation has more to do with the gendered political culture. Even if women as we have showed acted politically as voters of representatives, they seem not to have been able to stand as eligible or to take part in formal decision-making in different bodies.¹⁷ Even if the source material for these elections seldom comments on gender, there are traces of an underlying distrust of women in public life in the local political culture. In a conflict about a chief magistrate election in a town in central Sweden in 1759, one of the arguments was that approving widows' suffrage might lead to their being present in 'public places'. This might in turn 'cause a great deal of disorder and less quiet living among ordinary people'.¹⁸

The prohibition of women from voting for chief magistrates in 1758 differed from the regulations of other elections. Women were still allowed to vote for magistrates, clergymen and members of the *Riksdag*. Or, they were at least not prohibited. The political culture seems to have changed in an even more masculine way, as female voters became increasingly rare in elections of magistrates and members of the *Riksdag*. A vivid argument against female voters was to question why women should be allowed to vote in the *Riksdag* election in the town or city hall when they were not allowed to vote for chief magistrates. In eighteenth-century Swedish towns the local citizenship, the burghership, became individualised and masculinised, and the significance of marriage for both husband and wife was being exposed to change, which cumulatively eroded women's participation in voting. For example, it was no longer possible for a man marrying a burgher's daughter to achieve the status of a burgher. Burghers' widows' access to towns' land and ability to run businesses was also questioned. Arguments about widows not being 'proper burghers' or not representing their deceased husbands were put forward to restrain women from voting. They had not sworn the oath as male members of the burgher estate did.¹⁹ In addition to that, yet another criteria for voting became more evident, namely eligibility. Traditionally the chief magistrate was most often sent to the *Riksdag*, but during the Age of Liberty other 'honourable' men were elected in competition with others. As the *Riksdag* gained more power at the cost

of the monarch, the elections of members of the *Riksdag* became more important. In this political process yet another argument about voting was put forward: only those who were eligible could gain franchise.²⁰ This connection between eligibility and voting was in fact important during the French Revolution and afterwards as modern political citizenship developed.²¹

However, as discussed earlier, the regulations about the elections to the *Riksdag* were unsystematic and caused a lot of conflicts; for example, two people could show up at the *Riksdag* claiming that they were the rightful candidates representing the same town. The need to reform the regulations eventually dealt with the question of the voter's sex. At first sight in the *Riksdag* discussion, the exclusion of women was not at all evident, but as the debate continued, it became clear that in 1771 women were excluded from voting for members of the estate of burghers. The arguments in the *Riksdag* were that women already were denied the vote for chief magistrates, and besides 'the female sex' was excluded from politics in other countries. This was the first time references to 'sex' appeared. The decision did not receive royal authority, and therefore there was actually no legislation that excluded women from voting to the estate of burghers. Even if women as a rule disappeared from the elections, there were still some exceptions and women did participate in a few elections for the *Riksdag* in nineteenth-century Sweden. Also the estate of peasantry had to decide whether women should be allowed to vote in *Riksdag* elections or not. At the same *Riksdag* meeting in 1771, it was decided that farm-owning widows 'could not be refused permission to participate in the election'. Ownership was so crucial to estate affiliation that it overshadowed the issue of gender. However, no electoral rolls of elections of members of the estate of peasantry have been discovered, and therefore it is difficult to estimate women's political participation in these elections. As they were conducted through electorates, the political influence of individual women most likely was lower than in towns. The formulation of the estate as they could not refuse female participation, indicates that they rather wished that women would stay at home.²²

As mentioned earlier, women in Sweden continued to participate in urban church elections during the eighteenth century, even though the frequent use of proxies indicates that women were not accepted as standard participants in these elections. The question why urban widows were entitled to participate in church elections while being excluded from other elections, demands an explanation. Certainly legislation was important in this connection, but can hardly be considered an overall explanation.²³ In this connection, we would like to bring forward yet another aspect, namely the somewhat different character of the church elections as compared with other urban political elections.

In the countryside, the clergy maintained a leading political role as head of the parish meeting, but were not regarded as political leaders in the towns. Indeed, parish meetings were held in the towns too, but not to the same extent as in the countryside, and they did not have the same status. The urban parish meetings were held at irregular intervals and to a large extent the church's financial affairs were administrated by the church council in the towns.²⁴ In conclusion, the fact that the church congregation was a corporation separate from municipal activities may

explain why women could be accepted as voters in church elections, but not in mayor elections, which were tied to the burghership corporation.²⁵

Denmark-Norway: political culture under absolutism

In Norway, the neighbour country on the west side of the Scandinavian peninsula, supplications, court cases and riots – not votes and elections – were the political tools for both men and women during a long part of the early modern period. While the Swedish political scene throughout the early modern period was marked to some extent by representative governmental systems, Denmark-Norway, the other Scandinavian state was governed by an autocratic king. Since 1660, the king in Copenhagen had ruled without any constituted body. Absolutism prevailed until 1848 in Denmark, while Norway, as we shall see, took another route after 1814. In the absence of a representative body, the country was administered by civil servants who enforced royal orders in every part of the composite state, from Iceland and Greenland in the north to Schleswig in the south to colonies and fortresses in Caribbean and Africa, and into the wildest most remote parts of the Norwegian mountain area. However, within these conditions the government was dependent upon cooperation from local society. As in Sweden, judges and vicars conducted their work in courts and commissions together with appointed locals. The main difference was that Denmark-Norway had no *Riksdag*, no representative bodies at the state level and therefore no elections. This is not to say that there was no political initiative coming from below. Political impact and protest even had a legal channel in the petitions system that was well developed in Denmark-Norway. In the legal system unrest could be formulated into court cases and conflicts could find legal solutions. Petitions, complaints and litigation had an impact both on policy initiatives and implementations.²⁶ Both men and women had been part of this political culture.²⁷ So despite the lack of local and regional political institutions in Norway, the experiences of how to frame an initiative and organise protests were not so different from Sweden. Historians have emphasised the similarities more than the differences between Sweden and Norway.²⁸ In other words, there was a political culture also in Denmark-Norway, and it included the well-known ancient regime's indirect power as royal intrigues, bribes and manipulation.

Historians who have studied political culture in early modern Denmark-Norway have concluded that women were involved at all levels from the royal intrigues of high politics to direct action through riots. As in Sweden, Norwegian women submitted supplications and they took part in court cases.²⁹ Most of these cases could by first glance be classified as *private matters*, such as licence to continue or start a workshop or trade or to be their own guardians, but in a merchantilistic economy with monopolies and privileges for individuals, guilds or towns, the distinction between private and public is not that obvious. Supplications from seamstresses and widows of ironworkers claiming their right to trade either in supplications or in court cases may be regarded as political initiatives motivated by arguments such as 'for the common good'. Sometimes the cases resulted in royal decrees that opened

or closed trades, in other word – regulated the economy. About 30 percent of the supplications were submitted from women in the eighteenth-century Norwegian towns of Oslo and Trondheim. Women took part in about 30 percent of the court cases in towns and in about 8 to 20 percent of the court cases in the countryside in the districts that have been studied.³⁰

In a formal gender perspective on political rights, one may say that absolutism placed men and women on equal footing as king's subjects because nobody had more political power than others – because the king had it all. However, a gender perspective on political power in early modern Europe could also include the access to informal power. Several historians have studied the royal intrigue in Denmark under Christian VII's physician Struensee (1770–1772) and the king's stepmother queen Julianne Marie (1772–1784). Similar studies have revealed informal power in regional and local administration.³¹ The contempt for such informal power was one reason for constitutional change in European history, most famous in the scorn of the French queen during the revolution.³²

During the Enlightenment in the second half of the eighteenth century, less restrictive censorship in absolutist Denmark–Norway had allowed freer intellectual debate on themes such as economic and social improvement. Patriotic and dramatic societies formed in these years had also given the educated middle ranks some experience with organised proceedings and deliberative communication. However, regarding a parliamentary tradition on a national level, Norway entered into the union with almost no experience, in deep contrast to Sweden's 300 years of tradition with the four estate Diet.

Gender and vote in nineteenth-century Sweden–Norway

By the Treaty of Kiel, 14 January 1814, Denmark lost Norway and Norway was forced into a union with Sweden. The treaty was a result of the Napoleonic wars. A Norwegian uprising followed. In May 1814, the Norwegians gave themselves a constitution with much wider political rights than Sweden. Inspired by the French Constitution of 1791, the Norwegian constitutional assembly drafted and adopted a liberal constitution with a unicameral parliament and only a suspensive veto for the king. After a short war, the Swedish king accepted negotiations with the new parliament as representative for the Norwegian people and based the negotiation on the May constitution. On 4 November, the Swedish king accepted the Norwegian constitution with the necessary amendments for a union.

The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 enfranchised three groups of citizens over 25 years of age: those who were or had been civil servants; those who owned or rented matriculated land; and those who had citizenship in towns or owned houses worth more than 300 *Rigsbankdaler*.³³ In 1821, a fourth group was added; the inhabitants of the northern county Finnmark, especially the reindeer owners who paid a fee to the civil servants,³⁴ since the 1814 restrictions excluded this northern county because there was no matriculated land and no mandatory citizenship in the only town, just free trade. Paying taxes to the state were the criteria for being

enfranchised. Cotters, workers and servants did not receive the vote since they did not pay taxes to the state and were regarded as dependent. Gender was not touched upon until 1818. An MP, Valentin Sibbern, major and county governor, suggested a constitutional amendment to add 'man' as a criteria for enfranchisement in article 50 of the constitution. But the parliament refused to change the constitution since, as they said, 'women had not yet claimed the vote'. Some historians have interpreted this to mean that female voters were out of the question.³⁵ However, as we shall see later, this did not mean that franchise for women was unthinkable: eight years later a law proposal for local government included votes for female taxpayers.

The Norwegian constitution has been called the last revolutionary constitution.³⁶ It was based on popular sovereignty and many of the articles prove this. To become an MP no additional qualification was necessary than that a candidate be over 30 years of age. As in the US constitution, representatives should receive recompense from the treasury during the parliamentary sessions and journeys to and from. In contrast to Sweden this was not a diet based on estates; the electorate was one and the parliament unicameral. However, this was not a democratic constitution in a modern sense. Parliamentary elections were to be held every third year, and the parliament met for some months every third year. The elections were indirect. In 1814 only 10 percent of Norwegians lived in towns, but the constitution gave one-third of the seats to the towns. The king could dissolve the parliament after three months. About 45 percent of men over twenty-five years of age were enfranchised. The electoral registers were made during the summer and autumn of 1814. Of 62,000 men, nearly 80 percent of the enfranchised swore the oath to the constitution and were registered as voters. Many farmers were elected as representatives to the first ordinary parliament. Later, the interest for elections appears to have waned until the 1830s. Then agitation and campaigning secured a majority of farmers in parliament. However, until the 1850s no more than 33,000 voted, about half the number of those who swore the oath in 1814.

In Sweden, despite an intense political debate about the 'representation issue', the *Riksdag* was not reformed until 1866. There were some reforms during the nineteenth century that opened up the Diet of four estates to groups of middle class people who were denied formal political routes of influence, but especially because of hard resistance from the Nobility, it was a long time before the new two-chamber *Riksdag* was established. In the political debate the 'principle of person' was the most important figure. Not groups but 'independent' individuals should be represented in the *Riksdag*. As in other countries, a gendered division between dependent-independent and passive-active developed in the debate, which in the end put male taxpayers (over a certain income) in one corner with all political rights as political citizens, and all women, taxpayers or not, in the other, defined as 'dependent' and denied the vote for the Swedish *Riksdag*. There were examples in the debate of the idea that female voters were imaginable, but as the debate continued, they became more and more unthinkable, or, at least, unmentionable.³⁷ At the same time, as this debate carried on, there were regular elections to the estates, and there still did not exist any legislation against female voters. Therefore, women

actually voted in few elections. As late as 1859, there was a conflict in Uppsala about whether female taxpayers should be entitled to vote for the burgher estate or not. In 1862, the Supreme Court finally decided that only those who were eligible should have the right to vote, which meant that as women could not stand for election, they should be denied the vote.³⁸

In Norway, laws and institutions from the age of absolutism prevailed for several decades under the new political conditions. In 1814, there had only been time for making a new constitution, not for legislation. The plan was to make a modern code civil and code criminal.³⁹ In the intervening time the old laws should be used in accordance with the liberal constitution. In the years after 1814, local government was conducted as under absolutist rule by civil servants with assistance from the community. Attempts to reform local government came onto the agenda in the early 1820s. The plan was to have two bodies: an elected executive board (*formend*) and a meeting of all taxpayers that should decide whether the commune should expand or reduce ambitions and expenses. The parliamentary law-committee proposal for a law for local government was published, and in the following debate a radical politician, newspaper editor Peter Flor, suggested that for the sake of equality all taxpayers should have the vote at the meetings; not only those who were enfranchised by the constitution, but also those widows and minors who paid local taxes.⁴⁰ With references to the ideas of popular sovereignty Peter Flor declared that this meeting of taxpayers should be the highest local authority. The elected *formend* should be their executives. Almost all the points from Flor were included in the second draft of the law proposal. In two national hearings among civil servants no one reacted against this. In parliament in 1833 the paragraph on widow's vote was even made clearer.⁴¹

The history of widows' votes does not stop here. The king used his suspending veto against the law of local government. Not because of widows' votes – that was not mentioned – but because costs and accountability was not clarified. In the revision committee, a new model for local government was suggested: two elected bodies and no mass meeting of taxpayers. This was applauded in parliament in 1837 and approved by the king. The electorate should be only those enfranchised in the constitution. That meant less trouble putting up new electoral rolls. There are no signs of protest about not including female voters. The subject of women's votes was not on the agenda until the 1880s at which point it became a feminist issue for universal female enfranchisement in national elections. These initiatives were met with strong resistance from the conservatives, so much so that it was not until 1901 that female taxpayers and those married to taxpayers got the local vote in Norway. By contrast, in Sweden female taxpayers got the local vote in 1862 without any protests when the old system of local government was transferred into a new municipality system.

As a consequence of the argument of popular sovereignty and equality, widow's votes were implemented in law proposals in the 1820s and had nearly become law in 1833 in Norway. How is this to be explained? First, one could overestimate the gendering of vote in the early nineteenth century in a country without

a parliamentary tradition. It certainly was not a male prerogative to have the vote. Rather the vote should be regarded as an asset to the taxpaying household head's capacities. As mentioned, about 45 percent of adult men were enfranchised in Norway in 1814. Studies of voting rolls show that most men were in their 30s when they swore the constitutional oath and thereby qualified themselves for voting.⁴² The relatively high age of male voters can be explained as a consequence of the age of becoming the owner or leaser of land – that was the criteria for enfranchisement for the 90 percent of the Norwegian population living in the countryside. In Norway, as elsewhere in northwest Europe, taking over the farm happened around the age of 30, at the same time that men married and became household heads.⁴³ Receiving the vote was not for life. The position as household head lasted for about 30 years. When a man in his 60s retired and handed the farm over to his son or son-in-law, he would no longer have the vote. He was marked out of the rolls as *'føderådsmand'* (retired) even though he might be as experienced and cunning as ever. As previously mentioned, cottars, workers and servants did not have the vote, this group probably accounted for 50 percent of adult men. In short this meant that about every second adult man in Norway had the vote for about 30 years of his life, from his 30s to his 60s.

Second, an explanation for why civil servants in the hearings did not protest against the article that included widows in the local electorate could be that many civil servants had a rather low opinion of the newly enfranchised *men* in the years after 1814. In the hearings about local government, several civil servants reported that none of the men in the congregation could read or write properly and that no one was really interested in the new politics. The fresh electorate was described as egocentric and narrow-minded. Not all civil servants were negative, and some civil servants gave similar depressing reports but concluded optimistically that the electorate could be educated, and therefore reform in local government was necessary so they could get exercises in politics; 'Freedom presupposes exercises', so to speak.⁴⁴

Third, contrary to the former point: the esteem of widows' economic rationality in another genre of civil servants' reports is remarkably positive. An enormous source material has survived of the many civil servants' reports and recommendations on the endless numbers of applications Norwegians had to submit on a wide range of matters. These recommendations from the same years as mentioned in the former point show a very different discourse. On applications from widows to prevail in their undivided estate, the vicars' recommendations and opinions are very clear. The widows had economic sense, they would not reduce the economic values and they were hardworking, sensible and reliable. The vicars' recommendations from the counties on the western and northern coasts are sometimes obviously emotionally moved when several wives became widows as the result of one stormy night with shipwrecks and accidents for sailors and fishermen. Other recommendations reflect the vicars' understanding of the wives' central role in the household economy based on a combination of fishing and farming. One should note that this was gender neutral: vicars give the same positive recommendations on widowers' applications.

In general, civil servants had internalised a discourse of widows as sensible and reliable. This could be one explanation why civil servants when consulted for the law proposal on local government didn't protest against widows' votes. Moreover, the law proposal indicated that widows should meet together with their guardians.

Fourth, in the old political culture widows as well as other household heads had the same responsibility to pay taxes and be responsible for the household's different contributions to society – like opening up their homes and hosting schools, poor people or soldiers or contributing to different forms of transport. The widows would be held responsible and prosecuted in the local court if they failed. Widows could also line up as patriots. In the years before 1814 we find many widows in the lists of patriots contributing to the new Norwegian University, and they contributed to local patriotic societies in different ways.

If the law committee or any involved in the debate on local government in Norway had given Swedish local government a look, they would have found a model where female household heads took part in elections. But there seems to have been no interest in Swedish *sockenstämman* (parish meetings) as a model for Norwegian government. One explanation could be that the clergyman had a rather central role in these local governments in Sweden, and it was exactly the civil servants' leading role in local government that the new Norwegian reform would avoid. Another explanation could be that the Norwegian politicians preferred their political system and feared that taking in some part of the Swedish system could be a risk.

In Sweden, women were not prohibited from being present at the *sockenstämman* (parish meetings) but in practice they rather participated in elections of different representatives, than in considerations and decision-making. During the first half of the nineteenth century, as the local administration grew, women began to be in charge of public tasks, especially as demands for poverty and poor relief developed. They also participated in the widened public sphere, in different associations that developed, especially in philanthropy. The active female participation in the care of the poor that developed in the municipalities laid the groundwork for the development later, as women became eligible for poor relief boards and school boards by the end of the century.⁴⁵

All taken together, it is possible to explain why the Norwegian parliament was positively disposed to give widows the local vote in 1833 and why this didn't provoke protests. To explain why widows' votes failed in the final act of local government in 1837, the main cause seems to be the shift to only representative assemblies. In the 1830s many reforms of local governments in Europe were moving away from mass meetings and introducing representative models. This happened in Belgium, Britain and France. Mass meetings were considered as tempting arenas for demagogues that could disturb government. But why were widows in Norway not given the vote in the 1837 representative model? The acts give two arguments; the secretary in the government's municipal committee wrote that neither widows nor minors normally had any insight in public affairs, and including them in the electorate would afford more work with two sets of voting rolls, one for national elections and one for local elections. The issue was not raised in parliament nor debated in

the newspaper, so there is no proof of what impact these arguments had. The proceedings from parliamentary debate in these days are not the very best. However, the silence indicates that there were no active spokesmen for letting equality for all taxpayers trump gender, as Peter Flor was in 1826.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have shown the divergent political development in Norway and Sweden from the seventeenth century, which was characterised by autocracy and informal decision-making, to the more formalised and representative political cultures that developed over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries where elections of different kinds became more common. Even if we still lack knowledge of many aspects of ordinary people's political activities, we do know that women had political influence of different kinds in both formal and informal decision-making. As for voting, certain criteria seem to have been particularly important for female participation. Due to the principle that the one who contributes (by paying taxes) also should have influence, ownership and taxpaying were the most important criteria which opened up votes for women. However, most women, according to civil law, were dependent on a male head of household, which meant that it was widows who enjoyed the opportunity to vote. While notionally permitted to vote, in practice widows appear to have been less active participants in the voting process than men, many preferring to delegate their vote to a male proxy. A difference between town and countryside is discernible in the Swedish case, as women had greater financial opportunities in the towns, and participated more frequently in clergy elections. Comparisons between women's participation in clergy elections and other elections in towns indicate that the place of political activities was important as well. Both men and women were present in the church as members of the congregation, whereas the town hall had a more masculine character.

Even if women did have access to many political fora, there were criteria for voting that worked against their participation, and even prevented it. The use of proxies, and the idea that female participation threatened the public order were of importance in the first regulation in 1758 that excluded female voters from elections of chief magistrates in Sweden. In towns the fact that women did not swear the oath as burghers became a vivid argument against female voters. Most important was probably the fact that as women could not stand for election, and as eligibility became an important ground for citizenship, the signification of the voter became male.

The complex picture of nineteenth-century development shows that even if the national culture of politics changed in a direction towards an individual, male political citizen, other developments at local levels opened up for female participation, both because of the strong criteria of taxpaying as a ground for franchise and because of women's activities in poor relief and philanthropy. The regulations about elections for the burgher estate were vague and still unclear about whether women were entitled to vote or not, and therefore there were openings for female voters

until the late 1850s. The Norwegian development, with a very 'Republican' voting reform of the parliament with male voters, underwent a much more contradictory change in the local elections. It is clear here that it was not always separation between men and women that was the most important dividing line to be defined, but rather, the focus was to separate honourable, responsible, independent men from other men.

In Scandinavia, the shift from a traditional political culture to a more modern one took different roads. Norway leapt from absolutism to parliament, free press and elections in 1814. Denmark followed in 1848. Sweden reformed government in 1809, but continued with the four estate Diet until 1866. In all three countries, parliamentary politics became exclusively male, while taxpaying women could vote in local elections in Sweden. Women's vote movements from the 1880s had a long and difficult struggle to convince the majority that women deserved the vote – even in Sweden where taxpaying women in fact had long been a part of the electorate. Women found their way into politics as activists in the many popular movements that formed the Scandinavian political agenda in the second half of the nineteenth century. From a European perspective, Scandinavian women were the first to get a universal vote in national parliamentary elections. However, in local politics, Sweden continued a system with female taxpayers voting, while the feminist movements in Norway and Denmark had to struggle on until 1910 and 1915, respectively, before women got the universal vote in local elections.

Notes

- 1 Peter Lindström, *Prästval och politisk kultur 1650–1800* (Umeå: Umeå University [diss], 2003), pp. 15, 113–168, 195 ff.
- 2 Ibid, pp. 15, 113–168, 195 ff.
- 3 Ibid, pp. 31–49.
- 4 Ibid, pp. 67–88.
- 5 Ibid, pp. 67–88; *Prästeståndets riksdagsprotokoll 1726–1731*, ed. by A. Norberg (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1975), pp. 495–496. See also A. Thomson, *Studier i frihetstidens prästvalslagstiftning* (Lund: Gleerup, 1951), pp. 46–57.
- 6 In connection with public church meetings, the clergy were exhorted not to apply for appointments without the approval of the diocese board, see *Svenska synodalakter efter 1500-talets ingång. Första serien. Synodalakter från Uppsala ärkestift 1526–1800*, ed. by H. Lundström (Uppsala: Akademiska bokförlaget, 1908), pp. 280, 293, 302, 308.
- 7 Lindström, *Prästval och politisk kultur*.
- 8 Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, *Männen, kvinnorna och rösträtten. Medborgarskap och representation 1723–1866* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2006); Peter Lindström, 'Widows, Ownership and Political Culture: Sweden 1650–1800', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 29/3–4 (2004), 241–262.
- 9 The result is based on a study of 146 rural elections in twenty-two parishes in the northern part of Sweden during the period after the reforms of the 1730s to 1800.
- 10 Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, *Kvinnors rätt i stormaktstidens Gävle* (Umeå: Acta Universitatis Umensis. Umeå Studies in the Humanities [diss], 1998), pp. 40–41, 51, 65.
- 11 The result is based on a study of thirty-five elections in ten towns during the period 1730–1800.
- 12 Amongst others Michael Roberts, *The Age of Liberty. Sweden 1719–1772* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Jonas Nordin, *Ett fattigt men fritt folk. Nationell politik*

- självbild i Sverige från sen stormakettid till slutet av frihetstiden* (Stockholm & Eslöv: Symposion, 2002); Henrika Tandefelt and Marie-Christine Skuncke (ed.), *Riksdag, kaffehus, predikstol. Frihetstidens politiska kultur 1766–1772* (Stockholm & Helsingfors: Atlantis & Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2003).
- 13 R.G. Modée, *Utdrag utur alle ifrån den 7 December 2728 utkomne Publique Handlingar . . .*, Stockholm 1742–1777, October 16 1723, 23 August 1728.
 - 14 For references in detail, see Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, *Männen, kvinnorna*, pp. 34, 235–239.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 37–46, 65–70, 79–80.
 - 16 Modée 1742–1777, 19 January 1758.
 - 17 Karlsson Sjögren, *Männen, kvinnorna*, pp. 44–52.
 - 18 The National Archives (Stockholm), Landshövdingars skrivelser till Kungl. Maj:t, Västmanland, Volume 28, Köping, 1 January 1759.
 - 19 Karlsson Sjögren, *Männen, kvinnorna*, pp. 70–77.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, p. 78.
 - 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 53–74.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 75–78, 96–101.
 - 23 Merja Manninen has previously emphasised the church election legislation as a reason why women in Uleåborg, a town in the Finnish part of Sweden, were entitled to vote in church elections, but not in other elections. Merjanninen, 'The Opportunities of Independent Life for Women in an Eighteenth-Century Finnish Provincial Town', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 2 (1984), 149–169 (p. 166).
 - 24 K.H. Johansson, *Svensk sockensjälvstyre: 1686–1862: studier särskilt med hänsyn till Linköpings stift* (Lund: Gleerup, 1937), pp. 61 ff, 125–140, 209, 217.
 - 25 Karlsson Sjögren, *Männen, kvinnorna*, pp. 52–53.
 - 26 Harald Gustafsson, *Political Interaction in the Old Regime. Central Power and Local Society in the Eighteenth-Century Nordic States* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1994), pp. 154–162.
 - 27 Eva Österberg and Solvi B.Sogner, *People meet the Law. Control and Conflict-Handling in the Courts* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2000), pp. 267–276.
 - 28 Gustafsson, *Political Interaction in the Old Regime*, Österberg and Sogner, *People meet the Law*.
 - 29 Hilde Sandvik, 'Gender and Politics Before and After 1814', in *Scandinavia in the Age of Revolution*, ed. by Pasi Ilhainen, Michael Bregnsbo, Karin Sennefelt and Patrik Winton (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 329–333.
 - 30 Ida Bull, 'Politiske kvinner – fra regional administrasjon til familiens politikk' and Hilde Sandvik, 'Politiske kvinner på 1700-tallet i Norge', in *Kvinnor och politikk i det tidigmoderna Norden*, ed. by Åsa Karlsson Sjögren, Rapport till 26. Nordiska historikermötet i Reykjavik den 8–12 Augusti 2007 (Reykjavik, 2007).
 - 31 Michael Bregnsbo, 'Struensee and the Political Culture of Absolutism' and Ulrik Langen 'The Great, the Pages and the End of Eighteenth-Century Danish Court Culture', both in *Scandinavia in the Age of Revolution*, ed. by Pasi Ilhainen et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 55–68.
 - 32 Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (London: Routledge, 1992).
 - 33 Norwegian Constitution May 17th 1814, art. 50.
 - 34 *Storthingsforhandlinger*. 1818 September, pp. 178–181; 1821 Mars, pp. 233–241.
 - 35 Anne-Hilde Nagel, 'Politiseringen av kjønn – et historisk perspektiv', in *Kjønn og politikk*, ed. by Nina C. Raaum (Oslo: TANO, 1995), p. 61.
 - 36 Eirik Holmøyvik, 'Mellom Revolusjon og Restaurasjon: Striden om Grunnlovas vesen 1824–1884', in *Tolkingar av Grunnlova. Om forfatningsutviklinga 1814–2014*, ed. by Eirik Holmøyvik (Oslo: Pax forlag, 2013), pp. 307–337.
 - 37 Sjögren, *Männen, kvinnorna*, pp. 126–150.
 - 38 Karlsson Sjögren, pp. 144–146; Berit Borell, *De svenska liberalerna och representationsfrågan på 1840-talet* (Stockholm & Uppsala: Almqvist & Wicksell, 1948), pp. 52–53.
 - 39 Hilde Sandvik and Dag Michalsen, *Kodifikasjon og konstitusjon. Grunnloven § 94s krav til lovbøker i norsk historie* (Oslo: Pax forlag, 2013).

- 40 P. Flor, *Kritisk bedømmelse over Udkast til en Lov angaaende Formænd, eller de elegeerde Mænd i Kjøbstædene og Ladepladsene affattet i Commiteen for Kongeriget Norges Lovgivning. Christiania 1825* (Drammen, 1826), p. 8.
- 41 Odelstinget 24 July, *Stortings Forhandlinger* 1833, del 5 (Christiania, 1834), p. 1152.
- 42 *Table 11.1: Age swearing the oath to the constitution Electoral rolls of two parishes in eastern Norway: Aker and Asker 1817–1850, N = 399*

Age group	%
25–29	22
30–34	21
35–39	18
40–44	13
45–49	11
50–54	5
55–59	5
60–64	3
64–69	3
	100

- 43 *Table 11.2: Percentage of men categorised as farmers at three ages in the 1801 census of Norway*

Age:	
25: 10%	667 of 6487
30: 22%	1734 of 7794
35: 37%	1649 of 4504

- 44 Ole Schavland in *Om Formænd eller eligerede Mænd i Land-Districterne* (Christiania 1827), p. 25. On this debate see Maren Dahle Lauten 'Borgerånd udvikler sig kun almindelig der, hvor hver Enkelt har Leilighed til politisk Virksomhed'. Framveksten av eit moderne demokratiomgrep under debatten om formannskapslova av 1837. Master thesis in history, University of Oslo 2010. www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/23247.
- 45 Karlsson Sjögren, *Männenn, kvinnorna*, pp. 155–171.

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Conclusion

Global perspectives

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12

GENDER AND CULTURAL POWER IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Merry Wiesner-Hanks

The chapters in this volume suggest the large number of ways that gender and politics intersected in the early modern period: individual women and kin networks engaged in diplomacy and negotiated status; women voted and held office; queens regnant governed states and noblewomen administered territories; marriage and property-holding had political implications; texts, both handwritten and printed, presented gendered power strategies. Such a scope reflects the broadening of the notion of ‘politics’ and ‘the political’ that women’s and gender history has accomplished. Political history now includes groups and networks outside of formal institutions of government through which people, including women, expressed their opinions and shaped the world around them. Gender is central in this broader understanding of ‘political’, and Joan Scott’s assertion nearly thirty years ago that ‘gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power’ has gone from radical to self-evident.¹

This volume does not simply examine gender and politics, however, but gender and ‘political culture’, a phrase that captures the fact that what had been a fairly high and sturdy wall between political and cultural history has begun to be scaled or breached. In this, as well as in the broadening of political history, scholars of gender and sexuality have been key. Durba Ghosh, for example, highlights the ways in which historians trained in feminist, post-colonial and cultural studies began in the 1990s to produce a ‘new imperial history’ that paid greater attention to discourse, representation and power relations in many realms of life.² Susan Amussen and Allyson Poska note the ways in which gender provides an important conceptual tool for trans-imperial examinations of the Atlantic world.³ The chapters in this volume similarly highlight ways in which attention to gender allows, or better said, requires one to examine politics and culture together. These chapters range across Europe, and this final chapter will broaden the geographic scope even further to include other parts of the world as well. This global perspective seems especially appropriate

for the early modern period, that era shaped by long-distance voyages and dramatic increases in large-scale cultural encounters.⁴ The chapter will not include every aspect of gendered political culture, but will focus on cultural power, that is, the ability to shape the world around one in realms that we used to think of separately as the political and the cultural. It surveys recent scholarship on three topics on which significant studies of gendered cultural power have emerged: female rulers, female religious leaders and intermarriage. On all of these, scholarship examining different parts of the world is now abundant enough to allow meaningful contrasts and comparisons, those essential tools of historical analysis.

Female rulers

In many parts of the world, including Europe but also Japan, Central America, the Andean region, South Asia and West Africa, large centralized states were established in the early modern period, ruled by hereditary monarchies. In these states, individual women sometimes gained great power, either ruling in their own name as queens or empresses or, more commonly, ruling in fact during the minority of a son or when their husbands were incapacitated. Ideas about how the right to rule should be handed down varied considerably throughout the world. In some areas, such as most parts of Europe, daughters could inherit territories if there were no sons, and in others, such as parts of Africa, related men and women ruled in tandem. In a few places, such as the Andean region before the dominance of the Inca Empire, women appear to have inherited their authority independently.

Queens regnant were remarkably common in late medieval and early modern Europe. William Monter has recently examined the *thirty* women who had sovereign authority over major European states in the era 1300–1800, including well-known figures such as Isabella of Castile, Elizabeth I of England and Catherine the Great of Russia, and less familiar rulers of Denmark, Sweden, Cyprus, Navarre and the Hapsburg lands.⁵ Perhaps surprisingly to those who see the era as marked by a decline in women's independent agency, he finds that 'the political autonomy of Europe's royal heiresses increased' during this era, which might explain why the period also saw such a vigorous and sometimes vicious debate about female rule. This debate that was actually one about what we would term the social construction of gender, as writers discussed whether a woman's being born into a royal family and educated to rule could (and should) allow her to overcome the limitations of her sex.⁶

Monter is far from alone in his study of medieval and early modern queens in Europe. Every journal that covers the period regularly has articles on royal women – queens regnant, queen mothers, regents and consorts – and books appear from nearly every publishing house.⁷ Charles Beem and Carole Levin are editing an entire series, *Queenship and Power*, at Palgrave-Macmillan, that now has 29 titles, with more on the way. They describe this series as one that

will focus on works specializing in gender analysis, women's studies, literary interpretation, and cultural, political, constitutional, and diplomatic history.

It aims to broaden our understanding of the strategies that queens – both consorts and regnants, as well as female regents – pursued in order to wield political power within the structures of male-dominant societies.⁸

Levin's and Beem's mission statement for the series thus incorporates both political culture and cultural power.⁹ Other recent studies have also focused on the artistic, literary and religious patronage of female rulers and consorts, the ways in which queens and high noblewomen collaborated with men in the transmission of dynastic power through official and unofficial channels and the influence of women on the material culture and ritual life of courts.¹⁰

Meredith Martin's *Dairy Queens: The Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine de Medici to Marie-Antoinette* is a particularly interesting example of new work on the cultural power of European queens.¹¹ Martin draws on several recent scholarly turns – cultural, material, and spatial – to examine what were termed 'pleasure dairies', actual working dairies (most of them now destroyed) built by or in one case for various queens of France from Catherine de Medici to Marie Antoinette. Martin was trained primarily as an art historian, but the book goes far beyond the issues of style and representation that have typified art history in both its traditional and post-modern phases to embed the choices that were made about these dairies within their broad economic, cultural and political contexts. She thus avoids the concentration solely on representation, discourse and meaning that has been central to much cultural history to analyze causation. The book argues that these dairies were not simply foolish whims of queens out of touch with the realities of power and money who wanted to have a stage for pretending to be milkmaids – the way Marie Antoinette's is usually read – but they were built, decorated, discussed, visited, renovated and often directly managed by their royal patrons for political purposes, sometimes at points where the queen's own fertility was under question. In the literature and visual program of the Enlightenment, dairies and milk became associated with health, self-improvement and virtue, qualities the nobility (including Madame de Pompadour and Marie Antoinette) tried, desperately at the end, to associate with themselves by drinking milk and building pleasure dairies. Dairies were thus spaces in which women exercised power but were also controlled.

Female rulers with great cultural power were not just in Western Europe. Monter sets the rulers he studies within a global context of female rule that began with the Egyptian pharaoh Hatshepsut in the middle of the fifteenth century BCE, and mentions other ancient, medieval and early modern examples from around the world. So far all twenty-nine titles in the Palgrave series are on Europe (with eighteen of these on England, including eight on Elizabeth I), though one book does include one chapter on consorts of Moroccan sultans.¹² Levin and Beem clearly hope to attract books from further afield, however, noting that they want to include 'queenship as it appeared in many parts of the early modern world, such as East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Islamic civilization'. Research on those other places has already begun.

In the Ottoman Empire, Lucienne Thys-Senocak's work on Hadice Turhan Sultan, the mother of Sultan Mehmet IV (ruled 1648–1687), builds on that of Leslie Peirce in laying out her idea that the physical seclusion of Ottoman royal women kept them from political, cultural or indeed military activities.¹³ Turhan was enormously important as an architectural patron: she commissioned both the Yeni Valide mosque complex in the center of Istanbul and the fortresses of Seddülbahir and Kumkale at the entrance to the Dardenelles. Building the latter was part of her efforts to help the Ottoman Empire ward off Venetian naval attacks in the eastern Aegean, which she also addressed through her correspondence with her viziers and other court officials, including the admiral of the Mediterranean navy. Turhan Sultan was thus key in building up both the actual power of the Ottoman Empire and the public *representation* of that power, a key theme in cultural political history.

The research of Ruby Lal on the Mughal court during the reign of Emperor Akbar (ruled 1556–1605) has similarly found senior women, including Akbar's mother and aunt, who played important roles in political and cultural affairs, sometimes including public appearances.¹⁴ In 1575, his aunt, Gulbadan Banu Begum, led a large party of court women on the *hajj*, which signified their personal religious devotion, but also demonstrated the power of the Mughal government and its devotion to Islam, often somewhat suspect because of Akbar's religious syncretism and interest in other religious traditions. Akbar later asked Gulbadan to write the history of the founding of the Mughal dynasty by her father Babur, which she did. As Jyotsna Singh has pointed out, this text, the *Humayun Nama*, is 'unique in illuminating the world of early modern Islamic kingdoms and cultures from a Muslim women's perspective' and provides 'gendered accounts of varied cross-border relationships, affiliations, and social arrangements that resulted from the sweeping thrust of early Mughal conquests.'¹⁵ As both a cultural product and cultural producer, Gulbadan's history could yield fascinating comparisons with the histories written by early modern European women.¹⁶

In the Ottoman and Mughal Empires, the most politically important women were the mothers and wives of male rulers, but other Muslim states also saw independent female rulers. Barbara and Leonard Andaya have studied the firmly Muslim court of Aceh in northern Sumatra, which was governed by queens for nearly sixty years, from 1641 to 1699. The first of these, Taj al-Alam, used the feminized title of *sultanah*, and maintained a court astounding to Europeans for its pomp and magnificence.¹⁷ Similarly, in the Bugis kingdoms of south Sulawesi (now the Celebes), women who carried the 'white blood' of royalty could become ruling queens, a pattern that continued into the nineteenth century, long after the area had become Muslim.

In West Africa, the highest female leadership title is generally translated as 'queen mother'. A woman who held this title was related through kinship to the man who held the title translated as 'king', but was not necessarily his mother, and might be chosen by the senior women of the royal lineage. Kings had the greatest authority, but queen mothers had institutionalized roles and formal functions, including the right to act as intercessors in legal cases, settle disputes among other women at the court and sometimes name and depose male rulers. One of the most powerful

of these queen mothers was Queen Aminatu (sometimes called Amina) of Zazzau, one of the Hausa city-states in what is now Nigeria, who ruled from about 1536 to 1573 without a male co-ruler. She expanded Zazzau's political boundaries and trading networks, led the traditional religion termed *bori* centered on spirit-possession through which the royal family was thought to safeguard the health of the state, and became known as a warrior queen who led troops into battle herself. Thus like her exact contemporary Elizabeth I, Queen Aminatu had broad cultural power, over religion as well as politics.¹⁸ Similarly in Benin, Oyo, Dahomey and Asante (states that rose and fell in the early modern period in what is now Ghana and eastern Nigeria), women held the title of queen mother and other offices that paralleled those of male leaders.¹⁹ In Dahomey, those offices included leader of a permanent army of women, the only documented historical example of a standing army of female fighters.²⁰

Queens were thus central figures in the 'theater-states' of the early modern world from Versailles to Brunei, and perhaps beyond this to Mesoamerica as well, as research on the Maya courts is beginning to suggest.²¹ We are therefore at a point where studies of female rulers' political and cultural power and debates over that power can go beyond Elizabeth I and John Knox, and include not only other European rulers and writers, but those from many parts of the world.

Female religious leaders

Female rulers often held power over religion in the territories under their authority, but so did other women. Within Christianity, female religious leaders included abbesses, often elected by the nuns, who in the pre-Reformation church controlled large amounts of property and often had jurisdiction over many subjects. This was particularly true in Germany, where abbesses of free imperial convents had no secular overlord except the Emperor, but was also the situation elsewhere in Europe where certain convents were aligned with powerful noble families. In eastern Europe and Russia this situation did not change in the early modern period: women's convents were rarely enclosed and the women did not live communally, but retained their own incomes, clothing, and food. Many of these convents were wealthy centers of pilgrimage, holding huge estates, and had close ties with noble and royal families. The elected abbesses of major convents were often very powerful, entertaining secular and ecclesiastical officials and handling relations with the tsar well into the nineteenth century. Isolde Thyrêt, for example, finds that even those elite women forced into convents, such as the wives of Ivan the Terrible, continued to shape policy and influence life at court.²²

In post-Reformation western Europe, abbesses and other female convent officials often led the fight against Protestant moves to close convents through letter writing, family influence, physical bravery, and stubbornness. In some cases, particularly within the Holy Roman Empire, authorities finally gave up and the convents remained islands of Catholicism for decades and sometimes centuries.²³ Other convents supported the Protestant Reformation theologically on some issues, but

ignored its negative message about the value of convent life and remade themselves into institutions that were acceptable to Protestant authorities, educating girls and providing an honorable place for women who could not or chose not to follow the Protestant injunction to marry. As Amy Leonard has argued, they thus blurred various lines between Protestant and Catholic, and remained important political and cultural actors in the multi-layered world of the Empire.²⁴

In Catholic areas as well, post-Tridentine convent walls were not as impermeable as we once thought they were, neither as reality nor metaphor. Ulrike Strasser, Elizabeth Leheldt, Claire Walker, Renée Baernstein, and others have demonstrated that convents and their residents shaped family dynamics and thus political life, and were very much part of the public realm of power politics.²⁵ Convents also acted as patrons of the visual arts, ordering paintings and sculpture with specific subjects and particular styles for their own buildings and those of the male religious institutions they supported, shaping what religious and lay people, men and women, saw as they worshipped.²⁶ Abbesses and nuns commissioned, wrote, and performed musical works and plays that were seen or heard by men as well as women.²⁷

Recent scholarship has also focused on convents in the colonial world. The first New World convent was founded in Mexico City in 1540, and the first convent in South America was founded in Cuzco, Peru in 1558. Convents mirrored the society around them: professed nuns (who took final vows) were wealthier and of European background, lay sisters were poorer and of mixed-race, servants and slaves were still poorer, and of indigenous or African background.²⁸ One-fifth of female population of Lima, Peru in seventeenth century, for example, lived in convents, though most of these were servants, slaves, and lay sisters, not professed nuns. Kathryn Burns' study of convents in Cuzco shows that nuns played a vital part in subjugating Incas, creating a creole elite, and reproducing an Andean colonial order in which economic, cultural, and spiritual interests were inextricably fused.²⁹ Nuns were hardly marginal recluses, but central actors on the colonial stage. Similarly, Kimberly Gauderman includes nuns in her study of the ways women in colonial Quito used legal and extra-legal means to participate in many aspects of civic life and culture beyond convent walls.³⁰

In Canada, Jesuit missionaries established a separate community for Indian converts at Sillery outside Quebec in 1637, where they were joined by several Augustinian nursing nuns two years later. In the same year, Marie de l'Incarnation and several other French women established an Ursuline house in Quebec, which soon took in both native women and European immigrants. Ursuline and Augustinian houses for women grew to seven by the eighteenth century, which meant there were more religious houses for women in French Canada than for men. By 1725, one out of every hundred European residents in New France was a female religious.

Along with cloistered nuns, there were many Catholic women who challenged the boundaries between lay and religious life, and who confronted political as well as religious authorities to do so. Mary Ward (the eventual founder of the English Ladies), the Ursulines and Daughters of Charity in Italy and France, and other so-called 'Jesuitesses' have all received scholarly attention in the last decade for their

attempts to create an active religious vocation for women out in the world, both in Europe and in European colonies.³¹ For French Canada, Natalie Davis and Mary Dunn have examined the life of Marie de l'Incarnation, and Patricia Sampson that of Marguerite Bourgeoys, who founded a teaching congregation modeled on those being founded in Europe in 1665 in the frontier town of Montreal.³² Bourgeoys described her vocation in ringing words laying out not only a sense of religious, but also of a national mission:

We are asked why we prefer to be vagabonds rather than cloistered, the cloister being a protection for persons of our sex. Why do we not make solemn vows which are conducive to greater perfection and which draw women to religious life? Why do we go on missions that put us in danger of suffering greatly and even of being captured, killed or burned by the Indians? . . . The state we embrace and to which we commit ourselves in this unclioistered community is the same as that of the Blessed Virgin, our foundress, our mother and our queen. Having received from God this country as her domain in accordance with the prayers of the first settlers, she planned to have the little girls taught to be good Christians so that they would later be good mothers of families. For this she chose the poor women of the Congregation without brilliance, skill, talents or goods; just as Our Lord chose men who were not refined or held in high esteem by the world to teach everyone his doctrine and his Gospel.³³

In part because of their education of girls, female religious leaders such as Marguerite Bourgeoys clearly had significant cultural power in early modern New France.

In New Orleans, as the work of Emily Clark has shown, a group of French Ursulines also took the Virgin Mary as their patron when they established a community and school in 1727 and a women's lay confraternity in 1730.³⁴ The members of the Marian confraternity in New Orleans soon included more than a third of the free women and girls in the city, providing a colonial counterpart to the confraternities established by pious laywomen in many European cities.³⁵

Ann Little has recently focused on the gendered cultural meaning of women's religious houses in early modern North America, arguing that convents served as a convenient metaphor for Canada in the mid-eighteenth century English and Anglo-American imagination: they were French, Catholic, feminized, and most disturbingly, closed to Protestant men.³⁶ In describing French Canada and its convents, English and Anglo-American writers used language that suggests their fascination with opening and penetrating this new addition to the empire, despite the fact that the Quebec Ursulines were, in fact, actually very open to visitors, even to Protestant men, and the Mother Superior of the Ursulines was not, in fact, French or even Quebecois, but the New-England born Esther Wheelwright.

Most of the research on the political activities and political meaning of Catholic religious women outside of Europe has focused on the Americas, but Haruko Narata Ward's *Women Religious Leaders of Japan's Christian Century: 1549–1650*

provides extensive information about the activities of female Christian converts in Japan, along with those who opposed Christianity and were leaders in the Zen Buddhist and Buddhist-Shinto traditions.³⁷ Some of the women she studies were, in fact, leaders in *both* Buddhist and Christian institutions, and their influence was one of the reasons that Japanese translations of Christian texts included many words that came from a Buddhist religious vocabulary. Such translations were also written in a script preferred by ordinary readers, including women, rather than the more specialized script used by male elites.

The most prominent female Christian convert in Japan was Hosokawa Tama Gracia (1565?-1600) the daughter of a powerful lord and wife of another. Though her husband ordered her to remain in the house while he was away fighting in Japan's civil wars, she surreptitiously visited the Jesuit mission and debated religious issues with several missionaries. In 1587, right after the initial edict ordering the Jesuits to leave Japan, she was baptized (by another female convert) along with much of her household. She recognized the danger of doing so, as she wrote in a letter to Gregory de Cespedes, a Jesuit missionary still in Japan: 'All the Christians whom I have with me are strong, and I work in exhorting them to martyrdom, if perchance we may be found worthy of so great a thing'.³⁸ (Her own fate turned out to be similar to what she hoped for, although not for the reasons she expected. While her husband was away on a military campaign, soldiers from a rival faction in the civil wars surrounded the house. After sending her servants and court ladies away, Tama Gracia ordered her husband's samurai to kill her rather than allow her to be captured, the behavior expected of a Japanese noble woman according to the code of *bushido*. She also came to be revered as a Christian martyr, however, and the anniversaries of her death were celebrated with elaborate memorial ceremonies for a number of years.)

Only a very few writings by Christian women in Japan have survived (all of these in translation in Jesuit records), but Nawata Ward makes an effective argument that their influence can be seen in the way certain passages were translated and expanded. A 1592 translation of Luis de Granada's *Sumario de la Introduccion del simbolo de la fe*, for example, amplifies the emphasis in the original on God choosing the lowliest beings to demonstrate his power, and applies this explicitly to women, just as Marguerite Bourgeoys did in describing her vocation. The Japanese translation, *Fides no doxi*, reads:

These women, despite their physiques, so beautifully dressed that the moon and flowers might envy them, and easily blown away by a rough wind, are not afraid of the humiliation, slander, or assaults of torture. Forgetting the affectionate relationship with their fathers and mothers, disregarding others' tears, even when finally [the torturers] grind their bones and tear their bodies in half by pulling them apart by two wheels, they surely maintain their faith . . . Women are naturally weak, and they shake and quiver at a sword's shadow. Yet in regard to their faith they run to win first place, competing with a single horse-riding warrior whose might is worth that of one thousand warriors.³⁹

The 'single horse riding warrior' comes from a Japanese saying about male battle valor, here applied to weaponless women.

Nawata Ward makes a bold conclusion: 'The shift in politico-religious ideology in the first half of the seventeenth century and Japan's total rejection of Christianity was caused largely by the unprecedented apostolate of Kirishitan women'.⁴⁰ The 'closing of Japan' has been told as a story of men – as has its opening, with Admiral Perry steaming into Edo harbor in 1853 – and it will be interesting to see how her work shapes our understanding of Japanese political history in the future.

Ward's study of Japan complements the work of Barbara Andaya on women's leadership in many religious traditions in various parts of early modern Southeast Asia. Islam and Christianity joined Buddhism and Confucianism as imported and ultimately state-sponsored religions in Southeast Asia during the early modern period. All four of these traditions deemed men superior to women intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, but women contested the socioreligious agendas that privileged men and negotiated important roles as patrons and founders of institutions.⁴¹ Women in Southeast Asia and elsewhere also *opposed* the spread of world religions, as the work of Carolyn Brewer and Irene Silverblatt on female leaders in indigenous religious traditions has shown.⁴²

Women also blended imported and local traditions in a process of creolization. In the Kongo, for example, where Christianity had been widely adopted in the sixteenth century with the support of a series of Kongolese kings, the religious visionary and political reformer Beatriz Kimpa Vita (1684–1706) declared that she was an incarnation of St. Anthony and visited heaven every week. Jesus was born in the Kongo, she asserted, and the Virgin Mary and many of the saints were Kongolese.⁴³ She gathered thousands of followers in what became known as the Antonine movement, and declared that Christ had ordered her to unite Kongo under a single king. Like an earlier young female visionary seeking to unite a country, Kimpa Vita was captured and executed as a heretic and a witch, but her idea that Christ was Kongolese lived on, as over the next century Kongolese artists often depicted Christ with African features and wearing Kongolese clothing.

Within Protestant Christianity, the radical wing offered more opportunities for women's leadership and cultural power than did the magisterial Lutheran or Calvinist traditions, and this was not limited to Europe. Quaker women preached throughout England and the English colonies in the Americas and occasionally elsewhere, for which they were sometimes imprisoned, whipped, or otherwise punished.⁴⁴ In the early eighteenth century the pietist Moravian Brethren sent out missionaries, both male and female, to much of the colonial world. This included the Danish colony of St. Thomas in the Caribbean, where in the 1730s they began the first sustained effort in the Americas to convert African slaves to Christianity. Despite the official support of the Danish West Indies and Guinea Company and the fact that they did not challenge slavery, the Moravians were opposed by plantation owners and imprisoned, and their converts were beaten. Count von Zinzendorf, the founder of the Moravians, visited the island in 1739, arranged for the release of the missionaries, and carried petitions to the Danish king and queen on behalf of converts. One of these was written by a woman originally named

Marotta, born to Catholic parents in the Popo Kingdom of West Africa, and then taken as a slave in the 1690s to St. Thomas. She converted to Moravian pietism, taking the name Magdalena from the Danish-Norwegian queen Sophia Magdalene, to whom she wrote in a combination of Dutch Creole and her mother tongue, Aja-Ayizo: 'Great Queen! . . . I am very sad in my heart that the Black women on St. Thomas are not allowed to serve the Lord Jesus . . . If the Queen thinks it fitting, please pray to the Lord Jesus for us and let her intercede with the King to allow Baas Martin to preach the Lord's word . . .'.⁴⁵ Marotta/Magdalena was not the only woman from St. Thomas to reach across the Atlantic after becoming a Moravian. Rebecca Protten, a former slave, became a Moravian preacher alongside two husbands, first throughout the Caribbean, and then in Europe and West Africa, where she taught local girls at the school in Christiansborg.⁴⁶ As with studies of female rulers, analyses of female religious leaders clearly benefit from trans-Atlantic, trans-confessional, and transnational comparisons, and we are beginning to have enough research available to undertake these.

Intermarriage

Religious conversions and long-distance movements are also part of the third topic of this chapter: intermarriage. As many of the chapters in this volume demonstrate, marriage involved issues of power and authority, both within the marriage and in relations beyond the marriage. Those that brought these into sharpest relief were marriages that crossed some sort of border, including those created by politics, ethnicity, kin loyalties, social status, language or religion, as well as combinations of these. Such marriages linked spouses understood as somehow different together, and were thus sites of cultural contestation and exchange.⁴⁷

In Western Europe, the Reformation brought the possibility of border-crossing marriages in which spouses differed in their confessional allegiance. In the first generation of the Reformation, religiously mixed marriages were the result of the conversion of one spouse but not the other, and most reformers decided that religious conversion did not give one the right to leave one's spouse—one could pray he or she would see the light, but not leave. By the middle of the sixteenth century, however, this was also an issue of marriage formation. Should people be allowed to marry across religious lines? Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist authorities agreed that the answer was no. Spouses were to be (in the words of various city councils) 'one in body and spirit' and a mixed marriage would create 'one body and two minds' and 'cause arguments, quarrels, blasphemous wild conduct, and often half-hearted belief'. Authorities ordered sermons to be preached against mixed marriage, warning of the dangers to the soul 'seduced by the infamous sweet poison of heretical teaching'.⁴⁸ Protestant authorities in many areas required couples to seek approval of the consistory or marital court, which attempted to dissuade them with lectures and the threat of suspension or excommunication. Papal officials ordered priests to refuse to give absolution or communion to anyone in a mixed marriage.

Despite these condemnations, however, mixed marriages continued to occur, particularly in areas where Catholics and various types of Protestants lived in close proximity to one another, such as the territories within the Empire that were officially bi-confessional, or cities in Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Eastern Europe that saw a great deal of trade and migration. Dagmar Friest and Benjamin Kaplan have both analyzed these, as has David Frick, who examines the situation in Wilno (Vilnius), where there were *five* kinds of Christians, plus Jews and Muslims.⁴⁹

Although quantifying mixed marriages is difficult, in some territories as many as 20 percent of marriages may have been religiously mixed. For ruling families, political reasons sometimes led to marriage across religious lines, particularly between Calvinists and Lutherans, but sometimes also between Catholics and various sorts of Protestants.⁵⁰ Clergy of all denominations regularly performed mixed marriage weddings, reasoning that the risk to their church by not doing so was greater than that posed by performing the wedding, for spouses wed in their own confession were less likely to convert later. Arrangements for the religious training of children in confessionally mixed marriages were sometimes set in the wedding contract, but this did not mean these were always followed by the spouses, nor by the children themselves once they became old enough to have an opinion. As other chapters in this volume have noted, power relationships within marriage were rarely those envisioned by those who prescribed them. Thus the cultural power exercised from within a confessionally mixed marriage might itself be mixed, as each spouse patronized certain churches and pastors, purchased books or developed networks of influence with co-religionists.

In colonial areas, religious lines of differences interwove with those of race and ethnicity, and issues regarding intermarriage were even more clearly linked to broad political aims than they were in Europe itself. In French North America, for example, policy changed depending on changing ideas about how best to increase both the colonies' and France's strength. For a brief period in the 1660s the French crown directly recruited and paid for young women to go to New France to marry the young French men who were there, but finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert decided not to expand the program, stating explicitly in 1667 that 'it would not be wise to depopulate the kingdom in order to populate Canada'. Instead he recommended that

the most useful way to achieve it would be to try to civilize the Algonquins, the Hurons, and the other Savages who have embraced Christianity; and to persuade them to come to settle in a commune with the French, to live with them, and educate their children in our mores and our customs . . . after some time, having one law and one master, they may form one people and one blood'.⁵¹

Thus official policy in New France in the seventeenth century was one of the assimilation of Native Americans through *Fransication* (literally 'Frenchification'), through which they would be 'made French'.

The policy of *Fransication* included intermarriage between French men and indigenous women, for the French hoped that such marriages would help the fur trade and strengthen ties between French and Native American communities and families, as well as spread French culture. In a few cases, this policy had exactly the effect that the government hoped it would: couples married in Catholic ceremonies and Indian women adopted the clothing, work patterns and language of French women; they crossed the border from native to French. In other cases, women blended cultures. Sophie White provides a fascinating example of this in *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana*, using material objects such as beds, windows, laundry soap and especially clothing to examine cultural interdependence and mixture in Louisiana territory, a huge area that included most of the Mississippi River valley.⁵² The choices that Indian women made about how to furnish their homes, how to dress when meeting a priest and how to distribute their material wealth after death became indicators to French authorities about how well their project of *Fransication* was working. In upper Louisiana (meaning today's Illinois and parts of surrounding states), White argues, women's blending of cultures through material goods served to keep racial lines less distinct; thus their exercise of cultural power was less *marked* by material culture than it was *produced* by it.

Ultimately to the French government the process of *Fransication* was not proceeding as planned. Most marriages, if they occurred at all, were 'in the custom of the land', not in Catholic ceremonies, and French men adopted 'savage' customs. Official opinion changed. Prohibition of intermarriage became official policy in New France in 1716, and Indian/French marriages were discouraged by secular officials elsewhere in French North America. Despite the fulminations of authorities on mixing blood, however, European men and Indian women continued to engage in sexual relations in western French North America, and in areas where intermarriage worked to the benefit of the local people, to marry, often in ceremonies formalized by Native American rituals rather than Christian ones.⁵³

West Africa was another area where there was significant cultural blending through intermarriage. Toby Green notes that Mandinka traders from the Mali Empire moved into the area of Upper Guinea south of the Gambia River beginning in the thirteenth century. They married local women, particularly among the Kassanké lineage who lived along the Casamance River, and the two groups accommodated to one another. The Kassanké adopted the Mandinka language, ritual practices and agricultural techniques, while the Mandinka often adopted Kassanké matrilineality and practices of lineage formation.⁵⁴ Thus when Portuguese traders arrived in the area in the fifteenth century, they encountered people who were already used to forming marriage alliances with outside traders. Many of those Portuguese traders were New Christians who were themselves already familiar with adopting new practices to fit in with a dominant culture. The pattern of intermarriage and cultural accommodation continued, eventually creating *Crioulo*, the mixture of Portuguese and African languages that became common in the South Atlantic, and a broader 'creolized' culture of mixture and syncretism.⁵⁵

George Brooks also traces the ways in which European and local notions about acceptable marriage partners combined in the colonies of West Africa to create distinctive economic, social, and cultural patterns. In the patrilineal societies of West Africa, such as the Wolof, Portuguese men and their mixed-race children were not allowed to marry local people of free standing, as this could give them claims to land use; their children could not inherit or join the kin and age-grade associations that shaped political power structures. Brooks has found that this meant mixed-race sons generally continued in the trading occupation of their fathers, and in some places women became the major traders, with large households, extensive networks of trade and many servants and slaves. Because these wealthy female traders – termed *nharas* in Crioulo and *signares* in French—had connections with both the African and European worlds, they were valued as both trade and marriage partners by the French and English traders who moved into this area in the eighteenth century. ‘Some of these women were married in church’, reported one French commentator, ‘others in the style of the land, which in general consists of the consent of both parties and the relatives’.⁵⁶ In the latter form of marriage, the women’s European husbands would have paid bridewealth to their new in-laws (instead of receiving a dowry as was the custom in Europe), provided a large feast and been expected to be sexually faithful. If the husband returned to Europe, the *signare* was free to marry again. Thus intermarriage facilitated and was a key part of a pattern of cultural exchange in which European men adopted local customs far more than their indigenous wives adopted European, just as did French men in western North America. Similar examples of shifting policy toward mixed marriages on the part of both church and state, and great variation in levels of enforcement, can be found throughout the early modern world, in both colony and metropole.⁵⁷

Conclusions

Most studies of women’s cultural power in the early modern period, like most studies of any topic related to gender, focus on Europe, and within Europe, studies of England outnumber those of anywhere else. This is in large part because an inordinate amount of the work in women’s and gender history over the last several decades has been done by English-speaking historians situated in universities in North America, Britain and Australia. As the books and articles I have cited here indicate, however, research on other parts of the world is beginning to emerge, which can allow comparisons and broader-based analyses.

Historians of women and gender have tended to be suspicious of generalizations, and after an initial flurry of ‘sisterhood is global’, they have instead emphasized multiple categories of identity and difference – race, sexuality, class, religion, age, ability and so on. They note that every key aspect of gender – the relationship between the family and the state, the relationship between gender and sexuality, and so on – is historically, culturally and class specific. Today historians of masculinity speak of their subject only in plurals, as ‘multiple masculinities’ appear to have emerged everywhere, just as have multiple sexualities in works by historians of sexuality.⁵⁸

Gender scholars have also asserted that these categories of identity intersect in dynamic ways, developing a theory of ‘intersectionality’ that, as Valerie Traub has summarized,

insists that gender should not be considered apart from other identities, for it is always materialized in terms of and by means of them. The relations of gender, race, sexuality, religion and ability are densely interconnected in ways that are sometimes congruent, sometimes contradictory, but always manifest a more capacious and complex reality than ‘gender’ alone can encompass.⁵⁹

This complexity does not have to be paralyzing, however, or prevent one from moving beyond the local. Broader comparisons can be situated within the sophisticated understanding of intersectionality that has been developed over the last several decades. On issues related to political culture, such analyses can also take into account the performative aspects of power that have been at the heart of gender theory and cultural history.

In terms of the three topics in this chapter: female rulers, female religious leaders and wives in mixed marriages all had cultural power that enabled them to act independently and often publicly within the male-dominated political structures in which they were situated. That cultural power came from a variety of sources – social rank, connections with their birth families and kin groups, a charismatic personality, money, a reputation for holiness, religious visions, a position of leadership within an institution, links with men in competing structures of power – making such women a perfect example of intersectionality in action. Their ability to use that power varied, and changed over time – hardly surprising in the dynamic early modern world – but in most places it was a source of discomfort, or at least comment, to the men whose recorded thoughts form the vast majority of early modern written sources. This was true for men discussing their own societies, and even more for the male merchants, conquerors, missionaries and officials who confronted new societies when they traded, traveled, preached and colonized. Every regional or global interaction, and the forms of hierarchy, domination and separation that these created, reinforced or challenged, was gendered, a fact that must be part of every story we tell about politics and culture in this era, from the local to the global.

Notes

- 1 Joan Scott, ‘Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis’, *American Historical Review* (*AHR*), 91/5 (1986), 1053–1075. For a recent discussion of the impact of Scott’s work, see: ‘*American Historical Review* Forum: Revisiting “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis”’, with articles by Joanne Meyerowitz, Heidi Tinsman, Maria Bucur, Dyan Elliott, Gail Hershatter and Wang Zheng, and a response by Joan Scott, *AHR*, 113/5 (2008), 1344–1430.
- 2 Durba Ghosh, ‘Another Set of Imperial Turns?’, *AHR*, 117/3 (2012), 772–793. Among the early books she mentions are Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and*

- Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995); Antoinette Burton, ed., *Gender, Sexuality, and Colonial Modernities* (New York: Routledge, 1999). The link between gender and the cultural history of empire has continued; for example, Kathleen Wilson, Catherine Hall, and Mrinalini Sinha are the editors of a new series *Critical Perspectives on Empire* (published by Cambridge) in which every volume is attuned to gender, even those for which gender is not a primary category of analysis.
- 3 Susan D. Amussen and Allyson M. Poska, 'Restoring Miranda: Gender and the Limits of European Patriarchy in the Early Modern Atlantic World', *Journal of Global History*, 7/3 (November 2012), 342–363.
 - 4 The increase in global connections is a prominent theme in many recent discussions of the early modern as a distinct era. The mission statement of the *Journal of Early Modern History* notes that 'early modern is a convenient description for the age that was marked by a quantum leap in the level of global interaction' (www.hist.umn.edu/~jemh/prospect.html [accessed 25 January 2014]) and the title of the volumes that cover the period from 1400 to 1800 for the new *Cambridge World History* (2015), for which I was one of the editors, is *The Construction of a Global World*.
 - 5 William Monter, *The Rise of Female Kings in Europe 1300–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).
 - 6 The debate about female rulers in Europe has been surveyed in Amanda Shephard, *Gender and Authority in Sixteenth-Century England: The Knox Debate* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1994); Sharon L. Jansen, *The Monstrous Regiment of Women: Female Rulers in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).
 - 7 Lisa Hopkins, *Women Who Would be Kings: Female Rulers of the Sixteenth Century* (London: St. Martin's, 1991); Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed., *Queenship in Europe 1660–1815: The Role of the Consort* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Regina Schulte, ed., *The Body of the Queen: Gender and Rule in the Courtly World from the 15th to the 20th Century* (New York: Berghahn, 2005); Anne J. Cruz and Mihoko Suzuki, eds., *The Rule of Women in Early Modern Europe* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009) all discuss royal women in several parts of Europe. There are also many studies of single countries and individual queens, especially Elizabeth I.
 - 8 'Queenship and Power', at www.palgrave.com/series/queenship-and-power/QAP/ [accessed 24 January 2015].
 - 9 Sarah Duncan, *Mary I: Gender, Power, and Ceremony in the Reign of England's First Queen* (London: Palgrave, 2012) is the book in the series that analyzes these issues most explicitly.
 - 10 Representative studies include: Barbara F. Weissberger, *Isabel Rules: Constructing Queenship, Wielding Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Barbara Stephenson, *The Power and Patronage of Marguerite de Navarre* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004); Theresa Earenfight, ed., *Queenship and Political Power in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Konrad Eisenbichler, ed., *The Cultural World of Eleonora of Toledo, Duchess of Florence and Siena* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004); Melinda Gough and R. Malcom Smuts, eds., 'Queens and the Transmission of Political Culture: The Case of Early Modern France', special issue of *The Court Historian*, 10/1 (2005); Erin Griffey, ed., *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics and Patronage* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008); Joyce de Vries, *Caterina Sforza and the Art of Appearances: Gender, Art and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010); Dagmar Eichberger, Anne-Marie Legaré and Wim Hüsken, eds., *Women at the Burgundian Court: Presence and Influence* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); Michael Yonan, *Empress Maria Theresa and the Politics of Habsburg Imperial Art* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2011); Christina Strunck, ed., *Medici Women as Cultural Mediators (1533–1743)* (Milan: Silvana, 2012); Judith P. Aikin, *A Ruler's Consort in Early Modern Germany: Aemilia Juliana of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014).
 - 11 Meredith Martin, *Dairy Queens: The Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine de Medici to Marie-Antoinette* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
 - 12 The book in the series with the broadest geographic reach is Elena Woodacre, ed., *Queenship in the Mediterranean: Negotiating the Role of the Queen in the Medieval and Early Modern Eras* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

- 13 Lucienne Thys-Senocak, *Ottoman Women Builders* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008); Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). See also the essays in Gavin Hambley, ed., *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998).
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INDEX

- acquêts* 125
Akbar, Mughal emperor 19, 220
Albemarle, Arnold Joost van Keppel, earl
of 56
Albert VII, archduke of Austria 51
Albertine Agnes, countess of Nassau 53–4
Alley, Edward 30
Alley, Joan 30
Amalia, countess of Solms-Braunfels
52–3, 57
Amalia Elisabeth, countess of
Hanau-Münzenberg 56
Aminatu, queen of Zazzau 19
Anna, princess of Denmark, queen of
England and Scotland 5
Anton Ulrich, duke of
Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel 60
archives and archiving 25–40
Aylmer, John 144, 146, 151
- Bainbridge, E. T. 179–80, 186–90
Baskerville, Hannibal 31
Baskerville, Mary 31
Berkeley, Sir John 119
Berkeley, William 119
Bertie, Richard 150
Bielke, Nils 75, 80, 85
Bille, Eske 95
Blount, Charles 5
Booker, John 30
Bourgeoys, Marguerite 223, 224
Bourne, Elizabeth 33
Brandon, Charles, duke of Suffolk 118
- Brews, Jane 114–15
Brews, Thomas 115
Bull, Henry 30
Bullinger, Heinrich 144
- Caesar, Sir Julius 30
Cappello, Bianca 160, 165, 167
Caputh Palace 57, 59
canvassing 182–4, 185–9, 191
Catalina Micaela, infant of Spain 50
Catharina Belgica, countess of Nassau
52, 56
Catherine II (the Great), empress of
Russia 218
Catherine de Medici, queen of France
19, 219
Catherine of Aragon, queen of England
111, 112, 118
Cecil, Robert (later earl of Salisbury) 34–5
Cecil, William (lord Burghley) 4–5, 144,
145, 147, 148, 154, 155, 156, 157
Charles II, king of England 58
Charles XI, king of Sweden 69
Charles XII, king of Sweden 71, 73, 78
Charlotte Amalia, princess of
Hesse-Kassel 56
Christian II, king of Denmark, Norway and
Sweden 89, 92, 98–9
Christina, queen of Sweden 19
Churchill, Sarah, duchess of
Marlborough 38
citizen, citizenship 197, 201–3, 205–6, 210
Clifford, Lady Anne 32, 35

- Clifford, Margaret, countess of Cumberland 32, 35
 Coke, Theophila 33
 Coligny, de, Louise 52–3
conquêts 125
 Coppinger, Richard 188–90
 Cosimo I Medici, grand duke of Tuscany 51
 court, royal 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15–17, 19, 20, 28, 30, 52, 54, 58, 59, 61, 69, 70, 73, 78, 81, 104, 112, 119, 120, 143, 150, 152, 153, 158–71, 219, 220, 221, 224, 226
- de Ferrière, Claude 128
 De la Gardie, family 13, 71, 74–5, 78
 De la Gardie, Magnus Gabriel 75, 76, 85
 De la Gardie, Magnus Julius 78
 de la Pole, Edmund, earl of Suffolk 111
 de la Pole, Margaret, countess of Suffolk 111
 Dennis, Lady Anne 35
 Dering, Edward 33
 d'Este, Barbara Habsburg 158
 d'Este, Lucrezia de Medici 158
 d'Este, Margherita Gonzaga 158
 de Vere, Elizabeth, countess of Oxford 111–12, 114, 115
 Digby, Lady Mary 35
donations entre vifs 127
 Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester 146, 148, 151
 Dutch East India Company, the 52
- Elisabeth Charlotte, princess Palatine 59
 Elisabeth Juliana, princess of Schleswig-Holstein-Sönderburg-Norburg 60
 Elizabeth (Stuart), queen of Bohemia 10
 Elizabeth I, queen of England 4, 16, 19, 143–53, 218, 219, 221
 Engelbrektsson, Olav 89, 92–4, 98, 99, 100
 Erlendsdotter, Ingerd 97–8
 Essex, Robert, earl 4–6
- feminism 27, 101, 207, 211, 217
 Flor, Peter 207, 210
 Foxe, John 30
 Francesco I (Medici), Grand duke of Tuscany 51
 François I, king of France 50
 Françoise Marie de Bourbon, Mademoiselle de Blois 59
 Frederick I, king of Prussia 56–7, 59
 Frederick II, king of Prussia 60–1
 Frederick Augustus I, king of Saxony 59
 Frederick Henry, prince of Orange 52–3, 56
- Frederik I, king of Denmark and Norway 92–3, 98
 Frederik IV, king of Denmark 56
 Furze, Robert 25–6, 32–3
- Gabriel Daniel 51
 gift-giving 3, 4, 6, 9–10, 11–13, 17, 50–3, 54, 60–3, 66, 71, 73–4, 76–8, 81, 128, 132
 Giovanna of Austria 160–71
 Giske estate 97–8
 Glyd, Anne 39, 45
 Godfrey-Treby, Mary 187–8
 Gonzaga, Eleonora Habsburg 158, 168
 Gonzaga, Eleonora Medici 158, 168
 Gonzaga dynasty 158
 Goodman, Christopher 143, 149, 156
 Grey, Lady Anne 118, 119
 Grotius, Hugo 28
 Gulbadan Banu Begum, Mughal princess 19, 220
 Gustav I (Vasa), king of Sweden 92, 100
- Hadice Turhan Sultan, haseki sultan 220
 Hale, Sir Matthew 35
 Hans, king of Denmark, Norway and Sweden 89, 99, 103
 Hatshepsut, Egyptian pharaoh 219
 Hedvig Eleonora, dowager queen of Sweden 73, 81
 Henri IV, king of France 52
 Henriëtte Catharina, countess of Nassau 53–5
 Henriksson, Nils 89, 93, 94, 95, 97, 103
 Henry VIII, king of England 111, 118, 119
 Hindon 182, 183, 184–6
 Hoby, Lady Margaret 35
 Holman, William 32
 Hosokawa Tama Gracia 224
 household 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 28, 29, 31–2, 34–5, 36–9, 40, 118, 123, 135, 161, 167, 199, 210
 Howard family 38
- inheritance (law) 3, 6, 9, 13, 19–20, 26, 33, 35, 37, 40, 55, 57, 89, 98, 118, 124, 127, 128, 129–30, 132, 135, 200, 218, 229
 Isabella, queen of Castile 19, 218
 Isabella Clara Eugenia, infant of Spain 50–1, 53
- James I and VI, king of England and Scotland 4–5, 27, 52
 Jewel, John 148
 Johnson family 30

- Kassanké 228
 Kimpa Vita, Beatriz 225
 Kingston, Mary 108, 112, 114–15, 120
 Kingston, Sir William 112, 114
 Kitson, Sir Thomas 33
 Knollys, Margaret 31
 Knox, John 16, 19, 143–4, 146, 150, 221;
 *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the
 Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558) 143
 Knyvett, Thomas 34
 Kruckow, Johan 94, 99–100
 Krummedike, Henrik 94
 Ky Kiff, Joan 35
- legal system 124
 Lindsay, David 143
 Lisle, Arthur, Viscount 30
 Louis XIV, king of France 58–9, 66, 76, 78
 Louis XV, king of France 61
 Louise, princess of Mecklenburg 56
 Louise Henriëtte, countess of Nassau
 53–4, 57
 Lunge, Vincens 89–90, 92–5, 99, 101,
 102–5
- Mandinka 228
 Manners, Elizabeth, countess of Rutland 33
 Margaret, archduchess of Austria 51
 Margaret of Parma 143
 Maria, countess of Nassau 53
 Maria Anna, princess of Bavaria 50
 Maria Anna Amalia, princess of
 Courland 57
 Marie Antoinette, queen of France 219
 Marie de l'Incarnation 222
 Marie Eleonore, princess of
 Anhalt-Dessau 55
 Marotta (convert) 226
 Martelli, Camilla 160, 164–6
 Mary, queen of Scots 143, 148, 149, 150–1,
 152–3
 Mary I (Tudor), queen of England 143
 Mary II (Stuart), queen of England 55
 Mary of Guise 143, 145, 148
 Medici, Catherine de 143, 147
 Medici, Cosimo 160, 163, 164, 165, 166,
 167, 169, 170, 174
 Medici, Francesco de 160, 161, 162, 163,
 165, 166, 168, 169, 170, 173, 174
 Medici, house of 17, 51, 62, 158–71
 Medici, Isabella Orsini, Duchess of
 Bracciano 160–71
 Medici, Leonora di Toledo 160, 161–4, 165
 Medici, Pietro 160, 161, 165, 173
 More, Lady Margaret 34
- Norwegian Constitution (1814) 205
- Orange-Nassau, house of 12, 49–50, 52–9,
 61–2
 Oranienbaum 54
 Oranienburg 53, 56, 57, 59
 Oranienstein 54, 56
 Ottesdotter, Ingerd 14, 89–101
 Oxenstierna, Anna Margareta 70
 Oxenstierna, Bengt (1623–1702) 69–72,
 76, 78, 79–80
 Oxenstierna, Charlotta 71
 Oxenstierna, Eva 70
 Oxenstierna, family 13
- Pakington, Dorothy 33
 Palissy, Bernard 51
 Paulet, Lucy, Marchioness of Winchester 33
 Penry, Helen 34
 Penry, John 34
 Philip II, king of Spain 50–1, 145, 169
 Philip III, king of Spain 50
 Philippe, duke of Orléans 59
 Philippe II, duke of Orléans 59
 Philips, Dorothy 39
 Platen-Hallermund von, Clara Elisabeth
 70–1
 proxy, vote by 200, 202, 210
- Randolph, Thomas 16, 143, 144, 148,
 149–53
 Ratcliffe, Elizabeth 34
 Ray, John 36
 Reresby, Lady Mary 32
 Reresby, Sir John 32
 Rich, Penelope 4–6, 11
 Rodney, Sir Edward 32
 Russell, Lady Elizabeth 35
- Sackville, Edward, fourth Earl of Dorset 31
 St Clere, Elizabeth 114, 115
 St Clere, Frances 114–15
 Scrope, Anne Lady 15, 109, 115–16,
 117, 118
 Scrope, John Lord 15, 109, 115–16, 117
 Scrope, Richard 15, 109
 Scudamore, Lady Mary 30
 Sibbern, Valentin 206
 Smith, Hannah 34
 Smith, Sir Thomas 144
 Snaphaen, Abraham 55
 Starhemberg, family 70, 72–3, 75
 Stenbock, Magdalena 69, 71, 72–3, 76, 81
 Stenbock, Magnus 70–1, 78
 Sutton, Sir Thomas 30

- Taj al-Alam, sultana of Aceh 19
Taunton 179–81, 182, 183, 186–7, 188–9
Throckmorton, Nicholas 16, 143, 144–53
Trianon de Porcelaine 58–9
- Ugerup, Erik 95, 99
Upham, John 187–8
- Vaillant, Jacques 57
Valois, Marguerite de, duchess of Savoy 168
- Wadham, Dorothy 30
Walpole, Mary 34
Ward, Mary 222
- Whitfield, Ann 179, 181
Wilhelmina, princess of Prussia 61
William (the Silent), prince of Orange
52–3
William III, prince of Orange, king of
England 54, 55, 57
William V, prince of Orange 61
Willoughby, Cassandra 36
Willoughby, Francis 36
Willoughby, Sir Thomas 36
Wingfield, Sir John 117
Wingfield, Sir Robert 115, 117
Wrangel, Karl Gustav 75
Wyndham, Sir John 109