

5. Claude de France and the Spaces of Agency of a Marginalized Queen

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Abstract

The power of Queen Claude de France, who gave birth to seven children and died at the age of twenty-four, was objectively curbed by “the Royal Trinity” of François I, Louise de Savoie and Marguerite de Navarre. This essay examines texts, ambassadorial accounts and artworks that nonetheless point to Claude’s role as an active promoter of religious reform and prove that she functioned as a discrete magnet for political opposition to the contested policies of François and Louise. Were Claude’s image, stature and popularity feared by Louise and François? Was it not the religious tolerance not only of Marguerite de Navarre but also of Claude’s own court that was transmitted to her sister Renée and daughter Marguerite de France?

Keywords: Claude de France, religious patronage, cultural patronage, religious reform, queenship

Does Claude de France (1499–1524) deserve her place in historiography’s unwritten list of disempowered queens? A dispatch penned by a Venetian ambassador on 21 September 1518 has contributed to the widespread perception of Claude as inconsequential. On a visit to the ‘most serene Queen’, Antonio Giustinian (1466?–1524) spoke ‘in generalities’ because ‘with her one does not deal with issues of State’.¹ She is discussed only tangentially in *Les Conseillers de François I^{er}*, a fine collective study of the political advisers to Claude’s famed spouse François I (1494–1547), wherein a single citation

¹ ‘Serenissima Raina’, ‘*verba generalia*’, ‘con lei non si trata cose di Stato’, Sanudo, XXVI, col. 114. Unless otherwise specified, the translations are mine.

(dated 1517) from Antonio de Beatis disqualifies her in passing: Louise de Savoie (1476–1531) ‘always accompanied her son and Claude, over whom her power was absolute’.² Yet this appraisal embraces both François and his spouse, suggesting a cautionary approach. Claude, after all, was the sole French queen who bore the exceptional prestige of having descended from a French king, Louis XII (1462–1515), and a French queen, Anne de Bretagne (1476–1514), an ever-more-studied queen/sovereign duchess, now recognized as exceptionally strong. Wilfully, her parents made her the universal heiress to their personal possessions, including the County of Blois (then the seat of government), the Duchy of Brittany, and the fleeting but politically potent Duchy of Milan, as well as Anne’s exceptional personal library.³ Claude’s sister Renée (1510–1575), for decades Duchess Renata di Francia at the Ferrarese court, has shared an eerily similar historiographical fate. A recent study has confirmed Renée’s pivotal position at the center of a vast network of religious dissidents in Italy. Yet Claude’s sister-in-law Marguerite d’Alençon/de Navarre (1492–1549) is cast as an omniscient leader, Claude as ‘young, weak, ill, politically inept’, Renée’s cognitive and speculative capacities deemed ‘modest’, her ignorance manifest.⁴ These sisters’ reputations, I argue instead, have suffered unfairly from the objective marginalization to which their political marriages confined them both.⁵ A royal consort did not sit on the King’s Council and hence could not rule in the full sense of the term. In pageantry, however, her queenship positioned her symbolically directly after the king. She possessed territories and wielded certain forms of power in her own right — especially in the traditional queenly domains of justice, peace, piety, and culture.⁶ In her subjects’ eyes, Claude’s physical proximity to her spouse, no matter how fraught with difficulty, enabled her potentiality as a mediator on both a national and an international plane. What then were the physical and conceptual spaces of agency that a resisting Claude managed to carve out for herself?

2 Knecht, 2011, p. 178, citing the French translation: ‘Elle accompagne toujours son fils et la reine Claude sur lesquels elle exerce un pouvoir absolu’.

3 Chevalier, p. 108; C.J. Brown, 2011.

4 Belligni, pp. 8, 387.

5 Zum Kolk.

6 Cosandey; Gaude-Ferragu.

From Lauded Pupil to Judicious Queen

Anne de Bretagne gave birth to ten children, of whom only Claude and Renée survived into adulthood.⁷ Although a volume of *Les Remèdes de l'une et l'autre Fortune* lamented (probably around 1503) that Claude was only a girl, numerous signs prove that the king and the queen invested carefully in the tutoring of their royal daughter(s), who would be marketed from birth to marry high.⁸ Eleven years separated Claude and Renée, but their superior educations overlapped in multiple ways. Already in the year of her birth (1499), Claude had five officers in her service. Her high-ranking, experienced governess was Jeanne de Polignac (d. 1509), wife of Anne's first knight of honor Jacques II de Tournon (d. 1525), mother of both the future cardinal and political adviser to François I, François de Tournon (1489–1562), and his sister Blanche (c.1490–c.1538), future lady of honor to Marguerite d'Angoulême/de Navarre.⁹ One of the ageing de Polignac's daughters held the child during the visit of Archduke Philip of Austria (1478–1506) and Archduchess Juana of Castile (1479–1590) to Blois in 1501.¹⁰ Did Georgette de Montchenu, Madame du Bouchage (d. 1511), play an important role in Claude's upbringing as well?¹¹ She and her husband Imbert de Batarnay (1438–1523) had already served Anne's ill-fated son Charles-Orland (1492–1495), and at Renée's baptism in 1510, du Bouchage was both governess and godmother to Claude's sister.¹² After his spouse's death, Batarnay was still overseeing the expenditures of Claude and François's children in 1519.¹³ The successful rearing of the only viable royal child in three long decades was crucial to the networking at court of the Tournon/Polignac and probably also the du Bouchage clans.

7 E.A.R. Brown, p. 193, Appendix, The Children of Anne de Bretagne (25 [26] Jan. 1477–9 Jan. 1514).

8 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), ms. fr. 225, after Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374); C.J. Brown, 2011, pp. 1–3; Zöhl.

9 Minois, pp. 439–40; Matarasso, 2001, pp. 184, 223–34, 247, 261; Michon and Nawrocki, pp. 507–08.

10 Chatenet and Girault, pp. 47 and 170–71.

11 Leroux de Lincy, III, associates a series of Anne's letters to both Madame and Monsieur du Bouchage with Claude; Matarasso, 1996, and Matarasso, 2011, pp. 71–74, argues that they relate to Renée. Batarnay (who took his 'du Bouchage' title from a territory transmitted by Georgette) was Claude's governor and maintained his position officiously for the children of Claude and François (Philippe Hamon within Michon, 2011b, pp. 89–91). Madame's beautiful *gisant* (1513–1522) survives in Saint-Jean-Baptiste at Montrésor (Noblet, pp. 272–73; Corvisier, pp. 455–58).

12 Minois, pp. 434–35; Baumgartner, p. 52.

13 Hamon, 1994, p. 124.

While Louis and Anne monitored Claude's progress carefully, so did Anne's wardrobe mistress (*dame d'atour*) and closest adviser, Michelle de Saubonne (d. 1549), Madame de Soubise from 1507, Renée's governess following Madame du Bouchage's death in 1511, and the evangelical adviser who would accompany Claude's sister to Ferrara in 1528.¹⁴ In 1505, when Anne retreated to her duchy of Brittany during her open dispute with Louis XII over Claude's forthcoming engagement to François d'Angoulême (1506), a series of 23 letters shed light on Saubonne's crucial position in the queen's entourage.¹⁵ Financier Jacques de Beaune/'Semblancay' (c. 1445–1527), who remained a close ally of Monsieur du Bouchage into the reign of Claude and François, Cardinal Georges d'Amboise (1460–1510), and Louise de Savoie proactively sought Saubonne out to convince the headstrong queen to return to court.¹⁶ The intellectual profile of Anne's *dame d'atour* was particularly high. In his *Epistre à Madame de Soubise*, the poet Clément Marot (1496–1544) credited her 'Anne's best beloved', for having introduced his father, the writer Jean Marot (c. 1450–c. 1526), at court. He praised her love of literature and knowledge, while the humanist Guillaume Budé (1467–1540) lauded her wisdom; and her penchants spilled over onto her daughters, especially Anne (d. 1555) and Renée de Parthenay-l'Archevêque.¹⁷ The link between Renée de France and her life-long governess was deep. Yet Anne de Bretagne's confidence in Michelle de Saubonne, thought to have entered the queen's service shortly before Claude's birth, following the death of Anne's own *alter ego* governess Françoise de Dinan (c. 1436–1499), must provide an important key to understanding the nature of Claude's excellent education as well.¹⁸

In Claude's formative years, education and religion perforce went hand in hand. Page two of her luxurious Primer transmits the alphabet, intertwined with the Instruments of the Passion and coupled with a Pater Noster prayer, with which she learned her letters.¹⁹ Yet conceived more broadly, a pious education was a route to empowerment; and empowerment was clearly one of Queen Anne's major concerns. Prior to Claude's engagement to François d'Angoulême (an alliance that her mother opposed in the name of Breton

14 Giraud-Mangin justifies this designation, p. 70 (but is it anachronistic?). Minois, pp. 433–34, attributes a proactive role in Claude's education to this 'femme remarquable'; Belligni, p. 5, also thinks she oversaw the education of both daughters.

15 Matarasso, 1997, pp. 354–55; and Matarasso, 2011, pp. 71–74.

16 Hamon in Michon, 2011b, p. 90.

17 'la mieulx aimée d'Anne' Ségalen, p. 103; Belligni, pp. 94–95ff.; Gorris, 1997, pp. 341–42; Gorris, 2001; Gorris, 2007; Marot, 1969, III, pp. 388–90; Marot, 1993, I, v, xxvii, cxxix.

18 Giraud-Mangin, pp. 69–70.

19 The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, MS 159. Wieck, C.J. Brown, and König.

independence and probably out of distrust of Louise de Savoie and her son),²⁰ Anne commissioned the *Vies des femmes célèbres* from the Dominican Antoine Dufour (d. 1509), with the collaboration of the Parisian illuminator Jean Pichore (documented between 1502 and 1521).²¹ While of interest to the queen and her ladies-in-waiting, three of whom are represented with Anne on the dedicatory page, her royal daughter was surely a conscious target of this vernacular manuscript, too.

What were some of the major issues that Dufour's text and Pichore's illustrations set out to address? Then, how exactly would these issues play themselves out in Claude's short life? Like the Tuscan Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) before him, Dufour credited a woman, Nicostrata (depicted on fol. 21^v), with the invention of the very alphabet that Claude was acquiring via her Primer. Pichore's images also align women who read (the Empress Mamaea, fol. 61^r, the Virgin Mary, fol. 2^r); women who write letters (Medea, fol. 18^v) and books (the Erythraean Sibyl, fol. 17^r, Sappho, fol. 28^v, Amalthea, fol. 29^v, Blæsilla, fol. 61^v); and women who are the recipients of books (Theodelinda of Lombardy, fol. 69^v), as was so often the bibliophile Anne. Both Sappho (fol. 28^v) and Hortensia (fol. 44^r) model the notion that public speaking — to men — is an important skill. And interestingly, one of the letters Jacques de Beaune sent to Michelle de Saubonne in 1505, when the princess was not quite six, confirms Claude's actual empowerment through education: 'You would never believe how much she has learnt since you left and how she has grown in strength and confidence'.²² Later, her judgment and epistolary skills were praised in a rare mother-to-daughter epistle, written perhaps in 1513: 'I assure you my daughter that you will find me a good mother, for you oblige me more and more with the gracious letters you write me'.²³ Ambassadorial reports confirm these allusions to Claude's successful tutelage. Much is made of Claude's 'strange corpulence', yet according to a Venetian 'orator', 'grace in speaking greatly made up for her want of beauty'. Similarly, de Beatis remarked that 'though small in stature and badly lame in both hips, [the young Queen] is said to be very cultivated, generous and pious'.²⁴

Objective proof of Claude's genuine erudition lies in the extraordinary marginalia of her Book of Hours, produced subsequent to her 1515 accession to

20 Knecht, pp. 12–14; Matarasso, 2001, pp. 168–69, 211–30.

21 Musée Dobrée, Nantes, ms. 17. Cassagnes-Brouquet; C.J. Brown, 2011, pp. 144–66.

22 Matarasso, 1997, p. 354, for the translation: 'Vous ne croiriez empressée depuis le partement et la seurte et bonne contenance quelle a, cest une chouse singuliere'.

23 'vous asurenst ma fille q[ue] me trouverés bonne mere, car vous m'y obliger de plus en p[l]us veu les grassieuses lestrés q[ue] m'escripvés', Matarasso, 2011, pp. 183–85 and translation.

24 Translations from Knecht, 1994, pp. 17, 114.

the throne, and perhaps about four years after her mother's aforementioned letter of praise.²⁵ The daughter is often cast as merely a weak shadow of her mother; and the Latin devices shown on fols. 87^v and 88, NON MUDERA ('I will not waver') and FIRMITAS ETERNITATIS SPEM DUPLICAT ('constancy [of faith] doubles the hope for eternal life'), were effectively — like Claude's ubiquitous *cordelière* (knotted cord) — inherited from Anne.²⁶ Yet the second device appears not only in Latin, as her mother's, but also in Greek; and both accompany Claude's personal emblem of an armillary sphere while framing a page written in a beautiful, 'modern', humanistic script. These changes suggest that Claude was already in contact with the evangelical circle of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (1450?–1536), as her younger sister Renée would be.²⁷ This pattern of learning is also shared with Michelle de Saubonne's highly cultivated daughters, Anne and Renée, who in their childhood were exposed to both Latin and Greek.²⁸ Clément Marot informs us that his father, Saubonne's protégé, was writing an epistle to Queen Claude at the moment of his death; and Clément launched into his own courtly career as 'Facteur de la Roynie' (poet of the queen).²⁹ An early link to his mistress's sister is his *Epithalame de Renée de France* (1528), in which he imitates the humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1467?–1536); and when he later became Renée's protégé in Ferrara, the 'noble ladies of Soubise' figured amongst the recipients of his epistles and epigrams.³⁰ Under the direction of an ever-present team of ladies closely collaborating with the queen, and in the company of privileged *demoiselles*, Claude (and her sister) mastered the critical thinking skills essential for confronting the perils of power, which for both proved great.

Trial by Fire at Court

The poet Octavien de Saint-Gelais (1468–1502) completed in 1489 his autobiographical *Séjour d'honneur*, warning of the dangers of court life after his sojourn at the court of Charles VIII (1470–1498), shortly prior to Anne's

25 Switzerland, Heribert Tenschert collection. König.

26 See C.J. Brown, 2010, pp. 101–21, for multiple examples of the 'shared ownership' of mother and daughter.

27 Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a, pp. 109–10; Wilson-Chevalier, 2016. On Renée: Belligni; Gorris Camos.

28 See n. 17 above.

29 Cornilliat, p. 178, n. 3; McKinley, p. 621.

30 Céard, p. 111, n. 1; Marot, 1993, II, pp. 94–100, 280–81.

arrival in 1491.³¹ A comparable but female-inflected goal inspired Anne de France, Duchess of Bourbon (1461–1522), when during Claude's infancy, sometime between 1503 and 1505, she addressed her famed *Enseignements* to her daughter Suzanne.³² Therein, she instructed ladies on how to bear themselves with the dignity appropriate to their rank, but also on how to compose an inscrutable mask. The court was a figurative minefield for both sexes, and princesses were ideally groomed to conceal an iron will. In Dufour's almost contemporaneous *Vies des femmes célèbres*, saints are martyred; Pharoah sexually assaults Sarah (fol. 8^v); Herod has Mariamne's head chopped off for adultery (fol. 45); Deborah plants a nail in Sisera's temple (fol. 17^v); Medea writes with the blood of the son she has killed (fol. 18^v); the sword with which Judith decapitated Holophernes is huge (fol. 30); Athaliah massacres four of her children (fol. 27^v); men murder Agrippina and slice open her womb (fol. 47^v); Amalasuntha knocks her son down with a blow (fol. 68). The world is no place for the feeble at heart, and no fewer than ten heroines, many of them queens, don armoured suits. Fol. 13^r surely illustrates Anne de Bretagne's aspiration for her daughter(s): in a palatial setting, the supreme goddess Juno (despite Dufour's rather negative description) addresses 'king' Jupiter seated on his throne, proactively counselling her husband the king (Fig. 5.1). Yet in this courtly universe where malicious factions were constantly at war, how did 'the good queen Claude' fare?

When Claude and François ascended the throne in 1515, the king promptly appointed to his Privy Council his formidable mother Louise; and there she remained, serving twice as regent, until her death in 1531. Mother and son constituted a remarkably tight governing team.³³ Louise, 23 years older than the queen, was deploying her savvy political skills with Jacques de Beaune and Michelle de Saubonne when Claude was but five; and she outlived her daughter-in-law by six years. Claude's will to wield power was also up against unfavorable numerical odds: two, or even three against one, since the king's brilliant older sister Marguerite proved to be a major political protagonist too. The possibility that the fifteen-year-old queen would be able to hold her own, no matter how well groomed for her role, was extremely slim. Yet, while the Valois-Angoulême trio was adept in promoting its image as a 'royal trinity', as in their staging on the oft-reproduced fol. 2 of the *Orationes devotissime* manuscript, the concrete situation was actually much more complex.³⁴

31 Saint-Gelais.

32 See Anne de France; Chatenet; and Cynthia J. Brown's chapter herein.

33 For Michon, Louise is a true '*alter rex*', 2011a, p. 85.

34 BnF, ms. NAL 83; Lecoq, pp. 393–433.

Figure 5.1 Jean Pichore, *Juno and Jupiter*

In Antoine Dufour, *Vies des femmes célèbres*, Nantes, Musée Dobrée, ms. 17, fol. 13^r (© H. Neveu-Dérotrie / Musée Dobrée – Grand Patrimoine de Loire-Atlantique)

'The Very Christian King, Very Serene Queen, and Very Illustrious Madame Mother'

Further reports expedited by Venetian ambassadors in France during the nine and a half years of Claude's reign (1515–1524) suggest a rather different configuration, their trinity being most often that of the king, the queen, and 'Madame Mother'.³⁵ While there can be no doubt whatsoever that Louise and François were in command, Claude's physical presence at court proved dogged. Perhaps she learnt a lesson during the first year of her reign, when she was absent from the anointing ceremony in Rheims, although the delivery of her first child was over six months away.³⁶ As the years passed, her body bore the brunt of seven pregnancies. Nevertheless, she made a point of asserting her majestic rank, following her overbearing spouse, but preceding her overbearing mother-in-law. The king and his mother probably wished to keep an eye on the queen, too. Early in the reign, in Paris, the law clerks' organization known as the *Basoche* choreographed satirical plays that denounced the rapacity of Louise and François, openly taxing the son with debauchery. *Les Povres deables* and the *Troys pelerins et malice* may have been directed against Louise, the preferred focus of popular criticism, cast as a plundering 'Mère Sotte' (Mother Folly).³⁷ Shortly after his rise to the throne, *Monsieur Cruche* castigated the king as an adulterer who had had an affair with the wife of *Parlement* councillor Jacques Dishomme, then rapaciously confiscated the parliamentarian's great wealth.³⁸ Claude's image rose in moral authority instead.

François I's reputation as a womanizer was such that in September 1518 a Venetian ambassador in Milan relayed the rumor that the king had impregnated one of the daughters of 'the lord Galeazzo Visconti', headed to the French court.³⁹ The previous year, the king's former tutor, royal almoner François Desmoulins de Rochefort (d. 1526), had offered Louise the magnificent *Vie de la Magdalene*, with an alignment of tiny roundels that foreground the lascivious comportment of Mary Magdalen and her lovers.⁴⁰ Fol. 10^r (Fig. 5.2) shows the future saint leaving for the hunt, falcon in hand,

35 Almost without exception listed according to rank: 'Il Cristianissimo Re, serenissima Regina, et Illustrissima Madama madre', Sanudo, XXIX, col. 386.

36 Sanudo, XX, cols. 22–34; Knecht, 1994, p. 45.

37 Arden, p. 85.

38 Lalanne, pp. 13–14; Rousse, pp. 189–91.

39 Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 59.

40 BnF, ms. fr. 24955. Johnston; Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a, pp. 111–15; Wilson-Chevalier, 2016, pp. 129–36.

Figure 5.2 Godefroy le Batave, *Mary Magdalen Going off to Hunt (for Pleasure)*



From François Desmoulins de Rochefort, *La Vie de la belle et clere Magdalene*, Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 24955, fol. 10^r (©BnF)

her horse led forth by a groom with an emphasized codpiece as a heavily plumed accompanying knight (foregrounded on fols. 9^r and 11^r) stares from behind her with glee. The Latin inscription on the frame — ‘without dignity one must not hunt for pleasure’ — proffers an admonition, mirroring a *leitmotiv* of the Venetian ambassadors: ‘the king went to the hunt indulging in his usual pleasures’.⁴¹ Rochefort’s volume concludes with a prayer to the sinner-saint, whom Louise should implore to lead her son towards salvation and to help him distinguish between good and bad advice, so that his sins

41 ‘il Re andò a la caza ai soliti soi piaceri’, Antonio Giustinian; here, January 20, 1519; Sanudo, XXVI, col. 449.

do not cause suffering to others. The birth of a male heir to Claude and a child to Marguerite, but also the harmony of the royal family and of the commonweal itself hinge on this moral rectification.⁴²

Claude's spectacular entry into Paris in May 1517 affords proof that public opinion held the queen in high esteem.⁴³ The scaffold of the *Trinité* cast her as an advocate for her people — an intercessory task for which she had been programmed in childhood, as page thirteen of her Primer attests. The first scene of this early vellum sheet is devoted to the Annunciation to the lowly shepherds; the second, set above Anne de Bretagne's arms, shows a Virgin Mary receiving her subjects, amongst whom she singles out the shepherds, the humblest of them all. The third, set under the prayer to the right, concludes the entire pictorial cycle by presenting the Virgin Mother of Peace, not Christ, descending into Limbo to save poor souls.⁴⁴ At this entry celebrating Claude's coronation, the first scaffold at the Porte Saint-Denis associated the queen with six virtuous biblical heroines.⁴⁵ Thanks to trick machinery, an apple appeared, descending and multiplying until it became a dove with a crown in its beak, which it then placed upon the head of the queen. The manuscript narrative of the playwright Pierre Gringore (1475?–1538) tendered a warning: 'her humility makes her dreaded just as prowess makes princes dreaded'.⁴⁶ At the aforementioned scaffold of the *Trinité* — illustrated on fol. 40^v of Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 5750 — an enthroned queen was seated on the heraldic right of her royal consort (Fig. 5.3). By the king's side stood Good Counsel and Good Will, by the queen's Prudence and Knowledge, represented not as a single widow (Louise/Prudence), but rather two (plausibly alluding to the former regent Anne de France, henceforth serving the Bourbon cause). Below stand Prowess (resembling one of Dufour's armoured heroines), holding what Gringore calls a 'club of union', and Labor, identified as 'the French People', who turns to Concord

42 That the king 'ayt esprit pour se sauver, & pour congnoistre bon & mauvaiz conseil affin que par luy seul plusieurs personnez ne soient en souffrance' (fol. 105^v); that Louise's 'fille Claude soit grosse dung fils' and that her 'fille Margarite pareillement'. Louise should ask that her desire be accorded 'pour le bien de la chose publicque [...] affin que [elle] puyssse vivre en amour fiable avecquez [ses] enfans', fols. 106^r, 106^v.

43 Gringore.

44 Wieck, 2012, p. 162; with translations of the accompanying inscriptions: 'Fear not, Amen'; 'How the shepherds came' (not signifying though that all the figures surrounding the Virgin are shepherds); 'O mother of God, remember me'; the prayer to 'Lord God of hosts' invokes peace (p. 137). Wilson-Chevalier, 2015b, pp. 250–59.

45 For what follows, Hochner, pp. 266–74; and Wilson-Chevalier, 2015b, pp. 264–71.

46 'son humilité la fait redoubter tout ainsi que proesse fait redoubter les princes', Gringore, pp. 163, l. 194–95.

Figure 5.3 *The King, the Queen, Good Counsel and Good Will, Prudence and Knowledge, Prowess Labor and Concord (Parisian scaffold)*



From Pierre Gringore, *Le Sacre, couronnement et entrée de Madame Claude Royne de France*, Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 5750, fol. 40^v (©BnF)

with her victory club. For Nicole Hochner, the staging aligns political wisdom with the queen, in order to redirect the king's energy away from military endeavors like Marignan, towards peace and his people.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the royal canopy reads 'VIVE LE ROY ET TOUS CES AMYS' ('Long live the king and all his friends'), emphasizing the ability of the queen, aided by (her own) Prowess and two mighty but counterbalancing great ladies, to foster a harmonious State. Religious and civic dignitaries thus acknowledge the queen's moral probity and her power to intercede.

Unpacking the Pageantry of the Queen

Month after month, year after year, Queen Claude and the 'very illustrious' Louise appeared side by side, with or without Marguerite. Just before Christmas 1518, the Venetian Antonio Giustinian paid a visit to the queen, then in Paris with her mother-in-law. The following morning, he and other ambassadors attended Mass, where Claude performed a public acceptance of the political engagement of the ten-month-old François (1518–1536) to Mary (1516–1558), daughter of Henry VIII (1491–1547) and Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536).⁴⁸ The queen was six months pregnant at the time. Two and a half months before the birth of the future Henri II (31 March 1519), she was still in Paris alongside her mother-in-law when chests of spices gifted by the Venetians were opened in Louise's chamber.⁴⁹ On 10 March the ambassador announced that François had gone off to hunt as Claude and Louise proceeded to Saint-Germain, where the second royal son would be born. The ambassadors accompanied not the king but the queen and the royal mother, 'wishing to follow the court' — a remarkable conflation of the court and its female protagonists.⁵⁰ When the news of the birth reached Rome, the Venetian ambassador to the Holy See congratulated Denis Briçonnet (1479–1535), French ambassador to the pope and an episcopal ally of the queen.⁵¹

Approximately a year later, 29 February 1520, in the presence of the ambassadors of Rome, Spain, England, Venice, Ferrara, and Mantua, Louise organized a grand entry into the symbolic Valois-Angoulême seat of Cognac in honor of Claude. The glory of her queenship surely radiated upon the royal

47 Hochner, p. 271.

48 Sanudo, XXVI, col. 331.

49 Sanudo, XXVI, cols. 419–20.

50 Sanudo, XXVI, col. 449 and Sanudo, XXVII, col. 97: 'volendo seguir la corte'.

51 Sanudo, XXVI, col. 184; Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a.

mother as they rode forth in a black and crimson litter while ancient gods and goddesses emerged to pay homage to the queen, escorted by three carts full of her *demoiselles*.⁵² Claude was once again pregnant. Yet she traversed France to assume a major role in the astounding Field of Cloth of Gold (June 1520),⁵³ a ceremonial encounter that ended less than two months prior to the delivery of Madeleine (10 August 1520). The previous November the queen's secretary had conveyed to the royal princess of England Claude's gift of a cross of gold and jewels, along with a portrait (by Jean Clouet?) of her infant fiancé, the *dauphin*.⁵⁴ The date of the famous Franco-English encounter had been negotiated in function of her pregnancy;⁵⁵ and Claude regally presided over a banquet honoring Henry VIII and sat on the heraldic right of Catherine of Aragon when the jousting began.⁵⁶ The French queen was obviously determined that her power to produce heirs no longer deprive her of the symbolic power of public space.

On 22 May 1521, in a climate of rising fear of an Imperial threat to the Duchy of Milan (transmitted via the queen), Claude and Louise ceremoniously entered Dijon together, as they were wont to do.⁵⁷ Then most unusually, on 28 May, the Venetian ambassador Brizio Giustiniani delivered a present to the 'Very Serene Queen' and her wet nurses ('nutrice'), alone, in the presence of the grand chancellor and admiral: two coffers containing a jewel, spices, gold cloth, crimson silk, and so forth.⁵⁸ On 2 July, Ambassador Giovanni Badoer (1465–1535) paid a first visit to the king, assuring his majesty that Venice supported the conservation of his State. He then went to the queen, who rose to greet him as her consort had done, and likewise thanked the Republic for its support of the king's State and for its gifts. She reported on Madeleine (1520–1537), whom Badoer had had the honor to hold at the baptismal font almost a year before in the name of Venice and its doge.⁵⁹ Only then did the ambassador visit the king's mother. The ceremonies surrounding the royal children were at the very core of the politics of the age; and since the secretary of the children's household was Gilles de Commacre, one of

52 Sanudo, XXVIII, cols. 342–51.

53 Russell.

54 Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 116.

55 Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 443.

56 Sanudo, XXIX, cols. 22–23, 30.

57 Sanudo, XXX, col. 297.

58 Sanudo, XXX, col. 359.

59 Sanudo, XXX, col. 48, XXIX, col. 139.

her many Breton officers, Claude's power over her progeny was real, not merely symbolic.⁶⁰ In 1521, the Venetians were courting her.

The Italians cultivated the queen at important conjunctions, particularly it would seem when religious issues were at stake; and when useful, they flattered her artistic taste. In 1518 Pope Leo X (1475–1521) was seeking support for a crusade against the Turks, and he offered paintings by the sought-after Raphael (1483–1520), not to Louise but rather to the atypical trinity of François, Claude, and Marguerite d'Alençon/de Navarre, the latter two linked by their sustained interest in religious issues. The queen's present, Raphael's *Grande Sainte Famille* (Paris, Louvre), honors the birth of the *dauphin*. Yet Joseph, set at the top of a diagonal that runs from the Christ Child through the Virgin Mary/Claude, dons papal colors, suggesting that Leo had an especial interest in engaging the queen to put pressure on the king.⁶¹ When the Venetians decided to commission 'a Visitation of St. Mary and St. Elizabeth' to 'hang perpetually in the chamber of the Very Christian Queen of France', they turned to their own most famous artist in Rome, Sebastiano del Piombo, whom they classified amongst the outstanding painters just after Michelangelo and Raphael.⁶² Their Roman ambassador followed the development of the work from at least 4 May 1519 — the very day that Marcantonio Michiel wrote of St. Francis of Paola's canonization and expedited a copy of the *Divi Francisci Paulii apotheosis* which credited the event to the French king and queen.⁶³ On the feast of Corpus Christi, the Venetian Cardinal Cornaro exhibited Claude's future painting in front of his residence on an altar in the streets of Rome.

Venetian ambassadors are renowned for observing the European political scene with an eagle eye. When in June 1520 a French and an Italian pilgrim were murdered en route to St. Anthony of Padua, Claude and the king, 'our very dear confederates' in the ambassadorial transcription, addressed letters calling for justice to the Venetian government.⁶⁴ Antonio Giustinian later listed amongst the great expenditures of 'His Majesty', the court of 'the Majesty of the Queen, of his mother, of the children'.⁶⁵ Then on 12 September

60 Le Page, pp. 656–57.

61 Cox-Rearick, pp. 191–214; Wilson-Chevalier, 2010, p. 131. Also, Henry and Joannides, nos. 14, 16, and 21.

62 'la visitatione di Santa Maria e Santa Elisabetta, dono destinato a la Cristianissima regina di Franza, et che averà a stare sempre ne la sua camera', Sanudo, XXVII, col. 470.

63 Sanudo, XXX, cols. 272–77.

64 'nostri carissimi confederati' Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 628.

65 'come per spexe in la corte di la Maestà di la Regina, di Madama sua madre, di fioli', Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 628.

1520, when the king was tending to his customary pleasures of the hunt, Giustinian's compatriot Badoer went to Saint-Germain to transmit letters to 'the mother' but also to speak to the queen separately to invite her to Venice.⁶⁶ Thanks to a report from the secretary Alvise Marin, penned on 2 January 1521, we finally learn, six years after Claude rose to the throne, that she had a political agenda of her own. Odet de Foix, Lord of Lautrec (1485–1528), Marin relates, was not pleased that the queen was 'in the power' of the Constable; in other words, she was countering the politics of François and Louise.⁶⁷ On 16 January, Badoer reported that a political battle of benefices was underway: the French king had given the 'abazia di Ras' (Saint-Vaast d'Arras) to the queen's confessor, surely Louis Chantereau (d. 1531), while Charles V (1500–1558) had bestowed it upon one of his allies.⁶⁸ Was the king not trying to neutralize the queen, whose critical spirit made her a potential magnet for an alternative faction at court? Claude — her mother's daughter — was an active participant in the patronage game, both on the giving and on the receiving end. Her power helped make saints and distribute ecclesiastical charges. She could also wield it to defy the politics of the king.

The Power of Gift-giving and Discrete Alliances at Court

Although politically marginalized, Claude's marginalization was never absolute. Documents and artefacts prove that she made a valiant effort to occupy political spaces shortly after her queenship commenced. Her 1524 testament lists the territories that continued to fall under her legal jurisdiction: the Duchy of Brittany, which supplied a number of her officers and covered the major part of her expenses in 1523; the Counties of Blois, Montfort, Étampes, Soissons and Vertus; the *seigneurie* of Coucy.⁶⁹ At the beginning of François's reign the court was centered in her dynastic castle of Blois where, as countess, she rendered justice throughout her life. The king immediately began construction to leave his mark thereupon, relying on the services of Jacques Sourdeau (d. 1521/1522), a master mason formerly in her parents' employ.⁷⁰ While the king planted his salamanders triumphantly on the new *corps-de-logis* and

66 Sanudo, XXVIII, cols. 276–77.

67 'disse non li piacer la Raina sia in poter dil Contestabile', Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 540.

68 Sanudo, XXVIII, col. 596.

69 Hamon, p. 6. Le Page, in addition to Gilles de Commacre, mentions Philibert Tissart, Jean-François Cardonne, her treasurer Clérembaut Leclerc, and Yves Le Flo, pp. 24, 310, 469, 472–73, 639, 649–50.

70 Lesueur, pp. 99–100.

the grand staircase, the balustrade above sports the *cordelière* the couple shared; it however wraps itself around Claude's C, topped by a high crown, while the crown of François's monogram hovers below at the middle of his F. The queen's donation of land to Sourdeau offers proof of her agency on the construction site in 1516; and building at Blois came to a halt upon her death.⁷¹

The preceding year, when Claude and her consort of lesser rank took the throne, she had twice made gifts of lands from her territories to the major secretary of state Florimond Robertet (c. 1465–1527), for the 'eminent services' he had rendered to her parents.⁷² In the name of the king and herself, she wrote to 'Monseigneur de Lafayette', Governor of Boulogne, charged with overseeing the borders to the north.⁷³ She intervened to support the successful bid of her almoner Antoine de Levis-Châteaumorand (d. 1565) to become a canon of the chapter of Saint-Jean of Lyons. Yet did such acts play in her favor. The powerful Robertet, serving kings since Louis XI (1423–1483), quickly aligned himself with François and Louise, slipping seamlessly into François's Privy Council and remaining there until his death in 1527.⁷⁴ In 1522, his wife Michelle Gaillard was a lady-in-waiting not to Claude but to Louise.⁷⁵ Nothing, however, precluded the couple's continued bonding with the queen. Robertet had recourse to Greek devices, like Claude. Both contributed to reviving ruinous religious edifices in Blois; and Gérard Defaux argues that the royal officer was a protector of the evangelical cause.⁷⁶ In 1523, Étienne Poncher (1446–1525), Archbishop of Sens, solicited Claude alongside Robertet when he sought to place a Parisian parliamentary councillor in a vacant slot at the *Parlement* of her Breton duchy.⁷⁷

Early in her reign Claude had intervened to support the reform of the religious house of Yerres, effected by the same (then reforming Bishop of Paris) Poncher.⁷⁸ As for her almoner Levis-Châteaumorand (still recorded in that function in 1520), facets of his ecclesiastical career dovetail neatly with Claude's links to religious reform. In 1516 the recently appointed canon of Lyons was promoted Bishop of Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux. When ten years later he became Archbishop of Embrun, his bishopric was given to none other

71 Lesueur, pp. 95, 100.

72 Mayer and Bentley-Cranch, pp. 65, 157; Castelain, p. 39.

73 Castelain, p. 37 (BnF, ms fr. 2934, fol. 45).

74 Chevalier, pp. 99–116.

75 I thank Aubrée David-Chapy for this information.

76 Taburet-Delahaye; Mayer and Bentley-Cranch, p. 16 (including his sons Claude and François's knowledge of Greek); Bernier, p. 52 (for his renovation of Saint-Honoré); Marot, 1993, I, pp. 609–21.

77 Hamon, pp. 389–91.

78 Le Gall, p. 99; Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a, p. 99.

than Michel d'Arande (d. 1539), who had begun his controversial preaching of the evangelical gospel at court in 1522.⁷⁹ Linked to the circle of Meaux, d'Arande is most famous as a protégé of Claude's sister-in-law Marguerite. This suggestive transfer of a bishopric marks but one instance when the religious sensitivities of Claude and Marguerite crisscrossed. Their complicity had begun no later than 1515, when the queen and her sister-in-law each wrote to the *Parlement* of Paris to promote monastic reform.⁸⁰

The Power of Education and the Promotion of Church Reform

The minuscule girdle book that Claude de France wore around her waist is her most personal gift to posterity.⁸¹ Exquisitely illuminated by the master who bears Claude's name, it reveals the nature of the queen's piety and the discerning power of her fine aesthetic eye. Its 102 illuminated pages include the queen's arms three different times (fols. 5^r, 15^v, 18^v); her *cordelière* encircles all of the other sheets minus two, which defer to a model king and a model pope. The first exception highlights a rainbow-golden Trinity framed by the king's *cordelière* of Savoy (fol. 24^v).⁸² The second depicts the Mass of St. Gregory (fol. 50^v), an open book on the altar, the raised host projecting a pure explosion of golden light. On the opposite folio (51^r), Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540–604), seconded by a cardinal, composes instructions for a kneeling bishop, the threesome dutifully administering an exemplary Church. The page bearing the king's *cordelière* succeeds, however, a very first burst of divine rainbow-golden light: that of the Coronation of the Virgin (fol. 24^r), an allusion to the queen's 1517 coronation at Saint-Denis.⁸³ Hence Mary/the queen introduces the light of pure faith, in stride with the Eucharistic beliefs of Lefèvre d'Étaples.⁸⁴

The folios of the prayer book address popular evangelical themes, including the imminence of the end of the world (fol. 1^r, John the Evangelist composing his Apocalyptic text) and four scenes of resurrection (fols. 1^v, an

79 Longeon, p. 68, n. 142.

80 Renaudet, pp. 586–87; Le Gall, pp. 82, 515–16. Reid, I, p. 106, cites a letter from Marguerite to *Parlement* regarding the reformed Dominicans in Le Mans, dated August 23 1515, so predating the queen's two September interventions related to Jarcy.

81 The Morgan Library and Museum, ms. M 1166; <http://www.themorgan.org/collection/Prayer-Book-of-Claude-de-France>. Wieck and C.J. Brown; Wieck, 2012, 2014.

82 Wieck and C.J. Brown, pp. 257–58.

83 Wieck and C.J. Brown, p. 175, dates the manuscript to shortly before.

84 For these, see Hughes, p. 87.

unanticipated Drusiana; 15^r, Christ; 36^r and 39^v). Saints Claude and René, the model bishop-patrons of the queen and her sibling, enact the latter two. The task of resurrecting not only suffering souls but also a suffering Church, I contend, was placed in the royal daughters' hands at birth. Sometime between 1503 and 1505, in a letter addressed to Ferdinand (1452–1516) and Isabella of Spain (1451–1504), Anne de Bretagne expressed her explicit concern that bishops reside in their seats.⁸⁵ Anne (in synchrony with Michelle de Saubonne?) deliberately transmitted a dynastic responsibility that both Claude and Renée embraced.

The suffrages begin unexpectedly with a prayer to the Holy Face. Two pages are correspondingly devoted to St. Veronica (fols. 27^r and 27^v), who no less unexpectedly intervenes with her husband Amadour, forming a couple united to convert a disbelieving crowd — an expression of the queen's conjugal dream?⁸⁶ Claude shouldered her task of spiritual renovation earnestly, overseeing the reconstruction of the parish church of Saint-Solenne (today the cathedral of Blois)⁸⁷ and, in 1521, rebuilding the Augustinian convent of Saint-Jean of Blois for the nuns known as the 'Véroniques', who specialized in 'the good education they give to their boarders'.⁸⁸ Books abound in illustrations throughout her prayer book, often in women's hands. A grand double-page representation (fols. 46^v and 47^r) is accorded to St. Ursula, dear to Claude and her mother as a saint from their sovereign duchy (Fig. 5.4). A renowned protectress of female education, she is depicted enthroned in front of a (Breton) maritime scene like a queen with a vast court of *demoiselles*, one deploying a large open book on her knees. Education had empowered Claude, and transmitting its power was high on her agenda, whether sacred or profane.

The exemplary Pope Gregory intervenes just before the final illumination of the Exposition of the Eucharist (fol. 52^r), signaling Claude's full assumption of her active role in the promotion of an exemplary Gallican Church. St. Claude first appears at his consecration, kneeling at an altar with an open book (fol. 35^v). On the single page of the suffrage to St. René (fol. 39^v), the main scene depicts Bishop Maurilius resuscitating the infant René with the help of the open Scriptures.⁸⁹ The adult René stands nearby in a

85 Anne requested that they withdraw their candidate in favor of her almoner, 'en considerant que c'est une seulle église catedralle ou royaume de Navarre, & qu'il est besoing que leur preslat demeure continuellement sur les lieux', Leroux de Lincy, III, p. 34.

86 Wieck and C.J. Brown, pp. 218–19, and 258–59 on the crowd.

87 Sauvage, p. 28.

88 'la bonne éducation qu'elles donnent à leurs Pensionnaires', Bernier, p. 61.

89 Wieck and C.J. Brown, p. 268.

Figure 5.4 Master of Claude de France, *St. Ursula and Her Maidens*

Prayer Book of Claude de France, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, MS M.1166, fols. 46^v and 47^r © The Morgan Library and Museum. Ms M. 1166. Gift of Mrs. Alexandre P. Rosenberg in memory of her husband Alexandre Paul Rosenberg, (2008)

gold-ground insert with his bishop's staff and a closed book containing the word to be diffused. Six of Claude's prayers are to bishop saints; but St. Julian (fol. 39^r), an early Christian bishop of Le Mans, is the only one (like St. Anne educating her daughter, fol. 42^r; St. Martha, fol. 43^r; the royal Augustinian St. Genevieve, fol. 46^r) with open book in hand. As early as 1493, Philippe du Luxembourg (1445–1519), Cardinal-Bishop of Le Mans, had emerged as a major actor of Church reform.⁹⁰ It was he who on 15 February 1514 officiated at the funeral ceremony of Anne de Bretagne celebrated at Notre-Dame of Paris, he who on 10 May 1517 crowned Claude at Saint-Denis.⁹¹ That same year, this 'great connoisseur of the Italian milieu', then serving as papal legate too, led the reform of Jumièges.⁹² At the Council of Pisa in 1510, the Cardinal-Bishop had worked hand in hand with Anne to reconcile Louis XII and the Pope; and there he had labored alongside the Briçonnet father and sons reforming team.

90 Pierre, p. 143; Le Gall, pp. 101–02; Lestocquoy, 1949, pp. 81–82 for the Bishop and Arras.

91 Girault, p. 24.

92 Le Gall, pp. 450, 454.

Claude's documented connections are not to Guillaume Briçonnet (1470–1534) but rather to his lesser-known brother Denis (1473–1535), the 'enlightened' Bishop of Saint-Malo who, also, was highly familiar with the Italian scene.⁹³ For several years, Arcangela Panigarola (1468–1525), mother superior of the Augustinian convent of Santa Marta in Milan and head of a circle laboring for Church reform, identified Denis Briçonnet as the evangelical pastor destined to renew a decadent papacy. Moving in Panigarola's orbit was a Dominican theologian, Isidoro Isolani (c. 1480–1528?), who favored the French presence in Milan. In 1517, Isolani dedicated his *De imperio militantis Ecclesiae* to Denis; in 1518, the dedication of his Latin life of the blessed Veronica da Binasco (1445–1497), a humble nun of Santa Marta, targeted 'the invincible Lords of Milan', François I and Claude de France. The tale of Veronica's miraculous literacy is an important theme in Isolani's narrative and woodcuts, bisecting Claude's support of the 'Véroniques'. Louis Chantereau, Claude's Augustinian royal confessor and a(nother) monastic reformer, translated Isolani's text into French for the 'very honored lady and Queen of France', confirming that she, not the king, was the key dedicatee.⁹⁴ In keeping with the spirit of Lefèvre d'Étaples and of the prayer book that Claude had fabricated for her young sister Renée,⁹⁵ never does a priest intervene in Veronica da Binasco's personal religious experience. Christ himself feeds Veronica a host, and the nun learns to compose her own text — much as the Virgin, or Mary Magdalen, writes alongside the Apostles in the volume crafted around the same time for the young Renée.⁹⁶

Like Denis Briçonnet and many an evangelical, Claude seems to have advanced cautiously. Yet her religious sensitivities were such that Jean Daniel (documented 1518–1544), a priest based in Nantes at the time of her entry into her Breton capital in 1518, could offer her subsequently a bitterly satirical manuscript, *Les Obfuscations du monde*.⁹⁷ Daniel summons rich prelates to take humility as their patron and denounces the 'rich and powerful' King Pharaoh, who unleashed the wrath of God 'for his oppression

93 Veissière, p. 105; Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a. His brother Nicolas (d. 1529) was Anne and Claude's 'contrôleur et général des finances' for Brittany (Le Page, p. 248).

94 The king's and the queen's (more elaborate) vellum copies are BnF, Rés. Vélins 2744 and BnF, Rés. Vélins 2743.

95 Formerly Modena, Biblioteca Estense (stolen).

96 See Cynthia J. Brown's text herein, identified as the Virgin passing the Credo down to the Apostles; Wilson-Chevalier, 2015a, for the hypothesis that this youthful figure may be the Apostle Mary Magdalen.

97 Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliothek, NKS 165. Deuffic. See Chardon; Wilson-Chevalier, 2017.

of the poor'.⁹⁸ Since charity enables salvation,⁹⁹ Jean Daniel necessarily approved when the humble and respectful Queen Claude, during her entry, gave back to the Nantais their mandatory gift. Moreover, at the beginning of his text, he praised Anne de Bretagne's religious stance, complimenting his dedicatee's mother for having appointed pastors who illuminated the Gallican Church.¹⁰⁰ However humble, Claude insisted on her rank in both pageantry and her prayer book. She (and later her sister), in her mother's stead, used the power of rank to promote Church reform.

Perfect Friendship: The Power of a Pious and Equitable Queen

On 19 September 1519, Sebastiano (1459–1543) and Antonio Giustinian characterized the eloquent Claude de France as 'a woman of few words';¹⁰¹ and when about a year later Antonio described Marguerite d'Alençon/de Navarre as someone who knew all the secrets but 'spoke little',¹⁰² he unwittingly placed the sisters-in-law side by side in the same ever-more-prudent Church-reforming circle. Although most often linked to Marguerite, the future queen of England Anne Boleyn (c. 1501–1536) had actually spent almost seven years at Queen Claude's court.¹⁰³ A 'convinced evangelical', Boleyn borrowed stylistic elements from Claude's manuscripts and, like the queen, invoked the celestial armillary sphere.¹⁰⁴ Today Boleyn is credited with having shaped religious change in England; and the extant volumes from her library include Lefèvre d'Étaples's French Bible and his *Epistres et evangiles des cinquante et deux semaines de l'an*.

Another of Claude's remarkable ladies-in-waiting with evangelical ties was the author Anne de Graville (c. 1490?–after 1540), learned enough to offer the queen her translation of Boccaccio's *Theseida* around 1521. The Arsenal copy of her *Beau romant des deux amans Palamon et Arcita*, thought to have belonged to Claude, contains a dedicatory illumination

98 'Riches prelatz situez au hault trosne [...]. Humilite recevez pour patrosne', fol. 15^r; 'Pharaon estoit roy riche et puissant', 'pour l'oppression qu'il fist au pouvre peuple', fol. 25^v.

99 'The good you have done to the poor [...] you have done it for me [Jesus] and my affairs'; 'Ce que avez faict de bien aux pouvres gens [...]. Vous lavez faict pour moy et mes affaires', fols. 72^r, 72^v.

100 'toute l'eglise gallicane en est enluminee', fols. 6^v–7^r.

101 'di poche parole', Sanudo, XXVII, col. 610.

102 Sanudo, XXIX, col. 167: 'Disse che [...] madame di Lanson sapeva tutti li secreti, ma parlava poco'.

103 Reid, I, pp. 61–62, n. 57; Ives, pp. 24–33.

104 Ives, p. 30; Starkey, p. 8; and Carley, fig. 118.

(fol. 1^v) with an outstanding image of the queen.¹⁰⁵ Seated on her throne under a Franco-Breton canopy, she receives from her lady-in-waiting the tale of the Amazon queen Hippolyta and her sister Emilia that Graville rewrote. The preceding folio (1^r) casts the 'sovereign dame', patron of the translation, as 'the site of all knowledge', 'in all said to be without vice'.¹⁰⁶ Graville's artist depicts the curtain of Claude's impressive canopy extending out to embrace three ladies-in-waiting, two of them pictured in active debate. The text refers explicitly to the Field of Cloth of Gold, and the male heroes Palamon and Arcita, cousins who fight to the death for Emilia's love but are ultimately reconciled, have been equated with François I and Henry VIII. Hence, when Hippolyta and Emilia appear side by side as the central spectators of a tournament (fol. 36^r), Queens Claude and Catherine of Aragon, who together on 11 June watched the kings joust and then gave each other's consort a ring,¹⁰⁷ must have come to the contemporary viewer's mind. In the final image (fol. 68^r), the main female protagonist, standing on the heraldic right with two courtly ladies dressed in ermine like the queen, commands over four rather contrite looking men. The text directly below proffers a commentary on perfect love — 'I mean loving as perfect friendship / Not today's counterfeit love' — which reads as Graville and Claude's main point.¹⁰⁸ The author/translator was boldly formulating the power of women to redefine the parameters of Renaissance love: her own right to marry the man of her choice against her father's will, Claude's right to object to a philandering husband.

There is a political sub-text, too. In the first narrative image (fol. 2^r), Hippolyta and Emilia stand between the enthroned king (Theseus) and a knight with upright sword (Fig. 5.5). At the Field of Cloth of Gold, on 8 June, Constable Charles de Bourbon (1490–1527) rode by François's side 'with the naked sword in hand which he held point up' — the emblem of the charge bestowed on Bourbon in 1515.¹⁰⁹ Queen Hippolyta/Claude's gesture is that of an intercessor recommending a wary Constable to a troubled king. The tale of fratricide has become Claude's plea to François to mitigate his hostility to Bourbon, aggravated in December 1519 when Suzanne de Bourbon (1491–1521)

105 Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. 5116; dated 1521–1524 by Orth, II, p. 102, n°25; Müller, 2003; Müller, 2004; Reno; L'Estrange. Six manuscripts survive.

106 'ma souveraine dame', 'la ou gist tout sçavoir', 'en tout dicte sans vice', Arsenal, ms. 5116, fol. 1^v.

107 Sanudo, XXIX, cols. 45–46.

108 'J'entens aymant d'ung amytié par faicte / Non pas de celle aujourd'huy contrefaicte'.

109 'lo illustrissimo ducha di Barbon gran contestabele de Franza [...] havea in mano una spada nuda qual teniva cum la ponta in suso', Sanudo, XXIX, col. 78.

Figure 5.5 *Queen Hippolyta, Emilia, King Theseus and a Mounted Knight*



From Anne de Graville, *Romant de Palamon et Arcite*, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5116, fol. 2' (©BnF)

bequeathed her vast territories to her spouse.¹¹⁰ Graville reinterprets Lautrec's recent claim that Claude was 'in the power of the Constable' by presenting the queen as fostering reconciliation and attempting to counter François's intractable stance. Nevertheless, following Suzanne's death in April 1521, François I and his mother opened aggressive parliamentary suits to claim Bourbon territories for the crown. It was almost two years later, on 23 March 1523, that Charles de Bourbon made his final appearance at the French court, then at the Louvre. According to an ambassadorial letter dispatched to Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (d. 1530), the king and the queen were dining separately when the king learned of Bourbon's presence in the chamber of his spouse. It was therein that he castigated the Constable's dealings with Emperor Charles V, therein that the tone mounted for the very last time between the acrimonious rivals.¹¹¹ Claude called upon Graville's literary talents to voice her discordant view; and while this political battle over inheritance tarnished the reputation of François and Louise permanently, it surely enhanced Claude's image as a just queen.

An inscription runs up the curtain of Claude's regal canopy on Graville's dedicatory page: *DEUM TIME PAUPERES SUSTINE MEMEN(TO FINIS)* ('Fear God, support the poor, remember the end').¹¹² Hence, even this profane work includes a socio-religious edge, recalling Jean Daniel's concern with charity and the oppression of the poor. The inscription appears in the St. Roch chapel in the hospice of Issoudun, under construction during the first decade of Claude's life; and three of her prayer book illuminations are dedicated to the saints who protected from the plague, Sebastian (33^v and 34^r) and Roch (34^v). While Sebastian is shot with arrows and uncharitably clubbed to death, an angel intervenes delicately to dress the ailing Roch's wound. Claude remained proactive until the end of her life. Even after the birth of her seventh child Marguerite (1523–1574), when still following the court, she subsidized the church of Saint-Honoré in a suburb of Blois, to help build a cemetery for plague victims.¹¹³ Yes, the king and his mother intentionally thwarted Claude's will to rule. Nonetheless, her political and religious agendas were oft attuned to the demands of her age. In the name of charity and justice, a number of her subjects — including the second most powerful in the realm — reached out to build alliances with the queen.

110 Crouzet, pp. 298–301.

111 La Mure, p. 585, n.

112 The beginning transcribed by Orth, II, p. 102. The whole inscription figured at Issoudun (see Péricard-Méa).

113 Néret, p. 185, n. 1 cites a document in the Archives of Alençon.

Conclusion

Claude de France did not live to see François's humiliating capture at Pavia, nor the ensuing exchange of the *dauphin* François and the future Henri II as hostages in Spain. This twist of fate may explain why the sons destined to rule escaped the responsibility of shouldering evangelical Church reform, unlike the other viable royal children whose tutoring, logically, fell to Claude's sister soul Marguerite d'Angoulême/de Navarre at the queen's death.¹¹⁴ Guillaume Briçonnet wrote one of his longest letters to Marguerite after his brother Denis had gone to Blois to see the dying Claude, after she had received extreme unction from her confessor/translator Louis Chantereau.¹¹⁵ The 'very high, very powerful and very excellent dame Claude' left it up to her 'very dear, well-loved lord and spouse' to elect the site of her sepulcher and the arrangements of her funeral rites.¹¹⁶ She did not choose to bequeath her personal possessions to her consort, though, but rather to her sons, by order of birth, with a provision for her daughters where custom allowed. If the power she had expected to wield at her husband's side had been sorely constrained, the power of her image as a queen who interceded for her people remained intact. The writer Guillaume Michel of Tours (fl. 1540s) claimed in an elegy that the torrent of tears of the inhabitants of Blois, Tours, and Amboise caused the waters of the Loire to rise after Claude's death.¹¹⁷ Their queen provided sepulchers for her humblest subjects, victims of the plague, and conversely refused to bend to the will of her spouse and his powerful mother as they toppled the highest feudal lord of their realm. She helped make saints and simultaneously worked to renew a dangerously corrupt Church. She distributed lands and charges, and yet her moral authority remained unblemished. In the realm of culture, foreign powers sought her support through artistic gifts, and she herself commissioned books 'fit for a queen'. Power is not singular but plural; and the short-lived 'good queen Claude' demonstrated that the powers of a marginalized queen could indeed instil respectful dread.

114 Wilson-Chevalier, 2017.

115 Briçonnet, II, p. 144; Ferguson and McKinley, p. 5.

116 'très haute, très puissante et très-excellente', 'son très cher, très aimé seigneur et époux', cited in Néret, pp. 191–92.

117 'ung torrent volontaire', 'jusqu'à faire croistre [L]oire', Michel, n.p.

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