

religious vocation won out, and the king ended up married to her cousin. Pauline argued that beyond the trope of the king burning with passion for the beautiful and virtuous nun, there appeared to be negotiations among her family members, shown by the involvement of her aunt. Edgar's eventual marriage to Wulfhilde's cousin suggests that a political alliance with Wulfhilde's kin-group was his goal. Kin-groups and networks of kin are central throughout *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*. Pauline reminds us that men and women came with parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles, nieces, and nephews and cousins. Kin could provide support and alliances, or involve a new couple in feuds and wars.

The final thing, and the most influential on my own work, is the way that this book demonstrated that wives controlled the household treasure. Pauline uses the writings of Hincmar of Rheims and connects them to the poem *Beowulf* to show the role of the queen as the woman who controlled treasure and bestowed it upon favored members of the court. From this position within the court, and the way that queens could control wealth, patronage, and access to the king, it became clear to me that women in early medieval courts were powerful political actors at the center of government. This is where the breadth of this book really pays off. The range of examples shows that individual women were not exceptional, but that there were female roles—particularly wife, queen, mother, and widow—that gave women the opportunity for power and influence. The presentation of such a detailed analysis of female power, supported by examples of women from a wide geographical area and chronological span, opened my eyes to the possibilities of gender history and is the greatest triumph of this seminal book.

Reflections on Pauline Stafford's Book, *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*

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I FIRST READ *QUEENS, CONCUBINES, and Dowagers* in the late 1980s, when I was in graduate school and working on a dissertation project on royal women in medieval Spain. Accustomed to reading political history written by and about men, Stafford's book hit me like a thunderbolt that transformed my research methods, questions, and ultimately the

theories I rely on to understand the past. She argued that queens were not ancillary to the institution of monarchy, until then regarded as exclusively male with only a few “exceptions”—Isabel of Castile, Mary I Tudor, Elizabeth I Tudor—included when they were too visible to be neglected. This argument opened a door and welcomed into the conversation a crowd of scholars who continue to be inspired by the details of her study. It forced me to reread familiar chronicles with an eye for queens and abbesses—Adelaide, Gerberga, Theophanu, Matilda of Quedlinburg, Emma of Normandy, Edith of Wessex—and their families. I penciled in dozens of names to the genealogies in canonical studies on monarchy that included women only when they did something other than bear a male heir. I wondered where the queens and abbesses of Spain were and in the chronicles found Elvira, Berenguela, Urraca, and Elisenda, and eventually María of Castile, the fifteenth-century queen-lieutenant of the crown of Aragon, who now, after forty years of studying her, feels to me like a member of family. After 1989, scholars in Eastern Europe were no longer cut off from their counterparts elsewhere, and thanks to their archival work studies on queens from Poland, Hungary, and Bohemia now populate our libraries and our course syllabi.

Stafford’s work shifted the paradigm of women and power from an exclusively masculine vocabulary to one that re-centered the subject to include women. But it was not just a semantic shift. Including queens in monarchy expanded the subject beyond the study of kings in parliaments, making laws, and waging war. Nor was it just a question of including queens regnant. She argued that queens were hardly incidental to the practice of monarchy, but rather were key elements in dynastic government that depended on all members of the family, both immediate and extended members as regents, lieutenants, advisers, diplomats, and power brokers. Centering queens in monarchy reconfigured the hierarchical, descending theories of monarchy by arguing that family networks were vital to dynastic success. By emphasizing horizontal affiliations, she included non-royal women in the narrative. Her book opened up a very exciting field of research that explores networks of power at court, both in the intimacy of the bedchamber and the publicity of the great hall. It has led scholars to reconsider chronology in terms of continuity—of gender norms, inheritance practices, law, religion, and custom.

Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers pulled together some threads that led Stafford to upend conventional thinking about women and power and its variants—agency and influence—that made everything we had studied before richer, more alive, more complex, and now, finally, some-

thing that we recognize as a more fully imagined picture of monarchy. But Stafford would not be content to sit back and bask in the glow of her accomplishment without asking, What's next? I see several new directions.

First, it is important to study queenship and law, to read carefully familiar law codes and legal records for evidence of laws that affected a queen's right to rule. Some of this work has begun for some queens, but a broad and systematic study is needed in order to clarify and deepen knowledge on all women and the law.

Second, we need more regional and comparative studies that take into account the practice of patrilocality and study the tremendous impact of queens' moving from one realm to another to marry. Queens take their culture with them, but most political historians still equate monarchy with the king and fail to recognize that when a Hungarian or Bohemian woman married an English, French, or Spanish prince they created a blended political culture. This approach opens up new lines of study of questions of nation and identity, and of mobility. Hundreds of people traveled with the queen when she moved to marry. Some returned to their homes, but many also stayed, married, and created new families that challenge our notions of ethnicity. Queens also had access to tremendous wealth, both personal and public, and more work needs to be done on how they managed their natal and marital estates. Recent work on this has focused mostly on England (the "Queen's Gold," a fiscal account which was earmarked for the exclusive use of the queen) and on Portugal (the queen's estates, known as the *Terras da Rainha*, which provided a fixed patrimony for the queen to use), and the methods of these studies can provide a foundation for studies elsewhere.

Finally, Stafford's focus on queens complicates long-held chronological frameworks for the study of political history. Rejecting a reliance on narratives bounded by the deeds of men clarifies the persistence of patriarchal norms and institutions, and places the historiographical emphasis not on the death of a king but rather on the continuity of laws and practices. Dynastic change is revealed to be less the failure of a woman to bear a son, and more the failure of men to recognize the value of women in governance.

Stafford's book prompted more than just a few doctoral dissertations and panels at conferences. It unleashed an entire field of study we now label queenship studies. Her book is a tremendous intellectual gift to historians that continues to have an impact on scholarly work, not only in history but also in a wide range of fields.