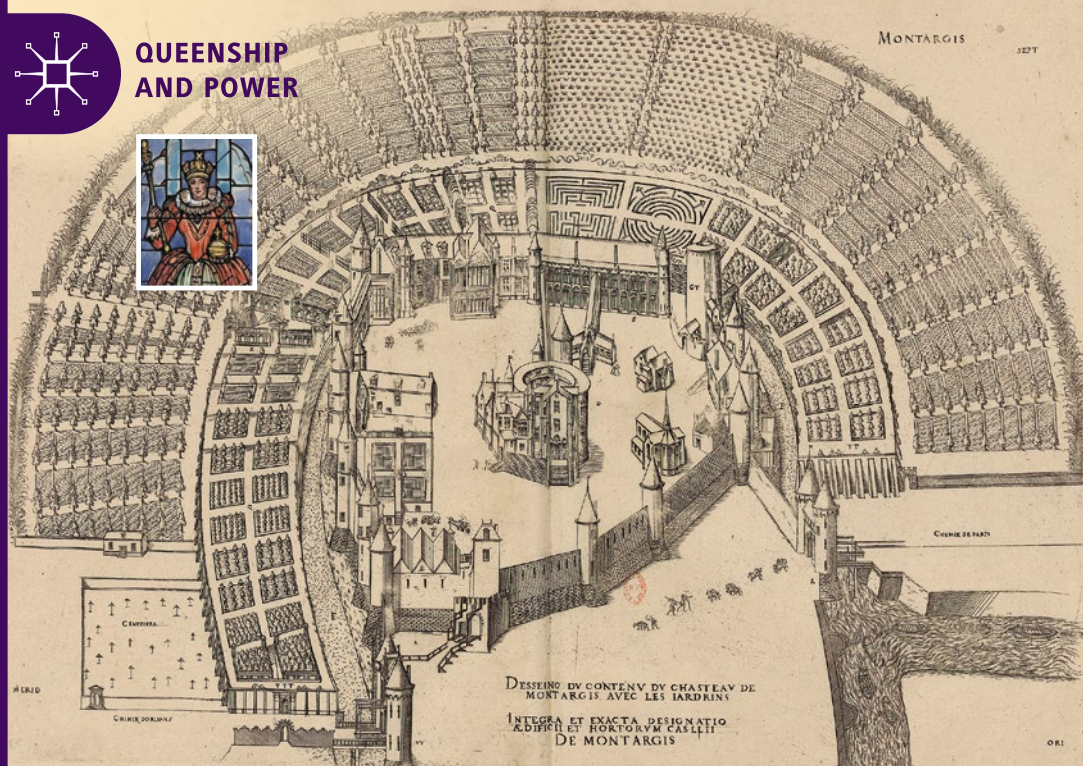




QUEENSHIP
AND POWER



Representing the Life and Legacy of Renée de France

From *Fille de France* to Dowager Duchess

Edited by
Kelly Digby Peebles
Gabriella Scarlatta

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Queenship and Power

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Editors

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*For Renée de France in commemoration of her 510th birthday on
October 25, 2020.
And for Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier in celebration of her retirement.*

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Renée de France's Life and Legacy

Kelly Digby Peebles and Gabriella Scarlatta

Renée de France was born to King Louis XII and Anne de Bretagne on October 25, 1510, at the Château de Blois, where she was soon baptized at the Chapelle Saint-Calais. She was the third of four children born to the couple, of whom only two survived to adulthood: Renée and her elder sister, Claude de France, who became queen consort to their father's successor, François I. Detailed manuscript accounts of Renée's baptism call attention to the broader European contexts that would later define the contours of her adult life.¹ Her godfather, the Milanese *condottiero*, Marshal of France, and Governor of Asti and Milan, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, carried the newborn *fille de France* down a tapestry-lined path

¹ *Le Baptême de Renée de France en 1510. Compte des frais et préparatifs*, ed. Pauline Matarasso (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2011).

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from the castle to the royal chapel, assisted by her sister Claude.² Behind them followed Renée's two godmothers, Anne de France, Dowager Duchess of Bourbon and a *fille de France* herself, and her governess, Georgette de Montchenu, also known as Madame du Bouchage, whose husband was a close advisor to Louis XII.³ Anne de France had personally overseen the baptismal preparations, ordering the construction of a two-tiered wooden platform three steps high on which the font stood beneath a fabric pavilion.⁴ The temporary structure was swathed in *fleur de lys*-embroidered tapestries, while the young princess was swathed in an ermine-lined white damask blanket, both carefully crafted to call attention to the royal and ducal heritage of her parents. Other attendants included Mademoiselle de Bourbon (Louise de Bourbon), the Princesse d'Orange (Claude de Chalon), Madame de Nevers (Marie d'Albret), ladies-in-waiting of Claude, and Anne de France, as well as ambassadors representing the courts of Emperor Maximilian I, King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Castile, and the Duke of Ferrara (Alfonso I d'Este), among other Italian

² Trivulzio had begun fighting for the French under King Charles VIII and had captured Milan for Renée's father. See Michael Mallet and Christine Shaw, *The Italian Wars, 1494–1559* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 49–50. Named Marshal of France by Louis XII in 1499, François I retained him in his service on his accession in 1515. See R. J. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron. The Reign of Francis I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 43.

³ Ymbert de Batarnay, Sieur du Bouchage, was a lifelong statesman who served Kings Louis XI, Charles VIII, Louis XII, and François I. Charles VIII named him governor of his and Anne de Bretagne's son Charles-Orland. Although Renée's care was soon conferred to Michelle de Saubonne, baronne de Soubise after Madame du Bouchage's death in August 1511, it seemed that Monsieur du Bouchage continued to play a role in her life, as he was later charged with overseeing the care of François I's and Claude's children, Louise, Charlotte, and François, as well as that of Renée. See Bernard de Mandrot, *Ymbert de Batarnay, Seigneur du Bouchage. Conseiller des Rois Louis XI, Charles VIII, Louis XII et François Ier (1438–1523)* (Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1886), 182–184 and 269. See also Pauline Matarasso, "Claude ou Renée? Les lettres d'Anne de Bretagne à Mme du Bouchage," *Mémoires de la Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Bretagne*, 74 (1996): 453–459. Interestingly, Monsieur and Madame du Bouchage are the grandparents of Diane de Poitiers through their daughter Jeanne de Batarnay. On the social significance of baptism and the choice of godparents, see Guido Alfani and Vincent Gourdon, "Spiritual Kinship and Godparenthood: An Introduction," *Spiritual Kinship in Europe, 1500–1900*, ed. Guido Alfani and Vincent Gourdon (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1–43. They note that the "ternary" model for choosing godparents was typical in France, with females given two godmothers and one godfather, 8.

⁴ Matarasso, *Le Baptême*, 41. For a discussion of a similar ceremonial platform, see Peebles's Chap. 11.

city states, their presence foreshadowing negotiations for Renée's hand in marriage.⁵ Though a relatively intimate affair in comparison to other court ceremonies, including Renée's own wedding, her baptism nonetheless reveals how such events were carefully orchestrated to publicly display social networks and solidify overlapping personal and political relationships. As Tracy Adams writes, Anne de France was "a master of politics," having learned to govern with her husband, Pierre de Bourbon, during her brother Charles VIII's minority all "while outwardly conforming to norms of female comportment."⁶ And by this time, she had earned a significant reputation for fostering young women at her court, among them Marguerite d'Autriche and Louise de Savoie, teaching them essential skills to ensure their future success in navigating social hierarchies and governing a household, including how to establish and preserve morality, faith, and family tradition.⁷ At Renée's baptism, those in closest proximity to the young *fille de France* were those who had the closest personal relationships with her parents, and the young women observing the ceremony were active participants by carrying the infant's blanket and other sacred objects, learning firsthand from this ritual.⁸ That ritual, as Guido Alfani notes, "realizes not only the spiritual birth of the new Christian but also his social

⁵ *Négotiations diplomatiques entre la France et l'Autriche durant les trente premières années du XVI^e siècle*, ed. André Le Glay (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1845), 367–368n2. Le Glay includes a prose description of the baptism ceremony ostensibly authored by Jean Caulier, ambassador to Margaret of Austria, though no source is provided.

⁶ Tracy Adams, "Fostering Girls in Early Modern France," in *Emotions in the Household, 1200–1900*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 103–118, and "Rivals or Friends? Anne de Bourbon and Anne de Bretagne," *Women in French Studies* Special Issue (2010): 46–61, 49.

⁷ Adams, 48. See also Pauline Matarasso, *Queen's Mate. Three Women of Power in France on the Eve of the Renaissance* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 36. Though here she focuses on Anne de France, Matarasso also discusses the courts of Anne de Bretagne and Louise de Savoie. Elodie Lequain also discusses Anne de France's "school" for young noblewomen, focusing at length on the education of her own daughter, Suzanne de Bourbon, "La maison de Bourbon, 'escolle de vertu et de perfection'. Anne de France, Suzanne de Bourbon et Pierre Martin," *Médiévales*, 48 (Printemps 2005): 39–54.

⁸ Among the young women mentioned by name, Claude de Chalon would marry the Comte de Nassau five years later, and Marie d'Albret, who had married Charles II de Clèves, Comte de Nevers, in 1504, gave birth to their son François in 1516. Though not specifically mentioned in the ambassador's dispatch, Anne de France's daughter, Suzanne de Bourbon, was of a similar age and had married Charles III, Duke of Bourbon, in 1505. After the birth of their son in 1517, François I was chosen as his godfather and namesake, though their relationship would later disintegrate. See Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, 203.

birth,” thereby creating a lasting spiritual kinship that “put members of different social classes in relation with one another [...] to establish ties at every level of the social ladder.”⁹ In fact, in a collection of lessons composed for her daughter, Suzanne de Bourbon, to prepare her for her future roles as wife and mother, Anne de France writes of the significance of these relationships, urging her to “carefully consider who will baptize [your children] and instruct them in the church and who will bring them up, because whoever it is must be wise and honorable.”¹⁰ Through this ceremony, Renée’s parents were thus shaping their daughter’s future social network and forging bonds to support her as she grew older.

By late 1513, Renée’s parents had discussed marriage to one of Maximilian’s and Ferdinand’s mutual grandsons.¹¹ However, her mother’s death on January 9, 1514, her sister’s May 1514 marriage to her father’s presumed heir, François d’Angoulême, followed by her father’s death on January 1, 1515, and the subsequent accession of her brother-in-law as François I led to a reordering of the crown’s priorities and a consequential shifting of Renée’s prominence in the royal hierarchy in favor of Claude’s and François’s children.¹² Several primary documents survive in manuscript and in print related to Renée’s childhood and coming of age. Ambassadors’ dispatches and account books paint a picture of her birth and baptism, while multiple marriage contracts, correspondence, and ephemeral pamphlets elucidate the celebrations surrounding her wedding. The increasing prominence of her public profile during the sixteenth century is confirmed by literary and artistic works produced by equally celebrated writers and artists. Her image was captured in a richly decorated manuscript by the illuminator known as the Master of Claude de France¹³ and in a drawing by the celebrated portrait artist Jean Clouet, which is

⁹ Guido Alfani, “Introduction,” *Fathers and Godfathers: Spiritual Kinship in Early-Modern Italy* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009), 3 and 10.

¹⁰ Anne de France, *Lessons for My Daughter*, ed. and trans. Sharon L. Jansen (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 60.

¹¹ See the dispatches of Pedro de Quintana, King Ferdinand’s ambassador to France and to the Holy Roman Empire, in December 1513. “Henry VIII: December 1513,” in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 1, 1509–1514*, ed. J. S. Brewer (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1920), 1102–1121.

¹² François I charged Monsieur du Bouchage with negotiating the marriage of Renée and Charles of Austria (the future Charles V) in 1515. Francis’s and Claude’s first child, Louise de France, was born later that year and subsequently engaged to him. See de Mandrot, *Ymbert de Batarnay*, 249 and 272.

¹³ Roger Wieck discusses these images in Chap. 3.

now housed in the Musée Condé in Chantilly (Fig. 1.1). Renée's 1528 wedding was celebrated by court poet Clément Marot, *valet de chambre* to François I, in an epithalamium that evokes the musical and choreographic revelry of a royal wedding, but also acknowledges the difficult situation of a young princess whose dynastic marriage and imminent departure for her husband's foreign land were motivated by geo-political and military concerns associated with decades of war with Italy.¹⁴ Inspired by the bellicose subtext of the union, the poet represents the groom, Ercole d'Este, future Duke of Ferrara, Modena, and Reggio (whose father's ambassador had attended Renée's baptism), as a virile warrior and alludes to the deliberate joining of two dynasties and political bodies—Valois France and Estense

Fig. 1.1 Jean Clouet.
Portrait of Renée of
France, ca. 1519.
Chantilly, Musée Condé,
Inv. MN28. © RMN-
Grand Palais/Art
Resource, NY. (Photo:
Michel Urtado)



¹⁴On the subtext of the Italian Wars, see Gabriel Braun, "Le Mariage de Renée de France: une inutile mésalliance. 28 juin 1528," *Histoire, économie et société* 7, no. 2 (1988): 147–168.

Ferrara—as an armed invasion of the young bride’s physical body.¹⁵ Paradoxically, the poet also notes that it was precisely that fear-provoking encounter that held the promise of mutual prosperity and interdependence through the couple’s offspring. Sure enough, Renée’s and Ercole’s union would ultimately produce five offspring: Anne, Alfonso, Lucrezia, Eleonora, and Luigi. In fact, their firstborn, Anne, would effectively retrace her mother’s journey across the Alps twenty years later for her own marriage to François de Lorraine, a socially brilliant match that would be arranged by Renée’s nephew, King Henri II.

Renée’s baptism and marriage were marked with elaborate pomp and circumstance that clearly established the importance of her rank and publicly commemorated higher order political negotiations. As was often the case for royal couples, several months after the festivities, Renée left her home to set up court alongside that of her husband in Ferrara, accompanied by a significant entourage of French courtiers. This highly symbolic journey, which Christiane Coester terms the “bridal voyage,”¹⁶ began with the ritualized public staging of the bride’s and groom’s first meeting. In Renée’s case, this occurred at the château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye¹⁷ and culminated with her crossing of the Alps, representing both geo-political and cultural borders. As this journey progressed, the bride “changed from daughter to wife, from one family to another, and she therefore changed not only her legal status but also her frame of cultural reference.”¹⁸ As Giulia Calvi further explains, “women marrying into foreign dynasties brought with them a dynastic capital made of status, wealth, material culture, court rituals and etiquette, religion as well as their own entourage.”¹⁹

¹⁵ On Marot’s portrayal of the marriage, see Kelly D. Peebles, “Renée de France’s and Clément Marot’s Voyages: Political Exile to Spiritual Liberation,” *Women in French Special Issue* 7 (2018): 33–60. In 1555, the Italian poet Bernardo Zane will also commemorate this union in a powerful image joining the two fertile rivers, the Po and the Seine. See Gabriella Scarlatta’s Chap. 7.

¹⁶ “Crossing Boundaries and Traversing Space. The Voyage of the Bride in Early Modern Europe,” in *Moving Elites: Women and Cultural Transfers in the European Court System*, ed. Giulia Calvi and Isabelle Chabot (Florence: European University Institute, 2010), 9–20.

¹⁷ Their first encounter is described in *Le triumpphant et tresnoble mariage de treshaulte et trespoussante princesse Madame Renée de France fille du Roy de France Loys douziésme de ce nom faict avec le Duc de Ferrare en la ville et cité de Paris* (s.l.: s.n., 1528). The only extant copy of this imprint is located at the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, 12-Rés-0567. The library’s rare book curator, Juliette Jestaz, kindly photographed this pamphlet for us.

¹⁸ Coester, “Crossing Boundaries,” 9.

¹⁹ Giulia Calvi, “Introduction,” in Calvi and Chabot, *Moving Elites*, 1.

This certainly was Renée de France's case when she left France, where she had come of age alongside her royal nieces and nephews, including the future King Henri II. Guido Guerzoni contends that by surrounding herself with a predominantly French entourage, she established a "French Court in the middle of nowhere,"²⁰ but her circle was far from homogeneous, for Renée also continued to cultivate the heterodox ideas that had characterized the French court during her youth. Orphaned before the age of four, Renée had developed a close relationship with her cousin, Marguerite de Navarre, who was known for her support of reform-minded individuals and espousal of evangelical ideas, and with whom Renée continued to correspond during her years in Ferrara.²¹

After settling in Ferrara, where Renée came to be known as Renata di Francia or Madame Renea, despite—and perhaps also inspired by—the unfamiliar, though vibrant, cultural surroundings, she continued to exploit her status as a *fille de France* and to associate with diverse intellectuals. The palaces of Schifanoia and San Francesco, as well as nearby Consandolo and Belriguardo, were a venue for political, religious, and diplomatic discussions, and they also functioned as a meeting space for a constellation of orthodox and heterodox personalities, many of whom were considered to be dubious or dangerous. As many other women of power, including her foremothers, Anne de Bretagne, Anne de France, and Louise de Savoie, she exercised various forms of power and influence in public and private spaces and took full advantage of her dynastic network as she established herself in her new duchy.²² Renata's acquaintances, activities, and suspected beliefs led to her forced profession of the Catholic faith in 1554, when her cousin, King Henri II, sent the Grand Inquisitor

²⁰ Guido Guerzoni, "Strangers at Home. The Courts of Este Princesses between XVth and XVIIth Centuries," in Calvi and Chabot, *Moving Elites*, 141–156, 154.

²¹ On Marguerite's and Renée's correspondence, see Jules Bonnet, "Marguerite d'Angoulême, Reine de Navarre et Renée de France (1535–1536)," *Bulletin historique et littéraire* 37, no. 3 (15 March 1888): 113–123. On Marguerite's faith, see Jonathan Reid, *King's Sister – Queen of Dissent: Marguerite de Navarre and Her Evangelical Network (1492–1549)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009). On female religious influences in Renée's early years, see Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier's Chap. 2.

²² For a discussion of the sources of power and how elite women exercised power, see Theresa Earenfight, "A Lifetime of Power: Beyond Binaries of Gender," in *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400: Moving Beyond the Exceptionalist Debate*, ed. Heather J. Tanner (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019): 271–293.

of France, Mathieu Ory, to Ferrara in order to oversee her interrogation.²³ Although Renée's correspondence reveals the extent of the distress provoked by this incident, she maintained a correspondence with Jean Calvin until the end of his life, seeking his counsel both before and after her husband's death in 1559.²⁴

These connections grew stronger still during Renée's dowager years. On the death of her husband on October 3, 1559, her eldest son, Alfonso II d'Este, rose to power as the Duke of Ferrara, and Renée experienced a subsequent reduction in monetary allowances and personnel allotted to her as staff.²⁵ As Renée outlived her husband, her own court was not completely dissolved following Ercole's death, but rather, her daughter-in-law's court existed in parallel to hers for a short time,²⁶ and in mid-1560, Renée had begun to explore a return to France. In November 1560, the dowager duchess reunited with the French court and her firstborn daughter, Anne d'Este, who was by then Duchess of Guise and a close companion of both the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici, and of the queen, her husband's niece, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. Renée arrived in Orléans just weeks before the untimely death of King François II and subsequent accession of the young Charles IX, where the court was preparing for a meeting of the Estates General to debate increasing religious, political, and economic tension.²⁷ Renée spent her last fifteen years at her château in Montargis, a geographically strategic location for troop movements during the Wars of Religion. There, displaying the royal *fleur de lys* of her

²³ Emmanuel Rodocanachi, *Renée de France, duchesse de Ferrare* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1896), 237–252.

²⁴ See, for example, Calvin's letters to Renée from July 1560 and early 1561. Edouard Cunitz, Johann-Wilhelm Baum, and Eduard Wilhelm Eugen Reuss, eds., *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia, Volumen XVIII*, (Brunsvigae: Schwetschke et filium, 1863), 147–148, 315–316.

²⁵ Guerzoni, "Strangers at Home," 141–156. Guerzoni notes that she received "33.500[...] annually up to 1555," and then "after the hiatus of 1558–9, during which her allowance dropped to 21.500," she later "received 38.250 in 1562, before her definitive return to France," 154.

²⁶ Guerzoni, "Strangers at Home," 156. Unlike her predecessors, Eleonora d'Aragona (wife of Ercole I), Anna Sforza, and Lucrezia Borgia (first and second wives respectively of Alfonso I), Renata outlived the duke.

²⁷ Renée traces her journey from Ferrara to Orléans, from September to November 1560, in a series of letters to Alfonso. See Odette Turias, *Renée de France, Duchesse de Ferrare, témoin de son temps: 1510–1575, Tome I* (PhD diss, Université de Tours, 2005), 333–341. See also Peebles's Chap. 11 in this volume.

Valois heritage prominently in the great hall of her château, as Androuet du Cerceau illustrates in his architectural drawings of Montargis, she continued to participate both in court life and in the French Calvinist network.²⁸ Much as in Ferrara, Renée's *domaine* became a veritable sanctuary for religious and political refugees from both sides of the conflict.²⁹ In the mid-1560s, prominent voices within the French Calvinist network, in particular Théodore de Bèze and Pierre Viret, adopted Renée as a symbolic figurehead of their cause by praising her leadership and public service in published book dedications, and her own correspondence from this time amply confirms their laudatory comments.³⁰

While Renée's "heretical" court is closely examined in Eleonora Belligni's (2011) biography,³¹ she has not yet earned the scholarly attention that has been devoted to her mother, Anne de Bretagne, to her cousin, Marguerite de Navarre, nor even to her own sister, Claude de France. However, Renée's life and legacy invite critical reflection from a variety of disciplines, and this volume aims to fill this lacuna by examining the many roles that Renée/Renata adopted, embodied, or had forced upon her—including *fille de France*, Duchess of Ferrara, and later, Dowager Duchess and *châtelaine* of Montargis—and to elucidate the abundant visual and textual evidence that celebrates her qualities and bears

²⁸ See the image reproduced on the front cover from Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, *Le Premier volume des plus excellents bastiments de France. Auquel sont designez les plans de quinze bastiments, & de leur contenu: ensemble les elevations & singularitez d'un chascun* (Paris: pour Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, 1576). For a detailed discussion of Androuet du Cerceau's renovations of the château de Montargis and its gardens, see Cyril Cvetkovic's Chap. 12.

²⁹ See Renée Burlamacchi in her *Memoirs Concerning her Father's Family*, in *Sin and Salvation in Early Modern France: Three Women's Stories*, ed. Colette Winn, ed. and trans. Winn and Nicholas Van Handel, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*, 53 (Toronto: Iter Press, 2017), 43–54.

³⁰ Théodore de Bèze, *Receuil des opuscles. C'est à dire. Petits Traictez de M. Jean Calvin. Les uns reueus et corrigez sur le Latin, les autres translatez. Nouuellement de Latin en François* (Geneva: Baptiste Pinereul, 1566), *2r–*5r, and Pierre Viret, *De l'Estat, de la conférence, de l'autorité, puissance, prescription & succession tant de la vraye que de la fausse Église, depuis le commencement du monde, & des Ministres d'icelles & de leurs vocations & degrez* (Lyon: Claude Senneton, 1565), *iir–*viiiiv. For further discussion of Renée's role of symbolic figurehead in Bèze's dedication, see Peebles, "Embodied Devotion: The Dynastic and Religious Loyalty of Renée of France (1510–1575)," in *Royal Women and Dynastic Loyalty*, ed. Caroline Dunn and Elizabeth Carney (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 123–137.

³¹ *Renata di Francia (1510–1575) Un'eresia di corte* (Turin: UTET, 2011).

witness to her hardships. These collected essays offer a comprehensive (yet far from exhaustive) look at her participation in and influence on cultural and intellectual life in sixteenth-century France and Italy: her generous patronage of artists, scholars, and other literati; the adversities that Renée encountered due to her support for heterodox voices; her unflagging spirit of resilience, tolerance, and charity despite those difficulties; and her astute cultivation of social, religious, and diplomatic connections, particularly between Valois France and Estense Ferrara, but also within broader European politico-religious networks.

Arranged chronologically in order to trace the trajectory of Renée's life, each chapter focuses on activities associated with her role(s) at a specific stage in her life, for example, the development of her religious faith in her childhood, her support of artists and literati made possible by her social status as Duchess of Ferrara, and her epistolary diplomacy that developed from her political connections as a French royal, which was further enhanced by the social freedom she enjoyed in her dowager years. This collection also demonstrates the breadth of Renée's legacy by investigating cultural artifacts facilitated by her patronage and inspired by her life story, including French and Italian poetry, theater, landscape architecture, and visual arts, and its chapters represent a variety of methodological approaches, including bibliographical and textual studies, art history, gender studies, religious studies, and literary criticism.

The first chapters in this volume examine Renée's early years, beginning with Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier's analysis of Anne de Bretagne's educational, economic, financial, and religious legacy to her daughters Claude and Renée. As notorious court chronicler Pierre de Brantôme observes of Anne, "sa court estoit fort belle escole pour les Dames, car elle les faisoit bien nourrir et sagement; et toutes, à son modelle, se faisoient et se façonnoient très-sages et vertueuses" (her court was a very fine school for Ladies, for she nourished them well and wisely; and all of them, following her example, behaved and presented themselves as very wise and virtuous).³² Indeed, Wilson-Chevalier firmly establishes the emotional and intellectual role of this environment on Renée's adult life and the way in which she would later structure her own court, where she would exercise charitable and protective actions toward the religiously persecuted. This

³² Pierre de Brantôme, sieur de Bourdeille, *Recueil des Dames, poésies, et tombeaux*, ed. Etienne Vaucheret (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 13–14. All translations in this chapter are the editors'.