

SEIGNEURIAL SANCTITY

THE FIRST STAGE of Charles's reputation developed in the highly fraught circumstances almost immediately after his death, and focused on trying to make him into a canonical saint of the Catholic Church. Such haste to elevate Charles to the altars was remarkable. Even the rapidly developed cult of Saint Louis IX of France (r. 1226–1270) only obtained final approval twenty-seven years after his death on Crusade, and of the seventeen canonization processes opened in the fourteenth century, only three began more promptly than Charles's.¹ But speed was of the essence, for following the first treaty of Guérande in 1365, the position of the new Montfort dynasty within Brittany was far from secure.² Had Jeanne de Penthièvre and her partisans obtained papal validation of Charles's sainthood in this moment, it would have represented a serious rebound from their recent defeat. Bursts of enthusiasm for a rival's sanctity were a frequent tool of political opposition and critique in this period, while descent from "holy stock" accrued long-term status benefits to the bloodline as a whole.³ Given the very real possibility that Jeanne or her children might revive her claim to the duchy, "Saint Charles" could help tip the balance of legitimacy in their favour.

So Charles's family and partisans swiftly promoted his veneration, centred around his tomb at Guingamp in northern Brittany.⁴ The order of Franciscan friars whom Jeanne and Charles had generously patronized helped

1 Gaposchkin, *Making of Saint Louis*, 1–2. Of these three processes, the only one that led to canonization was that of Bridget of Sweden. Based on the data in Vauchez, *Sainteté*, 298–299, the average time to open the seventeen processes was twenty-three years after death (with a median of twelve), and the nine successful processes lasted an average of twenty-four years (median fourteen). Had Charles's canonization reached completion, it would have been the second-shortest process of the century, trailing only that of Thomas Aquinas, and the single fastest posthumous canonization, taking five years fewer than that of Pope Celestine V.

2 Jones, *Ducal Brittany*, 52–54.

3 Duch, "Chasing St Louis," esp. 330, 339, 340, 346.

4 Jones, "Politics, Sanctity and the Breton State," 221; Héry, "La 'sainteté' de Charles de Blois ou l'échec d'une entreprise," 22; Martin, *Ordres mendiants*, 407; Vauchez, "Dévotion et vie quotidienne."

spread word of his miracles both within the duchy and across France. Breton bishops even “proclaimed [Charles] a saint and martyr for justice in their sermons, [and] offered the holy sacrifice on his anniversary day, as if to a saint approved by the church.”⁵ Jean IV, whose relationship with the Breton elite was increasingly precarious, reacted seriously to this movement by petitioning the pope against a possible canonization in 1368; but in 1369 Pope Urban V (r. 1362–1370) accepted the request to investigate Charles’s sanctity submitted by Jeanne, their daughter Marie and son-in-law Duke Louis d’Anjou, and their sons Jean and Guy de Bretagne.⁶ The complicated process of canonization, which I detail further below, lasted until 1376, by which time Duke Jean had been driven into exile by his nobility, King Charles V of France was considering the annexation of the duchy, and Pope Gregory XI (r. 1370–1378) had begun relocating the papacy from Avignon in France back to Rome. Because of these political upheavals, although Charles’s canonization did receive Gregory’s approval and he was periodically called a saint thereafter, he was only beatified in 1904.⁷

Making the case for Charles’s sanctity in this loaded context meant making sense of Charles as a saint in the midst of a devastating civil war—and one that he had lost. Previous historiography has highlighted two major narrative arcs that served this function.⁸ The first was that Charles should have become a friar (or a hermit, or a bishop, or some other churchman) rather than a duke. Charles himself supposedly thought so, lamenting that he had been pulled into the war instead. His family and associates mocked this unworldliness, their scorn serving ultimately to highlight Charles’s elevation above his peers. The second narrative transformed the war into a process of martyrdom, turning his defeat on earth into a spiritual victory. For many witnesses, the images of the martyred prince and would-be religious were satisfying, and they developed their accounts little beyond these basic traits. Accordingly, modern scholarship has tended to emphasize the trial as an effort to redeem a failed ruler, a pattern seen with several later medieval kings of France and England.⁹

5 Pocquet du Haut-Jussé, *Papes et les ducs de Bretagne*, 275.

6 Héry, “Culte de Charles de Blois,” 43–50.

7 Boulet, “Canonisation de Charles de Blois”; Laurent, “Charles de Blois.”

8 Vauchez, *Sainteté*, 423–24, 426–27; Cassard, “Patience”; Héry, “La ‘sainteté’ de Charles de Blois: Vertus et virtus”; Héry, “De la guerre à la paix”; cf. Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses*, 295–97.

9 Héry, “La ‘sainteté’ de Charles de Blois ou l’échec d’une entreprise,” 40–41; Cassard, *Guerre de succession de Bretagne*, 201; Vauchez, *Sainteté*, 187–97; Ormrod,

However, witnesses convinced of Charles's sanctity (and legitimate claim to the ducal title) would have sought evidence of holiness not just *despite* his rule, but within it. This process was not straightforward, because to be a duke, or a saint, or for that matter a man, was not a singular quality: there were multiple kinds of lordship, multiple kinds of saintliness, multiple kinds of masculinity, all offering different choices for which traits to select in a given context, and which to ignore or even subvert. The resulting narratives were not necessarily consistent, because the norms on which they were based were not. Nor could Charles's reputation be developed in isolation, for power—much like sanctity—could be exercised and evaluated only in relation to others. Accordingly, the portrayals of those around Charles were similarly reshaped to support any given characterization. As duchess, Jeanne's reputation was particularly liable to be pulled in several directions: if her feminine role as Charles's wife was a constant, her agency as his fellow lord could alternately constrain or reinforce his. Such flexibility was invaluable for constructing a positive interpretation of the recent civil war and the challenges it posed for the ideals of good lordship.

Reputation and Canonization

Late medieval processes of canonization involved creating an official collective memory, and the record we have today was produced by interactions between different participants. On one side, the proceedings were directed and shaped by ecclesiastical appointees, as the Church increasingly claimed control of the official recognition of saints.¹⁰ The pope selected two bishops (Bayeux and Angers) and an abbot (Marmoutiers) to interrogate witnesses about Charles. They were supposed to ensure that strict legal form was followed and that no "foul play" occurred among the witnesses.¹¹ Meanwhile, Duchess Jeanne and her family chose the Franciscan friar Raoul de Kerguiniou as their proctor, or representative. He was responsible for assembling appropriate witnesses, and was also expected to draw up a list of "articles of interrogation." These articles normally set the questions for the papal commission to ask each witness, letting the proctor's party control the narrative surrounding their candidate. In Charles's case, though, Raoul

"Monarchy, Martyrdom, and Masculinity," 176; Elukin, "Warrior or Saint?"; Cullum, "Introduction," 5.

10 Vauchez, *Sainteté*, chap. 1; Wetzstein, "*Iura novit curia*"; Krötzel and Katajala-Peltomaa, "Approaching Twelfth- to Fifteenth-Century Miracles," 16–25.

11 Toynbee, *S. Louis of Toulouse*, 154–57.

made no list of articles to guide the trial, though the main categories of questioning were retroactively added as marginal notes.¹² Finally, three notaries recorded the testimony “in public form,” summarizing in Latin the content of the question-and-answer sessions, of which three manuscript copies now survive.

On the other side, a large pool of witnesses provided the material to build the case for Charles’s sanctity. From September 9 to December 18, 1371, the commissioners collected sixty individual reports concerning Charles’s life and merits (*vita et meritis*), and another 139 on his miracles (*miracula*).¹³ For the purposes of assessing Charles’s personal reputation we are most concerned with the testimony in the *vita* section, whose sixty witnesses represented a selective social group.¹⁴ First, they had all known Charles, so were generally of high social status, including fourteen churchmen, ten knights (four of them lords in their own right), and twelve squires. Aside from eight who had served Charles only during his childhood, the witnesses were mostly connected to the ducal entourage. All but three came from Brittany or the neighbouring northwestern provinces, and included twenty-four who had served in arms and another twenty-four who acted as administrators or attendants. Second, the witnesses generally fit the profile expected of reliable judicial testimony in this period.¹⁵ Men were preferred to women, higher ranks to lower, and older witnesses—the average estimated age here is forty-seven years—to younger. The only *vita* witness outside this elite, male milieu was Guillemette of Saumur (a town near Angers), who with her husband had often lodged the duke and duchess over the course of fifteen years.¹⁶ Her position as hostess still gave her privileged access to the couple and to the gossip of their servants.¹⁷ This selectivity

12 Héry et al., eds., *Procès de canonisation*, 28.

13 Of the sixty witnesses in the first (*vita*) section of the dossier, thirty-six also gave testimony in the second.

14 Cf. Goodich, *Lives and Miracles of the Saints*, chap. 7, 297–98.

15 Katajala-Peltomaa, *Gender, Miracles, and Daily Life*, 36; Leguay and Martin, *Fastes*, 134; Everard, “Sworn Testimony,” 77.

16 All references to this source use Héry et al., eds., *Procès de canonisation*: here, D29.1. For depositions (hereafter D) 1–56, the numbers cited here also correspond to those originally in Sérent, ed., *Monuments du procès*; D57–60 appear only in the new edition, and thereafter subtract 4 from the cited number if using Sérent.

17 The frequency of Charles and Jeanne’s visits distinguished Guillemette from Jeanne of Candes-Saint-Martin, who after her testimony in the *miracula* section added a short account of Charles’s personal conduct based on a single eight-day visit some fifteen years earlier.

in choosing witnesses was meant to produce an authoritative portrayal of Charles, not a well-rounded one. However, the group also represented the social circles where this formulation of Charles's reputation mattered most.¹⁸

In this context, reputation depended on a combination of convention and individual authenticity. The point of the inquiry was not to debate Charles's character, but to assemble sympathetic witnesses who could collectively provide consistent evidence for his sanctity. The template settled on in the final report focused on eight core traits discussed in most of the testimonies.¹⁹ Charles's devotional practices such as attending Mass and spending time in prayer were mentioned by all sixty *vita* witnesses. Fifty-eight addressed his personal character, especially his humility and kindness, as well as his charity to the poor and the Church. His striking regime of ascetic penance appeared in fifty-seven accounts, followed by his chastity (fifty-two) and sobriety (fifty-one). Finally, his patience in the face of adversity (forty-seven) and his commitment to justice (forty-six) rounded out the list, lagging behind mainly because witnesses who had known Charles only as a child were mostly silent on traits from his ducal career. Within each category, the notaries relied heavily on stock phrases to make it obvious how the testimony substantiated accepted ideas of piety, generosity, temperance, and so on. This formulaic repetition largely obscured the personal voices of individual witnesses.

Nevertheless, this broad consensus left room for variety in the specifics of each deposition. Unlike hostile interrogations where questioner and witness were in opposition—Joan of Arc's trial being a notorious, and well-studied, example—Charles's trial was less strictly managed, even than other canonization processes.²⁰ Virtually no two witnesses addressed the main themes in the same order, which let them recombine these elements in different ways. More importantly, witnesses could apparently elaborate as they saw fit, perhaps reflecting their status as respectable individuals. The commissioners seem to have preferred open-ended questions, asking simply how the witness knew Charles was patient, or just, or humble, then following up only where they felt additional clarification was needed. They gave witnesses opportunities to enrich their own narratives, but did not challenge them.

¹⁸ Cf. Goodich, *Lives and Miracles of the Saints*, chap. 7, 295.

¹⁹ The numbers listed here reflect the categorizations in the manuscript margins, and may slightly underrepresent the actual mentions of the topic in the testimony.

²⁰ Flannery and Walter, *Culture of Inquisition*; Sullivan, *Interrogation*; Hobbins, *Trial*; Vauchez, *Sainteté*, 650; Toynbee, *S. Louis of Toulouse*, 166.

This conversational space kept the concrete evidence for Charles's sanctity rooted in each witness's own experience and reflected their access to information. Even within the restricted milieu of the ducal court, there was real variation based on one's exact position and relationships. When questioned on a detail of Charles's prayers, for example, the courtier Baudet de la Folie protested that "he does not know because he is not a cleric."²¹ Meanwhile, Charles's manservant Jean Forestier confirmed the duke's chastity on the grounds that he himself had been present in the bedroom almost every night.²² Many of the witnesses knew each other, of course, and so during the trial they confirmed one another's testimony or reported hearsay from around the princely household (even, on occasion, from Charles's private confessors).²³ It is particularly useful that we can compare and contrast different retellings of the same experiences to better understand how witnesses reinterpreted these events when moving them from personal memory to public record.

Still, the process of curating and constructing Charles's reputation began long before 1371. The princely couple themselves had helped circulate relevant information. Jeanne, for instance, told one squire that Charles's austerities had increased since his return from England.²⁴ Charles helped sow the seeds of his own later martyrdom narrative when he spoke "to the people in the house of the Friars Preacher [of Nantes] and explain[ed] to them what he had had to undergo in his prison."²⁵ Even attempting to hide many of his pious acts only helped fan the flames: as court gossip called attention to his virtue, it became all the more admirable for being originally hidden.²⁶ Already during Charles's lifetime, a combination of deliberate interactions and incidental social pressures established patterns of information about him.

It is therefore essential not to mistake either concrete details or general consensus in this testimony for straightforward fact. Historians such as Jean-Christophe Cassard have tried to assess how Charles's companions

21 D5.5.

22 D51.6.

23 D34.4.

24 D21.9.

25 D18.3.

26 E.g., D11.3, 18.5, 22.13, 35.8, 31.10, 37.4, 93.7. See also Lochrie, *Covert Operations*, 4; Constable, "Attitudes Toward Self-Inflicted Suffering," 21; Guay, "Émotions," 40–42, 45, 48–49.

really felt about the duke, or what Charles was actually like.²⁷ But these are not productive questions as we have no real evidence one way or another. The canonization process was a performance, not a confession. Witnesses chose to recollect some events and not others. Their reactions, both positive and negative, were not necessarily what they had been at the time, but the ones useful in the present context. What we can analyze are the decisions they made in adapting their material: what information was important, and what did it mean? The feedback loop between the expectations of canonization and witnesses' memories produced a composite picture rather than a seamless whole, showing how Charles's reputation(s) consolidated both on an individual level and within a courtly environment.

Jeanne's reputation here is, if anything, even more complicated than Charles's. André Vauchez has suggested that neither the witnesses nor their interrogators were interested in Charles's family life.²⁸ Still, given that Jeanne was not the main focus, it is significant that three-quarters of the *vita* witnesses made at least passing reference to her, usually as Charles's wife. While they were here to talk about Charles, most witnesses had lived with their princes as a couple, and knew Jeanne as well as, and in a few cases even better than, her husband.²⁹ Several remained in her service in 1371, and she may have even encouraged them to attend. This contact cut across all aspects of the ducal court, which meant most notably that Charles's companions in arms were Jeanne's associates as well. Yet personal connections alone were not enough to explain mentions of the duchess at Angers. Some of Jeanne's long-time retainers, such as the priest Guillaume Bérengier or the marshal Alain Maréchal, did not bring her into their testimony.³⁰ Instead, Jeanne served as a deliberate counterpoint to Charles. When and why she mattered were defined by his reputation, rather than on her own terms—though Jeanne's perceived comparative value was not set in stone.

At the same time, her presence (even implicit) meant that Charles's own reputation also operated within a framework of shared power, which presented both challenges and opportunities for constructing his sanctity. The first eight witnesses, for example, had known Charles up until his marriage, while eleven others had known him from that point onwards, so they used

27 Cassard, "Coulisses" (cf. Vauchez, *Sainteté*, 424); Cassard, *Charles de Blois*.

28 Vauchez, *Sainteté*, 422.

29 Graham-Goering, *Princely Power*, 149–53.

30 D19.2, 45.1.

this union to contextualize their testimony.³¹ This approach underscored the contingent nature of Charles's authority—it was Jeanne who made him a duke. The connection between his marriage and his status could even be made explicit: “he entered into marriage with the lady duchess of Brittany, and went off to rule the said duchy,” or “he was married to the lady Jeanne of Brittany, then countess of Penthievre and afterwards duchess of Brittany, and he had possession of the said duchy.”³² Given the prevalence of heiresses among the medieval aristocracy, the fact that Charles's title derived from his position as Jeanne's spouse would have been routine. Katrin Sjursen has pointed out the limitations of understanding medieval noblewomen primarily through their life stages (daughter, wife, mother, widow) rather than by the actions they took, and indeed, witnesses' references to Jeanne's role said little about her as an individual.³³ But it mattered that *Charles* had a wife, and I suggest that we should consider the impact of the matrimonial cycle on noblemen more than has often been the case.

Lordly Responsibilities and Civil War

If this process of canonization cobbled together one possible saintly template, it also had to grapple with the complex expectations associated with being a duke. After all, *dominium* worked on a sliding scale: good lordship on earth reflected divine lordship above.³⁴ But there were latent tensions inherent to the responsibilities of secular lordship. On one hand, a lord should provide effective (military) leadership, rewarding their followers and bringing them victories and wealth. On the other, they were also supposed to protect their dependents, especially women, children, and priests; and more broadly promote the common good. Normally, these commitments should not have interfered with each other, but during a civil war, they became almost mutually exclusive. The witnesses used two main strategies to navigate this contradiction and so bolster Charles's seigneurial and saintly legitimacy across this period of intensified conflict.

First, Charles had to be absolved of responsibility for the violence damaging his duchy while retaining his capacity for good military leadership. Second, proving his commitment to the welfare of his people could mitigate

31 Cf. Graham-Goering, *Princely Power*, 149–53.

32 D5.11, D52.2.

33 Sjursen, “Pirate, Traitor, Wife,” 153.

34 Van Engen, “Sacred Sanctions”; Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 16.

or even cancel out the consequences of the war. Both approaches relied on seeing Charles's authority not in autocratic terms, but as part of a larger system of power. Willingness to listen to counsel, both human and divine, was considered essential to good lordship, but it was also necessary to ignore bad advice: the stock figure of the prince misled by wicked councilors was a mainstay of discussions of just rule in this period. Charles's relationships with those around him allowed witnesses to align his priorities to the highest standards of lordship, ultimately idealizing his reign as it ought to have been.

To show how tensions between the two primary responsibilities of lordship played out in the canonization trial, I take as my starting-point Charles's victory at the siege of Quimper. Very few detailed military actions came up during the canonization trial, aside from the battle of Auray where Charles achieved supposed martyrdom. In defeat, the devastation of his duchy was just one of the many sufferings inflicted upon him. But in victory, Charles rather than his enemies became responsible for the violence, and that meant his actions had to be legitimate.

Quimper, a town in western Brittany, and especially its bishop Alain An Gall, had favoured the Montfortists since the early days of the war, but Charles besieged it in March 1344 and captured it by assault on May 1.³⁵ While siege warfare was a staple of the Anglo-French conflicts in this period and condoned a range of unusually violent acts, what happened at Quimper apparently surprised contemporaries.³⁶ A near-contemporary Latin chronicle, the *Chronicon Britannicum*, reported that in the sack of the city

there were killed by him fourteen hundred people, nor did Charles cease from the said cruelty and slaughter until it was announced to him that a certain infant was nursing at the breasts of its slain mother. Hearing this made him break off from this slaughter, and because of this cruelty a great scandal arose in Brittany, and especially in Cornouaille [the region of Quimper].³⁷

This account may have exaggerated, but its accusations likely had some real grounding in the communal memory to which the chronicler alluded. Indeed, rumours circulated that Charles had been "a bad man, a pillager and plunderer."³⁸ The brutality of lords and knights was a constant social and moral concern in this period. This episode of violence showed how easy it

35 Sumption, *Trial by Battle*, 434.

36 Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood*, 211–12.

37 Morice, ed., *Mémoires*, 1:7–8.

38 D128.1.

was, when tensions built into civil war, to tip over the line between licit violence and excessive cruelty, which was associated with tyranny. A contemporary chronicler, recalling a similar sack by the Black Prince in 1370, even described the three thousand dead inhabitants as martyrs and marvelled at how a prince could not have taken pity on such innocents.³⁹ In this light, the shocking image of the dead woman and helpless baby in the *Chronicon Britannicum* was no coincidence. It undercut Charles's legitimacy as duke of Brittany by suggesting he acted un-ducaly, inflicting violence where he should have extended his protection.

The nine witnesses who discussed Quimper were well aware of what had happened and its implications for Charles's reputation as a good lord. Seven said they had been present at the siege and the remaining two were likely to have been. Six had served in arms, while two were priests and one was Charles's servant; those who had not been with Charles's own contingent relied on what they had seen and heard in the aftermath. As active participants themselves, they might have believed that rebellion against one's lawful lord meant forfeiting any claim to safety. But in their testimony, only two of them noted the presence of *rebelles* in Quimper.⁴⁰ Rather than a story of a rebellion justly put down, most witnesses foregrounded a war against external invaders. Quimper was in the hands of generic enemies or specifically the English, and Charles used force to capture these foes.⁴¹ This framing highlighted the temporary nature of the situation, delegitimizing the occupiers and suggesting that Charles was really coming to the defence of his town. By giving the duke a more specific and unambiguously legitimate target for his violence, they sidestepped the grey area of civil conflict.

Moreover, the witnesses turned the siege into positive evidence that Charles fulfilled the expectations of military lordship by justifying the city's capture as a miraculous intervention. This approach made Charles not just an effective war leader, protecting his troops and ensuring their success in battle, but a divinely sanctioned one. Crucially, this leadership did not rely on the personal performance of violence, as was usual for a knight and a lord. Instead, it was God who came to Charles's assistance, making his victory a manifestation of the divine order.

³⁹ Froissart, *Chroniques*, ed. Luce, 7:250.

⁴⁰ D38.12, 40.10. Cf. Gauvard, "Révoltes," 55–56.

⁴¹ D38.12, 40.10, 41.10, 147.8, 149.7, 152.2–3, 152.6–7, 153.3.

In the first miracle, Charles was alerted to a spy on the eve of battle.⁴² This spy was “a poor little woman” who feigned weakness, and Charles had previously pitied and fed her—obviously fulfilling his lordly responsibility towards the vulnerable. Then, on the critical night, it was divinely revealed to Charles that she had gone to expose the situation of his army to “our enemies” in Quimper. Caught upon her return, she confessed to regularly trading information for gold, which was discovered in her hut. Charles was able to issue precise instructions to his men to keep the situation under control. At the same time (the witness believed) he was inspired by no human intervention, but purely by the advice he received from above, giving his leadership the edge of divine favour.

Later, all nine witnesses attested that the tides themselves ceased to rise at their usual hour when Quimper was taken, protecting Charles’s men as they attacked the city from the estuary and giving them time to carry the day.⁴³ In all but three reports, Charles deliberately sought the miracle through his prayers, and two witnesses claimed this interpretation was widespread among the local inhabitants and sailors.⁴⁴ The ability to request a miracle was a valuable characteristic in a war leader, one that even let Charles achieve a difficult military victory without lifting a weapon himself. Charles’s arms-bearer, who accompanied him during the attack, reported that “for as long as the assault lasted, Charles prayed with joined hands towards the east.”⁴⁵ One of Charles’s priests heard from some knights that while his men stormed the town, the duke himself “withdrew to the side and on bent knees made a prayer to God for the sake of his undertaking.” The tide held and “at the time when Charles made his prayer, his men entered the town through a well-fortified point and captured the town and the enemies.” A third witness had been present in the retinue of Olivier de Tinténiac, a nobleman related to Duchess Jeanne by marriage.⁴⁶ Seeing the assault threatened by the impending tide, Charles withdrew to a private space. The duke was dressed for battle, but with Olivier’s help removed the armour from his arms and legs. He knelt on a stone and prayed with raised hands that Christ would stem the tide to let them proceed. Only after this secret

42 D152.2–3.

43 D41.10, 46.12, 147.8, 148.10, 149.7, 150.17, 151.7, 152.5–8, 153.3.

44 D46.12, 150.17.

45 D151.7.

46 D152.6–7; Jones, ed., *Recueil des actes de Charles de Blois et Jeanne de Penthievre*, no. 16.

ritual did Charles have his men capture the city. These visual details are striking: the joined hands, bent knees, and deliberate removal of his equipment all emphasized that Charles was not acting as a knight. Stripping away his masculine warrior persona tacitly exonerated Charles from any violence committed against his people in Quimper, while proving that his divinely empowered lordship brought his men safely to victory over the enemy.

The success of Charles's strategy here also proved his superiority to those who normally advised him. A squire who had known Charles since childhood reported that the duke had argued with his knights and barons, who wanted to attack somewhere other than the tidal flood zone.⁴⁷ Charles replied that since they had chosen their spot, they would not change it; by God's grace the sea would not harm them. The miraculous vindication of his unconventional tactic underscored his extraordinary leadership: he was right where others had been wrong, discerning enough to trust to God rather than to mere men, and backed by divine intervention on his army's behalf. On more mundane occasions, too, Charles's disagreement with his counsellors could enhance his aura as a military commander. At the fateful battle of Auray, the knight Geoffroy de Dinan claimed a treaty was proposed whereby the Breton people would pay thirty thousand *livres* to the Montfortists across five years.⁴⁸ Several of Charles's nobles supported the offer, preferring taxation to combat; but Charles declared that rather than further burdening his subjects, he would rather fight for them. Charles's willingness to put his own life on the line compared favourably with the reluctance (even cowardice?) of his advisors. It also justified his death not only as martyrdom but as a commitment to his obligations as a lord, though here battle was to the advantage of the people rather than their detriment. Because Charles's ability to pursue the war in exemplary fashion could not be taken for granted, his decisions were instead explained with reference to other influences, either inspiration from above or the rejection of lesser ideals. These associations linked Charles's military leadership to his position as a saint, standing between the human and the divine.

The backdrop of conflict remained problematic at the canonization, however, as seen in how the witnesses approached the other side of lordship. Since the war by its nature disrupted the way things ought to be, it threatened Charles's ability to maintain public order. Only three of the nine witnesses at Quimper—Charles's arms-bearer and two other squires—

⁴⁷ D41.10.

⁴⁸ D56.8.

attempted to address the aftermath of the siege directly. Their testimony focused on Charles's safeguarding of the Church during the assault, a theme with particular resonance within Brittany as one of the so-called regalian (sovereign) rights claimed by its dukes.⁴⁹ The fortified town was divided in half by the river Steir, with the area to the east under the jurisdiction of the bishop and cathedral chapter, and to the west under that of the duke.⁵⁰ Having breached the walls, Charles allegedly made straight for the cathedral, where he gathered together all the local clergy and placed them, and the relics and ornaments of the churches, under his protection. In so doing, he contrasted with his foes, who did not hesitate to capture, despoil, and even kill priests from the other side. Moreover, Charles's advisors suggested that since the town was too large to hold easily, the duke should destroy the bishop's portion. Charles refused, for love of the Church or so as not to displease God, and instead ordered his own walls dismantled.⁵¹ This decision had no actual military repercussions, as Quimper remained loyal thereafter.⁵² In the moment, however, it clearly showcased Charles's seigneurial priorities.

This episode offered a different reading of lordship than in the miracle stories. By attending to the Church in person, Charles was again dissociated from the violence happening elsewhere, just as he had stood aside to pray for divine intervention. Now, though, being a good lord meant working against his own men and interests rather than on their behalf, as he had done during the assault. The witnesses variously provided this anecdote as evidence for Charles's commitment to justice or his acts of charity (what the compilers of the testimony later categorized as "mercy and almsgiving"). It therefore showcased Charles's lordship as a matter of promoting order and championing the common good.

Although this theme was only partially developed among the Quimper witnesses, it was more successfully demonstrated in other contexts. Historians have noted the sporadic attempts in the *vita* testimony to cast Charles as a peacemaker. Direct references to his continuous prayers for peace and ability to settle disputes complemented more oblique suggestions of reconciliation through the miraculous conversion of Englishmen and Montfortist

⁴⁹ Graham-Goering, *Princely Power*, 229.

⁵⁰ Leguay, *Réseau urbain*, 304.

⁵¹ D38.12, 40.10, 49.10.

⁵² Jean de Montfort would die of illness following a disastrous attempt to retake the city the following year (Sumption, *Trial by Battle*, 471), and it was besieged again by the young Jean de Montfort in November 1364 even after Charles himself was dead (Jones, ed., *Recueil des actes de Jean IV*, no. 41).

partisans to Charles's cult following his death.⁵³ But given that Charles had manifestly *not* brought peace in his lifetime, his peacemaking is better understood as a separation between the responsibilities of lordship that allowed Charles to concentrate only on his duchy's welfare while outsourcing the rest. Here, the mechanics of counsel were particularly effective for dissociating him from violence and, indeed, downplaying the overall importance of the war in understanding his rule.

Charles's manservant Jean Gauvin, for instance, recalled the duke's complaint that

"I am dressed in cloths of gold and silks, [but] I would truly prefer to be dressed in lesser cloths in the manner of the Friars Minor, and except that it would displease my people, truly I would clothe myself with other, simpler cloths; and I believe it would have been best if I had been a Franciscan when I was made duke, for the people of Brittany cannot be at peace because of the discord existing between me and my adversary, and I can do nothing about it save by the counsel of the barons and others of my duchy."⁵⁴

From this perspective, Charles undertook his princely career out of external obligation rather than personal interest. He had a duty to the Breton people, on whose behalf he lived up to his role. At the same time, the ongoing war harmed these same people, so Charles's priorities had to align with theirs.⁵⁵ Instead, those around Charles became responsible for prolonging the conflict. This dichotomy between Charles and his entourage ensured that both sides of lordship were addressed, while letting Charles close the gap between his idealized and actual rule.⁵⁶

Lest his lordship be perceived as unstable, witnesses normally reported that Charles was able to work closely with his council. This harmonious relationship underpinned his love of justice, and so served his reputation as an effective ruler. He appointed the best councillors he could, and they in turn ensured that his seneschals, officers, and other ministers of justice were competent.⁵⁷ Moreover, he supervised the council, making sure that they debated matters in a timely manner and reprimanding them when they sought to obstruct petitions or allowed a case to drag on.⁵⁸ This dynamic

53 D9.2, 15.9, 26.3, 35.4; D50.1–5, 132.5, 143.3–4, 144.4–5, 150.9–10, 150.13–14.

54 D31.8.

55 Cf. D13.3, 26.3, 39.8, 55.3.

56 Cf. Plassmann, "William of Malmesbury," 2–4.

57 D12.13, 19.11, 23.13, 24.9, 28.11, 31.11, 34.11, 40.9, 46.10.

58 D27.2, 21.2, 31.11.

exemplified good leadership, soliciting well-informed input while ultimately taking command. By stressing both reciprocity and authority, this model reflected contemporary conceptions of governance.⁵⁹ Accordingly, a gentleman in the service of Jeanne's uncle-by-marriage Hervé de Léon, reported that Charles governed the duchy of Brittany by Hervé's council, while a squire spoke of the council's role in ensuring the just administration of the duchy.⁶⁰ Conforming to the latest expectations of public order management was an attribute of good lordship, and perhaps doubly so in what might otherwise have been seen first as a period of disorder.

However, the management of the war, even off the battlefield, provoked differences of opinion. While armies in the fourteenth-century kingdom of France still relied on the obligations of military service from their noble fiefholders, these were generally insufficient to the needs of prolonged campaigns and had to be supplemented with wages and the hiring of paid troops—the etymological definition of “soldiers.” The issue of how Charles spent his money was discussed by a number of witnesses, generally under the headings of mercy or piety (donations to churches) and generosity or alms (charity towards the poor, especially giving money and food). These were all acts expected of someone in Charles's position, as part of the obligations of care for the weak. Indeed, we may suspect that his benefaction might have gone relatively unremarked in more peaceful circumstances, where it might have lived up to the practices of conspicuous giving expected of elite men.

As it was, however, Charles's desire to look after ordinary Bretons clashed with the financial demands of the war, and so Charles clashed with his companions. Charles's almsgiving provoked recriminations from his council.⁶¹ A knight, a servant, and a priest all noted that Charles was always willing to take the side of the Church against his own officers and advisors, just as had happened with the walls of Quimper.⁶² One squire's brother had brought the duke a thousand florins from Charles's captain of Morlaix (a castle and town in northwestern Brittany). Charles instructed his chancellor to take charge of them but not breathe a word of the money's existence, “because if my paid men-at-arms should know that I had that money, they

59 Genet, “Government,” 12–13.

60 D11.2, 48.10.

61 D11.4.

62 D12.11, 24.5, 35.12.

would seek it of me, and so I would not have anything to spend on the poor.”⁶³ Charles was expected to reward those who fought for him, but he chose to prioritize his other responsibilities when the funds were limited.⁶⁴ Similarly, Charles’s household administrators complained that the duke spent all he could on the Church and the poor, instead of on his war efforts.⁶⁵ And Charles’s treasurer Pierre Poulard among others remonstrated with Charles to levy the taxes needed to fund the war and maintain a lifestyle appropriate to his rank. Instead, out of compassion for his subjects, Charles preferred to borrow money from the pope, the king of France, and other great lords, with his duchy as collateral.⁶⁶ Other witnesses, such as the ducal secretary Guillaume André, recalled giving similar loans themselves.⁶⁷ Charles here made use of his followers and allies to fulfill his obligations to his subjects, rather than using his subjects to supply the needs of his men. By reporting explicit debate on which of Charles’s ducal responsibilities came first, the witnesses were able to parcel them out: the pursuit of the war was displaced onto Charles’s entourage, whereas he remained concerned with the business of peace.

At its extreme, this distinction could suggest that Charles ruled *beyond* the war. The squire Henri Le Prévôt explained how Charles’s council (to which he himself belonged) tried to impose taxes “for the defence of the homeland [*patria*].” Here, the council saw the taxes as contributing to the protection of the duchy against external invaders. But these efforts were undercut by the duke himself, who “always wished that his subjects should live peacefully under him.”⁶⁸ It was not until much later in the Hundred Years’ War that the idea of permanent taxation developed; at this point, taxes were still seen as emergency funds and were expected to cease when the immediate need was over. By objecting to the levy, Charles indicated that the problem was not the tax itself, but that it prolonged the undesirable conflict. His opposition to taxation implied that he ought to be able to rule as a lord in peacetime rather than in war.

63 D16.5.

64 Ironically, unreliable pay drove soldiers to live off the local peasantry instead: Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood*, 228.

65 D38.7; cf. 35.10.

66 D49.3.

67 D28.4; cf. 23.5, 38.4, 45.4.

68 D49.4.

Accordingly, witnesses emphasized Charles's efforts to create a semblance of normalcy. The extreme generosity that frustrated his council in fact served to ensure good lordship continued under extenuating circumstances. Charles rebuilt a Dominican priory "which had been practically destroyed and consumed by the wars," a church and tower that were ruined, and paupers' homes that had been burned.⁶⁹ He also had a new hospital built within the walls of Guingamp (in northern Brittany, one of his main residences) when it became unsafe to reach the original extramural hospital.⁷⁰ Such activities were effectively retroactive extensions of the safeguard he pre-emptively extended to the churches of Quimper. Unlike the siege, however, these pious donations had the merit of avoiding the question of whose army it was that had caused the damage originally.⁷¹ Done right, the exercise of good lordship in the sense of maintaining order could substitute for failures of military lordship.

Going one step further, the preservation of good rule could, like Charles's battlefield leadership, operate on a miraculous level. A squire at Quimper claimed that

although the grains had been cut around the said town by the people of the army of the said Lord Charles, nevertheless the residents of that land harvested grain more abundantly in those places the following August than they would have if it had not been thus cut and eradicated.⁷²

He credited this report to local residents and farmers, adding that it was well known that "such bounties had not arisen in the region of Brittany since his [Charles's] death as they had done during his life." Claiming that the violence of Charles's army resulted, through his lordship, in such a positive outcome was a remarkable attempt to make Quimper almost a victimless siege. Another squire likewise insisted that Charles's rule materially benefited his people:

It is commonly said by the populace of the homeland of Brittany that the people of the duchy of Brittany, during the lifetime of the said Lord Charles, had greater abundance of crops and of all other goods, and were richer in material possessions, although they were beleaguered by the wars, than they were after his death.⁷³

69 D11.4, 12.9, 18.7, 34.7, 39.7, 42.8, 49.9.

70 D44.6.

71 Tellingly, some witnesses who might have brought up Charles's safeguard after the siege, such as Pierre Martin, a Franciscan of Quimper, did not (D33).

72 D150.18.

73 D48.11; cf. 132.4.

Reconciling crisis and stability was a powerful tool for enhancing Charles's legitimacy by suggesting that the war had ultimately been unable to disrupt his tenure as duke. Elevating him above the conflict restored him to what he should have been, especially in light of his still-recent defeat. A key response to a period of heightened tension was to double down on the status quo. Indeed, the political aims of the canonization effort itself may be read in this vein, promoting Charles's uninterrupted lordship even beyond the end of his mortal life.

Witnesses' efforts to navigate between the different responsibilities of lordship nuance our understanding of how canonization reconfigured a ruler's reputation. For some, sanctity might have been a way to make up for "martial failings," retconning past disappointments into vindications of virtue.⁷⁴ But leaving it there oversimplifies the *co*-construction of sainthood and lordship: Charles's seigneurial successes were just as integral to interpreting his holiness. Because the civil war made it hard to cast his authority in unambiguously positive terms, witnesses instead stressed how Charles lived up to different aspects of lordship in different contexts, covering all the bases but not all at once. At the same time, the exceptionality demanded of saints meant Charles had to defy ordinary expectations, so we should be cautious about seeing disagreements about tactics or policy just as lapses of lordship retrospectively papered over. Instead, a useful modern analogy might be the maverick action hero whose offbeat decisions provoke skepticism then admiration (a perennial audience favourite). Charles's clashes with those around him were an easy way for witnesses to make him stand out.

Such interpretations were made easier by the fact that lordship was already understood not in isolation or absolutely, but contingently. A lord's practical ability to use counsel wisely also had an extended moral significance for evaluating and communicating their authority. In the canonization inquiry, reputation was therefore inevitably established by situating Charles within a wider framework of spiritual and earthly relationships. Moreover, the associative process of lordship made it possible to shift the impetus for violence away from Charles himself.⁷⁵ It became God's responsibility where justified, and that of ordinary barons where it fell short of the ideal. Charles's reputation thus appeared in its best light when compared to others and when his lordship was framed collectively.

⁷⁴ Elukin, "Warrior or Saint?," 194; cf. Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity*, 57.

⁷⁵ Cf. Hardy, *Associative Political Culture*.

Gender and Aristocratic Partnerships

The version of Charles's leadership that rose above the war tended to foreground what Mark Ormrod has called the "feminized" aspects of rulership, such as peacemaking, intercession, and compassion, which under more usual circumstances could readily be outsourced to a male ruler's spouse.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, other witnesses inverted Charles's authority to enhance his spiritual standing. Although this approach might first seem to come at the expense of his secular role, it ultimately preserved his masculine reputation as a knight and lord. Jeanne's presence as his wife and duchess contributed both passively and actively to this process. As with Charles, however, the parameters of her gender and authority were not fixed, but depended on their position within a shared framework.

The portrayal of Charles's piety as far outside the princely norm has often been taken as straightforward evidence for his lack of leadership ability. A recurring trope among Charles's associates and attendants (and sometimes even his priests) was their boredom and impatience with his lengthy masses, prayers, and discussions of saints' lives.⁷⁷ Witnesses suggested this behaviour was inappropriate for a prince in his position, and even ridiculed him for it. Michel Barbelot, the duke's barber, recalled a particularly sharp contrast when Charles would humble himself before the poor "to such an extent that certain nobles who saw it derided him, saying, 'You see our duke, certainly he would humble himself more before some old woman than before one good man-at-arms.'"⁷⁸ Charles himself reportedly acknowledged this contradiction, as we saw above in his lament for his unrealized career as a Franciscan monk. Moreover, this clash of purpose was fundamentally due to Jeanne. Michel further recalled the duke's claim that if not for his wife and sons, and the defence of his rights in the duchy, he would have entered the Carthusian order of monks.⁷⁹ Jeanne's presence motivated his pursuit of the war, making his martial functions an outgrowth of his marital relationship. These and many similar claims suggested a dichotomy between being a good duke and leading a religious life.

But the reluctant duke was a convenient narrative for the purposes of canonization, as truly exceptional piety was an obvious asset to Charles's

⁷⁶ Ormrod, "Monarchy, Martyrdom, and Masculinity," 175.

⁷⁷ E.g., D19.6, 24.2, 35.7, 37.3, 40.5, 41.5, 47.4, 56.4.

⁷⁸ D47.2.

⁷⁹ D47.4.

case whether founded in reality or not. There are abundant indications even in the testimony that Charles's devotional routine had not actually greatly interfered with his pursuit of ordinary business, as he would interrupt it in the company of important guests, in order to travel, and to see to other pressing affairs, including the war.⁸⁰ This habit resulted in something of a nesting doll effect, where Charles maintained the outward appearance of a prince, conforming to the expectations of his station, while privately expressing a supposedly secret piety.

Charles could achieve the best of both worlds because how far they were actually in contradiction is debatable. If covert spiritual virtue ostensibly contrasted with the visibility of knightly exploits, the two were ultimately both validated by having an external audience.⁸¹ Saint Louis, France's most respected king, had undertaken similar acts of humility both in imitation of Christ and as an exemplar of good kingship, so this well-recognized theme need not have implied negative repercussions for Charles's princely image.⁸² Parallels between secular warriors and monks as "soldiers of Christ" were recognized early in the Christian tradition.⁸³ And although the line between secular and clerical masculinities was constantly evolving, the demands of manhood placed on both monks and rulers overlapped in relying heavily on an assumption of control.⁸⁴ Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, substantial Church reform and the emergence of a new knightly aristocracy had jointly tended to focus pressure on the issues of chastity and violence. The former entailed mastery of one's own body, though this expectation could clash with that of exerting sexual dominance over others. The latter stressed physical strength exercised with discipline and restraint. If men of the cloth and of the sword might manifest these requirements in different ways, their gender rested on parallel foundations.⁸⁵ At the canonization, then, it was both necessary to heighten the contrast between the two frame-

80 E.g., D9.10, 12.3, 15.7, 18.13, 19.4, 22.10, 23.10, 33.3, 46.3, 51.2, 57.2, 58.6.

81 Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood*, 64–65.

82 Gaposchkin, *Making of Saint Louis*, 106–7; cf. Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity*, 149, 202.

83 Vauchez, "Notion de *miles Christi*."

84 Armstrong-Partida, "Sex and Priestly Masculinity"; Thibodeaux, *Manly Priest*; Aurell, "Rapport introductif"; Smith, "Saints in Shining Armor"; Nelson, "Monks, Secular Men and Masculinity"; McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*."

85 Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 24; Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 43–44, 50.

works and possible to use Charles's religious persona to lay the groundwork for his ducal one.

Many of the standard characteristics recurring across the witness testimony highlighted Charles's masculine self-control. After all, contemporary manuals of rulership admonished, how could a man expect to govern others if he could not govern himself?⁸⁶ The evidence that Charles met this criterion included abundant reports of his restrained reactions to news of both victory and defeat, as well as his tolerant attitude towards those who showed him disrespect. Far from signs of apathy or meekness that might have demoralized his followers, such equanimity attested Charles's strength of will and the superior discipline which marked the best of the nobility.⁸⁷ The same behaviour which contributed to his saintly reputation for humility here would have enhanced his reputation as a *prudhomme*, a worthy man, in courtly circles.

But some forms of discipline posed different problems for noblemen than for churchmen. For aristocratic and clerical men alike, chastity was considered a form of battle, epitomizing self-mastery; but taken too far it was dangerous in a male ruler, who also had a duty to perpetuate his lineage.⁸⁸ At the same time, elite laymen could be considered unmanly if they indulged too freely in sex, either hetero- or homosexual.⁸⁹ The solution here was to focus on Charles's conformity to the standards of continent marriage, an increasingly popular theme in saints' lives of this period, and it was in this context that witnesses most regularly mentioned Jeanne.⁹⁰ Discussions of Charles's chastity repeatedly confirmed that he had "never known carnally any woman save his wife." Jeanne's presence in this role made Charles a successful father—four of their six children were explicitly mentioned during the trial—and well-behaved spouse, allowing him to reconcile bodily control and sexual purity with the obligations of a dynastic prince and a man.⁹¹ She was therefore cast as a necessary component of his masculine authority in this contested space. Her contribution here was passive and impersonal;

86 Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity*, 2, 26–27; cf. Cassard, "Patience," 290.

87 Taylor, "Chivalric Conversation," 178–79.

88 Cullum, "Introduction," 4–5; Thibodeaux, *Manly Priest*, 38, 124; Bagerius and Ekholst, "Unruly Queen," 108.

89 Ormrod, "Sexualities of Edward II"; Karras and Pierpont, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe*, 200.

90 Weissenberg, "Sacrament of Marriage."

91 D9.5, 12.5, 24.1; Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 16, 43; McNamara, "Herrenfrage," 5.

even her name and title were rarely used. Nevertheless, Charles's performance of masculinity in turn confirmed *a priori* Jeanne's own ability to fulfill the requirements of a wife and mother.

Chastity was generally the least detailed of Charles's virtues (after all, it was fundamentally an absence of behaviour rather than its presence), but such regular mentions confirmed the importance of the spouses' "marital community" as part of Charles's (and by extensions, Jeanne's) reputations.⁹² Repeating this rather bland trope was, moreover, only one option for showing how their roles fit together. One of Charles's manservants put a different spin on the dynamic of chastity by bringing in the idea of conjugal debt, where both spouses owed each other sex: the duke claimed that were he not obliged to by the marriage vows, he would not sleep with his wife at all.⁹³ This approach was again meant to satisfy two competing demands. Charles's status meant he could not enjoy the spiritually purer states of virginity or a celibate marriage, but at least he had *wanted* such a lifestyle.⁹⁴ If, meanwhile, a complete lack of desire for women might be unknightly, Charles had already come out on top in the competition for women via his high-status marriage.⁹⁵ As part of this balancing act, Jeanne remained passive, but she now interrupted Charles's spiritual aspirations. Their identities were still paired, but as counterparts rather than reinforcements.

The external mediation of Charles's piety was also a running theme in the more dramatic demonstrations of his personal discipline such as his sobriety, his penances, and the adversities he bore, which ranged from the commonplace to the extreme. On a day-to-day level, he might fast, or eat and drink only a little simple food. Increasingly, he tied knotted cords tightly around his torso, wore a rough hairshirt (*cilicium*) against his skin, slept without a mattress, and embraced other similar inflictions. Finally, he performed individual feats of pious endurance, most notably a barefoot pilgrimage in winter from La Roche-Derrien to Tréguier, about six kilometres apart. These practices had clear and deliberate associations with clerical asceticism, and especially Franciscan traditions of penance. The knotted cords in particular were described as being "in the likeness of the Friars Minor."⁹⁶

⁹² Weissenberg, "Sacrament of Marriage," 463.

⁹³ D10.5; Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, 241–42.

⁹⁴ See Thibodeaux, *Manly Priest*, chap. 1; McGlynn and Moll, "Chaste Marriage"; cf. Weissenberg, "Sacrament of Marriage," 462, 464, 467; McNamara, "Herrenfrage," 10.

⁹⁵ Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 51, 54, 56.

⁹⁶ D10.9, 27.7.

They also aligned Charles with recent saintly models, most notably his relative Saint Louis, who also wore a hairshirt, but also Saint Yves, a Breton jurist saint whose canonization Charles had personally sponsored and whose garment he was said to have worn over the hairshirt.⁹⁷ This emulation was as close as Charles could effectively come to realizing his religious calling, and so helped substantiate the sincerity of his aspiration while performing masculine feats of endurance.⁹⁸

However, these devotions interacted with the physical demands of Charles's ducal position in complex ways. For some witnesses, it was important to mitigate the consequences of these rigours to show that Charles remained up to his worldly responsibilities. They tempered their accounts of Charles's asceticism with evidence that he was able—perhaps with some encouragement—to take sufficient care of his body. His physicians' nagging on the matter of fasting apparently succeeded in preventing Charles from going overboard, ultimately proving his ability for self-restraint from an unexpected angle and showing him listening to counsel to boot; he was also apparently willing to eat while actually ill.⁹⁹ Jenni Kuuliala has observed that the treatments Charles sought for the lesions caused by the hairshirt demonstrated his “need to balance his saintly corporality with his official duties,” just as in other aspects of his spiritual pursuits.¹⁰⁰ Jeanne's intimate access to Charles through their marital relations made her a particularly effective moderating influence. The duke reportedly removed his hairshirt and knotted cords on the nights he slept with his wife and consented to lie on a softer bed with her, literally setting aside his test of endurance to fulfill his carnal and procreative obligations to her and to the ducal line.¹⁰¹ Michel Barbelot specified that Charles observed additional fasts when he was away from the duchess, implying that her presence encouraged a closer adherence to ordinary behaviour.¹⁰² As the potential distance increased between Charles's two lives, Jeanne's disruption of his pious extremes helped these facets coexist.

On the other hand, the physical responsibilities of lordship were not necessarily so easily reconciled with extreme self-denial, as Charles allegedly

97 D10.9, 17.8.

98 Cf. Thibodeaux, *Manly Priest*, 19.

99 D12.8, 36.7, 46.8, 55.4.

100 D23.11, 47.7; Kuuliala, *Saints, Infirmary, and Community*, 167.

101 D9.12, 10.9, 24.4, 27.7, 31.10, 32.5, 47.7.

102 D47.6.

risked weakening himself even to the point of jeopardizing his martial abilities. One of Charles's chamberlains believed Charles's weakness astonished his physicians, who did not know its source, but this impression was either ignorance or exaggeration.¹⁰³ Several of Charles's companions recalled *maître* Georges de Lesnen, in particular, reprimanding the duke for diminishing his bodily strength through fasting or "killing himself" through penance.¹⁰⁴ Georges corroborated their claims, and recalled having roped Charles's confessor into his cause.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Charles's almoner and chaplain recalled that Charles wore out his body by depriving himself of sleep and food, and his snowy pilgrimage required an extended recovery period.¹⁰⁶ Episodes of illness were among the adversities which Charles suffered patiently; somewhat perversely, Charles even pretended illness in order to fast, as his attendants noticed.¹⁰⁷ Spiritual resilience here came at the cost of bodily fitness.

Evaluated from an aristocratic perspective, these extremes of physical suffering were potentially problematic on several levels. In practical terms, being unwell might inhibit Charles's ability to lead and/or fight himself. On a more conceptual level health could be equated with "the ability to fulfil one's social role," such that neglecting the one meant neglecting the other.¹⁰⁸ More concretely, ill health undermined a knight's control over his body, threatening his masculinity.¹⁰⁹ In this text, infirmity was more usually associated with the poor unfortunates (and even *impotentes*, powerless people) to whom Charles repeatedly tended.¹¹⁰ Weakness was not a condition that befitted his high status.

However, this simple dichotomy was complicated by the fact that Charles's devotional trials were closely bound up with his ducal career. Many witnesses stressed how his austerities developed in step with the significant milestones of his life. Some who had known Charles in his youth reported that his fasting and penance increased as he aged, suggesting these practices were part of his becoming a man.¹¹¹ One of the rare servants

103 D24.3.

104 D12.8, 15.10.

105 D9.6.

106 D35.8; D10.3, 28.9, 38.13, 45.8.

107 D19.3, 26.3, 27.8, 51.7; D10.4, 47.6.

108 Kuuliala, *Saints, Infirmity, and Community*, 167.

109 Bateman, "Knight Fever," 40; Phillips, "Crusader Masculinities."

110 D30.4, 31.5.

111 D1.4, 2.8.

to come with him from Blois to Brittany, Poulet de La Vicogne, believed Charles started wearing the hairshirt after marrying Jeanne, and sleeping without a mattress after his capture at La Roche-Derrien.¹¹² As Charles became first a husband and then forcibly separated from the marriage bed, he began to express his rigours in new ways. Poulet noted that he observed these habits while Charles was count of Penthievre and duke of Brittany, the double title emphasizing the growing authority Charles exercised via his wife.¹¹³ Timelines of Charles's asceticism differed; another early companion recalled Poulet telling him Charles slept without a mattress while still under his father's roof.¹¹⁴ Still, there was largely consensus that he increased his ordeals during his imprisonment, and that he wore his hairshirt to the battle of Auray.¹¹⁵ Charles's asceticism became a manifestation of his authority and the war he fought.

Linking significant defeats to Charles's asceticism and its physical consequences may have helped some witnesses "make sense of a military fiasco," and the association certainly bolstered the overall martyrdom narrative.¹¹⁶ More positively, though, fusing martial and spiritual trials underscored Charles's exceptional masculinity. Historians such as Steven Bruso and Katherine Allen Smith have examined the importance of sheer physical hardness to conceptions of knightly masculinity.¹¹⁷ Hard bodies reflected not only the knight's need to develop enough strength and fitness to wear armour and wield weapons effectively, but also their ability to maintain stamina and withstand pain through sheer toughness. Conversely, medieval moralists habitually voiced concerns over the growing softness and effeminacy of contemporary knights.¹¹⁸ In Charles's case, his devotional practices were a chance to showcase his hardness. Charles removed the mattress from his bed to make it harder (*durius*), with the implication that the person sleeping upon it must be hard also.¹¹⁹ That he pursued these sleeping arrangements and other austerities even while on campaign showed their compatibility

112 D52.9.

113 Cf. D41.3.

114 D5.8.

115 E.g., D34.9, 35.8, 41.9.

116 Kuuliala, *Saints, Infirmary, and Community*, 190.

117 Bruso, "Bodies Hardened for War"; Smith, "Saints in Shining Armor," 593; cf. Downes et al., "Introduction—War as Emotion," 10.

118 Dressler, "Steel Corpse," 88; Parsons, "'Loved Him—Hated Her,'" 289–90.

119 D46.7, 51.9, 55.8.

with, and even reinforcement of, the knightly lifestyle.¹²⁰ One squire noticed the bare bed when he went to report the progress of the (successful) siege of Carhaix to the duke in 1342.¹²¹ Here, Charles literally commanded from atop a testament of his hardness.¹²²

To evaluate such physical masculinity, the usual metric was other men. Charles was even able to outcompete his fellow knights by pitting his ascetic rigours against their more ordinary performance of knighthood. An attendant of Jeanne's uncle Hervé, Hamon de Languéouez, recalled when Hervé once shared Charles's bed for the night.¹²³ Bed-sharing was part of the culture of martial companionship surrounding the medieval male nobility, reinforcing political and military bonds.¹²⁴ Despite usually allowing a relaxation of masculine competition, however, this encounter showed that Charles possessed greater fortitude than his kinsman. Hamon was given a heads-up by Charles's regular servants that once Hervé was asleep, Charles would abandon the luxurious bed for a small, low cot without straw or feather mattress. Come morning, Hamon was treated to a guided tour of Charles's various instruments of penance. Juxtaposing the two men distinguished Charles from one of the greatest noblemen of his duchy. Moreover, Hervé's younger brother Énard recalled that Hervé himself had given Charles a hairshirt early in their acquaintance, when they were together in the royal army.¹²⁵ Not only was this gift considered appropriate between knights out in the field, it enabled Charles to push the limits of his toughness further.¹²⁶

Because Charles's baseline bodily existence was more challenging than that of ordinary knights, the fact that he could still fight meant going above and beyond the masculine norm. Facing physical damage and carrying on were essential proofs of knightly manhood.¹²⁷ His remark to an attendant squire, astonished at his ability to tolerate his hairshirt, that it was no different from wearing fine undergarments, showed how far he had hardened

120 E.g., D12.7, 19.10, 21.9, 24.4, 28.8.

121 D40.6.

122 On the significance of beds to rulership in late medieval France, see Brown and Famiglietti, *Lit de justice*, esp. 21–22.

123 D11.3.

124 Storey, "Questioning Terminologies," 35–36, 40.

125 D57.6.

126 Cf. Constable, "Attitudes Toward Self-Inflicted Suffering," 19.

127 Casey, "Feeling It Like a Man," 243.

himself by the end of his life.¹²⁸ Crucially, this exceptional toughness held true even in defeat. By increasing his austerities after his capture at La Roche-Derrien, Charles showed his capacity to withstand yet greater hardship. His physician Georges de Lesnen clarified how Charles's renunciation of mattresses had come about:

In being captured he was injured with seventeen wounds, which this witness saw. He saw also that after [Charles] was captured, a certain English knight called Lord Thomas Dagworth, in the place where Lord Charles was lying naked on a certain bed with a stuffed feather mattress, angrily had the mattress pulled out from under him. And so the said Lord Charles remained lying upon straw with only a linen sheet over it, for which he gave thanks to God, saying that he wished and desired to be in that state, and that he would never again lie upon a feather mattress.¹²⁹

Charles's battle wounds, successfully borne, led seamlessly into another fight with the enemy, which the duke was likewise able to tough out: by meeting Thomas's challenge he set himself an even higher standard going forward. The interchange of clerical and knightly rigours then continued during his captivity. Since Charles did not ride during this period, he added the same coarse fabric of his hairshirt to his thighs.¹³⁰ This alteration attested both the limits he normally kept to in the pursuit of his duty and his refusal to go easy on himself when barred from that pursuit.¹³¹ Set apart from the war, he inflicted wounds upon himself through self-flagellation.¹³² Charles remained hard by fighting both earthly and spiritual battles.

His final battle of Auray was the ultimate example of this fortitude. Charles allegedly suffered from an unspecified illness in the weeks leading up to the fight, during which he continued to sleep without a mattress.¹³³ The servants of his bedchamber reproved Charles for seeking a fight under such conditions, but they received a stern rebuff: "I go to defend my people; only let it please God that the conflict should be between me and my adversary alone, without anyone else having to die because of it."¹³⁴ This was a fine line to walk—going to battle unwell could be seen as foolhardy rather

128 D21.9.

129 D9.3.

130 D10.9, 12.7.

131 For Charles's forced inactivity during his captivity, see D9.4.

132 D9.13, 10.9.

133 D19.3, 26.3, 27.8.

134 D27.8.

than noble, but allowing oneself to be put out of action was unmanly.¹³⁵ Fortunately, playing different masculine norms against each other had served Charles well before, as when he pointed out that breaking his fast to build up his strength would only encourage the demands of his flesh, and so threaten his self-control.¹³⁶ Thus, even in his weakness, Charles was outstanding: he continued to fulfill his lordly obligations both by fighting and by defending his people, and even aspired to be the sole combatant on the field, testing his chivalric mettle.

Charles's death consolidated the blend of sacred and secular masculinity. If at Quimper the duke had removed his armour to invoke God's blessing, here his armour encased his piety as represented by his hairshirt. Hair-shirts were Charles's most important open secret: he purportedly favoured white ones because black was too visible, yet they were repeatedly discovered during his close interactions with his men-at-arms.¹³⁷ One squire felt the hairshirt when massaging Charles's shoulder after a riding mishap.¹³⁸ A knight who fought at Auray had often tried to spot the hairshirt without success, as it was too well covered by the duke's other clothes, though another nobleman caught a glimpse while helping Charles arm himself for the fight.¹³⁹ Featuring the hairshirt in these martial contexts made it part of the duke's regular battle equipment. The English later discovered his hairshirt when they "disarmed and despoiled" Charles's corpse.¹⁴⁰ It was customary to take the arms and other valuables of those defeated or killed in battle, and the hairshirt now numbered among these prizes. Several witnesses agreed the English recognized its value and divided the hairshirt into pieces to keep, although a Dominican friar insisted instead that they had simply thrown it aside, so he himself had taken it away and preserved it out of devotion to Charles.¹⁴¹ Even if it was not immediately seen as a relic (or, we might suspect, a souvenir of victory), the English and Montfortist Bretons apparently discussed the find, suggesting they attached at least some significance to it.¹⁴² The association of temporal and spiri-

135 Bateman, "Knight Fever," 47; Casey, "Feeling It Like a Man," 243.

136 D10.4.

137 D23.11.

138 D21.9.

139 D13.4, 56.6.

140 D9.15, 16.7, 30.8, 40.6, 47.7.

141 D13.4, 40.6, 47.7, 56.6; D30.8.

142 D13.4, 20.4, 32.5, 40.6, 56.6.

tual armour had been exemplified during the high medieval period by the *loricatus*, ascetics who wore armour as part of their penitential routine (often, indeed, along with a hairshirt).¹⁴³ This model suited warriors who had become holy men, and while such saints had declined in popularity by the fourteenth century, Charles made something of a *loricatus* in reverse, pushed into the secular life but adopting the trappings of his other path to harness the masculine authority of both roles.

The close association between Charles's piety, his gender, and his leadership in this testimony had ramifications for Jeanne's own reputation. If she was often used passively to contextualize what Charles did and did not do, she could also interact more dynamically with the markers of his exceptionality. For instance, Auray was not the final appearance of the famed hairshirt. In three reports of the aftermath of Charles's death, Jeanne was at Nantes, one of Brittany's two capital cities, and needed funds to leave for Angers, outside the duchy.¹⁴⁴ She ordered a locked chest thought to hold some of Charles's treasury to be opened, but the search found no money, only a box with three hairshirts inside. The symbolic interpretation was obvious: where an ordinary prince, here exemplified by Jeanne, might keep worldly wealth, Charles instead kept items of spiritual value.¹⁴⁵ While this comparison enhanced Charles's saintly credentials, it also set expectations for Jeanne's leadership. Her agency in this scene, one of the few places where her motivations came into view, allowed her to exercise her own set of seigneurial priorities, focusing on practicalities over principles. She thus shared in the ducal authority but visibly took command as an independent actor.

Recognizing Jeanne's agency also meant complicating her default significance through the dynamics of partnership. Whereas many of Charles's valets had him abandon his unpadded bed to visit his wife, one instead reported that their shared bed was divided: "namely, the part in which his wife lay had a feather mattress and pillow, and the part in which the said Lord Charles lay had straw and a mat."¹⁴⁶ Charles and Jeanne were here physically placed on opposite sides, with her sleeping as appropriate for both a duchess and a woman, and him eschewing such worldly luxuries and soft-

143 Smith, "Saints in Shining Armor."

144 D33.7, 35.8, 50.9.

145 We do know that Jeanne kept a piece of one of Charles's hairshirts until her death: La Borderie, ed., *Inventaire*, 6.

146 D10.9.

ness. This contrast gave them each a clear place in the social order. Moreover, while previous studies of this canonization have focused on Jeanne's exclusion from Charles's religious practices, she could instead contribute to them.¹⁴⁷ Two other manservants claimed that the bed was made up the same way for the pair of them as when Charles was alone.¹⁴⁸ Jeanne herself even allegedly took an active hand in promoting this shared arrangement. Repeatedly confronted with the divided bed, "she did not long permit this when she saw it; instead, the said lady duchess lay down with him upon the mat or pad or other prickly mattress." This interpretation, too, reinforced Charles's leadership as he set an example for his spouse to follow, making the household a microcosm of the principality. It was also more fitting for a saint's wife to be worthy of him.¹⁴⁹ But by altering Charles's arrangements, Jeanne participated in the "hardening" of the bed, which lost its connotations of marriage and became more like the rough quarters associated with Charles's military campaigns. Likewise, Jeanne's ability to compete with her husband (a task at which knights had failed) made her his double more than his opposite. And the episode again attested the duchess's authority, as she overruled Charles's attempt to keep her separate.

Indeed, Jeanne's effectiveness as a point of either comparison or contrast with Charles made sense largely because she and he were understood as part of a whole, a married couple and ruling partnership. The lens of shared power underpinned the Franciscan Jean Lay's emphasis on how many sermons Charles listened to when he was in Jeanne's company.¹⁵⁰ He also recalled that Charles fed the poor when he and the duchess happened to be in the same place.¹⁵¹ To some extent this view was simply practical: Jean was Jeanne's own priest, so he necessarily observed Charles only when the couple was together. Nevertheless, the duchess's presence was not merely incidental to these pious acts. Jean reported that Charles fed an increased number of paupers after he had inherited the duchy, again reflecting the stages of his authority by marriage. Jean also noted that he had been called upon to select them specifically in his role as Jeanne's almoner, implicating her in this process alongside her husband. Similarly, while most witnesses attributed the patronage of churches and institutions to Charles alone, two

147 Esp. Vauchez, *Sainteté*, 422.

148 D27.7.

149 Weissenberg, "Sacrament of Marriage," 463.

150 D34.2.

151 D34.5.

priests recalled having seen letters of foundation for certain projects drawn up on the joint orders of the ducal couple.¹⁵² Jeanne's involvement would have been normal for a noblewoman, but bringing her up here was a deliberate decision that made shared authority relevant to Charles's sanctity. When the ducal pair acted in concert, it reinforced the validity of Charles's behaviour, whether measured against lay or clerical norms; when they diverged, it underscored his exceptionality. In either case, Jeanne's position as duchess was integral to the assessment.

The dynamics of gender and partnership within the canonization process open alternate perspectives on the socio-cultural construction of political reputations. As I showed in the previous section, breaking lordship down into its component parts helped witnesses assert Charles's continuous authority across a challenging period. Distinguishing between Charles's sacred and secular callings likewise offered a strategy for reinterpreting the tensions of the past, but for many witnesses it was just as important that these roles could complement each other. Proving Charles's manliness through spiritual discipline allowed him to satisfy the expectations of knightly competition and offset the need to distance Charles from a conventionally masculine performance of lordship in more martial contexts. By masculinizing or feminizing his authority by turns, the witnesses associated Charles with the full range of gendered expectations of rulership without recourse to narratively inappropriate displays of prowess.

But as Mark Ormrod has shown, the shared participation of both kings and queens in the gendered responsibilities of monarchy could disturb contemporary hierarchies of power. He argues that in late medieval England, there was thus a tendency to masculinize royal holiness, where the sanctity of kings was used in part to reassert their authority independent of their wives.¹⁵³ In Charles's canonization we find quite a different approach, or rather approaches. Most witnesses focused on Charles alone, as appropriate for the occasion. This exclusivity could have helped draw attention to his self-sufficient, manly authority, but the specific political context demanded a more complicated gendering of his role. Meanwhile, other witnesses included Jeanne, often in a similar function to the "barons and others of his duchy" surrounding Charles—of whom she was, in effect, the most preeminent. Jeanne's gender and authority, however, made her stand out from the noble crowd. On one hand, she represented a feminized presence that more

152 D23.9, 26.9.

153 Ormrod, "Monarchy, Martyrdom, and Masculinity," 186–87.

clearly defined Charles's self-control, and certainly did not defy any binary norms. On the other hand, her own lordship offered an immediate metric for his, and was accordingly gendered more malleably. She could participate alongside Charles in several of his activities, rather than competing with him like a knight or taking over the pious duties of rulers often left to women. Their mirroring relied on and reinforced the fundamental unity of the spousal couple as rulers, even as each retained their own agency. A flexible view of such gendered partnerships ultimately contributed to the stability of lordship.

Conclusions

Charles's and Jeanne's reputations in the canonization process give a more holistic appreciation of the standards by which an elite, largely male audience evaluated princely leadership. Canonization was a politically effective strategy in the late Middle Ages precisely because it did not respond to the needs of the Church alone, but appealed to the kinds of people footing the bill.¹⁵⁴ Yet as with the identification of sainthood itself, there was no definitive checklist for an "orthodox" lord. While moral authorities offered models for their aristocratic readers throughout the medieval period, good reputation here did not rely on conformity to a single archetype.¹⁵⁵ Instead, from the perspective of politics as constant crisis, the best lord was the one that fit the occasion. Moreover, efforts to normalize Charles's tenure as duke by elevating him above the civil war on the one hand, and by anchoring his conduct in noble values on the other, relied on his associations with others. As his wife and as a parallel repository for ducal authority, Jeanne provided a ready benchmark and/or counterpoint. In this interpretation, legitimacy became a collaborative project.

Did these reputations reach beyond the immediate context? Theoretically, these testimonies were supposed to represent the wider community. Every *vita* witness confirmed that what they had reported was also "commonly said, held, and told" in their area. This *fama* was both part of the justification for sanctity, and the means by which news of it spread.¹⁵⁶ We can see this process in action in the presentation of evidence by local notables in front of a large crowd at the town of Lamballe in Penthievre. Similarly,

154 Smoller, "Northern and Southern Sanctity," 290, 308.

155 Crouch, *Chivalric Turn*; Wittig, *Learning to Be Noble*, esp. chap. 4.

156 Krötzl, "*Fama sanctitatis*."

the inhabitants of Guingamp wrote a collective letter to the papal commission that both stressed Charles's particular relationship with their town and confirmed his pious generosity, his protection of the weak, and his ascetic hardships.¹⁵⁷ The military companies of Breton nobles and mercenaries who travelled far afield, as well as the Franciscan order, also contributed to the publicity.¹⁵⁸

At the same time, the files produced by the papal examiners were not a matter of public record, and did not circulate in written form among wider audiences. As Jeanne's and Charles's reputations developed in other narrative formats, then, there was no direct link back to the canonization materials. However, some of the details captured in the chronicle tradition attest their ongoing dissemination via word-of-mouth across elite networks. Moreover, if I have focused here only on certain issues with which the witnesses grappled (especially ones neglected by earlier studies of this testimony), these themes continued to play out in new contexts. The relative responsibility for warfare, the gendered and un-gendered performance of good lordship, and the two-way influence of partnered reputations were far from settled, and the same events could be reinterpreted no less authentically in a new light.

157 Both reports were transcribed as part of the canonization dossier as R19 and R16, respectively.

158 E.g., Héry et al., eds., *Procès de canonisation*, 156n279; D32.10; Cassard, "*Gestes des Bretons*," 105; Vauchez, "Canonisation et politique."

