

Reigning as partners? Alfonso VIII of Castile and Leonor Plantagenet

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Summary. The marriage of Alfonso VIII of Castile and Leonor Plantagenet was not only the first political alliance between a Spanish kingdom and England in the Middle Ages, but it is also a very interesting case of study for the collaborative and corporate nature of twelfth-century royal rulership in Europe. Queen Leonor was described in the sources as a very capable and virtuous ruler and the study of her reign as consort reveals that she exercised queenship as an active political companion and partner in rule to her husband, thus contributing significantly to one of medieval Spain's most successful reigns and perhaps setting a model for queens in the late medieval period. *Una cum uxore sua*, the king did not simply exercise his power and authority in the passive company of Leonor, but with her consort reigned over the kingdom as one body, thus making the most of her family prestige and networks, and fully availing her capacity and virtues for Castile's political, dynastic and cultural prospects.

Keywords: Monarchy; Queenship; Castile; Alfonso VIII; Leonor Plantagenet.

[es] ¿Reinando como socios? Alfonso VIII de Castilla y Leonor Plantagenet

Resumen. El matrimonio entre Alfonso VIII de Castilla y Leonor Plantagenet no implicó solamente la primera alianza entre un reino hispánico e Inglaterra en la Edad Media, sino que es también un interesante caso de estudio de la naturaleza colaborativa y corporativa del gobierno real en la Europa del siglo XII. La reina Leonor fue descrita en las fuentes como un gobernante capaz y virtuoso y el estudio de su reinado como consorte revela que ejerció la reginalidad como una compañera política activa y una asociada en el gobierno de su esposo, contribuyendo de manera significativa a uno de los reinados más exitosos de la España medieval y quizás estableciendo un modelo para las reinas del periodo tardo medieval. *Una cum uxore mea*, el rey no ejerció su poder y autoridad en la pasiva compañía de Leonor sino que, en conjunto con su consorte, gobernó el reino como un solo cuerpo, aprovechando así al máximo el prestigio familiar y las redes de su esposa y disponiendo activamente de su capacidad y virtudes para los propósitos políticos, dinásticos y culturales de Castilla.

Palabras clave: Monarquía; Reginalidad; Castilla; Alfonso VIII; Leonor Plantagenet.

Sumario. 1. Leonor and the attributes of a queen consort. 2. Model queenship and ruling partnership. 3. Conclusion. 4. Bibliography.

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Recent scholarship has taken great strides in understanding the exercise of royal power by women and the nature of the authority vested upon female rulers, regents and consorts in twelfth and thirteenth-century Europe and Leonor Plantagenet provides an interesting case for analysis². Some of the ideas presented in this study have found inspiration in such studies, and thus we will focus on the queen consort of Castile so to contextualise her life and work within the wider scholarly discourse about

medieval queenship. It will be argued that Leonor was not like most European consorts of her time, but truly a ruling partner for Alfonso VIII. She was the only foreign princess in the Iberian Peninsula in the second half of the twelfth century; a very capable and independent politician and patron; and a loving companion to her husband as well as an influential mother of future monarchs. Having these considerations in mind, this study examines how contemporary chroniclers portrayed the queen

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² Some of these articles, chapters and books will be referenced and cited throughout this paper. As regard to Leonor in particular, this study brings together the works of Miriam Shadis, Ana Rodríguez, Rose Walker, Colette Bowie, Theresa Vann and José Manuel Cerda, among others. Abbreviations used: Luis Charlo Brea (ed.) (1997), "Chronica Latina Regum Castellae," in *Chronica Hispana saeculi XII*, CCCM, LXXIII. Turnhout, Brepols = CLRC; J. Fernández Valverde (ed.) (1987), Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de rebus Hispaniae sive Historia Gothica*. Turnhout: Brepols = DRH; Ramón Menéndez Pidal (ed.) (1995), *Primera Crónica General de España*. Madrid, Gredos = PCG; Martínez Díez et al. (eds.) (1991), *Crónica de Veinte Reyes*, Burgos, Ayuntamiento de Burgos = CVR.

and crafted a model for late medieval queenship for Iberian royals; one that reveals the nature of cooperative governance and partnership in ruling in this period and that may have been in the mind of rulers as eminent as Alfonso the Wise.

Castilian and Leonese chroniclers writing in the first half of the thirteenth century painted a consistently favorable portrait of queen Leonor, as might be expected. According to the author of the *Chronica latina regum Castellae*, Leonor was “most noble in customs and origin, modest and especially prudent” (“*nobilissimam moribus et genere, pudicam et ualde prudentem*”), and in the *Historia de rebus Hispaniae*, she was considered “modest, noble and discrete, most prudent and perceptive” (“*pudica, nobilis et discrete, prudentissima, sagaci*”).³ Lucas de Tuy, a contemporary chronicler from León, made no reference in his *Chronicon Mundi* to Leonor’s virtues, but he wrote that she was the famous daughter of the king of England⁴.

Such laudatory phrases appear at first as mere formulae proper to the traditions of chronicle writing in the Middle Ages, and as rigid, typological clauses of historical accounts more concerned with the expectations of those in power than with presenting accurate or truthful information. After all, both Castilian chroniclers, the chancellor Juan de Osma and archbishop Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, were courtiers and officially in the service of Alfonso and Leonor and were therefore expected to write official—and so agreeable—stories about royalty. At first, it would be reasonable to suggest that these accounts better serve the study of chronicle writing in medieval Europe than the study of the personalities, places and events, which they describe.

But if this consideration is applicable to the virtues attributed by these chroniclers to Leonor, then the same or very similar praise might be expected for every queen described by the chancellor and the archbishop as well as other contemporaries. Indeed, Juan and Rodrigo praised the wives of Fernando III, their patron, with virtues similar to those granted to Leonor: Beatrice of Swabia and Joan of Ponthieu were also considered prudent, discrete and noble, but the Castilian chroniclers spent hardly any lines at all on queens consort other than Leonor⁵. No such qualities are used to describe the wives of Alfonso VII, Berenguela and Rica, nor is anything written on the attributes of queen Blanche of Navarre, wife of Sancho III and mother of Alfonso VIII. Except for Berenguela,

who became regent of Castile, the daughters of Alfonso and Leonor who were queens in Aragón, France, and Portugal, are barely mentioned in these accounts, even though they were all contemporaries of the same Castilian chroniclers.

Not surprisingly, the center stage in these narratives is taken by kings, especially Alfonso VIII and Fernando III, but the praise given to them is markedly different to the virtues attributed to queens⁶. While kings were expected to be strong, generous, judicious and wise, royal women were meant to honor the traditional models by bringing into the dynasty what was sought above all in marriage arrangements: beauty and nobility.

These qualities were necessary but “passive”, in other words, a queen did not do anything in order to be regarded as beautiful and noble; this was normally said of all women who were betrothed to marry kings. Diplomatic missions sent to procure a wife for a monarch always sought a woman of proper lineage—a condition *sine qua non* in the *Siete Partidas* of Alfonso X—, so that they may endow the monarchy with fame and prestige⁷. A chronicler could praise the beauty of a queen without having met her personally and no doubt all queens were meant to be beautiful. This is surely not a description that historians can consider accurate information in a chronicle, just as no courtly painter in later centuries could dare paint his patron’s wife in her portrait as anything but a heavenly muse.

But when chroniclers make reference to “active qualities” in royal women, those associated with the exercise of medieval queenship, they are often attempting to describe a more precise and specific profile. As a result, it is important to pay more attention to such descriptions if we are to conceive or judge their political performance on the throne as consort and royal companion. This is not necessarily a naïve or face value approach to the information provided by medieval chronicles. Taking into account the difficulties of judging fact, fiction and exaggeration in these old accounts, they should not be discarded as misleading panegyrics entirely detached from reality.

The historical accounts written in vernacular a few decades after the Latin chronicles of Rodrigo and Juan tend to emulate the descriptions of these narratives and amplify their praise. Although their authors were not contemporaries of the kings, these later accounts may attest to the enduring dynastic memory surrounding Al-

³ CLRC, 51; DRH, 253, 281.

⁴ Falque, Emma (ed.) (2003), *Chronicon Mundi*, Turnhout, Brepols, 83.

⁵ Practically no description or very little attention is spent in these chronicles on queens consort such as Berenguela of Barcelona and Rica of Poland (Alfonso VII); Urraca of Portugal, Teresa de Lara and Urraca López de Haro (Fernando II), Teresa of Portugal (Alfonso IX); Sancha of Castile (Alfonso II); Leonor of Castile and Violante of Hungary (James I); Maria of Montpellier (Peter II); Sancha of Castile (Sancho VI); Clemence of Germany and Constance of Toulouse (Sancho VII); and Berenguela of Navarre (Richard I). It is, therefore, difficult to prove beyond doubt that the chronicles’ praises were entirely formulaic.

⁶ Rodríguez López, Ana (2003), “*De rebus Hispaniae frente a la Crónica latina de los reyes de Castilla: virtudes regias y reciprocidad política en Castilla y León en la primera mitad del siglo XIII*”, *Cahiers de linguistique hispanique médiévale*, 26, 133-149; and Rucquoi, Rucquoi, Adeline (2006), *Rex, Sapientia, Nobilitas: Estudios sobre la Península Ibérica Medieval*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 47-49.

⁷ *Siete Partidas*, II.6.1. Chronicle praise of the beauty of queens was conventional according to Duby: Duby, Georges (1997), *Women of the Twelfth Century. Vol 1: Eleanor of Aquitaine and Six Others*, Cambridge, Polity, 6. The importance of lineage for ideal queenship is also stressed in some letters of Bernard of Clairvaux to Melisende, queen of Jerusalem, sent in 1143: James, Bruno S. (ed.) (1998), *The Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, Guilford, Sutton Publishing, nos. 273-274, 346-347. Theresa M. Vann refers to the attributes of a queen in the *Siete Partidas*: Vann, Theresa M. (1993), “The theory and practice of medieval Castilian queenship”, in *Queens, Regents and Potentates*, ed. Theresa M. Vann, Cambridge, Academia, 126-136.

fonso and Leonor, which was still vivid towards the end of the thirteenth century. For the authors of the *Estoria de España* and the *Crónica de Veinte Reyes*, Alfonso VIII's consort was knowledgeable (*entendida*), intelligent (*sesuda*), measured (*mesurada*), wise (*sabia*) and judicious (*juiciosa*). In sum, she was a very good ruler or *domina* (*dueña*) and, of course, young, good and beautiful⁸.

Rodrigo and Juan provided the image of Leonor with a number of attributes but both consistently wrote that she was noble, prudent and modest. These three qualities praised in the latin chronicles may be more specific to the queen's historical agency and legacy than commonly thought. When they are matched with her performance as consort during the reign of Alfonso, it seems that the daughter of Henry Plantagenet and Eleanor of Aquitaine may have embodied the ideals of medieval queenship with more commitment and ability and companionship than most.

1. Leonor and the attributes of a queen consort

In the first place, Leonor was a most noble princess, born into a very prestigious and famed lineage. Chronicles, official records and artistic evidence suggest that her progeny was greatly esteemed and held in high regard in Alfonso's kingdom. That Leonor was the only foreign princess in the peninsula when she arrived in 1170 is a fact that was noted and given much more importance by medieval Castilians than by modern historians. Castilian chronicles of the thirteenth century such as the account of Lucas de Tuy noted the "international" character of this marriage; an aspect that was consistently celebrated and highlighted as a distinctive feature amongst the Iberian kingdoms of the time⁹.

Leonor's nuptial endowment (*arras*) granted in 1170 was considerable: the rights over many cities, villages and castles; the rents of ports; an annual payment of five thousand gold pieces; and half of what Alfonso was to gain from Al-Andalus¹⁰. Leonor marriage benefits were a substantial portion of Alfonso's property so this *do-*

natio propter nuptias must have pleased Henry II and the duchess of Aquitaine as an honor befitting the newly forged Anglo-Castilian alliance. The marriage was, in fact, the very first diplomatic bond between these powers in the Middle Ages and "brought about the transformation of the peninsula's diplomatic alignments,"¹¹ in the words of Peter Linehan. As Theresa Earenfight has argued, "a queen's foreignness...made her stronger,"¹² and in Leonor's case, this observation seems insightfully appropriate. A dower of such significance both empowered and authorised the foreign queen, who received fidelity and homage from the nobility of her adopted kingdom in lieu of her lordship and jurisdiction. Among other cases, this power and authority were effectively used by Leonor when freeing William, entrusted in 1177 with a chaplaincy devoted to Thomas Becket at Toledo Cathedral, from all taxes "*per totum regnum meum*" (in all of my kingdom)¹³. The queen was not regent, but as Alfonso's partner entitled to queenly rights and property, Castile was "her" kingdom.

Consequently, Leonor's lineage brought more prestige to Alfonso VIII's throne, court and dynasty, but her nobility was not sufficient and something else was required since all of the peninsular consorts were also of noble birth and came from the highest ranks of the Iberian aristocracy. According to the chronicles, Leonor displayed good customs and was discrete because she was all too conscious of her role in Castile, and the fame of her lineage weighed upon her shoulders. The promotion of the cult of Thomas Becket in Castile, a royal project pushed by Leonor herself, bears witness to her connection with the Plantagenet dynastic network, as are the priestly stoles (or maniples) embroidered or commissioned by her in 1197¹⁴. These vestments were probably sent as a marriage gift to her daughter Berenguela on the occasion of her marriage with Alfonso IX of León (r.1188-1230) and perhaps they were used by clerics during the marriage ceremony. These liturgical objects were worthy of the moment, finely produced and decorated with the royal emblems of Castile and clearly revealing the lineage of the author with a significant message across the cloth: "Leonor, Queen of Castile, daughter of King Henry of

⁸ *CVR*, 277, 288; *PCG*, 683, 709.

⁹ Aziza Pappano, M. (2003), "Marie de France, Aliénor d'Aquitaine, and the alien queen", in *Eleanor of Aquitaine. Lord and Lady*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 337. Although Leonor was not "English" in the sense of being a native or raised on the island, Castilian chronicles and documents tend to identify her as such, thus stressing –and also appreciating– her peculiar condition as a foreign princess. Leonor herself was interested in the projection of this idea as can be gathered from the priestly stoles embroidered or commissioned by her in 1197 and 1198. See n. 14 and Cerda, José Manuel (2013), "The Marriage of Alfonso VIII of Castile and Leonor Plantagenet. The First Bond between Spain and England in the Middle Ages", in *Les Stratégies Matrimoniales (IX^e-XIII^e siècles)*, ed. Martin Aurell, Turnhout, Brepols, 149.

¹⁰ Leonor's dower rights and property are contained in an original parchment in the Archive of the Crown of Aragon, cancellería, pergaminos Alfonso II, carpeta 43, no. 92, and that parchment has been edited in González, Julio (1960), *El reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 192-193.

¹¹ Linehan, Peter (2008), *Spain, 1157-1300: A Partible Inheritance*, Malden, Blackwell, 32.

¹² Earenfight, Theresa (2013), *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 27. See also Lincoln, Kyle (2013), "Una cum uxore mea: Alfonso VIII, Leonor Plantagenet, and marriage alliances at the court of Castile", in *Revista Chilena de Estudios Medievales*, 4, pp. 22-23; and Cerda (2013), *op. cit.*, 143-153.

¹³ Cerda, José Manuel (2016), "Matrimonio y patrimonio. Las arras de Leonor Plantagenet, reina consorte de Castilla", *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 85-86.

¹⁴ On the promotion of the cult to Thomas Becket in Castile see: Cerda, José Manuel (2016) "Leonor Plantagenet and the Cult of Thomas Becket in Castile, in *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c.1170-c.1220*, ed. Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 133-146; Slocum, Kay B. (1999), "Angevin Marriage Diplomacy and the Early Dissemination of the Cult of Thomas Becket", *Medieval Perspectives*, 14, 215; Cavero, Gregoria (ed.), (2013). *Tomás Becket y la Península Ibérica (1170-1230)*. León, Universidad de León; and Galván, Fernando (2008), "Culto e Iconografía de Tomás de Canterbury en la Península Ibérica (1173-1300)", in *Hagiografía peninsular en els segles medievals*, ed. Francesca Español and Francesc Fitó, Lleida, Edicions de la Universitat de Lleida, 197-216.

England, made me” (*Alienor Regina Castelle Filia Henrici Regis Anglie me fecit*)¹⁵. After nearly three decades as queen of Castile and having been to England perhaps only once or twice as a girl, Leonor ensured everyone in the neighboring kingdom of León and for everyone to remember that the Castilian king was married to the daughter of Henry Plantagenet, the most powerful ruler that Europe had seen in the twelfth century. Eventually, as Theresa Earenfight suggest royal family was the framework for the transmission and the exercise of lordship, as well as a model and source for attitudes and behavior toward woman in general and queens in particular. It furnished principles of order, and simultaneously adapted and molded those attitudes, structures and behavior into the institutions of medieval government¹⁶.

Such an affiliation is proudly paraded at the royal pantheon established by Alfonso and Leonor at the Monastery of Las Huelgas in Burgos, wherein the main nave of the monastic church a double stone sarcophagus identifies the queen’s resting place with the Plantagenet leopards. This work of funerary sculpture was made several decades after her death in 1214 and reveals how powerfully imprinted into dynastic memory was the queen’s nexus to the political and cultural world of the Plantagenets in Europe.

Leonor carried across the Pyrenees this dynastic prestige and she became a bridge for cultural and diplomatic exchange between Castile and the Plantagenet domains. She was not only the passive bearer of her family fame but like her parents, Leonor was a very active –and often independent– politician who placed her nobility and lineage to the service of Alfonso’s project for Iberian supremacy and the search for a stronger dynastic identity for Castile¹⁷.

Secondly, the chronicles portrayed Leonor as a prudent queen. She was also “learned, sagacious, judicious and wise” all virtues of prime value in medieval queenship which added to prudence¹⁸. Such an attribute

is made manifest in Leonor’s agency as diplomat and counselor. When the neighboring kingdoms of Castile and León were about to fall into renewed armed conflict, the queen listened to the nobles and managed to convince her husband with “tender advice” and “sweet words” to allow the illegal, but most convenient, marriage of their daughter, Berenguela, to the king of León¹⁹. Alfonso VIII was reticent to betroth their eldest daughter to his enemy and defy the papacy, because the spouses were consanguineous in the prohibited degree by canon law. Leonor, who was extremely judicious, balanced, clear, of profound discernment, and assisted by the Holy Spirit –according to one chronicle– foresaw the dangers and perils that such marriage pact may evade, and consequently insisted that the marriage should take place in order to achieve some lasting peace between León and Castile²⁰.

Just as Mary had persuaded Christ to act at the wedding feast of Cana or like the Old Testament Esther interceded for her people, Leonor here acted as the decisive *mediatrix*, perhaps with these models of intercession in mind; a role that has been studied by John Parsons and Lois Honeycutt, among several others²¹. But the queen’s decisive involvement seems to have pushed the prevailing models for queenship a little further. In this case, she was more of a diplomat acting with the authority and independence of a strong-willed Plantagenet than a meek intercessor confined to the secondary –and typically feminine– role of queenly persuasion. The marriage between Berenguela and Alfonso IX of León took place in 1197 and was dissolved by papal mandate in 1204, but peace was secured between León and Castile during those years and the union had also produced two sons, one of whom will unite León and Castile under one throne in 1230.

The diplomatic role played by Leonor in Berenguela’s first betrothal (c.1188) is not as clearly noted in the sources, but since the discussions between Alfonso’s

¹⁵ *Inventario de Bienes Muebles de la Real Colegiata de San Isidoro* (León), no. 11C-3-089-002-0024 and no. 11C-3-089-002-0025. See also Partearroyo, Cristina (2001), “Estolas de la reina Leonor de Inglaterra”, in *Maravillas de la España medieval. Tesoro sagrado y monarquía*, dir. Isidro Bango Torviso, Valladolid, Junta de Castilla y León, 191; Cerde, José Manuel (2011). “La dot gasconne d’Aliénor d’Angleterre. Entre royaume de Castille, royaume de France et royaume d’Angleterre”, *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 54, 241; Jasperse, Jitske (2017), “Matilda, Leonor and Joanna: the Plantagenet sisters and the display of dynastic connections through material culture”, *Journal of Medieval History*, 43.5, 10-13.

¹⁶ Earenfight, *op. cit.*, 22.

¹⁷ Cerde, José Manuel (2012), “Leonor Plantagenet y la consolidación castellana en el reinado de Alfonso VIII”, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 42.2, 629-652; Cerde, José Manuel (2018), “Diplomacia, mecenazgo e identidad dinástica. La consorte Leonor y el influjo de la cultura Plantagenet en la Castilla de Alfonso VIII”, in *Los modelos anglo-normandos la cultura letrada en Castilla (siglos XII-XIV)*, ed. Amaia Arizaleta and Francisco Bautista, Toulouse, Presses universitaires du Midi, 31-48. Theresa M. Vann refers to the importance of the alliance between Castile and the Angevin empire: Vann, *op. cit.*, 128-130.

¹⁸ Scott, *op. cit.*, nos. 273, 346. See also Hilton, Lisa (2009), *Queen Consort: England’s Medieval Queens*, London, Phoenix, 2. It is important to consider Margaret Howell’s study about Eleanor de Provence and her abilities and qualities to govern, in which define her as intelligent, assertive and knowledgeable, in other words, same characteristics that Leonor Plantagenet had a century before (Howell, Margaret (2001), *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in the Thirteenth-Century England*, Oxford, Blackwell, 270).

¹⁹ “...era muy sabia et muy entendida duenna et muy anuisa et entendie los peligros de las cosas et las muertes de las yentes que uernien en este desamor et se podrien desuiar por este casamiento si se fiziesse...Et la Reyna non lo allongo, et assi como se pudo apartar con el rey, fablo en este casamiento: et quando mostro los bienes que por ello uernien en las yentes et los males que por y se desuiarien, et sobresso tantol sopo falagar de sus palabras et adulçarle, que gelo ouo de otorgar et que se farie el casamiento. Et desde que la reuna donna Leonor esto ouo recabddado, enuio por los buenos omnes, et dixoles lo que auie puesto con el rey” (PCG, 683).

²⁰ “prudentissima, sagaci providencia et sollerte rerum pericula atenebat...” DRH, 253. Refer also to Pratt, Karen (2002), “The image of the queen in old French literature”, in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 241; and McKiernan, Eileen (2005), “Monastery and Monarchy: The Foundation and Patronage of Santa María la Real de Las Huelgas and Santa María la Real de Sigüenza”, Ph.D. Diss. Austin, The University of Texas at Austin, 59.

²¹ See Earenfight, *op. cit.* and the high-medieval queen”, 126-146; Parsons, John C. (1995), “The Queen’s Intercession in Thirteenth-Century England”, in *Power of the weak: studies on medieval women*, ed. Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 148-177.

envoys and Frederick Barbarossa concerned most of her dower rights, it is plausible that she had some involvement. Leonor herself had been at the very center of a marriage alliance discussed between the Plantagenets and the Staufen in the 1160s and so her presence in Castile could have borne some weight at the imperial court during the negotiations in the 1180s. The terms of the pact were discussed at Seligenstad in 1187 and written down in 1188 in a document authorised by Frederick, Alfonso, the *infantes* Enrique and Berenguela, and queen Leonor. They promised to observe the clauses established and provide the bride with a dowry that preserve all of the nuptial rights granted to Leonor in 1170 (“*saluo et reseruato illeso iure suo domine regine Alienor, uxori dicti regis Castelle, in omnibus et per omnia in arris suis*”)²².

Unlike her dower, Leonor’s own dowry has been a mystery for historians since there is no charter granting the king’s marriage rights, but Alfonso’s claim of lordship over Gascony in the early years of the thirteenth century placed his queen at the crossroads of European politics and turned her into a mediator between the Plantagenets and the Capetians²³. Eleanor of Aquitaine had travelled to Burgos to fetch Blanche of Castile and arrange a marital solution to the conflict between England and France, and Leonor was granted safe conduct in 1206 to meet her brother John, king of England, possibly to discuss matters concerning Gascony²⁴.

The queen of Castile not only took decisive action in Iberian and European diplomacy, but she also educated and prepared her children –especially her daughters– to become successful and prestigious rulers, connected to royal families with “crusading pedigree”, as Kyle Lincoln has noted²⁵. Leonor mothered her first child at the age of nineteen and the last at forty-four, which was a remarkable span of maternal productivity²⁶. She sorely lamented the premature death of several of her children, especially that of Fernando in 1211, not only as a diligent mother but also as a politician so manifestly com-

mitted to the future of the dynasty. The queen had survived most of her children when she met her own death in 1214, but she had provided them with a very valuable inheritance: a wealth of Plantagenet royal experience and connections.

Finally, Leonor is considered by chronicle writers to have been a modest woman. She was also good, pious, chaste, and measured; all virtues that seem to be associated in these medieval accounts with modesty. It is notably evident from the sources that the marriage of Leonor and Alfonso involved a loving relationship. In comparison, the stormy and hateful marriage built between Leonor’s parents helps scholars realise how extraordinarily fruitful and affectionate was her relationship with the Castilian king²⁷.

The queen’s modesty is praised in troubadour verses like those of Ramón Vidal de Besalú, a Catalan poet who wrote in the first half of the thirteenth century and described a courtly session held by the kings of Aragón and Castile²⁸. Vidal’s verses are in courtly love with Leonor, capturing the queen’s character and much of what has been suggested in this study: she is modest, discrete and subtle; she is a gentle wife and noble companion, but her entrance into the scene is noticed and admired by the troubadour. She is as formidable a Plantagenet as any in her family, and her lineage is here made public and is appreciated by all at the court of Castile and the foreigners present. Alfonso’s wife was gentle and discreet, but also powerful. Another Catalan troubadour, the noble Guillem de Berguedá addressed the queen with daring lines in 1190 and refers to her as a lady and empress with political authority and feudal command²⁹.

2. Model queenship and ruling partnership

Several other examples could be cited to support the case for the queen’s modesty, chastity and piety without having to resort to the stereotypes proposed by romantic

²² González, *op. Cit.*, II, 859; Estepa, Carlos (2013), “Concejos y Monarquía en el reinado de Alfonso VIII: el pacto matrimonial de 1187-1188”, in *El historiador y la sociedad: Homenaje al profesor José María Mínguez*, ed. Pablo C. Díaz, Fernando Luis Corral, Iñaki Martín Viso, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 67-75.

²³ Cerda (2011), *op. cit.*, 225-241. On the income and properties granted to his bride by Alfonso VIII, see above, n. 10.

²⁴ Hardy, Thomas D. (ed) (1835), *Rotuli Litterarum Patentium, (Patent Rolls)*, London, Rolls Series, I, 67: “*A. Regina Castelle et soror dn'i R'. h't litt' as pat' de cd'cu sibi et ill' quos secu' dux'it ad venie' du' secure ad dn'm R. '.*” See also González, *op. cit.*, I, 872; Ryder (ed.), *Ryder, Thomas (ed.) (1816), Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae, et Cujuscunque Generis Acta Publica (...), (Foedera)*, Londres, Rolls Series, I, 94.

²⁵ Lincoln, *op. cit.*, 23. See also Parsons, John C. (1997), “Mothers, Daughters, Marriage and Power: Some Plantagenet evidence, 1150-1500”, in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 64, 75; Pratt, *op. cit.*, 242, 245-6; Wade, Margaret (1986), *A Small Sound of The Trumpet: Women in Medieval Life*, Boston, Beacon Press, 45 and Shadis, Miriam and Hoffmann Berman, Constance (2003), “A Taste of the Feast: Reconsidering Eleanor of Aquitaine’s Female Descendants”, in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Lord and Lady*, ed. Wheeler and Carmi Parsons, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 185-186.

²⁶ See Vann, *op. cit.*, 130-132.

²⁷ Cerda (2012) *op. cit.*, 629-652.

²⁸ Appel, *Povengalische Chrestomathie*, 27; Pratt “The image of the queen”, 245; Shadis, Miriam, (2009), *Berenguela of Castile (1180-1246) and political women of the High Middle Ages*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 47; Cerda (2012), *op. cit.*, 639. Amy Kelly has described Eleanor of Aquitaine’s visit to Burgos in 1200 in reference to the courtly environment she might have encountered there: “Now in middle age the queen of Castile was gracious, pious, learned, wise, still beautiful the patroness alike of prelates, grandees, and troubadors. Eleanor found in Burgos and Toledo the full flowering of those civilized customs so rudely broken off in Poitiers by Henry’s invasion of her palace and her own long captivity. The Spanish days and nights were too short for all the history that had piled up in the epos of the Plantagenets”. Kelly, Amy (1950), *Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 358. Jane Martindale refers to the event pointing out the diplomatic importance of Leonor’s Angevin blood: Martindale, Jane (1999), “Eleanor of Aquitaine: the Last Years”, in *King John: New Interpretations*, ed. S.D. Church, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 145.

²⁹ De Riquer, Martín (ed.) (1975), *Los trovadores. Historia literaria y textos*. Barcelona, Ariel, I, 333, 339, 539-540; and Menéndez, Ramón (1942), *Poesía juglaresca y juglares. Orígenes de las literaturas románicas*, Madrid, Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 114.

views of medieval royalty³⁰. But it is interesting to consider that much of Leonor's patronage and diplomacy was shaped by the singularity of being the only foreign queen in the peninsula with all the consequences that such a position held in the politics concerning royal vassals, favorites and clients and the nexus bridged with other dynasties. Noble, prudent, and modest, Leonor was likely to have become a model of Castilian queenship in the thirteenth century because she had embodied with her attitude and agency the ideals formulated for the exercise of power and authority by royal women. She was noble, prudent and modest and the customary treatises produced at Alfonso the Wise's court a few decades after her death may well have considered Leonor –perhaps more than any other– when describing their expectations of queenship.

Some clauses from the *Siete Partidas* suggest four standards for the selection of potential queens: “that she comes from a good lineage; secondly, that she is beautiful; thirdly, that she is of good manners; fourthly, that she is rich”³¹. Lineage was deemed more important than beauty, manners and wealth which were considered of “less weight”, still following close after. The king and his court were to take the first two into account above all others; being of first priority, no mistakes or concessions could be made when it came to lineage. The text then explains that a king and his children are honored and esteemed by the nobility of their queen and mother just as Alfonso VIII's prestige was exalted with the marriage of 1170 and that most of the children –male and female– became rulers in the thirteenth century.

Eleanor of Aquitaine's embassy to Burgos to acquire one of Alfonso's daughters as the future queen of France is particularly significant in this regard³². Rodrigo of Toledo wrote that Beatrice of Swabia, Fernando III's first wife, was beautiful, but references to the physical appearance of the queen were better served by the literary verses considered above³³. Although the vernacular *Crónica de Veinte Reyes* is concerned with Leonor's “*lozanía*” (youth), it reports that when Alfonso reached his majority and was ready to marry, the nobles of Castile learned that the king of England had a daughter “*muy hermosa*” (very beautiful)³⁴. It was understood in

thirteenth-century Castile that the dynasty and the monarchy would profit from the queen's beauty, and thus it was included in the *Siete Partidas* as one of the desirable qualities for potential queens. Juan of Osma affirms that Leonor was well mannered; an important aspect of medieval queenship, for according to the *Siete Partidas*, the king is greatly pleased and monarchical honor is preserved by a wife of good customs³⁵.

Finally, Alfonso's consort ought to be rich and richly-endowed. Leonor was granted substantial dower lands and income in 1170, adding to the dowry rights that the queen's family brought to Castile, perhaps the county of Gascony or at least some form of jurisdiction over lands and nobility in that region. The *Partidas* suggests that the king, his kingdom and lineage would benefit from the queen's riches and although the existence of the Gascon dowry is debatable, Alfonso's claim on that territory greatly enhanced Castile's position in the concert of European politics³⁶. On the other hand, the wedding arrangement established in the queen's dower charter of 1170, clearly demonstrates that Alfonso had model queenship in sight when it came to provide for a wealthy and powerful consort endowed with “so many such cities and fortresses in her honor as the daughter of the most victorious and always triumphant king of England... [so] when I may be crowned king or emperor, she will be enhanced by the same honor”³⁷. Political reciprocity was the key to cooperative monarchy and successful royal governance. It has often been stated that royal women could only exercise real power through her families, in other words, as wives and mothers of kings. But the dower rights and properties granted by Alfonso to Leonor were meant to authorize the foreign consort so to turn the local nobility into her vassals and to empower her with the means to provide for her court and patronage initiatives³⁸. Indeed, Leonor's life and work show that she was able to exercise such power and authority with an independence.

Lindy Grant's recent biography of Blanche of Castile offers a fresh approach to medieval queenship and proves that although she was never a queen of France on her own right, she exercised “direct executive agency as a ruler” and that she “remained in close contact with her

³⁰ Such views were expressed, for example, in the eulogy read out to the members of the Spanish Royal Academy of History in 1908 by Fidel Fita. That eloquent speech on the virtuous life of Leonor embodies the romantic praise granted to some medieval queens, not really grounded on contemporary evidence: Fita, Fidel (1910), “Elogio de la Reina de Castilla y Esposa de Alfonso VIII, doña Leonor de Inglaterra”, in *Memorias de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 12, 411-30; and Flórez, Enrique (1761), *Memorias de las Reynas Catholicas*. Madrid, Antonio Marin, I, 386-414.

³¹ *Siete Partidas*, II.6.1: “*La primera que venga de buen linaje, la segunda que sea hermosa, la tercera que sea bien costumbrada, la quarta que sea rica... et si tal non la podiere fallar, cate que sea de buen linaje et de buenas costumbres, ca los bienes que se siguen destas dos cosas fincan para siempre en el linaje que della deciende, mas la fermosura et la riqueza pasan mas de ligero*”. Refer also to Goodman, Eleanor (2013), “Conspicuous in Her Absence: Mariana of Austria, Juan José of Austria, and the Representation of Her Power”, in *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Theresa Earenfight, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 167; and O'Callaghan, “The Many Roles of the Medieval Queen”, 21-32.

³² On this embassy, see Stubbs, William (ed.), (1868-9), *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, London, Longman, IV, 114.

³³ On the marriage of Beatrice and Fernando and the attributes of this queen, see *DRH*, viiii.x.

³⁴ *CVR*, 273-4. The literal meaning of *lozanía* is “youth” but in most contexts and certainly for these chronicles, it is a quality that points to freshness and beauty.

³⁵ *Siete Partidas*, II.6.1: “*ca en quanto ella de mejor linaje fuere, tanto será él mas honrado por ende, et los fijos que della hobiere serán mas nobles et mas en caro tenudos: otrosi quanto mas hermosa fuere, tanto mas la amarà, et los fijos que della hobiere serán mas fermosos et mas apuestos... et quanto de mejores costumbres fuere, tanto mayores placeres recibirá della, et sabrá mejor guardar la honra de su marido et la suya, otrosi quanto mas rica fuere, tanto mayor pro verná ende al rey, et al linaje que della hobiere, et aun á la tierra do fuere*”.

³⁶ Cerde (2011) *op. cit.*, 225-241; Rodríguez, Ana (1995), “Dotes y Arras en la política territorial de la monarquía feudal castellana: siglos XII-XIII”, *Arenal: Revista de Historia de mujeres*, 2, 271-293.

³⁷ Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, Pergaminos de Alfonso II, no. 92.

³⁸ Cerde (2016), *op. cit.*, 63-96.

Spanish relatives”³⁹. Although it is difficult to prove that she was following a maternal model, Blanche’s queenship certainly resembles that of her mother in Castile. For Grant, feminist historiography has tended to over gender the analysis of medieval queenship to suggest that royal women could only exercise power indirectly through others and by assuming roles that are peculiarly defined as feminine. Leonor’s queenship proves this approach assertive for although her agency was evidently a complement to Alfonso’s rulership, she also commanded power and authority directly and by her own means in ways that can hardly be gendered. The study of medieval queenship is certainly part of women’s history, but pertains also –and most fundamentally– to field of political history.

The *Siete Partidas* also added that the king should love, honor, and protect his wife; firstly, because marriage has turned them into “one thing”; secondly, because she “is the only companion in the king’s pleasures, and sorrows”; and, finally, because “the lineage that sprouts from this union is to be preserved after their death”⁴⁰. The contemporary dispositions of the *Especulo* (a thirteenth-century courtly manual) explain that a queen that commits adultery harms the honor of the king and his lineage, and that her life, fame and intimacy are to be protected as if they were the king’s⁴¹. Alfonso and Leonor seem to have kept a model marriage becoming one thing in love and government and thus providing their lineage and kingdom will all the honor and fame that concerned these treatises, or did they idealised the relationship so to provide a model? Alfonso VIII’s wife suited the peninsular models of queenship better than Alfonso X’s wife, and perhaps she was the consort that the wise king had in mind when writing the *Siete Partidas*⁴².

Leonor not only fulfilled the expectations of queenship as they were viewed in her time, but also served as a model when they sought foreign princesses in thirteenth-century Castile. When Berenguela looked for a worthy wife for her son, Fernando, she was above all concerned with the “nobility of blood”, and according to the *Chronica latina regum Castellae* found in Beatrice of Swabia a “very noble, beautiful” lady of “honorable manners”, who was very “honest”. Importantly,

Juan of Osma also adds that –like Leonor– the most noble wife “was brought from distant lands” thus pointing out the foreign prestige brought to the Castilian dynasty with this marriage⁴³. When Beatrice died in 1235, Fernando married yet another foreign princess (Joan of Ponthieu)⁴⁴. Queen Berenguela must have been all too aware and acquainted with the blessings vested upon the kingdom with the presence and agency of foreign consorts such as her own mother. It is true, however, that the practice was short-lived and after Fernando’s reign, the kings of Castile-León reverted to marrying peninsular princesses; a phenomenon that claims more historical analysis. The same virtues of modesty and prudence were used to describe saint Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231) and might help to explain the halo around Leonor’s crown in the *Tumbo Menor de Castilla*⁴⁵. The *Crónica de Veinte Reyes* reports that Leonor’s death was much lamented for she “was a very wholesome (*acabada*) and very accomplished lady (*my conplida*).”⁴⁶

If psychological profiles of kings can hardly be constructed from the evidence, what can be confidently affirmed about queens consort who attracted less attention from chroniclers and left few documentary records of their own? No matter how little can be grasped of the personalities of these royal women, it is clear that not all fulfilled their role and satisfied the expectations of queenship in the same manner and to the same extent. This point becomes particularly relevant when considering their posthumous reputation.

Shortly after their death in 1214, Alfonso and Leonor were both represented as holy monarchs in the only miniature of the *Tumbo Menor de Castilla*, a cartulary of the Order of Saint James. It is, in fact, the earliest and only medieval depiction of the two rulers together and Leonor is very evidently holding the seal tag of a diploma granted to the knights of Santiago; a powerful image of the cooperative governance and partnership in ruling that characterised the reign. It is puzzling that such a miniature, so charged with political, ritual and symbolic information has mostly attracted the attention of art historians and has not been properly analysed as a representation of a partnership in ruling and the cooperative exercise of power and authority.

³⁹ Grant, Lindy (2016), *Blanche of Castile, Queen of France*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 8, 20 and 32.

⁴⁰ *Siete Partidas*, II.6.2: “porque él et ella por casamiento segund nuestra ley son como una cosa...la segunda porque ella solamente debe ser segund derecho su compañia en los sabores et en los placeres...la tercera porque el linaje que de ella ha ó espera haber que finque en su lugar despues de su muerte”.

⁴¹ *Especulo*, II.3.127-128: “E dezimos que la rreyna deve sseer guardada en dos maneras: la vna quanto al alma, la otra quanto al cuerpo. Quanto al alma deve sseer guardada que ninguno nol ffaga ffazer yerro contra ssu marido [...] Onde por todas estas cosas puede todo omne entender quán grant pe ccado es adulterio e tan grant yerro” And if queen were to fail in this she “denuesta a ssus fijos e a todo ssu linaje”.

⁴² Vann, *op. cit.*, 141. This view is partly shared by Shadis (2009), *op. cit.*, 44, 48; and McKiernan, *op. cit.*, 237.

⁴³ *CLRC*, 40, 82-83; 43, 85-86. Refer also to Shadis, Miriam (1996), “Piety, Politics, and Power: The Patronage of Leonor of England and Her Daughters Berenguela of León and Blanche of Castile”, in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June Hall McCash, Athens, GA, The University of Georgia Press, 203-205, 217; Martin, Georges (2011), *Mujeres y poderes en la España medieval*, Alcalá de Henares, Centro de Estudios Cervantinos, 93-126, 127-165.

⁴⁴ *DRH*, viiii.xviii.

⁴⁵ *Tumbo Menor de Castilla*, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Códice L.1046B, Liber I, f. 15v; Pérez Monzón, Olga (2002), “Iconografía y poder real en Castilla”, *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte*, 14, 26-27. For traditional queenship see Kings, 10.1-13; Scott, *op. cit.*, nos. 274, 348; Stroll, Mary (2002), “Maria Regina: Papal Symbol”, in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan, Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 173-203; Webb, Diana (2002), “Queen and Patron”, in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan, Woodbridge, 206, 220; Duby, Georges (1995), “Women and Power”, in *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 71; Pratt, *op. cit.*, 236.

⁴⁶ *CVR*, 288.

The impact of Alfonso and Leonor as patrons is difficult to measure objectively, but some evidence suggests that they were remembered long after their own dynasty had been eclipsed. Manuscripts preserved in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid and at Las Huelgas suggest that Alfonso's patronage of the royal nunnery, among other institutions, reinforced the strength of his candidacy as a saintly Spanish king, as the Habsburg monarch Philip II looked for a royal saint on a par with Louis IX of France⁴⁷. From the sixteenth-century annals of Jerónimo Zurita to the hagiographical eulogy given by Fidel Fita to the Royal Historical Society in 1908, Leonor Plantagenet has been the object of praise and admiration as a model queen, a view that has recently been rekindled by some historians, however traditional and seemingly uncritical⁴⁸. Theresa Vann has argued that according to law, politics, and custom, it was expected that medieval queens would be honorable wives and mothers, educators of their children (especially daughters), pious and devoted, diligent household administrators, discreet and tactful diplomats and intercessors; all attributes that could be credited to Leonor, even if the sources are scarce and complex⁴⁹. Shadis and Hoffman Berman have argued that the model queen of Castile has attracted less study than her English and French counterparts because the events south of the Pyrenees in this period were granted less importance—or were considered less European—by mainstream historiography and because her life and work has been overshadowed by others in her family, particularly her parents and her brothers, kings Richard and John. Leonor was so conventional as a queen and assumed so masterfully the roles and attitudes expected of royal women that she appears a less interesting personality for modern scholars than her troublesome and eccentric relatives⁵⁰. For medieval chroniclers and Leonor's descendants who greatly admired and praised the consort this was hardly the case; the name Leonor

became extremely popular amongst Iberian royals and nobles from the thirteenth century onwards, as we have pointed out⁵¹.

The joint tombs at Las Huelgas also served to perpetuate praiseworthy memory of the royal couple and sets in funerary stone that partnership in ruling. They were originally buried within wooden coffins placed in a small chapel of the Cistercian convent, but in the reign of their grandson, Fernando III, the coffins were inserted into wonderfully carved stone sarcophagi. The *Chronica latina regum Castellae* eloquently explains that “*quos una mens iunxerat et morum nobilitas decorauerat idem locus sepulture conseruat*”, one tomb keeps those whom the same spirit and nobility of customs had united and glorified, while the *Primera Crónica General* establishes that Leonor “was buried in the aforementioned monastery of Las Huelgas in Burgos, next to Alfonso, her husband”. According to the later testimony of Enrique Florez, based on the medieval accounts, Alfonso and Leonor “were such fine lovers that were never set apart in life, death, and sepulchre”⁵². Although the practice of burying royal couples in dual tombs is commonplace in late medieval Europe, in the case of Alfonso and Leonor such funerary monument reveals a political reality of collaboration as well as an affectionate marital bond; one that still resounds in Baltasar Porreño's seventeenth-century account for Alfonso VIII's canonisation process, a king that “titles himself to reign as one with his wife queen Leonor in Castile, Toledo, Plasencia and Cuenca”⁵³.

Although the loving relationship between monarchs provided grounds for cooperative governance, some studies give emphasis on the king's approval for the queen's authority and her political role. As Elena Woodacre argued “the power-sharing dynamic of the royal pair could vary considerably based on the strength of

⁴⁷ Arizaleta, Amaia and Jean-Marie, Stephanie (2007), “En el umbral de la santidad: Alfonso VIII de Castilla”, in *Pratiques hagiographiques dans l'Espagne du Moyen Âge et du Siècle d'Or. II*. ed. Françoise Cazal, Amaia Arizaleta, and Claude Chauchadis. Toulouse, Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 573-589; *Declaración acerca de la santidad de don Alonso el Bueno, dada por el obispo don Melchor Rodríguez* (1603); *Información de la vida y Milagros del bienaventurado señor rey don Alfonso VIII* (Archivo Histórico Nacional, Códices, traslado de 1171); Porreño, Baltasar, *Historia del santo rey Don Alfonso*, Ms. Archivo del Monasterio de las Huelgas, leg. 55, no. 3; Yáñez, Damian (1990) “Alfonso VIII de Castilla. Historia y Leyenda”, *Reales Sitios: Revista del Patrimonio Nacional*, 105, 36-48; Pérez Monzón, *op. cit.*, 23-24; Beceiro, Isabel (2008), “La consideración ejemplar de la santidad femenina (Castilla, siglos XIII– XIV)”, in *Hagiografía peninsular en els segles medievals*, eds. Francesca Español y Francesc Fité, Lérida, Ediciones de la Universitat de Lleida, 9-31.

⁴⁸ Manuel Gómez Moreno described Leonor as “that homely and quiet English woman”: Gómez, Manuel (1946), *El Panteón Real de Huelgas de Burgos*, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 100. More recently, Gilles Susong has identified her as a “Queen Victoria of the thirteenth century”: Susong, Gilles (2006-7), “À Propos du rôle des Plantagenêts dans la diffusion de la Littérature Arthurienne: l'exemple d'Aliénor de Domfront, reine de Castille (1161-1214)”, *Le Domfrontais Médiéval*, 19, 20-25. The information on the queen included in Alfonso VIII's biographies is virtually negligible. More recently, however, the life and work of Leonor has attracted some historical attention, apart from my articles here cited. See Vann, *op. cit.*, 125-47; Walker, Rose (2007), “Leonor of England and Eleanor of Castile: Anglo-Iberian Marriage and Cultural Exchange in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries”, in *England and Iberia in the Middle Ages*, ed. María Bullón-Fernández, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 67-88; Walker, Rose (2005), “Leonor of England, Plantagenet queen of King Alfonso VIII of Castile, and her foundation of the Cistercian abbey of Las Huelgas. In imitation of Fontevraud?”, *Journal of Medieval History*, 31, 346-368; Shadis (2009), *op. cit.*, 3-50; Rodríguez, Ana (2014), *La estirpe de Leonor de Aquitania. Mujeres y poder en los Siglos XII y XIII*. Barcelona, Crítica, 99-107, 126-131, 170-178; and Bowie, Colette, (2014), *The daughters of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine*. Turnhout, Brepols, 112-119, 165-167.

⁴⁹ Eileen McKiernan has summarised Leonor's agency as “pious action and effective power”: McKiernan, *op. cit.*, 241. Refer also to Earenfight, *op. cit.*, 167.

⁵⁰ Shadis and Hoffman Berman, *op. cit.*, 180, 185. The authors, however, are not as certain as Theresa Vann that Leonor was the queenship model for the *Siete Partidas*.

⁵¹ Just to provide some examples in chronological order: the queen of Aragon, her daughter; three granddaughters; one of Alfonso the Wise's daughters; then a daughter of Fernando IV and Constanza of Portugal; also the wives of Fernando I of Aragon and of Enrique II of Castile. The wife of King Duarte of Portugal was also a Leonor. According to Archbishop Jiménez de Rada, the wife of King Edward I of England was named after the wife of Alfonso VIII.

⁵² CLRC, 69; PCG, 709; Flórez, *op. cit.*, 411. Refer also to O'Callaghan, *op. cit.*, 31-33; Pratt, *op. cit.*, 245.

⁵³ Porreño, *op. cit.*, 74-75.

their personal and political partnership and the desire or need of a monarch for his consort to be actively involved in governance⁵⁴. Under this context, one of the most relevant cases was María of Castile (1401-1458) as she became queen-lieutenant when her husband, Alfonso V of Aragón, gave her the authority to do so⁵⁵. Interestingly, however, Leonor Plantagenet did not rule instead of her husband but in harmonious cooperation with him, reigning as synchronised political partners. In this context, it seems more appropriate what Theresa Earenfight identifies as “rulership” rather than “monarchy” for “the government of one” is improper to the political reality of a royal couple consistently acting as one body and sharing some degree of authority as associates in government. Ernst Kantorowicz’s most cited study of 1957 on the king’s body suggested an idea of monarchy as a multiple power, but such body did not include the queen, so it becomes necessary to provide this political reality with further analysis⁵⁶.

Leonor’s power and authority enabled her to exercise independent administration of property and reward service and loyalty, and the dower granted by Alfonso funded her *camera* of assistants and her *curia* of officials⁵⁷. A charter drafted in November 1179 at the queen’s chancellery has recently come to light. It was taken from the archive of the medieval hospital during the French occupation of Burgos in 1808 and hitherto unknown to researchers. The document registers a donation granted to a particular for services provided for the queen but more importantly, it confirms the existence and activity of a queenly household or *domus reginae*, the very first for a royal consort in the medieval kingdoms of Iberia, and possibly in medieval Europe. At the same time, the diplomatic aspects of this newly-discovered parchment such as the *signo rodado* (drawn seal) exhibiting Leonor’s hand, may be symbols of her political authority and patrimonial independence⁵⁸. Unlike the *signo rodado* drawn in the document of April 1179, the queen’s hand is united with the cross of the Castilian monarchy in this diploma drafted in November, perhaps an image of cooperative governance and partnership in ruling that embodies the clause *cum domino meo rege Aldefonso*

incorporated in the text. Miriam Shadis has suggested that they possessed a real “partnership in ruling,” a fact embodied in the presence of the queen’s name in more than ninety per cent of royal diplomas and in the clause *una cum uxore mea*, registered in nearly all of the king’s initiatives⁵⁹. Along with Diana Pelaz’s study on Spanish queens consort in the Middle Ages, we can suggest that the kingdom’s governance was understood as a “joint venture” and that cooperative latin formulae in royal diplomas of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were then replicated in the fifteenth-century vernacular as *rregnante en vno* o *rregnante en vno* (reigning as one). In late medieval Castile, “king and queen were joined in an image regarding the [marital] institution they embody for which they are recognised by the other powers of the kingdom as the couple anointed by God to lead the destiny of their subjects.”⁶⁰ This is not to suggest that they held regal authority equally, but that the associative dimension of marriage could be replicated in a political partnership for the great benefit of the kingdom. The destructive nature of the relationship between Henry Plantagenet and Eleanor of Aquitaine played a role in the demise of the Angevin Empire while the collaborative marriage sustained by Alfonso and Leonor was very consequential in the political success enjoyed by Castile in this period; a comparison that deserves more historical attention⁶¹.

3. Conclusion

The political cooperation of Alfonso and Leonor in the throne of Castile, each one of them contributing according to the prevailing models of kingship and queenship, resulted in the kingdom’s dominant position towards the end of the twelfth century and its ruler’s crusading leadership at the Battle of Navas de Tolosa in 1212. More importantly for the political history of Europe, this partnership in ruling may be a fine example of the twofold nature of royal governance in the Middle Ages; a reality that is somehow captured in the words of Robert of Torigni, Leonor’s godfather and abbot of Mont Saint

⁵⁴ Woodacre, Elena (2013), *Queenship in the Mediterranean. Negotiating the Role of the Queen in the Medieval and Early Eras*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 3.

⁵⁵ Earenfight, Theresa (2010), *The King’s Other Body: María of Castile and the Crown of Aragon*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 131.

⁵⁶ Earenfight, *op. cit.*, 28; Otis-Cour, Leah (2000), *Historia de la pareja en la Edad Media: Placer y Amor*, Madrid, Siglo Veintiuno de España Editores, 178; Pelaz, Diana (2017), *Reinas consortes. Las reinas de Castilla entre los siglos XI-XV*, Madrid, Sílex, 158-161.

⁵⁷ González, *op. cit.*, I, 239-245, 253, 256; Cerda (2016), *op. cit.*, 63-96; and Salazar y Acha, Jaime (2000), *La Casa del Rey de Castilla y León*, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 55, 373-4. A document granted to the Royal Hospital in Burgos refers to the body of assistants or officials at the service of Leonor as a *curia*: Palacín, M. del Carmen and Martínez, Luis (eds.) (1990), *Documentación del Hospital del Rey de Burgos (1136-1277)*, Burgos, J.M. Garrido Garrido, 66.

⁵⁸ A study and transcription of this hitherto unknown parchment is in Cerda, José Manuel and Martínez, Félix (2019), “Un documento inédito y desconocido de la cancellería de la reina Leonor Plantagenet”, *En la España Medieval*, 42, 59-91.

⁵⁹ Shadis (2009), *op. cit.*, 4-9, 41, 48; Poza, Marta (2017), “UNA CUM UXORE MEA, la dimensión artística de un reinado. Entre las certezas documentales y las especulaciones iconográficas”, in *Alfonso VIII y Leonor de Inglaterra: confluencias artísticas en el entorno de 1200*, ed. Marta Poza Yagüe and Diana Olivares Martínez, Madrid, Ediciones Complutense, 74-75; Ávila, “La memoria regia”, 112. See also Earenfight, *op. cit.*, 12, 28; Woodacre, *op. cit.*, 3; Otis-Cour, *op. cit.*, 178; and Pelaz (2017), *op. cit.*, 158-161. Pelaz’s recent book on queens consort in Castile is interesting and useful for the late medieval period, but her analysis of queenship in the 11th and 12th centuries is rather incomplete. For what matters to the present study, there is hardly any reference in this book to the 44-year queenship of Alfonso VIII’s consort and the only source considered is Miguel Romero’s book (2014) which is a historical novel and that contains substantial plagiarism.

⁶⁰ Pelaz, Diana (2018), “*Reynante(s) en vno*”. Fundamentación teórica del poder de la pareja regia en la Corona de Castilla durante la Baja Edad Media”, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 48.2, 863. Refer also to 848, 852-3. See also Poza, *op. cit.*, 71-108; Lincoln, *op. cit.*, 9-30; Bianchini, Janna (2012), *The Queen’s Hand. Power and Authority in the Reign of Berenguela of Castile*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 259; Shadis (2009), *op. cit.*, 26; Earenfight, *op. cit.*, 14.

⁶¹ Cerda (2012), *op. cit.*, 629-652; and Lincoln, *op. cit.*, 13-27.

Michel, who reported from Normandy that “by God’s favour, and by his own virtue, this Alfonso has married my dearest lady and my baptismal daughter, Alienor, the daughter of the king of England, whose advice and assistance (“*cujus consilio et auxilio*”) have been productive to him of many happy results”⁶².

The *Siete Partidas* suggests that when a king weds a woman in possession of all the attributes expected of queenship, he “should thank God very much and consider himself very lucky”⁶³. Such was most definitely the case of Alfonso VIII. The eighth hundredth anniversary commemorations in 2014 concentrated mostly on the virtues and great deeds of the king, perhaps overlooking the fact that much of Castile’s success and greatness in this period was due to the direct agency of Leonor and the ruling cooperation with his Plantagenet consort⁶⁴. The account of the Norman abbot and chronicler places Leonor away from the secondary role usually attributed

to medieval queens and at the very front line of action in one of medieval Spain’s longest and most successful reigns. The only foreign princess in the peninsula when she crossed the Pyrenees in 1170, the daughter of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine collaborated with her husband’s reign in a way peculiar and distinctive to all other queens consort of her time and she was definitely more than a royal spouse to the king of Castile.

All of the evidence presented here provides no grounds to suggest that regent and consort held equal power and authority, but only that the queen’s lineage and agency proved an essential dimension of Alfonso’s government and that she was no mere companion. *Una cum uxore sua*, the king ruled not simply in the company of Leonor, but with her consort reigned over the kingdom as one body and as ruling partnership, making the most of her family prestige and networks, and fully availing her capacity and virtues for Castile’s political, dynastic and cultural prospects.

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⁶² Delisle, Léopold (ed.) (1872-3). *Chronique de Robert de Torigni*, Ruán, Societé de l’Histoire de Normandie, II, 116.

⁶³ *Siete Partidas*, II.6.1.

⁶⁴ A clear example of this is a book recently published on Alfonso VIII containing papers of a conference organised in 2014 to commemorate the anniversary that includes not a single chapter on queen Leonor (Gómez, Miguel; Lincoln, Kyle and Smith, Damian (eds.), *King Alfonso VIII of Castile*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2019).

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