

## In Which a Research Student Meets One of her Heroes

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MY FIRST BRUSH WITH the works of Pauline Stafford were in the very formative years of my undergraduate degree at the University of Evansville, Indiana. I was fortunate enough to be under the supervision of another great feminist medieval scholar, Annette Parks, who assigned Prof. Stafford's article "Women and the Norman Conquest"<sup>41</sup> as a part of our senior seminar group. Although I had enjoyed most of my degree, it was that article which, for the first time, made me think, "Yes. Yes. This is what history is to me. *This is why we do what we do.*"

This article is only one small part of Prof. Stafford's entire body of work focusing on political, gender, and manuscript history in the central Middle Ages. All tie together with such erudition, scholarship—and readability. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of Prof. Stafford's work is a deep scholarship worn lightly, writing that combines a quick turn of phrase alongside erudition and the ability to make an academic monograph an absolute page-turner. *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers, Unification and Conquest, Queen Emma and Queen Edith*<sup>42</sup> (all books to which I regularly send my students), alongside works on Edith, the "Annals of Aethelflaed," Judith, sons and mothers, women in Domesday, queens and treasure,<sup>43</sup> and so much more place Prof. Stafford as not just one of the preeminent scholars of the Middle Ages but, equally, one of the most important gender his-

<sup>41</sup> Pauline Stafford, "Women and the Norman Conquest," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 4 (1994): 221–49.

<sup>42</sup> Pauline Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>43</sup> Pauline Stafford, "Edith, Edward's Wife and Queen," in *Edward the Confessor, the Man and the Legend*, ed. Richard Mortimer (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), 119–38; "Charles the Bald, Judith and England," in *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*, ed. Janet L. Nelson and Margaret Gibson (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1981), 139–53; Pauline Stafford, "Women in Domesday," in *Medieval Women in Southern England*, ed. Keith Bate, Anne Curry, and Peter Noble (Reading: University of Reading, 1989), 75–94; Pauline Stafford, "Queens and Treasure in the Early Middle Ages," in *Treasure in the Middle Ages*, ed. Elizabeth Tyler (York: York Medieval Press, 2000), 61–82.

torians in the field. Indeed, it is not just *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers* but Prof. Stafford's overall work which has advanced and nuanced ideas of gender and authority in the early and central Middle Ages, and those of us who work in these areas owe her a great debt.

Many years after my first brush with Prof. Stafford's work as an undergraduate, I was fortunate enough to meet her at my first Leeds International Medieval Congress. As I sat through a panel, I noticed the name badge of the woman next to me: Pauline Stafford. As the panel continued, my mind was all aflutter: one of the most influential scholars to my career was sitting next to me! I remember nothing about that entire session. When the questions were finished, we turned to each other and she said, cheerfully, "I thought that was interesting. What did you think?" Having nothing to say about the papers that I was too flustered to have listened to, I could only respond, prattling in shock, "I'm—I just have to say—I'm so happy to meet you—your article on Women and the Norman Conquest—you're the reason I'm doing my Ph.D.!" I am sure it was not the best impression I could have given. But to her credit—and as I have grown to realize is a part of her characteristic kindness and generosity to other scholars—she smiled and simply said, "Oh, how nice! Which article? What are you working on?" We had a lovely little chat, and I was left star-struck to have met one of my academic heroes.

As important as *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers* is to medieval academia, alongside all of Prof. Stafford's work, her scholarship alongside that one simple, kind conversation to a star-struck research student exemplifies to my mind all the things we should be as medievalists: not simply great scholars but also kind people. Pauline Stafford, to me, has set both these bars high. As much as this special forum is in honor of the excellent scholarship contained in *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers*, may we all, in her honor, also strive to reach those bars of kindness and generosity which she has set for us too.