



***Later Plantagenet and the Wars of the
Roses Consorts: Power, Influence, and
Dynasty***

**Edited by Aidan Norrie, Carolyn
Harris, J.L. Laynesmith, Danna R.
Messer, Elena Woodacre**

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023

Reviewed by: Michelle L. Beer



Later Plantagenet and the Wars of the Roses Consorts: Power, Influence, and Dynasty. Edited by Aidan Norrie, Carolyn Harris, J.L. Laynesmith, Danna R. Messer, Elena Woodacre. Palgrave Macmillan, 2023. ISBN 978-3-030-94886-3 (ebook). xxiii + 292. \$99.00

It is a heartening testament to the continued growth and academic advancement of the field of queenship studies that the volume under review (and its sister volumes in this series) is both a useful and necessary introduction to the now substantial body of scholarship on English queenship. The particular period covered by the articles in this volume, from 1308 to 1485, has been the focus of detailed queenship studies for decades now, and this volume serves as useful guide and consideration of the current understanding of the field for its most famous queens, including Isabella of France, Philippa of Hainault, Margaret of Anjou, and Elizabeth Woodville. But the editors are careful to include all the queens of this period, from those who have remained ciphers even to the most devoted of medieval scholars, such as Richard II's child-bride Isabella of Valois, to her romanticized sister, Katherine, widowed queen of Henry V. It is likely, therefore, that this collection of articles will appeal to new and seasoned scholars of late medieval English queenship.

Organized chronologically in fifteen chapters, the collection is divided into two subsections, the first encompassing the consorts active during the Hundred Years War, and the second the consorts active during the Wars of the Roses. In addition to an introduction to the volume as a whole, each subsection consists of a section introduction, biographical chapters for each consort, and a chapter addressing a wider theme across the entire volume. The collection concludes with Elena Woodacre's article on foreign consorts in English history, which ranges outside the period of the volume and also considers the advent of English-born queens consorts, a trend begun during the fifteenth century but carried through the sixteenth century and into the present day.

There are advantages and disadvantages to the collection's organizational scheme. The addition of the subsection introductions allows editors Elena Woodacre and J.L. Laynesmith to draw out the common themes of the period and provides necessary connective tissue between chapters when it is easy to become lost in the biographical details of the individual consorts. The thematic chapters by Katia Wight on the queen's finances and dower and Anne Crawford on the Wars of the Roses and queenship also help to draw together the collection as more than a series of biographies. However, these introductions and chapters also provide brief biographical introductions to the consorts in

question, which results in a great deal of repetitive information across the volume; for example, Margaret of Anjou's biography and historical reputation is detailed separately by Laynesmith (170–171), Anne Crawford (179–183), and Carole Levin (196–213). For a reader looking to dip in and out of each chapter, this is likely an advantage, but when reading the collection together it becomes repetitive and unnecessary.

While nearly all the articles in this collection deliver a modern, considered approach to the lives of their subjects, there are a few standouts that deserve to be highlighted. Katia Wight's thematic article on the queen's dower draws together new and existing scholarship to present a compelling argument on the importance of the queen's dower and how it shifted and changed during this period. Louise Tingle's biography of the child-queen Isabella of Valois takes on a difficult and nearly unknown subject and shows how Isabella had already begun to appear to fulfill the responsibilities of queenship, regardless of whether she had any genuine agency due to her youth (96). Lastly, Katherine J. Lewis's reassessment of Katherine of Valois and her reputation as a "lusty" woman and her "scandalous" marriage to Owen Tudor provides an important and nuanced corrective to her historiographical reputation.

The articles in this collection cover a period that has been a focus of intense historical study and historical myth making almost since its inception. That this volume presents new perspectives on these events when told from the point of view of English queens is a compelling argument for the importance of queenship studies as a whole. The traditional regnal organization of most English histories of this period mean very little when one studies the queens who outlived their husbands and remained active political players as queen mothers or queen dowagers in the new reign. And, as pointed out by the concluding chapter in this volume, the international alliances queens embodied during this period (long studied by scholars of both queens and kings) look entirely different when the queen's extended patrilineal and matrilineal family is placed at the center of the diplomatic story (266). How many scholars, for instance, have thought through the implications that Isabella of France, vilified queen of Edward II, was also the niece of her (very much alive and active) predecessor, Margaret of France (second wife of Edward I), and cousin to her daughter-in-law Philippa of Hainault? Woodacre makes this point in her conclusion (269), but this point would have been made even more clearly had the editors been able to include family trees not only of the English royal dynasties, but of the European dynastic connections of these royal consorts.

This volume, then, serves two valuable purposes. As an introduction to queenship during this period and recent scholarship, the biographical chapters will be useful to scholars looking to begin or brush up their learning about medieval queens. For those looking to pursue the topic further, the themes, connections, and arguments in the articles noted above might serve to provoke new lines of inquiry and inspire the next generation of queenship studies.

MICHELLE L. BEER

Independent Scholar