

QUEEN ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE: POLITICAL MOTHERHOOD IN THE
MIDDLE AGES

by
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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my loving, supportive husband who has always encouraged me in my educational goals. I also want to dedicate this paper to my mom and my recently departed dad who believed in me, and gave me a loving childhood, teaching me values, morals, and the importance of hard work. Also to my five children who told me I was a good example to them by pursuing my education, even though I felt too old to attempt it. I want to encourage my grandchildren to always seek education and never stop learning. I would like to thank my six siblings and family members, and friends for being so supportive of my education and making me feel like I can accomplish whatever I set my mind to.

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ABSTRACT

Historians have frequently written on the life of Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204) although few have studied her role as an affectionate, devoted, dutiful mother. This work is an attempt to address this situation through the study of available primary sources on Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine. Even though she was Queen of France (1137-1152) and England (1137-1189) she was considered less important than any man of her class because of the societal norms of the time. In reality she played an important part in the Angevin Empire for the power and influence she wielded in her own right. She used this power to influence the lives of her children for the better, nurturing them as children and playing a major role in their marriage alliances as well as supporting them in their adult lives. Eleanor fought the attempts her husband, Henry II, and other male secular and religious leaders made to force her into a submissive role because of Church reforms of the time. Eleanor of Aquitaine continues to captivate readers today.

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INTRODUCTION

Eleanor of Aquitaine, a New Perspective on Medieval Motherhood and Queenship

The Rebellion

In the autumn of 1173, Eleanor of Aquitaine fell from her position as companion to the king of England in ruling his considerable territories, to confinement as his prisoner. Eleanor supported her sons Henry, Richard and Geoffrey in the rebellion against her husband King Henry II of England (r. 1154-1189). Young King Henry sent letters to prospective supporters, trading on his ties with his father-in-law, King Louis VII of France (r. 1137-1180), as well as stirring up the memory of his father's part in the assassination of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket.¹ Settling the division of land between their four surviving sons had become a major point of contention between Eleanor, Henry II, and their sons. During a conference held in Montmirail, Maine, in 1169, Henry II furthered young Henry's ire when the king gave his youngest son, John, three castles on the continent: Chinon, Loudun, and Mirebeau.²

These castles had previously been a part of Prince Henry's inheritance, and Eleanor sympathized with her son's anger against his father. Prince Henry had been crowned in 1170 as king of England even though his father was still alive. This practice had been started by the Capetian kings of France in an attempt to avoid succession

¹Benedict of Petersborough, "The Murder of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury," 29 December 1170, accessed 7 October 2017.

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/1170benedict-becket.asp>.

² Ralph Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 214.

disputes. Henry II and other Angevin kings adopted this practice as well. These heirs were regarded as junior kings but exercised very little power. If the junior king predeceased his father, he was not included in the numbering of the monarchs.³ Henry II wanted to make an alliance with Count Humbert of Maurienne through the betrothal of John to the Count's daughter, Alicia. John had no inheritance, having been dedicated to the church as a young child, so land had to be appropriated from Prince Henry's original inheritance.⁴

Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine and Normandy, Countess of Poitou, and Queen of England, was prepared to support her three eldest sons against their father in an attempt to reduce her puissant husband's succession strategies for several reasons. First, Eleanor protested the tight reign Henry exerted on her participation in political decisions; second, the mistresses Henry kept, especially the fair Rosamond Clifford, hurt and angered Eleanor; and, lastly, she supported young Henry, Richard, and Geoffrey against Henry II for his unfair division of land between their sons.⁵

Settling the distribution of land had become a major point of contention between Eleanor and Henry II as well as Henry and his three eldest sons. Eleanor sympathized with her sons and became their protector, acting as intercessor between them and their father. The rebellion that ensued between Henry, his sons, and wife, Eleanor was unparalleled in the history of the Middle Ages.⁶

³Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 187, 205-207.

⁴Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 210-212; Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 169; Alison Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), 177. Alicia died in 1177 before her engagement to John could be formalized.

⁵Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 208.

⁶Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 205.

Contemporary and Modern Critics

Many of Eleanor's contemporaries, such as Ralph Diceto, and modern writers, such as Ralph Turner and Elizabeth A. R. Brown, have looked at this event and others and portrayed Eleanor as a self-serving woman and mother. These characterizations are possibly inaccurate.⁷ For example, Brown claimed that Eleanor was more of a domineering mother rather than a nurturing one.⁸

Eleanor certainly challenged the accepted gender norms of submissiveness and subservience for women and came up against many fierce opponents, from church leaders to her second husband, King Henry II.⁹ Eleanor often felt Henry's tight control over her in many matters such as her personal finances and the governance over her own duchy of Aquitaine. Even though Henry ruled his wife, children, and kingdom with an iron fist, Eleanor fought for recognition of her titles, dowry, and ancestry and the respect that she deserved.¹⁰

I will add to this discussion by reinterpreting primary sources to demonstrate how Eleanor was not a power-hungry queen who manipulated her children only for what she could gain, but instead was an affectionate, devoted, dutiful mother to her children by the standards of the Middle Ages. The standards of medieval motherhood included: coping with high mortality rates in children from disease and accidents, especially within the first year; mothers were not allowed to attend their babies baptisms being considered "unclean" for several weeks after giving birth; for the poorer classes, wet nurses were

⁷Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 206.

⁸Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine: Parent, Queen, and Duchess," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patron and Politician*, ed. William Kibler (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1976), 10.

⁹Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 256-57.

¹⁰Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life*, 129.

hired to feed and care for the baby out of a need to return to work, and in wealthier families wet nurses were hired to help avoid the suppression of the fertility of the mother; midwives delivered and cared for the mother and child and used herbs to treat them both as opposed to a male doctor caring for them; children of the lower classes were sent to live with families around the age of seven to serve as apprentices and the wealthier classes sent their sons to trusted, scholarly men who would educate these young male children.

New scholarly interest in medieval women, queenship roles, and motherhood provides an opportunity to re-examine the important role women played in royal family dynamics as well as the political arena. This renewed interest was a result of “feminist historical studies,” from the 1960s and has continued to gain momentum since.¹¹ Because of feminism and academic interest in gender studies, formerly accepted theories such as Brown’s and Turner’s concerning the lives of Eleanor and other noble women are being challenged and rewritten on a range of social, political, economic, religious, and family issues. Eleanor has been neatly packaged in the past as a frustrated, vengeful woman who was only looking after her self-interests, but I argue that she was in reality, an energetic woman and affectionate, devoted mother who tirelessly promoted her children’s interest and welfare as her own. She was both a strong queen and a nurturing mother. The two issues do not need to be separated or opposed but, instead, incorporated.¹²

¹¹John Carmi Parsons, “Introduction: Family, Sex, and Power: The Rhythms of Medieval Queenship,” in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 1. John Carmi Parsons referred to this new interest as, “an outgrowth of feminist historical studies since the 1960s.”

¹²Parsons, Introduction, 1.

A look at extant sources on Eleanor of Aquitaine suggests a picture of a royal woman who learned to combine a desire to fulfill her political responsibilities with successful mothering by preparing her children for the societal duties required in a court setting, participating in their marriage alliances, and supporting them in their responsibilities throughout their lives. And as Eleanor also had dreams and goals for her own life she sought to exert the political power that was rightfully hers through her inheritance of Aquitaine. Based on examples of her female ancestors, Eleanor had expectations to rule by her husband's side, and raise her children with motherly affection and influence. Eleanor of Aquitaine continues to serve as an example of a woman who balanced a desire for political recognition with good motherhood by the standards of her time.

Methodology

During the course of my research on Eleanor, I utilized what primary sources I could find which were limited. Primary sources were originally written in Latin and can be difficult to find as well as to read. One reason for the lack of information on Eleanor stems from the annulment of her first marriage from King Louis VII. It appears that after Louis and Eleanor's marriage was annulled, certain existing documents such as Odo of Deuil's *De Profectione Lodovici VII in Orientem*, were edited to eliminate references to Eleanor as Queen of France.¹³ Legal separation in the Middle Ages is often termed as divorce yet there was no such thing in the modern sense of the word. When the word divorced was used, it meant that an annulment or a judgement had been passed that no real marriage between a couple had ever existed. Prior to their annulment, Eleanor

¹³Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), xv.

expected to govern her duchy of Aquitaine and help King Louis govern his kingdom as her predecessors had. Louis's advisors were afraid of Eleanor's powerful hold over the king and after returning from a failed trip to the Holy Land for the second crusade, and upon failing to produce a male heir for Louis, his advisors urged him to seek an annulment from Eleanor and it was granted from Church leaders. Although such historical developments make finding information on Eleanor particularly difficult, it is still possible and worthwhile to make the attempt.

Main sources concerning Eleanor include Pipe Rolls, letters, charters, and chronicles. Pipe Rolls are financial records kept by the English treasury beginning in 1130 that provide information on the household accounts of Henry and Eleanor. Pipe Rolls also reveal the times Eleanor requested money to care for and travel with her children. Eleanor was unique in that she did travel with the royal children since it was not the standard practice of the time. Eleanor nurtured her children, was involved in who they saw, and what they experienced. Pipe Roll evidence demonstrates how she participated in their marriage alliances, and continued to sacrifice and support them throughout her life.

I found official letters written to and from Eleanor that have been translated into English by Dr. Joan Ferrante and published on the internet. There are three extant letters that were written to Eleanor from her son Richard and one written from John to Eleanor. There is also a letter written from Eleanor to John, as well as three letters written by Eleanor to Pope Celestine III on behalf of her son Richard who was in captivity. There exists a letter from Eleanor's clerk, Peter of Blois, upon the death of her first son, William, when he was only three years old. These few extant letters shed light on Eleanor's interactions with her sons, Richard and John, that seem to demonstrate

affection and support for each other, and the correspondence that took place between Eleanor and religious leaders on behalf of her children support this analysis.

There are also primary sources in the form of charters that were written by Eleanor on behalf of her duchy of Aquitaine under the auspices of her first husband Louis VII then Henry II as well as charters written by Eleanor while acting as regent for Henry while he was away. Eleanor also wrote charters acting on behalf of her sons, Richard and John, which demonstrate Eleanor's son's confidence and trust in her.

Chronicles written by Eleanor's contemporaries provide little information about Eleanor's physical appearance or her personal experiences due to the Church's model of conduct. Chronicles started out as annals kept by monasteries that detailed a list of key events and followed a strict chronological structure. Since most chroniclers were men of the Church they looked for the individual's place within the Christian community and as a result biographies were not a common genre during this time, especially in regards to women. Chroniclers thought more about parishioners conforming to accepted Church models, and if parishioners did not conform they would be held up as examples of those not living up to Church standards. Although these documents are not about Eleanor as a mother they provide examples of how Eleanor interacted with her children and was judged by her peers.

I interpreted Eleanor's relationship with her children from the point of view that she was an affectionate, devoted mother, by the standards of her day, as opposed to what benefits her royal children could bring to her politically and financially. I used the insights of historians and sociologists of family and religion to help me reinterpret the scarce evidence on Eleanor in new ways. For example, there has been an active debate

for decades over the level of affection medieval parents had for their offspring. I compared and contrasted how theories promoted in the 1960s, proposing that parents had little affection for their children in medieval Europe to today's theory that maintains medieval parents did in fact have affection for their children by medieval standards. For example, Barbara Rosenwein posits that medieval children did have a childhood and were cherished members of the family. Mark Golden argues that many ancient Roman parents felt emotion for their children especially at their deaths which has been evidenced by the number of headstones erected for children.¹⁴ I employed these theories to interpret the information in the Pipe Rolls that Eleanor was with her children as often as possible. She appears to have been devoted to and nurturing with her children as she traveled with them in their youth and supported them when they were adults. While it is impossible to determine what exact emotions Eleanor felt for her children these sources are relevant in that they to support my analysis that Eleanor had motherly attachments to her children.

My approach was to state how often Eleanor was with her children from infancy to adulthood as often as she was allowed, demonstrating her unflinching support despite her age or the miles she traveled to be with them or fulfill a request from them. This supports my argument that Eleanor was a devoted mother to her children in contrast to what some of her contemporaries such as Ralph Diceto thought about her motivation behind her support.

¹⁴ Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions': Writing Without Fear about Early Medieval Emotions'," *Early Medieval Europe* (2001), 10:2, in Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 43-44; *Euripides and Dionysus* (Cambridge, 1948), 11 in Mark Golden, "Did the Ancients Care When Their Children Died?" *Greece & Rome* 35, no. 2 (Oct. 1988), 152-163. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/642999>.

My theoretical framework that I used in evaluating Eleanor and her motherhood concerns the idealized, emotional and spiritual aspects of motherhood. The ideal mother knew her responsibilities to her children religiously and secularly. The ideal mother demonstrated obedience and submissiveness to her husband as an example for her daughters to follow, and although Eleanor fought the constraints placed upon her because of the gender norms of the day, I contend that she was an ideal mother as a result of her dedication to her children. Eleanor provided her children training on what proper manners to use in court, saw to their education and discipline, and helped prepare them for their future lives.

The emotional aspect of motherhood is evidenced in this paper by referring to Rosenwein's and Golden's articles. The spiritual perception of motherhood was constructed by the Church in the form of the Virgin Mary. Mary was a very popular figure in medieval Europe and as such works by historians Clarissa Atkinson and Sally Cunneen provide valuable information on how people of the Middle Ages viewed the Virgin Mary. This was relevant because medieval women were encouraged to model the Marian ideal of virginity and piety. Mary not only bore the Christ child, but actively participated in the redemption of mankind.¹⁵ By medieval standards, it seems that the term to use in describing Mary's motherhood is devoted and as such I will refer to Eleanor's motherhood as devoted.¹⁶

¹⁵Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 133-34; Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary: the Woman and the Symbol* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 146-67.

¹⁶Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 133-34. Mary was not said to love unconditionally as was "ascribed to good motherhood by modern psychologists." The Miracles were written about Mary to represent the transactions conducted between Mary and her suitors. Complete devotion was required.

Eleanor's inheritance made her a powerful woman and as a result many unfavorable myths were written about her by her contemporaries. Consequently, I was faced with trying to determine what was correct and what has been invented to discredit Eleanor. Articles written by historians such as Frank Chambers and Robert Chapman helped me to sort through the myths perpetuated about Eleanor.¹⁷ I also had to familiarize myself with twelfth century customs and determine the strength of the Church in order to try to define Eleanor's place in secular and religious society as a mother and queen. Utilizing current historiography on Eleanor's life aided me in my research to attempt to establish that Eleanor of Aquitaine was a nurturing, dutiful mother to her children.

To demonstrate this, this thesis is organized as follows: chapter one will discuss available primary sources, as well as convey the image contemporary chroniclers created of Eleanor which comes through in these records. I also discuss how I selected primary and secondary sources. Chapter two provides a background on Eleanor of Aquitaine and briefly describes the customs and social practices she would have been exposed to as a child and youth. In Chapter three, I provide a framework of the standards of medieval motherhood, then use primary resources to discuss Eleanor's care of her children by providing an abundance of examples of Eleanor's life-long interactions with them in order to demonstrate that Eleanor was a devoted mother by the standards of her time. Chapter four discusses Eleanor's support of her adult children and utilizes the official letters. Chapter five places Eleanor within the context of medieval motherhood and queenship, describes the office of queenship, and contrasts Eleanor to other well-known

¹⁷Frank M. Chambers, "Some Legends Concerning Eleanor of Aquitaine," *Speculum* 16, no. 4 (Oct 1941): 459-61; Robert Chapman, "A Note on the Demon Queen Eleanor," *Modern Language Notes* 70, no. 6 (1955): 394-96.

queens of her time using secondary sources. Last is the conclusion which summarizes my argument of Eleanor's success in combining queenship with motherhood, and weathering the many storms in her life.

CHAPTER ONE

Who Was Eleanor?

On the death of her father, William X, Eleanor inherited almost a third of today's France. This inheritance coupled with Eleanor's illustrious ancestry made Eleanor one of the most powerful and sought-after women in Western Europe. It also made her one of the most feared.

The purpose of this thesis is to compare and contrast contemporary and current accounts of Eleanor's activities as a mother and demonstrate how she used her positions as duchess and queen to support her children throughout their lives. Since this counters the most common portrayals of Eleanor by her contemporaries as well as by modern historians, it is first necessary to analyze how the negative mischaracterizations of Eleanor came to be. The deficiency of evidence regarding Eleanor and the mythical status she has acquired go far to explain why historians have associated her name with events in which she played no part which I will argue have contributed to negative characterizations of Eleanor as queen and mother.¹⁸ We must understand the biases of both the primary and secondary sources relating to Eleanor to begin to untangle these misunderstandings.

¹⁸Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and Her Seasons," *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, eds. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 3.

Myths and Legends

Eleanor's inheritance brought her a great deal of prestige and power, and churchmen and secular leaders alike feared her authority and influence. As a result, many "black" legends were attributed to Eleanor in an attempt to negate her power. Frank McMinn Chambers wrote an article explaining how certain legends concerning Eleanor originated. Two of the legends were generated while Eleanor accompanied her first husband, Louis VII of France, on the second crusade to the Holy Land. Louis VII, Eleanor, and their entourage spent some time at Antioch with Eleanor's uncle, Raymond, who was prince of that city (r. 1136-1149).¹⁹ Eleanor was reportedly glad to see a family member and enjoyed spending time in Raymond's company. A rumor was circulated that Eleanor engaged in a physical relationship with her uncle, Raymond, and speculation concerning the supposed affair continued to follow Eleanor through the centuries. Turner urges historians to keep in mind that:

What is important about the Antioch incident is not so much what actually happened between Eleanor and her uncle, but what her contemporaries believed or wished to believe had occurred. For John of Salisbury and his clerical contemporaries, Eleanor's violation of the laws of marriage was not adultery with Raymond (which is unproven), nor her demand for an annulment of her marriage so much as her refusal to adopt the subservient role expected of a wife. She had gone against the submissiveness demanded of wives by a male-dominated Church and secular society.²⁰

Turner is correct in focusing on how Eleanor's contemporaries portrayed her. A person's standing in society could be adversely affected by slander and gossip. A reputation for chastity and morality in a woman was considered essential. Another legend resulting from the second crusade, which again was a result of Eleanor acting outside of the

¹⁹Chambers, "Some Legends Concerning Eleanor of Aquitaine," 459.

²⁰Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 90-91.

prescribed submissiveness required for acceptable wifely conduct, contended that Eleanor and the women who accompanied their husbands on the second crusade dressed up like Amazons and fought bravely beside their husbands. It was also rumored that Eleanor had an affair with Saladin, the Muslim leader, which would have been impossible since Eleanor's movements were closely watched by Louis VII and his attendants, and Eleanor would most assuredly not have been released alive by Saladin had the affair really occurred. Saladin kept numerous female slaves and Eleanor was a European woman from the camp of his enemies.

Eleanor also supposedly had an affair with the great troubadour, Bernart de Ventadorn, who accompanied Eleanor from her court at Poitiers to the court of her second husband, Henry II, after the annulment of her marriage to Louis VII. The legend most written about by historians is the rumor wherein Eleanor killed Henry's mistress, Rosamond Clifford. Numerous variations exist in operas, poems, and tragedies that fancifully describe how Eleanor took revenge on Rosamond.²¹

The significance of these legends is that they were constructed in an attempt to discredit Eleanor's rank and influence. In the medieval period, morality in a woman was very important and the surest way to discredit a woman's reputation was to question her chastity. Chapman contends that these legends attached to Eleanor are a result of her powerful standing and political influence. Secular and religious men felt threatened by Eleanor's position as queen to Henry II and mother to the royal children. As a result they tried to discredit Eleanor and weaken her power and influence with Henry.²² Sexual slander was the easiest way to do so. Men grew less tolerant of women in positions of

²¹Frank McMinn Chambers, "Some Legends Concerning Eleanor of Aquitaine," 459-463.

²²Robert L. Chapman, "A Note on the Demon Queen Eleanor," 394.

power as the male-dominated Roman Catholic Church became stronger and as marriage, in particular, came under greater church control. At this time gender was being redefined by theologians and moralists, and “an increasing emphasis on episcopal authority and ecclesiastical order signaled an end to the strict dichotomy of Christ and Culture.”²³ This statement indicates that belief in Christ, and all practices attendant, became the culture in Western Europe.

In the eleventh century, a struggle for power between the Church and secular leaders, known as the Investiture Controversy, may have influenced perceptions of Eleanor by her contemporaries. It originated between Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV, Holy Roman Emperor, and included conflicts over lay investiture, clerical marriage, and simony (the buying and selling of ecclesiastical offices). These reforms strengthened Church power over religious rituals that influenced everyday life such as baptism, communion, marriage, and last rites. The Church’s notoriously misogynist view of women and the teachings of the early Church Fathers placed a high value on sexual abstinence and chastity. Women were expected to meekly submit to male power—even abusive forms of male power—in society, the home, and church. During this time, chroniclers often purposefully excluded women from their chronicles.²⁴ Secular and religious men felt threatened by strong and powerful women, especially queens.

Despite the strengthening of the Church’s hold over daily customs and the place of women in society, Eleanor was well aware of her illustrious ancestors and knew that her distinguished origins coupled with her rich inheritance made her as powerful as her

²³Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 237.

²⁴Christopher N. L. Brooke, “Both Small and Great Beasts: An Introductory Study,” in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 6.

husband Henry II in her own right. Eleanor of Aquitaine's patrilineal ancestors descended from Charlemagne and included Agnes (1024?-1077), Empress (1046-1056), daughter of Duke William V of Aquitaine. Eleanor was an important figure in Europe as a countess, duchess, wife and queen of two kings, and a mother of two kings. Through her long life, she knew most of the wealthy and important people of Europe such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Becket, Abbé Suger, and Pope Eugenius III. Her wealth and significance over her eighty years allowed her to take part, at various times, in King Louis VII's and King Henry II's governments, and courts, under the king's direction and approval.²⁵

Eleanor was often vilified by male church leaders because of her rank and her willingness to use the authority that came with it. An example of this comes from Walter Map, who served as a courtier of King Henry II. He wrote the twelfth century social history, *De Nugis Curialium* in 1200. Map, feeling his influence with the king was weakened by Eleanor's power, began a smear campaign to discredit her. In *De Nugis Curialium* Map wrote, "He [Stephen] was succeeded by Henry, the son of Matilda, and to him Eleanor, the Queen of France, cast glances of unholy love. She was the wife of that most pious King Louis, but she managed to secure an unlawful divorce and married Henry, and this in spite of the charge secretly made against her that she had shared Louis's bed with Henry's father, Geoffrey."²⁶

²⁵Wheeler and Parsons, "Lady and Lord: Eleanor of Aquitaine," xiv. Young Henry is often included in the count of Eleanor's son's as kings although if the young king died before the elder king, his kingship was not included.

²⁶Chapman, "A Note on the Demon Queen Eleanor," 394. *De Nugis Curialium* was written in 1200, and translated by Montague K. James in 1923.

Map, a churchman, used words like “unholy” and “unlawful” to accuse Eleanor in both religious and secular terms, implying that Eleanor had committed the ultimate treachery by engaging in an incestuous relationship with her uncle Raymond. Blackening her name would aid in discrediting Eleanor in all aspects of her life. Turner declared that, “those living in a Christian society classed adultery and fornication as serious crimes.”²⁷ Because of inheritance laws, adultery in a woman was taken very seriously. Prevailing gender roles and negative attitudes about women in the twelfth century affected the way chroniclers, like Map, recorded events.²⁸

Historiography

Despite the lack of comprehensive records on Eleanor’s life, she continues to be a favorite topic for modern writers because of her power and influence. Eleanor was not only maligned as a woman and queen by peers and historians, but as a royal mother. Elizabeth A. R. Brown, for example, commented that Mary Anne Everett Green, a nineteenth century historian judged Eleanor as a mother by Green’s own Victorian standards assuming that Eleanor had spoiled her children and that her children were fortunate to have left home at an early age.²⁹ Brown attributes this and other negative portrayals of Eleanor as a mother and the myths that were generated about her, to the lack of information on Eleanor’s life.³⁰

A survey of secondary sources written on Eleanor was helpful in establishing an up-to-date overview of her life which supported this analysis of Eleanor’s motherhood and queenship. Each author used in this survey has attempted to construct the most

²⁷Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 25.

²⁸Chapman, “A Note on the Demon Queen Eleanor.” 394.

²⁹Brown, “Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and Her Seasons,” 3.

³⁰Brown, “Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and Her Seasons,” 3.

accurate picture of Eleanor possible from their own point of view based on primary sources. Most of the biographies share similar facts about Eleanor such as her birth, her ancestors, marriages, and children. Where they differ, is in their focus on Eleanor's possible motives behind some of the decisions she made, such as her support of her sons in the revolt against their father.

Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons, for example, extensively evaluated several secondary sources on Eleanor of Aquitaine, highlighting the most prominent comprehensive studies of Eleanor in the twentieth century. Included was Amy Kelly's, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* (1950), where they determined that Kelly constructed her biography on Eleanor, through the men in Eleanor's life. Kelly's book was one of the few written on Eleanor for the next two decades and was a frequently used source on this medieval queen. In contrast, Marion Meade's *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Biography* (1977) is a profile of Eleanor told through a woman's point of view, concerning how Eleanor fought for recognition in a man's world where a power struggle persisted between church and state, male and female. D. D. R. Owen's, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend* (1993) concentrates on the connection between history and legend, especially relating to Eleanor, and argues that some of Eleanor's attitudes and decisions politically, such as her marriage to Henry II, were a product of her southern culture. Alison Weir notes in her book, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: By the Wrath of God, Queen of England* (1999), that there is a lack of primary sources for Eleanor and those records that do exist were written mostly by men which possibly produced an unbalanced view of her life.³¹ Owen and Meade try to make a connection between Eleanor's life

³¹Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life*, xix, xx. Literary links such as the tales of King Arthur.

choices and her southern upbringing through literary links. Brown and Weir subscribe to Kelly's theory that Eleanor achieved her rank and power because of the influential men in her life. Wheeler and Parsons concluded that because of the lack of a comprehensive view of Eleanor's life, based on the full range of record evidence as well as narrative sources, that modern scholarship has had the tendency to concentrate on male religious and secular opinions of Eleanor which we know are mostly negative.³²

Wheeler and Parsons provide a convincing argument that Eleanor's image is more recently evolving from ongoing discussion and research based on historical foundations, with which this thesis attempts to engage. Most assuredly, opinions on Eleanor, her motherhood, and queenship have been more positive since the 1990s and in the early 2000s, Tuner, Bowie, Wheeler, and Parsons began to compare Eleanor's mother-child ties to today's warm, affectionate relationships.

New Interpretations

Past interpretations of Eleanor's image as a mother and queen can no longer be accepted because of changing information on parenting and childhood. For example, it was the accepted theory in the 1960s that there was little affection demonstrated by parents for their children. It was thought that medieval mothers did their duty bearing children, and then placed these children in the care of wet nurses and servants for their rearing thus bonds of affection were not created between mother and child.³³ Children were invisible to their mothers because of the high rate of child mortality, and that the family unit, as we know it, is a modern invention.

³²Parsons and Wheeler, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, xvi-xvii.

³³Parsons and Wheeler, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, xvi-xvii, 464.

This view continued unchallenged until the late 1960s, with the development of cognitive psychology. Ulric Neisser published his book on *Cognitive Psychology* (1967) which marks the official beginning of the cognitive approach. The advent of social construction in the 1970's further aided in the revision of medieval childhood. In the 1980's, historians such as Gerd Althoff, Barbara Rosenwien, and Hanna Vollrath radically revised prior theories on the state of childhood in the medieval era proposing that medieval children did have a childhood and were cherished members of the family.³⁴ Pauline Stafford also supports the theory that medieval people understood there was a distinction between childhood and adulthood. Shulamith Shahar and Colin Heywood have both recognized that there was a medieval awareness of the three Classical stages of childhood-*infantia*, *pueritia*, and *adolescentia*.³⁵ Lorraine Attreed shared the same opinion that medieval parents raised their children very similarly to today's parents.³⁶

As far as Eleanor is concerned, Brown suggested in the early 1970s that Eleanor was not an affectionate, self-sacrificing mother, but that she was more domineering rather than nurturing. She also commented that Eleanor was more interested in political activity and using her children to further her political interests than in motherhood.³⁷ This paper will attempt to refute these ideas and establish that Eleanor was an affectionate, devoted

³⁴Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 43.

³⁵Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 31, 35, 56; Pauline Stafford, "Parents and Children in the Early Middle Ages," *Early Medieval Europe* (2001), 257-71; Shulamith Sharhar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 352; Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 231.

³⁶Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 56.

³⁷Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Parent, Queen, and Duchess," 16. These particular comments of Brown's were based on research from 1976, before the critique of Ariès. Brown wrote another work on Eleanor in the book cited in this paper, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, edited by Wheeler and Parsons where she revised conclusions she had made about Eleanor in the 1970's.

mother.³⁸ Desmond Seward joined those authors that cast Eleanor's motherhood in a negative light. He asserted that because Eleanor was not given a larger part in ruling the Angevin Empire, she, as a frustrated wife turned, "into a possessive matriarch," and that she became, "ferociously maternal" because of this situation. Seward also claimed that Eleanor found a way of regaining some of her power through her children. He called Eleanor a "masterful mother" who knew how to control her children, especially her son, Richard.³⁹ Seward's theory is speculation based on little evidence. He did not include notes and a full bibliography supporting this claim, only a select bibliography. Of the twelve sources Seward used to support his theory, all were male chroniclers. This provides a skewed representation of Eleanor's life. It is possible that Seward confused queenly responsibility and motherly support with a lust for power and self-promotion.⁴⁰ In contrast to Seward, Robert L. Chapman, as discussed above, described and refuted a range of negative myths attached to Eleanor. She seemed to attract attention because of her power and authority in any time period.⁴¹

In sum, surviving documents on Eleanor of Aquitaine's life are scarce, and those that do survive were written chiefly by monks who were often biased toward women, and who usually chose to focus their writings on the deeds of kings, princes, and popes. Queens mainly appear in Pipe Rolls for the purpose of accounting for the king's household, therefore, it is important to better understand Eleanor's overlapping motivations in queenship and motherhood by digging deeper into Eleanor's background.

³⁸Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 124.

³⁹Desmond Seward, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: The Mother Queen of the Middle Ages* (New York and London: Pegasus Books, 1978), 152- 153.

⁴⁰Desmond Seward, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 152-153; Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life*, 88.

⁴¹Chapman, "A Note on the Demon Queen Eleanor," 394.

In analyzing her roots, we can discern why Eleanor became the person she did, beyond what male chroniclers wrote about her.

CHAPTER TWO

Eleanor's Upbringing: Her Noble Ancestry and Background

Illustrious Beginnings

Due to the lack of primary sources that deal specifically with Eleanor's childhood, historians often refer to Eleanor's illustrious ancestry, the richness of Aquitaine, a brief background on the ten Dukes of Aquitaine, all named William, and a few vital statistics on Eleanor and her family.⁴² Most chroniclers were churchmen who were bound by the strict conventions of the Church, and sought the place each individual held within the Christian community. Conforming to the Church's accepted standards was far more important than recording personal characteristics or experiences.⁴³

Eleanor's life began in 1124 when she was born into the ducal family of Aquitaine, a family of distinction, wealth, and longevity. A contemporary chronicler, Gervase of Canterbury, commented on how Eleanor, "sprang from a noble race."⁴⁴ Her father was William, the tenth Duke of Aquitaine. Her mother was Aenor de Chatellerault from the noble Chatellerault family. Eleanor had a younger sister, Petronilla (later called Aelith), and a younger brother, William Aigret. Both Eleanor's mother and her brother, William, died in 1130. After her mother's death, Eleanor no longer had the direction and care of a mother, and upon William's death she became her father's heir. Both of these factors were to effect Eleanor and the woman she became.

⁴²Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 36-37.

⁴³Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 4-5.

⁴⁴Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life*, 6.

On April 9, 1137, when Eleanor was scarcely a teenager, her cosseted childhood ended upon the death of her father at the age of thirty-eight. William X was on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain. Noble daughters were usually married, or at least betrothed, by the time they reached the age of twelve which was the age the Church considered girls old enough to marry. After her father's death, Eleanor became the most desired bride in Western Europe because of her rich inheritance. Eleanor's father had not made marriage arrangements for Eleanor before he left for Santiago de Compostela, and she had no powerful male family members who could protect her and her sister, Petronilla, by arranging advantageous marriages for them. As William lay dying, he made Eleanor and her sister wards of Louis VI of France, who was William's overlord. This would be an advantage to Louis VI, for he had a son four years older than Eleanor, also named Louis.⁴⁵

Young Louis had already been crowned king in 1137 following the French custom of the crowning of male heirs as kings while the father was still alive. Louis VI was in very poor health and knew he did not have long to live. There were no laws protecting unmarried women from being kidnapped by any powerful man and being forced to marry him, so Louis sent his son with an armed guard to collect Eleanor from Aquitaine. Eleanor and young Louis were married on July 25, 1137, only months after Eleanor's father's death. Louis VI died a week later, and Louis and Eleanor became king and queen of France.

⁴⁵Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 37-40.

First Marriage

The marriage between Eleanor and Louis VII was a difficult one for both. Eleanor was always aware of the distinguished prestige of her lineage, second only to the royal Capetian family which gave her certain expectations for sharing in the leadership of the Capetian kingdom as well as her duchy of Aquitaine. Louis Capet, being the second son of Louis VI, had been dedicated to the Church at an early age. He was raised in a monastic setting where he learned that the Church placed great significance on sexual abstinence. The Church associated the act of procreation with the sin of Adam and Eve, and Louis was taught to repress his sexual desires. The Church's ideal life for Christians was the monastic life, whereas marriage was of lesser perfection, established "as a divine remedy for sexual desire."⁴⁶ Christians began to think that conception was a sin, as was sex.⁴⁷ In contrast, Eleanor was a woman of the southern regions and most likely felt disappointed with Louis's lack of response to her.⁴⁸ Even though Louis did love Eleanor, she had trouble conceiving because of his repression. Eleanor finally became pregnant and their daughter Marie was born in 1145.

Being such a pious man, Louis wanted to go on military pilgrimage, or crusade, to Jerusalem for absolution of his sins. Louis decided to take Eleanor with him on the second crusade, not only because he loved her, but because he wanted to keep an eye on her. Louis was jealous of any man who might make any advances to his beautiful wife. The second crusade was a distinct failure and drove an irremovable wedge between the two of them. Eleanor's expectations of ruling beside Louis and sharing in the governing

⁴⁶Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 47.

⁴⁷Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 113.

⁴⁸Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 47.

of the kingdom were to be largely unfulfilled. After receiving marriage counseling by Pope Eugenius III on their way home from the crusade, Eleanor and Louis resolved to give their marriage another try, which resulted in the birth of their daughter Adelicia. This did little to improve relations between Eleanor and Louis. Eleanor had lost her respect for Louis, and Louis no longer trusted Eleanor because of the rumors that resulted from the second crusade.⁴⁹

These problems coupled with the lack of a male heir caused their marriage to crumble. The Church annulled Eleanor and Louis's marriage in 1152 on the grounds of consanguinity, and Eleanor returned to her own lands in Poitou. The Church was in the process of raising marriage to the status of a sacrament, and society and the Church frowned on the dissolution of any marriage. No divorce was possible. Only people related within seven degrees of kinship were allowed to have an annulment of their marriage even if that marriage had been previously authorized by the Church. A man and woman could be granted permission to live apart, but they were not allowed to marry again. Eleanor had to leave Marie, age seven, and Adelicia, age eighteen months, behind, and the separation may have been heart wrenching. Since Eleanor and Louis had married in good faith, their daughters were deemed legitimate by the Church, and in all likelihood Eleanor was never allowed to see her daughters again. Perhaps this experience contributed to Eleanor's close relationship with her children with Henry II.⁵⁰

For a brief time—only one month—Eleanor was single again in 1152, and she was more powerful than before her marriage to Louis. She would not enjoy so much autonomous authority again, until after her second husband, Henry II's, death. Eleanor

⁴⁹Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 69-72.

⁵⁰Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 70-71, 97, 104-06, 107, 109.

had met the handsome young Duke Henry of Normandy when he accompanied his father, Geoffrey of Anjou, for a visit to Louis VII in 1151. Information is scarce on this encounter since Eleanor was married to Louis VII, and a private meeting between Eleanor and Henry would not have been proper, but something attracted Eleanor to Henry. Eleanor's marriage to Louis was in such an irreparable state that the energetic, young duke may have appeared very attractive to Eleanor. As soon as her marriage to Louis had been annulled, Eleanor sent word to Henry. Eleanor knew that once more she was in danger of being abducted by any man powerful enough to overrun her guards and force her to marry. Henry quickly traveled to Poitou to Eleanor's side.

Second Marriage

Henry and Eleanor were married on May 18, 1152, within Eleanor's lands, in the cathedral at Poitiers. Henry desired to marry Eleanor not only because of her beauty, but for her rich inheritance of Aquitaine. Counts from Anjou had long been attempting to expand their power into many areas, especially Poitou. The unification of Aquitaine with Anjou through Henry and Eleanor's marriage was a happy outcome for Angevins.⁵¹

Late in 1152, Henry left France for an expedition to England to challenge King Stephen for the crown of England. Henry's mother Matilda, daughter of King Henry I of England, had challenged her cousin, Stephen of Blois, for the crown after her father's death. Stephen quickly made a move to secure the throne with the support of the English barons. Matilda, married to her second husband, Geoffrey of Anjou and Normandy, achieved a stronghold in Normandy which allowed her to confront Stephen in England. A civil war resulted (1135-1153) with Stephen overpowering Matilda and her forces,

⁵¹Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 101.

causing her to retreat, defeated, to Normandy. When Henry II took up his mother's quest in 1153, King Stephen had just lost his eldest son, Eustace. Stephen was growing old and was disheartened by his son's death. He made an agreement with Henry that he, Stephen, would wear the English crown for the remainder of his life, where after the crown would pass, not to Stephen's younger son, William, but to Henry. When Stephen died in October 1154, Henry became Henry II, King of England, and Eleanor became Queen.⁵²

Eleanor likely came into her marriage with Henry expecting to rule by his side as she had initially with Louis. Eleanor's background and upbringing were reflected in her expectations and style of governing as well as her mothering, and her Aquitanian roots must be remembered to understand many of Eleanor's actions and choices as an adult. With the example of strong female ancestors filling positions of political power and acting in the public sphere, it is safe to assume that Eleanor expected to wield substantial influence in political affairs especially in her duchy of Aquitaine.

For example, Eleanor was her father's heir from the time she was approximately eight years old. She accompanied her father on his tours around Aquitaine learning by example how to use and delegate power while cultivating aristocratic support and friendship. Women in Aquitaine traditionally enjoyed greater rights over their property than did their northern European counterparts, even as wives. This practice was left over from when Aquitaine (formally Gaul) was a Roman province. Eleanor had grown up with stories about her powerful female ancestors, such as Adela of Normandy, who surmounted the limits of a patriarchal society and Church by acting as regent for her husband, Stephen II of Blois, then for her son, Thibaud, from 1102-1120. Adela made

⁵²Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 117-19, 120.

important decisions for her husband's kingdom that affected economic growth, politics, and social issues. Adela continued to influence the kingdom, her children, and ecclesiastical leaders until her death in 1137.⁵³

Furthermore, before Eleanor became queen of France, a French queen was seen as “an ally and partner in governing.”⁵⁴ Louis VII's mother, Adelaide, was the last French queen to hold this position as a partner in rule. But, as discussed above, times were changing. Eleanor was affected by religious reforms of the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and this began the change in the extent of a queen's shared authority with the king.⁵⁵ Any power that Eleanor was to enjoy in her marriage to Louis VII would come from her personal relationship with him. Previous queens had participated in ruling with their husbands, yet Eleanor's plans to exercise authority were not met with the same acceptance as Adela's and Adelaide's had been.

Changes in Queenly Power

Despite her experiences in Aquitaine, Eleanor enjoyed little participation and power within either of her husbands' kingdoms after the first years of either marriage. Eleanor had a certain amount of influence over both her husbands and a voice in policy when she was first married. After Louis's mother died, royal government was no longer conducted informally in the king's hall, and instead began to be discussed in a formal setting apart from the royal court. Due to monastic reforms, the strengthening of the Church by land ownership, and the urging of her husbands' royal advisors, Eleanor saw a decline in these liberties in her time both in France and in England. It wasn't until her

⁵³Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 32-33.

⁵⁴Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 54.

⁵⁵Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 55.

husband, Henry II, died and her son, Richard I, ascended to the throne that Eleanor enjoyed the respect and responsibilities she felt she was entitled to as a duchess and a queen.⁵⁶

To summarize, Eleanor has been repeatedly portrayed as a power-hungry woman whose behavior was outside of the norm, but in reality Eleanor's expectations for ruling were legitimate based on past history. The norms for queenly participation and behavior were changing as a result of the monastic reforms. Eleanor was able to combine her expectations for queenship with motherhood as she found expression in political matters through the power that queenly motherhood brought her. Kinship, marriage, and motherhood were crucial to the family, therefore Eleanor maintained claims to influence and power within the royal family. Analyzing Eleanor's background helps to place her queenship in context, providing some insight on her choices and actions. Now we will turn to the primary source evidence better able to interpret Pipe Roll evidence and correspondence in light of her particular circumstances.

⁵⁶ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 10-16, 23, 53, 57; Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life*, 7.

CHAPTER THREE

Eleanor as a Mother, New Opinions

The Family Arena and Medieval Childhood

In the first years of Henry II's and Eleanor's marriage, their itinerant court constantly moved around the expansive Angevin domain. Walter Map said, "We wear out our garments, break our bodies, and our beasts, and never find a moment for the cure of our sick souls."⁵⁷ Under such conditions, some might wonder why Eleanor traveled so extensively with her children, but again, I argue that she traveled with them because she had genuine affection and a sense of duty for her children. Lloyd de Mause, in the *History of Childhood*, claimed that medieval noble mothers farmed their children out to wet nurses, foster families, the cloister, or to the homes of other nobles.⁵⁸ In contrast, when Eleanor was not riding, she and her children traveled with the royal household in litters or barrel-topped wagons over roads that were narrow and rutted, so that Eleanor could have her children near her.⁵⁹ Eleanor could have left her children home with servants, but she endured more stress and discomfort by traveling with them in order to have them close to her. This is just one example of Eleanor's devotion to motherhood.

⁵⁷ Walter Map, "*De Nugis Curialium*", trans. Montague R. James; with Historical notes by John Edward Lloyd, ed. E. Sidney Hartland (London: Honorable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1923) quoted in Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, 95.

⁵⁸ Lloyd deMause, "The Evolution of Childhood," In *The History of Childhood*, ed. Lloyd deMause (New York: Oxford Press, 1980), 1, 51, in Thurer, *The Myths of Motherhood*, (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994), 88.

⁵⁹ Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, 95.

Historians such as Stafford and Turner have researched the life of Eleanor of Aquitaine in the attempt to determine Eleanor's motivations behind her relationship with her children and her continued influence and support in their adult lives. Maintaining "close relationships with her children as adults protected her power and influence with Henry II, secular dignitaries, and religious leaders. While it may be difficult to prove the amount of affection Eleanor felt for her children because the fleeting nature of emotions causes them to be difficult to analyze or define, it is important to note how historians have evaluated medieval emotion, not how medieval men and women experienced them.⁶⁰

The concept of emotions over the centuries has been almost as elusive to establish and clarify as childhood. Historian Barbara Rosenwein rejects the theory of "emotionology" that was created by Peter and Carol Stearns in the 1980s which defines "emotionology" as, "the attitude or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression [and] ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct." Emotions have been studied and written about, although not in great number or detail, before the early modern "advice manuals" on which the Stearns's based their study of emotions. Contrary to the Stearns's premise that it was important to note how groups within a society "thought" about emotional responses it is safe to surmise that medieval men and women did

⁶⁰ Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002), 821-22.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/107.3.821>.

experience many emotions during their lives and that they had affection for their children.⁶¹

As researchers have attempted to uncover emotional structures of groups and communities and the different ways people showed their emotions publically and privately in different times, some have been guided by the work of Norbert Elias who contended that the “grand narrative” of the history of the West “is the history of increasing emotional restraint” which could indicate that emotions became more restrained after the Middle Ages.⁶² The legendary Greek author Homer (c. 750 BCE) provided a great pool of information for ancient emotion in his works, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.⁶³ Johan Huizinga wrote about the “childlike nature” of medieval society in 1919, asserting that although life was lived very publically and cruelly, children experienced emotions as children and not small adults, unrestrained and unashamed.⁶⁴

These examples, as well as many others, help to give historians an idea of how emotions were experienced by people from past ages. The modern period has been defined by some historians, such as Susan James (1997), as a time where society was controlled, disciplined and suppressed.⁶⁵ Despite the contrast in the way people showed emotions in different times and places, I contend that humans used emotions as one of many tools to endure life as they tried to make sense of their experiences.

⁶¹ Peter and Carol Stearns, “Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards,” 90, no. 4 (October 1985). <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/90.4.813> 813, in Barbara Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions,” 824.

⁶² Barbara Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions,” 827.

⁶³ Barbara Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions,” 823.

⁶⁴ Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (1924), in Barbara Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions” 823.

⁶⁵ Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17-18, in Barbara Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions,” 827.

Evidence about Eleanor's parenting contradicts such questionable theories. It is possible to ascertain that Eleanor went out of her way to be with her children during her extensive travels and have them reside with her in her household as indicated in the Pipe Rolls. Each culture has its own beliefs, rituals, norms, and practices for motherhood. One model of motherhood is not necessarily better than another.⁶⁶ The fundamental framework of motherhood generally centers around a few basic responsibilities common among times and peoples: gestation, the bearing of a child, and provision of the necessary elements for survival of said child such as: sustenance, shelter, safety, clothing, and nurturing. While not essential for sustaining life, additional expectations such as training, education, discipline, and taking an active role in the child's life through adulthood were placed on mothers in the belief that such care contributed to a well-rounded child. Among the noble and aristocratic classes, two factors can be added to this benchmark for good motherhood: assurance of the child's legitimacy and financial security.⁶⁷ Eleanor appeared to have gone beyond what was expected of noble mothers by society in the nurturing of her children, mirroring the ideal mother.

The Modern Trends

Many modern histories discuss households and families rather than motherhood in particular. This includes histories on Eleanor of Aquitaine who I am arguing achieved a balance between religious obligations and secular ones, between political interests and familial responsibilities. Women began to appear in modern histories more frequently as gender roles were gradually being redefined in the twentieth century. During the feminist movement of the 1960s, as women began to find voices for themselves, historians looked

⁶⁶ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 6-7.

⁶⁷ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 5-7, 23-25.

at women's experiences across time in a new light.⁶⁸ In the course of Henrietta Leyser's early academic career, she wondered what place women inhabited in history, and in 1995 she wrote *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450-1500*, where she tried to study medieval women by their past experiences, updating inaccurate notions previously applied to women in history. Leyser holds to the same theory as Atkinson, that medieval motherhood was created by the Church, and women were encouraged to pattern their lives after the Virgin Mary.⁶⁹

Shari Thurer debunked some common myths of medieval motherhood such as women being required to wear chastity belts in the Middle Ages, that there was one correct way to mother, and that there were "good" and "bad" mothers. Thurer noted that history has not been kind to mothers, and their real experiences were rarely recorded. She determined that in spite of this mothers have held a significant place in society throughout history.⁷⁰ Eleanor of Aquitaine is an excellent example of this. Having been the wife of two kings and the mother of two kings, her legacy touched many generations. Thurer concurs with Leyser that motherhood was defined by the Church and that celibacy was valued over motherhood.

While authors such as Leyser and Thurer have contributed research to family structures and women in the Middle Ages, only Clarissa Atkinson has conducted a study, which will follow, on medieval motherhood in particular which began to provide historians with a fuller picture of medieval mothers and queens. Furthermore, when

⁶⁸ David Herlihy, *Medieval Households*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press), 1985, v-vi, 112.

⁶⁹ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450-1500* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), ix-x, 27-28.

⁷⁰ Thurer, *The Myths of Motherhood*, xi-xii, xv, 121-123.

secondary sources on medieval motherhood are more generally combined with primary sources on Eleanor, a more comprehensive picture of her as medieval mother and queen begins to emerge.

Idealized Motherhood

The ideal royal mother was a Virgin Mary-like figure who lived in the secular world: a standard that was impossible to attain. This mother would have to strive to emulate the characteristics of the Virgin Mary and live a chaste, pious, humble, submissive, and obedient life yet bear the royal children and raise them in the world, seeing to their nurturing, education, and training.⁷¹ The devoted mother suffered over the loss of her children like Mary suffered over the death of her Son. She had responsibilities to fill both religiously and domestically. Much was expected of the medieval noble mother. It was as if women were to straddle the boundary between Heaven and earth.⁷²

Eleanor would have been taught these ideals at an early age, and it appears that she wisely exhibited the characteristics of loyalty, piety, and humility when she needed to while embracing sexual activity and her divine duty to provide her husband, the king, with a male heir. Queenship and the Marian ideal will be discussed in greater length in chapter four. For now it is important to understand that the Marian ideal affected the Church's notion of how a medieval queen should act and what responsibilities she had to fulfill.⁷³

While most of the ideals of how to live a proper Christian life were reasonably straightforward and easy for parishioners to understand, there were mixed messages on

⁷¹ Thurer, *The Myths of Motherhood*, xv, xvi.

⁷² Thurer, *The Myths of Motherhood*, xv, xvi; Herlihy, *Medieval Households*, 116.

⁷³ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 5-7, 23-25; Thurer, *The Myths of Motherhood*, xv, xvi.

the institutions of sex, marriage, motherhood, and piety that had developed over the centuries. As Christian societies became progressively hierarchical with males filling all leadership roles, women who desired to live in holiness were confined to a cloister where motherhood was incompatible with a life devoted to God. Saint Jerome, a priest, confessor, theologian, and historian from Dalmatia (347 A. D. to 420 A. D.) said, “That you may understand that virginity is natural and that marriage came after the Fall, remember that what is born of wedlock is virgin flesh and that by its fruit it renders what in its parent too had lost.” Jerome warned that family responsibilities interfered with holy life.⁷⁴

In the early Christian Church, the importance of sex, gender, and parenthood was negligible compared to the “realm of the spirit.” Lines between sex and gender roles became more obscure as women enjoyed more participation in early Church roles. During the establishment of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire, austerity and suffering became the way for Christians to achieve holiness. Women who abstained from food and physical comfort were held up as examples of spiritual health as they meekly accepted the hardship and difficulties that would come to them as faithful Christians. In hagiography these women were portrayed as spiritual mothers and ideal women.⁷⁵

Since a life of piety lived in service to God was considered the best way to live, devotion to social status, possessions, and even children were all considered to be distractions and it was necessary to renounce them in order to achieve holiness. Eve was considered an inferior being because of her enticement of Adam in the Garden of Eden. The ensuing banishment from the garden was determined as Eve’s fault, branding her as

⁷⁴ St. Jerome, “Select Letters,” *Letters of Jerome*, quoted in Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 72.

⁷⁵ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 37, 66-67, 238.

a temptress. Jerome linked procreation and parents' feeling of love for their children with sorrow and shame.⁷⁶ Early Christian practices of piety over family affected those in the medieval era. This led to the development of the medieval dilemma: trying to exist in the dual worlds of religious and public life.

Emotional Motherhood

How did mothers in earlier societies feel when their children left this world for the next? This is not an easy question to answer as mentioned previously. Countless variables such as period of time, culture, economic standing, and religion can be attached to the study of former peoples and how they experienced specific emotions. It has been argued that ancient mothers nurtured and cared for their children more than fathers, and that young children, especially infants, were missed more than older children.⁷⁷ A demonstration of this is the fact that more gravestones existed for young children from families of servile and urban populations.⁷⁸ It is also possible that because of differing burial practices in communities that there may have been different degrees of affection from parents.⁷⁹ It has not been conclusively proven that parents did grieve when their children died, but it is reasonable to assume from examples in literature such as Homer's

⁷⁶ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 239.

⁷⁷ K. R. Bradley, "Classical Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Classical Antiquity", 82 (1986), 267 in Mark Golden, "Did the Ancients Care When Their Children Died?" *Greece & Rome* 35, no. 2 (Oct. 1988), 152-163.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/642999>.

⁷⁸ R. P. Saller, B. S. Shaw, *Fellows of the Royal Society*, 74 (1984), 130, 138, in Mark Golden, "Did the Ancients Care When Their Children Died?" *Greece & Rome* 35, no. 2 (Oct. 1988), 152-163.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/642999>.

⁷⁹ J. Bremmer, "The Early Greek Concept of the Soul" (Princeton, 1983), 97, in Mark Golden, "Did the Ancients Care When Their Children Died?" *Greece & Rome* 35, no. 2 (Oct. 1988), 152-163.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/642999>

Laments for the Lost in Medieval Literature, eds. J. Tolmie and M. J. Toswell, 2010, Turnhout, Belgium.

Iliad, where the “short life” of children is discussed, along with “bereaved parents” that grief was experienced with the loss of a child.

It is then fair to assume that experiencing emotion at the loss of a child was one of the characteristics of a devoted medieval mother. In the *Medieval Woman’s Guide to Health*, a fifteenth-century gynecological treatise, it seems that women were more content and happy during pregnancy and naturally mourned the loss of a baby.⁸⁰ The analysis of texts about pain and grief is an increasingly important area in medieval literature. While historians must be careful not to incorporate current standards of emotions and feelings to the ancients, medieval, or any past peoples, one would wonder why the reaction of people would differ that much throughout time.⁸¹

According to Atkinson, the ideal mother in medieval Europe could be described not only emotionally but physiologically and spiritually. In physiological theory, conception was thought of as a “seed and soil” concept articulated by Apollo in Aeschylus’s *Eumenides*.⁸² A woman’s reproductive organ was often described as a “wandering womb” that traveled freely about her body. She could also be described in religious or spiritual terms as being chaste, pious, and submissive. Physiological and spiritual motherhood often walked hand in hand as in the topic of conception, especially since the days of the early Church. Since standards of medieval motherhood were often constructed by persons whose primary ideology was Christianity, it is not surprising that, in Eleanor’s time, religious values colored the basic beliefs of conception, pregnancy,

⁸⁰ *Medieval Woman’s Guide to Health: The First Gynecological Handbook*, ed. Beryl Rowland (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1981), 119 in Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*.

⁸¹ *Euripides and Dionysus* (Cambridge, 1948), 11 in Mark Golden, “Did the Ancients Care When Their Children Died?” *Greece & Rome* 35, no. 2 (Oct. 1988), 152-163.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/642999>.

⁸² Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 46.

birth, and lactation, all expectations of good motherhood. Atkinson termed motherhood, “an ancient vocation whose roots are inseparably interwoven with the history of Christianity.”⁸³

Spiritual Motherhood

Christians gave new meaning to the concept of motherhood during late antiquity and the early Middle Ages with the creation of spiritual motherhood. This does not mean that there were changes in the basic concept of physical and emotional motherhood that existed between the fourth and tenth centuries, but within monastic houses in the sixth century, spiritual motherhood was introduced as an additional type of motherhood. Nuns were generally women who came from wealthy families and chose a life dedicated to the Church that was safe from the perils of childbirth. Fontevraud abbey became a popular place for noble and aristocratic women who temporarily wanted to retreat from the world or permanently retire. These women could find a respite from the demands society imposed on them in the holy life, gaining a measure of control over their lives. Nuns and their male counterparts, monks, constructed new family units to take the place of the families they had left behind upon entering a religious house. Words such as “mother,” “father,” “brother,” and “sister,” were applied to new relationships within the religious community. The word “mother” took on a new connotation as spiritual motherhood was valued over physical maternity. The abbess of a convent was called mother, and priests were called fathers in recognition of their leadership role over their parishes. Nuns called each other sister as they would sisters in a family, and the same applied to monks as

⁸³ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, ix, 6-7, 23, 32, 62, 244. Aretaeus of Cappadocia was a second century A.D. Greek physician that believed a woman’s womb could move out of place and float within the body.

brothers.⁸⁴ The evolution of the Church's doctrine on the role of women helps to provide historians with an idea of how strong the Church was in each community and how women were required to live. Eleanor of Aquitaine was required, like all other women, to show proper deference and obedience to Church as well as secular leaders. Her powerful position as wife and mother to kings as well as her wealth and influence constantly put her at odds with these male leaders.⁸⁵

While the Church promoted life in the cloister as the ideal path to live closer to God, this way of life was available to few women, and as a result the majority of women married and bore children. The Church, therefore, had to develop standards for what constituted the model mother. Ideologies of Christian motherhood were considerably shaped by traditions about Christ's mother and the Holy family. The Virgin Mary's humanity was used to create a relationship between Heaven and earth. She was held up as an example of a pleading, relatable mother who was beautiful, patient, and generous and who gave birth to the son of God.⁸⁶

Eleanor would have been expected to share many of the qualities such as piety and devotion exhibited by the Virgin Mary. Because of her "eternal virginity," Mary became a figure for religious and secular men to revere and adore. The idealized Virgin Mary produced a broad scope of strong feeling about women and mothers.⁸⁷ In contrast, Eleanor had to continually fight the rumors of infidelity and incest that followed her from France to England. These rumors tarnished her ideal image as a fruitful yet chaste queen who demonstrated Marian qualities of piety and devotion. The people of England were

⁸⁴ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 65-66.

⁸⁵ Parsons and Wheeler, "Lady and Lord: Eleanor of Aquitaine," xiv.

⁸⁶ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 126-8.

⁸⁷ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 239-41.

aware of the rumors about Eleanor and did not give her their full support until after Henry II's death.⁸⁸

Changes in the Church's messages about Christian motherhood began to occur in the twelfth century, around Eleanor's lifetime, when monastic ideals and practices began to show more respect for marriage and motherhood through the veneration of the Virgin Mary. Mary provided optimism and comfort to medieval women for the harsh realities attendant to childbearing and motherhood. Once the Virgin Mary became the model of medieval Christian motherhood, nuns could imitate her by having spiritual children and remaining virgins. They believed that true motherhood was acquired through the Church.⁸⁹

The gap between monastic virtues and lay values began to narrow, yet medieval mothers were required to walk the thin line between living chaste lives while raising children and executing public responsibilities. Eleanor is an excellent example of a woman straddling these conflicting expectations, as she bore and raised eight children with Henry II, involved herself in teaching her children about God, made benefactions, and retired to Fontevraud Abbey on many occasions.⁹⁰

Elizabeth of Hungary, a near contemporary of Eleanor of Aquitaine, is an example of a woman in the twelfth century who achieved both sanctity and motherhood, but not at the same time. Since it was not possible to live in a cloister and raise a family, Elizabeth found she had to make several concessions in her life as a married woman in order to become a holy woman. Elizabeth was married to the landgrave of Thuringia in

⁸⁸ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 127.

⁸⁹ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 165-68, 239-41.

⁹⁰ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 165-68, 239-41.

1221 and bore him three children. Her husband died on crusade to the Holy Land, and as a result she was allowed to pursue a life of holiness that she could not have while married. To achieve this, Elizabeth refused to be married again, and delegated the rearing of her children to others. Elizabeth regarded maternal attachment as a weakness, and spent her energy instead on God's children. Elizabeth died at the age of twenty four because of the mortifications she heaped on her body in her quest to achieve sanctity. Only four years later, she was canonized. Her reputation developed into a model of holiness that the Church encouraged wives and mothers to follow. While Elizabeth could not live in a cloister and raise her children at the same time, becoming a widow and relinquishing her children allowed her to become a spiritual mother.

The Complexities of Medieval Noble Motherhood

We may not firmly grasp the complexities of motherhood in Eleanor of Aquitaine's world, but through prosopographical research insights can be gleaned as to how medieval noble mothers such as Eleanor raised their children. As stated above, motherhood was a vocation with responsibilities that ranged from providing the basic necessities ensuring a child's survival to the training of that child and taking an active role in the child's life through adulthood. As stated before, medieval motherhood was an institution based on the established traditions of the Church, and noble mothers had particular responsibilities for producing legitimate children. Primogeniture, or inheritance laws, had gained a foothold in aristocratic families, and legitimacy became very important to males. Men wanted to make sure that the children their wives bore were

legitimately theirs in order for their land and titles to pass to their own children, therefore immorality in a woman was considered a heinous crime.⁹¹

Since noble women were married at a very young age to men who were often much older, they had a very good chance of out-living their husbands and therefore building and retaining strong bonds with their children as they grew up. Occasionally, noble women were married two or three times during the span of their lives, as Eleanor was. With fathers frequently away from home seeing to lands and responsibilities, mothers played an important role as they spent time with their children nurturing them and listening to their pleas and problems. Being closer to their children's ages, mothers acted as intercessors between fathers and sons in their disputes over land and power. An example of this lies in Montmirail where Eleanor intervened on behalf of her sons.⁹²

Eleanor's Motherhood and Medieval Medical Practices

Eleanor of Aquitaine took a different path. She chose to remarry after her first marriage to Louis VII was annulled and live in the world fulfilling her sacred duty as a queen and mother to Henry II's children. She supported them and went above and beyond her motherly duty by exhibiting her unceasing loyalty to her children until her death.⁹³

In putting together this brief synopsis on ideals of Christian motherhood in the Middle Ages, I have discovered that histories of medieval motherhood other than Atkinson's are virtually non-existent. This is largely because of the scarcity of sources on childbearing and motherhood. Further research and scholarship on medieval motherhood is a must in order to more fully understand women's roles and twelfth century Europe as

⁹¹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 208.

⁹² Herlihy, *Medieval Households*, 121.

⁹³ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 238-39.

a whole. As mentioned before, most medieval records were written by male chroniclers—especially churchmen—who documented the deeds of important men, not the experiences of women. Childbearing was attended to by midwives who were for the most part illiterate and did not write about the women they served or the experiences they had. A doctor would have been called in for an unusual delivery especially in the case of a noble or aristocratic birth. A priest would be called to baptize a non-thriving baby before it died or to read the mother her last rites if she was not going to survive childbirth. The point is, there are few records of women recording the birth experiences of other women.⁹⁴ Most information comes through a male’s experience of childbirth such as the ancient Greek physician, Galen. There were, thus, many misconceptions of the workings of a woman’s body, discussed previously.

Not all medical practitioners were men. Dame Trotula of Salerno was a female medical writer and practitioner that lived in the Italian coastal town of Salerno in the early decades of the eleventh or (twelfth century). Salerno was the center of medieval medicine in Europe and Trotula was considered a pioneer in women’s health. Because it was the practice of royal and noble mothers to put their infant in the care of wet nurses, Trotula thought it important that the wet nurse should be clean, young, heathy, and of moderate weight. Trotula’s purpose in writing her books was to help educate male physicians on the female anatomy, childbearing, and women’s conditions since they knew very little about it in the eleventh century.⁹⁵ Few medical practitioners wrote on

⁹⁴ Herlihy, *Medieval Households*, 112-114; Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 56-57.

⁹⁵ *The Trotula: an English Translation of the Medieval Compendium of Women’s Medicine*, ed. and trans. Monica H. Green (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2001), xi, 34, 37, 52. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 61. There is no substantive evidence that Trotula of Salerno ever existed, or that she wrote, *On the Diseases of Women*. Green has traced back the evolution of “the Trotula,” determining that these works were written by many authors and most likely had contributions from the woman called Trotula. If Dame Trotula existed, the writings attributed to her name were very instrumental in

how to be a “good mother” since motherhood concerned the family unit and the family unit was under the domain of the Church.

Modern authors, such as Turner and Weir, who criticized Eleanor as a mother—accusing her of leaving the nurture and rearing of her children to servants while later using them for her own selfish ends—paint an inaccurate portrait of Eleanor as mother.⁹⁶ These characterizations are unfair, as Eleanor spent a good deal of her life in service to her children, providing for her children’s needs while they were young and then supporting them as adults. Factually, there is evidence of a pattern where she strove to keep her children with her rather than turning their care over to others, as was the practice of the time. She trained them and secured their futures, both in this world and the next. Eleanor was a powerful woman in the Plantagenet government as she wrote charters, gave authoritative permission for royal directives, and was in attendance at the *magna curia regis*, or royal council which conducted the business of state under the direction of her husband or sons. Eleanor often used this power on behalf of her children. It is possible that these modern authors were using the standards of today to judge Eleanor’s motherhood rather than the expectations of Eleanor’s own time.

Eleanor was thirty when she married Henry, and both Henry and Eleanor would have known that Eleanor had a limited time to produce an heir for her husband. Eleanor gave birth to eight children over the next two decades. It was the norm for noble mothers

understanding women’s health issues such as fertility. On the whole this information was analytical about the childbearing process and could determine what was necessary for a woman to bear children, but it did not discuss the characteristics of being a “good mother.”

⁹⁶ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 243-44; Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 146-147; Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life*, 88; RaGena DeAragon, “Wife, Widow, and Mother: Some Comparisons between Eleanor of Aquitaine and Noblewomen of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin World,” in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* eds. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 98, 102-103.

to employ a wet nurse, and Eleanor was no different in this regard. She employed a wet nurse for each child for the purpose of nourishment, not because she was detached from her children, as Turner indicated. This allowed Eleanor to produce as many children as possible during her remaining child-bearing years.⁹⁷

It is possible to see that Eleanor demonstrated emotional attachment for her first born son, William when he died at the age of three, as I argued earlier was evidence of devoted motherhood. There is no record as to why William died. Peter of Blois, secretary to Eleanor and diplomat to Henry II, wrote a letter of consolation to Eleanor sometime after William's death in April of 1156. In the letter he said, "But how can we, who were never sufficient to stopping your distress or repulsing our dangers, be sufficient now to temper such bitter grief in your highness...how could we find a physician's hand or medicinal remedy for a maternal wound?"

He also said, "the mother offers tears for the son which the son reserved for the mother. She sees the youth, not yet grown, untimely submit to the judgement of death before the judgement of old age arrived."⁹⁸ In the letter, Peter of Blois, used words like "bitter grief," "distress," "maternal wound", and "tears." This would indicate that as a mother, Eleanor felt deep emotions at the death of her child, supporting my argument that Eleanor had significant maternal feelings for her children.⁹⁹

As a noble mother, Eleanor fulfilled her responsibility for securing the succession with a number of legitimate male children, a key expectation of a noble medieval mother

⁹⁷ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 144, 146. "It is widely known that breast-feeding inhibited pregnancy," Turner, 146.

⁹⁸ Peter of Blois, "A letter from Peter of Blois," in *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 16 October 2017.

<https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/144.html>.

⁹⁹ Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 36-38.

which gave her more power and validity as a queen. After William, she gave birth to Henry, Matilda, and Richard. By the time her son, Geoffrey, was born in 1158, it would have been safe to assume that the succession was secure, but Eleanor continued to give birth to an additional four children.¹⁰⁰ Eleanor thus exceeded expectations in fulfilling her sacred duty to produce children for her husband the king. After her children were born, Eleanor traveled a great deal with her them. This is not a typical practice of the time, many royal mothers left their children with trusted household servants such as wet nurses, but Eleanor chose to travel with her children. It could have been that she was determined to remain with them in order to make herself more powerful, but I argue from evidence in the Pipe Rolls that it is safe to assume she genuinely had affection for them.

Using the Pipe Rolls, it is possible to construct tables that show the times Eleanor traveled with her children. Eleanor traveled with Matilda during most of her infancy. Matilda was only one month old when she made her first crossing of the Channel with her mother and older brother, Prince Henry, to meet Henry II in Angers. Eleanor joined Henry II in Rouen then, travelled south to Aquitaine to receive homage from the nobles of Aquitaine where she celebrated Christmas of 1157. This suggests that when Eleanor returned to Normandy with her children, Matilda and Henry in January 1157, they had accompanied their mother on her journey south.¹⁰¹

Eleanor appears again in the Pipe Rolls in January 1157 detailing her return to Normandy with Matilda and Henry. It can be assumed that because Matilda accompanied Eleanor from England to the Northern part of France, and then south to Aquitaine, that Eleanor wanted to keep her daughter close to her during the crucial time of Matilda's

¹⁰⁰ DeAragon, "Wife, Widow, and Mother, 102-103.

¹⁰¹ Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 36.

infancy and early childhood.¹⁰² This example established the pattern of Henry and Eleanor traveling with their children throughout the kingdom, a pattern which continued as her remaining offspring, Richard, Geoffrey, Leonor, Joanna, and John were born.¹⁰³

For instance, Eleanor travelled to Paris in August of 1158 to make arrangements for the marriage of Prince Henry, age three, to Margaret, the daughter of Eleanor's former husband, Louis VII. Margaret's mother was Louis's second wife, Constance of Castile. Matilda also accompanied Eleanor and Prince Henry on this trip. Furthermore, Eleanor traveled with her children, Richard, Joanna, and John, who were nine, three and two respectively, to Poitou in 1168 under Henry II's direction, hoping her presence would inspire greater loyalty of the Poitevin barons. Richard would officially be recognized as the Duke of Aquitaine in 1172.¹⁰⁴

Travel in the twelfth century under any conditions was risky, and to add small children to perilous intercontinental travel provides evidence that Eleanor did not want to be separated from her children, taking them with her frequently. It appears that as far as Angevin children were concerned, their parents kept them very close to home.¹⁰⁵ In support of Eleanor's desire to have her children close to her it can be concluded that because of such extensive and frequent travel with her children that Eleanor was not a neglectful mother who only used her children when they were politically advantageous to her.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 36-37.

¹⁰³ Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 36-38.

¹⁰⁴ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 189.

¹⁰⁵ Kathryn Dutton, "Ad erudiendum tradidit: The Upbringing of Angevin Comital Children," in *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 24-39 (2009), 32, quoted in Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ DeAragon, "Wife, Widow, and Mother, 103.

When Eleanor was not travelling with her children, it is apparent in the Pipe Rolls that her children resided with her in her household. By March 1166, Eleanor was living in Anjou with all of her children, except Prince Henry. Henry had been entrusted to the care of Thomas Becket as his guardian and teacher when the prince was between four and six years old.¹⁰⁷ Sending Henry for fostering in the home of Becket was part of fulfilling the responsibilities of noble parentage for Eleanor which included training and educating her son to secure Prince Henry's future. Sons of nobles were placed in the homes of learned, reliable men who would see to the education of these young boys and teach them how to be gentlemen.

Henry II was officially responsible for choosing his heir's master, but it was more than likely that Eleanor was allowed to approve the choice. Prince Henry was crowned king in 1170 even though his father was still alive. As discussed previously, during the time of young Henry's coronation, Henry II wanted to make an alliance with Count Humbert of Maurienne through the betrothal of his youngest son, John, to the count's daughter, Alicia. John had no inheritance, having been dedicated to the church as a young child as well as being the fourth surviving son so land had to be appropriated from young Henry's original inheritance. For the rest of his short life young Henry fought his father over how much power he should hold once he was crowned. This contrasts with the relationship that Eleanor had with young Henry and her other children. Despite the fact that Eleanor's sons were placed at a young age with a master or preceptor who were

¹⁰⁷ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 147; Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life*, 155. There are a differing opinions between the two authors of young Henry's age at the time of his placement with a preceptor.

members of the royal household. I maintain Eleanor created effective bonds with her sons sometime during their youths, which will be discussed in greater detail below.¹⁰⁸

In sum, the Pipe Roll evidence suggests that Eleanor was invested in her children's lives to a high degree, a conjecture supported by her high level of contact with them in their youth. Eleanor could have left her children in the care of others as she travelled extensively, but she chose to keep them close. This contrasts with the assertions of Turner, who contended that Eleanor was only interested in her children when it furthered her own agenda.¹⁰⁹

Just as Eleanor helped to train and ensure her sons' futures through fosterage, she fulfilled another standard of noble motherhood by training her daughters for marriage and acting to secure her their futures with favorable alliances. Her separations from her daughters also illustrates the affection Eleanor appears to have had for them as follows. When they came of age, Eleanor chose to travel with her young daughters as far as possible when they were being sent to their fiancés' homes. She journeyed as far as Dover with Matilda when Matilda was twelve years old. Matilda was to marry Henry the Lion of Saxony. At Dover, Matilda and Eleanor were met by a retinue of trusted men and women from the household of Henry the Lion who accompanied Matilda safely to her new family.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Eleanor travelled to Bordeaux with her daughter, Leonor, in June of 1170, where they were met by envoys representing Alfonso VIII who would accompany Leonor to Castile. It is safe to assume that Eleanor spent some of her lengthy stay in Poitou (1168-73) preparing Leonor for marriage, as she must have done with

¹⁰⁸ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 147.

¹⁰⁹ John Carmi Parsons, "Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power: Some Plantagenet Evidence, 1150-1500," 69.

¹¹⁰ *The Pipe Rolls of Henry II* 13 (38 Vols. Pipe Roll Society, 1884-1925), 169.

Matilda. Matilda and Leonor both made politically advantageous marriages that seemed to be successful by the number of children they produced and the longevity of their marriages. Eleanor most likely had a hand in securing marriages for her daughters with men that would treat them well.¹¹¹

However in September of 1176, Eleanor's daughter, Joanna, departed for Sicily to marry William II without her mother to see her off. As discussed in the introduction, Eleanor had supported her three surviving oldest sons against Henry II in the 1173 revolt after Montmirail, and was now in Henry II's custody under house arrest. During Eleanor's imprisonment, she was allowed to spend time with all four of her sons at Henry's Easter court in 1176, held at Winchester. Matilda, her husband, Henry the Lion of Saxony, and their children lived in Henry II's court for three years (1182-1185) during the enforced exile of Matilda's husband by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1155-1190), and as a result of Matilda and her family's presence, Eleanor's appearances at court increased.¹¹²

As part of her captivity Eleanor was not allowed to accompany Joanna part of the way to her new home as she had done with Matilda and Leonor.¹¹³ It does not appear that Eleanor was prevented from seeing her children as part of her punishment for her part in the rebellion although the times she was allowed to see them were restricted.¹¹⁴ It could, indeed, have been sore retribution for Eleanor to have been prevented from seeing her children at any time. From the time a woman becomes a mother she continues to be known as a mother for the rest of her life. This especially applies to noble mothers in the

¹¹¹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 194.

¹¹² Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 233, 246.

¹¹³ *The Pipe Rolls of Henry II* (38 Vols. Pipe Roll Society, 1884-1925).

¹¹⁴ Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 41.

medieval era.¹¹⁵ It is not certain whether Joanna lived with her mother during Eleanor's imprisonment, but there is evidence in the Pipe Roll for the year 1176 that they saw each other on at least one occasion before Joanna left England for Sicily.¹¹⁶ Joanna's marriage to William of Sicily seemed to be a good one although she produced no heir. William died in 1189, twelve years after they were married. Joanna was married to her second husband, Raymond VI of Toulouse in 1196, and this marriage was not successful.¹¹⁷

Primary sources have thus helped to piece together this story of Eleanor's dedicated motherhood during her children's early years, in contrast to modern portrayals of Eleanor as a neglectful, non-nurturing, unattached, and predominately self-serving mother who had little significant contact with her children.¹¹⁸ Eleanor spoke for her children in matters of their nurturing and care, providing them with the necessities of life. She trained and disciplined them. She advised them in their education and the requirements of court life. She participated in the negotiations for their marriage alliances. She acted to secure their futures. Eleanor was an advocate for her children. She would continue to be throughout their adulthood.

¹¹⁵ Stapleton, "Motherly Devotion and Fatherly Obligation: Eleanor of Aquitaine's Letters to Pope Celestine III," 102. Rachel Stapleton asserted that when a woman becomes a mother she assumes a "recognizable identity," that remains with her for her entire life, even after her children are grown.

¹¹⁶ *The Pipe Rolls of Henry II* (38 Vols. Pipe Roll Society, 1884-1925); Flori, J., *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Rebel* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004; Eng. Trans. By Olive Classe, 2007.) Flori indicates that at this time, Eleanor may have helped Joanna prepare her trousseau as well as her life in the Sicilian royal court. In Diceto, I, 382, he notes Joanna's presence with her mother.

¹¹⁷ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 277.

¹¹⁸ Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 41.

CHAPTER FOUR

Eleanor and her Adult Children

Relationships

Eleanor continued to enjoy close relationships with her children and was an advocate for them even when they were grown. Richard, for example, was in his mother's company most of his childhood, youth, and young adulthood since he was her heir to Aquitaine. Eleanor also visited young Henry at his court in Normandy after his coronation, as often as she could or as the affairs of her duchy required her to pass by.¹¹⁹ The Pipe Rolls of 1172 additionally suggest the possibility of a visit with young Henry in England some time during that year. Even if Eleanor had not visited young Henry at this time, it is most likely that they would have corresponded, although none of this correspondence exists. This visit preceded Eleanor's and her sons' revolt after Montmirail later that year, but evidence shows that both Richard and Geoffrey had been residing with Eleanor prior to her three eldest sons gathering at Paris to join King Louis VII in their plotting against Henry II which confirms that Eleanor maintained close contact with her sons. During times Eleanor and her children could not meet together they most likely would have kept in contact through letters.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 186-90.

¹²⁰ Ralph De Diceto, "The Historical Works of Master Ralph De Diceto, Dean of London," I, ed. by William Stubbs, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 350.
doi:10.1017/CBO9781139226271.002; *Gesta Regis*, 1, 34, 42, 43; Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 223.

After young Henry died suddenly from dysentery in 1183 at the age of twenty eight, Eleanor was again in close contact with her adult sons, Richard, Geoffrey, and John, working for their interests in reconciling them with their father, Henry II. In late November of 1184, Henry II called a great council in London, most likely to discuss young Henry's death and to attempt to bring his surviving sons back into a peaceful relationship with each other since they had been feuding. During this time, Henry allowed Eleanor to have a reunion with Matilda and her family as well as Richard, Geoffrey, and John. Eleanor was also permitted to be with these same family members at Henry's Christmas court in the same year. While at court, Henry again asked Eleanor to exert her influence over her sons to restore relations between them. Henry asked Eleanor to come to Normandy for another family council in May of 1185. This indicates that Eleanor still had a good relationship with her sons and Henry knew this, and she maintained some vestige of power even while she was in his custody. Matilda and Henry the Lion returned to Saxony in 1185 after Henry II succeeded in reconciling Henry the Lion and the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. These examples demonstrate how Eleanor continued to maintain close ties with her children in their young adulthood and, as such, wielded continual influence in their lives, continuing to advocate for them.¹²¹

Dynastic Ties

Healthy dynastic ties in the Plantagenet family were necessary for political stability, and it is fairly obvious from the records that Eleanor contributed to these connections. For example, some of Eleanor's children enjoyed close relationships with each other at various times. Geoffrey and young Henry stayed close as they were

¹²¹Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 223-24, 247-48.

growing up, and Geoffrey went to live in young Henry's household in 1178, joining young Henry on a tournament circuit across the north of France.¹²² While Eleanor was in captivity, Matilda left her daughter, Richenza, and her two sons, Henry and Otto, to be raised in Henry II's court after Matilda and Henry the Lion were allowed to return to Saxony. Leaving three of Matilda's children to be raised in Henry II's court helped to cement ties of affection between royal houses, demonstrating the importance of political alliances. The connection with Matilda's family would continue not only with Henry and Eleanor but with Richard and John. Richard and John supported Matilda's son, Otto, who later became Emperor in 1209. Eleanor's daughter, Leonor, had contact with her younger brother, John, while seeing that her husband, Alfonso VIII of Castile, and John maintained a supportive relationship after John became king in 1199.¹²³

To further demonstrate Eleanor's continued connection to her adult children, Richard and John, after they had married, both chose Eleanor to serve as queen-regent instead of their wives. These alliances most likely resulted because of the strong bonds of trust Eleanor had forged with her children over the years and demonstrates how Eleanor fulfilled her duty toward supporting healthy dynastic ties in the Angevin family.¹²⁴

Because of these bonds it is reasonable to assume that Eleanor and her children corresponded with each other, although I have not been able to locate letters between Eleanor and young Henry, Matilda, Geoffrey, Leonor, and Joanna. Most likely they no longer exist. Official letters do exist between Richard and Eleanor and John and Eleanor

¹²² Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 242.

¹²³ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 246-47.

¹²⁴ Stapleton, "Motherly Devotion and Fatherly Obligation, 116.

which will be discussed presently. These letters support my argument that Eleanor was an affectionate, devoted mother and successfully combined motherhood with queenship.

Richard on Crusade

Relations between Richard and Eleanor would become even more meaningful after King Henry II died in July of 1189 at the age of fifty six and Richard was crowned king. Henry II could no longer interfere with Richard's leadership over Aquitaine, and soon after Richard was crowned king, he returned the governing of this southern duchy to Eleanor. Eleanor was to enjoy a level of participation in government that she hadn't seen since young Henry was made Henry II's regent in 1170, a role Eleanor had previously filled. At Henry II's death, Eleanor was released from captivity and turned her full energy and attention to helping Richard secure the Angevin kingdom. Eleanor had achieved victory over Henry by outliving him and gaining the freedom and participation in government that she had always desired but which she could only achieve after his death.

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Richard entrusted Eleanor with the de facto power to act for him in matters of government in her own duchy of Aquitaine and in the rest of the Angevin kingdom, although official power of the kingdom was entrusted to William Longchamp and Walter of Coutances. Richard ensured that his mother had plenty of money at her disposal, so that she could live in the manner that was appropriate for a queen even though she was a dowager queen. But at this point Richard had not yet married and he bestowed upon his mother all of the rights and power of the queen consort. Richard restored the revenue from the queen-mother lands that Henry II had granted to Eleanor upon their marriage.

¹²⁵ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 255.

Henry had taken these revenues were from Eleanor by when he imprisoned Eleanor for her part in the rebellion of 1173.¹²⁶

Richard had promised Pope Urban III (r. 25 November 1185-20 October 1187) in 1187, before he was crowned king, to travel to the Holy Land on crusade. With Eleanor's rights as dowager queen of England restored, Richard was ready to go on crusade.¹²⁷

Richard exacted an oath from his younger brother, John that John would not enter England during the entire time Richard was away on crusade. Richard and Eleanor knew how ambitious and powerful John was since Richard had given John control over six shires at the Nonancourt council of 1190 and made John his heir. Richard departed for the Holy Land in June of 1190 and set out to meet Philip II, King of France, at Vèzelay. He would not return for almost a decade.¹²⁸ Right after Richard's departure, Eleanor sat on a tribunal at Saumur to settle a dispute between the abbesses of Fontevraud and the town's mayor. She had immediately assumed her governing role in Richard's name.¹²⁹

Eleanor ended up supporting Richard in his rule longer than either of them anticipated. The Third Crusade to the Holy Land was not a success. Richard was captured on his way back home by a loyal servant of Duke Leopold of Austria, then was later turned over to Emperor Henry IV as a prisoner.¹³⁰ Eleanor quickly moved to take authority upon herself to act for Richard and protect the throne for him. When John heard

¹²⁶ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 260, 266-67.

¹²⁷ Richard I, "A letter from Richard, king of England (1193)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 16 October 2017, "Richard, by the grace of God king of England, to his dearest mother Eleanor, by that same grace queen of England, greeting and the inviolable sincerity of filial love." Richard called Eleanor Queen of England, accessed 17 November 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/148.html>; Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 261.

¹²⁸ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 261, 264, 266.

¹²⁹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 271-73.

¹³⁰ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 271-73.

of Richard's imprisonment, he traveled to the French court to pay homage to King Philip, most likely hoping Richard would never return from captivity, leaving John to ascend to the throne. Meanwhile, Eleanor rallied the government in support of Richard.¹³¹

Official Correspondence

While in captivity Richard wrote several letters to Eleanor expressing his trust in Eleanor's ability to help achieve his release from captivity. Because Richard went to his mother first, this helps to support my argument that Eleanor created strong ties of trust with her children. It follows that Eleanor most likely wrote many letters to her children as well in order to stay in touch.¹³² From the early Greek theorists to Cicero, classical rhetoric was mainly concerned with oral discourse rather than written discourse. Letter writing did exist during the classical period, but did not become a formal subject of debate and discussion until the fourth century. Letter writing was a very important form of communication in the Middle Ages when it became the main focus of rhetorical theory.¹³³ In general, medieval society was not, for the most part, urban. As a result, people did not always communicate face-to-face, creating the need for a system of letter writing to cope with growing legal, Church, and government business. At the beginning of the eleventh century, many theoretical works were written on the composition and form of the official letter. The model for medieval letter writing, whether personal or business, was laid down by Pope Leo IX (r.1049-1054) for the Imperial Chancery within the papal court. The rank a person held determined the type of letter they would receive

¹³¹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 77.

¹³² Richard I, "A letter from Richard, king of England (1193)," accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/148.html>.

¹³³ Les Perelman, "The Medieval Art of Letter Writing: Rhetoric as Institutional Expression," in *Textual Dynamics of the Professions: Historical and Contemporary Studies of Writing in Professional Communities*, 97-102, eds. Charles Bazerman and James Paradis (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 100, 105-06.

or send. The higher a person was in social status, the more complex the letter formula became. The meager style was used when a superior was writing to an inferior, employing a request or a command only. The exalted style was utilized in letters written from a lesser person to a greater one, and used flattery, the cause of flattery, and a request. The medium style neither ascended or descended and contained flattery and a request. In each letter, a salutation, securing of good will, narration, petition, and conclusion was included.¹³⁴

The first official letter that Richard wrote to Eleanor was written in the medium style. Richard used the terms “revered lady” and “dearest mother” which showed respect for Eleanor and might demonstrate his affection for her.¹³⁵ Richard was his mother’s heir and they spent a great deal of time together while Eleanor taught Richard how to administer the duchy of Aquitaine. During Richard’s minority, he was continuously present at his mother’s court where his attachment to her seemed to deepen and would continue for the rest of his life. It appears that both Eleanor and Richard developed an undeniable connection to Aquitaine and her people.¹³⁶

In his letter, Richard described Eleanor’s support with the words “loyalty,” “devotion,” and “faithful care.” These words describe the strength of their relationship and demonstrate Richard’s faith in his mother’s affection, loyalty, and sense of duty. Richard also said, “First to God and then to your serenity, sweetest mother, we give

¹³⁴ Perelman, “The Medieval Art of Letter Writing: Rhetoric as Institutional Expression,” 106.

¹³⁵ Perelman, “The Medieval Art of Letter Writing: Rhetoric as Institutional Expression,” 105.

¹³⁶ Richard I, “A letter from Richard, king of England (1193),” accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/148.html>. “Revered lady” or “reverendae dominae suae” and “dearest mother” or “matri carissimae.” Richard said, “In primis Deo et postmodum vestrae serenitati, mater dulcissima, gratias quascunque possumus exsolvimus, licet as tam dignas fratriarum actiones sufficere non possumus, pro fidelitate quam nobis servatis, ed fideli cura et diligentia quam terrarium mostrarum paci ac defensionis tam devote et efficaciter impeditis.”

thanks as we can, though we cannot suffice to actions so worthy of thanks, for your loyalty to us and the faithful care and diligence you give to our lands for peace and defense so devotedly and effectively.”¹³⁷ Richard requested that his faithful advisor, Hubert, bishop of Salisbury, be advanced to the office of archbishop of Canterbury, believing that “his [Hubert’s] promotion will hasten our liberation and strengthen the defense of our lands.” Hubert journeyed to Rome in an attempt to convince Pope Celestine to participate in securing Richard’s release. Hubert also appeared before Emperor Henry IV, making an appeal for Richard’s release from captivity. As a result of his captivity, Richard was learning whom he could trust and who would look after his well-being, all the while knowing that Eleanor was his main ally.¹³⁸

The second extant official letter Richard wrote to Eleanor was in the same year of 1193 during Richard’s captivity. This greeting looks somewhat different from his first letter when he called Eleanor his “sweetest mother” but still retains respect and does not descend or ascend in the medium style.¹³⁹ Richard, increasingly more urgent for his release, called on his relationship with his mother in an even deeper degree of familial obligation, asking her to act on his behalf. Richard greeted Eleanor saying, “Richard, by the grace of God king of England, to his dearest mother Eleanor, by that same grace queen of England, greeting and the inviolable sincerity of filial love.”¹⁴⁰ In this letter, Richard also encouraged Eleanor to continue in her quest to have Hubert elected as

¹³⁷ Richard I, “A letter from Richard, king of England (1193),” accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/148.html>.

¹³⁸ Richard I, “A letter from Richard, king of England (1193),” accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/148.html>.

¹³⁹ Perelman, “The Medieval Art of Letter Writing: Rhetoric as Institutional Expression,” 106.

¹⁴⁰ Richard I, “A letter from Richard, king of England (1193),” accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/148.html>. “Ricardus, Dei gratia, rex Angliae, etc., cairrimae matri suae, Alienorae eadem gratia, reginae Angliae, salutem et filialis dilectionis inviolabilem sinceritatem.

archbishop of Canterbury. If Hubert was archbishop, he would have the power to help Eleanor obtain Richard's release. Richard discreetly told Eleanor that he had to "yield to the prayers of great men and entreat for those whom we wish in no way to promote."¹⁴¹ This indicated that both he and Eleanor knew they had to appeal to men who had the power to help secure Richard's release being careful of those who did not have Richard's welfare in mind.

Richard requested that Eleanor go in person to his justiciars and the prior and monks at Canterbury to raise the enormous ransom of 70,000 marks of silver, which suggests that Richard knew how well respected and powerful his mother was in his kingdom, and knew these men would listen to her. Based on past experiences between Eleanor and Richard, and their close mother-child bond, Richard had confidence that Eleanor would execute any command he gave her.¹⁴²

Letter three from Richard to Eleanor, also an official letter written in 1193 in the medium style, appertains to the agreement Henry IV and Richard made regarding Richard's ransom and reaffirmed how Richard realized he could rely on his mother which is indicated in the first two letters. At this point in Richard's captivity, Emperor Henry IV took Richard into his own household, and according to Richard, he and his emissary, William, bishop of Ely were "honorably, staying with that Emperor; until negotiations between him and us are finished."¹⁴³ Richard would be set free if he paid Henry IV

¹⁴¹ Richard I, "A letter from Richard, king of England (1193)," accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/148.html>.

¹⁴² Richard I, "A letter from Richard, king of England (1193)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/149.html>.

¹⁴³ Richard I, "A letter from Richard, king of England (19 April 1193)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 16 October 2017. "Honeste autem circa ipsum Imperatorem moram facimus." <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter864.html>.

70,000 silver marks and provided hostages or guarantors, such as Walter of Coutances, archbishop of Rouen, on Richard's behalf. This official letter was intended for not only Eleanor, his mother and trusted ally, but also Hubert, venerable bishop of Salisbury, and his justices. Had this letter been a private letter between Richard and Eleanor, it most likely would have contained less formal wording, although it appears all letter writing in the medieval period was quite formulaic. Richard instructed Eleanor, Hubert, and his trusted men to set the example and donate as much as they could to this exorbitant ransom. An appeal had to be made to the people of the kingdom to give liberally to free their king.¹⁴⁴ Richard made Eleanor primarily responsible for the collecting of his ransom with the help of Walter of Coutances. Richard requested that a list be made and witnessed by Eleanor of the people who contributed money, so that he could reward them after his release.¹⁴⁵ This was an important demonstration of trust, on Richard's part, by giving Eleanor the responsibility of collecting his ransom instead of relying on a high ranking man as was the practice. Men were considered rational and capable of making difficult decisions as well as carrying them out, based on gender roles of the twelfth century.¹⁴⁶

Three letters written from Eleanor to Pope Celestine III also help to establish Eleanor's active role in Richard's life, working as his mother, to secure his interests. Eleanor wrote to the pope beseeching him to come to the aid of Richard by securing his release from Henry IV. In her first letter to the pope, written in 1193, Eleanor properly defers to the pope saying, "To her revered father and lord, Celestine by the grace of God the highest pontiff." Eleanor opened this letter with, "in the wrath of God queen of the

¹⁴⁴ Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, 316-17.

¹⁴⁵ Richard I, "A letter from Richard, king of England (19 April 1193)" accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter864.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 203-206.

English.” This sentence quickly established that Eleanor was being respectful to Celestine, but was also expressing both her authority and anger. This type of letter was written in the exalted style because Eleanor would have been considered a person of lesser importance than the pope. Eleanor called herself a suffering mother and said to the pope:

I had determined to be silent, lest I be accused of insolence and presumption if the overflowing of my heart and the violence of my grief evoked some less cautious word against the prince of priests. Grief is not very different from illness: in the impetus of its fire it does not recognize lords, it does not fear colleges, it does not respect or spare anyone, not even itself. Let no one be surprised, then, if the power of grief makes the words more harsh,[sic] for I lament a public loss while the private grief is unconsolably [sic] rooted in the depths of my spirit.¹⁴⁷

This letter is reflective of the Christian values in the twelfth century and the prevailing gender expectations of the time demonstrating that Eleanor knew her place and the respect that was due to the pontiff, but her fear for her son and her maternal instincts nearly overrode this respect. Fear is a leveler of titles and social decorum, and Eleanor knew that she needed Pope Celestine’s support as leader of the Church to convince Henry IV to release Richard, so she managed to moderate her tone. Eleanor reminded Celestine of her family’s endorsement of the pontiff instead of the anti-pope, Victor, at the time of schism during the Investiture Controversy. Eleanor hoped this would add strength to her appeal for Celestine’s action. She reminded the pope of his responsibilities as father of the Church and as God’s mouthpiece. Eleanor chastised the pope, citing scriptures from the Bible, and at times using shame, “It saddens the church publicly and excites the murmurs of the people not a little at the expense of their opinion of you that, in the face

¹⁴⁷ Eleanor of Aquitaine, “A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193),” *Epistolae: Medieval Women’s Latin Letters*, accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.columbia.edu/letter139.html>. “Reverendo Patri et domino Coelestino, Dei gratia summo pontifici,

of such crime, of such tears, of the supplications of so many provinces, you have not sent one messenger to those princes.” Eleanor did not have the power to actually threaten the pope and make good on the threat so she had to resort to reminding the pope of his responsibilities to his flock which included King Richard.¹⁴⁸

In her second letter, also written in 1193 in the exalted style, to Pope Celestine, Eleanor portrayed herself as a despondent mother and told the pope that she was “undone by pusillanimity of spirit and misfortune” about Richard’s captivity and her heavy role in trying to achieve his release that her “soul wearies of life.”¹⁴⁹ Eleanor informed the pope that she was tired of all the trials she had endured in her life, and that due to her extreme grief over Richard’s captivity and her old age, her time on earth was limited. At the time of this letter Eleanor was sixty-nine years of age, and for a person in the medieval era this was indeed old, although Eleanor enjoyed unusual vitality most of her life. Eleanor used her motherhood and helplessness as a woman to prick the conscience of the pope, hoping this would drive the pope to action. From the information supplied in the letters, it does not appear that Richard directly asked Eleanor to write to the pope and intervene on his behalf. It seems that Eleanor did this on her own to help secure her son’s interests.¹⁵⁰

In this letter, Eleanor asked the pope, who had the power to intervene in her son’s captivity, why he had not. In all three letters to Celestine, she made references to biblical stories of unfair imprisonments such as that of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, likening Richard’s captivity to Joseph’s. Eleanor reminded the pontiff that Richard was captured

¹⁴⁸ Eleanor of Aquitaine, “A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193),” accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter139.html>.

¹⁴⁹ Eleanor of Aquitaine, “A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193),” *Epistolae: Medieval Women’s Latin Letters*, accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/140.html>. “a pusillanimitate spiritus et tempestate.”

¹⁵⁰ Eleanor of Aquitaine, “A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193),” accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/140.html>.

while he was on God's errand serving on the crusade as a "soldier of Christ." She again reminded Celestine that Henry II had been his loyal supporter. And Eleanor called the pope's attention to the fact that she had always been a steadfast daughter of Christ and the Church. She said, "I loved you not with tongue and word but in deed [sic] and truth."¹⁵¹

In each letter that Eleanor wrote to the pope she became more personal and forceful in her mother's chastisement of the pope's inaction and her advocacy for her adult child. The tone of Eleanor's third letter also written to Pope Celestine in 1193 in the exalted style continued to grow progressively sad and weary due to the fact that he had still not come to Richard's aid. Eleanor again referred to herself as a suffering mother, "wretched and to be pitied." She conveyed to the pontiff how she was in terrible anguish and suffering, fearing for Richard. "My years decline in sighs-would that they might give out altogether...that I might completely vanish in weeping."¹⁵²

Within this letter, Eleanor appealed to the Virgin Mary, "Mother of mercy, look on a mother of such misery," likening her suffering for Richard to the agony the Virgin Mary suffered for her son, Christ, while he was on the cross. Medieval mothers were expected to emulate this suffering in as much as it related to their earthly sons. Eleanor asked, "Pitiful and pitied by no one, why have I come to the ignominy of this detestable old age, who was ruler of two kingdoms, mother of two kings?" Eleanor reminded the pope that most of her family had been torn from her in death, and that only her two sons, Richard and John, and daughter, Leonor, were left to her. Richard was being held in

¹⁵¹ Eleanor of Aquitaine, "A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193)," accessed 16 October 2017. The story of Joseph being sold into Egypt is found in the Old Testament of the Bible in Genesis 37:30. <https://epistolae.columbia.edu/letter/140.html>.

¹⁵² Eleanor of Aquitaine, "A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193)," accessed 16 October 2017. <https://epistolae.columbia.edu/letter/140.html>. "misera, et utinam miserabilis."

captivity, and John was stirring up discontent for Richard in his kingdom as he “depletes his kingdom with iron [sword] and lays it waste with fire.”¹⁵³ Eleanor asked the pope, “How could a mother forget the son of her womb for so long? Affection for their offspring softens even wild tigers and demons.” Eleanor lamented that if she were to die at that point, she would never get to see her beloved Richard again, and there would be no one to obtain Richard’s release.¹⁵⁴

Efforts to secure Richard’s release continued through 1193 and early 1194. With Richard being held prisoner, King Philip II of France and Count John, Richard’s brother, conspired together to take advantage of the situation. During negotiations, Philip and John, made the emperor a counter offer of 100,000 marks of silver to keep Richard in captivity that almost derailed the agreement for his release. Henry IV’s motivation in holding Richard captive was to change the balance of power in Western Europe in his favor, and gain concessions from Richard.

Eleanor was instrumental in Richard’s release by advising him to accept the deal the emperor had offered him. One of the terms of the ransom required Richard to acknowledge the emperor as his liege lord instead of Philip of France. The king of France was recognized as the central leader of the provinces of France that surrounded Paris due to the feudal system. All lesser lords owed allegiance to the king. For Richard’s loyalty he was allowed to receive the title of King of England, but he was required to show reverence and submission to Philip. Richard accepted the change of his liege lord from

¹⁵³ Eleanor of Aquitaine, “A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193),” *Epistolae: Medieval Women’s Latin Letters*, accessed 16 October 2017.

<https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/141.html>.

¹⁵⁴ Eleanor of Aquitaine, “A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193),” accessed 16 October 2017.

<https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/141.html>.

Philip to Henry IV knowing that he could change his vassalage back to Philip when he was free. Richard was finally released on February 4, 1194, into the custody of Eleanor and the Archbishop of Rouen.¹⁵⁵ Many in England rejoiced for the emancipation of their king.

Eleanor was devastated when Richard died only six years after his release from captivity when he was struck in the neck by an arrow from a crossbow while he was on campaign. Amy Kelly constructed a touching and romantic scene of Eleanor's despair, "cutting her like a sword."¹⁵⁶ Eleanor lamented, "I have lost the staff of my old age, the light of my eyes."¹⁵⁷ Richard had been Eleanor's most consistent supporter and champion which demonstrates Eleanor's devotion as a mother. Eleanor's life had been changed for the better upon Richard's ascension, when she was freed from being held as a prisoner of Henry II at his death. Eleanor held a leading position in Richard's government while he was on crusade and prisoner of Emperor Henry IV. His death might bring a change in fortune. Only time would tell.

As Richard's representative, Eleanor protected her son's interests but also exercised her authority to further causes in which she believed, particularly protecting and governing her home lands in Aquitaine and Poitou. Such initiatives were not in

¹⁵⁵ Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, 316-17; Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 272-73. The feudal system in Western Europe lasted approximately from the fifth century to the fifteenth century.

¹⁵⁶ Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, 344. Kelly refers to Eleanor's son, young Henry, who died in 1183. Kelly's reconstruction of Eleanor's response to Richard's death, "Martel, where the young king had breathed his last, lay hardly a hundred miles away from the same deep heart of the Limousin. As she gazed upon the noble figure of Coeur-de-Lion, Queen Eleanor must have recalled the vision of that other fair young man that had visited her in her prison at the time of his passing, wearing his double crown. It must have cut her like a sword thrust that, of all of the Winchester eaglets, only John remained-John, the fondling of Henry Fitz-Empress, the fiercest, the most ungovernable of all the brood; that he who had been Lackland now grasped the inheritance of all his elder brothers."

¹⁵⁷ Eleanor of Aquitaine, "A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1193)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*.

Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, 344.

opposition to her role as a dedicated royal mother but evidence of the balance she achieved between fulfilling her role as a parent, as a queen, and as a noble. For example, Eleanor wrote charters in her domain of Poitou and also revoked charters that Henry II had written for Poitou during his reign. In the town of Oléron, Henry had issued charters that took away customs existing under the authority of Eleanor's family before she married Henry, and Eleanor restored them. In a letter from 1199, Eleanor decreed, "Know that we have granted and confirmed in perpetuity in giving their girls and widows in marriage and marrying their boys, and having stewardship of their girls and widows and boys, without any opposition from us and our heirs."¹⁵⁸

Her actions in this letter demonstrate how both Richard and, and as we shall see, John returned the political power of Aquitaine to Eleanor during their kingships, emphasizing the trust they had in their mother to act in their best interests. Furthermore, Eleanor received respect from the English people under Richard's reign that she had never enjoyed as Henry's queen. But Eleanor's beloved Richard was now dead, and the support Eleanor showed to Richard would be extended to her last living son, John.¹⁵⁹

John assumed the throne upon Richard's death in the spring of 1199 but not without a struggle against Eleanor's grandchild, Arthur, son of Geoffrey. Both Eleanor and John knew that Arthur was no friend to England. Eleanor did not want to see the Angevin lands divided between John and Arthur because she had a deep mistrust of

¹⁵⁸ Eleanor of Aquitaine, "A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1199)," in *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 16 November 2017. <http://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/866.html>.

¹⁵⁹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 280-81.

Arthur's mother, Constance of Brittany. Constance wanted to end the Plantagenet hold over Brittany and would have done almost anything to achieve this.¹⁶⁰

Eleanor would support and advocate for her child, John, just as she had for her other adult children. John had been raised by Eleanor in his early childhood but became a favorite of Henry II and spent most of his time with his father. Eleanor and John may not have spent as much time together as Eleanor and Richard had, but it does not follow that Eleanor did not have strong maternal feelings for John or would have supported him less when he became king. When John ascended to the throne Eleanor gave him her unfailing loyalty.¹⁶¹

For this support, John gave Eleanor's beloved Poitou back to her for the remainder of her life. "A letter from John, king of England (1199)," to Eleanor recounts this action. In the letter, written in the medium style, John addressed his mother as the "dearest and venerable Lady," and, "our mother Eleanor." He also said, "And not only of our said lands do we wish her to be the Lady but also of us and all our lands and possessions."¹⁶² These phrases may have been formulaic for a letter of the twelfth century, but appear to be sincere. John could have employed the support of other influential people, but he chose his mother as an ally because he evidently trusted her more than others. John gave Eleanor's inherited duchy of Aquitaine back to her which made him look like a kind, magnanimous king, building his public image, and it secured Eleanor's support. A letter that Eleanor wrote to John in the year 1200 recounts the steps

¹⁶⁰ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 280-81.

¹⁶¹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 286-292.

¹⁶² John I, "A letter from John, King of England (1199)," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 16 October 2017. "Et non tantum de praedictis terris nostris volumus quod sit Domina; set etiam de nobis, & omnibus terris, & rebus nostris." <https://epistolae.cml.columbia.edu/letter/867.html>.

she and the Constable of Auvergne, Guido de Dina, had taken to confirm the loyalty of Viscount Thoarc, a Poitevin Baron of John's. In this letter, she addressed John, "To her dearest "son" twice, and demonstrated that she was doing his will and would continue to support him. While this letter lacks some of the warmth of the long, close relationship that Richard and Eleanor enjoyed, it exhibits Eleanor's determination to continue to support John and the Plantagenet domains."¹⁶³

After years of helping her adult children secure their interests and exercising a great deal of authority in their names and her own, Eleanor returned to Fontevraud in early 1200, presuming she would live out the remainder of her widowhood in prayer and meditation, but John requested her help again soon after her return. He asked that Eleanor, travel to her daughter Leonor's court in Castile to accompany Leonor's daughter Blanche, to Paris so she could become the bride of Philip II's son, the future Louis VIII. Eleanor's willingness to travel overland to Castile at the age of seventy six is testimony of Eleanor's unceasing determination to serve her children and their interests, helping to secure the futures of her adult children and grandchildren.¹⁶⁴

Eleanor's support of John even led to threats against her own interests. For example, in 1202 when she was seventy eight, Eleanor left the quiet of Fontevraud Abbey, yet again, this time for Poitiers in an attempt to keep her beloved homeland from falling into her grandson, Arthur's, hands. Eleanor did whatever she could to stop Aquitaine from becoming a part of Brittany. When Eleanor was staying at Mirabeau Castle toward the end of July 1202, she was attacked by Arthur's forces including his

¹⁶³ Eleanor of Aquitaine, "A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1200)."
<https://epistolae.etl.columbia.edu/letter/900.html>.

¹⁶⁴ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 289.

allies from the house of Lusignan with which the Plantagenets had a long-standing feud. Blockaded in the castle, she succeeded in sending a note to John. In Ralph of Coggeshall's account of the event, John's intense feeling for his mother caused him to move with unusual speed to rescue Eleanor. After a forced march of eighty miles in two days from Le Mans, John and his mercenaries surprised Arthur's forces and freed his mother.¹⁶⁵

During John's kingship, Eleanor's life became the busiest, politically, to date. Eleanor acted on John's behalf not for her own important place in government—for she had long since realized her participation in government would only be achieved in the name of her husbands and sons—but to fulfill her duty to her son. It is apparent that Eleanor was very active on behalf of John, by the number of official documents she issued during the months after Richard's death. These examples of Eleanor's interactions with her children have been provided to demonstrate the power, authority, and responsibilities that came with the role of queenly motherhood and how well Eleanor executed her role on behalf of her children.¹⁶⁶

One final standard of ideal motherhood which Eleanor fulfilled was her role as a faithful Christian mother and queen. It was not enough for Eleanor to promote the worldly interests of her children. She needed to protect their souls as well. For example, there are four extant letters that Eleanor wrote which detail her efforts as a queen to promote piety and as a mother to make benefactions to various religious houses who would offer up prayers on behalf of her children's souls. She addressed these letters to

¹⁶⁵ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 292.

¹⁶⁶ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 285. There is no extant copy of the letter Eleanor wrote to John requesting his help.

religious and secular leaders and the general public, especially Fontevraud Abby. Eleanor declared that the whole community of Fontevraud:

should know that we, for the salvation of our souls and in pious remembrance of king Henry, and good memory of our son king Henry, and the powerful man king Richard and our other sons and daughters, [we] have given and granted, with the consent and will of our dearest son John, illustrious king of England, to God and blessed Mary and the nuns of Fontevraud, to celebrate our anniversary and that of our said sons, a hundred Poitevin pounds, to be received each year.¹⁶⁷

In sum, it is possible to ascertain from extant correspondence involving Eleanor that she displayed the characteristics of devoted, Christian motherhood in support of her children, in contrast to previous historian's mischaracterizations of her actions and motives. The letters written by Richard and John to Eleanor reveal their confidence in her support of their kingships and a clear recognition of her capabilities as a queen, a mother, and regent to act in support of their interests. Eleanor's letter to John, and her three letters to Pope Celestine, on behalf of Richard, display the depth of feeling for these sons. Letters that note benefactions given to Fontevraud for the souls of her children demonstrate that Eleanor was concerned not only for her children's lives on this earth but in the life to come. A medieval mother was charged with teaching her children the fundamentals of Christianity such as the first two commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Hail Mary. Gifts made to monastic houses acquired the goodwill of such saints' Saint Radegonde, and Eleanor seemed to have understood this. Prayers were arranged for her children so after their death they would serve less time in Purgatory and receive salvation.¹⁶⁸ All this evidence supports the argument of Eleanor's life-long

¹⁶⁷ Eleanor of Aquitaine, "A letter from Eleanor of Aquitaine (1199)," in *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, accessed 16 October 2017.

<https://epistolae.cml.columbia.edu/letter/887.html>.

¹⁶⁸ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 34, 36.

concern for her children's welfare, yet not all chroniclers and historians have written favorably about Eleanor, especially as a mother. There is sufficient evidence to disprove, or at least call into serious question, such characterizations of Eleanor's mothering. Regardless of the differences between the methods used by medieval mothers in raising their children, current trends in scholarship support the theory that medieval mothers had affection for their children. Eleanor spent significant time with her children when they were young, creating close mother-child bonds that lasted the rest of their lives, as the letters between Eleanor and Richard and John indicate.

It would seem that Eleanor spent her life balancing the dual roles of queenship and motherhood. She fought for the right to rule her duchy throughout her long life, and she fought for the continuation of the Angevin Empire through her sons' rule. Since Eleanor was the mother of two kings of England she continued to wield power and influence. Her fecundity made her a force to be reckoned with. As William Ross Wallace said, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world."¹⁶⁹

It can no longer be asserted that Eleanor of Aquitaine was a detached, neglectful mother who used her children predominately for her own ends. A picture of Eleanor can be constructed using extant primary sources affirming that Eleanor went to great lengths to have her children with her in their formative years. She cared for them and provided training, education, and discipline for them while actively participating in their marriage alliances. Afterwards, she spent the rest of her life supporting her adult children—both sons and daughters—in their various times of need, taking an active role in their lives and helping them to promote their interests. She sacrificed a tranquil retirement in her

¹⁶⁹ William Ross Wallace, "What Rules the World," in Bartlett's Quotations, 10th edition, Boston: Little Brown, 1919.

widowhood to support her two surviving sons. These actions refute allegations of Eleanor as a “bad” mother and, by the medieval standards of what made a “good” or devoted mother.

Being a successful mother of royal children required Eleanor to be acutely conscious of her position and power, in order to remain viable as a queen and to have a say in her children’s lives. Some of Eleanor’s actions such as her participation in the 1173 rebellion could be interpreted as Eleanor being a power-hungry woman who was only looking after her own interests, but I argue that Eleanor’s actions were a result, at least in part, of her desire to play an active part in her children’s lives. It is interesting to note that without the support and influence of Eleanor after her death, the Angevin Empire began to disintegrate, although her descendants would go on to influence a significant part of Western Europe for generations.¹⁷⁰

Thus far this thesis has explored Eleanor predominantly through the lens of motherhood, but now she will be explored primarily through the lens of queenship. Eleanor tried to balance her roles as both a mother and a queen. Included in this analysis will be the introduction of the importance of the office of queenship and the relationship between Marian ideology and queenship in order to provide context to what was expected of Eleanor as a queen in the twelfth century. Church judgment of powerful women was harsh, and these issues affected Eleanor. Eleanor lived in a society where the expectations of a queen were sometimes similar to those of a mother but could also come into conflict with each other, making Eleanor’s attempts to balance both roles challenging.

¹⁷⁰ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 293, 297.

CHAPTER FIVE

Queenship and Motherhood—One Role or a Conflict of Duties?The Duties of Queenship

Several important works on Eleanor of Aquitaine written by historians such as John Carmi Parsons, and Marion Meade in the 1990s as well as a collection of works edited by Wheeler and Parsons in 2003 have analyzed the roles of medieval motherhood and queenship through new social, political, and domestic lenses. The study of birth, lineage, betrothal, marriage, ritual, childrearing, widowhood, death, and burial patterns have aided historians in constructing a picture of the duties and place of queens.¹⁷¹ There are few texts from Eleanor's time that expressly address a queen's rights or duties in England. The "Edgar" ordo written in 973 and modified during William the Conqueror's reign provides information on the queen's coronation.¹⁷² It was the duty of the queen consort to play a supporting role to the king as helpmate, companion, mother to his children, helping to establishing churches, and making benefactions to these churches. If it was necessary, queen consorts would act as regents while the king was away.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Lois Huneycutt, "Alianora Regina Anglorum: Eleanor of Aquitaine and her Anglo-Norman Predecessors as Queens of England," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, eds. Wheeler and Parsons, 117.

¹⁷² Heather J. Tanner, "Queenship: Office, Custom, or Ad Hoc? The Case of Queen Matilda III of England (1135-1152)," 133-35, in Wheeler and Parsons, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, 2003, 133-158. A lack of information on kings of this period also existed, see also: D. E. Luscombe, "Introduction: The Formation of Political thought in the West," *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350-c. 1450*, 155-173, 2008, 155-60. Eleanor adhered to some of the precedents set by Matilda of Boulogne, yet because of her lack of lands in England, her power was limited.

¹⁷³ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 128-29.

Chroniclers predominately recorded the actions and activities of kings and their sons, not queens and their daughters. It wasn't that queens were absent but that chroniclers placed kings at the center of history. Kingship was considered to be ordained of God, and the king was consecrated by high ranking clergy. A queen's coronation bestowed the change in the status of a noble woman to a queen by consecrating her as lawful royal consort and mother of legitimate royal heirs, but the queen was crowned by the clergy as well as the king, which symbolized the queen's subordinate role as a consort, not a ruler ordained by God.¹⁷⁴ The Church's fight for clerical celibacy began defining gender roles more succinctly for the broader society, where men were considered capable and rational and women were viewed as incompetent and irrational. Male religious and secular leaders moved toward denying women any public role in governing, and influential women were branded as unfeminine and unnatural if they exercised power. The Church chastised the husbands of authoritative women as unmanly for letting their wives play a role in public life.¹⁷⁵ Despite the fact that queens took a subservient role because of gender, queenship was one of the highest positions in society a woman could hold, particularly if she was mother to the royal children.

Current works convey a renewed interest in queenship as a whole as historians continue to explore the ways medieval queens pursued their power and how they used it.¹⁷⁶ The conventional responsibilities of a queen encompassed the domestic sphere with men filling responsible roles of public leadership. Eleanor excelled at running her

¹⁷⁴ Parsons, "Introduction," 8.

¹⁷⁵ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 35, 129.

¹⁷⁶ Parsons, "Introduction," 1-3; Huneycutt, "Female Succession and the Language of Power in the Writings of Twelfth-Century Churchmen," *Medieval Queenship*, ed. by John Carmi Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 201.

household, heading the itinerant royal court that moved around Henry's vast kingdom, visiting royal residences making sure all was in order, as well as garnering support for Henry II. But she might also have expected, based on earlier examples of her female ancestors such as Adela and Adelaide, discussed earlier, to be an effective partner to Henry in governing his kingdom as regent during his absences from England. Aside from acting as regent for Henry II early in their marriage, Eleanor's desire to share in the governing of the kingdom was only infrequently granted during Henry's life-time. Eleanor did act as Henry II's regent early in their marriage, but as soon as her oldest surviving son was deemed capable, Prince Henry took over the position.¹⁷⁷

Edith-Matilda, Henry I's consort (Henry II's parents), was one such queen who acted as regent during her husband's frequent absences. She acted on the king's behalf creating official documents to which she applied her own seal. Edith-Matilda escaped chroniclers' disapproval for acting in a position of power by her piety and good reputation. Eleanor was not as fortunate in her marriage to Henry II since she could not seem to shake her poor reputation which began when she accompanied Louis VII on crusade. The extent of Eleanor's power was also limited because of her lack of English lands, despite her rich inheritance of Aquitaine, and because of changing gender expectations.¹⁷⁸ But regardless of these disadvantages, Eleanor fought to retain a necessary and useful presence in Henry II's life as his queen by providing him eight children. Eleanor knew it was her sacred, yet very earthly, duty to embrace her sexuality

¹⁷⁷ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 128, 150, 173-74. Eleanor returned to Poitou in 1168-1173 with Henry's assent to act in his name, and even though it was her duchy she could not act without Henry's permission.

¹⁷⁸ Heather J. Tanner, "Review of Queenship in Medieval Europe. Queenship and Power, by Theresa Earenfight," *Medieval Prosopography* Vol 31, no. 1, Article 13, 2016. <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/medpros/vol31/iss1/13133-35>.

and produce the next king. A queen's fecundity raised the level of her status, and Eleanor's ability to produce eight children for Henry was a key reason that she remained a vital power in the royal family. Although a queen did not officially swear an oath at coronation, her power was fluid, at the discretion of the king, who, generally only allowed his queen power in the family sphere.¹⁷⁹

The ritual and consecration of kings and queens was also very important for the children of royalty because it bestowed legitimacy and relevance to them.¹⁸⁰

Responsibilities and duties were almost as important as ritual in queenship. Orderic Vitalis, a Benedictine monk and a contemporary of Eleanor of Aquitaine, provided valuable information on the nature of queenship in his work, *Historia Ecclesiastica*. This history was written between 1114 and 1141 at Saint Evroult monastery on the southern frontier of Normandy. The *Historia Ecclesiastica*, chronicled a combination of social occurrences and events of the cloister, as well as political situations in France, England, Spain, southern Italy, and the Latinate and Greek East. In this work, he described a queen's responsibilities which included, "helping in government in any time of crisis, ruling during minorities, or helping the foundation of churches." This reiterates the queen's supportive role.¹⁸¹ Having a capable, fertile queen on the throne was crucial to preventing a succession crisis and ensuring that the kingdom continued to run smoothly in the absence of the king.¹⁸² Eleanor's contemporary, Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, made the limitations of a queen's, even a Heavenly queen's, role clear when he stressed that

¹⁷⁹ Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 23-25.

¹⁸⁰ Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 25.

¹⁸¹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 127-28. Orderic was referring to William the Conqueror's wife Matilda of Flanders.

¹⁸² Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 18. Eleanor's daughter Joanna failed to produce an heir for her husband, William of Sicily, resulting in a succession crisis.

only by the virtue of her Son, was the Virgin Mary queenly and regal. If this applied to the mother of the King of Heaven, then this must also relate to earthly queens. Bernard also believed that women were, “weak of body, unstable of heart, not prudent of counsel, [and] not accustomed to affairs.”¹⁸³

As mentioned above, most churchmen believed that women were not capable of making difficult decisions let alone filling leadership roles. However, Bernard of Clairvaux thought a woman could step into her husband’s shoes in the case of necessity, but only if she were to, “show a man in a woman.”¹⁸⁴ This means that a woman had to stop being what males considered naturally irrational and weak, and take on the characteristics of rationality, strength, and wisdom like a man. For example, Queen Melisende of Jerusalem had to step up and act like a man by issuing charters, giving prudent counsel, having her own administration, establishing power bases, being rational, and making difficult decisions, so she could preserve the kingdom for her son upon the death of her husband.¹⁸⁵ This was similar to Eleanor’s situation in that she had to assert herself and act like a rational man and in order to be given any rights to rule her duchy of Aquitaine or have influence over her children.

As Bernard indicated, a characteristic of the twelfth-century model for queenship, not just motherhood, was based on ideologies of the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary’s position as the mother of Christ and Queen of Heaven provided characteristics for churchmen to pattern their expectations for secular queens. These characteristics were:

¹⁸³ Bernard of Clairvaux, “A letter from Bernard of Clairvaux, abbot (1143-44),” *Epistolae Medieval Latin Letters*, 2, accessed 16 October 2017.

<https://epistolae.cml.columbia.edu/letter/246.html>.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. Men were considered to be rational, strong, and competent, Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 185.

piety, devotion, selflessness, modesty, chastity, long suffering, humility, and most importantly, obedience. Queens had to show enduring empathy and compassion for their children. The queen also played the role of mother to her people as an intercessor, between her husband, the king, and his people, similar to how the Virgin Mary acted as intercessor between Christ and his people. Although no earthly woman could experience a state of perpetual virginity throughout pregnancy like Mary did, a queen could achieve a type of divine status when she was pregnant with the future king since the role of kingship was a sacred role. The queen's physicality was redeemed by her relationship with holiness.¹⁸⁶ As a result of the important role the queen played in producing the next king, queenly motherhood became the focus of many early works that considered royal marriage and motherhood as the main source of a queen's power.¹⁸⁷

Eleanor was similar to Mary in that she was required to be subservient to male authority, but in Eleanor's case, she had to be deferential to her husband's, and then her sons' power. Eleanor's anguish for her son, Richard, during his captivity was similar to Mary's suffering for her Son as discussed in the last chapter. Eleanor's suffering was not for a son dying on the cross, but her maternal feelings of protection and empathy were engaged as were Mary's for a suffering child.¹⁸⁸

Whereas Mary was honored for bearing the Christ child, Eve was portrayed by the early Church Fathers as a temptress to Adam. They taught that all women, except the

¹⁸⁶ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 75.

¹⁸⁷ Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 18-19. Bowie commented that Mary was only considered a queen due to her relationship with Jesus Christ as his mother and was subservient to, "a higher (male) power." She goes on to say that, "Her intercessory role as *Mater Misericordiae* (Mother of Mercy) added symbolism and provided a further parallel to that of secular queens, as did her role as patron and *Mater Ecclesiae* (Mother of the Church), thereby firmly establishing the link between queenship and mercy, piety and patronage."

¹⁸⁸ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 144-45; Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 278.

Virgin Mary, had inherited Eve's deceptive nature making it necessary for women to live under the control of their husband's authority.¹⁸⁹ However, they did concede that women did fill a necessary place in procreation. Although the reproductive process was not necessarily a focus of Christian thought, the Church did have a great deal to say about parenthood and sexuality from a theological standpoint. A lack of Christian biology does not mean that there was an absence of biological thought and belief. The pope was most concerned with domestic morality and the conversion of non-Christians. Classical scientific instruction added to scripture were the tools medieval men used to prove that women were less capable of being rational and were unable to overcome their passions.¹⁹⁰ This was in direct contrast to what Eleanor experienced in Poitou as a child. Because she was groomed by her father to inherit the duchy of Aquitaine and because of her female ancestor's experiences, Eleanor most likely expected to rule her duchy of Aquitaine, rule by Henry's side, and to direct and support her children, especially her sons, Richard and John, in building their power and influence in the areas under their administration.¹⁹¹

Patronage

One way royal and noble women like Eleanor found a way to exhibit their power and authority in a way that was acceptable to men, was through patronage. It was the duty of the queen to exercise patronage which included sponsoring artists, bestowing lands, diplomacy, gift exchange, and arranging marriages. A queen used funds from the queen's

¹⁸⁹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 129.

¹⁹⁰ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 24-25, 32. "Early and medieval Christians, along with their Muslim neighbors, were heirs of classical Greek science, although their inheritance was modified, diluted, and in some cases transformed over time." (25). Galen was a Greek physician in Rome whose physiological theory of the four humors remained uncontested from his life time until 1543.

¹⁹¹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 128-29.

dower lands to support these projects. A primary function of female patronage for both a queen and mother was to see that intercessory prayers were said for family members' souls on a regular basis. Eleanor accomplished this through her patronage of religious establishments such as Fontevraud Abbey, introduced in the last chapter.

Both Eleanor and Henry had an extensive history with Fontevraud. As a child, Eleanor was most likely made aware of her ancestors' "place in the sacred sphere," and realized what a sacred duty it was to pay for intercessory prayers for the souls of her family that had passed before her.¹⁹² Fontevraud Abbey was a favorite monastic house of the Plantagenet family. Henry II's grandfather, Faulk, Count of Anjou and King of Jerusalem, patronized Fontevraud as did Henry's father, Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, and his aunt, Matilda, who was abbess at Fontevraud after Henry was crowned king. Eleanor's family also had a history with Fontevraud Abbey. They had controlled the abbey since the tenth century, and William IX, Eleanor's grandfather, donated the land upon which Fontevraud was built. Eleanor's grandmother, Philippa of Toulouse, the wife of William IX, took refuge at Fontevraud after he disowned her in 1115. William X, Eleanor's father, made a grant to the abbey in 1134. Furthermore, Eleanor made a benefaction of £100 to be paid annually to Fontevraud Abbey under the guidance and approval of her husband.¹⁹³

In one of the existing charters she issued for Poitevin monastic houses, Eleanor mentioned that she felt inspired to visit Fontevraud Abbey:

Impelled by divine inspiration, I have wished to visit the assembly of holy virgins Fontevraud, and what was in my mind I have been able to accomplish with the Help of God's grace. Therefore guided by God, I have come to Fontevraud and

¹⁹² Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 128-29.

¹⁹³ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 18, 36, 113-14, 129, 249.

Crossed the threshold of these virgins' chapter house.¹⁹⁴

This document records the first time that Eleanor expressed particular sentiment for Fontevraud Abbey, the place to which she eventually retired. Eleanor also funded benefices made to Fontevraud, as her ancestors had. These examples provide evidence of Eleanor's conformity with medieval standards for both a Christian queen and a holy widow. In an age of family solidarity due to a concern for dynastic continuance, the mothers and grandmothers of princes played an essential part in securing the eternal salvation of the souls of their families by devotional practices as well as the patronage of monastic houses and ties of friendship with holy monks and nuns.¹⁹⁵

Eleanor's commitment to the abbey would continue to increase over her life until she took orders at Fontevraud just before her death in 1204. Eleanor, as a duchess and a queen, was instrumental in providing support to some of the regions other religious houses as well, such as Saint Maixent, the greatest of the Poitevin ecclesiastical baronies.¹⁹⁶ Reading Abbey also held a special place in Eleanor's heart, especially from the time of the early death of her first-born son, William, at age three. He died while his father was abroad tending to affairs of his vast kingdom. Bearing this burden without her husband would likely have been difficult for Eleanor. The monks at Reading Abbey wrote a letter in the meager style titled, "A Monastic Letter of Fraternity to Eleanor of Aquitaine," sometime time between the years 1158-65. This letter provides insight into the liturgical practices of the twelfth century, demonstrating the ties established between religious houses and royalty. Eleanor made benefactions to the abbey, and in return the

¹⁹⁴ H. G. Richardson, "The Letters and Charters of Eleanor of Aquitaine," *The English Historical Review* 74, no. 291 (1959), 193, quoted in Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 114.

¹⁹⁵ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 36.

¹⁹⁶ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 36, 59-60.

canons of the abbey promised to say prayers for Eleanor and her family from a queen, such gifts were expected, but to medieval mothers, these prayers must have been a great source of comfort. So great was the esteem the monks of Reading Abbey had for Eleanor that she was given all the benefits that were customarily conferred on a deceased monk of the abbey, which included prayers said for the soul, psalms and litanies recited, and the anniversary of her death commemorated in perpetuity by the monastic community. This was unusual in that such arrangements were rarely made before the thirteenth century. What is more noteworthy is that these benefits were made for a female by a male monastery.¹⁹⁷

Another expectation of a queen's patronage was to bolster the prestige of the royal family. Queens could be a driving force behind advancements in literature and art which could be used to extol the virtues of their particular dynasty.¹⁹⁸ Eleanor had grown up in a court where learning was valued. She invited a variety of artists to her court where entertainment held an important place. Troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn, from the Limousin area in France, was present at the English royal court where music and literature flourished.¹⁹⁹

Although women's patronage could make them powerful, there were limits to that power. For example, queens also had a special seal to mark official documents created in her name. Eleanor's seal bore her titles as countess of Poitou and duchess of Aquitaine which were bestowed upon her as heir to her father. Absent was any title that had she had acquired through her marriage which could indicate that Eleanor wielded power in her

¹⁹⁷ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 36.

¹⁹⁸ Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 191.

¹⁹⁹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 26, 169, 201. Bernart, a native of the Limousin, followed Eleanor from Poitiers to the court of Henry II, 1152.

own right. Since evidence on Eleanor's activities as queen is limited in the historical record, a broader look at the duties and responsibilities of queens who lived before and after Eleanor will help to provide context of her queenship.²⁰⁰

Prosopographical Study

Historian Lois Huneycutt conducted a prosopographical study, published in 2002, of the four Anglo-Norman queens who preceded Eleanor, including: Matilda of Flanders, wife of William the Conqueror; Edith-Matilda, wife of Henry I; Adeliza of Louvain, Henry I's second wife; and Matilda of Boulogne, wife of King Stephen. The purpose of her study was to compare what commonalities and differences Eleanor had with these women in order to change the perception that Eleanor was the only controversial, queen-consort in twelfth century England.²⁰¹ Commonalities between the five queens were abundant. The first commonality is fairly obvious and focused on the fact that these women were all chosen as queens because of their bloodlines and for the political alliances their marriages would bring. The above women were all very aware of their political and social status and the advantages they brought to their marriages. Four of these women, with the exception of Eleanor of Aquitaine, married for love, or at least reciprocal fondness before marriage. In contrast, Eleanor's first marriage to the future Louis VII was arranged by his father, King Louis VI, and they were incompatible. Her second marriage, to the future Henry II, is thought to have been initiated by Eleanor, but was of political benefit to both. While she may have been more attracted to Duke Henry

²⁰⁰ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 114. For a short time in the spring of 1152, Eleanor held more power than at any other time during her marriage to Henry II. She would gain this power back under the reign of her son, Richard I, in 1189.

²⁰¹ Lois Huneycutt, "Alianora Regina Anglorum: Eleanor of Aquitaine and her Anglo-Norman Predecessors as Queens of England," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, 115-142, eds. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 120-21.

on a physical level than she had been to her first husband, her marriage to Henry fell apart as well.²⁰² Eleanor's marriages started out amicably, but both marriages broke down rather quickly due to the fact that Eleanor was disappointed in her expectations to rule by her husbands' sides and retain her leadership over her duchy of Aquitaine.²⁰³

Another commonality between these queens was the influence they enjoyed over their husbands on a personal level. A king who had a close relationship with his queen would sometimes allow her to make contributions in royal decision-making. Churchmen and courtiers knew when the queen had the king's ear, and as a result they often bribed or flattered her into bringing their cause to the king's notice. A close relationship with a queen was a strategic move for any man, secular or religious. Eleanor did seem to enjoy a close relationship with both of her husbands at first, but grew steadily apart from them. When her relationship with Henry II broke down, Eleanor turned her attentions to furthering her children's interests. As a result, she ended up becoming a prisoner of Henry II after the rebellion of 1173.²⁰⁴

As discussed above, when a queen was pregnant she became even more visible to the kingdom and received special attention particularly in times when the king needed an heir. Failure to produce an heir often made the queen look like she had not fulfilled her duty. Eleanor's failure to produce an heir for Louis VII reflected badly on Eleanor and helped to hasten their annulment, but Eleanor more than satisfied her duty of childbearing by giving birth to eight children with King Henry II which strengthened her position as queen.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Huneycutt, "Alianora Regina Anglorum," 119.

²⁰³ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 55.

²⁰⁴ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 205-06.

²⁰⁵ Huneycutt, "Alianora Regina Anglorum," 119.

Eleanor's personal wealth was a notable distinction between her and the other queens. While the four Anglo-Norman queens all brought some land and strong political alliances to their marriages, Eleanor brought with her Aquitaine, one of the wealthiest areas in Western Europe. With that inheritance came money, land, and the right to rule over Aquitaine.

Perhaps because of such wealth, Eleanor fought the increasingly powerful Church-prescribed model of female submissiveness. Eleanor had reasonable expectations to rule, based on the examples of Adela and Adelaide in Aquitaine and France, but times were changing. Female authority began to wane just before Eleanor became queen, and male authority became stronger as the Church enacted reforms. Noble women like Eleanor who exercised authority or who fought against male authority were criticized. Eleanor fought these expectations since she was not a subservient woman due to her upbringing in Aquitaine where women enjoyed greater rights. She shared many forceful traits with the three Matilda's but Adeliza was more accepting of her subservient position.²⁰⁶

A final distinction between Eleanor and the other four queens was her longevity. Eleanor lived to the age of eighty, which was very old by medieval standards. Richard of Devizes wrote a glowing accolade to Eleanor when he said, "Queen Eleanor, a matchless woman, beautiful and chaste, powerful and modest, meek and eloquent, which is rarely wont to be met within a woman, who was advanced in years enough to have had two husbands and two sons crowned kings, still indefatigable for every undertaking, whose power was the admiration of her age."²⁰⁷ She outlived her two husbands and all but two

²⁰⁶ Huneycutt, "*Alianora Regina Anglorum*," 118-20.

²⁰⁷ Richard of Devizes. *Chronicle of the deeds of Richard First, King of England. Also, Richard of*

(Leonor and John) of her ten children. By contrast Matilda of Flanders only lived to her fifty-second year, Edith Matilda lived to the age of thirty eight, Adeliza of Louvain outlived her husband but only lived to the age of forty eight, and Matilda of Boulogne lived only until she was forty seven. Eleanor's longevity allowed her to exert true political power as a widow under the reign of her sons Richard and John.²⁰⁸ Honeycutt's study places Eleanor's queenship into context with other queens of her time, revealing Eleanor's similarities and uniqueness among queens of her era.²⁰⁹

Eleanor witnessed many events in Western Europe and also earned the respect of some of her peers with her skillful handling of political affairs of the kingdom. She knew many important people over the course of her eighty-year life span. Her queenship touched many lives and left lasting impressions, not all of them positive ones, as evidenced by the black legends. Conclusions can be drawn that queenship provided one of the basic foundations to the power structure of the kingdom and that Eleanor of Aquitaine was a queen of power and influence as well as a devoted mother concerned with nurturing her children and supporting their political careers.

In sum, recent scholarly interest in queenship has shown that this is a growing field of study, rich in substance. As this field grows, the discourse on queenship will continue to expand our knowledge on the balance of power within the medieval family as well as in political, religious, and economic spheres. As a queen and a mother, Eleanor used both tropes of the Marian grieving mother and queenship. She embraced her duty to provide the next king by being sexually active ensuring the succession which all

Ciernescester's Description of Britain, trans. and ed. J.A. Giles (London: James Bohn, 1841) 7 section 29.

²⁰⁸ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 256.

²⁰⁹ Honeycutt, "Alianora Regina Anglorum", 118, 121, 129-30.

contributed to elevating her public image. It is possible that one of the reasons she traveled so publicly with her children was to improve that public image. It was important for Eleanor to be seen as a pious Christian, devoted, dutiful mother working for her children's best interests, and was a supportive, affective queen. Eleanor influenced the path and success of the Angevin Empire from the time of her marriage to Henry II to her death. Her life was a variation of hectic motion interspersed with periods of inactivity. She endured a lifelong struggle to reconcile her determination to be recognized as a ruler in her own right with responsibilities as a nurturing, dedicated mother by the standards of her time. This balancing act created a woman of unique insight and wisdom. Perseverance and commitment became Eleanor's hallmarks.

CONCLUSION

Looking at Eleanor through a New Lens

Enduring Legacy

Modern fascination with Eleanor of Aquitaine continues due to the central role she played in the history of the twelfth century. Her personal inheritance as well as her position in society as the wife of King Henry II and mother of the royal children made her a powerful woman.²¹⁰ It appears that Eleanor understood the importance of remaining near her children in order to nurture and guide them as well as making her position of Queen viable. Eleanor fulfilled social expectations of a queen through her dedication to the Church, God, and Henry II by fulfilling her sacred duty to bear an heir, by serving as regent, building churches, making benefactions, and playing a key role in literature, art, and music in the kingdom. In consideration of her motherhood, Eleanor fulfilled medieval expectations by bearing, nurturing, educating, and training her children, preparing them for the lives they would lead. Eleanor was unusual however in that she traveled and resided with her children when they were young which contrasts with many noble and aristocratic mothers who left the nurturing and care of their children to trusted servants. She tirelessly supported and promoted her children's interest and welfare, as her own, to the end of her life.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Wheeler and Parsons, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, xiv.

²¹¹ Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 146-47, 256-57, 280-81.

Eleanor challenged the changing gender norms of her day and came up against many fierce opponents, from Church leaders to her two husbands, King Louis VII of France and King Henry II of England. While Eleanor often had to give in to the power of her husbands, she continued to fight for recognition of her ancestry, titles, and the power and influence Aquitaine brought her. She never gave up her personal quest to be an autonomous ruler of Aquitaine, even though she only enjoyed complete autonomy as a duchess for a few short periods throughout her life. As a woman so frequently in the spotlight in her own time, Eleanor has fallen under the inquisitive eye of history, making her a target for negative and at times inaccurate portrayals. Considering that she faced the conventional challenges brought about by womanhood, it is remarkable to view her in the context of a queen and mother where so much was expected. Attempting to negotiate between her roles as mother, wife and queen and historical expectations of virtue and gender, and her own earthly desires, Eleanor exemplified the struggles of those who came before her and those who followed her.

Balancing Roles

Eleanor is an example of a twelfth century queen and mother who successfully balanced both roles by the standards of the day. As this analysis has demonstrated, Eleanor's contribution to the success and longevity of the Angevin Empire was substantial. She spent an appreciable amount of her life in service to her children as she struggled to craft her public persona in her quest to be recognized as a ruler in her own right. Eleanor gained insight and wisdom during a time where male leaders were striving to put women firmly in a place of submissiveness and obedience. Her life spanned eighty years during which Eleanor witnessed many social, economic, political, and religious

changes in Western Europe. The fascinating combination of perseverance, loyalty to her children, and the black legends that followed her throughout her life created an exceptional woman.²¹²

During Eleanor's final years, she remained at Fontevraud Abbey where she spent her time in prayer and contemplation while also constructing a mausoleum for her family, and overseeing the construction of Henry II's tomb as well as her son, Richard's. She planned her own tomb which was completed by others in 1210, six years after her death. Eleanor died at Fontevraud Abbey on March 31, 1204. She was entombed beside Henry and Richard, her effigy bearing only a crown as a symbol of her royal power. This effigy depicts Eleanor as if she was still living, holding a book, appearing lost in eternal contemplation. The nuns of Fontevraud wrote an obituary for Eleanor that told of how Eleanor had, "brightened the world with the splendor of her royal progeny," and had "by the merit of her incomparable rectitude, surpassed almost all of the queens of the world."²¹³ It is necessary that historians continue to re-evaluate limited medieval primary sources on women like Eleanor as I believe the important place motherhood and queenship played in the royal family arena as well as the political sphere are central to understanding medieval society as a whole.

Eleanor of Aquitaine's influence within her dynastic family continued after her death, through the strong bonds of affection and influence she established with her children and her grandchildren. She left a legacy of royal descendants who ruled throughout Europe until the fifteenth century. Eleanor was not a power-hungry queen

²¹² Wheeler and Parsons, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, xiv.

²¹³ Jean-Marie Bienvenu, "Alienor d' Aquitaine et Frontevraud et Fontevraud," *Cahiers de civilization médiévale*, 29 no. 113-114, 15-27 (1986), 296, quoted in Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England*, 296.

who manipulated her children only for what she could gain, but instead was an affectionate, devoted, dutiful mother to her children by the standards of her time, and protected their interests because she wanted the best for them.

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TABLES, MAPS AND PICTURES

Table 1: Eleanor's journeys with Matilda, 1156-1160. Courtesy of Colette Bowie

June 1156	Matilda born
July 1156	Matilda travels to Rouen with Eleanor & young Henry
N/D	Eleanor & Henry II journey to Aquitaine (with Matilda & young Henry?)
Christmas 1156	Eleanor & Henry at Bordeaux (with Matilda & young Henry?)
January 1157	Eleanor returns to Normandy with Matilda & young Henry
February 1157	Matilda returns to England with Eleanor
February 1157-1158	Matilda in England with Eleanor?
1157	Eleanor travels between Hampshire, Berkshire, Wiltshire & Devon
February 1158	Eleanor travels from Winchester to London
August-September 1158	Eleanor at Winchester
October 1158	Eleanor travels between Winchester, Oxford & London
November 1158	Eleanor at Salisbury
Christmas 1158	Eleanor joins Henry II at Cherbourg
Christmas 1159	Eleanor with Henry II at Falaise
December 1159	Eleanor returns to England
September 1160	Matilda travels to Rouen with Eleanor

The Pipe Rolls of Henry II (38 Vols. Pipe Roll Society, 1884-1925), Pipe Rolls 6-16, in Colette Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 36.

Table 2: Eleanor's journeys with Matilda and Leonor, 1160-1165.

September 1160- January 1163	Matilda in France (largely Normandy) with Eleanor
Christmas 1160	Eleanor & Henry II (with Matilda?) at Le Mans
September 1161	Leonor born at Domfront in Normandy
Christmas 1161	Eleanor & Henry II (with Matilda & Leonor?) at Bayeux
Christmas 1162	Eleanor, Henry II, Matilda & Leonor at Cherbourg
January 1163	Matilda returns to England with Eleanor & Leonor
January 1163- May 1165	Eleanor in England with Matilda and Leonor
February 1163	Eleanor travels from Hampshire to Wiltshire
Summer 1164	Eleanor travels between Wiltshire, Devon & Hampshire
April 1165	Eleanor & Matilda (and Leonor?) in Berkshire
May 1165	Matilda, Leonor & Richard travel to Rouen with Eleanor

The Pipe Rolls of Henry II (38 Vols. Pipe Roll Society, 1884-1925), Pipe Rolls 3-6, 13-14 in Colette Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 37-38.

Table 3: Eleanor's journeys with Matilda, Leonor and Joanna, 1165-1167.

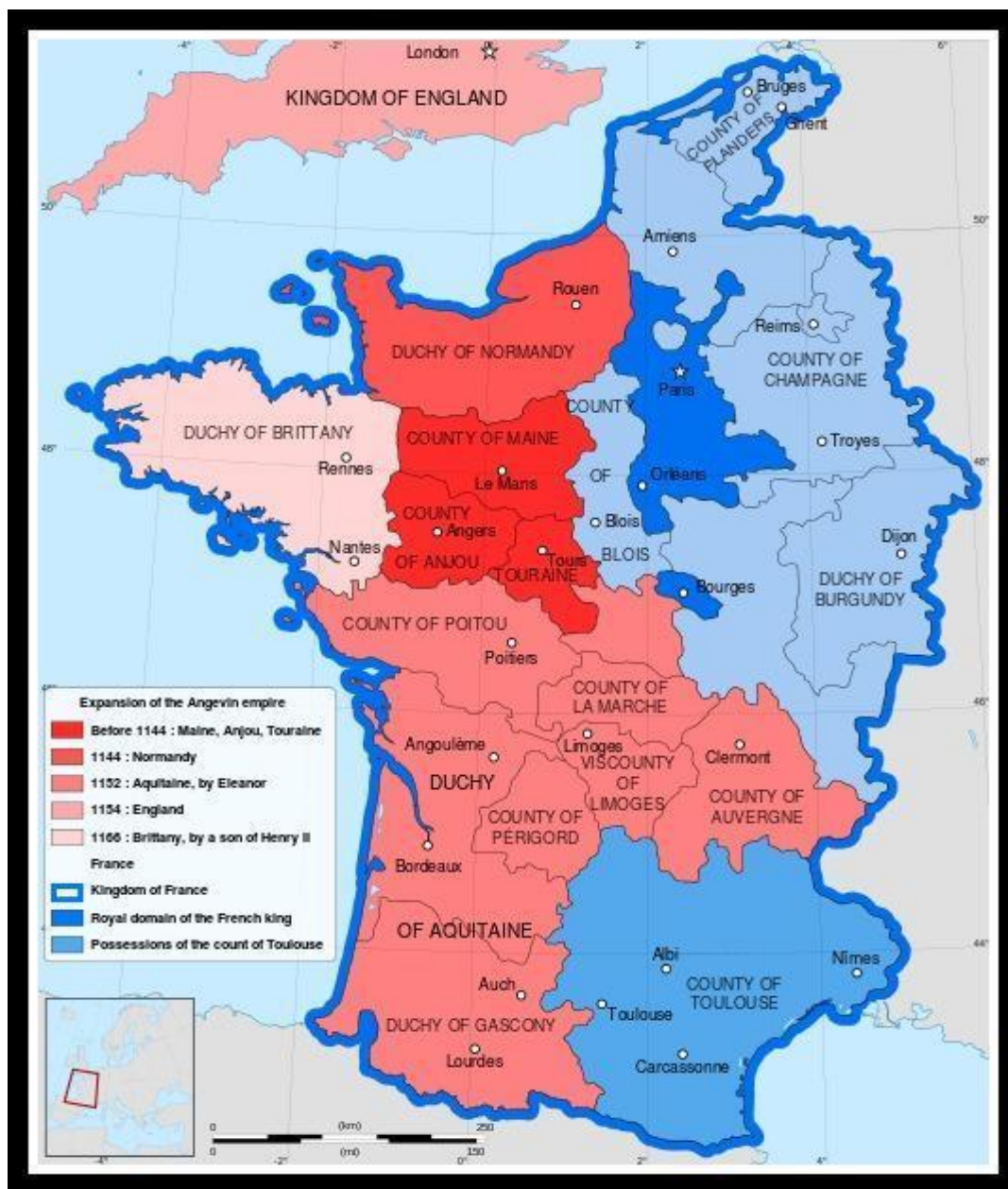
May 1165-October 1166	Matilda & Leonor in France (largely Angers) with Eleanor
Michaelmas 1165	Matilda & Leonor with Eleanor at Angers
October 1165	Joanna born at Angers
Easter 1166	Matilda, Leonor & Joanna with Eleanor at Angers
Michalemas 1166	Matilda, Leonor & Joanna with Eleanor at Angers
October-November 1166	Matilda, Leonor & Joanna return to England with Eleanor
December	Eleanor at Oxford
September	Matilda travels to Dover with Eleanor Matilda journeys to Saxony for marriage to Henry the Lion

The Pipe Rolls of Henry II (38 Vols. Pipe Roll Society, 1884-1925), Pipe Rolls 20-22, in Colette Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 39.

Table 4: Eleanor's journeys with Leonor and Joanna, 1167-1174.

September- December 1167	Eleanor at Winchester (with Leonor & Joanna?)
Christmas 1167	Eleanor & Henry II at Argentan with Leonor, Joanna, Richard & John
February 1168	Leonor, Joanna, Richard & John travel to Poitou with Eleanor
February 1168-July 1174	Eleanor in France (largely Poitou)
May 1170	Eleanor in Limoges with Richard
June 1170	Leonor Travels to Bordeaux with Eleanor Leonor journeys to Castile for marriage to Alfonso VIII
June 1170	Eleanor at Caen
Christmas 1172	Eleanor & Henry II at Chinon
February 1173	Eleanor at Council of Limoges before returning to Poitou
July 1174	Joanna & John return to England with Eleanor (now captive)
July 1174- September 1176	Eleanor at Salisbury (with Joanna?)
September 1176	Joanna at Winchester with Eleanor Joanna journeys to Sicily for marriage to William II

The Pipe Rolls of Henry II (38 Vols. Pipe Roll Society, 1884-1925), Pipe Rolls 20-22, in Colette Bowie, *The Daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 40.



Picture 1 Author Unknown, Map of France 1154, In: Wikipedia. Accessed April 2018. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duchy_of_Aquitaine



Picture 2 Eleanor's Seal,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eleanor_of_Aquitaine#/media/File:EleanorAkvitakie1068.jpg



Picture 3 The Eleanor vase. Eleanor gave the vase to Louis VII as a gift.
Eleanor was given the vase by her grandfather, William IX.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_crystal_vase#/media/File:vase_de_cristal_d%27ali%C3%A9nor.jpg