

*The Cultural and Political Legacy of Anne de Bretagne: Negotiating Convention in Books and Documents.* Edited by Cynthia J. Brown. D. S. Brewer, 2010. Pp. 228. ISBN: 9781843842231.

ANNE DE BRETAGNE IS one of France's most fascinating and consequently well-known queens due to her unusual distinction of being both the reigning duchess of Brittany and the wife of two successive kings of France. Anne has garnered a fair amount of scholarly attention and study, although there is still ample room for further investigation, as Cynthia J. Brown points out in her introduction. In particular, Brown discusses recent scholarship on Anne and finds limitations in three often cited French works by Cassagnes-Broquet, Le Fur, and Minois.<sup>1</sup> However, Brown does applaud Pauline Matarasso's excellent comparative study of Anne de Bretagne and her contemporary rivals, and she also lauds the scholarship of the French collection, directed by Dominique Le Page, *Pour en finir avec Anne de Bretagne*?<sup>2</sup> Brown's own collection focuses on defining the cultural and political legacy of this important female ruler, particularly with regard to literary patronage and production.

The book is made up of ten papers, plus an introduction, and is divided into four sections. The first section is titled "The Politics of Bookmaking in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Brittany: Cooperation between France and the Queen's Duchy" and is comprised of two papers by Diane E. Booton and Malcolm Walsby. Surprisingly, both authors emphasize that Anne's reign was not beneficial to either manuscript or printed book production in the duchy, despite her acknowledged role as an important patroness. It appears that her patronage was focused on artists in and around the French court and did not give preferential treatment to artists from Brittany or emphasize the use of Breton materials or agents. Both authors agree that Anne showed a marked preference for lavishly illustrated manuscripts and did not demonstrate an interest in the developing printing industry. While both authors note that there was a market for printed books within Brittany, there appears to have been little resident production, with most works being imported from neighboring Normandy and Paris where higher-quality books were produced. Although both papers are insightful, it seems a risky decision to begin a volume that aims to investigate and ostensibly laud Anne's cultural contribution with two papers that confirm that while Anne's cultural patronage might have been highly beneficial to the French court, she did little or nothing to aid cultural development in Brittany, at least with regard to book production.

The second section, "The Politics of Literary and Religious Traditions: How

Books (Re)defined the Queen,” continues to focus on literary production, but these three papers are centered on works produced in the milieu of the court. The first paper, by Lori J. Walters, examines the 1497 version of Christine de Pizan’s work *Le Livre des Trois Vertus* produced by Anthoine Vérard. Walters notes two significant changes made by Vérard: to re-title the work *The Treasure of the City of Ladies (Trésor de la cité des dames)* and the decision to swap “droiture” or rectitude for doctrine. By associating the work with doctrine, Walters argues that Vérard was appropriating the moral high ground with a tome that could instruct the queen and the ladies of her court.

In the following paper, Michelle Szklinik evaluates Antoine Dufour’s *Vies des femmes célèbres*. Szklinik argues that Dufour did not cast himself as a humble author, but set himself up on an equal footing as the Queen’s mentor or “moral director.” Evidently, the queen did not disapprove of his lofty, moralizing tone as she promoted Dufour to become the royal couple’s confessor and commissioned illustrations for his work. The final paper in this section, by Elizabeth L’Estrange, focuses on Anne’s prayer book, now a part of the collection of the Newberry Library, Chicago (MS 83). L’Estrange highlights three key themes that pervade the volume: penitence, prayers connected to conception and childbirth, and devotion to the Passion of Christ. The need for penitence was connected to sins theoretically committed through the breaking of engagements and marriages in order to facilitate Anne’s two royal marriages. These perceived sins were believed to be a factor in Anne’s failure to produce a surviving male heir for either of her husbands, which might be remedied by prayers connected to childbearing.

Anne’s eldest surviving daughter Claude, who inherited the duchy of Brittany from her mother and also became Queen of France through her marriage to Francois I, is the focus of the third section. Retaining the literary connection, Cynthia J. Brown examines the “blurring” of royal imagery in books created for both mother and daughter. Brown compares Claude and Anne in terms of patronage and fecundity. In terms of the former, Anne had the advantage as Claude was hampered by her active mother and sister-in-law as well as successive pregnancies. However, Claude’s pregnancies were far more successful than her mother’s, and her ability to provide multiple male heirs guaranteed the continuity of the dynasty. Despite her success in what is arguably the Queen’s most important duty, Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier notes in the following paper that Claude has been often overlooked by scholars. Although Claude often seems like a royal wallflower, Wilson-Chevalier notes her tenacious attempt to retain the independence of Brittany and to control access to the impressive artistic and literary collection that she inherited from her parents.

The final section contains three papers that evaluate Anne's political role. In the first paper, Nicole Hochner argues that Anne "renegotiated" French queenship, using her status as duchess and the trial of her enemy the Mareschal de Gié to put herself on an equal footing with her husband. In the following paper, Michel Naisset argues that Anne's political activities have not been sufficiently investigated. The most significant moments in Anne's political career form the focus of the paper: the negotiations for Anne's two marriages, her reaction to the death of her first husband, the trial of Gié, the imagery of her second coronation, and Anne's attempt to preserve the sovereignty through the marriage of her heiress, Claude. The final paper, by Elizabeth A. R. Brown, the eminent historian of the French monarchy, returns to the key moments highlighted by Naisset. However, in line with Brown's well-known work on Capetian funerals, she also discusses the funerals of both Charles VIII and Anne.

In summary, this volume is an excellent addition to the existing scholarship on Anne de Bretagne. Although it is dominated by a focus on literary patronage, it does shed light on the "queen-duchess" political role and her daughter Claude—areas that are both in need of further illumination. The scholarship of the various contributors is of a very high standard, and the thorough bibliography would be an effective aid to anyone who is aiming to study Anne, particularly her cultural patronage. This volume has demonstrated that although Anne is a well-known figure who continues to attract interest and study, there are still many facets of her life and political career that are yet to be explored.

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## NOTES

1. Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet, *Un manuscrit d'Anne de Bretagne: Les Vies des femmes célèbres d'Antoine Dufour* (Ouest-France, 2007). Didier Le Fur, *Anne de Bretagne, miroir d'une reine, historiographie d'un mythe* (Guénégand, 2000). Georges Minois, *Anne de Bretagne* (Fayard, 1999).

2. Pauline Matarasso, *Queen's Mate; Three Women of Power in France on the Eve of the Renaissance* (Ashgate, 2001). Dominique Le Page, ed., *Pour en finir avec Anne de Bretagne?* (Archives départementales de Loire-Atlantique, 2004).