

L'Envers de la tapisserie
The Œuvre of Yolande d'Aragon

A Study of Queenship, Power and Authority in Late Mediæval France.

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TO MY FAMILY

For in the end, if we strip away the History, this study is about family particularly mothers and sons.

ABSTRACT

The genesis of this dissertation can be dated to earlier research completed in January 1999 the title of which was *Nature, Raison et le Couple*. During the course of this earlier research many couples and partnerships were examined, both literary and historical. The enigmatic Yolande d'Aragon kept appearing on the horizon to be brushed away by the researcher anxious to complete her dissertation in a timely fashion. Notwithstanding these attempts, Yolande refused to be suppressed for very long and it was probably the temptation occasioned by the scarcity of available secondary material documenting her extraordinary *gestes* that determined she would become the centre of this research project.

In order to give the full context of Yolande d'Aragon's activities and responsibilities the study commences with an examination of the peninsular kingdom of Naples-Sicily. Firstly because Naples-Sicily was the trigger for her betrothal to Louis II d'Anjou and, secondly because an understanding of this singular kingdom is an essential prerequisite if we are to fathom the difficulties under which Yolande d'Aragon was obliged to labour once the responsibility for this largely fictive legacy passed to her.

The foundations for Yolande's later endeavours were meticulously laid down by her mother-in-law, Marie of Brittany, therefore her particular struggles must be examined and understood in order to achieve an understanding of the importance of a unified and prosperous Provence to later Angevin enterprise.

Yolande's origins and upbringing are studied to examine how Iberian princesses were prepared for regal service. The personalities of her parents, their particular spirituality and connections, as well as the importance of the Friars Minor to the Crown of Aragon constitute another essential layer to this research.

The partnership of Louis II and Yolande d'Aragon is examined in light of the political malaise within the Kingdom of France during the period 1400-1417. Their allegiances were complex and often dangerous yet they managed to steer a relatively steady course in the interests of their House, allowing Yolande to maintain her power and dignity upon the death of Louis II in April 1417.

Yolande was widowed at the age of thirty-six and rather than mourn her loss she was obliged to consolidate her holdings and ensure loyalty from her subjects and vassals. She then moved to build alliances, conscientiously working towards the establishment of durable unity between princely Houses of France so long divided by the ambitions of successive Dukes of Burgundy and their allies as well as by opportunistic princes and lesser nobles who sought to gouge out personal fortunes from what was left of a devastated kingdom. This, Yolande d'Aragon eventually achieved by detaching the Duke of Brittany from the Anglo-Burgundian powerhouse. Notwithstanding this eventual victory, the journey to its achievement was an arduous one and it would take a near miracle to shake both Charles and France out of defeatist stupor.

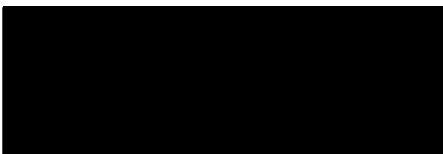
Enter *La Pucelle*. We examine Joan of Arc's origins and connections in an attempt to achieve a rounded context to her epic, too often studied in episodic isolation.

Joan was removed by Bedford and the University of Paris and we analyze the often cited abandonment of her by Charles and his party, emphasizing Yolande d'Aragon's activities in this period and her gradual re-organization and reform of Charles's inner circle and government as well as her participation in events leading to the Arras congress and eventual peace in the Kingdom of France. Peace, however, was hard won and we examine the measures put in place to ensure recovery and reform of the kingdom and its governance.

The study concludes with Yolande's death in Saumur on 14th November 1442 and an evaluation of her legacy.

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



Zita Rohr

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INTRODUCTION

Charles VII of France has been referred to variously as *le Bien Servi*, *le Victorieux*, *le Très Chrétien*, *le Roi des Rois*, with one eighteenth century commentator, Charles-Jean-François Hénault claiming that : « *Charles VII ne fut, en quelque sorte, que le témoin des merveilles de son règne.* »¹ This is probably excessive, yet the fact remains that much of the secret of the success of Charles's ultimate triumph over the odds remains shrouded by the passage of time and the long shadow of Joan of Arc.

In his memoirs, Pius II ponders the phenomenon of Joan of Arc. After having described the deeds of and reactions to Joan he makes the observation that: « *Qu'elle fût une œuvre divine ou une invention humaine, je trancherais difficilement.* »² Rather than leaving this pronouncement as his final word on the subject, Pius expands his reflection: « *Certains ont une autre version: alors que les nobles de France (quand les événements tournaient à souhait en faveur des Anglais) étaient divisés et que personne n'était jugé digne par un autre de commander, quelqu'un de plus sage imagina cette ruse d'affirmer que la jeune fille était envoyée par Dieu et qu'il fallait lui confier le commandement.* »³

¹ Hénault, Charles-Jean-François, *Nouvel abrégé chronologique de l'histoire de France, contenant les événements de notre histoire depuis Clovis jusqu'à la mort de Louis XIV, les guerres,...les traités de paix, nos lois principales...On y trouve aussi les femmes de nos rois, leurs enfants etc,...rangés par colonnes, avec la date de leur mort*, Paris, Imprimerie de Prault Père, 1744, p.177.

² Pie II, (Enea Silvio Piccolomini), Minischetti, Vito Castiglione, Clouas, Ivan, (eds.), *Mémoires d'un pape de la Renaissance*, Paris, Tallandier, 2001, p. 273. Latin version: "*Divinium opus an humanum inventum fuerit difficile affirmaverum.*" Piccolomino, Enea Silvio (Papa Pio II), *I Commentarii*. Edizione A Curia di Luigi Totario, Totario, Luigi, (ed.), Milan, Adelphi Edizioni, 1984, p. 1110. Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-1464) was elected as Pius II in 1458 and is unique in that he wrote the only mediæval papal memoirs. He travelled to France immediately after the death of Joan of Arc in his capacity as secretary to the papal mediator, Cardinal Albergati. Taylor notes that his comments regarding the Maid were recorded after the Bishop of Arras, Jean Jouffroy, had attacked her in a eulogy for Philippe, Duke of Burgundy delivered to the Congress of Mantua in 1459. Jouffroy charged that in instigating the Nullification trial, Charles VII had sought deliberately to suppress public debate about Joan. The Bishop's position was that Joan had in fact been a puppet of one of the French nobles who was determined to restore Valois morale and spirit. Taylor, Craig, *Joan of Arc La Pucelle*, Manchester & New York, Manchester University Press, 2006, p.350. He cites as his source Lettenhove, Joseph Kervyn de, (ed.), *Chroniques relatives à l'histoire de Belgique sous la domination des ducs de Bourgogne*, 3 vols., Brussels, 1876, III, pp. 117-206.

³ Ibid. Latin version: « *Nonnulli existimant cum Franciae proceres, prospere succedentibus Anglorum rebus, inter se dissiderent, nec alter alterius ducatem ferre dignaretur, ab aliquo qui plus saperet hoc*

In this study we will attempt to demonstrate that Yolande d’Aragon, mother-in-law and guardian-angel of Charles VII, was the central *quelqu’un de plus sage*, who not only championed the cause of Joan of Arc⁴ but furthermore underwrote Charles VII’s ultimate victory and set the seal on his metamorphosis from *le petit roi de Bourges* into *le Victorieux, le Roi des Rois*.

Henri Martin evaluates Yolande d’Aragon’s contribution in these terms: « *Tout porte à attribuer une très grande et très utile influence à la mère de la reine, à la douairière Yolande d’Aragon. Avec moins d’éclat et d’autorité apparente, cette habile Espagnole semble avoir presque renouvelé chez nous Blanche de Castille.* »⁵ We intend to show that Yolande did far more than merely influence the course of events, that she was actively and consistently involved in the political, military and diplomatic affairs of France from

vaframentum excogitatum, ut virginem divinitus missam assererent, ducatumque petenti committerent;... » Piccolomini, Enea, Silvio (Papa Pio II), op. cit. p. 1110.

⁴ Since the completion of this research, yet another highly sensationalized and selectively “researched” account of Joan of Arc has appeared: Senzig, Roger & Gay, Marcel, *L’Affaire Jeanne d’Arc*, Mesnil-sur-l’Estrée, Firmin Didot, 2007. It seems to be a rehash of earlier works such as Caze, Pierre, *La Vérité sur Jeanne d’Arc, ou éclaircissements sur son origine*, par P. Caze, Paris, Rosa, 1819; Andrée, Francis, *La Pucelle et les sociétés secrètes de son temps : la vérité sur Jeanne d’Arc : Ses ennemis, ses auxiliaires, sa mission*, Paris, L. Chaumel : Librairie spiritualiste et morale, 1900 ; Bourrier, André, Grillot de Givry, Emile-Jules, Ryner, Han, *La vérité sur le supplice de Jeanne d’Arc, victime de l’Eglise : la Pucelle a-t-elle été brûlée ? S’est-elle échappée et mariée ?*, Conflans-Sainte-Honorine : « l’Idée libre », 1925 ; Jacoby, Jean, *La Pucelle d’Orléans, fille au grand cœur, martyre et sainte*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1936 ; Jacoby, Jean, *Scènes de la vie privée de Jeanne d’Arc. Son portrait, son instruction, ses toilettes, ses amis, ses habitudes, sa vie privée*, Paris, Mercure de France, 1940 ; Guérin, André, White, Jack Palmer, *Operation Shepherdess*, London, Heinemann, 1961 ; Bancal, Jean, *Jeanne d’Arc, princesse royale*, Paris, R. Laffont, 1971 ; and Cadiou, Martial, *Jeanne d’Arc : émissaire secrète de la politique de la Maison d’Anjou, les répercussions de « l’affaire du Grand Schisme d’Occident » sur la conduite de l’épopée johannique*, Opera Editions, 2003, just to name a few. None of these earlier “works” are acknowledged by Senzig or Gay, this despite the fact that they apparently consecrated some ten years to their “research”. Footnotes are extremely sparse and they have included some facsimiles of primary documents in their appendices in an attempt to legitimize their ideas. From these documentary inclusions their main fixation, apart from their thesis that Joan was a royal bastard, appears to be the reported re-appearance of the Maid in the years 1436-1439. Senzig and Gay do not appear to have consulted works examining the « *fausse Jeanne d’Arc* » including Lecoy de la Marche, Albert, *Une fausse Jeanne d’Arc*, Paris, V. Palmé, 1871 ; Marsy, Arthur de, *La fausse Jeanne d’Arc, Claude Des Armoises : du degré de confiance à accorder aux découvertes de Jérôme Vignier*, Compiègne, Imprimerie de H. Lefebvre, 1890 ; Lefèvre-Pontalis, Germain, *La fausse Jeanne d’Arc*, Paris, E. Bouillon, 1895 ; and Ledru, Ambroise, (l’abbé), *Quelques erreurs des historiens de Jeanne d’Arc : les détracteurs de la dame Des Armoises, dite la Pucelle d’Orléans ou la fausse Jeanne d’Arc, le prétendu pèlerinage d’Isabelle Rommée et des compagnons de la Pucelle au Puy-en-Velay en 1429*, Le Mans et Laval, Imprimerie A. Goupil, 1931.

⁵ Martin, Henri, *Histoire de France depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu’en 1789*, t. VI, [France du moyen âge (suite et fin), France de la Renaissance], Paris, Furne, 1855, p. 321.

the time of Charles's regency until her death in 1442, a period of some twenty-five years.

The title for this study has been intentionally employed to satisfy a number of historical and metaphorical rationales, the first and most obvious of which is the significance of tapestry to the political, ceremonial and domestic life of mediæval royal and noble families.⁶

A tapestry analogy is particularly relevant to our study of Yolande d'Aragon as the miraculously extant⁷ and meticulously restored *Tapisserie de l'Apocalypse* was itself commissioned by her father-in-law Louis I d'Anjou around 1373-1377 and completed in approximately 1382, meshing with the birth and early childhood of Yolande, *infanta* of Aragon, who as a woman would fight to retain Louis's Angevin legacy and play a leading rôle in the recovery of France during the closing stages of the Hundred Years War. This tapestry series, a monumental opus depicting the destruction of Babylon and the creation of a new Jerusalem, served as *toile de fond* for the marriage of Yolande d'Aragon to Louis II d'Anjou in the Cathedral of Arles in 1400.⁸ A chronicler of the spectacle, *maistre* Bertran Boysset,⁹ *arpenteur arlésien*,

⁶ C.f., Guiffrey, Jules, *Histoire de la tapisserie depuis le Moyen Age jusqu'à nos jours*, Tours, A. Mame et Fils, 1886 ; Lewis, Suzanne, *The Rhetoric of Power in the Bayeux Tapestry*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999 ; Woolley, Linda, *Medieval Life and Leisure in the Devonshire Hunting Tapestries*, London, V. & A. Publications, 2002 & Joubert, Fabienne, Lefébure, Amaury & Bertrand, Pascal-François, *Histoire de la Tapisserie en Europe, du Moyen Age à nos jours*, Paris, Flammarion, 1995.

⁷ While the entire collection of tapestries did not survive the passage of time, much of it has.

⁸ The *Apocalypse* Tapestry was still in Yolande d'Aragon's possession at the time of her death for she willed it to René, her elder surviving son: « *Item nous donnons et laissons a nostre dit filz le roy de Sicile/La tapicerie de l'Apocalypse.* », P 1334/17, f.° 52, p. 7. Lecoy de la Marche evinces the Angevin taste for rich tapestry: « *Le goût des riches tapisseries, si général au moyen âge, avait fait de ce genre d'ouvrage un art véritable, rival souvent heureux de la peinture. Ce goût était héréditaire, en particulier, dans la maison d'Anjou. Louis I et Louis II contribuèrent à son développement et à la prospérité des manufactures françaises, les premières du monde dès l'origine.* » Lecoy de la Marche, Albert, *Le roi René, sa vie, son administration et ses travaux artistiques et littéraires*, 2 vols, Geneva, Slatkin Reprints, 1969, t. II, p. 109. C.f. Mérimodol, Christian de, « Note sur la tapisserie de 'l'Apocalypse' d'Angers », in *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, (1983), pp. 82-91.

⁹ Cf. Portet, Pierre, *Bertrand Boysset, arpenteur arlésien de la fin du XVe siècle (1355-1415)*, doctoral dissertation, Université de Toulouse II, 1995 & Meyer, Paul, « Les manuscrits de Bertran Boysset » in *Romania*, Paris, Emile Bouillon, t. XXI, 1892, Geneva, Slatkin Reprints, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1974, pp. 528-556.

described the impression the Apocalypse Tapestry made upon him: « *Il n'est homme qui puisse écrire, raconter la valeur, la beauté, et la noblesse de ces tissus* ». ¹⁰ By the conclusion of this study it is hoped that a similar assessment will be made regarding the “*valeur*”, “*beauté*” and “*noblesse*” of Yolande’s warp and weft.

The idea of slipping behind the tapestry stems from a desire to discover what really went on and how victory was finally achieved during this troubled period of France’s history. After a long passage of time, the reverse of a tapestry is frequently more simple and vibrant than the image originally crafted for the beholder. The reverse of a tapestry reveals the intricacies of design, texture and beauty of its interwoven schema, where the threads of decisions and actions were woven and knotted together to achieve the public face of victory: in short, it is where the real work was done. Just as a finished tapestry is the result of concerted team effort by artist, weaver and dyer, no one person can be singled out as being the sole architect of the re-conquest of France. Yolande d’Aragon, however, played a primordial part in its reunification and recovery and it will be our task to demonstrate the extent to which she was involved.

Before passing from this discussion of tapestries, we must remind ourselves that all true tapestries are mirror images: they are woven reverse side uppermost, facing the weaver. In this study, we will slip behind the tapestry to witness Yolande d’Aragon, our *tisserande*, assiduously and patiently working towards the creation of a new Jerusalem in France from the rubble of its Babylon. We will discover that patience was perhaps Yolande’s greatest strength. One of her contemporaries, Jean Juvénal des Ursins,¹¹ expresses well the virtue of patience:

¹⁰ Ms. Fr 5728, f°35v° & Ehrle, Franz, *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters*, Berlin, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1893, VII, pp. 311-420.

¹¹ Jean Juvénal des Ursins (1388-1473) was a brilliant negotiator, diplomat, prelate and historian. He was created Archbishop of Reims in 1449 after the death of his brother Jacques. Another brother, Guillaume, was chancellor of France from 1445. From the time of his elevation to bishopric of Beauvais as successor to Pierre Cauchon, Jean Juvénal wrote a great deal. Peter Shervey Lewis holds that: « *ses écrits et lui-même à travers eux sont les guides indispensables pour nous conduire dans ce monde du XVe siècle et son action politique...il nous offre les faits concrets d'un real world.* ». Lewis, P.S., *Ecrits politiques de Jean Juvénal des Ursins*, Paris, Librairie C. Klincksiek, 1978-1993, 3 vols., t. III, p. 1. In writing his *Audit celi*, Jean Juvénal, a staunch supporter of

« *Pacience est une dame de coustume et modeste, grave de ung visaige ferme et estable, laquelle pour ostz de batailles et tempestes ne se meut point mais tousjours demeure liee sans soy esbahir. Et*

Inde quieta manet paciencia fortis et omnes

Omnibus una communis ceterisque virtutibus associatur

Nam vidua est virtus quem non paciencia ferat. »¹²

We will come to understand that above all other virtues, patience was the one that underscored all of Yolande's activities.

Yolande d'Aragon has been mentioned *en passant* by many historians and commentators¹³ of the closing stages of the Hundred Years War. In studies of the second House of Anjou, Good King René of Anjou, Charles VII and occasionally of Joan of Arc, Yolande d'Aragon has been acknowledged as having been shrewd and intelligent, an *éminence grise* who facilitated all manner of military, diplomatic and political advantage for her family and for France. Yet to our knowledge, no extended study has been undertaken to examine Yolande's activities in detail and in the light of the broader context of her time. A few scattered *mémoires de maîtrise*,¹⁴ scholarly papers,¹⁵ journal articles¹⁶, popular histories¹⁷ and novels¹⁸ have appeared from time

Charles VII, removed Joan of Arc from his narrative in order to emphasize the bigger picture (in his world view): God's support for the Valois monarchy. See above footnote 2 regarding Jouffroy's charges and Pius II's comments. Jean Juvénal later presided as one of the three judges in charge of the Nullification trial. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

¹² *Ecrits politiques...* I, p. 338. Line divisions as shown.

¹³ These will be acknowledged during the course of this study.

¹⁴ Bousquet-Labouerie, Christine, « Yolande d'Aragon (1376-1442) », Masters Dissertation, University of Nantes, 1986 ; Tanguy, Dominique, « Le rôle de Yolande d'Aragon dans le royaume angevin et français, selon les chroniqueurs du XVe siècle », Masters Dissertation commenced autumn 2001, Université du Québec à Montréal ; & Sottiau, Aurélie, « Une princesse dans l'Etat Angevin au XVe siècle à travers l'étude des comptes d'hôtel de Yolande d'Aragon », Masters Dissertation commenced autumn 2003 also at Université de Québec à Montréal. To date these are either incomplete or not available to this researcher.

¹⁵ Two recent papers have aroused our interest, one given on 18th February 2006 at the Faculté Universitaires Saint-Louis Bruxelles, (as part of a conference session : *Femmes de pouvoir, femmes politiques durant les derniers siècles du Moyen-Age*) by the respected historian Philippe Contamine, who chose as his subject: "Yolande d'Aragon et Jeanne d'Arc face à Charles VII, comparaison et confrontation" and the other, presented by Jean-Patrice Boudet at the University of Rouen in March 2005. Boudet's paper was titled, « Pour commencer bonne manière de gouverner le dit

- royaume, un miroir de prince du XVe siècle : avis à Yolande d'Aragon » and it contributed to study sessions on the theme of *Le prince au miroir de la littérature politique de l'Antiquité à l'époque moderne*. Both of these conferences would have been of great value to our current study, however, pressures of the research process and the tyranny of distance between Europe and Australia prevented the researcher's participation. Cf. The excellent paper researched by Claire Ponsich, « Trois princesses et la renommée d'une lignée – les trois Yolande (1325-1442) », in *Bulletin de la Société Agricole, Scientifique et Littéraire des Pyrénées-Orientales*, Perpignan, 2002, pp. 253-290.
- ¹⁶ Sené, E., « Un « miroir de prince » du XVe siècle : l'avis à Yolande d'Aragon », in *Bulletin de l'Association des Amis du Centre Jeanne d'Arc*, 19 (1995) p. 145-148.
- ¹⁷ Orliac, Jehanne d', *Yolande d'Anjou, la reine de quatre royaumes*, Paris, Librairie, Plon, 1933, a remarkably well-researched (for its genre) yet flawed work, containing several serious errors of fact and a tendency towards hagiography that detract from its authority; Erlanger, Philippe, *Charles VII et son mystère*, Paris, Gallimard, 1945, revised and re-issued in 1981. Erlanger published several articles on the subject of Yolande d'Aragon but his specific thesis is her determinant rôle in the recovery of France as sole protagonist rather than placing her in the context of her overall political activity. E. Cosneau, Gaston Du Fresne de Beaucourt and Albert Lecoy de la Marche discuss Yolande d'Aragon in relation to their respective subjects Richemont, Charles VII and René d'Anjou. Anatole France, man of letters, novelist and Nobel laureate wrote a provocative biography, *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, portraying the Maid as a weak ecclesiastical puppet, army mascot and violator of feudal conventions. Nadia Margolis notes that this work is "well-written, seductive in both its engaging style and scholarly panoply." Margolis, Nadia, *Joan of Arc in History, Literature and Film*, New York & London, Garland Publishing Inc., 1990, p. 119. France refers to Yolande *passim* and takes a rather dismissive view of her involvement, for example, « ...madame sa mère [Yolande] faisait envoyer de Blois des convois de vivres aux habitants d'Orléans, assiégés par les Anglais. Bien qu'elle fût pour lors en mauvaise intelligence avec les conseillers du roi Charles, son gendre, elle se montrait vigilante à combattre les ennemis du royaume, qui menaçait son duché d'Anjou. » France, Anatole, *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*, Paris, Editions Alive, 1999, p. 105. We will argue that her involvement, while interested, was rather more positive and far-reaching. A rather breathless account of Yolande's life and works has appeared in recent months from the pen (and imagination) of Arnaud des Roches de Chassay. This opus is titled *Yolande d'Aragon 1379-1442 ou l'unité de la France*, Janzé, Editions Charles Hérissey, 2006. Des Roches de Chassay seems to have played *pique-assiette* with a variety of largely unattributed sources some legitimate, others seemingly drawn from the world of the popular historical romance (perhaps sampling Sergentet, Marie-Louise, *La Reine de l'ombre, Yolande d'Aragon*, Cheminements, 2001), garnished with a veritable forest of exclamation points, imagined dialogue and breathless claims. Sadly, such publications in presenting themselves as "true" histories, only muddy the waters.
- ¹⁸ Keneally, Thomas, *Blood Red Sister Rose*, London, Collins, 1974, refers to Yolande almost continuously as "Mamam Yolande". At one point the author has the character [Georges] de la Tremoille sidle up to Yolande to accuse her: "You got the mob together tonight, Madame. The mob outside her pub [the inn where Joan was staying]...You got half a dozen of your Franciscans to preach about Lorraine virgins in the market today. After the council meeting. If we'd known you'd take advantage of us like this..." , p. 151. A tantalizing take on the arrival and reception of the Maid, while that of a novelist rather than an historian it is nonetheless interesting that Keneally characterized Yolande in the way he has. As a former seminarian, he might well have had the opportunity to consult a wide range of documents relating to this period of history. His book has been read as an "absorbing novel on Joan, structured according to speaking parts only to convey action of the story up to Charles's betrayal before Compiègne. Trial and death of Joan presented via a poignant letter composed by her father.» Margolis, op.cit., p. 342. Apart from Sergentet's novel mentioned above, a three part narrative of Yolande's fictionalized activities, the *Lys en Val de Loire* series, has appeared quite recently: Godard, Jocelyne, *La Nuit des démons*, Paris, Editions Stock, 2003, deals with events commencing in 1400 with the commissioning of the *Apocalypse* tapestries (see above for actual dates of commission and completion) wherein Yolande d'Aragon "s'active avec courage

to time, but these concentrate largely on isolated aspects of her undertakings, her children, or if she is the point of focus, generally fall into the category of the biographic/hagiographic portrait.¹⁹

In examining the case of Yolande d'Aragon it is the intention of this study to lay to one side the anthropological/sociological "*retrospectoscope*". We will not therefore attempt to analyze Yolande's motivations and activities in light of our epoch's interpretation of "the plight of women as the product of patriarchy and misogyny"²⁰ nor, as critical constructivists might, in order to better understand that knowledge is situated, partial, provisional, and open to many interpretations, reading events, experiences and assumptions such that the status quo might be challenged.²¹ As Theresa Earenfight succinctly attests, such approaches "blind[s] us to the diversity of life in the past."²² Instead we will attempt to study the *gestes* of Yolande d'Aragon in the context of her world and its attendant realities.

exemplaire pour sauver le royaume", the second volume, *La Trahison des anges*, Paris, Editions Stock, 2003, covers events from 1430 in which "les puissantes maisons d'Anjou et de Bourgogne rivalisent de luxe et d'opulence mais la France, elle est affamée et dévastée par les Anglais". The final volume, *La Revanche des dieux*, Paris, Editions Stock, 2003, picks up the narrative in 1450 where the plucky Clarisse, daughter of the *lissier* responsible for the production of the *Apocalypse* tapestries and herself now a master *lissière*, sets up her own studio in Saumur in a newly restored France. In English, the wildly imaginative novel, *The King's Women*, takes up Erlanger's thesis that it was the women in Charles VII's life (particularly Yolande d'Aragon) who proved to be the secret of his success. The novel's author gives Yolande d'Aragon considerable prominence in her historical narrative casting her as Richemont's lover and them both as the parents of Joan of Arc. An original take on the persistent theory of Joan's royal bastardy one which the author claims is the result of her personal research into the connections between the Houses of Anjou, Brittany and Bar-Lorraine. Lake, Deryn, *The Kings Women:: A Novel in Four Parts*, Allison and Busby Limited, London, 2006, (first published by Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1992).

¹⁹ Excepting the meticulous statistical study by Marcelle-Reynaud Reynaud, *Le Temps des Princes, Louis II & Louis III*, Lyon, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2000

²⁰ Earenfight, Theresa, *Queenship, Politics, and Government in the Medieval Crown of Aragon : The Lieutenancy of Maria of Castile, 1420-23 and 1432-53*, Doctoral Dissertation, Fordham University, New York, May 1997, p.43.

²¹ Donnelly, Kevin, "Why History Needs an Overhaul", in *Quadrant*, vol. L, n° 12, (2006), p. 33.

²² Earenfight, loc. cit. As Jacqueline Murray attests, "...Bynum has observed that "[there is] no such thing as 'the medieval attitude toward women'. Our historical vantage point frequently blinds us to alternative interpretations and dissent from ideology which prevailed in society.", Murray, Jacqueline, "Thinking about Gender", in *Power of the Weak, Studies on Medieval Women*, Carpenter, Jennifer & Maclean, Sally-Beth, (eds.), Urbana & Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1995, p. 2.

David Starkey gives us one reading of the discipline of History: “History, fundamentally, is a branch of story-telling. It is, of course, a very sophisticated branch of story-telling: issues of evidence, issues of critical analysis, issues of debate are very important, but they seem to me to be the scaffolding and the foundations...the substance, is the structure itself, is the magnificent many-mansioned building of history...the skills-based approach to the teaching of history is fundamentally wrong, or rather the dominant message of the teaching of history is fundamentally wrong...[it] prioritises the historian over history and method over content, leading to an utterly vulgar notion of relativism...I get a little bit worried about the emphasis on the critical...the rise of that dreadful word, bias – of course everything is biased... [This] leads to something that is worse than an absence of criticism; it is a universal scepticism...”²³

In our examination of Yolande d’Aragon, the reader will be more conscious of the content of this study rather than its underlying structural methodology. While evidence: primary, secondary and circumstantial, as well as critical analysis and debate will not be overlooked, in Starkey’s words, they will form the scaffolding and foundation upon which this research rests rather than the edifice itself.

In order that this ambitious project, the recording of the story of Yolande and her family in the context of the wider background of European politics, warfare and religion is in some small measure realized, we have chosen to adopt a chronological narrative methodology rather than the thematic approach favoured by some areas of recent scholarship. With so many diverse players and theatres, attention to the narrative chronology of the period under examination was thought to be the most effective means by which to avoid unnecessary confusion and repetition. That is not to say however that vital themes such as Yolande d’Aragon’s unwavering commitment to her family’s best interests, her unquestionable piety, her gradually

²³ Starkey, David, “What history should we be teaching in Britain in the 21st century?”, plenary lecture given to the *History in British Education Conference* organized by the Institute of Historical Research in collaboration with the Historical Association and the Royal Historical Society, 14th-15th February 2005. Transcript consulted as an electronic resource, <http://www.history.ac.uk/education/conference/starkey.html>

emerging public power and indeed her influence over public as well as private politics, notably her involvement in the already well-titled Joan of Arc story, will be ignored. These themes are at the very core of Yolande d'Aragon's activities and they will surface repeatedly as this study unfolds.

Our inquiry commences with an examination of the importance of the peninsular kingdom of Naples-Sicily from the vantage point of the reign of its hapless queen, Joanna I. Chapter 1, therefore, establishes one of the most important contexts of Yolande's later responsibilities and is in fact the introduction proper to this research. Joanna's reign might well be viewed as an object lesson on how *not* to proceed as a ruling queen and the pitfalls which perhaps might have been avoided by Naples's unhappy monarch. Joanna might have been well advised to remain a widow, a position of relative potency, if skilfully maintained, throughout the period known as the Middle Ages. Though in decline as the Renaissance approached, the potency of widowhood as a separate state of womanhood often set widows apart.²⁴ Yolande d'Aragon, her mother Violant of Bar and indeed her mother-in-law, Marie of Brittany were all widowed at relatively young ages and all three were able to preserve this condition. This set them apart from married women and gave them both the authority (in some cases limited) and the power²⁵ to act independently, cannily manipulating the limits of their respective spheres of influence.

The responsibility entailed by Naples-Sicily cannot be overstated, for Yolande's final testament confirms that: « ...*tout le plus bel et le meilleur* [of her possessions]/ *A esté employé pour le fait du royaume d'Italie et baillé au Roy Loys,/ Nostre aisé fils dont Dieu ait l'ame pour sa conquête...* ». ²⁶ In the words of Philippe Contamine, Chapter 1 of this study, « ...*ne prétend pas renouveler la question* » but rather seeks to « *faire le point et*

²⁴ Cf. Contamine, Geneviève & Contamine, Philippe, (eds.), *Autour de Marguerite d'Ecosse. Reines, princesses et dames du XVe siècle. Actes du colloque de Thouars (23 et 24 mai 1997)*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1999, particularly Martin Aurell's « Conclusion », pp. 233-237 & more cogently still for our study, Silleras-Fernández, Núria, « Widowhood and Deception : Ambiguities of Queenship in Late Medieval Crown of Aragon » in *Shell Games. Studies in Scams, Frauds and Deceits (1300-1650)*, Crane, Mark, Raiswell, Richard & Reeves, Margaret, (eds.), Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004, pp. 185-207.

²⁵ See our discussion below relating to authority and power.

²⁶ AN P 1334/17 f.°52, p. 8.

poser en passant quelques questions » and, as such relies primarily upon work done by Emile-Guillaume Léonard.²⁷

Chapter 2 analyzes the efforts of Marie de Blois-Penthièvre,²⁸ widow of Louis I d'Anjou and mother-in-law of Yolande d'Aragon, particularly focusing upon her Herculean struggle to ensure the continuation of her husband's legacy. Her greatest achievement was to drag her House out of penury and leave a princely war-chest of

²⁷ Emile-Guillaume Léonard was an historian and mediævalist; his doctoral dissertation: *La jeunesse de Jeanne 1re, reine de Naples, comtesse de Provence* was presented to the Faculté des lettres à l'Université de Paris in 1932. By 1936 this initial research had expanded to three volumes under the title, *Histoire de Jeanne 1re, reine de Naples, comtesse de Provence (1343-1382)* with *Les Angevins de Naples* published by PUF in 1954. His work is detailed and objective, giving a full portrait of the peninsular kingdom of Naples-Sicily and the struggle between Angevins (Neapolitan, Hungarian and French) and against their adversaries the Aragonese for ascendancy in the strategic western Mediterranean. Some recent scholarship has been undertaken on the subject of Joanna I of Naples, not an insubstantial quantity of which either duplicates or indeed rests upon the earlier research undertaken by Léonard. Other studies refer to quite specific aspects of her reign. Abulafia, David, "The South", in *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance, 1300-1550*; Najemy, John M., (ed.), Oxford, OUP, 2004, pp. 208-225 & 289-290; Hoch, Adam S., "Five Frescoes with a French Connection", in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 67, n° 1, 2004, pp. 15-24; Lokaj, Rodney J., "Giovanna d'Angiò nelle Familiare di Petrarca", in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, vol. 178, n° 117/580, 2000, pp. 481-521; Giordanengo, Gérard, "Arma legesque colo", in *L'état angevin:: Pouvoir, culture et société entre XIIIe et XIVe siècles. Actes du colloque international organisé par l'American Academy in Rome, l'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, l'U.M.R. Telemme et l'Université de Provence, l'Università degli studi di Napoli "Frederico II" (Rome-Naples, 7-11 novembre 1995)*; Vauchez, André, (ed.), Rome, Ecole française de Rome, vol. 26, 1998, pp. 35-69; Székely, György, "Egy itáliei merénylet 650 év előtt és a magyar lovagkor [trans. "An assassination in Italy 650 years ago and chivalry in Hungary" {The Murder of André of Hungary and Louis the Great's military campaigns in revenge}], in *Honismeret: A honismeret Szövetség folyóirata*, vol. 23, n° 4, pp. 12-15.; Voci, Anna Maria, "Giovanna I d'Angiò e l'inizio del grande scisma d'occidente: La doppia elezione del 1378 e la proposta conciliare", in *Quellen und Forschungun aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, vol. 75, 1995, pp. 178-255 ; Bonnot, Isabelle, "De Charles Ier...à Jeanne de Naples", in *Marseille et ses rois de Naples: La diagonale angevine, 1265-1382*, Bonnot, Isabelle, (ed.), Marseille, Archives municipales/Edisud, 1988, pp. 7-17 ; Hayez, Anne-Marie, "Le conseil de ville supplie la reine Jeanne de ne pas vendre Avignon (1347)", in *Avignon au Moyen Age: textes et documents (Institut de Recherches et d'Etudes du bas Moyen Age avignonnais-Archives du Sud)*, Avignon, Aubanel, 1988, pp. 97-102 ; Löfstedt, Bengt, "Lustrum 'Glanz' [trans. A description of St Birgitta in a letter of Queen Joanna I of Naples]", in *Acta Classica: Verhandeling van die Klassieke Vereniging van Suid-Afrika/ Proceedings of the Classical Association of South Africa*, vol. 23, 1980, p. 138, Cot, J. ; "La reine Jeanne (Jeanne Ière, reine de Naples, comtesse de Provence)", in *Bulletin des amis d'Orange*, vol. 19, n° 73, (1978), pp. 12-18 ; Stella, Prospero, Tommaso, "Gli 'Articuli parisienses, qui doctrinum eximii doctoras beati Thomae de Aquino tangunt vel tangere assertuntur' nella accezione di Giovanna regina di Naploli", in *Salesianum*, vol. 37, n° 1, (1975), pp. 39-67.

²⁸ To whom we will refer as Marie of Brittany.

cash and assets to fund future Angevin enterprise and ensure the prestige and credentials of her son Louis II.

Chapter 3 examines the origins of Yolande d'Aragon and highlights the rôle and responsibilities of Yolande's mother, Violant of Bar, Queen of Aragon. This chapter also examines the importance of the interaction between Aragon's monarchs and the Friars Minor.

In Chapter 4 we discuss the partnership of Louis II d'Anjou and Yolande d'Aragon, concentrating upon the political realities of their joint undertaking, as well as her personal qualities and credentials, factors which would greatly influence her long independent rule and stewardship as a young widow of thirty-six.

Chapter 5 reveals that Yolande d'Aragon had very little time to grieve the loss of Louis II. Indeed, like Marie of Brittany before her, she was obliged to work *velis et remis* to keep the Angevin-Valois ship of state on a steady course as it tacked and gybed its way through troubled waters. In spite of her gains and achievements, the political situation in France often conspired against her best efforts, and in Chapter 6 we examine the phenomenon of *La Pucelle* and put forward the case that the realization of the Maid's "miracle" was very much «*par le moyen de la royne de Sicile*»,²⁹ ably seconded by her familial, Franciscan and political connections.

Chapter 7 analyzes Yolande's emergence from *la forêt de longue attente* and examines her political activities and wider realities in Charles's kingdom during the time of Joan of Arc's trial and execution, suggesting pragmatic reasons for the often criticized "abandonment" of Joan by her party. This chapter is also about recovery and reform in the kingdom of France initiated prior to the death of Yolande in Saumur on 14th November 1442.

²⁹ AN P 1334/4, f° 150 v°.

During the course of our study, we will examine the ways in which Yolande d'Aragon employed her royal "dignity", her queenship, to exercise both power and authority whenever the need arose. Michel Foucault reasons that "power is neither given or exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised,..., it exists only in action."³⁰ In other words, power is a force; it is not tangible and exists only when utilized, while on the other hand authority is officially constituted, securing obedience or conformity through a hierarchical chain of command.³¹ By the conclusion of this study, we hope to have evaluated to what extent Yolande d'Aragon exercised both power and authority in order to achieve the best outcome for her House and for France.

Much care has been taken to ensure that as rich a context as possible, the complicated tapestry of people and events under examination, emerges from the pages of this study. Of great importance to the second half of this research is the idea of "network analysis", the ways in which the many fibres of our tapestry weave together. Its significance to this study lies in the fact that if we are to come to a conclusion regarding Yolande's queenship and her implication or otherwise in Charles VII's "victory", in the absence of an unbroken trail of parchment, we must examine Yolande d'Aragon's familial, religious and social networks. As Núria Silleras-Fernández has it: « *Examinar a la reina en relació a la seva família, el seu llinatge, els seus afins, en definitiva, esbrinar l'estructura de la seva família extensa, resulta fonamental... el "network analysis" (anàlisi de xarxes) – que és l'estudi de les relacions socials entre un conjunt de factors.* »³² To run these networks to earth, a variety of sources, both

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge : Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper, New York, Pantheon, 1980, pp. 89-90, cited by Theresa Earenfight in Earenfight, Theresa, (ed.), *Queenship and Political Power in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005, p. xviii. Cf. Parsons, John Carmi, (ed.), *Medieval Queenship*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1993, for instances of the application of both authority and power by mediæval queens and their relative degrees of success.

³¹ Earenfight, loc.cit.

³² Silleras-Fernández, Núria, "Reginalitat a l'Edat Mitjana hispànica: concept historiogràfic per una realitat històrica", in *Butlletí de la Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona, L-2005-2006, Anys Acadèmics CCLXXVII-CCLXXVIII*, Barcelona, Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres, 2006, p. 139.

primary and secondary, has been consulted including household accounts, letters, mandates, ordinances and treaties as well as the work of historians, chroniclers, poets, chancellors, secretaries, money-men and at least one pope. While some of this wealth of information from varied sources may appear at first reading to be peripheral, we have determinedly sought to build up a picture of the times as well as the lives and connections of our principal players.

A not inconsiderable quantity of this material has already been discovered and analyzed by previous research and as such we have taken care to acknowledge these secondary sources. As far as possible, either personally or in microfilm form, most if not all primary sources have been verified. Notwithstanding our close examination of primary sources, when emphasizing a point already made in a secondary source concerning the primary material under re-examination, this debt has been acknowledged in full. In other cases, we have put forward new readings of primary sources, drawing attention to the locations where the source was identified and protagonists involved in the event under discussion. In most instances, we have left the actual writings of the period in their original forms, fully appreciating the regional idiosyncrasies of certain texts as well as the relative levels of erudition of their authors and scribes. To borrow from Eugene Vinaver,³³ we have consciously striven to preserve the physiognomy of the texts we have chosen to study.

³³ Vinaver, Eugène, "Principles of Textual Emendation", in *Studies in French Language and Literature presented to Mildred K Pope*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1939, Reprinted 1969. Vinaver discusses this idea of the preservation of the authenticity and colour of texts on pp. 366-369 of his study.