

Aleksandra Skrzypietz (ed.)

Queens

within Networks of Family
and Court Connections





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Aleksandra Skrzypietz

Introduction

A figure of a queen, a monarch's wife, enjoys an unfailing interest from historians. Many of these women were to win influence and power using various tools often not attached to their position. Therefore, it seems interesting and important to trace the steps that could lead them to power or give them an opportunity to achieve the goals they set for themselves. It is often not enough to show the way in which queen consort influenced her surroundings, it is also significant to determine people whom she used for that purpose and through whom she tried to reach for influence and power.¹ On the other hand, each queen was subjected to the impact of her circles; relatives, courtiers, and many other people tried to reach the ruler through the queen, and his spouse was to open up to them the possibility of influencing him. Thus, scholars try to present the queens' role in the royal court environment, they seek for manifestations of their probable – and sometimes almost imperceptible – influence on their husbands and their actions, and they try to determine which queens created their own networks of connections and pressures in order to gain control, and which gave in to the pressure of their surroundings and played a role of intermediaries in exercising power or successfully defended themselves from those influences and refused to intercede on behalf of somebody else.

Traditional roles of royal consorts came down to building political alliances between families and states, from which they originated and those they entered through marriage. The dowry of a given candidate, which – as expected – was to contribute to the husband's treasury, was often an element not deprived of its relevance in finalising the royal marriage. Crumbling political alliances and unpaid dowries could be the cause of tensions and problems of queens, who disappointed their husbands, their families and advisers, completely regardless of their wills, wishes, and possibilities. The major aim of every monarchical relationship was the birth of a male heir, although daughters – as long as not too numerous – could also become a political asset. Wives who failed to comply with these tasks – did not provide political support, did not bring in the promised dowry or did not give birth to an heir – were doomed to an uncertain future and their position was

1 Some of the materials used in this book have been prepared as part of the 2018/29/B/HS3/00907 project: Polish Courtier at the Royal Courts of the Jagiellons and Elective Kings: Rank, Value System, Role Model (Dworzanin polski na dworze Jagiellonów i królów elekcyjnych. Pozycja, system wartości, wzorzec osobowy), financed by the National Science Centre.

inevitably weakened. Women who experienced this became victims of unfavourable and sometimes tragic circumstances.

The queen was responsible for representation duties. Participating in public and court ceremonies by her husband's side, or on her own should the situation require it, in charity and devotional functions, particularly fulfilling religious duties sometimes even quite demonstratively, was part of the royal consort's everyday life. Appropriate creation of an image of a wife and mother, placing emphasis on the loyalty towards her husband and Church, the splendour of garments and jewels presenting the magnificence and – not always realistic – possibilities of the royal consort, were the everyday life elements and tasks facing the queens.² It is worth noting that the royal wives were in a trap between the presented luxuries, to which they were obliged and encouraged, and the accusations of vanity directed against them, to which women, in particular, were expected to give in.³

This image of the queen and her life was the standard in all the European courts. It is worth emphasising that pursuing all these roles – assuming that the queen taking her first steps at the new court focused the attention of her husband, his family and circles, and usually also the present diplomats – was not easy, especially at the beginning of marriage, when she was getting started at the new royal court. When a young woman got married, she had to leave her family home, usually say goodbye to her loved ones forever, grow into the new place, culture, landscape, weather, scents and smells, get used to different customs, garment designs, and language. These challenges were faced by all European princesses and they did not miss those who left Poland or arrived in the country in order to marry the rulers whom their parents had chosen as husbands, usually wishing for their daughter's happiness, but at the same time pursuing specific political goals. The family's hopes, as well as those of the young couple, were sometimes coinciding, but their implementation varied. There is no doubt that it would be an interesting element – which usually escapes researchers due to the lack of suitable sources – to determine the extent to which women were ready for the roles they were meant to fulfill. The observation of their mothers' behaviour and actions, who performed identical functions, was most certainly not sufficient, and it should be emphasised that there were not too many opportunities in the life of a young girl for such observations; none of them saw their mother taking their first steps at the husband's court. Orientation in the court's life and general rules of manners and etiquette were certainly making it easier for young princesses – brought up in a similar but never the same environment – to enter the new role. However, even the slightest differences in the functioning of the parents' and the husband's court were difficult to accept. In turn, women who came

2 BEEM 2020, pp. 154–172.

3 BERRY 1994.

from outside of the court circles found it unimaginably challenging to meet the new demands, particularly since they were automatically doomed to a deep dislike by the new circles that were usually showing their superiority in an ostentatious way.

Coming to her husband's court was a challenge to a young woman also because she was usually a figure anticipated by the court community that associated specific hopes with her arrival. The monarch's marriage must have been a decisive change at the court; it was linked with reshuffles necessary in the face of creating the court of his wife or transformations at the court of her predecessor if she was the next wife of this ruler. The fight for the new queen's favours could begin even before her arrival and then continue before her eyes, in front of her, with or without her participation. The new queen's retinue was arriving at the court together with her in order to act as her support, at least in the first phase of growing into the new environment. People who came with her were often burdened with the task of influencing the court and making efforts to reach the ruler's ear, the husband of their mistress. There were also people of a less high-profile who could act more freely; they were usually more experienced and risked less in fulfilling political tasks. This group was usually not welcomed enthusiastically; others wanted to get rid of it almost immediately, explaining it by the need to let the young wife grow into the new environment as soon as possible. In reality, the most important reason was to deprive the queen of support, to prevent her from using the newcomers in the court's game of influence and position, and the "locals" wanted to take a place by her side as soon as possible and win her influence as long as she was poorly oriented in the network of connections in her circles, and she knew little about people surrounding her; there was a greater chance then of having her wrapped in the net of dependencies. If at least part of the retinue with which the queen arrived remained in the new country, it could become an instrument of influence and means of contacting the fatherland or an opportunity for the queen consort's relatives to put pressure on her. On the other hand, the moment these people were leaving the court, there was another breakthrough in shaping the entire balance of power at the court.

Creating the young wife's court usually depended on the king sometimes yielding to his trusted advisor's suggestions, who could aim at lowering the queen's positions and depriving her – as far as possible – of greater importance and influence. To manoeuvre in this new environment, and in particular to win the husband's attention and trust, was exceptionally difficult; to gain a support group and to face unfriendly people required a great perceptiveness, predicting skills, skillful manner of dealing with often experienced opponents. These challenges could be handled better by women who already had some experience in the political game, but not many had this kind of preparation.

The queen's position at the court, particularly at the beginning, could be based not only on her personal qualities and social competences, but could also depend on the political background created by her connections. If the husband cared about having good relations with his in-laws, if they could have influence on him, support the representative of their own blood, then both the rules as well as his circles had to reckon with the queen, which strengthen her position and influence. However, the royal wife could also be perceived as a foreigner, a dangerous person, accused of spying for the benefit of her relatives, hostile towards her husband's issues.⁴ Even giving birth to children did not help the unpopular queens in breaking down those negative opinions, but the lack of offspring and the weak position associated with it only made this matter worse. Hostile and defamatory opinions were often spread by people competing with the queen to gain access to her husband, reluctant to her influence, full of concerns that the faction associated with her would block their own activities.

The aim of this work is to present the queens of the Early Modern Period who lived in varied and complex arrangements of the court as well as family connections. The authors try to present the pressure that was put on queens by their surroundings and people, and the efforts of these women to not succumb to these pressures, to avoid traps, which resulted in submitting to someone else's wishes and goals, even though not all of them knew how to avoid these interplays. Some of the queens tried to create their own networks of family and court connections in order to strengthen their position this way and secure the future of their own family or even the country. Elements of building their own position at the time of getting married and ascending the throne also occur. A considerable role in this narrative was played by the queens' relationships with their husbands, who were also not free from the pressure of their surroundings and arrangements at the court.

There is no doubt that the queens' positions were not easy, even though none of the women presented in this book ruled on her own. Duties imposed on the queen consort, expectations associated with them, and the queen's position in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were not different from other European countries, but in the face of the throne's eligibility and the monarch's weakening position, her role was also diminishing. Therefore, a question arises whether the removal from power – but not from influences – freed these women from responsibility for the country where they held the throne and whether this responsibility came down only to giving birth to heirs to this throne. This question is linked explicitly to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as an elective monarchy where the heir to the throne was as important and respected as he was not necessarily needed from the

4 STAFFORD 1983, pp. 58–59.

legal and political point of view.⁵ The rule of the throne's eligibility in Poland was first introduced within the family, and then *virtim*, but it was still important for the royal spouse to give birth to children because it was assumed, at least until the mid-17th century, that the monarch's sons would be the most reliable candidates to the throne.

Undoubtedly, Polish queens had an influence on power and future of the state, or they were suspected of having this possibility, which triggered rivalry and aversion towards them, but they were encouraged to reach for power – even through influencing their husbands – also by their relatives or people from their circles. The active and strong queen was becoming a part of the arrangement of the court, and thus also the political arrangement.⁶

The characters presented in this book are linked by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, from which they came or to which they were brought by circumstances. Barbara Radziwiłł and Anna Jagiellon were born here and were enthroned here; Marie Leszczyńska, who married the King of France, was also born here. Anna of Austria and Louise-Marie Gonzaga came to Poland to become queens. Marie Casimire de la Grange d'Arquien became the queen thanks to the election of her husband and her granddaughter, Maria Clementina Sobieska, was born in Silesia situated on the border with Poland, and she went to Italy hoping to marry a king who would recover his inheritance; but that is not what happened, and she spent the rest of her life in Rome as *de iure* queen. She was not enthroned as her husband did not win the throne back, but through her own ambitions and political background she relied on, as well as struggles that were shaking the court in exile, she belongs to the group of women presented in this book.⁷ They all found friends – if rulers can have any – and supporters; they also all came across people who were adverse personally to them, but also to their husbands and their actions.

Therefore, we wish to present how all the queens, even though linked to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in different ways, dealt with establishing their position or achieving the goals they set for themselves. It includes both princesses with high-ranked families and background (Anna Jagiellon, Anne of Austria, Louise-Marie Gonzaga) and women who were not born in power circles (Barbara Radziwiłł, Marie Casimire de la Grange d'Arquien, Maria Clementina Sobieska, Marie Leszczyńska), who had to face the challenges that their social elevation caused. The position at the royal court and influence of these women were very diverse, and thus presenting the

5 CZAPLIŃSKI 2008, p. 50.

6 CRUZ, SUZUKI 2009, pp. 3–4.

7 Maria Clementina will soon have her first biography published, which will present not only the history of her life but also uncover numerous misinterpretations about her that are widely present in the historiography of the Stuarts. SKRZYPETZ, JUJEZKA.

family and court arrangements in which they functioned seems to be an important element of their biographies.

Barbara Radziwiłł (1523–1551), the representative of the Lithuanian aristocracy, a widow of her first husband, Stanislovas Goštautas, met Sigismund II Augustus at the time when he already had the crown which he had received as a child when his father had still been alive. When they met, he was still married to Elisabeth of Austria, who soon died. Barbara became the Jagiellonian monarch's wife in the atmosphere of scandal.⁸ Their secret wedding forced the king – when he took over independent power after the death of his father, Sigismund I the Old – to the long-lasting efforts to have the marriage recognized and to have Barbara crowned.⁹ No one can answer the question to what extent the difficult entry into the role of a royal spouse and dislike, which she encountered, damaged Barbara's health and contributed to her premature death. The fact that – being sick as she was – she did not give her husband any offspring also seriously diminished her position at the court. Agnieszka Januszek-Sieradzka presents the process of the royal spouse's growing into the role of the queen. The short marriage of only four years with the Jagiellonian monarch let her strengthen neither her position nor her influence, all the more so, because the majority of this time was dedicated to the king's fight for the coronation of his beloved wife. Barbara became a victim of her subjects' dislike, who deemed her unworthy of this elevation. Sigismund II Augustus's persistence resulted in her coronation taking place six months before her death when she was already very ill. Married to the monarch, Barbara was the object of pressure and demands from her relatives, who expected her to become a tool in their hands and a pathway to achieving their ambitions and political plans. Meanwhile, the king highly appreciated his wife's inactivity. The article uncovers contradictions in which the queen was entangled and her circle's reactions to her behaviour.

Anna Jagiellon (1523–1596) should have become a wife of a foreign ruler, similarly to her three sisters, but neither her parents nor her brother found time to find her a husband, even though her younger sister, Catherine, did get married. After the death of her brother, Sigismund II Augustus, Anna had to take care of her own future. Unmarried for many years and living isolated from the political life, she – as the last representative of the Jagiellonian dynasty in Poland – was of interest to the noblemen who wanted to secure her future and wealth. This moment opened up for her the opportunity to pursue broader activities at home and abroad. The issue of taking over the inheritance of her mother, Bona Sforza, and the execution of her siblings' wills were the subjects of her efforts. However, the elections required much greater efforts, and Anna became a participant in the political games during

⁸ JANUSZEK-SIERADZKA 2017, p. 29.

⁹ MARCHWIŃSKA 2011, pp. 484–499.

three of them. The aging maiden hoped twice to get married, first to Henry Valois and then to Stephen Báthory, and it was the latter who got the crown together with her hand.¹⁰ Anna turned fifty at that time, and even though her health was not bad, she could not have any children.¹¹ Agnieszka Pawłowska-Kubik proved that Anna – having practically no political experience – managed to get involved in wide-scale activities and create a network of connections that served to carry out her plans. She also knew how to find influential allies, skilfully seek for their help, and remind them of their obligations. She energetically supported her relatives in the political fight, working on their marriages. She consistently and successfully worked on placing her nephew, Sigismund III Vasa, on the Polish throne.

Anne of Austria (1573–1598) was the child of Archduke Charles, the younger brother of Emperor Maximilian II. Her marriage to Sigismund III Vasa was set up by Anna Jagiellon, who started the talks to win the archduchess' hand for her nephew, even though the final word allegedly belonged to the fiancé who liked the portrait of young Anne.¹² Her marriage, arrival to Poland, and coronation did not differ from the accepted norms. Anne gave birth to a few children, and her son, Władysław, was chosen the king after his father's death. It can be stated that her short life and marriage was an exemplary model of a queen's biography, which does not mean that she did not come across problems after becoming the ruler's wife and that she did not have to learn her new role. Young Anne was brought to Poland by her mother, Archduchess Maria Anna of Bavaria, an energetic woman who was successfully pursuing her own political plans and who wanted to have an influence on her daughter. This was meant to be achieved through leaving trusted people in the Polish queen's circles, through whom she could contact her daughter, but also get detailed news about the situation at the Polish court. Anne herself was to be a source of information as she was obliged to write to her mother regularly. As a result, Maria Anna of Bavaria could follow the events and try to influence the queen's attitude. Thus, she encouraged her to take actions beneficial to her own views or the Habsburgs' interests. Aleksandra Barwicka-Makula traces the family letters, uncovering the archduchess' role in both leading to her daughter's marriage to the King of Poland and indicating that Anne was to become an intermediary in her mother's efforts to make Sigismund III act in accordance with the plans of his in-laws. The author emphasises that even though only remnants of the family letters survived, they are still a vast source of knowledge on the relationship between the archduchess and her daughter and son-in-law.

10 PAWŁOWSKA-KUBIK 2019, p. 236.

11 BOGUĆKA 2009.

12 BARWICKA-MAKULA 2019, p. 329.

Louise-Marie Gonzaga (1611–1667) was born as Marie, and the name Louise was taken by her before her departure to Poland. Her life in France was marked by participating in political and matrimonial scandals, similarly to Anna, her sister.¹³ She was suggested as the wife of Władysław IV Vasa twice, and the second time this not-so-young, already thirty-four-year-old princess became his wife just to become a widow three years later and to marry his brother, the next King of Poland, John II Casimir. Louise-Marie's asset was her large dowry and a considerable amount of cash that came from selling her French properties, which she brought to Poland; she also knew the court's customs and brought with her a group of young ladies whom she married off very well in order to use them in the political game, which provoked opposition against "the rule of a skirt". The efforts of the queen, who was openly reaching for power and scheming to implement her political plans, exposed her to the nobility's dislike.¹⁴ The catastrophic situation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the mid-17th century resulted in the queen searching for allies abroad and introducing the *vivente rege* election, which was to strengthen the Polish monarch's position. Two children born in the queen's second marriage died, and so plans were made to enthrone her adopted niece, Anne Henriette, and her husband, Duke d'Enghien.¹⁵ A thread of connection between the queen and his father, Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, was exceptionally complicated and linked many people who mediated the contacts between Warsaw, Chantilly, and Paris. Damien Mallet presented how complex and strong the network of connections linking Louise-Marie with France was, but he also included problems of people involved in it, first and foremost the tensions arising among these people, particularly in the face of challenges engendered by the double dependence on both the queen and the Conti family.

Marie Casimire de la Grange d'Arquien (1641?–1716) came from the poor French nobility, and she arrived in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth together with Louise-Marie. Thanks to the queen and in accordance with her plans, she married John Sobieski, who was quickly climbing his career ladder. Brought up in the queen's political "school", she did not shy away from taking part in intrigues and making efforts to have a French candidate enthroned, in accordance with the queen's intentions. However, the opposite happened, and the throne was taken by Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki, and Marie Casimire – even though her husband was the leader of the anti-king opposition – sought acceptance at the court, and thus she was accused of using female tricks against the king.¹⁶ She also joined the political game during the following election supporting her husband's candidature, and she

13 SKRZYPIETZ 2019, pp. 68, 76–77.

14 MALLET 2017, pp. 455–469.

15 LIBISZOWSKA 1985, pp. 55–67.

16 MATYASIK 2011, p. 35.

was enthroned together with him. She knew the court, she had a great experience in manoeuvring the pathways of the court's arrangements, but her humble birth status and willingness to get involved in the political activities triggered a widespread resentment. Together with her husband, she had to fight for her coronation, the right which she was denied, similarly to their children born before the election who were denied the titles of royal descendants.¹⁷ She managed to overcome these obstacles, but her husband's reign was taking place amid fierce fighting against the opposition. It was Marie Casimire's ambition to preserve power in the hand of her children. However, it turned out that the changing political situation and the lack of a strong family and political background made this task very difficult. Therefore, the queen decided to create a network of ties based on marriages of her relatives with the most prominent families of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Dominika Rychel-Mantur indicates that the effort to strengthen the position of the Sobieski family through John III's relatives and the queen's siblings brought from France turned out to be a failed attempt, and the fiasco of these efforts seems to reside in the weakened position of the Polish ruler, intensifying in the second half of the 17th century,

Maria Clementina Sobieska (1701–1735) was the granddaughter of John III Sobieski and Marie Casimire. She was born in Oława, where her father, James Sobieski, took refuge after he had lost the election in 1697. John III Sobieski's sons did not sit on the Polish throne, but they constantly tried to participate in the international political game, believing that they will win the Polish crown. However, that is not what happened, and the family of John III lost its significance, even though legends about its wealth circulated around Europe. Through her mother, Hedwig Elisabeth of Palatinate-Neuburg, Maria Clementina was related to families who held many European thrones. Maria Clementina's asset was her youth, giving her hope that she would have sons; she was chosen as the future wife of James Stuart, the English king *de iure*, who tried to keep the support of his advocates by giving them the potential heir to the throne of the Stuarts' blood and royal rights. Improving his situation thanks to his wife's relatives and repairing the finances was very important for the exiled king who had just settled in Rome. However, James Stuart's enemies remained alert, and Maria Clementina – at the order of the emperor, Charles VI, who acted in the interests of George I, King of England – was confined in Innsbruck, from where she was freed through a ruse.¹⁸ There was no great retinue that would lead her to the husband, although when she reached Rome, she was welcomed by the cardinals and the pope. Her husband did not wait for her since, once again, he tried to recover the lost throne. The small circles of

17 KOMASZYŃSKI 1983.

18 MILLER 1968.

the Jacobite immigrants were shaken by fierce arguments. Sobieska joined these conflicts fighting for her own position. The payout of her dowry turned out to be difficult, and her connections did not bring James Stuart back to the throne, which diminished her influence. She gave birth to a son, fulfilling the task of the king's spouse, but despite this, her position at the court in exile was waning because the hope to return to the throne was increasingly declining. Efforts of the monarch's favourites who tried to block Maria Clementina's influence on her husband resulted in tensions between the royal couple. The escalating conflict resulting from the fights of the court's factions prompted Sobieska to act against the favourites and the decisions of the king who – according to her – succumbed to them.

Marie Leszczyńska (1703–1768) was born in the family of a Polish nobleman and together with her father's election – carried out at the request of the Swedish king, Charles XII – she was elevated to the position of a princess, but this did not mean the actual advancement since the political turmoil and the great northern war forced her family to exile. Internment and then Charles XII's death deprived her father, King Stanisław, of influence, and the family's financial situation was also hopeless. Despite small hope for an excellent marriage in the absence of dowry and influential political background, Marie was relatively well educated, but she had no chance to experience the functioning of the royal court with all its complexities. Due to conflicts shaking the circles of young Louis XV and changes in the French government, it was decided that a princess should be found, who could quickly give birth to an heir to the throne. Marie Leszczyńska was selected, but the faction which brought her to the throne also expected to win the monarch's favours through her mediation.¹⁹ The Polish princess had no support in the form of a royal family who could benefit from her influence; she ended up in Versailles, in the environment marked by a long tradition of the court and etiquette. Not used to life at the court, Marie found herself in a net of dynastic and personal dependencies. Giving birth to sons and many daughters did not strengthen her position, and the presence of Louis XV's influential mistresses meant that the efforts to win the influence of the king's wife became even more difficult. Katarzyna Kuras presents Marie Leszczyńska in the net of intrigues and rivalries that surrounded her, and she tries to explain the reasons for the queen's weak position at the court, illustrating the picture of her loneliness in the face of the lack of family and political background since Leszczyńska did not have those at her disposal. This example indicates that even though personal predispositions and skills could provide the queen's influence, they could, in fact, help only to a small extent; for the origins, family, and political background – which assisted the royal wife in strengthening her position – were much more important.

19 KURAS 2018, pp. 44–51.

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Queen Barbara Radziwiłł in a Web of Contradictory Expectations*

In Memory of My Beloved Parents

Abstract:

Barbara Radziwiłł (1523–1551), a second wife of King Sigismund II Augustus (1520–1572, reign from 1548), spent only four years with her husband, of which only six months as a crowned queen (7 December 1550 – 8 May 1551). Due to the backdrop of this unequal and socially unacceptable marriage between the monarch and the Lithuanian magnate, a widow of a strained reputation, this short period of time excellently shows the process of “becoming the queen”. It was difficult and fraught with traps even in favourable conditions, but under the circumstances Barbara got involved, it became particularly difficult and complex. The king’s beloved wife, but an unwanted queen, struggled at the royal court in Cracow with numerous problems, facing also one which put her under the pressure of contradicting expectations of people closest to her – her husband and the Radziwiłł family that dreamt of strengthening and expanding their influence. In Sigismund Augustus’ eyes, one of Barbara’s major assets was her lack of interest in the state or public affairs. The queen did not want to lose this asset. What moved her husband’s heart towards her, alienated her from all others who wanted to reach the monarch’s favour through her. The queen’s attitude was the source of annoyance for the power-hungry Radziwiłł relatives who – although they could rely on the monarch’s favour anyway – attempted to extend their sphere of influence and benefits, taking advantage of having their family’s representative enthroned and constantly pressuring her, making requests, and indicating a route for their implementation. How did the queen – being hardly able to find herself in the royal court’ reality – navigate in this web of contradictory expectations? This is what this article addresses.

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There were, in fact, three expectations of a Queen in Poland, common to all the members of public life, both in the mid-16th century as well as earlier and later periods: she was to give birth to an heir to the throne (the Jagiellonian elective monarchy also required successors), she should appear publicly in order to emphasise her husband's position and wealth, and it was her duty to also set an example of a good life as an exemplary Christian, wife, and mother, and she was to emotionally link the subjects with the monarch and monarchy.¹ It was also perfectly clear and natural that the queen would not get involved in politics or any state affairs, leaving these matters in an exclusive and undisputed domain of her husband, the king.² While the queen's obligations were of a universal dimension in Early Modern Europe, for they were similar regardless of the latitude or the political and institutional shape of the country, the socio-cultural landscape into which the queen had to fit after her arrival to her husband's homeland and where she had to fulfill these obligations, tended to be exceedingly different, also from what her country of origin had made her used to. In 1380 Leopold III, Duke of Austria, brought his future daughter-in-law, Jadwiga of Anjou, who was only a few years old at that time, to the court in Vienna not only to ensure the terms of the marriage agreement with his son were honoured, but also for the young Hungarian to grow into the Habsburg tradition, culture, and customs.³ A queen's skill to effectively and advantageously navigate through this maze of often contradictory expectations was a real challenge – a highly difficult art of playing many pianofortes at once, requiring vigilance, foresight, caution, and a constant calculation of profits and losses.

A Lithuanian magnate, Barbara Radziwiłł (1523–1551, queen from 7 December 1550), a widow with a terrible reputation⁴, in 1547 she became the second wife of Sigismund II Augustus (1520–1572, reigned from 1548) after a scandalous romance, in secret, without the knowledge and consent of her parents and the royal council, in the face of a hurricane opposition from Polish political elites, as well as extensive masses of nobility.⁵ Barbara became the wife of the Polish heir to the throne in unconventional circumstance, and this atypicality somehow turned out into a trademark, or perhaps a heavy burden, of her short life by the side of Sigismund Augustus. The husband in love tied to provide his beloved with as many rituals as possible – typical of the entire dynastic Europe – of changing her status from an

1 MRÓWCZYŃSKA 1983; BEEM 2020, pp. 154–172.

2 Cf. BRZEZIŃSKA 1999; BEEM 2020, pp. 158–163.

3 CDHung., IX, vol. 5, pp. 376–380; PRZYBYSZEWSKI 1975, pp. 109–110.

4 On the origins, family, and the first childless marriage between Barbara and Stanislovas Goštautas (1507–1542), voivode of Nowogród i Trakai, whom she married in 1537, and on the reputation of the future queen, more broadly in: KUCHOWICZ, 1989, pp. 8–22, 61–74; RAGAUŠKIENĖ 1999, pp. 39–85; KOŁODZIEJCZYK 2015, pp. 361–374.

5 KUCHOWICZ 1989, pp. 97–125; SUCHENI–GRABOWSKA 1996, pp. 122–133.

unmarried woman to a wife, from a royal consort to a crowned queen. The process of “becoming the queen” did not go according to the accepted and expected norms. Barbara took part in a series of ceremonies which were secret (getting married), incomplete and postponed (travel to Poland, inauguration and presentation at the Cracow’s castle), and substitutive (quasi-wedding games in Niepołomice near Cracow).⁶ Determined Sigismund Augustus provided Barbara also with a substitute of his personal rituals of separation and reception (“rituels de séparation et d’accueil”), facilitating a woman’s adaptation to a new legal and social situation, arranging her almost a classical “le voyage de la jeune mariée”.⁷ Despite the husband’s efforts and carefully staged ceremonies, Barbara Radziwiłł could not count on a realistic welcome to her new family and to a new royal court. The royal consort found out about it in a palpable and painful way the minute she was brought to the rooms intended for her. In order for Barbara to take the rooms, it was first necessary to break the door down that had been locked up tight by Sigismund Augustus’ mother, Bona Sforza (1594–1557), who – not wanting to share the Wawel residence with her unrecognized daughter-in-law, had ostentatiously left Wawel and went to Warsaw.⁸

As aptly noted by Grażyna Rutkowska, a queen could usually recognize “the social expectations towards her because she was constantly meeting the representatives of various circles both at the royal court and outside of it (royal family, clergymen, university scholars, and other guests). She could shape and perfect her image under their influence”.⁹ This seemingly universal statement did not apply in the case of queen Barbara Radziwiłł. She came to the Cracow’s royal court with no knowledge, skills, and competencies typical of women who were being prepared to become a ruler’s wife since childhood, as well as no experience which allowed to get oneself acquainted with practices of living at the summits of power. The majority of the representatives of those “various circles”, apart from those – initially only few – whom Sigismund Augustus managed to convince to support – or at least staying neutral towards – the new queen, did not expect her to perfect her image under their influence. The only thing expected of Radziwiłł was to immediately and permanently remove herself from Sigismund Augustus’ life, from the Cracow’s royal court, from Poland. It was not an expectation explicitly directed to the unwanted queen, but in different forms and from different sides addressed to her husband, a sovereign, to take steps to end this relationship as soon as possible, even against the wife’s will, but with universal support. Those who were traditionally supposed to influence the queen to have her shape and improve her image did everything

6 TARGOSZ 2007; JANUSZEK–SIERADZKA 2017a, pp. 133–151.

7 MUIR 1997, pp. 32–39; COESTER 2011; VAN GENNEP 2019, pp. 116–145; KOSIOR 2019, pp. 23–45; PASTRNAK 2020; JANUSZEK–SIERADZKA 2017a, pp. 133–151.

8 Elementa, XXXVIII, p. 111.

9 RUTKOWSKA 2014, p. 234.

so that Barbara Radziwiłł would not only not become a crowned queen but also stop being the king's wife. Sigismund Augustus' mother and sister ostentatiously took a stand against young Jagiellon's choice. Bona – always thinking and acting in terms of the dynasty's and national interest's wellbeing, and never shrinking from subordinating all the matters to them – began to act energetically against his only son's marriage, hoping that he would come to his senses under pressure and end this "unfortunate and pathetic marriage".¹⁰ It should be remembered that in this case, she was hurt not only as a queen but also as a mother who suddenly lost influence over her beloved only son who was ready to sacrifice his long and close relationship with his mother for the love of another woman. The old queen did not want to accept the new one. She wanted to remove her and win back the exclusive filial feelings.¹¹ Towards the end of 1548, when Sigismund Augustus was fighting to have his marriage recognised at the Diet session in Piotrków, the widowed queen was to offer her son a hundred thousand zloty and all the estates in Lithuania in exchange for sending Barbara Radziwiłł away.¹² Church and lay dignitaries in the senate, like i.e. Jan Tęczyński (1484–1552), the governor of Sandomierz, who were rebuked for not complying properly with obligations towards the young king, stated that "they would prefer to see Turkish Suleiman in Cracow than to see this one [Barbara Radziwiłł – A.J.-S.] as a queen in Poland".¹³ During the Diet session, the deputies – in their eloquent speeches which urged the king to "leave the marriage" – combined the postulates of legal and institutional nature with a genuine concern for the rank of the dynasty and state, and in the end, in a spectacularly dramatic gesture, "they knelt, wiping their tears away many times, openly expressing a sincere sorrow".¹⁴ There were also those who did not shrink from propagating an absurd gossip that Primate Mikołaj Dzierżgowski (c. 1490–1559) supposedly stated that "if some kind of sin was to fall on the king due to this split up, he would divide it between all heads in Poland for the public good".¹⁵ The nobility was even willing to voluntarily put taxes on themselves for the purpose of Barbara's financial security until the end of her life, as long as this life was far from the Polish monarch.

10 Listy polskie 2001, pp. 1–2, 10–11.

11 BOGUCA 2004, pp. 142–145; cf. WATANABE-O'KELLY 2017, pp. 25–36.

12 Elementa, XLIV, p. 26; SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA 1996, p. 164 and n. 12; FERENC 2014, p. 302. On the proceedings of the Diet session and the king's efforts to have his marriage to Barbara Radziwiłł recognized more broadly in: SUCHENI-GRABOWSKA 1996, pp. 150–166; MARCHWIŃSKA 2001, pp. 484–499.

13 Citation from: SZUJSKI 1886, p. 121.

14 DIARIUSZ 1548, p. 207; Elementa, XXXVIII, pp. 74–77; JANUSZEK-SIERADZKA 2014, pp. 172–176; KOSIOR 2019, pp. 126–136.

15 ORZECZOWSKI 1854, p. 24; POCIECHA 1947, p. 58.

If these expectations – directed more to Sigismund Augustus to send away his universally unaccepted wife than to Barbara to leave her husband and Poland, which was unwelcoming to her – ever reached her then with a significantly weakened power. Sigismund Augustus tried to protect his wife from gossips, but solutions applied by him sometimes worked like a double-edged sword. Wanting to shelter Barbara from the malevolent members of the royal court, but more broadly from the representatives of the nobility associated with the royal court, he ordered Barbara's extensive isolation. On the one hand, this clearly separated her from evil looks and evil tongues, but on the other hand, it seriously hindered for her to get to know this new world, to find herself in it, and finally to adapt to the new role. It would be difficult to assume that in the royal court's circles, even the most carefully selected and the most strictly controlled, the queen's ears did not come across opinions of her new family and new subjects who demanded her separation from the king. However, while Sigismund Augustus' was a shield protecting her from direct contact with them, she had to be more independent when facing immediate contact with peoples' expectations.

The circles the queen had contact with most often was her female court, an environment inherently conflicted, and – when it came to Barbara – unfriendly, where the young queen, despite her husband's efforts to arrange it, found neither support nor kindness.¹⁶ Nevertheless, with the help of her spouse, Radziwiłł managed to meet the most important expectations from the ladies-in-waiting and their noble families, i.e. to take care of their advantageous marriages.¹⁷

Members of her male court also had expectations of the young queen, but these were far more serious than an advantageous marriage. The matter of these hopes was more complicated because it did not refer to the internal issues of the royal court but the public and state affairs; meanwhile, the queen did not show the smallest interest in them. Her attempts at offering patronage to the state offices or church dignities, confirmed by the sources, are rare. The members of Radziwiłł's court quickly realised the fact that their service for the queen, even after surviving the first, exceptionally difficult period associated with the social ostracism, did not give any real chances for quick promotions, financial gains, or even less spectacular, but gradual building up of one's position.

The queen's Hofmeister, Stanisław Maciejowski (1500–1563), and her secretary, Stanisław Koszucki (died 1559), unequivocally assessed that instead of respect and devotion to serving Barbara, her behaviour resulted in resentment and bitterness.

16 MARCHWIŃSKA 2001; JANUSZEK-SIERADZKA 2017a, pp. 23–56.

17 Despite misunderstandings and grievances in the female circle, and only three year period when the court functioned, as many as 9 – out of her 14 – ladies-in-waiting found husbands during their stay at the royal court, and 3 maids-in-waiting from Barbara's court also entered into matrimonies (MARCHWIŃSKA 2008, pp. 136, 142–144; JANUSZEK-SIERADZKA 2017a, pp. 30–32).