# INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK EXPLORES how aristocratic leadership was understood in response to the political conflicts of the late Middle Ages. It focuses on how elite audiences engaged with different ideas about men's and women's joint authority as a way to make sense of these clashes. Tracing the development of this discourse in a case study across the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, I argue that the tensions defining political society encouraged a perpetual reassessment of the dynamics of legitimate power, which became comparative rather than categorical.

The protagonists, so to speak, of this analysis are Charles de Blois (ca. 1321–1364) and Jeanne de Penthièvre (ca. 1326–1384), duke and duchess of Brittany in what is now northwestern France. Jeanne was the niece of the previous duke, Jean III, while her husband Charles was the nephew of the king of France, Philippe VI. Jeanne was expected to succeed her childless uncle to the Breton title in 1341, but her half-uncle Jean de Montfort challenged her claim. Despite winning the legal confirmation of her rights from the king's *parlement* at Paris, the support of King Edward III of England for her rival led to war. Jeanne and Charles controlled much of the duchy for over two decades, but their authority faced repeated disruptions, including several major military defeats, Charles's capture and nine-year imprisonment in England, and the surrender of two sons and one daughter as hostages for his ransom. The conflict abated only after Charles died at the battle of Auray in 1364 and Jeanne signed a treaty recognizing Jean de Montfort's son as Duke Jean IV in 1365. Nevertheless, she remained titular duchess and pursued an active political career for the rest of her life.

I am not concerned here, however, with the events or even the rhetoric of Jeanne and Charles's actual exercise of power, which I have analyzed primarily from Jeanne's perspective elsewhere.[1] Instead, I am interested in what other people had to say about their authority after the fact. From the 1370s to the 1510s (and beyond), many commentators reflected on, repurposed, and repackaged the events of the Breton civil war and its controversial duke and duchess to meet the political needs of the moment. Because

1 Graham-Goering, *Princely Power*.

these accounts used codified social categories to communicate efficiently, they reveal the range of values associated with different models of power, from knights and princesses to saints, parents, and lords. However, there was also friction between—and indeed within—these ideals. How and why were such tensions magnified or resolved by talking about two people together instead of just one?

## Concepts

The conceptual framework supporting this study can be broken down along the lines suggested by its title. I focus on the primary historiographical questions underpinning each component and how the case of Jeanne and Charles can contribute towards addressing them, rather than attempting any exhaustive citation of these diverse and rapidly developing fields.

### Aristocratic Partnership

An aristocratic partnership implies, in essence, a power-sharing relationship, but within the broad scope of the political, social, and cultural authority this elite could wield, certain dynamics are of particular interest. I refer throughout this book to Jeanne and Charles's "leadership" as a neutral umbrella term that takes in both the active capacity for decision-making and command, and the ability to attract loyalty as the legitimate authority. However, I also draw attention to more specific manifestations of hierarchy that marked the late Middle Ages. Lordship, first, was seen as the common denominator of all domination, from God above, through kings and barons, down to husbands in their households; it was, as Rees Davies puts it, "part of the natural order of the universe."[2] There is a tendency, though, for lordship to get buried within the rubric of kingship at a higher level and that of nobility at the lower, rather than understood as a context for power-sharing in its own right. Because we so often take lordship for granted, much of the methodology and theory of its study remains to be adequately developed, but meanwhile, looking at reputation can help pinpoint some important ways contemporaries engaged with the concept and the challenges it posed as an ideal even at the time. I will also speak of "rulership" to highlight the preeminent position of lords at the level of a principality such as Brittany, especially given the huge influence of royal studies on political history, but such princes were also part of a continuum. A second thematic focus is the

**2** Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 16.

concept of knighthood, numerically declining in this period but still essential to aristocratic identities.[3] Idealized knighthood had two facets of interest here.[4] On one hand, knights exemplified martial skill, and on the other they offered faithful service to their superiors. Its particular functions gave knighthood a distinct relationship to power from lordship, but both frameworks fed into shaping the dynamics of partnership.

Historians are fortunately moving beyond viewing political power in the Middle Ages as primarily autocratic to emphasize its collaborative aspects. This shift has been particularly noticeable in how we study monarchy. Ernst Kantorowicz famously advanced the idea that the Crown had a "corporational character," involving not only the king but also the great magnates who helped him govern.[5] This relatively abstract framing has become more concrete as historians explore the forms of royal power-sharing taken in various contexts.[6] To give only a few examples particularly relevant to medieval Europe, the kingship itself could be parcelled out, with different members of the ruling family each having at least a potential claim to authority.[7] While the field of candidates might narrow over time, such shifts should not be taken as a move away from corporate monarchy itself, but rather towards other solutions for sharing power. Kings might rule alongside their designated son and successor during their own lifetimes in a form of associative kingship.[8] The system of apanages in Capetian France, where younger sons received large territories within the kingdom to govern rather than dividing the realm and title, nevertheless ensured that what Graeme Small calls the "royal familial community" would be the major driver of French politics throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[9] And whereas queens were traditionally seen as peripheral accessories to the king, especially in the high and later medieval periods, we now recognize them as an integral part of a ruling partnership.[10] Theresa Earenfight lays out the consequences of

**3** Contamine, "Points de vue"; Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood*.

**4** Cf. Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 24–25.

**5** Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 381.

**6** Woodacre, "Understanding the Mechanisms of Monarchy," 12.

**7** Spangler, "Family Affair," 469–71; Naderer, "Love and Fear," 69–76.

**8** Whaley, "From *a* Salic Law to *the* Salic Law"; Martin, "Anticipatory Association of the Heir."

**9** Wood, *French Apanages*; Small, *Late Medieval France*.

**10** See Woodacre, *Queens Regnant*; and Beem and Taylor, *Man Behind the Queen*, for just two examples from the plethora of recent studies.

this interpretation particularly clearly when she characterizes rulership as "a malleable, permeable and multivocal political institution that can be envisioned, metaphorically speaking, as a flexible sack."[11] Monarchy, in apparent contradiction to its name, was not the rule of one: the only question was how wide it might stretch, and this question was never permanently settled.

The implications for power dynamics below the level of monarchy have been somewhat slower in coming, though the field is clearly headed in this direction. There is increasing evidence, for instance, that even married women could exercise direct power within the aristocracy and wider elites.[12] More broadly, since we know that medieval socio-political power fundamentally relied on networks of all kinds, it is surprising that we still often assume that methods for distributing power such as multiple lordship and co-lordship were deviations from normal or desirable practice.[13] Nevertheless, such patterns of power-sharing as part of general seigneurial practices are starting to gain more serious attention.[14] It is also telling that most studies across these areas focus on the period 1000–1300 (or even earlier), leaving the later Middle Ages to be dominated by the "rise of the state." That narrative has usually stressed the centralization of power, even if state formation has increasingly been reinterpreted as more cooperative than competitive. Just recently, though, the contributions of decentralized and delegated authority to this process have started to come to light.[15] So there is ample room to expand our appreciation of aristocratic collaboration as part not just of how things worked, but how people expected them to work.

Studying the partnership of the duke and duchess of Brittany builds on this discourse in several ways. First, this case study helps translate the frameworks of corporate monarchy into the sphere of the aristocracy at large. Aristocrats, even magnates, faced different pressures from their royal counterparts, since they were unburdened by the extensive ideological baggage of sacral monarchy and occupied a secondary position within the realm's political hierarchy. This distinctive social context affected the manifestation and interpretation of joint leadership. Still, the princes' preemi-

**11** Earenfight, "Without the Persona," 10.

**12** Livingstone, "Recalculating the Equation"; Tanner, "Women's Legal Capacity"; Tanner, *Medieval Elite Women*; Graham-Goering, *Princely Power*.

**13** Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers*; White, *Re-Thinking Kinship*; Esmark et al., *Nordic Elites*.

**14** "Coseigneurie"; Débax, *Seigneurie collective*; Boston, *Lordship and Locality*.

**15** Graham-Goering et al., *Lordship and the Decentralized State*.

nent political position on the regional level heightened the common conceptual tools of aristocratic power, making it easier to see how these responded to collaborative dynamics. Second, the timing of the Breton war of succession and its narrative afterlife is useful for bridging the routine boundaries of periodization. Examining how the same actors and events were adapted to new contexts over some 150 years shows both continuity and evolution in assessing shared power. Finally, while this research focuses on Jeanne and Charles as a married couple, this core partnership was closely tied into other relationships, groups, and networks, all of which contributed to defining the meaning and legitimacy of their joint rule. This case can therefore help us connect the different forms of collaboration now being studied as integral to premodern political culture.

## Gendered Reputations

Reputation was at this time deeply embedded in many facets of life. Often discussed under the Latin name of *fama* (whence English "fame"), it meant in broad terms what was widely known about someone, but such public information had serious consequences.[16] While the personal and professional ramifications of having a good or bad name in most social contexts are perhaps readily grasped, there was a particular truth value to "that which is commonly said, held, and told" that gained evidentiary weight in all sorts of legal proceedings during this period.[17] Reputation was also a tool for community social monitoring and enforcing behavioural norms, ostensibly in aid of the common good.[18] Correspondingly, public opinion had real political force from both above and below, a factor that has fed into an increasingly expansive view of later medieval political society.[19] For the nobility in particular, reputation was vital to justifying both individual honour and collective domination, and I will focus here primarily on how this concern offers a new approach to the issues surrounding the aristocratic marital partnership.

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**16** Arbelet and Devlaeminck, "Fama"; Soria and Billoré, *Rumeur au Moyen Âge*; Fenster and Smail, *Fama*; Gauvard, "Renommée"; cf. Walker and Kerr, *"Fama" and her Sisters*.

**17** Théry-Astruc, "*Fama*" (also in English translation); Gauvard, "*Fama* explicite et *fama* implicite."

**18** Coleman, "Scholastic Treatments," 24–25.

**19** Guenée, *Opinion publique*; Dumolyn et al., *Voices of the People*; Slater, "Rumour and Reputation Management"; Théry-Astruc, "*Fama*"; Genet, "Political Society"; Watts, "Pressure of the Public."

Gender underpins this discussion on two levels. While the full complexity of medieval gender lies beyond my present scope, the analysis of elite reputation is impacted by questions of (1) what men and women were said to have done, and/or (2) how their actions were characterized as masculine or feminine (or both or neither).[20] I examine both sides of this coin in the narratives surrounding Jeanne and Charles's partnership. Such an emphasis is not to say that gender was uniquely significant in determining reputation, but its importance as "*a* primary way of signifying relationships of power" raises problems of particular relevance to the interpretation of joint leadership.[21] Christopher Fletcher has, moreover, pointed out the need "to bring gender history and political history together, taking both politics and gender equally seriously," a task which has so far proceeded unevenly.[22]

I hope to make two main contributions by examining shared power from the perspective of gendered reputations. First, reputation is an especially sensitive instrument for gauging the cultural and political importance contemporaries attached to power-sharing between men and women. In Rhiannon Snaith's formulation, "expectation lay at the root of reputation; the ability to meet expectation resulted in praise and positive renown, while failure to live up to the same ideal was punished by criticism."[23] Focusing on reputation clarifies how legitimate authority was constructed and evaluated, a process that, Jean-Philippe Genet argues, "is less self-evident for the medieval period than we might think."[24] At the same time, aristocratic ideals (just like gendered ones) were a moving target rather than a static metric, so that pinning them down was a constant yet inconclusive challenge. Medieval aristocrats tried to carefully control their *fama* using a range of methods to influence public discourse, sometimes successfully, sometimes less so. As Craig Taylor shows, efforts to convey these principles necessarily also had a hand in shaping the ongoing debate.[25] Studying reputation therefore provides an important complement to the practical dynamics of co-rule,

**20** I focus here on the most salient gender categories in my source material; for a recent survey and discussion of non-binary medieval history, see Wingard, "Trans Middle Ages."

**21** Quote from Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, 44 (my italics). Cf. LoPrete, "Women, Gender and Lordship," 1925; Waag, "Rulership, Authority, and Power," 103.

**22** Fletcher, "Introduction."

**23** Snaith, "Politics of Noble Reputation," 30.

**24** Genet, "Pouvoir symbolique," 10.

**25** Taylor, *Virtuous Knight*, 5.

because it speaks to how and why it was normalized or contested in different political contexts.

Second, and conversely, spousal power-sharing can help us synthesize several strands within the study of political reputations. Historians now recognize that monarchy necessarily contained both masculine and feminine elements. These could be encapsulated within the single figure of the monarch, as in Cynthia Herrup's argument that early modern rulers could "inhabit an artificial body that was gendered neither exclusively male nor female, but both," but were more usually parcelled out between the king and queen who jointly constructed royal power.[26] Yet most studies of royal reputations foreground either the king or queen rather than both together, a problem that Henric Bagerius and Christine Ekholst have also highlighted.[27] Likewise among the wider aristocracy, scholarship on reputation has usually dealt more with individuals or family lineages than with partnerships, and so missed a key link in the chain. (I strongly suspect that part of this individual focus comes from the close relationship between the projects of reputation and biography.) As a result, while the reputations of both men and women as rulers were shaped by similar normative categories, including appropriate sexual behaviour, use of power, honourable conduct, and so on, these parallels and their reciprocal influence across genders have not been fully examined.

Moreover, the focus on individual reputations has only reinforced tendencies to study the ideals of women's and men's authority separately. The two fields, after all, have had markedly different trajectories. Medieval masculinities (quickly pluralized in a way that "femininities" rarely are) have received serious attention only from the 1990s, as a response to the growth of women's studies in the preceding decades, and there are no signs of achieving balanced attention to men within medieval gender scholarship any time soon.[28] Starting at the top of the political hierarchy, the boom in queenship studies since the 1960s and especially the 1980s has only much more recently been matched by interest in kingship as a specifically gendered phenomenon, as Katherine Lewis astutely explains.[29] To some extent,

**26** Herrup, "King's Two Genders," 496.

**27** Bagerius and Ekholst, "Unruly Queen," 103.

**28** Lees, *Medieval Masculinities*; Hadley, *Masculinity*; Murray, *Conflicted Identities*. As an extremely crude metric, works dealing with women/femininity versus men/masculinity available on the International Medieval Bibliography on August 14, 2024 show a ratio of about 5:1, a trend that has held remarkably steady since the '90s.

**29** Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity*, 3–5; cf. Fletcher, *Richard II*.

this separate treatment is justified by the historical reality. Although we know there is clear overlap between the actual practices of men and women's lordship, the conceptual frameworks of gender were embedded within hierarchies of power.[30] Historians have shown how manliness was in many ways constructed through competition and comparison not with women, but with other men in elite homosocial contexts.[31] Meanwhile, the spotlight put on ruling women has been instrumental in making their roles visible to us despite their frequent relegation to a secondary status.[32] Although calls for greater attention to the co-production of gender are not new, nor have they gone wholly unanswered, the impact on political history remains limited.[33]

Nevertheless, a blended approach to reputation is needed to fully appreciate the political world of the aristocracy as a whole. Claudia Wittig's work on the transmission of idealized conduct in high medieval courts, for example, shows the benefits of integrating analysis of the expectations set upon young noblemen and -women to understand how "communities of values" came to be.[34] Because spousal power-sharing necessarily set male and female actors, and masculine and feminine performances of power, side-by-side, it is an especially effective context to examine how the gendering of each reputation influenced the other. Necessarily, my discussion of certain aspects of Jeanne's and Charles's reputations will prioritize only one person, to better unpick how they were affected by complicated ideals of gender and power. But I consistently return to what I call *relational* reputations, by which I mean both the mutual impact of two individual reputations on one another, and how the relationship between two individuals was a deliberate strategy of reputation-building. Through such comparison, reputation itself becomes, rather than just "a singular property that shapes the place of the individual in...a society of honour," a product of power-sharing.[35]

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**30** LoPrete, "Women, Gender and Lordship"; Evergates, *Aristocracy in the County of Champagne*.

**31** Karras, *From Boys to Men*, esp. 10–11; Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity*, 7; McVitty, "False Knights"; Storey, "Questioning Terminologies."

**32** See Woodacre, *Queens and Queenship*, for an accessible synopsis of the main findings of this scholarship to date.

**33** Rasmussen, *Rivalrous Masculinities*; Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity*, 10, 59.

**34** Wittig, *Learning to Be Noble*.

**35** Gauvard, "*Fama* explicite et *fama* implicite," 39.

## Civil War

I analyze shared power in the context of conflict, which has several implications for my scope and conclusions. As a war of succession, the case study of Brittany fits into our usual ideas about what a civil war is: a conflict internal to a given polity and fought ultimately over control of that polity. This clear-cut categorization can be challenged, however, on both specific and general grounds. If Bretons fought against Bretons in support of rival would-be dukes, the involvement of the kings of France and of England made Brittany a proxy for the sprawling dispute retroactively dubbed the Hundred Years' War. The combatants in the duchy were heterogeneous in their origins and affiliations, including not only English and French lords but Genoese mercenaries and Spanish adventurers. Meanwhile, Charles and Jeanne themselves were also viscount and viscountess of Limoges to the south, equally contested by the Montforts yet with few direct links to Brittany.[36] And although the conventional dates for the war are 1341–1365, and these do identify a meaningful chapter at least concerning the legal basis for conflict, the Penthièvre–Montfort rivalry had no definitive settlement until the late fifteenth century (as we will see), so speaking of *the* war of succession is also something of an artifice.

More broadly, historians, political scientists, and anthropologists have questioned the category of "civil war" itself. I draw here especially on the recent synthesis and new insights developed in the project *The Nordic "Civil Wars" in the High Middle Ages in a Comparative Perspective*.[37] This research takes on board not only critiques of defining civil war as somehow exceptional compared to other wars, but also the pushback against seeing violence as a sign of breakdown in itself. These scholars argue that "war, civil war, rebellion, succession dispute, etc. should not automatically be seen as challenging or indeed undermining the socio-political order, but rather be conceived of as the very vehicles through which the polycentric order of medieval polities and politics played out."[38] Taking endemic violence as politically normative rather than disruptive does not mean that it was never seen as problematic. To the contrary, the potential for violence to regulate

**36** Graham-Goering, "Une principauté décentrée?"; Coativy and Massoni, "Vicomté de Limoges."

**37** Sigurðsson and Orning, introduction to *Medieval and Modern Civil Wars*, ix–xiv; Comaroff, "Reflections."

**38** Orning et al., *New Perspectives*, 344; cf. Lantschner, *Logic of Political Conflict*; Challet, "Violence as a Political Language."

the social order meant that its legitimacy was necessarily open to scrutiny and debate. What this premise does mean is that war and peace were not a strict dichotomy. Instead, medieval (and indeed, many other) societies existed in what may be called "constant crisis."[39] This concept encapsulates how tension could escalate into outright conflict or could abate, but was never fully resolved; or, to put it another way, war was the intensification of politics as usual in such highly networked societies.

I will continue to refer to the Breton war of succession as a civil war for three reasons. First, it remains a convenient shorthand for the period of acute tensions in the mid-fourteenth century that was marked by military campaigning and disputed political authority. Second, this conflict became increasingly distinct in the historiography between then and now, a process kick-started by the sources studied here. How and why different people conceptualized *a* civil war, or pushed back against that framing, is essential in assessing its impact upon narratives of leadership. Third, the narrower definition of civil war as a fight between rivals over political legitimacy explains the value of reputation as a vehicle for spelling out previously implicit norms. Nevertheless, this designation is not meant to put up barriers with what came before or after. Rather, I adopt the framework of constant crisis to draw attention to how conflict called for an ongoing re-evaluation of legitimacy, as well as how the contested succession continued its repercussions over an extended timeframe. By treating crisis as routine rather than exceptional, the Breton case becomes part and parcel of the wider political trends of this period.

The dynamics of ruling partnerships examined through the lens of reputation offer in return a further perspective on this critical framework. The appeal to multiple models of gendered leadership to explain or appraise a conflict shows how even constant crisis was unevenly distributed according to a range of structural criteria that were themselves contested. Likewise, the power couple as a specific node within the wider social connections that drove political interactions deepens our concept of polycentricity and the various horizontal and vertical relationships that structured even later medieval polities. Shared power, far from being a crisis itself, helped perpetuate authority across periods of heightened tension and construct (or deconstruct) its subsequent significance.

Finally, the framework of civil war reflects back on how I understand the aristocratic leadership with which I began. The capacity for violence has

**39** Orning and Vigh, "Constant Crisis"; Orning, *Constant Crisis*.

played a core role in analyses of medieval politics from the emergence of lordship to that of states.[40] From a gendered perspective, however, noblemen and women had different positions towards violence as both a physical and social possibility. Warfare, as a quintessentially masculine activity, offers an important testing ground for how noblewomen's reputations might be gendered. Conversely, taking men as the baseline has long encouraged a relatively narrow vision of elite medieval violence and military leadership based largely on feats of arms. But women's involvement in the warrior aristocracy shows she needed not *be* a knight to command them. Accordingly, recognizing the ways women contributed to the pursuit of warfare, from generalship to logistics to planning to diplomacy, has led historians to a broader understanding of military matters beyond the battlefield, an insight equally relevant to knights themselves.[41]

Nevertheless, women's status within the knightly martial ethos is far from fully clarified, a pressing need given that as many as one in five lordships were held by women, depending on the time and place.[42] While such entitlement did not automatically translate to active governance (any more than it did for men), neither did women have to inherit power directly to become intimately involved in that world.[43] Christine de Pizan in the early fifteenth century recommended that married noblewomen familiarize themselves not only with every practical aspect of military command, but the interpersonal side too. A baroness should test her soldiers' bravery and determination before fully trusting them, avoid incurring their hatred by pressing them too hard, and encourage their loyalty and prowess with her noble words.[44] Insofar as warfare had come to be *the* field defining aristocratic status (a context perhaps only intensified by competition with the up-and-coming "nobility of the robe" at this time[45]), the reputations of women as well as men necessarily developed in relation to violence. However, this martial identity was embedded within wider structures such as family and inheritance, which could compel obedience and even legitimize violence

**40** Bisson et al., "Debate: The 'Feudal Revolution'"; Firnhaber-Baker, *Violence and the State*.

**41** Sjursen, "Peaceweavers' Sisters"; Harwood, *Medieval Women and War*; Isaac, "Women in Command."

**42** Graham-Goering, "Empowering Lordship," 395–96.

**43** Sjursen, "War of the Two Jeannes."

**44** Pizan, *Livre des trois vertus*, 149–52.

**45** Autrand, "Image de la noblesse."

without being overtly violent in themselves. To capture both the multifaceted nature of warfare and its intersection with these other components of constant crisis, I will analyze reputations for leadership across a range of contexts, not strictly in relation to the fighting itself. This broad-brush approach will help clarify the political legitimization of men and women alike within the warrior aristocracy.

## Sources and Approach

Taking reputation as an analytical scope means leaning into, rather than working around, the agendas of the available sources. Reputation could not be built in a vacuum: it required corroboration, in two senses. On one hand, elites relied extensively on material, visual, and textual resources to craft their image.[46] On the other, these claims had to reach, and persuade, an audience, who might have ideas of their own. The narratives that have come down to us, the ones recorded in a durable form, can have a disproportionate impact on modern historiography compared to their success at the time.[47] However, while Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Smail contrast unstable, spoken *fama* with the "fixed, unchanging memory that written records necessarily convey to us," texts could also participate in this social dialogue over the longer term.[48] In treating written documents as a measure of reputation, we have to think carefully about the flow of information they represent.[49] While I will address the details of the sources used here at the start of each chapter, they fall into two main categories. First, a papal investigation into Charles's candidacy for sainthood generated a large collection of transcribed oral testimony (Chapter 1). Second, the rich chronicle tradition of the later Middle Ages produced numerous retellings of the Breton conflict, ranging from enthusiastic tales of knightly prowess (Chapter 2) to formal histories of the ducal dynasty (Chapter 3). The advantage of studying these narra-

**46** Snaith, "Politics of Noble Reputation"; Slater, "Rumour and Reputation Management."

**47** Taylor, *Virtuous Knight*, 164–65.

**48** Fenster and Smail, *Fama*, 6.

**49** A note, therefore, on how I have quoted my sources here: for the sake of readability and brevity, I give excerpts in English, and note the original only where the manuscript has not been edited or transcribed elsewhere. I also indicate specific words or phrases in the French or Latin (retaining the medieval spelling) where these are potentially polyvalent and/or especially significant for analysis. All source translations are my own.

tive sources is that each of them represents more than one way of looking at things. A core aim of this book is to draw attention to these fine-grained variations as a method for untangling how political culture was continually renegotiated. Comparing these different points of view, or the evolution of one point of view over time, can indicate how people established legitimacy without assuming everyone agreed on one set of rules. Conversely, because these interpretations were not entirely independent of each other, understanding why one version of a given story won out over another (or not) helps trace the ongoing political relevance of debating reputation.

My basic approach to this material owes much to two early studies of queenly reputations. Rachel Gibbons and Anne-Hélène Allirot both showed how the portrayals of certain French queens developed in distinct stages in response to both evolving political demands and specific textual traditions.[50] In Jeanne and Charles's case, I have identified three key reputational phases. Chapter 1 focuses on the first phase in 1371, when Jeanne and her family attempted to have Charles formally declared a saint following his violent death. This process of canonization, which compiled the official statements of several dozen of Jeanne and Charles's associates alongside a much wider group who claimed to have benefitted from the miracles he performed, measured Charles's (and to a lesser extent Jeanne's) leadership against the standards of both princely and clerical conduct. Chapter 2 turns to a second phase that developed from the 1380s to the 1410s, as chivalric chroniclers such as Jean Froissart and Cuvelier glorified the Breton war for their noble Anglo-French audience. Although churchmen themselves, these authors idealized martial heroism for its own sake, but the popularity of their stories also gave rise to more partisan versions.[51] Finally, Chapter 3 considers a third phase of history-writing developed under the auspices of the Montfort dukes and duchesses, which culminated in the dynastic chronicles of the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The officials who composed these texts were obviously not sympathetic to the Penthièvre cause, but they still nuanced their views of Jeanne's and Charles's place in Breton history according to the challenges facing the duchy at the end of its political independence.

The reputations developed within each phase fed both directly and indirectly into the next, but there was no overall trend across this century-and-a-half. Jeanne and Charles were by turns praised and criticized, masculin-

**50** Gibbons, "Isabeau of Bavaria"; Allirot, "*Male royne boiteuse*."

**51** Cf. Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture*, 3–4.

ized and feminized, compared and contrasted. Even when they agreed, these accounts of the civil war tell us little about these princes as real people, and I do not attempt to assess any extrinsic accuracy they may or may not have contained. Instead, I focus on the categories used to pass judgement on Jeanne's and Charles's conduct and characters. Each was strongly shaped by the values assigned to the other, rather than simply measured to an outside standard. This mutual influence suggests that a major consequence of joint leadership within the medieval aristocracy was that political legitimacy in times of crisis could only be fully explained and justified in relation to other actors. By revealing the spectrum of responses to co-rulership, and their uses in the face of conflict, reputation offers a new tool for understanding the visibility and effectiveness of shared power in the premodern period.