



*Chaucer's Queens: Royal Women,
Intercession, and Patronage in
England, 1328–1394*

Louise Tingle

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Chaucer's Queens: Royal Women, Intercession, and Patronage in England, 1328–1394. By Louise Tingle. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. ISBN 978-3-030-63218-2. i + 239 pp. £74.99.

In *Chaucer's Queens*, Louise Tingle examines two English queen consorts, Philippa of Hainault and Anne of Bohemia, as well as Joan of Kent, who was never a queen herself, but was the wife to Edward III's heir and mother of Richard II. Tingle fills a gap in the scholarship of medieval queenship between Lisa Benz St John's study of early fourteenth-century English queens, *Three Medieval Queens*, and Joanna Laynesmith's study of the fifteenth-century English queens, *The Last Medieval Queens*. Like Laynesmith and Benz St. John, Tingle argues for the benefits of comparative study of successive queens. She focuses on ideas of agency with a specific emphasis on the queenly activities of intercession and patronage as transactional, whereas previous scholars focused more on the queen's relationship with, and as part of, the crown (2).

The book is divided into two parts consisting of ten chapters. The first three chapters explore the themes of motherhood and intercession and summarize the many studies that make up the existing scholarly discourse on Philippa, Joan, and Anne. Tingle argues that children secured the queen's status and that proximity to the king in this way led to increased influence. Intercession was of key importance to both the king and queen and publicizing it, as was done in Froissart's account of Philippa's intercession in Calais and in Maidestone's account of Anne in the *Concordia*, could have positive effects on the queen's reputation (53). The historiographical summary is thorough, demonstrating strong knowledge of the previous scholarship. Likewise, the author's analysis of these earlier studies makes a significant contribution to the discussions about intercession and motherhood regarding these specific royal women. However, the more general conclusions about the relationships between intercession and motherhood within the framework of medieval queens' agency are not new to the study of queenship.

The final chapter of Part One, "Queen's Gold and Revenues," is where this study begins to make a noteworthy contribution to the study of medieval queens. Queen's gold was a tax on fines payable to the king and was an important part of the queen's income. Tingle argues that the "queen's gold represents the symbolic links between the queen as intercessor and her role as patron" (108). While analysis of queen's gold is frequently considered at length in many scholarly studies of early medieval queens, it is not a subject addressed often or in as great a depth in discussions of the later medieval queens. Laynesmith does discuss it briefly in her study of fifteenth-century queens, Benz St. John, even less so. Examining queen's gold in the framework of intercession as Tingle does is striking: her specific analysis of its use under Philippa, Anne, and Joan can act as a foundation for larger comparative studies on the topic across additional medieval queens.

Part Two of *Chaucer's Queens* shows how queens used patronage to construct their identities. These three royal women deployed symbols on material objects like crowns, jewellery, livery, and badges to assert agency through their identity (136). In her discussion of seals, effigies, and images in manuscripts, Tingle takes this argument further. She convincingly shows how Anne, Joan, and Philippa leveraged their agency through the

creation of these artistic representations to construct the identity each wanted to display to the world. The level of agency a queen exerted dictated her direct influence in the creation of these representations; Tingle implies that this depended on the life stage of the queen. Queens had less agency in the creation of their seals because these were created at the beginning of their marriages, before they had any opportunity to establish significant authoritative capital. Thus, seals were more formulaic in their depictions of the queens. These women had more agency in identity creation through tomb effigies. Philippa was heavily involved in the commission and possibly the design of her tomb in the years just prior to her death. By then, she had a lifetime of experiences to give her greater agency in this commission. Conversely, Anne died quite young. Not only did she not have the time and space to be the author of her own posthumous identity, but she may not have had the authority to commission such a project. Her effigy, designed by her husband, Richard II, lacks the more personal and realistic representations of Philippa's. Joan may have had even more personal choice in the creation of her effigy and the decision of her place of burial in Greyfriars in Stamford Lincolnshire, beside her first husband, John Holland, Duke of Exeter. Her agency in this choice may have been greater because she was a widow at her death—and perhaps because she was never queen.

In comparing Philippa, Anne, and Joan's religious patronage, Tingle explores the well-known donations to institutions like the Hospital of St. Katherine's and Greyfriars, London, pointing out that these royal women supported the traditional subjects of queenly patronage. However, while most previous studies focus on Greyfriars and St. Katherine's, Tingle also looks at the lesser donations to smaller institutions, which may have seemed inconsequential. However, through this examination the author is able to highlight a significant degree of personal choice and agency when it came to the religious patronage of these women (155).

The study then examines images of queens created by others. Royal women inspired the depictions of both themselves and fictional queens in literary works. By influencing the writers creating these depictions through their patronage, they shaped the commemoration of themselves during and after their own lives (173). Through their direct patronage, these queens played a role in court literary culture and used literary patronage to transmit their natal culture to their marital homes (191). Even when queens did not directly commission literary works, they still influenced the depictions of queens in these works. Froissart and Chaucer had direct connections with the royal court in the fourteenth century and their connections to the court, and more specifically to Joan, Anne, and Philippa, have been the topic of scholarly study. Tingle contributes to that discourse by arguing that while Anne, Joan, and Philippa may not have directly commissioned these works, by inspiring the fictional queens or *fictionalized* queens they “provided a legacy for their intercessory activity,” and solidified intercession as an identifying quality of good queenship which afforded them wider visibility (199). This is the first time that Chaucer is mentioned since the introduction of the book, but the author's lengthy discussion of his connections to these three royal women demonstrates how these are “Chaucer's Queens”. He had a close relationship with all three and drew on them in his representation of queens in his works.

Tingle uses the transactional nature of the queen's role at court as a new analytical framework to explore agency. According to Tingle, Philippa of Hainault, Joan of Kent, and Anne of Bohemia "accumulated wealth from land rights and traditions, including queen's gold in return for intercessory activities, which in turn funded artists, authors, as well as material culture" (5). This new approach adds another facet to queenship studies, which situates queens as "agents of transaction within the social bonds at the royal court with the transformation of symbolic capital into economic" capital (203). Intercession for queens was not only a political advantage, but also an economic one. Tingle's book is an important contribution to the study of medieval queenship. It adds new categories of analysis by locating the queen's intercession and patronage within a transactional and economic space, giving broader understanding of the queen's role at court and her agency, power, and authority.

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