COURSE GUIDEBOOK

Medieval Heroines in History and Legend

Part I

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Medieval Heroines in History and Legend, Part I
Professor Bonnie Wheeler

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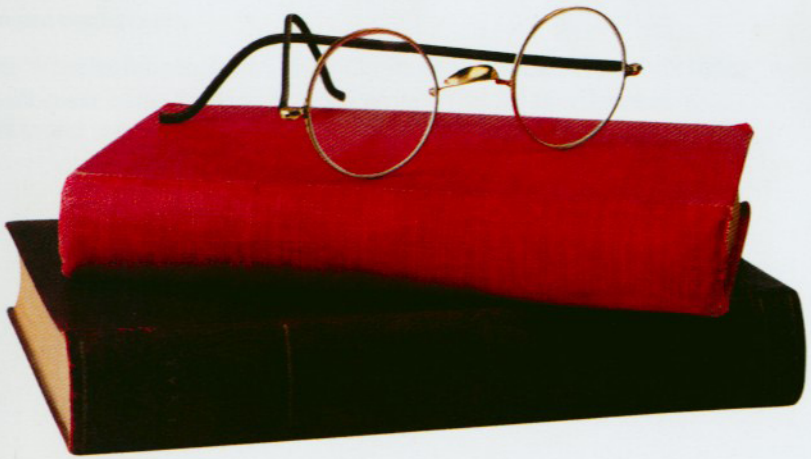
Professor Bonnie Wheeler
Southern Methodist University

Part I



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Bonnie Wheeler teaches English and Medieval Studies at Southern Methodist University (SMU) where she directs the Medieval Studies Program. She holds degrees from Stonehill College and Brown University (Phi Beta Kappa) and taught at Case Western Reserve and Columbia University before moving to SMU. Professor Wheeler writes about medieval literature and culture and is editor of the scholarly quarterly about King Arthur, *Arthuriana*, and editor of the book series *The New Middle Ages* (Palgrave/St. Martin's Press, New York). Her recently edited books include *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc* (1996), *Medieval Mothering* (1996), *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (1997), *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman* (2000), *The Malory Debate: The Texts of Le Morte Darthur* (2000), *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Memory of Maureen Fries,*(2001), and the forthcoming *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (2002). Among her scholarly articles are "Trouthe without Consequences: Rhetoric and Gender in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*," in *Feminea Medievalia I* (1994); "Joan of Arc's Sword in the Stone," (1996); "Origenary Fantasies: Abelard's Castration and Confession," (1997); "Models of Pilgrimage: From *Communitas* to Confluence," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 13.2 (1999); and "The Project of Arthurian Studies: *Quondam et Futurus*," in *New Directions in Arthurian Studies* (2002).

Professor Wheeler has recently served as commentator and the historical consultant for A&E and *The History Channel*'s programs on *Camelot*, *The Holy Grail*, and *Joan of Arc*, and she has delivered numerous papers at national and international conferences.

Professor Wheeler has received SMU's Outstanding Teacher Award six times and is a recipient of the Phi Beta Kappa Perrine Prize for excellence in scholarship and teaching.

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Part I

Medieval Heroines in History and Legend

Scope:

This course looks at some varieties of the heroic life as it was lived by four actual medieval women. Each of these women had grand ambitions, profound intelligence, and dramatic achievements, and each of these women still has her measure of fame and infamy. Interestingly, three of our four subjects' lives overlapped in time in the twelfth century. The twelfth-century German abbess Hildegard of Bingen lived the dramatic life of a prophet who brought to her voluminous writings and preaching a rare ecological sense of life's wholeness; in these lectures, we discuss Hildegard as the last flowering of antique learning. Her personal courage, as a passionate speaker for clerical and imperial reform, give her special interest in our own day. Heloise is another twelfth-century abbess, but she is better known to us as the consummate Parisian, a spectacular lover who preferred (as she said) to be Abelard's mistress than his wife. Her letters passionately overflow with the new knowledge of her day, a mode of philosophic thought that she and Abelard were together inventing. Heloise is a harbinger of Europe's new day. The third twelfth-century figure is Eleanor of Aquitaine, duchess, twice queen, and mother of at least ten children. She has captivated all later ages, though we discuss ways in which she remains a strangely elusive epic figure. Finally, we consider the girl-hero Joan of Arc, a fifteenth-century peasant who rose to lead her king's soldiers to a daring victory over their enemies. Each of these women is larger than life, powerfully projecting the past into the future.

Lecture One

Four Remarkable Medieval Women

Scope: These lectures tell the stories of four remarkable medieval heroines, tracking them through time to see how their reputations were sought, sexualized, sullied, and sometimes sanctified. The story of the French abbess Heloise is inevitably linked to that of her lover, Abelard. The mystic German seer Hildegard of Bingen was a monastic reformer and deeply embroiled in the politics of her day. Her authoritative writings range from doctrine to drama, from science to sex: Collectively, she consolidates inherited patterns of thought in the deepest way. Heloise, on the other hand, outwardly submits to the norms of her culture in her acts but inwardly challenges these norms in her writing: Heloise heralds the arrival of new modes of thought. Eleanor of Aquitaine, as "lord," lady, mother, and queen of France and then England, scandalized her twelfth-century contemporaries and has fascinated us ever since. Our fourth subject is not noble, not learned, and not long lived. She is, rather, the late-medieval illiterate French peasant girl Joan of Arc, whose life was a brief candle, soon extinguished. Some claim that this virgin-warrior changed the course of European history in her two breathtaking public years as a military and spiritual figure before she was burned at the stake as a heretic at the age of nineteen.

Outline

I. This course tells the stories of four prominent medieval women who still shimmer in the modern imagination.

- **A.** Our cast of characters is small and in no way representative: Extraordinary people never are entirely representative. Nevertheless, this study allows us to ask some fundamental questions about how medieval women were perceived in their own time and in later times.
- **B.** Seeing the ways these people have been understood and misunderstood (but not ignored) helps us to understand how history passes judgment on both women and the Middle Ages.

II. What has happened to make these women particularly visible to us now?

- **A.** Surely one of the defining cultural and scholarly questions of our own day—in addition to the question of race—is the question of gender.
  1. Since the late 1960s, thinkers from all political positions in the Western world have become aware that our "official" histories almost always ignored women.
  2. Researchers from disciplines as various as literary criticism and medical research have become conscious of the differences between biological sex and culture-driven gender.
  3. In history, at least, this question has spawned the new field of women's history.
  4. The first thing that we discovered, not surprisingly, is that most of our stories about women were written by men.
  5. Quite surprisingly, however, we have also discovered or rediscovered lots of materials written by women. Heloise and Hildegard are among those rarest women, those who have left substantial written records that let us trace their lives, leanings, and learning. The unique trial records of Joan of Arc continue to fascinate historians and readers.
  6. Scholars used to say that women in the Middle Ages were all identified either with Eve (the temptress) or Mary (the Virgin). We now know that this view is a distorting oversimplification. Our four subjects in this course alone are proof that women were perceived in diverse ways.
  7. The four women we are talking about in this course are significant in part because they were so visible in their own time. With our four subjects, we can move beyond issues of expectations about how women "ought" to have been to some knowledge—however precarious—about how women were.
- **B.** For many years, it was presumed that the period of the Middles Ages was a vast gloom, the "Dark Ages" into which Western culture descended after the Fall of Rome, only to emerge radiant once more in the Renaissance.
  1. The latter part of the twentieth century was a time of rediscovery of the medieval past. As historians have become more aware of the ebb and flow in societies, they have become more reluctant to subscribe to simple "progress narratives," stories that presume every change is change for the better.
  2. Historians have become suspect—perhaps too suspect—of narrative at all, presuming that for every story or method, there is a counter-story and a counter-method.
- **C.** As we look at the medieval women we are studying in this course, we must be aware that much of the information we have about these women is newly discovered, newly recovered, or newly interpreted by recent scholars.

III. We might ask, "How are these women heroic"?

- **A.** Of our cast of characters, only the fifteenth-century Joan fits the traditional male model of militant heroism.
  1. Even though she never killed a man, she went to war at absolute risk to herself.
  2. Her heroism was tested again in a brainwashing trial conducted by religious leaders who were (in her eyes) also her nation's enemies; there, she displayed not just clarity and courage but wit.

3. Of course, we almost reflexively presume that she was heroic in her martyrdom. About Joan's heroism we have no question.

B. The heroism of our other three, the twelfth-century women, is in large measure, a reflection of their intensely realized lives. They are heroic in terms of the greatness of their vision, profound determination, intensity, and power.

C. Little about these women is "normal" for women in their time and cultures.

1. These women are not modern. Not one of them would pass as a modern feminist. They are, however, concerned about the lives of women.
2. Although each of them achieved a remarkable degree of independence and accomplishment, they all subscribed to a hierarchical worldview that gave increasing dominance to the male.
3. Each of these women live on the borderland of fact and legend, and it is how they got to that borderland—as well as the facts and the legends—that will interest us.

IV. Our next lecture provides a general background to the twelfth-century world of Heloise, Hildegard, and Eleanor.

A. The subsequent four lectures closely consider Heloise of the Paraclete (1101?–1163).

1. Her tumultuous early life as student and lover culminated in her marriage to the great philosopher and theologian Abelard.
2. After the scandal of his castration, they both withdrew to monastic life.
3. Heloise withdrew to monastic life in submission to Abelard's demands, and we still ponder whether her dedication to that life was a heart-shift. We know she never forsook her passion for Abelard; perhaps one could say that her monastic life was another of her gifts to her beloved.
4. We also consider her later monastic life as a powerful abbess who probed the meaning of religious life for women.

B. Lectures Seven through Eleven explore the life, works, and achievements of another monastic woman, the formidable German genius and abbess, Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179).

1. Unlike Heloise, monastic life was Hildegard's first calling.
2. She was one of the great thinkers of her or any other day, and her writings are encyclopedic in character, attesting to a vast mind that put no question outside her interests.
3. She carried on a huge international correspondence with the politically and theologically powerful people of her time.
4. Her musical compositions earned her the title "the Mozart of her time."

5. Together, she and Heloise constitute a picture of what quality and character of intellectual life was possible for women who lived in (and shaped) the fascinating twelfth century.

C. We turn then to the lives and legacies of two secular women, first to a contemporary of Hildegard's and Heloise's, Eleanor of Aquitaine (1124–1204).

1. We begin by looking at Eleanor of Aquitaine's exotic and powerful family, one that typifies the independent insurgence of medieval land barons.
2. Her family's conflicts with authority and social norms describe in small the changes that took place as the power of the crown and Church became more centralized.
3. The truth of the mythic proportions of Eleanor of Aquitaine's life—a staggering heiress; a wife and queen of France; "annulled," then remarried and queen of England; and a formidable mother—is so amazing that it is easy to see why she has become the staple of legends.
4. We look first at the biography, then we assess the legends.

D. Finally, in Lectures Eighteen through Twenty-Three (before our wrap-up in Lecture Twenty-Four) we look at the life and legends of the most famous girl warrior of the late Middle Ages, Joan of Arc (1412–1431); once more, we speak of a character whose real life is as compelling as the stuff of legend that she has become.

Essential Reading:

Eileen E. Power, *Medieval Women*, M. M. Postan, ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

Bonnie S. Anderson and Judith P. Zinsser, *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

Supplementary Reading:

Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, ed., *A History of Women in the West II: Silences of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992).

Questions to Consider:

1. What do we know about the ordinary life of the people in the past?
2. What roles did women play in medieval public life?

Lecture Two

The Revolutionary Twelfth Century

Scope: In politics, Europe in the twelfth century was beginning to settle into the now-familiar contours of nations with distinct language groups. Simultaneously, in cultural terms, the overriding Latinity of Christendom came into its own as a supple, sophisticated, international language. Huge institution-building enterprises in this period produced organized religious warfare (crusades), large-scale interest in travel (pilgrimage), monasteries, universities, and parliaments. Cities were repopulated for the first time since the ancient world. Ways of doing business changed when Arabic numbering and double-entry bookkeeping were adopted in Venice. Also at this time, the impulse to develop corporate and collective life was balanced by new surges of concern with the individual human person. Chivalry was congealing as a mode of life as well as warfare; it was only one of the many twelfth-century innovations that tried to balance radical individuality with group identity. Northern French culture—Heloise's world—was especially volatile. This lecture assesses some of these cultural changes as they relate to the story of Heloise.

Outline

I. Into what sort of culture was Heloise born? How do we characterize twelfth-century France?

- **A.** It was a time of rapid transition marked by struggles between powerful families and the increasingly institutionalized Church.
- **B.** In Heloise's time, Europe was in a geographically expansionist mode, with Latin Europeans attempting to assert territorial control, repel invaders, and solidify succession through kin-groups and adherence to Christian values.
- **C.** Heloise's lifetime in the twelfth century witnessed the rebirth of cities, the steady expansion of a technologically stabilized agrarian economy, the development of new instruments of economic transaction, and partly as a consequence, the creation of an administrative class connected more deeply to their patrons than to their families.
- **D.** All this provided the pre-conditions of capitalism.
- **E.** Yet, as families became more firmly settled geographically, sons (particularly younger sons) often became less rooted, more prone to travel, to go to war, and to pursue adventure.
  1. This group, competing for the favor of an increasingly centralized power, "laid the foundation for the reshaping of European society and culture for the subsequent 700 years," (as historian R. I. Moore says in his brilliant study, *The First European Revolution*) and, thus, created Europe as we know it even now.
  2. This group was bursting with energy and ideas.
- **F.** During Heloise's lifetime, Paris became a preeminent center: The early university was coming into shape on Mt. St. Genevieve at this time, but its "official" foundation can only be tracked to around 1180.
- **G.** During this time, monasteries and other church foundations multiplied geometrically.
- **H.** The Parisian royal court and cathedral achieved preeminence in France.
- **I.** It is important to remember that all this happened during the time of Heloise and Abelard, not before. They were at the core of these cultural shifts.

II. What changes in gender roles do we note during this time? How did the roles of women change?

- **A.** We know that the twelfth century crucially changed masculine roles.
  1. It is especially important to note that the first quarter of the twelfth century saw the consolidation of a universal rule of celibacy for male clergy.
  2. This had tremendous consequences for property, as well as culture.
  3. In terms of property, it accelerated the movement of lands and other wealth away from family groups into the hands of the institutional Church.
- **B.** It is no exaggeration to say that the twelfth-century clergy expressed increasing contempt for women (misogyny).

III. There are two major theories about changing women's roles in the twelfth century.

- **A.** Let's start with the background in one sentence: Throughout the Middles Ages—and in most times and places before then and even now—the ideology of gender presumed that it is natural, necessary, and even providential for women to submit to men.
  1. Some historians (such as Robert Fossier) argue that Europe in the twelfth century entered a softened "matriarchal" phase in which women's desires took precedence over male power.
  2. Some claim that demographic changes—a surge in male birth and survival—favored an increasingly scarce pool of women.
  3. These historians make a crucial point: Women were healthier because poverty was less prevalent. Economic expansion aided those of all social classes, even the peasantry.
- **B.** From this, and from some literary documents, some of these sentimental historians deduce that women had vast sexual freedom and that adultery was rampant.

C. Some argue that the increasing veneration of the Virgin Mary naturally elevated the status of all women.

D. Other, more analytic, historians (such as Georges Duby and JoAnn McNamara) insist that work on gender roles is still in its early stages because our documents are sparse and under-analyzed.

E. Furthermore, their analysis of the demographic information stands in opposition to that of Fossier and others, stating instead that there were, in fact, too many women for the available men, compelling families to pay a dowry to a bridegroom rather than receive a settlement from his family.

F. The fundamental argument made by these influential historians of women is that women lost ground in the twelfth century because (in Le Goff's contentious words), "Christianity did little to improve the material or moral position of women."(Jacques Le Goff, *La civilisation de l'Occident médiéval* [Paris: Arthaud, 1972], p. 354, quoted in Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, ed. *A History of Women in the West II: Silences of the Middle Ages*, p. 203).

IV. Virginity was always the more celebrated and preferred form of Christian life, though for most ordinary women, marriage and child-rearing was the social norm.

A. More than any other institution, marriage defined women's social place.

B. Most historians now argue that most women's positions in marriage became more constrained in the twelfth century than in Europe previously in terms of legal limitations now placed on women's rights to legal appeal, rights of inheritance, and rights to enter into contracts.

V. Life expectancy was short for all, usually around an average of age thirty, and women often died in childbirth. Though life for all was usually brief, women's lives were especially vulnerable to death in childbirth and men's, to death in warfare.

VI. Most medieval lives in all social classes are still largely invisible to us. What historians do agree on is that the records we have about women are usually written by men and, thus, women become visible usually through the traces they leave in men's records. We must ask who, in the famous phrase, painted the lion?

A. In the cases of three of our four subjects, they painted their own lives in words.

B. The fourth, Eleanor, left us only traces of her own hand or mind, but she is one of the most lionized women in history.

Essential Reading:

R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970–1215* (Oxford: Blackwells, 2000).

Georges Duby, *Women of the Twelfth Century*, 3 vols. I: *Eleanor of Aquitaine and Six Others*, II: *Remembering the Dead*, III: *Eve and the Church* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

Bonnie Wheeler, ed., *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

Supplementary Reading:

Robert Fossier, ed., *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Middle Ages*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, ed., *A History of Women in the West II: Silences of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992).

Questions to Consider:

1. Are there other historical periods in which we can identify such an intense double push toward individualism and community?
2. What set of circumstances allows universities to flourish?

Lecture Three

Prodigious Heloise

Scope: There are many "stories" of Heloise: the literary prodigy, passionate lover, reluctant bride, submissive wife, and adept abbess. Heloise is a model of the French public female intellectual, the first and one of a very few such figures before modern times. Great and learned women abounded in the Middle Ages, but not many others had what in later times would constitute the equivalent of a university education—an education denied women until modern times.

Outline

I. What do we know about Heloise's family?

- **A.** Historical "certainty" moves in cycles. We are less certain now than we used to be about many "facts" of Heloise's narrative.
  - **1.** We do not, for instance, any longer agree about the year of her birth. Most historians assume that she was born around 1100, but recently, some have speculated about an earlier birth date.
  - **2.** We must tease out, largely from later writings, the story of Heloise's youth. It is a fascinating example of the methods of historical reconstruction.
- **B.** We have no firm evidence about the status of Heloise's family, though we know she came from a family of aristocratic resources, and we can pinpoint the precise places in which she spent most of her life. Some historians have declared that she was a member of the "minor aristocracy," but that label is inadequate and anachronistic.
- **C.** We do not know if she was legitimate, born of a formal concubinage, or entirely illegitimate.
- **D.** Her easy adult alignments with powerful aristocratic networks in the orbit of the Capetian court, especially the Montmorency and Garlande factions (who were sometimes allied and sometimes in conflict), suggest that she might be a member by birth of this class.
- **E.** Perhaps she was related through both parents to a cadet branch of the ancient Montmorency clan and other noble families of the region of Paris.
- **F.** We know that Heloise's mother's name was Hersinde. Our source for this information is the Paraclete necrology roll, an obituary that was sent from place to place and to which comments were added by those who wished; it was then returned home and kept as a special memorial that marked the day the beloved person had entered the next world.
- **G.** We presume that the well-connected Fulbert, canon of the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, who is listed in the same necrology, is her maternal uncle.
- **H.** We do not have any evidence who her father was.

II. Where did Heloise spend her childhood?

- **A.** Most historians presume from Abelard's account that she was raised in the great nunnery of Argenteuil, not far from Paris, where her mother seems also to have lived.
- **B.** In this period, many women of means, not all of whom took monastic vows, chose to live in monastic settings (religious condos of the medieval world) with their children.

III. Heloise came of age in the culturally liminal early decades of the twelfth century. Her story is one of closure, as well as possibility.

- **A.** When Heloise was young, for instance, a woman might hope to be taught by the great masters of philosophy, and she might even dream of being counted in their number.
- **B.** By the time the institutional structures of the University of Paris were forged in the early thirteenth century, women had been thoroughly excluded from its formal institutional life.
- **C.** In other spheres, to solidify family power, male primogeniture became normalized, and women were increasingly excluded from family property inheritance.
- **D.** From her later writings, we can deduce the content and methods of Heloise's education in Argenteuil, but we do not yet know whether she was expected from childhood to enter monastic life.
- **E.** As her letters show, and unlike Abelard, Heloise was well versed in the secular Latin poets and the classical philosophical traditions; she loved Cicero and Latin rhetoric. She relished her deep knowledge of the great Christian teacher St. Jerome.
- **F.** Even in her youth, Heloise was a *rara avis* whose fame for learning was known by many, including Abelard, and this fame preceded her arrival to Paris.

IV. Around 1116, Heloise was moved from Argenteuil to the home of her uncle Fulbert in the clerical quarter of the Île-de-la-Cité in Paris, very near where the vast cathedral of Notre Dame later replaced the St. Etienne, the huge cathedral of the twelfth century that was torn down in favor of its more glamorous successor. It was there, in Paris, in the bosom of the Church and her family, that Heloise's larger life, which we begin to trace in the next lecture, began.

Essential Reading:

R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970–1215* (Oxford: Blackwells, 2000).

Bonnie Wheeler, ed., *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

Constant J. Mews, *The Lost Letters of Heloise and Abelard: The Context of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France*, Constant J. Mews and Neville Chiavaroli, trans. (New York: Palgrave, 1999).

Supplementary Reading:

Betty Radice, ed. and trans., *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard*, with an introduction by Betty Radice (Harmondsworth; Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1974, et seq.), esp. *Historia calamitatum* and Personal Letters 1–4, pp. 57–156.

Mary Martin McLaughlin, *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard: A Translation of Their Complete Correspondence* (New York: Palgrave, forthcoming 2003).

Questions to Consider:

1. Does it seem logical for historians to infer that Heloise was aristocratic or is that a sign of a prejudice that assumes that all status originates in social status?
2. If she was raised on a nunnery, who provided Heloise with her superb classical education?

Lecture Four

Abelard's Story of Abelard and Heloise

Scope: The intellectual genius Abelard arrogates Heloise's story as he folds it into his own coruscating autobiographical letter of complaint, the *Historia calamitatum.* This is the first "story" of Heloise, and she was provoked to respond in the "Personal Letters" that she and Abelard subsequently exchanged. Heloise's recorded writings should also include the love letters that Abelard reports exchanging with her at the time they first knew each other, the famous "lost love letters." This lecture concentrates on Peter Abelard, Heloise's tutor, lover, husband, and (finally) fellow monastic and his report of how he and Heloise became lovers.

Outline

I. How do we know the story of Abelard and Heloise?
   - **A.** The primary documents recording this famous love affair are a series of letters written in highly erudite formal Latin, which is also capable of conveying great passion.
   - **B.** First, let's see their story from Abelard's carefully crafted view in his long autobiographical summary of his life up to 1132 (or thereabouts). It is entitled *Historia calamitatum suarum* (*The Story of His Adversities*).
   - **C.** Abelard wrote this short autobiography (the first we have found since St. Augustine's autobiographical *Confessions* seven and one-third centuries before) to an unnamed "friend." Many have conjectured that there was, in fact, no such person, that he wrote it for the educated public—perhaps even, in a devious way, for Heloise.

II. Abelard was a member of the lower nobility from the manor of Le Pallet, located in the expanding frontiers of Brittany (then outside France), who traded the role of the eldest son and military life for the contentious life of the intellectual alpha-male.
   - **A.** The *Historia calamitatum* recounts Abelard's brilliant career as a combative philosopher and theologian, which led him to a peak of fame at Paris around 1118, when he taught at the cathedral school of Paris.
   - **B.** At that point, his pride, as he said, led him to experiment with writing bawdy songs and, if his former companion Fulk's word can be trusted, with sex.
   - **C.** He chose Heloise for his experiment, planned and successfully carried out her seduction, got her pregnant, escaped with her to his family home

in Brittany, married her despite her protests, and returned with her (but not their son) to Paris.

D. Then Abelard tells of the vengeful fury of Heloise's uncle Fulbert, who had Abelard shamefully castrated, whereupon Abelard entered monastic life himself and forced Heloise to become a nun.

E. Shortly thereafter, a Church council at Soissons in 1121, rigged by vengeful intellectual rivals, condemned Abelard's book about the Holy Trinity, and Abelard was forced to become a monk at the great royal abbey of St.-Denis near Paris.

F. In spite of the fact that the brilliant Abelard was a great "catch" for St. Denis, Abelard made himself so hated there that he was allowed to withdraw.

G. He founded a new religious community, called the Paraclete, near Nogent-sur-Seine, about fifty miles upriver from Paris.

H. Later, the politically ambitious Suger of St.-Denis, always looking for ways to extend the control and lands of his foundation, managed to take over control of the great old women's monastery of Argenteuil and expelled all the women.

I. Those exiled nuns—Heloise (who had become head of the nun's school) and her disciples (to whom she had probably been teaching Abelard's doctrines)— were invited by Abelard to the Paraclete, which Abelard handed over to Heloise.

J. Abelard moved to St. Gildas in Brittany, an old monastery badly in need of reform. His monks there liked him so much that they tried to assassinate him by poisoning.

K. Thus, he saw his life as a "history of calamities."

III. At that point begins what has traditionally been called the "Personal" correspondence between Heloise and Abelard.

A. A letter from Heloise to Abelard complains that he should have written the *Historia* to her; she is his wife, she needs his company, and he owes her that: He should return to the Paraclete and live with her.

B. Abelard replies that they are no longer married; she is now the bride of Christ, and Abelard's visiting her in person would be scandalous.

C. Heloise rebuts Abelard's argument in a third letter; he replies with counter-rebuttals in a fourth letter. These two letters contain much discussion of guilt and the danger that women pose to great men. Heloise is even more eloquent on the latter point than Abelard.

D. In a fifth letter, Heloise accepts Abelard's refusal to come live with her, but he promises to write her and her nuns a rule, some letters of spiritual and institutional direction, and hymns for a distinctive year-round liturgy. He made good on his promise, with two more long letters

(one of them the rule for the Paraclete, a very long letter indeed), and ninety-three hymns. In other words, Heloise got some of what she wanted.

E. This body of correspondence is remarkable. If authentic, it is the *first* first-person record of a love affair in human history—and what a love affair!

IV. Much other evidence from the time tells their story, but are these first-person accounts authentic? This has been a crucial scholarly question for hundreds of years, and it has only become more vexed in our time.

A. The Personal Letters were probably preserved at the Paraclete as a private treasure for a century and a quarter or so after Heloise's death in the 1160s.

B. Then they were discovered, translated into French, and publicized by Jean de Meun, a Parisian cleric who wrote a huge book in French called *The Romance of the Rose*, one of the most important statements of the psychology of human love in medieval Western Europe.

C. Jean, usually something of a misogynist, admired Heloise, loved the tragic story, and emphasized what he saw as its moral.

D. Some scholars (since at least the seventeenth-century French dictionarist Pierre Bayle) have suggested that Jean de Meun himself wrote the Personal Letters, at least.

E. Most contemporary scholars do not agree with this theory, which would make Jean even more of an improbable genius in two languages than he is in one.

F. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, several scholars in several countries found this extraordinary correspondence too incredible to be anything but fiction.

G. However, the majority opinion among contemporary scholars is that this amazing correspondence is authentic.

V. Among the many issues raised by these famous letters, one is clear: Heloise was seduced by Abelard.

A. Abelard makes this point abundantly clear in his *Historia.*

B. Current attempts to make Heloise seem older (how did they define *adolescent*?) and, thus, more independently responsible for their love affair are not very compelling.

C. We may suspect that her pliability, both in age (she was probably about seventeen; he, about thirty-nine) and in status, appealed to Abelard as well, but neither of them explicitly says that.

D. What attracted Abelard to Heloise? Her reputation for a brilliant mind and her excellent education, he says.

E. Heloise fell in love with Abelard. But was he (ever) in love with her? Many who have read and written over the centuries about their tragic affair have seen this as a central, most compelling question.

Essential Reading:

Betty Radice, ed. and trans., *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard*, with an introduction by Betty Radice (Harmondsworth; Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1974, et seq.), esp. *Historia calamitatum* and Personal Letters 1–4, pp. 57–156.

Mary Martin McLaughlin, *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard: A Translation of Their Complete Correspondence* (New York: Palgrave, forthcoming 2003).

Constant J. Mews, *The Lost Letters of Heloise and Abelard: The Context of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France*, Constant J. Mews and Neville Chiavaroli, trans. (New York: Palgrave, 1999).

Supplementary Reading:

Bonnie Wheeler, ed., *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

Questions to Consider:

1. Did Abelard ever love Heloise? If so, how could she get him to admit it? Is that what the Personal Letters are really all about?
2. Abelard was raised to be a knight, a competitive, combative alpha male. Did he ever really change? What must it have been like to love such a man?
3. How important to Heloise and Abelard's relationship was his power over her?

Lecture Five

Heloise as Lover: Her Sublime Submission

Scope: Heloise's narrative comes to us in part in her own voice. This lecture concentrates on Heloise's intimate love affair and intellectual partnership with Peter Abelard, her tutor, lover, husband, and (finally) fellow monastic. Here, we focus on major traumas: their marriage, Abelard's castration, and their subsequent entry into monastic life. From Abelard's perspective, his castration (on her uncle's orders) ended their marriage; it was at Abelard's insistence that they each then took full monastic vows. Heloise was horrified but (as always) submissive to Abelard's demands; she moved from the position of beloved wife to that of sister in Christ—though unlike Abelard, she never rejected one role for the other. The frisson of their intensely passionate engagement often makes it difficult to distinguish the teacher from the taught, the dancer from the dance.

Outline

I. Heloise was a reluctant bride, and her reluctance was both philosophically grounded and utterly practical.

A. Abelard tells us about it in his *Historia*, and Heloise confirms it in the Personal Letters. Abelard clearly loved repeating what he claimed were Heloise's words—and few men have found a woman so adamant about preferring his ambitions to hers. For Heloise, his genius suspended all ordinary rules.

B. Heloise would rather be Abelard's *meretrix* (prostitute, whore) than his *imperatrix* (empress). Whenever we hear her voice in her surviving writings, we hear a passion always intellectual and literarily articulate.

C. Heloise saw most contemporary marriages as little more than commercial transactions.

D. This concept of the crass basis of normal marriage was certainly realistic in Heloise's day.

E. Greek and Roman philosophers had sought such freedom from material ties, and Paul urged that same freedom on the elite Christians of the communities to which he ministered.

F. Besides, as Heloise argued, the practical daily requirements of married life were burdensome, noisy, costly, and dirty.

G. The ideal of free love that Heloise espoused around 1120—preferring whoredom to wifedom—especially for the intellectual, had deep roots in the pagan classical world.

H. Interestingly, however, Jewish and Muslim scholars have tended, in medieval times, earlier, and later, to be married men of substance, with the material means to have both families and philosophical leisure.

II. Heloise submitted to Abelard's will if not his mind: Wife she became and, in her mind, remained. We have no proof that she was persuaded to adopt Abelard's highly conventional notions of male-oriented honor.

A. Like the good wife of that ancient and Christian model, she obeyed him.

B. She returned to Paris with him after the birth of their son, Astralabius, to be married discreetly, with only Fulbert and a few other family members and friends as witnesses.

C. She continued to live with her uncle, only being visited by her husband.

D. She agreed to play this charade of secrecy about the marriage, though she knew it would neither satisfy Fulbert's sense of honor nor stay secret. Abelard had very few stupid ideas, but this was one of them.

E. When Fulbert "heaped abuse on her on several occasions" because she kept playing the secrecy game, she obeyed Abelard in going back to Argenteuil as a lay guest instead of living openly with him in Paris as either wife or mistress.

F. Fulbert, thinking that Abelard had rejected Heloise as his wife and, thus, had dishonored not only her but their child and Fulbert's family, had Abelard castrated by two of his henchman while Abelard was sleeping abed one night in 1121 in Paris. Before the next day was over, all of Paris and much of the world knew of the castration; Abelard, as we said earlier, then went to refuge and the life of a monk in Suger's St. Denis.

III. Was Fulbert simply Heloise's devoted maternal uncle?

A. Some argue (in absence of countervailing evidence) that Heloise was his daughter, although maternal uncles had traditional primary sponsoring roles in that and many comparable cultures.

B. Progressively and creatively enough, Fulbert wanted a splendid future life for this talented niece under his protection.

C. That meant a first-rate education, which he wanted to arrange through study with the finest philosopher and most daring theologian of the time.

D. The final affronts to Heloise's, Fulbert's, and the family's honor were the cowardly farce of the secret marriage, followed by Heloise's abandonment (as Fulbert must have seen it) by Abelard at Argenteuil.

E. What more motivation did he need for the castration? Because Fulbert still thought of himself as Heloise's male protector, he violently had this lover (who seems to have rejected the role of husband) castrated.

Thereby, he ironically also dictated Heloise's destiny, because he considered her a defenseless woman.

F. After Abelard's castration, Heloise consented to become a nun, taking full monastic vows at Argenteuil even though she pled with Abelard not to force her to do that.

G. Abelard admitted in letter 4 of the Personal Letters that he had made that demand because he was possessively jealous and wanted no other man to have her.

H. As a nun at the Paraclete corresponding with Abelard, Heloise keeps insisting that she is still his wife and that he owes her the conjugal debt of at least the kind of consolation that could come with his companionship.

IV. Crucial to understanding Heloise's and Abelard's differing views of their marriage is the issue of his castration.

A. For Abelard, they had been divorced by the knife; no legal process was necessary.

B. That conclusion suggests that, for Abelard, marriage was simply legal sex, sacramentally blessed but soluble once sex was no longer possible.

C. It made sense for them to move on once he had guaranteed that Heloise could not remarry.

D. Now, he kept repeating, they were both married to Christ.

V. In Heloise's mind, they had been married forever, whatever happened.

A. Heloise also seems to say, at several points in the Personal Letters, that it is time for their real marriage to begin, now that full sexual fulfillment is not possible. It is (at the least) time to launch their dual career as practicing intellectuals.

B. Heloise was, in fact, closer to the latest contemporary thinking about marriage.

1. During her lifetime in the twelfth century, the severe and idealistic canon law of marriage was legislated in the Catholic West by the Second Lateran Council of 1139: Celibacy for clergy and no divorce for married laity became the norm.
2. Abelard could not take full monastic vows without Heloise's permission; therefore, his desire that she become a nun made practical, as well as emotional, sense to him.

VI. How could Abelard have been ordained a priest in the 1120s even though he both was married and had been castrated?

A. Marriage was not yet a bar to priestly ordination, though it soon would be.

B. Eunuchs were not normally ordained priests: The Old Testament was utterly clear that a eunuch at the altar was an abomination.

C. But as Abelard later reported the argument, his castration was neither intentional nor chosen; it was forced on him by Fulbert's henchmen. Furthermore, Heloise had willingly taken full monastic vows.

D. One of Abelard's major contributions to the ethical thought of his time was the principle that sin (and virtue) reside in the intention rather than the act itself. Lacking the intention to be castrated, he lacked sinful responsibility for it. Therefore, he felt free to choose monastic priesthood.

VII. Though Abelard continued to be a contentious thinker until his death in 1142, his gift to Heloise of the Paraclete solidified her power.

A. This place, named for the Holy Spirit in the role of comforter, occasionally gave him physical refuge in bad times.

B. It also gave Heloise a community to govern, and she took that opportunity to develop, with Abelard, new rules of life for women monastics.

C. Governing the Paraclete gave Heloise a new subject of conversation that kept a steady stream of letters from Abelard arriving. She found a way to keep, in some fashion, what she had so crushingly lost.

Essential Reading:

Mary Martin McLaughlin, *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard: A Translation of Their Complete Correspondence* (New York: Palgrave, forthcoming 2003).

Constant J. Mews, *The Lost Letters of Heloise and Abelard: The Context of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France*, Constant J. Mews and Neville Chiavaroli, trans. (New York: Palgrave, 1999).

Bonnie Wheeler, "Origenary Fantasies: Abelard's Castration and Confession," in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler, eds. (New York: Garland, 1997).

Supplementary Reading:

Bonnie Wheeler, ed., *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

Betty Radice, ed. and trans., *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard*, with an introduction by Betty Radice (Harmondsworth; Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1974, et seq.), esp. *Historia calamitatum* and Personal Letters 1–4, pp. 57–156.

Questions to Consider:

1. Did Abelard ever love Heloise? If so, how could she get him to admit it? Is that what the Personal Letters are really all about?
2. What was the determining factor in Abelard forsaking his marriage? Shame? Fear? Devotion to God? Or jealousy about Heloise (by making her live a parallel life that, as he claimed, kept her from other men)?

Lecture Six

Heloise, Adept Abbess and Mother

Scope: Heloise was a great institution builder long after Abelard's death. In her later exchanges with Abelard, she concentrates on monastic, theological, and spiritual matters. In this lecture, we explore Heloise's sense of the urgent need to reform monastic life to accommodate new communities of religious women. In her obituary, the nuns of the Paraclete recollect her as their brilliant mother; this recognition of Heloise's practical and spiritual maternity is the first—and least conflicted—record of her historical reception. Inevitably, one must deal with the issue of her son, Astralabius. Heloise was and remains a touchstone for the problematic reception of vibrant intellectual women.

Outline

I. Heloise's later correspondence with Abelard left behind their personal issues to concentrate on theological and spiritual issues, as well as issues of Church history and the building of monastic institutions.

A. The correspondence includes eleven "letters of direction," compared to four "personal" letters, according to the conventional practice of modern editors in describing these letters.

B. Heloise's first "letter of direction" to Abelard is representative of her mind.

1. She shows her interest in erudition itself (here, about the history of the Church).
2. Then, she shows herself a connoisseur of the best Latin love poetry.
3. Finally, she is utterly practical about details of daily monastic life, as well as general policy; for example, she asks, "Is it proper for us nuns never to extend hospitality to men?"

C. Both Abelard and Heloise frequently cite Church history as a source of guiding precedents.

D. The *Problemata Heloissae* was initiated by Heloise to develop further this unique body of writing on monastic theory and practice, especially as they affected the women's monastery that was now her responsibility.

E. Several of her "problems" raise the question of divine and human judgments and their capacity for injustice. She was clearly dogged by this issue; earlier, in her first and second "personal letters," she had made it clear that she could not see the justice, equity, or fairness in the judgment of God that was Abelard's castration, the event that deformed both of their lives thereafter.

F. The whole of the *Problemata* manages to accomplish several aims: not just to forge a set of answers to specific questions but also to retain the great and innovative method of approaching questions—the dialectical method—as a model for education in her community and, perhaps, beyond.

II. After his second condemnation at the Council of Sens in 1141, Abelard wrote a *Confession of Faith*, which may have been his last communication with Heloise.

A. He died under the protection of Cluny in 1142.

B. On the basis of his *Confession of Faith*, Abelard's old student, Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny—an old adversary of Bernard of Clairvaux—got Abelard absolved from the council's condemnation.

III. Over the next twenty years, Heloise became an active and widely respected abbess in her own right. She never disavowed her profound connection to Abelard, but she sought, as she put it, her "little corner of heaven."

A. She governed the Paraclete solidly.

1. The novices entering the Paraclete were never numerous. Many were, like Heloise, the casualties of unfortunate marriages. Despite Abelard's warnings to take in talent and avoid the complications that come with wealthy women, most recruits were women of noble connections, especially daughters of the "old" local nobility. All, however, had to be willing to engage in serious intellectual activity.

2. Heloise's diplomatic and legal relations with her neighbors were exemplary and widely admired.

3. Although strict about her community's legal rights, Heloise went to great pains to avoid lawsuits and less alienating modes of conflict.

4. She made a point of getting along with the several male Cistercian monasteries in her corner of southwestern Champagne, as well as with several bishops of Troyes (the local diocese) and their superiors, the archbishops of Sens.

5. She was also careful to be on the best of terms with the family of the counts of Champagne, the local feudal rulers.

6. Heloise founded six daughter houses during her thirty-five-year abbacy.

7. The Paraclete and its monastic family would last until the French Revolution.

B. After Abelard's death in a priory of Cluny to the southeast, Heloise did not scruple to change the liturgy and the rules Abelard had composed for the Paraclete at her request (indeed, demand).

C. Perhaps most startling was Heloise's rapprochement with the great Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, Abelard's enemy (who had engineered his second doctrinal condemnation at the Council of Sens in 1140).

1. Bernard, like most leading churchmen, felt sorry for Heloise's bad treatment at the hands of Abelard.

2. After Heloise cultivated him by correspondence, he became a great admirer of her sanctity, learning, and pastoral responsibility.

IV. We must, however, come to terms with Heloise's treatment of her and Abelard's son, Astralabius.

A. His name is remarkable and must have been absolutely striking in its day.

1. It means "astrolabe," a navigational instrument invented by the ancient Greeks in the Hellenistic era and used thereafter by the Arabs, which had just become known once more in Western Europe. Giving a child this name was similar to naming a baby Skylab or Spacestation.

2. We know that Abelard and Heloise admired contemporary Arabic philosophical and scientific thought. It may have been a name chosen as a tribute to a vastly more learned culture, as Arab culture then was, and, thus, a statement of hope about the future.

3. On the other hand, that instrument's name derives from the Greek words for "star" (αστρον) and "falling" (λαβειν): This was a child who had fallen from the stars, the fruit of a "star-crossed" love. Their love-child's name was unabashedly romantic, as well as scientific.

B. Either or both of Astralabe's parents decided to leave him in Brittany, to be raised by one of Abelard's siblings.

C. In 1144 or 1145, when Heloise was abbess of the Paraclete and Astralabe was about twenty-four, she wrote to Peter the Venerable, asking him to secure a good job for Astralabe. Peter replied sympathetically, but we do not know what results this exercise of maternal pressure produced.

D. About 1135, when Astralabe would have been a teenager, Abelard wrote him a letter of advice, rather an unattractive document, which among other things urges the boy to avoid dangerous women. Those documents are all we know for sure about the son of this famous union.

E. A priest named Astralabius was a canon of the cathedral of Nantes in 1150: Is that he? With a name like that, could it be anyone else? Geographically and socially, it makes sense, but we do not know for sure.

F. Did Heloise ever miss or grieve for the child of her womb? No written evidence of that sentiment has survived.

G. Here, we need to pay attention to historical context and get back into the medieval *mentalité.*

1. What Heloise and Abelard did about Astralabius was entirely appropriate in their time, place, and station.
2. Some of the same mindset survives among some economically privileged families: Children are raised by nannies, governesses, and schoolteachers and start bonding with their parents in adolescence, when conversation is possible (if they bond at all).

H. Heloise was, in many ways, a modern mind, but as a mother, she was very much a part of her time.

I. In her obituary, the nuns of the Paraclete recollect her as their brilliant mother: This praise of Heloise's practical and spiritual maternity is the first record of her historical reception.

Essential Reading:

Mary Martin McLaughlin, *The Letters of Heloise and Abelard: A Translation of Their Complete Correspondence* (New York: Palgrave, forthcoming 2003).

———, "Heloise the Abbess: The Expansion of the Paraclete," ch. 1 of *Listening to Heloise*, Bonnie Wheeler, ed.

Supplementary Reading:

Bonnie Wheeler, ed., *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do we more commonly remember Heloise as a lover than a monastically maternal figure when her influence on the Paraclete was so profound?
2. Passion and diplomacy are not often associated. Can we imagine the woman who pleaded "better to call me a whore" to have, so gently, maintained the tenuous feudal relationships that allowed the Paraclete to grow and become great and obtained the devoted admiration of Bernard of Clairvaux, the man who had condemned her beloved husband? How can her private and public selves be so incongruent?

Lecture Seven

Heloise of the Imagination

Scope: Today, the story of Heloise captivates us as much as it must have her contemporaries. She has been interpreted in dozens of ways, both positive and negative, starting with Abelard's own blaming of her as a temptress who brought about his downfall just as Eve brought about Adam's. A more generous reflection on the constancy of her love was celebrated in a famous, sweet letter of consolation sent to Heloise by Abbot Peter the Venerable after Abelard's death. Later invocations of Heloise veer between these extremes of blame and praise. With few important exceptions, the story did not grip medieval readers after her death until Jean de Meun translated the love letters into French, but since then, their story has captured the imagination of great writers and painters and the public.

Outline

I. Heloise appears even today in the popular imagination.

A. The lively 1999 movie *Being John Malkovich*, directed by Spike Jonze, begins with actor John Cusack pulling the strings in a sidewalk puppet theatre on the streets of New York.

1. A child—whose father is distracted looking up the street for a taxi—watches the puppet show.
2. What the audience hears are our lovers reading their letters to each other; what *we* see is the child watching puppets of the clerically garbed Heloise and Abelard in separate quarters reenacting their old lovemaking. The father turns around at the height of this caricature of passion, and what *he* sees he interprets as pornography in action. He slugs the puppeteer—"you pervert!" The puppeteer's wonderful defense? "I'm in public theatre."

B. The play *Peter Abelard*, adapted from Waddell's novel, swept the London stage in the late 1960s, and Heloise was played by the sprightly and sometimes nude Diana Rigg. It was adapted to the New York stage as an opera in 2002.

C. *Stealing Heaven*, a turgid 1989 movie directed by Clive Donner, also tells the lovers' tale with factual inventiveness. Perhaps one should say rather that it distorts the story as it slouches in the direction of pornography.

D. What these recent invocations of the story prove is that the passionate story of Heloise as the lover of Abelard is alive if not entirely well. Only now are scholars recovering the long, important second half of the story of Heloise as a woman of power after Abelard's death.

II. In their own time, many contemporaries remarked on the awesome stature of Heloise's love and the lovers' tragedy.

A. Peter the Venerable gave refuge to Abelard at the great Burgundian monastery motherhouse at Cluny.

1. There, Abelard died.
2. At Heloise's request, Peter sent Abelard's remains to her at the Paraclete for burial; this gentle Peter recognized that the lovers belonged together in the hand of God in the afterlife.

B. Three twelfth-century epitaphs yoke the lovers with equal expressiveness, seeing as one whole the unity of their flesh, their minds, their bed, their monastic life, and their tomb.

C. One thirteenth-century manuscript, the *Chronicle* of Tours, is hostile to Abelard but full of praise for Heloise. It tells a sweet if macabre fiction of their burial, claiming that when Abelard's tomb was opened to received Heloise's body, he lifted his arms and encircled her in a permanent embrace.

D. After their immediate time, however, the lovers' story faded somewhat from view until their letters were found and translated from Latin into French by the poet Jean de Meun.

E. The usually biting, satiric Jean, known for his scorn of women, is full of admiration for Heloise, whom he calls wise and beautiful, and he finds in her letters to Abelard a remarkable proof of true and loyal love.

F. The greatest of late medieval poets got access to the story through Jean's translation.

1. The English Chaucer knew the story.
2. The Italian poet Petrarch owned a Latin manuscript, which he poignantly annotated. He clearly identified with Heloise, about whom he says that she was totally tender and gracious.

G. Can we find the hand of Heloise controlling the whole production in those two decades after Abelard's death? Did she reshape the correspondence, and if so, why?

1. Surely the production is of such high literary merit that it seems revised with future readers in mind.
2. Might Heloise have wanted to preserve the story of their collaboration as thinkers and institution builders, as well as lovers?
3. Given that the pope himself ordered Abelard's work to be burned, was Heloise preserving its most salient characteristics through their exchange, which she kept (and burnished) at the Paraclete?

H. As he lay dying, the French poet François Villon composed a ballad mourning the deaths of ladies: "Where is the very wise Heloise…(because of whom Abelard was castrated)…*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan*? [But where are the snows of yesteryear?] Like Heloise, they melted away."

III. Each age—and all the world—has since invented its own version of Heloise. For the most part, these stories have chosen to revere either Abelard (the thinker) or Heloise (the lover) at the expense of the other.

A. By the late seventeenth century, new French renditions of the love story firmly cast Heloise and Abelard in a romantic vein, and these stories often elevate Abelard over a silly, petulant Heloise.

B. The great English poet Alexander Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* gives us one of literature's most compelling interpretations of Heloise in 1717. Pope portrays a Heloise for his age, one who is Pope's match in miserable melancholy. She lives in selfless devotion in the deep gloom of the nunnery yearning for the death that will relieve her of life's loneliness and render her invisible.

C. Also in the eighteenth century, Diderot told Jean-Jacques Rousseau that if he thought women incapable of both love and art, he had not read the letters of Heloise properly. Rousseau later composed his *La Nouvelle Heloise* (*The New Heloise*).

D. The Romantics of the nineteenth century elevated Heloise's love for Abelard to the stature of a virtue, but they also (unlike many of their predecessors) recognized her formidable qualities of mind.

E. Even Mark Twain took his turn considering the lovers' story, just as he considered the story of Joan of Arc. He adored Joan, but in *Innocents Abroad* (1869), he said of Heloise: "It was a noble, self-sacrificing love, and characteristic of the pure-minded Heloise, but it was not good sense."

IV. It is not just in literature and other arts that one looks for Heloise.

A. Many are the sentimental pilgrims who have retraced her steps back to the bucolic Paraclete, now a private manor house, and to the post-industrial Parisian suburb of Argenteuil, once the inspiration of Impressionist painters.

B. Most of all, pilgrims have flocked to the tombs of the lovers to show their respect.

C. The tombs show Abelard and Heloise to be as peripatetic in death as they were in life.

1. Abelard's body was brought from Cluny to the Paraclete, and there, Heloise was buried with him. From there, they were moved to a local church of Saint-Laurent at Nogent-sur-Seine. From that site, they were disinterred and their bones were brought in 1804 to the gardens of the Elysée in Paris. Napoleon paid tribute at that shrine, as did his empress, Josephine.
2. Their newest resting place, the Père-Lachaise cemetery, to which they were brought in 1817, is favored by permanent Parisians.

3. Not long ago, the area around their tomb was pastoral, but now, even the dead jostle for space. Just feet from Abelard and Heloise is buried another celebrity, the American musician from the 1960s Jim Morrison.

D. Their elegant, raised tomb is cobbled together of various bits: an old sarcophagus to which recumbent full-length figures of a monk and a nun were added, along with various inscriptions marking this as their final resting place. A Gothic-revival enclosure keeps the sun from their heads—and keeps them from the damage of our graffiti-littering age.

Essential Reading:

Peter Dronke, *Abelard and Heloise in Medieval Testimonies* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1976).

Supplementary Reading and Film:

Spike Jonze, director, *Being John Malkovich*, 1999 (film).

Alexander Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717).

Enid McLeod, *Héloïse: A Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1938, 1971).

Questions to Consider:

1. Why are there so many operas about other star-crossed lovers (Tristan and Isolde, for example) but comparatively little about Heloise and Abelard?
2. Is Heloise a positive image to inspire young women?
3. Is Heloise a projection of a male fantasy?

Lecture Eight

Hildegard of Bingen, Sibyl of the Rhine

Scope: Known to her contemporaries as the Sibyl of the Rhine, Hildegard of Bingen was abbess, preacher, scientist, healer, writer, visionary, teacher, musician, theologian, and prophet. She was born into a world experiencing upheavals in the spiritual and monastic spheres, and she helped bring these movements to maturity. Although Hildegard holds a unique place in history, she was very much a product of her time. This lecture discusses the improbably heroic quality of Hildegard's twelfth-century monasticism and the even more improbable status of this woman prophet.

Outline

I. One of Heloise's most interesting contemporaries, born far away in the German Rhineland probably a few years before Heloise and outliving her by sixteen years, was Hildegard of Bingen.

A. They were similar in several ways.
1. Both became distinguished and respected abbesses.
2. Both, it seems, were daughters of roughly the same ruling class.
3. Both were serious intellectuals.
4. Each of them was diplomatically adroit but daring in her own way.

B. Yet they seem, finally, a world apart.
1. Hildegard was a mystic visionary, never romantically involved with any man, nor any man's disciple: There was no one remotely like Abelard in her life. In this respect, she resembles Joan of Arc more than Heloise.
2. Hildegard wrote massively, her intellectual sources and creative temperament were deeply and lovingly traditional.
3. She was as much the voice of an antique mentality as Heloise was one of the committed harbingers of the energetic new scholasticism that would come to embody the delight of medieval thought for later ages.
4. Yet Hildegard, from the German Rhineland, had a thundering, persuasive, authoritative, and powerful voice in her culture that Heloise did not have in hers.

C. Hildegard worked from within the monastic world to amplify its role. Her spiritual insights always reflected a dynamic, organic sense of the divine and all creation.

D. Only in this past generation have scholars rediscovered this amazing medieval intellect. Few geniuses in human history have been creative in as many realms as was Hildegard.

II. One of the hardest things for modern people to understand about the medieval mentality is the simple fact that a high percentage of the population became monks and nuns.

A. More startling to us, perhaps, is the fact that many, if not most, did so passionately and willingly.

B. To most twelfth-century West Europeans, as far as we can tell, the monastic life was the most heroic lifestyle, more heroic even than the calling of the holy warrior.

C. Worldly people of power and wealth, definitely including some of the most sinful of them, seem to have desired association with monastics, not just for their prayers but often for their advice and consent on worldly and spiritual matters.

III. The leading figure in the monastic movement of the twelfth century was Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), Hildegard's slightly older contemporary (whom she outlived by twenty-six years).

A. As we remember, Bernard was Peter Abelard's deadly adversary, who arranged his condemnation at the Council of Sens in 1141.

B. Though himself a mystic who often wrote rapturously and sensually about mystic experience, Bernard defined the core religious orthodoxy of his day.

C. He presumably met Hildegard, sometime between November 1147 and February 1148. They had previously been in correspondence.

D. Hildegard had earlier written Bernard about the visions she was recording in a book, and he had answered her sympathetically, if rather briefly.

E. Bernard's disciple, a former monk of Clairvaux now elevated as Pope Eugenius III, was presiding over a local church council that was concerned about matters of orthodoxy and heresy. Hildegard was ordered to present the pope with her writings, then in an early stage.

F. This visionary record, the early parts of her first book, *Scivias*, was not only approved for its orthodoxy but read aloud to prelates at the Council of Trier.

G. From that moment, Hildegard could be seen as having papal approval for her life as a prophet.

IV. Within the culturally heroic monastic lifestyle, then, Hildegard of Bingen embodied a rare heroic role, that of prophet.

A. According to the primary scholarly interpreters of Hildegard today, such as Peter Dronke and Barbara Newman, Hildegard could never have accomplished the things she was the first to do had she not been acknowledged by contemporary religious and secular authorities as a prophet—someone to whom they had to listen, despite the challenging character of what she said.

B. By the twelfth century, the role of prophet may have become the only safe and effective position for an outspokenly critical woman in Western Christendom—that is, if such a woman could convince the authorities of her integrity.

C. Hildegard did so and, in her own time, was referred to as *Prophetissa Teutonica,* the German Prophetess, the Sibyl of the Rhine.

V. Hildegard's origins were privileged but not extraordinarily so.

A. It is thought that Hildegard was born in 1098 at Bermersheim near the west bank of the middle Rhine.

B. Hildegard died on September 17, 1179, as abbess of the Benedictine monastery she had founded at Rupertsberg.

C. Hildegard's parents, Hildebert and Mechtild, were devout and literate as well as socially well connected.

D. Her brothers, Roricus and Hugo, became priests, and her sister, Clementia, became a nun.

E. As far as we know, Hildegard never received a formal education from well-educated teachers.

F. She claimed (perhaps with excess humility) that the Latin in which she dictated her visions, treatises, and letters was rough and difficult and needed a bit of editorial polishing from members of her entourage. It is tricky to speak of "raw literary talent," but if that exists, she seems to have had it.

G. Hildegard got her intellectual and literary education in the adopted family of the Benedictine monastery of Disibodenberg, which she also saw as warmly nurturing.

VI. Hildegard was clearly a special child. From the age of three, she was prone to having visions, episodes in which a cloud of bright light infused what she looked at.

A. Modern scholars with medical expertise contend that she suffered from a type of migraine called *scintillating scotoma*. Her biographer Sabina Flanagan thinks that this theory fully explains her visions.

B. Other modern readers of her written visions think that there was (and is) a lot more to her creative insight than a migraine condition.

C. Everyone around Hildegard a thousand years ago interpreted this condition as a gift from God, a sign of divine favor.

D. At the age of eight (in 1106), Hildegard was sent off to an especially demanding, elite form of the religious life.

1. She was committed to the care of an anchoress, a nun who lived in a cell built against the wall of the church of the abbey of St. Disibod.
2. The anchoress, Jutta of Sponheim (or Spanheim), was the daughter of the Count of Sponheim, a nobleman of high lineage and royal marriage connections who was well known to Hildegard's father, Hildebert; perhaps he was, in some sense, Hildebert's lord.

E. Hildegard throve in the severe but supportive setting of this new Benedictine abbey, known as "the Disibodenberg."

F. Jutta was so well respected (and well connected) that her disciple Hildegard was given the veil in 1115 by Bishop Otto of Bamberg, an important member of the German hierarchy.

VII. Hildegard's mature leadership and burgeoning reputation eventually outshone any of Jutta's achievements (though unlike Hildegard, Jutta was declared a saint swiftly and easily).

A. Hildegard became prioress of the women at Disibodenberg.

B. Hildegard came to rely especially on the nun Richardis of Stade and the monk Volmar, who acted as her secretaries.

C. Soon Hildegard became famous beyond the Rhineland.
1. In 1141, she began dictating to Volmar and Richardis the *Scivias*, the first book of her visionary trilogy.
2. Four or five years after that, Hildegard exchanged letters with Bernard of Clairvaux, who by then was the most influential religious leader in Western Christendom. He had just launched the Second Crusade, of which she approved.
3. Bernard expressed cautious approval of Hildegard's visions but urged her to humility.
4. In the following year, Pope Eugenius III was presiding over a church synod at Trier where he read aloud from Hildegard's *Scivias* and urged her to continue it.
5. A letter of 1148 from one Master Odo of Paris, who had also been at Trier, praised Hildegard's hymns, which at least suggests that they had become known that far away. Paris was already a center of intense intellectual critical awareness.

Essential Reading:

Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), ch. 6.

Barbara Newman, intr. to *Hildegarde of Bingen: Scivias*, Mother Columba Hart and Jane Bishop, trans.; Caroline Walker Bynum, pref. (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), pp. 9–61.

Anna Silvas, *Jutta and Hildegard: The Biographical Sources* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

Supplementary Reading:

Sabine Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen, 1098–1179: A Visionary Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998).

D. Weinstein and R. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000–1700* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

Questions to Consider:

1. Why would the male leaders of Hildegard's society have accepted her as a prophet?
2. Why did Hildegard leave Disibodenberg?

Lecture Nine

Hildegard, Holy Hypochondriac

Scope: Hildegard was most distinguished for the genius she displayed in the massive and diverse character of her recorded intellectual vigor. She was also distinctive for her charismatic relationship, not just with her several ecclesiastical communities, but with large crowds of the general public—a unique phenomenon of which (yet more incredibly) the establishment seems to have entirely approved. But perhaps Hildegard is most extraordinary in an interior dimension, in the precarious balance she somehow maintained between her instinctual rapport with established authority and her indomitable determination to be true to her individual inspiration. She was just responding to God's inspiration, not her own, she said. In spite of constant illness and severe pain, she lived a life of amazing accomplishment.

Outline

I. By the late 1140s, Hildegard was already famous for her musical poetry and her visionary prose.

- **A.** Pope Eugenius III approved her visionary prophecies.
- **B.** Later popes allowed her to go about the Rhineland preaching her version of Church reform.
- **C.** She became an advisor of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa.
- **D.** A prolific writer in Latin prose and verse on many subjects, always outspoken, she was widely revered and sought out.

II. In 1150, Hildegard moved to a nearby mountaintop sacred to the memory of a local bishop, St. Rupert, and founded there a monastery for women, of which she became the abbess.

- **A.** Archbishop Henry of Mainz consecrated the abbey church in 1152.
- **B.** Fifteen years later, in 1165, Hildegard founded a daughter-house across the Rhine at Eibingen. She would cross the great river every other week to supervise that community.

III. Hildegard was famous even in her old age.

- **A.** Hildegard became a famous preacher. Contemporary admirers claimed that the pope suggested (or commanded) that she go on preaching tours and that she preach not just to the clergy but to the public.
  1. As far as documents can demonstrate, this was a unique role for a woman in medieval Christian Europe.
  2. Between 1158 and 1171, despite her chronically poor health, Hildegard went on four preaching tours that took her as far as Bamberg in eastern Germany and as far north as Cologne.
  3. Her favorite topics on these tours were the need to reform the Church, which she saw as decadently effeminate, and the imminence of the end of the world, which she described in vivid language.
- **B.** Hildegard was sought out as an advisor by the great, the near-great, and the modest.
  1. To judge from her surviving collected letters, at least four popes and ten archbishops engaged in correspondence with her, as did ten bishops, twenty-one abbesses, and thirty-eight abbots, not to mention over a hundred other personages great and small.
  2. Her biographers insist that spokesmen of the Jewish community of Mainz, one of the most outstanding for rabbinical authority in Europe, sometimes came to cross-examine her (and on the Old Testament, as Christians called the Hebrew Scriptures!).
- **C.** Perhaps most strikingly, Hildegard was sought out as an advisor by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I (1152–1190), known as Barbarossa ("Redbeard" in Italian; he was king of Italy and Burgundy, as well as the German king).
  1. The imperial party seems to have regarded her as a person of integrity even though frequently inconveniently so. This was one case where her integrity did not allow her to go along with authority—at least not with secular authority.
  2. We know of four occasions on which Hildegard gave Barbarossa advice after they met in 1154. All four opinions dealt with Barbarossa's opposition to Pope Alexander III (pope 1159–1181), against whom Barbarossa rallied factions of bishops to elect three antipopes.
  3. The first time, Hildegard urged Frederick to desist; the second time, she took a neutral position; the third time, she was opposed to the imperial antipope; and the fourth time, she warned the emperor to discontinue this policy of recruiting and supporting rivals to Pope Alexander III.
  4. Untypically, Barbarossa treated her with kindly respect even though he did not follow her advice.
  5. In 1176, eight years after Hildegard's last warning about supporting antipopes, Barbarossa was humiliatingly defeated at the Battle of Legnano in northern Italy, then promptly made peace with Pope Alexander III. Hildegard's reputation as a predictive prophet was, thus, further enhanced.

D. It is important to realize how exceptionally well Hildegard was treated by the male leadership of Church and State in a century that was steadily growing more misogynist.

IV. When Hildegard moved to Rupertsberg in her early fifties, she began her major life work.

A. She composed three extended Latin prose treatises between 1141 and 1174, between the ages of forty-three and seventy-six.

1. She entitled the first part of this trilogy *Scivias*, which is sort of a Latin pun on the injunction to "know [*scire*] the ways [*vias*] of the Lord."
2. In this book, Hildegard she felt impelled by a divine command to record the visions about the Church that she had been having since she was a child.
3. *Scivias* consists of three books reporting and commenting on twenty-six of her visions, preceded by a preface stating her intentions as author.
4. Book I deals with six visions of the creator and his creation.
5. Book II presents seven visions of the redeemer and his redemption of the human race.
6. Book III doubles the number of visions, presenting thirteen of them about the history of salvation as represented by a building (which is essentially the Church).

B. These visions have an important visual dimension, as well as compelling language describing and explaining them.

1. Brilliantly colored illustrations accompany the texts of these visions.
2. Fortunately, these paintings were exactly copied in the 1930s, because the original illuminated manuscript was almost certainly destroyed in Dresden—where it had been sent for safekeeping— in the British fire-bombing of that city toward the end of World War II.

C. Hildegard was subject to disabling chronic illness, usually now described as migraines. Were her visions delusions, a result of brainstorms caused by chemical imbalances?

1. Advocates argue that the visions can be both related to the migraines and simultaneously inspired insights.
2. Donald Weinstein and Richard Bell have pointed out in their statistical study of saints in Western Christendom between 1000 and 1700 that female saints have claimed illness as a sign of divine favor many times more than male saints have.
3. One of Hildegard's biographers, Theodorich, follows Hildegard herself by suggesting that her illnesses got worse, more paralyzing, and perhaps more frequent after she was afraid to tell the Disibodenberg community that God had commanded her in a vision to leave and found a new monastic community in the wilderness. She was struck blind, paralyzed, and immovable for several days, until she spoke up about these newest divine instructions.

D. Perhaps that level of challenge was at core the reason why Hildegard of Bingen, the holy hypochondriac, was a heroine to so many men and women of her time.

E. What was the nature of Hildegarde's "visions" in the *Scivias*? They are in large measure about joy, joy in God and in nature—in that constantly mobile "cosmic egg of creation," as Hildegard pictures it.

F. One feature of Hildegard's thought we might wish to notice especially is her conviction, central to her sense of mission, that virility is a highly desirable quality, which the "effeminate" male leaders of the Church in her day lacked. Hence, "weak women," like herself, were called to virile speech and action.

Essential Reading:

Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), ch. 6.

Barbara Newman, intr. to *Hildegarde of Bingen: Scivias*, Mother Columba Hart and Jane Bishop, trans.; Caroline Walker Bynum, pref. (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), pp. 9–61.

Anna Silvas, *Jutta and Hildegard: The Biographical Sources* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

Supplementary Reading:

Sabine Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen, 1098–1179: A Visionary Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998).

D. Weinstein and R. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000–1700* (Chicago University Press, 1982).

Questions to Consider:

1. Why would the male leaders of Hildegard's society have given her such a wide, unprecedented scope of action?
2. How could Hildegard have managed to be both a reclusive visionary and a founder of durable institutions?

Lecture Ten

Hildegard's Visionary Trilogy, Science, and Letters

Scope: This lecture briefly summarizes the second part of Hildegard's trilogy *Scivias*, *The Book of Life's Merits*, which she wrote between 1158 and 1163, a time of busy public activity. The last third of this trilogy, *The Book of Divine Works*, was begun shortly after Hildegard completed *The Book of Life's Merits* in 1163. It was finished eleven or twelve years later, when Hildegard was seventy-five or a bit older. This is her most theologically sophisticated work. Two products of Hildegard's remarkably energetic fifties and early sixties are what we would call her "scientific" treatises: *The Book of Simple Medicine* (alternative title, *Nine Books on the Subtleties of Different Kinds of Creatures*) and *The Book of Composite Medicine*, or *Causes and Cures*. In addition, the recently edited collection of Hildegard's surviving correspondence contains more than 300 letters to and from her. It is an amazing testimony to her standing and to the range of her influence in the patriarchal Church and State of her moment.

Outline

I. The second book in Hildegard's trilogy is called *The Book of Life's Merits* (*Liber vitae meritorum*).
   A. It was begun in 1158 and finished in 1163, while Hildegard was active (despite her chronic debilitating illness) in preaching, especially about the forthcoming apocalypse, when all would be judged.
   B. *The Book of Life's Merits* is about the way to live and is Hildegard's greatest ethical work.
      1. Like *Scivias*, it is a collection of visions with explanatory commentary.
      2. Each of its six books is centered on the vision of a huge man (*Homo*, again) whose feet rest on the foundations of the underworld and whose head reaches to the arc of the heavens.
      3. He is, not surprisingly, God—especially in the person of the Father. In almost every paragraph, he speaks of virtues and their opposing vices. Frequently, he prescribes specific penances for those who repent of the vices they have committed.
   C. *The Book of Life's Merits* is crammed with statements of interest to modern ethical discourse.
      1. Among the most interesting doctrines developed in these visions is the nature of Purgatory, a dogma of special interest to the twelfth century.

      2. Another is abortion. Hildegard condemns it, of course, but makes a point of not equating it with murder.
   D. From the literary point of view, much of this book looks like a forerunner to Dante's *Inferno*.
      1. It reports visions of the damned suffering eternal condign punishment for the sins they committed on earth.
      2. This is part of a long tradition of medieval European literature.
   E. The structure of this second piece of Hildegard's visionary trilogy comprises a trinity of genres.
      1. Hildegard is fascinated in this book by *psychomachia*, the traditional warfare between vices and virtues.
      2. Hildegard also exploits the earlier medieval genre of the "penitential," a manual of repentant attitudes and behavior, often with detailed suggestions about the penances to be performed.
      3. Dominating *The Book of Life's Merits* is a vision of the other world, the other life. Some contend that in describing the "spirit world" for her audience in this manner, Hildegard was exercising the role of the preliterate shaman, as well as that of the Hebrew or Christian prophet.

II. *The Book of God's Works* (*Liber divinorum operum*), the third part of Hildegard's visionary trilogy, was begun in 1163, just after she finished *The Book of Life's Merits.*
   A. This enormous book has been called her most sophisticated theological work.
   B. Its message is dominated by discussions of *caritas*, the love of God for humans and their reciprocal love for him.
   C. Like *Scivias*, this book also presents the forthcoming apocalypse predicted in the book of the New Testament by that name (also called Revelations).
   D. It is no surprise, however unfortunate, that Hildegard soon came to be remembered primarily as an apocalyptic prophet. The rest of her very rich teaching would have to wait for the nineteenth century to be properly appreciated.

III. *The Book of Simple Medicine*, or *Nine Books on the Subtleties of Different Kinds of Creatures*, or *Natural History*, is an impressive mini-encyclopedia of what was known in her time in Western Christendom about what we call the natural sciences.
   A. Its structure tells us a lot about twelfth-century "science."
   B. It contains four books on animals, two on herbs and trees, and three on gems, metals, and something she calls "elements" (not the elements of modern chemistry!): air, fire, water, mud.

C. These are recognizably the four elements of much of ancient Greek science, as transmitted in summary form to the medieval West.

D. More interesting from the modern perspective is that this very medieval book is loaded with empirical observation. Hildegard is particularly astute—and apparently original—about wild and cultivated lettuces, soft and prickly thistles, cabbages, leeks, and grapevines.

E. Both of her medical books also have notes on the capacities of various creatures to poison or heal us.

F. Magical charms to be used in healing—antidotes—occur, as well. "Antimagic" was one of her prime practical concerns.

G. Yet even this collection of practical lore has its spirituality: The moral symbolism of animals and plants is one of the overarching logical structures unifying this collection of disparate elements. The cypress tree, for instance, signifies God's secrets; the ivy, joy; and so on.

H. Another interesting feature of Hildegard's medical anthropology is her discussion of four physiologically determined types of women.

IV. Hildegard herself never oversaw the completion of *The Book of Composite Medicine* (*Causes and Cures*), but it seems to have made a significant contemporary impact and has been enthusiastically revived today by some New Age healers.

A. Hildegard's typical cures usually involve herbal recipes.

1. Melancholy saps virility and leads to depression and troubles with the metabolism, gout, rheumatism, and fits of anger. It should be cured with a healthy and balanced diet. More specifically, bursts of anger can be cured by mixing powdered rose petals with sage.
2. Most of the miraculous cures reported of Hildegard herself were much simpler: She liked to bless water or bread for the afflicted to consume.
3. She also sent around the area a belt woven of her hair, which was effective in cases of difficult childbirth. Once it worked for the wife of the mayor of Bingen, it was then much in demand. But these were miracles, not cases of natural healing.

B. In *Causes and Cures*, Hildegard showed her interest in astrology, which most medieval Europeans thought could explain the behavior of humans, animals, and plants.

1. Hildegard is full of advice for farmers. For example, farmers should cut herbs and gather fruit while the moon is waxing, unless they want to make medicine from them or preserve them as long as possible; in that case, herbs and fruit should be harvested while the moon is waning—and the latter goes for wheat, too.
2. The phases of the moon also influence thickening and thinning of human blood—medically, an important "fact" in the age of bleeding.
3. Elsewhere, Hildegard expressed the more orthodox Christian attitude that astrology was blasphemous because it claimed for the stars the powers of their creator alone.

C. Hildegard liked to speculate about Adam and Eve: How, for example, could they have produced children in the Garden of Eden?

D. Human sexuality was for Hildegard a complex subject.

1. She would seem to have admired the prolific married sexuality of her parents, for example, and certainly recommended that pattern as a fine one for Christian life.
2. On the other hand, that form of licit and sacramentally blessed sexuality was for procreation, not recreational pleasure. She says in *Scivias* that men who have sex with their pregnant wives are murderers, because they might kill the baby and certainly kill the wasted seed they emit.
3. Virginity was always better. After all, it sounds not unlike *viridity* and *virility*, and words were valid signifiers of the things they signified. *Viriditas* (greenness) and *virilitas* (virility) differ in Latin by only one letter; *virginitas* is not as close to either of the other two but still seems related. For Hildegard, virgins (male or female) are virile.

E. This notion of *viriditas* was central to Hildegard's thought. It was a core insight from which sprang most of her original theorizing.

1. What Hildegard meant by it went far beyond any previous Latin use of it or of related words, such as *viridis*, the Latin adjective meaning *green.*
2. Hildegard did not use *viriditas* merely to convey a descriptive sense of that or any other color. For her, it was a vital force.
3. Therefore, virility is close to viridity by nature, in fact, derives from it. Because virginity has more integral viridity to it than any other corporeal state, virgins (male and female) are the most virile of humans.

V. The extent and activity of Hildegard's correspondence are amazing. More than 300 letters survive because many of them were treasured and copied.

A. Her correspondence with Bernard of Clairvaux started her public career.

B. Hildegard corresponded with Frederick Barbarossa in both friendly and critical modes—and he seems to have respected her in either case.

C. Her letter to Henry II of England, husband of Eleanor of Aquitaine, urged Henry not to support Barbarossa against the pope. If Barbarossa

heard of that missive, we have no evidence that he thought it treasonous.

D. Her letters to fellow monastics tend to interest us less these days, but they reveal her sincerest and least forced thoughts on a great variety of topics. For example:

1. She corresponded on subjects of mutual interest with the mystic poet Elizabeth of Schönau.
2. Guibert of Gembloux, her final secretary, began writing her in 1175. One of her many letters to him explains the visionary experience that generated *Scivias* and does so better than any of her other accounts of it.
3. Werner of Kirckheim heard Hildegard preach on her last preaching tour (1170–1171). He asked her for a copy of her speech, and she sent him a letter detailing the vision she must have preached about at Kirckheim. It is a severe warning to bad priests, in language of prophetic power.

Essential Reading:

Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

Hildegard of Bingen: Mystical Writings, intro., sel. by Fiona Bowie and Oliver Davies; Robert Carver, trans. (New York: Crossroads Spiritual Classics, 1990).

The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen, 2 vols., Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman, trans., intro. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, 1998).

Supplementary Reading:

Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1984), ch. 6 and appendix.

Sabine Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen, 1098–1179: A Visionary Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998).

Charles Burnett and Peter Dronke, eds., *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of Her Thought and Art* (London: Warburg Institute, 1998), esp. the articles by Madeline Caviness ("Hildegard as the Designer of the Illustrations to Her Works"), Robert Murray ("Prophecy in Hildegard"), Charles Burnett ("Hildegard of Bingen and the Science of the Stars"), Danielle Jacquart ("*Hildegarde et la physiologie de son temps*"), Laurence Moulinier ("*Abbesse et agronome: Hildegarde et le savoir botanique de son temps*"), and Barbara Newman ("Three-Part Invention: The *Vita S. Hildegardis* and Mystical Hagiography").

Régine Pernoud, *Hildegard of Bingen: Inspired Conscience of the Twelfth Century*, Paul Duggan, trans. (New York: Marlowe, 1998).

Questions to Consider:

1. How could Hildegard have both approved of astrological science and condemned it theologically? Or was this a pattern of her thought on other subjects, as well?
2. How could this chronically ill woman, perhaps subject to lifelong and serious migraine attacks, have gone about preaching at considerable distances, written two scientific books and Part II of her trilogy, and written dozens of letters all at the same time?

Lecture Eleven

Wholly Hildegard

Scope: Hildegard was not just a prophet. She was a vulnerable, sometimes angry and wounded, person. She wrote out of the fullness of her human condition, asserting her desires, needs, and prejudices. Yet she brought all these frailties to fruitful heights in her verse drama, the *Ordo Virtutem*, and in her songs that celebrate the rich variety of human experience, especially the virility of virgins.

Outline

I. Hildegard had her share of difficult relationships.

A. Hildegard's unhappiest relationship breakdown was with Richardis von Stade. She handled it very badly, and it broke her heart.

1. Richardis followed Hildegard to Rupertsberg in 1150 but did not stay there long.
2. Within a year, Richardis's brother Hartwig, the archbishop of Bremen, persuaded her to leave Hildegard's new foundation for the post of abbess at a Benedictine monastery at Bassum near Bremen.
3. In letters to several ecclesiastical authorities, including Pope Eugenius, Hildegard tried to force Richardis's return to Rupertsberg.
4. Hildegard hinted strongly that the Bassum election was tainted by simony, the purchase or sale of ecclesiastical office.
5. Hildegard pulled every political string and heartstring she could but failed.
6. Hildegard bowed to her pope's and her archbishop's judgments and wrote to Richardis a final letter, candidly expressing once again her grief and hurt.
7. Shortly thereafter, on October 29, 1152, Richardis died at Bassum.
8. Her brother Hartwig wrote Hildegard a letter that was quite startling from the pen of an archbishop. He said that Hildegard had been right, and Richardis felt so, too. Richardis had died weeping about the hurt she had caused Hildegard and had, in fact, been planning to return to Rupertsberg when death intervened.

B. What was the problem here?

1. Was it basically a social problem, an embarrassment to the rank-conscious Hildegard, who was not as noble as members of Richardis's family? That does seem to be an element of the problem.

2. But the problem was far deeper. Hildegard loved Richardis intensely, had come to depend on her both emotionally and in practical matters, and could not bear to lose her.
3. She described her feelings as those of a mother for an especially beloved child; earlier, she said that she had come to love Richardis as Paul loved Timothy.
4. Some modern scholars have seen the relationship as even stronger than that, a "particular friendship" in the parlance of spiritual directors, the kind of intimacy that can lead to trouble and is usually forbidden seminarians, as well as monks and nuns.
5. Hildegard certainly made herself look foolish, at least undignified, in her desperate thrashing about to find someone who would force Richardis to return.
6. It is indicative of their overriding respect for her that the pope and the archbishops of Mainz and Bremen treated her with such understanding, even though they said no to this woman they nevertheless called prophet.

II. A second unfortunate disagreement was the criticism directed at Hildegard later by a certain Tengswich (or Tengswindis).

A. Tengswich was the superior of a community of religious women who followed not the venerable Benedictine Rule, but the so-called Augustinian Rule.

B. The Augustinian movement was one product of the Church reform movement's interest in the history of the Church. Most reformers wanted to return the Church to its original state, which was a pretty radical commitment.

C. What bothered Tengswich was the accurate report that on feast days in the liturgical year, Hildegard's nuns attended services in the church at Rupertsberg with their long hair flowing loose. By long tradition, nuns' hair was supposed to be cut short, as a sign of their humble rejection of the world and its vanities.

1. Worse, it was reported that on feast days, the Rupertsberg nuns wore long, white silk veils that swept the floor and gold filigree crowns and gold rings on their fingers, despite Paul's Epistle to Timothy, which forbade women to act immodestly, "with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly attire" (I Timothy 2:9).
2. "Moreover," Tengswich continued, "that which seems no less strange to us is the fact that you admit into your community only women from noble, well-established families and absolutely reject others…of lower birth and less wealth." Tengswich declared that her Hildegard and her canonesses "are struck with wonder and…reeling in confusion" when they contemplate Christ's preference for fishermen and other poor folk.

3. Then came a barrage of well-selected and well-aimed New Testament quotes, from the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians: "We have examined as accurately as possible all the precedents laid down by the Fathers of the Church, to which all spiritual people must conform, and we have found nothing in them comparable to your actions."

D. Historically, Tengswich was, of course, perfectly correct; in Tengswich's criticism, we hear the authentic voice of the ongoing impetus of the reform movement.

E. Hildegard's reply was lengthy and carefully reasoned. It is one of her most revealing letters.
   1. She effectively ignores Tengswich's argument from Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.
   2. Instead, she offers two logically ordered arguments, from the realms first of theology, then of political science.
   3. Hildegard agrees that Paul commands modesty in female comportment, but she points out that Paul demands this of married women, not of virgins.
   4. God made woman magnificent, and when she retains the full *viridity* of virginity, not submitting her body to any man, she deserves to celebrate her magnificent natural beauty.
   5. This is especially valid when she worships God with musical song.
   6. It is also valid if she is of noble birth, which is something conforming to the will of God, not merely some accidental convention.
   7. Then Hildegard moves to an exposition of her political theology, as perhaps we might call it.
   8. God, according to Hildegard, planned for the human race to have social stratification, just as he planned different species of animals.
   9. Each domesticated animal has its own proper function, and so does every condition of humankind.
   10. Each does best when it fulfills its role and does not irrationally try to become something else.
   11. She says: "It is not good for people to grab hold of a mountain which they cannot possibly move. Rather, they should stand in the valley, gradually learning of what they are capable."
   12. And, lest you think this is just Hildegard's discussable opinion, she ends the letter with: "These words do not come from a human being but from the Living Light. Let the one who hears see and believe where these words come from."
   13. This is the voice of the prophet; we should remember that prophets can be very difficult to deal with, as difficult for righteous idealists as they are for retrograde tyrants.

F. Hildegard's reaction was entirely typical of twelfth-century thought; Hildegard assumed, as did almost everyone else we know of in her time, that the differently privileged orders of human society were divinely ordained and should not be questioned or altered.

III. Hildegard's last major conflict was with the clergymen of the chapter of Mainz. It ended well for her but was a close call and required great courage in the last months of her life.
   A. Hildegard had permitted a noble knight to be buried in the cemetery at Rupertsberg, the sort of favor many medieval people valued highly.
   B. Some years previously, the knight had been excommunicated. Consequently, the members of the Mainz chapter demanded that the knight's cadaver be exhumed and interred outside consecrated ground.
   C. The aged Hildegard (then about eighty) was outraged. She claimed to have documentation that the knight had done penance and been absolved of his excommunication.
   D. The canons did not credit that documentation and replied by placing Rupertsberg under the interdict. That meant that no one there could receive the sacrament of the Eucharist and that no music could be sung or played there.
   E. Unfortunately for Hildegard, Archbishop Christian, who was also Chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire and the right hand of the aging Barbarossa, was across the Alps in Italy cementing the new peace between his emperor and Pope Alexander III.
   F. Hildegard had to fight this one with much less hierarchical support than she had been used to.
   G. Eventually, Archbishop Christian heard her appeals and decided in her favor, though his letter to her was not particularly friendly or admiring.

IV. Music was of supreme importance to Hildegard, both theoretically and in practice.
   A. Music, for Hildegard, was a branch of natural science, closely related to astronomy.
      1. She believed that music was generated by the planetary spheres. This had been standard scientific doctrine since the ancient Greeks.
      2. For Hildegard, there was also a spiritual harmony inseparably linked at the creation to the harmony of the spheres.
      3. Therefore, it is the proper job of the superiors of religious communities to compose music that will resonate with the divine plan.
   B. Hildegard took that responsibility upon herself by writing many hymns and the first-known musical drama (a psychomachia called the *Ordo Virtutum*, the *Play of the Virtues*).

C. No male or female in the twelfth century has yet been proven to have composed anywhere near as much as Hildegard.

1. The singing of the Divine Office was crucial to Hildegard: For her, to sing was to choose God, to convert from sin to virtue.
2. The musical notation Hildegard invented was strikingly original.
3. She wrote plainchant, as had all medieval West European composers before her; that is, her music was the monophonic development of a single melody.
4. Often, however, she seems to have been experimenting with new musical forms. At least some of her modern performers think so.
5. Hildegard liked exceptionally long melismas, sometimes dedicating more than a dozen notes to one syllable.
6. Music was the basis of Hildegard's monastic life, and it was the basic technique and means by which she taught her community of nuns.

D. In addition to this voluminous literary and musical production, Hildegard wrote the best, most vigorous musical drama of her age, the *Ordo Virtutum*.

Essential Reading and Recordings:

Fiona Bowie and Oliver Davies, eds., intro., *Hildegard of Bingen: Mystical Writings* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), introduction.

Barbara Newman, ed., trans., comm., intro., *Saint Hildegard of Bingen: Symphonia*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1998).

Hildegard Von Bingen, *Symphoniae: Geistliche Gesänge/Spiritual Songs*, recorded by Sequentia, BMG Classics, 1989, AFC9779.

———, *11,000 Virgins: Chants for the Feast of St. Ursula*, recorded by Anonymous 4, USA Production, 907200.

———, *Ordo Virtutum*, recorded by Sequentia, BMG Classics, 1990, 77051-2-RG.

———, *A Feather on the Breath of God: Sequences and Hymns by Abbess Hildegard of Bingen*, recorded by Gothic Voices with Emma Kirkby, Hyperion Records Limited, CDA66039.

Supplementary Reading:

Sabine Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen, 1098–1179: A Visionary Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998).

Questions to Consider:

1. What seems to you relevant today in the writings and example of Hildegard of Bingen?

2. Medieval Christian thought liked to call Mary the New Eve. How far did Hildegard agree with that contemporary commonplace?

Lecture Twelve

Eleanor's Lineage

Scope: We must tease out what we can about the family backgrounds of Heloise and Hildegarde, but we have rafters of information about Eleanor of Aquitaine. Hildegard and Heloise were noted as remarkably independent individuals whom we know through their own writings. Not Eleanor. Though Eleanor was sometimes mentioned with her daughters, she was always tied to a man: grandfather, father, husbands, sons. Even most historians who recorded her life have been far more fascinated by the men around her than by the woman herself. In this lecture, we survey Eleanor's patrilineal descent, which gave her the lordship of rich Aquitaine. Our story begins with Eleanor's epic grandfather, William IX (1071–1126), who was lord of a vast if loosely held domain that embraced most of southwestern France, from Poitiers and Limoges to the Pyrenees. Western Europe, for good or ill, owes its basic attitudes, and even vocabulary, about romantic love to William IX of Aquitaine, known as the first troubadour. He shocked the sensibilities of his culture by marrying his son and heir to the daughter of his live-in mistress. Their daughter Eleanor was born at least by 1124.

Outline

I. Eleanor's grandfather William IX was wild even for an age of powerful barons. He took the reins of Aquitaine as duke at the age of fifteen and immediately showed his capacity for wielding power.

- **A.** His lands were vast and lush. His Occitaine/Aquitainia was the land of the sun, influenced in matters of culture and art by the Hispano-Arab world.
- **B.** His was the world of flowing silks; the cold Parisian north, on the other hand, was the world of wools. William's liberal court was an axis to which those from the north and south were drawn.
- **C.** His notorious sexuality was part of his epic energy. His marital history was a mess.
- **D.** Neither wives nor the Church could govern him; he insisted on his independence from impinging controls, and he only really caved in when mortality threatened.
- **E.** At the age of sixteen, he made a good alignment but a bad choice when he married Ermengarde of Anjou.
- **F.** When she failed to produce an heir and showed ill temper about his women chasing, William had the marriage dissolved.
- **G.** He then met his match in the heiress-widow Philippa of Toulouse; through Philippa's blood claim to Toulouse, a huge county that adjoined Aquitaine on the southeast, William could fulfill his own territorial aspirations.
- **H.** By and large, William succeeded through guile rather than conflict. Though his personal prowess was never challenged, he generally preferred the sensual pleasures of peace to catastrophes of war.
- **I.** He temporized about going on crusade, but he did invite the pope to visit, and the pope accepted his invitation to spend the Christmas season at William's prestigious court at Poitiers.
  1. Philippa's uncle, Raymond of Toulouse, quickly fulfilled his crusade pledge, left Toulouse to his son Bertrand, and took an army that his chronicler said numbered 100,000 to the Holy Land.
  2. Raymond made clear his intention to establish his own dynasty in the lands across the sea called Outremer. He did so: the city of Tripoli.
  3. William waited until Raymond left, then in 1098, swiftly and unilaterally absorbed Toulouse into his properties.
  4. Philippa produced an heir in 1099, and a confident William mortgaged Toulouse to Bertrand to raise the funds necessary to go on crusade.
  5. The then-successful crusade held for William the promise of plunder, pleasure, spiritual cleansing, enhanced reputation, and above all, the shock of the new.

II. His crusade was, however, a catastrophe. He lost his men and found solace only as a guest in the lavish court of Antioch.

- **A.** The strategies of war had lost their interest; now, he was moved by the seductions of song.
- **B.** Eighteen months later, after a brief visit to Jerusalem, William was back in Aquitaine.
- **C.** From at least the time of his own grandfather, William V (r. 993–1030), the family court at Poitiers had been an important crossroads that included intellectuals and artists.
- **D.** William IX returned to this cultural matrix from the crusades filled with memories of Arabic brilliance and sophistication.

III. He responded deeply to secular and religious music, and he is the first important poet in any continental European vernacular language.

- **A.** As he did in all things, in music, he took and teased out what he wanted, and what he didn't find, he invented. He is the first of the troubadours.
- **B.** William also provided a starting point and sponsorship for those who shared a new sensibility about gallant romance.

C. William reveled not only in women but in wooing women, and in troubadour poetry and song, he invented a protocol and new language for loving.

IV. While William pursued his various crusades at home, a disillusioned duchess Philippa turned to the arms of the Church under the influence of a powerful preacher, Robert d'Arbrissel, who, in 1099, established nearby the great monastery of Fontevraud.

A. This joint foundation (for men and women) had an abbess as its head.

B. It maintained its importance for Eleanor's family (the Plantagenets) for centuries. It was very important to Eleanor personally.

C. William's public love affair with the improbably named Dangereuse, wife of his vassal the Viscount Aimery, came to a head in 1115 when he abducted Dangereuse and installed her in a tower he added to his own palace.

D. Philippa, having borne him two sons and five daughters, listened to his songs of amorous conquest, and watched him throw away her own lands, put up with it for about a year, then moved permanently to Fontevraud, where she found friendship, bizarrely, with William's first wife, now the widow Ermengarde.

E. William may actually have established at his castle at Niort a mock abbey of prostitutes in parody of Fontevraud. In any case, until his final days, he expressed much awe but showed little respect for either women or the Church.

F. In 1121, he arranged to have his son by Philippa marry his mistress's daughter Anor, shocking the sensibilities of everyone, it seems, except the young couple themselves.

G. Young William (who became William X) was physically gigantic and a man of prodigious appetites, but his quick temper and constant struggles with the Church kept him from enjoying the popularity of his father.

H. His greatest moment was one of profound humiliation before the righteous Bernard of Clairvaux, who demanded—and received—his submission.

I. Eleanor was probably born in 1124 (though some scholars think it may have been earlier, in 1122) and was named for her mother as *alia* Anor (the Other Anor). She knew her grandfather, William IX, briefly before his death in 1126. Her mother died when Eleanor was only six.

V. Eleanor's contentious father died at the peak of his pilgrimage to Compostella, in its great cathedral; his death on Good Friday of 1137 was a typically dramatic moment for a duke of Aquitaine.

A. William X died famous for his repentance, and his fame was etched in a crusading song by the great troubadour Macabru.

B. Before William left on pilgrimage to the edge of Spain, he had assembled his vassals to swear homage to Eleanor in the event of his death.

C. He had made his will appointing King Louis VI of France (his overlord) Eleanor's guardian, knowing that Louis would marry Eleanor to his son Prince Louis, the heir to the throne.

D. William also made a brilliant provision that honored the Aquitainian prerogatives of women: Eleanor's lands could not be incorporated in France but remained the sole inheritance of Eleanor and her heirs.

E. This, some say, still galls the Gauls.

Essential Reading:

Georges Duby, *Women of the Twelfth Century*. 3 vols. I: *Eleanor of Aquitaine and Six Others*, II: *Remembering the Dead*, III: *Eve and the Church* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

Samuel N. Rosenberg, Margaret Switten, and Gérard Le Vot, eds., *Songs of the Troubadours and Trouvères: An Anthology of Poems and Melodies* (New York: Garland, 1998).

Supplementary Reading:

Marion Meade, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Biography* (New York: Dutton, 1977).

D. D. R. Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1993).

Alison Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life* (New York: Ballantine, 2000).

Questions to Consider:

1. Does *fin' amors* elevate or denigrate women?
2. Did Eleanor see echoes of her spectacular grandfather in Henry II?

Timeline for Heloise

1079 ..... Birth of Abelard.

1101? ..... Birth of Heloise.

1113–1117 ..... Abelard dominant in the world of Paris schools.

1116? ..... Heloise brought from Argenteuil to the home of her uncle Fulbert in Paris.

1116–1117? ..... Exchange of love letters between Heloise and Abelard. Secret love affair, followed by public scandal. The birth of their son, Astralabe; clandestine marriage. Heloise sent by Abelard to Argenteuil. Fulbert's vengeance: Abelard's castration.

1118–1119 ..... Heloise and Abelard take religious vows.

1129 ..... Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis appropriates abbey of Argenteuil, where Heloise was prioress, and expels its nuns. Abelard invites Heloise and the nuns loyal to her to the Paraclete, where they establish a new community.

1130–1134 ..... Establishment of the collaboration of Heloise and Abelard at the Paraclete. Composition of much of the Paraclete "corpus," which is largely completed by 1136/1137.

1131 ..... November 28: Letter of Innocent II confirming the prioress Heloise and her nuns in possession of the Paraclete, the earliest dated reference to her.

1131–1132? ..... Abelard writes his *Historia calamitatum*.

1142 ..... April 21: Abelard dies. Founding of Sainte-Madeleine-de-Traînel, first of the Paraclete's dependencies.

1143–1144? ..... Peter the Venerable announces Abelard's death in a letter of consolation to Heloise.

1144? ..... Heloise solicits Peter's aid in finding a position for her and Abelard's son, Astralabe.

1147–1151? ..... Founding of the Paraclete's second dependency, the abbey of La Pommeraye.

1153–1163 ..... Founding of the final four dependencies: Laval, Noëfort, Saint-Flavit, and Boran, or Saint-Martin-aux-Nonnettes.

1163/1164? ..... May 16: Heloise's death.

Timeline for Hildegard of Bingen

1098 ..... Hildegard's birth.

1106 ..... Hildegard entrusted to Jutta of Sponheim.

1112–1115 ..... Hildegard takes her vows.

1136 ..... Death of Jutta of Sponheim. The nuns elect Hildegard as their leader.

1141 ..... Hildegard begins to write *Scivias*.

1146–1147 ..... Hildegard exchanges letters with Bernard of Clairvaux.

1147–1148 ..... Pope Eugenius III reads from *Scivias* and authorizes Hildegard to continue her work.

1150 ..... Hildegard moves to Rupertsberg.

1151–1158 ..... Composition of the *Natural History* and of *Causes and Cures*.

1151 ..... Finishes *Scivias*.

1152 ..... Frederick I (Barbarossa) is elected king.

1153 ..... Hildegard meets Frederick I at Ingelheim.

1158–1163 ..... Composition of the *Book of Life's Merits*.

1159 ..... Beginning of the eighteen-year-long schism between the papacy and Frederick I.

1160 ..... Hildegard undertakes her first preaching tour.

1161 ..... Second preaching tour.

1161–1163 ..... Third preaching tour.

1163 ..... Hildegard begins the *Book of Divine Works*.

1165 ..... Hildegard founds the community at Eibingen. She writes to Henry II of England and his wife, Queen Eleanor.

1170 ..... Composition of the *Life of St. Disibod*.

1170–1171 ..... Fourth preaching tour.

1173 ..... Hildegard's secretary, Volmar, dies.

1173–1174 ..... Completion of the *Book of Divine Works*.

1174–1175 ..... The monk Gottfried arrives from Disibodenberg. He begins to write the *Life of Hildegard* and completes Book One.

1175 ..... Guibert of Gernbloux begins a correspondence with Hildegard. She sends him her *Book of Life's Merits* and *Songs*.

1176 ..... Gottfried dies.

1177 ..... Guibert of Gembloux becomes Hildegard's secretary.

1178 ..... Interdict imposed on Rupertsberg by diocese of Mainz.

1179 ..... Interdict lifted by Archbishop Christian of Mainz; September 17: Hildegard dies.

1180–1190 ..... Theodoric of Echternach completes Books Two and Three of the *Life of Hildegard*.

Timeline for Eleanor of Aquitaine

1086-1127 ..... Aquitaine ruled by William IX.

1100 ..... Fontevraud founded.

1122? ..... Eleanor born.

1136 ..... Easter: Eleanor inherits Poitou and Aquitaine on her father's death. July: Marries Louis, son of King Louis VI, who dies later in the month. August: Coronation of Louis and Eleanor.

1145 ..... Birth of Marie.

1147–1148 ..... Louis and Eleanor go on crusade.

1150 ..... Birth of Alix.

1151 ..... March 21: Annulment of Louis and Eleanor's marriage. May 18: Marriage of Henry and Eleanor.

1152 ..... Birth of William. Death of Bernard of Clairvaux (canonized 1174).

1153 ..... October 25: Death of King Stephen. December 19: Coronation of Henry and Eleanor.

1154 ..... Birth of Henry III.

1155 ..... Birth of Matilda.

1156 ..... Birth of Richard.

1157 ..... Birth of Geoffrey.

1161 ..... Birth of Eleanor.

1162 ..... June 3: Becket consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury.

1166 ..... Birth of John.

1170 ..... June 14: Prince Henry crowned as king presumptive. December 29: Becket murdered at Canterbury (canonized 1172).

1173 ..... Eleanor begins decade-long captivity.

1176 ..... Death of Rosamond Clifford, Henry's mistress.

1177 ..... September: Louis dies and is succeeded by his son, Philip Augustus.

1183 ..... Death of Henry, the Young King.

1186 ..... Death of Geoffrey.

1189 ..... July 6: Death of King Henry. July: Death of Matilda. September 3: Coronation of Richard.

1190 ..... Richard leaves on crusade.

1191 ..... October 9: Richard is captured by Duke Leopold of Austria.

1193 ..... January: Eleanor is informed of Richard's captivity; she pays his ransom.

1194 ..... Richard is released.

1197 ..... Death of Louis and Eleanor's daughter Alix.

1198 ..... Death of Marie of Champagne.

1199 ..... April 6: Death of Richard. May 25: Coronation of John.

1204 ..... April 1: Death of Eleanor.

Timeline for Joan of Arc

1412? ..... 6 January?, Domrémy: Joan's birth.

1424? ..... Domrémy: Joan hears God's voice.

1428 ..... May 13: Vaucouleurs. First meeting with Robert de Baudricourt. ?: Toul. Joan is denounced before the authorities for breaking a promise of marriage, which she denies.

1429 ..... Sunday, March 6, Chinon: The king receives Joan. Thursday, March 10, Chinon: Interrogation session. Tuesday, March 22, Poitiers: Joan sends an ultimatum to the king of England (the "Letter to the English"). Saturday, April 2: A horseman is sent to find the sword of Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois. Sunday, May 8, Orléans: The English raise the siege; thanksgiving procession throughout the city. Saturday, June 18, Battle of Patay: "The gentle king will have today the greatest victory he has ever had. And my counsel has told me that they will all be ours" (deposition of John of Alençon at the rehabilitation trial). Sunday, July 17: Anointing of Charles VII in the cathedral of Reims. Tuesday, September 8: Attack on Paris at the Saint-Honoré Gate. Thursday, September 10: The order is given to abandon the attack on Paris.

1430 ..... Tuesday, May 23: Capture of Joan of Arc before Compiègne. Saturday, December 23: Joan arrives at Rouen.

1431 ..... Tuesday, January 9: First day of the trial; inquest undertaken at Domrémy and Vaucouleurs. Wednesday, February 21: First public session; Joan is presented to the court. Wednesday, May 30: Joan is burned alive in the Old Marketplace at Rouen.

1449 ..... Charles VII requests that Pope Nicholas V authorize a new trial for Joan.

1455 ..... Pope Calixtus III authorizes a new trial.

1456 ..... July 7: The trial adjourns, declaring the nullity of the 1431 trial on the basis of procedural flaws.

Glossary

Anchoress/anchorite: Nun who lived ascetically in a cell, which was often built against the wall of a church or an abbey.

Angevin dynasty (ruled England 1154–1399): English kings whose line originated in the tenth century from Count Fulk V of Anjou. A descendent of Fulk, Geoffrey IV inherited Anjou, married Matilda, the daughter of Henry I of England, and conquered Normandy. Their son, Henry II, became the first Angevin or Plantagenet king.

Apocalyptic: Interpretation of the Bible about the radical end of the world as we know it; millennial movements predicting the immediate end of the world as we know it.

Aquitaine: Territory between the Pyrenees and the Loire Valley that, during the twelfth century, effectively became an English possession as Eleanor of Aquitaine changed thrones. Later, the area was hotly contested by her sons, Richard and John. It was confiscated from the Plantagenets in 1204 by the French King Philip II but reinstated as a Plantagenet fief by Louis IX in 1259. In 1360, it was detached from France and annexed to England by King Edward III. In 1453, it was finally reconquered by the French at the Battle of Castillon.

Argenteuil: The great nunnery close to Paris at which Heloise most likely spent her early life and from which she was expelled as head when the Abelard-haters at St. Denis assumed its control.

Armagnac: A region of southern France in Aquitaine; its lord, Count Bernard VII of Armagnac, became an intensely loyal partisan of the Valois cause, especially against what he saw as Burgundian treachery. The name was quickly extended to the entire pro-Valois party, not only those from southern France (which was, in fact, one of the areas of the kingdom most solidly supportive of Charles VII). Joan of Arc was, typically, insulted by English soldiers on the ramparts of Orléans as the "Whore of the Armagnacs."

Benedictine: Family of monastic communities following the Rule of St. Benedict (480?–547?) and its members.

Capetian dynasty (ruled from 987–1324): The royal house of France of which Louis VII was a member. Named after Hugh Capet (987–996), the French king after whom this dynasty monopolized the throne.

Celibacy: Always an ideal in earlier Christian centuries, it became a legal requirement for all priests in the Western Church in the twelfth century.

Chinon: French town in the Loire Valley where Joan of Arc met the dauphin.

Domrémy: Birthplace of Joan of Arc, a village on the Meuse River.

Eibingen: Priory founded in 1165 by Hildegard of Bingen when her abbey at Rupertsberg became too crowded.

Epistola consolatatoria: Letter of consolation—subject, like all classical *epistolae*, to strict literary conventions.

Fin' amors: Ideal and practice of heterosexual love, first celebrated by the troubadour poets of southern France.

Fontevraud: Great monastery established in 1099 by Robert d'Arbrissel as a joint foundation for monks and nuns, Fontevraud was endowed during much of the twelfth century by Eleanor of Aquitaine. It remained important to the Plantagenets even after Eleanor's death because its church became the burial ground for much of the family. Eleanor, Henry, and their son Richard are buried there.

Great Schism (1378–1415): Confused time in the Church; the years of the Great Schism saw popes and antipopes come and go as each claimed papal authority for himself, then excommunicated his rivals. The intensely religious population who depended on a single pope to dispense religious truth, as well as to counterbalance the power of the crowns, knew not in who or what to believe. This dilemma seems to have conjured up a pervasive societal anxiety in which visionaries, such as Joan of Arc, thrived by providing some sort of steadfast direction.

Hundred Years War (1337–1453): Dispute primarily between the Valois and Plantagenet dynasties over the crown of France. This war saw the end of "chivalric" warfare as all sectors of the population, rather than just the warriors, experienced the horrors of wartime violence. Joan of Arc's support of the Valois claim helped lead that dynasty to victory and, as a consequence, define France (and England) as whole nations.

Laity: General membership of the church; simply, non-clergy.

Langue d'oc: Language of southern France (closely related to modern Catalan).

Langue d'oïl: Language of northern France (the ancestor to modern French).

Matriarchal: Structure in which women, especially mother figures, are central to the process of decision-making.

Mentalité: French word for the general ideas and attitudes that support a society's basic ideology.

Midons: "My lord," a term used by troubadours for the ladies who were their love interests—and sometimes for their feudal lords.

Misogyny: Hatred of women.

Monastic: Of or relating to persons living in cloistered seclusion, usually behind the walls of a monastery, and following one or another rule of life.

Paraclete: Abbey in southwestern Champagne founded by Abelard and subsequently managed by Heloise from approximately 1132–1163.

Plainchant: Monophonic (one melody) form of medieval music, predominantly vocal, but sometimes making use of instrumental accompaniment.

Plantagenet: See **Angevin dynasty**.

Prioress: Head of a priory or a nun in an abbey whose office is subordinate to that of an abbess.

Rupertsberg: Abbey to which Hildegard of Bingen moved in 1150 and of which she served as the abbess until her death. Rupertsberg burned in the Thirty Years War (1632).

Siege of Orléans (October 1428–May 1429): Prolonged contest between the French and English forces for the city of Orléans; Joan of Arc's involvement proved instrumental to French victory. It was her rallying and direction of the troops and their subsequent brilliant performance that made her reputation as an inspired commander.

Troubadour: Love-poet of southern France from the early twelfth century; Duke William IX of Aquitaine is often called the first troubadour.

Valois dynasty (ruled from 1328–1589): The French dynasty that ruled for seven generations after the death of the last Capetian monarch. For much of the time of their reign, the Valois found themselves in contest with the Plantagenets.

Biographical Notes

Peter Abelard (1079–1142). Scholar, teacher, lover, and letter writer, Abelard is particularly remembered in popular culture for his seduction and renunciation of Heloise. Secretly marrying his student after impregnating her, Abelard felt the wrath of her family rather profoundly when her uncle Fulbert sent men to castrate him. The blade of the knife had the particular effect of leading Abelard to forsake Heloise for the cloister. He became a monk and, in time, a great theologian, whose romantic sensibility and love for Heloise endured, though their physical relationship did not. In his *Historia calamitatum*, Abelard confessed his tumultuous past in writing. This work, along with the preserved correspondence between the abbess Heloise and his similarly monastic self, now defines Abelard as much as his influential dogma of intentionalism and religious condemnations.

Astrolabius/Astrolabe. The product of Abelard and Heloise's renowned relationship who, aside from his "love-child-of-famous-people" status and similarly remarkable name, goes mostly unnoted in the books of history.

Thomas Becket (1118–1170). Initially a friend and advisor to King Henry II, nominated by Henry and approved by the pope as Archbishop of Canterbury. When he assumed England's highest ecclesiastic position as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162, Becket shifted his allegiance from the crown to the Church. The archbishop was now Henry's archenemy. Their power struggle resulted in Becket's exile in 1164. In 1170, Henry and he managed to reconcile tentatively, and Becket returned to England and his ecclesiastical post. However, while in exile, he had excommunicated the bishops of London and Salisbury for their support of King Henry. Back in England, Becket still refused to absolve the bishops while also opposing the coronation of the young Prince Henry by the Archbishop of York. For these reasons, the elder Henry became so infuriated that he supposedly shouted what inadvertently became the death-sentence for his former friend; ranting, he asked, "Who will rid me of this impertinent priest?!" The answer came when four of Henry's knights stormed into the cathedral at Canterbury and murdered its recently returned archbishop in front of many witnesses. Becket's death did not reflect well on the king, who was punished with public penance and the painful knowledge that he had made a martyr out of his rival. Becket was swiftly canonized as a saint.

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153). Deeply respected Cistercian abbot and founder of the monastery of Clairvaux, Bernard's influence was felt not only ecclesiastically and politically but also personally, in the lives of abbess Heloise, Hildegard of Bingen, and Eleanor of Aquitaine. He was a letter and sermon writer, as well as the author of many treatises. Today, it is the work that Bernard left unfinished at his death, called the *Sermones super Cantica canticorum*, that, besides the conflicted conservatism of his actions, most defines his insight. In these sermons, he writes of the religious, as well as the literary, merit of the Song

of Songs, revealing his own deeply aesthetic ideals while reveling in the luxuriousness of the Songs' language and content. His diverse admiration of these Songs, then, seems to mirror his appreciation for these very different women.

Pierre Cauchon (1371?–1442). The highly educated bishop of Beauvais who served as Joan's tireless prosecutor. A native of Reims and pro-English partisan, he is now seen by some as a myopic but ethical professional.

Charles VII (1403–1461, r. 1422–1461). "Dauphin Charles" before being crowned King of France with the help of Joan of Arc, Charles is particularly remembered for his abandonment of Joan during her condemnation and, later, years after her death, for his attempt at reparation when he undertook her nullification trial. His reign, however, did have brighter moments than this. In his time, he was known as "the Victorious" because his reforms of the military bought about the creation of a well-formed, permanent army while his mediation between the church of France and the papacy successfully assigned more powers to the former. Charles VII attracted outstanding and loyal talent, which is why another of his epithets is "the Well-Served."

Rosamund Clifford (d. 1176). Known as "Rosamund the Fair," she was Henry II's mistress from 1173 to the time of her death, which was rumored to have been a premature one arranged by Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Jacques Darc (1375-1431). Father of Joan of Arc, Jacques Darc was married to Isabelle Romée, Joan's mother. He was frequently chosen by the villagers of Domrémy to act as their leader and spokesman.

Dietrich of Echternach. Monk who completed the biography of Hildegard of Bingen that was begun by Gottfried of Disibodenberg.

Earl of Warwick (1382–1439). As the English regent of France for the boy-king Henry VI, the Earl of Warwick bought Joan of Arc from the Duke of Burgundy after his men took her captive at Compiègne. His desire to see Joan condemned as a witch and burned propelled her ecclesiastical trial.

Elizabeth of Schonau (c. 1129–1165). The mystic Benedictine nun who maintained a correspondence with fellow visionary Hildegard of Bingen.

Pope Eugenius III (d. 1153). The pope who encouraged both Hildegard of Bingen and Eleanor of Aquitaine by urging the abbess to continue her writing and advising the queen to remain with her first husband, Louis VII.

Frederick I "Barbarossa" (1123–1190, r. 1152–1190). Holy Roman Emperor, as well as German king and king of Italy and Burgundy, Frederick earned his Italian appellation "Redbeard" when he invaded northern Italy in 1157. Two years later, a new pope, Alexander III, was elected. As pope (1159–1189), Alexander allied himself with Milan and other rebellious Italian city-states and, therefore, against Frederick. As Frederick asserted himself as Holy Roman

Emperor, the power struggle between the pope and himself so intensified that he rallied bishops to elect three different antipopes in succession. In 1154, Frederick sought the formal counsel of Hildegard of Bingen, who had written unsolicited letters of advice to him before this time. She recommended that he moderate anti-papal policies. Though he didn't immediately do so, when he was defeated at the Battle of Legnano in 1176, Frederick finally heeded her warnings and reconciled himself with Pope Alexander. In 1190, Frederick Barbarossa died while on the Third Crusade.

Fulbert. Maternal uncle and protector of Heloise, who nurtured her intelligence and reputation by first hiring the well-known scholar Peter Abelard to tutor her, then ordering Abelard's castration after learning of his niece's seduction and consequent pregnancy by her teacher.

Count Geoffrey of Anjou (1113–1151). Father of King Henry II and husband of Henry I's daughter Matilda, Geoffrey was called "the Handsome." Perhaps his beauty played an instrumental role in his rumored extramarital seduction of Eleanor.

Gilles de Laval, Baron de Rais (1404–1440). One of the richest men in Europe and a loyal follower of Joan of Arc, Gilles de Rais met a similar fate to hers when he was executed on the charges of witchcraft and perversions. This man, for his sexual assaults and murders of as many as 150 children, has been associated with the wife-killing Bluebeard of French folklore.

Gottfried of Disibodenberg (d. 1176). Began a biography of Hildegard of Bingen, but died before its completion in the 1180s. (See **Dietrich of Echternach**.)

Guibert of Gembloux. Hildegard of Bingen's secretary from 1175 until her death.

Henry II (1133–1189, r. 1154–1189). Son of Queen Matilda by Count Geoffrey of Anjou, Henry controlled Anjou and Normandy and married Eleanor of Aquitaine before King Stephen recognized him as heir to the English throne in 1152. Henry maintained a passionate though not always amicable relationship with his wife. Together, they had at least eight children (William, Henry, Mathilda, Richard, Geoffrey, Eleanor, Joanna, and John), one of whom, William, the eldest, died at a young age. Nevertheless, the pair plus seven was enough to make a rather riotous household even when Henry further winnowed his clan by imprisoning his wife in a tower for fifteen years.

Hersinde. Mother of Heloise, about whom not much is known. Some suspect that she was the daughter of the noble Montmorenay clan.

Hildebert. Father of Hildegard of Bingen. A gentleman of substance, father of ten children, four of whom entered the clergy. (See **Mechtild**.)

John I "Lackland" (1167–1216, r. 1199–1216). Youngest son of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II, John was called "Lackland" because, unlike his brothers, his father overlooked him when partitioning his inheritance among his sons. For this reason, he had a particularly contentious relationship with his brothers. After Richard ascended to the English throne, then promptly abandoned England for the Holy Land, John tried but failed to overthrow Richard's administration. On his brother's death, when he finally became king, John acted tyrannically and was excommunicated from the Church. However, for him, the most disastrous event of his reign proved to be the rebellion of many of his barons, who then forcefully compelled John to sign the Magna Carta, the treaty that entirely reformed the powers of the monarchy, on June 15, 1215.

John, Count of Dunois (1402–1468). Illegitimate son of Duke Louis of Orléans, John was generally known as "the Bastard of Orléans." John and his cousin, the young dauphin Charles, were reared together. An accomplished knight and courageous captain, John was, at twenty-five, the formal commander of the French forces at the Siege of Orléans, where he fought and triumphed alongside Joan of Arc. While his half-brother, Duke Charles of Orleans, was a prisoner in England, John was the head of the House of Orléans. Later, he was made Count of Dunois. John helped to clear Joan's name at her nullification trial in 1456 by eloquently attesting to her bravery.

John, Duke of Alençon (1407–1476). A nobleman who was a faithful supporter and may have been a romantic admirer of Joan of Arc. He fought at Joan's side at Paris and gave compelling testimony about her at the nullification trial. His wife was the sister of Duke Charles of Orléans and half-sister of the Bastard of Orléans.

Jutta of Sponheim (d. 1136). Daughter of the local count of Sponheim, Jutta was the anchoress at the abbey of St. Disibod, who took the eight-year-old Hildegard of Bingen into her care, then mentored her for the next thirty years. She was so well respected that when her protégé took the veil in 1115, the esteemed bishop Otto of Bamberg presented it to her.

Louis VII (1120–1180, r. 1137–1180). Second son of Louis VI, Louis VII's kingship fell to him unexpectedly when his older brother, the intended heir to the throne, died. Thanks to arrangements made by his father, young Louis, at age seventeen, married Eleanor of Aquitaine in a move to secure her lands for France. Days later, his father was dead and he ascended the throne. Louis VII was a serious and devout man, whose religious zest proved a hindrance when conscience came into conflict with political stratagem. He was particularly devastated when, by his command, French forces stormed Vitry and, in the process, burnt the village church in which the peasants had taken refuge. In an effort to atone, Louis embarked on crusade to the Holy Land with his wife in tow. Broken in spirit, he could never gain his beloved Eleanor's spirited affection. They did manage to conceive two daughters (Marie of Champagne and Alix) before officially annulling their marriage on the grounds of consanguinity.

Louis married twice more and his son, Philip II Augustus, assumed the throne on his death.

Mechtild and **Hildebert**. Parents of Hildegard of Bingen, whose devotion to the church was strikingly evidenced in their commitment of four of their children (Hildegard, Clementia, Hugo, and Roricus) to the clergy.

Peter the Venerable (c. 1092–1156). A former student of Abelard, Robert of Montboiser took the monastic name Peter and, over time, as the abbot (1122–1156) of the great Burgundian monastery of Cluny, earned his "venerable" reputation. Because he was, perhaps, the most powerful ecclesiastical figure in Europe during his lifetime, he was able to eventually reverse the condemnation of Abelard by the Council of Sens and save his teacher from the certain catastrophe of confronting Pope Eugenius III. Later, Peter supported abbess Heloise in several negotiations.

Philip II Augustus (1165–1223, r. 1180–1223). Son of Louis VII and a descendent of Charlemagne through his mother, Adèle of Champagne, Philip Augustus exhibited the imperial finesse of his famous forefather by fusing feudal France into a nation. Using mostly shrewd politics rather than rude force, he managed almost to quadruple the size of his realm by seizing the lands of England's Angevin dynasty in France and, thus, subjugating the brood of his father's first wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. By the end of this Capetian king's reign, with the exceptions of the territories constituting Brittany, Burgundy, Champagne, Flanders, and Toulouse, the domain of modern France was composed. In addition, Philip Augustus is credited with founding the central bureaucracy of French government; he formally reassigned administrative authority from the feudal lords, who directly collected revenue, to members of the bourgeoisie, who were on salary to do such things directly for the crown. Ironically, the seemingly progressive Philip Augustus was truthfully the ultimate feudal overlord.

Raymond of Antioch (c. 1097–1149). Raymond was the uncle of Eleanor, with whom she is purported to have had an affair while on crusade with Louis VII. During her time in Antioch, she appears to have developed a fierce enough devotion to this man that her departure from the city had to be physically compelled by her husband. Fortunately for Louis, Raymond was killed in combat a short while later.

Richard I "the Lionheart" (1157–1199, r. 1189–1199). Son of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II, otherwise known as "the Lionheart." Richard spent his young life in contest for power with his father. Advised and favored by his mother, he ascended to the throne after Henry II's death, but spent little time enjoying his kingdom of England, choosing instead to join the noble ranks of the Third Crusade. Richard left his kingdom in the able hands of his mother, who later was compelled to pay an enormous ransom for him when he was captured

and imprisoned by Duke Leopold of Austria. Today, Richard is distinguished more by his valor and chivalry than by his prudence.

Richardis of Stade (d. 1152). The nun at the Disibodenberg who, along with Volmar, acted as Hildegard's secretary. A noblewoman of high standing, Richardis left Hildegard to become abbess of a new nunnery near Bremen.

Robert of Baudricourt (1395–1454). The captain of Vaucouleurs and, later, lord of Baudricourt, Robert was the loyal supporter of Dauphin Charles and was able to secure Joan of Arc's meeting with the dauphin after she convinced him of the legitimacy of her mission.

Isabelle Romée (1380–1458). Mother of Joan of Arc and wife of Jacques Darc, she earned her last name by her ardor for going on pilgrimage.

Stephen (ca. 1096–1154, r. 1135–1154). The king of England, first cousin to Queen Matilda, who fought him for the royal title. It was Matilda's son, Henry II, who succeeded him because his own son, Eustace of Blois, had died.

Suger (ca. 1081–1151). Abbot of St. Denis and highest royal advisor of both Louis VI and Louis VII, Suger negotiated the marriage/merger of Eleanor to the younger Louis. He counseled the couple to stay together through their private and political problems. His effectiveness as an advisor became evident when Louis VII petitioned for the marriage to be annulled shortly after Suger's death. Suger served as regent of France while Louis and Eleanor were on the Second Crusade.

Pope Urban II (1042–1099). The instigator of the crusades who is most noted for his call at the Council of Clermont (1095) to fight the "infidels."

Volmar (d. 1173). Monk who, with the assistance of Richardis of Stade, acted as secretary to Abbess Hildegard of Bingen.

William IX "the Troubadour" (1071–1126). The Duke of Aquitaine and grandfather of Eleanor, William was a lusty and sensual man. He married first Ermengarde of Anjou, with whom he had no heirs, then Philippa of Toulouse, with whom he conceived Eleanor's father, William X. Later, looking for intrigues more than spiritual renewal, William undertook a crusade, though it proved disastrous. He was a poet and a lover more than a warrior and is particularly remembered for being the first troubadour.

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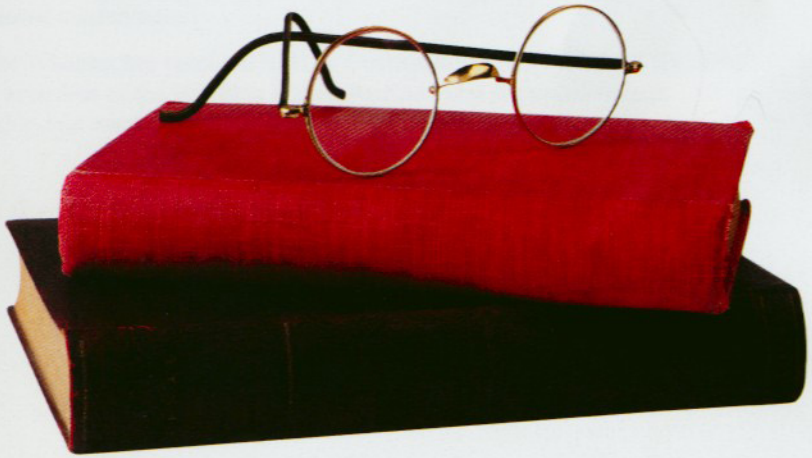

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Lecture Thirteen

Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine, Queen of France

Scope: The thirteen-year-old Eleanor became a great heiress in her own right on the death of her father. King Louis (1077–1137) moved swiftly to secure her marriage to his son and heir, the seventeen-year-old Louis—who had been crowned in 1131 at Reims—in late July of 1137. He sent his highest royal advisor, Abbot Suger of St.-Denis, to Bordeaux to secure the marriage, and he made sure that the ceremony and oaths emphasized the subordination of Eleanor's Aquitaine to the king of France. Only days later, Louis VI unexpectedly died, and another ceremony, held at Poitiers, now confirmed Eleanor and Louis VII (1120–1180; r 1137–1180) as the new king and queen of France. They were married for almost fifteen years. Chroniclers said that Louis loved Eleanor, but it was later rumored that she resented him. The marriage seemed privately and politically troubled from its early days.

Outline

I. Eleanor, it is now thought, was a mere thirteen when she inherited Aquitaine. (This new information comes to us thanks to Prof. Andrew Lewis, who is publishing these findings in a book I have just co-edited entitled *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* and who argues that Eleanor was born in 1124, not 1122 as previously presumed.) Eleanor's background and the few facts that are known of her childhood provide perspective for understanding her interests and aims as an adult.

A. She was the first daughter and second child of William X of Aquitaine and his first wife, Anor (or Ænor) of Châtellerault.

B. She was the granddaughter of William IX of Aquitaine, the mocking, cynical, duke-poet and crusader, and womanizer.

C. As a child, Eleanor must have known her grandfather, though he died when she was still very young. She may not have remembered him, but she surely heard talk of him and his exploits, and she, her parents, and her elder brother William were under his authority at the beginning of her life.

D. William X, Eleanor's father, was less flamboyant than his own father and was known chiefly for his enormous appetite. As this suggests, he was no ascetic; he had two bastard sons and, after the death of his first wife in 1130, married again. Nonetheless, he was remembered not for his pursuit of women but rather as a faithful son of the church, cowed and humbled by Bernard of Clairvaux in 1125. On April 9, 1137, Good Friday, he died on pilgrimage to Santiago of Compostella, where he was buried before the church's main altar.

E. Eleanor and her sister Alice Petronilla were left orphans and alone; their elder brother had died in the same year as their mother in 1130.

F. Before departing for Spain, however, their father had provided his daughters and his lands with a powerful guardian, Louis VI, king of France (c. 1077–1137, r. 1108–1137).

1. Louis VI shrewdly decided that his son, namesake, and heir (who had been crowned in 1131 at Reims) should marry Eleanor.
2. From this decision unfolded the chain of events that led, proximately, to the subordination of Aquitaine to France and England and, finally, to the long wars of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that resulted in 1453 in the fall of Bordeaux and the territory's definitive incorporation into the kingdom of France. In the short run, the move was advantageous to both Eleanor and Louis.

II. We know nothing with certainty of Eleanor's youth, but we can presume it to have been led in a colorful court—full of visitors from many cultures, abundant with elegant varieties of food and clothing, sounded with music and amusing speech—given the character of her family.

A. We also don't know whether or how she was educated.

B. But we do know that her father explicitly allocated the Aquitaine for her and her heirs as a separate territory not to be annexed into one entity with France.

C. Leaving his father ill in Paris, the young Louis, then seventeen, proceeded southward with Abbot Suger of St.-Denis and a host of other "heroes." In late July, he and Eleanor were married at Bordeaux.

D. With Louis, Eleanor was crowned with the royal diadem in a ceremony in which a novel coronation *ordo* emphasized the subordination of Aquitaine and Burgundy to the king of France.

E. On August 1, Louis VI died. On August 8, another ceremony was held at Poitiers, where a second coronation rite was performed. Orderic Vitalis reports that by this coronation, "Louis obtained the kingdom of the Franks and the duchy of Aquitaine, which none of his ancestors had held."

F. The marriage was a great coup for the French Capetian dynasty.

1. The marriage reemphasized Eleanor's status as a lady rather than an independent lord—that is, in the medieval scheme of gender-power relations, she was relegated to the position of lady in relation to her lordly husband.
2. But Eleanor remained active as queen and duchess of the Aquitaine along with Louis, though he did not prove very successful with her people.
3. Was the marriage appealing to Eleanor? We know nothing of her original response to Louis.

Table of Contents

Medieval Heroines in History and Legend
Part II

Medieval Heroines in History and Legend

Scope:

This course looks at some varieties of the heroic life as it was lived by four actual medieval women. Each of these women had grand ambitions, profound intelligence, and dramatic achievements, and each of these women still has her measure of fame and infamy. Interestingly, three of our four subjects' lives overlapped in time in the twelfth century. The twelfth-century German abbess Hildegard of Bingen lived the dramatic life of a prophet who brought to her voluminous writings and preaching a rare ecological sense of life's wholeness; in these lectures, we discuss Hildegard as the last flowering of antique learning. Her personal courage, as a passionate speaker for clerical and imperial reform, give her special interest in our own day. Heloise is another twelfth-century abbess, but she is better known to us as the consummate Parisian, a spectacular lover who preferred (as she said) to be Abelard's mistress than his wife. Her letters passionately overflow with the new knowledge of her day, a mode of philosophic thought that she and Abelard were together inventing. Heloise is a harbinger of Europe's new day. The third twelfth-century figure is Eleanor of Aquitaine, duchess, twice queen, and mother of at least ten children. She has captivated all later ages, though we discuss ways in which she remains a strangely elusive epic figure. Finally, we consider the girl-hero Joan of Arc, a fifteenth-century peasant who rose to lead her king's soldiers to a daring victory over their enemies. Each of these women is larger than life, powerfully projecting the past into the future.

4. Did she love Louis in these early days? She was barely beyond childhood, and the chroniclers don't record her initial responses to the new king. It was said later that she found him monk-like.
5. He, however, was reputed to have adored her. Was the question of love even relevant? For this society, probably not.

III. If we cannot judge much about Eleanor's affection for Louis, we can see his failures to pursue successful ducal policies on her behalf.

A. Louis failed in his attempts to secure Eleanor's claim to Toulouse. (Eleanor's claim was through her grandmother Philippa, whose parents were Count William of Toulouse and Emma of Mortain).

B. Louis also failed to secure a fast, peaceful resolution in his war with Champagne.

1. The war was provoked by the scandalous marriage of Eleanor's sister Petronilla to Count Raoul of Vermandois, who had deserted his wife.
2. Eleanor backed a faction at court that arranged a dubious annulment for Raoul and got some pliable members of the clergy to marry Raoul and Petronilla, who thus became Countess of Vermandois.
3. Leaders of Church reform, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, were outraged at what they saw as a cynically corrupt violation of canon law.
4. The mighty family of Raoul's discarded wife was outraged and went to war to avenge her (and their) honor.
5. In 1142, Louis's forces in Champagne committed several unspeakable atrocities, including torching the village of Vitry.
6. It was only in 1144, when all France came to see the new gothic wonder of Abbot Suger's new chevet at St.-Denis, that Louis made a firm peace with the Church and the Count of Champagne.

IV. In 1145, Eleanor's first child, her daughter Marie, was born.

A. Was that enough to bring contentment or even peace to the young couple?

B. We already see a change in attitude toward inheritance—from south to north, from Occitania to France. Louis needed a male heir to secure his throne. Eleanor's proof of fecundity now needed to be repeated, this time by the provision of a male heir.

V. For Eleanor, was it better to be queen of France by virtue of marriage than duchess of Aquitaine in her own right? Not until Elizabeth I of England several centuries later would another European woman face the question of marriage with so much riding on the answer.

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Questions to Consider:

1. Was Eleanor merely a pawn in a Capetian plan for territorial expansionism?
2. Was there anything except duty that bound Eleanor and Louis together?

Lecture Fourteen

Eleanor and the Politics of Estrangement

Scope: Louis and Eleanor had both heard Bernard preach the Second Crusade at Vézelay in 1146, and by June of 1147, the royal cavalcade fulfilled its pledge and set out for the East. It was a remarkable trip for the young queen, although her contemporaries did not find it entirely unsuitable. Eleanor and Louis did not become closer as they traveled to and from the Holy Land. On their return from the crusade, Eleanor was finally determined to be free of the French king. She found her mechanism in the regulations of consanguinity, arguing that she was too closely related to the king to be his legitimate wife and that this was an insurmountable impediment to the marriage. The most distinguished clergy-advisors of their time made many efforts to save the marriage, and for a time, they prevailed. Eleanor even produced a second child, again a daughter, Alix, in 1150. But after the death of Abbot Suger in 1151, Louis himself pushed for an annulment, which was officially granted on March 21, 1152.

Outline

I. Eleanor joined Louis on crusade to the Holy Land in 1147.

- **A.** Louis and Eleanor had both heard Bernard preach this crusade, traditionally called the Second Crusade, at Vézelay in 1146, and by June of 1147, the royal cavalcade set out for the East.
- **B.** It was not unexpected for a queen to go on crusade, and the experience was pivotal in Eleanor's life. It demonstrates to us one fact known well to her contemporaries: She was physically hearty and did not lack courage. Like her grandfather, she exploited opportunities for travel.
- **C.** Besides, she may well have had some strong individual motives for going on this great voyage of penance: All crusades and many unarmed pilgrimages were, to some extent, penitential exercises.
- **D.** She may have felt guilt, for example, for supporting her sister Petronilla's affair with Raoul of Vermandois, which led to the disastrous incineration of the people of Vitry.

II. Women were always in the crusades and (it seems) in substantial number, but most histories have erased all but the very great.

- **A.** Urban II's general call for crusade in November 1095 was quickly hedged by hesitations and limitations, including those on crusading women; however, by the thirteenth century, it had become quite standard for women of standing to "take the cross." What happened?

- **B.** One person who happened was Eleanor of Aquitaine, who, with a large force of her own vassals, went on crusade (as did other noble women before and after). The First Crusade looked like a "once-only" event that had to be radically revived in the 1140s, but the basic elements of the Second Crusade remained the normative elements of crusades until 1274.
- **C.** What roles were there for women in this consciously reconstructed enterprise? One change made by the revivers was tacitly to allow women to participate.
  1. Historians of the crusades recognize the important roles in early crusades played by women who formally allowed and even encouraged their husbands to go on crusade.
  2. In all crusades, women provided crucial economic support.
  3. Women were quite active, not just in the origins and funding of crusades, but also in field operations.
- **D.** Crusading came to play a normative role for medieval queens, as well as for certain noble households.
  1. Eleanor maintained a visible political and diplomatic presence and, when on crusade, continued to inhabit the range of roles that she played at home, most notably that of loyal consort.
  2. One change in the situation of this married couple's consorting was that they made an oath to abstain from sexual contact as long as they were on that pilgrimage. The official historian of the French army on this crusade tells us that a monk of St.-Denis was posted at the flap of the king's tent to make sure that the king and queen kept that vow.
  3. This would have been a standard vow for married couples going together on an unarmed pilgrimage.
  4. We may well wonder what further stresses this requirement would have put on anyone's marriage and particularly that of Eleanor. One can easily imagine the monastic Louis acceding to this customary requirement, but Eleanor?
- **E.** What was a crusade for women who took the cross? How can we define and limit the term?
  1. Were many women who vowed crusade as naïve as little Teresa of Avila, who left home at six years old, hand-in-hand with her brother, seeking martyrdom at the hands of the Moors? Martyrdom was hard to find in her historical moment just outside the walls of sixteenth-century Avila, but it was certainly possible earlier in parts of Outremer.
  2. Were some earlier women crusaders likewise seeking martyrdom and certain redemption?
  3. Was crusade for them an extension of a rigorously traditional pilgrimage, which would have meant that they went unarmed? The

so-called Children's Crusade of the thirteenth century, which included girls, eschewed arms, counting on the sincerity of the participants' prayers to convert the enemy. (Those who actually got to the Holy Land were sold as slaves, which may have been the worst form of protracted martyrdom.)

4. Were women crusaders bearing their strong faith as their arms? In what circumstances did some of them actually fight?

F. Furthermore, a crusade is not just an attempt at conquest, but often a form of emigration, often with colonial motivation.

1. From the time that Urban preached about the "land of milk and honey," crusaders were not merely expected to defeat the enemy and win the Holy Land but to settle, to form (in Benjamin Kedar's words) "fragment societies," if not colonies. Unlike pilgrims, crusaders didn't necessarily intend to return home even if they didn't swarm and stay in sufficient numbers.
2. Even when women merely accompanied their husbands, it must often have been with the expectation that they were moving toward a new home and new life. It became a convention for royal and noble women to go on crusade and return home, but we also need to study more carefully the uncounted numbers of women went to live in the Holy Land.
3. Historians are now addressing some larger questions of definition (what is a crusade?) and of women's diverse roles in enabling (or resisting) crusade. This is exciting work that suggests potential new horizons even for military histories of the Middle Ages. When it is done, this work will allow us to imagine women outside the usual contexts of family and domesticity and to understand that medieval women —with Eleanor as an exemplar—were agents of (sometimes radical) change.

III. Though Eleanor was later falsely rumored to have taken many lovers, it seems credible to believe that, in some ways, she was enraptured not only with the glamour of Antioch but also with its lord, her young uncle Raymond.

A. She allied herself politically with Raymond against Louis, and in the end, she had to be forced to leave Antioch in Louis's company.

B. By the time the royal couple arrived home, Raymond was dead and his head had been brandished over the city gate of Baghdad.

IV. After the crusade failed disastrously, and after a year-long visit to Jerusalem and long voyage home, Eleanor and Louis visited the pope on their return in 1149.

A. Pope Eugenius III consulted with them about their marital problems. Privacy about such matters was not a privilege allocated to noble couples.

B. Like Abbot Suger, the Pope was adamantly opposed to their divorce.

C. Within the year, Eleanor had another child, Alix.

D. Around this time, Geoffrey of Anjou and his son Henry (this family was later known as the Plantagenets) appealed to Louis for help in their dynastic struggle against Stephen of Blois for the English throne and the duchy of Normandy. (This Stephen was the son of the Stephen of Blois who deserted from the First Crusade and of William the Conqueror's daughter Adela.) The French king's advisor Abbot Suger supported this move.

E. Eleanor met Geoffrey and Henry at this time, and it may be that the queen, now in her mid-twenties, made her own secret arrangements for the future with either the father or the son.

F. After the death in 1151 of Abbot Suger, who had championed the royal marriage, there was a rising tide of sentiment in favor of annulment.

G. Once the powerful Bernard of Clairvaux—enemy of Abelard, friend of Heloise and Hildegard—expressed his doubts about the legality of the marriage of these third cousins once removed, Louis decided to forge ahead and push for an annulment, which was finally granted on March 21, 1152.

1. What were the grounds for divorce—or annulment, as it is usually called?
2. As historian Constance Bouchard argues, each of them later married partners to whom they were equally or more closely related; clearly, consanguinity was not the primary consideration in the dissolution of Louis and Eleanor's marriage.
3. Our most recent interpretations, then, suggest that Louis wanted this annulment at least as much as Eleanor did, and we know that only Louis, as king, could successfully bring the matter forward. It seems that Louis wanted a Capetian son even more than he wanted the rich but troublesome Aquitaine and its duchess.
4. This loophole in Church regulation was later closed so that it became more difficult both for close cousins to marry and for a (supposedly) indissoluble union to be erased.
5. Because the closeness of blood was treated as if it were a surprise to all and all parties were, thus, guiltless, the legitimacy of the royal daughters was intact, and the decree gave Louis their custody. Eleanor evidently saw little of them after this: Medieval motherhood, especially royal motherhood, may have had different rhythms than does contemporary mothering, and she never seemed to highlight these daughters.
6. Fifteen years of marriage now ended. Eleanor and Louis never saw each other again.

V. Now the brilliance of Eleanor's father's stratagems became apparent.

A. The subordination of Aquitaine was not the same thing as its permanent annexation, as the divorce settlement proved. Eleanor once more became Lord of Aquitaine, although like her father before her, she acknowledged Louis as her overlord.

B. Louis was not anxious to return to Eleanor full control of her lands. Some (such as historian E. A. R. Brown) attribute this to personal jealousy, as well as a desire to protect his daughters' interests.

C. Did Louis think their daughters would be Eleanor's only offspring and that they would be the heirs to the Aquitaine?

D. As Eleanor returned swiftly to Poitiers and her own territories, had she already decided to marry again?

Essential Reading:

Elizabeth A. R Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and Her Seasons," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

Constance Brittain Bouchard, "Eleanor's Divorce from Louis VII: The Uses of Consanguinity," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds., *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History* (Yale University Press, repr. 1990).

Supplementary Reading:

Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1950).

Marion Meade, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Biography* (New York: Dutton, 1977).

D. D. R. Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1993).

Alison Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life* (New York: Ballantine, 2000).

Questions to Consider:

1. Was Eleanor's crusade more an act of pilgrimage? War? "Travel and leisure"?
2. Was Eleanor unfaithful to Louis? Was she predisposed to infidelity as a family habit?

Lecture Fifteen

Eleanor, Duchess of Aquitaine, Queen of England

Scope: We can hardly help being enraptured by the next phase of Eleanor's dramatic life. It reads like the most romantic of swashbuckling fictions. Twice on her way home to Aquitaine, Eleanor was almost kidnapped by young nobles apparently intent on having her and gaining her lands. In marriage, then, lay her greatest safety. On May 18, 1152—not quite two months after her annulment—Eleanor married the Angevin Henry (also known as Henry Plantagenet), who was about a decade her junior. The bond between them appears to have been authentically passionate, based on a sympathy of physical and political desires. They wanted each other, a kingdom to rule, and a brood to raise. With her backing and resources, her new husband soon claimed the English throne as Henry II. Together, they ruled and had at least eight children, seven of whom lived into adulthood.

Outline

I. After Eleanor and Louis were divorced on March 21, 1152, Eleanor departed for Poitiers at once, leaving her husband of fifteen years and her two young daughters.

A. Eleanor demanded the return of her duchy, but Louis VII balked. Not until August 1154 did he cease entitling himself duke of Aquitaine and using the counterseal he had employed since his marriage to Eleanor.

B. Louis's reluctance to restore Eleanor's lands to her cannot be explained solely by his desire to guard the interests of their daughters. His jealousy must have been piqued by Eleanor's adventures after she left him.

1. First, Thibaud of Blois (who would later marry Alice, the younger daughter of Eleanor and Louis), then Geoffrey of Anjou (Henry's younger brother and their father's namesake) attempted to waylay Eleanor as she journeyed to Aquitaine, and each was apparently intent on marrying her.
2. Then, on May 18, 1152, within two months of the divorce, Eleanor married Henry, who had become count of Anjou on his father's death the preceding September.

C. Louis continued to call himself duke of Aquitaine and summoned Henry to his court, confiscated his lands when he failed to appear, and captured two of his most important Norman castles.

D. For his part, Henry moved cautiously, refraining from assuming the title of duke of Aquitaine until early 1153.

E. As to Eleanor, Henry does not seem to have delayed in asserting his authority over her. From the beginning, Henry controlled her retinue, as he would later the household of their eldest son.

F. Leaving Eleanor pregnant on the Continent, Henry departed for England, where he succeeded in vanquishing King Stephen.

G. Military success bolstered his self-assurance, as did the birth on August 17, 1153, of a son, named William after both his and Eleanor's ancestors.

II. Between divorce and the early months of her remarriage, Eleanor solidified her control over Aquitaine, issuing grants and charters in her own name.

A. Once she married Henry, he swiftly exerted control over her and the Aquitaine, where he was popular but she also maintained, for some time, her lordly status.

B. Soon after their marriage, Eleanor visited Fontevraud for the first time. Happily enough, Henry's family also had a long link to this monastery, and at this time, his aunt Mathilda was abbess. Eleanor granted that monastery a new charter.

C. It is crucial for us to remember that (with or without Eleanor's ready assent) marriage transferred first to Louis VII, then to Henry II crucial aspects of her lordship.

III. Henry was a compelling, gloriously handsome, and charismatic young man whose line was said to descend from the devil.

A. The couple committed a form of feudal treason by marrying without the permission of Louis, their overlord, but they were stuck in a quandary.

1. Louis would never have allowed his former wife and one of his most aggressive rivals to marry.
2. Louis would immediately have perceived the danger of having Eleanor's vast property allied to the Angevin Henry's. Not only was this collective territory ten times larger than Louis's own, it also stretched from the English Channel to the mountains of the Pyrenees.

B. The death of King Stephen's heir left the way clear for Henry's accession to the English throne.

C. Thus, the year 1153 came tied in a ribbon for Henry, because the Treaty of Winchester of November 1153 acknowledged him as the next king.

D. At this point, Henry had brought Eleanor from Poitiers to his Normandy, closer to the English Channel.

E. After King Stephen's death in October of 1154, Eleanor and Henry sailed for England. They were crowned king and queen of England on December 19 in Westminster Abbey.

F. At thirty, now queen of England, Eleanor enjoyed Europe-wide fame. She was lauded in conventional ways and her compelling desirability was celebrated.

IV. Henry II quickly found himself facing difficulties brought on by his Continental military campaigns to maintain his Norman duchy, his (futile) campaigns to revive Eleanor's claims to Toulouse, and his constant diplomatic negotiations. In the later 1160s, he was embroiled as well in fights with his former best friend and chancellor, Archbishop Thomas à Becket, whose murder he caused and for whose martyrdom he was, thus, responsible.

V. During this long period, from their marriage in 1152 until 1168, Eleanor performed a multitude of tasks in tandem with Henry.

A. Together, they had at least eight children (others may have died in childbirth or infancy), seven of whom lived into adulthood.

B. Adding to the physical burden of pregnancy was the role that Eleanor seemed to relish of regent in Henry's frequent absence. She herself traveled frequently and often selected children to accompany her.

C. Her public political role started to diminish in 1163 when Henry took a more aggressive hand in controlling the affairs of the kingdom.

VI. A striking change occurred in 1168, when Eleanor assumed, at Henry's wish, control of the duchy of Aquitaine. The fact that Henry set Eleanor over Aquitaine after the death of his mother, Matilda, in the fall of 1167 suggests an impulse on his part to free himself from the control (and, perhaps, annoyance) of powerful women. With his mother removed by death, his wife could be sent off to the Continent.

A. Had Henry foreseen the long-term consequences of dispatching Eleanor to Aquitaine, he might have decided to keep her at his side.

1. From this time on, Eleanor's ambitions were centered on her children and their fortunes.
2. According to most historians, she was not primarily concerned with fostering their development but was most interested in using them in her struggle against Henry.

B. It is no exaggeration to say this marked the end of their great shared love affair.

1. They saw each other on rare occasions thereafter.
2. Henry remained a famous philanderer and adept wielder of power over all except his family.
3. Eleanor, who concentrated on her children's destinies, was locked in an endless struggle: Was it Henry's attention she wanted? Did he reject her because she was too old, too knowing, too powerful, and herself too accustomed to authority?

VII. Henry made a series of errors or time-consuming diplomatic mistakes that marred his reign.

A. The Treaty of Montmirail with Louis VII in 1169 split his French lands among Henry's sons, one of whom (Richard) became affianced to Louis's daughter (by his third wife) Alice.

B. In June 1170, the Archbishop of York crowned young Henry as heir presumptive, a mistake in itself and an insult to Henry's former closest friend, whom he had raised from obscurity to become his impressive but independent chancellor, Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas à Becket.

C. At the supposed urging of Henry ("Will no one rid me of this impertinent priest?"), Becket was murdered at Canterbury on December 29, 1170.

D. The pope chastised Henry, whom he held personally responsible, and placed England under an interdict.

E. Becket was canonized on February 21, 1173, and Henry became increasingly unpopular among his people

VIII. In June 1172, in Eleanor's presence, fifteen-year-old Richard was installed as duke of Aquitaine. Young Henry was crowned a second time in the fall of 1172.

A. Trouble was brewing. It erupted shortly after Raymond of Toulouse did homage to Henry and to Richard (as count of Poitou) —note, not to Eleanor—in February 1173 at Limoges.

B. Eleanor may have been disturbed at being excluded from the ceremony. If she was, she did not have to wait long for revenge. As Raymond is said to have informed Henry, the English king's family was conspiring against him, and battle was soon joined.

C. Eleanor played an essential part in her sons' rebellion and may have inspired it.

1. Understandably, Henry had her seized. For the rest of his life she was secluded and closely watched wherever she was, in England or on the Continent.

2. For fifteen years, Henry used her as he struggled with his sons. Her sequestration did not bring peace, and a period of intense conflict culminated in the death of young Henry on July 11, 1183.

D. Eleanor worked to advance her sons against their father.

E. By 1174, Henry kept Eleanor in captivity or under his close thumb. She would be paraded out on certain limited state occasions when it pleased Henry; otherwise, she was kept in careful confinement.

F. Eleanor helped arrange the marriage of her daughters, but she concentrated especially on her sons. On the shoals of their rebellious relations with their father, what was left of her partnership with Henry broke.

G. In the end, their sons Richard and John joined with Philip of France in a final rebellion against Henry II, who capitulated on July 4, 1189. He died at Chinon (where Joan later met her dauphin) two days later without the comfort of his wife or sons.

H. Rather than being buried in England, on the recommendation of William Marshall (the flower of chivalry), Henry II was buried at Fontevraud.

I. This tells us as much as anything can how loose the notion of nationhood still was and how intertwined were the French and English by blood and by desire.

J. It marked the beginning of Fontevraud as a royal and family burial place.

K. Eleanor was in several respects (as we shall see) liberated by Henry's death and swiftly began the perambulations that marked her widowhood.

Essential Reading:

Elizabeth A. R Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and Her Seasons," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds., *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

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D. D. R. Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1993).

Alison Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life* (New York: Ballantine, 2000).

Questions to Consider:

1. Unlike Abbess Hildegard, most of the time Queen Eleanor had to wield power indirectly by using her wiles to influence the men in her life. Do we consider "manipulators" (in the literal sense of the word) to be more, less, or equally powerful as those who directly wield power?
2. Eleanor derived much of her power from being overlord of Aquitaine. She and the land were inextricably bound together; her fertility (in primitive terms) constituted the land's—and its people's—fertile future. Does the

itinerancy and landlessness of the modern woman make pregnancy signify a condition of comparative weakness?

Lecture Sixteen

Eleanor the Dowager Queen

Scope: In her own right, and as the wife and mother of kings, Eleanor's wealth and influence afforded her fields of action by no means insignificant to her husbands' governments, as shown by Henry II's decision to keep her closely guarded—mostly in England, far from Aquitaine—for the last fifteen years of his life. Eleanor's unquestioned importance in the governments of her sons Richard I and John demonstrates that her influence and political reach were recognized during her widowhood, as well. Passion for power and her family's future propelled Eleanor's active final years. She was also active in the marital arrangements of her grandchildren, ensuring the noble continuity of her line. She fought off all threats to her children except the most implacable—death—as one by one they died, leaving, in the end, her feckless son John who ruled disastrously as the English king.

Outline

I. Eleanor took full advantage of her reign as Queen Mother when her son Richard the Lionheart inherited the throne.

- **A.** Though the ranks of Eleanor's children were thinning, Marie and Alix (by Louis) were still thriving, as were Richard and her three younger children by Henry (Eleanor, Joanna, and John).
- **B.** Richard I, as surviving eldest son, was close to his mother and encouraged her ambitions for him.
- **C.** Richard confirmed Eleanor's control of her dower lands from her marriage to Henry.
- **D.** Being delivered from captivity herself, she went about delivering others who had been on Henry's "enemies" list and imprisoned by him.
- **E.** She moved with great energy to secure the loyalty to Richard of the barons and the free men alike, and she helped arrange a glorious homecoming in England for Richard's coronation at Westminster on September 3, 1189.
- **F.** But Richard's interests were not with ruling England: He milked it for the revenue he required to set off on crusade (by way of his ducal territories) with Philip Augustus that very December.
- **G.** Mother and son conspired in a small piece of successful diplomacy and slicing revenge on Henry when they repudiated Richard's engagement to Philip Augustus's half-sister Alice.

H. Eleanor spent much of 1190–1191 traveling across Europe solidifying her and her son's alliances, then returned by circuitous route to England, where she ruled the kingdom as Richard's regent.

I. She arranged his marriage to Berengaria, princess of Navarre, which took place in Cyprus in May of 1191 when Richard was on his way to the Holy Land.
   1. The choice of Berengaria (whom Richard of Devizes called "more sensible than stunning") also had the advantage of ensuring that Richard would have a wife who would not challenge Eleanor's authority or influence over her son.
   2. The rejection of Alice of France also put Philip Augustus on notice that Eleanor and Richard were people to be reckoned with.

J. Richard was taken prisoner of war in December of 1193, and in the meantime, Eleanor countered a conspiracy between her younger son John and Philip Augustus by threatening John into submission.

K. She simultaneously worked for Richard's release, raising the staggering sum of 100,000 marks for his ransom, much more than the annual revenue of the kingdom.

L. She sailed to Germany (remember that she was now seventy years old) to join Richard as he paid homage to the Emperor Henry VI at Mainz; by doing so, they assured the emperor's loyalty to Richard's interests above those of Philip Augustus and John.

M. In an escalating series of successes, Eleanor accompanied her favorite son on a triumphal tour as they made their way back to England. On April 17, 1194, she (not Berengaria) sat as his enthroned equal as he once more ceremoniously took his crown in that ancient English capital, Winchester.

II. Eleanor presumed that her prime progeny were secure and—now that Richard and John were reconciled—she retired from public view later in 1194 to spend her final years at her beloved Fontevraud.

A. We have records of the many gifts and endowments that Eleanor gave to Fontevraud. (While Richard was warring and building, Eleanor was in honorable retreat at Fontevraud. She showered the house with gifts, having walls constructed to protect it, providing an endowment for the habits of the religious, and donating a gold processional cross adorned with jewels and many gold and silver vessels and silken cloths.)

B. It must have given her deep satisfaction when, in 1196, her daughter Joanna took as her second husband Raymond VII of Toulouse, once more yoking Toulouse with Aquitaine and satisfying one of Eleanor's most fundamental political desires.

C. Her family seemed to be moving from glory to glory, when in July 1198 (through Richard's efforts), her grandson Otto of Brunswick, duke of Poitou (the land that was directly Eleanor's by inheritance), reached the coveted height of Holy Roman Emperor. Otto reached the imperial heights that his grandfather Henry had been denied.

III. In 1199, however, tragedy struck again. By the beginning of 1199, Eleanor had lost all but four of her children.

A. While putting down a petty insurrection by laying siege to the minor castle of Châlus, Richard was mortally injured.
   1. He sent for his mother, who rushed to his side and attended him.
   2. After naming his brother John as his heir, he died on April 6, 1199, in her presence.

B. In September, Eleanor witnessed the death of her daughter Joanna and of Joanna's infant son.

IV. In between, she once more acted on a son's behalf, summoning as much support for John's kingship as possible.

A. John was crowned on May 25, 1199, but Eleanor's diplomatic missions on his behalf were just beginning.

B. The months after Richard died witnessed a flurry of activity.

C. Eleanor issued numerous charters, which as H. G. Richardson declared, "are as authoritative and binding as the charters of any English king."

D. Nor did she simply give written orders and commands. She herself led the mercenaries Richard had been commanding north to Anjou, where they vanquished the supporters of her grandson Arthur of Brittany (son of Geoffrey and Constance of Brittany), who was claiming the throne of England.

E. Next, she traveled through Poitou and Gascony to affirm the regions' loyalty. In July 1199, having formally recognized Philip Augustus's overlordship of Poitou (although not of Aquitaine, which she held independently), she and her son John entered into an arrangement that made them co-rulers of Poitou and Aquitaine.

F. The acts confirming the agreement are curious.
   1. Ordering that all homages, acts of fidelity, and services be rendered to him as liege lord, Eleanor bestowed on John, "her dearest son" and "rightful heir," all of Poitou.
   2. In turn, John acknowledged his homage to his mother for Poitou and declared that during her lifetime, his mother should have and hold Poitou as *domina* and that neither he nor she would make any alienation without the other's consent, except for appropriate donations for the benefit of their souls.
   3. Perhaps the phraseology of Eleanor's charter, doubtless carefully chosen, was intended to suggest her endorsement of the rightfulness of John's claim to the kingdom of England.

G. She spent the next year negotiating with Philip Augustus and John to secure lasting peace.

H. Eleanor sealed that peace by promising one of her granddaughters as bride for Philip's son Louis.

I. She crossed to Spain in harsh winter and returned in the spring with the superb Blanche, princess of Castile, whose marriage to Louis on May 23, 1200, brought the royal families of Europe into alignment once more and produced the future saint King Louis IX.

J. This marriage ensured a peace between England and France for a good period of time.

V. Eleanor's last years were marred by the consistently foolish decisions of her son John, whose cause she always tried to protect.

A. John badly needed her assistance because of his reckless, ill-advised marriage to Isabelle of Angoulême on August 24, 1200.

B. This union brought him and Philip Augustus into conflict yet again.

C. Early in 1201, Eleanor intervened from her sickbed to help John retain the allegiance of a powerful Poitevin lord.

D. After John's formal condemnation by the court of France on April 28, 1202, Philip Augustus invaded his lands. Eleanor, then seventy-eight, again went to her son's aid, and her presence in the field resulted in one of John's few victories.

E. John's one monumental military success was the lifting of the siege on the castle of Mirebeau in late July of 1202, when Eleanor was under attack by her grandson Arthur of Brittany and the forces of Philip Augustus.

F. The Plantagenet-Capetian struggles continued. Arthur was murdered, and historians still ask whether he died at John's hand.

G. After her rescue, Eleanor retired, we think, to Fontevraud. She would there have heard the sad news that Chateau Gaillard, the impregnable Plantagenet fortress built by her beloved son Richard, fell to Capetian forces in March of 1204.

VI. On April 1, 1204, three weeks later, the eighty-year-old Eleanor died. She had outlived all but two of her ten or more children.

A. She did not live to see the shame of John signing Magna Carta on June 15, 1215.

B. She had carefully supervised the marriages of her many children and many of her grandchildren.

C. Of her royal progeny we are sure, for Eleanor's fecundity was prolific and her descendants, numerous.

D. Historians today are just beginning to emphasize the importance of mothers and family descent traced through the maternal line.

E. Eleanor's greatest skill (perhaps not her joy) was the management of motherhood. Whether or not we think she was a good mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine was one of Europe's greatest progenitors.

Essential Reading:

Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "Eleanor of Aquitaine Reconsidered: The Woman and Her Seasons," in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds., *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

Alison Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life* (New York: Ballantine, 2000).

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D. D. R. Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1993).

Questions to Consider:

1. Was Eleanor treacherous to Henry? If so, were her actions justified?
2. Most women in the Middle Ages lived a considerably shorter life than Eleanor did (and Hildegard and Heloise, for that matter). Did age augment her authority?

Lecture Seventeen

Legendary Eleanor

Scope: Thus far, we have stayed rigorously to the facts of Eleanor's life as we now know it. Will new charters and other documents tell us more? Of course they will—and the hope that more might be discovered keeps historians in the archives. But in this lecture, we ask where historical narrative ends and legends begin, because fact and legend conspire with each other in the representations of Eleanor of Aquitaine. The historical blanks and gaps of Eleanor's crusade have been filled to overflowing from the twelfth to the twenty-first centuries by lurid and leering sexual speculation. Hers is a story full of sex, violence, suspense, and the teeth-grinding tenacity of brilliant conflicting will power. Who could ask for anything more? Certainly not the gossips of her own day or the writers and artists of subsequent generations. What are the lusty legends that surround this woman, and why do new ones continue to arise?

Outline

I. Legends about Eleanor have accumulated in vast numbers over generations.
   - **A.** She was the greatest heiress in Christendom, married and crowned queen of France at thirteen (true).
   - **B.** She bemoaned an unexciting marriage to Louis VII (maybe true).
   - **C.** She rode bare-breasted to the crusades (well, she went on crusade, but bare-breasted?).
   - **D.** She dallied scandalously with her uncle at Antioch (dallied, but how did they dally?).
   - **E.** She returned to France to divorce Louis (true).
   - **F.** She passionately adored, then fought endlessly with, her second husband, Henry II of England (all too true).
   - **G.** She poisoned Henry's mistress Rosamund—Fair Rosamund—Clifford (no proof; if it was fidelity she wanted, she should have poisoned Henry instead).
   - **H.** She presided as Henry's, then Richard's lieutenant in Aquitaine (true, but also acting as proper lord of the Aquitainians).
   - **I.** She held "courts of love" to encourage and engage in amatory liaisons (unproved).
   - **J.** She was imprisoned as a rebellious (and cross-dressing) queen (true; she dressed as a man in an attempt to evade capture when Henry was trying to imprison her).
   - **K.** She dominated her children and manipulated their politics almost to her last breath (true).

II. The book-length biographies of Eleanor still tend to mix fiction with fact—even those books that carefully separate the "fact" chapters from the "fiction" chapters.
   - **A.** But the myths themselves are compelling, telling us (among other things) what commentators from the twelfth to the twenty-first centuries think about women, sexuality, motherhood, and power.
   - **B.** What stories do we have about Eleanor on crusade?
     1. At Easter of 1146, Eleanor heard Bernard preach the Second Crusade at Vezelay, and she and Louis fulfilled their well-understood intention to crusade by taking the cross at that highly charged symbolic moment.
     2. We now recognize what previous historians obscured. Eleanor did not merely accompany her husband while he went on crusade: She herself went on crusade—she "took the cross" just as he did.
     3. Crusading was a pilgrimage of desire for God as much as a war against the infidel.
     4. For medieval people in general, the image of women among warriors conjures up scenes of licentiousness, although in Eleanor's own day these remarks were carefully *sub rosa*.
     5. Odo of Deuil lists some of the many noble ladies and 300 less-exalted women who vowed crusade that day.
     6. More than a year later (on the feast of St. Denis in 1147), with goods, troops, friends, and servants, the royal couple began their campaign, not to return to France until two and a half years later, in November of 1149.
     7. No contemporary historian can yet tell us what Eleanor's full role was during her crusade: Was she acting as lord of her troops? Was she cavorting like an Amazon at play? Did she (like Louis) think of herself as undertaking a penitential pilgrimage? We don't know. Many women, it seems, undertook the First Crusade, but Eleanor is by far the most famous to have attempted the Second Crusade.
     8. Many of us cut our medieval milk teeth on the story first recounted by Gervase of Canterbury: Eleanor, when she went on crusade with Louis, cavorting with her ladies in armor, or billowing red and white costumes, evoking the image of the single-breasted Amazon warrior women.
     9. By the late seventeenth century, stories spread across Europe of Eleanor as a latter-day Hipployta, leading a battalion of women warriors in full armor—armored, that is, except for their bravely and titillatingly exposed breast.
   - **C.** Eleanor's sexual immorality before and during the crusade was allegedly flagrant.

1. Not satisfied by her penitent, feminized husband (the story goes), Eleanor had an affair before leaving France with Henry II's father, Geoffrey of Anjou; while on crusade, she was passionately linked with her uncle Raymond of Antioch.
2. These—and better—stories are still recycled in contemporary fiction.
3. She is alleged to have treated her crusade as a sexual experiment, bedding the randy Raymond and the Emperor Manuel Comnenus (of course, her "relations" with Bernard of Clairvaux, the Abbot Suger, her handmaidens, and her horses are also described in remarkable detail).
4. But the best are the hand-me-down stories of Eleanor and Saladin, called the intrepid Turk.
5. By the nineteenth century, stories about Eleanor and the great Saracen warrior Saladin are fully developed. The assumption of these stories is that any woman with Eleanor's spirit would naturally desire a magnificent dark warrior, just as any dark warrior would desire a magnificent (white) Western lady. She almost escapes to join Saladin when betrayed by a handmaid and forcibly restrained by Louis.
6. Eleanor was notable for "robbing the cradle" by marrying a man almost ten years younger than she (Henry II). But surely even the most gullible historians would have paused had they looked at the ages of Eleanor and Saladin, who was only twelve when Eleanor was in Antioch. This story also got wrapped into the "history" of Eleanor, repeated even by those who might have known better.
7. Even in Eleanor's time, however, there were rumors from John of Salisbury and others of her relations with her uncle Raymond.
8. If there had really been physical infidelity, as Dartmouth historian Charles T. Wood recently remarked to me in a private e-mail, "given the lack of privacy that was the ever-present reality of the servant-pampered upper classes of the day, not to mention all the rules surrounding the chastity of a queen, there would have been no way to keep a physical relationship private. Real infidelity would surely have left a much more memorable paper (perhaps a sheet) trail."
9. Having been between the sheets with two kings, Eleanor was perfect fodder for medieval and modern scandals. And the fact that her family had a propensity for "weird relationship issues" (William, Eleanor, and John were all medieval divorcees) added more smoke to the issue. In any case, these stories, too, became part of the "history" of Eleanor.

D. Perhaps the most popular of all rumors about Eleanor involve her supposed hatred and murder of Henry II's mistress Rosamund Clifford, by whom he was supposedly "gobsmacked," dazed in love. There is no shred of information about Eleanor and Rosamund, though, again, this story is now part of her "history."

E. The most persistent myth surrounding Eleanor and accepted by scholars and general readers is that she was involved in real courts of love.
1. These stories originated with Andreas Capellanus.
2. Many presume that between 1168 and 1173, Eleanor was cavorting in her French daughters' courts and judging witty courtiers presenting keenly argued cases about why their pleas as lovers should be accepted.
3. On the other hand, Eleanor was already imprisoned by Henry II on the one date mentioned in the text (May 1, 1174).
4. Andreas gives up a literary conceit but one that comports so well with the rumors about Eleanor that it slips into the record.

III. We know much about the duchess and the queen; it is the woman we yearn to know and cannot find, except in our imaginations. Our fascination with Eleanor is like our fascination with King Arthur: We are fascinated by the legends and romances that provide a "mythic scaffold" around these characters. We want the truth, we historians and listeners, but not at the expense of the scaffolding. Consider the story, then, as we have told it, in the terms in which Winston Churchill considered King Arthur's: It is all true, or ought to be, and more and better besides.

Essential Reading:

John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler, eds., *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

Alison Weir, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Life* (New York: Ballantine, 2000).

D. D. R. Owen, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Legend* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1993).

F. M. Chambers, "Some Legends Concerning Eleanor of Aquitaine," *Speculum* 16.4 (1941), pp. 459–468.

Supplementary Reading:

Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1950).

Marion Meade, *Eleanor of Aquitaine: A Biography* (New York: Dutton, 1977).

Questions to Consider:

1. Given the conceptions of women most cultures hold even now, are we surprised by the salacious quality of the legends regarding Eleanor of Aquitaine?
2. What might Eleanor have thought of the new language of love as promulgated by the troubadours?

Lecture Eighteen

Joan of Arc and Her Times

Scope: What can we really know about the extraordinary peasant girl Joan of Arc (1412?–30 May 1431)? How did a peasant girl from the fringes of France become, as Mark Twain tells us, the "youngest person of either sex to lead her nation's army before the age of nineteen"? How do we explain her prominence, first in the military victory in Orléans, then in the coronation of King Charles VII at Reims? Some claim that Joan changed the course of European history in her two public years before being burned at the stake as a heretic at the age of nineteen. She is one of history's most well documented persons, and this lecture introduces us to her life in context (as recorded in extensive trial records and contemporary reports) and to two of the overwhelming institutional facts of the period: the Hundred Year's War and the Great Schism.

Outline

I. In her own time, Joan of Arc was an enigma and, to her enemies, a scandal—a stumbling block even to many of her friends, supporters, and allies.

- **A.** She was very young to presume to do the things she did.
- **B.** She was probably born in 1412, some said on January 6, the feast day of the Epiphany (popularly known as the Day of the Kings).
- **C.** She was burned at the stake on May 30, 1431, aged something like nineteen.
- **D.** Before that, she became, in the awestruck words of Mark Twain, "the youngest person of either sex to lead her nation's army before the age of nineteen."

II. Joan's historical moment was shaped by two major, long-lasting European crises.

- **A.** The crown of France was disputed in what is conventionally known as the Hundred Years War (1337–1453).
  1. It had old roots in a centuries-long dispute about limits of authority between the crown of France and the several great principalities that made up the kingdom. Some say it began with the marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry Plantagenet (Henry II of England).
  2. It then became—and remained—a succession crisis between two closely blood-related royal dynasties, the Plantagenets and the Valois.
  3. This dynastic rivalry was aggravated by the ambitions of the House of Burgundy, closely blood-related to the other two dynastic claimants.
  4. The war was actively fought in four phases: 1337–1360, 1364–1380, 1413–1429, and 1430–1453.
  5. Eventually, the Valois dynasty retained its hold on the crown of France, and the French nation was born (as was the English nation, whose Plantagenet kings remained in control until the Tudors).
  6. The famous, bloody battle of Agincourt in 1415 (when Joan was a small child) seemed to give real substance to the English hopes of placing all of France under Plantagenet control.
  7. Joan of Arc's brief intervention, her supporters insisted and still insist, gave "France" victory in the third phase and made the fourth phase merely a protracted mopping-up operation.
- **B.** The second crisis occurred between 1378 to 1415, when three popes claimed to be authentic. This conflict is known as the Great Schism.
  1. Ordinary Christians became terribly confused as one pope excommunicated his opponents and all their followers.
  2. Who could tell which was the rightful pope and, therefore, who had been condemned to hell?
  3. Some preachers claimed visions revealing that no one had entered heaven since the schism began.
  4. During this time of high general anxiety, visionaries multiplied.

III. Joan was of solid peasant stock and behavior. Her family was seemingly normal, but the family as a whole was more upwardly mobile than the norm.

- **A.** Joan's family was quite respectable in the village of Domrémy.
  1. Her father, Jacques Darc (as her name probably should be spelled), was frequently chosen by his fellows as leader-speaker (what we call mayor) of their village.
  2. Her mother, Isabelle Romée ("Pilgrim"), was a committed homemaker who had the leisure to go on pilgrimages.
  3. Joan would have been known to her neighbors as Jehanne Romée (that was how naming patterns worked in that part of Europe).
  4. Her more distant relatives were successful in rural life, and the whole family was more mobile than most. She had an uncle, for instance, who was a village priest.
  5. But they were all peasants, with no claim to noble or bourgeois connections.
  6. Joan was illiterate, as was typical for her class, sex, and age.
  7. After Joan got him crowned at Reims, King Charles VII elevated Joan and all her relatives and all their legitimate descendants to nobility; they were assigned a coat-of-arms. But before that, they were peasants pure and simple.

8. Some have found this fact (peasants?) so astounding (perhaps intolerable) that they have decided Joan was, in fact, a royal bastard raised by the loyal Darc family. This way of thinking is very medieval—heroic deeds can be performed only by those with noble or better blood—and a lot of ink has been spilt trying to prove and disprove this thesis.

B. Joan and her family were devout and ordinary.
1. In their testimony at her post-death retrial, her fellow villagers described her over and over again as "just like everyone else"—with one big exception (emphasized by historian Régine Pernoud): how "willingly" she did everything she thought she had to do.
2. Her life was full of normal village activities.

C. Joan was illiterate, a serious inconvenience even in the Middle Ages.
1. She did learn to write her name during her year (really four months) of triumph.
2. How could an illiterate peasant begin to comprehend the complex issues of politics, diplomacy, and law that impinged on her constantly during the two years of her public life?

D. Joan came from the farthest eastern frontier of France, a region predominantly loyal to the Burgundian (English) faction opposed to the dauphin, whom she got crowned king of France. Why should such a person care about an old dispute being fought out at the center of France? How much of it could she understand?

E. Most amazing, this illiterate peasant girl from the frontier achieved remarkable military victories and showed a strategic, as well as a tactical, sense that won the respect of hardened veteran officers.
1. There are four prime examples, the first of which was her moral and tactical victory in raising the siege of Orléans (in early May 1429), then perhaps the key place, geopolitically, in the Hundred Years War.
2. The second was her open-field victory at Patay (June 18), a minor reverse of Agincourt, with high casualties for the English and practically none for the French.
3. The third was her strategic daring in penetrating deep behind enemy lines to get Charles the dauphin crowned king at Reims, the key symbolic event of that final phase of the war.
4. The fourth was her uncanny understanding of artillery tactics, something it had always taken older commanders quite a while to learn. And this on the part of someone distressed by bloodshed!
5. A fifth would have been her taking of Paris in August 1429, which any modern strategist sees as obvious and manageable, if the suddenly cautious king, duped by the Duke of Burgundy, had committed to this attack the minimum forces necessary. But he didn't, so the attack failed, discrediting Joan in the eyes of many. She was right, even though she failed.
6. Most contemporary field commanders were firmly convinced that Joan's military expertise was either a divine miracle or witchcraft. That's why the English faction had to get her tried and burned at Rouen (May 1430).

IV. Yet Joan of Arc won her goals. Some modern historians dismiss her as an incomprehensible quirk; others think she changed the course of European (indeed, of world) history. The debate about her goes on.

A. The debate ought to be easier to resolve but has been aggravated by the fact that Joan is one of the most well documented figures in premodern human history.

B. Because of the amazingly detailed and lovingly preserved transcripts of her two famous trials, as well as an explosion of contemporary reports, we know more historically about her short life than we do about the lives of Jesus Christ, Julius Caesar, Plato, Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, or anyone who lived after her for perhaps another two or three centuries.

C. Joan has generated many legends, but we can (and should) dispense with all of them.

Essential Reading:

Régine Pernoud and M.-V. Clin, *Joan of Arc: Her Story*, Jeremy duQ. Adams, rev. and trans. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, eds., *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc* (New York: Garland, 1996).

Supplementary Reading:

Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (New York: Knopf, 1981; reissued, University of California Press, 1999).

Questions to Consider:

1. In your estimation, was Joan of Arc an entirely unique historical personage? If you don't think so, of whom do you conceive as a person similar to Joan?
2. In this age, would it be possible for someone like Joan to emerge? If she did, would she meet a similar fate?

Lecture Nineteen

Joan Discovers Her Mission and Her Dauphin

Scope: This lecture tracks Joan's life from the solid context of her native village of Domrémy on the eastern frontier of France to the royal court at Chinon in the Loire Valley at the heart of the kingdom. There, she told the Dauphin Charles a secret that convinced him of her authenticity and that of her mission to save him. The transcript of her second trial at Rouen (1456) is rich in village testimony about her early life—startlingly ordinary, in fact. But at thirteen, Joan began to hear heavenly, angelic voices, and at sixteen, she dedicated herself to virginity in view of the mission she now saw as hers: to save the embattled dauphin and get him crowned king. Perhaps Joan's first "miracle" was to persuade her family and Robert de Baudricourt to send her to the dauphin. But what was the secret she revealed to him?

Outline

I. In adolescence, or perhaps pre-adolescence, Joan developed an unusual personal spirituality.

A. At thirteen (Joan told her trial judges), she began to hear voices—the voices of angels, she was sure.

1. The timing of this experience has led several modern medieval scholars to speculate that it all had something to do with hormones: Joan never developed normal adolescent female sexuality, they argue, was never fully a woman.
2. There is no contemporary evidence for this image of her. The Duke of Alençon, in fact, was given to remarking how beautiful her breasts were, and her English jailers at Rouen appreciated her buttocks.
3. Joan's contemporaries remarked instead on what a womanly young woman she was, despite her manly behavior on campaign, the practical men's clothes she wore at such times (but not at others—she liked red dresses), and her short haircut.
4. For her medieval contemporaries, the issue would have been the source of those voices: Were they from God or the devil?
5. Because these voices first spoke to her in her father's garden, a secure and happy place, Joan was sure they were the voices of angels coming from God.
6. After much later prayer and probable consultation with her parish priest, she was convinced that these were good and holy voices, to which were soon added the voices of St. Catherine (of Alexandria) and St. Margaret (of Antioch), two mythic virgin martyrs of the heroic days of the early Church.
7. What did these voices tell her? To reconstruct her later statements, they told her to save France and to get the Dauphin Charles, the Valois claimant to the French throne, crowned at Reims.
8. Professor Charles T. Wood of Dartmouth College has suggested that her mission was originally to save the dauphin, and only later, after doing so by saving the city of Orléans, did she become convinced that her mission included getting Charles crowned.

B. At sixteen, Joan dedicated herself to virginity, in view of what by then, she later said, she saw as her vision: to save France by rescuing the Dauphin Charles from the English armies that beset him and getting him crowned king.

1. Her chief title during her military activity was *Jehanne la Pucelle*, Joan the Maid (i.e., the virgin).
2. In medieval Europe, virginity was a normal condition of life for anyone, male or female, with such a special, totally demanding vocation. Lack of demonstrable virginity would have been a strong indication that she was a fraud.

C. Around the same time, she successfully defended herself in an ecclesiastical trial in the nearby diocese of Toul against a young man who claimed she was pledged to him in marriage. This Joan confessed to be the one time she had disobeyed her parents (of course, leaving Domrémy to go find the dauphin was against their wishes, but she saw God's will in that matter as entirely overriding her parents' authority to command). The suitor's name has not come down in the surviving records.

1. It seems that Joan had rejected a betrothal arranged by her parents and became the defendant in a breach-of-promise suit. She claimed consistently that *she* "had not made any man any promise."
2. Joan's respectable father especially worried about her safety. Jacques went so far as to tell his sons that if their sister "went off with soldiers"—which to him had to mean that she was going off as a camp-follower—they should drown her. The marriage to the boy from Toul, whoever he was, must have seemed the perfect solution.

II. Joan had to convince the practical adult world of her improbable mission.

A. The first step was to get not just permission, but a military escort from the local military commander, the embattled pro-Valois Robert de Baudricourt.

1. Her father dealt with Baudricourt regularly as mayor of Domrémy, but he resisted Joan's pleas for intercession.
2. Joan began trying in May 1428 (when she was sixteen) to persuade Baudricourt of her mission; she went to the fortified town of Vaucouleurs, which he commanded. Not surprisingly, he dismissed her swiftly.

3. Baudricourt was pressed for both time and resources. Vaucouleurs was a Valois holdout in a region that had largely gone over to the duke of Burgundy. The duke wanted to secure it as a corridor connecting the traditional core of Burgundy to the south with his richest northern territories in Flanders and the other Low Countries.

B. But Joan was not one to stop attempting the impossible.
1. In January 1429, Joan got her favorite older male cousin, Durand Laxart, to take her again to see Baudricourt at Vaucouleurs.
2. Baudricourt rebuffed Joan again, but eventually, Joan overcame Baudricourt's hesitations, and he sent her to the dauphin at Chinon with a letter of introduction and a small escort of men.

C. The little troupe covered more than 200 miles in eleven days, traveling almost entirely by night to avoid enemy soldiers. They even avoided going to mass (with one exception, when they blended incognito into a Friday mass at Auxerre cathedral); for the devout Joan, this was a real hardship.

D. The next step was to get to see the dauphin.
1. Having agreed to see her during a daytime session of open court, with perhaps 300 courtiers in attendance, the dauphin decided to test her by hiding among the courtiers.
2. How did Joan pass that cunning courtly test? Ignoring the courtier dressed up in kingly clothes, she went straight for the disguised dauphin. How did she recognize him?
3. Partisans of the Royal Bastard Theory answer that she already knew him; it was prearranged. According to the usual form of this theory, Joan was Charles's half-sister, the child of Queen Isabeau and Duke Louis of Orléans. She had been sent for raising to the loyal Darc family on Jeanne of Joinville's lands and prepared for a dramatic intervention when the time was right. Even if she had not actually seen Charles before, she was told of some sign that would let her know who he was.
4. What, in any case, was the secret she told him?
5. Some say she reassured him that he was, in fact, the son of Charles VI, not of Louis of Orléans or some other lover of Queen Isabeau. But that exaggerates a propaganda rumor circulated by his enemies only later, and the bastardy theory is unsupported by any reasonable evidence, according to Régine Pernoud, Marie-Véronique Clin, and other current scholars. Clin has recently published a scholarly biography of Isabeau that rejects the slanders about her infidelity.
6. Joan's secret remains a mystery.

Essential Reading:

Régine Pernoud and M.-V. Clin, *Joan of Arc: Her Story*, Jeremy duQ. Adams, rev. and trans. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, eds., *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, (New York: Garland, reissued, 1996).

Mark Twain, *Joan of Arc*.

Supplementary Reading:

Vita Sackville -West, *Saint Joan of Arc* (New York: Grove Press, reissued 2001).

Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (New York: Knopf, 1981; reissued, University of California Press, 1999).

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you suppose Robert de Baudricourt granted Joan the favor she asked of him? He needed every man-at-arms he could get, and the letter to the dauphin risked his own reputation for common sense.
2. Joan's companions on the risky trip from Vaucouleurs to Chinon became firm partisans of her cause. How do you suppose she won them over?

Lecture Twenty

Joan the Warrior, Holy Berserker

Scope: This lecture discusses Joan's anomalous position as a warrior. She was the opposite of nearly every traditional medieval military stereotype: a virgin peasant girl without a shred of military experience. Yet something about her, some sort of charisma, inspired the Dauphin Charles and other great nobles to let her have a major share in commanding the war effort and inspired the common soldiers and the civilians to believe in her unlikely promises. The completeness and swiftness of her victory in raising the siege of Orléans must have seemed some kind of miracle to her contemporaries.

Outline

I. What convinced Charles to make Joan a captain of arms and send her against the English besieging Orléans?

- **A.** The rank the dauphin accorded her was indicated by her own personal banner and a fine suit of plate armor, both of which were made for her at top speed.
  1. She had her own contingent of troops and an accredited herald—just like the top-level noble commanders.
  2. More important, she had the right to coordinate on an equal basis with the French commander defending Orléans.
  3. Most of Charles's counselors at court seem to have been dead set against these striking concessions.
- **B.** To check his instincts, the dauphin had Joan examined by a court of university professors and other high clerics at Poitiers.
  1. They cleared her: Her orthodoxy was attested; her virginity, affirmed; and her mission, approved.
  2. This was to be Joan's first trial.
  3. Unfortunately, the transcript (the famous Poitiers transcript) has been lost, perhaps with the collusion of the archbishop of Reims, who never liked Joan.

II. Remember that France was riven between an Anglo-Burgundian alliance and the so-called French: the "Armagnacs," supporters of the Valois dynasty.

- **A.** Joan was not interested in the Armagnac faction as such, or in any factions; she saw the matter simply—to drive the English out of France—and she saw her mission as the restoration of French national identity.
  1. By the time she left for Orléans (in the third week of April 1429), *La Pucelle* seemed to embody Christian nationalism with her banner, her armor, and her full-fledged military and diplomatic household.
  2. She had also acquired a holy sword, for which she had Charles send to Sainte-Catherine-de-Fierbois, a shrine to the Frankish hero Charles Martel's victory against the Saracens seven centuries before (732). How she knew the sword was there, buried behind the altar, is a mystery.
- **B.** The strategic importance of Orléans was great.
  1. It lay close to the center of the kingdom, of which the English/Burgundians controlled most of the northern provinces.
  2. Orléans was, then, the key to the southern half of the kingdom.
  3. Not far to the south of Orléans lay the city of Bourges. Bourges had become the Valois/French capital since King Henry V of England had conquered Paris, which enjoyed being the capital of Plantagenet France.
  4. The English began a serious and expensive siege of Orléans in October of 1428. Neither side had any illusions about the crucial significance of that operation.

III. Why did troops follow *La Pucelle*?

- **A.** The French forces defending Orléans were demoralized, as was the city's population of about 30,000—a large urban population for the time.
- **B.** The experienced captains of arms there were commanded by John, the Bastard of Orléans (later Count of the Dunois).
  1. The Bastard (as he was generally addressed) was then acting as head of the House of Orléans.
  2. His half-brother Charles, the legitimate Duke of Orléans, was languishing in long, elegant captivity in England, where he had been "visiting" since being captured at Agincourt (and where he wrote some important poetry in both English and French). He still awaited his ransoming.
  3. None of these experienced noble warriors was inclined to take the advice, not to mention the orders, of an inexperienced peasant girl.
- **C.** Joan's strategy was unremitting attack on the English positions, no matter how invincible they seemed.
  1. The seasoned commanders were aghast at her recklessness, but the rank-and-file soldiers and the besieged populace agreed with her.
  2. Several times Joan issued orders to attack in direct confrontation of the orders of the day issued by the Bastard and his staff. (Regardless, the Bastard esteemed her.)

3. Although sustaining great losses, the French troops, supported by townsmen on the city walls, stormed the strongest of the seven fortresses with which the English had surrounded the city.
4. After that, the English army abandoned the siege on May 8 and marched north. The townsfolk organized a vibrant thanksgiving procession, of which Joan was the ecstatically praised heroine.

IV. *La Pucelle* was a curious kind of military commander.

A. Although she carried a sword in battle, she never used it to kill a man.
1. It was later alleged that she had struck some female camp-followers on the back with it, to drive them away from her morally purified army. (The soldiers went to mass and confession daily, were forbidden to curse, and so on: *drôle de guerre* indeed!)
2. She seems never to have become really used to the sight of dying men, English or French.

B. She lacked any kind of military training, yet her military instincts seemed impeccable—at least until the failed attack on Paris in August 1429.
1. It was universally assumed that military talent, as well as the right and capacity to command, were inherited with noble blood, yet Joan was a peasant through and through.
2. She rode warhorses very well, like a man born to that skill (the Royal Bastard Theory had not yet been invented, though it would call attention to that fact).

C. Given that women traveling with soldiers were commonly assumed to be prostitutes, how could Joan have won the respect and, occasionally, the obedience of such great nobles as the Bastard of Orléans, Duke John of Alençon (who may have had a sort of crush on her), and the supremely self-confident Gilles de Rais (later known as the child molester and murderer Bluebeard), a Breton ultra-aristocrat who was one of the richest men in Europe?

D. How could *La Pucelle* exert such persuasive power over common soldiers, as well as noble captains?
1. To answer that, one might have to believe in miracles, or to recognize the power of her promise to these men that those who died would go straight to heaven.
2. It may also be true that Joan was the first popular figure who gave voice to the French form of nationalism that persisted into the Revolution: The king is France. Thus, the need to make Charles king was identical to a need to save the country.
3. Finally, it is also true—though historians have underestimated this—that soldiers want to follow only someone who has absolute confidence in the mission and that they prefer to follow into battle someone who *becomes* the heat of battle. What later is called "cold strategy," and is studied in military academies, is often at the time thought to be menacing madness, boiling blood. Like the ancient hero Achilles, Joan was a berserker in battle, though a Holy Berserker who used the edge of her tongue and the point of her exposed, mystic sword to rally her troops to terrifying, impossible victory.

Essential Reading:

Régine Pernoud and M.-V. Clin, *Joan of Arc: Her Story*, Jeremy duQ. Adams, rev. and trans. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

Kelly DeVries, "Joan of Arc as Military Leader," in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, eds. (New York: Garland, 1996).

Supplementary Reading:

Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Kelly DeVries, *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* (Stroud, U.K.: Sutton, 2002).

Questions to Consider:

1. How much of Joan's military charismatic power depended on her demonstrated virginity?
2. What about Joan appealed to battle-hardened captains and professional soldiers, many of them veteran mercenaries?

Lecture Twenty-One

Joan's Success and Captivity

Scope: Joan reached the peak of her military and political success in May and June of 1429. The first part of her mission was to relieve the strategically crucial city of Orléans from siege; the second was to get Charles the Dauphin crowned King Charles VII of France, a feat that could be done with full effect only at Reims, which lay well behind enemy lines. Nevertheless, Joan accomplished this, as well. Then, Joan's fortunes turned: Charles, once king, did things his way, not Joan's way. Always preferring diplomacy to the risks and costs of warfare, Charles did not adequately support Joan's strategically coherent effort to take Paris in August. Her military failure there discredited her in the eyes of many. She spent the next half year wasting her time in winter quarters and skirmishes in the center of France. With the spring of 1430, Joan returned to the attack, commanding a small contingent. She was captured at Compiègne on May 23 in the course of a skirmish against the Burgundians. Charles did nothing to rescue her.

Outline

I. Let's recall how this peasant girl got to Orléans. Having convinced Robert de Baudricourt to send her to the dauphin in Chinon, she spoke her "secret" to Charles, and Charles was convinced—but not so convinced as to appoint her war captain without proof of her spiritual purity. Therefore, he sent her to Chinon, where she was investigated and her virginity was confirmed.

II. Joan was verbally dexterous, witty, from her early days.

- **A.** Friar Seguin later reported what Joan said when he asked her why she called the king "dauphin" and not "king." She answered that she would not call him "king" until he had been crowned and consecrated at Reims, where she intended to bring him. "She responded in great style," said Seguin. Joan's language always provoked admiration: "This girl spoke terribly well," Albert d'Ourches from the region of Vaucouleurs said of her, adding, "I would really like to have had so fine a daughter."
- **B.** The friar—talking from the vantage point of 1453, when he gave this deposition—said that Joan predicted to the Poitiers tribunal four things that would happen. They did indeed happen thereafter.
  1. First, she said that the English would be driven away; thus, the siege they had laid to Orléans would be lifted and the city would be free of the English. But first she would send them an invitation to surrender.
  2. Next, she said that the king would then be consecrated at Reims.
  3. Third, she said that the city of Paris would return to the king's obedience.
  4. Fourth, she predicted that the duke of Orléans would return from England.

III. The king accepted Joan's aid and sent her to Orléans.

- **A.** Joan spoke with the English on the opposite embankment, telling them to go away in God's name; otherwise, she would drive them out.
- **B.** During the next days, Joan proved her mettle and that of her soldiers; their full frontal attack broke the English control of the Tourelles, and the French crossed the bridge and entered the city of Orléans.
- **C.** To report simply that the Tourelles had been taken would have been monumental enough news for the day. But the fervor of Joan's soldiers had brought the greatest goal: total victory and liberation of the city of Orléans.
- **D.** On the next day, a Sunday, the troops squared off against each other, but Joan would not allow her troops to initiate the battle because she was firmly committed to chivalric warfare and its rituals, in spite of the fact that the organization of armies and practices of warfare were swiftly changing in her day.

IV. On May 9, 1429, Joan left a delirious Orléans for the next stage of her mission. She believed that the most important part of her mission lay ahead of her.

- **A.** Now, she was determined to bring Charles to the cathedral city of Reims for his anointing as true king of France.
- **B.** To go to Reims meant going deep behind enemy lines. This daring move required a high degree of military and diplomatic ingenuity.
- **C.** Fortunately, the English did not regroup to cut them off from the west, nor get the Burgundians to do the same from the east. Neither did the English and Burgundians combine to face the high morale of the relatively modest army accompanying the dauphin.
- **D.** On June 18, the French won a pitched field battle at Patay against a sizeable regrouped English force bearing down on Orléans from the northwest.
- **E.** The English estimated their casualties at 2,000, while the French lost miraculously few.
- **F.** Patay was Joan's finest victory in a classic military engagement.

V. On July 17, 1429, Charles the dauphin became King Charles VII of France in the traditional royal anointing ceremony in the cathedral of Reims, where most previous French kings had been anointed by the ancient charismatic oil and crowned.

A. Joan played a major and entirely unconventional role in the coronation ceremony at Reims.

1. She stood close to her king in full armor and held her banner unfurled. When reproached later for doing so, she answered that because her banner had "worked hard to achieve this victory, it deserved some of the honor."
2. Once Charles had been properly anointed, she fell to her knees, grasping the king by his knees and explaining the divine significance of the event. That intimacy and presumption irritated some.

B. Pierre Cauchon, the bishop of Beauvais, one of the six ecclesiastical peers, did not attend. His absence is explained by his long-time devotion to the English faction.

C. Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, was also absent.

D. Joan had written the duke of Burgundy on the very Sunday morning of the coronation, July 17.

E. Her letter, preserved in the archives of Lille, brilliantly evokes the grandeur of her Christian, martial, and chivalric mentality, though it masks the increasing irrelevance of these qualities to Joan's world and moment.

F. The letter also suggests that Joan expected the fate of France to be determined by submission or by battle. She was not aware of the swarming diplomatic activity then underway among France, England, and Burgundy.

G. The coronation was a major symbolic victory for the French/Valois cause in the war of propaganda.

H. In December 1431, seven months after Joan's execution, the English/Plantagenet party had their contender, the boy-king Henry VI, crowned in the cathedral of Paris as king of France. These symbolic acts had great political force in that era, but Paris was not Reims—the most powerful traditional king-making site—when it came to coronations.

VI. Once Charles was crowned, he reverted to his preference for diplomacy over military attack, and he distanced himself from Joan.

A. Joan the king-maker knew that her new cause, driving the English utterly out of France, required taking Paris.

B. Joan was frantic with frustration as the king dallied, negotiating with the duke of Burgundy and the English.

C. The "great army of the coronation" began to disintegrate, and the remaining French troops lost forward propulsion.

D. This slackening of initiative gave the pro-English time to fortify the capital city.

E. Joan's foray on Paris was a humiliating failure.

F. Charles reduced his support for her fiscally and in personnel.

G. He ordered her to spend the winter skirmishing with troublesome mercenary captains in the center of France and spending time at the castle of George de la Trémoille, a favored counselor to whom he was deeply in debt and who never liked Joan.

H. Charles clearly wanted Joan to go home with her family's new patent of nobility and leave high policy alone.

VII. In the spring of 1430, Charles allowed Joan to return to the north to campaign against the English and the Burgundians.

A. By now, she was simply one of his captains, with a small though devoted force of veteran soldiers.

B. Charles wanted her to spend her time skirmishing against the Burgundians, wearing them down—perhaps the only kind of strategy he understood.

C. During one of these skirmishes, at Compiègne on May 23, 1430, Joan was taken captive.

D. Historians still debate whether Joan was captured by her Burgundian enemies with the complicity of the supposedly pro-French commander of Compiègne.

E. The Duke of Burgundy, after meeting Joan in an encounter unfortunately not recorded, sold her for a staggering sum to the Earl of Warwick, the English regent of France for the boy-king Henry VI.

F. Warwick wanted Joan condemned as a witch and burned, but he needed an ecclesiastical court to produce that verdict.

Essential Reading:

Régine Pernoud and M.-V. Clin, *Joan of Arc: Her Story*, Jeremy duQ. Adams, rev. and trans. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

Kelly DeVries, "Joan of Arc as Military Leader," in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, eds. (New York: Garland, 1996).

Supplementary Reading:

Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Kelly DeVries, *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* (Stroud, U.K.: Sutton, 2002).

Questions to Consider:

1. Should Joan have foreseen that once he was king, Charles would insist on doing things his way, which she as a loyal subject had to obey?
2. Do you suspect that Joan may have felt some despair at God's apparent loss of interest in her?

Lecture Twenty-Two

Joan's Trial, Death, and Retrial

Scope: This lecture deals with Joan's captivity, trial, condemnation, and death at Rouen in 1431. Joan's trial is a fascinating study in professional jurisprudence and in the raw intelligence and courage of the illiterate peasant girl who was its target. We also consider one of the strangest and most compelling parts of Joan's story: her retrial (*in absentia*, of course), also at Rouen, twenty-five years later, three years after final French victory in the Hundred Years War. This second trial was spurred by Charles VII, who owed his throne to Joan. After taking testimony from dozens who knew Joan, the judges set aside the previous trial's decision that Joan was a heretic.

Outline

I. Bishop Pierre Cauchon, an English partisan, planned Joan's trial and lobbied intensely for it to be under his direction.
   - **A.** Cauchon was a native of Reims and bishop of Beauvais, two cities that had come over to the side of Charles VII, thanks largely to Joan.
   - **B.** His consequent inability even to visit these two cities of "his" must have increased his hostility to Joan.
   - **C.** Cauchon assembled a distinguished panel of several dozen professional canon-law jurists and theologians for this ecclesiastical trial of Joan.
     1. Many of them were graduates of the pro-English University of Paris and some of them, current faculty members.
     2. Cauchon was intensely proud of "his" trial and saw to it that punctilious minutes and other records were preserved.
     3. But the trial had problems at the outset.
     4. What issues about Joan's political and military career could an ecclesiastical court properly try?
     5. What charges could be brought against her? Was she a prisoner of war or a suspected heretic?
     6. Did the rules of an Inquisitorial trial allow someone not charged of any crime to be interrogated?
     7. These were some of the problems that allowed the illiterate peasant girl to achieve her greatest victory: the near-frustration of nearly 100 highly trained, male professionals.

II. Joan's trial lasted from January 9 to May 23.
   - **A.** She was imprisoned in incredibly harsh and painful circumstances, and without women companions or jailers, who would normally accompany a female defendant.

1. Her greatest danger was from her particularly brutal English guards, who may have threatened her virginity.
2. On the other hand, Joan was a handful: She had tried quite dramatically to escape by jumping a long distance into a moat in Beaurevoir. She must have been extremely agile to have survived.

B. At almost every turn, the illiterate peasant girl frustrated her professional inquisitors.
1. This was, perhaps, her final "miracle."
2. It was certainly a sign of great innate intelligence.

III. Joan's last days on earth were terribly conflicted.

A. Whether to save her life or from doubt in her voices, Joan denied her vision and her mission.
1. On May 24, Joan accepted the tribunal's offer of life in a church prison run by women.
2. Cauchon reneged on that promise, sentencing her to life imprisonment in an English prison run by jailers who would be delighted to have their way with her.

B. For whatever reason, Joan resumed male garb, recanted her previous denial, and reaffirmed her faith in her mission. The tribunal promptly declared her a relapsed heretic and condemned her to die at the stake (always Warwick's goal).

C. Did Joan die a virgin or did her guards finally rape her?

D. Why was she finally allowed the consolation of the sacraments—presumably forbidden to heretics?

IV. The execution itself was a dramatic event.

A. It produced the conversion to belief in Joan of many; even some of the English were converted to belief in her: "We have burned a saint!"

B. Joan's body was reduced totally to ashes.
1. The English wanted no relics to survive.
2. Her ashes were thrown into the Seine.

C. Her burning at the stake remains perhaps the most vivid vision we have of Joan.

V. Throughout her life and trial, Joan claimed that she shaped her life, mission, and goals at the direction of her "heavenly voices." She identified them as the archangel Saint Michael, Saint Margaret (of Antioch), and Saint Catherine (of Alexandria).

A. Joan in her own day (and in ours?) embodied and symbolized profound religious faith.
1. How has her faith been represented, admitted, and denied?
2. Here, we interrogate the figure of Joan and our modern embarrassment about belief.

B. We also look at the power of Joan's own voice.
1. She speaks with grave and compelling simplicity.
2. Her letters alone are remarkable documents that testify to her confidence in her mission as a form of national crusade.
3. The trial records reveal her quick wit, piercing honesty, and insistent righteousness.

VI. A quarter-century after Joan's death, Charles VII wanted her reputation (and, hence, his title) vindicated.

A. Working with Pope Nicholas V, Charles VII arranged for a second trial at Rouen in 1456.
1. Dozens of witnesses, some of them formerly witnesses at Rouen in 1431, were summoned.
2. Joan's fellow villagers from Domrémy came in a group.

B. This fascinating recasting of her condemnation process gives us a richer view of Joan, but that view confirms what we previously could know about her.
1. The court's final judgment was that the 1431 trial was so procedurally flawed as to be null and void.
2. Joan was not formally rehabilitated, though that was this trial's evident agenda.
3. The movement to rehabilitate her fully and declare her a saint had to wait until the nineteenth century, and she was not raised to the full dignity of Roman Catholic sainthood until World War I had ended.

Essential Reading:

Régine Pernoud and M.-V. Clin, *Joan of Arc: Her Story*, Jeremy duQ. Adams, rev. and trans. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

H. A. Kelly, "Joan of Arc's Last Trial: The Attack of the Devil's Advocates," in *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc*, Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, eds. (New York: Garland, 1996).

Supplementary Reading:

Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Vita Sackville -West, *Saint Joan of Arc* (New York: Grove Press, reissued 2001).

Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (New York: Knopf, 1981; reissued, University of California Press, 1999).

Kelly DeVries, *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* (Stroud, U.K.: Sutton, 2002).

Questions to Consider:

1. Of what could Joan have reasonably been found guilty?
2. Which is the more implausible: Joan's military victories or her solitary resistance to her judges?

Lecture Twenty-Three

Joan of the Imagination

Scope: Always remembered at Orléans by a solemn festival in her honor on May 8, Joan was relatively forgotten, even in France, until the eighteenth century. Several dramatists, including Shakespeare, revived memory of her from the late sixteenth century onward, especially in France. In the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, she was mocked by Voltaire and celebrated as a heroine by Schiller and Southey. The nineteenth century saw the revival of what can only be called the cult of Joan the Maid of Orléans, not only in France. Since World War I, Joan has become a heroine for feminists, national liberation movements, political prisoners, and amnesty movements. Today, she is exploited in the propaganda mostly of rightist-nationalist parties. The Catholic Church beatified Joan in 1909 and canonized her (declared her a saint) in 1920. The international film industry has adopted Joan as one of its favorite characters. She remains an extraordinary, rule- and role-defying figure of human history.

Outline

I. One of the most remarkable tributes to Joan was written by a woman of her own day, the elegant court poet Christine de Pizan (1364–1430). Christine had already retired to monastic life by the time she heard of Joan, about whom she wrote a poem, the *Ditie de Jeanne D'arc*, completed on July 31, 1430—that is, between the time that Joan brought Charles to be crowned in Reims and Joan's failure to take Paris.

II. Two mystery writings sum up much of the continuity and difference between medieval and modern perceptions of Joan. Many lesser versions of the story were written for local entertainment.

   A. Joan's memory has been consistently honored at Orléans since 1435 by a festival on the 8th of May.

      1. The ritual reenactment of the siege has been celebrated with dramatic performances, as well as processions and the like, for more than five centuries (barring a few short breaks at periods of extreme political difficulty).
      2. The central dramatic performance is a mystery play in medieval style, *The Mystery of the Siege of Orléans.*

   B. In the early twentieth century, the French Catholic poet Charles Péguy wrote a major poem that can be (and frequently has been) performed as drama. Influenced by, although very unlike, the Orléans mystery play, Péguy's *Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc* is generally recognized as a monument of modern French literature.

C. These two works sum up much of the continuity and difference between medieval and modern perceptions of Joan.

III. Interestingly enough, most of the writers of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who wrote on Joan were dramatists. That changed during the Enlightenment.

A. Shakespeare, as always a patriotic Englishman, said nasty things about Joan in *Henry VI, Part I* (1592–1594?). For Shakespeare, she was the whore of the Armagnacs—a sexually perverse and lurid witch.

B. Several Francophone dramatists wrote supportive and successful plays about the Maid in the seventeenth century.

C. Three major poetic works for and against Joan were composed in the eighteenth century, in three languages.

1. The great Enlightenment writer Voltaire's scurrilous satire *La Pucelle d'Orléans*, circulated first privately (1740), then formally published in 1762 and later, caricatured Joan as a lumpish and stupid peasant who rides an ass, is constantly surprised while naked, and finally, yields her virginity to Dunois. Voltaire sought to undermine her story ironically because he was amused that the French, given their proclivities, would make a national heroine of a virgin.
2. Outraged at this caricature, the Englishman Robert Southey published a long laudatory epic entitled *Joan of Arc* in 1796 (when he was twenty-two).
3. In 1801, comparably outraged, Friedrich Schiller published his verse drama *Die Jungfrau von Orléans*.
4. Despite their opposition on almost every other point, both Voltaire and Schiller had to get rid of Joan's virginity (Schiller felt that her virtues deserved the fullness of romantic bliss).

D. Most of the plays and nondramatic poems written about Joan from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries also ended with Joan's deflowering: Her virginity, the guarantee of her mission in the medieval mind, was too much for those modern male authors.

IV. The nineteenth century saw the revival of what can only be called the cult of Joan the Maid of Orléans, not only in France.

A. In France, she became the nationalist heroine of monarchists and republicans, socialists and conservatives.

B. She became a potent figure of Allied propaganda (which meant including the English) in World War I. American enthusiasm for her mounted at that time. She was seen as a figure of liberation.

C. In World War II, Joan's example inspired both Charles de Gaulle and Vichy propaganda: Two sides of the political coin claimed her inspiration.

D. Today, Joan is exploited as a propaganda figure in France mostly by rightist parties; Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the anti-immigrant National Front political party that was popular in the early part of the third millennium, said that she was his special inspiration: Was he trying to copy de Gaulle?

E. From its inception, film has celebrated Joan's life. Have more movies been made worldwide about Joan of Arc than about any other historical figure? Perhaps so. Even Thomas Edison made a film about Joan.

F. Joan also remains an inspiration for movements of national and economic liberation, some of the most important movements of twentieth-century world history.

G. She is also a model for political prisoners.

H. If anything, Joan has been more important to the imagination of our time than she was to that of her own fifteenth century.

V. The Catholic Church finally validated Joan in the early twentieth century.

A. Joan was beatified at Rome in 1909, thus paving the way officially for her to be made a saint.

B. Joan's cult then spread throughout the Catholic world.

C. In 1920, she was canonized (declared a saint) just after World War I by Pope Benedict XV.

D. Interestingly, in a move some see as politically motivated, she was sainted as a virgin, not as a martyr or confessor of the faith.

VI. We end by considering the power of Joan's own voice. She speaks with grave and compelling simplicity.

A. Her letters alone are remarkable documents that testify to her confidence in her mission as a form of national crusade.

B. As Marina Warner said, Joan is most notable for what she is *not*: no queen, no courtesan, no mother, no beauty, no artist. She is not an intellectual: She belongs to the sphere of action, not contemplation. And she was hated by intellectuals because she didn't hold to their party line.

C. She is renowned for what she did on her own—not by birthright or by marriage.

D. She claimed that she shaped her life, mission, and goals at the direction of her "heavenly voices."

VII. Joan in her own day embodied and symbolized profound religious faith.

A. How has her faith been represented, admitted, and denied? The figure of Joan forces us to face our embarrassment about belief.

1. Most troublesome of all, more shocking than sex and strumpets, Joan's story forces us to face the problem of faith. Faith is the inadmissible topic.
2. It is easy in our culture to talk about sex, but the absence of Joan's desire for anyone other than God challenges our post-Freudian sensibilities.

B. If we can't comfortably contend with faith, we are certainly nevertheless able to perceive Joan's constancy and honor as a form of heroic grace and greatness.

Essential Reading:

Régine Pernoud and M.-V. Clin, *Joan of Arc: Her Story*, Jeremy duQ. Adams, rev. and trans. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

Bonnie Wheeler and Charles T. Wood, eds., *Fresh Verdicts on Joan of Arc* (New York: Garland, 1996).

Supplementary Reading:

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Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (New York: Knopf, 1981; reissued, University of California Press, 1999).

Questions to Consider:

1. Can you think of any other historical figure enjoying as durable and polyvalent an influence as Joan—especially if defeated and killed in two years of often-frustrated activity?
2. Saint or political martyr: Ultimately, did Joan die for her religion or for her politics?

Lecture Twenty-Four

Four Pioneers

Scope: The daunting queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, the learned abbess Heloise, the prophet Hildegard of Bingen, and the warrior Joan of Arc: Each of these women had a profound impact on her culture. In this course, we have considered issues of biography, personal and national identity, and identity-anxiety, as well as myth-making; we have considered the lives and later interpretations of these medieval women. In each case, we have reported from contemporary records and later interpreters. All these instances show us women who elaborated or escaped the boundaries inside which medieval women are conventionally thought to have lived.

Outline

I. All the stories we have been thinking about in this course make us aware of the alterity—the *otherness*—of the Middle Ages.

A. This culture, for example, whether in the twelfth or fifteenth century, whether in France or Germany or other parts of Europe, attached profound importance to contemplative life and symbolic acts.

B. Even when they chose monastic life (or found it thrust on them), these women were active in the world.

C. Consider Heloise and Hildegard.
1. They were institution builders, literally "homemakers" for their "daughters."
2. They contributed crucial revenue to their orders and amplified their organizational structures.
3. But they also performed another basic function: They led communities of women dedicated to prayer. Prayer was not a luxury for medieval European Christians; it was as crucial as food.

II. Why do we want to know about these women? Why do they seem heroic?

A. One fact that makes these women remarkable is that they were considered notable figures in their own times.
1. Those were times when women's accomplishments usually weren't considered valuable enough to record.
2. These women had what we now call *agency*: They acted as themselves for themselves; they were not merely "acted upon," subsumed, or remembered only as companions to inherently more important men.
3. These women were exceptional figures in a society where women were not forces to be considered but, instead, things to be used.

4. The very existence of these four women tells a different story about gender than historians often record.
5. Gender is a very basic distinction in society. The question "Is it a boy or a girl?" often comes before "Is the baby healthy?"
6. In their day, each of these women significantly redefined gender roles. Hildegard did this in theory (virgins are virile), and the others, in action.

B. The accomplishments of these women were notable and were noted because they achieved great feats in many realms: intellectual, spiritual, scholastic, prophetic, philosophical, political, cultural, and so on.
1. They were engaged in feats of war and peace, of private and public life, of romance, fantasy, and gripping reality.
2. Their achievements were generally thought by most people to be the exclusive prerogative of the male.
3. Such feats lead us to ask some basic questions about what we mean (and what older cultures meant) by the concepts of "masculine" and "feminine."

III. We moderns inevitably find each of these women problematic, as well as fascinating.

A. Was Heloise was just an adjunct of Abelard?

B. Was Eleanor merely a manipulative power monger?

C. Were Hildegard and Joan mad?

D. Was crazy Hildegard just zany?

E. Was crazy Joan really berserk and menacing?

F. All of these women were, in some way, perceived as dangerous:
1. Heloise's "in-habited" (in and out of clerical garb) sexuality
2. Hildegard's spiritual monomania
3. Eleanor's thirst for passion and power
4. Joan's push as warrior girl-wonder.

G. They often frightened as much as fascinated the men who (at least temporarily) controlled their reputations by writing about them. Fear often distorts.
1. Hildegard exercised most control over how she was seen; to a large extent, she created her "press," her public and historical persona. She controlled her writings, her manuscript production, her letter collection, and even part of her own biography (autohagiography, as Barbara Newman cleverly names it).
2. She also attempted to enforce a view of herself in her letters, as did Joan in her trial.
3. Illiterate Joan knew she had left a paper trail and was part of the historical record—witness her remarks on her faith that the Poitiers trial record was accessible, available.

4. Ironically, it is the grandest dame of them all, Eleanor, who had least control over her press.

IV. What is important about the stories we have gathered in this course is that these women can now live in the light of history.

A. These women (especially our twelfth-century women) remind us of a moment long ago in Western Christian culture when women *almost* made it as partners to men who had parallel roles and equal rights.

B. Those "gender rights" depended, however—as we must remember—on a medieval caste or class system that was fundamentally inequitable.

C. The caste system persisted, and repression soon swallowed that brief shining moment in which women could hope:
1. To rule as much as be ruled
2. To teach as much as learn
3. To travel and see the world
4. To assert their prerogatives over their own bodies.

D. Women did not again have such huge possibilities until modern times.

Essential Reading:

Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees, eds., *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

Supplementary Reading:

Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, ed., *A History of Women in the West II: Silences of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992).

Questions to Consider:

1. What is most memorable about each of the four women we have studied?
2. Would women today face the barriers these women faced?