

THE GOOD KING

René of Anjou and Fifteenth Century Europe

Margaret L. Kekewich



The Good King

Also by Margaret L. Kekewich

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Europe**

Margaret L. Kekewich

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To the memory of my parents Arthur and Winifred Kekewich

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>List of Illustrations</i>	x
<i>Maps</i>	xii
<i>Genealogical table</i>	xiv
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xv
Introduction: 'Good' and 'Bad' Kings	1
1 Anjou, Bar, Lorraine and Provence	11
Introduction	11
Young René	15
Disaster	27
The administration of the <i>apanage</i>	32
Conclusion	42
2 Naples: the 'Italian Wasp-Nest'	45
Introduction: the Angevin Empire	45
The other Hundred Years War	48
1380–1434: a graveyard for the Angevins	48
King René: 1435–1442	54
John of Calabria and the end of the Angevin enterprise	68
Conclusion: two Renaissance princes	76
3 The End of the Hundred Years War	80
Introduction	80
René redux	83
Two weddings and a truce	91
The question of Maine	105
The reconquest of Normandy and Guyenne	116
Crisis in England	122
Conclusion	131
4 René's Court	134
Introduction	134
Court locations	138

Family, courtiers and servants	147
The arts: making and patronage	155
Literature	155
Painting and sculpture	169
Devotion and chivalry	183
Conclusion	191
5 The Dissolution of René's <i>apanage</i>	198
Introduction	198
The first demise of Lancaster	201
The League of the Public Good	209
'King of Aragon', count of Barcelona	215
1470/71: the 'Annus Horribilis'	223
The dissolution of the <i>apanage</i>	229
Conclusion	244
Conclusion: the Paradox of the Good King	247
<i>Bibliography</i>	255
<i>Index</i>	267

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Margaret Lucille Kekewich, London, 2008

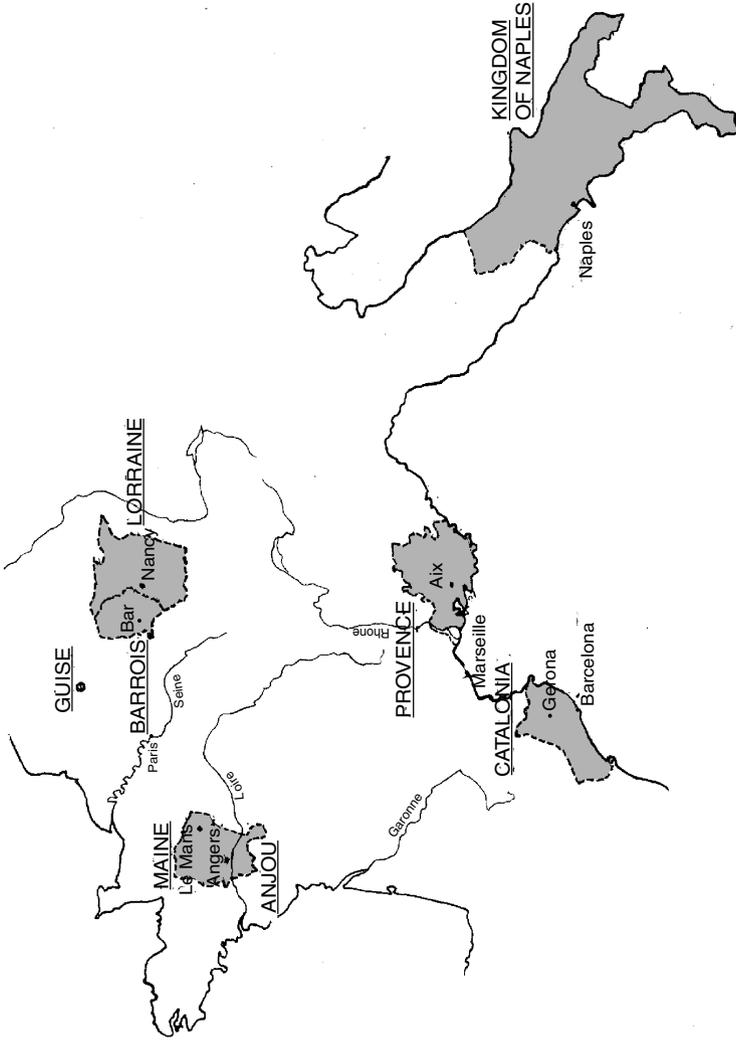
List of Illustrations

Cover: Tomb of king René of Anjou and his first wife, queen Isabelle of Lorraine formerly in the choir of Saint Maurice cathedral, Angers. Damaged by fire in 1533 and destroyed in 1793, only a few fragments now remain. Drawing by Gaignières, c. 1699.

1. The window from the north transept of the cathedral of St Julian, Le Mans (detail). Photo, Peter Fawcett.	2
2. Yolande of Aragon, detail from the window in Le Mans cathedral.	3
3. Statue of king René in the Cours Mirabeau, Aix by David d'Angers, 1819 (detail). Photo Peter Fawcett.	43
4. Courtyard of the Castelnuovo, Naples. Photo Peter Fawcett.	46
5 a–d. Miniatures of king René, queen Isabelle, their son John of Calabria and his wife Marie of Bourbon. <i>Register of the Confraternity of St Martha</i> , Naples, Archivio di Stato, Ms 58.	60
6. Arms of king René by Luca della Robbia, formerly displayed on the Villa Pazzi near Fiesole. The Victoria and Albert Museum. Photo, Peter Fawcett.	67
7 a–c. The castle at Angers: curtain walls, built in the thirteenth century and moat, the lodge built by René c. 1450 and plan. Photos Peter Fawcett. Plan property of Palgrave: see Kekewich and Rose, <i>Britain, France and the Empire</i> , pp. 232–4.	106
8. The duke of Bourbon views the arms of participating knights held up by a herald. <i>The Book of Tournaments</i> , Paris, BnF Ms fr.2695, f.11.	161
9. Heart and Ardent Desire arrive at the Hospital of Love. <i>The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart</i> , Paris BnF Ms fr. 24399 f. 58.	165
10. René in his study. <i>The Mortification of Empty Pleasure</i> , Brussels, Bib.Roy. Ms 10308, f.1. The Warburg Institute.	168
11. 'The Virgin Mary in the Burning Bush' by Nicolas Froment, 1476, Saint Saviour cathedral, Aix. The Warburg Institute.	175
12. Probably Margaret of Anjou, a medal by Pietro da Milano (1463–64). Private Collection. The Warburg Institute.	180

13. John Cossa, a medal by Francesco Laurana, 1466. Paris BnF Cabinet des médailles. The Warburg Institute. 181
14. Tarascon Castle, effigies of king René and queen Jeanne de Laval and inscription, probably by Francesco Laurana. Photo Peter Fawcett. 182
15. The tomb of Charles I, count of Maine, d.1472, in Le Mans cathedral, probably by Francesco Laurana. Photo Peter Fawcett. 216
16. Tomb of Ferry of Vaudemont (d.1470) and Yolande of Anjou (d.1483) in church of Saint-Laurent, Joinville, Haute Marne. Made in 1495 by Ferry's brother Henry of Lorraine, bishop of Metz, and destroyed during the French Revolution. Classical features led L. Maxe-Werly to attribute the tomb to Francesco Laurana, *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (1899) facing p. 263. Warburg Institute. 238
17. King René in old age, a modern picture copied from the Mathurin portrait. Hotel d'Arlatan, Arles. Photo Kenneth Lewis. 243
18. Statue of the young René by David d'Angers near Angers castle, 1853. Photo Peter Fawcett. 250

Maps



Angevin lands in the fifteenth century



The Angevins in Italy

List of Abbreviations

Basin, <i>Charles VII</i>	<i>Histoire de Charles VII</i> , ed. and trans. C. Samaran, 2 vols (Paris: 1964)
Basin, <i>Louis XI</i>	<i>Histoire de Louis XI</i> , ed. and trans. C. Samaran and M. C. Garand, 3 vols (Paris: 1963–72)
Beaucourt	G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, <i>Histoire de Charles VII</i> , 6 vols (Paris: 1881–91)
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale
Bodl.	Bodleian Library
Bouvier	Gilles le Bouvier, dit le Hérault Berry, <i>Les Chroniques du Roi Charles VII</i> , ed. H. Courteault and L. Celier (Paris: 1979)
BL	British Library
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
CFR	<i>Calendar of Fine Rolls</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
CSPM	<i>Calendar of State Papers Milan</i>
Chartier	Jean Chartier, <i>Chronique de Charles VII</i> , ed. Vallet de Viriville, 3 vols (Paris: 1858)
Chastellain	Georges Chastellain, <i>Oeuvres</i> , ed. K. de Lettenhove, 8 vols (Brussels: 1863–66)
Commynes	Philippe de Commynes, <i>Mémoires</i> , ed. J. Calmette and G. Durville, 2 vols (Paris: 1924)
<i>Dépêches</i> (Mandrot)	<i>Dépêches des Ambassadeurs Milanais en France sous Louis XI et François Sforza</i> , ed. B. de Mandrot, 4 vols (Paris: 1916–23)
<i>Dépêches</i> (la Sarra)	<i>Dépêches des Ambassadeurs Milanais sur les campagnes de Charles-le-Hardi duc de Bourgogne de 1474 à 1477</i> , ed. F. de Gingins la Sarra, 2 vols (Paris, Geneva: 1858)
<i>Dietari</i>	<i>Dietari del Antichi Consell Barceloni</i> , ed. D.F. Schwarz, D. Franchesch and Carreras y Caudi, 17 vols (Barcelona: 1892–1922) 2
<i>Dispatches</i>	<i>Dispatches with Related Documents of Milanese Ambassadors in France and Burgundy, 1450–1483</i> , ed. P.M. Kendall and V.I. Iardi, 3 vols (Athens, Ohio: 1970–81)

<i>Diurnali</i>	<i>Diurnali detti del Duca di Monteleone</i> , ed. N. Faraglia (Naples: 1895)
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
Escouchy	Mathieu d'Escouchy, <i>Chronique</i> , ed. G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, 3 vols (Paris: 1863–64)
<i>Foedera</i>	<i>Foedera, Conventiones et cujuscunq̄ue Acta Publica</i> , ed. T. Rymer, 10 vols (The Hague: 1745)
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Medieval History</i>
Lecoy de la Marche	A. Lecoy de la Marche, <i>Le Roi René: sa vie, son administration, ses travaux artistiques et littéraires</i> , 2 vols (Paris: 1875)
Molinet	Jean Molinet, <i>Chroniques, 1474–1506</i> , ed. G. Doutrepont and O. Jodogne, 2 vols (Brussels: 1935).
Monstrelet	Enguerran de Monstrelet, <i>La Chronique, 1400–1444</i> , ed. L. Doüet-d'Arcq, 6 vols (Paris: 1857–62)
<i>RP</i>	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum</i> , Record Commission, 6 vols (London: 1767–83)
Stevenson	<i>Letters and Papers illustrative of the Wars of the English in France during the reign of Henry VI</i> , ed. J. Stevenson, 2 vols (London: 1861–64)
<i>Vale's Book</i>	<i>Politics of Fifteenth Century England: John Vale's Book</i> , ed. M.L. Kekewich, C.F. Richmond, A.F. Sutton, L. Visser-Fuchs and J.L. Watts (Stroud: 1995)
Warkworth	John Warkworth, <i>Chronicle of the first thirteen years of the reign of Edward IV</i> , ed. O. Halliwell (London: 1839)
Waurin	Jean de Waurin, <i>Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istoires de la Grant Bretagne</i> , ed. W. and E.L.C.P. Hardy, 5 vols (London: 1864–91)

Note: All translations are by the author unless otherwise stated.

Introduction: 'Good' and 'Bad' Kings

A great window full of colourful fifteenth century glass illuminates the north transept of Le Mans cathedral. The rose at the top is filled with figures of God the Father, the Son, the Virgin and four evangelist symbols surrounded by angels. Below stand the Apostles, St René, bishop of Angers and St Louis, king of France. The bottom line of worthies reveals the programme of the whole window: amongst local prelates members of the Angevin family kneel in prayer. Louis I of Anjou, his wife Marie of Blois, their son king Louis II, his wife Yolande of Aragon and John II, duke of Bourbon, the brother-in-law of René's son John, are identified by their arms. It is a powerful testimony to the image and values that the dynasty chose to portray.¹ They shared a strongly held faith combined with the assertion of their ownership of French lands and their claim to the crowns of Naples and Jerusalem (Illustrations 1 and 2).

This book traces the rise and decline in the fortunes of the second house of Anjou in the fifteenth century and particularly of king René whose long life spanned most of the period. English language studies that take a broad view of the relationship of the French princely

¹There is considerable difficulty in dating this window since authorities assign it to the mid-1430s, during the English occupation, ten years before Maine returned to France. It does, however look like a triumphant assertion of the Angevin re-possession in 1448. L. Grodecki, 'Les Vitraux de la Cathédrale de Mans', *Congrès Archéologique de France*, 119 (1961) pp. 59–99; J.B. de Vaivre, 'Datation des vitraux du bras nord de la cathédrale St. Julien du Mans', *Bulletin monumental*, 151 (1993) pp. 497–523.



Illustration 1 The window from the north transept of the cathedral of St Julian, Le Mans (detail). King David at the top, below (left) St James the Great and St Philip, below them a bishop (left) and St Louis, at the bottom (left) Marie of Blois and Yolande of Aragon. Mid-fifteenth century. Photo, Peter Fawcett.



Illustration 2 Yolande of Aragon, detail from the window in Le Mans cathedral.

*apanages*² to the rest of Europe are thin on the ground. Whilst the work of Richard Vaughan has done much to illuminate the impact of Burgundy on European politics,³ the other *apanages* have only been covered tangentially in broader works. Gareth Prosser has remarked that: ‘The Valois princely houses lack modern monographs, and the most important – Burgundy and Anjou, but also Orleans and Alençon – have always been severely under-studied.’⁴ English studies of the last phases of the Hundred Years War usually give little weight to the internal politics of the French court between 1422 and 1453. The role played by the princes and princesses of the blood and their followers in the emergence of Charles VII as a victorious king is seldom seriously considered although Malcolm Vale’s study of Charles VII has much to say on the subject.⁵

René of Anjou, titular king of Sicily and Jerusalem, duke of Bar, Lorraine and Anjou and count of Provence, has rarely been taken seriously by English historians. When he is mentioned at all, he usually figures as a penniless incompetent, a small player in the great drama of the Hundred Years War. At best he is credited with having put over a fast one on the English government, saddling them with his troublesome daughter as their queen. A major theme of this book is that René, together with other members of his family, was central to the development of French royal policy for much of the fifteenth century. The role of the Angevins as advisers to Charles VII, the assertion of their claim to the kingdom of Naples,⁶ their dealings with Burgundy, the Papacy, Aragon and the Empire, the marriage of René’s daughter Margaret to Henry VI of England and their subsequent losses all had a serious impact on Europe. René was also a figure of great significance to cultural developments in France: both celebrating the ideals of chivalry with Gothic splendour and embracing the art and scholarship of early Renaissance Italy. In recent decades Angevin patronage of the arts and

²The name of territories given by French kings to their sons and brothers. They enjoyed extensive powers of government within such lands.

³R. Vaughan, *Valois Burgundy* (London: 1975) and several other books.

⁴G. Prosser, ‘“Decayed feudalism” and “Royal Clienteles”: Royal Office and Magnate Service in the Fifteenth Century’, in *War, Government and Power in Late Medieval France*, ed. C. Allmand (Liverpool: 2000) pp. 175–89.

⁵M.G.A. Vale, *Charles VII* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: 1974).

⁶The house of Aragon already ruled Sicily at the time when René asserted his claim to Naples but since contemporaries referred to him as ‘the king of Sicily’ that title is used here.

literature has been extensively investigated by French scholars.⁷ Most studies owe a great deal to A. Lecoy de la Marche who published a scholarly biography of king René in 1875, based on extensive work in the archives at Paris, the Bouches-du-Rhône and Naples (the latter now mostly destroyed).⁸

The title of this book begs the question of why René should be regarded as a 'good' king. This is not a trivial issue, despite recalling the jokes in *1066 and All That*, but goes to the heart of how medieval princes were perceived by their contemporaries and of how they are assessed by modern historians. Extensive discussion of the issue has taken place since philosophers such as J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner raised it in the 1960s and 1970s.⁹ They suggested that the way in which people thought about their governors was founded on a series of ethical and practical expectations and was itself an important determining factor in political life, often now described as 'political culture'.¹⁰ More recently historians have assessed the capacities of princesses, most notably in regard to Margaret of Anjou, Anne Crawford, Bonita Cron, Diana Dunn, Helen Maurer and J.L. Laynesmith.¹¹ René's mother, Yolande of Aragon, a key figure in French politics for three decades, awaits a

⁷F. Robin, *La Cour d'Anjou-Provence: la vie artistique sous le règne de René* (Clamecy: 1985) provides a good overview and plentiful illustrations. A whole plethora of studies marked the five-hundredth anniversary of René's death in 1980.

⁸A. Lecoy de la Marche, *Le Roi René: sa vie, son administration, ses travaux artistiques et littéraires*, 2 vols (Paris: 1875).

⁹Both authors have published extensively but their thinking is well represented in: J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge: 1967); Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols (Cambridge, New York: 1978); *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge: 2002).

¹⁰C. Carpenter, 'Introduction: Political Culture, Politics and Cultural History', in *Political Culture in Late Medieval Britain*, ed. L. Clark and C. Carpenter, *The Fifteenth Century*, 4 (Woodbridge: 2004) pp. 1–19; M. Hicks, *English Political Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (London, New York: 2002).

¹¹A. Crawford, 'The King's Burden: the Consequences of Royal Marriage in Fifteenth Century England', in *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England*, ed. R.A. Griffiths (Gloucester: 1981) pp. 33–56; D. Dunn, 'Margaret of Anjou, Queen Consort of Henry VI: a Reassessment of her Role, 1445–53', in *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. R.E. Archer (Stroud, New York: 1995) pp. 107–43; H.E. Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: 2003); J.L. Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship, 1445–1503* (Oxford: 2004).

modern biographer. René's only son to survive into adulthood, John of Calabria, is the subject of a short French study.¹²

There was no difficulty for moderately educated and politically aware subjects in the late middle ages in deciding whether or not a particular prince or princess was good or bad. The Bible, the works of the Fathers of the Church and later scholastic commentators were teeming with examples such as David, Rehoboam, Judith, Jezebel, Herod and the Caesars. By the fifteenth century these had been expanded by a whole canon of works known as 'mirrors for princes'. Most had been produced in antiquity or in the Arab world and were translated into Latin and vernacular languages in the late middle ages. They provided the models for contemporary works, usually written by clerics, which incorporated many of their features but often addressed current concerns as well. The works of Vincent of Beauvais were widely read but *Of Princely Rule* (*De Regimine Principum*) by Giles of Rome was probably the most influential book in the genre. He was archbishop of Bourges and a prominent scholastic philosopher: he wrote the treatise for Philip IV (the Fair) of France while he was heir to the throne in the late thirteenth century. The appeal that it held for contemporaries (clerics and the considerable number of lay people who owned copies) was that it combined the prestigious scholarship of books on government by Aristotle with practical advice.¹³ How should a prince ensure his own Christian morality, the good management of his family, of his household and of his kingdom? This corresponded well with the idea of microcosm and macrocosm: if the body and mind were sound and virtuous this would be communicated to the wider scope of an individual's activities. Such ideas percolated right down the social scale through the assumptions made by those who controlled opinion and were manifested in sermons, religious and civic paintings and sculpture.

Modern historians tend to blench at invitations to hand out moral judgements on the subjects of their study. Yet they can scarcely avoid doing something that approximates to the formation of such judgements. The language that they use is different from the terms employed in the past but the verdict remains the same: 'ineffectual', 'prestigious' or 'unstable' are the kinds of adjective used to characterise rulers who would formerly have been described as 'weak', 'valiant' or 'evil'. As the various aspects of Angevin rule are considered they will be informed

¹²J. Bénét, *Jean d'Anjou, duc de Calabre et de Lorraine, 1426–1470* (Nancy: 1997). The research was completed in the 1930s.

¹³C.F. Briggs, *Giles of Rome's 'De Regimine Principum'* (Cambridge: 1999).

both by late medieval and modern historical opinion. Whilst the field in English history has remained relatively fallow, substantial work has been done by continental historians on the political, economic and cultural aspects of Angevin power.

King John II of France gave Anjou as an *apanage* to his second son Louis in 1360. The structure of its government and the way in which it was financed determined the effectiveness of its rulers since they had the income of great nobles but from 1380 had to fund a war for a kingdom. Throughout the second half of the fourteenth century and the early fifteenth century the dukes also took a major part in the government of France. Their claim to the kingdom of Sicily also embroiled them with the Spanish kingdoms and the Papacy and had an impact on French policy during the Great Schism. The absences of his father and older brother in Italy and the captivity of René of Anjou in Burgundy left his mother, Yolande of Aragon, to rule much of the *apanage*. When he was finally released in 1437 he bore a huge burden of debt that lessened his ability to fight effectively in Italy. Yolande also exercised a considerable amount of influence over the embattled young king of France, Charles VII her son-in-law. After her death René, his brother Charles of Maine, and a number of Angevin nobles continued to be influential at the French court, although their importance dwindled in the 1450s and was curtailed some years after the accession of Louis XI. René's son, John of Calabria, with his duchy of Lorraine and his following in Italy and Spain remained a formidable force in Europe.

From 1435 to 1442 René, his wife Isabelle of Lorraine and their two young sons were involved in an attempt to assert his family's claim to the throne of Naples against the wealthy king of Aragon, Alfonso IV (the Magnanimous). This was an episode in the other Hundred Years War (1380–1480) that the Angevins fought to recover the Kingdom. The king of France supported René but he was too deeply involved in the Hundred Years War to offer material aid. René exhausted his limited financial resources in paying the mercenaries and Neapolitan nobles whose help was essential to his success. His claim was also sanctioned by the Papacy, although it was too weak to be of much use to him. He emerged from a series of battles and sieges with a personal reputation for bravery but with nothing left of his kingdom except Provence. He retained the title of 'king' for the rest of his life and John of Calabria made further attempts against Alfonso's son Ferrante to revive the claim. It eventually devolved onto the French monarchs and was to be a major factor in their long wars in Italy at the end of the fifteenth century and in the early sixteenth century. The period from 1435–1442 was the only time when René

could be said to have ruled as a king, so to what failings (or qualities) did contemporaries and modern historians attribute his loss?

The later stages of the Hundred Years War between France and England had a devastating impact on the Angevins whose lands in north-western France had been either conquered or ravaged by the English during the absences of Louis III and René. The county of Maine was occupied and Anjou was subjected to periodic depredations. In 1444 a treaty of marriage between Henry VI of England (who favoured a policy of peace) and Margaret of Anjou offered the prospect of a settlement favourable both to Anjou and to the kingdom of France. During the negotiations, and also those for the cession of Maine, Charles VII, René and their delegates ran rings around Henry, his chief minister Suffolk and their advisers. Yet their very success was to leave Margaret, the agent by whom the return of Maine was promoted, with a heavy burden to carry in what was always going to be a difficult union. Her meagre dowry and the subsequent loss of all the lands in France (apart from Calais) provoked popular resentment against her in England. As C.S.L. Davies has remarked: ‘... the Wars of the Roses were part of a complex series of events; what happened in England affected events elsewhere, and was affected by them’.¹⁴

The virtual bankruptcy of the Crown, the unpopularity of Henry VI’s advisers and the losses that many had sustained in France subjected the Lancastrian dynasty to stresses from which it never recovered. The Angevins, however, benefited substantially from their sacrifice of Margaret. In 1445 a favourable settlement of their huge debt to Burgundy was made and they continued to enjoy royal favour. This was the most successful period of René’s life but how far was he personally responsible for the recovery of France?

The political importance of late medieval and early modern courts has been recognised in numerous studies in recent decades. The court of king René, however, presents particular difficulties to historians. He spent his early years as duke of Anjou and titular king first in captivity and then in asserting his claim to Naples. Even after he lost his Italian kingdom his domains were widely scattered between Bar and Lorraine, the Loire valley and Provence. Studies devoted to the culture and political significance of René’s court show that he was aware of the problem of a lack of homogeneity. His knightly Order of the Crescent, which gathered together nobles from all parts of his *apanage*, was seemingly

¹⁴C.S.L. Davies, ‘The Wars of the Roses in European Context’, in *The Wars of the Roses*, ed. A.J. Pollard (Basingstoke: 1995) p. 167.

founded to address this.¹⁵ His patronage of artists and musicians from many European countries made him a truly cosmopolitan prince. He simultaneously embraced the Christian, chivalric imagery of late Gothic art and architecture and the new forms of the early Italian Renaissance. René was himself an enthusiastic poet and painter and his patronage of the arts appears to have come from a genuine commitment rather than simply a desire to fulfil the princely stereotype of magnificence. The urbanity and grace of his court, combined with the apparent rustic simplicity of his later years, were to make a major contribution to traditions about the rule of 'good king René'.

Margaret of Anjou's fortune was languishing by the 1450s, threatened by the loss of the French territories and increased by other problems. She did not bear a child until 1453 and during that time the nobleman with the best claim to be heir to the English throne was the duke of York who became a focus for discontent. Despite the general rejoicing when a boy, prince Edward, was born the very need to protect his interests put the queen at odds with much of the political nation. Henry VI was subject to bouts of insanity and by 1460 York was ready to claim the Crown for himself. Margaret and her supporters fought off this first attempt and York was killed in the process, but in the following year Henry and his family were driven into exile and York's oldest son became Edward IV. René of Anjou gave Margaret a haven in his duchy of Bar and during the rest of the decade father and daughter attempted to raise support in Europe for Lancaster. They were finally successful in 1470 but Henry's *Readeption* (restoration) only lasted for a few months and ended in his death and the death of his son. Margaret remained Edward IV's prisoner for several years but was finally ransomed by her cousin Louis XI. In return for this and a pension she signed away her rights of inheritance to the Angevin domains.

The accession of Louis XI in 1461 meant that the Angevins had to prove to him that they were worth supporting and the following years were severely to test René's political capacities. John of Calabria stormed back from Italy aggrieved that Louis, after some minor initial help, had sided with Francesco Sforza of Milan, a close ally of Ferrante of Naples. John joined Burgundy and most of the princes of the royal blood in 1465 to rebel against Louis in the League of the Public Good.¹⁶ Although René

¹⁵M.T. Reynolds, 'René of Anjou, king of Sicily and the Order of the *Croissant*', *JMH*, 19 (1993) pp. 125–61.

¹⁶Usually called 'Public Weal' but this seems archaic in the twenty-first century.

kept aloof from the revolt it damaged the Angevins in the eyes of the king. They cooperated with Louis in the late 1460s when they headed the rebellion of Catalonia against John II of Aragon but the sudden death of John of Calabria in 1470 deprived the Catalans of a credible leader and another Angevin project foundered. By late 1473 René was without direct male heirs leaving him exposed to the schemes of king Louis. He made the fatal mistake of offering (perhaps not seriously) Provence to the great enemy of Louis, Charles the Bold of Burgundy.

René spent the last years of his life trying to salvage what he could of his *apanage* for himself and his heirs. In 1476 Louis, who had occupied Anjou and most of Bar, promised to return them and pay him a pension if he rejected Burgundy. This was willingly done since Charles the Bold had just taken Lorraine, proclaiming that it belonged to him. The duke, René's grandson René II, had also foolishly flirted with Burgundy and discovered his mistake too late. He took his revenge in 1477 when he led the army of Germans, Swiss and Lorrainers that defeated and killed Charles outside Nancy. The victorious young duke hoped to inherit all his grandfather's lands and the crown of Naples but he had to be content with much less on René's death in 1480 when the *apanage* disappeared.

The question arises of whether René would have been a better king if he had fought harder to preserve his *apanage*, together with Provence, for his heirs. Other aspects of his kingship were his role in European politics: in dealings with the Church, the Italian states, England, the Spanish states and the Empire.¹⁷ Historians of Anjou and Provence have often praised his care to avoid burdensome taxation, his stimulation of agriculture and industry and his encouragement of commerce. Most agree that his patronage of art, although limited by his resources, was enthusiastic and discriminating. René's kingship cannot be assessed in isolation from the rest of his close-knit family: his mother, brothers, wives, sisters, son, nephew, daughters and grandchildren have all left their political footprints on the fifteenth century. This work attempts to rectify an omission in English-language studies by providing an Angevin perspective to fifteenth century European history in the context of an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the 'good king'.

¹⁷C. Ohnesorge, 'Politique et Diplomatie du Roi René: Service et fidélité pendant les entreprises d'Italie et de Catalogne', in *La Noblesse dans les Territoires Angevins à la Fin du Moyen Âge*, ed. N. Coulet and J.-M. Matz (Rome: 2000) pp. 457–70.

1

Anjou, Bar, Lorraine and Provence

Introduction

The prospects of victory looked good to duke René when he chose to attack count Antoine de Vaudemont and his Burgundian supporters near Bulgnéville in Bar, on 2 July 1431.¹ Charles VII of France had sent him a force led by the renowned ‘knight without reproach’, Arnould-Guilhem, lord of Barbazan. René also had detachments formed by his Lorraine vassals and German allies altogether numbering about 7500, but his ordnance was scanty and his soldiers included few skilled bowmen. Vaudemont, who was claiming the duchy of Lorraine, only had an army of about 4000 but it included bowmen from the Flemish towns of his ally the duke of Burgundy and 400 more led by two experienced English captains. He also enjoyed the services of the great Burgundian commander, Antoine de Toulangeon, and formidable artillery: men of all ranks were ordered to fight on foot on pain of death. Against the advice of Barbazan and other older knights René decided to attack the enemy in their good defensive position, protected by a stream and fortified by ditches and palisades. Vaudemont was apparently assisted by an omen: a stag ran between the armies, stopped, beating its hooves three times on the earth, and then dashed amongst René’s forces causing confusion.² René’s men were subjected to devastating fire from the Burgundian cannons and arrows and Barbazan was soon killed. The battle

¹B. Schnerb, *Bulgnéville (1431): L’Etat bourguignon prend pied en Lorraine* (Paris: 1993) pp. 73–87; Thomas Basin, *Histoire de Charles VII*, ed. and trans. C. Samaran, 2 vols (Paris: 1964) 1, pp. 173–9.

²*La Chronique d’Enguerran de Monstrelet, 1400–1444*, ed. L. Doüet-d’Arcq, 6 vols (Paris: 1857–62) 4, pp. 461–5.

lasted for only a quarter of an hour but the pursuit and massacre of René's soldiers took a further two hours. He was wounded in the face, taken prisoner and handed over to the Burgundians. The calamity of Bulgnéville – political, financial and psychological – was to blight his promising career, putting at risk the security of the territories and titles he accumulated between 1419 and 1435: duke of Bar, Lorraine and Anjou, king of Sicily and Jerusalem and count of Provence.

The second house of Anjou had ruled a number of French territories since 1360 when John II of France had invested his second son, Louis count of Anjou, with his *apanage*.³ Initially it included Anjou, promoted to the status of a duchy, and the county of Maine; other territories came as her dowry when the duke married Marie of Blois. Throughout the 120 years of its existence the extent of the Angevin *apanage* expanded and contracted through marriage, conquest, purchase, sales, confiscation and diplomacy. The lands ruled by the Angevins in France remained under the ultimate jurisdiction of the French kings. The dukes did homage for them, could levy taxes only with royal consent and appeals in litigation could be made to the *Parlement* in Paris.⁴ The situation changed, however, during the rule of duke Louis I in 1380 when the childless queen Joanna of Sicily adopted him as her son and heir. The investment was obligingly made by the schismatic pope Clement VII from his base in Avignon. Two years later the queen was strangled by a rival claimant to the throne, Charles of Durazzo, leaving Louis I of Anjou with a good title to be king of Naples and Jerusalem as well as to the counties of Provence and Forcalquier.⁵ These lands did not form part of the Angevin *apanage*, neither did Bar and Lorraine, but the distinction will not be made in what follows: the problems and benefits that they brought cannot realistically be separated from the original holdings.

³The Angevin dukes of the Valois dynasty, Louis I, Louis II, Louis III and René, 1360 to 1480, are referred to here as 'the second house of Anjou'. Practice amongst historians varies, some describe the line of Geoffrey Plantagenet, father of Henry II of England as 'the first house'; here, Charles of Anjou, brother of Louis IX of France of the Capet dynasty and his descendants are regarded as 'the first house'. There is also the question of their indirect descendants, the house of Durazzo. More will be said (but not too much more) about these dynastic intricacies in Chapter 2.

⁴For a useful study of the *apanagiste* princes see A.Leguai, 'Royauté et principautés en France aux xiv^e et xv^e siècles: l'évolution de leurs rapports au cours de la guerre de cent ans', *Le Moyen Age*, 101 (1995) pp. 121–35.

⁵See Chapter 2 for the claim to Jerusalem.

Most commentators have seen the crown of Naples as a burden rather than a benefit for the house of Anjou. The other *apanagiste* Valois as well as the French kings recognised their claim and it gave the dukes of Anjou precedence over the wealthy and more powerful dukes of Burgundy. On the other hand, it drained the financial resources and physical energies of the early Angevins and was to prove an equally baleful inheritance for René and his son John of Calabria. The first three dukes all enjoyed some success in making good their claim to the Kingdom.⁶ Whilst they were present they were able to occupy parts of it, sometimes even taking the city of Naples itself, making headway against their rivals first from the house of Durazzo and then the kings of Aragon. Yet when they returned to France their hold on power invariably weakened, undermined by the problems of inadequate financial resources and a volatile and self-seeking Neapolitan nobility.

One advantage of their engagement in Italian politics in the early decades of the fifteenth century was that it distanced the Angevins, to some extent, from the dreadful internal strife between princely factions in France. This was largely the result of the periodic fits of madness to which the king, Charles VI, was subject. The vacuum in royal authority was filled by his wife, Isabeau of Bavaria and her close ally (and possible lover) the king's brother Louis duke of Orleans. Their rival for power was John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy who was responsible for the murder of the duke of Orleans in Paris in 1407. The king's uncle, John duke of Berry (until his death in 1416) and the Angevins were initially not closely aligned to either faction but progressively identified with the interests of the *Armagnacs*.⁷ John the Fearless was popular in Paris and could manipulate its people to his purpose. He also became increasingly embroiled with the English who were waging a successful war of conquest in Normandy under their formidable king, Henry V. Matters reached a crisis in 1419 when John the Fearless went to a meeting at Montereau that was ostensibly to conclude a peace with his rivals brokered by the dauphin Charles. The encounter was actually a trap

⁶'The Kingdom' (Il Regno) is the term frequently used to describe Naples, as opposed to Sicily, during the middle ages. The island of Sicily was already in the possession of the kings of Aragon by the early fifteenth century. The Angevin dukes were, however, always described by contemporaries as kings of Sicily.

⁷The Orleanist faction came to be called *Armagnacs* after one of its most powerful members, the count of Armagnac, father-in-law to the oldest son of Louis of Orleans, duke Charles. After the battle of Agincourt in 1415 he was held prisoner in England for twenty-five years and distanced from the strife in France.

sprung by Charles and his advisers, including several Angevins, and John was stabbed to death. His successor, Philip the Good, lost no time in making a settlement with Henry V. This incorporated not only Burgundy and England but also Charles VI of France and his wife Isabeau (who had switched her support from one princely faction to the other). In the treaty of Troyes in 1420 Charles VI and Isabeau disowned the dauphin and proclaimed Henry V to be the heir to the kingdom of France and regent. He married Catherine their daughter and eighteen months later a son, Henry, was born.

Several circumstances made the Angevins identify themselves with the fortunes of the dauphin. Their great hostility to England emanated from the Plantagenets' claim to the duchy of Anjou and the county of Maine that was based on the fact that they had been ruled by duke Geoffrey, the father of Henry II of England. Those lands had been lost to England over two hundred years earlier together with Normandy but, under vigorous king Henry, the claim was being reasserted. Bad feeling had existed between the houses of Anjou and Burgundy for some time. This was exacerbated in 1413 when Louis II and his wife Yolande of Aragon sent Catherine of Burgundy back to her father: a terrible humiliation for a princess who had long been betrothed to their oldest son.⁸ In December the duke and duchess of Anjou agreed that their daughter Marie of Anjou would be betrothed to the third son of Charles VI and Isabeau, Charles, count of Ponthieu. Both were still children and they were taken to Anjou in the care of Yolande as it was a less turbulent environment than the Paris of Burgundian and *Armagnac* conflicts: Charles and Marie were married at Bourges in April 1422.⁹ Yolande's youngest son, Charles of Anjou, was especially close to Charles of Ponthieu who became dauphin shortly after the betrothal when both his older brothers died. When the dauphin's mother rejected him by the treaty of Troyes the Angevins and their servants protected and supported him ensuring that his claim to the throne remained viable. The price they paid for their influence at the French court during the following decades was to endure the relentless animosity of the duke of Burgundy.

⁸*Chronique de Jean Le Févre, Seigneur de Saint-Remy*, ed. F. Morand, 2 vols (Paris: 1876–81) I, pp. 125–37.

⁹G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, *Histoire de Charles VII*, 6 vols (Paris: 1881–91) 1, p. 236; Vale, *Charles VII*, pp. 22–31.

Young René

Despite the fact that Louis II of Anjou died prematurely in 1417 and his son, Louis III, spent much of his reign in Italy, their house flourished because it enjoyed the invaluable services of the queen mother, Yolande of Aragon.¹⁰ Contemporaries and later writers praised her beauty and wisdom¹¹ and the history of France in the second, third and fourth decades of the fifteenth century show her to have been one of the most effective diplomats of her time. The daughter of John I king of Aragon and Yolande of Bar, a niece of Charles V of France, she enjoyed a high status in her own right. One daughter Marie was married to the dauphin, the other, Yolande, was to be the wife of Francis, the son of the duke of Brittany, and her oldest son, Louis III, married the daughter of the duke of Savoy. The queen and her children could address an impressive number of European princes and nobles as 'fair son/daughter/aunt/uncle/brother/sister/cousin /nephew or niece'. Yolande was a woman of culture: she employed scholars amongst her officials, improved several Angevin residences and enjoyed beautiful tapestries and books.¹² She and her husband founded a university at Aix in 1409. Had she not given financial support to both her son-in-law's campaigns against the English and her sons' attempts to re-conquer Naples she would doubtless have been a more generous patroness of the arts.

Yolande was the recipient of advice on how to govern well: a treatise formerly thought to have been addressed to Isabeau of Bavaria has more

¹⁰J. d'Orliac, *Yolande d'Anjou, la reine des quatre royaumes* (Paris: 1933). Not a scholarly book and the tone is effusive, but Orliac collected together much of what is known about Yolande and has some useful insights. In her early years in Aragon Yolande used the Spanish version of her name 'Violente'.

¹¹'One of the most beautiful creatures that one could see', Jean Juvenal des Ursins, *Histoire de Charles VI, 1380–1422* (Paris: 1653) p. 144; 'She was a very good and wise woman', *Les Chroniques du Roi Charles VII par Gilles le Bouvier dit le Héraut Berry*, ed. H. Courteault and L. Celier (Paris: 1979) p. 258; Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 25–6.

¹²A. Coville, *La Vie Intellectuelle dans les Domaines d'Anjou-Provence, 1380–1435*, 2 vols (Paris: 1941) 1, pp. 36–7. In 1416 Yolande acquired the *Beautiful Hours* (not to be confused with the *Very Rich Hours*) from the executors of the duke of Berry and drove an extremely hard bargain with them, paying 300 livres rather than their asking price of 700. By the Limbourg brothers, who also made the *Very Rich Hours*, what remains of it is ms. 54 11 in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. It was to be seen in Paris in 2004 in the Louvre exhibition, *Paris 1400: Les arts sous Charles VI*.

recently been shown to have been intended for the mother-in-law rather than the mother of Charles VII.¹³ In about 1425 an anonymous writer deplored the dreadful state of France and urged Yolande to recall Charles to his duty. The advice combined traditional sentiments about the need to possess all the virtues and to obey the precepts of the Church with a strong regard for 'the common good' and the practical measures required to safeguard it. The king should not take lowly born servants as his confidants in the affairs of government but choose wise and experienced counsellors. He should avoid imposing excessive taxation, especially on the poor, and to ensure prudent and economical rule should at least twice a year:

go to his *parlement* to see how it is conducted and that it gives justice in accord with the duty that God has given him. He should also visit his Chamber of Accounts several times to know his resources and the keeping of his charters and how they are kept. If by negligence some are lost it should be reported to him so, if possible, they can be recovered.¹⁴

A great deal has recently been written about the role of European queens and princesses in the late middle ages. Issues that have been raised include what was expected of them, how much authority they could exercise and how their success or failure has been assessed both by their contemporaries and by later historians. Anne Duggan has asked the pertinent question of how far commentators of the time constructed accounts of female power 'to channel and confine the feminine according to male-centred ideas of what is right and proper conduct for a woman'.¹⁵ The usual reaction was either to ignore the phenomenon or to criticise it as a sign of weakness or decadence in a country that allowed it to occur. No queen occupied a throne except by marriage in north-western Europe during this period: even hereditary duchesses

¹³Vallet de Viriville and M. Deprez, 'Advis à Isabelle de Bavière: Mémoire Politique Adressé à Cette Reine Vers 1434', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* (1866) 27, pp. 128-57; E. Sasse, 'Un "miroir du prince" du xv^e siècle: l'avis à Yolande d'Aragon', *Bulletin de l'Association des amis du Centre Jeanne d'Arc*, 19 (1995) pp. 145-8.

¹⁴Viriville and Deprez, p. 145.

¹⁵*Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. A.J. Duggan (Woodbridge: 1997) 'Introduction', p. xv.

such as René's wife Isabelle of Lorraine and Jacqueline of Hainault encountered enormous opposition, irrespective of their abilities.

Yolande of Aragon's daughter, queen Marie, appears to have been effective when her husband did entrust her with political authority and was virtuous and fecund, but she is rarely mentioned in her own right by chroniclers.¹⁶ Along with her brother Charles, she was involved in the removal of the favourite Georges de la Trémoille from the royal court in 1433. The following year she was made lieutenant of the kingdom for a time and she was involved in the negotiations for the release of René. In 1437 Marie was instrumental in the removal of the *ecorceur* (flayer) Rodrigo de Villandrando from Touraine, who chivalrously complied with her request.¹⁷ One reason for her obscurity was that she bore Charles VII at least fourteen children between 1423 and 1446 and took her duties as a mother very seriously. Yet as Martin Aurell observes 'to be without glory did not make her less effective'.¹⁸

The death of her husband and her failure to re-marry liberated Yolande of Aragon both from childbearing and from male tutelage. J. d'Orliac remarked that she was seldom mentioned by pro-Burgundian chroniclers such as Monstrelet and Chastellain but, despite this, a clear account of her contribution to the Valois cause may be constructed.¹⁹ She was absent from 1419 to 1423 with her two youngest children, Yolande and Charles, governing Provence and negotiating with the Neapolitan nobility for Louis III to become their king, but for the remainder of the next two decades she regularly sat on the royal council. During the mid-1420s the phrase 'by means of the Queen of Sicily' frequently appeared in the acts of Charles VII. She also summoned the Estates General to support the war effort at Angers and in her dower town of Saumur in 1426.²⁰ It will be noted below how she entered into negotiations with Brittany and Burgundy in an attempt to undo the disaster of the murder of John the Fearless that the dauphin and his advisers had perpetrated during her absence in Provence.

¹⁶B. Chevalier, 'Marie d'Anjou, une reine sans gloire, 1404–63', in *Autour de Marguerite d'Écosse: reines, princesses et dames du xv^e siècle*, ed. G. and P. Contamine (Paris: 1999) pp. 81–98.

¹⁷Beaucourt, 3, p. 45.

¹⁸M. Aurell, 'Conclusion', *Autour de Marguerite d'Écosse*, p. 229.

¹⁹Orliac, p. 58.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 119, 134–5.

Jean de Bourdigné, an Angevin priest writing in the early sixteenth century, warmly praised the virtue and wisdom of Yolande.²¹ By the time he wrote, Anjou was ruled by the kings of France so he presumably would derive no personal gain from doing so. He was also in a good position to recover local memories and opinions of the queen and her son. The enormous amount of patriotic fervour, supported by mountains of scholarship, devoted to the phenomenon of Joan of Arc has tended to obscure the contribution made by Yolande to the recovery of France. Charles VII expressed it clearly in 1443, soon after her death, when he gave her son Charles the lordships of Gien, Saint-Maxent, Chizé and Givray:

Considering that the late Yolande, of good memory, queen of Jerusalem and Sicily, in our youth did us great services in many ways that we hold in perpetual memory. Our said mother-in-law, after we were excluded from our city of Paris, received us generously in her lands of Anjou and Maine, and gave us much advice, support and many services using her goods, people and fortresses to help us against the attacks of our adversaries of England and others.²²

Unusually, when Yolande was mentioned by contemporary French chroniclers, she was portrayed as an effective politician. G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, the authoritative nineteenth century historian of Charles VII, gave due weight to her importance, although he was not invariably uncritical:

If by the alliance of her second son [René] with the heiress of the duke of Lorraine, Yolande served the interests of France, it was not the same for the oldest [Louis III] who she threw, young and inexperienced, into the pursuit of a far-away throne.²³

Nothing is known about the education of Yolande's second son René who was born in the castle of Angers, the capital of Anjou, on 16 January 1409. He had a nurse, Tiphane la Magine, who he loved enough to com-

²¹J. de Bourdigné, *Histoire Agregative des Annales et Chroniques d'Anjou* (Angers: 1529) f. cxxviii.

²²Orliac, pp. 238–9; February 1443, Montauban P2531, f.215.

²³Beaucourt, 1, p. 317 and *passim*.

memorate in a fine tomb in Saumur when she died in 1459.²⁴ He remained under his mother's tutelage, mostly in the duchy, for his first ten years, apparently only leaving it twice for Paris: on the first occasion for the betrothal of his sister Marie to Charles of Ponthieu in 1413. The four-year-old René was given a diamond and a ring worth 80 francs by queen Isabeau.²⁵ It is reasonable to infer that he was taught by some of the eminent clerics and learned laymen who surrounded his mother as well as by humbler tutors. Pierre de Beauvau, for example, was an Angevin nobleman who served the dukes and Yolande of Aragon in many capacities: as chamberlain, counsellor, seneschal, governor and lieutenant in Anjou, Provence and Calabria, and was also one of the three governors of the young dauphin. His time in Italy probably acquainted him with the works of Boccaccio since he was the most likely translator of his *Filostrato*, the tale of Troilus and Cressida.²⁶ The de Beauvau family were to serve the Angevins and the kings of France for many years to come.²⁷ During the 1440s and 1450s René painted, composed poetry and treatises on religious and secular subjects and designed the programmes for three lavish tournaments. From the 1440s until his death he was a patron of painting, drama, architecture and sculpture. These were the achievements of a well-educated man who was at ease with the scholastic heritage of Christian learning, courtly literature and the early Italian Renaissance.

Part of René's library was inherited from his parents, who kept their main collection of books in the castle at Angers, and others were acquired during the course of his long life. Both Lecoy de la Marche and M. Albanès assembled lists of the books René owned.²⁸ In default of any

²⁴Lecoy de la Marche, 1, pp. 6–7. She was also nurse to Marie, later queen of France. The tomb was surmounted by Tiphane's recumbent image; only a drawing and the record of René's pious inscription survive, church of Notre Dame, Nantilly.

²⁵J. Chartier, *Chronique de Charles VII*, ed. Vallet de Viriville, 3 vols (Paris: 1858) 3, p. 269.

²⁶Coville, 1, pp. 140–88.

²⁷L. Bidet, 'La noblesse et les princes d'Anjou. La famille de Beauvau', *La Noblesse*, pp. 471–97.

²⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pp. 182–97; J.H. Albanès, 'La bibliothèque du Roi René', *Revue des Sociétés Savantes des Départements*, 5th Series, 8 (1875) pp. 301–11. De la Marche compiled his list of René's books using the inventory from the castle at Angers (1471), the books that Charles, count of Maine, inherited from his uncle in 1480 (many had been transported from Angers to Aix in 1473), books that were mentioned as acquisitions in the king's accounts and surviving volumes. He reckoned that René owned 202 books. Albanès counted only 128; he based this on an inventory of 1508, evidently compiled after many items had been alienated. Sixteen books were printed.

information about his education they give some evidence about his tastes and the level of learning that he had achieved as an adult. He owned a Greek and a Latin Bible as well as separate books of the Old and New Testaments and books of hours: several of these still survive.²⁹ As would be expected of such a pious son of the Church, he possessed a number of theological treatises, often written by the Fathers, collections of canon law and a *Book of the legends of the Holy Marys*. He had four copies of Vincent of Beauvais, the *Mirror of History* (*Speculum Historiale*), an encyclopaedic work that was probably used by their tutors to educate the Angevin princes and princesses: five further books provided a scholarly apparatus to guide them through it. There were also several classical histories by late medieval favourites, such as Sallust and *The History of Alexander the Great* by Quintus Curtius Rufus. Works by Cicero, Plato's *Phaedo* and a printed book by Lorenzo Valla gave a humanist character to part of René's library. So did some of the books given him by his Venetian friend, Jacopo Antonio Marcello, such as Quintilian's *Method of Oratory*.³⁰ He had several works dealing with the natural sciences: *On the nature of birds* reflected one of his hobbies. All these books were in Latin, about 120 altogether, but he also owned two Hebrew works, two in Italian, three in German, including one on astrology, and twenty-four volumes in Turkish and Moroccan (although their subjects were not specified). He also possessed at least twenty-six books in French, several of which dealt with aspects of chivalry, including a *Compilation of the arms of the knights of his Order of the Crescent*. There were also song-books, Joinville's *Life of St Louis*, a book on chess, a Bible and two school books.

Yolande of Aragon's childless uncle, cardinal Louis, bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, was duke of Bar. The last of his nephews had been killed at Agincourt so the field was clear for Yolande to persuade him to adopt his great-nephew René as his heir. René was already count of Guise, which he had inherited from his father two years previously. It was agreed that the ten-year-old would go and live in Bar where he was made a member of the Order of Fidelity in which forty knights swore

²⁹See Chapter 4. Books of hours and service books were not included in the estimated total of books in René's library.

³⁰I am grateful to Nigel Ramsay for drawing a manuscript in the duke of Norfolk's library at Arundel to my attention. A French version of the '*Metamorphose d'Ovide*' was written for René in 1467 by a Norman clerk who was living in Anjou.

to protect him from all dangers.³¹ In a ceremony on 13 August 1419, the old cardinal formally ceded his duchy and the marquisate of the adjacent lands of Pont-à-Mousson to René. It had already been arranged that he would marry Isabelle, the oldest daughter of the neighbouring duke Charles of Lorraine. Charles had no legitimate sons and, since law and custom did not forbid the succession of women, she and her husband would eventually become duke and duchess of Lorraine. Dom Calmet, the author of a detailed history of Lorraine, remarks that the marriage was popular with the people, who hoped that uniting the duchies under one ruler would end long-standing conflicts between them.³² Yolande had pulled off a double *coup* in the face of stiff competition since Henry V of England had asked for the hand of Isabelle for his brother, the duke of Bedford.

René married Isabelle in Nancy, her father's capital, on 24 October 1420: he was eleven and his bride was ten. She was given fifty thousand livres a year from the revenues of Pont-à-Mousson and other lordships in Bar. From being an insignificant French noble René had shot to prominence and importance as a prince of the empire. The inhabitants of the left bank of the river Meuse (*Bar mouvante*) and individual nobles gave their allegiance to the kings of France. The rest of Bar, the whole of Lorraine and the bishoprics of Metz, Toul and Verdun (where the dukes had influence but not sovereignty) formed part of the Holy Roman Empire. The incumbent emperor Sigismund was mired in his wars with the *Hussites* of Bohemia (religious reformers) and permanently short of money so he was in no position to assert his authority over these western lands. The dukes of Burgundy were exploiting the situation by gradually extending their control beyond Flanders: Holland, Hainault, Brabant and Luxemburg would eventually fall to them.³³ Bar and Lorraine could provide invaluable links between their northern and southern blocks of territory and the sudden appearance of a Valois prince loyal to the dauphin Charles was the worst thing that could have happened to their plans for consolidation. The dukes hoped that the emperor would eventually reinstate the early medieval kingdom of Lotharingia in their

³¹J.A. Cherrier, *Le Roi René en Lorraine* (Marseille: 1895) p. 14. Written by a French partisan while Lorraine was held by Germany its views should be approached with caution.

³²Dom A. Calmet, *Histoire de Lorraine*, 6 vols (Nancy: 1748) 3, pp. 536; Le Févre, 2, p. 258.

³³R. Vaughan, *Philip the Good: the Apogee of Burgundy* (Woodbridge: 2000) *passim*.

³⁴M.J. Schneider, 'Lotharingie, Bourgogne ou Provence? L'Idée d'un royaume d'entre-deux aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge', *Liège et Bourgogne* (Paris: 1972) pp. 15–44.

favour.³⁴ Bar and Lorraine did not form part of the Angevin *apanage* as they were held through inheritance and marriage. During the next ten years young René, his timorous father-in-law and his aged great uncle had to cope with the intractable problems of this unstable, strife-ridden region.

The great extent of Angevin territories to be defended was to prove a mixed blessing in the 1420s and 1430s. Had the dauphin's troops, with the aid of some formidable Scots soldiers, not defeated the English at Baugé in 1421, Anjou would have been lost to its duke. Yet the duchy continued to be subject to raids right up to the truce with England in 1444.³⁵ Yolande of Aragon not only had to do her best to protect her son-in-law king Charles from external enemies and uphold the interests of her house, she also had to cope with the factionalism that was endemic in his court. She was trying to detach Burgundy from its alliance with England and to forge links with the duke of Brittany since this policy represented the best chance that Charles had of pushing back the English. She had to dismiss the Angevin servants, Jean Louvet and Tanneguy du Châtel, who were implicated in the murder of John the Fearless and in the brief but untimely arrest of duke John V of Brittany in 1420. They were sent away in 1425 but a settlement with Burgundy was in the future. Yolande was more successful with Brittany: she hoped to marry her son Louis III to duke John's daughter (the duke paid homage to Charles in the same year) and attract his brother, Arthur of Richemont, away from his Burgundian alliance. The treaty of Saumur of 17 October 1425 proclaimed the reconciliation between the Angevins and the house of Brittany.³⁶ Yolande had written with satisfaction on 28 June to the people of Lyon:

Since the President [Louvet] and others have disturbed the peace, our lord the King has by our entreaties and those of our fair cousin

³⁵A. Joubert, 'Les Invasions Anglaises en Anjou au xiv^e et au xv^e siècle', *Revue de l'Anjou* (1869, 1870) 5, 6, pp. 180–98, 103–18. The duke of Clarence, brother of Henry V, was killed at Baugé. R.G. Little, *The Parlement of Poitiers: War, Government and Politics in France, 1418–36* (London, New Jersey: 1984) p. 186 argues that Yolande was instrumental in saving the kingship for Charles but that she did it primarily in the course of protecting Angevin lands in northern France.

³⁶M.R. Reynaud, *Le Temps des Princes: Louis II et Louis III d'Anjou-Provence, 1384–1434* (Lyon: 2000) p. 100.

the constable [Richemont], put him from his presence. Since we have accomplished this, with the help of God, affairs are at present in a very good state.³⁷

In making Richemont constable of France king Charles had secured for his cause one of the best generals of the age.³⁸ He was to be Yolande's ally at court against the latest royal favourite who threatened to undermine Angevin influence: Georges de la Trémoille, who appears not to have wished to wage the war vigorously. In the meantime a further sign that Yolande's family was high in favour was the king's gift of the county of Mortaine to her youngest son Charles.

In 1425 the constable of Burgundy, John of Luxemburg, took the town and castle of Guise. He had overrun the county in 1424 and its inhabitants had begged René for help but he was still only fifteen and his cautious father-in-law, the duke of Lorraine, advised him not to intervene. The inhabitants of the town of Guise agreed that if help was not forthcoming by the end of the following February they would surrender and so would save their lives and keep their possessions.³⁹ This was the first of a series of losses that René was to sustain in the course of his career but, on this occasion, it is difficult to see what else he could have done. He was inexperienced in warfare and under the tutelage of the duke of Lorraine who was principally concerned to protect his own lands. If he had defended Guise he would almost certainly have been defeated and his subjects there would have suffered terribly.

The house of Anjou also lost one of its principal possessions in 1425: the county of Maine. Despite the death of Henry V the English under the regent Bedford, sustained by his alliance with Burgundy, continued to make headway against the Valois.⁴⁰ Encouraged by their victory at Verneuil in the summer of 1424 they took a number of towns and fortresses before the end of the campaigning season. It was at this time

³⁷Beaucourt, 2, p. 98.

³⁸Vale, *Charles VII*, pp. 35–9. It was a considerable achievement to detach Richemont from Burgundy as he was married to duke Philip's sister Marguerite, duchess of Guyenne.

³⁹Monstrelet, 4, pp. 184–5, 199–205; Jean de Waurin, *Recueil des croniques et anchoriennes istoires de la Grant Bretagne*, ed. W. and E.L.C.P. Hardy, 6 vols (London: 1864–91) 5, pp. 96–7.

⁴⁰R. Planchenault, 'La Conquête du Maine par les Anglais: la campagne de 1424–1425', *Revue historique et archéologique du Maine*, 81 (1925): 3–31. For the English strategy during this period see R.A. Griffiths, *The Reign of Henry VI: the Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422–1461* (London: 1981) pp. 184–9.

that Yolande of Aragon was desperately trying to attract Arthur of Richemont to the Valois cause; although she succeeded it was too late to save Maine. Its principal city, Le Mans, was strongly defended and well supplied as an attack had been expected. The natural leader of the defence would have been duke Louis III but he was far away in Naples. The earl of Salisbury laid siege to Le Mans in late July 1425 when his heavy artillery started to demolish its high walls and towers. On 10 August the city capitulated: it paid Salisbury 1000 livres and its inhabitants could choose either to stay and keep their property or leave in safety. The earl took other towns in Maine and used the county as a base for harrying and plundering Anjou. This was to be the greatest extent of English conquests in the area and, in the following year, Charles VII started a counter-attack. Yet a wedge had been driven between the Valois kingdom and the duchy of Brittany, and Maine was to be occupied for more than twenty years.

Beaucourt believed that Charles VII was made to appear weak and easily led in the 1420s by circumstances that were beyond his control, but Malcolm Vale already saw signs of the qualities that were eventually to make him a victorious king.⁴¹ The chronicles of Monstrelet are full of accounts of attacks and counter-attacks on the edges of Normandy and the Île de France during the 1420s. They by no means give the impression that Charles was an inactive, timorous leader, but he was certainly constrained by lack of resources and reliance on nobles who were not always loyal enough to do more than defend their own territories. There is evidence that during the darkest days after Verneuil and the fall of Maine he thought that he might have to go into exile, perhaps to Scotland, yet this would have been a prudent alternative to the possibility of captivity.⁴² The outcome of the English siege of Orleans, 1428–29, was to be a turning point for both sides and it defines the strengths and weaknesses of Charles as a king. The part played by Joan of Arc in the relief of the town and the clearance of a path through Champagne to Reims, where Charles was crowned on 17 July 1429, is well known, but what of René's role in these events?

The Maid came from Domrémy in the marches of Lorraine and Bar, so she was René's subject. He probably saw her when she presented herself to duke Charles of Lorraine at Nancy early in 1429 and asked the duke to send him with men-at-arms to escort her into France. She had to make

⁴¹Beaucourt, 2, pp. 200–1; Vale, *Charles VII*, pp. 26–44.

⁴²Ibid., p. 54.

do with less elevated company but Orliac assigns a major role to the Angevins, and especially to Yolande of Aragon, in fostering the career of the Maid. She was sheltered, supplied and encouraged by a number of Angevin servants as she made her way to Chinon and whilst she remained in the Loire Valley. Yolande was one of the great ladies who attested to her virginity after an examination at Poitiers and she paid for the supply convoy with which the Maid entered Orleans. Philippe Contamine is, however, sceptical about the extent of the Angevin support she enjoyed.⁴³ After the victory of Patay in June, Joan petitioned Charles VII on behalf of Richemont, an ally of the Angevins.⁴⁴

Lecoy de la Marche stated that René attended the coronation at Reims and that he was with the Maid together with his brothers Louis III (who, de la Marche claimed, had returned from Naples) and Charles when an unsuccessful attempt was made to capture Paris in September.⁴⁵ The *Chronique de la Pucelle* states that René entered Reims with his father-in-law the duke of Lorraine and the lord of Commercy 'well accompanied with soldiers'. He went with the king on his subsequent campaign and was one of the lords, including Joan's friend the duke of Alençon, who wished to press on with the attack on Paris. When she was wounded it was René who bore her off to the safety of his hotel at Chapelle Saint-Denis.⁴⁶ Ambiguous evidence indicates that he did not attend the coronation at Reims but was involved in the subsequent hostilities. No move seems to have been made either by Charles VII or the Angevins to rescue

⁴³P. Contamine, 'Jeanne d'Arc de Chinon à Paris: l'action militaire, le jeu politique', in *De Jeanne d'Arc aux Guerres d'Italie: figures, images et problèmes du xv^e siècle* (Orleans: 1994) pp. 77–83.

⁴⁴Orliac, pp. 165–9.

⁴⁵Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 72–6, 2, Itineraries, pp. 438–9. These show him to have been in Pont on 15 June 1429 and in Bar on 21 November 1430, his movements between those dates are uncertain: Monstrelet does not mention him as one of those present at the coronation at Reims; Chartier states that he arrived at Reims the day before the coronation, 1, p. 97; Bouvier says that he came to Charles VII and the Maid at Senlis after the coronation, p. 140; Contamine does not mention his presence at Reims, 'Les Pairs de France au Sacre des Rois (xv^e): Nature et Portée d'un programme iconographique', in *De Jeanne d'Arc*, pp. 111–37; R. Pernoud and M.-V. Clin, *Joan of Arc: Her Story*, ed. and trans. J. du Quesnoy Adams (London: 2000) pp. 77–8. See Chapter 2 for the likely movements of Louis III.

⁴⁶A. Vallet de Viriville, *Chronique de la Pucelle ou Chronique de Cousinot* (Paris: 1859) pp. 280–4, 88; J. Bours, 'René duc de Bar', *Le Roi René: René, duc d'Anjou, de Bar et de Lorraine, Roi de Sicile et de Jérusalem, Roi d'Aragon, Comte de Provence, 1409–1480* (Avignon: 1986) pp. 17–22.

⁴⁷Vale, *Charles VII*, pp. 58–9.

or ransom the Maid after her capture in 1430.⁴⁷ To deplore this, however, is to impose modern values on the situation: religious doubts about the Maid had been raised at Chinon in 1429 and the charges of witchcraft and her apparent desertion by God weighed heavily in a devout age. R.G. Little suggests that Charles saw her trial as an attempt to discredit his recent successes and deliberately distanced himself from the process.⁴⁸

Apart from his sojourn in France, René was deeply involved in the affairs of his new family and the duchies of Bar and Lorraine during the late 1420s. On 2 August 1426 Isabelle gave birth to a son John, later called duke of Calabria (Lecoy de la Marche gives 1427 as the year of his birth). He was christened three days later at Toul by the bishops of Metz and Strasbourg.⁴⁹ Isabelle and René were to have eight more named children: of these only four survived into their teens or beyond. Louis, marquis of Pont, was born in October 1427 and died seventeen years later, Yolande was born in November 1428 and Margaret in February 1430. René was beginning to do the regular business of the duchies for himself and his father-in-law: fighting rebellious subjects and difficult neighbours. In 1428 he besieged and took the castle of Passavant in the Marne held by Eustache de Wernoncourt who had been mercilessly ravaging the surrounding country for a long time.⁵⁰ He also intervened on behalf of duke Charles in the War of the Basket of Apples with Metz. The conflict had been smouldering for some time, exacerbated no doubt by the duke's removal of the body of St Sigebert, once king of Austrasia, from the abbey of St Martin just outside Metz to his capital of Nancy. Charles then demanded payment from the abbot of St Martin's for some fruit that he had picked: incensed by this creeping assumption of sovereignty the citizens of Metz supported him when he refused. In July 1429 René sent his herald to defy them and his gouty father-in-law appeared, carried in a chair. They were supported by several princes of the Empire who disliked assertive cities but, apart from the customary ravaging, nothing conclusive happened and René apparently departed for France.⁵¹

On 3 August 1429 René had sent a defiant message to the duke of Bedford, disavowing the homage to Henry VI that his old uncle the cardinal had just made on his own and his great-nephew's behalf.⁵² This was

⁴⁸Little, pp. 118–20.

⁴⁹Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 67 and n. 2.

⁵⁰Monstrelet, 4, p. 296.

⁵¹Calmet, 3, pp. 542–7.

⁵²Lecoy de la Marche, 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 219–20.

to be an expensive act of loyalty to the Valois: a pension and the prospect of regaining Guise had been dangled before him by the English and Burgundians. The consequences for him of Anglo-Burgundian enmity in 1431 were to be even more fateful. In the meantime, in 1430, after the failure of the assault on Paris, René and the lord of Barbazan went on campaign in Champagne. They took the town of Chappes from the Burgundians where, according to their chronicler Chastellain, René distinguished himself: 'He was a brave knight of great heart who showed himself to be proud and courageous.'⁵³

Now he had reached maturity a pattern was to emerge in his conduct of military campaigns. When he was led by skilful strategists such as Barbazan or, later, Charles VII and his captains, he fought valiantly and successfully. When he was supreme commander he was often rash, quixotic and impractical and battles ended badly for him.

Disaster

On 25 January 1431 René's father-in-law Charles, duke of Lorraine, died. Antoine count of Vaudemont, the son of the duke's younger brother had never truly accepted the marriage settlement made for René and Isabelle by which they would jointly inherit the duchy. The majority of the nobility and people, however, were content with the agreement since local custom allowed women to succeed and pass on their rights to their heirs. In 1426 Isabelle's younger sister, Catherine, had married the marquis of Baden: they were to have seven offspring and their family would succeed if all René's children died. Vaudemont would have had little chance of making good his rival claim had he not been able to call on Burgundy and its ally England for assistance. René unwisely brought matters to a head in April 1431 by summoning Vaudemont to submit to his authority or face the confiscation of his property.⁵⁴ In May, René, accompanied by Barbazan, entered the county of Vaudemont and laid siege to the town: they failed to take it but wasted the surrounding countryside. Meanwhile the count and his supporters had joined with Burgundian forces at Dijon. In June they descended on Bar destroying everything in their path and forcing René to lift his siege to go and face them. Toulangeon, the Burgundian commander, had per-

⁵³Chastellain, G., *Oeuvres*, ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 8 vols (Brussels: 1863–66) 'Chronique', 2, p. 44.

⁵⁴Schnerb, *passim*.

sueded Vaudemont that they should retreat as provisions were low and they were outnumbered. René, however, and his young nobles were eager for a fight when the armies met on 2 July near Bulgnéville.

Duke René had been wounded in the course of his calamitous defeat and was taken prisoner by a humble squire who handed him over to Vaudemont, but the count was forced to give him up to the Burgundians. René was valuable not just for the prospect of a large ransom but also as a bargaining counter with duke Philip's enemy Charles VII. The next day the victorious army left for Dijon: its people were soon to become alarmed by the large number of captives from the Lorraine army that were held within their walls.⁵⁵ Contemporary chroniclers were unwilling to criticise René directly for the defeat, after all, when they were writing, he bore a kingly title and was a great French prince of the blood. Le Bouvier stated that he 'fought very bravely' and blamed the lords of Lorraine for the decision to attack. Thomas Basin castigated the impatience and folly of the German knights who overruled the wise advice of Barbazan.⁵⁶ The French chroniclers seem to have wished to admire René for his martial feats, the exercise of the princely virtue of fortitude, rather than to criticise his poor generalship. Le Févre reported that René remarked whilst he was a prisoner in Dijon that, on the day of the battle, he had so many men that it seemed that he could fight all the world for a day. The Burgundian went on to remark that, although Fortune had overthrown him, he could praise God that he had fallen into the hands of his fair cousin the Duke!⁵⁷

For René a tedious process began by which Philip made enormous demands concerning the level of his ransom, the marriage of his children and the surrender of towns in return for his liberty. He played 'cat and mouse' with René, prepared either to release him temporarily to implement the terms or to keep him in close confinement, often in Dijon in a tower with grilled windows. In April 1432 he was released but his young sons, John and Louis, had to remain in Burgundy as hostages. The following year at Metz René discussed means of combating the brigands who plagued the area and attended a three-day performance of the history of St Catherine.⁵⁸ In 1434, whilst he was free, the

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 86–94.

⁵⁶Bouvier, p. 149; T. Basin, *Histoire de Charles VII*, ed. and trans. C. Samaran, 2 vols (Paris: 1964) 1, pp. 175–7.

⁵⁷Le Févre, 2, p. 262.

⁵⁸Cherrier, p. 48.

emperor Sigismund found in favour of René and his wife and against Vaudemont, investing him with the duchy of Lorraine. This annoyed Philip so much that he forced his prisoner to return for two more years of harsh confinement. The Milanese ambassador reported that he was allowed to make him a brief visit:

I found him in a chamber, closely guarded wearing a long beard. In the presence of many people he addressed me and almost weeping said: 'I beg you to recommend me to my lord my cousin [Filippo Maria Visconti], and say that I have a great desire to see him'. He said nothing else and the chancellor of Burgundy made me leave.⁵⁹

The reference to René's long beard raises the question of his appearance as a young adult. No evidence has been found concerning his stature. He is bearded in a miniature contained in a book of hours that was probably made in this period. His forehead is high and his features regular and pleasant but not especially handsome. The portrait is likely to be realistic as his face is similar to the older versions produced by Nicolas Froment and the Italian sculptors in the 1460s and 1470s.⁶⁰

Duchess Isabelle had made a truce with Vaudemont who was still furious at the loss of his prisoner to Burgundy and who knew that the people of Lorraine would not recognise him as duke. Isabelle conducted the government of both duchies assisted by an old friend and mentor, Henri de Ville bishop of Toul, who was head of her council in Lorraine. Until his death five years later he was a valuable go-between in the negotiations with Burgundy for René's release and he also assisted Isabelle and her ally, Charles VII, in protecting the duchies. Calmet is particularly scathing about the depredations of Robert de Sarrebruck, lord of Commercy, an unscrupulous Barrois noble who was rumoured to have fled the field of Bulgnéville 'like a hare before the hounds', leaving René's rear exposed.⁶¹ He then profited from his lord's imprisonment to harry the inhabitants of both duchies, he was subdued several times and always falsely promised to mend his ways and make reparation.⁶²

⁵⁹Schnerb, p. 110; Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 110–12.

⁶⁰Paris BN Ms lat. 1156A, f.81v. René faces his arms that include those of the Kingdom of Naples so the miniature must post-date his accession in 1435; Chapter 4.

⁶¹Schnerb, p. 93.

⁶²Calmet, 5, pp. 21–2, 65–70, 76, 78 *et seq.*

At the end of 1434 Louis III of Anjou died in Italy leaving no children and early the following year Joanna II of Naples also died after declaring that René was her heir. Philip of Burgundy was not impressed and simply assumed that the price of his prisoner's freedom had increased. The prestige of René's kingly title as well as his possession of the duchy of Anjou and the county of Provence made it a matter of urgency for Charles VII to achieve his liberation. The situation at the French court had changed radically since Bugnéville for Angevin influence had been re-asserted after the period of La Trémoille's supremacy. Yolande of Aragon retained the respect of Charles VII but, for a time, she had been unable to accomplish her designs. Constable Richemont her ally and the enemy of La Trémoille remained out of favour with the king. Even worse, in 1430 the long-standing engagement of Louis III of Anjou to Isabelle of Brittany was broken by the king and his favourite so that she might marry Guy, count of Laval, from Maine. Yolande flew into a violent passion at the suggestion but, in this case, matters turned out well since the much-needed *rapprochement* between France and Brittany was consolidated. Years later, a daughter of Guy and Isabelle was to become René's second wife. Yolande was somewhat placated in the following year by the betrothal of her daughter, Yolande, to Francis count of Montfort, the eldest son of the duke of Brittany.⁶³ In 1432 queen Yolande acted as a mediator between the king and his favourite on the one hand and constable Richemont on the other and they agreed to settle their disputes.

Yolande of Aragon's daughter, queen Marie, seems to have assisted her in restoring Angevin supremacy and was involved in the ousting of La Trémoille at her castle of Chinon in June 1433. Pierre de Brézé, Jean de Bueil and Prégent de Cœtivy stormed into the favourite's bedchamber, wounded him in the hand, the head and the stomach (his extreme girth saved his life) and drove him into exile. They were forgiven by Charles VII, and Yolande's youngest son, Charles, remained his close friend and constant companion.⁶⁴ Three years later the king affectionately described him as 'A brave prince, a true man of war endowed with a remarkable beauty.'⁶⁵

⁶³Beaucourt, 2, pp. 271–9. Yolande of Anjou, René's sister, died in 1440, before her husband became duke Francis I.

⁶⁴Ibid., 2, pp. 297–8; Vale, *Charles VII*, pp. 71–3; P. Mechineau, *Les Chevaliers de la Victoire: Pierre de Brézé ministre de Charles VII, 1408–1465* (Cholet: 1986) pp. 72–3.

⁶⁵Beaucourt, 3, p. 296.

⁶⁶Chartier, 1, p. 171.

Chartier believed that he had master-minded the coup: 'This was done by the order of Charles of Anjou, brother of the queen of France.'⁶⁶ Queen Marie was also working on the case: 'The King was scared and troubled when he heard of it but the Queen appeased him.'⁶⁷ Angevin influence was further enhanced when Louis III found another suitable bride, Marguerite daughter of the duke of Savoy, a useful ally in his Italian diplomacy. The three young pro-Angevin conspirators were to enjoy high office in France during the following decades. The career of Yolande of Aragon's servant, Pierre de Brézé, lord of La Varenne, was meteoric and remained entwined with the destiny of the house of Anjou until his death.

France and Burgundy finally made peace at Arras in 1435: the culmination of Yolande of Aragon's long years of diplomacy. Duke Philip realised that he should make some concessions over René, now a king in his own right as well as brother of the queen of France. René was not allowed to attend the conference but his mother, brother, sister and brother-in-law safeguarded his interests and his name appeared in the treaty with the other allies of Charles VII.⁶⁸ The various conditions for his release that had been discussed over the years were finalised early in 1437 with a French delegation that included the duke of Bourbon and Richemont. Gruel remarked that Richemont was glad to assist René because 'they were brothers-in-arms'.⁶⁹ By the treaty of Lille René would pay a ransom of 400,000 écus and cede his lands in Flanders, Cassel and Bois-de-Nieppe, to Burgundy. He also married two of his children to allies of duke Philip. John of Calabria wed Marie de Bourbon at Moulins in 1437, she was Philip's niece and the daughter of the duke of Bourbon. Two-thirds of her dowry of 150,000 écus was to go towards the payment of the ransom. Another 100,000 écus were to be paid toward the ransom in May 1437 and a similar sum in 1438, the rest would be due when René took possession of Naples. The towns of Neufchâteau, Gaudrecourt and Clermont were to be held by Burgundy as surety. Yolande of Anjou was to marry Ferry, the son of Antoine de Vaudemont: her nuptials took place eight years later.⁷⁰ So ended René's first period of engagement in the Hundred

⁶⁷Bouvier, p. 156.

⁶⁸Both Dunois, bastard of Orleans, and Charles of Anjou swore provisional oaths to observe the treaty because the duke of Orleans and his brother were imprisoned by the English and René was held in Burgundy, Beaucourt, 3, p. 73.

⁶⁹G. Gruel, *Chronique d'Arthur de Richemont, 1393-1458*, ed. A. Le Vavasseau (Paris: 1890) p. 142.

⁷⁰Schnerb, p. 112; Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 122-6.

Years War. Vaudemont did not feel that he had profited sufficiently from his victory and was to harass Lorraine for several years to come. Duke Philip appeared to have achieved good terms from René but Richard Vaughan believes that he was short-sighted in confirming his enmity.⁷¹ After the treaty of Arras both *apanagiste* princes were, technically, on the same side, but mutual hatred and distrust characterised their relations.

René was finally free to leave Burgundy in February 1437 and he proceeded via Bar and Lorraine, where the Estates voted *aides* towards his ransom, to Anjou.⁷² Encouraged by the duke of Bourbon, he may have become involved in some kind of conspiracy against Charles VII who was absent in Lyon. According to the *Chronique d'Alençon* René was reconciled with the king at Gien in August through the good offices of queen Marie and Charles of Anjou.⁷³ He saw his mother for the last time: yet again she was to rule his French domains while he pressed his claims in Italy. Angevin finances, however, bore new burdens in the ransom and the sums due to René's followers and allies at Bugnéville whose costs for liberation and other losses he felt in honour due to pay. As Thomas Basin observed in the 1470s when René had retired to Provence:

This disaster was particularly damaging ... His captivity was the reason why the land which traditionally belonged to his ancestors, the kingdom of Sicily and Naples, passed to his enemy Alfonso, king of Aragon, and that to this day he remains dispossessed.⁷⁴

In April 1438, having raised as much money as possible, René and his son John sailed from Marseille for Genoa. He joined his wife and son Louis in Naples in May, she had been ruling the Kingdom as his lieutenant general since October 1435.

The administration of the *apanage*

Before he left for Italy in 1438 king René had enjoyed few opportunities to take charge of the internal government of his domains. He was

⁷¹Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, p. 119, Philip ignored the sage advice of Hughes de Lannoy to treat René magnanimously.

⁷²One of the traditional occasions for giving *aides* to a prince was if he had to be ransomed. See below for the other uses of the term.

⁷³Beaucourt, 3, pp. 46–7. Lecoy de la Marche made light of the affair, *René*, I, pp. 130–1.

⁷⁴Basin, *Charles VII*, 1, p. 179.

the adolescent pawn of his great uncle and his father-in-law until the late 1420s. No sooner had they died than he launched on the campaign to secure Lorraine for himself and his wife that ended in his imprisonment. The long negotiations for his release and the draconian financial penalties exacted by Burgundy have already been discussed. It is easy to condemn René for then leaving his northern domains for four years so soon after he succeeded his brother, but the prize of Naples was enormous. Only with hindsight can the futility of his enterprise be understood: had he succeeded he would have become a great European ruler. He left experienced officials in charge of Bar and Lorraine and his capable mother continued to rule Anjou and Provence as she had done for the past twenty years for his older brother. The Angevins presided over administrative systems that differed from each other in some respects but which were mainly modelled on the institutions of France. They were generally staffed by loyal and competent officials, some of them clerics, who were well educated and sufficiently rewarded often to remain in service for long periods of time and who proved equal to the task of governing in their master's absence.

Late medieval princes were expected to take advice about how they should govern from wise and virtuous counsellors and only to impose taxes on their subjects when it was strictly necessary. The most fully argued programme for good administrative practice in France was produced by a former courtier, Philippe de Mézières, for the young Charles VI in 1389. He was a member of a circle of distinguished moralists that had surrounded the king's father, Charles V. The third part of his *Dream of the Old Pilgrim* was modelled on the *Princely Rule* of Giles of Rome but was more detailed and specifically addressed French problems.⁷⁵ He went beyond the traditional enumeration of royal virtues to recommend specific reforms. These included the reduction of household expenses (especially for lavish ceremonies), the abandonment of unworthy advisers, listening to the grievances of the poor, appointing a commission to inspect the accounts of royal officials, the reduction of unreasonably high taxes and the abolition of customs duties that inhibited commerce. Christine de Pizan lived at the courts of Charles V and Charles VI and produced a number of moral, historical and educational works. In her *Book of the Body of Policy*, addressed in 1407 to

⁷⁵D.M. Bell, *L'Idéal Éthique de la Royauté en France au Moyen Age* (Geneva, Paris: 1962) pp. 75–131; J. Krynen, *L'Empire du roi: idées et croyances en France xiii^e–xv^e siècles* (Saint-Amand, Cher: 1993) pp. 187–204 and *passim*.

the dauphin Louis of Guyenne, she exhorted princes to be merciful in taxing the poor. She appreciated the importance of the bourgeoisie in contributing to the prosperity of a country and praised the dignity of manual labour.⁷⁶ There is no evidence that René owned such works, although his mother was the recipient of one, but he moved in the circles in which they were current and was probably aware of them. Throughout his life he showed a concern for the welfare of the common people: instances of this are recorded below and in following chapters. Christine's praise of the emperor Diocletian who retired to a simple, rural life after the end of his military career could have resonated with René in his final decades.

René observed the principals of the French moralists for he was a sociable man and positively welcomed the presence of his family, the nobles with whom they had intermarried and other friends and servants as counsellors. He also seems to have taken their advice to exercise moderation in the way that he taxed his subjects. His income was derived from a combination of the yield from his own estates, local revenues and a royal pension which was based on a proportion of the taxes levied by the king on his lands. There is evidence that, whilst he raised taxes to finance the last phases of the Hundred Years War and his own dynastic ambitions, he did his best to protect his subjects from unreasonable exactions. In 1450 at Tours, for example, he begged Charles VII of France to reduce his demands on Anjou and Maine because the war had caused them terrible suffering. René offered to waive his own rights to the half of the *taille*⁷⁷ in return for a reciprocal reduction by Charles. René also asked him to alleviate the burden of the tax on wine, the principal source of income in the duchy. In 1451 the *tailles* raised in Anjou totalled 61,000 livres, this represented a partial concession, but the tax on wine remained.⁷⁸ In 1454–55 his pension derived from the *aides* of Angers, Saumur and Loudun was

⁷⁶Bell, pp. 105–18.

⁷⁷A direct tax often levied on property.

⁷⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 467–71. Revenue was calculated in *livres tournois* in Anjou, in *florins* in Provence and in *écus, francs* or *florins of the Rhine* in Bar. In France there were two types of money: money of account and actual coin. The former were *livres tournois* that were worth 20 *sous tournois* that were worth 12 *deniers tournois*. There were also *livres parisis* but they were less common by the fifteenth century. Actual coins included the *franc d'or* and the *écu*. *Florins* were an Italian currency, Vale, *Charles VII*, pp. 241–2.

7300 livres.⁷⁹ Late in his reign, in 1473, he reduced the amounts of tolls paid to him by the farmers in Anjou because of the depredations caused in the duchy by the forces of Louis XI and the duke of Brittany.⁸⁰ René loved luxury but he exercised restraint in his personal expenditure, balancing the need to live in princely style with a respect for economy. His building projects and patronage of the arts combined discernment with an appreciation of what could be accomplished on a small scale.⁸¹

H. Bellugou in his study of attempts at fiscal reform in Anjou suggested that René wanted to change the chaotic and illogical mixture of taxation – *tailles*, *aides* and *traites* (on the circulation of merchandise) – wishing to reduce and simplify the burdens on his subjects. In 1450 he protested that the innovations in royal administration in Anjou had brought ‘prejudice and loss’ to his lordship. His judicial privileges had been ‘attacked and mutilated’ by royal officers, especially the bailly of Touraine.⁸² Bellugou concluded that Charles VII and Louis XI (even before he took over the duchy in 1474) encroached on René’s feudal powers despite his protests. The kings of France determined the levels of taxation in the *apanages* and with their fiscal domination came an extension of their administrative power.⁸³ In early September 1461 many of the people of Angers rebelled in the *Tricotterie* against the high taxes that the new king, Louis XI, had just imposed. René was in Provence at the time so his council spent over 200 livres to send a delegation of bourgeois to mollify the king of France. He had already brutally suppressed the rising with a number of drownings and decapitations.⁸⁴ René was unfortunate that Anjou was so close to the principal residences of the French Crown in the Loire. Charles VII had been brought up at the court of Yolande of Aragon and Louis XI was half Angevin so both kings loved and coveted it.

Until 1453 René’s council had accompanied him on his travels but in that year he ordered that it should remain in Angers under the

⁷⁹Vale, *Charles VII*, p. 226. Charles of Maine received 12,000 livres from his county. *Aides* were often indirect taxes on consumer goods but the term was also used for taxation in general.

⁸⁰P. Marchegay, ‘Deux lettres-Patentes du Roi René’, *Revue de l’Anjou*, 2 (1853) pp. 195–9.

⁸¹See Chapter 4.

⁸²H. Bellugou, *Le Roi René et la Réforme Fiscale dans le Duché d’Anjou au milieu du xv^e siècle* (Angers: 1962) p. 14.

⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁸⁴The insurgents used *triques* or cudgels to belabour royal officials. P. Marchegay, ‘Sédition à Angers, dite la Tricotterie’, *Revue de l’Anjou*, 2 (1853) pp. 268–70.

presidency of his faithful friend and servant Bertrand de Beauvau, lord of Précigny. The chancellor was responsible for calling the council that normally met twice a week in the castle. René attended when he was in residence: in his absence it had supreme authority but was always expected to act on his instructions. (Yet despite the 1453 order a skeleton council often accompanied him on his travels.) The councillors were drawn from all parts of his domains and also included servants of the French king, other princes (mainly honorific) and their representatives. Lecoy de la Marche listed the principal councillors and a selection is given below showing their diversity of origin and status:

John, duke of Calabria, Ferry of Vaudemont (René's son-in-law), Bernard, marquis of Baden (René's brother-in-law), Jacques de Sierck, chancellor of Lorraine, apostolic pronotary and eventually archbishop of Trier, Jean Bernard, archbishop of Tours, Jean de Beauvau, bishop of Anjou, John Cossa (originally from Naples) grand seneschal, Bertrand de Beauvau, lord of Précigny, who held many offices under René, Charles de Castillon, lord of Aubagne, Guy de Laval, lord of Loué, Philippe de Lénoncourt, Pierre de Brézé, lord of la Varenne, Jean de Bueil, admiral of France, Bernardo Doria of Genoa, Jean Breslay, judge of Anjou and Jean le Rouge, silversmith.⁸⁵

From 1471 René lived permanently in Provence so his council was divided, some carrying out the work of government in Anjou, others serving their master in the south. Charles of Maine held his own council in his county after 1448 as did John of Calabria after he became duke of Lorraine in 1453. René seldom felt the need to allude to his council in his letters and ordinances: his peripatetic lifestyle meant that much of the regular business in Angers was carried out in his absence. The harmonious relations that he enjoyed with his family and servants probably obviated the need to state that he was often acting on advice. In October 1468, for example, at Corné in Anjou when he did issue an order 'in his council' he was devolving the considerable responsibility of making nominations to all secular offices to his chancellor, Jean Fournier, lord of Guérinière.⁸⁶ One of the origins of René's reputation as a 'good king' seems to have been his use of nobles and prelates in his council. He was also quite prepared to work with

⁸⁵Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 443, n. 2.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 329–30.

lawyers and merchants when it was appropriate but it was the suitably elevated personnel attending his council meetings in Angers, Aix and Bar that his subjects would have noticed.

There is some difference of opinion amongst historians about the influences that determined the nature of René's administration. Lecoy de la Marche stated that it was predominantly modelled on that of the French monarchy but more recent studies have suggested a greater degree of regional variation.⁸⁷ Bousquet believed that the second house of Anjou substituted French for Neapolitan influence in Provence (although the post of 'Guardian of the Poor' instituted in 1458 was based on such an office in Naples). He was critical of René's administration, claiming that his innovations were primarily intended to raise money for his enterprises rather than to benefit the people. Michel de la Mené says that the Chamber of Accounts in Anjou, established by 1368, was based on the Parisian model. It had three main tasks: to conserve all the duchy's assets (revenues and buildings), to verify the accounts of its agents and to keep financial records. Yolande of Aragon had ordered that the archives should be systematically stored in cupboards in Angers castle. The chamber could refuse the payment of gifts made by the duke on certain technicalities. Once René had settled in Provence permanently they would only act after he had sent a number of authorities to ensure his real will was observed. This was an aspect of the principle of inalienability that French ministers and bureaucrats had tried to enforce on behalf of the Crown throughout the Hundred Years War. La Mené praises the quality and the devotion of René's fiscal officers, they were skilled in understanding his true wishes and deflecting to themselves the unpleasantness of refusing requests.⁸⁸

Noël Coulet believes that the Chamber of Accounts in Provence continued to owe much of its structure to the Neapolitan model under king René. He did on two occasions attempt to reduce the number of *maîtres rationaux*⁸⁹ who staffed it for reasons of economy but the posts and the system of keeping archives were derived from Palermo and Naples. Some of the officials were still Italian although the majority

⁸⁷Ibid., 1, pp. 441–2; R. Bousquet, 'La Provence', in *Histoire des Institutions Françaises au Moyen Âge*, ed. F. Lot and R. Fawtier, 3 vols (Paris: 1957) 1, pp. 249–66; *La France des principautés: les chambres des comptes xiv^e et xv^e siècles*, ed. P. Contamine and O. Mattéoni (Paris: 1996).

⁸⁸M. le Mené, 'La Chambre des Comptes d'Anjou et les libéralités princières', in *La France des principautés*, pp. 43–54.

⁸⁹Financial officials, a direct translation of the Italian 'maestri razionali'.

were Provençal: the most significant change under René's regime was the replacement of many noble officials by the university educated children of merchants and artisans.⁹⁰ Hélène Olland distinguishes clearly between the well-organised administration of Anjou and Provence and the more primitive practices in Lorraine. Very few chamber accounts survive before the reign of René's grandson, René II (1473–1508), and there does not seem to have been a regular establishment before that time. The Chamber for Bar was more developed and when René I's wife Isabelle returned from Naples and called the receiver of Lorraine to render account he had to be assisted by officials from Bar. That duchy had enjoyed more regular contacts with the administration of the French kings and had been forced to respond to the pressures of incessant conflicts over sovereignty. René brought the Merlin family back from Naples and its members worked in the chambers of both Bar and Lorraine for many years.⁹¹ The administration of justice in Bar was close to the model in René's other domains, presided over by judges appointed by the duke. In Lorraine the nobility retained greater jurisdiction and it came under the control of the duke's procurer general only in the seventeenth century.⁹² From 1453 to 1470 John of Calabria was duke of Lorraine: René had enjoyed the title by the right of his wife from their succession in 1431 to her death in 1453.

René's reputation as 'the good king' may have rested in part on the extent to which he consulted his subjects but the nature of this process differed in each of his domains. The Angevins led by Marie of Blois and Louis II had won the loyalty of Provence only by showing due regard to its customs and privileges. The Estates met more than 100 times between 1359 and 1480: they were composed of nobles, clergy and deputies from the main towns and appointed officers to advise the seneschal and oversee finances. Hébert remarks that by the end of the fourteenth century a political society had been formed which was concerned, alongside the royal administration, with all the workings of the government of the county.⁹³ Conversely in Bar the Estates consisted exclusively of nobles and were not asked by their dukes to authorize the levy of taxes. The

⁹⁰N. Coulet, 'Le personnel de la Chambre des Comptes de Provence sous la seconde maison d'Anjou (1381–1481)', *La France des principautés*, pp. 135–48.

⁹¹H. Olland, 'Le personnel de la Chambre des Comptes de Lorraine à la fin du Moyen Âge', *La France des principautés*, pp. 125–33.

⁹²P. Marot, 'Le Moyen Age, 959 à 1477', *Histoire de Lorraine* (Nancy: 1939) pp. 119–20.

⁹³M. Hébert, 'La Noblesse et les États de Provence', *La Noblesse*, pp. 327–45.

nobility in Lorraine were more powerful and, together with the clergy and citizens of towns, were consulted about the succession as well as the raising of taxation.⁹⁴ Their support was crucial to René and Isabelle both before and after Bulgnéville. They loyally assisted John of Calabria in voting revenues for his many campaigns in Italy, France and Catalonia: it was not until the time of duke René II in 1480 that they grumbled about the expense of the troops. There was little formal consultation between René I and his subjects in Anjou although bourgeois, along with nobles and clerics sat on his council. When he seized the duchy in 1474 Louis XI made much of the extent to which he cared for the liberties and interests of its people.⁹⁵

Provence was the most peaceful of René's domains although, beyond its littoral, parts were poor. The economies of Lorraine and Bar were seriously affected by local and inter-state conflicts during the early decades of Angevin rule. Anjou and Maine were potentially prosperous possessions but the Hundred Years War had caused tremendous damage, especially to Maine. A report made on the estate of Tucé in 1453 complained that:

because of the wars of the English, our old enemies, that affected this kingdom for so long and their occupation of the town of Mans and nearly all the county of Maine, the said land of Tucé was almost entirely destroyed and similarly all its subjects either fled to various places such as Touraine, Anjou, Brittany and others besides and finished their days poorly, and the people, who returned in poverty, only found bushes and scrub on their land, creepers and grass, the houses burnt and demolished so that many could not recognise what belonged to them.⁹⁶

Maine probably benefited from the fact that the family of René's second wife, Jeanne de Laval, came from the county. In 1456 she visited Mans in state, riding a richly caparisoned horse, protected by an escort of men-at-arms and accompanied by ornate wagons bearing her arms and covered in violet cloths that transported her wardrobe and plate. More practically, she loved the cheeses of La Ferté-Bernard and asked

⁹⁴Marot, *Histoire de Lorraine*, pp. 122–3.

⁹⁵See Chapter 5.

⁹⁶A. Bouton, *Le Maine: Histoire Economique et Sociale xiv^e, xv^e et xvi^e siècles* (Le Mans: 1970) p. 64.

her brother-in-law to send her some soon after her marriage.⁹⁷ She might have been emulating René who showed a lively interest in stimulating the economies of his domains.

René was active in encouraging commerce, industry and agriculture throughout his lands. In 1430, for example, the barber/surgeons of Bar were told that unskilled men had been practising their trade and causing harm. An experienced master should be chosen to oversee his fellows and exclude any unsuitable practitioners. In 1456 the king established glassworks at Roche-sur-Yon in Anjou and Goult in Provence. John of Calabria encouraged glass-making in Lorraine, giving a charter to craftsmen in the region of Darney in 1448 and renewing it in 1469.⁹⁸ René's patronage of the arts and crafts also provided work and the possibility of innovation for a number of workers. In 1443 he confirmed the letters of protection that Yolande of Aragon had given to the Jews and they generally thrived under his rule.⁹⁹ Bourdigné, however, gives a harrowing account of the indictment at Angers of an elderly (and probably demented) Jew for blasphemy against the Virgin Mary: he was eventually skinned alive. Bourdigné cites it as an example of René's piety since leaders of the Jewish community offered him a large sum of money to save their fellow but, when he refused to recant, the king ordered that the sentence should be carried out.¹⁰⁰ This appears to have been an isolated incident and, despite his devotion to the Church, René was generally open to establishing trading links with Muslims and Jews throughout the Mediterranean.

Eliyashu Ashtor has traced the incidence of trade between the West and the Levant during the later middle ages.¹⁰¹ The end of the fourteenth century marked a peak for the major traders, including the Genoans, Catalans and Provençals who regularly imported and exported goods via Levantine ports such as Alexandria. Their olive oil, honey, cloth and coral were prized in the Orient whilst the West was eager for spices and exotic goods. Trading declined in the fifteenth century due in part to internal problems in North Africa and the resurgence of the Hundred Years War. René experienced the particular difficulty of his wars over Naples with Aragon that spasmodically inhibited commerce. On the other hand, he was blessed with some enterprising subjects like Jean Forbin of Marseille.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 67, 284.

⁹⁸Bénet, p. 38 and n. 36.

⁹⁹Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 479, 484, 516–19.

¹⁰⁰Bourdigné, ff. clxxi–ii.

¹⁰¹E. Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (New Jersey: 1983) *passim*.

Naples and Gaeta had been staging posts for Western merchants en route to Egypt and Syria: after the expulsion of the Angevins in 1442 Forbin simply traded directly with the Levant.

René had formed a taste for oriental goods well before he settled permanently in Provence. In 1448, for example, an array of items including basins, spoons, chandeliers, spurs and tablecloths were sent from Tarascon in Provence to his castle at Angers.¹⁰² He was a friend of the merchant Jacques Coeur who kept a fleet that traded in the Mediterranean and who provided him with many of his exotic purchases. Coeur was disgraced and imprisoned by Charles VII in 1451 and he later fled via Provence to a safe haven in Italy. René colluded in his escape and responded ingenuously on several occasions in 1455 to the exhortations of his brother-in-law and sovereign.¹⁰³ In the previous June, Charles had sent his attorney, Jean Dauvert, to Provence to try and confiscate Coeur's goods and obtain the extradition of his nephew and business associate Jean de Village. Dauvert met René 'alone and apart in his garden' at the palace in Aix and stated his master's demands. The king of Sicily politely replied that he could not agree to them as Provence, unlike Anjou, was not subject to the king of France.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the sound of the gobbling turkeys in his menagerie that de Village had imported for him from Egypt stiffened his resolve.¹⁰⁵ Provence flourished demographically and economically under the Angevins and the French Crown that took the county in 1481. The population increased by between 200 and 300 per cent between 1471 and 1540, the peace that the county enjoyed under king René continued and ensured prosperity at home and profitable trade around the Mediterranean.¹⁰⁶

His cultivation of a simple, rural life-style in his later years does not seem to have been an affectation on René's part. He encouraged the production of grapes and introduced vines from Provence into Anjou. He also promoted the planting of mulberry trees in the Midi and his love of silken clothes for his family and court provided a stimulus to the industry. Farms and orchards formed part of several of his manors: at Gardanne, near Aix in Provence, his interest is well documented

¹⁰²Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pp. 131–2.

¹⁰³N. Valois, *Le Conseil du roi aux xiv^e, xv^e et xvi^e siècles* (Paris: 1888) pp. 250–9, 294–6.

¹⁰⁴M. Mollat, *Jacques Coeur ou l'esprit d'entreprise au xv^e siècle* (Mesnil-sur-Lestrière: 1988) pp. 291–4.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, p. 456, n. 32.

¹⁰⁶Ashtor, pp. 437–8.

since a good set of accounts survive.¹⁰⁷ He probably regarded it as a model of husbandry for his subjects. About thirty servants worked on the estate: apart from the governor, the captain of the castle and overseer there were shepherds (who wore cloaks bearing the royal arms), cowmen, swineherds, a muleteer, a concierge, a gardener, a baker and other domestics. Workers were also employed temporarily at times such as haymaking:

1472: 1 August, paid to Antoine of Dauphiné, journeyman haymaker, for five days of threshing at Gardane at 1 ¹/₂ gros of salary and 1 gros for food per day 1 florin 8d.¹⁰⁸

The Chamber of Accounts at Aix protested from time to time that the cost of the king's agricultural activities such as making wine and cutting hay well exceeded the profits derived from these products. It is not clear whether they also took into account the other goods from his estates, such as the flesh and hides from cattle, fruit, vegetables, wood and oil that were used to maintain his buildings and feed his court and servants. Even if his enterprises in Anjou and Provence did show an overall loss the benefits that employment and the example of good agricultural practice brought to his subjects were considerable.

Conclusion

The nineteenth century statue of René by David of Angers (1788–1856) that stands at the end of the Cours Mirabeau in Aix-en-Provence shows him crowned and holding a bunch of grapes and a sceptre (Illustration 3). It encapsulates the two sides that he presented to his subjects: the glamour of a king of distant lands and the practical man who loved the countryside and its products. His sources of income were as complex as the nature of his domains and much was dependent on the good will of his overlord the king of France. René and John of Calabria certainly taxed their duchies and Provence to help pay for their Neapolitan ambitions but the wars on the edge of the empire and the depredations of the English did far more damage to their subjects than taxation. Some of what was due was remitted and the good king left a reputation for the

¹⁰⁷M. Chaillan, *Le Roi René à son Château de Gardane: étude sur les conditions d'exploitation agricole en Provence au xv^e siècle* (Paris: 1909) *passim*, spelt 'Gardanne' in recent times. See Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p. 108.



Illustration 3 Statue of king René in the Cours Mirabeau, Aix by David d'Angers, 1819 (detail). Photo Peter Fawcett.

kind of rule that Genet characterised. A prince was expected to oversee the receipt and expenditure of his revenue, as far as possible without causing ruin to his realm, and to live of his own: not requiring extra taxes.¹⁰⁹

René's defeat at Bulgnéville, his long imprisonment and the burden of a large ransom made a bad start to his long career. Yet his chivalrous observance of the rules of his captivity contrasted well with the mean fashion in which Philip of Burgundy enforced them and enhanced the young king's European reputation. Some would have remembered that in the previous century his grandfather, Louis I, had refused to return to England in place of his father, king John of France, and forced him to die in captivity. The following decades were to offer René several opportunities to do valiant deeds and extend his domains. His chivalrous conduct during the occupation of Naples, his great tournaments and his intervention in the final stages of the Hundred Years War would be admired by contemporaries as brave and magnificent behaviour worthy of a king.

¹⁰⁹J.P. Genet, 'Conclusion. Chambres des Comptes et Principautés et Genèse de l'État Moderne, *La France des principautés*, pp. 267–79.

2

Naples: the 'Italian Wasp-Nest'¹

Introduction: the Angevin empire

On 31 December 1441, when his enemy Alfonso of Aragon had confined him to little more than the city of Naples, a dramatic spectacle, based on a dialogue by Lucian, took place before king René in the Castelnuovo. A platform was erected in the courtyard bearing a scene representing the entrance to the Elysian fields (Illustration 4). Actors portraying Scipio Africanus, Hannibal and Alexander argued before their judge, king Minos, to earn a palm that was the prize for the greatest warrior, which was eventually awarded to Scipio Africanus. In the humanist fashion a jurist, Cyprien de Mer, finished with a Latin oration in which he explained the allegory and applied a moral to the spectacle. Having reminded his audience that Hannibal (who came from Spain) was initially successful in his campaigns while the wise and virtuous waited for fortune to turn in their favour, he addressed René directly:

Most Serene King ... Hannibal fought against the Romans just as your enemy fights against the Roman church. Scipio defended the republic and you defend the Holy See. Like Hannibal Alfonso is old, sly, malicious and mendacious; like Scipio you are young, prudent, just and a friend of the truth ... Be assured, O Great King, that if you

¹J. Levron, *Le Bon Roi René* (Saint Amand Montrond: 1980, 2004) p. 88.



Illustration 4 Courtyard of the Castelnuovo, Naples. The chapel of St Barbara dates from René's time but the doorway was added by Alfonso IV. Photo Peter Fawcett.

continue as you have done you will soon drive out your enemy and reign in peace over your lands.²

By 1441 the Angevin empire had evaporated: from 1266, when Charles I, the founder of the first house of Anjou, had been invested with the kingdom of Sicily by the Papacy until the death of Maria queen of Hungary in 1395, it had ruled or claimed to rule extensive territories. Sicily was lost to the dynasty after the revolt of the Vespers in 1282 but the mainland kingdom continued to be one of the strongest powers in Italy and in the course of the following century Angevins ruled Achaëa (mainland Greece), Piedmont, Hungary, Albania and Dalmatia. Charles I was also count of Provence and Forcalquier through his marriage to Beatrice who inherited the territory from her father. In 1277 Charles bought the title to the throne of Jerusalem from another heiress: neither he nor any of his descendants made a serious attempt to conquer it but the claim added lustre to their dynasty. The counties of Anjou and Maine, which Charles I had received from his father Louis VIII as an *apanage*, passed to Charles of Valois in 1290 when he married Margaret daughter of Charles II of Naples. The successors of Charles I made sporadic attempts to recover Sicily: but they never did so and remained in an almost permanent state of enmity with its Aragonese kings. The house of Capet ran out of direct male heirs with the death of Charles IV in 1328. He was succeeded by his cousin, Philip count of Valois who, as Philip VI, became the first Valois king of France. His son, John II, revived the *apanage* of Anjou and Maine in favour of his second son Louis. As close relatives of the old house of Capet he and his descendants could claim all the lands that had been enjoyed by the first house of Anjou in Italy and elsewhere. The low fertility of the relicts of that house was to assist their ambitions.

In 1343 Robert the Wise of Naples, the last of three able kings, died and was succeeded by his granddaughter Joanna I. The Salic Law, which French kings claimed prohibited the succession of a princess or her heirs, did not apply in southern Italy or the Spanish kingdoms. A cadet

²B. Croce, 'Teatri di Napoli: secolo xv-xviii', *Archivio Storico per le Provincie Napoletane*, 14, (1889) pp. 559–61; N.F. Faraglia, *Storia della lotta tra Alfonso V d'Aragona e Renato d'Angiò* (Lanciano: 1908) pp. 264–5. See L. Martines for a polemical dispute in 1435 between Poggio Bracciolini and Guarino Guarini. The former claimed that the republican Scipio Africanus was superior to the signorial Julius Caesar, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (London: 1980) pp. 270–1.

branch of the Angevins, the house of Durazzo, ruled a duchy based in Albania and by marriage also claimed the crown of Hungary (ruled by a younger brother of Robert and his descendants for most of the fourteenth century). Robert had hoped before his death to mend some of the divisions between branches of the Angevin family by marrying Joanna to her cousin prince Andrew of Hungary. Andrew was murdered soon after her accession and her rapid remarriage compounded suspicions about her complicity in the crime. Joanna was childless and in 1382 another cousin, Charles of Durazzo, murdered her and seized the throne, proclaiming that he was punishing her for the crime she had committed nearly forty years earlier.

Any study of Angevin Naples is impeded by the destruction of the state archives during World War II. The Office for Angevin Reconstruction has achieved a good measure of restoration by using surviving fragments, inventories and transcripts (including those made by Lecoy de la Marche) but progress is understandably slow and it will be some time before the fifteenth century is reached.³

The other Hundred Years War

1380–1434: a graveyard for the Angevins

Naples is one of the most beautiful places in the Mediterranean and it offered many attractions to aspirant medieval kings. The Normans, Hohenstaufen and early Angevins had supplied it with fine churches, castles, palaces and villas supported by thriving towns and an agriculture that benefited from the excellent climate. It was also well placed on the trade routes that connected the eastern and western parts of the Mediterranean and North Africa. Yet beneath the surface serious problems awaited any conqueror. The Angevins had secured their position over the previous century only by allowing the nobility to enjoy a large degree of independence within their territories.⁴ Together with the

³J. Mazzoleni, 'Les archives des Angevins de Naples', *Marseille et ses rois de Naples: la diagonale angevine, 1265–1382*, ed. I. Bonnot (Aix-en-Provence: 1988) pp. 25–9. The best contemporary account, much used by later writers, is the *Diurnali detti del Duca di Monteleone*, ed. N.F. Faraglia (Naples: 1895). This anonymous compilation (Monteleone was the owner of the earliest manuscript) dates from 1371 to 1478.

⁴For an account of the relationship of the Neapolitan nobility with their kings see D. Hay and J. Law, *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance, 1380–1530* (London, New York: 1989) pp. 185–90.

citizens and the peasants they were mostly loyal to Robert the Wise and his unfortunate granddaughter but they regarded the houses of Durazzo, the second house of Anjou and, later, the Aragonese as opportunistic foreigners.⁵ It was recognised that some kind of monarchy was a necessity but the nobility, partly Italian and partly French, would often sell themselves to the highest bidder and change sides without compunction. The record was held by the count of Caserta who did so five times in two years.⁶ If a particular king appeared to be gaining too much power and threatening to deprive them of their privileges or their wealth that was reason enough to weaken or depose him: 'It is pointless to look for political ideas amongst the nobility, only private interests motivated them.'⁷

The hostile dynasty of Aragon was firmly installed just across the straits of Messina in Sicily. They benefited from large surpluses of grain that could sustain military campaigns and also from the support of the senior branch of the family that ruled Aragon, Valencia, Catalonia and several islands. The Catalan navy invariably supported their political and mercantile interests, especially against their rivals the Genoese. The Papacy was recognised to be the suzerain of the kings of Naples but, from the 1380s until 1415 and during the council of Basle, schisms ensured that there were at least two popes at any given time. The numerous and conflicting popes and their generally short life spans increased the instability of the Kingdom. This was the wasp-nest into which six Angevin princes and their wives ventured.

Joanna I had rather unwillingly adopted Louis I of Anjou as her heir in 1380: she was suspicious of French influence yet she hoped he would support her against the onslaught of Charles of Durazzo. Displaying the sluggishness that characterised all the male princes of the second house of Anjou in their attempts to secure Naples, Louis took two years to assemble an army and invade the Kingdom. As Émile Léonard remarked,

⁵For a discussion of changing Italian perceptions of the Angevins see P. Gilli, 'L'intégration manquée des Angevins en Italie: le témoignage des historiens', *L'État Angevin: pouvoir, culture et société entre les xiii^e et xiv^e siècles*, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 45 (Rome: 1998) pp. 11–33.

⁶A. Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous: King of Aragon, Naples and Sicily, 1396–1458* (Oxford: 1990) p. 226.

⁷E. Nunziante, 'I Primi Anni di Ferdinando d'Aragona e l'invasione di Giovanni d'Angiò', *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane*, vols 17–23, 18 (1893) p. 412. This is probably the fullest account of the 1459–64 Angevin campaign but is heavily reliant on the pro-Aragonese reports of the Milanese envoys.

Louis's talents did not match the size of his ambition.⁸ During the negotiations to enable his army to pass from France to Italy he ceded what remained of Angevin Piedmont to the duke of Savoy. He lost territory that included the towns of Asti, Alba, Mondovi, Cherasco and Alessandria. Alan Ryder believes that his was the most formidable French force to appear in Italy between 1265 and 1494 but this did not guarantee its success.⁹ Charles III had disposed of Joanna and enjoyed the support of pope Urban VI in Rome. By avoiding battle he watched the great French force wither away 'in penury and pestilence': disease claimed the life of Louis I at Biseglia near Bari on 21 September 1384. His will urged Charles VI of France and his widow, Marie of Blois (or Brittany), to support his son's claim to Naples and to set up a provisional government of thirteen regents in the Kingdom led by the French commander Enguerrand de Coucy. However, de Coucy had only reached Arezzo when he heard the news of his leader's death so he hastily sold the town to the Florentines and returned to France.

Marie of Blois, however, was made of sterner stuff and proceeded to conquer the counties of Provence and Forcalquier, the other half of the Kingdom of Naples, on behalf of her young son, Louis II. This was a difficult enterprise since the nobility and citizens of those desirable counties had enjoyed considerable latitude during the long reign of Joanna I. The northern part of what French historians call 'the Angevin diagonal' was a huge swathe of territory adjacent to Avignon (which Joanna had recently sold to the Papacy). The potential it had for raising revenue and its busy port of Marseille made it a valuable prize in its own right as well as a good launch-pad for campaigns in Italy. Nobles and citizens who supported the house of Durazzo waged the war of the League of Aix against the dowager queen and her son. They were lectured by the public notary, in Provençal, on the traditional liberties of the city in the courtyard of the palace at Marseille on 24 August 1385. Louis and his mother then received the oath of loyalty from its three *syndics* (senior magistrates) who knelt, but kept their hats on, and in return the prince and queen Marie swore on the gospels to observe their liberties. She then entered into careful negotiations with the other major towns of Provence and during the following two years most of

⁸E.G. Léonard, *Les Angevins de Naples* (Paris: 1954) p. 466.

⁹A. Ryder, 'The Angevin Bid for Naples, 1380-1480', *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494-5: Antecedents and Effects*, ed. D. Abulafia (Aldershot: 1995) pp. 55-69.

them swore fidelity to the house of Anjou. In 1406 on his way to Naples Louis II, by then an adult, used the occasion of the institution of Mathieu de Beauvau as provost of Marseille to repeat his oath to observe its liberties. M.R. Reynaud suggests that, through such policies, by the early fifteenth century the Angevin princes had achieved a delicate balance between their authority and the rights of their subjects in Provence.¹⁰

Louis II was crowned king of Naples by the compliant Avignon pope, Clement VII, in that city on All Souls Day 1389. Charles VI of France was present and the ceremony made it clear that both he and the pope were the overlords of the king of Naples.¹¹ The following year, assisted by large sums lent to him by Clement, Louis II led an army into southern Italy. Charles III of Durazzo had been assassinated in Hungary and Louis was faced by his cousin Ladislas, another boy. Louis won victories in Puglia, the Terra di Lavoro and Calabria and occupied the city of Naples, ruling as king for nearly ten years.¹² The death of Clement VII and the withdrawal of French support from the new Avignon pope, Benedict XIII (a Spanish friend of the house of Aragon), eventually undermined his position. Like his father he showed no decisive qualities of military leadership, while Ladislas was developing into an effective commander. In an attempt to galvanise his unenthusiastic Neapolitan nobles into action Louis led a desperate foray into Puglia in February 1399. During his absence Ladislas and his supporters seized the capital and by July Louis had abandoned his kingdom and sailed to Provence.¹³ His marriage at Arles in December 1400 to Yolande of Aragon, the daughter of John I of the defunct line of Barcelona, was to involve his dynasty in a wider network of European princely families with considerable repercussions for their three sons, Louis, René and Charles. One daughter, Marie, was to become queen of France and another, Yolande, married the heir to Brittany. Without winning any wars Louis II and his wife, who was to prove a fecund mother and a resolute and able diplomat, had put themselves at the centre of affairs in western Europe.

Despite the fact that the Burgundian and *Armagnac* factions at the sorry court of Charles VI and Isabeau of Bavaria needed the good offices of the senior royal uncle, Louis II could not resist the siren call of southern Italy. Ladislas had unwisely occupied Rome and much of

¹⁰Reynaud, pp. 84–92; R.Duchêne, *...et la Provence devint française* (Paris: 1982) pp. 58–61.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 108–11.

¹²*Diurnali*, pp. 38–52.

¹³Ryder, *The Angevin Bid*, p. 57.

central Italy. In 1409 his enemy Alexander V (a transitory pope elected at the council of Pisa) and the rulers of Florence and Siena invited Louis to attack Rome in the company of the *condottiere* Attendolo Sforza and the widely-feared Braccio da Montone. Enthusiasm for the second part of the deal, the reconquest of Naples, rapidly waned once Ladislas had been expelled so Louis had to return to Provence to raise more money. He extracted 200,000 francs from Charles VI and hastened back to Rome where another schismatic pope, John XXIII, gave him support and a little money. Together with Attendolo Sforza Louis won a great victory over Ladislas at Roccasecca in May 1411 but failed to follow it up with an attack on the capital. Discouraged by sickness in his army, the usual shortage of funds and difficulties with his captains he retreated to Rome and then, in August, to Provence.

Louis II was already weakened by illness when he left Italy and he remained in France until his death in 1417. In the meantime Ladislas had died and his sister and heir, Joanna II, had succeeded him: she was childless and was to be the last of the line of Durazzo. Martin V, the pope who had replaced the schismatics at the council of Constance, wished to stabilise the Kingdom by settling the succession. He chose Louis III of Anjou,¹⁴ the oldest son of Louis II, and Joanna adopted him as her heir. Yolande of Aragon was uneasy that her son should venture into the wasp-nest presided over by a queen who contemporaries such as Chastellain characterised as 'of strange conduct, little to her honour and much to mischief and confusion'. (There is scope for anglophone feminist historians to re-evaluate the reputations of both Joanna I and Joanna II as most commentators have given negative accounts of them.) Yolande and her son went to Provence in 1419 where some hard negotiations were concluded:

The Neapolitans asked her to give them her son, heir to Naples, to become their king but she was unwilling to do so without long consideration and serious advice because Italians are very unreliable. She only agreed on condition that eight Neapolitan lords were left in Provence as hostages for her son until he was in peaceable possession of the Crown. This done with tears and sighs, as mothers do,

¹⁴He is called 'Louis III' from the time of his father's death because the Angevins were regarded by many as the true successors of Joanna I, rather than the house of Durazzo.

she gave him into their hands accompanied by people of his own nation.¹⁵

Louis went to Rome where he was invested by the Pope with the succession to the crown of Naples. But his arrival in the Kingdom in 1420 challenged the supremacy of the queen's chief minister and lover, Gianni Caracciolo, who opted for the best alternative candidate to be heir, Alfonso V of Trastàmara, king of Aragon.¹⁶ He already ruled Sicily as well as his Iberian lands and the restive islands of Corsica, Sardinia, Majorca and Minorca. He disposed of a higher income than the Angevins, the services of Braccio da Montone (who had changed sides), the formidable Catalan navy and the friendship of duke Filippo Maria Visconti of Milan. He had gained military experience serving his father, king Ferdinand.¹⁷ Alfonso had a strong personality, a commanding presence and proved to be an able general. He also knew how to use humanist learning and propaganda to his advantage.¹⁸ Louis III attracted some favourable comments from Reynaud: he was resolute, brave and moderate but seems not to have been an accomplished military leader.¹⁹ He could usually count on the support of the Genoese navy, the Papacy and the great *condottiere* Attendolo and his son Francesco Sforza. France also backed him but his cousin and brother-in-law, Charles VII, was mired in the wars with England and Burgundy and could give him little practical assistance.

In June 1421 Alfonso landed at Naples and was adopted by Joanna who invested him with the duchy of Calabria, traditionally the fief ruled by the heir to the throne, and the Castel dell'Uovo in the capital.²⁰ The rejected

¹⁵Chastellain, *Oeuvres*, 1, pp.168–9. Joanna had 'a sordid reputation that grew in the telling', D. Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms, 1200–1500* (London, New York: 1997) p. 195.

¹⁶He was also Alfonso IV of Catalonia, Alfonso II of Sicily and became Alfonso I of Naples! J. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250–1516*, 2 vols (Oxford: 1978) 2, pp. 239–66.

¹⁷The Compromise of Caspe 1412, peacefully concluded by the estates of Aragon, delivered the crown of Aragon to the Castilian house of Trastàmara. Louis III of Anjou had been one of the rival candidates since his mother Yolande of Aragon had a good claim to the throne. See Chapter 5.

¹⁸Ryder, *Alfonso, passim*.

¹⁹Reynaud, *passim*.

²⁰So-called either after the shape of the island on which it rests or because the poet and reputed magician Virgil was believed to have balanced the walls on an egg in a bottle when he built them, L. Collinson-Morley, *Naples through the Centuries* (London: 1925) p. 5.

Louis III and Attendolo Sforza, who were based at Aversa ten miles away, besieged the city which was blockaded for several months. Louis eventually abandoned his forces to go to Rome to seek aid from the pope and they melted away. In the meantime Joanna and her courtiers had developed a strong dislike of the occupying Spaniards and Alfonso was deserted by the unpredictable Filippo Maria Visconti. Alfonso left Naples for Spain in 1423 after a confrontation with Joanna's followers that reduced much of the city to smoking ruins: only a few castles remained in the hands of his supporters. Braccio da Montone was killed in the fighting that followed his departure. Alfonso aimed a final blow at the Angevins on his return journey: Marseille had been denuded of fighting ships by the expedition to Naples so he took the city by surprise and spent two days sacking and looting it. He returned to Barcelona with a rich collection of gold and silver and, most galling of all for the Angevins, the skull and some bones of their great dynastic saint, Louis of Toulouse, whose relics were placed in the cathedral in Valencia. It was only in 1956 that the archbishop of Marseille managed to achieve the return of two vertebrae that were installed in the church of the Augustines.

In September 1423 Louis III was welcomed back by queen Joanna who re-adopted him. He treated her with great respect and made such headway against recalcitrant nobles, especially in Calabria, that he is reputed to have returned to France to fight for Charles VII against the English. Yet as Alfonso had discovered, the succession to Naples was best assured by keeping close to Joanna, but on her right side. Reynaud insists that Louis never returned to France during this period.²¹ He married Margaret of Savoy but she did not join him in Italy until 1434 and they had no children. While he was waiting for Joanna to die, one of the great misfortunes that bedevilled the attempts of the second house of Anjou to secure the Neapolitan crown occurred. It was Louis III, aged thirty-one years, who died first, of fever at Cosenza in November 1434.

King René: 1435–1442

Queen Joanna II named René of Anjou as her heir before she died in February 1435. An Angevin servant, Guy de Bossaye, received the investment from pope Eugenius IV and paid homage on René's behalf the

²¹Reynaud, p. 100. She cites the evidence of letters that he sent from Cosenza at the time of Charles VII's coronation at Reims. Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 50, n. 3 cites a letter, 17 December 1426, from Louis to Yolande of Aragon asking for funds to enable him to obey the king's command to return to France but there is no evidence that he did so.

following February. This gave little comfort to René and his supporters since he was to remain the prisoner of Philip of Burgundy, mostly in Dijon, for another year. The new pope was generally pro-Angevin but was also susceptible to pressure from the king of Aragon. Alfonso had returned from Spain in 1432 and negotiated unsuccessfully with the queen's favourite Caracciolo and Joanna to have his adoption restored.²² Caracciolo was murdered in August by some of his many enemies. Several powerful nobles, including Giovanni Antonio del Balzo Orsini prince of Taranto who owned enormous estates and was 'the most powerful man in Italy after the duke of Milan', made friendly overtures to Alfonso.²³ Yet they would not commit themselves unless he invaded Naples and he was unwilling to do so whilst Joanna lived. For the following two years he was based in Sicily where he resisted calls from his Spanish subjects to return to solve the many problems that they were facing. His three brothers the *infants* John, Henry and Peter, despairing of attracting him back to Spain, eventually joined him to assist in his great enterprise: 'He is so fired by this Neapolitan business that nothing in the world pleases him but to talk of that kingdom.'²⁴ So wrote a disgusted envoy who was trying to interest Alfonso in the municipal affairs of Barcelona.

Why should a prosperous king who set great store by his dignity wish to spend so much time and money in conquering an alien people who had already spurned him? Spain held few attractions for him: the campaigns he and his brothers had fought against Castille during the past years had ended without glory. Alfonso's wife, queen Maria of Castile, was sadly marked by years of ill-health: they had failed to produce any children and he showed no inclination to try again. She was, however, a loyal and conscientious regent during his long years of absence. He had several thriving bastards including Ferrante (or Ferdinand) who was to prove an able captain for his father. Alfonso had probably already decided to engineer Ferrante's succession to Naples: the rest of his lands would go to his oldest brother John, king of Navarre. Their house could trace its claim to Naples back to queen Constance, the daughter of Manfred of Hohenstaufen. The beautiful and fertile kingdom would make an important link in the trading routes between Catalonia, Sicily, Alfonso's other islands, the eastern Mediterranean

²²A document showing that he had succeeded was a forgery according to Hay and Law, p. 174 and n. 12.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 186.

²⁴Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, p. 199.

and north Africa so he would turn the western Mediterranean into 'an Aragonese-dominated lake'.²⁵ Subsequent events show that he also had ambitions to subjugate the rest of Italy. Most of all, however, Alfonso's claim represented unfinished business: an opportunity at last to win the military renown that was so prized by contemporary princes and to give him a commanding position in Italy. Alfonso's psychology might not have been very different from that of President Bush junior when he invaded Iraq in 2003.

Alfonso attacked Gaeta in May 1435, calculating that it would be a good base for an assault on the city of Naples. This seemed to be a wise strategy as he had a powerful fleet laden with Spanish and Italian soldiers. The Genoese, however, were determined that their enemies, the Catalans, would not dominate southern Italy. They reinforced Gaeta and inflicted a heavy defeat on Alfonso's navy at Ponza on 5 August. Their superior seamanship prevailed against the king's fleet that was not only laden with soldiers but many dignitaries whom he had invited to view his 'victory'. All but one of the Spanish ships were captured or destroyed: Alfonso, two of his brothers and many nobles were taken prisoner. A Neapolitan chronicler remarked that 'no net cast in the sea has ever caught so many fish at once'.²⁶ Alfonso refused to surrender to the lowly Genoese as a matter of honour until they produced the governor of Chios as a fitting person to receive his sword.²⁷ He was then transported to Milan to their overlord, Filippo Maria Visconti, an even more worthy custodian. Yet to Genoese disgust and to the alarm of the supporters of Anjou and the still-incarcerated René, Alfonso was treated like an honoured guest. He soon managed to persuade Filippo Maria that his interests would be better served if they were to make an alliance against the Angevins. Italy would be dominated by two great powers: Milan in the north and Aragonese Naples in the south.²⁸ The duke repudiated an earlier agreement that he had made with René and offered financial and military support to Alfonso, who was released without paying a ransom. The contrast with the way in which Philip of Burgundy had treated his cousin René in 1431 could not have been greater.²⁹ Perhaps an abler diplomat than René might have

²⁵Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 204.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 204; *Diurnali* pp. 93–4.

²⁷Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 140–1.

²⁸G. Galasso, *Il Regno di Napoli: Il Mezzogiorno angioino e aragonese, 1266–1494* (Turin: 1992) pp. 564–6.

²⁹Eugenius made the same comparison in a letter of 18 April 1436, in which he begged Philip of Burgundy to release his captive, Faraglia, pp. 67–8.

taken advantage of that captivity to anticipate the *rapprochement* orchestrated by Yolande of Aragon and concluded by Charles VII and Philip at Arras four years later. On the other hand, Philip knew that it had been Angevin servants who had encouraged the young dauphin to murder his father and he and René appear to have detested each other: 'honour' was perhaps more of a factor in politics in France than in Italy.

Since the death of Joanna II the government of Naples had been conducted by a council composed mainly of Angevin loyalists. René named Isabelle of Lorraine as his lieutenant and she rapidly made her way to Provence. There she attended to some local business and then, accompanied by her second son Louis, embarked for Naples. She made a solemn entry, on 25 October 1435, into the city where she was warmly welcomed and conducted by representatives of the various quarters to her residence, the Castel-Capuano. A month later, enthroned in the courtyard, she received the homage of the nobles and people. Whilst this was happening a tussle occurred over a question of precedence that could have ruined the occasion. The queen ordered a prelate to address the people in these terms:

You lords of the quarters of Capuana and Nido, and you other representatives of Montana, Portûs and Porto-Nove, and you citizens, the Queen wishes that your privileges, immunities and dignities should be maintained as they were in the past. In giving your oath and liege homage you will keep the order and rank observed in the sessions of the court of the baliffs of San Paolo where the quarter of Capuana took first place.³⁰

By such means Isabelle soon built on the hatred that many citizens felt for Alfonso of Aragon after the devastation he had wrought, and became a popular ruler in a large part of the Kingdom.³¹ She restored the administration of excise duties to the city authorities and sent her son Louis to Calabria with the captain Attendolo Sforza, a move that proved effective in returning most of the province to the Angevins.³²

³⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 145 and 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 222–3.

³¹She 'acted as regent with considerable effect between 1435 and 1438', Hay and Law, p. 173; 'A lady endowed with fine wifely and political qualities', E. Pontieri, *Alfonso il Magnanimo re di Napoli 1435–58* (Naples: 1975) p. 40; 'all writers, including the Aragonese, agree' [about her virtues as a ruler], *Diurnali*, p. 95 and n. 7.

³²V. Glijeses, *La Storia di Napoli delle origine ai nostri giorni* (Naples: 1974–81) 3 vols, 2, pp. 212–13.

Isabelle had already shown her mettle by rallying the Lorrainers after René's defeat at Bulgnéville to such effect that she preserved the duchy for the Angevins and their children. Now, in the face of great difficulties, she ruled the parts of the Kingdom that supported her husband until his arrival. Two of the great Neapolitan fortresses, the Castel dell'Uovo and the Castelnuovo, still remained in Aragonese hands. But during Isabelle's regency Alfonso was unable to make a decisive move against Naples: the presence of Genoese ships prevented an effective siege. Eugenius IV sent the *condottiere* Giovanni Vitelleschi, patriarch of Alessandria (whom he made a cardinal) with 5000 soldiers to support the queen – which he did whilst he continued to be paid. But early in 1438, after abortive negotiations to defect to Alfonso, he abandoned his army before Trani and fearing the anger of the pope fled to Venice. Abruzzo and Calabria were generally loyal to the Angevins so Alfonso, a patient man, strengthened the castle at Gaeta, which he had eventually captured, and waited for his enemies' funds to run out. There he established a court that was the focus of diplomacy and anticipated in its patronage of humanism the reputation he later established in Naples.³³

On 18 May 1438 René finally disembarked from a Genoese ship in the city of Naples, accompanied by his son John, duke of Calabria, and John's wife, Marie of Bourbon. He was met on the bridge of the Maddalena at the harbour by queen Isabelle and their son Louis. Riding under a royal canopy René received an enthusiastic welcome from the people: he was the papal candidate for the throne, had been chosen by Joanna II as her heir and large parts of the Kingdom, including the capital city, supported him. It is only with the benefit of hindsight that many historians, especially Italians and Spaniards, can date Alfonso's reign from 1435. From his accession and for his first two years in Naples René rather than his rival was its king. Yet he faced enormous difficulties in retaining the throne: Alfonso's wealth, determination and capacities, his own perpetual shortage of resources and the danger that both the *condottiere* and the native nobility would favour the richest and strongest claimant.

Initially matters went well as René enjoyed the support of the Neapolitan captain Jacopo Caldora who was prepared, despite his age, to campaign vigorously on his behalf. The king could devote himself to more peaceful pursuits, such as regulating the administration of Naples

³³Pontieri, pp. 44–5.

University and protecting the interests of the Church.³⁴ René, his queen, John of Calabria and Marie de Bourbon joined the Confraternity of St Martha (founded in 1400 by queen Margaret of Anjou-Durazzo with a chapel near Santa Chiara) and they and their arms are pictured in its register (Illustrations 5a–5d).³⁵ He also rewarded the good service of Angevins from France, Italy and Lorraine: his shortage of funds dictated the gift of offices and lands (not always in his possession) rather than cash. Isabelle received the duchy of Amalfi including the towns of Sorrento and Castellamare described by Lecoy de la Marche as 'the most delicious corner of his states, the terrestrial paradise of Italy' as a testimony to her husband's affection and to the sacrifices she had made for him.³⁶

In July 1438 the campaign against Aragon recommenced in earnest. Francesco Sforza offered his services to René but the king's chief captain, Jacopo Caldora, would never cooperate with him so his offer was refused, to the long-term detriment of Angevin interests. Alfonso and the prince of Taranto encountered Caldora in the Terra di Lavoro and had him at a numerical disadvantage but the king refused to give battle. Alfonso explained to the indignant Taranto that if he won he defeated a mere *condottiere*, if he lost he forfeited a kingdom. It was then René's turn to behave in a kingly fashion: his forces joined those of Caldora and had Alfonso outnumbered between Celano and Albe in Abruzzo, probably his best chance of winning a victory to secure his throne. Instead he observed the laws of chivalry and sent Alfonso a challenge: he exercised his right to choose a location close to the city of Naples at Maddaloni. On 8 September 1438, his army appeared there whilst René and Caldora were still using their military superiority to reduce Abruzzo. At Aquila René listened to sermons delivered by Bernardino of Siena in which he exhorted the king to restrain the excesses of his soldiers.³⁷ Alfonso had extricated himself from a tight corner, could claim the moral advantage and proceeded to besiege Naples.

The city, denuded of troops by the campaign of René and Caldora in Abruzzo, was protected only by a citizen guard and a few noblemen. Alfonso sent a strong fleet from Gaeta and completed the encirclement

³⁴Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 166–70.

³⁵St Martha was one of the Angevins' dynastic saints, see Chapter 4; Naples, Archivio di Stato, Ms 58, fols 11–14.

³⁶Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 169–71.

³⁷Faraglia, p. 149. This account is at variance with Lecoy de la Marche's claim that Bernardino was a personal chaplain to René, see Chapter 4.





Illustration 5a–d Miniatures of king René, queen Isabelle, their son John of Calabria and his wife Marie of Bourbon. *Register of the Confraternity of St Martha*, Naples, Archivio di Stato, Ms 58.

so affairs looked black for Isabelle who remained in the Castel Capuana. She was so short of experienced soldiers that artisans were dressed in breastplates to parade the walls and deceive the enemy.³⁸ Bad weather prevented an all-out assault on the city and on 18 October, whilst firing on the monastery of Santa Maria del Carmine, the *infant* Peter was decapitated by the defenders' cannon. Pious soldiers on both sides saw this calamity as a direct act of God as the fatal shot had damaged a venerated crucifix. Isabelle flew a black banner from Capuana and offered to bury Alfonso's brother in the city but he preferred to place it in the Castel dell'Uovo which he still controlled. Continually plagued by bad weather the grieving king raised the siege and retreated to Gaeta. René returned to his capital with Caldora in December having conquered most of Abruzzo, Basilicata and Calabria. He could enjoy one of his favourite pastimes, a tournament in which queen Isabelle offered prizes of a rose, a diamond aigrette (a spray of gems) and a ring. He may also have worked with the painter Colantonio.³⁹ René set about reducing the two remaining Aragonese fortresses in the city with the help of five Genoese galleys. The Castelnuovo was captured on 25 August 1439 and the dell'Uovo on the following day. The Angevins' use of spingards (an early form of matchlock) a novelty in Naples, may have been decisive.⁴⁰ The Aragonese treasure contained in the Castelnuovo was helpful in alleviating René's acute shortage of cash.

The power of the rival kings was fairly equally balanced: René was in possession of the capital, enjoyed papal support, the friendship of Florence and the services of Caldora and the Genoese. Alfonso had good bases for his campaigns in Sicily and Gaeta, alliances with Milan and powerful Neapolitan nobles, his Catalan fleet and continuing sources of substantial revenue. Eugenius IV and Charles VII of France were anxious to bring the damaging conflict to an end and sent envoys to broker a peace. Alfonso rightly assumed that time was on his side and rejected these overtures. Instead he had been backing the policies of the Council of Basle to restrict papal power and they elected an anti-pope, Amadeus VIII duke of Savoy, as Felix V. It was at this time that Alfonso's servant, Lorenzo Valla, wrote the great humanist treatise *On the Donation of Constantine* in which his acute scholarship undermined

³⁸Faraglia, p. 153.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 160–2 and n. 3. See Chapter 4.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 183; *Diurnali*, p. 108; Ryder, *Alfonso*, p. 234 suggests that it was Alfonso's capture of two Angevin spingardiers that enabled him to use these fearsome weapons later in the campaign.

the basis of the temporal power of the Papacy.⁴¹ Eugenius continued to favour René but, in the long run, Alfonso's strategy of undermining him was to prove effective. The stalemate between the kings was broken when Jacopo Caldora died during an assault on a minor town, in November 1439: his loyalty to the Angevins had not always been irreproachable but he was a fine captain. His son inherited his lands, his title of duke of Bari and his private army but, as Lecoy de la Marche observed, René was exchanging a one-eyed horse for a blind one.⁴² Antonio Caldora would sell himself and his control of Abruzzo to the highest bidder and that was bound to be Alfonso of Aragon. When he laid siege to Aversa, the site of a strong castle and perilously close to Naples, Caldora responded to René's pleas for help with demands for money.

In a daring but ultimately ill-advised bid to confirm Caldora's loyalty, in late January 1440, René left Naples secretly accompanied by a small number of soldiers and passed through enemy territory to join him in Abruzzo. His crossing of the Appenines in the depths of a cold winter, the manifestations of loyalty he received on the way and the warmth and simplicity of his manners towards his supporters were the stuff of romance. Yet without money he could not attract useful service from Caldora when he reached Aquila in the spring and Alfonso took advantage of his absence from the area round Naples to secure more territory. By late June René and a reluctant Caldora had returned to the vicinity of Naples and encountered Alfonso's army near Benevento. René launched an attack which could just have resulted in victory had Caldora engaged his troops but the captain was already negotiating with the king of Aragon.⁴³ The Angevin army returned to Naples where René arrested Caldora but his men immediately mutinied and the king was obliged to release him. René allowed the captain and his forces to return to Abruzzo and in July Caldora performed homage to Alfonso. A ruthless prince might have assassinated Caldora or at least browbeaten him into submission but the second house of Anjou was not a ruthless dynasty: it was probably at this point that they lost any hope of retaining the Kingdom.

René received provisions for his capital from a Genoese fleet paid for by Eugenius who also sent an army to harry Alfonso's forces. Yet neither of these interventions proved decisive and in August 1440 Isabelle of

⁴¹*The Treatise of Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine*, ed. and trans. C.B. Coleman (New Haven: 1922).

⁴²Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 185.

⁴³Ryder, *Alfonso*, pp. 237–8.

Lorraine, John of Calabria and Louis returned to France. At a meeting of the royal council at the Castelnuovo on 4 August the queen had been appointed lieutenant general of Bar, Lorraine, Anjou and Provence. She was also required to confirm the investiture of René's brother Charles with the county of Maine and to regulate the succession in the house of Anjou. Amongst those present were some of its most faithful followers including Otto Caracciolo, chancellor of the Kingdom, Louis de Beauvau and John Cossa. René probably did not expect to survive the war with Alfonso, especially as he was determined not to be made a prisoner for a second time. The psychological impact on his subjects of the departure of his popular queen and charming young sons was inevitably negative. Yet many of the Neapolitans begged him to remain with them and to resist the king of Aragon, who was now at their gates,⁴⁴ and he was to do so for nearly two more years. Against their wishes and the demands of the Genoese, who were anxious that their investment in his cause was being dissipated, René tried to negotiate with Alfonso. He offered to vacate the Kingdom and that it should be ruled by the king of Aragon for his lifetime provided that he adopted René's eldest son, John of Calabria, as his heir. Lecoy de la Marche takes this as a sign of his selflessness and lack of ambition but, even if Alfonso had accepted it, it was a bad bargain for the house of Anjou.⁴⁵ If John had returned to the Kingdom before the death of Alfonso his chances of survival would have been slim. After the accession of the legitimised Ferrante in 1458 John did indeed fight an unsuccessful war for four years to restore his house to the throne and this would almost certainly have happened despite any prior agreement.⁴⁶

In 1441 René's prospects brightened a little when in April Eugenius and the Genoese concluded an offensive league against Alfonso on behalf of the pope's 'dear son'.⁴⁷ However, a rebellion against the pope in Rome put an end to prospects of military aid after a short incursion into the county of Albi, and the Genoese temporised as they were uncertain that funds for an expedition would be forthcoming from either René or the pope. In November René made an agreement with Francesco Sforza that, in return for ten ducats a month for a lancer and two for a foot-soldier, he would lead a thousand of both to fight in the Kingdom. He was appointed grand constable and confirmed in all the privileges he had been given by Joanna II and Louis III. Sforza

⁴⁴*Diurnali*, pp. 117–18.

⁴⁵Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 198–201.

⁴⁶See below.

⁴⁷Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 201–3.

employed Antonio Caldora, who had again changed sides, serving 'neither God nor the devil',⁴⁸ raided Puglia and took several towns. Yet this was of no assistance to René who was ever more closely besieged in the city of Naples. In the following summer Sforza was to make his peace with Alfonso, sealed with a marriage alliance between his son and Alfonso's daughter. The king of Aragon had occupied most of the Kingdom by early 1442: the capture of Capri also gave him a measure of control over the bay of Naples. The people of the city, who numbered about 60,000, were starving after a long blockade so his possession of the capital was, as Ryder remarks, a mixed blessing for René.⁴⁹ There had always been partisans of Aragon within the city and they became bolder as Angevin power failed and the superior firepower of the besiegers caused extensive damage.

It had always been recognised that an aqueduct and wells leading into the city could give access to the enemy and René had them barred and guarded. Alfonso and his humanists knew that the Byzantine general Belisarius had taken Naples from the Goths by such means in the sixth century. On the night of 1 June 1442 the soldier guarding one of the entrances deserted to the enemy and forty-six Aragonese appeared in the house where a well was situated and, the following morning, a larger body made their way from inside to the walls. This was the signal for Alfonso to attack and soon two gates were in his possession. The abbess of Santa-Maria-Donna-Regina and her nuns let down ropes to help his men: she was a Caracciolo from the branch that favoured Aragon. René fought bravely with a few followers in the streets crying: 'Were I certain of death I should not care, but I fear being taken prisoner.'⁵⁰

He was eventually forced to abandon the city and retreat to the Castelnuovo. Two Genoese ships had managed to slip past the Catalans with provisions for the besieged and they were his means of escape. He provided as best he could that his supporters remaining in Naples should receive good terms from Alfonso. Early in July René, accompanied by Italian loyalists such as John Cossa, Nicolas de Montford, count of Campobasso and Boffillo de Juge sailed to Leghorn to join Eugenius IV in

⁴⁸Faraglia, p. 274.

⁴⁹Ryder, 'The Angevin Bid', p. 63 and n. 31. The population were reduced to the usual horrors of a close siege: eating flour mixed with ashes, grass, horses and asses, and parents prostituting their children, Faraglia, pp. 263–4.

⁵⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 211–19; Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, p. 246; *Diurnali*, pp. 122–4.

Florence.⁵¹ He gave the king another bull of investiture for Naples but a pope who had been chased out of his own city was of little practical use. The Florentines were friendly (this was the time when the Pazzi bankers forged close links with René; see Illustration 6) but they were not a martial people and in October he returned to Provence.

The city of Naples was sacked by the victorious Aragonese although they were ordered to respect the virtue of women. After mopping up pockets of Angevin resistance Alfonso of Aragon made his formal entry into Naples on 26 February 1443 through a breach in its walls in the manner of a Roman conqueror. Crowned and seated on a gilded chariot he wore a crimson gown trimmed with ermine, held a sceptre and orb and was accompanied by his son Ferrante, bishops, nobles, knights and musicians. According to the *Diurnali*, the king was greeted with joy by the people: jousts and dancing celebrated his entry. The triumph is recorded in the arch that he erected at the entrance to the Castelnuovo.⁵² Later in the year Eugenius IV was persuaded to invest Alfonso with the Kingdom, to legitimise Ferrante and to recognise him as heir, as did the assembly of Neapolitan lords.

René was called 'king of Sicily' by his supporters and by a number of European sovereigns and accorded the honours due to a monarch for the rest of his life, and his son, grandson and nephew were successively known as 'dukes of Calabria'. It was partly due to their royal status that both René and John continued to play a part in Italian politics until the mid-1460s. It suited the French kings and several Italian states to keep their claims alive in the complex power struggles of the peninsula. Yet the most enduring legacy of 'the other Hundred Years War' for France was not to be the ultimately abortive campaigns of the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The peaceful absorption of Provence (the northern part of the kingdom of Naples that had been secured by Marie of Blois) by the French crown after the demise of the Angevins brought lasting benefit to the expanding state.

A consequence of the Neapolitan inheritance was that, from 1380, the Angevin princes were titular kings of Jerusalem: a fact that René proudly proclaimed on his coat of arms. He also had a fairly good claim to be king of Hungary, a kingdom that was under pressure from the Turks throughout his lifetime. Renowned amongst his contemporaries for generosity of spirit, piety and chivalry why did he not embrace the several projects for crusades that were launched during his long life-

⁵¹Faraglia, p. 291, n. 4.

⁵²Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous*, pp. 248–51; *Diurnali*, p. 126.



Illustration 6 Arms of king René by Luca della Robbia, formerly displayed on the Villa Pazzi near Fiesole. The initials 'IR' stand for Jeanne de Laval and René. The crowned helmet bears dragon's wings and a royal mantle. The arms date from after 1466 since those of Aragon feature in the centre. From the top left are Hungary, Sicily (old Anjou) and Jerusalem. Below are Anjou (left) and Bar. Beside the arms are René's emblem of the chafing dishes and below two mottos: 'Los en Croissant' in the crescent of his order and 'Ardent Desire'. The Victoria and Albert Museum. Photo, Peter Fawcett.

time? One factor must have been his constant engagement in expensive military exploits to keep or recapture parts of his domains. In the 1420s he fought for his great uncle and father-in-law to protect their interests in Bar and Lorraine. He was an indigent prisoner of Burgundy for much of the 1430s and then spent nearly five years defending and ultimately losing his kingdom of Naples. The mid- and late 1440s were occupied in fighting for France during the final stages of the Hundred Years War. René's Italian ambitions revived in the 1450s when there seemed to be a good chance of reconquering Naples. After that hope proved illusory René and his son undertook the new challenge of leading the Catalans in their revolt against John II of Aragon.

Another reason for René's disinclination to engage in crusades was probably the fact that they were the favourite projects of some of his bitterest enemies, notably Philip of Burgundy. Alfonso of Aragon adroitly gave public backing to the ideal without actually venturing any men or money. Pius II, 1458–64, was the only pope to be seriously hostile to the second house of Anjou and he was an ardent advocate of crusades.⁵³ The lucrative trading links between Provence and the Levant have been discussed and these could easily be disrupted by such warfare. René's court life, especially in Provence, will later be considered, including his liking for Moorish servants, costumes, music and artefacts. To wage war against a civilization that he found so attractive would probably have been uncongenial to him.

John of Calabria and the end of the Angevin enterprise

Angevin aspirations to rule Naples did not end in 1442. René seems to have appreciated the realities of the situation by mid-1440 but his son John duke of Calabria, a capable and ambitious man, had spent two exciting years as a teenager in the city of Naples. He bore the title of the heir to the throne and was regularly and deeply engaged in Italian and Spanish politics until his sudden death in 1470. He could always find Italian states and powerful individuals willing to support him and the French kings also wished to keep Angevin claims alive. With hindsight we know that their hopes would be frustrated but this was not manifest at the time.

⁵³N. Housely, 'Introduction', *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, ed. N. Housely (Basingstoke: 2004) pp. 1–12 for the responses of various powers (but not the Angevins) to crusading; Pius II blamed the Angevins for diverting a fleet that had been funded by the French church for the crusade as John of Calabria used it to attack Naples, *Secret Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope. The Commentaries of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Pius II*, ed. L.C. Gabel and trans. F.A. Gragg (London: 1988) pp. 171–3.

Alfonso of Aragon efficiently reduced the Kingdom to obedience: his humanist servants ensured that his rule was renowned for its political wisdom and intellectual distinction. Yet he was dissatisfied with his domination of the western Mediterranean, Aragon and Naples. His dislike of the Papacy and Florence, both supporters of the Angevins, encouraged his expansionist plans in central and northern Italy, earning him the sobriquet of 'the king of war'.

Following his return from Italy in 1442, René had been occupied with the truce and then the war with England and the affairs of his three duchies and Provence. In February 1453 Isabelle of Lorraine died at the age of forty-four and their son John, by the laws of succession in that duchy, became its duke. The south-easterly lands of Charles VII of France were close to the duchy of Milan and his cousin, the duke of Orleans, had a good claim to it through his mother, Valentina Visconti.⁵⁴ Francesco Sforza therefore gradually abandoned his earlier partiality for the French, although he tried to dissemble. He was the husband of an illegitimate daughter of the last Visconti duke, had seized Milan by force and held it by a mixture of war and diplomacy. It is no accident that a major contemporary source for this period in Italy's history is the large collection of dispatches to and from Milanese ambassadors in France, who were watching for signs of French aggression against Milan.⁵⁵ Whilst neither Charles VII nor his son Louis XI ever ventured large resources in supporting the claims of *apanagiste* princes, their existence was a useful diplomatic counter to play. This was the context for several more Angevin sorties into the 'wasp-nest'.

The first opportunity came in February 1452 when Florence and Milan were threatened by hostilities orchestrated by Alfonso of Aragon in alliance with Venice. They signed a treaty with Charles VII in which he promised to send a prince of the blood to assist them in return for their support in conquering Naples for the Angevins. René accordingly agreed with Florence in April 1453 that he would lead 3000 horse into Italy to fight in Lombardy. They would pay him 10,000 ducats a month

⁵⁴She had brought the town of Asti to France as part of her dowry; ruled by a French governor it gave the Crown a toe-hold in Italy.

⁵⁵*CSPM*, 1, 1385–1618 (1912); *Dispatches with Related Documents of Milanese Ambassadors in France and Burgundy, 1450–1483*, ed. with translations. P.M. Kendall and V. Ilardi, 3 vols (Athens, Ohio: 1970–81); *Dépêches des Ambassadeurs Milanais en France sous Louis XI et François Sforza*, ed. B. de Mandrot, 4 vols (Paris: 1916–23); *Dépêches des Ambassadeurs Milanais sur les campagnes de Charles-le-Hardi duc de Bourgogne de 1474 à 1477*, ed. F. Gingins de la Sarra, 2 vols (Paris, Geneva: 1858).

so his status became that of a royal *condottiere*. He arrived in Villanova, near Asti in August and, to his dismay, encountered the dauphin who wished to be involved in the campaign. Louis was estranged from his father and living in Dauphiné so René had to incur his displeasure by asking him to withdraw.⁵⁶ René proceeded to Pavia, assumed command of the allied troops and by November had cleared the Venetians out of most of Brescia.⁵⁷ Francesco Sforza gave him a ceremonious welcome fit for a king but problems soon developed on both sides. The Italians were accustomed to the calculated manoeuvrings of mercenaries and were unprepared for the ferocity and rapacity of French soldiers, forged in the wars with the English. They began to fear the spectre of prolonged foreign occupation whilst René wondered when the other part of the deal, an Angevin invasion of Naples, would be implemented. This was the context of his sudden departure for Provence in January 1454, although he did arrange for John of Calabria to replace him. Sforza protested to Charles VII that they had paid René:

... the honours we would have paid to God had he come to this world, and this we have done to the limit of our means and with all respect. And whereas we have been in the field with all our forces, a prey to rain and wind and every hardship, we have seen to it that King René remained under cover [his late arrival meant that the campaigning season had to be extended] and was provided with victuals and everything else that we could give him.⁵⁸

The Florentines and Milanese put as unfavourable an interpretation on René's conduct as possible, accusing him of cowardice and ingratitude, whilst he observed that the Italians were 'an unstable and impetuous nation, useless for great undertakings'.⁵⁹ Yet his sudden withdrawal offended Francesco Sforza leaving a damaging legacy for John of Calabria when he tried to reconquer Naples.

⁵⁶Beaucourt, 5, p. 302.

⁵⁷Ryder, 'The Angevin Bid for Naples', p. 64; Kendall and Ilardi, 1, pp. 124–7; C.M. Ady, *A History of Milan under the Sforza* (London: 1907) pp. 67–9.

⁵⁸Kendall and Ilardi, 1, pp. 134–6.

⁵⁹Galasso, p. 607; the Florentine envoy Angelo Acciaiuolo reported that Charles VII was disgusted at René's departure, lamenting that he had harmed the standing and honour of France in Italy, Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pièces justificatives, 38, p. 279.

Duke John arrived in Florence in February 1454 and was engaged as their captain general for three years, but the Florentines and Milan soon afterwards concluded peace with Venice. He stayed on until early 1455 when Alfonso's agreement to the treaty of Lodi with the other states proved the hopelessness of his situation. His wife Marie of Bourbon, had died in childbirth in 1448 and in a fruitless visit to Milan he failed to get the hand of Sforza's daughter Ippolita, who married the oldest son of Ferrante of Naples ten years later. It was reported to Sforza that Cosimo de' Medici regretted that he would not give her to John: 'Even though the duke of Calabria is nearly thirty, he seems to him a kind gentleman and a man of worth, who would be much more suitable in every respect to the aforesaid Madonna especially as women grow old far more quickly than men' (she was nine).⁶⁰ Had the match been successfully concluded it would probably have weaned Sforza away from his friendship with the Aragonese and greatly improved the Angevin prospects of reconquering Naples. John opened negotiations with Genoa, unwisely excluded by Alfonso from the treaty of Lodi, which was again to be an instrument of Angevin policy in Italy in coming years, and then returned to France.⁶¹

Realising that there was no imminent prospect of pursuing his Neapolitan ambitions, John of Calabria went to Lorraine where, according to Bénét, he continued the effective government he had instituted with his solemn entry into Nancy in 1453.⁶² Circumstances became more favourable to his ambitions in 1458 when the Genoese, exasperated at the friendship between their patron Milan and their commercial rivals Naples and the Catalans, invited Charles VII to become their overlord. Francesco Sforza regarded Genoa as part of Milan's sphere of influence and tried desperately to avoid a French occupation but on this occasion he failed.⁶³ The king had been 'constantly urged by duke René, the duke of Orleans and many others to provide forces for the enterprise of Italy'.⁶⁴ Charles VII had few men at his disposal to govern Genoa: he was permanently alienated from the dauphin and mistrusted most of the other great princes. So it was John of Calabria who arrived in Genoa as lieutenant of

⁶⁰Ady, p. 73. Ippolita's husband Alfonso, the other duke of Calabria, was not kind and her complaints of mistreatment were diplomatically contentious between Milan and Naples in years to come, E.S. Welch, 'Between Milan and Naples: Ippolita Maria Sforza, Duchess of Calabria', *French Descent into Renaissance Italy*, pp. 123–36.

⁶¹Bénét, pp. 55–68.

⁶²Ibid., p. 53.

⁶³Ady, p. 73.

⁶⁴Beaucourt, 6, p. 231.

the king of France in the spring of 1458.⁶⁵ As Machiavelli later observed: 'Charles had the idea that John, because he had adopted many Italian habits, would be better able than another to govern that city; and in part he thought that from there he could plan for an expedition against Naples.'⁶⁶ His powers were limited by the fact that the republic retained its ruling council and traditional liberties. In the summer, however, when he received news that Alfonso of Aragon had died, he seemed in an ideal position to exploit the situation.

On his deathbed Alfonso offered Ferrante three pieces of advice: to remove Spaniards from the government since the Italians detested them, to relieve the burden of taxation and to live in peace with the Papacy and other Italian powers. Alfonso's brother John succeeded to the crown of Aragon and thus acquired its Mediterranean islands, including Sicily, so Ferrante had to govern with considerably lower revenues than had been available to his father. He could not afford to reduce the taxes that Alfonso had raised to unprecedented levels. Many Spaniards did leave although some great landowners remained and for pro-Angevins this still constituted a grievance. The prince of Taranto, whose support for Alfonso had been an important factor in his victory of 1442, felt marginalised once the king and his Spaniards were safely installed in Naples. He did not declare his hand until 1460 but his refusal to pay homage to the new king encouraged other nobles to defy him.

One potential problem for Ferrante was removed when the old pope Calixtus III died. Despite his Spanish birth he had been at odds with Alfonso and refused to recognise his heir, perhaps hoping to install instead one of his Borgia relatives.⁶⁷ The new pope, the humanist Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Pius II, wanted a united Italy to launch a crusade to recover Constantinople. The last thing he needed was an Angevin invasion of the Kingdom so, on 28 January 1459, Ferrante was crowned king of Naples by the papal legate, thus gaining an important psychological advantage. Francesco Sforza met Pius II at the congress of Mantua (called to promote a crusade) in late 1459 and warned him that a French incursion into Italy would be fatal to his project. Ferrante sent word that he would undertake the crusade as soon as his Kingdom was secured. Philip of Burgundy, who was at odds with France over the shelter he was giving

⁶⁵Nunziante, 17 (1892) p. 357.

⁶⁶*The History of Florence, Machiavelli: the Chief Works and Others*, ed. and trans. A. Gilbert, 3 vols (Durham, N. Carolina: 1965) 3, p. 1331.

⁶⁷*Diurnali*, p. 141; *Secret Memoirs*, p. 89.

to the dauphin, made generous promises to the pope. Charles VII also sent envoys, accompanied by ambassadors from king René and the dukes of Orleans and Brittany, but they achieved nothing. Florence and Venice declared their neutrality in the contest for Naples.⁶⁸

After protracted negotiations with the Genoese and promises of support from Charles VII, John of Calabria finally managed to put together a fleet of nineteen Genoese and Provençal galleys and four cargo ships and sail to the Gulf of Naples in October 1459. He was accompanied by his father's loyal friend John Cossa, count of Troia, the Neapolitan seneschal of Provence, whose local knowledge and contacts would prove invaluable. Initially it was hard to find a place to land as Naples was strongly held for Ferrante but his own brother-in-law, Marino Marzano prince of Rossano, rebelled and offered the Angevins a base at Castellamare in the Terra di Lavoro.⁶⁹ Ferrante was in Calabria where he had been subduing the pro-Angevin marquis of Cotrone who had rebelled too early. He returned hastily to Naples but John had left for Puglia, perhaps inviting nemesis by marching under a device: 'There was sent a man whose name was John'.⁷⁰

John joined forces with the prince of Taranto, who met some of the costs of his army from his ample revenues.⁷¹ Ferrante had secured the lands around Naples and, encouraged by the arrival of papal and Milanese troops, led by duke Francesco's brother Alessandro Sforza,⁷² met duke John at Sarno. John had fortified his camp, which was also protected by the river, and a night assault by Ferrante ended in confusion. The Angevins won a victory on 7 July 1460 and, backed by a Genoese fleet of about twenty galleys, they might have taken the city of Naples. John wrote to his ally Sigismondo Malatesta 'we have routed and shattered them so that they can never recover'.⁷³ John Cossa urged an attack on the capital especially as about two-thirds of the kingdom was then in Angevin hands.⁷⁴ Yet the prince of Taranto and the other rebel nobles were more interested in protecting their lands in Puglia, Abbruzzo (where Antonio Caldora had

⁶⁸Nunziante, 20 (1895) pp. 210–21; *Secret Memoirs*, pp. 113–38; the French embassy included René's friend Jean Bernard, archbishop of Tours, see Chapter 4.

⁶⁹Nunziante, 19 (1894) pp. 328–36.

⁷⁰Galasso, pp. 647–9.

⁷¹He also hoped to enjoy the grazing tax on sheep in Puglia.

⁷²Sforza mendaciously instructed his envoy in France to contradict the (true) allegation that he had sent 500 horse and 1000 foot soldiers to help Ferrante; Kendall and Ilardi, 2, pp. 352–7.

⁷³Nunziante, 20, (1895) pp. 452–3 and n. 4.

⁷⁴Galasso, p. 655.

changed sides again in favour of the Angevins) and Calabria than in putting John in power. Even at that stage some of them, remembering the events of 1442, may have intended eventually to make favourable terms with Ferrante.

Jacopo Piccinino, the *condottiere* who had joined the Angevins, and the prince of Taranto were only prepared to fight in Puglia.⁷⁵ Piccinino hoped to carve himself a state out of the conflict, and the prince was concerned to defend his lands against 'Scanderbeg', the Albanian George Castriota who had turned up to defend his old friend Alfonso's son. John was neither able to follow up the advantage of Sarno nor could he collect adequate revenue from Calabria to feed his men. In the spring of 1461 he heard that Genoa, encouraged by Milan, had revolted and expelled his French officials. King René led a fleet from Marseilles in July in an attempt to retake the city but Ryder paints a sorry picture of his failure and the consequent loss of French soldiers in this enterprise. René had put French soldiers on shore but, fearing defeat, sailed away leaving them to be slaughtered or to drown.⁷⁶ Basin, after giving an account of the fiasco remarked of René: 'One could see that although he was a brave knight and courageous in combat, he was doomed to failure in all his campaigns.'⁷⁷ In neither his 1453 nor 1461 Italian campaigns had René displayed either chivalry or, in the latter case, courage. The kingly qualities he had shown to contemporaries in the 1430s and 1440s were now a memory that only apologists for the houses of Valois and Anjou were likely to invoke.

John of Calabria's money was exhausted and, without the support of the Genoese fleet, he was entirely reliant on the dissident Neapolitan nobles. A contemporary wrote that he was obliged to fight both fortune and poverty.⁷⁸ John hoped that the new king of France, his first-cousin Louis XI, might send him some aid but only encouraging words and diplomatic support were forthcoming.⁷⁹ Louis knew that during his long

⁷⁵Nunziante gives a long account of how the princes of Italy, especially Francesco Sforza, tried to dissuade Piccinino from supporting the Angevins, 19 (1894) pp. 595–658.

⁷⁶Ryder, 'The Angevin bid', p. 67 and n. 46; René blamed Francesco Sforza for the French defeat; Beaucourt, 6, p. 340; Ady, p. 74; J. Favier, *Louis XI* (Poitiers: 2001) pp. 184–5.

⁷⁷Basin, *Charles VII*, 2, p. 275.

⁷⁸Nunziante, 21 (1896) p. 276, n. 1.

⁷⁹*Dépêches*, Mandrot, 1, pp. 103–26, Tours, 27 December 1461, the ambassadors report to the duke that Louis XI is supporting his cousin's campaign and he wants him to marry Ippolita Sforza. The king was still urging this alliance in later letters.

years of alienation from Charles VII it had been the Angevins (especially Charles of Maine) who had been the king's principal friends and advisers. Unlike later French monarchs, Louis avoided wars when there was no guarantee that he would win. His cousin queen Margaret had just lost her English throne and he had little reason to give men or money to any other desperate Angevin cause, especially after René's humiliating defeat at Genoa. John saw his territorial support bleed away during the next year as ever more nobles made their peace with Ferrante. Many of John's soldiers deserted and those who remained were demoralised by lack of pay and food. On 18 August 1462 he was defeated by the king at the battle of Troia in Puglia. The Milanese ambassador wrote to Francesco Sforza: '... what happened on that day settled the crown of this Kingdom on the head of the lord king'.⁸⁰

The prince of Taranto made a good settlement with Ferrante in September 1462 and died of natural causes a year later. Piccinino seemed to have been pardoned in the following year and was rewarded with the hand of an illegitimate daughter of Francesco Sforza. Two years later, however, after enjoying a banquet with Ferrante in Naples he was arrested and murdered. The duke of Rossano, Ferrante's brother-in-law, settled with him only to lose all his lands and be imprisoned for life. A few nobles still adhered to John of Calabria, Antonio Caldora held part of Abruzzo, but they were isolated there by the king and by the summer of 1464 nearly all resistance to him had ceased. John negotiated his safe passage out of the Kingdom: holding such a well-connected captive might finally have brought the wrath of France on Ferrante's head. John sailed to Ischia where he remained for seven months trying to raise funds and support. When it became clear that none was forthcoming he returned to France via Florence in April 1464 leaving 'with the reputation of a good and very valiant man'.⁸¹ In the meantime Louis XI had agreed to cede Genoa to Francesco Sforza: two years later his new alliance was confirmed by the marriage of the heir to Milan, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, to the king's sister-in-law Bona of Savoy. John blamed Louis bitterly for failing to help him and this grudge would harm his family.

Italy had not quite finished with the hapless Angevins. Just before the death of his grandfather, king René, René II duke of Lorraine, arrived in Venice in 1480 to fight for the republic as a *condottiere*. He was made a patrician of the city and lieutenant general but returned to Lorraine

⁸⁰Nunziante, 22 (1897) p. 227.

⁸¹*Diurnali*, p. 142; *Dépêches*, Mandrot, 2, pp. 21–38.

without doing battle. In what was to be known as the War of Ferrara all those Italian states who were hostile to Ferrante found it useful to trail the possibility that the Angevins might yet be restored to Naples. In 1483 René II led an army of 1200 Lorrainers, including a number of nobles and the bishop of Verdun, into Italy. He won a victory over Ferrara and was joined by more troops from his duchy led by the bastard of Calabria. It looked as if he might be able at last to attack Naples but news of the death of Louis XI and his hopes of gaining more of king René's inheritance called him back to France. During the noble revolt against Ferrante, 1485–86, the Papacy, returning to its traditional anti-Aragonese stance, suggested René II as a candidate for the throne of Naples. He was on the point of organising another expedition in 1488 when his cousin, Charles VIII, ordered him to desist as he wished to conquer it himself.⁸² At last an Angevin had been forced to reject the 'Italian wasp-nest'.

Conclusion: two Renaissance princes

Spanish and Italian historians, knowing that Naples was to be ruled by Spain for over two more centuries, have tended to dismiss the incursions of the second house of Anjou as tiresome and irrelevant. Those from Naples, however, such as the authors of the *Diurnali* and Faraglia, show some affection for René and his son and admiration for their bravery. The English seem to regard the conquest of the Kingdom as unlikely as Angevin claims to rule Jerusalem: a proof of the inanity of a dynasty that landed England with an impecunious and troublesome queen. French historians such as Reynaud, content that the affair ended with the union of Provence to their state, tend to take a more positive view. Yet Léonard castigated René, his objection was a specifically regional one that through the king's feebleness Provence was alienated from the Angevin house of Lorraine and lost its separate identity.⁸³ As usual, national interests seem to have determined scholarly attitudes. For a biographer an important aspect of the matter is the impact that their sojourns in Italy had on the cultural and political attitudes of father and son.

The first house of Anjou had left a rich cultural heritage: palaces, churches and castles, including the Castelnuovo adorned with frescoes by

⁸²Galasso, pp. 678–9, 705–6; G. Poull, *La Maison ducale de Lorraine devenue la maison impériale et royale d'Autriche, de Hongrie et de Bohême* (Nancy: 1991) pp. 193–5.

⁸³Léonard, pp. 492–3.

Giotto of illustrious men and women from the Bible and antiquity (now almost entirely destroyed). The second house of Anjou was never in Naples for long enough or with sufficient stability or funds to leave lasting memorials. Antoine de la Sale served Louis III there and made extensive accounts of the dangers of mount Stromboli and the allure of the Sybil's mountains and cave for the amusement of John of Calabria and his wife Marie of Bourbon in the *Salade*.⁸⁴ He also gave a long description of Hannibal's campaigns in Italy: writing in 1442 he probably knew of the way in which Alfonso had been compared to that general in the play at the Castelnuovo only a year before. De la Sale praised John for reading good histories since his early childhood and provided him with a detailed account of his Angevin forebears in Naples and their just claims to various thrones. John's bookishness is borne out by a reply to a lost letter from him that survives in the works of Antonio Beccadelli (Panormita). In 1460 or 1461 the prince had invited the humanist to meet him and requested a copy of his *Of the Sayings and Deeds of Alphonso*. Panormita drafted a polite reply but wisely did not send it as he was in Ferrante's service.⁸⁵ Another interaction between the Angevins and Neapolitan culture was the influence that king René and Barthélemy d'Eyck may have exerted on the painter Colantonio who in turn was influential on Antonello da Messina. But great claims cannot be made for the second house of Anjou: Alfonso is the king who shines in accounts of the Renaissance as the benevolent patron of artists and scholars, perhaps because most of the latter who celebrated him were in his pay.

Italy exerted a powerful attraction for René and his son and from the time of their first incursion into Naples this affected both their politics and patronage of art, although the impact of the latter was to be felt in France rather than Italy. In Bar and Provence they employed Pietro da Milano and Francesco Laurana to make a series of portrait medallions of their dynasty; both had previously worked for Alfonso in Naples.⁸⁶ Laurana was later to execute some fine monumental sculpture for the Angevins in a predominantly classical style that probably included the tombs of John Cossa in Tarascon and Charles of Maine in Le Mans.

Both René and John appreciated the need for the circumspection and judicious diplomacy that is taken to typify Italian politics in the Renaissance. The hostile accounts of the Milanese ambassadors make this clear,

⁸⁴Antoine de la Sale, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. F. Desonay (Liège, Paris: 1935) 1, 'La Salade'. See Chapter 4.

⁸⁵J.H. Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples* (New Jersey: 1987) p. 98.

⁸⁶See Chapter 4.

but the reputation of the Angevins has suffered because the principal protagonists in the exchanges they described, France and Milan, were richer and more powerful than they were. Their room for manoeuvre and scope for negotiation was consequently limited. Without external financial support they could not lead armies that were strong enough to endure years of fighting. During René's campaigns the only powers that supported him were the Papacy and Genoa. He had only escaped the prisons of his powerful and able adversary Philip of Burgundy to be bested by another rich and determined rival, Alfonso of Aragon. John had to survive the enmity of Pius II and lost Genoese assistance in 1461. In both cases Florence and Venice remained benevolently neutral and Milan was strongly hostile to the Angevins. All the cunning and diplomatic ingenuity at their disposal could not change these brutal facts or motivate the major Italian powers, *condottiere* and the volatile Neapolitan nobility to give them sufficient assistance.

The other factor that might just have delivered an Angevin victory was military leadership. René seems to have appealed to his followers on his first arrival in Italy in the late 1430s when he was still a young man and saw himself as a chivalrous, Christian knight. His conduct in Abruzzo in 1438, his dash over the mountains in early 1440 and his leniency to his enemies appeared even to contemporaries as belonging to a bygone age. David Abulafia remarks that his strategy for vindicating the ancient rights of the second house of Anjou was to behave like an Arthurian hero.⁸⁷ He was no more than a mediocre general and such gains as he made in the early years were to a large extent the achievements of Jacopo Caldora and his other captains. By the summer of 1440 he was behaving realistically – like an Italian: sending his family back to France and trying to negotiate with Alfonso. It seems to have been pressure from his subjects rather than his own inclination that kept him there for nearly two more years. Even the normally deferential Le Bouvier was scathing in his verdict on René's return to France in 1442: 'This king of Sicily had been chased from his kingdom of Naples by the king of Aragon who had conquered all the land from him.'⁸⁸ René's later sorties into Italy, to Lombardy in 1453 and Genoa in 1461, were inglorious and, in the second case, costly of his soldiers' lives and to his reputation for chivalry. In both campaigns he was serving others, Milan and France, not a role appropriate to an effective monarch.

⁸⁷Abulafia, *Western Mediterranean Kingdoms*, p. 197 (Liège and Paris: 1935).

⁸⁸Bouvier, p. 250.

John of Calabria was castigated for sluggishness as a military leader by Machiavelli. He failed to follow up Sarno and '... lost it [victory] who through the excellence of his soldiers had many times won it'.⁸⁹ Nunziante was equally scathing: 'This prince was not made to grasp the crown of Naples: his faltering hand could not control the turbulent and perverse nobles who the indomitable nature of Ferrante succeeded in suppressing.'⁹⁰ We have testimony to John's human qualities, his loyalty to his father and his love of the arts. He was a brave and persistent military leader but he seems to have lacked the ruthlessness that might have won through in what were always difficult circumstances. Ironically, although he was regarded as a foreigner by many Italians he seems to have behaved and dressed like a *condottiere*.⁹¹ When the rulers of Milan and Naples stood alone against the might of France and Spain a few decades later they did no better than the Angevins and were eventually destroyed. René and his son played the game of Italian power politics for over three decades but, always reliant on support from France, they were never able to act as independent princes.

⁸⁹Machiavelli, *History of Florence*, p. 1335. He saw the Angevin campaigns as 'an illustration of the disastrous policy of systematic intervention by foreign powers that plagued Italy', J. Lacroix, 'Machiavel et la Maison d'Anjou', *Le Roi René*, pp. 96–110, p. 106.

⁹⁰Nunziante, 23 (1898) pp. 192–3. This author was consistently hostile to the Angevins always referring to John as 'the Pretender' or 'John of Anjou' rather than 'John of Calabria'.

⁹¹See Chapter 5.

3

The End of the Hundred Years War

Introduction

On 24 May 1444 Margaret of Anjou was betrothed to king Henry VI of England in the cathedral of St Martin, Tours. William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, stood proxy for the king and the glittering group of French royalty who attended demonstrated the importance of the ceremony. King René and queen Isabelle were there together with Charles VII and his wife queen Marie, the bride's aunt, Louis the dauphin and his wife the dauphine, Margaret of Scotland. The duke and duchess of Calabria joined other great nobles such as Charles of Maine and the dukes of Brittany and Alençon. The papal legate, Piero da Monte bishop of Brescia, gave a provisional dispensation for marriage within the prohibited degrees: 'Dame Margaret made surance to the Marquis of Suffolk, and principally to the King of England, and all these ambassadors; and she was made there queen of England.'¹ All the people cried 'Noël' and the cortege retired to the abbey of St Julien where the fourteen-year-old Margaret was treated with all the honours of a queen. They enjoyed a spectacle of two giants carrying trees covered with great fruits, two camels bearing towers and men-at-arms who jousted with their lances. A ball followed that continued to a late hour.²

This was one of the most important princely marriages to be arranged in fifteenth century Europe. It brought considerable benefits to the kingdom of France and the house of Anjou but was perceived to have done great harm to English interests. René, without whom it could not

¹*The Brut or Chronicles of England*, ed. F.W.D. Brie, 2 vols (London: 1908) 2, p. 486.

²Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 232–3.

have taken place, may have been a good French prince but was a bad father in allowing the union. Hindsight inevitably plays a major part in viewing the prospects for success of the marriage from an Angevin point of view. The inanity of Henry VI must have been known to the French court by 1444. René had already sacrificed one daughter for the sake of a settlement over Lorraine and as it happened that turned out well on a personal as well as a political level, but such a result cannot have been anticipated. Margaret was to be left with a less than manly husband, his unpopular advisers and a growing crisis that was to break in 1450.

The motivation on the English side is more difficult to fathom: John Watts probably identified their reasoning when he suggested that the English could not know that Charles VII had effectively got on top of the factionalism that had bedevilled the first part of his reign. The marriage promised great benefits:

The new queen's family were, at the time, the most influential princes at Charles VII's court, and it must have seemed likely that, through their intercession with a king notorious for his vulnerability to factional pressure, the deadlock of 1439 could be broken and more favourable peace terms extracted. Even if peace proved elusive, an alliance with the Angevins would provide the English with welcome assistance along the vulnerable southern border of Normandy where the family's lands lay.³

If Henry VI and his advisers really believed that the Angevins would support them in preference to their Valois cousins, they were soon to be deceived. Valois family solidarity appears also to have been an important factor in the way in which Margaret of Anjou intervened in the negotiations during the next few years. The assumptions recently made by Diana Dunn, Helen Maurer and J.L. Laynesmith that she went to England only to act as a model wife, to obey her husband and the laws and customs of the realm do not stand up to scrutiny.⁴ Like most

³J. Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge: 1996) p. 222.

⁴Up to 1454 she was 'a dutiful wife, a determined and effective distributor of patronage and a woman concerned for the welfare of her household servants', Dunn, 'Margaret of Anjou: a Reassessment', p. 110; 'Although she had been born and bred to power, she was also a child of her time who knew and understood her proper place', Maurer, p. 24; Laynesmith suggests that it was only after her son had been disinherited in 1460 that Margaret started to act contrary to English interests in alliance with Scotland and France, p. 186.

of her immediate family she probably detested the English, and with good reason as most of the problems experienced at the French and Angevin courts during her short lifetime could be traced back to them. Initially she can have had little comprehension of the attitudes and expectations shared by most of her new husband's subjects and there is no evidence that she ceased to identify her interests with those of the Valois.

René probably had little more understanding than his daughter of the nature of English internal politics or of the likely fate of her husband's regime if things went wrong. He would be disposed to think of unrest in terms of the clashing ambitions of great princes: of his own and others in Italy and the recent *Praguerie* in France. In such conflicts the common people and bourgeoisie were invariably dragged along by their betters. In English society, on the other hand, disaffection could easily start amongst humble artisans, priests and merchants even if it was usually expressed by their more literate and affluent leaders. Charles VII and René, once the immediate English problem had been solved, were free to turn eastwards towards the Swiss and Lorraine to demonstrate their power in the area, forge alliances with the German princes and intimidate Burgundy. They also played an important part in finally ending the schism in the Church.

Henry VI's undertaking to hand over Maine, a county essential to the stability of Angevin lands in the north-west of France, did his government incalculable harm. Instead of bringing closer the prospect of permanent peace it soured relations with France and undermined his position in England. The re-commencement of war in 1449 and the rapid loss of Normandy and Guyenne compounded his problems and led to the destruction of his leading ministers, notably the duke of Suffolk, and Jack Cade's revolt. Just as he appeared to be quelling the dissidents and accepting better management of financial affairs dangerous enmity arose between the Beauforts and York. Henry and Margaret, as is suggested below, could have managed this situation by treating the growing factions in an even-handed way. The favours they showered on Somerset and their hostile treatment of York directly led to confrontation in 1452 and, ultimately, the outbreak of civil war. Little evidence survives of the role played by Margaret and her Angevin advisers and servants at this time but the possibilities are discussed below. René, once Maine was returned in 1448 and Normandy reconquered in 1450, was less closely engaged in Anglo-French diplomacy. His ambitions and those of John of Calabria focused their attention on Provence and their allies in Italy and Spain but, even if the king had

wished, he could have done little to rescue his daughter from the consequences of her English marriage.

René redux

René had spent four years in Italy trying to assert his claim to the throne of Naples and after his expulsion he by no means accepted his defeat as final. He still had a number of powerful allies in the peninsula including the Papacy and the Genoese and was to make several more attempts. The key to success or failure for the contestants, as was suggested in the previous chapter, was the possession of adequate resources to buy the loyalty of the Neapolitan nobility and the services of effective *condottiere*. René did not dispose of sufficient revenue to achieve these objects unaided and although Charles VII of France had supported his attempt on Naples he had given him scant practical assistance. If the English were to be expelled from all or most of their French lands (including Angevin Maine), Charles would be in a much better position to help his brother-in-law to reconquer Naples. This is the context, together with René's dislike of the English and desire for security in his lands, for his political manoeuvres during the next decade.

René reached Provence in October 1442, only to hear in the following month that his mother, Yolande of Aragon, had died in Saumur. Although her age had caused her to withdraw a little from state affairs in recent years, her authoritative presence in the heart of Anjou had compensated for the prolonged absence of her son in Italy. René now had little choice but to assume direct responsibility for that part of his domains. This also coincided with the needs of Charles VII who wanted his brother-in-law's support in his attempt to make further progress in the re-conquest of the areas of France held by the English. In March 1443 the two kings met at Toulouse and proceeded to Poitiers for Whitsuntide and later to Saumur.⁵ They had ample opportunity to reaffirm the cordial relations that had existed between them before René's Italian expedition and to discuss ways in which the English problem could be solved. This was probably the time when a strategy involving a marriage between Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou and a truce in return for English concessions was planned. René's long absence had preserved him from involvement in the *Praquerie* and his urbane brother Charles, count of Maine, was the

⁵Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, Itineraries, pp. 445–6; Vale, *Charles VII*, p. 92.

French king's favourite companion and counsellor.⁶ All three had been brought up by Yolande of Aragon and, with the deaths of the king's two older brothers, René and Charles seem to have taken their place. René's inclinations and personal advantage encouraged him to capitalise on this situation and to work closely with the king. During the following decade he showed princely wisdom in the way in which he used his influence at the French court to gain benefits for himself and his subjects.

The Congress of Arras in 1435 has often been described as the turning point in English fortunes in France for, despite their hopes, they failed to secure a peace, while Philip of Burgundy and Charles VII settled their long dispute (although their mutual dislike continued). Olivier de la Marche noted that many great princes of France, including René and his brother Charles, were included in the peace treaty.⁷ The duke of Bedford died in 1435, his regency in France had extended the conquests of Henry V including Maine. The removal of his leadership and the increasing unwillingness of the English parliament to vote adequate funds for defence contributed to the military and diplomatic weakness of the government of Henry VI. These factors rather than Arras caused the English decline in France according to C.T. Allmand.⁸ The French, on the other hand, encouraged by successes such as the relief of Orleans and the conquest of Paris in 1436 believed that all their lands, at least in northern France, might eventually be re-taken. As their position grew stronger they were prepared to negotiate with the English but always on the basis that the sovereignty of their lands could not be alienated.⁹

By the late 1430s Henry VI was beginning to play an active role in the formation of policy. His piety led him to deplore the long-drawn-out war that was being fought in his name and his early upbringing by his mother made him psychologically more of a Valois than a Plantagenet.¹⁰

⁶Chastellain, *Chronique*, 2, p. 162, Charles 'was a wise and eloquent prince ... close to king Charles governing and ruling everything. He loved beautiful books and took great trouble to acquire them. He was also a great lover of women.'

⁷*Mémoires d'Olivier de la Marche*, ed. H. Beaune and J. d'Arbaumont, 4 vols (Paris: 1883–88) 1, p. 235.

⁸C.T. Allmand, *Lancastrian Normandy, 1415–1450: the History of a Medieval Occupation* (Oxford: 1983) pp. 39–40.

⁹R.A. Jackson, *Vive le Roi! A History of the French Coronation from Charles V to Charles X* (Chapel Hill, London: 1984) pp. 68–93. By the late fourteenth century the principal of inalienability had been incorporated into the coronation oath.

¹⁰See Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 443 for the first point and B. Wolffe, *Henry VI* (New Haven, London: 1983) p. 172 for the second.

The earl of Suffolk and cardinal Henry Beaufort, influential advisers to the king, were convinced that their country would be best served by the conclusion of a peace. For some years members of the royal council who favoured the vigorous prosecution of the war, led by king Henry's uncle and heir Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, prevailed. Yet the increasing difficulty in raising money for campaigns exacerbated by the ravages of war and bad harvests, the lack of enthusiasm on the part of many nobles and gentry and the loss of key French towns and ports strengthened the arguments of the peacemakers.

The means by which a satisfactory settlement with England could be achieved were at hand since it was known in France that Henry VI was well disposed towards a peace treaty and in need of a wife: René had an available daughter of marriageable age. Margaret, the last of his surviving legitimate children, was born at the castle of Pont-à-Mousson, on the Moselle just outside Nancy, in Lorraine. Until recently most English histories dated her birth to 23 or 24 March 1429, but an article published in 1988 showed that she was actually born a year later, in 1430.¹¹ She was named for her saintly grandmother, Margaret of Bavaria duchess of Lorraine. Margaret saw little of her father during her childhood since he was in prison for several years, only being released for periods to negotiate terms with the duke of Burgundy. Soon after he was finally liberated he travelled to Naples with his son John, Isabelle had already gone there, taking their son Louis with her, so the family was thoroughly dispersed. There is little evidence that Margaret ever travelled beyond Lorraine and north-western France during her childhood.¹²

In her early years Margaret and her sister Yolande had lived with their mother in Lorraine, principally at Pont-à-Mousson. Yolande was sent to Vaudemont's household as part of the marriage settlement that was negotiated by her father. Isabelle, burdened with the cost of paying René's ransom and with the government of Lorraine and Bar, probably

¹¹C.N.L. Brooke and V. Ortenberg, 'The Birth of Margaret of Anjou', *Historical Research*, 61 (1988): 357–8.

¹²C. de Nostradamus, *Histoire et Chronique de Provence* (Lyon: 1614) p. 595 states that John of Calabria, after he had been liberated from Burgundy, visited Provence in 1436 accompanied by his sister Margaret. The people of Aix welcomed them warmly on their entry thinking that they looked like two blonde angels. He cites no authority but it would have been characteristic of Yolande of Aragon's political acumen to send her grandchildren to a county deprived of a royal Angevin presence for so long.

spent little time on her youngest daughter. A girl too small to be an attractive marriage prospect and without hope of a good dowry was of little use. In the late middle ages when marriages were celebrated involving very young children there was usually either a compelling diplomatic reason or a large inheritance to be won.¹³ When Isabelle left France in 1435 to uphold her husband's claim to the kingdom of Naples, Margaret was bundled off to live with her grandmother Yolande of Aragon in the Loire valley. She thus became the responsibility of another woman who was looking after 'the firm' during René's imprisonment.

Yolande's principal residence was the castle at Saumur, which formed part of her jointure and there were other castles, manors and hunting lodges besides that she visited from time to time. Saumur castle today is so attractive that it could have been designed for a Disney theme park but its rounded turrets and square towers had a sterner purpose in the fifteenth century. Anjou was not fought over as intensively as the neighbouring county of Maine but there was a constant danger that the English might attack. During the time of duke Louis II or III a new fortified gateway had been built that echoed in its design the great reconstruction that duke Louis I had carried out in the late fourteenth century. The Angevins' living quarters, although traditional in style, were spacious and airy and commanded good views of Saumur and the surrounding countryside. In her early years Margaret may have been entrusted to the care of Tiphane la Magine, her father's old nurse.¹⁴ Nothing is known for certain about her subsequent education but it is likely to have been good since scholars and clerics frequented the court. Antoine de la Sale was tutor to her brother John and produced several works for him, and the rest of René's children probably used them as well. They all concerned the courtly and moral virtues that princes and nobles should possess.¹⁵ The example of her strong and able grandmother and the cultural environment of the Angevin court provided a good preparation for the future political role of the princess.

In 1440, when Margaret was ten years old her uncle and aunt, Charles VII and queen Marie, visited the ageing Yolande. Charles was doubtless

¹³The marriage of Richard II of England in 1396 to Isabelle of France was an example of the former; the marriage of Edward IV's son the duke of York to the daughter of the duke of Norfolk securing her large inheritance was an example of the latter. Such marriages were seldom consummated until the parties were in their teens.

¹⁴See Chapter 1.

¹⁵See Chapter 4.

aware that he had a niece approaching marriageable age and her appearance and manner may have impressed him with her potential as an asset. Few portraits of Margaret survive: the attribution of a tapestry figure from Chatsworth has been questioned, so the stylised double illumination of the queen and Henry VI, from 1445, is the only picture that can be firmly dated to this period.¹⁶ This bears out contemporary accounts that Margaret was comely. Thomas Basin, for example, wrote that she had an excellent appearance and form.¹⁷ This evidence, however, should be approached with caution: young princesses were supposed to be beautiful so they tended to be described and depicted accordingly. On the other hand, amongst the criticism and worse that was to be aimed at Margaret whilst she was queen of England, no one ever complained about her looks.

In September 1442 Margaret's political education was further extended by a visit paid to Saumur by the ambassadors of the emperor Frederick. Rich fabrics and furs were bought from merchants in Angers and sent to Saumur to clothe 'madame Marguerite'.¹⁸ Yolande probably wished reports of her granddaughter's beauty and good character to circulate as widely as possible in Europe. René's other daughter was already promised to Ferry of Vaudemont so the Angevins needed to marry Margaret as advantageously as possible. Two months later Yolande died: in her will she left various precious objects, tapestries and jewels to René, queen Marie and Margaret but declared that she had no money to bequeath as she had spent it all in the service of the kings of France and Sicily.¹⁹ She did, however, leave the strong political role she had played in supporting the king of France when he was at his weakest as a model to her family.

René and Charles VII spent a great deal of time together during the two years following the former's departure from Provence: Charles of Maine was already close, so Angevin influence at the Valois court remained strong. René had ceded Maine (occupied by the English) to Charles in 1440 as part of the arrangements he made in Naples before the departure of queen Isabelle. The warm regard that the king felt for his younger brother-in-law is attested by his grant of Gien to him in 1443: '...for the many great and laudable services and pleasures that

¹⁶L. Woolley, *Medieval Life and Leisure in the Devonshire Hunting Tapestries* (London: 2002) *passim*; London BL Ms Royal 15 E VI f. 2v. The best likeness of Margaret is probably the medal executed by Pietro da Milano at Bar in 1464, see Chapter 4.

¹⁷Basin, *Charles VII*, 1, p. 293.

¹⁸Lecoy de la Marche, ed. *Extraits des Comptes et Mémoires* (Paris: 1873) p. 226.

¹⁹Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 46, 226–7.

he has given us in many ways, the great and loyal regard he has for us and for the recovery of our lordship'.²⁰ In May 1445 the Milanese ambassador was to write to his master that:

there are in the heart of the house of France great jealousies and burning disputes. None could be more violent than those between the illustrious lord dauphin and the king René. This springs from the fact that king René is the one by whom everything is done in the kingdom.²¹

The Milanese ambassadors were obsessed with the Angevins, fearing their Italian ambitions, and overstated René's influence. Angevin chances of regaining Naples should have been good especially as a truce with England, secured by the marriage of Margaret of Anjou, released French resources for such an enterprise. The duke of Orleans also harboured aspirations to become ruler of Milan, a claim that he inherited from his mother, Valentina Visconti, and these could vie with René's Italian ambitions. Did Charles VII cynically manipulate René in 1443–45 only subsequently to abandon him? There was a danger that as the king became stronger his need for support from René and other princes of the blood would diminish. Yet Charles and René continued to cooperate closely because of their mutual interest in recovering Maine and securing Normandy for France: an enterprise that was to be considerably advanced by the Anglo-Angevin marriage.

In 1440, in the face of strong opposition from Gloucester, Henry VI finally ordered the release of Charles duke of Orleans who had been held captive since 1415.²² The thinking that led to this has been exposed by Wolffe²³ and is symptomatic of the combination of ignorance, naivety and baseless optimism that was to characterise English policy in the decade preceding the crisis of 1449–50. Henry and his advisers, especially Suffolk, believed that Orleans would be able to exert his influence in favour of the conclusion of a peace that was favourable to English interests. After his release it became clear that Charles VII regarded his cousin with suspicion, especially as he was given a warm welcome in

²⁰Reynaud, p. 20.

²¹Vale, *Charles VII*, p. 97.

²²*Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France during the reign of Henry VI*, ed. with translations J. Stevenson, 2 vols (London: 1861–64) 2, pp. 440–60.

²³Wolffe, p. 157.

Burgundy and subsequently became involved in the *Praguerie*. Even if Orleans intended to keep the solemn oaths to promote peace that were a condition of his release, he was initially in no position to do so for his long absence and lack of resources had left him with little influence amongst the peers of France. The anonymous bourgeois of Paris remarked scathingly: 'Shortly after the King had left Paris, the duke of Orleans arrived on 15th October 1441 to take his beakful from the poor town, and then went home again on the 20th without having done anything of any use towards the peace or anything else.'²⁴ The English had lost a valuable bargaining counter and had demonstrated the inanity of their diplomacy.

The prosecution of the war in northern France did afford opportunities for the English to reconquer some of the parts of eastern Normandy that they had lost after the death of Bedford. This was largely due to the leadership of a number of experienced soldiers, especially John lord Talbot, later earl of Shrewsbury. By 1439 they had regained most of the duchy including the pays de Caux and Pontoise (vital for communications between Normandy and the Île de France). Yet in that year Talbot was superseded as senior field commander by Henry VI's cousin John Beaufort, earl of Somerset, who had little practical military experience. In 1440 Meaux was lost to Richemont and Pontoise was re-taken in the following year.²⁵ The English position was exacerbated by a chronic shortage of funds since there seems to have been an unwillingness to accept that the war-damaged duchy could no longer make a substantial contribution to its own defence. The duke of York did manage to negotiate a decent amount of expenses when he was appointed royal lieutenant in Normandy in 1440 but these fell into arrears and the war effort faltered.

An ongoing difficulty for the English government was the need to decide how to allocate resources between northern France and Guyenne. It was essential to keep the loyalty of the nobles and bourgeois of England's oldest French province and trading partner by providing sufficient resources for its defence. Modest reinforcements and a new seneschal were dispatched early in 1443 but the royal council seems to have realised that these measures would not be sufficient. This was the origin of the scheme to send a large, well-supplied force to Guyenne under John Beaufort who was made duke of Somerset for the occasion. He was to have powers similar to those enjoyed by York in Northern France.²⁶ Somerset

²⁴A *Parisian Journal, 1405–1449*, trans. J. Shirley (Oxford: 1968) p. 346.

²⁵A.J. Pollard, *John Talbot and the War in France, 1427–1453* (London, New Jersey: 1983) pp. 41–57.

²⁶Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 464–73.

took nearly a year to muster his forces and depart for France and the council diverted him to the north without making clear the demarcation between his authority and that of York.

The decision that Somerset should act as a kind of shield to Normandy was a reasonable one as it looked as if that would be the target of Charles's next attack. Somerset moved from Normandy down the marches of Anjou and Maine, laying waste the countryside up to the walls of Angers. His captains lodged at the abbey of St Nicholas at Angers where René was later to marry his second wife, Jeanne de Laval. He went on to attack La Guerche, a town inside Brittany and Michael K. Jones believes that it was fair game as it actually belonged to a French peer, the duke of Alençon, who held it as a fief from the duke of Brittany. The duke of Brittany did not take so tolerant a view of the situation and complained vociferously to England and Somerset was ordered to make restitution.²⁷ The final phase of the campaign saw the capture of Beaumont-le-Vicomte in Maine before Somerset returned to Normandy. This helped to safeguard the position of his brother, Edmund Beaufort earl of Dorset, who had been made governor of Anjou and Maine and was independent of York's authority. Jones points out that the expedition achieved its primary purpose, which was to avert an attack on Normandy, since Charles VII made no major move against the duchy that year. It had, however, only been financed by loans from Somerset's uncle, cardinal Beaufort, and no comparable resources were available to York in Normandy. His resentment at the way he had been treated was a crucial factor in his estrangement from the king's Beaufort relatives that was to have such a devastating impact on the English polity, including Margaret of Anjou and her son, in the 1450s.

King René had only just returned to his duchy of Anjou after an absence of six years: his itineraries show him to have remained in Angers, with a sojourn in Saumur in November, until early 1444.²⁸ Both of these cities were well fortified, his subjects were loyal and his castles were very strong, but the ravaging done by the English and the tightening of their hold on Maine must have brought home the harsh realities of the situation to him. Only hindsight tells us that Charles VII was to go from strength to strength in his conquests: in 1443 matters would have looked differently to a man who had endured years of imprisonment

²⁷M.K. Jones, 'John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset and the French Expedition of 1443', *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England*, ed. R.A. Griffiths (Gloucester: 1981) pp. 79–102.

²⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René, 2, Itineraries*, p. 446.

and then defeat in Naples. Charles of Maine had fought at the side of Charles VII and his commanders (and been wounded by an arrow at Pontoise) in the previous years but some of the gains they made had been lost or were precarious.²⁹ The hand of René's only available daughter must have seemed a price well worth paying for a truce with the English since there appeared to be a real danger that they might occupy parts of Anjou.

Two weddings and a truce

Sporadic peace initiatives had been undertaken since 1439 by the earl of Suffolk and cardinal Beaufort and their faction and undermined by Gloucester and his followers. Time was not on Gloucester's side, however, as peace-loving king Henry gained in confidence. Henry's need for a wife and the fact that marriage with a French princess would further his desire for a settlement further weakened the position of those who wished to continue the war. The prospect of a union with the Angevins, the most influential of the *apanagiste* princely houses, must have seemed to offer insurance for future good relations and peace to the royal council. As Mathieu d'Escouchy remarked: 'By means of this alliance they expected to have good, powerful friends in France, especially to help them to conclude a final peace with the king of France.'³⁰ René's reputation as a chivalrous prince had been enhanced by his last-ditch resistance to Alfonso of Aragon in Naples. As the brother of queen Marie of France his house and its servants enjoyed considerable favour with Charles VII. Pious but glamorous and embedded in the French court, René should make an ideal father-in-law for the inexperienced Henry VI.

The French had good reason to arrange a halt in hostilities in 1444. Somerset's campaign in the previous year had not done a great deal of damage but it showed that the English could still be formidable. Burgundy had concluded a perpetual truce with England in 1443 and Charles VII probably feared that the alliance that had divided France in the first half of his reign might be revived. The duke of Brittany offered to act as a go-between although it seems that, after the early stages, Charles did not allow him to play a decisive part in the negotiations. Pope Eugenius IV was also anxious for a peace to be concluded so that

²⁹Monstrelet, 6, p. 19.

³⁰*Chronique de Matthieu d'Escouchy*, ed. G. du Fresne de Beaucourt, 3 vols (Paris: 1863–64) 1, p. 85.

the contending powers could concentrate their energies on a crusade against the Turks.³¹ He sent Piero da Monte, bishop of Brescia, to Poitiers in May 1443. Charles VII, the dauphin, René and Charles of Maine were there, probably in the first stages of planning a settlement with England based on the Angevin marriage. As negotiations commenced, both sides believed that they stood to gain from such a marriage.

The French government had signalled that it would welcome Suffolk as the leader of an English peace delegation. This was dangerous for the earl who rightly feared the repercussions for his position in England should a settlement prove unpopular but Henry VI prevailed upon him to accept the post.³² He arrived in Normandy in March 1444, accompanied by a team that included Adam Moleyns, dean of Salisbury and keeper of the privy seal and Sir Robert Roos, a trusted servant of the king. Their opposite numbers in the negotiations, which commenced in Charles VII's city of Tours in late April, were the grand master of the royal household, Louis, count of Vendôme, Pierre de Brézé lord of La Varenne, who was close both to Charles VII and the Angevins, and their servant Bertrand de Beauvau, lord of Précigny.

Margaret of Anjou, who was fourteen at this time, was brought from Angers to be inspected by the Englishmen and evidently met with their approval. She had already been considered as a bride for several European nobles. Most recently negotiations had opened with the count of Nevers but this union was unacceptable to Charles VII since it would associate the Angevins too closely with Philip of Burgundy, the count's cousin. Griffiths and Wolffe both explain Charles VII's decision to offer Margaret of Anjou rather than one of his own daughters as arising from a disinclination to strengthen the English claim to the French throne.³³ As Thomas Basin remarked, daughters of France had always had unhappy experiences and caused great calamities when they made English marriages.³⁴ The speed with which Margaret was brought to Tours and betrothed makes it look as if provisional agreements had already been made between England, France and the Angevins. Lecoy de la Marche, after observing how a marriage alliance with England would be repug-

³¹Beaucourt, 3, p. 265.

³²For the subsequent negotiations and settlement see Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 482–90; Wolffe, pp. 169–80; B. Cron, 'The Duke of Suffolk, the Angevin Marriage and the Ceding of Maine, 1445', *Journal of Medieval History*, 20 (1994) pp. 77–99.

³³Six of his daughters were living in 1444 but only Jeanne was free to marry and of an age to do so.

³⁴Basin, *Charles VII*, 1, p. 293.

nant to the Valois, explained that Charles was pleased to distance himself from it. If war broke out again it would be easier to pursue vigorously if René rather than the king of France were allied to Henry VI.³⁵ René's daughter never left her thoughts on her marriage for posterity and her public pronouncements were extremely correct.³⁶ English historians have, however, discounted too lightly the repugnance that many of the French, including the Angevins, felt for the English invaders of their land. Only months before her betrothal they had gained territory in Maine and been lodged in the outskirts of the ducal seat of Angers.³⁷

The English negotiators at Tours were entertained by all manner of courtly, ceremonial and martial diversions. On May 1 queen Marie of France and Margaret of Scotland, rode out with three hundred gallants to bring in the may. Another cause for celebration was the wedding of Charles of Maine to Isabelle of Luxemburg (her sister, Jacquetta the widow of John duke of Bedford, had married Sir Richard Woodville in 1436). The Angevins never did such things by halves and it was lavishly conducted with feasts and jousts. De Brézé and Suffolk arranged a contest between the English and French archers with a prize of 1000 écus which was won by the Scots archers who served Charles VII.³⁸ Despite the cordial atmosphere, as negotiations proceeded it was clear that no final settlement could be reached that encompassed the French refusal to cede sovereignty over Guyenne and Normandy. The very discussion of this had, however, signalled that the English side was flexible on the matter of their claim to the French throne. If they were demanding full sovereignty over the duchies this was a de facto admission that Charles VII was rightful king of France. Another victory for the French had been their success in attracting Francis I, duke of Brittany, to join the other peers of France at Tours. Wolffe's verdict is that in the diplomatic game the French soon gained the upper hand and never subsequently lost it.³⁹

³⁵Lecoy de la Marche, I, pp. 231–2.

³⁶But see below, Mathieu d'Escouchy, on her negative state of mind privately expressed in 1450–51.

³⁷David Grummitt has, however, commented on the antipathy felt by the French for the English, 'Introduction: War, Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange, 1450–1558', *The English Experience in France, c.1450-1558*, ed. D. Grummitt (Aldershot: 2002) pp. 18–19.

³⁸Beaucourt, 3, pp. 275–6.

³⁹Wolffe, p. 192. Duke Francis of Brittany was to do homage to Charles VII in 1446, his wife Yolande, René's sister, had died six years earlier.

Suffolk's negotiating position was inherently weak as he did not wish to return home to his master without a marriage agreement. All he gained on 22 May when the treaty was signed was a twenty-month truce and a meagre dowry of 20,000 francs. René added his claim to Majorca and Minorca, held by his adversary Alfonso of Aragon, to the dowry but Margaret was also required to renounce any claim she might have to Angevin territories.⁴⁰ Bonita Cron speculates that René may have hoped to involve the English in a Mediterranean war to recover the kingdom of Naples by giving them his claim to the islands. This assumes that the Valois really believed that they would live in peace and amity with the Plantagenets and that they were strangely optimistic about Henry's martial inclinations. The pragmatic interpretation of Valois thinking given by Lecoy de la Marche seems more convincing: if the worst came to the worst English friendship and indeed Margaret of Anjou were expendable.⁴¹

After her betrothal and the departure of Suffolk Margaret returned to Angers whilst Charles VII and René embarked on another piece of Valois family business: the humiliation of Metz and its ally Burgundy. René had every reason to dislike duke Philip and Charles always viewed him with suspicion. He may have been peeved that he had failed to attend the festivities at Tours where Philip would have been forced to defer both to him and René as kings. Jewels and a baggage train belonging to queen Isabelle had apparently been seized by the people of Metz when she was making a pilgrimage to Pont-à-Mousson. Lecoy de la Marche pointed out that this could not have happened in May as Vallet stated since she was attending the marriage negotiations at Tours during that month.⁴² The terms of the settlement made in the following year between René and the people of Metz did, however, refer to 'the baggage and precious objects taken from the queen of Sicily that will be restored'.⁴³ Pierre Marot suspected that the main reason for the Metz campaign was René's request to Charles to punish it because, in

⁴⁰This was a wise provision. Had she still been a regnant queen when her father, brother, cousin and nephew died, the English government could have claimed the Angevin territories on her behalf. When Louis XI bought her from the English in 1476 she had to repeat the renunciation in his favour. See Chapter 5.

⁴¹Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 232.

⁴²Vallet de Viriville, *Histoire de Charles VII, 1403–6*, 3 vols (Paris: 1862–65) 3, pp. 31–3; Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 233. The incident, like René's debts to Metz (see below), could date from more than a decade earlier.

⁴³Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 233–6.

the words of Jean Chartier, it was 'rebellious and disobedient towards him'. The city of Metz and the dukes of Lorraine had a history of conflict caused by their ambiguous relationship.⁴⁴ In particular it was still demanding the repayment of debts incurred by René and his predecessors and it had made depredations on the abbey of Gorze whose abbot was his ardent partisan. The king of France owed René a favour because he had allowed his daughter to marry Henry of England, a union that was repugnant to most people in France.⁴⁵

At the same time as the Metz campaign, Louis the dauphin led an army against the Swiss in response to an appeal from the Hapsburgs (the financially-challenged Frederick III, emperor and his cousin, Sigismund of the Tyrol) who complained that they had been defying their authority.⁴⁶ The force included about 5000 English soldiers under their captain, Matthew Gough. A major incentive for Charles VII in launching these campaigns was to occupy the many soldiers who had been made dangerously idle by the truce with England. Gough and the other captains gave Alsace and the lands between Strasbourg and Basle a taste of what France had been suffering at the hands of the *écorcheurs* (flayers) for decades. The brothers-in-law made their way to Nancy where the French and Angevin courts were to be based for the next six months. They were content largely to leave the attack on Metz to Pierre de Brézé, chief commander for the campaign, who rapidly obtained the submission of several towns in the Lorraine marches.

By late September a delegation from Metz was at Nancy with protestations that they did not owe obedience to France but to the empire. The French forces besieged Metz closely for the following five months, ravaging the land despite Charles VII's order in November 1444, made at René's request, that they should not harm his subjects in Bar and Lorraine or take their beasts and goods.⁴⁷ The citizens finally signed a treaty with Charles at the end of February 1445 and made a convention with René three days later. By the former all prisoners were to be returned and Metz would not claim damages, rather it would pay France 200,000 écus and would give no help to its enemies. René was

⁴⁴See Chapter 1.

⁴⁵P. Marot, 'L'Expédition de Charles VII à Metz (1444–1445): documents inédits', *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 102 (1941) pp. 109–55.

⁴⁶Sigismund was betrothed to Radegonde, a daughter of Charles VII, but she died before the marriage could take place.

⁴⁷Escouchy, 3, pp. 95–7.

promised that all the rights and revenues that he and his family possessed in Metz would be respected and that his queen's goods would be restored. Instead of receiving a war indemnity such as was to be given to Charles VII, debts he owed them dating from the Bulgnéville campaign were to be remitted. His sovereignty over Metz was not exactly reasserted as Vale suggests.⁴⁸ The convention merely referred to 'such rights' as René possessed, nor did Charles VII gain sovereignty since that belonged to the empire.

The dauphin, after making accords with several Swiss cities, left his armies to winter in Alsace (living off the land) and joined the French and Angevin courts at Nancy. His campaign had the dual advantages of showing the recalcitrant inhabitants of western Germany and Lorraine what might happen to them if they resisted French power and also of humiliating Burgundy. The Burgundian Olivier de la Marche, on the other hand, gives a rather different version of events, claiming that the dauphin sustained losses at the hands of his various opponents.⁴⁹ In December 1444, Jacques de Sierck, archbishop of Trier, one of René's counsellors and formerly his chancellor, arrived at Nancy. His friendship was of considerable benefit to Charles VII and René for he seems to have arranged the marriage in October between Louis, the elector of the Palatine and Margaret of Savoy, the widow of Louis III of Anjou.⁵⁰ De Sierck also acted as an intermediary in concluding more alliances between Charles VII and a number of German princes and nobles who promised military aid to France if she were attacked. This effectively divided them from Burgundy since several had previously made treaties with its duke. They also used this means to assert their independence of Frederick III since he was technically their overlord although the French campaigns of late 1444 had already demonstrated his impotence.

Basin castigated both Charles VII and René for their behaviour towards Metz, seeing their conduct as tyrannical rather than kingly: 'Thus tyrants always hate liberty, peace and peoples' rights; this is what the good bourgeois of Metz learnt to their great cost.'⁵¹ Basin was writing much later when, in exile from France, he was sheltered by Burgundy, a duchy that frequently supported Metz. Other chroniclers were not so forthright in their criticisms of René but he is generally

⁴⁸Vale, *Charles VII*, p. 95.

⁴⁹O. de la Marche, 2, pp. 61–2.

⁵⁰Beaucourt, 4, pp. 66–9.

⁵¹Basin, *Charles VII*, 2, p. 13.

shown as playing a rather shabby part in the affair. Chartier presented René in a poor light: 'The king of Sicily begged the king of France that he would be pleased to support and help him to conquer the city of Metz in Lorraine and other places as they were rebellious and disobedient, as he said.'⁵² Marot discussed the question of whether or not Charles VII intended to extend the jurisdiction of France as far as the Rhine but concluded that this was not his purpose. He contrasted the effectiveness of the king's policies with the 'feebleness and political mediocrity' of René who relied on the king of France to achieve his ends. After the peace of 1445 Charles enjoyed cordial relations with Metz. When René complained in 1450 that it was not observing the peace, Charles supported the city against him.⁵³

France had showed its considerable military power on the borders of Burgundy and the empire and made alliances with a number of important German princes. This all seemed to be beneficial to René and Isabelle as duke and duchess of Lorraine but it confirmed the enmity between their house and Burgundy without definitively establishing their control of Metz. In the long term the involvement of the French crown in the affairs of Bar and Lorraine could prejudice the interests of the house of Anjou: but as a king without a kingdom and still mired in financial problems René had no alternative. His fortunes and those of his house were dependent on the good will of the king of France. In 1445 René made John of Calabria, who had accompanied him to Nancy, his lieutenant general in Bar and Lorraine in recognition of the fact that his domains were too scattered to be governed effectively by one person.

Margaret of Anjou, honoured as queen of England, arrived at Nancy in February 1445. She was not, according to Bonita Cron, going to Nancy to participate in another proxy ceremony with Suffolk but to attend the wedding of her sister Yolande to Ferry of Vaudemont. Cron has persuasively contradicted the claim of many authorities, both medieval and modern, that Margaret and Suffolk went through a proxy marriage at Nancy in March 1445. There was plenty of scope, however, for confusing accounts of the betrothal in the previous year with Yolande's wedding.⁵⁴ The most compelling evidence cited by Cron is that no Englishman is recorded as having participated in the lavish festivities at Nancy. Neither Thomas Basin nor Mathieu d'Escouchy refer to a ceremony involving

⁵²Chartier, 2, p. 43.

⁵³Marot, 'Expédition', pp. 135–41.

⁵⁴See J.J. Bagley, *Margaret of Anjou, Queen of England* (London: 1948) pp. 42–3, for a typical account of the 'wedding' at Nancy.

Margaret and Suffolk taking place there and the latter's editor describes the transactions at Tours in 1444 as a 'betrothal'.⁵⁵ There was no need for a wedding as Margaret was to be married to Henry VI on her arrival in England. Even the diplomatically inept Suffolk would have been wary of making such a final commitment before receiving the approval of the king and council and canonically betrothals were easier to break than marriages, even unconsummated ones. He went to Paris to negotiate the return of England's last important hostage, the younger brother of the duke of Orleans, from captivity in England. A small group of Englishmen did go to Nancy, probably to accompany queen Margaret to the border of French-held territory where she was to be handed over to the duke of York but it did not include Suffolk.⁵⁶

The wedding of Yolande of Anjou and Ferry of Vaudemont was celebrated with characteristic Angevin style. It was the occasion of the first of the three great tournaments that René was to hold throughout his domains during the period of the truce with England, 1445 to 1449. Escouchy admiringly reported the magnificence of the entertainment provided by René who: '... feasted the King and all the other lords with all his means, always trying to find new pastimes for the King and his fine nephew the Dauphin'.⁵⁷ René was displaying the generosity and magnificence (magnanimity) that contemporaries expected of their kings. Charles VII took part bearing the arms of the de Lusignans, a dynasty from Poitou that had ruled Jerusalem and Cyprus. René jousted dressed as Godefrey of Bouillon, the crusader who conquered Jerusalem and became its first king. Other members of his family, such as John of Calabria and Charles of Maine, participated as did followers including the Lenoncourts, John Cossa and Bertrand de Beauvau. The splendid show had a purpose besides the obvious one of an aspirant king displaying his chivalrous credentials. According to H. Müller it was a means of humbling Burgundy: 'The way in which Charles VII and René of Anjou presented themselves at Nancy as kings of Jerusalem could be considered as a warning to Philip the Good not to put himself at the head of a crusade as a sovereign prince.'⁵⁸

⁵⁵Fiançailles', Escouchy, 1, p. 84, n. 1; Cron, 'The Duke of Suffolk', pp. 79, 82, 89.

⁵⁶Beaucourt, 4, p. 93, n. 4.

⁵⁷Escouchy, 2, p. 42.

⁵⁸H. Müller, 'Les pays Rhénans, la France et la Bourgogne à l'Epoque du Concile de Bâle: un leçon d'histoire politique', *Francia*, 30/1(2003) pp. 107-33; C. de Mérindol, *Les Fêtes de chevalerie à la cour du roi René: Emblématique, art et histoire* (Paris: 1993) pp. 24-7. Philip of Burgundy was an enthusiastic champion of a crusade to reconquer Jerusalem.

Margaret of Anjou parted from Charles VII outside Nancy shedding bitter tears that almost prevented her from speaking. Lecoy de la Marche took the opportunity to expand on her strength of character and ingenuously claimed that she became known to the English as 'the great Margaret'.⁵⁹ Accompanied by her father she travelled to Bar-le-Duc and was then conducted by John of Calabria and the duke of Alençon to Paris. She was received in state by the duke of Orleans and it was there that she was probably joined by Suffolk. His high favour with Henry VI had been confirmed in the previous September when he had been made a marquis, he was to be made a duke in July 1448. The duke of York, the king's lieutenant and governor of France and Normandy, met Margaret at Pontoise, the furthest limit of French territory. His entourage was composed of twenty-two lords, knights and esquires as well as personal followers and servants. She was unwell at this time and was taken down the Seine by barge to Rouen. Her illness prevented her from participating in her own state entry but the English were not going to miss such a propaganda opportunity so the countess of Salisbury deputised for her. Escouchy reported that, following the duke of York and his retinue:

A page led a palfrey draped in cloth of gold sent by the king of England for his new queen ... he had also sent her a chariot covered in cloth of gold and bearing the arms of England and of France drawn by six very valuable white horses. It was decorated in many colours and in it rode the marchioness of Suffolk accompanied by the countesses of Talbot and Salisbury, the countess was in the same estate as the queen when she was betrothed ... The marquis of Suffolk rode behind the chariot representing the king accompanied by forty richly dressed horsemen bearing his arms.⁶⁰

A number of Angevins accompanied the queen to England but some of them seem only to have remained there for a short time: a good thing in a country intolerant of foreigners but later to be held against her.⁶¹ Griffiths shows how Henry VI transferred some of the members of his own household to Margaret's retinue probably to give her a suitably

⁵⁹Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 238.

⁶⁰Escouchy, 1, p. 89.

⁶¹'But no French came with her besides three or four French women', *John Benet's Chronicle for the Years 1400 to 1462*, ed. G.L. Harriss (London: 1972) p. 190. But see below.

magnificent following.⁶² A large flotilla was required to transport her escort to and from France: the cost to the English government, including the first few months of her residence in England was £5,573 17s 5d.⁶³ To this must be added the expense of refurbishing the palaces where she would live, about £1000. There was also her jointure (marriage settlement) of land worth £2000 a year and the unusually generous grant of an annual cash income of £4,666 13s 4d.⁶⁴ The Crown could ill afford this drain on its resources, as Crawford points out, and it was to contribute to its later insolvency.⁶⁵ Four royal ladies had disgraced themselves in the precious decades: the widowed Katherine of Valois and Jacquetta of Luxemburg by marrying beneath them, Joan of Navarre, widow of Henry IV, and Eleanor Cobham, duchess of Gloucester, by reputedly dabbling in witchcraft. The English were well disposed towards Margaret of Anjou as she symbolised a popular peace but, if that failed, she would soon be blamed as a pauper princess who damaged the interests of her adopted country.

Margaret and her accompanying flotilla sailed from Harfleur and landed at Porchester on 9 April 1445. She had apparently suffered from seasickness and also had an illness described as a 'pox' and this caused a delay in the date of her wedding. Such evidence as survives indicates that the new queen was in a very negative state of mind and on the verge of physical collapse. She may simply have been ill through natural causes in Rouen and on her arrival in England but her condition could have been the result of hysteria.⁶⁶ For her whole life she had regarded the English as the great enemies of her house and the perpetrators of evil in its lands. The duke of York symbolised the English presence in her country and she had to meet him at Pontoise: there was no need to wait until the 1450s for her aversion towards him to develop.⁶⁷ Even if her encounter with her mild-mannered and complacent husband and the warm welcome she initially received from the English people allayed her fears, there is no reason to believe that she ceased thinking and acting like a Valois.

⁶²Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 360-1, 552.

⁶³Stevenson, 1, pp. 443-60.

⁶⁴*RP*, 5, pp. 118-20.

⁶⁵Crawford, 'The King's Burden', *passim*.

⁶⁶Cron attributed her illness after she left Nancy to 'over-excitement', 'The Duke of Suffolk', p. 90.

⁶⁷Maurer, pp. 45-6 and *passim*; Laynesmith, pp. 163-7.

Henry VI and Margaret were finally married on 22 April by William Aiscough, bishop of Salisbury, at the abbey of St Mary and St John the Evangelist at Titchfield in Hampshire. They then spent several days there before travelling separately to London. On 28 May the queen was welcomed at Blackheath by the duke of Gloucester, accompanied by five hundred retainers, the mayor, aldermen and leading guildsmen.⁶⁸ Maurer has given a full account of her reception as she entered the city with this escort and made her way to the Tower of London. The lavish pageants that greeted her stressed the themes of peace and prosperity and the crowds acclaimed her enthusiastically.⁶⁹ On 30 May Margaret was crowned by John Stafford, archbishop of Canterbury in Westminster Abbey. The Issues of the Exchequer record payments in June to a number of René's servants who had come to witness Margaret's coronation 'and to make a report thereof abroad'. There were five of his minstrels, 'John de Surencourt, an esquire of the king of Sicily and steward of the Queen's household abroad' and John d'Escoce, an esquire of the king of Sicily who, 'came in the Queen's retinue'. Devon did not record the presence of 'Antonio de la Sale esquire and John de la Panetrye'⁷⁰ recently come from the king of Sicily in the retinue of the queen' but they are mentioned in the Issue Rolls (Devon and Issue Rolls, see note 72). The presence of de la Sale raises the possibility that he had been tutor to Margaret during the period after his return from Naples where he had served John of Calabria.

'Sir Almeric Chaperon, knight, and Charles de Castelion, clerk [sic],⁷¹ ambassadors from the king of Sicily, lately sent to the lord the king, in the queen's retinue, upon certain affairs on behalf of the said lord the king of Sicily' received the princely sum of £133 6s 8d.⁷² These last two seem to have been present as diplomats since on 17 November they were to be named in a procuration to negotiate on René's behalf at the same time as he authorised the ambassadors of Charles VII.⁷³ It looks as if informal negotiations for a final peace were starting as early as

⁶⁸*The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. A.H. Thomas and I.D. Thornley (Gloucester: 1983) p. 178.

⁶⁹Maurer, pp. 18–22.

⁷⁰Two *panetiers* or pantrymen called Jean are recorded: Jean Cotenet and Jean Quidance, Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 499.

⁷¹See Chapter 4 for more on Charles de Castillon, lord of Aubagne; both he and Alvernatius Chaperon were councillors to René.

⁷²NA, Issues of the Exchequer E 403/757; F. Devon, *Issues of the Exchequer from King Henry III to King Henry VI inclusive* (London: 1837) p. 452.

⁷³Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 250, n. 1, 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 258–60.

April or May with the arrival of Margaret and her Angevin followers in England, before the prestigious Franco-Angevin delegation in mid-July. There would have been time for Chaperon and Castillon to return to the Loire to report to their masters during the summer but they could equally well have remained in England to advise René's daughter.

Stevenson records payments to 'family servants' who came over from Anjou and Lorraine with the queen. They included damsels and squires but only two are named: Peryne Angeatre, a kitchen servant and master Francisce, the queen's physician who had secured the safety of her person with many aromatics, confections, powders and drugs.⁷⁴ It is probable that some of the damsels were those who were named in the household accounts for 1452–53 that are discussed below.

In the meantime Charles VII and René were pursuing their goals of cutting Burgundy down to size, strengthening the French armies, and impressing the princes of the empire. Their courts left Nancy in late April, queen Marie travelled directly to Châlons in the Marne valley arriving there in early May. Charles visited Toul, Commercy, Koeur, Saint-Mihiel and Louppy before arriving at Châlons towards the end of the month. René must have accompanied him as he was at Saint Mihiel on 5 May and it was probably at his suggestion that they stayed at his beloved castle at Louppy.⁷⁵ One of their preoccupations was the need to find a long-term solution to the problem of the unruly men-at-arms. Charles had already issued several *ordonnances* (edicts) that had attempted to regulate them, but the one promulgated in June 1445 finally forged the companies into a standing army regulated by a code of discipline and financed by a special *taille*. Lecoy de la Marche drew on evidence from the Milanese ambassador to attribute a major role to René in formulating the *ordonnance*.⁷⁶

The other business to be conducted at Châlons was for René to make a final settlement with the duke of Burgundy. René was quite incapable of paying the remainder of the huge ransom that had been part of the price of his release in 1437 and Philip continued to hold the towns of Neufchâteau, Clermont-en-Argonne and Gaudrecourt. An important part of the bargain, Yolande's marriage to Ferry of Vaudemont, had recently been fulfilled. With the armies of France present near the borders of Burgundy and after their recent ravages this was a good time to negotiate. The duke had already sent a list of his grievances against France with his emissaries to Reims in March but without any result. Considerable

⁷⁴Stevenson, 1, p. 452.

⁷⁵Beaucourt, 4, pp. 94–5; Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, Itineraries, p. 447.

⁷⁶Vale, *Charles VII*, p. 104; Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 244–5.

personal antipathy still existed between Philip and Charles, who the duke held responsible for the murder of his father, so the duchess Isabelle came to Châlons to speak for Burgundy. She was greeted by queen Marie with great ceremony and the rigorous observance of the etiquette that was essential to the conduct of business between mutually hostile branches of the Valois family.⁷⁷ Other envoys also attended the court emphasising the importance of France and the number of its friends and allies. Ambassadors from the duke of Milan, the duke of Savoy, the king of Castille (a natural ally for René since he was in conflict with Alfonso of Aragon), the electors of the empire, the emperor and of the patriarch of Constantinople were all present. The duke of York also sent envoys for he was hoping to marry his son Edward to a daughter of Charles VII.⁷⁸ The king made a positive response, but although York was still the royal lieutenant he was unlikely to have entertained the proposal seriously.⁷⁹

The duchess of Burgundy spent two months in Châlons where the amusements that had been arranged at Nancy continued, as Olivier de la Marche observed: 'The festivities went from strength to strength with jousts and much pomp.'⁸⁰ Charles of Maine and the young Louis de Saint Pol, count of Luxemburg, went to Charles VII and René one day after supper when they were in the fields gathering herbs and flowers.⁸¹ They started a conversation in which they deplored the fact that, whilst in Burgundy the court daily enjoyed fêtes, jousts, dances and songs, all the French court did was to sleep, drink and eat, so the kings agreed to hold a tournament for all comers. A valiant young squire in the entourage of the duchess of Burgundy, Jacques de Lalaing, distinguished himself by his skill in the lists and by his courtly manners. Every evening after the jousting was over banquets were held accompanied by dancing and the

⁷⁷Beaucourt, 4, p. 95 *et seq.*; Aliénor of Poitiers had the account from her mother, one of Isabelle of Portugal's ladies, 'Honneurs de la Cour', *Mémoires sur l'ancienne chevalerie*, ed. La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, 2 vols (Paris: 1826) 2, pp. 154–8; Aliénor remarked that neither the duchess nor the queen of Sicily (who disliked her) would damage their kneecaps in curtsying to each other; Vaughan, *Philip the Good*, pp. 119–20.

⁷⁸P. A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York, 1411–1460* (Oxford: 1991) pp. 48–50.

⁷⁹*Lettres de Louis XI, roi de France*, ed. J. Vaesen and E. Charavay, 11 vols (Paris: 1883–1909) 1, pp. 199–200; Stevenson, letters from York to Charles VII, 1, pp. 79–86.

⁸⁰Olivier de la Marche, 2, pp. 59–60.

⁸¹Beaucourt, 4, pp. 97–102; *Le Livre des faits du bon chevalier messire Jacques de Lalaing, Oeuvres de Georges Chastellain*, 8, p. 40. The scene of Charles VII and René gathering flowers in the fields may have been a fiction to put the whole tournament into a suitably courtly context.

music of trumpeters and minstrels. A ballet, *The Basse Dance of Burgundy*, was performed by Isabelle of Lorraine, the duchess of Calabria, the dauphine and the count of Clermont. It looks as if the Angevin capacity for enjoyment had communicated itself to the sober king of France. He had recently taken one of queen Isabelle's ladies, Agnes Sorel, as his mistress and perhaps that was another reason for the more pleasure-loving character that his court assumed.

In early July 1445 a marriage between the constable, Arthur of Richemont (whose Burgundian wife had died) and Catherine of Luxemburg was celebrated. This allied him even more closely to the Angevins as her sister had recently become the wife of Charles of Maine. Pierre de Brézé, despite the fact that he had started his career an Angevin servant, seems to have become jealous of the Luxemburg/Angevin connection and was falsely to allege that they were starting a new *Praguerie*. Guillaume Gruel, who reported the incident, went on to say that Brézé was mistaken 'for they did not think of it'.⁸² But if this was more than court gossip, laced with wishful thinking, the estrangement between de Brézé and the Angevins did not last long. The following year Charles of Maine and de Brézé were godparents to the second surviving son of Charles VII and Marie of Anjou, Charles of France.⁸³

On 6 July, by the good offices of Charles VII, René and the duchess of Burgundy signed a convention by which he was relieved of some of the worst provisions of the treaty of Lille of 1437. Whilst he recognised the binding nature of its other clauses, the remainder of the huge sum he had been liable to pay as ransom, 80,600 écus, was remitted. His towns of Neufchâteau, Clermont and Gaudrecourt were to be returned provided that their Burgundian captains were paid off.⁸⁴ The French made some trifling concessions to Burgundy but ignored its major grievances. Duke Philip accepted the terms negotiated by his duchess and had the satisfaction of seeing the French and Angevin courts and their soldiers withdraw to the Loire valley. Their departure from Châlons and the end to festivities was abrupt since the courts went into mourning for the sudden death of the dauphine, Margaret of Scotland, who seems to have been loved by everyone except her husband Louis.

Charles VII had rendered two services to René: the humiliation of Metz and the removal of the harshest terms of the treaty of Lille.

⁸²Vale, *Charles VII*, p. 98; Gruel, p. 187.

⁸³Jean Chartier, *La Chronique Latine Inédite*, ed. C. Samaran (Paris: 1928) Appendix, p. 99.

⁸⁴Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 247–8.

Escouchy was critical of his unkingly whinging that had led to the concessions.

He complained daily to the king of France, the Dauphin his nephew and other lords that he had been treated too harshly [in the treaty of Lille of 1437] and that the King should not allow it but with his great power safeguard the interests of those who were of his close family.⁸⁵

Some took the subsequent departure of the Angevin brothers from court as a sign that they had lost favour with Charles VII.⁸⁶ Pierre de Brézé may have been involved, but it was necessary for René to assert his control over his duchy of Anjou since he had spent little time there since he inherited it ten years earlier. Charles of Maine must also have seen an opportunity of at last recovering his county. To achieve this both brothers needed to concentrate on the *apanage* and be ready to send envoys to England. They remained an important element in Charles VII's long-term goal to recover English France. Illustrations 7a–c show the castle at Angers.

The question of Maine

Charles VII and René may really have intended to conclude a lasting peace with England in the late 1440s but it is unlikely. Even the naive and inept government of Henry VI and Suffolk would not agree to surrender the claim to the French throne and Maine and, in addition, hand over Normandy and agree to do homage for Guyenne. It is reasonable to assume that those were the only terms that the French would accept in return for a final peace since they were offered by the eminent embassy that Charles sent to England in July 1445. He may not have expected very much of this first encounter on English soil since the marriage of Margaret of Anjou. Time, however, was on his side for his intelligence sources would have told him how weak and underfunded the Norman garrisons were and his niece would gain in confidence as she got the measure of her malleable husband. She may have had good Angevin advisers at hand in the shape of Alvernatus Chaperon and Charles de Castillon.

⁸⁵Escouchy, 1, p. 44.

⁸⁶Escouchy, 1, pp. 68–9. He only refers to 'certain great lords' being sent from court without naming anyone.





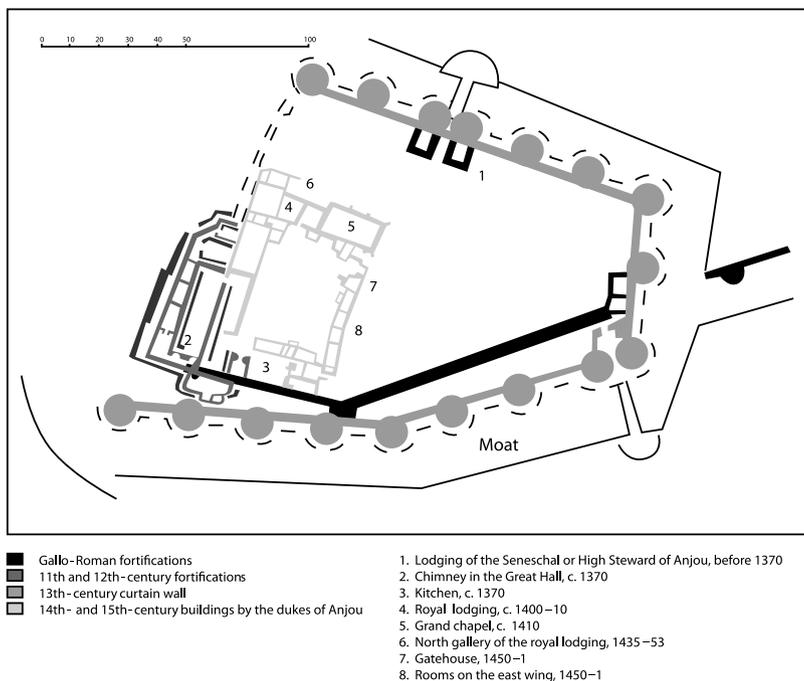


Illustration 7a-c The castle at Angers: curtain walls, built in the thirteenth century and moat, the lodge built by René c. 1450 and plan. Photos Peter Fawcett. Plan property of Palgrave: see Kekewich and Rose, *Britain, France and the Empire*, pp. 232–4.

Charles VII's counsellors, Thomas Gascoigne and later French historians maintained that some kind of undertaking had been made by Suffolk that Maine would be returned in the course of the marriage negotiations of 1444. Beaucourt based this claim on a document that Cron suggests was, in fact, a memorandum compiled after the second embassy of 1445 had returned to France.⁸⁷ Amongst other things it stated that during the negotiations at Tours certain things were said 'concerning

⁸⁷Beaucourt, 4, pp. 284–5; BN, fonds fr.18442, f.173; *Loci et Libro Veritatum: passages selected from Gascoigne's Theological Dictionary (1403–1458)*, ed. J.E. Thorold Rogers (Oxford: 1882) pp. 220–1. Gascoigne claimed that the duke of Lorraine 'who is called king of Sicily' (the English did not recognise René as duke of Anjou) helped the duke and duchess of Suffolk to work for peace and the marriage of his daughter to the king of England on the condition that Maine and Anjou were ceded to him; Cron, 'The Duke of Suffolk', pp. 97–8.

the deliverance of Maine' and that a few months later Chaperon and Castillon were sent to sound out Henry VI on the subject and during the embassy of July/August 1445 a verbal promise was made to Bertrand de Beauvau that Maine would be handed over on 1 October 1445. Whilst the subject of Maine may well have been raised by the French or the Angevins at Tours, Suffolk was most unlikely to have made any such undertaking, although he would have reported such conversations to the king. We know that Chaperon and Castillon were in England by April 1445 so that part of the memorandum was accurate. They could have raised the question of Maine, possibly through the agency of queen Margaret, who would have been well briefed on the subject by her father and uncle. We are unlikely ever to know whether or not an undertaking was made by the English government as early as the summer of 1445. Any negotiations that took place then were shrouded in secrecy, as were the later ones that we do know about, and even the French conceded that the promise was verbal.

In July 1445 the French ambassadors arrived in London led by a lord of the blood, Louis de Bourbon, count of Vendôme and Jacques Juvenal des Ursins, archbishop of Reims. It also included two of René's friends and councillors, Bertrand de Beauvau and Guy de Laval, lord of Loué (they had accompanied queen Margaret from Angers to Nancy earlier in the year).⁸⁸ René's ambassadors, the lord de Tucé, the treasurer of Anjou, and Guillaume Gauquelin called Sablé, his secretary, had already met them at Canterbury. Other ambassadors represented the king of Castille and the dukes of Brittany and Alençon but the duke of Burgundy did not send a delegation on the grounds that they had not received a safe-conduct. A detailed account written by a member of the French delegation survives and provides a unique insight into the workings of diplomacy and into the personality of Margaret's husband.⁸⁹ Although it was not spelled out Charles VII could deduce, if he had not already done so, that the king of England was either an idiot or very naive and that France could extract highly favourable terms in return for minor concessions.

The first encounter on 15 July between the ambassadors, king Henry and his councillors, headed by Suffolk and Moleyns, was a formal occasion when flowery sentiments were exchanged. The recorded negotiations began on 19 July, although we do not know what was being

⁸⁸De Beauvau's first wife had been Françoise the sister of Pierre de Brézé, his fourth wife was to be Blanche, René's illegitimate daughter.

⁸⁹Stevenson, 1, pp. 87–159; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, 490–2, for an account of Henry's simple behaviour extracted from the report.

discussed informally in the meantime. It was soon clear that little progress could be made: the English were prepared to give up Henry's claim to the French throne but expected to keep all the lands that they currently held in full sovereignty. The best that the French could offer was Guyenne, including the Limousin and Saintonge, and Calais and Guines, all to be held of the French crown. Both sides were anxious to retain the cordial atmosphere that prevailed so they agreed that Charles and Henry should meet soon in France and that the truce should be extended. Adam Moleyns was to go to France to make the arrangements, he may also, if the document cited by Beaucourt is to be believed, have been charged by Henry and Suffolk with secretly discussing the surrender of Maine. The ambassadors departed, with money for expensive gifts of plate and left Margaret and, possibly, her Angevin advisers to work on the king.⁹⁰

Moleyns visited France and obtained a confirmation of the extension of the truce to November 1446. In November 1445, another French delegation was sent to England although it was not as prestigious as the first, led this time by Guillaume Cousinot (who had participated in the earlier one) the master of requests and Jean Havart, carver to Charles VII. René issued a letter of procuracy to them confirming their authority to negotiate on behalf of Anjou and stressing that they should press for the return of Maine. He and his brother Charles would offer the English a perpetual alliance and a truce for twenty years. He wrote an affectionate letter to Henry VI on the same day, 17 October.⁹¹ He had also, as has been mentioned above, charged Chaperon and Castillon with taking part in the negotiations although they were to be subordinate to the French ambassadors. In Wolffe's view: 'The House of Anjou would thus be allowed to recover Maine only through the licence and agency of the French king, their sovereign lord.'⁹² René may have been acting on his own initiative but if, as is more likely, it was done in collusion with Charles VII, it was a cynical manipulation of the trusting Henry. A long alliance and truce with René was, as it proved, valueless if it was not linked with a long truce or peace with the king of France.

The dukes of York and Gloucester, who might have been expected to oppose the concessions envisaged by Henry VI and Suffolk, were kept out of the negotiations that ensued. In public the negotiations entailed

⁹⁰Devon, p. 459.

⁹¹Lecoq de la March, *René*, 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 258–60.

⁹²Wolffe, p. 188.

discussions about the meeting of the kings of England and France and a further extension of the truce to facilitate it until 1 April 1447. Privately, however, the return of Maine to René and the long truce and alliance with him were being discussed. Henry's intention was not officially made known to his subjects for more than a year, so controversial was it. Letters were sent in October⁹³ from Charles VII to queen Margaret and on 17 December from the queen to Charles that discussed the return of Maine, one from Henry VI followed on 22 December. It is worth quoting from Margaret's letter (which was written in French) as it shows the working of Angevin influence within the English government and contains the kind of sentiments that her new subjects would soon be imputing to her:

... to the pleasure of our lord, we will, upon our part, stretch forth the hand, and will employ ourselves herein effectually to our power in such wise that reason would that you, and all others, ought herein to be gratified. And as to the deliverance which you desire of the county of Maine, and other matters contained in your said letters, we understand that my said lord has written to you at considerable length about this;⁹⁴ and yet herein we will do for your pleasure the best that we can do, as we have always done, as you may be certified of this by the above-said Cousinot and Havart, whom it may graciously please you to hear, and to give credence to what shall be related to you by them upon our part at this time; making us frequently acquainted with your news and of your good prosperity and health; and therein we will take very great pleasure and will have singular consolation. Most high and powerful prince, our very dear uncle, we pray the sweet Jesus Christ that He keep you in His blessed protection. Given at Shene, the xvii day of December, Marguerite.⁹⁵

Helen Maurer interprets this letter, not as a declaration of Margaret's commitment to the aims of France and Anjou, but as a kind of mediation between two parts of her family at a delicate stage in negotiations.⁹⁶ She suggests that 'as queen of England, Margaret would have acquired interests and goals that differed from those of the family she

⁹³This letter has not survived, Escouchy, 3, p. 149.

⁹⁴This letter has not survived.

⁹⁵Stevenson, 1, pp. 164–7.

⁹⁶Maurer, pp. 31–8.

was born into'.⁹⁷ The fifteen-year-old queen had scarcely had time to do such things between April and December 1445. The presence of French and Angevin envoys and servants and the letters that survive or are referred to tell a different story. In his letter of 22 December (in Latin and French), Henry VI referred to the 'many times' that Margaret had requested him to hand over Maine.⁹⁸ Again Maurer believes this to be an unimportant part of a fairly robust letter but there is a difference between what was actually written and what an apologist for the queen wishes to infer from it. Griffiths believes that René rather than Charles VII took the initiative on the surrender of Maine (the Angevin de Beauvau had been prominent in the July mission) and that the king of France accepted it as a sign of good faith for the conclusion of a final peace. He remarks, however, that the resistance the English king encountered from his own subjects in implementing the agreement paradoxically made a renewal of war more likely.⁹⁹ In the meantime queen Margaret and her uncle of France continued to correspond: Escouchy lists five letters from the queen and three from Charles to his niece between 1446 and December 1448.¹⁰⁰ The last of Margaret's letters is dated 10 December – '1448' is written by another hand at the top and '1446' by a different hand at the bottom. Given its place in the sequence of letters and the despairing plea for peace it contains, the later date seems most likely:

Very high and powerful prince and very dear uncle I beg and exhort you resolutely to extend your hand towards my very feared lord who, on his part, is always inclined to the benefits of peace. May it please you to know that in truth we beg and implore God for it as sincerely as is possible.¹⁰¹

No further records exist of correspondence between the queen and her uncle for with the occupation of Maine her usefulness declined and after the outbreak of war between England and France in 1449 her situation must have been an embarrassment to him.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 32; Laynesmith, pp. 185–6, her discussion of queens' families assigns a minor role to Margaret in the English government's decision to surrender Maine. J. Ferguson believes that the queen was actively promoting the return of Maine, 1445–46, *English Diplomacy, 1422–1461* (Oxford: 1972) p. 29 and n. 4.

⁹⁸Stevenson, II, ii, pp. 638–42.

⁹⁹Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 494–5.

¹⁰⁰BN fonds fr. 4054, ff. 33, 76, 79, 94; Escouchy, 3, pp. 149–50, 155–6, 161–3, 170.

¹⁰¹BN fonds fr.4054, f.94.

René spent most of 1446 in his duchy of Anjou. In June he played a prominent part in a tournament held at Razilly, near his sister's castle of Chinon. His son Louis had died and this may have been why his armour and the trappings of his horse were all in black and his shield was covered in tears.¹⁰² At Saumur in late July he confirmed his status as king/duke by holding another lavish tournament. A wooden castle was built on the plain of Launay outside the city and was decorated with tapestries to serve as a pavilion for the noble spectators.¹⁰³ Two lions from his menagerie were pressed into service to add to the splendour of the occasion. The tournament has been called by various names but Lecoy de la Marche suggests that its original name, derived from a contemporary manuscript account, should be 'The Enterprise of the Joyful Garde' (*Emprise de la Joyeuse Garde*). This refers to the Arthurian tale of Sir Lancelot and to his castle which had a similar situation and appearance to the castle at Saumur.¹⁰⁴ Biancotto believes that the tournament was intended by René to portray himself as the most chivalrous prince in France, a deliberate contrast to Charles VII who was not skilled in feats of arms. Escouchy remarked admiringly: 'It seemed that they wished to follow the style of the former knights of the Round Table under the very powerful prince of whom it can be read in ancient histories, who ruled so gloriously, king Arthur.'¹⁰⁵ Ironically the conquest of Normandy, precipitated by the marriage of his daughter, was soon to put René and other great French princes in greater subjection to the French crown.

In his letter of 22 December 1445, Henry had committed himself to hand over Maine by the end of the following April. Even had he dared to announce his intention to his subjects and they had been willing to cooperate, this was not a realistic timetable. When nothing had happened by 1 May 1446, Charles could assume the moral high ground and be patient, continuing the fiction that the two kings would meet in France and extending the truce by short periods to allow it to take place. Henry's advisers were unlikely to have savoured the prospects of an encounter with his 'beloved uncle'. He had already given a great

¹⁰²Beaucourt, 4, p. 184.

¹⁰³G. Biancotto, 'Le Pas d'Armes de Saumur (1446) et la vie chevaleresque à la cour de René d'Anjou', *Le Roi René*, pp. 1–16. He suggests that there was no specially built wooden castle just the castle of Saumur and a few smaller structures on the jousting field.

¹⁰⁴Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pp. 146–7; C. de Mérimondol, *Les Fêtes de chevalerie*, pp. 16–23 and 31–8.

¹⁰⁵Escouchy, 1, pp. 107–8.

deal away to the French and Angevin ambassadors so what would he do when dazzled by the personal blandishments of his close relative? The duke of York, who might have been expected to oppose the cession of Maine, was probably silenced by his continuing hope of marrying his son to a daughter of France. The duke of Gloucester was in poor health and apparently had been in semi-disgrace since Henry VI had ignored his views in the summer of 1445 and, according to the French ambassadors, publicly humiliated him.¹⁰⁶ A parliament was convened at Bury St Edmunds in February 1447. Gloucester was arrested there on the 18th, charged with treason and died in custody five days later. Some of his followers were also arrested but were subsequently pardoned. Whether he was murdered or simply died of shock, his arrest had been a move by the king, Suffolk and Moleyns to pre-empt the strongest source of criticism of the cession of Maine.¹⁰⁷ Yet his fate was to become almost as strong a grievance to the people of England as the loss of French territory.

During the negotiations over the surrender of Maine, whilst relations were still fairly amicable between England, France and France's allies, they took the opportunity finally to end the schism. The election of Martin V in 1415 had seemed to accomplish this but his successor, Eugenius IV, refused to recognise the continuing powers of councils of the Church. This led the reformist clerics at the council of Basle to elect an anti-pope: duke Amadeus of Savoy, called Pope Felix V. The pious René and his fellow princes were scandalised by this development and welcomed the cooperation of the equally pious Henry VI in seeking a solution. In a letter to Charles VII dated 22 July 1447, Henry expressed the hope that the problems of the Church would have a good conclusion. He was sending ambassadors to Lyon where they would join the delegates of the archbishops of Trier and Cologne, the duke of Saxony, the count Palatine of the Rhine and the king of Castille. On their way to meet these allies of France and the French delegation, the English ambassadors would visit king Charles, their purpose was to advance the business of Maine.¹⁰⁸ René had arrived in Provence in March 1447 for what was to prove to be his longest visit since he inherited the county. Now that John of Calabria was lieutenant of Bar and Lorraine and the English were committed to the return of Maine, he could afford to take up residence in the part of the kingdom of Naples that his house retained.

¹⁰⁶Stevenson, 1, pp. 116, 123.

¹⁰⁷Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 496–8.

¹⁰⁸Escouchy, 3, pp. 165–8.

Charles VII was now free of English attacks and could pursue the claims of his relatives, René and Charles of Orleans, in Italy. From the Angevin point of view Provence was a better base than the Loire valley for promoting their cause. Lecoy de la Marche also believed that the good offices of René were central to the negotiations for the end of the schism. In August 1447 he sent John Cossa, Charles of Castillon and Nicolas de Brancas, bishop of Marseille, to meet the other ambassadors at Lyon. It was not until later delegations, including a number of Provençal clerics, had visited Rome, Geneva and Lausanne (the residence of the anti-pope) that Felix V finally accepted an honourable retirement in April 1449. René had good reason for satisfaction since the split within the Church was finally healed and his friend Eugenius IV had triumphed over an anti-pope who favoured his rival, Alfonso of Aragon. Yet his sojourn in Provence was to have one ominous consequence for René. He was visited by Louis the dauphin, ostensibly as part of his pilgrimage to La Sainte Baume, but Lecoy de la Marche suggests that he also wished to draw his uncle into intrigues against his father. René's polite resistance to these blandishments was probably one of the causes of the suspicion between him and the dauphin that was to prove so harmful to his dynasty in years to come.¹⁰⁹

Charles VII maintained the pressure on Henry VI to return Maine: in July 1447 another prestigious embassy led by Dunois and including Beauvau, Cousinot and Havart visited England. In return for an extension of the truce to 1 May 1448, Henry handed them a solemn undertaking to surrender the county on 1 November 1447.

The English custodians of Maine and in particular, the city of Le Mans, had greeted the news of the cession with dismay. They prevaricated from July 1447, when Henry nominated two commissioners to receive Maine from its lord Edmund Beaufort, marquis of Dorset (he was to be made duke of Somerset early in 1448, his brother John had died in 1444), until the following spring.¹¹⁰ Beaufort was to receive a considerable sum from the king in compensation for his county but provision for the lesser ranks who lost land was scanty – one of the reasons for the resistance to the agreement. The English government had also made no prior arrangements for the orderly withdrawal of its soldiers and citizens to Normandy. By early 1448 Charles was

¹⁰⁹Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 254–5.

¹¹⁰On 28 October 1447 a squire of Pierre de Brézé, Rawlyn, was in England and was given nineteen yards of purple damask worth £12 13s 4d but not Maine! Stevenson, 1, pp. 470–1.

becoming exasperated with the inability of his 'dear nephew' to enforce the obedience of his subjects. In early March he sent a force of 6000 to 7000 men, supported by formidable artillery, to invest Le Mans. There was a flurry of activity by Henry's representatives in France and eventually the city and most of Maine was handed over on 15 March. In return the English got an extension of the truce until April 1450.

By his siege of Le Mans Charles VII had staged what was to prove a useful dress rehearsal for his campaigns against the English in the following years. In the short term René gained a great deal from the negotiations of 1444–48: the security of Anjou, the return of Maine, the gratitude of Charles VII (expressed in practical terms at Nancy and Châlons) and the prestige of having a daughter who was queen of a powerful country. Yet he had invested that prestige in the weak vessel that his son-in-law was already proving to be. As she matured Margaret showed strength and determination but she had a fatal lack of understanding of or sympathy for the political values of her new subjects. She emulated one of her husband's worst traits when she chose her English advisers from the royal households and the group of nobles who enjoyed his favour, particularly Suffolk and the Beauforts. The combination of Henry and Margaret was to be fatal for the prospects of their son, who would be three-quarters Valois, and eventually a burden and a humiliation for René.

The reconquest of Normandy and Guyenne

Initially the return of Maine to the house of Anjou looked as if it might purchase the peace that the English craved. Negotiations continued throughout the remainder of 1448 and in early 1449 but there were several reasons why they were doomed to failure. Plenty of intelligence would have reached Charles VII from Normandy that the defensive capacity of the duchy had been drastically reduced since the days of Bedford. He probably also realised that the financial resources of the English government were not equal to improving it and that morale was low on both sides of the Channel. King Charles found the new royal lieutenant in northern France, Edmund duke of Somerset, haughty and inflexible.¹¹¹ Charles realised that his negotiating position was far stronger than it had been in 1443: his armies had been reorganised and had sharpened their skills in the Metz and German forays and also had

¹¹¹Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 514.

superior artillery. All he needed was a decent excuse to break the truce and his prospects of reconquering all or part of Normandy and the Pas de Calais were good. René was resident in Provence from early 1447 to mid-1449 but regular communications would have been maintained. He had possibly discussed a long-term strategy for the return of more English-held territory with Charles at Montils-les-Tours before he left the Loire Valley.¹¹² His reputation for piety and chivalry made it timely that, as the participant in a perpetual alliance with England and father of its queen, he should absent himself from the theatre of operations for a while.

Duke Francis had confirmed his allegiance to France in 1446 but this was not recognised by the English government.¹¹³ Ignoring reality it persisted in the view that what transpired between the duchy and England was of no concern to France. The capture in 1446 of Giles of Brittany by French soldiers and his imprisonment by duke Francis his brother could be regarded as the first infringement of the truce. Henry was so anxious to maintain the peace with France that for nearly three years he attempted to negotiate for the release of Giles, his close friend and liege. Then in March 1449 the Breton town of Fougères was subjected to a surprise attack, capture and sack by one of Somerset's captains, the Aragonese, François de Surienne.¹¹⁴ It is clear from the justificatory reports that he subsequently sent to England, France, Aragon and Rome that Henry, Suffolk and Somerset were all implicated in this attempt to put pressure on Francis of Brittany.¹¹⁵ Far from achieving the release of Giles it led to a declaration by the duke in alliance with his liege lord, Charles VII, that they were no longer bound by the truce. A joint Franco-Breton force attacked Normandy in May and took Pont de l'Arche and later in the year Giles was murdered. On 31 July Charles VII formally stated that the truce with England had ended. Since René and Charles of Maine were lieges of the French king they could legitimately claim that their alliance and truce with Henry VI was also terminated.

¹¹²Beaucourt, 4, p. 204; Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, Itineraries, pp. 448–9.

¹¹³They had slipped Brittany in as one of the English lieges participating in a renewal of the truce with France in 1448, see Wolffe for this whole issue, especially pp. 200–9.

¹¹⁴M.H. Keen and M.J. Daniel, 'English Diplomacy and the Sack of Fougères in 1449', *History*, 59 (1974): 375–91. They suggest that English thinking may have extended beyond the release of Giles to using him, his lands and following in Brittany as a substitute for the alliance with Burgundy that had been lost in 1435.

¹¹⁵Stevenson, 1, pp. 278–98, 310–11.

None of his advisers, who by 1449 included Margaret of Anjou his wife of four years, are recorded as suggesting to Henry VI that he might save something from France if he took personal command of his forces there. At least the king's presence in Normandy would have raised English morale but in his absence they were led by Somerset whose strategy, '...if so it could be called, was merely for each garrison to sit tight and wait to be invested'.¹¹⁶ Most of them did not have to wait for very long: a large number of fortified Norman towns fell to king Charles (with Charles of Maine at his side) and his chief commanders Dunois, the constable Richemont, Alençon and de Brézé between May and October. The dauphin, however, was not in his company: incessant rumours of plots by the son against his father had caused a permanent estrangement and they never met again.

René hurried back from Provence when he got word that the Valois were again going to war and he was soon joined by John of Calabria. René met Charles VII at Louviers, near Rouen the English capital, with a group of Angevin gentlemen, fifty lances and a corps of archers. The company included Charles of Maine (as ever), Ferry of Vaudemont, his brother John of Lorraine count of Harcourt and other Angevins: 'The king of France made great cheer to the king of Sicily and received him joyously.'¹¹⁷ Showing the diplomatic moderation that characterised his reconquest of Normandy, Charles VII opened negotiations with the citizens of Rouen. Some were French partisans and most were fearful of an assault probably followed by the horrors of a sack. Somerset, ensconced in the strong fortress, huffed and puffed but a few bursts of artillery brought him to capitulate. He negotiated good terms for himself, his family and followers who could leave in an honourable fashion. He promised, however, to pay a ransom, deliver several strong Norman towns, including the port of Harfleur, to France and to leave hostages. Since Talbot was the most prominent of these the English war effort was further incapacitated.

On 10 November 1449, Charles VII entered his city of Rouen fully armed and riding on a courser covered in a cloth embroidered with golden fleur de lis. René rode on his left and Charles of Maine on his right, both were fully armed and their horses wore cloths bearing the white crosses of France, sewn with hoops of gold thread. A great procession of lords, knights and pages followed the kings and behind them priests and monks carrying crosses, religious banners and relics

¹¹⁶Wolffe, p. 210.

¹¹⁷Bouvier, p. 312.

and singing the *Te Deum*. Charles VII was greeted by the archbishop of Rouen and other Norman bishops at the cathedral of Notre-Dame and, amidst general rejoicing, swore to observe the privileges of the Church and prayed devoutly at the high altar.¹¹⁸

A lesser man might have rested on his laurels for a time, especially as the winter of 1449/50 was very hard. Charles VII realised, however, that his conquests had acquired an irresistible momentum and, with his brothers-in-law at his side, he proceeded to besiege Harfleur, which had not been handed over despite Somerset's undertaking, and the town surrendered. Then Charles, accompanied by René, went to the abbey of Jumièges, where Agnès Sorel was dying. Little real evidence, beyond the malicious gossip of sanctimonious contemporaries, survives about the true nature of this most famous of royal mistresses or what, if any, political influence she exerted on the king.¹¹⁹ She started her career as an Angevin servant and her elevation during the late 1440s does not appear to have harmed her former employers. There was talk about her relationship with Pierre de Brézé and his jealousy of the Angevins but little of substance can be cited. During the period of their *affaire* Charles got the better of Burgundy, cowed western Germany, helped to end the schism, reconquered Normandy and was acclaimed by his subjects in a fashion that had not been seen since the days of Charles V. As Gregory's *Chronicle* later observed of Edward IV of England's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville: 'Now take heed what love may do.'¹²⁰

The English finally managed to put a relieving army into Normandy, in March 1450, commanded by Sir Thomas Kyriell. He marched into the Cotentin and started to recapture some of the places that had been lost in the previous year. Somerset would, however, have been better advised to concentrate on defending Caen and Cherbourg, the only realistic strategy at a time when the king of France and the lords of his blood were rampaging victoriously through Normandy. Yet both sides were still influenced by the memories of the campaigns of the 1420s and 1430s and, according to Beaucourt, the French attempted to avoid a field battle with the English on 15 April at Formigny.¹²¹ The superior

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 323–4; Vale, *Charles VII*, pp. 203–4; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 517–18; Beaucourt, 5, pp. 19–24; B. Guinée and F. Lehoux, *Les Entrées Royales Françaises de 1328 à 1515* (Paris: 1968) pp. 160–2.

¹¹⁹Vale, pp. 92–5, 135–6; Mechineau, especially chapter 9.

¹²⁰'Gregory's Chronicle', *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London*, ed. J. Gairdner (London: 1876/1965) p. 226.

¹²¹De Beaucourt, 5, pp. 27–34.

fire-power of the French and the timely arrival of the constable Riche-mont with his Bretons decided the day. The English mortality was high and many were taken prisoner so further resistance, even if they had had the heart for it, would have been difficult. Bayeux and other towns quickly fell and in June the siege of Caen started in earnest in the presence of Charles VII and king René. On 1 July Somerset left the city for Calais 'with the last debris of his army' having again secured the safety of his family and followers in return for its surrender. By the end of August all the remaining English towns, including Cherbourg, had surrendered. Some of the settlers went to Calais but most returned to England where no provision had been made for them so they were mostly destitute and embittered.¹²²

In an age that saw the hand of God in all major events the initial successes of the French had given them a psychological as well as a material advantage. René, who had himself suffered a comparable defeat to the English at Bulgnéville and in Naples, had fully participated in the victory in Normandy. This increased both his reputation as a valiant and chivalrous prince and his standing at the French court. There is no real evidence, despite murmurings, that it had ever been seriously threatened but in 1450 it was certainly high. In the words of Lecoy de la Marche: 'At this time René seemed to have arrived at the height of his power and his political influence.'¹²³ Contemporaries were happy to associate René with the glory of king Charles during the surrender of Rouen, both of them behaving in a suitably kingly fashion: 'It was a very noble thing to see the kings of France and Sicily.'¹²⁴ The attack on Guyenne was already under way by the end of 1450 but René enjoyed the civilised and peaceful pleasures of Anjou in the company of his wife and family.

The first conquest of Guyenne took place remarkably smoothly despite the preference that many of its inhabitants felt for English rule. This was of long duration and came from inheritance not conquest as the wife of Henry II of England, Eleanor of Aquitaine, had passed on her rights to their children. The English were welcome because they left the ruling and commercial orders in Guyenne pretty much to govern themselves. Yet despite these benefits and the efforts of Henry VI's government to re-supply the duchy it fell into the hands of Dunois, the chief commander. Charles did not accompany his armies but let it be known that if

¹²²Wolffe, p. 211.

¹²³Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 261.

¹²⁴Bouvier, p. 319.

Bordeaux capitulated he would grant the people of the Bordelais generous privileges. When no English force appeared to relieve them by the end of June 1451 the principal city of Guyenne opened its gates to the royal French army. Amongst those who participated in the victorious entry were eighty men-at-arms sent by Charles of Maine.¹²⁵

René does not appear to have taken any part in the conquest but he did join Charles VII at Taillebourg in Poitou in August where representatives of Bordeaux and other towns did homage.¹²⁶ Many other lords of the blood and great nobles attended the king of France there including Charles of Maine, Vendôme and Dunois. They were probably discussing another major aspect of royal policy, the Italian enterprise, and for that the king of Sicily's presence was vital. Characteristically the Angevins presented their case in a rhetorical and devotional context. Stephano Cornagli, René's secretary, gave a discourse before Charles VII in which he exhorted him not to leave a barbarian on the throne of Naples but to aid his 'brother'. He referred to the victories of Formigny and Bordeaux and the apparition of the white cross of France in the sky before the fall of Bayonne.¹²⁷ Whilst René would have rejoiced at the conquest of Guyenne it did not directly affect him although the Angevins had shown their commitment through the participation of troops from Maine. René spent the spring of 1452 in Provence, then returned to Anjou and went to northern Italy via Provence in 1453.¹²⁸

The French had been premature in turning their attention to Italy for in October 1452, Talbot, with 4000 to 5000 soldiers from England, re-took Bordeaux with local collusion and went on to occupy many of the places that had fallen in the previous year. It was too late in the year to launch a counter-attack but by the summer of 1453 Charles VII, accompanied by Charles of Maine, was ready to lead four armies into Guyenne.¹²⁹ The count of Clermont was the king's principal commander, they reoccupied several towns and one of the armies besieged Castillon. Talbot left the stronghold of Bordeaux and, apparently mistaking the strength of the investing force, attacked it on 17 July. He was defeated and killed: many of the best English and Gascon soldiers died with him.¹³⁰

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 371 *et seq.*; Beaucourt, 5, chapter 2.

¹²⁶Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, Itineraries, p. 452.

¹²⁷P. Contamine, *Pages d'Histoire: militaire médiévale (xiv^e–xv^e siècles)* (Paris: 2005) p. 220.

¹²⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, Itineraries, pp. 453–4.

¹²⁹Beaucourt, 5, chapter 9; Vale, *Charles VII*, pp. 139–40.

¹³⁰Pollard, pp. 135–8.

The soldiers of a number of French nobles fought in the battle, including those of Charles of Maine who were led by Pierre de Beauvau.¹³¹ Charles VII himself supervised the siege of Bordeaux that fell in October so English rule in Guyenne had finally ended. As Griffiths observes: 'The effect on the king [Henry VI] himself, who had striven for an honourable and negotiated peace, and yet had suffered crushing defeats and the loss of his second realm, was bound to be shattering.'¹³² The disastrous effects on the English polity had already become apparent.

Crisis in England

The turbulent events in England from 1449 to 1453 can be viewed from an Angevin perspective if the role of queen Margaret, her Angevin servants¹³³ and the English whom she favoured is considered. It was noted above that Margaret brought little in the way of a permanent entourage of Angevins with her in 1445. The best source for the senior personnel in her household is the edition of her accounts for 1452–53 published by A.R. Myers.¹³⁴ These are almost devoid of references to Angevin men¹³⁵ but the queen still had some ladies in her service and to these more can be added. The accounts also refer to her senior household officials and members of her council, they are useful for considering her links with these men and the troubles in which the queen became embroiled. Not all of them had necessarily held office since 1445 (Somerset, her most important councillor, had been in France for over two years – 1448–50) but the accounts cover a time of acute unrest and of Margaret's increasing political engagement.

¹³¹He died in September either of the wounds he had received at Castillon or of the plague, Beaucourt, 5, p. 281.

¹³²Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 533.

¹³³Here 'Angevin' describes a person from any of Margaret's father's domains or from elsewhere in France or Germany who served her. This study shows how interchangeable were the servants of the kings of France, Sicily and other princes.

¹³⁴A.R. Myers, 'The Household of Margaret of Anjou, 1452–3', *Crown, Household and Parliament in Fifteenth Century England*, ed. C.H. Clough (London, Ronceverte: 1985) pp. 135–209. In 1454 Margaret's household numbered about 120, p. 146.

¹³⁵See below for John Prince. Thomas Belwel, a French surgeon, had been naturalised in 1443 before the queen's arrival. She later employed him with others to treat the king during his mental collapse. In 1452/3 he was in receipt of an annual sum of £4 11s 3d as well as an annuity of 100s 8d, C. Rawcliffe, 'Master Surgeons at the Lancastrian Court', *The Lancastrian Court: Proceedings of the 2001 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. J. Stratford (Donington: 2003) pp. 192–210.

Queen Margaret's chancellor was Laurence Booth, a canon of St Paul's, and he thrived, collecting several benefices and offices, becoming Dean of St Paul's and, in 1457, bishop of Durham. Sir John Wenlock was her chamberlain and Viscount Beaumont was steward of her lands. Amongst other officials, William Cotton was her receiver general and treasurer of her household, Edward Ellesmere was treasurer of her chamber, Sir Andrew Ogard and Sir Edward Hull were her carvers. Robert Tanfield her attorney general was assisted by five other attorneys and several apprentices-at-law.¹³⁶ These were supplemented by yet more attorneys and apprentices for the meetings of the queen's council that took place daily at Westminster. Some of her officials also held posts in the king's household and this made sense because, from time to time, the two establishments merged. The letters collected by C. Munro and Anne Crawford and discussed by Diana Dunn and Helen Maurer give a good idea of much of the business, mainly devoted to her property interests and charitable works, transacted by the queen.¹³⁷ Only occasionally do they give any intimation of her more controversial activities: communications with royal advisers such as Suffolk or Somerset were likely to go unrecorded. Her family, wise in the ways of the Valois court, would have enjoined discretion concerning such matters on her before she left France. No letters from the Angevins have survived but they surely existed and two items in the accounts of René of Anjou prove that contact was maintained.¹³⁸ In June 1448 payment was made for material for a robe that was to be given to Jehan des Dames, a servant of the queen of England. In January 1458 reference was made to hackney horses sent to her father by the queen. Margaret's accounts include payment for jewels, a gift that she sent to her father in 1445.¹³⁹ A safe-conduct was issued to Isabelle of Lorraine's

¹³⁶See the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, for details about the first three men and J.C. Wedgwood, *History of Parliament: Biographies of Members of the Common House, 1439–1509* (London: 1936) for the others (apart from Ellesmere). All had served the English crown before joining the queen's household.

¹³⁷C. Monro, ed., *Letters of Queen Margaret and Bishop Beckington and Others* (London: 1863); A. Crawford, ed., *Letters of the Queens of England, 1100–1547* (Stroud: 1994); D. Dunn, 'Margaret of Anjou: a Reassessment'; Maurer, especially chapter 4.

¹³⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *Comptes*, pp. 36–7, 233. The survival of these accounts is very patchy, more contacts between the queen and her family, 1445 to 1461, were probably recorded.

¹³⁹A.R. Myers, 'The Jewels of Queen Margaret of Anjou', *Crown, Household and Parliament*, pp. 211–29, p. 221, n. 1.

chaplain in 1447 so that he could return to France.¹⁴⁰ Such records as survive could have been the tip of a large iceberg.

A substantial number of queen Margaret's ladies were English, led by noblewomen such as Ismania lady Scales, lady Margaret Roos and lady Isabel Butler but she also kept a number of Angevin ladies in her household. Barbelina Herberquyne was born in Germany and her services were highly valued as Henry VI, with characteristic prodigality, gave her a pension of £40 per annum for life as early as July 1446.¹⁴¹ Katherine Gatewayne was born in Anjou and was presumably already married to Robert Whittingham, who held a number of household posts, when they were granted the reversion of an income of 40 marks for good service in February 1448.¹⁴² Whittingham was captain of Caen in 1449. In 1451, at the height of the war with France, he was charged with exhuming the body of John, duke of Bourbon, who had died in captivity and arranging for it to be sent to France. Had the queen wished, this would have been a means of contacting her family.¹⁴³ Jamonna de Sharneres was born in Anjou and married one of the queen's squires, Thomas Shernborne, in 1449 when he received a grant of £20 per annum from Margaret's manor of Great Waltham.¹⁴⁴ Osanna Herman was born in the duchy of Burgundy, she married in England but it is not clear whether or not 'Herman' was her married name. The queen gave her £200 in 1452/3 on the occasion of her marriage.¹⁴⁵

Three other ladies are mentioned in the list of those given letters of denization in 1449 (which included the four mentioned above): Marie, the bastard daughter of Charles of Maine, born in Touraine, Isabel Barbays, born in Lorraine, and Isabel de Gragione, born in Berry.¹⁴⁶ Marie was probably a child when she came to England as she did not marry until 1457: she received a New Year's gift of gilded chopyns (a

¹⁴⁰Monro, pp. 136–7.

¹⁴¹Myers, 'Household' p. 183 and n. 1; *CPR, 1446–52*, p. 240; *CPR, 1441–6*, p. 445.

¹⁴²*CPR, 1446–52*, p. 165.

¹⁴³NA, Issues of the Exchequer, E403/777; *CPR, 1446–52*, p. 410.

¹⁴⁴Monro, pp. 108–9. The name 'Shernborne' is spelt in several different ways in the records. A memorial brass to the couple is still to be seen in Shernborne church.

¹⁴⁵Myers, 'Household' p. 204. The identity of her husband is unknown: several Hermans occur in the rolls and the most likely candidate is William, a merchant of Ely who held several posts as collector of customs, *CPR, 1446–52*, p. 392; *CFR, 1445–52*, pp. 138, 232–4.

¹⁴⁶*CPR, 1446–52*, p. 240.

vessel for wine) from the queen in 1453.¹⁴⁷ She wed Thomas Courtenay, later earl of Devon, who was killed after the battle of Towton in 1461. Van Kerrebrouck traces her career after her return to France as a widow. She married the lord of Auricher and, in 1470, received a gift of 200 livres from her father.¹⁴⁸ In 1456 letters of denization were issued to four more French people: Katherine Vaux, née Peniston, the wife of William Vaux, born in Provence, Joan Grayonne, born in France, Jacquetta, wife of Thomas Bernet, born in Provence and James Prynne, born in France.¹⁴⁹ It is not clear how long they had been in England but Katherine was certainly one of Margaret's ladies and the others were probably her servants. William Vaux was a loyal Lancastrian who held offices, including that of sheriff, in his home county of Northamptonshire and elsewhere.¹⁵⁰ No trace of Thomas Bernet has been found. Some of these ladies would have been young and attractive when they came to England (this is demonstrated by the alacrity with which they made good marriages), several married Lancastrian loyalists. Margaret's letters show her to have been an active promoter of matches for these offered the triple advantages of rewarding followers free of charge, invoking their gratitude and promoting the queen's policies including the furthering of Angevin/French interests.

If Mathieu Escouchy is to be believed queen Margaret anticipated the evils that bankruptcy and the loss of Normandy and Guyenne were to bring upon the Lancastrians. She must have appreciated that as a French bride, linked to the unsuccessful peace negotiations and as yet childless, she was vulnerable to popular censure. Writing of the crown's penury and the disorders in England in 1450 he reported that it was alleged that Margaret was not the daughter of the king of Sicily but only of his wife and some said that she should be sent back to France. Hearing of these murmurs she:

... often had feelings of great resentment and grief concerning what she knew of the weakness of her husband. If God did not prevent it she and her husband would encounter great dangers. She patiently

¹⁴⁷Myers, 'Jewels', p. 224.

¹⁴⁸Van Kerrebrouck, p. 317 and n. 28.

¹⁴⁹*CPR, 1452-61*, p. 342. Myers says that Joan Prynne was the sister of John Prynne, a chamber servant of the queen, 'James' could be a mistake for 'John' in the Patent Rolls. Both a Joan and a Jacquetta received a gift of silver spoons from the queen, 'Household', p. 184, n. 1, 'Jewels', p. 227, n. 1.

¹⁵⁰*CFR, 1445-52*, pp. 145, 172; *1452-61*, pp. 74, 187, 223-4.

bore these things in public but in private often made great lamentations and piteous complaints. On the night of the Kings 1450 [Epiphany 6 January 1451] when they sat at table nothing was ready and the officers who should serve the food could find no money and no one would give them food without ready cash.¹⁵¹

Escouchy's most likely source for such private information (written with the benefit of hindsight) would have been an Angevin, probably one of Margaret's ladies. This portrayal of her state of mind sits uneasily with the picture of a dutiful wife and loyal English subject offered by Maurer and Laynesmith.

The first alarming sign that royal authority was foundering was the murder by mutinous sailors of bishop Adam Moleyns, Henry VI's trusted counsellor, at Portsmouth on 9 January 1450. It is impossible to know whether his role in the arrangement of the king's marriage and subsequent peace negotiations was the main reason for his death but that was certainly the case with the next victim of the common people, the duke of Suffolk. Parliament had assembled the previous November as news of losses in Normandy arrived almost daily. It proceeded to pass an Act of Resumption in the belated hope that this would enable the king to raise sufficient revenue to pay for both his domestic expenses and the defence of his French domains. On 7 February 1450, the speaker presented a bill of impeachment for treason and misprision¹⁵² of treason against Suffolk to the chancellor. The charges included the allegation that he had colluded with the French for personal gain and against the interests of England in the peace negotiations. Amongst many other secondary crimes he was accused of:

Item, where the said duke of Suffolk, late was one of your ambassadors with other, to your said adversary Charles, calling himself king of France; he, above his instruction and power to him by you committed, promised to Reyner king of Sicily, and Charles d'Angers his brother, your great ennemys, the deliverance of Mans and Maine, without the assent, advice or knowing of your ambassadors then with him accompanied; and thereupon, for great rewards given to him by the king's enemies caused the deliverance of Mans and Maine.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹Escouchy, 1, pp. 303–4.

¹⁵²Concealment of knowledge of treasonable designs.

¹⁵³Wolffe, p. 225; I.M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford: 1991) pp. 67–9; *RP*, 5, pp. 177–82.

On 17 March Henry VI announced that Suffolk was not to be convicted of eight major, capital charges, for the lesser ones he was to be banished for five years. This turned out to be an unintended sentence of death as the duke was seized on the high seas as he left the kingdom and on 2 May was beheaded by English sailors. The proceedings against Suffolk were strongly francophobe although the queen was not directly associated in them. Yet the condemnation and destruction by parliament and the common people of the man who had headed the negotiations for her marriage and stood proxy for her bridegroom could only humiliate and weaken her in the eyes of her subjects.

Matters got much worse for the royal couple and their advisers in the summer of 1450. Henry VI's response to Jack Cade's rebellion was typified by the kind of timorous muddle that had already caused the loss of Maine and most of Normandy.¹⁵⁴ Wolffe suggests that queen Margaret remained in her manor at Greenwich when Henry VI retreated to the Midlands, and that it was at her instigation that a general pardon was offered to the rebels on 6 July, 'at the request of the queen'.¹⁵⁵ He cites no authority for her stay at Greenwich and it seems strange that the queen would remain there, only half a mile from the rebels' favourite encampment at Blackheath. The policy, however, was a sound one and whatever Margaret's role may have been in planning it, the outcome was to send most of the rebels peacefully back home. Maurer's study stresses the importance of Margaret's activities as an intercessor, moderating the harsh justice of the king's will with gentler feminine counsels.¹⁵⁶ In this case Margaret, who had not been singled out by the rebels for criticism, seems to have played an acceptable and constructive role in the re-establishment of some form of royal authority.¹⁵⁷

Several prominent household men and bishop Aiscough, who had conducted Margaret's wedding five years before, had been killed during 1450. There was an opportunity for the government to address some of the problems that had caused the revolts as commissions of the peace were able to restore a reasonable degree of order by early 1451. A second,

¹⁵⁴Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 610–49; M. Bohna, 'Armed Force and Civic Legitimacy in Jack Cade's Revolt, 1450', *EHR*, 118 (2003) pp. 563–82.

¹⁵⁵Wolffe, pp. 237–8; *CPR 1446–52*, p. 338.

¹⁵⁶Maurer, pp. 67–72.

¹⁵⁷The queen's chancellor William Booth, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (his half-brother Laurence was to succeed him in the post) and her chaplain Walter Lyhert, bishop of Norwich, were threatened by the insurgents. This was not necessarily on account of their service to her since their association with Suffolk's regime had probably attracted popular ire.

more effective Act of Resumption was also passed by parliament so that the crown's disposable income rose substantially. Yet, ominously, two great mutually hostile lords, both with close blood ties to the crown had arrived in England in the second half of 1450. Edmund Beaufort, duke of Somerset, returned ignominiously from Calais after the surrender of Caen. Richard Plantagenet, duke of York, lord lieutenant of Ireland, could not resist the opportunity to capitalise on his popularity as the one commander in Normandy who was not apparently implicated in the losses of the previous two years. In the absence of any firm political direction from Henry VI, the queen could sway her husband and his servants in favour of one or the other or she could be even-handed in her dealings with them. Fatally she was to seek a Valois rather than a Plantagenet solution: Henry IV and Henry V of England had embedded their new regime by a policy of firmness but also of winning over potentially hostile nobles. But as J.J. Bagley remarked: 'Nothing in the traditions she had inherited cautioned her from supporting one particular group of nobles, for neither the House of Anjou nor the House of Valois hesitated to take sides when their subjects divided into warring factions.'¹⁵⁸ The French common people were perfectly capable of revolting, as several uprisings during the reign of Charles VI had proved, but their protests lacked the political coherence and the danger of the English risings of 1381 and 1450.¹⁵⁹ Queen Margaret had left France when she was still very young with only limited experience of the workings of courts and governments and could have had little idea of the common people as a political force. She was, as yet, only one of a number of people who could influence the king but her authority increased in the mid-1450s as others were removed from his court and she bore a son.

The way in which Margaret furthered the interests of her friends and servants between 1449 and 1453, in the face of the criticisms of the royal household made by parliament, some nobles and many of the common people, shows her insouciance. After his ignominious return from Normandy Somerset was welcomed at court and made constable of England, captain of Calais and a member of the king's and queen's councils. A determined effort was made by Henry and Margaret to reintroduce household men into the counties, especially the disorderly ones. Together with William Say, another usher of the king's chamber,

¹⁵⁸Bagley, p. 56.

¹⁵⁹M.L. Kekewich and S. Rose, *Britain, France and the Empire, 1350–1500* (Basingstoke: 2005) pp. 72–84.

for example, Robert Whittingham was granted in survivorship the office of baliff of Sandwich in June 1451.¹⁶⁰ The following year he was sheriff of Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire and was pardoned in 1453 for not paying the farm due of £65 10s.¹⁶¹ In July 1451 Thomas Shernborne was given a pardon on account of his good service to the king and queen. He had been called before a commission of *oyer and terminer* (to hear and determine a criminal trial under writ) in Norfolk charged with various trespasses, oppressions, extortions and other offences but he said that he had not dared to appear through fear of death at the hands of his enemies.¹⁶² Suffolk and Henry VI had allowed such abuses to occur in the 1440s, but after the parliaments of 1449 to 1451, Cade's rising and Margaret's increasing involvement in politics she was partly responsible for repeating the old mistakes.

A great deal of discussion has taken place during the past three decades concerning the origins and nature of the animosity between York and Somerset and more recently the part played by Margaret of Anjou.¹⁶³ York had consumed a whole cocktail of grievances against Somerset by the late summer of 1450 and his hostile reception in Wales by members of the king's household contrasted starkly with the offices and honours piled upon his rival. There was still no immediate prospect that the king would have an heir and, after five years of marriage, it may have seemed that one of the noble houses 'of the blood royal' would eventually provide one. The Beauforts were directly descended from John of Gaunt, Edward III's third son; the duke of Exeter was the grandson of Henry IV's sister; and York was descended from the second son of Edward III in the female line and his fifth son in the male line. The Beauforts had been legitimised by parliament but it had also declared that they could not succeed to the throne so that left York with the best claim to be Henry VI's heir. This situation and his knowledge of the fate of the duke of Gloucester doubtless influenced his behaviour during the coming years. Margaret, it has been suggested above, must have regarded York with misgivings when she first encountered him in Normandy in 1445.

¹⁶⁰CPR, 1446–52, p. 473.

¹⁶¹CPR, 1452–61, p. 78.

¹⁶²CPR, 1446–52, p. 454.

¹⁶³R.A. Griffiths, 'Duke Richard of York's Intentions in 1450 and the Origins of the Wars of the Roses', *King and Country: England and Wales in the Fifteenth Century* (London, Rio Grande: 1991) pp. 277–304; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, especially chapter 22; M.K. Jones, 'Somerset, York and the Wars of the Roses', *EHR*, 104 (1989) pp. 285–307; Watts, chapter 7; D. Dunn, 'Margaret of Anjou: a Reassessment', pp. 107–43; Maurer, *passim*; Laynesmith, pp. 163–7.

Both appear to have behaved very correctly on that and subsequent occasions. By 1450, however, York was prepared to capitalise on popular and noble hatred of Suffolk and to collude in casting Somerset in the role of his successor. As Watts has pointed out, Somerset had to assume this role if he wished to exercise power since only the weak king and his omnipresent household could legitimate authority.¹⁶⁴ The queen also played a part in the magnification of Somerset, she paid him an annuity of 100 marks from 1451, as well as welcoming him to her council, thus putting her on a collision course with York well before their public conflict in the late 1450s.

In September 1450 York attempted to recover the ground that he had lost against Somerset by offering his services to Henry VI to restore order and prosecute traitors (including Somerset). Henry made it clear that he regarded York as simply one amongst a number of those who might support and counsel him. When York's henchman, Thomas Younge, proposed to parliament in May 1451 that his master should be recognised as the royal heir he was sent to the Tower of London and parliament was dissolved. Michael Jones suggests that Younge's proposal was an affront to the queen as it implied that she was barren.¹⁶⁵ York was not included in the various judicial progresses upon which the king, with uncharacteristic vigour, embarked in 1451. These restored a large degree of royal authority in previously disaffected counties such as Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and Wiltshire. York attempted to break into the government by a show of force outside London in 1452 but he failed to gain support from the nobility and submitted to the king. Henry made two more judicial progresses through the lands belonging to York, Devon and their supporters, executing a few and fining many. The king spent Christmas and the first half of January 1453 with Margaret at Greenwich: it must have been at this time that prince Edward was conceived. Henry then went on what was to be his final judicial progress in the eastern counties ending at Reading where a new, amenable parliament voted him unusually large sums of money. With Guyenne reconquered, York quelled and the queen pregnant Henry's prestige was greater than at any time since his marriage.¹⁶⁶ It was all to go terribly wrong in

¹⁶⁴Watts, p. 293; the price Somerset had to pay for household support was to allow some of the old financial laxity that had been curbed in 1450/1, to reappear.

¹⁶⁵Jones, 'Somerset, York and the Wars of the Roses', p. 289, n. 2.

¹⁶⁶Laynesmith makes the point that kings enhanced their status by the very act of being married, pp. 30–6.

the summer with the defeat and death of Talbot at Castillon and the king's descent into lunacy.

Conclusion

Writing of the English troubles in the early 1450s Olivier de la Marche asserted:

The French king found the means, at a distance, to cause dissent in England on account of the government, between the duke of York and the duke of Somerset because king Henry of England, son of the valiant and wise king Henry, was a simple person, too much given to God and to devotion to defend and increase his realm and lordship. And his wife, queen Margaret, governed all England who, in truth, was a wise woman of great spirit. This queen was daughter of the king of Sicily ... And by this dissention the English lost what they had in France.¹⁶⁷

Bagley has cautioned against the temptation to impute too much political importance to queen Margaret during her first ten years as queen, and de la Marche was writing with the benefit of hindsight.¹⁶⁸ On the other hand, from her betrothal, via her friendship with Suffolk and his wife to the favour she showed to Somerset she was progressively linked in popular English opinion with the loss of the French lands and with bad government at home. Her early correspondence with Charles VII (and it must be assumed with her father, although it has not survived) may have been of little consequence. She probably influenced her impressionable new husband to return Maine but that was already on the Franco/Angevin agenda in the peace negotiations. Margaret's growing maturity and Henry's simplicity must, however, allow her a significant degree of political influence by 1450. She was already showing determination and sense in the way in which she conducted the business of her dower lands and household. She had brought a number of ladies with her from Anjou and these together with the Englishmen and women connected with both royal households formed a protective phalanx round her. She seems to have encouraged her Angevin ladies to take out letters of denization and, in several cases, to marry key members of

¹⁶⁷O. de la Marche, 2, pp. 208–9.

¹⁶⁸Bagley, pp. 53–4.

the government and household, but was this Anglicisation or Angevin infiltration?

If queen Margaret was actively involved in offering pardon to the Cade rebels in 1450 she showed a sagacity that was often absent in her later political dealings. Another possible instance of her positive influence might have been the vigorous and successful series of judicial progresses that Henry undertook. Why did he not undertake such progresses earlier in his reign and indeed go to France, when such royal leadership could have yielded golden returns?¹⁶⁹ Whilst the queen may have given York and his servants conventionally splendid New Year gifts in the early 1450s too much should not be read into these traditional transactions.¹⁷⁰ What counted in political terms was the preferential treatment Somerset received from Margaret and Henry. There were several opportunities between 1450 and mid-1453 for Henry and Margaret to 'extend the hand' to York, both by inviting him to the royal council and by offering him lands or offices that would balance, in some measure, the favours shown to Somerset and his followers. This would not have been interpreted as weakness but as a statesmanlike compromise that, in the long run, might have avoided civil war and the destruction of the house of Lancaster.

Angevin interests were well served by the diplomatic exchanges between England and France from 1444 to 1449, by the recapture of Normandy and the conquest of Guyenne. These triumphs may well have occurred eventually but, without the assistance of his brothers-in-law, Charles VII might not have been known in France as 'the Victorious'. Once the military juggernaut started rolling in 1449 René could have done little, even had he wished, to rescue his daughter from the consequences of the folly of her husband and the venality and incompetence of his advisers. The English hope, postulated by Watts, that the Angevins might support their interests in France proved illusory. The English gentry and nobility had also become progressively disengaged from the interests of their fellow countrymen in France and their failure to vote the government adequate resources for defence compounded the problem. From the beginning of 1453 René was, in any case, making an effort to regain his Italian throne and the woes of his daughter in England probably commanded little of his attention. He was to spend much of the

¹⁶⁹*Gregory's Chronicle* remarked when Henry VI and his nobles made a great display of riding through London in 1450 after Cade's revolt and York's return that it would have been a noble sight if it had taken place in France, p. 196.

¹⁷⁰Maurer, pp. 85–93.

later part of the decade in Provence and this must have distanced him psychologically from an area of northern Europe where the major Angevin problem, the English occupation, had been solved to his satisfaction.

René had shown sagacity in responding to the new, less ethical standards of conduct to be found in contemporary books of advice.¹⁷¹ The chivalrous façade given to the participation by René, John of Calabria and Charles of Maine in the reconquest of Normandy enhanced their European reputation and influence with Charles VII. For contemporary chroniclers, such as Bouvier and Escouchy, René played a kingly part in these events, a role he consciously emphasised in his great tournaments. Yet in the long run the deterioration of the situation in England, the division of that nation into warring factions and the emergence of a new dynasty that reactivated the old anti-French Burgundian alliance were to have serious consequences for the Valois.

¹⁷¹René may or may not have been acquainted with the new realpolitik theories but he had opportunities in Burgundy to encounter writers such as Hughes de Lannoy and in Italy and Provence to read the works of precursors of Machiavelli such as Uberto and Pier Candido Decembrio, Bartolomeo Platina (Sacchi), Diomede Carafa and Giovanni Pontano. Q. Skinner, 'Political Philosophy', *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. S.B. Schmitt, Q. Skinner, E. Kessler, J. Kray (Cambridge: 1988) pp. 387–452; A.H. Gilbert, *Machiavelli's 'Prince' and its Forerunners* (New York: 1968).

4

René's Court

Introduction

On 3 June 1449 king René inaugurated the Tournament of the Shepherdess at Tarascon in Provence. To the sound of trumpets and tambourines the king and queen of Sicily mounted a scaffold close to the lists. They were accompanied by their son-in-law, Ferry of Vaudemont, by great Angevin nobles, such as Guy de Laval, lord of Loué, and Louis de Beauvau and many Provençal knights. A detailed account survives in a poem by Louis de Beauvau.¹ The part of the shepherdess, who was to distribute the prizes, was played by Isabelle de Lenoncourt a noble lady of Lorraine. She wore a grey damask robe in a pastoral style and a red hat and carried a silver crook. She entered on the first day on horseback escorted by one of the judges of the tournament and the king of arms, her sheep followed with the two men who actually looked after them, and she was installed in a rustic bower decorated with flowers. Two shields hung from a tree nearby, one was white for joy the other black for sorrow. Two knights, 'the shepherds' Philippe de l'Aigue, René's chamberlain, and Philippe de Lenoncourt (probably the father or brother of 'the shepherdess') defended them against the eighteen other contestants as each attempted to touch one of the shields. Some of the knights wore grey jackets fashioned in the style of Provençal

¹BN Ms fr.1974. The first page of this contemporary manuscript bears a miniature of the shepherdess and her flock as well as the de Beauvau arms and motto: 'Sans departir'. For the text of the poem see *Oeuvres Complètes du Roi René*, ed. M. le Comte de Quatrebarbes, 4 vols (Angers: 1845) 2, pp. 45–96; H.F. Williams, "'Le Pas de la Bergère": a Critical Edition', *Fifteenth Century Studies*, 17 (1990) pp. 485–513.

shepherds and, as they also wore helmets adorned with ostrich plumes, the effect must have been bizarre. The evenings were occupied in feasting, dancing and play-acting in René's castle. At the end of the tournament Ferry of Vaudemont received the richest prize (a gold ring, a fine diamond and a bouquet) as the most valiant knight.²

This tournament was the last of a lavish series that René held in different parts of his domains: at Nancy for the wedding of his daughter Yolande to Ferry in 1445 and the Enterprise of the Joyful Garde at Saumur in 1446. Yet this should not be taken simply as a conventional display of princely chivalrous valour and magnificence drawn from the romances of king Arthur and the Round Table. The symbolism of the shepherds was also conveying a particular message, for after his costly defeats by Burgundy in 1431 and by Alfonso of Aragon in 1442 René was seeking other means by which to uphold the prestige of his house. He was soon to take up arms again in the service of France to reconquer Normandy and his son, John of Calabria, would fight on several fronts for the interests of Anjou. But René increasingly preferred to invest thought, effort and money in the cultural and social environment of his court as a means to attract the admiration and loyalty of his subjects and to unite the nobility of his scattered territories. His great tournaments were held in three separate domains: Lorraine, Anjou and Provence. The message of the Tournament of the Shepherdess at Tarascon seems to have been that, whilst remaining armed and ready to defend his house, René was embracing the peaceful arts typified by a bucolic ideal. But even the arts of peace came at a cost since, as late as 1455, René was assigning 1200 livres on the salt revenues of Saumur to pay the outstanding bills from the tournament that had been held there nine years earlier.³

The growth in court studies has put the subject firmly at the centre of discussions of princely power and prestige in Europe in the late middle ages. The definition of what constituted a court as opposed to a household has always been problematical. R.G. Asch suggests that the more senior officers of the prince's household together with the king's personal friends and advisers and nobles who accompanied him could be defined as courtiers. The court was held wherever the prince was present and living in dignified state, provided sufficient personnel were

²Mérindol, *Les fêtes de la chevalerie à la cour du roi René*, pp. 39–42.

³Lecoy de la Marche, *Comptes*, p. 327.

also in attendance.⁴ When René was imprisoned in Burgundy or in flight from Naples, for example, he did not hold court. Is Huizinga's picture of a decline in the practice if not the ideal of a chivalrous and courtly society a useful approach to adopt to the topic? B. Bedos-Rezac, writing in 1990, managed to make it sound politically convenient, even if it was a mirage. There was a

correlation between the creation of an order of knights and the contestation of the founder's succession to his throne ... chivalry had come to function as a myth, staged to validate authority, and as a setting in which décor, ceremony and heraldic and ritual precision articulated the image of a stable social hierarchy endowed with traditional values.⁵

Maurice Keen raised the pertinent question of whether or not there ever was a heyday of chivalry, as pragmatism governed the dealings of knights and princes from the early middle ages: how then could it have declined?⁶ Jacques Lemaire believes that decline was positively a good thing if, as an alternative, a king such as Charles V of France concentrated the energies of his followers on learning and the establishment of sound finances. Lemaire uses (rather uncritically) the condemnations of contemporaries such as Honoré Bouvet, Alain Chartier and Philippe de Mézières to demonstrate how the court of Charles VI of France was retrograde in returning to a culture based on chivalry. Charles VII was physically unprepossessing and, in the early years of his reign, too beset by the conflict with England and Burgundy to hold an impressive court.⁷ In his later years, as his military problems were gloriously resolved, he was effective in using the culture of chivalry and courtesy to enhance his image.

⁴R.G. Asch and A.M. Birke, *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility: the Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, c.1450–1650* (Oxford: 1991) p. 9.

⁵J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. F. Hopman (London: 2001) especially pp. 90–103; B. Bedos-Rezac, 'Review' of D'A.J.D. Boulton, *The Knights of the Crown: the Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe* (Woodbridge: 1987) *Speculum*, 65 (1990) pp. 374.

⁶M. Keen, 'Huizinga, Kilgour and the Decline of Chivalry', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 8 (1977) pp. 1–20.

⁷J. Lemaire, *Les Visions de la vie de cour dans la littérature française de la fin du Moyen Âge* (Brussels/Paris: 1994) pp. 155–78. See Chapter 3 for the jousts and other chivalric pursuits held at Nancy, Châlons and Saumur, 1445–46.

When Lemaire turns to the provincial courts of the *apanagiste* princes he accuses them of distancing their domains from royal authority and emphasising their independence. This worked under Charles VI and during the early reign of Charles VII but then changes came about. The duke of Orleans returned from his long imprisonment in England and established an austere court at Blois that shunned, in Lemaire's opinion, the pursuit of political power in favour of literature. Philip the Good of Burgundy presided over a splendid court in the Low Countries where artists and scholars used chivalrous and courtly ideals as a means of praising the wisdom and power of their prince. It was only after the defeat and death of Charles the Bold in 1477 that the political and cultural rivalry between France and Burgundy came to an end. Lemaire sees the case of Anjou as more complex: whilst René was a true cosmopolitan in his outlook, most of the culture of his court took a chivalric and courtly form. He disputes the claim made by des Garets that René's patronage of Italian artists and the rural tranquillity or *otium* that he fostered in his later years in Provence give him humanist credentials.⁸ These questions will arise as the various aspects of René's court are discussed: was it principally his patronage of the arts that formed the foundation of his reputation as a 'good' king?

From his childhood René's career promoted his engagement with cosmopolitan culture. Although he was born a younger son and lived in the Loire valley during his early years, the whole agenda of his family was determined by the claim to the kingdom of Naples. It was consequently involved in the life and politics of the south of France, the Italian and Iberian peninsulas. In 1419 when he was only ten years old, he had been dispatched to live in Bar with his great uncle and in the following year his marriage to Isabelle of Lorraine gave him an affiliation to the adjacent duchy. While much of his later life was spent elsewhere he retained a respect for the life and customs of those regions and the German and Flemish lands beyond. In 1451 René employed a German craftsman to make stoves covered with tiles for his residences in Saumur, Ponts-de-Cé and Angers: a sign of his readiness to take the best from all parts of Europe. In his *Book of Tournaments* he wrote: 'I have closely followed the method of the Germans and those of the Rhine in arranging tournaments, of Flanders and Brabant and also the ancient customs in France that I have found in the records.'⁹

⁸M.L. des Garets, *Un artisan de la Renaissance française au xv^e siècle: le roi René (1409–1480)* (Paris: 1980) *passim*.

⁹*Le Livre des tournois du roi René*, ed. F. Avril, trans. E. Pognon (Paris: 1986) p. 19.

René spent part of the 1430s in Burgundian prisons but sometimes his captivity was not too strict and offered an opportunity to share in the richest and most prestigious court culture in Europe. His sojourn in Naples from 1438 to 1442 was embattled and impoverished, yet his later career showed that he formed an admiration for the arts and life-style of Italy. He also attracted Italians such as John Cossa who were to remain in his entourage as loyal servants and courtiers when he returned to France.

Court locations

A brief look at René's itineraries from the early 1440s until his death in 1480 show how extensively he travelled between the various parts of his *apanage* until the last nine years of his life, when age and differences with Louis XI encouraged him to remain in Provence.¹⁰ While he was based in one area he seldom stayed in a palace, castle or manor for more than a few weeks but travelled round visiting various residences and in this he shared the habits of most contemporary princes. In November 1442 he arrived in Marseille on his way back from Naples and remained in Provence until February 1443. He then returned to the Loire valley, staying mostly at Angers and Saumur but also at Tours (one of Charles VII's residences) until the summer of 1444 when he went to Lorraine and Bar for nearly a year. By the autumn of 1445 he was in the Loire valley again, went to Provence in March 1447 and stayed there until July 1449. He had returned to the Loire valley by August and, apart from the campaign in Normandy and a trip to Paris, remained there until March 1452 when he went to Provence for just two months. He was back in the Loire valley by June and stayed there until the following May when he went briefly to Provence, using it as a staging post on his journey to northern Italy.

After the mid-1440s René only visited Bar once more: his son, John of Calabria, became duke of Lorraine in 1453 after his mother Isabelle's death and took full responsibility for the territory. Three years later René made Ferry of Vaudemont governor of Bar. René returned to Provence, after his Italian machinations, in February 1454 and remained there until August when he went to the Loire valley. In April 1457 he returned again to Provence for a stay of nearly five years, until January 1462. He then went to Bar, via the Loire valley, and assisted his daughter Margaret

¹⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, Itineraries, pp. 445–97. He did not record all of René's movements, for example, some of his visits to Gardanne.

whose husband had lost the English crown. He welcomed her in 1463 to the castle of Koeur where she was to spend the next seven years in exile with her son and a small, impoverished court. René went back to the Loire valley, via Paris, in the late summer of 1464 and stayed there until October 1469 when he travelled to Provence. He might have remained there for good had it not been for the continued needs of queen Margaret. Her reconciliation with Warwick and the marriage of her son to Warwick's daughter brought him back to the Loire in September 1470 but in the following October he left the Loire valley for ever and settled in Provence.

Provence had enjoyed an independent existence for centuries under a series of counts, owing a notional allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor, with its culture and affiliations differing strongly from those of Paris and the Loire valley. The proximity of Spain, including its Moorish enclaves, north Africa and Italy gave its inhabitants a Mediterranean orientation and there is considerable evidence that René increasingly shared their tastes and attitudes. This was not a new departure for the Angevins; René's predecessors had also spent much time in Provence and Italy in pursuit of their claim to the kingdom of Naples, they had forged alliances in the area and profited from regular trading links. René received these influences without rejecting his past: the high Gothic art and courtly literature of northern Europe combined in the Angevin court with new forms from Italy and the exoticism of the Near East.

René had an artist's sensibility towards his surroundings. His painting and poetry may have been mediocre but he turned the life he lived with his family and court into a form of art. He had neither the means nor, probably, the inclination to embark on great new building projects but in his more modest schemes and his patronage of artists and craftsmen he showed great discrimination. René devoted large amounts of time and effort to the detailed improvement of his residences, to his religious foundations and gifts, to his gardens and farms, to commissioning furniture, pictures, tapestries and metalwork. He was also generous, especially at the traditional time for gifts at New Year, and Françoise Piponnier has given an extensive account of the cloth he delighted to give to his family, friends and servants.¹¹ These were described in the accounts that survive,

¹¹F. Piponnier, *Costume et vie sociale: la cour d'Anjou xiv^e-xv^e siècle* (Paris: 1970). Piponnier used accounts from all of René's domains, their survival has been patchy but sufficient remain to give a good idea of the scale of his expenditure and of his priorities and of those of his second wife, Jeanne de Laval. Most existing accounts date from the 1440s and 1469–80.

partly to ensure that the correct price was paid but also that the quality of goods should reflect the status of the recipient. Most of the cloth given to his servants would be used to make outfits in his livery of black, white and grey.

René's building programmes show a clear change of direction from the practices of his parents and grandparents. They had been content to inhabit the great castles of Angers, Saumur and Tarascon, the palace at Aix and hotels in Paris and Marseille. They had owned and used a number of smaller castles, *bastides* (the term for country houses in Provence), manors and houses but mainly regarded them as staging posts on journeys or as hunting lodges. René also possessed a palace at Nancy, castles at Bar, Koeur, Pont-à-Mousson and Louppy and a number of smaller residences in Bar and Lorraine as a result of his acquisition of the two dukedoms. Throughout his life, and especially from the mid-1440s, he pursued a dual policy of buying houses, manors, *bastides*, farms and gardens and of adapting the residences he already owned to be more responsive to his taste and comfort. After the expulsion of the English from Normandy in the early 1450s there was less need to maintain the high defensive capacity of his castles so they could be made more luxurious with modern buildings, fittings, furniture and paintings, and gardens adorned their courtyards. When he was absent from a residence René normally entrusted its care to an elderly servant who had retired from more active duties.

A high proportion of René's time was spent in just a few of his residences despite his itinerant habits. For fifteen years after his return from Naples, his castle at Angers was his main residence and his senior officials were also based there. His grandfather, father and mother had already carried out works to make the old fortress, which dated from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, more comfortable. They had modernised the great hall, inserting large windows and a huge fireplace, and added a kitchen, chapel (complete with a little side oratory for the dukes with its own fireplace) and a royal lodging. This last building was small, so René continued putting the finishing touches to this modern palace within the great curtain walls. He added a north-facing gallery, built an east-facing range of rooms and gave a new entrance to the whole complex through an elegant gatehouse: its first floor provided accommodation for John of Calabria. The style of the buildings was mostly traditional with the high roofs, round turrets and pointed arches that were typical of late medieval French architecture. Some features, however, were innovatory, such as the fireplace and large flat-topped windows in the great hall and lodgings. The whole concept of the new palace also marked a break with the past

for it was modest in scale and would provide an unprecedented amount of comfort and privacy for the ducal family. Royal officers and servants were housed in other parts of the castle.

Tapestries formed an important element in the comfort and decoration of René's residences in the Loire, Bar and Lorraine. They were expensive to produce but could be easily packed and transported. There is evidence that he used the same ones, bearing the arms of Anjou, together with other hangings and cushions, at different times at Louppy, Angers and Tarascon. René and John of Calabria took tapestries together with banners and shields to decorate their boats when they travelled by water, for example, from Angers to Roanne *en route* for Provence.

It was an imposing spectacle for those on the river bank, this long line of boats covered in drapes in his livery of grey, white and black, adorned with banners showing his arms and full of princes, officials and courtiers. They moved slowly, stopping at towns according to the needs and caprices of their master.¹²

By far the most valuable and prestigious tapestries that René owned were six large pieces depicting scenes from the *Apocalypse*, a sort of celestial tournament between Good and Evil. They had been commissioned by Louis I of Anjou in about 1374, hung in the castle at Angers and were bequeathed to René by Yolande of Aragon. The style would have seemed old-fashioned to connoisseurs such as the king and his artists but its monumental strength and devotional message probably overcame any such reservations. He was solicitous for his tapestries: in 1452 his fear of mice led him to have chests made to protect those in the grand gallery at Angers during his absences.¹³ He did not found a school of tapestry makers and his patronage of the art was relatively modest, mostly confined to dynastic arms and emblems. This was partly due to the expense involved but, as he settled in his Provençal residences, he may have concluded that heavy tapestries were inappropriate in the warmth and light of the south. He ordered a number of painted cloths and embroideries: one of the painters in his household, Pierre du Villant was also an embroiderer. In 1448 he embroidered four crescents as insignia for the king's new order. After his death in 1472 his daughter and heiress was paid the residue for making a whole set of embroidery

¹²Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 253.

¹³F. Robin, *La Cour*, p. 150, n. 81.

for a chapel in the cathedral of St Maurice at Angers, it was the huge sum of 4782 florins, eight gros.¹⁴

Surviving treasurer's accounts and inventories provide some details about the life that René lived within Angers castle. The arrangement and furnishing of his rooms bear witness to his desire for privacy as well as his interest in art and literature. His presence chamber in the royal lodging would be used for more intimate receptions than those held in the great hall. His bedroom was furnished simply and there were beds in other rooms as well, mostly used, as was the custom, by servants. The king had three studios at Angers and apart from their beds they were furnished with cupboards for his armour, 'a little ... desk on which Barthélemy writes'¹⁵, 'a great chest of wood closed with a key which contains part of the king's library' and various tables, desks, chairs and musical instruments. A large study was furnished with four great dressers that contained some of René's collection of goblets, caskets, glass and various curiosities as well as scales and plentiful supplies of ink, parchment and paper.¹⁶ He had a covered tennis court in the castle and there was at least one more, at the manor of Reculée. He extended the garden in the large courtyard that surrounded the new palace within the curtain walls and used part of it, as well as the moat, for his menagerie of exotic animals. In a relatively small space he had the means to conduct the government of his *apanage* as well as to pursue his personal tastes as a connoisseur, writer and artist (see also Illustrations 7a–c in Chapter 3).

Despite the fact that René visited his eastern lands only infrequently after he inherited Anjou and the royal title, the accounts show that he continued to make provision for the upkeep of the residences in Bar. Between 1450 and 1460, for example, the floors were replaced in several rooms in the castle at Bar and also in the presence chamber and in two little oratories in his castle at Louppy. A goldsmith renewed the foot of a chalice in the chapel at the castle at Koeur in 1453 and in 1457 the painters Couillard and Jehannin of Bar carried out several commissions at Louppy. In particular they decorated the high chamber that communicated with the chapel with 'figures of chivalry wearing cloaks bearing various coats of arms'.¹⁷ In 1463 René arranged that

¹⁴Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pp. 95–6.

¹⁵Barthélemy d'Eyck, an artist who worked for René for many years, see below.

¹⁶Robin, *La Cour*, p. 107.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 74 and 132.

the castle of Koeur should be properly furnished for the use of his daughter, queen Margaret.¹⁸ He visited her in the late summer, staying for part of the time in his house in the neighbouring town of Saint Mihiel, but he mostly preferred Louppy in the western part of the duchy.

In early June 1464 an embassy from king George Poděbrady of Bohemia, which was on its way to negotiate with Louis XI, visited René at Bar. Its purpose was to convene a council of princes to restore peace in the empire and reform the Papacy. King George was an *utraquist* (a moderate member of the *Hussite* reform movement) and thus isolated from other Catholic rulers. His embassy was led by the chevalier Antoine Marini of Grenoble and lord Albrecht Kostka of Postupitz. A diary of their journey was written by an attaché called Jaroslav, who left a brief account of René's court:

... we travelled seven leagues to a city called Barluduk (Bar-le-Duc), where the king of Sicily resides, and has his court. And Lord Albert was overturned with Lord Antony, and the unfortunate coachman was killed, and there was no help for it. We breakfasted on the road in a certain village, a mile from the town of Barluduk, and there we found a monk in company with a pretty damsel, who travelled with us and performed the service of the mass. And straightway there came out to meet us the council of the king of Sicily, and welcomed us honourably. On the morrow, the Wednesday before St Vitus, at vespertime, an audience was granted us in the presence of the king of Sicily. Here first Lord Albert Kostka presented a salutation from the king of Bohemia, and delivered letters credential; and when the letters credential had been read, straightway the king took Lord Albert as well as Lord Antony into his chamber with his council. And there they were a good long time, till they had an answer from the king, all this being in secret council.

On the morrow, Thursday, Lord Albert invited the privy council of the king of Sicily to dinner, and the king invited us all to supper, where we were honourably entertained. Afterwards the officers of

¹⁸M.L. Kekewich, 'The Lancastrian Court in Exile', *The Lancastrian Court*, pp. 95–110 for details concerning Koeur castle.

the king reimbursed us all that we had paid during those days in the inns. [The following day the embassy left for Amiens].¹⁹

The embassy was unlikely to have achieved any tangible results from René, who was pious and strictly orthodox, but the account gives a good picture of the way in which the king and his council conducted formal diplomacy.

In Provence Avignon was by far the most important city as far as politics and culture were concerned. Joanna I of Naples had sold it to the Papacy during its exile there and it had been enhanced by many fine churches and mansions as well as the construction of the Palace of the Popes. The return of the pope to Rome had led to a decline in the city's wealth and prestige but, for most of René's reign, cardinal Pierre de Foix, brother of count Jean de Foix, resided in the palace. Pierre, who enjoyed an excellent relationship with René, ruled the south of France as papal legate *a latere* (fully empowered by the pope). Commercial and artistic activity revived as the city again became an important political centre. In 1450 Pierre was made archbishop of Arles: he held a church council there two years later and called another one from 1457 to 1458 in Avignon. René's itineraries show him to have been in Avignon on 27 September 1457, twenty days after the council opened.²⁰ During those years his visits to Avignon were infrequent and brief and he may have stayed in the palace as a guest of the legate. Late in his life, in 1476, he bought a house from the Carthusians at Villeneuve-les-Avignon for 3000 florins. He spent several weeks there and also in the two following years, and bought other houses. Lecoy de la Marche believed that only death prevented him from making it one of his major residences.²¹

When his visits to Provence began, the castle of Tarascon was the residence most favoured by René. It was, however, large and forbidding and this may have been one of the reasons why in his later years he increasingly came to favour his palace at Aix.²² Little is known about the palace, because it was radically changed during the following

¹⁹*Diary of an Embassy from King George of Bohemia to King Louis XI of France in 1464*, ed. and trans. A.H. Wratislaw (London: 1871) pp. 22–4.

²⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René, 2*, Itineraries, p. 458.

²¹*Ibid.*, 2, p. 56.

²²He undertook some refurbishment at Tarascon castle, 1447–49, probably in preparation for the Tournament of the Shepherdess. C. de Mérindol, 'Nouvelles données sur Barthélemy d'Eyck, peintre du roi René. Les plafonds peints du château de Tarascon', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (1985) pp. 7–16.

centuries and demolished in the late eighteenth century.²³ Whilst he carried out regular improvements and refurbishment to the palace René also took measures to enable him to live the simple, rustic style of life that increasingly attracted him. His mother, Yolande of Aragon, had already planted a garden nearby and in the late 1440s René bought several pieces of land to extend it. He built small houses, each with their own garden, for himself, the queen, John of Calabria and the seneschal of Provence. He planted muscatel vines, cherry trees, almond trees, strawberries and currants and lined the walls with scented herbs and flowers. One area was netted so he could keep the birds he loved there, including exotic species. Other areas were given over to orchards and vegetable gardens and he used a meadow in which to keep cows that supplied him with butter. His first gardener was a Neapolitan, Nardo de Laurico, and others came from Genoa for it seems that during his time in Italy he had been impressed with Italian skills in this art.²⁴ He also owned a *bastide*, La Pérignanne, near Aix where he spent some time as its location was congenially rural.

René satisfied his interest in agriculture and love of the countryside at Gardanne, twelve kilometres from Aix, which he purchased for 4000 florins in 1454.²⁵ The domain contained an old castle but its rooms were not convenient, so he bought three houses and made a comfortable dwelling out of them. By the end of 1457 the building had been completed under the supervision of Gibert d'Auton, prior of Castrum, a friend and chaplain of René. To mark the occasion the king was to make a ceremonial entry and spend New Year there.²⁶ Gibert wrote ruefully in his journal: 'The last day of December the king came to Gardane to spend the first day of the New Year; in his entourage were Monsieur de Calabria and Monsieur de Vaudemont. The king ordered me to feed the horses, there were 60 of them and they needed a great deal of provender.'²⁷ A musician, Bertrand de Cibile, and three other companions were ordered to attend the celebrations at René's entry. Four Augustine chaplains were also commanded to join the procession which included monks

²³Jean Boyer, 'Le Palais Comtal d'Aix du Roi René à 1787', *Aspects de la Provence* (Marseille: 1983) pp. 55–95.

²⁴N. Coulet, 'Jardin et jardiniers du roi René à Aix', *Annales du Midi*, 102 (1990) pp. 275–86.

²⁵Chaillan, *passim*. See Chapter 1.

²⁶Amongst the fevered last-minute preparations was the installation of *crémaillères*, hooks for cauldrons, in the fireplaces so that water or soup could be heated in the rooms. To this day in the Midi *crémaillère* is the word for a house-warming party.

²⁷Chaillan, pp. 29–30.

from the abbey of St Victor in Marseille, parish priests, vassals and peasants.

René liked festivals that included his subjects of all degrees: during sheep shearing at Aix and Gardanne he would provide food for the shearers, music was played and his parks and residences were decorated with greenery. The sheep were then driven up to the Alps for the summer, each marked with his royal arms. He had instituted a fish festival near Angers at Ponts-de-Cé that also involved the lower orders. On the Thursday in Ascension week the eighteen-to-twenty-year-old daughters of local fishermen fished in the Loire. Their haul was presented to René who proclaimed the best 'Queen of the Catch', kissed her and ate the fish for dinner. The festival continued for centuries, the mayor of Angers taking René's role.²⁸ René's love of fish led him to create a fishpond on his land at Gardanne and also a larger one, stocked with carp and pike and surrounded by a causeway, south of the village. In 1462 he issued a letter to a poor fisherman of Angers who could not afford to pay rent for his shack to the king. In the future he was instead to present René with a dish of small fish (blay) once a year.²⁹ Little wine had been produced in Gardanne before René bought the domain but, with his encouragement, farmers in the area started to plant vines.

On the ground floor of the lodging at Gardanne there were two rooms for public functions, above were the king's chamber, his retreat or writing room, the queen's chamber and her retreat. There were also chambers for John of Calabria, Ferry of Vaudemont and the seneschal, all with their retreats. René's bastard daughter Blanche, ladies-in-waiting, chamberlains and priests had accommodation nearby in the garden. Glass was fitted into the windows of the king's and queen's chambers and also into the chapel windows in the castle. An Italian painter, Leo of Forli, was employed to decorate the residence with frescoes in 1457. René continued to make improvements to Gardanne, supervised by Gibert d'Auton and the castellan, André de Ponthieu. A René de Castillon stayed there for eighteen months and caused such havoc that furniture, linen and utensils had to be replaced in 1469.³⁰

²⁸Levron, pp. 27–8.

²⁹P. Marchegay, 'La Platelée d'Ablettes', *Revue de l'Anjou*, 2 (1853) pp. 102–6.

³⁰Chaillan, p. 31. He may have been a relative, perhaps a child or an idiot, of Charles de Castillon, lord of Aubagne, one of René's councillors (see Chapter 3). He was a chancellor of the Order of the Croissant and one of the keepers of the Jews of Provence, Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, *passim*. René kept Castillon's bastard daughter, Mariolle, at court, G. Arnaud d'Agnel, *Les Comptes du Roi René*, 3 vols (Paris: 1908–10) *passim*.

By 1471 René was ageing and preferred to be a spectator rather than a participant in hunting. He had a *belvedere* (viewing post) made at the top of mount Captivel at Gardanne, reached by an easy ascent. From January to early February 1472, he watched a Picard huntsman with twenty-four hounds catch partridge, hare, rabbits, foxes and wolves and the court was fed with the more edible parts of this game. René may well have spent more time at Gardanne and his other small residences in and around Aix than is recorded by Lecoy de la Marche. The abbé Chaillan notes several sojourns at Gardanne that are not mentioned in the 'Itineraries' of de la Marche, the short distance from Aix made brief visits, not necessarily always overnight, practicable. René also used his castle at Peyrolles, which he had purchased in about 1470, for it had a cool location about twenty kilometers from Aix on the banks of the river Durance. He restored it, built an aqueduct there and improved its chapel of St Sepulchre. His enthusiasm for acquiring and improving property did not wane with age. After a refurbishment, for example, he visited the castle of Tarascon several times in the late 1470s. He also purchased houses there and in Avignon and Marseille, but his favourite residences remained his rural retreats in and around Aix.³¹ Françoise Robin sees this as part of the process by which the king and his family adopted an increasingly rural style of living: the ideal reflected in the poem *Regnault and Jehanneton*.³² He moved away from the ceremonial, courtly society of his youth to something that had literary rather than ceremonial precedents in European culture.

Family, courtiers and servants

The ways in which René conducted his council and transacted his political affairs have been discussed in previous chapters. The focus here is on the culture he promoted by his patronage of the arts, courtly pursuits and the relationships he enjoyed with his family, friends and servants in the environment of the court. General perceptions of René as a ruler, both by his contemporaries and by posterity, are addressed throughout the study and in the Conclusion.

³¹René owned three *bastides* near Marseille, Olivet, Le Pin and Saint Jérôme, N. Coulet, A. Planche and F. Robin, *Le Roi René: le prince, le mécène, l'écrivain, le mythe* (Aix-en-Provence: 1982) pp. 97–101.

³²F. Robin, 'La cour de René d'Anjou en Provence: Demeures, Itinéraires et Sejours', *La Noblesse*, pp. 175–87.

Both of René's wives were respected and even revered in different ways. Isabelle of Lorraine, a great princess and heiress in her own right, started married life with these advantages as well as partaking by birth and education of cultural assumptions shared with her French subjects. She showed determination and resourcefulness during the crises of the attack on Lorraine, her husband's imprisonment and the Neapolitan expedition. She produced four children, two of them male, who survived their infancy, and she proved a dignified and able wife, mother and queen. René's second wife, Jeanne de Laval, the daughter of a noble family from Maine, could have attracted criticism on several counts. She brought him no lands, she produced no children, she was stepmother to his three surviving children and was neither beautiful nor, apparently, particularly witty or clever.³³ Yet these are not failings that posterity holds against her and her contemporaries seem to have admired her for the devotion she showed to her husband, and for her piety and charity.³⁴

René was also fortunate in his children: John, duke of Calabria and (from 1453) Lorraine was dutiful and energetic. He had his own household from 1445 when he was made lieutenant general of Bar and Lorraine. His wife, Marie de Bourbon, was the daughter of a great French prince of the blood, the niece of Philip of Burgundy, and fitted gracefully into the ambience of the French and Angevin courts. Their sons, John and Nicolas, carried the illusory hopes of their parents and grandparents that their dynasty and fortunes would survive. Louis, René's younger son lived for only seventeen years but, as a child, he had accompanied his mother to Naples and was already serving his family as lieutenant governor of Lorraine when he died there in 1444.³⁵ Yolande of Anjou, René's older daughter, had been sacrificed in the agreement between her father and Philip of Burgundy and his ally, Antoine de Vaudemont. Her marriage to his son, Ferry, secured René's freedom and the acceptance that Lorraine belonged to him. The union was a harmonious one and their son, René II, was eventually to be the only male Angevin in the direct line

³³Jeanne de Laval is represented in *The Virgin in the Burning Bush* in St Sauveur, Aix (see Illustration 11 below). J.P. Coste's comment on it in his guide to Aix, although uncharitable is justified: 'Jeanne was forty three and she was never pretty', *Aix-en-Provence et le Pays d'Aix* (Millau: 1981) p. 61.

³⁴An indication that this devotion was genuine was the way in which she carried out René's wishes that his body should be buried in St Maurice, Angers, in face of strong opposition from the Provençal clergy who wished to retain it. See Chapter 5.

³⁵Van Kerrebrouck, p. 295.

to survive. Ferry became a courtier who efficiently and willingly served his father-in-law. René's younger brother, Charles count of Maine, also rendered great service to his house by using his close friendship with king Charles VII to advance Angevin interests and when they enjoyed less favour, he retired to govern his county peacefully. The accounts for René's residences show that his children, John and Yolande, their spouses and children and René's nephew, Charles II of Maine, spent considerable amounts of time at his court, and apartments were reserved for them in several of his castles and houses.

René's relations with his daughter Margaret of Anjou were affected by the fact that she had married into what would now be defined as a dysfunctional family. Throughout the fifteenth century, until their demise in 1485, the Lancastrian and Yorkist branches of the Plantagenet dynasty were fatally unable to agree amongst themselves. Contending fathers, brothers, cousins, the Beauforts and several unsuitable marriages undermined them. In the French royal house the appalling collapse of relations between the dauphin Charles and his mother Isabeau of Bavaria nearly destroyed the Valois dynasty and Charles did not see his son, the dauphin Louis, for the last fourteen years of his life. The house of Anjou, on the other hand, not only worked as a unit to protect and promote its interests, there was warmth and affection in its members' dealings with each other. Their *apanage* disappeared not through family strife but after a series of deaths and through the machinations of king Louis XI, which enforced the return of many of their lands to France. His harmonious family life, reflecting in its piety and proper observation of rank the heavenly hierarchy, was one of the factors that contributed to the reputation of 'good king René'.

From the time of his return to France in 1442 René showed that he understood very well how to hold an orderly and prestigious court. In his youth he had observed the state kept at Saumur and Angers by his mother, Yolande of Aragon. He had then spent his adolescence at the courts of his great-uncle the cardinal/duke at Bar and his father-in-law, Charles of Lorraine, although the structure of his own court was closely modelled on that of the kings of France. Despite his limited resources (in 1447 his income was approximately 97,680 livres tournois, about a third of the revenue enjoyed by Philip of Burgundy) René seems to have kept a household of at least three hundred officials and servants.³⁶ Its size would

³⁶Piponnier, p. 78. It is not always clear from the records who were members of the household and who were simply paid for particular goods or services.

vary according to whether he was based in Bar and Lorraine, Anjou or Provence, so would the number of nobles, friends and advisers available to attend him and constitute the court. The ceremonies at the funeral of Isabelle of Lorraine at Angers in March 1453 are well documented. The number and cost of the mourning clothes that were distributed to 223 men and 35 women give a good idea of the structure of the court. Piponnier has listed the main categories of officials and servants who were present and has distinguished their places in the court/household hierarchy from the quality of black garments that they were given. Sixteen chamberlains and masters of the household received capacious robes of good cloth (worth 3 livres tournois 10 sous per ell [1m.188]) and hats.³⁷ Ninety-eight gentlemen, secretaries, heads of offices, buglers and pages had good gowns (worth 2 livres tournois 10 sous per ell) and hats. Ninety-two minor officers, horsemen, wagoners, muleteers and stablemen were given fairly good gowns (worth 1 livre tournois 10 sous per ell) and inferior hats. Fourteen messengers, wagoners' assistants and a slave received cheap gowns (15 sous per ell) and no hats. Triboulet, the king's fool, was given a rather better quality of gown than was available to the gentlemen, senior officers and pages, an example of how the prince's predilections could cut across protocol.³⁸

Piponnier, besides giving an overview of the household hierarchy at the funeral of Isabelle of Lorraine, has also based a more precise list of gentlemen and servants on the accounts for the last year of René's life, 1479 to 1480.³⁹ The 'heads of offices', mentioned above, would have included those concerned with revenue and expenses such as the superintendent of finance, the almoner and the treasurer. There were also four marshals for the king's residences, responsible for arranging the many moves he made between his various homes each year. Minor officers included the *sommeliers* (butlers) responsible for the service of wine, fruit and the pantry and the ushers who ensured that due order was observed at court. The kitchen was well staffed with men and children as well as a sauce-maker, a baker and a fisherman. There were a

³⁷*Chaperons*, elaborate turban-like headpieces.

³⁸Piponnier, *op.cit.*, pp. 196–9. The tally of courtiers and members of the household comes to only 258, plus members of the royal family. But those who did not attend the funeral for various reasons and the servants and officials left to care for his numerous properties in other parts of his domains must also be considered in attempts to estimate the size of René's court and household. See below concerning female members of the court/household.

³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 201–2.

number of serving men (*valets*) attached to the royal chamber and others specialised in waiting at table. Three serving men looked after the king's clothes and he kept six furriers, a tailor, a shoemaker, an armourer and a goldsmith. He had six minstrels as well as trumpeters, buglers, an organist, chaplains, a cantor and a confessor. René employed six heralds: the King of Arms (Sicily) and pursuivants 'Fleur de Pensée', 'Ardent Désir', 'Provence', 'Viennois' and 'Romarin'.⁴⁰ Twenty-three servants looked after his stables and wagons and he had three falconers and keepers of his birds, dogs and lions. He employed an almoner, doctors and surgeons. In Provence the sum of two gros, two patacs a day was allowed for the food of every member of the household and a similar sum was provided for the nourishment of their horses.⁴¹ The description of all these officials and servants assigns them a masculine gender although the queens and children were attended by ladies-in-waiting, female servants and nurses. Women worked in other capacities about the court, often concerned with the production, cleaning and mending of clothing and fabric, they were probably employed by the male officials or brought in to do particular jobs.

A good balance seems to have been achieved between the ceremonial and dignity that were expected of the court of a great prince and the maintenance of pleasant, sometimes intimate, relationships between its members. René had several bastard children but neither they nor their mothers appear as disruptive forces and little is known about them. The best documented is his daughter, Blanche, who was probably Provençal. She was a lady-in-waiting to Jeanne de Laval in 1456 and eventually married Bertrand de Beauvau as his fourth wife. His other bastards have been named as John of Anjou, who was made marquis of Pont-à-Mousson after the death of duke Nicolas in 1473. He fought for René II at Nancy in 1477 but was deprived of his marquisate twelve years later (probably because the previously childless duke had remarried and wanted it for his oldest son). He was also lord of Saint-Remi and Saint-Cannat in Provence. In 1500 he married the daughter of Raimond de Glandèves and he died in 1536. Madeleine married Louis Jean, lord of Bellenaves, a chamberlain to Charles VIII, in 1496. Nothing is known of Françoise except that she was mentioned in a will in 1524. It looks from their dates as if these bastards were born during René's second marriage. P. Pansier referred to

⁴⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 498. The Order of the Crescent employed two heralds, see below.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 1, p. 496.

René's mistress, the countess of Sault, for whom he bought a dwelling in Avignon, but gave no date or reference.⁴²

The king encouraged entertainers of all kinds to visit his court and was not averse to his own grandchildren acting in 'mummeries' and dancing *mauresques* (Moorish dances). Courtiers also participated in various kinds of plays and masques. In 1448, René gave brother Alphonse de la Roche, prior of the Augustine friars at Aix, 25 florins for wine. This was a reward for whoever had revealed in confession that they had picked up a great diamond that had been lost by Madame de Beauvau, seneschalle of Anjou (the wife of Louis de Beauvau), on 1 January as she was playing in a farce in René's presence. The prior had returned the diamond.⁴³ Early biographers did not make much of René's interest in theatrical events but recent research shows that he was a major patron.⁴⁴ He possibly inherited the taste from his mother (thieves cut off part of her sleeve containing coins and her personal seal whilst she watched a farce in the castle of Angers in 1409). From 1447 to his death in 1480 René watched at least forty farces and seven big morality and mystery plays, mainly in Anjou and Provence. He paid altogether about 100 écus for the farces (each actor usually received an écu) and about 800 écus for the morality and mystery plays. Sometimes the farces were performed by members of his household, others were staged by professionals, such as the *Insouciant Gallants* who entertained him during the last months of his life. His marshal for lodgings, Jean le Prieur, took a leading part in staging plays and composed at least one in 1455, the *Mystery of the Future King*. This recounted the Christian fable of Barlaam and Josaphat, was interrupted by a meal and a farce, and in tribute to René's recent remarriage included a reference to a wooing. Some of the mystery and miracle plays lasted for several days and the king paid for expensive scaffolds to ensure that he and his people could see them properly. Their length necessitated the inter-

⁴²P. Pansier, *Histoire de la Langue Provençal à Avignon*, 2 vols (Avignon: 1924) 1, p. 93; Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, p. 8 mentions a 'madame de Saux' as having a room near the queen's chambers in the Angers inventory of 1471. He also speculated about the identity of René's mistresses but without much evidence, 1, p. 433, n. 1; Van Keerebrouck, pp. 296–7.

⁴³Lecoy de la Marche, *Comptes*, pp. 208–9; Paris AN P 1334 14.

⁴⁴G.A. Runnals, 'René d'Anjou et le Théâtre', *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest (Anjou, Maine, Touraine)* 88 (1981) pp. 157–80; various authors, 'Histoire du Théâtre en Anjou du Moyen Âge à nos jours', *Revue d'histoire du théâtre*, 43 (1991) pp. 7–75.

vention of light-hearted material: the jokes of a 'rascal' in the *Mystery of St Vincent* played at Angers in 1471 were so disgusting that the copyist refused to record them.

From the evidence of his accounts, René took particular pleasure in pampering his courtiers. Pipponier suggests that, once settled in Provence, he abandoned the dark colours that he and Jeanne de Laval had favoured for themselves and their entourages and encouraged the court ladies to wear more colourful, stylish and luxurious clothes. She remarks on the frequency of his gifts, not only to his female relatives but to ladies such as two de Beauvau girls.⁴⁵ In the late 1470s, when a good set of accounts exists, a child Helene de Leymes (possibly one of René's bastards) was a special favourite. In 1476 she was bombarded with presents, including various lengths of cloth, a silver mirror in the form of a rose, three baby dolls, an ivory pin, a painted chest, a wooden painted box containing muscat soap, boxes of powder from Cyprus, a white pigeon, a little belt, a large purse, ribbons, a black hat, a mantle, pattens and a set of cards from Lyon.⁴⁶ In April 1478, René gave Katherine Pierre, one of the duchess of Calabria's ladies, a ruby worth fourteen florins in exchange for a number of strange small stones that she had found by the sea at Marseille.⁴⁷ Our cynical age might put a dark interpretation on such generosity but it was displayed to many people of both sexes of all ages and conditions and seems simply to have been one of an old man's pleasures. Odile Blanc's study on 'the invention' of the stylish human body in late medieval France also raises the possibility that René was consciously fashioning the court in a particular image.⁴⁸ While he and Jeanne de Laval retained sombre costumes suitable to their age and dignity, he wished his courtiers to cultivate the fashionable modes and manners of the south and enjoy its luxuries. René was turning his back on the depressing situation in the northern parts of his *apanage*, especially from 1472 onwards, and constructing a civilised, comfortable court life on a human scale in Provence. His dealings with Italian merchants, artists and craftsmen as well as the influence that Italy exercised over his taste and his fascination with Moorish crafts and customs also promoted the change.

⁴⁵Pipponier, pp. 286–8, Isabelle de Beauvau, madame de la Jaille and Anne de Mombron, later de Beauvau.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 283; Lecoy de la Marche, *Comptes*, pp. 367–75; Agnel, 1–3, *passim*.

⁴⁷Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, p. 379.

⁴⁸O. Blanc, *Parades et Parures: L'Invention du corps de mode à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Turin: 1997) *passim*.

Like most contemporary princes René loved jewels and fine metalwork and they featured along with clothing materials amongst his gifts to his family and courtiers. Lecoy de la Marche believes that it is likely that the king himself was responsible for some of the designs. He had his own small workshop in Angers fitted with all the specialist tools that he needed for the craft. During his time Angers became a flourishing centre for goldsmiths.⁴⁹ His household goldsmith for some time was Jean Nicolas; in 1456 he spent two months and 200 écus in preparing gifts for the king and queen. They also employed a number of jewellers and goldsmiths in Provence and René used Italians such as the Pazzi bankers to obtain special pieces for him from further afield. His treasurer paid 372 écus for 'A double gold cross of Jerusalem, with six square cut diamonds for the Queen and another gold cross with four square cut diamonds with four big pearls at the four corners of the said cross given by the King to the marquis of Pont [his grandson].'⁵⁰ These crosses would have borne a double significance for the donor and the recipients: as precious religious objects and as reminders of their dynastic claim to the kingdom of Jerusalem.

To entertain him at court, René employed not only minstrels and musicians but also a number of dwarves and fools. Triboulet was the most famous, he had a very small head and body and has been immortalised by a medal struck by Francesco Laurana in 1461. On the reverse an abbreviated Latin inscription has been variously interpreted. E. Tietze-Conrat translated it as: 'The king's vesture makes mock of me by giving innocent me in appearance the office of a king [he carries a kind of sceptre or mace] and clothes me for the sport of kings.'⁵¹ A marble relief portrait by Laurana, probably intended for his tomb, also survives. Other fools appear in the accounts: 'Phelipot the dwarf', 'Faillon the fool' and a female fool 'Michon' employed by Jeanne de Laval. René kept a number of Moors, some may have been purchased in the Mediterranean slave markets. At least one appears to have converted to Christianity as Jeanne de Laval's lavender woman in 1469 and 1471 is called 'Katherine la More'. As early as the 1440s the king was showing a taste for Moorish clothes and armour, possibly as a result of his sojourn in southern Italy. He paid a page of John Cossa who brought him a Moorish

⁴⁹R.W. Lightbown, *Secular Goldsmiths' Work in Medieval France: a History* (Dorking: 1978) pp. 106–7; Lecoy de la Marche, *Comptes*, pp. 244–5.

⁵⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, p. 119.

⁵¹E. Tietze-Conrat, 'A Relief Portrait by Francesco Laurana', *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin* [Ohio], 12 (1955): 86–90.

knife in December 1447. In July 1448 he purchased a pair of spurs 'in the Moorish style' and an armourer refurbished his Moorish sword.⁵² The accounts record several occasions when he rewarded adults and children who performed Moorish dances for him.

Many medieval princes kept exotic animals but René's love for them seems to have been exceptional. Apart from the ornamental and hunting birds that he owned in large numbers, he kept an unusual and rather dangerous array of wild beasts. 'A little moor' looked after a dromedary at Angers in 1450 and an unfortunate keeper was killed by one of the king's lions there in 1463. René usually kept about four of these beasts, for they were important as heraldic symbols of royalty, also leopards and ostriches. He had six camels at Gardanne in 1473 but he could have used them for transporting goods as well as for ornament. His tailor in Provence made costumes for his monkeys, also for an elephant and, ominously, for 'another beast called "the tiger"'.⁵³

Once he had settled in Provence during his last years, René was anxious to recover the precious objects that had given him so much pleasure in his earlier years in Anjou. His accounts include a number of payments for bringing them to him. In August 1473, for example, the treasurer paid 150 livres, 7 sols and 6 deniers to the custodian of the king's tapestries for the cost of wagoners transporting his books and tapestries from Anjou to Provence.⁵⁴ The large sum paid out implies that a considerable volume of goods must have been transported. Not only do these transactions give a good idea of René's tastes and priorities, they also indicate that he did not envisage returning to Anjou.

The arts: making and patronage

Literature

The image of René as a good prince was to a large extent established for posterity by his literary works and his patronage of painting, architecture, sculpture and other arts. A. Coville suggested that the early Angevin princes dissipated their energies chasing their Italian inheritance, leaving little time for literary or artistic pursuits.⁵⁵ Yolande of Aragon, however, showed discrimination in the improvement of her residences, her collection of manuscripts and her patronage of scholars. Yolande had

⁵²Lecoy de la Marche, *Comptes*, pp. 219, 221–2.

⁵³Robin, *La Cour*, p. 119.

⁵⁴Lecoy de la Marche, *Comptes*, p. 185.

⁵⁵Coville, *La Vie Intellectuelle*, 1, p. 41. See Chapter 1.

continued to employ Antoine de la Sale, her late husband's secretary. He subsequently became squire and chamberlain to René and was the tutor of his son John. He wrote the *Salade* for him, as its punning name implies it was like a collection of herbs, containing history, accounts of ceremonies for the conferment of nobility and extracts from classical authorities such as Frontinus on the art of war. It was an excellent handbook for a prince who was to rule a number of territories and go to war on behalf of his dynasty.

De la Sale parted from the Angevins on bad terms (there was probably a dispute over money) but his major works, written while he was employed by Louis of Luxemburg, count of St Pol, surely reflect the ambience of the Angevin court. *The Fifteen Joys of Marriage* is a cynical book with an underlying theme of misogyny that was characteristic of the time. *A Hundred New Reports* (*Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*) is a collection of bawdy tales of the kind enacted in René's beloved farces. *Young St John of Saintré* is a courtly work reflecting values conveyed in René's tournaments and his own *Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, but salted with the realism of an experienced courtier.⁵⁶ Michelle Szkilnik has suggested that it should be compared with the real-life account of the exploits of the knight, Jacques de Lalaing. Both young men professed traditional chivalrous ideals but their careers were underpinned by favour and finance from patrons, so their aspirations were really those of courtiers.⁵⁷ Despite the way in which he had left Angevin employment, de la Sale dedicated his *St John* to its namesake, John of Calabria – after all in the 1450s he was one of the most important princes in Europe:

To you, my excellent and powerful prince, monseigneur John of Anjou, duke of Calabria and of Lorraine, marquis of Pont, my very respected lord. In accordance with my very humble and modest intention to obey your wishes, which are for me orders, I have written for you four good tales, divided into two volumes for greater convenience.⁵⁸ The first tells of the love of a lady des Belles Cousines,

⁵⁶Ibid., 1, p. 145, 2, pp. 319–21, 458–62. Coville, however, in another study questions whether an earlier version of *Jehan de Saintré* might have been written while de la Sale was still employed by René. A. Coville, *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré; Recherches Complémentaires* (Paris: 1937) pp. 23–38. In the chapter devoted to John of Calabria he gives a more favourable verdict on his poetry and sensibility than did Poirion, see note 63.

⁵⁷M. Szkilnik, *Jehan de Saintré: Une carrière chevaleresque au xv^e siècle* (Geneva: 2003).

⁵⁸Two of them were *Floridan and Elvide* and extracts from *The Chronicle of Flanders*.

she had no other Christian name or surname, and the seigneur de Saintré, a very brave knight.⁵⁹

De la Sale also made a copy of the Provençal romance, *Paris and Vienne*, his fourth tale, at the request of John of Calabria. In both the *Salade* and the three courtly works the influential de la Sale had provided his pupil with the kind of moral and chivalrous examples, tempered with some humanist realism, that a good prince was expected to emulate.

René had probably received a sound education at his mother's court and from his great uncle in Bar although no details about it are known.⁶⁰ He may also have used his years of enforced idleness in captivity in Burgundy to develop both his literary and artistic skills. He certainly took advantage of the sojourn at Tours in 1444 to hold a conversation in *rondeaux*⁶¹ with his cousin Charles of Orleans and other poets of his circle on one of his favourite subjects: love. The occasion of his encounter with this fine poet, recently released from captivity in England, were the diplomatic moves that culminated in the treaty of Tours and the marriage of Margaret to Henry VI. On St Valentine's Day René wrote:

Apart from one other
I will serve you this year
My sweet gentle Valentine,
For Love wishes me to do so
And that is my destiny.

Orleans promised in a later poem:

During the treaties with England
Which were made at Tours,
By the good advice of Love
I have abstained from war.⁶²

John of Calabria entered into the poetic chat room with a less elevated tone, 'Who will exchange his lady for mine?', 'I'll change with you if

⁵⁹Antoine de la Sale, *Jehan de Saintré*, ed. J. Blanchard, trans. M. Quereuil (Paris: 1995) p. 35.

⁶⁰See Chapter 1.

⁶¹Poems of ten or thirteen lines with two rhymes and an opening line that is later repeated.

⁶²*Charles d'Orléans, Poesies*, ed. P. Champion, 2 vols (Paris: 1923–27) 2, pp. 293, 299.

you desire' replied the Norman squire Blosseville, who knew how to play the courtier.⁶³ René never showed the skill that Orleans brought to his art, for the king it was simply one of several courtly activities with which he pleased his companions and enhanced his image as a gallant and chivalrous knight.

By the end of the 1440s René was toying with another image although he was not necessarily abandoning his love of the pageantry and glamour of tournaments and other chivalric displays altogether. The Tournament of the Shepherdess seems, however, to have signalled the beginning of a change of direction. Some writers have attributed his growing preference for a simpler life, lived mostly in the countryside, to the influence of his second wife Jeanne de Laval. The tradition of pastoral literature that celebrated the happy, rustic lives of shepherds and shepherdesses stretched back to the *eclogues*⁶⁴ of the Roman poet Virgil. They gained prestige in the middle ages because he was thought to have predicted the birth of Christ and pastorals had been a popular literary form in Provence since the twelfth century. Samuel Johnson later condemned them as 'easy, vulgar and therefore disgusting' but René admired the genre and either wrote or caused to be written one of the best contemporary examples of a pastoral.⁶⁵ He was accepted as the author of *Regnault and Jehanneton* until V. Chichmaref questioned the attribution, suggesting that the author was Pierre de Hurion and it was the 'little treatise' that he presented to René in 1471. Joël Blanchard discussed the question in 1983 and came to no clear conclusion about the authorship. In a sense it does not matter greatly: René espoused the pastoral idyll and, in his later life, lived it to some extent. No poet would have dared to call the king and queen of Sicily by such familiar terms except in a work devised at their express command.⁶⁶

⁶³D. Poirion, *Le Poète et le Prince: L'évolution du lyrisme courtois de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d'Orleans* (Paris: 1965) pp. 178–90. Poirion describes John of Calabria as 'a great swallower of proverbs'. He believes that his poems were influenced by rhetoric and not for the better as he also criticises his 'heavy allegories' and 'interminable anaphora' (the repetition of a word or phrase), p. 188, n. 152.

⁶⁴Short pastoral poems, often dialogues.

⁶⁵H. Cooper, *Pastoral: Medieval into Renaissance* (Ipswich: 1977) p. 7.

⁶⁶V. Chichmaref, 'Notes sur quelques oeuvres attribuées au roi René', *Romania*, 55 (1929) pp. 214–50; J. Blanchard, *La Pastorale en France aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles: Recherches sur les structures de l'imaginaire médiévale* (Paris: 1983) pp. 144–5.

The poem *Regnault and Jehanneton* observes the major conventions of pastoral literature.⁶⁷ The narrator, a pilgrim, overhears a conversation between a shepherd, Regnault, and a shepherdess, Jehanneton:

The shepherd
Calls in a loud voice
Saying: 'My love are you there?
Oh Jehanneton!'

Then she replies
And says: 'Regnault, come
And we will sit under the tree stump
Here, you and me;

For it is a good retreat
And we can easily watch
Our sheep without a care
In the shade.⁶⁸

They sit under the tree stump that has one green branch (an emblem of René) and share an idyllic meal of bacon, cheese, nuts, apples, mushrooms, onions and milk. All is spread on a cloth and they scold their dog, Briquet, when he walks over it. This kind of realism is interspersed with what Helen Cooper calls 'iconographic set-pieces', for example, when two turtle doves settle on the branch.⁶⁹ The rustics fall to arguing about which one loves the most and the pilgrim intervenes offering to make a judgement between them at the same place on the following day. When he returns in the morning no one is there and the peaceful beauty of the countryside adds to the atmosphere of dreamlike melancholy. This very simple, private poem seems to have been known beyond the circle of René's family and friends. It looks like an amorous tribute to his second wife soon after their marriage and Georges Chastellain exclaimed with mild humour on the king of

⁶⁷The original manuscript, possibly written and illuminated by René himself, disappeared from the library of Saint-Germain-des-Prés during the French Revolution; copies survive in the Public Library of St Petersburg Ms Fr. Q. p. XII (bearing the arms of René and Jeanne de Laval) and Paris BN Ms fonds fr.12178.

⁶⁸Quatrebarbes, 2, pp. 116–17.

⁶⁹Cooper, p. 70. A pair of doves was one of the emblems used by René and Jeanne de Laval.

Sicily who wished to play the shepherd as one of the marvels of the world.⁷⁰

I have seen a king of Sicily
 Turn shepherd
 And his gentle wife
 Take to the same trade
 Carrying the shepherd's pouch
 The crook and hat,
 Dwelling on the heath
 Near their flock.⁷¹

René had succeeded in presenting his court as existing in a kind of mock pastoral setting and his last great tournament, the literature, art, and the unassuming dwellings he favoured all fostered this image.

Evidence from the list of books that René owned and his own writings show him to have been well read in the conventional literature of his time and also open to Renaissance works. *The Book of Tournaments*, which he dedicated to his brother Charles of Maine, adopts a practical, factual approach to the subject, contrasted to the dream-like or romantic tone of the king's other works. He is more concerned with the elaborate organization of the preliminaries to such events than with the actual combats, and this reflects the increasingly ritualized approach to the sport in the late middle ages.⁷² Lecoy de la Marche believed that the treatise was written between 1451 and 1452⁷³ but Avril suggests that its similarities to a little book on tournaments written by de la Sale in 1458 for Louis of Luxemburg must put it at least a year later than that date.⁷⁴ The only certainty is that René's book was known by 1470 since it was mentioned in a work dedicated to Gaston de Foix who was killed in a tournament in that year.

The Book of Tournaments begins by insisting that a tournament can be initiated only by a great lord or notable knight. He should be called 'the challenging lord' and the equally eminent noble who takes up the challenge is called the 'defending lord'. René assigns these roles to his

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 221, n. 75. This poem is often credited to Jean Molinet because he continued the sequence where Chastellain left off.

⁷¹Huizinga, p. 131.

⁷²*Le Livre des Tournois*, Introduction, p. 8.

⁷³De la Marche, *René*, 2, pp. 155–6.

⁷⁴*Le Livre des Tournois*, Introduction, pp. 8–9.



Illustration 8 The duke of Bourbon views the arms of participating knights held up by a herald. *The Book of Tournaments*, Paris, BnF Ms fr.2695, f.11.

friends and kinsmen the dukes of Brittany and Bourbon (the brother-in-law of John of Calabria) (Illustration 8).⁷⁵ Four judges are then chosen and the king-of-arms (senior herald) belonging to the challenging lord, accompanied by other heralds, publicizes the tournament, inviting princes, nobles, knights and esquires to participate. The protocol of the entry of the challenging and defending lords and their retinues into the town chosen for the event is minutely described. Lodgings must be chosen (religious houses are strongly recommended) and a ball should be held on the first night. On the second day the banners, pennons

⁷⁵C. de Mérindol, "Le Livre des tournois" du roi René: Nouvelles lectures', *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1992) pp. 177–90. He discusses the choice of the dukes of Brittany and Bourbon and sees it as an attempt by René to continue his mother Yolande's policy of acting as an intermediary between Brittany and France but maintains that Bourbon is subtly favoured in the treatise.

and helmets with their crests belonging to the participants are transferred to the judges' lodgings. The ladies can then inspect these, most conveniently laid out in a cloister, and ask the judges to disqualify any contestant who has defamed their sex. On the third day all participants go to the lists and swear to observe the rules and the ladies choose a knight of honour to act as a referee to prevent excessive violence. The fourth day is devoted to the jousting and in the evening the victorious knight receives his prize from a lady and two unmarried girls who are chosen by the judges and the knight of honour.

The best version of *The Book of Tournaments*, together with two copies made soon afterwards, survives in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.⁷⁶ A lively debate has been held between art historians for most of the twentieth century about who painted the fine pictures that are an integral part of the book. This controversy will be referred to below as it affects the question of René's patronage of art. The clarity and vivacity of the illustrations enhance the interest of the rather pedestrian work. While it may seem strange that René should have written such a book so long after he had held his last major tournament (if he did indeed write it as late as 1460), there were, nonetheless, good reasons for this, because like the Order of the Crescent and the tournaments, the work could act as a force to unify his scattered possessions by giving the nobility a code of conduct. The need to wear the correct clothing and possess the proper accoutrements coincided with René's love of the details of costume, furnishings and other luxury goods. As a king without a kingdom it was especially important for him that all proper ceremonies and protocol should be observed as a means of preserving his estate. *The Book of Tournaments* also corresponded with a change, noticed by Odile Blanc, in the attitude of contemporaries towards the phenomenon of tournaments. They were no longer murderous scrums but a series of complex jousts and courteous deeds of arms, although still not without danger. The appearance of the participants was of great importance, for they were no longer principally concerned to establish their high birth but to prove their perfect mastery of the social code and thus to link themselves to the world of the great lords.⁷⁷ The role of women was enhanced and the warlike aspect of the tournament reduced, although in all of René's tournaments the jousting had actually continued for several days. Perhaps it was necessary to write books about the sport because it was failing: this bears out Huizinga's theory about the decline of chivalry. On the other

⁷⁶BN Paris fonds fr. 2695 and its copies 2692 and 2693.

⁷⁷Blanc, p. 226.

hand, Jöel Blanchard and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler insist that René's works and his Order of the Crescent perpetuated chivalric ideals whilst making a pragmatic contribution to the political ends of its author.⁷⁸

René probably started to compose his *Book of the Love-Smitten Heart* in about 1457, although it was only completed twenty years later.⁷⁹ The work, a mixture of poetry and prose, is partly an autobiographical letter, partly a dream-vision and partly a quest romance. The author mentioned three works that had influenced him: a *Quest* (for the Holy Grail?), *The Romance of the Rose*, a well-known late medieval French love poem and the less well-known poem the *Book of the Hospital of Love* (c. 1440) by Achille Caulier. René dedicated the book to John II duke of Bourbon (who had been a protagonist in *The Book of Tournaments*) asking his advice about a remedy for his lovesick heart. The earliest of six copies that survive is lavishly and beautifully illustrated with a close correspondence between the text and the pictures.⁸⁰ Richard and Juliet Barber have remarked that some of them look like the set-pieces for a tournament, giving a glimpse into a romantic world that was 'a powerful current in the visual element of contemporary jousts'.⁸¹ J.P. Bouteau thinks that it may have been intended to be read aloud or even dramatised.⁸²

In the opening verse René's voice, as author, addresses the reader:

One night this month now past
 I retired to bed, anxious, tormented,
 Fatigued, and deeply pensive,
 Like a weary man who has so placed
 His heart at Love's mercy.
 My life by complaints and tears
 I greatly consume, pursuing
 A sweet gift, which pursuing,
 Long hence could not suffice.
 Never did a lover's body

⁷⁸J. Blanchard and J.C. Mühlethaler, *Écriture et Pouvoir à l'aube des temps modernes* (Paris: 2002) pp. 126–7.

⁷⁹*The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart by René of Anjou*, ed. and trans. S. Viereck Gibbs and K. Karczewska, rightsholder, Taylor and Francis Group LLC-Books (New York, London: 2001).

⁸⁰Vienna, National Library, Codex Vindobonensis 2597. See below for a discussion about the identity of the painter.

⁸¹R. and J. Barber, *Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: 1989) p. 114.

⁸²J.P. Bouteau, 'Le regard de l'acteur sur deux textes médiévaux', *Histoire du Théâtre en Anjou*, pp. 68–75.

More sorrow and torment suffer,
 For my grieving heart strongly
 Burns in ardent desire.
 It has no power by which to worsen
 And suffer its sickness more grievously.
 What do you wish me to say to you?
 It could not be believed:
 Loving enmity,
 Sweet battle, delectable misery,
 Pleasing sorrow, unhappy good,
 Repose which so labours
 And, without blows, battling and sorely
 Wounding my heart goes forth, without open wounds,
 Both openly and hidden from sight.
 I thus do not know what I shall become,
 For Pity takes such tiny steps
 In coming to my lady's heart.⁸³

René is pictured lying in his bed: Love comes to him and removes his heart from his body. It then assumes the form of an armoured knight, wearing the heart as its crest, and accompanied by a young man, Desire, goes on a quest to rescue René's lady, Sweet Mercy. In the tradition of Arthurian romances they encounter many dangers and temptations, for example, the dwarf Jealousy, the Cottage of Melancholy and the River of Tears. Heart is imprisoned in the castle of Anger and Sadness until rescued by Honour and Renown. Sustained by Lady Hope and the damsels Trust and Understanding, the companions finally reach the Island of Love and stay in the Hospital of Love (Illustration 9). There they visit a cemetery where the arms of many famous lovers are displayed: Julius Caesar, Troilus and Lancelot. René is commemorated there together with many of his contemporaries: Charles VII of France (tactfully represented by his emblem of a flying stag rather than by name), Louis of Orleans, Philip of Burgundy, Charles of Bourbon, Charles of Anjou, Gaston of Foix and Pierre de Brézé. There are also lavish tombs of great love poets such as Ovid, Guillaume de Machaut, Petrarch and Alain Chartier. In the Castle of Pleasure, Heart swears to serve its lord, Love, faithfully and is allowed to seek out Sweet Mercy. She is held in the manor of Rebellion by Refusal, Fear and Shame. After a fierce battle with

⁸³*Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, p. 5.



Illustration 9 Heart and Ardent Desire arrive at the Hospital of Love. *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, Paris BN Ms fr. 24399 f. 58.

her keepers, Heart is finally granted a kiss by his lady. But on leaving the manor, on their way back to the Castle of Pleasure, he and his companions are ambushed by Refusal, Fear and Shame who again carry off Sweet Mercy. Heart, Desire and their party retire wounded and, at this point, René wakes up and decides to write down his dream.

What can be made of this book? At the time of its inception René appeared to be recently and happily married to Jeanne de Laval. Should it

be taken as an autobiographical, allegorical account of their courtship? On the other hand, it may not relate to a particular experience but may simply be a meditation on the pains of love. The style and narrative would have been familiar to any reader of Arthurian romances and the book seems to have been intended, from the number of copies that survive, for the king's court circle. The convention is in harmony with the amorous *rondeaux* that he and his son exchanged with Charles of Orleans. The whole work is suffused with the theme of 'Sweet battle, delectable misery' that was common currency in the love poetry of the time. Together with the *Book of Tournaments*, the foundation of the Order of the Crescent and the Nancy, Saumur and Tarascon tournaments, it shows how René enhanced his image as a cultured, courtly prince who understood and lived by the rules of chivalry. He may also have been reinventing himself as the shepherd-king but this was only one of the characters that this lover of drama presented to the world.

An intimation of René's changing priorities may be gained from another major work, *The Mortification of Empty Pleasure*, that he wrote in 1455.⁸⁴ The theme, the rejection of the delights of earthly pleasure in favour of Christian virtue, counters the courtly, chivalrous values of the *Book of the Love-Smitten Heart* that he was writing at about the same time. In the *Book of the Love-Smitten Heart* René put himself in the narrative, but soon distanced the reader from his personality by the device of the disembodied heart. In *The Mortification* a similar process takes place as the author writes about the sinful soul in the shape of a young woman who eventually surrenders her heart so that it may be purified. In his dedication to his friend, Jean Bernard, archbishop of Tours, he gives his reasons for undertaking the work:

Very reverend Father in God, John, by divine grace archbishop of Tours, a special friend and close to my heart I, René, salute you strengthened by charitable love as a very humble son of the Church who cannot do enough for his spiritual father. You know intimately my little, secret habits and when I consider the time we have to render account for our lives that swiftly passes, incessantly flowing, like water in a river without stopping or turning, and often by negligence we cannot make amends, I see that nothing offers a better remedy than always to be occupied in good works, to avoid sleeping in lazy negligence like Samson in Delilah's lap while his beautiful

⁸⁴*Le Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance de René d'Anjou*, ed. F. Lyna (Leyden: 1926).

long hair was cut and he lost his strength. This appears in the Bible, chapter 26 of the Book of Judges.⁸⁵

The king did not intend this book, despite its dedication, for the great and well-educated clerics but for ordinary laymen.

The Soul is encouraged to repent by Divine Justice (a young woman with a sword hovering over her head) and Contrition (a young woman naked to the waist carrying a scourge). They are joined by another lady, Fear-of-God, who tells the Soul three parables that all involve the search for salvation. One concerns a poor woman who must cross a rickety bridge over a rushing river (Divine Anger) to take her sack of corn to be ground at a mill (Paradise). She must either die of hunger or risk drowning. A wise traveller advises her to cross steadfastly which she does successfully and lives happily with plenty of food. Convinced by such examples that she must strive for salvation the Soul gives her heart to Divine Justice and Contrition. They take it to a beautiful garden where four richly dressed ladies (the virtues Supreme Love, True Hope, Firm Faith and Divine Grace) nail it to the Cross. Blood, signifying all the sins that it has committed, flows from the heart. Divine Grace then pierces it with a lance (Knowledge of Eternal Glory) and all the remaining love of empty pleasure streams away. Divine Justice and Contrition take the heart, nailed to the Cross, back to the Soul who embraces it with joy, addressing God with many thankful prayers and praises.

Lyna cites eight illuminated manuscripts of the *Mortification*: one formerly in Vienna is now lost and the others fall into two groups. Three have a Flemish provenance and the others all derive from five surviving miniatures which have been detached from their original volume and are now kept in the city library in Metz. Lyna dated them to 1456 and believed that they came from René's own exemplar and were probably executed by his court artist, Barthélemy d'Eyck. One was the copy presented to Jean Bernard in 1455–57 and another was written and illuminated for Jeanne de Laval in 1456.⁸⁶ The survival of so many contemporary copies implies that René intended to circulate this book

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 1–2; J. d'Etiau, 'Un Prélat Angevin: Jean Bernard, archevêque de Tours', *Revue de l'Anjou*, 9 (1885) pp. 174–88.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. xli; The Flemish group are: Brussels Bib.Roy. Ms 10308; Cambridge Fitzwilliam Mus. Ms 165 and Paris BN Ms franc. 19039. Others are: Berlin, Museum of Painting Ms 566; New York, Pierpoint Morgan Ms 705 and Chantilly, Musée Condé Ms 1477. Copies without illuminations are Paris BN Mss fr. 960 and 12443 and Oxford, Bodleian Ms 9778.



Illustration 10 René in his study. *The Mortification of Empty Pleasure*, Brussels, Bib.Roy. Ms 10308, f.1. The Warburg Institute.

amongst his family, other princes, including Philip the Good of Burgundy (see Illustration 10), and the court. The religious thought it contains is conventional enough for the time, reflecting the deeply physical, self-castigating trends in society that have been identified by Huizinga and the cult of the Body of Christ more recently discussed by Miri Rubin.⁸⁷ Taken together with *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, which was produced at about the same time, it represents two apparently contradictory trends in court life. The pious practice of Christianity could be accompanied by the pursuit of sexual conquest and pleasure, conveyed in courtly language and imagery. Yet to describe the mentality of René and other writers and artists in these terms is to impose an anachronistic set of values on his age. Noblemen could be simultaneously sensual and devout provided that they observed decorum in their love affairs. Noblewomen might encourage conventional public manifestations of amorous friendship but if they actually indulged in illicit carnal relations it usually ended badly. These conventions were well understood by René's noble contemporaries and they would probably respond to his courtly and devotional treatises in the way he anticipated.

Painting and sculpture

Despite the renown that René has enjoyed both as a painter and as a patron of artists the whole subject is bedevilled by uncertainty. At one time, so great was his reputation, that several famous works were attributed to him, including *The Virgin in the Burning Bush* and the illuminations in the Vienna version of *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*. Yet even in the 1870s Lecoy de la Marche was restrained in his claims for René. He limited them to the possibility that he executed the figure of the dead king behind his funeral monument in Angers, perhaps manuscript illuminations and gifts for his wives and some allegorical wall decorations in his castles and manors.⁸⁸ He made the point that painting, the activity of artisans, was not considered a fitting pursuit for a prince, so René's name would not necessarily be attached to his works by contemporaries. No payments would have been recorded, consequently historians lack another means of identifying the presence of his hand. His long sojourn as a prisoner in Burgundy gave him plenty of time to develop a hobby and the presence of great Flemish artists provided inspiration and perhaps even some instruction. In an appendix to

⁸⁷Huizinga, especially chapters 11 and 12; M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: 1991).

⁸⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pp. 69–87.

his study of Enguerrand Quarton, Charles Sterling discussed the question of René as a painter.⁸⁹ He cited three examples, from 1458, 1460 and 1472, of the king designing reliquaries, but remarked that this did not make him an eminent painter. He did, however, suggest that the illustrations in the original manuscript of the poem *Regnault and Jehanneton*, which survive only in a copy, could have been painted by René.

Between 1447 and 1449 René ordered his counsellor, Guy de Laval, to oversee the painting of the great chamber at the castle of Saumur with a series of pictures of the tournament that had been held there in 1446. The artist or artists are unknown and their work has not survived although crude sketches in a St Petersburg manuscript may relate to it.⁹⁰ This was probably the largest commission for a painting that the king made in Anjou. His years of protracted residence there mostly coincided with the time when he was discharging his enormous debts, marrying two daughters and mounting lavish tournaments. The accounts suggest that, despite his love of art, he was content to employ his own artists and local painters to decorate his residences and to supply his family with modest devotional works.⁹¹ A number of these are recorded in the accounts together with the names of painters such as Jean Lemaître and Adenot, but no specific links can be established with surviving works. Robin observes that a group of painters (of whom Jean Fouquet was the most notable) flourished in the Loire valley and that they worked for the French kings and local nobles and did not migrate to Provence.⁹² Christine Leduc has studied the mural paintings in the chapel of the castle of Pimpéan in Anjou, which belonged to Bertrand de Beauvau and then to his son Antoine. The evidence of a shield bearing the insignia of the Order of the Crescent shows that it was likely to have been decorated between 1451 and 1462 (when Bertrand died). Several saints favoured by the house of Anjou, such as St Louis of Toulouse and St Maurice, are also depicted, showing that René's artistic preferences were shared by some of his courtiers.⁹³

⁸⁹C. Sterling, *Enguerrand Quarton: Le peintre de la Pietà d'Avignon* (Paris: 1983) pp. 181–3.

⁹⁰St Petersburg Public Library Ms Fr. F.V.XIV, 4.

⁹¹Lecoq de la Marche, *René*, 2, pp. 96–8.

⁹²Robin, *La Cour*, pp. 221–4.

⁹³C. Leduc, 'La Chapelle du Château de Pimpéan et ses peintures murales de la fin du Moyen Âge', *La Noblesse*, pp. 639–52; see also Robin, *La Cour*, p. 116, besides Pimpéan she also cites Belligan and Montriou as examples of the spread of the Angevin court style.

From the 1460s in Provence René patronised the cosmopolitan succession of artists who visited his court. In 1476, for example, a Catalan painted five cloths for his chapel in Avignon and a Castilian produced several portraits of saints.⁹⁴ Increasingly preoccupied with hopes of salvation René and his wife ordered a series of illuminated books of hours and paid for paintings and statues to be installed in churches and monasteries. One of the distinguishing features of the Avignon school of painters, which flourished during the fifteenth century, was the influence that Flemish masters exercised on the style of its members. By no means all of this group were employed by René, but the finest works that are associated with his patronage are characteristically 'sombre ... monumental and luminous'.⁹⁵ The whole question of the authorship of many of the products of this school, especially the illuminations in manuscripts, is extremely controversial and an English historian does well to tread gingerly around 'big beasts' in the field such as Sterling, Laclotte, Avril, Robin and Reynaud. Only one of the great paintings that can be securely attributed to a named artist was commissioned by René: the triptych of *The Virgin in the Burning Bush* by Nicolas Froment which was paid for in 1476. It was destined by the king for the altar of the chapel of the Maternity of the Holy Virgin in the church of the Carmelites in Aix (where his entrails were to be deposited) although it has finished up in the cathedral of Saint Saviour (see Illustration 11 below).⁹⁶ In other cases connections with and between the work of Enguerrand Quarton, the master of the *Aix Annunciation*, the master of king René, as he is often called, and other artists and the king can only be the subject of speculation. Another presence which hovers over the school is Jean Fouquet, the painter from Tours who worked for Charles VII and his secretary Etienne Chevalier. His influence on the Avignon painters, their possible influence on him and the impact of a sojourn in Italy on his later style are all subjects for debate.⁹⁷

⁹⁴Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, p. 98.

⁹⁵M. Laclotte, 'A propos de quelques primitifs méditerranéens', *Études d'art français offertes à Charles Sterling*, ed. A. Châtelet and N. Reynaud (Paris: 1975) pp. 321–44. Grete Ring characterises René's influence as giving the art of his court 'its distinctive flavour and physiognomy', *A Century of French Painting* (London: 1949) p. 18.

⁹⁶Robin, *La Cour*, pp. 211–12.

⁹⁷See, for example, M.L. Evans, 'Jean Fouquet and Italy: buono maestro, maxime a ritrarre del naturale', *Illuminating the Book: Makers and Interpreters*, Essays in Honour of Janet Backhouse, ed. M. Brown and S. McKendrick (London, Toronto: 1998) pp. 162–89.

The painter Barthélemy d'Eyck worked closely with René from the 1440s to his death in the 1470s. He was almost certainly a Fleming and may have been enlisted in his prince's service during his imprisonment in Burgundy. He was a royal squire and later a carver in the household in addition to his duties as an artist. René must have found him to be a congenial companion as he ensured that he would be constantly at his side: his desk in one of the king's studios in Angers was mentioned above. Payments over and above his salary were promised to him for paintings from time to time, but nothing conclusively links him with any surviving works. There is an irony in a document that provides considerable evidence about the conditions experienced by artists working for the king published in the 1980s. It was addressed to René by Barthélemy's widow between 1470 and 1476:

Sire, I recommend me to your good grace as humbly as I can. Please it you to know, Sire, that Charlot Pierre [first valet of the chamber, close to René during the second half of his reign] has sent me letters touching the pictures of the late Barthélemy. Sire, please it you to let me know if you want them and I will send them to you by whoever it shall please you to command me. Sire, all is at your disposition, not only these pictures but all that I have in the world. Sire, please it you not to forget your late servant Barthélemy deike concerning his offices that it pleased you to give him in Provence and it pleased you to assign him on your estates of Anjou, from which offices in four years I have not had more than 60 livres. Sire, it pleased you to send a warrant every year that the chamber of accounts should pay 240 livres. I beg you Sire that you shall be pleased to give me an order by which I can be paid and, this done, I shall pray God for you. And please it you to know Sire that your late servant left me in debt and that is why I am your suppliant. Begging that you shall be pleased to give this matter careful thought and always hold me in your good grace. Attending on your good pleasure to accomplish it, very humbly as I can according to the will of God who give you good and long life. Written at your little house at Brion [between Saumur and Angers] the 28 day of March. Your humble servant Jehanne de la Forest.⁹⁸

As is so often the case with such pieces of evidence, we do not know what response the widow received to her request.

⁹⁸N. Reynaud, 'La lettre de la veuve de Barthélemy d'Eyck au roi René' *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art français* (1986) pp. 7–10.

Michel Laclotte and Dominique Thiébaud's study of the Avignon school offers a hypothesis on the work of Barthélemy d'Eyck based on the research of several experts in the field.⁹⁹ Their conclusions do not reflect the unanimous opinion of such scholars but, in the light of the evidence currently available, they seem persuasive. They believe that Barthélemy painted the triptych of the *Aix Annunciation* (a fine work commissioned by Peter Corpici, a draper who supplied cloth to René) in 1443–45, for the chapel of the Holy Trinity in the church of Notre Dame.¹⁰⁰ If the painter had accompanied René to Naples, these dates would give him time to have returned to Provence to carry out this commission. The king was penniless after the failure of his Italian expedition and he might have been content for his artist to earn some money elsewhere. The Flemish style suggests that the painting is an early work of the artist whose technique evolved during the following decades. He is also thought to have been the illuminator of some miniatures in another early commission, a Book of Hours made for René, which is now in London in the British Library.¹⁰¹ Some time later he shared with Enguerrand Quarton the task of producing miniatures for a Book of Hours which is in New York (its original owner is unknown).¹⁰² In the 1450s d'Eyck illustrated René's own copies of *The Book of Tournaments*,¹⁰³ *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*¹⁰⁴ and *The Mortification of Empty Pleasure*.¹⁰⁵ The integration of the text and the paintings in these works indicates that the author and his artist worked closely together. Christian de Mérindol has also discerned Barthélemy's hand in fragments of frescoes executed for the king at the castle at Tarascon. Barthélemy is mentioned in the accounts as being concerned in its decoration in 1447

⁹⁹M. Laclotte and D. Thiébaud, *L'École d'Avignon* (Tours: 1983) pp. 69–75.

¹⁰⁰Now in the church of the Magdalene, Aix.

¹⁰¹London BL Ms Egerton 1070.

¹⁰²New York Pierpoint Morgan Library Ms 358. No direct links can be established between René and Quarton but besides the suggestion that he and Barthélemy collaborated in illuminating a manuscript, they are associated in a legal document dated 19 January 1444 at Aix, Laclotte and Thiébaud, p. 74. Quarton's great *Coronation of the Virgin*, commissioned in 1453 at Avignon, must have been well known to the king. Quarton also painted a banner in 1457 for the Confraternity of Our Lady at Aix which bore the arms of the king of Sicily, J. and Y. le Pichon, *Le mystère du Couronnement de la Vierge* (Paris: 1982) p. 30.

¹⁰³Paris, BN Ms fr. 2695.

¹⁰⁴Vienna, National Library, Codex Vidobonensis 2597.

¹⁰⁵Metz, city library.

and there are similarities between the style of the paintings and works such as the New York Book of Hours.¹⁰⁶

Assuming that he accompanied his master to Italy, Laclotte and Thiébault see probable traces of Barthélemy d'Eyck's influence in the work of the Neapolitan artist Colantonio.¹⁰⁷ Colantonio in turn was influential on the better-known artist Antonello da Messina. The books in Antonello's painting of *St Jerome in his Study*, in the National Gallery, London, for example, are reminiscent of the books in a *St Jerome* by Colantonio in Naples, Gallery of Capodimonte and *lunettes* (semicircular niches) above the prophets on the wings of the *Aix Annunciation*.¹⁰⁸ Barthélemy's influence in Provence may be discerned as early as 1444 in the stained glass windows of the chapel of St Mitre in St Saveur at Aix, commissioned by archbishop Nicolai from the Dombet family of artists. Whether or not the painter of the *Annunciation* and the master of king René were one and the same person and he was Barthélemy d'Eyck, the quality of the work attributed to him that was produced for the court and its environment in Anjou and Provence was outstanding: innovative, intense and elegant.

As noted above, there is only one major painting in Provence that can be attributed without question to René's patronage, Nicolas Froment's retable (altarpiece) *The Virgin in the Burning Bush* (Illustration 11). Apart from its interest as one of the major examples of work of the Avignon school, it contains evidence of the piety of the king and queen and of the way in which they presented themselves to the world in the mid-1470s. The subject is unusual since the incident in the Old Testament refers to God the Father's manifestation to Moses in a burning bush, but in Froment's picture it is the Virgin and Child that appear in the bush. The fire that burns but does not corrupt is a symbol of virginity and here it could refer to Mary's own immaculate conception by her mother Anne as well as to the birth of Jesus Christ. René and Jeanne de Laval kneel praying on the side panels, he has placed his crown, doubtless as a sign of humility, on his *prie-dieu* where it lies on

¹⁰⁶C. de Mérindol, 'Nouvelles données sur Barthélemy d'Eyck', pp. 7–16.

¹⁰⁷Ring cites an early sixteenth century source for the suggestion that René himself influenced the painting of Colantonio, p. 18.

¹⁰⁸The wings are in the Musée des Beaux Arts, Brussels and the Musée Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Later in the century Antonello da Messina influenced Avignon painters, Laclotte and Thiébaut, p. 98.



Illustration 11 'The Virgin Mary in the Burning Bush' by Nicolas Froment, 1476, Saint Saviour cathedral, Aix. The Warburg Institute.

a long, rich cloth bearing his royal arms. He is supported by the patron of his Order of the Crescent, St Maurice, St Anthony the Hermit and St Mary Magdalene, a saint for whom he had a special devotion (see below). Jeanne de Laval resolutely wears her royal crown and her *prie-dieu* is draped with the arms of Laval and Brittany. Behind her stand St John the Evangelist, St Catherine (a suitable role-model for a princess) and St Nicolas of Bari who was venerated by the king and queen. Despite the richness of the clothes worn by the royal couple and their saints and the beautiful landscape that unfolds behind the central scene, the mood is sombre and meditative: the twilight of the reign of a king who had attempted great things but was reconciled to his failures. Perhaps the scene of Moses tending his flocks was a deliberate continuation of the theme of pastoral simplicity that the king had increasingly cultivated in Provence. His choice of a hermit saint and the penitent Magdalene as patrons together with his decision not to wear his crown in this public work of art bear out the sentiments he expressed in *The Mortification of Empty Pleasure*. Even the presence of St Maurice was perhaps a reminder that the Knights of the Crescent were dedicated to the service of religion as well as to their temporal lord, who was no longer a martial figure

and whose sons had predeceased him. This great devotional work bears testimony to René's priorities towards the end of his reign.¹⁰⁹

The Italians, merchants and others, who lived in Provence were another source for the influence of early Renaissance art. Many were people of substance who either brought pictures and illuminated manuscripts with them from their home states or commissioned works from their fellow countrymen whilst they were living abroad. Their ranks had been swollen in the early 1440s by those who accompanied René when he returned from Naples and they were later joined by followers of John of Calabria. Italian forms combined with Flemish and native French to produce an art in the middle decades of the century which distinguished itself from the work of painters both from the Loire valley, such as Jean Fouquet, and from northern France. Painters who worked for René and his court could be required to work in Anjou as well as Provence, decorating his residences in the Loire. The accounts attest that this was the lot of Barthélemy d'Eyck and the letter from his wife, quoted above, shows that he occupied a house there. Robin has described the work done in René's Angevin lands by local artists and by painters from other parts of France and from other countries.¹¹⁰ Ring opened her study of French painting in the fifteenth century by insisting that it was not useful to make too much of regional variations in style within the country.¹¹¹ Yet the rich cultural environment of Burgundy, the Loire and Provence produced a number of schools as well as fine artists. Amongst these Enguerrand Quarton, the master of king René, the master of the *Aix Annunciation* (if these last two were not the same) and Nicolas Froment can be claimed for the school of Avignon. They all, directly or indirectly, contributed to the court culture of king René.

In 1444, soon after his return from Italy, René embarked on a grandiose scheme to build a tomb for himself and Isabelle of Lorraine that was to be placed against the north wall of the choir of St Maurice, Angers. He probably designed it himself for it bore many of the features of tombs

¹⁰⁹The central panel measures 3.05 x 2.25m and the wings each 2.25x 0.96m, Laclotte and Thiébaud, p. 247. E. Harris, "Mary in the Burning Bush" Nicolas Froment's Triptych at Aix-en-Provence', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 1 (1937-8) pp. 281-6. Jean de Mathurin, an ambassador and chancellor to René, was the probable owner of two small framed portraits of the king and queen that are clearly based on the altarpiece. They are either by Froment or a follower, René looks slightly older and Jeanne wears a severe black hood rather than a crown, Ring, pp. 33-7.

¹¹⁰Robin, *La Cour*, pp. 220-4.

¹¹¹Ring, p. 9.

that he would have seen in Naples (that of Robert of Anjou in Santa Chiara, for example) and northern Italy. It represented a departure from family tradition as his father and grandfather, both buried in St Maurice, had modest sarcophagi. The details of the design are uncertain since hardly anything remains today: the structure was partially destroyed by a fire in 1533 and restored, suffered the depredations of the Huguenots and the French revolutionaries and the reconstruction of the choir.¹¹² From drawings and descriptions René and Isabelle seem to have lain in their regal robes on top of their sarcophagus. Behind them there was a large painting of a dead, crowned king whose royal cloak hung pathetically from his lolling, mummified body and whose sceptre and orb had fallen from his grasp. Angers was depicted behind him and on either side cherubs held the arms of the royal couple. Corinthian columns supported the round arch that framed the tomb, they were painted with chafing dishes (vessels holding burning coals), one of the king's emblems. René and Isabelle's arms appeared again on two shields in the arch above, his bearing the motto of the Order of the Crescent: 'Los en Croissant'. The top of these and traces of the painted fleur-de-lis behind them are all that survives today. In front of the tomb were three large sculpted figures of knights bearing René's helmet and arms, three ladies sitting reading their Hours and a reliquary of Saint Maurice. Another sculptured group was composed of Christ on the Cross, the Virgin and St John and St Michael presenting René and the Magdalen presenting Isabelle surrounded by small angels. This does not appear on surviving drawings of the tomb and it may have been abandoned in the course of the work or destroyed in the fire.

There was a high casualty rate amongst the early sculptors who worked on the tomb. Jean Poncet, who received a detailed specification for the work in August 1450, and Jean Morel both died while working on it.¹¹³ Poncet's son Pons continued with the work but had to suffer the seizure of his father's goods by the king's officers in compensation for his failure to make any progress on the contract.¹¹⁴ Most of it had been completed by 1460 and twelve years later one of the king's artists, Coppin Delf, painted the tomb. It is impossible to estimate the quality of the work but the style was a mixture of Italian Renaissance and late Gothic.

¹¹²All drawings date from after 1533 and may reflect the restoration rather than its original appearance. Robin, *La Cour*, illustrations 35 and 36 between pp. 96–7. (See also the front cover of this book.)

¹¹³Robin, *La Cour*, pp. 231–40.

¹¹⁴Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, p. 100.

The design was highly original and, dominated by the figure of the dead king, must have been arresting and disturbing to spectators. While the imagery seems to fit well with René's reduced situation in the 1470s, it is strange that he would have embraced such negative symbolism early in his reign when he made the design. He still had many supporters in Italy and a martial son and there was some prospect that his kingdom might be reconquered. On the other hand, the combination within the design of worldly pomp and aspirations with a terrible reminder of the transience of human glory was part of the late medieval tradition of juxtaposing great men and women wearing the trappings of their status with skeletons or rotting corpses.¹¹⁵ In plastic form it echoed the suppression of carnal needs and vanities that was the theme of *The Mortification of Empty Pleasure* and the mummified kings who appear in two of his books of hours.¹¹⁶

The long-drawn-out work on René's tomb was not the only commission that he instituted in the Loire valley. Apart from small figures for his residences, in 1471 he ordered a large group of *Domine Quo Vadis?* for the church of St Peter in Saumur, the sculptor is unknown. This showed St Peter encountering Jesus Christ outside Rome with statues of René and Jeanne de Laval kneeling on either side, but this group has not survived. It was mentioned in the king's will and in 1477 he ordered that Coppin Delf should be paid for painting it, so it was a work that was executed whilst the king was resident in Provence. He seems to have retained an affection for the town where he had spent much of his early life at his mother's court. In 1462 Pons Poncet, the son of Jean, was working on the tomb of René's nurse, Tiphane la Magine, in the church of Notre Dame de Nantilly, Saumur. Only a drawing survives to show that it was a conventional sarcophagus surmounted by the coiled figure of Tiphane.¹¹⁷

Some of the work carried out by sculptors for René in Provence has proved more durable than his commissions issued in the Loire. From 1459 to 1463 John of Calabria fought an extended campaign to reconquer Naples for his house. The renown of the medals that Pisanello struck for the victorious Alfonso of Aragon and of the triumphal arch that the king had erected at the entry to the Castelnuovo must have been considerable. John probably managed to entice one of the main sculptors of the arch, Pietro da Milano and his associate, Francesco

¹¹⁵P. Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: 1997).

¹¹⁶Paris BN Ms lat. 1156 A, f.113v; London BL Ms Egerton 1070, f.53.

¹¹⁷Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pp. 101–2. See Chapter 1.

Laurana, to leave Italy to work for his father. The Lombard Pietro had run a workshop in Dubrovnik for nearly twenty years where he was joined by a young Croatian, Francesco of Zara. They worked together on the small fountain and the Rector's Palace which both survive. Vladimir Grozdanovic has suggested that Pietro's more rigidly posed figures can already be distinguished from Francesco's softer, flowing ones.¹¹⁸ In 1452 Pietro, accompanied by Francesco whose name was Italianized to 'Laurana', was summoned to Naples to work on the triumphal arch. James Pope-Hennessy castigates it as 'an unhappy union of unrelated styles' but thinks that Pietro was in control of the overall design, largely redeeming the faults of the disparate Gothic and classical elements and giving it an overall architectural unity.¹¹⁹ It was a considerable *coup* for René to attract two such fashionable sculptors to his court. After the death of Alfonso, the future of his dynasty was very insecure and it was not clear until 1463/4 that the Angevins would fail to replace it in Naples. With the absence of large commissions in Italy and the offer of work in France a relocation must have seemed timely to both artists.

Pietro da Milano worked for René in Bar where the king resided between June 1463 and August 1464, whilst he installed his exiled daughter queen Margaret in the castle of Koeur. Pietro produced a portrait medal which, while less than flattering is probably of Margaret and as such is the most authentic likeness that we possess (Illustration 12). His portraits of René and Jeanne de Laval are equally unattractive although they are instantly recognizable. He must have remained in Bar for a time since he also carved two dogs for a new chamber in the castle there and produced figures for a group including the Magdalene of la Baume for St Maxe de Bar. He is not known to have carried out any further commissions for the king or his court before his return to Naples in 1464.¹²⁰ Francesco Laurana does not seem to have worked with Pietro since there is no record that he did anything in Bar. If he produced any of the highly finished, serene female portrait busts for which he is most famous for the king or his circle they have not been identified.¹²¹ Pächt,

¹¹⁸V. Grozdanovic, 'The Dalmatian Works of Pietro da Milano and the beginnings of Francesco Laurana', *Arte Lombarda*, 42-3 (1975): 113-23.

¹¹⁹J. Pope-Hennessy, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture* (Oxford: 1986), p. 67.

¹²⁰Robin, *La Cour*, pp. 230, 244-6.

¹²¹But see O. Pächt, 'Dévotion du roi René pour sainte Marie-Madeleine et la sanctuaire de Saint-Maximin', *Chronique Méridionale: Arts du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance* (1981) pp. 15-28.

however, thinks that Laurana made the original gold mask to hide the relic of the skull of the Magdalene, which was commissioned by René and destroyed in the Revolution, also a mask of marble that still exists in the museum at Villeneuve-les-Avignon. Laurana's first work replicated the kinds of commission that were to be given to Pietro da Milano: medals of Charles, count of Maine (before 1461), René (1461), René and Jeanne together (1462), Jeanne de Laval (1463), Ferry of Vaudemont and John of Calabria (1464) and John Cossa (1466; Illustration 13). These incorporate a humanist approach to portraiture for Laurana emulated Pisanello's technique of showing his subjects' distinction and resolution by finely modelling their features and giving them an upright carriage and firmly compressed lips. Chrysa Damianaki contrasts them



Illustration 12 Probably Margaret of Anjou, a medal by Pietro da Milano (1463–64). Private Collection. Warburg Institute.



Illustration 13 John Cossa, a medal by Francesco Laurana, 1466. Paris BN Cabinet des médailles. The Warburg Institute.

with Pietro's 'mechanical treatment of form'.¹²² Laurana's use of classical antiquity was continued on the reverse where particular virtues which the subject of the medal claimed to possess were extolled: fortitude, prudence or love for a spouse. Both the double portrait of René and Jeanne and portrait busts in Tarascon castle (in a bad state but probably by Laurana) bear Latin inscriptions using the characteristically classical term 'divi'. The one at Tarascon reads (Illustration 14): 'These demi-gods made illustrious by the lilies of France and the Cross advance,

¹²²C. Damianaki, *The Female Portrait Busts of Francesco Laurana* (Rome: 2000) p. 12.

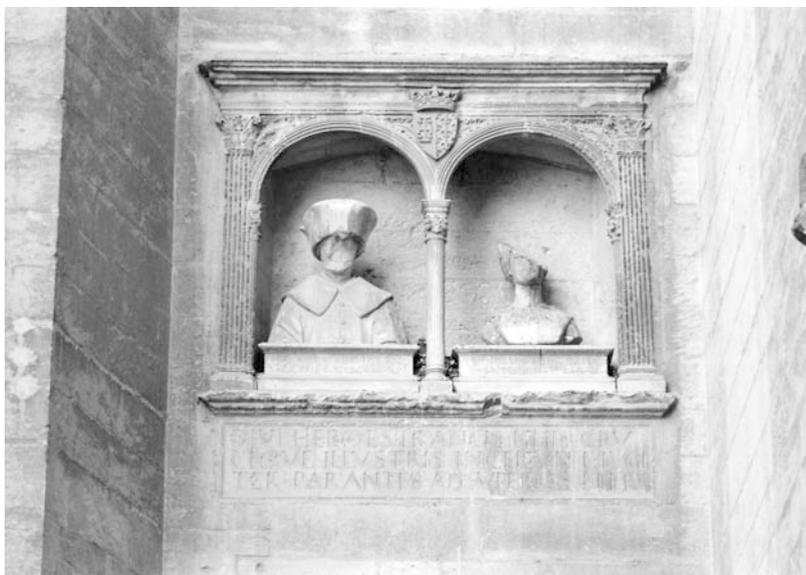


Illustration 14 Tarascon Castle, effigies of king René and queen Jeanne de Laval and inscription, probably by Francesco Laurana. Photo Peter Fawcett.

side by side, towards heaven. [Divi heroes Francis Liliis Cruceque Illustris Incedunt Iugitur Parantes ad Superos Iter].¹²³

From 1464 to 1465 Laurana worked on a public fountain, ornamented by two bronze griffons and the arms of the king and the patron, for the town of Puy Sainte-Réparate. It had been commissioned by one of René's counsellors, Fabricio da Gaëta, lord of Bouc, who had followed him from Naples. Laurana left Provence in the late 1460s and worked in Sicily and Naples for several years. He had returned by the late 1470s to serve René, working simultaneously on two commissions. One was a collaboration with the Lombard sculptor, Tommaso Malvito, to decorate the chapel of St Lazare in the Old Cathedral at Marseille. Most of it survives and the architectural details are classical in style. Robin believes that, although René did not order this work to be done, he may have had a hand in its design.¹²⁴ The other commission was to make a deeply cut frieze of the Virgin, St John the Evangelist and Holy Women meeting Christ carrying the Cross on his way to Calvary. The cost was shared by René and the Celestines of Avignon, although the work was later moved to the church

¹²³Robin, *Le château du roi René à Tarascon* (Paris: 2005), p. 46.

¹²⁴Robin, *La Cour*, pp. 252–4.

of St Didier. In 1480 Laurana had already received 622 écus from René and 300 écus from the monks; the frieze was finished in 1481, just after the king's death. Often called 'Our Lady of the Swoon' after the fainting Virgin supported by the other Holy Women, the figures in this group are more expressive and less smoothly modelled than the artist's well-known female portraits. They found no favour with Pope-Hennessy who exclaimed against Laurana that his 'intellectual resources were barely adequate for the work he undertook'.¹²⁵ C. Seymour, who wrote his study at about the same time, was more appreciative of a style that veered between late Gothic and humanist trends. He praised Laurana for a versatile eclecticism that eludes a convenient historical pigeonhole.¹²⁶ Although the emotion displayed by the Holy Women is certainly Gothic in its intensity, the impassive, classically uniformed soldiers and the architectural background belong to antiquity.

The flexibility with which Laurana gratified his patrons' requests must have been welcome to René and his courtiers. The king had experienced considerable difficulties in the 1450s in getting his French sculptors to make progress on his ambitious tomb at Angers. He probably asked Laurana to carve an effigy of one of his favourite saints, Martha, for her church at Tarascon (although it has disappeared). Laurana is also likely to have made the surviving effigy there for the king's friend, John Cossa (who died in 1476) which was commissioned by his sons René and Melchior. Laurana was probably the sculptor of the tomb of René's brother, Charles of Maine (who died in 1472) which survives in the chapel of St John the Baptist in Le Mans cathedral. The sarcophagus on which the count lies and the architecture of its niche are classical in style and closely resemble contemporary tombs in Italy.¹²⁷ Laurana may have returned to Italy for a time but he died in France before 12 April 1502. René ordered work from other sculptors (most of which has not survived) but it was Pietro da Milano and, above all, Francesco Laurana who had produced the medals and monuments that would equal in classical imagery and prestige those of his rivals in Naples.

Devotion and chivalry

The account of René's life so far has shown that he and his family were devout and orthodox sons and daughters of the Catholic Church. Most

¹²⁵Pope-Hennessy, p. 82.

¹²⁶C. Seymour, *Sculpture in Italy, 1400–1500* (Harmondsworth: 1966) p. 165.

¹²⁷See Damianaki, pp. 24–7 for a discussion of these works. See illustration 15, Chapter 5.

princes and great nobles offered gifts to the Church and purchased fine religious ornaments and buildings, but René's zeal was remarkable. After his second marriage he may also have been encouraged by Jeanne de Laval who was also extremely pious and who, both before and after his death, was generous in her donations and assiduous in acquiring Books of Hours and other religious works.¹²⁸ René was on friendly terms with several prelates including the cardinal of Foix the papal legate, and Jean Bernard, archbishop of Tours, to whom he dedicated *The Mortification of Empty Pleasure*. According to V. Tabbagh, however, René's Angevin bishops were learned rather than over-concerned with their pastoral duties.¹²⁹

In his later years René gravitated increasingly towards Avignon, although it stood just outside his county. This may have reflected a feeling that as death approached he wished to be as close as possible to a centre of papal authority. He had respected it all his life, despite a few minor wrangles over appointments and jurisdiction of the kind that nearly all medieval princes encountered. His only serious conflict with the Papacy occurred in the 1460s when his dynastic claim to Naples proved irreconcilable with the wish of Pius II to keep the house of Aragon on that throne. Yet that was a political not a doctrinal matter and was eventually terminated by the death of the Pope.¹³⁰

René owned three fragments of the True Cross, one he gave to the church of St Laud in Angers in 1452, the second he offered to the Celestines of Avignon. The third he kept for his personal devotions in a magnificent reliquary in the chapel of his castle at Angers. In 1476 the archbishop of Aix took it to Provence, no doubt to save it from that notorious collector, Louis XI. Avid for relics of the life of Christ, in 1449 René had purchased a classical hydra of porphyry, from the monastery of St Paul in Marseille, which was believed to have been used for mixing wine at the marriage at Cana. He gave it to the chapter of St Maurice at Angers and instituted a sumptuous feast to mark its arrival. Every year on 28 January he paid for special hats, illuminations, cakes and wine for those who took part in the religious celebrations.¹³¹

¹²⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pp. 97–8, 189.

¹²⁹V. Tabbagh, 'Formation et activités intellectuelles des évêques d'Anjou, du Maine et de Provence à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Formation intellectuelle et culture du clergé dans les territoires Angevins (milieu du xiii^e- fin du xv^e siècle)*, ed. M.-M. de Cevins and J.-M. Matz (Rome: 2005) pp. 117–37.

¹³⁰See Chapter 2.

¹³¹Robin, *La Cour*, pp. 53–4.

René, his family and courtiers felt a strong devotion to an array of saints that had special cults in Anjou, Bar, Italy and Provence. They venerated St Maurice (Anjou), St Nicholas (Bar and Naples), St Bernardino of Siena (Italy), St Louis of Toulouse (Provence) and Saints Mary Magdalen and Martha (Provence). By fostering such saints the king could combine his religious with his political interests for he was careful to spread his devotion over all his domains as another means of attempting to unify them. In the discussion of his patronage of the arts the names of special 'Angevin' saints regularly recur.

A legend recounted the journey made after the resurrection of Christ by Saints Mary Magdalen and Martha, their brother St Lazarus, Saints Mary Salomé, Mary Jacobé, St Maximin, St Sidonius and a black servant called Sara (now revered by the gypsies) to Provence. The group dispersed to evangelise a wider area, apart from the Maries Salomé and Jacobé and Sara, who built an oratory there. This was part of the ministry of the disciples of Christ and their followers that had been instituted at Pentecost when they scattered throughout the world to preach the gospel. The tradition was attractive to north European princes who felt excluded from the eastern Mediterranean and especially from Jerusalem and Constantinople where much early Christian activity had been concentrated. Since the thirteenth century crusades were much talked about but nothing had been achieved: Nicopolis (1396) and Varna (1444) were embarrassing failures. The surge in devotion to the body of Christ, the Virgin Mary and the saints, relics and the churches and chapels in which they were deposited looks like some kind of compensation for the remoteness of the holy places. The Angevins had a long-standing devotion to the Magdalen for they owned her skull which was venerated at La Sainte Baume in Provence in the cave where she was believed to have ended her life in penance. Louis III, René, Isabelle, John of Calabria and his wife Marie of Bourbon, were also inscribed in the register of the confraternity of St Martha in Naples: a potent symbol of the Angevin claim to the Kingdom.¹³² In 1448 the relics of the two Maries and Sara were discovered in Our Lady of the Sea, a Provençal church in the remote, salty marshes of the Carmargue. René's friend, cardinal Pierre de Foix, declared that they were authentic and the king ordered that a special chapel should be installed. By the following year construction was underway, carried out by the architect Jean Robert, René's master of works, assisted by a Florentine, Frozino d'Andréa and Gaillard Nicon of Avignon, who made a copper altar for the church.¹³³

¹³²Robin, *La Cour*, pp. 172–3. See Chapter 2 and Illustrations 5a–d.

¹³³Pichon, p. 80; Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, p. 56.

The king arranged a grand ceremony in December to mark the translation of the relics within the church: in matters of religion he had a sure touch when engaging with the political culture of his time.

A legacy from his early sojourn in Bar and Lorraine was the devotion that René displayed for St Nicolas of Bari (or Myra). The church of St Nicolas du Port near Nancy owned one of his finger bones and was popular with pilgrims. René and Jeanne de Laval were married at the abbey of St Nicolas at Angers in 1454 and this could have enhanced their veneration for the saint. In 1471 the king and queen donated a lavish reliquary to St Nicolas du Port in the form of a silver-gilt arm and hand. The decoration epitomised the way in which René combined classical images and Gothic devotional objects without feeling them to be incompatible. The hand of the reliquary wore an episcopal ring containing a large ruby. The pedestal which supported the arm was decorated with gold, precious stones and cameos (doubtless from the king's collection) of Cupid, Bacchus, Hercules, Hadrian, a centaur and a naked Venus looking into a mirror. There were also contemporary cameos of Christ and the saints and an enamel of the arms of the donors. The reliquary was destroyed during the French Revolution but the cameo of Venus survives in the Louvre because its Benedictine guardians had presented it to Louis XIV and replaced it with an enamel of St Nicolas.¹³⁴

One of René's reputed confessors was the Franciscan, Bernard from Massa-di-Carrara, better known as St Bernardino of Siena, a renowned preacher and vicar-general of the Observant friars. According to Lecoy de la Marche he accompanied the king on his Italian expedition.¹³⁵ Bernard died in 1445 and five years later René managed to obtain his canonisation: a considerable achievement at a time when Angevin power in Italy had waned, and a sign of their good relations with the Papacy. René purchased some land near the church of the Cordeliers in Angers and, in 1453, started to build a chapel dedicated to this new dynastic saint. He filled it with sculptures and painted glass depicting the whole ducal family and engraved lines on the Passion that he had composed himself.¹³⁶ Merindol points out that the Angevins also honoured the saint favoured by the kings of France, St Michael, and his

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 2, pp. 121–2.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 2, p. 25. Another account simply has René attending Bernard's sermons whilst on campaign, see Chapter 2.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 2, pp. 25–6.

statue stood on the altar of St Bernard.¹³⁷ René provided in his will that his heart should be buried there and Jeanne de Laval inserted the same clause in her will. Even though their bodies were to be buried in separate tombs this chapel (which was destroyed during the Revolution) was a means of proclaiming their devotion.

Unlike some of his contemporaries, for most of his career René does not appear to have favoured astrologers. The political dangers that the casting of horoscopes could present were well known in both France and England.¹³⁸ The Church regarded the practice as, at best, dubious and, at worst, damnable. René's accounts, however, show that towards the end of his life he made several payments to astrologers. In 1477–78 master Jean Laurens of Nancy visited his court in the entourage of his grandson René II of Lorraine. He may have stimulated the king's interest as in November 1477 he purchased three astrolabes, one as a gift for his friend Charles of Bourbon, recently made a cardinal, and two for himself. René bought other scientific instruments and in his last years paid several other astrologers including Bertrand Vieulx, a gentleman of Dauphiné.¹³⁹ This looks rather like desperation – an old king without direct male heirs and under unbearable pressure from Louis XI seeking unorthodox solutions to his dilemma.

The foundation of the Order of the Crescent has been presented in recent decades as primarily a political act to unite René's scattered domains.¹⁴⁰ Reynolds linked this to a refutation of Huizinga's claim that the ideals of chivalry had ceased to be more than mythical in an age when arrows, javelins and guns could determine the outcome of battles. The question of whether René regarded his order primarily as a religious confraternity or as a useful political tool in European diplomacy is linked to an understanding of how he wished to motivate his noble and knightly courtiers and to deal with foreign allies. The order was founded in August 1448 with the issue of the king's first set of

¹³⁷C. de Merindol, 'Saint Michel et la Monarchie Française à la fin du Moyen Âge dans le conflit Franco-Anglais', *La 'France Anglaise' au Moyen Âge, Actes du 111^e Congrès Nationale des Sociétés Savantes*, 1 (Paris: 1988) pp. 513–42, 541. De Merindol believed that this devotion was more apparent when relations between the kings and the Angevins were close, between 1445–50 and 1463–64.

¹³⁸Kekewich and Rose, p. 214.

¹³⁹Agnel, 1, p. 244, 3, pp. 3–10. René's library contained a German book on astrology sent by the astrologer Nicolas Merlin, Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, p. 190.

¹⁴⁰See Reynolds for much of what follows; also C. de Mérimodol, 'L'Ordre du Croissant: mises au point et perspectives', *La Noblesse*, pp. 499–509.

statutes (they were modified slightly in 1452). They set out his concerns and priorities and emphasised the religious nature of the order that had St Maurice as its patron. The choice of the crescent seems curious for an order dedicated to Christian ideals. However, the first house of Anjou had used it on their coinage and also in an order founded jointly by Louis IX of France and his brother, Charles of Anjou.

Membership was to be restricted to men of princely or noble birth of four generations and was not to exceed fifty knights and squires at any given time. The order was governed by a senator (a title that claimed ancient Roman virtues for its holder) who changed annually and more permanent officials: a chaplain, who must be a prelate, a chancellor, vice-chancellor and treasurer. Its motto was 'Los en croissant', a punning means of claiming 'Increasing honour' or 'Praise to the Crescent': the king-of-arms and herald were called respectively 'Los' and 'Croissant'. Members must be devout, hearing mass and saying the hours of the Virgin every day and paying a penalty if they failed in the former duty. They swore oaths concerning their personal conduct: to help the poor and the widows and orphans of members, to assist each other if they were ill or taken captive, to respect women and never to speak ill of them. They also promised to carry arms only under their sovereign lord; since the order included French and foreign knights, he would not invariably be the king of Sicily. Their good deeds would be recorded in the chronicle of the order (which has not survived).

Every year on the feast of St Maurice on 22 September all the members of the order would meet. They wore their crimson cloaks, black velvet hats and the insignia of the order, a golden enamelled crescent bearing their motto in blue letters, suspended from their right arms. On the first evening they processed to the cathedral to hear vespers: this would normally be St Maurice at Angers, where René had installed an altar in a chapel for their use, but if he was elsewhere the meeting could be relocated. The members of the order then retired to the senator's house for supper. On the following day they would hear solemn high mass and, after dinner, they would attend their annual general chapter to hold elections. Afterwards each member in turn would leave the room while the senator asked the others to confirm that he had acted honourably during the previous year. If anything was alleged against a member the senator would raise the matter with him discreetly. On the last day a requiem mass was held for any members who had died since the previous chapter. Members could be expelled from the order if they lapsed from the Catholic faith, indulged in evil conduct, deserted their banner on the field of battle or were convicted of felony or treason.

The first senator of the order was Guy de Laval, lord of Loué, the king was senator in 1449 and John of Calabria held the office a few years later. René had no formal role in the government of the order but Reynolds believes that he controlled its membership and activities.¹⁴¹ This was certainly indicated by the fact that the chapters took place in René's presence, not invariably in Angers¹⁴² and by the personnel. The order may never have reached its maximum number of fifty; over the thirty-two years of its existence the identity of fifty-five members are known. Forty of these were René's vassals, many of them courtiers, drawn from Bar, Lorraine, Anjou, Provence and the Neapolitan exiles. A high proportion of the first knights were members of the king's family and his immediate entourage: his son and son-in-law, Louis and Bertrand de Beauvau, Tanneguy du Châtel, Louis de Clermont, John Cossa and Thierry de Lenoncourt. Other members, some of whom were elected later, were nobles who served the king of France or the duke of Brittany, allies from northern Italy such as Jacopo de'Pazzi, Gabriele Valori, the Venetian Jacopo Antonio de Marcello and Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan. Between 1459 and 1464 when John of Calabria was attempting to reconquer Naples, membership was offered to several local nobles. Not all prospective members were admitted without question: in 1450 the selection of the Lord of Montjean was postponed because he had supported the rebellious dauphin against his father Charles VII.

The inspiration for the foundation of the Order of the Crescent probably came from several sources. Apart from the Valois/Angevins' own past orders (and a confraternal order of St Hubert that had been founded in Bar in 1422) there was the prestige enjoyed by the crusading orders of knights, the English Order of the Garter and the recently founded Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece. Arthurian romance would also have influenced René's thinking, especially as he had recently organised two tournaments that incorporated Arthurian themes. The annual chapter recalled the institution of the round table since in both cases the participants sat in a circle. There was also the egalitarian spirit in which members of the order criticised each other's conduct and in which the senator changed every year. Religious confraternities were very popular in France in the late middle ages and the stress laid on hearing mass and saying the hours of the Virgin, as well as the Christian morality contained

¹⁴¹Reynolds, p. 148.

¹⁴²In 1453, for example, when René was in Pavia during late September the chapter was held there, Reynolds, pp. 156–7.

in the oaths taken characterised René's order. D'Arcy Boulton has distinguished between 'princely confraternal orders' where the prince was not automatically the head and 'monarchical orders' where he was invariably the leader because of his position.¹⁴³ Boulton assigned the Order of the Crescent to the first category and it was typical of René, and his ambiguous position somewhere between a king and a great noble, that he embraced the prestige that his order could offer but preferred the appearance of just being an ordinary member.

Levron dourly dismissed René's project as superficial if sincere, an extension of the king's love of chivalry and tournaments.¹⁴⁴ Yet the annual meetings provided an opportunity for him to discuss affairs of state with his closest and most important advisers. No one ever criticised him, as they did Henry VI of England, for putting his trust in low-born counsellors. The order was also a cheap way of attracting the friendship and, sometimes, the alliance of key nobles in France and Italy to support the interests of the house of Anjou. It could also be manipulated by its members: Jonathan Alexander interprets an Italian Renaissance illuminated *Life of St Maurice* (possibly by Andrea Mantegna) sent by Jacopo Antonio Marcello to John Cossa in 1453 in this way. Beneath a portrait of Marcello is the Latin inscription in code that has been deciphered as: 'If my hopes do not deceive me, you, Cossa, will not make my country ungrateful to you.'¹⁴⁵ This expressed the desire that Cossa would use his good offices with king René to detach him from an anti-Venetian alliance with Milan and Florence. Pius II certainly took the order seriously when he banned it in 1460, fearing that it was attracting the loyalty of too many prominent Neapolitans who should remain in Aragon's camp. Despite his usual obedience to the Papacy, René continued the business of the order in Anjou and Provence, where it survived until his death. The hard-headed Louis XI respected such institutions, founding his own order of St Michael in 1469. He made his uncle a member and allowed him to wear the insignia of both orders. Reynolds agrees with Malcolm Vale that the orders of chivalry were of considerable significance in late medieval political life.¹⁴⁶ He feels that René's capacities have been undervalued, that they constituted 'an admirable legacy to late medieval statecraft' and that the Order of the Crescent played an impor-

¹⁴³Reynolds, p. 133; D'Arcy Boulton, pp. xv-xvii, 397-8.

¹⁴⁴Levron, p. 203.

¹⁴⁵J.G. Alexander, *Italian Renaissance Illuminations* (London: 1977) p. 59.

¹⁴⁶M.G.A. Vale, *War and Chivalry: Warfare and Aristocratic Culture in England, France and Burgundy at the End of the Middle Ages* (London: 1981) pp. 34-5, 62.

tant part in it. Jöel Blanchard and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler have recently endorsed this view suggesting that, despite the politicization of chivalric ideals, they remained potent in the late middle ages.¹⁴⁷

René's own attitude to the order did not necessarily remain the same throughout its existence. He founded it when he still aspired to regain his crown by military means and in the midst of his series of spectacular tournaments. After the death of his heirs in the direct male line he may have moved to stress its religious virtues: an attitude perhaps reflected in the figure of St Maurice in Froment's *Virgin in the Burning Bush*. This combination of piety and chivalry enhanced René's reputation as a good king with his contemporaries. The Burgundian Olivier de la Marche, sensing its rivalry to his master's order, tried to claim that it was a confraternity rather than an order on the erroneous grounds that it held no chapters and did not celebrate its feast.¹⁴⁸

Conclusion

The introduction to this chapter raised the question of whether René and the culture of his court could be linked to the Renaissance in Italy or whether, despite some of his commissions, he remained committed to Gothic and courtly forms. The building works carried out in the Loire valley, principally in the late 1440s and 1450s, were innovatory in some respects but in a French rather than an Italian idiom. Some of the features in the lost royal tomb in St Maurice at Angers, on the other hand, were classical and the whole conception probably derived from the king's sojourn in Naples and northern Italy. The employment of de la Sale as tutor to John of Calabria and the didactic and courtly books that de la Sale produced for him, intended to promote his formation as a good prince, belong to the traditions of late scholasticism. René's own works, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, *The Mortification of Empty Pleasure* and *The Book of Tournaments* seem to be entirely courtly, chivalric or devotional. But the first two are pervaded by a strong sense of the author's own personality and needs, characteristics that a writer such as Jacob Burckhardt would have claimed as belonging to the Renaissance.¹⁴⁹ *The Book of Tournaments* is not primarily about mock combats but about how a knight or nobleman could show that he had understood the rules

¹⁴⁷Blanchard and Mühlethaler, p. 126.

¹⁴⁸O. de la Marche, 4, p. 162.

¹⁴⁹J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (Harmondsworth: 1990) *passim*.

concerning appropriate dress and conduct that would admit him to the ranks of the elite. These were aims that Baldassare Castiglione, the author of the Renaissance manual *The Courtier*, would have recognised. It was also a means, comparable with the tournaments and the Order of the Crescent, of unifying René's scattered domains through commonly accepted modes of behaviour. Both these purposes were entirely compatible with Renaissance conduct and statecraft.

René's taste in painting and sculpture was equally eclectic. He employed the Italian Leo of Forli to paint frescoes at Gardanne, but on the whole it was the Flemish style that he found most attractive. Yet there seems to have been some cross-fertilization with Italian artists as the probable influence of the master of the *Aix Annunciation* (Barthélemy d'Eyck?) on Colantonio and Antonello da Messina indicates. In the decade between 1449 and 1459 the Venetian member of the Order of the Crescent, Jacopo Antonio de Marcello, sent René and his wives four Renaissance manuscripts. The last one, Strabo's *Of the position of the world* (*De situ orbis*) contained very sophisticated illuminations showing the humanist teacher and scholar, Guarino da Verona, presenting his translation to Marcello. Another scene showed Marcello offering it to the idealized figure of René: the buildings, trees and figures in the background are similar to those that occur in the near contemporary paintings of Piero della Francesca.¹⁵⁰ John Cossa gave Jeanne de Laval a French translation of the Latin history, *De Temporibus* (*Of the Times*), by the Florentine humanist Matteo Palmieri that had originally been dedicated to Piero di Cosimo de' Medici.¹⁵¹ The employment of Pietro da Milano and Francesco Laurana was a clear choice made by the king and his son as they were brought to France from Naples to work for the Angevins and their court. The style of their portrait medals was strongly classical as were the inscriptions and imagery. The inscription on a portrait medal for Jeanne de Laval was close in sentiment to the inscriptions beneath the portrait busts of René and Jeanne in Tarascon castle (Illustration 14 above). They were hailed as demi-gods, recalling terms used in Renaissance monuments commissioned by rulers such as Alfonso of Aragon and Sigismondo Malatesta. Laurana's sojourns in Provence seem to have drawn him into a more Gothic, north European idiom but in a late work such as *Our Lady of the Swoon* classical imagery still abounds. Even the king and queen's high-Gothic reliquary presented to St Nicolas du Port, Nancy contained a number of exuberantly pagan cameos.

¹⁵⁰Robin, *La Cour*, pp. 225–6.

¹⁵¹Vale, *War and Chivalry*, p. 62. Palmieri had only written the book in 1448.

René, his family and court showed no sign that they considered a strong devotion to the Church and its saints to be incompatible with the new humanist techniques and artistic imagery of the Renaissance. The king and his son dealt easily with France, Italy, North Africa and Spain in fostering diplomacy, trade and cultural exchanges. Rather than rejecting a *mauresque* because it was danced by heathens, a cameo because it was pagan or a medal because it emulated a political rival, they seem to have asked whether it was entertaining, beautiful or politically apt. They were pragmatists who accepted, apparently without question, the religious and cultural heritage of scholasticism. Yet when something new or exotic presented itself it was judged on its merits. Many contemporaries of the Angevins in Italy adopted the same approach to what Renaissance learning and art and the world beyond southern Europe had to offer.

The phenomenon of the court had been subjected to systematic scrutiny since at least the early fourteenth century.¹⁵² A growing body of literature took a generally negative view of it on a number of grounds. Drawing on French literature Lemaire has distinguished three main kinds of criticism: social, moral and humanist.¹⁵³ Social protest often came from the bourgeoisie and was linked to a reaction against high taxation and the consequent call to reform and simplify court life. Articulated by writers such as Honoré Bouvet (against papal Avignon) and Alain Chartier in his *Curial* (against the court of Charles VI) it was a call to put the public good above the selfish needs of the monarchy and aristocracy. The moral view emanated from the Christian, scholastic tradition that condemned pride, avarice and luxury wherever it was to be found. The court was believed to promote a concentration of these vices: the power of women and low-born favourites, conspicuous consumption, gambling and dancing scandalised devout clerics and lay people alike. The anonymous *Man Abused by the Court* (*L'Abuzé en Court*) is a rhetorical poem that advocates good Christian values to its readers. A sad old man looks back on his folly in wasting his youth in an attempt to curry favour at court. He had to suffer all manner of indignities at the hands of depraved courtiers and was ruined in the process.¹⁵⁴ It was written between 1450 and 1470 and three manuscripts name king René as its author whilst one attributes it to Charles de Rochefort.

¹⁵²The lecherous and corrupt horse/ruler Fauvel was presented as an embodiment of all that was evil in court life.

¹⁵³Lemaire, *passim*.

¹⁵⁴*L'Abuzé en court*, ed. R. Dubuis (Paris-Geneva: 1973).

Commentators have long since dismissed a connection with René. The hero is a young man lacking noble status and wealth, the language of the poem places it in north-eastern France and indicates that the court in question could be Burgundy.

The third kind of criticism of courts distinguished by Lemaire was of their hypercharged and competitive atmosphere that should be rejected in favour of a retreat to rural peace and scholarly tranquillity. The humanist preference for *otium* (contemplation) rather than *negotium* (business) had been introduced as an ideal by Petrarch to the papal court at Avignon in the previous century. The court of Charles VI was again the focus for this criticism, changing as it did from the debauched atmosphere of his early years to the long period of his lunacy and the feud between Orleans and Burgundy culminating in the English occupation. Proto-humanists such as Gontier Col and Jean de Montreuil expressed their disquiet in Latin works. Eustache Deschamps and Christine de Pizan, writing in French, were probably more effective in condemning the failings of court life and promoting in contrast the virtues of solitude. Alain Chartier joined his voice to theirs and drew on Juvenal and Horace to praise rustic peace and individual liberty. These writers all operated within the court circle and wrote from personal experience, rejecting chivalrous and courtly values in favour of contemplative scholarship.

Since *The Man Abused by the Court* has been de-coupled from king René, no such work can be shown to have emanated from the Angevin court. There was, in any case, an essential difference between the regional, *apanagiste* courts (including Brittany which was not an *apanage*) in France and the court of the Valois kings. They were all vassals, not independent monarchs, so with the exception of powerful Burgundy, the motivation of their courtiers to seek favours was not so strong. René, although a king in name, remained dependent on his royal brother-in-law and nephew financially and politically throughout his career. Some of his most senior courtiers, such as members of the de Beauvau family and Pierre de Brézé, moved from his entourage to the service of France and back again without difficulty, sometimes serving both masters simultaneously. After the failure of René's direct heirs the traffic was increasingly towards the French court. Ironically he had by then embraced to a certain extent the kind of *otium* that was recommended by humanists as a reaction against life at court.

Those to whom René showed particular favour fell into several categories: members of the Order of the Crescent, his own family, attractive court ladies and girls and special servants such as Triboulet. The order, composed of nobles from all his domains, eminent foreigners

and his own son and brother, offered him just the kind of advisers and companions that popular opinion and readers of mirrors for princes would expect him to have. He may have presented fine gifts to pretty court ladies and his bastards and provided good lodgings for members of his family but this did not arouse resentment. If any of the women or lowly servants in his entourage had been perceived to have influenced his political decisions or spent too much of his money, all kinds of accusations might have been levelled against him but this did not happen.

His family did not split into the kind of factions so familiar from contemporary English and French politics that would have led to accusations of corruption, flattery or the other vices supposed to be attendant on court life. It is reasonable to conclude that the harmonious atmosphere at René's court was, at least in part, of his own making. He would have been well aware of the qualities that writers such as Vincent of Beauvais and Giles of Rome expected a prince to possess. As far as his family and household were concerned he must keep a dignified state but shun needless luxury or indulgence. An orderly, obedient family and household reflected the way in which a prince should govern his lands, according to contemporary political culture, and also gave an intimation of the heavenly hierarchy that all should emulate.

The accounts that give a picture of how René administered his estates in Anjou and Provence and the religious works of art and architecture that he patronised attest to the importance he attached to both terrestrial and divine order. His growing inclination, apparently shared by his second wife, was to live a simple, rural life, shunning his earlier love for the pageantry of chivalrous enterprises. This did not lead him to abandon court life and dynastic interests for he understood the importance of maintaining an entourage, of dressing according to his royal status and of giving princely hospitality and gifts. From the 1440s, however, his practice had always been to modernise the castles, palaces and manors he had inherited rather than to build new ones. He made purchases but they were of relatively modest manors and houses, often with gardens and farms attached that he improved and used to feed the court. As Robin has remarked René: '... took the separation between the residence and defence to their ultimate conclusion, installing the court in the fields and giving perhaps by this curious image the tradition of a good king, simple and informal'.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵Robin, *La Cour*, p. 162.

This life that René lived in the midst of his court enhanced his reputation with his contemporaries and in the eyes of posterity: he was genial yet regal, a cultivated lover of the arts, simultaneously traditional and innovative. Some of these qualities struck Gabriel Tetzl, the chronicler of the Lord of Rozmítal from Bohemia, when he visited Anjou in May 1466:

We rode to the King of Cecylla [Sicily]. We found him in a fine town called Symell [Saumur], but he was away about half a mile at a country seat in a forest. This was splendidly built and very stately and the king provided my lord with everything he needed. The king is a handsome old man, but gay. He showed my lord great honour, and presented us to his wife (a lady of middle age who had very lovely and excellent maids) ... The king has a man called Tuybelim [Triboulet] who has the smallest head that I have seen in all my days. He wears a bonnet no bigger than an orange.

In order to please the King, we rode to a town and castle called Angers. This is, I think, the finest and best-fortified castle to be found in all Christendom ... When my lord had seen the castle within and without he was taken to the King's palace. A stately meal had been prepared with a splendid side-table and much silver ware, which the King keeps always in his castle. The meal was most excellent and was served to my lord and his retinue with side-dishes as if the King had been there himself. On the King's bed lay tapestry which was valued, it was said, at more than 40,000 crowns, and every room was hung with costly tapestries which cannot be described. When the meal was finished, my lord was conducted everywhere. The King takes great pleasure in birds and rare beasts. We saw an incredible number, also goats from heathen parts with ears more than three spans long. We saw also two great lions, two leopards, two ostriches and many other strange beasts. Item, the king has a great liking for Germans and has many Germans at his court. He speaks German well.¹⁵⁶

René's subjects in Anjou and Provence called him 'good king René'. Chastellain praised him as a 'Patron of buildings, ceremonies, feasts and tournaments, he kept a lavish court.'¹⁵⁷ Serious commentators from Lecoy de la Marche to Françoise Robin have mostly concurred that

¹⁵⁶*The Travels of Leo of Rozmítal, 1465–67*, ed. and trans. M. Letts, The Hakluyt Society (Cambridge: 1957) pp. 66–9.

¹⁵⁷Chastellain, *Chronique*, 2, p. 162.

his supreme quality as a prince lay in his dignified life-style that was enhanced by his fine artistic taste and distinction as a man of letters. There is every indication that René consciously fashioned the image of his princely court: in his early years as one of chivalrous splendour and martial enterprises, later as a place for the pursuit of simple, pastoral pleasures and the devout practice of religion. Yet at the end of his life he was obliged to mount a diplomatic defence of Provence, the only part of his domains where as count and titular king of Naples he was truly independent of the French crown. Had he lost it, his reputation as a patron of the peaceful arts would have been seriously compromised.

5

The Dissolution of René's *apanage*

Introduction

On 22 July 1470 in the cathedral of Angers an extraordinary spectacle took place: the reconciliation of the house of Lancaster with a disaffected faction of the Yorkists led by the earl of Warwick and the duke of Clarence.¹ In the presence of Louis XI of France queen Margaret of Anjou faced Warwick in front of the high altar, he knelt before her for a quarter of an hour, begging her pardon for the many wrongs he had done to her and to the house of Lancaster. He protested that he had only done what a 'nobleman outraged' might reasonably do but in the future he would '... always hold the part and quarrel of king Henry and shall serve him, the Queen and the Prince as a true and a faithful subject ought to serve his sovereign lord'.² She eventually pardoned him and agreed that her son, prince Edward, should marry his daughter Anne. King Louis and his brother Charles of France, dressed as canons, witnessed the solemn oaths of both parties. King René was not present at the ceremony as he only arrived from Provence on 15 September. Opinions are divided as to how this difficult settlement was made, it rather depends on the principal subject of the scholar's interest. P.M. Kendall, J.M. Tyrrell and several French historians attributed the agreement to Louis XI and his ministers. Michael Hicks believes that Warwick took the initiative on the English side. The present writer has

¹*The Politics of Fifteenth Century England: John Vale's Book*, eds, M.L. Kekewich, C. Richmond, A.F. Sutton, L. Visser-Fuchs and J.L. Watts (Stroud: 1995) pp. 47–8, 'The manner and guiding between the queen Margaret and her son and the earl of Warwic [sic] time of his being in France with the duke of Clarence', pp. 215–18.

²*Ibid.*, p. 217.

suggested that it came from the Angevins and the little Lancastrian court at Koeur in Bar, the project of able lawyers and clerics such as Sir John Fortescue, Dr John Morton and Dr Ralph Makerell.³ Yet the subsequent restoration of Henry VI in England could not have taken place without the material support of Louis XI and he drove a hard bargain: so hard that it undermined the long-term prospects of success.

The last decades of René's life, which were to contain so many sorrows and failures, commenced in a positive and hopeful fashion. Lecoy de la Marche described him in the early 1450s as being at the apogee of his power and political influence.⁴ The expulsion of the English from Normandy had lifted any imminent threat to his duchy of Anjou and his brother's county of Maine. The latter remained a close friend and adviser to Charles VII for the remainder of his reign as did the former Angevin servant, Pierre de Brézé, lord of la Varenne. René had a loyal and energetic son in John of Calabria to look after his interests in Bar, Lorraine, Italy and Catalonia. Provence was peaceful and prosperous and in Marseille it possessed an excellent port for trade with all parts of the Mediterranean and a departure point for military expeditions. Yet the Angevins' closeness to Charles VII was a source of resentment and suspicion to the dauphin Louis who was irreconcilably alienated from his father. He had been educated by Angevin servants and was himself half Angevin through his mother Marie, to whom he appears to have been devoted, but she was only to survive her husband for two years.⁵ Yet during all the troubles and grievances that arose between Louis and his uncles and cousins during his reign this relationship seems to have inhibited him from taking the most extreme measures against them.

Apart from the threat of the enmity of Louis XI, the Angevins' lack of fertility was to pose the greatest danger to the survival of their *apanage*. In 1453 all seemed to be well: René's younger son Louis had died in 1443 but his older son, John of Calabria, although a widower was healthy and had two sons, Nicolas, marquis of Pont-à-Mousson, and John. Charles of Maine also had a son Charles, but he proved to be frail in body and

³P.M. Kendall, *Louis XI: the Universal Spider* (London: 1971) pp. 228–37; J.M. Tyrrell, *Louis XI* (Boston: 1980); M. Hicks, *Warwick the Kingmaker* (Oxford: 1998) pp. 288–9; M.L. Kekewich, 'The Lancastrian Court in Exile', pp. 95–110. Chastellain, who detested Warwick, credited Louis XI with the agreement, *Chronique*, 5, pp. 464–9.

⁴Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 261. See Chapter 3.

⁵Favier, *Louis XI*, pp. 40–1; Vaesen, 3, pp. 47–9, 133–4; Bruges, 28 July 1461, the Milanese ambassador believed that Angevin influence, especially that of the queen mother, balanced the importance of the duke of Burgundy, *Dépêches*, Mandrot, 1, p. 15.

personality. According to the custom of France, an *apanage* could only be inherited by direct male heirs. The fact that René had two daughters who were bearing sons, Yolande the wife of Ferry of Vaudemont and Margaret, queen of England, would not ensure the survival of the *apanage*.⁶ Provence and Bar, however, had been directly inherited by the Angevins and technically could be willed by the prince to the heirs of his choice.

On 28 February 1453 Isabelle of Lorraine died at the age of forty-four years, according to Lecoy de la Marche as the result of exhaustion brought on by her great exertions, especially in Italy.⁷ This is hardly convincing since she had returned from there over ten years earlier and had subsequently spent a pleasant life in the French and Angevin courts and, latterly, at her manor of Launay. We do not know how often she was pregnant after the birth of her last surviving child, Margaret, in 1430. Three boys and two girls died in infancy and there might also have been still and premature births that were not recorded.⁸ Complications in pregnancy, bad drains or a particular infection or malady are more likely to have made an end of this resolute and efficient princess than 'exhaustion'. She died in René's arms and he mourned her death in characteristically romantic fashion. She had a lavish funeral at Angers⁹ and he set about painting testimonies to his grief all over the castle, especially a rainbow bearing the device in Italian, derived from Petrarch: 'Loosening the bow does not cure the wound: *Arco per lentare, piaga non sana*'.¹⁰ John of Calabria became duke of Lorraine as Isabelle's heir, was recognised by the Estates, and made his formal entry to Nancy on 22 May 1453.¹¹

On René's return from his Lombardy expedition in the spring of 1454 he needed a new wife: a matter of urgency for a king with only one son. De la Marche indignantly refutes the allegations of some earlier writers that he had a liaison with his second wife, Jeanne de Laval, at the time of the tournament of Tarascon in 1449. This is highly unlikely as she was only twenty-one when he wed her at the abbey of St Nicolas in Angers on 10 September 1454. She was the third child of Guy, count of Laval¹² and Isabelle, daughter of John V, duke of Brittany and had many brothers

⁶P. Saenger, 'Burgundy and the Inalienability of Appanages in the reign of Louis XI', *French Historical Studies*, 10 (1977) pp. 1–26.

⁷Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 262–4.

⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 433–4; Van Kerrebrouck, pp. 292–306.

⁹See Chapter 4.

¹⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, p. 262.

¹¹Bénet, p. 53.

¹²Not to be confused with René's councillor and seneschal Guy de Laval, lord of Loué.

and sisters as her father had married twice. The house of Brittany had been allied to the Angevins through René's grandmother, Marie of Blois, and by the marriage of René's sister Yolande to Francis, later its duke. Jeanne brought no great wealth to René but she was sufficiently well-born for her new estate as queen, she was gentle and pious and proved to be an excellent wife. She was a kind stepmother, giving generously to John of Calabria and René's friends and servants: fatally, however, she never bore any children.¹³ Her father paid a dowry of 40,000 écus and she received a third of the revenues of the duchy of Anjou, the town and castle of Saumur, half the revenues of the duchy of Bar and the salt revenues from Provence. René was in dispute with the Turenne family over the county of Beaufort-en-Vallée but he gave it to Jeanne over and above her dower.¹⁴ This was generous but it was to be expected that so young a woman would have several children and would support them in their early years. René had made a suitable second marriage and it could not be foreseen that it was to be a major factor in the ending of his *apanage*.

The first demise of Lancaster

King René stayed in the Loire valley for nearly three years after his marriage to Jeanne de Laval.¹⁵ He had pleasant manors such as Baugé and Launay as well as the recently improved castle at Angers. He needed to consolidate the administration and improve the economy of his duchy after its long years as a border territory in the Hundred Years War. Yet the king's preoccupation during these years was to be the second chance of conquering Naples for his house. It has been shown how the instability of Genoa led one faction to invite Charles VII to rule it as a French protectorate and that he appointed John of Calabria as his lieutenant. The death of Alfonso of Naples and the succession of his bastard son Ferrante raised the possibility of a combined Genoese/Angevin attack, the latter to be launched from Marseille. This was the context of René's departure for Provence in February 1457 and his long sojourn there until January 1462. During that period his son experienced the same lack of resources and duplicity from the Neapolitan nobility that had ruined the first

¹³Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 304, n. 1.

¹⁴Ibid., 1, pp. 298–307; B. de Brouillon, *La Maison de Laval, 1020–1605*, 4 vols (Paris: 1895–1902) 3, pp. 212–32, Cartulary *passim*. Jeanne's brother, Pierre de Laval was appointed archbishop of Reims and René used his influence and resources on behalf of other members of her family.

¹⁵Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, Itineraries, pp. 455–7.

attempt. This time he also had to contend with the hostility of pope Pius II and it even extended to René's other domains with a papal ban on his beloved Order of the Crescent. His only physical involvement with the war was his inglorious attempt to recapture Genoa in 1461: the denouement probably convinced him that in future he would be wise to leave such exploits to his martial son and grandsons.

Whilst René and John of Calabria were giving their attention to Naples another source of Angevin prestige was wasting away. It has been suggested that the political influence of queen Margaret of Anjou and her Angevin servants in the early years of her marriage was greater than has previously been allowed by some biographers. That it became practically invisible from the early 1450s was probably a result of the dangerous situation in England rather than any wifely wish to identify with the culture of her adopted country. The dispute between the duke of York and Henry VI's Beaufort relatives was brought to a climax by the king's mental collapse between 1453 and 1454. Margaret made an attempt to become regent, her position enhanced by the birth of a healthy son, Edward. York managed to secure the post of protector but was not unassailable when the king's health improved. The result was the first battle at St Albans in 1455 where the duke of Somerset was killed. During the following years it was clear that the king had by no means recovered his always precarious hold on reality and his wife increasingly filled the vacuum.¹⁶

In August 1457 Margaret's old family friend Pierre de Brézé, seneschal of Normandy, and John of Lorraine (Ferry of Vaudemont's younger brother) launched an attack on Sandwich. This, according to Chastellain, was because he hated the English and out of loyalty to the Angevins wished to assist the queen by discrediting York. Escouchy assigned an active role to René and his brother and manages to make the attack sound like a good idea: 'The king of Sicily and ... Charles count of Maine persuaded king Charles to put together a great army to go into England to help the king of Scotland against York who coveted the English crown...[Brézé] attacked England and pillaged Sandwich killing 3 to 400 English with few losses.'¹⁷ The French were already detested by the English for their supposed treachery over the surrender of Maine and the broken truce of 1449. To launch an unprovoked attack (although peace had never been formally concluded) could only harm a queen already

¹⁶Watts, pp. 331–62.

¹⁷Escouchy, 2, p. 353.

damaged by the loss of the French lands and her long period of childlessness. Even the birth of a son gave rise to rumours, apparently encouraged by Warwick, that he was not the child of the king.¹⁸ No firm evidence has ever been produced that the queen committed adultery either then or later when she was travelling around Scotland and the Continent with de Brézé. Given the unmanly nature of her husband and their long periods of separation after 1459 only a writer with a heart of stone would blame her if she did so.¹⁹

By 1459 the factions – York (the duke, his older sons, Warwick and his kin) and Lancaster (the duke of Exeter, surviving Beauforts and most of the active members of the nobility) – were irreconcilable. Lancaster appeared to have triumphed at the Coventry parliament in November when York, Warwick and their supporters were attainted.²⁰ Yet the rebels had good bolt-holes in Ireland, where York retreated, and in Calais, which still regarded Warwick as its captain. He fled there with Edward, earl of March, York's oldest son. After a masterly propaganda campaign Warwick invaded England in June 1460 and was welcomed enthusiastically in Kent and London. York joined him from Ireland and they defeated the king at the battle of Northampton on 10 July. Several leading Lancastrians were killed, Henry fell into York's hands but Margaret, her son and followers, who included Morice Doulcereau, de Brézé's servant, escaped.²¹

In October, Henry, deprived of his familiar advisers, was prevailed upon to disinherit Edward of Lancaster and to recognise the duke of York and his sons as his heirs. York's fortunes flagged on 30 December, however, when York and his second son, the earl of Rutland, were defeated and killed at the battle of Wakefield. Queen Margaret had not been present but it enabled her to lead an army south to recapture her husband. Bonita Cron cites the lack of evidence for the frequently repeated charge that Margaret's forces caused huge damage to English towns and

¹⁸Basin, *Charles VII*, 2, p. 253; Maurer, pp. 46–8, 129, 176–8; a strolling player was the culprit in Chastellain's account, *Chronique*, 5, p. 464.

¹⁹Mechineau believes that she did on the later occasion and even postulates an earlier romance between them, pp. 184–98.

²⁰Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 817–29. 'Attainder' was an act of parliament that declared a named person or persons outlawed (usually for treason) so their lives and property were forfeited.

²¹C. Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward IV*, 2 vols (London: 1923) 1, p. 161; Brézé to Etienne Chevalier, 31 July 1460. He had received news of the battle from an Englishman sent by Henry VI, BN, ms fr. 20428, f.21 [has been re-numbered, originally 17].

religious houses as they marched towards London.²² Yorkist propaganda certainly made the most of fears that southerners felt for the northern 'riotous people'.

The Lancastrian army met and defeated Warwick's forces outside St Albans on 17 February 1461.²³ He had brought Henry VI to the field so the king was reunited with his wife and son and this should have proved a major advantage in a realm where many were still loyal to him. Margaret sent Doulcereau and a Dominican to France to announce the victory and offer the islands of Jersey and Guernsey to de Brézé. He recognised the danger of queen Margaret's situation when he wrote to Charles VII on 24 February 1461 urging him to communicate with her only via Doulcereau. If letters from France were intercepted by her enemies they would use them to justify putting her to death.²⁴ Margaret asked Charles VII for 80,000 écus and the dispatch of an army but it was too late as he was dying.²⁵ In July de Brézé commanded a French fleet that took part of Jersey. His activities were then curtailed by the accession of Louis XI who dismissed several of his father's servants and imprisoned de Brézé: the king blamed them for the years of estrangement from his father and exile that he had suffered.

Queen Margaret, unwisely according to Cron, did not risk an entry into London, she

... had never courted popularity with the Londoners, as Warwick had, and she had kept the court away from the capital for several years in the late 1450s, a move that was naturally resented. Warwick's propaganda had tarnished her image, associating her irrevocably with the dreaded northern men.²⁶

They turned north again and were disastrously defeated at Towton by the earl of March who had been proclaimed king as Edward IV. Desperate that neither Henry VI nor her son should fall into Yorkist hands Margaret retreated to Scotland. She had already met the regent, queen Mary of Guelders at Lincluden, at the beginning of the year and discussed a marriage between Edward of Lancaster and one of Mary's daughters. But

²²B.M. Cron, 'Margaret of Anjou and the Lancastrian March on London, 1461', *The Ricardian*, 12 (1999) pp. 590–615.

²³Waurin, 5, pp. 330–441; Wolffe, pp. 327–32.

²⁴Scofield, 1, p. 161.

²⁵Beaucourt, 6, pp. 325–8.

²⁶Cron, 'Margaret of Anjou', p. 605.

a safe haven was not to be gained without a cost: the cession of Berwick to Scotland in April 1461. The Lancastrians' refuge with England's great enemy and their alienation of a valuable border town delivered another propaganda gift to the Yorkists. The following year, for example, a rumour was circulating that:

by the ... subtle suggestion and enticing of the said malicious woman [Margaret] the French had been encouraged to invade England and make her uncle, Charles of Maine, king. Henry VI had renounced his right to the crown of France and would give the Scots large parts of England as well as Berwick.²⁷

Any Scottish soldiers that Margaret raised would scarcely have had the strength on their own to restore Henry VI. Her other potential source of aid was France, a necessity guaranteed further to damn her family in English eyes. She nevertheless left her husband and son in Scotland in April 1462 and visited king René at Angers in May; he had arrived from Provence two months earlier. She also met de Brézé, who had been released from prison, at Vienne. From his correspondence and behaviour Louis XI appears to have had mixed feelings about the advent of his cousin and her appeals for help. Unlike his father who had regarded René, his brother and John of Calabria as close family who should be supported in their enterprises, Louis looked at each case on its merits and acted as interest dictated. During his last years as dauphin he had undermined the Angevins by his friendship with the Sforza of Milan, who had worked against them in Naples, and the Yorkists in England. In 1462 he met the Angevins' great enemy, John II of Aragon, and signed treaties at Sauveterre. In the following year he dumped John of Calabria, ceding Genoa to Milan.²⁸

So early in the reign of Edward IV Louis was probably undecided whether or not it was advantageous to have him as a friend. England was buzzing with rumours that the Lancastrians would invade, supported by René, his son and other European princes.²⁹ In June 1462 Louis wrote to a servant that he did not wish Margaret to meet his wife, Charlotte of Savoy, at Amboise.³⁰ On 12 October he grovelled to Philip of Burgundy, blaming 'those men who hang around the queen of England' for a rumour that

²⁷Scofield, 1, p. 242; J.O. Halliwell, ed., *Letters of the Kings of England*, 2 vols (London: 1846) 1, pp. 126–7, Edward IV to Thomas Cooke, alderman of London, Stamford, 8 March 1462; London, BL Harley Ms 543, art.14.

²⁸Vaesen, 2, pp. 41, 49–51, 128–9, 159–61, 166–7.

²⁹Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 887.

³⁰Vaesen, 2, pp. 54–7.

Burgundy had instigated an attack on English (Yorkist) ships. Yet he lent her 20,000 livres on the security of Calais in June and she promised on behalf of Henry VI that he and Louis XI would help each other against all rebels.³¹ He ordered the people of Rouen to give her an honourable reception when she passed through on 8 July. He allowed her to depart for Northumberland with de Brézé and a force of 800 fighting men personally financed by 'one of the valiant Christian knights and the most praiseworthy'. Basin (who was hostile to Louis XI) remarked that the king regarded it as a hopeless enterprise in which he hoped that de Brézé would be killed.³² The expedition fulfilled the worst predictions: Margaret and de Brézé took Alnwick where he left his son with Robert, lord Hungerford, when Edward IV and Warwick arrived in the autumn. The castle was eventually taken and in January 1463 when Margaret and de Brézé returned to Alnwick with a Scots army, despite superior numbers, they again retreated. Margaret and de Brézé managed to occupy Bamborough and Dunstanborough but were again assailed by Edward IV and Warwick.³³

The queen feared that her only son would fall into Yorkist hands and in August 1463 she sailed for Flanders accompanied by de Brézé and, according to the *Annales* of William Worcester, about 200 other people. They were to form the nucleus of the court in exile that she and her son were to hold in Bar for the next seven years. They included the duke of Exeter, Sir John Fortescue, Sir Edmund Hampden, Sir Thomas Ormonde, Dr John Morton and Dr Ralph Makerell. Some of her ladies, including Angevins such as Katherine Gatewyne and Katherine Peniston, married respectively to Sir Robert Whittingham and Sir William Vaux, were also in the party with their husbands.³⁴ Henry VI was left in Scotland but two years later he was captured by the Yorkists in northern England and

³¹E. Meek, 'The Practice of English Diplomacy in France, 1461–71', *English Experience in France*, pp. 63–84.

³²Vaesen, 2, pp. 60–1; Scofield, 1, pp. 261–3; Chastellain, *Chronique*, 4, pp. 229–31, de Brézé told him that the expedition had cost him 50,000 écus; T. Basin, *Histoire de Louis XI*, ed. and trans. C. Samaran and M.C. Garand, 3 vols (Paris: 1963–72) 1, pp. 79–85; Tyrell, p. 67.

³³C.D. Ross, *Edward IV* (London: 1974) pp. 50–4; *A Chronicle of the first thirteen years of the reign of Edward the Fourth by John Warkworth*, ed. J.O. Halliwell (London: 1839) pp. 2–3.

³⁴Stevenson, 2, p. 781; R.A. Griffiths, "'Ffor the myght off the lande, aftir the myght off the grete lordes thereof, stonidith most in the kynges officers": the English Crown, Provinces and Dominions in the Fifteenth Century', *Concepts and Patterns of Service in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. A. Curry and E. Mathew (Woodbridge: 2000) pp. 80–98; Kekewich, 'Lancastrian Court in Exile'.

imprisoned in the Tower of London. The Lancastrian strongholds in Northumberland were gradually reconquered.

Margaret of Anjou was welcomed by Charles, count of Charolais (later Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy), and briefly and graciously interviewed by Philip of Burgundy at Saint Pol. But he was not deflected from the agreement he was to make with Edward IV in the autumn at Saint Omer.³⁵ Margaret and de Brézé also tried to reconcile Charolais with his father. Returning from a diplomatic mission in Italy in the following year Anthony the Great Bastard was warmly welcomed by René and his son in Provence. They warned him, according to Chastellain, of treachery that Louis XI was planning against Burgundy. This probably initiated the alliance between Charolais and John of Calabria during the War of the Public Good and René's later dangerous dealings with Burgundy: a reversal of decades of hostility between the two *apanages*.³⁶ De Waurin reported that Margaret of Anjou was grateful for Philip's generosity towards her (he gave her 2000 gold crowns and more money to her followers for they did not have ten florins between them). He had put aside the memory of the harsh things she had previously said about him and she wished that she and her husband had allied with him, if they had done so they would not have lost their throne.³⁷

Louis XI also made a settlement with Edward IV at Saint Omer: a one year truce was agreed and an undertaking not to assist each others' enemies, including the Lancastrians.³⁸ The failure of John in Naples and Margaret in England seems to have convinced Louis that the Angevins were not worth supporting: another reason for the shift in Angevin loyalties. The king was currently concerned about his relationship with the more threatening Valois family of Burgundy and especially the duke's volatile and martial heir, the count of Charolais. Through his mother, Isabelle of Portugal, he was related to Lancaster and inclined to favour them whilst his father had supported York. The situation presented no possibility of further assistance, so Margaret had to retire with her son and followers to her father's castle of Koeur in Bar where her brother, John of Calabria welcomed her. René's grandson, Nicolas, also assisted in settling the exiles and formed a friendship with prince Edward. Three years later he was to be assisted by Somerset's son John in the relief of

³⁵Chastellain, *Chronique*, 4, pp. 277–332 gives a long account of this episode imputing chivalrous speeches to de Brézé who was renowned for his eloquence.

³⁶Ibid., 5, pp. 58–9, n. 2.

³⁷De Waurin, 6, pp. 436–7.

³⁸*Foedera*, 5, pt 2, pp. 117–18.

Épinal.³⁹ These are but two instances of the closeness of queen Margaret and her followers to the Angevins that, it is argued, was to have a crucial impact on European politics in 1470.

The influence of king René, Charles of Maine and John of Calabria at the French court had been threatened by the death of Charles VII. René was still in Provence when it occurred but Charles of Maine, a leading member of the royal council, secured his position by initiating a placatory letter that they sent to the dauphin on 17 July 1461, five days before the king died. Marie of Anjou also wrote to her son from Chinon warning him that his father was near death and advising him to use the services of her brother, Charles and Pierre de Brézé.⁴⁰ Despite the temporary disgrace of the latter there was still a chance that Angevin influence could survive the new king's indignation at his treatment by Charles VII and his advisers. René did not arrive in time for the coronation where Louis XI allowed the Angevins' old enemy, duke Philip of Burgundy, to play a prominent part in the festivities.⁴¹ The king did, however, confirm the gifts and pensions that his father had given to René 'for great services'.⁴² René arrived in the Loire valley in early 1462 and stayed until May 1463 hoping, no doubt, to achieve the *rapport* with his nephew that he had enjoyed with the old king. He then departed for Bar to welcome his daughter Margaret.⁴³ There was alarming talk of a marriage between Louis's sister-in-law, Bona of Savoy, and Edward IV. Louis was, however, still prepared to employ Angevins in positions of trust when it suited him, Charles of Maine was appointed governor of Languedoc.⁴⁴

Queen Margaret left Bar and was in Paris in October 1465 to appeal for aid. She was lodged outside the city and received no encouragement from Louis XI who was still mired in negotiations with the dissident princes of the League (see below). Eventually he gave her some empty promises and a pension of 4000 to 5000 francs.⁴⁵ She could do

³⁹Calmet, 7, p. 42.

⁴⁰Vale, *Charles VII*, pp. 188–91; Beaucourt, 6, pp. 440–3, pièces justificatives, pp. 495–6; de Waurin, 5, p. 397, states that Charles of Maine sent three messages to Louis on the day of his father's death.

⁴¹Kendall, pp. 112–15; De Waurin, 6, p. 404.

⁴²Duchêne, p. 75.

⁴³Lecoy de la March, *René*, 2, Itineraries, pp. 462–4.

⁴⁴Vaesen, 2, pp. 71–5. In these years Louis's letters show him to be solicitous for his uncles' comfort and convenience – good lodgings, spices and perfumes!

⁴⁵*Dépêches*, Mandrot, 4, pp. 22, 53.

little more for the time being than cultivate the patience enjoined on her by Georges Chastellain in his *Temple de Bocace* which he had presented to her in 1464: '... avoid anger and melancholy, to seek peace of heart, attend to virtue, not to dwell on the past and to thwart evil fortune by strength of spirit'.⁴⁶ The rancour felt by John of Calabria was not to be quelled by such good counsel, for Louis XI had betrayed him to Ferrante of Naples and the Sforza of Milan. It was only a matter of time before he would join with other disaffected princes and nobles in an attempt to limit the capacity of the king to harm their interests.

The League of the Public Good

The Angevins had survived the first three years of the new reign in reasonable shape but in 1464 John of Calabria became involved with disaffected nobles and irrevocably shook the confidence of Louis XI in his family. Soon after his accession the king had proclaimed the resumption of many lands, posts and pensions and made other unpopular changes.⁴⁷ The duke of Brittany had always maintained a precarious partial sovereignty within France and he feared the intentions of his new overlord. Charles of France, the king's younger brother and heir, has been described by his biographer Henri Stein as an 'indecisive character with a delicate constitution': he was easily led and showed little political capacity.⁴⁸ Just as Louis had relied on Burgundy for support against his father so Charles, who felt that his *apanage* of Berry was meagre, was sustained by Brittany and for several years he refused to meet his brother. Charles count of Charolais believed that his ambitions would best be served by weakening the king and prevailed upon his father, Philip of Burgundy, to allow him to join the others. John, duke of Bourbon, followed a family tradition of taking any opportunity for making trouble for the monarchy. The old friends and servants of Charles VII, such as count Dunois, Jean de Bueil and Antoine de Chabannes, were indignant that they had been marginalised. Most of the king's ministers were chosen from those who had shared his exile in Dauphiné and Burgundy between 1447 and 1461.

⁴⁶Georges Chastellain, *Le Temple de Bocace*, ed. S. Bliggenstorfer, *Romania Helvetica*, 104 (Berne: 1988) p. 191.

⁴⁷Chastellain, *Chronique*, 4, p. 343.

⁴⁸H. Stein, *Charles de France, frère de Louis XI* (Paris: 1921) p. 52. Referred to here as 'Charles of France' as his title changed so often.

The Angevins, faced by the ambiguities and dangers of the new reign, may have agreed amongst themselves that they would divide their loyalties to safeguard their family interests.⁴⁹ René, who had returned from Bar by October 1464, took the congenial role of 'good cop'. Charles of Maine temporised, supporting Louis but undermining his chances of outright victory at the battle of Montlhéry. John of Calabria was initially an enthusiastic member of the League but eventually, like his father and uncle, became an arbitrator between the two sides. In September 1464 the Milanese ambassador reported from Abbeville that Louis XI was furious with the Angevins for discussing a project to marry Mary of Burgundy, daughter of the count of Charolais, to Nicolas the son of John of Calabria. He was already betrothed to Anne, Louis's daughter and part of her dowry had been paid: her indignant father observed that she 'should not be prostituted'.⁵⁰

In December 1464, 500 knights, squires and some ladies met at Notre Dame in Paris and decided to make a league to reform the government 'for the Public Good'. In the same month Louis XI, scenting danger, convoked an assembly of nobles at Tours and appealed for their support. René assured him on behalf of his peers that: 'We are the king's subjects, we are ready to sacrifice everything in his service and to go to war for him if he wishes.'⁵¹ It soon became clear, however, that of all the great princes and nobles only René, Charles of Maine, the count of Nevers and Pierre de Brézé (restored as seneschal of Normandy) were loyal to the king. Apart from a vocal minority most Parisians supported him as did his good towns but when they were in an area dominated by one of the dissident lords his towns could give him little assistance. On 22 March 1465 a treaty of alliance was signed by members of the League including Charles of France, the count of Charolais and the dukes of Bourbon, Brittany and Calabria. Louis, who was at Saumur, sent René to negotiate with them at La-Roche-au-Duc (Maine and Loire). Charles of France, asked about the nature of his grievances, replied that he feared for his safety at the king's hands and that, as heir to the throne, he was concerned at the bad governance of the realm. In a response dated 1 April, Louis and his council retorted that the prince had no reason to fear for his safety, and that the only misgovernment in the realm was a direct result of the activities of the League. Further, Charles would

⁴⁹Bénet, pp. 97–8.

⁵⁰*Dépêches*, Mandrot, 2, pp. 229–30.

⁵¹Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 357; Basin, *Louis XI*, 1, pp. 135–7; *Dépêches*, Mandrot, pp. 11–12.

probably not be heir to the throne for much longer as Louis and his wife were healthy and she was pregnant! Louis thanked René for his good offices and exculpated him from any suspicion that he was sympathetic to the League.⁵² He sent him to St-Florent-le-Vieil (Maine and Loire) in mid-April to mediate again, but without success and armed conflict ensued.⁵³

The king's forces and the Burgundians, led by the counts of Charolais and St Pol, met on 16 July at the inconclusive battle of Montlhéry, near Paris. Louis XI was outnumbered and had inferior artillery but he was anxious to prevent the Burgundians from joining up with the other princes. Pierre de Brézé was killed in an otherwise successful attack on St Pol (with lands in France and Burgundy he had decided to support the League). Charles of Maine and the admiral of Montauban faced Charolais but they withdrew from the hostilities without fighting.⁵⁴ This seems to have been treachery rather than cowardice since Charles had fought valiantly at the side of Charles VII on many occasions. John of Calabria did not join the League's army until after the battle, bringing with him a force of over 2000, composed of his subjects from Lorraine and Swiss and Italian *condottiere* led by his old comrade the exiled Neapolitan count of Campobasso. The first news of the battle reported a defeat for the League with Charolais killed or captured. Duke John refused to believe it, saying that first accounts of battles were often misleading and they should wait. If the worst had happened he would stay with the Burgundians: his years in Italy had evidently given him skills in managing potential disaster.⁵⁵

When more news arrived of a Burgundian victory the allies advanced on Paris but were not admitted, only fighting skirmishes in the suburbs. Philippe de Commines who, Dufournet suggests, was generally favourable to the Angevins, left several *vignettes* to explain what endeared John of Calabria to his subjects and soldiers.⁵⁶ He was always the first to be ready for battle with his horse saddled and wearing the armour of

⁵²Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 309–12; Stein, pp. 65–7. René swore fidelity between the hands of Louis XI on behalf of himself and his son.

⁵³E. Le Roy Ladurie, *The French Royal Estate, 1460–1610*, trans. J. Vale (Oxford: 1994) pp. 63–5.

⁵⁴Basin, *Louis XI*, 1, p. 195, n. 3; Jean de Roye, *Chronique Scandaleuse, 1460–83*, ed. B. de Mandrot, 2 vols (Paris: 1894) 1, p. 67, 2, pp. 404–5; *Dépêches*, Mandrot, 3, pp. 239–41; Favier, pp. 473–510.

⁵⁵O. de la Marche, 3, p. 19.

⁵⁶J. Dufournet, *Études sur Philippe de Commines* (Paris: 1975) pp. 29–41. O. de la Marche also gave a favourable account of duke John, 3, pp. 19, 23.

an Italian *condottiere*, and he would press his attack right up to the enemy to prevent their advance. On one occasion when there was poor visibility the allies wrongly thought that Louis and his whole force had issued out of Paris against them. John joked to his men: 'Look! It is what we have wanted, see the king and all the people have come out of the city ... be of good heart, we have taken the measure of them and a Parisian measure is a large one' (about a third longer than most French measures).⁵⁷

Charles of Maine joined René as a mediator: he was probably equally distrusted by both sides and Louis would have no problem in disowning anything he promised.⁵⁸ On 1 October the League took the duchy of Normandy. Louis was obliged to compromise by conceding in two treaties that Charles of France should become its duke and that the other princes would be generously rewarded: both sides confirmed this by a meeting at Bois-de-Vincennes.⁵⁹ The *parlement* of Paris registered the treaty of Conflans that transferred Normandy but protested against the alienation of a crown possession. Charles was enthroned on 1 December and received the ducal ring with Thomas Basin, bishop of Beauvais officiating (an act that was soon to entail his disgrace and exile). John of Calabria received the promise of money to lead a new army into Italy and an undertaking that Louis would terminate his alliance with Ferrante of Naples. He would be given 60,000 écus for his services in Genoa, a pension of 80,000 livres, the town of Épinal and various extra rights in Lorraine. He swore to be loyal to the king and, on the whole, kept his promise for the rest of his life. He was planning another expedition against Naples which would probably involve an attack on Ferrante's ally Milan, hence the frantic anti-Angevin tone of its envoys.⁶⁰

Louis XI was still not reconciled with his brother and the chances of a reconciliation worsened after the king successfully invaded Normandy in mid-December 1465 proclaiming that his gift was invalid as it had been made under duress. Most of the other members of the League also discovered that the king's promises were worthless. John of Calabria, however, may have taken to heart his father's letter of the previous August in which he begged him to be loyal: 'I have always been obedient and if you are wise do not now start to be otherwise. I advise you

⁵⁷Philippe de Commines, *Mémoires*, eds J. Calmette and G. Durville, 2 vols (Paris: 1924) 1, pp. 71–3.

⁵⁸Stein, pp. 112–14; Kendall, *Louis XI*, pp. 176–83.

⁵⁹*Dépêches*, Mandrot, 4, pp. 32–40.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 3, pp. 333–7 and *passim* volumes 1–4.

for your good and honour.⁶¹ He never received most of what had been promised by Louis but, as the heir apparent of Anjou, there was much to be said for an accommodation. Louis no longer trusted Charles of Maine and deprived him of the governorship of Languedoc. The king had wangled his seal, a sign of his membership of the League, out of duke John: the hapless Charles had thought that he could trust him with it.⁶²

Giovanni Pietro Panigarola and Cristoforo da Bollate, Milanese envoys, give an account of a huge quarrel between John of Calabria and Louis XI at Paris on 14 November 1465. They exchanged insults and John declared that as duke of Lorraine he was free of any suzerain. This contradicts Panigarola's claim in the following year that John was trying to ingratiate himself with the king and the fact that Louis later entrusted him with several delicate missions, as well as the occupation of Catalonia. There may also have been some misunderstanding by the Italians of the relationship between the cousins, their mutual jibes should not be taken too seriously, indeed they might have been staged for the envoys' benefit. The exchanges ended with an insincere promise by John to make friends with the duke of Milan whilst Louis undertook (mendaciously) to aid him against Ferrante of Naples and paid him 3000 écus on account. The duke left Louis in a good humour exchanging arch greetings with him in Italian.⁶³ John later took on the role of principal mediator: Charles of France had fled to Brittany when Normandy was invaded and John went to Nantes in August 1466 with full powers to negotiate. At this stage in his reign Louis still needed the support of some great princes and John was the best of an unpromising bunch. The betrothal of his son Nicolas to Anne of France, the only healthy daughter of Louis XI, emphasised the continuing interdependence of the Angevins and the French crown. Nicolas was seventeen but Anne was a child of five, so the marriage

⁶¹Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 362–3; *Dépêches*, Mandrot, 3, pièces justificatifs, pp. 114–17, the ambassador sent to John of Calabria at Nancy reported in August that he had received a letter from René urging him to make peace.

⁶²Favier, *Louis XI*, p. 544; John of Calabria sat on the royal council at least four times between 1465 and 1469, P.R. Gaussin, 'Les Conseillers de Louis XI, 1461–85', *France de la Fin du xv^e siècle: Renouveau et Apogée*, ed. B. Chevalier and P. Contamine (Paris: 1985) p.108.

⁶³Kendall, *Louis XI*, pp. 421–3, n. 9; amongst various derogatory remarks about duke John, Louis said that he would rather have the company of four Turks and, on at least two occasions, wished for his death, *Dépêches*, Mandrot, 4, pp. 69–78 and *passim*.

would not be consummated for several years giving both sides room for manoeuvre.

In the same year René finally settled a long-running dispute over her dowry and jewels with the widow of Louis III of Anjou, Margaret of Savoy, now countess of Wurtemberg. She was the aunt of the queen of France and although René could ill-afford the 33,000 écus he allowed her from the revenues of Bar, it was wise to placate so close and vociferous a relative of Louis XI.⁶⁴ René had failed, two years earlier, to secure the restitution of Nice. Its ownership had been in dispute between the Angevins and the house of Savoy for eighty years.⁶⁵

In 1468 Louis XI invested René as lieutenant general of Anjou, Maine and Brittany. René's grandson, Nicolas, was his commander and when he conquered Ancenis in September the duke of Brittany sued for peace. René set about establishing free circulation and commerce between the formerly belligerent duchies and pacified their inhabitants. In warm recognition of his services Louis XI bestowed on him on 28 January 1469 the unique honour of sealing his letters with yellow wax, normally reserved for the kings of France. He saluted René as:

Our beloved uncle, who we should call with better reason our father ... who with an unshaken constancy and an ever moral sense, has maintained the ancient honour of this realm, has respected and increased its prestige and has rescued it from the edge of the precipice.⁶⁶

A settlement was finally achieved in June 1469 when Charles of France agreed to accept the duchy of Guyenne in place of Normandy.⁶⁷ He swore on the Cross of St Laud, specially brought from Angers for the purpose, that he would be loyal to the king and not try to marry the daughter of the duke of Burgundy.⁶⁸ The brothers then met amicably and in October Charles took possession of Guyenne.

⁶⁴Vaesen, 3, pp. 93–4, 16 September 1466. Margaret had married the elector and count Palatine of the Rhine as her second husband; Ulrich V of Wurtemberg was her third.

⁶⁵Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 345–56.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 1, pp. 372–3, 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 332–4. René was among the nobles in the assembly of 1468 that advised Louis XI that he had no obligation to give Normandy to his brother, De Waurin, 6, p. 558.

⁶⁷Stein, pp. 197–9, 251–67.

⁶⁸Charles of Burgundy used the tempting offer of marriage of his only child, Mary, on several occasions as a diplomatic tool.

Charles of France was to die after a long, feverish decline on 24 May 1472. He had been in contact with Charles of Burgundy, again seduced by the honey trap of marriage to his daughter. It was suspected that he had been poisoned, probably by his brother, but no evidence for that survives.⁶⁹ King René emerged from the War of the Public Good in high favour with Louis XI. Charles of Maine, however, who died in 1472, had indulged in treasonable activities and never again enjoyed the king's confidence (Illustration 15 shows his tomb in Le Mans cathedral). After his initial rebellion, John of Calabria did good service to the king as a mediator and, before the final settlement, assumed a new importance in another Valois/Angevin enterprise: the conquest of Catalonia.

'King of Aragon', count of Barcelona

Catalonia, often called 'the Principate', which included Majorca, Roussillon and Cerdagne, enjoyed extensive privileges and liberties within the otherwise authoritarian regime of John II of Aragon. The heir to the throne or *Primogenit*, the prince of Gerona, traditionally ruled with the assembly or *Cortes*. When that body was not sitting, authority passed to a commission, the *Generalitat* – three deputies drawn from the three estates of the *Cortes* and three auditors. Other bodies, including the 'Wise Council', also functioned within this most participatory of governments.⁷⁰ Catalonia was alienated from John II by his treatment of their *Primogenit*, his son by his first marriage, Don Carlos prince of Viana. He was deprived of the succession to Navarre, which he claimed through his mother, and imprisoned for a time by his father. In 1461 he had just been freed and recognised by his father as lieutenant general of Catalonia when he suddenly died in Barcelona. The Catalans inevitably suspected foul play and welcomed the offer of Louis XI to become their protector.

John II knew that he could not conquer the combined forces of France and Catalonia so he met Louis on the borders of their territories in May 1462. By the treaty of Sauveterre they promised mutual support against attack, excepting their allies: for Louis XI (who promptly abandoned the Catalans) these were Henry IV of Castille, king René and

⁶⁹J. Calmette, *Louis XI, Jean II et la Révolution Catalane (1461–73)* (Toulouse: 1903), pp. 356–7, n. 3, Charles of Burgundy made the charge; Kendall, *Louis XI*, p. 248.

⁷⁰Much of this section is based on Calmette, *Louis XI et la Révolution Catalane*, see also Hillgarth, 2, pp. 267–99 and M. de Treppo, 'Aragon', *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, 7, c.1415–c.1500, ed. C. Allmand (Cambridge: 1998) pp. 588–605.



Illustration 15 The tomb of Charles I, count of Maine, d.1472, in Le Mans cathedral, probably by Francesco Laurana, the architecture of the niche is Renaissance in style. Photo Peter Fawcett.

John of Calabria, for John II Alfonso of Portugal, Ferrante of Naples and Francesco Sforza of Milan. Louis also promised to help king John subdue the Catalans by sending an army of 700 lances, his finest infantry.

In return king John would pay him 200,000 or 300,000 écus (depending on the degree to which the French troops were engaged) on the security of the revenues of Roussillon and Cerdagne. Calmette stressed that the counties were mortgaged not pawned, although the French were to occupy the castles at Perpignan and Collioure as pledges of future payment.⁷¹ The Catalans rose up in revolt against John II proclaiming him and his second wife, Johanna Enriquez, public enemies, and the queen with their son Ferdinand were besieged in Gerona. They were liberated by a strong army that combined French soldiers with Aragonese (including Catalans, not all of whom had forsaken the king). They proceeded to besiege Barcelona but it was well fortified and provisioned from the sea and could not be taken. They ravaged the surrounding lands so effectively that they had to withdraw by the end of 1462, weakened by hunger and disease. The following January Louis XI sent an army to seize Roussillon and by mid-June it had also taken Cerdagne. John II was amongst the first European princes to discover the dangers of dealing with this seemingly frank and affable king.

The beleaguered Catalans turned to Henry IV, the Impotent, of Castille to protect them from John II but he lived up to his unofficial title. In the second half of 1463 they sent a delegation to Louis XI and convinced him that they would never again obey John II, they 'would rather be ruled by the Turk'.⁷² They were, however, alarmed by the French king's remark that he was partly Catalan through his grandmother, Yolande (Violante) of Aragon, and that there should be no mountains between France and Catalonia. One positive outcome of the embassy was a commercial agreement between Catalonia and Provence brokered by René's counsellors Ferry of Vaudemont and Nicolas Brancas, bishop of Marseille, who were at court. In the meantime the Catalans offered the crown of Aragon to Don Pedro, the brother-in-law of the king of Portugal. He was of the house of Urgel, his grandfather James had been one of two unsuccessful claimants of the crown back in 1412 at the Compromise of Caspe,⁷³ the other had been René's brother, Louis III of Anjou. Don Pedro was a pleasant, cultivated prince but he was unmarried and a poor leader causing the Catalans to lose ground to John II and his followers within the principate. In November 1465 Pedro sent a monk to John of Calabria and the count of Charolais (whose

⁷¹Calmette, *Louis XI et la Révolution Catalane*, p. 83, Appendix 1, pp. 385–401, pièces justificatives, pp. 429–39.

⁷²*Ibid.*, pp. 219–20, n. 1.

⁷³See Chapter 2, note 17.

Portuguese mother was Pedro's aunt). He offered to help John conquer Naples in exchange for aid and was promised that 50 to 300 Italian lances and supplies from Provence would be sent in the spring.⁷⁴

Don Pedro died at Barcelona on 29 June 1466. After a suitably lugubrious funeral and tributes, in late July the Wise Council decided that:

The lord king of Sicily, vulgarly called 'king René' should be recognised as king and lord for it is according to justice and his highness is very virtuous. He has a son, a valorous man of great virtue and sense who already has a male child, a very fine youth of about eighteen years. The said lord king possesses in particular the land of Provence, very close to the Principate of Catalonia, abounding in rich produce, especially corn, a commodity which the Principate and especially the city of Barcelona often need.⁷⁵

Calmette's view of the capacities of duke John coincided to some extent but was less flattering: '... a prince with an ardent and sympathetic character, great courage but mediocre political skills'.⁷⁶ Since it was the *Primogenit* rather than the king of Aragon who ruled in Catalonia, the reasoning of its leaders is clear. Instead of the ageing René, whose military enterprises often ended in failure, they would get his vigorous son who was currently one of the most influential lords at the French court.

Panigarola, the Milanese envoy at the French court, gives a detailed and very hostile account of John of Calabria's position at this time. It seems that Louis XI played his usual game of pleasing the Italian with scathing comments about his cousin, especially his treachery during 1465. Yet he was to give him considerable support in Catalonia and use him in his most important diplomatic negotiations during the following three years. In 1468 Louis suddenly dismissed Panigarola from court and the envoy believed that it was the Angevins who engineered his fall.⁷⁷

⁷⁴*Dépêches*, Mandrot, 4, p. 56.

⁷⁵Calmette, *Louis XI et la Révolution Catalan*, pp. 265–6; *Dietari del Antichi Consell Barceloni*, ed. D.F. Schwarz and D. Franchesch Carreras y Caudi, 17 vols (Barcelona, 1892–1922) 2, pp. 470–511.

⁷⁶Calmette, *Louis XI et la Révolution Catalane*, p. 277; Chastellain, *Chronique*, 5, p. 410.

⁷⁷Ilardi, *Dispatches*, 3, p. 24 and *passim*, for example, p. 358 'Duke John seeks to control the entire court if he can.'

They had powerful reasons to embark on another foreign adventure for it offered a new opportunity to conquer Naples. If they could keep Catalonia and possibly even subdue Aragon and Valencia, one of Ferrante's principal sources of support would become a hostile force and the western Mediterranean could be turned into an Angevin lake. The principate, when it was not being ravaged by war, was a prosperous country and conveniently close to Provence. The formidable ability of the house of Trastàmara in the shape of John II and his son Ferdinand and their alliance with Castille (soon to be cemented by Ferdinand's marriage to Isabella of Castille in October 1469) did not deter the optimistic Angevins. They disregarded the facts that Aragon and Valencia were not in the gift of the Catalans and that their peoples were mostly loyal to their king and viewed the Angevins as old enemies.

On 27 September 1466 three envoys from Catalonia were received by king René in his castle at Angers. They heard high mass and then, preceded by a herald bearing the arms of Aragon, they presented a formal request that he should become their king. His mother Yolande had been the heiress to John I of Aragon so he had an excellent claim. He accepted and agreed that John of Calabria should become their *Primo-genit* and exercise the royal prerogatives. The envoys then knelt and kissed his hand but not too obsequiously. René dispatched an embassy to enlist the support of Louis XI, tactfully omitting 'count of Rousillon and Cerdagne' from the titles he now assumed as 'king of Aragon'. Louis, whose major concerns were with his recalcitrant brother and his allies, Brittany and Burgundy, was prepared to support the Angevin enterprise for the time being. He appointed John of Calabria, who was playing the central role in negotiating with those dissidents, his lieutenant general in Rousillon and Cerdagne.⁷⁸ In January 1467 Boffille de Juge, a Neapolitan follower of the Angevins, led 140 French and Provençal soldiers into Catalonia. He was followed by duke John who made his solemn entry into Barcelona amid great rejoicing on 31 August.⁷⁹ He was supported by 400 more French soldiers and also raised a force of Catalans. Whilst he was campaigning in November his procurer general, Guy de Laval lord of Loué, swore to observe the privileges and liberties of Catalonia. Lecoy de la Marche stresses the interest that René took in his new possession. He sent his son money and supplies and

⁷⁸Louis sent a warmly supportive letter to the *Generalitat* on 29 October 1467, F. Pasquier, *Lettres de Louis XI relatives à sa politique en Catalogne de 1461 à 1473* (Foix: 1895) pp. 36–7.

⁷⁹*Dietari*, 2, p. 481.

was concerned in matters such as the appointment of officers and clerics and the commercial welfare of his subjects.⁸⁰

In 1468 Louis XI recalled John of Calabria to France to deal with the duke of Brittany who trusted no other negotiator; during his absence Ferry of Vaudemont held Catalonia as lieutenant general.⁸¹ John II gained ground, strengthening Aragon by the marriage with Castille and alliances with England and Burgundy. Duke John concluded the treaty of Ancenis with Brittany in September 1468 but he was further detained in the north by an attack on Lorraine by Thibaud de Neufchâtel, marshal of Burgundy.⁸² This was only settled when Thibaud died in the following year, when John could finally return to Catalonia, but much needed troops had been detained in Lorraine whilst the fortunes of John II flourished. Matters looked hopeful in the summer when duke John, supported by a French force led by the veteran Dunois, took Castellon-de-Ampurias and Gerona. The latter city was still loyal to John II so the psychological benefit of its fall was considerable: John could now bear the title of the *Primogenit*, 'prince of Gerona', with conviction. But in other respects this success was illusory since war had impoverished Catalonia and emptied it of useful fighting men. Louis XI, again threatened by Burgundy, Brittany and Charles of France, could not spare him men or money. In January 1470 he left for Provence in the hopes of finding more resources and returned to Catalonia in August. During his absence John II set up a loyalist *Generalitat* which was to prove an increasingly effective focus of resistance to the revolution.

René took his role as count/king of Barcelona seriously and did all he could to put his scanty resources at the disposal of his son and their subjects. If matters had gone otherwise it is hard to say whether or not the Angevins might have retained Catalonia because success would probably have depended on the attitude of Louis XI. Some of René's afflictions were of his own making but at 6 o'clock on the morning of 16 December 1470, he was struck by an unexpected calamity when John of Calabria died in his palace at Barcelona. He was apparently killed by a fit of apoplexy: hardly surprising considering the constant burdens and pressures he had sustained since his childhood, pressures that had intensified during the last twelve years of his busy life. Some inevitably suspected

⁸⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 376–8.

⁸¹Tyrell suggests that in 1468 the Angevins were the key to the grouping in the rival princely camps in France, p. 90; *Dietari*, p. 487.

⁸²Bénet, pp. 123–4; R. Vaughan, *Charles the Bold: the Last Valois Duke of Burgundy* (Woodbridge: 2002), pp. 101–4.

poison but no evidence survives that this was the case. He had made a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Monserrat in November, perhaps a sign that he was already in poor health.⁸³ Most of the citizens of Barcelona seem to have been genuinely grief-stricken for the loss of one characterised by Hillgarth as 'a vigorous and attractive prince capable of infusing new life into the revolution'.⁸⁴ René's loss was grievous, his only son enjoyed the support of Louis XI, if not his trust, and considerable prestige throughout Europe. Had John survived and produced more legitimate sons the future of the house of Anjou would have been secured.

Duke John's funeral on 21 December was exceptionally grand, a patriotic display and gesture of defiance towards John II. The procession was led by a large number of people wearing mourning and carrying torches. The great cross of the cathedral followed, accompanied by the crosses of thirteen other churches and convents, the priests and canons of the cathedral and nine court ushers wearing black robes and hats. The coffin, surrounded by candle-bearers, was carried on the shoulders of fourteen royal counsellors, nobles, knights and bourgeois. It was covered in rich crimson velvet, embroidered in gold and on it rested the prince's sword. Three horses followed caparisoned in mourning, the first ridden by a herald wearing a coat with the arms of duke John, on the second a royal usher bore his shield and on the third a herald held his banner lowered to the earth. A large number of people and noblewomen followed. When the horsemen arrived within the cathedral they leapt down crying: 'O Lord Primogenit what will become of us unfortunate ones!' All broke into tears and nothing was heard in the cathedral but weeping and sighing. The office of the requiem was then said with the bishop of Vich officiating.⁸⁵ The prior of the Dominicans of Barcelona then gave the funeral oration, dwelling on the virtues of duke John and exhorting the people to remain faithful to his father in the confidence that God would give him victory.⁸⁶

The day after duke John's death the Wise Council invited Nicolas of Anjou to come to Barcelona but he was detained by the dangerous state of the duchy of Lorraine. Ferry of Vaudemont would have made a good lieutenant but he had died earlier in the year. Italian and Provençal contingents were still fighting for the Angevins in Catalonia, led by Angevin

⁸³*Dietari*, p. 498.

⁸⁴Hillgarth, 2, p. 293.

⁸⁵The Papacy disapproved of the revolution and had refused to appoint a bishop of Barcelona when the previous one died.

⁸⁶Calmette, *La Révolution Catalane*, pp. 315–17.

servants such as Gaspard Cossa (the son of John) and the count of Campobasso. René wrote to the Catalans assuring them that he would not abandon them and Louis XI offered moral but no material support. In March 1471 René appointed his grandson John, the bastard of John of Calabria and a rather underwhelming young man, to lead his forces in Catalonia. In the autumn John II started his reconquest, taking Gerona in October. Historians are divided concerning the heir of John of Calabria: most, such as Poull, simply assume that Nicolas was his only legitimate son but Calmet states that his older son, John who was born in 1441, became duke of Lorraine until his death in August 1471. Favier recognises him in his genealogy as duke 'John III'.⁸⁷ Confusion over the matter may be explained by the existence of bastards of John of Calabria and king René, both called 'John', and by the brief period by which he survived his father. His short rule is, however, justified by Calmet through his mention as 'duke of Calabria' in his father's will (Nicolas was merely 'marquis of Pont'). He seems to have been either a very inactive young man or suffering from some form of disability. It was his younger brother who had been entrusted with all sorts of responsibilities during the past years and who had been betrothed to the French king's daughter.

René sent Boffile de Juge to Milan to beg duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza for aid but he only received polite words (although he did allow the Angevins to hire Genoese ships). The Italian states wished above all to keep the French out of Italy and supporting John II and Ferrante of Naples was the best way to do so. King Louis promised René an army but it never materialised. By early 1472 king John was tightening his hold on Barcelona, taking surrounding towns and blockading the harbour with his fleet. In July René and Nicolas managed to send some Genoese ships laden with corn to their beleaguered subjects but only prolonged their agony by a month. The *Generalitat* started negotiating with John II in early October and he offered excellent terms. Nearly everyone would be fully pardoned for their actions during the past ten years, the two governing bodies of Catalonia would be merged and their liberties guaranteed. The bastard of Calabria and his followers could leave honourably: he decently assured the city that it had given sufficient evidence of its endurance and fidelity to René. On 15 October the *Generalitat* wrote to him regretting that they were obliged to withdraw their obedience and submit to John II. On that day the king of Aragon made his solemn entry into Barcelona amid scenes of rejoicing.

⁸⁷Poull, p. 170; Calmet, 5, pp. 157–61; Favier, *Le Temps des Principautés*, p. 414.

Even in early 1472 French intervention might have saved Catalonia for the Angevins but Louis XI had good reasons not to involve himself. John V count of Armagnac was in revolt and the king already possessed Rousillon and Cerdagne (although he subsequently lost them to John II until 1475). Calmette believed that his ultimate aim was to take the whole of Catalonia for France.⁸⁸ Louis feared that young duke Nicolas was about to repeat his father's mistake and make a pact with Burgundy. The prize was the hand of Mary of Burgundy, an alliance that would entail the repudiation of his betrothed Anne of France. Until 1471 the combination of duke John's enthusiasm for martial exploits, René's benevolent interest in his new subjects and support from France freed Catalonia from John II, a hard man who was prepared to ruin his own son and daughter.⁸⁹ Duke John's death, his bastard son's lack of prestige and money and the disengagement of France doomed yet another Angevin enterprise to failure.

1470/71: the 'Annus Horribilis'

The summer of 1470 to mid-1471 saw the period of the Angevins' highest hopes and deepest despair. Initially there seemed to be a real prospect that they would make good their hold on Catalonia and use it, together with Provence, as a base for the reconquest of Naples. As a result of the extraordinary reconciliation between dissident Yorkists, led by the earl of Warwick, and Margaret of Anjou and her son, there was a fair chance that Henry VI would be restored to the throne of England. In both cases Louis XI was sufficiently impressed with Angevin representations to devote modest sums of money and French forces to their campaigns. The death of John of Calabria, René's only son and the one Angevin prince who was an effective military commander, dealt a deadly personal and political blow to the old king. The killing of his grandson, the defeat of his daughter and the destruction of Lancaster in England did not touch him so closely but was deeply humiliating.

As early as February 1467 the Milanese ambassador was speaking of a possible reconciliation between the earl of Warwick and the house of Lancaster. It has been suggested above that modern historians have

⁸⁸Calmette, *La Révolution Catalane*, pp. 381–2; Pasquier discusses the same issue, p. 24.

⁸⁹Donna Bianca, after the death of her brother Don Carlos, had a good claim to Navarre but her father allowed her to be imprisoned and probably murdered (1464) by her younger sister Eleonora, the wife of his candidate for the kingdom, Gaston IV of Foix.

tended to credit those who are their prime subject of study with the inception of the policy. This study of the Angevins as a political force in Europe seeks to make a case for the origins of the agreement being located in their circle. According to Panigarola, John of Calabria, probably in the course of a drunken dinner, reproached Louis XI for his devotion to Warwick. He suggested that, if he was so fond of him, he and the earl would benefit from restoring Lancaster. Louis retorted that he would hold his nephew, Edward of Lancaster, responsible for any undertakings he might make. Panigarola, who detested the Angevins, characterised the boy as talking of nothing but cutting off heads and making war as if he occupied a throne or were the god of battle. In May John's son Nicolas visited Margaret of Anjou in Bar and Louis XI sent Ferry of Vaudemont to bring her to Chartres in early May where such a possibility was discussed at court.⁹⁰ A Lancastrian envoy captured in Wales also claimed that Warwick was changing sides.⁹¹

In 1468 Cornelius, a servant of Sir Robert Whittingham from the court at Koeur, was taken at Queenborough with a bundle of Lancastrian correspondence. Under torture he embarrassingly implicated seemingly loyal Yorkists including a servant of lord Wenlock, Warwick's ally.⁹² Queen Margaret was apparently in Rouen that year, perhaps on business connected with the Cornelius episode: she may have intended to invade England, but nothing happened.⁹³ In 1469, when Warwick and Clarence dominated the government of Edward IV, another Lancastrian exile, Dr Ralph Makerell, was arrested, probably in Norfolk. Unlike his hapless forerunners, he was treated leniently, perhaps because Warwick (and even Edward IV) wanted to hear his propositions.⁹⁴ The thinking of the court at Koeur was contained in four memoranda sent to the French chancellor by Sir John Fortescue, Henry VI's chancellor-in-exile.⁹⁵ The first two, where no mention was made of Warwick, seem to have been submitted in the middle of the decade and were ignored. The third and fourth from internal evidence date from between July 1469 and March 1470. As they contain the proposal that Warwick should be reconciled

⁹⁰CSPM, pp. 117–20.

⁹¹William Worcester, *Annales*, Stevenson, 2.2, p. 788.

⁹²Scofield, 1, pp. 454–5.

⁹³J. Calmette and G. Périnelle, *Louis XI et l'Angleterre(1461–1483)* (Paris: 1930) p. 104.

⁹⁴M.L. Kekewich, 'The Mysterious Dr Makerell: His General Pardon of 27 November 1469', *Much Heaving and Shoving: Late Medieval Gentry and their Concerns. Essays for Colin Richmond*, ed. M. Aston and R. Horrox (Lavenham: 2005) pp. 45–54.

⁹⁵Paris, BN ms. fr. 6964, ff. 27–27v.

with Lancaster and the alliance sealed with the marriage of his daughter to prince Edward it is understandable that the French chancery started to take them seriously.⁹⁶

The arrival of Warwick, his countess, their daughters and his son-in-law the duke of Clarence (who had deserted his brother king Edward) in France in the spring of 1470 presented the Angevins with an opportunity.⁹⁷ The earl had ships and followers but they were insufficient to mount an invasion of England without French assistance. Clarence, who had married Warwick's daughter Isabel, had thought that such an expedition would have put him on the throne of England but, if Henry VI were to be reinstated, there was little profit in the situation for him. Margaret of Anjou, on the other hand, at last had the ear of Louis XI and a son old enough at seventeen to fight and to marry. King René and John of Calabria were in Provence, deeply involved in the Catalonian enterprise: John was soon to return to Barcelona for the last time. Yet it looks as if he and his son Nicolas, abetted by the lawyers at Koeur, had already developed his throwaway remark of February 1467. By 22 June 1470, when queen Margaret, her son and followers arrived at Amboise, the outlines of a reconciliation between Warwick and Lancaster could already have been agreed. Makerell had possibly been the envoy from the Angevin court at Koeur to the earl during 1469. In the following spring 'the servants of the king of Sicily her [Margaret's] father after many treaties and meetings'⁹⁸ and Louis XI took the negotiations with Warwick and Margaret forward.⁹⁹ Their culmination was staged at Angers on 22 July 1470 when Warwick was forgiven by the queen: his daughter Anne would marry Edward of Lancaster as soon as he had conquered England. Louis rather unwillingly gave him some money, at least 50,000 crowns (and probably more), 2000 archers and two great French ships of the admiral and vice-admiral of France to add to the invasion flotilla.¹⁰⁰

Queen Margaret managed to prevent her son from leaving for England with Warwick and Clarence when they embarked on 9 September. They had to be content with the loyal Lancastrian Jasper Tudor, titular earl of Pembroke, half-brother of Henry VI. Edward IV obligingly fled before

⁹⁶Kekewich, 'The Lancastrian Court', pp. 103–5 and Appendix 2, pp. 109–10; A. Gross, *The Dissolution of the Lancastrian Kingship: Sir John Fortescue and the Crisis of Monarchy in Fifteenth Century England* (Stamford: 1996) pp. 75–9.

⁹⁷De Waurin, 5, pp. 608–74.

⁹⁸'Manner and Guiding', *John Vale's Book*, p. 217.

⁹⁹Hicks, *Warwick*, pp. 286–310.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 291–2; 'Manner and Guiding', *John Vale's Book*, pp. 215–18.

them, taking refuge with his brother-in-law the duke of Burgundy. The remaining Yorkists did not resist and king Henry was removed from the Tower of London and peacefully reinstated. In the meantime René had arrived in Tours on 15 September: he was to remain in the Loire valley, mostly at Angers, for over a year. His grandson Edward of Lancaster married Anne Neville at Amboise on 28 November and on the same day signed a treaty with Louis XI who was referred to as 'king of France'.¹⁰¹ Edward undertook to make war on Burgundy in alliance with France, neither would withdraw until it was conquered. King René probably attended the ceremony since he was near Angers at his manor of La Ménitré on 25 November and at Ponts-de-Cé on 1 December.¹⁰² He may have had reservations about making war on Burgundy as his son had been a close ally of Charles during the War of the League of Public Good and René and his grandson Nicolas were later to ally with the duke. The newly-weds, together with Margaret of Anjou, the countess of Warwick and their followers lived in great luxury at the French court. Edward had been honoured on 30 June when he became godfather to Louis's newborn son, later Charles VIII. Louis staged a magnificent reception for the young couple in Paris: nobly accompanied, they were welcomed by the bishop, the provost, members of the university, the *parlement* and many prominent citizens, passing through streets richly decorated with tapestries and other hangings.¹⁰³ The Lancastrians then left for Normandy where they waited for two months before embarking. The delay was caused initially by the anxieties of Louis XI that his deal with Warwick would be honoured and, latterly, by contrary winds.

Hicks points out that it would have been foolish to have allowed Edward to go to England too early since his capture or death would have immediately ended Lancastrian hopes.¹⁰⁴ Henry VI was just a figurehead from whom no leadership or additional children could be expected. Yet without prince Edward, Warwick faced enormous problems: his credibility with Lancastrians was in question, his own followers were looking for rich rewards, Clarence and his people were disaffected and the Yorkists were expecting the return of Edward IV. Warwick did not lack good advice: at some point he received the *Articles sent by Edward, Prince of*

¹⁰¹Calmette and Périnelle, pp. 125–6, 133–4, pièces justificatives, pp. 319–20; Paris BN Ms fr. 3887, f.113 r-v for a copy of the treaty, the Lancastrians did not formally relinquish the title.

¹⁰²Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, Itineraries, pp. 472–4.

¹⁰³*Chronique Scandaleuse*, 1, pp. 249–50.

¹⁰⁴Hicks, *Warwick*, p. 294.

Wales concerning the government of England. They were composed by Sir John Fortescue, and were an abstract for some of the recommendations later circulated in his *Governance of England*. They stressed the need to curb the notorious generosity of Henry VI by means of a strong council, not dominated by great magnates, and to keep a small, inexpensive household. The underlying anxiety of Fortescue, his Angevin mistress and young master was that the victorious Warwick would dispense a disproportionate amount of lands and offices to his followers and risk alienating Lancastrian support.¹⁰⁵ The earl actually feared to raise the money he needed in case he provoked revolts and, on top of everything, Louis XI expected him to make war on Burgundy.¹⁰⁶ This threat proved the catalyst for the initially unenthusiastic duke Charles to aid his brother-in-law's return to England in March 1471.¹⁰⁷ On 14 April Warwick was defeated and killed by Edward IV near Barnet: Clarence had changed sides. Commynes believed that Warwick deliberately gave battle before the arrival of queen Margaret and Somerset because he feared them for the harm he had done them in the past.¹⁰⁸

Believing Warwick to be safely in control of England, Margaret of Anjou, prince Edward and their followers, including the personnel from the court at Koeur, embarked in April. They arrived at Weymouth on the day that Warwick was destroyed at Barnet and were joined by the duke of Somerset and the earl of Devon. De Rapin Thoyras claims that after learning of Warwick's defeat queen Margaret wished to send her son back to France.¹⁰⁹ Persuading the martial-minded teenager to retreat was presumably easier said than done especially as Warwick had proclaimed him to be Henry VI's lieutenant. Devon and Somerset encouraged Margaret and her son to believe that they could defeat king Edward with their own forces. This showed their lack of military judgement, although supporters were flocking to the Lancastrian army and the numbers were fairly evenly matched, about 6000 on each side. The queen proceeded cautiously and

¹⁰⁵Warwick had made his brother the archbishop of York, George Neville, chancellor, undermining Fortescue's position.

¹⁰⁶Chastellain, *Chronique*, 5, p. 487 says that Louis XI 'bathed in roses' at the news of Warwick's victory.

¹⁰⁷*Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV in England and the Finall Recoverye of his Kingdomes from Henry VI*, ed. J. Bruce, Camden Society, I (London: 1838). Charles of Burgundy had married Edward's sister Margaret in 1468 but he remained sympathetic to Lancaster.

¹⁰⁸Commynes, 1, p. 216.

¹⁰⁹De Rapin Thoyras, *History of England*, trans. N. Tindal, 11 vols (London: 1728–29) 6, pp. 86–7.

seems to have intended to fall back on the comparative safety of Wales where Pembroke was ensconced. King Edward managed to catch up with the army at Tewkesbury and forced a battle on 4 May 1471.¹¹⁰

The Lancastrians were stationed on high ground surrounded by woods, 'evil lanes' and deep ditches and, had they remained there and defended it, they might just have survived. Somerset's advance on the right, exposing his men to attack both on the front and from Yorkist spearmen hidden in a wood nearby, showed the defective generalship that had been the Lancastrians' bane since the 1440s. His troops broke and fled leaving the centre, commanded by the inexperienced prince Edward and Wenlock, to take the full force of the Yorkist attack. The prince seems to have been killed in the subsequent rout although Tudor propaganda awarded him brave words before he was slaughtered in cold blood before Edward IV.¹¹¹ The Lancastrian left was also defeated and in the process Devon was killed: other notable casualties were Wenlock, Whittingham and Hampden. Most of the lawyers and clerics probably did not fight and Fortescue, Morton and Makerell were spared. Ross suggested that Edward respected those who had remained consistently loyal to Henry VI but men like Somerset and Sir Gervase Clifton had broken oaths of allegiance to the house of York and were executed.¹¹² Margaret of Anjou had apparently been observing the battle from the tower of the abbey. She fled over the Severn but was apprehended, together with her daughter-in-law Anne Neville, the countess of Devon and Katherine Vaux, by the Yorkists and was to remain in custody for the next five years.¹¹³ On 21 May Edward IV triumphantly returned to London and the following day the death of Henry VI was announced. The Yorkists claimed that he had died of sorrow for his son and the defeat of Lancaster but few people believed that story.¹¹⁴ In October 1471 king René left the Loire valley for the last time to take up permanent residence in Provence.

Could René, John, Margaret or their patron, Louis XI, have done any more to avoid the disasters that overcame them? The occupation of Catalonia would certainly have been strengthened by an injection of

¹¹⁰Scofield, 1, pp. 582–8; Ross, pp. 169–72.

¹¹¹R. Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. H. Ellis (London: 1811) p. 662; E. Hall, *Chronicle Containing the History of England, Henry IV to Henry VIII*, ed. H. Ellis (London: 1809) p. 30. Prince Edward was buried in Tewkesbury abbey.

¹¹²Ross, pp. 172–3; P.A. Haigh, *The Military Campaigns of the Wars of the Roses* (Stroud: 1995) pp. 125–38.

¹¹³Warkworth, pp. 17–19.

¹¹⁴Scofield, I, pp. 593–5.

more French soldiers and money. René did his best when he returned to Provence but, as ever, he lacked sufficient resources to go it alone. One of his bastard grandchildren (duke John seems to have had four altogether¹¹⁵), also John of Calabria, simply lacked his father's prestige and charisma in the face of the formidable king of Aragon. As far as England was concerned, the Angevins and their servants who negotiated with Warwick seem to have done so effectively and king Louis gave them a reasonable amount of support. It was when Warwick and the Lancastrians arrived in England that things went wrong. His French ships and archers would have played badly with nobles and commons alike and many sat on their hands.¹¹⁶ Pembroke in Wales, Warwick's Frenchmen and retainers and the loyal Lancastrians who followed Margaret and her son never joined forces. Had they done so, they just might have defeated Edward IV although they would still have been a motley force riven by internal rivalries. By 1470 the people of England were disinclined to give active support to a dynasty that had been discredited over a long period, and without Warwick the *Readeption* could never have taken place. Naples, Catalonia and England were to become distant dreams and memories for René and his relatives for his problem in the future was to hold on to his domains in France and the empire. Three men remained to assist him: his young grandsons Nicolas of Calabria and René of Lorraine and his nephew Charles II, who became count of Maine in 1472.

The dissolution of the *apanage*

For the two and a half years that followed the death of John of Calabria in December 1470 the future of the Angevins resided in his legitimate son, Nicolas duke of Lorraine and Calabria. He was in his early twenties and had already been involved, with his father, in the repercussions of the War of the League of Public Good when they were attempting to reconcile Charles of France with Louis XI. Nicolas sat on the royal council fourteen times between 1467 and 1471.¹¹⁷ Between 1461 and 1462 René had been promised a dowry of 100,000 écus, of which 60,000 was paid on account, for the marriage of Nicolas to Anne of

¹¹⁵Van Kerrebrouck, pp. 306–11. They were another boy and two girls.

¹¹⁶H. Kleineke, 'Gerard von Wesel's Newsletter from England, 17 April 1471', *The Ricardian*, 16 (2006) pp. 66–83.

¹¹⁷Gaussin, p. 111. The only surviving son of Louis XI was born in 1470, so he needed young, loyal princes of the blood to fill the vacuum.

France. In return she was to receive rents of 10,000 écus a year from towns such as Loudun and Gondrecourt.¹¹⁸ Neither side seems to have taken the betrothal very seriously. From its early days the Milanese ambassadors gossiped about the possibility of Anne marrying Charles, count of Charolais and Nicolas marrying Mary of Burgundy.¹¹⁹

The latter project, however, became a threat to Louis XI on 25 May 1472 when, having quit the French court for Lorraine, Nicolas signed an alliance with duke Charles and was promised the hand of his daughter.¹²⁰ The impact on Louis XI was considerable, when the possibility of such a match had been discussed in 1464 he had joked about it. Now she was old enough to marry, it was a grievous insult to a daughter of France. Louis was likely to have been even more alarmed by the possibility of an alliance that would have stretched from the heart of France via Burgundy, Bar and Lorraine to Provence. This was his worst nightmare: the resurrection of an enhanced kingdom of Lotharingia dominated by duke Charles, the brother-in-law of his other great enemy Edward of England.¹²¹ Allied with such strength and wealth the Angevins might even go on to conquer Naples and dominate much of the Mediterranean. Yet something went wrong not, apparently, of the French king's making. Nicolas visited his new betrothed in a nunnery in Namur in early November 1472 but by then her father was changing his mind.¹²² Lecoy de la Marche suggested that once Charles had detached Nicolas from Louis XI he no longer needed to lavish such a brilliant match on him and saved Mary for a more powerful suitor. Lecoy de la Marche denies that René had played any part in the marriage negotiations, for no mention was made of him.¹²³ Since he already appears to have spent the money paid for Anne of France's dowry on John's Neapolitan expedition, he could not in honour get involved in the transaction. According to Calmet, duke Charles and Nicolas once again started negotiations for the marriage in the summer of 1473. On 24 July Nicolas was returning from a visit to a church in Nancy when he experienced violent stomach pains and in three days he was dead. Poison was inevitably

¹¹⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 334–5; he attributes the match to the influence of Marie of Anjou.

¹¹⁹*Dépêches*, Mandrot, 2, Abbeville, 5 September 1464, pp. 229–30.

¹²⁰Vaughan, *Charles the Bold*, pp. 128–9; *Chronique Scandaleuse*, 1, pp. 265–6; O. de la Marche, 3, pp. 79–80 and n. 4.

¹²¹Schneider.

¹²²CSPM, 1, p. 168.

¹²³Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 388–9.

suspected and a man was arrested but nothing more was heard of the affair.¹²⁴

Charles II, count of Maine, René's nephew, became the heir to the *apanage* and was called 'duke of Calabria' by the Valois, reinforcing their continued claim to the kingdom of Naples. The duchy of Lorraine was initially found by its Estates to be the inheritance of René's daughter Yolande, the widow of Ferry of Vaudemont. She rapidly resigned it in favour of her son who became duke René II and made his solemn entry into Nancy on 4 August 1473. He was to prove a resolute soldier and an able politician but in his first two years he hesitated between the ill-advised pro-Burgundian policy of his cousin Nicolas and grandfather René and friendship with France. Duke Charles of Burgundy was storming round the empire and the Low Countries seeming to sweep all before him. It was understandable that René II would give him permission to lead his troops through Lorraine, a tempting corridor between Burgundian territory and on the route to Italy. Louis XI might have put up with that arrangement since he had signed a truce with Burgundy and did not want to fight. He was fearful of an English invasion in revenge for his support of Lancaster and the Angevins: but the latter were to provoke him much more seriously.

Louis seemingly never regained what faith he reposed in the Angevins after the War of the League of the Common Good. In 1469 he arrested Guillaume de Haraucourt, bishop of Verdun and René's friend and counsellor, on suspicion of intriguing with Charles of France and Burgundy and imprisoned him for ten years. In the summer of 1472 Louis spent some time in Angers making free with his uncle's property.¹²⁵ He gave one of his servants the lordship of Saint-Laurent-des-Mortiers in Anjou, violating René's rights as ruler of the *apanage*. Louis then demanded that John of Lorraine, governor of the castle of Angers, should surrender the artillery kept there. Further royal interference in the affairs of Anjou followed in 1473 when Louis nominated officials whose appointment was René's prerogative. This was probably the reason why René made his third will, on 22 July 1474. He left Bar to his grandson René II and Anjou and Provence to Charles II of Maine as the sole direct male descendant of Louis II of Anjou and heir to the *apanage*.¹²⁶ Louis XI might have ignored this: his uncle would probably die soon and his cousin

¹²⁴Calmet, 2, pp. 893, 897; *Chronique Scandaleuse*, 1, p. 298, states that he died of plague.

¹²⁵Favier, *Louis XI*, p. 637.

¹²⁶Paris BN Ms Lat. 6010, f.175, seventeenth century copy.

Charles had a gentle character and, although married, had no legitimate children so the will could easily be swept aside.¹²⁷ He could not ignore, however, the increasingly friendly relations between René and Charles of Burgundy that even extended to an understanding that the duke might annex Provence. Louis XI seized the duchies of Anjou and Bar in 1474: he had tried to reconcile the people of Anjou to the changing situation by giving them an autonomous mayoralty in the previous year. He chose one of his own servants to be mayor but, although the new form of government had many powers, it cost the citizens substantial sums in taxes and caused endless disputes with the officers of the old ducal institutions that survived.¹²⁸ René had involuntarily colluded with the French take-over by quitting Anjou in 1471 and sending for his valuables thus showing that he did not intend to return

The chronology of the deteriorating relations between Louis and René is controversial: Lecoy de la Marche chose to regard the legacy of Provence to Burgundy as a fabrication and denied any contact between René and duke Charles before 1476.¹²⁹ Yet evidence which he did not use proves that René was in correspondence with duke Charles at least by the spring of 1475. An unknown servant of René's niece (the duchess of Savoy, an ally of Burgundy) wrote to her from Moirans on 30 July 1475. He reported that René's secretary, Antonello Pagano, had just come from Malines bearing news for his master from duke Charles. After describing the advent of Edward IV in France he went on to say that Charles had invaded Lorraine. Knowing this would be difficult for the king of Sicily to accept, Charles explained that René II had abandoned his duchy and gone to the king of France thinking that he would be made grand constable. His counsellors and subjects were dismayed, believing that he had been induced to support France by his mother, Yolande of Anjou, and two young gentlemen. Pagano excused himself for not bringing this news to the duchess in person but he wished to return to his master in Provence as quickly as possible.¹³⁰

René's defiance of Louis seems to have fallen into two stages: the will of July 1474 and later, perhaps in early 1475, an understanding with Charles of Burgundy. Provence had come to the king through the gift

¹²⁷Van Kerrebrouck, pp. 321–3; Charles's wife was his cousin Jeanne de Lorraine.

¹²⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 395–400.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 1, pp. 391–2, 400–1, n. 2; Duchène, pp. 80–94.

¹³⁰*Dépêches*, la Sarra, 1, pp. 54–7, 192–6; on 12 March 1475 Antonio d'Appiano reported from Savoy that René wished to make an alliance with Savoy, Milan and Burgundy.

of Joanna II of Naples along with the rest of her kingdom in 1435 so he had a right, according to local custom, to leave it as he pleased. On the other hand, ever since the 1380s, the second house of Anjou had applied the French principle¹³¹ that only the heirs of male princes could succeed and this excluded René II from the contest. René I had inherited Bar from his great uncle the cardinal/bishop Louis and it should have been his to bequeath. The law concerning *apanages* was not entirely clear and a strong king such as Louis XI could effectively interpret it as he wished but it was arguable that René was correct in stating that Anjou should go to Charles II of Maine. His violation of legitimate French interests came when he contemplated, however frivolously, passing Provence to Burgundy and gave Louis good strategic reasons to dominate his lands. Werner Paravicini suggests that there was a wide conspiracy in 1475, orchestrated by Louis of Luxemburg count of St Pol. The intention of Edward IV of England and Charles of Burgundy to attack Louis XI and take many of his lands is well known but the Angevins and the dukes of Brittany, Bourbon and Nemours were also implicated. Charles of Burgundy undermined the project by concentrating on his campaign on the Rhine in the summer and St Pol actually turned his guns on the English at St Quentin. Edward and Louis made peace, Charles agreed a truce with France and the isolated St Pol was tried for treason and executed in Paris in December.¹³² This scenario helps to explain both the draconian punishment of St Pol and the strange behaviour of René in dealing with his old enemy for it was an abortive revival of the War of the League of the Public Good.

By early 1476 the power of the previously invincible duke Charles was waning: he had failed to conquer either the Swiss or the Germans, his hold on Lorraine (see below) was tenuous and on 2 March he was defeated at Granson. René, like the duke of Milan, the duchess of Savoy and other less important princes, had thought it wise to ally himself with Charles against the threat of France. Ferrante of Naples tried to extract his twopenny-worth out of René's predicament. On 16 March at Lausanne, where duke Charles was gathering forces for his next big defeat at Morat, the Neapolitan ambassador proposed that his master could send a force to occupy Provence to prevent it from falling into the hands of king Louis. He was 'menacing the liberty of old "duke" René': Charles found the idea

¹³¹Often claimed as a 'Salic law'.

¹³²W. Paravicini, 'Peur, Pratiques, Intelligences: Formes de l'opposition aristocratique à Louis XI d'après les interrogatoires du connétable de Saint-Pol', *La France de la Fin du xv^e siècle*, pp. 183–96.

unattractive because, the ambassador believed, he wanted the county for himself.¹³³

The ambassador's impression was confirmed by the arrival of the Burgundian Jean de Damas, lord of Clessy and a retinue in Provence in March 1476. They departed, however, without achieving anything when news of their master's defeat at Granson arrived.¹³⁴ Louis XI was already assembling troops at Lyon and the following month the *parlement* of Paris summoned king René to appear before it to explain accusations of treasonable conduct. His chief accuser, Jean Bressin, was a former clerk from his chancery in Bar who had fallen into the hands of Louis when he seized Angers castle where he was imprisoned. All Angevin misdeeds real or imagined from the time of the War of the League of Public Good were rehearsed in the accusation.¹³⁵ The testimony of the duke of Brittany and the count of Saint-Pol, former constable of France, was cited against him and René was found guilty. He had committed 'great crimes of *lèse-majesté* against the king and the public weal of the kingdom'.¹³⁶ This must have seriously alarmed René given the fate of St Pol at the end of the previous year.

Lecoy de la Marche believes that news of Burgundy's defeat at Granson disposed Louis to be reconciled with his uncle.¹³⁷ He asked René to meet him at Lyon; it was an unattractive and dangerous proposition but the presence of so many French soldiers on his borders obliged him to acquiesce. They met in May 1476 and hard bargaining ensued. At the first session René's old servant John Cossa made a reproachful speech to the king:

Sire, do not be surprised that the king your uncle has offered to make the duke of Burgundy his heir. He has been advised by his counsellors and especially by me that you, his sister's son and his nephew, have done him great wrong in seizing the castles of Angers and Bar and treated him badly in all other respects. We wanted to make this agreement with the duke so that you would hear of it and treat us reasonably, recognising that my master the

¹³³*Dépêches*, la Sarra, 1, p. 365.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 2, pp. 107–11.

¹³⁵D. Plancher, *Histoire de Bourgogne*, 4 vols (Dijon: 1737–81) 4, pp. 342–6.

¹³⁶S.H. Cuttler, *The Law of Treason and Treason Trials in Later Medieval France* (Cambridge: 1981), pp. 229–30.

¹³⁷Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 404–10.

king is your uncle; but we never intended to take this scheme to a conclusion.

Louis seems to have accepted the speech in good part, he gave René fine entertainment, featuring attractive women, and uncle and nephew were reconciled. Commynes substantiates the view that, by this time, René was known for his sensual tastes: 'The king entertained him with ladies and amused him in all things as much as he could according to René's nature.' On 4 June René paid two florins six gros to a painter of props at Lyon for the *Farce of the Fart*.¹³⁸

Various versions of what was agreed at Lyon have been proposed ranging from an abject capitulation by René¹³⁹ to a valiant defence of the interests of his house.¹⁴⁰ Thomas Basin, an advocate of realpolitik, approved of René's pragmatism he 'actively took a good initiative to avoid the danger'.¹⁴¹ René had promised the ambassadors of Louis in April, before leaving Provence, that he would have no more dealings with Burgundy or his other enemies. Louis delivered Anjou to his uncle on 25 May 1476, but the mayoralty with its extensive powers was to remain. Bar was returned without conditions on 9 June although France continued to hold the castle of Bar and other parts of the duchy. Until all the revenues due to René were given to him he would be paid an indemnity of 2000 francs a month and his pension from the revenues of Languedoc was restored.¹⁴² These seem to have been generous terms but they presented several problems to the Angevins. The duchies were only returned to René, there was no guarantee that Charles would receive Anjou or that René II would get Bar after his death. The way in which Anjou was now administered ensured that the French king retained a large measure of control and many of the citizens there were loyal to him rather than to René.

Charles II of Maine could cite two good precedents for his rights: René's own succession to his brother Louis III in 1435 and the agreement of 1440 that settled the *apanage* on Charles I of Maine and his male heirs if

¹³⁸Commynes, 2, p. 113. In February 1476 king Louis had threatened to put Cossa's son Gaspard in a sack and have him drowned for his loyalty to the Angevins, Vaesen, 6, pp. 44–7.

¹³⁹*Chronique Scandaleuse*, 2, pp. 14–15; Leonard, pp. 491–3; Tyrell, p. 178.

¹⁴⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 411–12.

¹⁴¹Basin, *Louis XI*, 2, p. 299.

¹⁴²Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 359–65; Vaesen, 8, pp. 30–2, 34–5; the pension was to be 10,000 livres a year.

¹⁴³Lecoy de la Marche, 1, p. 408.

those of his older brother died.¹⁴³ On the other hand, Louis maintained that those provisions had been mistaken and, on his uncle's death, Anjou should return to the crown. Charles II of Maine agreed this with a royal servant at Châtellerault at the same time as René and Louis were meeting at Lyon. He could draw some comfort from the fact that he was recognised as the 'heir presumptive of the king of Sicily'. Not only did he have a right to the Italian 'wasp-nest' but to delightful Provence as well.¹⁴⁴ Paravicini cites this timorous Angevin as one of those who were fearful of the consequences of their intrigues against Louis XI since the king investigated his actions but finally pardoned him.¹⁴⁵ Jacques Armagnac, duke of Nemours, the husband of Charles's sister Louise, was to be executed for treason in the following year, increasing the miasma of suspicion surrounding the Angevins. Considering his own misdeeds and the ruthless character of Louis XI René seems to have done reasonably well for himself and his heirs although he never collected all the pensions that the king had promised him as part of the bargain.

The release of Margaret of Anjou was another piece of Angevin business that was concluded in 1476. Louis XI had agreed with Edward IV as part of their amicable settlement in the previous year that she should be returned for a ransom of 50,000 écus, and she renounced all claims on the English crown. Sir Thomas Montgomery conducted her and a few ladies to Rouen where she was delivered to French royal officials in January 1476. In return for her freedom and a pension of 6000 crowns Margaret had also to renounce any claims she might have to the succession in Bar, Lorraine, Anjou and Provence.¹⁴⁶ In his will of 1474 René had left her 1000 écus and, if she returned to France, a rent of 2000 livres from the duchy of Bar and the castle of Koeur for her residence.¹⁴⁷ The whole area was in turmoil on account of the Burgundian wars and Lecoy de la Marche suggests that her sister Yolande was hostile to her.¹⁴⁸ Margaret settled first at Reculée near Angers and later near Saumur at the castle of Dampierre accompanied by Katherine Vaux and several other ladies and squires. After her father's death she wrote to the lord of Bouchage, a counsellor and chamberlain of Louis XI, asking for more financial aid but probably received little.¹⁴⁹ When she died in 1482 the only property she

¹⁴⁴Duchène, p. 93.

¹⁴⁵Paravicini, p. 187.

¹⁴⁶Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 356–8, she described herself as 'lady' rather than 'queen'.

¹⁴⁷Paris, BN Ms lat.6010, ff. 183–4.

¹⁴⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 416.

¹⁴⁹Paris, BN Ms fr. 2909 f. 24.

owned that the king desired were some hunting dogs. There is no evidence that she ever saw René after her return from imprisonment but she was buried in state near to his tomb in Angers cathedral.¹⁵⁰

René had seen a great deal of his other daughter and her children and his son John but Margaret had been in England for sixteen years when her visits to France commenced in 1461. He did his best for her by giving her a modest pension and a residence at Koeur in 1463 and remembering her in his will. He also exerted what diplomatic pressure he could on her behalf, but the decade was dominated by his interests in Italy and Catalonia. If he felt guilt at marrying her into an increasingly unstable situation it has not been recorded. Queen Margaret was the victim of contemporaries' expectations concerning female rulers, well described by Sharon Jansen in her study of Anne of Beaujeu's advice to her daughter. In politics they had to appear pious, submissive and chaste: those who, like Anne herself, Yolande of Aragon, Isabelle of Lorraine and Yolande of Anjou succeeded, were commended. Queens such as Isabeau of Bavaria and Margaret of Anjou, both cursed with inadequate husbands, failed their subjects because they seemed to transgress the rigorous model of a good princess prescribed by royal, noble and clerical writers from the days of Saint Louis.¹⁵¹

René II was only twenty-two when he suddenly inherited Lorraine from his cousin Nicolas in 1473: '...very young and inexperienced in all matters'.¹⁵² He had, however, the advantages of loyal subjects and a wise mother in Yolande of Anjou to advise him. (Illustration 16 shows the tomb of René II's father and mother, Ferry of Vaudemont and his wife Yolande.) She continued to enjoy the usufructs (the right to benefit from the advantages of another's property) of the duchy and ordinances were jointly signed by mother and son. He had married Jeanne d'Harcourt, daughter of the count of Tancarville, in 1471 but she proved to be barren. It took until 1485 to get the marriage dissolved when he wed Philippa of Guelders, daughter of Adolphe of Egmont duke of Guelders and Catherine of Bourbon. They had twelve children, the third son was to become the next duke, Anthony. René II was very short of money and caught between Burgundian lands ruled by the determined, martial and increas-

¹⁵⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 415–18: 2, pièces justificatives, 95, pp. 395–7; she described herself as 'queen' in her will. L. de Farcy, *Monographie de la cathédrale d'Angers*, 4 vols (Angers: 1901–26) 1, p. 313.

¹⁵¹*Anne of France 'Lessons for my daughter'*, ed. and trans. S.L. Jansen (Woodbridge: 2004) p. 82.

¹⁵²Commynes, 2, p. 94.



Illustration 16 Tomb of Ferry of Vaudemont (d.1470) and Yolande of Anjou (d.1483) in church of Saint-Laurent, Joinville, Haute Marne. Made in 1495 by Ferry's brother Henry of Lorraine, bishop of Metz, and destroyed during the French Revolution. This eighteenth century sketch was published by Dauzats in 1857. Yolande wore a crown as titular queen of Sicily (1480–83), classical features led L. Maxe-Werly to attribute the tomb to Francesco Laurana, *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (1899) facing p. 263. Warburg Institute.

ingly unstable Charles the Bold. René II soon discovered that the permission he had amicably given to Charles to occupy some castles and use Lorraine as a corridor for his soldiers had turned it into a powerless Burgundian satellite. They treated it like enemy territory, killing and robbing.¹⁵³ By 1474 René was ready to make a secret agreement with Louis XI who led him to believe that he would receive military support, although he had not endeared himself on his accession by claiming the whole Angevin inheritance as well as Champagne. The king's priority was to secure his eastern borders against attack whilst Edward IV was

¹⁵³Poull, pp. 190–1.

invading France from the north. With terrible timing René II joined the anti-Burgundian League of Constance of German and Swiss towns and on 9 May 1475 declared war on duke Charles. When his herald from Lorraine entered Charles's presence he said:

Herald, I have heard and understood the exposition of your commission, which has given me matter for joy and, to show you that such is the case, you shall clothe yourself in my robe and have this gift. Tell your master that I shall soon be in his lands and the greatest fear that I have is not to find him there.¹⁵⁴

Besides the duke's robe of cloth of gold the herald received a silver-gilt cup containing 500 gold *lions* (coins).

In September 1475, after signing another truce with France, Charles and the count of Campobasso, the former Angevin *condottiere*, invaded Lorraine from the north and the Great Bastard invaded from the south. René II did not have enough troops to take the field against them. His towns capitulated, including Nancy that fell in late November when Charles made his entry in great state.¹⁵⁵ Yet his domination of Lorraine was illusory: Louis XI may have despised his weak and wobbly Angevin relations but he did not want Lorraine to form part of a dangerous Burgundian bridge to the Mediterranean. Duke Charles, from the time of his failure to take Neuss from his German and Swiss enemies in mid-1475, was bent on a course that would ultimately destroy him. To avenge his honour he went off to the Vaud to fight for his Savoyard allies and was defeated at Granson. The duchess Yolande of Savoy and his other allies such as Mathias Corvinus of Hungary and the duke of Milan and his own commanders advised him that there was no honour in fighting peasants. Yet Charles persisted in facing the Swiss and Germans again at Morat on 22 June 1476. René II, who had fallen back on the loyal Vosges and assembled a small force, arrived just before the battle and was knighted. Louis XI could not openly aid his cousin as he had signed a truce with Burgundy but he gave him funds and exiled a number of French captains who, with their men, could then go and fight for the League of Constance. René with the lord of Theirstein, bailiff of Upper Alsace (probably a 'minder' for the inexperienced duke) commanded a cavalry contingent to protect the van of the army. Although it was the

¹⁵⁴Vaughan, *Charles the Bold*, pp. 308–9.

¹⁵⁵*Chroniques de Jean Molinet, 1474–1506*, ed. G. Doutrepoint and O. Jodogne, 2 vols (Brussels: 1935) 1, pp. 111–14.

Swiss pikemen who won the day, René conducted himself well in his first major battle.¹⁵⁶ He spent the night of the victory in the luxurious former lodgings of duke Charles, full of jewels, plate and fine provisions.¹⁵⁷

The town of Vaudemont had rebelled against the Burgundians in April 1476 and many other parts of Lorraine followed after the victory at Morat. René II, supported by a force of Germans, Swiss and Lorrainers, took Nancy on 6 October, probably assisted by the inaction of its defender, the count of Campobasso. Again duke Charles was strongly advised to go to quarters in Luxembourg rather than besiege his lost capital. Instead he insisted on exposing himself and his demoralised and depleted forces to the rigours of a particularly harsh winter. In early January a large Swiss force rendezvoused with the Lorrainers and Campobasso (who had suddenly remembered that he was a loyal Angevin supporter) at St Nicolas-du-Port. The fresh and reasonably healthy forces of the League numbered about 10,000, those of Burgundy a sickly 3000 to 5000. On 5 January 1477 René II led the army against duke Charles who was defeated and killed.¹⁵⁸ What remained of the Burgundian army fled to Luxemburg and Metz. When they found the duke's naked, frozen body two days later it was so disfigured that his servants had to identify it from his old wounds and other signs. Duke René treated it honourably by burial in the church of St George in Nancy.¹⁵⁹

The defeat and capture of René I at the battle of Bulgnéville in Lorraine forty-six years earlier had initiated the misfortunes that probably cost him his throne in Naples. The victory of his grandson at Nancy ensured that at least Lorraine and, eventually, Bar remained with his descendants. The senior house of Valois was to peter out after a series of collateral inheritances a century later, the house of Lorraine survived, eventually as emperors of Austria, until the First World War. Louis XI regained the *apanage* of Burgundy, the Somme towns and part of Flanders. He tried to marry Mary of Burgundy, who was twenty, to his unattractive little son, the seven-year-old dauphin Charles. Despite being beleaguered by her own subjects in Ghent she would have none of him and later in 1477 wed duke Maximilian of Austria. The consequences of that union were to cause enormous difficulties for France during the following two centuries.

¹⁵⁶Kendall, *Louis XI*, pp. 305–7; Comynnes, 2, pp. 119–21; *Dépêches*, la Sarra, 2, pp. 292–306.

¹⁵⁷Molinet, 1, pp. 146–7.

¹⁵⁸*Chronique Scandaleuse*, 2, p. 34; O. de la Marche, 3, pp. 238–42.

¹⁵⁹Comynnes, 2, pp. 149–53; Molinet, 1, pp. 162–71.

René I must have derived great satisfaction from his grandson's victory although no gloating is recorded. Yet even in his final years of life he could not relax his vigilance on behalf of Angevin interests. Many of those who had advised and supported him were now dead: Ferry of Vaudemont, John Cossa and that valuable intermediary between the Angevins and the French crown, Bertrand de Beauvau. His Italian friends the Pazzi had been destroyed by their unsuccessful conspiracy against the Medici in 1476. Former servants such as Boffile de Juge now worked for Louis XI and, although Palamède de Forbin was still René's president of accounts, he promoted the interests of France. Despite the return of Anjou and Bar Louis XI continued to intervene in both duchies, harrying René's servants and procrastinating over the payment of the revenues and pension that were due to him. Louis retained control of the castle and town of Bar and, in 1479, he extracted a lease of the revenues of the duchy for six years. René II did his best to assert his lordship but he was too sensible to do anything to force a confrontation with the all-powerful king. Only after the king's death, in 1483, did the duke of Lorraine receive his other duchy in full sovereignty from Charles VIII or rather from his older sister, Anne of Beaujeu (she who had been rejected by his cousin Nicolas).¹⁶⁰ Lorraine and Bar were then united in perpetuity. René II had visited his grandfather in Provence on his way to intervene briefly on behalf of Venice in the war of Ferrara.¹⁶¹ He urged his claim to the succession to the county but René had left it to Charles II of Maine. He sent Palamède de Forbin, who was experienced in Italian diplomacy, with his grandson perhaps thinking that the Neapolitan dream might be revived.¹⁶²

By the end of 1479 king René's health was failing: seventy was a great age for the time. Louis XI was well informed about his condition, he and his servants had been stalling over the question of the payment of the pension of 50,000 livres that he owed his uncle. On 24 June 1480 Louis instructed his receiver general in Languedoc to 'amuse' René and his servants with empty promises as he realised that René was near death.¹⁶³ He died on the afternoon of 10 July 1480. The monk Eléazar Garnier reported that he received the last sacraments, listened to some psalms and engaged in edifying reflections on those holy

¹⁶⁰Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, pp. 418–21.

¹⁶¹See Chapter 2.

¹⁶²Duchène, pp. 101–4.

¹⁶³Vaesen, 8, pp. 221–2.

texts.¹⁶⁴ He had always been pious and this may represent something like the truth. The archivist to the chamber at Aix recorded that: ‘... at 2.00 in the afternoon the illustrious king René, prince of peace and mercy, rendered his soul to God amid the tears of all his people and especially the citizens of his capital’.¹⁶⁵ Louis XI ordered his officials in Paris and the chapter of the cathedral of Angers (that he now indisputably ruled) to celebrate solemn requiems for his ‘good father, the king of Sicily’. The previous December he had requested the chapter to send to René for ornaments and a tapestry that he had taken to Provence that had been promised to them. On 25 June 1480, he ordered his chamber of accounts to search their records for the sums he had paid to John and Nicolas of Calabria in the 1460s: Louis was characteristically preparing for every eventuality, such as Angevin claims for unpaid pensions and revenues.¹⁶⁶

René’s body remained in the church of St Saveur, Aix until the summer of 1481 as his Provençal subjects were very anxious to retain it (see Illustration 17). He had, however, provided in his will that he should be buried with his first wife, Isabelle of Lorraine, in the tomb he had prepared in St Maurice, Angers.¹⁶⁷ Fearing that she would probably be resisted if she tried to move René’s body openly the judicious Jeanne de Laval had it transported secretly. With the cooperation of the clerics who were keeping it she ordered her servants to disguise the coffin and René’s heart as ordinary pieces of baggage among other parts of her wardrobe that were embarked on the Rhone to be sent to her in Anjou. They arrived in August and were kept by the chapter of St Laud until 9 October. The great bells of the cathedral of St Maurice and the university tolled, joined by the bells of the other churches and convents of Angers. A procession of priests, monks, nobles and civic dignitaries accompanied the body in a coffin surmounted by an effigy, clothed in royal robes, crowned and bearing an orb and sceptre. A herald of the Order of the Crescent preceded the coffin that was carried by twelve students of the university (all gentlemen) in black; it was laid in the chapel *ardente* (full of candles) of the cathedral. The bishop and chapter sang vespers and the vigils for the dead. The following day they celebrated a requiem mass and his body was placed in the

¹⁶⁴Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 1, p. 426.

¹⁶⁵Duchène, p. 105.

¹⁶⁶Vaesen, 8, pp. 223–4, 248–50, 252–3, pièces justificatives, pp. 348–9.

¹⁶⁷See Chapter 4.



Illustration 17 King René in old age, a modern picture copied from the Mathurin portrait (see Chapter 4, n. 109). Even in 2008 the king is a commercial asset. Hotel d'Arlatan, Arles. Photo Kenneth Lewis.

sepulchre that had been prepared. His heart was carried in solemn procession to St Bernard preceded again by the herald.¹⁶⁸

Many royal corpses were destroyed during the French Revolution but those of René and Isabelle escaped that fate. The small vault that contained their coffins was obscured from view by the panelling that had been installed in the choir in 1783 and remained undisturbed until 1895. During reparations the Church authorities opened the vault and found the coffins holding the skeletons of the king and queen: the former contained a light crown, sceptre and orb made of oxidised metal, the latter contained vestiges of a shoe and some silk. The following year the vault was cleaned and the bodies were placed in new, oak coffins (the originals had suffered badly from damp) before it was sealed. There was no sign of the remains of Margaret of Anjou who must have been buried elsewhere, the vault was only large enough to house two coffins.¹⁶⁹

The people of Aix had to be content with René's entrails that were kept in the church of the Carmelites. Paul Binski has stressed the great importance that the placing of bodies and their parts held for people in the late middle ages.¹⁷⁰ Jeanne de Laval had notified Louis XI of the arrival of the corpse and he could not very well forbid a grand funeral in Angers. The great demonstrations of affection and respect that accompanied the funeral marked a kind of gentle victory for the queen and her late spouse.

Conclusion

The immediate beneficiaries of René's death did not long survive him. Charles II of Maine had to face a rebellion in parts of Provence in April 1481 provoked by René II, the rival claimant to the county. It was suppressed with the help of French troops sent by Louis XI (led by René I's old Neapolitan *condottiere* Giacomo Galeotto) who was determined that Provence should not become a possession of Lorraine. Charles died

¹⁶⁸Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 387–94; description written by Balthasar Hirtenhaus, councillor and controller of finances at the request of queen Jeanne to be sent to the archives at Aix.

¹⁶⁹L. de Farcy, 'À Propos des Sépultures du Roi René, d'Isabelle de Lorraine et d'Ulgar, évêche d'Angers', *Revue de l'Anjou*, 32, 1896, pp. 432–41. A photograph was taken of René's skeleton, remarkably reminiscent of the painting of the dead king that originally surmounted his tomb, Farcy, *Monographie*, 1, facing p. 312.

¹⁷⁰See Chapter 4.

in Marseille on 11 December 1481 in his forty-fifth year.¹⁷¹ He left Maine and Provence and all his kingly claims to his cousin king Louis,¹⁷² who was to enjoy them for only a year and a half before he also died, at Plessis-du-Parc on 30 August 1483. Palamède de Forbin had been appointed governor of Provence and ensured a peaceful transition to royal rule. Charles VIII encountered few serious problems whilst Anne of Beaujeu ruled for him. After she left court he revived the right to the succession to Naples that he had inherited from Charles II of Maine. Unlike his great uncle and cousin, he succeeded with his huge army in taking the whole kingdom from Ferrante's son for a few months in 1494–95. On his retreat his depleted forces were harried by the Italian states, indignant that their long policy of excluding the French from the peninsula had foundered. French garrisons were defeated and Naples returned for a few years to the bastard branch of the house of Trastámara. When Charles VIII died after an accident in 1498 he and his wife, Anne of Brittany, had no surviving children. His heir was Louis of Orleans who was married to Jeanne de France, the severely disabled daughter of Louis XI. 'The offspring they will produce will cost little to bring up' her cruel but realistic father had joked.¹⁷³ The marriage had been intended to prevent a rival claim to the throne from the one remaining *apanagiste* who might present a threat to king Charles. Louis XII lost no time in securing a papal dispensation to annul his marriage (Jeanne retired, probably with relief, to a nunnery) and marry his cousin's widow, Anne of Brittany. Thus the last great territorial principedom within France came to the crown. Louis then embarked on a series of adventures in Italy, all ultimately unsuccessful, reviving the Angevin and Orleanist claims to Naples and Milan. A side product was the fall of the Sforza, a consequence of French intervention that had been foreseen by duke Francesco as early as the 1440s. The ultimate beneficiaries of the Italian wars were the Hapsburgs.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹Duchène, pp. 118–21; the convenience of his death to Louis, following those of John and Nicolas of Calabria led to accusations that he had been poisoned. He became ill in October and the care he and his doctors then took with his diet seem to have precluded murder.

¹⁷²Lecoy de la Marche, *René*, 2, pièces justificatives, pp. 394–5; Paris BN Ms Lat. 6010, ff. 209–320.

¹⁷³Kendall, *Louis XI*, p. 344.

¹⁷⁴*The French Descent into Renaissance Italy*, *passim*. See, however, Le Roy Ladurie on the Italian wars, he does not view them as an unmitigated disaster for France, pp. 91–6.

Three main factors can explain the end of king René's *apanage*. A continuing lack of sufficient revenue exacerbated by costly wars against the house of Burgundy, turbulent Barrois and Lorrainer subjects in the 1430s and the house of Aragon/Trastàmara during the following decades made him fatally dependent on France. A series of political blunders started with John of Calabria's participation in the War of the League of the Common Good, and continued with his son Nicolas's rejection of the hand of Anne of France in favour of Mary of Burgundy. René's flirtation with Charles of Burgundy, with Provence as his love-token, deprived Louis XI of any sympathy he might have felt for his uncle. The final and most important factor in the Angevins' loss was their ultimate lack of fertility. This only became apparent, however, in the 1470s with the deaths of John and Nicolas of Calabria when it was too late to do anything about it. John had spent seven futile years attempting to marry Ippolita Sforza: an excellent match but unrealistic considering Milan's close alliance with Naples. Instead of looking for a rich princess or noblewoman he seems to have amused himself with mistresses and died a widower. His son was locked into a betrothal to a child for much of his life and then failed to land Mary of Burgundy before his death. René probably expected to have several more children when he married Jeanne de Laval. When it became apparent that she was barren he was presumably too fond of her to divorce her. Louis XI, after the death of Charles II of Maine, was legally justified in taking Maine and keeping Anjou. Provence should strictly have gone to René II as his grandfather's closest heir but the Angevins' politically inept dealings with Burgundy had shown Louis the danger that desirable county presented if not controlled by France. As an exemplification of kingly ability the final years of René I's reign are unimpressive: some Provençal writers still regard it as disastrous. Yet such a wealthy and strategically important county would never have been left in peace by the warring nations of the early modern period: far better to be a possession of powerful France. René's surviving line, the house of Vaudemont/Lorraine, was to have a long and prestigious destiny for centuries to come.

Conclusion: the Paradox of the Good King

Gloucester: '... poor King Regnier, whose large style
Agrees not with the leanness of his purse.'

(W. Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part 2*, Act 1, Scene 1)

When Shakespeare dismissed king René in these scathing terms he criticised his pretensions but did not question whether or not he should be regarded as a king.

Yet this issue should be addressed as a prelude to any estimate of the quality of his rule. Increasingly in early modern and modern Europe the rulers of states described themselves as 'kings' but matters were not so clear-cut in the late middle ages. There were princes, such as the dukes of Burgundy, who were wealthier and more powerful than some kings. Even the Holy Roman Emperors, Sigismund and Frederick III, had to spend much of their time inactive within their patrimonial lands because they could not afford to do anything else. Despite his constant shortage of money (a plight shared with many other princes) René ruled the extensive lands of Anjou and Bar under the French crown but also Provence which, for over a century, had been part of the kingdom of Naples. It was debatable whether his suzerain there was the emperor or the pope but he was certainly not the king of France. René was also duke of Lorraine, followed in succession by his son and grandsons, and his suzerain was the emperor. From 1435 when he inherited the kingdom of Naples from queen Joanna until 1442 when Alfonso of Aragon won the crown, René was its king and held the capital, recognised by the majority of his subjects. Between 1466 and 1472 he was obeyed as count/king of Catalonia by the majority of the Catalans although he never approached making good his larger claim to be king of Aragon. This portfolio surely justifies the kingly title that his friends and many of his enemies gave him from 1435 until his death.

The Introduction suggested the criteria by which a king was judged in the late middle ages: the ability to keep due order in his personal life, his household and his country was the supreme virtue of a good king. Soon after René's death apologists drawn from various parts of his former lands praised him. The demonstrations of affection after his death at Aix and at his funeral in Angers were the first occasions for contemporaries to express their opinion. Threatened by the designs of Louis XI on their county the Provençals had good political reasons to treasure the memory of his long rule. The people of Angers, on the other hand, would gain nothing from Louis XI by showing their loyalty to the memory of their old duke. Contemporary chroniclers were generally sympathetic to René, his son and grandsons, although they were detested, with good reason, by the Milanese ambassadors in France and Burgundy. Georges Chastellain's *Chroniques* contained sketches of many contemporary princes including René I. He was a chivalrous and valiant prince whom bad fortune prevented from keeping his kingdom. He later lived patiently in France organising building works, festivals and tournaments.¹ Others, such as Basin, Commynes, Bouvier, Escouchy and Gruel, as has been shown above, generally concurred in the opinion that René was a noble and valiant prince whose sorrows were the result of bad fortune rather than his own shortcomings. Machiavelli, a political theorist rather than a chronicler, was more censorious of the Angevins.²

The local priest Bourdigné in his early sixteenth century history of Anjou did much to establish the tradition of 'the good king René'.³ For him king René was a virtuous protector of his lands, the Church, nobles and the common people. He dispensed uncorrupted justice but was a benign and merciful prince. A model of chivalry he suffered misfortune with dignity, showing the patience of Job. In his later years he retreated to the delights of rural simplicity in Provence to which he introduced new animals and plants. René's literary work and patronage of art were recognised as kingly qualities in the seventeenth century, most notably by César Nostradamus in his *Histoire et Chronique de Provence*.⁴ Coulet and her co-authors remark on the process by which René has been presented as totally absorbed in the culture and customs of Provence. His Angevin background and tastes were ignored by such historians who perpetuated

¹Chastellain, *Chronique*, 2, p.162.

²Chapter 2.

³*Histoire agrégative des annales et chroniques d'Anjou*.

⁴Nostradamus, pp. 580–649, especially p. 646; Coulet, Planche and Robin, *passim*.

the myth that he retired happily to Provence for a tranquil old age. As the inscription on the base of his statue in Aix puts it:

Illustrious in his time in war and peace,
but unfortunate, he only knew happiness with the Provençals.
Ejected from his kingdom, deprived of his children,
deprived of his wealth, he rediscovered all that he had lost
in the love of the Provençals.⁵

David d'Angers made two statues of René in the early and mid-nineteenth century. A youthful and courtly version stands in the middle of a traffic island near the castle at Angers (Illustration 18). A more realistic figure of the old king, wearing royal robes and holding a bunch of grapes and a sceptre was erected on 24 August 1819 (the eve of the feast of St Louis) at the end of the Cours Mirabeau in Aix.⁶ A compliment was intended to the recently restored Bourbon king Louis XVIII who, until his nephew's death in 1795, had been the count of Provence. The royalist reaction continued to favour the memory of king René. Viscount Villeneuve-Bargement dedicated his inaccurate and totally laudatory *Histoire de René d'Anjou* to the duchess of Berry, the widow of the recently assassinated heir to the throne.⁷ Count Quatrebarbes published an edition of René's literary works twenty years later. Some of Quatrebarbes's attributions have subsequently been challenged but it remains a rich resource, although he used Bargement's biography uncritically in the introduction.⁸

J. Michelet was more critical of René and his family, scorning the chivalrous Angevins who 'undertook to continue, in the wise fifteenth century, the follies of the middle ages'. He believed that the failure of René's direct male heirs was desirable as part of the process by which his lands were absorbed into France.⁹ Sir Walter Scott had a poor opinion of king René, condemning him for his frivolous pursuits in the novel, *Anne of Geierstein*.¹⁰ Albert Lecoy de la Marche produced a two-volume political,

⁵M. Miquel, *Quand le bon Roi René était en Provence, 1447–80* (Paris: 1979) p. 275. See Chapter 1.

⁶See Illustration 3 in Chapter 1 above.

⁷F. Villeneuve-Bargement, *Histoire de René d'Anjou*, 3 vols (Paris: 1825).

⁸Quatrebarbes, *passim*. He was instrumental in the erection of David's statue of the young René in Angers in 1853.

⁹J. Michelet, *Histoire de France*, 15 vols (Paris: 1856–66) 6, p. 15 and *passim*.

¹⁰W. Scott, *Anne of Geierstein*, The Waverley Novels, 23 (London: 1901).



Illustration 18 Statue of the young René by David d'Angers near Angers castle, 1853. Photo Peter Fawcett.

cultural and administrative biography in 1875. He was a legitimist and counter-revolutionary and gave a wholly positive account of René's life and achievements. It has proved strongly influential on subsequent French histories, many of which added very little to his work. At the end of the century Cherrier was ambivalent, describing René as 'a fine mixture of ideas and sentiments, an apparition of the past and the future'.¹¹ A flurry of publications marked the five-hundredth anniversary of René's death in 1980; many produced by Provençal scholars concentrated enthusiastically on his literary and chivalrous activities and patronage of art. Back in 1954, however, Émile Léonard had castigated René for achieving 'an immortality that neither his character nor his politics deserved'. He cited Bousquet approvingly for his critique of how he undermined the independence of Provence: Lecoy de la Marche was merely his 'hagiographer'.¹²

The great expansion in court studies and an accompanying interest in chivalry in recent years have served to enhance René's reputation. The regard he paid to correct behaviour and clothing in his *Book of Tournaments* bears out the argument of Michelle Szkilnik in her study of de la Sale's *Jean de Saintré* that they were not merely nostalgic chivalrous games. Like his real counterpart, the Burgundian knight Jacques de Lalaing, martial exploits were important but it was an understanding of the courtly code that earned good opinions and financial rewards from princes.¹³ The work of M.T. Reynolds on the Order of the Crescent and of Christof Ohnesorge on René's diplomacy have shown that he and his son were astute in attracting the loyalty of French, Italian and, latterly, Catalan nobles and captains to support their political aims.¹⁴ The Italians in particular showed an impressive devotion to the Angevins.

Was René of Anjou a good king in his personal behaviour, towards his family and household and to his subjects? As far as possible modern value systems must be set aside to address the question. Marrying his children for political gain, sending his young sons off to exercise onerous duties, skinning a Jew for blasphemy, keeping Moorish slaves and causing many deaths in wars of dynastic ambition all stick in contemporary gullets. Yet the political culture of his own time blamed René for none of these things, he was rather praised for his martial exploits and bravery, his piety and his glamorous court. Both his wives loyally carried out his wishes, John of

¹¹Cherrier, p. 93.

¹²Léonard, pp. 492–3, 514–16; Bousquet, 1, pp. 249–66; according to the latter, René 'destroyed the harmony and simplicity of Provençal institutions', p. 260.

¹³Szkilnik, pp. 13, 16, 139–42, 152–4.

¹⁴For Reynolds see above Chapter 4; Ohnesorge, *La noblesse*, pp. 457–70.

Calabria was always ready to serve him, his daughter Yolande, her husband Ferry and their children spent much time at his court and there seems to have been real affection within his family. His mother, first wife Isabelle and daughter Yolande were sagacious and determined politicians and did much to promote his interests. René's sister Marie, the queen of France whose importance has been underestimated by posterity, influenced both her husband and son in favour of the Angevins. Queen Margaret of England had courage and great strength of will, but her lack of skill and understanding of the political values of her adopted country ultimately harmed her own interests as well as those of her family. With few exceptions René's friends and servants worked loyally for him, often for decades: when they were also employed by the French crown conflicts seldom arose. He may not have been as generous in relieving his subjects of taxation as has sometimes been claimed, but evidence survives that he did so on occasions. He used his limited resources judiciously giving gifts, pensions and offices proportionate to the importance of the recipient and often on a modest scale.¹⁵ He managed to fulfil expectations that a king should be magnificent without unduly depleting his resources. The renown of his court, his patronage of agriculture and the arts probably outshone the reality but his image as 'the good king' survives, especially in Provence and Anjou, to this day. Coulet and her co-authors point out that it is to the advantage of commerce and the tourist industry for it to do so.¹⁶ Levron first published his popular biography in 1973 and was often critical of René yet concluded: 'In a century where political calculators were numerous, encumbering the scene with their intrigues and ambitions, he cherished peace and preferred the arts.'¹⁷ His love of the arts, especially tournaments and drama, was translated into the chivalrous, cultivated and pious role that he tried to play in Europe. It was his great misfortune that he was pitted against three such able, wealthy and pragmatic princes as Philip the Good, Alfonso of Aragon and Louis XI.

How did king René's political activities affect contemporary Europe? Some suggest that he played a valiant but quixotic role in the Anglo/French and Neapolitan Hundred Years Wars only to retire a defeated, sad old man to pious pursuits and gardening in Provence. That has not been the argument proposed in this study. His career started and ended with colossal blunders but he often showed determination and good judgement in pursuing his objectives. His decision to engage the enemy at

¹⁵See Chapter 4.

¹⁶Coulet et al., p. 231.

¹⁷Levron, p. 288.

Bulgnéville in 1431, his subsequent defeat, imprisonment and impoverishment probably cost him the crown of Naples and certainly strengthened France's adversary Burgundy. He showed great resilience, however, on his return to France in 1442, by building on the Angevin proximity to Charles VII established by his mother, sister and brother. The diplomatic triumph of marrying his daughter to the intellectually-challenged Henry VI of England and the benefits that flowed from that both to his family and to France assured the Angevins' favourable position for two more decades. He used the time well, consolidating the government of his domains and improving their economies. His many friendships with prelates and personal commitment to the welfare of the Church helped to end the schism in the 1440s. His court in Anjou and Provence rivalled Burgundy in the patronage of chivalrous events, the Order of the Crescent, religious festivals, art, plays and foundations.¹⁸

The accession of Louis XI, richer and more ruthless than the Angevins, contributed to the decline in their fortunes which was exacerbated by a series of untimely deaths. In the later 1460s René and John of Calabria managed to escape from the consequences of the latter's participation in the League of Public Good by serving the king. They were also successful in facilitating the reinstatement of the Lancastrians in England through Warwick. René was far from enjoying a tranquil old age in Provence in the 1470s, composing poetry and tending sheep. Alarmed by the increasingly aggressive incursions by Louis XI into Anjou he unwisely dealt with Charles the Bold, participating in some degree in St Pol's conspiracy, and convincing the king that Bar, Anjou and even Provence were not safe in Angevin hands. He soon realised his mistake and at Lyon and Châtellerauld in 1476 he and his nephew Charles made the best possible deals that they could with Louis given that the direct Angevin male line was doomed to fail. René II of Lorraine was the loser but, soon after his grandfather's death, he did manage to repossess the whole of Bar and left a long and successful posterity: to have opposed France with arms would have brought calamity on the duke and his subjects. King René had shown the same realism as early as 1440 when he tried to negotiate with Alfonso of Aragon. Apart from the campaigns against the English he and his son often used mercenaries, French, German, Italian and Spanish in their later wars. Anjou and Provence were not fought over: a fate that the lands of few other great French nobles avoided.

¹⁸W. Paravicini, 'The Court of the Dukes of Burgundy: a Model for Europe?'; Asch and Birke, pp. 69–102, suggest that the influence of the Burgundian model has been overrated.

Perhaps the greatest paradox of René's career is that he is remembered as a good king partly because he preferred to capitulate to Louis XI rather than involve his subjects in war and destruction.

The last word on the tradition of 'the good king René' is left to his fellow countrywoman, Marie-Louyse des Garets. She wrote her biography during the Second World War, finishing it in Avignon in 1944. She commenced by reproving earlier writers for praising René with excessive fervour, but after studying his life she concluded that the 'seductions of the legend pale before the brilliance of the reality'.¹⁹ Living in the starving, beleaguered south she probably found it comforting to contemplate his civilised court, his love of the arts and the harmonious, peaceful society he defended. René understood the political culture of his time and that legacy, the 'large style' of 'the good king', remains potent in France and beyond to this day.

¹⁹Des Garets, pp. 304–5.

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Index

- Abbeville, 210
Abbess of Santa-Maria-Donna-Regina, 65
abbeys
 of Gorze, Metz, 95
 of Jumièges, Normandy, 119
 of St Julien, Tours, 80
 of St Martin, Metz, 26.
 of St Mary and St John, Titchfield, Hampshire, 101
 of St Mary the Virgin, Tewkesbury, 228
 of St Nicolas, Angers, 90, 200
 of St Peter, Westminster, 101
 of St Victor, Marseille, 146
Abruzzo, 58–9, 62–3, 73, 75, 78
Achaëa, 47
Act of Resumption, 126, 128
Adenot, painter, 170
Adolphe of Egmont, duke of Guelders, 237
Agincourt, battle of (1415), 20
Agnes Sorel, lady of Beauté, 104, 119
aides, 32, 35
Aiscough, William, bishop of Salisbury, 101, 127
Aix-en-Provence, 15, 37, 41–2, 146–7, 242, 244, 248–9
 palace, 41, 140, 144–5
Alba, 50
Albania, 47–8,
Albe, 59
Albi, county of, 64
Albrecht Kostka, lord of Postupitz, 143
Alençon, house of, 4
 duke Jean II, 25, 80, 90, 99, 109, 118
Alessandria, 50
Alexander V, pope, 52
Alexander the Great, 45
Alexandria, 40
Alfonso V, king of Portugal, 216
Alfonso of Trastámara, ‘the Magnanimous’, king of Aragon, Sicily and Naples, 7, 32, 45, 53–9, 62–6, 68–9, 71–2, 74, 77–8, 91, 94, 103, 115, 135, 178–9, 192, 201, 247, 252–3
Almeric/Alvernatius Chaperon, knight, 101–2, 105, 109–10
Alnwick, 206
Alphonse de la Roque, prior of
 Augustine friars, Aix, 152
Alsace, 95–6
Amalfi, duchy of, 59
Amboise, 226
Amiens, 144
Ancenis, treaty of (1468), 214, 220
André of Ponthieu, castellan of
 Gardanne, 146
Andrew of Hungary, prince, 48
Angers, city of, 17–18, 34–7, 40, 87, 90, 92–4, 109, 138, 146, 150, 169, 172, 177, 183–4, 188–9, 191, 196, 205, 214, 219, 225–6, 242, 244, 248–9
 castle of, 18, 19, 37, 41, 105, 137, 140–2, 149, 152, 154–5, 172, 184, 196, 201, 231, 234
Anjou, county/duchy of, 7–8, 10, 12, 14, 18–19, 24, 30, 32–42, 47, 83, 86, 90–1, 102, 105, 111, 113, 116, 120–1, 124, 131, 135, 142, 150, 152, 155, 170, 174, 176, 185, 189–90, 195–6, 199, 201, 213–14, 231–3, 235–6, 242, 246–8, 252–3
 house of/Angevins, 1, 4, 6–10, 12–14, 19–20, 22–3, 25, 30–3, 35, 37, 39, 41, 47–51, 55–9, 63, 65–6, 68–83, 86–8, 91–5, 97–9, 102, 104–5, 109–12, 114–15, 118–19, 121–4, 126, 128, 131–5, 137, 139, 141, 148–9, 155–6, 170, 176, 179, 184–6, 188–9, 193–4, 199–203, 205, 207–10, 212–15, 218–25, 227, 229–36, 238–41, 246, 248–9, 251–3

- Anne Beauchamp, countess of Warwick, 226
- Anne of France, of Beaujeu, 210, 213, 223, 229–30, 237, 241, 245–6
- Anne Neville, wife of Edward of Lancaster, later duchess of Gloucester and queen of Richard III of England, 139, 198, 225–6, 228
- Anthony, duke of Lorraine, 237
- Anthony, Great Bastard of Burgundy, 207, 239
- Antoine of Dauphiné, 42
- Antonello da Messina, 77, 174, 192
St Jerome in his Study, 174
- apanage(s)*, 4, 7–8, 10, 12–13, 22, 32, 35, 47, 69, 91, 105, 137–8, 149, 153, 194, 200–1, 207, 209, 231, 233, 235, 240, 245–6
- Apocalypse* tapestry, 141
- Apostles, 1,
- Appenines, the, 63
- Aquila, 59, 63
- Aragon, kingdom of/Aragonese, 4, 40, 49, 56, 58–9, 62, 65–6, 69, 72, 76, 117, 220
kings of, 13, 184, 189, 217, 219, 246–7
- archives: Paris, Bouches-du-Rhone, Naples, 5, Naples, 48, Angevin accounts, 139–40
- Arezzo, 50
- Aristotle, 6
- Arles, 51,
- Armagnac(s)*, 13–14, 51
- Arras, congress/treaty of (1435), 31–2, 57, 84
- Arthur, king, 113, 135
- Arthurian romance, 78, 164, 166, 189
- Asti, 50, 70
- Augustines, 145
- Auricher, lord of, 125
- Aversa, 54, 63
- Avignon, 11, 50–1, 144, 147, 152, 171, 184, 193–4, 254
Palace of the popes, 144
school of, 171, 174, 176
- Bamborough, 206
- Bar, castle, 140–1, 234–5
- Bar, duchy of, 8–10, 11–12, 20–1, 24, 26, 32–3, 37–40, 68, 77, 84–5, 97, 138–9, 143, 148, 150, 157, 179, 185–6, 189, 200–1, 207–8, 214, 224, 230–2, 234–6, 240–1, 246–7, 253
- Bar-le-Duc, 99, 143
- Bar mouvante*, 21
- Barbazan, Arnauld-Guilhem, lord of, 11, 27–8
- Barbelina Herberquyne, 124
- Barcelona, 54–5, 215, 217–20, 221, 225
the *Generalitat*, 215, 220, 222
the Wise Council, 215, 218, 221
- Bari, 50
- Barlaam and Josaphat, fable, 152
- Barnet, battle (1471), 227
- Barthélemy d'Eyck, 77, 142, 167, 172–4, 176, 192
- Basilicata, 62
- Basin, Thomas, bishop of Beauvais, 28, 32, 74, 87, 92, 96–7, 137, 206, 212, 248
- Basle, 95
- Basle, council of, (1431–49), 49, 62
- Basse Dance of Burgundy*, 104
- Bastide*, 140, 145
- Baugé, battle of (1421), 22
- Baugé, manor of, 201
- Bayeux, 120
- Bayonne, 121
- Beaufort, house of, 82, 116, 129, 202–3
Henry, bishop of Winchester, cardinal, chancellor, 85, 90–1
John II, earl, duke of Somerset, 89–91, 115
Edmund, marquis of Dorset, duke of Somerset, 82, 90, 115–20, 122–3, 128–32, 202
Henry, duke of Somerset, 208
Edmund, titular duke of Somerset, 227–8
John, titular marquis of Dorset, 208
- Beaufort-en-Vallé, 201
- Beaumont, John, viscount, 123
- Beaumont-le-Vicomte, 90
- Bedfordshire, 129
- Belisarius, general, 65

- Bellenaves, Louis Jean, lord of,
 husband of Madeleine, bastard of
 René I, 151
- Benedict XIII, pope, 51
- Benedictines, 186
- Benevento, 63
- Bernard, marquis of Baden, 27, 36
- Bernet, Thomas, 125
- Berry, duchess of, 249
- Berry, duchy of, 209
- Berwick, 205
- Bible, The*, 6, 20, 77
Old Testament, 20, 174
New Testament, 20
- Biseglia, 50
- Blackheath, 101, 127
- Blanche, bastard of René I, 146, 151
- Blois, 137
- Blosseville, a Norman squire, 158
- Boccaccio, Giovanni, 19,
Il Filostrato, 19.
- Boffillo de Juge, 66, 219, 222, 241
- Bohemia, 21, 143, 196
- Bois-de-Nieppe, 31
- Bois-de-Vincennes, 212
- Bona of Savoy, duchess of Milan, 75,
 208
- Book of the Legends of the Holy Marys*, 20
- Booth, Laurence, dean of St Paul's,
 bishop of Durham, 123
- Bordeaux, 121–2
- Borgia, house of, 72
- Bossaye, Guy de, Angevin servant, 54
- Bouchage, lord of, 236
- Bourbon, house of, 249
 Catherine of, 237
 Charles I, duke of, 31–2, 164
 Charles, cardinal, 187
 John I, duke of, 124
 John II, count of Clermont, duke
 of, 1, 31–2, 104, 121, 161, 163,
 209–10, 233
 Louis, count of Vendôme, 92, 109,
 121, 189
- Bourgeois of Paris, 89
- Bourges, 14,
- Bouvet, Honoré, 136, 193
- Bouvier, Gilles le, Berry herald, 28,
 78, 133, 248
- Brabant, 21, 137
- Braccio da Montone, *condottiere*, 52–4
- Brescia, 70
- Breslay, Jean, judge, 36
- Bressin, Jean, 234
- Brézé, Pierre de, lord of La Varenne,
 30–1, 36, 92–3, 95, 104–5, 118–19,
 164, 194, 199, 202–8, 210–11
- Brittany, duchy of, 17, 24, 30, 39, 90,
 174, 194, 213, 219, 220
- Brittany
 Anne, duchess of, 245
 Arthur III, count of Richemont,
 constable of France, 22–5,
 30–1, 89, 104, 118
 dukes of, 22, 189
 Francis I, duke of, 15, 80, 90–1, 93,
 109, 117
 Francis II, count of Mountfort,
 duke of, 15, 30, 35, 73, 161,
 201, 209–10, 214, 220, 233–4
 Giles of, 117
 John V, duke of, 22, 201
- Buckinghamshire, 129
- Bueil, Jean de, admiral of France, 30,
 36, 211
- Bulgnéville, battle of (1431), 11, 12,
 28–30, 32, 39, 44–5, 58, 96, 120,
 240
- Burgundy, duchy of/Burgundians,
 8–9, 11–12, 17, 27, 29, 32, 51, 68,
 88, 91, 94, 96–7, 102–3, 119, 133,
 135, 136, 138, 157, 169, 176, 194,
 206–7, 209, 211, 219, 220, 223,
 226–7, 230–3, 236, 238–40, 246,
 248, 251, 253
 house of, 4, 13, 14, 21–3, 33, 53, 82,
 137, 247
- Bush, George junior, president of the
 USA, 56
- Cade, Jack, 82, 127, 129, 132
- Caen, 119–20, 124, 128
- Calabria, 19, 51, 54, 57–8, 62, 73–4
 duchy of, 53, 66
- Calais, Pas de Calais, 8, 110, 117, 120,
 128, 203, 206
- Caldora, Antonio, duke of Bari, 63,
 65, 73–5

- Caldora, Jacopo, duke of Bari, 58–9, 62–3, 78
- Calixtus III, pope, 72
- Canterbury, 109
- Capet, house of, 47
- Capri, 65
- Captivel, mount, 147
- Caracciolo, house of,
Gianni, 53, 55
Otto, 64
- Carlos, Don, prince of Viana, 215
- Carmelites, church, Aix, 171, 244
Chapel of the Maternity of the Holy Virgin, 171
- Carthusians, 14
- Caserta, count of, 49
- Cassel, 31
- Castel-Capuano, Naples, 57, 62
- Castel dell'Uovo, Naples, 53, 58, 62
- Castellamare, 59, 73
- Castellon-de-Ampurias, 220
- Castellnuovo, Naples, 45, 58, 62, 64, 66, 77, 178
Triumphal Arch of Alfonso of Aragon, 66, 178
- Castiglione, Baldassare, 192
The Courtier, 192
- Castille/Castilians, 55, 171, 219
- Castillon, battle of (1453), 121, 131
- Castriota, George, 'Scanderbeg', king of Albania, 74
- Catalonia/Catalan, 10, 39–40, 49, 53, 55–6, 62, 65, 68, 71, 171, 199, 213, 215–23, 225, 228–9, 237, 247, 251
- cathedrals
Notre Dame, Paris, 210
Notre Dame, Rouen, 119
Old Cathedral, Marseille, 182;
Chapel of St Lazare, 182
Santa Eulalia/La Seu, Barcelona, 221
St Julian, Le Mans, 1, 183, 215;
Chapel of St John the Baptist, 183
Santa Maria, Valencia, 54
St Martin, Tours, 80
St Maurice, Angers, 142, 176–8, 184, 188, 198, 242, 244
- Catherine of Burgundy, 14,
Catherine of France, queen of Henry V of England, 14,
Catherine of Lorraine, 27,
Catherine of Luxembourg, 104
- Caulier, Achille, *Book of the Hospital of Love*, 163
- Caux, *pays de*, 89
- Celano, 59
- Celestines of Avignon, 182, 184
- Cerdagne, 215, 217, 219, 223
- Chabannes, Antoine de, 209
- Châlons-sur-Marne, 102–4, 116
- Chamber of Accounts,
Bar, 38
France, 16,
Anjou, 37–8
Provence, 37–8, 42
Lorraine, 38
- Champagne, 24, 27, 238
- Chapelle Saint-Denis, 25
- Chappes, 27
- Charles I of Anjou, count of Maine, brother of René I, 7, 14, 17–18, 23, 30–2, 36, 51, 64, 75, 77, 80, 83–4, 87–8, 90–3, 98, 103–5, 110, 117–18, 121–2, 124–6, 133, 149, 160, 164, 180, 183, 199–200, 202, 205, 208, 210–13, 215, 235, 253
- Charles I of Anjou, king of Sicily, Naples and Jerusalem, 47, 188
- Charles II of Anjou, count of Maine and Provence, 149, 200, 229, 231–3, 235–6, 241, 244–6, 253
- Charles II of Anjou, king of Naples and Jerusalem, 47
- Charles III of Durazzo, king of Naples and Hungary, 12, 48–51
- Charles IV, king of France, 47
- Charles V, king of France, 15, 33, 136
- Charles VI, king of France, 13–14, 33, 50–2, 128, 136–7, 193–4
- Charles VII, count of Ponthieu, dauphin, king of France, 4, 7, 11, 13–19, 21–5, 27–32, 34–5, 41, 53–4, 57, 62, 69, 71–3, 75, 80–4, 86–92, 95–9, 101–5, 108–22, 126, 131–3, 136–7, 149, 164, 171, 189, 194–5, 199, 201–2, 204–5, 208, 211, 252–3

- Charles VIII, dauphin, king of France, 76, 151, 226, 240–1, 245
- Charles ‘the Bold’, count of Charolais, duke of Burgundy, 10, 137, 207, 209–11, 214–15, 217, 226, 230–4, 238–40, 253
- Charles of Castillon, lord of Aubagne, 36, 101–2, 105, 109–10, 115
- Charles, count of Valois, 47
- Charles, duke of Lorraine, 21, 22–7, 33, 68, 149
- Charles, duke of Orleans, 69, 71, 73, 88–9, 98–9, 115, 137, 157–8, 164, 166
- Charles of France, brother of Louis XI, 104, 198, 209–15, 219–20
- Charles de Rochefort, 193
- Charlotte of Savoy, queen of Louis XI of France, 205, 214
- Chartier, Alain, 136, 164, 193
The Curial, 193
- Chartier, Jean, 30, 95–7
- Chartres, 224
- Chastellain, Georges, 17, 27, 52, 159, 196, 202, 207, 209, 248
Chroniques, 248
Le Temple de Bocace, 209
- Châtellerault, 236, 253
- Chatsworth tapestry, 87
- Cherasco, 50
- Cherbourg, 119–20
- chess book, 20
- Chevalier, Etienne, 171
- Chinon, castle of, 25–6, 30, 113, 208
- Chios, governor of, 56
- Chizé, 18
- Christine de Pizan, 33–4, 194
The Book of the Body of Policy, 33–4
Chronique d’Alençon, 32
Chronique de la Pucelle, 25
- Church of the Augustines, Marseille, 54
- Cibile, Bertrand de, musician, 145
- Cicero, 20
- Clement VII, pope, 12, 51
- Clermont-en-Argonne, 31, 102, 104
- Clifton, Gervase, knight, 228
- Coeur, Jacques, 41
- Coetivy, Prigent de, 30
- Col, Gontier, 194
- Colantonio, 62, 77, 174, 192
St Jerome, 174
- Collioure, castle of, 217
- Commercy, 102
- Commynes, Philippe de, 211, 227, 235, 248
- Compilation of the Arms of the Knights of the Order of the Crescent*, 20
- Compromise of Caspe (1412), 217
condottiere, 52–3, 58–9, 70, 74–5, 78–9, 83, 211–12, 239, 244
- Conflans, treaty of (1465), 212
- Confraternity of St Martha, Naples, 59, 185
- Constance of Hohenstaufen, queen of Aragon and Sicily, 55
- Constance, council of (1414–19), 52
- Constantinople, 72, 185
- Cordeliers, church of, Angers, 186
- Cornagli, Stephano, secretary of René I, 121
- Corné, 36
- Cornelius, 224
- Corpici, Peter, 173
- Corsica, 53
- Cortes, 215
- Cosenza, 54
- Cossa, John, count of Troia, seneschal of Provence, 36, 64–5, 73, 77, 98, 115, 138, 154, 180, 183, 189–90, 192, 221, 234, 241
his sons: Gaspard, 221, Melchior, 183, René, 183
- Cotentin, the, 119
- Cotrone, marquis of, 73
- Cotton, William, 123
- Coucy, Enguerrand de, 50
- Couillard, painter, 142
- Council,
Angevins in Naples, 57
Charles I of Maine, 36
Charles VII, 17,
Henry VI, 128
Isabelle of Lorraine, 29
John of Calabria, 36
Margaret of Anjou, 123, 128
René I, 35–7, 143–4

- Cours Mirabeau, Aix-en Provence, 42, 249
- Courtenay, earls of Devon,
 countess of, 228
 John, titular earl, 227–8
 Thomas I, 130
 Thomas II, 125
- Cousinot, Jean, master of requests,
 110–11, 115
- Cross/True, the, 167, 177, 181–2, 184
- Cyprien de Mer, 45
- Cyprus, 98, 153
- Da Bollate, Cristoforo, 213
- Dalmatia, 47
- Damas, Jean de, lord of Clessy, 234
- Dames, Jehan de, 123
- Dampierre, castle of, 236
- Darney, 40
- Dauphiné, 70, 187, 209
- Dauvert, Jean, attorney, 41
- David d'Angers, 42, 249
- de Beauvau, family of, 19, 153, 194
 Antoine, 170
 Bertrand, lord of Précigny, 36, 92,
 98, 109, 112, 115, 151, 170,
 189, 241
 Jean, bishop of Anjou, 36
 Louis, lord of Champigné, 64, 134,
 152, 189
 Madame, wife of Louis, 152
 Mathieu, provost of Marseille, 51
 Pierre, lord of Beauvau, 19, 122
- de Lusignan, house of, 98
- de la Marche, Olivier, 84, 96, 103,
 131, 191
- De Waurin, 207
- Delf, Coppin, painter, 177–8
- Deschamps, Eustache, 194
- Dijon, 27–8, 55
- Diocletian, emperor, 34
- Disney theme park, 86
- Diurnali*, 56, 76
- Doulcereau, Morice, 203–4
- Dombet family of artists, 174
- Dominican friar, 204
- Dominicans of Barcelona, 221
- Domrémy, 24.
- Doria, Bernardo of Genoa, 36
- Dubrovnik, 179,
 rector's palace, 179
 fountain, 179
- Dunois, Jean count of, bastard of
 Orleans, 115, 118, 120, 209,
 220
- Dunstanborough, 206
- Durance, river, 147
- Durazzo, house of, 13, 48–50, 52
- ecologue*, 158
- ecorcheur*, 17, 95
- Edmund, earl of Rutland, 203
- Edward III, king of England, 129
- Edward IV, earl of March, king of
 England, 9, 103, 119, 203–8,
 224–6, 232–3
- Edward of Lancaster, prince of Wales,
 9, 90, 116, 130, 139, 198, 202–5,
 207, 223–8
- Egypt, 41
- Eleanor of Aquitaine, queen of Henry
 II of England, 120
- Eleanor Cobham, duchess of
 Gloucester, 100
- Elizabeth Woodville, queen of Edward
 IV of England, 119
- Ellesmere, Edward, 123
- Elysian Fields, 45
- Empire, Holy Roman, 4, 10, 21, 26,
 103, 139, 231
- 'Enterprise of the Joyful Garde', 113,
 135
- Épinal, 208, 212
- Escouchy, Mathieu d', 91, 97, 99, 105,
 112–13, 125–6, 133, 202, 248
- Estates General, 17,
 estates,
 of Anjou, 38
 of Bar, 38
 of Lorraine, 32, 39, 200, 231
 of Provence, 38
- Eugenius IV, pope, 54–5, 58, 62–4, 66,
 91–2, 114–15
- Fabricio da Gaëta, lord of Bouc, 182
- 'Faillon the fool', 154
- Farce of the Fart*, 235
- Fathers of the Church, 6, 20,

- Ferdinand 'the Catholic', king of Aragon, 217, 219
- Ferdinand of Trastámara, king of Aragon, 53
- Ferrante, Ferdinand I, king of Naples, 9, 55, 64, 66, 71–6, 201, 209, 212–13, 216, 219, 222, 229, 233, 245
- Filippo Maria Visconti, duke of Milan, 29, 53–6, 69, 103
- Flanders, 21, 137, 206, 240
- Florence/ Florentines, 52, 62, 66, 69–70, 75, 78, 190
- Forbin, Jean, 40–1
- Forbin, Palamède de, 241, 245
- Forcalquier, county of, 12, 47, 50
- Formigny, battle of (1450), 119, 121
- Fortescue, John, knight, 199, 206, 224, 227–8
- Articles sent by Edward, Prince of Wales concerning the government of England*, 226–7
- The Governance of England*, 227
- Fougères, 117
- Fouquet, Jean, 170–1, 176
- Fournier, Jean, lord of Guérinère, 36
- Francisce, master, physician to Margaret of Anjou, 102
- Françoise, bastard of René I, 151
- Frederick III, Holy Roman emperor, 87, 95–6, 103, 247
- French Revolution, 177, 180, 186–7, 244
- Froment, Nicolas, 29, 171, 174, 176, 191
- The Virgin in the Burning Bush*, 169, 171, 174–6, 191
- Frontinus, 156
- Frozino d'Andréa, 185
- Gaeta, 41, 56, 58–9, 62
- Gaillard Nicon, 185
- Galeotto, Giacomo, *condottiere*, 244
- Gardanne, 41–2, 145–7, 155, 192
- Garnier, Eléazar, 241
- Gascoigne, Thomas, 108
- Gaston IV, count of Foix, 160, 164
- Gaudrecourt, 31, 102, 104
- Gauquelin, Guillaume, called Sablé, 109
- Geneva, 115
- Genoa/Genoese, 32, 40, 49, 53, 56, 58, 62–5, 71–5, 78, 83, 145, 201–2, 205, 222
- Geoffrey Plantagenet, duke of Anjou, 14,
- George, duke of Clarence, 198, 224–7
- George Poděbrady, king of Bohemia, 143
- Gerona, 217, 220
- prince of, 215, 220
- Ghent, 240
- Gibert d'Auton, prior of Castrum, 145–6
- Gien, 18, 32, 87
- Giles of Rome (Egidio Colonna) archbishop of Bourges, 6, 33, 195
- Of Princely Rule (De Regimine Principum)* 6, 33
- Giotto, 77
- Givray, 18.
- Godefrey of Bouillon, 98
- 'good kings', 5–6, 38, 42, 44, 248–9, 251–4
- Goths, 65
- Gothic style, 4, 8, 139, 177, 179, 183, 186, 191–2
- Gough, Mathew, 95
- Goult, 40
- governor of Chios, 56
- Granson, battle of (1476), 233–4, 239
- Great Waltham, manor of, 124
- Greenwich, manor of, 127, 130
- Gregory's *Chronicle*, 119
- Grenoble, 143
- Gruel, Guillaume, 31, 104, 248
- 'Guardian of the Poor', 37
- Guarino da Verona, 192
- Guernsey, 204
- Guillaume de Haraucourt, bishop of Verdun, 231
- Guillaume de Machaut, 164
- Guines, 110
- Guise, county of, 20, 23, 27,
- Guy, count of Laval, father of queen Jeanne, 30, 200

- Guy de Laval, lord of Loué, 36, 109,
 134, 170, 189, 219
 Guyenne, 82, 89, 93, 105, 110, 120–2,
 125, 130, 132, 214
 Hainault, 21,
 Hampden, Sir Edmund, 206, 228
 Hampshire, 130
 Hannibal, 45, 77
 Hapsburg, house of, 245
 Harfleur, 118
 Havart, Jean, carver, 110–11, 115
 Hélène de Leymes, 153
 Henri de Ville, bishop of Toul, 29
 Henry II, king of England, 14, 120
 Henry IV, 'the Impotent', king of
 Castille, 215
 Henry IV, king of England, 100,
 128–9
 Henry V, king of England, 13–14, 21,
 23, 84, 128, 131
 Henry VI, king of England, 4, 8–9, 14,
 26, 80–1, 83–5, 87–9, 91–5,
 99–101, 105, 109–18, 122,
 126–32, 139, 157, 190, 199,
 202–7, 223–8, 253
 Henry Holland, duke of Exeter, 129,
 203, 206
 Henry, Infant of Aragon, 55
 Heralds of René I: King of Arms
 (Sicily), pursuivants: 'Fleur de
 Pensée', 'Ardent Désir', 'Provence',
 'Viennois', 'Romarin', 151
 Hohenstaufen, house of, 48
 Holland, 21
 Holy Women, 182–3
 honour, 32, 56–7, 239
 Huguenots, 177
 Hull, Edward, 123
 Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, 85,
 88, 91, 101, 110, 114, 129
 Hundred Years War, 4, 7–8, 31, 34,
 37, 39–40, 44, 68, 201
 Hundred Years War for Naples, 7,
 48–79, 252
 Hungary, 47–8, 66,
 Hungerford, Robert lord, 206
 Hurion, Pierre de, poet, 158
Hussites, 21, 143
 Île de France, 24, 89
 Insouciant Gallants, 152
 Ireland, 128, 203
 Isabeau of Bavaria, queen of Charles
 VI of France, 13–15, 19, 51, 149,
 237
 Isabel Neville, duchess of Clarence, 225
 Isabel Barbays, 124
 Isabel Butler, lady, 124
 Isabel Gragione, 124
 Isabella 'the Catholic', queen of
 Castille, 219
 Isabelle of Brittany, 30, 201
 Isabelle of Lorraine, queen, first wife
 of René I, 7, 17, 21, 27, 80, 94,
 96–7, 104, 123, 134, 137, 145,
 148, 176–7, 185, 237, 252
 children, 26, 85
 death and funeral, 38, 69, 138, 150,
 200, 242, 244
 governs Lorraine, 29
 lieutenant general for Bar, Lorraine
 and Anjou, 64
 lieutenant general for René in
 Naples, 32, 57–8, 62–3, 85–7
 Isabelle of Luxemburg, 93
 Isabelle of Portugal, duchess of
 Burgundy, wife of Philip the
 Good, 103–4, 207, 218
 Ischia, 75
 Ismania, lady Scales, 124
 Jacqueline, duchess of Hainault, 17,
 Jacques Armagnac, duke of Nemours,
 233, 236
 Jacques de Sierck, chancellor of
 Lorraine, archbishop of Trier, 36,
 96
 Jacques Juvenal des Ursins, archbishop
 of Reims, 109
 Jacquetta Bernet, 125
 Jacquetta of Luxemburg, (1) duchess
 of Bedford (2) lady
 Woodville/Rivers, 93, 100
 James II, king of Scotland, 202
 James of Urgel, 217
 Jamonna Shernborne, née Sharneres,
 124
 Jaroslav, Bohemian attaché, 143

- Jean Bernard, archbishop of Tours, 36, 166–7, 184
- Jean, count of Foix, 144
- Jean, count of Nevers, 92, 210
- Jeanne de France, first wife of Louis XII, 245
- Jeanne d'Harcourt, first wife of René II, 237
- Jeanne de Laval, queen, second wife of René I, 30, 39, 90, 148, 151, 153–4, 158–60, 165, 167, 171, 174–5, 178–82, 184, 186–7, 192, 196, 200, 242, 244, 251
- Jeanne de Lorraine, wife of Charles II of Maine, duchess of Calabria, 153
- Jehanne de la Forest, wife of Barthélemy d'Eyck, 172
- Jehannin of Bar, painter, 142
- Jersey, 204
- Jerusalem, 1, 12, 76, 154, 185
king of, 12, 47, 66, 98, 154
- Jesus Christ, 1, 158, 174, 177–8, 182, 184, 186
Body of Christ, cult, 169, 185
- Jews, 40, 251
- Joan Grayonne, 125
- Joan of Arc/the Maid, 18, 24–6
- Joan of Navarre, queen of Henry IV of England, 100
- Joanna I, queen of Sicily, 12, 47–50, 52, 144
- Joanna II, queen of Sicily, 29, 52–5, 57–8, 65, 233, 247
- Joanna Enriquez, queen of John II king of Aragon, 217
- John I, king of Aragon, (line of Barcelona) 15, 51
- John II, duke of Alençon, 25
- John II, duke of Lorraine, son of John of Calabria, 199, 222
- John II, king of Aragon, *infant* and king of Navarre, 10, 55, 68, 72, 205, 215–17, 219–23, 229
- John II, king of Castille, 103, 109, 114
- John II, king of France, 7, 11, 44, 47
- John V, count of Armagnac, 223
- John XXIII, pope, 52
- John, bastard of Anjou, marquis of Pont, lord of Saint-Remi and Saint-Cannat, son of René I, 151, 222
- John, bastard of Calabria, 76, 222–3, 229
- John d'Escoce, esquire of René I, 101
- John, duke of Bedford, 21, 23, 84, 89, 93, 116
- John, duke of Berry, 13
- John, duke of Calabria and Lorraine, oldest son of René I, 1, 6, 7, 9, 36, 66, 68, 80, 82, 86, 98–9, 101, 133, 135, 140–1, 145–6, 148–9, 156, 161, 166, 176, 178, 180, 189, 191, 199, 201–2, 205, 208, 224–5, 229, 237, 242, 246, 251–3
birth, 26
campaign in Normandy, 118
captivity, 28
Catalonia, 216–23
death and funeral, 10, 220–1, 223
duke of Lorraine, 38–40, 42, 69, 71, 138, 200
in Italy, 13, 32, 58–9, 64, 69–79, 85, 185
League of the Public Good, 9, 207, 209–13, 215
lieutenant of Bar and Lorraine, 97, 114 and literature, 77, 156–8
marriage, 3
- John 'the Fearless', duke of Burgundy, 13–14, 17, 22
- John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, 129
- John, lord Wenlock, 123, 224, 228
- John of Lorraine, count of Harcourt, 118, 202, 231
- John of Luxemburg, constable of Burgundy, 23
- John de la Panetrye, 101
- John Stafford, archbishop of Canterbury, 101
- John, viscount Beaumont, 123
- Johnson, Samuel, 158
- Joinville, John lord of, 20
Life of St Louis, 20
- 'Katherine la More', 154
- Katherine Pierre, 153
- Katherine of Valois, queen of Henry V of England, 100

- Katherine Vaux, née Peniston, 125, 206, 228, 236
- Katherine Whittingham, née Gatewyne, 124, 206
- Kent, 130, 203
- Koeur, castle of, 102, 140, 142–3, 199, 224–5, 227, 236–7
- Kyriell, Thomas, knight, 119
- l’Aigue, Philippe de, knight, 134
- La Guerche, 90
- La Méniltré, manor of, 226
- La Pérignanne, 145
- La Roche-au-Duc, 210
- La Sainte Baume, 115, 185
- la Trémouille, Georges, lord of, 17, 23, 30,
- Ladislas, king of Naples, 51–2
- Lalaing, Jacques de, knight, 103, 156, 251
- Lancaster, house of/Lancastrians, 8–9, 125, 132, 149, 198, 203, 207, 223–5, 226–9, 231, 253
- Lancelot, Sir, 113
- Languedoc, 208, 213, 235, 241
- Launay, 113, 200–1
- Laurana, Francesco, 77, 154, 178–83, 192
Our Lady of the Swoon, 183
- Laurens, Jean, astrologer, 187
- Lausanne, 115
- Le Fèvre, Jean, lord of Saint-Remy, 28
- Le Mans, Mans, 24, 39, 77, 115, 126
- le Prieur, Jean, 152
Mystery of the Future King, 152
- le Rouge, Jean, silversmith, 36
- League of Constance, 239
- League of the Public Good, 9, 210–15, 253
- Leghorn, 66
- Lemaître, Jean, painter, 170
- Lenoncourt, family of, 98
Philippe de, knight, 36, 134
Isabelle de, 134
Thierry de, 189
- Leo of Forli, painter, 146, 192
- Lille, treaty of (1437), 31, 104
- Limousin, 110
- Lincluden, 204
- Lodi, treaty of (1454), 71
- Loire valley, 8, 25, 35, 102, 104, 117, 138–9, 141, 170, 176, 178, 208, 226, 228
- Lombardy, 69, 78, 200
- London, 101, 130, 173–4, 203–4, 228
- Lorraine, duchy/people of, 7–8, 10–11, 12, 21, 24, 26, 28–31, 33, 38–9, 58, 68, 71, 75–6, 81–2, 85, 95–7, 134–5, 138–41, 148, 150, 186, 189, 199, 211, 220–1, 230–3, 236, 238–41, 244, 246–7
- Lotharingia, kingdom of, 21, 230
- Loudun, 34
- Louis I, of Anjou, king of Sicily, grandfather of René I, 1, 7, 12, 44, 49–50, 86, 141
- Louis II, of Anjou, king of Sicily, father of René I, 1, 14–15, 38, 50–2, 86, 231
- Louis III, of Anjou, king of Sicily, brother of René I, 7–8, 15, 17–18, 22, 24–5, 29–31, 33, 51–4, 65, 77, 86, 96, 185, 214, 217, 235
- Louis IX (St Louis), king of France, 1, 188, 237
- Louis XI, dauphin, king of France, 7, 9–10, 35, 69–70, 72, 74–6, 80, 95–6, 98, 104–5, 115, 118, 138, 143, 149, 184, 189, 194, 198–9, 204–36, 238–42, 244–6, 248, 252–4
- Louis XII, duke of Orleans, king of France, 245
- Louis XIV, king of France, 186
- Louis XVIII, count of Provence, king of France, 249
- Louis, duke of Orleans, 13, 164
- Louis duke of Bar, cardinal/ bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, 20, 26, 33, 68, 149, 157, 233
- Louis, elector of the Palatine, 96
- Louis of Guyenne, dauphin, 34
- Louis, lord of Clermont, 189
- Louis, marquis of Pont-à-Mousson, son of René I, 26, 28, 32, 57–8, 64, 85, 113, 148, 199
- Louis de St Pol, count of Luxemburg, 103, 156, 160, 211, 233–4, 253
- Louise of Maine, 236

- Louppy, castle of, 102, 140–3
 Louvet, Jean, 22
 Louviers, 118
 Louvre, museum, 186
 Low Countries, 137, 231
 Lusignan, house of, 98
 Luxemburg, 21, 240
 Lyon, 22, 32, 114–15, 234–5, 253
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, 72, 79, 248
 Maddalena, bridge in Naples, 58
 Maddaloni, 59
 Madeleine, bastard of René I, 151
 magnanimity, virtue of, 98
 Maine, county of, 8, 12, 14, 18, 23–4, 30, 34, 39, 47, 64, 82–3, 86–8, 90, 105, 108–16, 121, 126, 131, 148, 199, 202, 214, 246
Maîtres rationaux, 37–8
 Majorca, 53, 94, 215
 Makerell, Dr Ralph, 199, 206, 224–5, 228
 Malatesta, Sigismondo, lord of
 Rimini, 73, 192
 Malines, 232
 Malvito, Tommaso, sculptor, 182
Man Abused by the Court, 193
 Manfred of Hohenstaufen, king of Sicily, 55
 Mantua, congress of (1459), 72–3
 Marcello, Jacopo Antonio de, 20, 189
 gave John Cossa the *Life of St Maurice*, 190
 gave René I Strabo's *Of the Position of the World*, 192
 Margaret of Anjou, queen of England, wife of king Henry VI, daughter of René I, 4, 8–9, 26, 75, 80–3, 85–8, 90–1, 94, 97–102, 105, 109, 111–12, 116, 118, 122–32, 138–9, 143, 149, 157, 179, 198, 200, 202–9, 223–9, 236–7, 244, 252–3
 Margaret of Anjou, wife of Charles count of Valois, 47
 Margaret of Anjou-Durazzo, queen of Naples, 47, 59
 Margaret of Bavaria, duchess of Lorraine, 85
 Margaret Roos, lady, 124
- Margaret of Savoy, queen of Sicily, countess of Palatine, countess of Wurtemberg, 15, 31, 54, 96, 214
 Margaret of Scotland, the dauphine, 80, 93, 104
 Maria, queen of Castille, 55
 Maria, queen of Hungary, 47
 Marie of Anjou, queen of Charles VII, sister of René I, 14–15, 17, 19, 30–2, 80, 86–7, 91, 93, 102–4, 113, 199, 208, 252–3
 Marie, bastard of Maine, (1) countess of Devon (2) lady of Auricher, 124–5
 Marie of Blois, queen of Louis I of Anjou, 1, 12, 38, 50–1, 66, 201
 Marie of Bourbon, wife of John of Calabria, 31, 58–9, 71, 77, 80, 104, 148, 185
 Marini, Antoine, knight, 143
 Marino Marzano, prince of Rossano, 73, 75
 Marne, 26
 Marseille, 32, 40, 50–1, 54, 74, 138, 140, 146–7, 153, 182, 199, 201
 Martin V, pope, 52, 114
 Mary, duchess of Burgundy, daughter of Charles the Bold, 210, 214–15, 223, 230, 240, 246
 Mary of Guelders, queen of Scotland, 204–5
 Master of the *Aix Annunciation*, 171, 173–4, 176, 192
 Master of René of Anjou, 171, 174, 176
 Mathias Corvinus, king of Hungary, 239
mauresque, 152, 193
 Maximilian of Hapsburg, duke of Austria, Emperor, 240
 Meaux, 89
 Medici, family of, 241
 Cosimo de', 71
 Piero di Cosimo de' Medici, 192
 Merlin, family of, 38
 Messina, straits of, 49
 Metz, city of, 26, 28, 94–7, 104, 116, 167
 bishop of, 26
 bishopric of, 21,

- Meuse, river, 21,
 Mézières, Philippe de, 33, 136
The Dream of the Old Pilgrim, 33,
 Michon, a female fool, 154
 microcosm and macrocosm, 6
 Milan, 53, 56, 62, 69–71, 73–5, 78–9,
 88, 190, 205, 212, 222, 245
 Milanese ambassador(s), 29, 69, 75,
 78, 88, 102, 210, 218, 223, 230,
 248
 Milano, Pietro da, 77, 178–81, 183,
 192
 Minorca, 53, 94
 ‘mirrors for princes’, 6, 15–16, 33
 Moirans, 232
 Moleyns, Adam, keeper of the privy
 seal, dean of Salisbury, bishop of
 Chichester, 92, 109–10, 114, 126
 Mondovi, 50
 Monstrelet, Enguerran de, 17, 24,
 Montauban, Jean de admiral, 211
 Montereau, 13,
 Montford, Nicolas de, count of
 Campobasso, 65–6, 211, 221–2,
 239–40
 Montgomery, Sir Thomas, 236
 Monthéry, battle of (1465), 210–11
 Montils-les-Tours, 117
 Montreuil, Jean de, 194
 Moorish style, 153, 155
 Moors, 68, 139, 154, 251
 Morat, battle of (1476), 233, 239–40
 Morel, Jean, sculptor, 177
 Mortain, county of, 23
 Morton, Dr John, 199, 206, 228
 Moselle river, 85,
 Moulins, 31
 Muslims, 40
Mystery of St Vincent, Angers (1471),
 153
 Namur, nunnery, 230
 Nancy, city of, 21, 24, 26, 71, 85,
 95–9, 102, 109, 116, 135, 192,
 200, 230, 239
 battle of (1477), 10, 151, 240
 palace, 140
 tournament at, 98, 166,
 Nantes, 213
 Naples/the Kingdom/kingdom of
 Sicily, 1, 4, 7–8, 10, 12–15, 24–5,
 31–3, 37–8, 40–1, 44–59, 62–6,
 68–79, 83, 85–6, 88, 90–1, 94,
 114, 120–1, 137–9, 140, 148,
 173–4, 176–9, 182, 184, 189, 192,
 201–2, 207, 212, 218, 223,
 229–31, 245–7, 253
 city of, 13, 51, 54, 56–9, 62–5
 Nardo de Laurico, gardener, 145
 Navarre, 215
Negotium, 194
 Nemours, duke of, 233
 Neufchâteau, 31, 102, 104
 Neuss, 23
 Neville, Richard, earl of Warwick,
 139, 198, 203–4, 206, 223–7, 229,
 253
 New Year gifts, 132, 139
 Nice, 214
 Nicolaï, archbishop, 174
 Nicolas de Brancas, bishop of
 Marseille, 115, 217
 Nicolas, Jean, goldsmith, 154
 Nicolas, marquis of Pont-à-Mousson,
 duke of Lorraine and Calabria,
 148, 151, 154, 199, 207, 210,
 213–14, 221–6, 229–31, 237,
 241–2, 246
 Nicopolis, battle of (1396), 185
 Norfolk, 129, 224
 Normandy, duchy of, 13–14, 24, 82,
 88–90, 92–3, 99, 105, 113,
 115–20, 125–9, 132–3, 135, 138,
 140, 199, 202, 210, 212–14, 226
 Northampton, battle of (1460), 203
 Northamptonshire, 125
 Northumberland, 206–7
 Notre Dame, church, Aix, 173
 chapel of the Holy Trinity, 173
 Observant friars, 186
 Ogard, Andrew, knight, 123
On the Nature of Birds, 20
 Order of the Crescent (*Croissant*), 8,
 162–3, 166, 170, 175, 177,
 187–92, 194, 202, 242, 251, 253
 Order of Fidelity, 20
 Order of the Garter, 189

- Order of the Golden Fleece, 189
 Order of St Hubert, 189
 Order of St Michael, 190
Ordonnances, 102
 Orleans, 24–5, 84
 Orleans, house of, 4, 245
 Ormonde, sir Thomas, 206
 Orsini, Giovanni Antonio del Balzo,
 prince of Taranto, 55, 59, 72–5,
 Osanna Herman, 124
Otium, 137, 194
 Our Lady of Monserrat, church of,
 221
 Our Lady of the Sea, church,
 Carmargue, 185
 Ovid, 164
oyer and terminer, 129
 Pagano, Antonello, 232
 Palatine of the Rhine, count, 114
 Palermo, 37
 Palmieri, Matteo, 192
 Of the Times, 192
 Panigarola, Giovanni Piero, 213, 218,
 224
 Panormita, Antonio Beccadelli, 77
 Of the Sayings and Deeds of Alfonso,
 77
 Papacy, 4, 7, 47, 49–50, 53, 63, 69, 72,
 76, 78, 83, 143–4, 184, 186
 Paris, 13–14, 18–19, 25, 27, 84, 89,
 98, 138–40, 162, 208, 210–12,
 226, 233, 242
parlements
 of Paris, 12, 16, 212, 226, 234
 of Poitiers, 16,
 parliament,
 Bury St Edmunds (1447), 114
 Coventry (1459), 203
 Westminster (1449–50), 126, 129
 Westminster (1450–51), 128–9
 Passavant, castle of, 26
 Patay, battle of (1429), 25
 Patriarch of Constantinople, 103
 Pavia, 70
 Pazzi, family of, 66, 154, 241
 Jacopo de', 189
 Pedro, Don of Urgel, 217–18
 Perpignan, castle of, 217
 Peryne Angeatre, 102
 Peter, *infant* of Aragon, 55, 62
 Petrarch, 164, 194, 200
 Peyrolles, castle, 147
 'Phelipot the dwarf', 154
 Philip IV 'the Fair', king of France, 6,
 Philip VI, count of Valois, king of
 France, 47
 Philip 'the Good', duke of Burgundy,
 11, 14, 22, 28–32, 44, 55–7, 68,
 72, 84–5, 92, 94, 96, 98, 102–4,
 137, 148–9, 164, 169, 205, 207–9,
 252
 Philippa of Guelders, daughter of the
 duke of Guelders, second wife of
 René II, 237
 Piccinino, Jacopo, *condottiere*, 74–5
 Piedmont, 47, 50
 Piero da Monte, bishop of Brescia,
 papal legate, 80, 92
 Piero della Francesca, 192
 Pierre, Charlot, first valet of René's
 chamber, 172
 Pierre de Foix, cardinal/archbishop of
 Arles, legate *a latere*, 144, 184–5
 Pimpéan, castle of, 170
 Pisa, council of (1409), 52
 Pisanello, 178, 180
 Pius II, pope, Aeneas Sylvius
 Piccolomini, 68, 72, 78, 184, 202
 Plantagenet, house of, 14, 84, 94, 128
 Plato, 20,
 Phaedo, 20.
 Plessis-du-Parc, 245
 Poitiers, 25, 83, 92
 Poitou, 98, 121
 political culture, 5, 186, 195, 251, 254
 Poncet, 177
 Jean, sculptor, 177
 Pons, sculptor, 177–8
 Pont-à-Mousson, 85, 94, 140
 marquisate, 21, 151
 Pont de l'Arche, 117
 Pontoise, 89, 91, 99–100
 Ponts-de-Cé, 137, 146, 226
 Ponza, battle of (1435), 56
 Porchester, 100
 Portsmouth, 126
Praguerie, 82–3, 88, 104

- Prieur, Jean le, marshal for lodgings,
author of *the Mystery of the Future King*, 152
- principate, the, 215, 217–19
- primogenit*, the, 215, 218–21
- Provence, county of, 7–8, 10, 12, 17,
19, 30, 32–3, 35–42, 47, 50–2, 66,
68–70, 73, 76–7, 82–3, 87, 114–15,
117–18, 121, 125, 133–5, 138–41,
144–5, 150–3, 155, 158, 170, 173,
175–6, 178, 182, 184–5, 189–90,
192, 195–201, 207, 218–20, 225,
228–34, 236, 241–2, 246–9, 251–3
- Prynce, James/John, 125
- Puglia, 51, 65, 73–5
- Puy Sainte-Réparate, 182
- Quarton, Enguerrand, 170–1, 173,
176
- Queenborough, 224
- Quintilian, 20
- Method of Oratory*, 20
- Quintus Curtius Rufus, 20
- The History of Alexander the Great*, 20
- Raimond de Glandèves, 151
- Razilly, tournament at, 113
- Readeption*, the, 9, 229
- Reading, 130
- Reculée, manor of, 236
- Reims, 24–5, 102
- Renaissance, the Italian, 4, 9, 19, 77,
176–7, 191–3
- René, duke of Anjou, Bar and
Lorraine, count of Provence and
Forcalquier, king of Naples and
Jerusalem, 1, 4–8, 10, 13, 17, 51,
81–2, 84, 88, 121, 123, 126,
131–3, 136, 223, 230, 240, 247
- administration, 32–42
- agreement at Lyon, 234–6
- animals, 155
- appearance, 29
- astrology, 187
- besieges Metz, 94–7, 105
- birth, 18
- building, 140–3, 144–5, 147
- campaign in Normandy, 117–20
- at Châlons, 102–4
- children, 26
- chivalry, 44, 78–9, 98, 113, 134–5,
137, 190–1, 197
- claim to kingdom of Jerusalem,
66–8, 98
- claim to throne of Naples, 13, 45,
54–7
- consequences of English marriage
for Angevins, 81, 116
- court locations, 138–9
- courtiers, 150–3
- criticisms of courts, 193–5
- death of Isabelle of Lorraine,
marriage to Jeanne de Laval,
90, 200–1
- death, 241–2
- defeat at Bulgnéville, 11–12, 27–8
- education, 19–20
- entertainments, 45–7, 152–3, 156,
235
- family, 148–9, 151–2
- festivals, 146, 184
- first return from Italy, 83
- funeral, 242–4
- gardens, 142, 145
- ‘good king René’, 9–10, 34, 42, 44,
133, 137, 149, 195–6, 248–9,
251–4 191, 251
- helps end schism 115
- and Joan of Arc, 24–5
- image of dead king, 169, 177–8
- imprisonment, 28–32
- Italian campaigns, 58–9, 62–6,
69–70, 73–9, 201–2
- jewels and metal work, 154
- the League of Public Good, 210–12,
214–15
- library, 19–20
- literature, 156–7: *Regnault and Jeanneton*, 147, 158–60, 170;
The Mortification of Empty Pleasure, 166–9, 173, 175,
178, 184, 191; *Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 163–6, 169,
173, 191; *Book of Tournaments*,
137, 160–3, 166, 173, 191, 251
- loss of *apanage*, 246
- Louis XI’s occupation of Anjou and
Bar, 231–2

- marriage, 21
 marriage of Margaret of Anjou,
 80–3, 85, 87, 91–4, 99
 martial exploits in Bar and
 Lorraine, 22, 23, 26
 at Nancy, 97–8
 the Order of the Crescent, 187–91
 painting, 169–76
 piety, 183–7
 and Renaissance culture, 76–9, 137,
 160
 the return of Maine, 101, 105,
 109–16
 sculpture, 177–83
 servants, 150–1, 154
 struggle for Catalonia, 215, 217–22
 support for Margaret of
 Anjou/Lancaster, 198–9,
 202, 205–9, 223, 225–6,
 228–9
 tapestries, 141–2, 155
 understanding with Burgundy,
 232–4
 visit by Bohemians to court, 143–4,
 196
 youth, 19
 René II, duke of Bar and Lorraine,
 grandson of René I, 10, 38–9,
 148, 151, 187, 229, 235, 253
 aspirations to inherit the *apanage*,
 241, 244
 conflict with Charles the Bold, 10,
 232, 238–40
 inherits Lorraine, 231, 237
 Italian enterprises, 75–6, 241
 René de Castillon, 146
 Rhone river, 242
 Richard Plantagenet, duke of York, 9,
 82, 89–90, 98–100, 103, 110, 114,
 128–32, 202–3
 Roanne, 141
 Robert, Jean, architect, 185
 Robert, lord Hungerford, 206
 Robert de Sarrebruck, lord of
 Commercy, 25, 29
 Robert ‘the Wise’, king of Naples,
 47–9, 177
 Roccasecca, battle of (1411), 52
 Roche-sur-Yon, 40
Romance of the Rose, Guillaume Lorris
 and Jean de Meun, 163
 Rome, 50, 52–4, 115, 117, 178
Rondeaux, 157, 166
 Roos, Robert, knight, 92
 Rouen, 99–100, 118–20, 206, 224, 236
 archbishop of, 119
 Round Table, 113, 135
 Roussillon, 215, 217, 219, 223
 Rozmital, lord of, 196
 Saint-Laurent-des-Mortiers, lordship
 of, 231
 Saint-Maxent, 18
 Saint Omer, 207
 Sainctonge, 110
 Sale, Antoine de la, 77, 86, 101,
 156–7, 160, 191
 La Salade, 77, 156–7
 The Fifteen Joys of Marriage, 156
 A Hundred New Reports, 156
 Young St John of Saintré, 156, 251
 Paris and Vienne, 157
 Salic law, 47
 Salisbury,
 Thomas Montague, earl of, 24,
 countess of, 99
 Sallust, 20.
 Sandwich, 129, 202
 Santa Chiara, church, Naples, 59, 177
 Santa Maria del Carmine, monastery,
 62
 Sara, 185
 Sardinia, 53
 Sarno, battle of (1460), 73, 79
 Sault, countess of, 152
 Saumur, 17, 19, 34, 83, 87, 90, 113,
 135, 138, 149, 172, 196, 210, 236
 treaty of (1425), 22
 castle of, 86, 113, 140, 170
 tournament at, 166
 Sauveterre, treaties of (1462), 205,
 215
 Savoy, dukes of, 214
 Amadeus VI, 50
 Amadeus VIII, anti-pope Felix V,
 15, 62, 103, 114
 Yolande, duchess of, 232–3, 239
 Saxony, duke of, 114

- Say, William, 128
schism(s), 7, 52, 82, 114, 119, 253
Scotland, 24, 203–6
Scott, Sir Walter, 249
Anne of Geierstein, 249
Seine, river, 99
Severn, 228
Sforza, house of, 245
Alessandro, 73
Attendolo, 52–4, 57
Francesco, duke of Milan, 9, 53, 59,
64–5, 69–72, 75, 189, 209, 213,
216, 245
Galeazzo Maria, 75, 222, 239
Ippolita, duchess of Calabria, 71,
246
Shakespeare, William, 247
Henry VI, Part II, 247
Shernborne, Thomas, 124, 129
Sicilian Vespers, revolt, 48
Sicily, kingdom of, 48–9, 53, 55, 62,
72, 182
Siena, 52
Sigismund, count of the Tyrol, 95
Sigismund, emperor, 21, 28, 247
Somme towns, 240
Sorrento, 59
spingard, 62
St Albans
first battle of (1455), 202
second battle of (1461), 204
St Anthony the Hermit, 175
St Bernard, chapel of, 186–7
St Bernardino of Siena, 59, 185–7
St Catherine of Alexandria, 175
St Catherine, play, 28.
St Didier, church, Avignon, 182–3
St-Florent-le-Vieil, 211
St George, church, Nancy, 240
St John the Evangelist, 175, 177, 182
St Laud, church, Angers, 184, 214,
242
cross of 214
St Lazarus, 185
St Louis of Toulouse, 54, 170, 185
St Martha, 183, 185
church in Tarascon, 183
confraternity, Naples, 59, 185
St Mary Jacobé, 185
St Mary Magdalene, 175, 177, 180,
185
St Mary Salomé, 185
St Maurice, 170, 175, 177, 185, 188,
191
St Maxe-de-Bar, church, 179
Magdalene of la Baume, sculpture,
179
St Maximin, 185
St Michael, 177, 186
St Mihiel, town of, 102, 143
St Nicolas du Port, church, Nancy,
186, 192, 240
St Nicolas of Bari, 175, 185–6
St Paul, monastery, Marseille, 184
St Peter, 178
St Peter, church, Saumur, 178
sculpture *Domine Quo Vadis?* 178
St Petersburg, 170
St Pol, 207
St Quentin, 233
St René, bishop of Angers, 1
St Saveur, Aix, 171, 174, 242
chapel of St Mitre, 174
St Sepulchre, 147
St Sidonius, 185
St Sigebert, king of Austrasia, 26
Strasbourg, 95
bishop of, 26.
Stromboli, mount, 77
Suffolk, William de la Pole, earl,
marquis, duke of, 8, 80, 82, 88,
91–4, 97–9, 105–10, 114, 116–17,
123, 126–7, 129–31
Surencourt, Jean de, squire of René I,
101
Surrey, 130
Surrienne, François de, 117
Sussex, 130
Swiss cities/states, 10, 82, 95–6, 233,
239–40
Sybil, 77
syndics, 50
Syria, 41
1066 and All That, W.C. Sellar and R.J.
Yeatman, 5
taille(s), 34–5,
Taillebourg, 121

- Talbot, John, earl of Shrewsbury, 89,
118, 121, 131
countess of, 99
Tancarville, count of, 237
Tanfield, Robert, 123
Tanneguy du Châtel, 22, 189
Tarascon
city of, 41, 77, 134–5, 166, 200
castle of, 135, 140–1, 144, 147, 173,
181, 192
Terra di Lavoro, 51, 59, 73
Tetzel, Gabriel, 196
Tewkesbury, battle of (1471), 228
Thibaud de Neufchâtel, marshal of
Burgundy, 220
Thierstein, lord of, 239
Tiphane la Magine, 18, 86, 178
Toul, 26, 102
bishopric of, 21,
Toulangeon, Antoine de, marshal of
Burgundy, 11, 27.
Toulouse, 83
Touraine, 17, 35, 39,
Tournament of the Shepherdess,
134–5, 158
Tours, 34, 92–4, 98, 108–9, 171, 210
treaty of (1444), 157
Tower of London, 101, 130
Towton, battle of (1461), 125, 204
traites, 35,
Trani, 58
Trastámara, house of, 219, 245
Triboulet the fool, 150, 154, 194, 196
Tricotterie, 35
Trier, archbishop of, 114
Troia, battle of (1462), 75
Troyes (1420), treaty of, 14,
Tucé, estate of, 39
Tucé, lord of, treasurer of Anjou, 109
Tudor, house of, 228
Tudor, Jasper, earl of Pembroke, 225,
228–9
Turenne, family of, 201
Turks, 66, 92, 217
- Upper Alsace, 239
universities
Aix, 15
Angers, 242
Paris, 226
Naples, 58–9
Urban VI, pope, 50
Utraquist, 143
- Valencia, 49, 219
Valentina Visconti, duchess of Orleans,
69, 88
Valla, Lorenzo, 20, 62–3
The Donation of Constantine, 62–3
Valois, house of, 4, 13, 17, 21, 23–4,
26, 74, 81, 84, 87, 93–4, 100, 103,
116, 118, 123, 128, 133, 149, 189,
194, 207, 215, 240
Valori, Gabriele, 189
Varna, battle of (1444), 185
Vaud, the, 239
Vaudemont
Antoine, count of, 11, 27–9, 31, 85,
148
county of, 27
Ferry, count of, 31, 36, 87, 97–8,
102, 118, 134–5, 138, 145–6,
148–9, 180, 200, 202, 217,
220–1, 224, 231, 237, 241,
252
house of, 246
town of, 240
Vaux, William, knight, 125, 206
Venice, 58, 69–71, 75, 78, 190, 241
Verdun
bishop of, 76, 231
bishopric of, 21
Verneuil, battle of (1424), 23–4
Vich, bishop of, 221
Vienna, 167, 169
Vienne, 205
Vieux, Bertrand, astrologer, 187
Village, Jean de, nephew of Jacques
Coeur, 41
Villandrando, Rodrigo de, 17
Villanova, 70
Villant, Pierre du, embroiderer,
141–2
Villeneuve-les-Avignon, 144, 180
Vincent of Beauvais, 6, 20, 195
*Mirror of History (Speculum
Historiale)*, 20
Virgil, 158

- Virgin Mary, 1, 40, 174, 177, 182–3, 185
 Hours of the, 188–9
 Vitelleschi, Giovanni, cardinal, patriarch of Alessandria, *condottiere*, 57
 Vosges, 239
- Wakefield, battle of (1460), 203
 Wales, 129, 224, 228
 War of Ferrara, 76, 241
 War of the Basket of Apples, 26
 War of the League of Aix, 50
 War of the League of Public Good, 207, 226, 229, 231, 233–4, 246
 Wars of the Roses, 8
 Wernoncourt, Eustache de, 26
 Westminster, 123
 Weymouth, 227
 Whittingham, Sir Robert, 124, 129, 206, 224, 228
 Wiltshire, 130
 Witchcraft, 26
- Woodville, Richard, knight, 93
 Worcester, William, 206
Annales, 206
 World War I, 240
 World War II, 48, 254
- Yolande of Anjou, daughter of René I and wife of Ferry of Vaudemont, 26, 31, 85, 97–8, 102, 135, 148–9, 200, 231–2, 236–7, 252
 Yolande of Anjou, sister of René I and wife of Francis of Brittany, 15, 17, 30, 201
 Yolande of Aragon, mother of René I and queen of Louis II of Anjou, 1, 5, 7, 14–23, 25, 30–2, 34–5, 37, 40, 51–2, 57, 83–4, 86–7, 141, 145, 149, 152, 155–7, 217, 219, 237, 252–3
 Yolande of Bar, 15
 Yonge, Thomas, 130
 York, house of/Yorkist, 149, 198, 203–4, 206–7, 223, 226, 228