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ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE:

A QUEEN AND A MOTHER

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INTRODUCTION

The mere mention of Eleanor of Aquitaine brings to mind an remarkable woman in many respects. She enjoyed an exceptional longevity for a woman of the High Middle Ages. Eleanor was born in either 1122 or 1124 and died in 1204 around the age of eighty which represents almost twice the life expectancy of her time. This is all the more exceptional since she gave birth to ten children when many women died in childbirth.

Eleanor also wielded great power especially once again for a woman of the Middle Ages. Not only was she twice queen, first Queen of France then Queen of England, a unique situation on its own, but she was also the mother of three kings of England: Henry the Young King, the renowned Richard the Lionheart and John Lackland.

However, Eleanor also had a bad reputation and was known for less glorious feats. Amongst other things, she was notorious for supposedly having had an incestuous relationship with her uncle Raymond of Poitiers. In *The Crusades: A Documentary Survey*, James Brundage writes that a “dubious relationship ... had sprung up between ... Eleanor of Aquitaine, and Prince Raymond of Antioch, Eleanor's cousin” (114). He does not clearly indicate the nature of said relationship but suggests they do not have the usual relationship cousins should have, either. She also supposedly rode bare-breasted into Antioch during the Second Crusade. Although it does not mean it could not have happened anyway, there are no primary sources to be found that verify that rumor. Primary sources solely indicate Eleanor and her ladies were dressed like Amazons, which David Townsend describes in *The Tongue of the Fathers: Gender and Ideology in Twelfth-Century Latin* when he writes “we find the queen and her ladies themselves donning Amazon garb” (136).

Nonetheless, being a good mother is one thing at which historians seem to agree that Eleanor was not good. Ralph V. Turner, one of Eleanor's biographers reckons that Eleanor's sons' "persistent revolts against their father, the fecklessness of young Henry, Geoffrey's repeated treachery or King John's cruelty and incompetence ... have caused her to be labeled a bad mother centuries later" (Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 149).

This accusation is not firmly grounded on facts, however. Eleanor had five sons and was often branded a bad mother because of the behavior of three of them but she also had five daughters and her relationship with them is but seldom addressed, let alone taken into consideration in this accusation. Such is the case in two biographical works standing out amongst well known and renowned works on Eleanor's life: Ralph Turner's *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen of France, Queen of England* and Jean Flori's *Aliénor d'Aquitaine, la reine insoumise (Eleanor of Aquitaine: Queen and Rebel)*. If both authors recount and analyze the significant events of Eleanor's life, they only barely mention her daughters and do not delve into the relationship she had with them whereas some chapters are entirely dedicated to the relationship she had with her sons, especially Richard and John. Indeed, chapter 9 of Flori's biography is entitled « Aliénor et Jean » (Eleanor and John) but Flori does not dedicate a single chapter to Eleanor and any of her daughters.

Nonetheless, some scholarly articles do revolve around Eleanor's daughters. Four of them in particular stand out. June Hall Martin McCash explores in her article the possibility of several encounters between Eleanor and her first born after Eleanor had her marriage from her first husband annulled. It offers a new perspective on a relationship that was thought non-existent before. In his article, Ralph Turner delves into Eleanor's attachment to all her

children, not only her sons but also her daughters. French author Edmond-René Labande is the only one to write about Eleanor's five daughters in the same work. While he gives the reader an insight into their lives by comparing them, he does not go into much detail about the relationship they had with their mother. Finally, Bowie discusses thoroughly the lives of Matilda, Leonor and Joanna and the relationship they had with their mother. However, such work is yet to be done on Eleanor's eldest daughters by Louis VII. None of these works investigates the matter to its full extent, although they provide quite a basis to rely on. Moreover, works that were inclined to consider Eleanor as a “bad mother” also shared a tendency to judge her in a modern light, and thus not weigh up the facts through what should have been the standards of that time.

In that respect, one might naturally wonder, to what extent Eleanor of Aquitaine may be actually considered as a bad mother? How exactly did she relate to the standards of her time, regarding education and mother-daughter relationship? This work intends to offer a new perspective in order to rehabilitate Eleanor of Aquitaine as a good mother, or at least as a decent one. It suggests a change of perspective. In order to do so, the present study will examine the relationship she had with her daughters.

The relationship to each daughter will be examined in the light of the socio-historical context and more particularly in the light of the works on education in the Middle Ages and today. This approach should cast a new light on Eleanor's position regarding motherhood and on mother-daughter relationship.

The time boundaries of this study will cover the scope of Eleanor's entire life as she outlived all of her daughters but one. Even though Leonor outlived her mother by ten years,

nothing relevant enough to this study was found to be mentioned, for Leonor did not perpetuate any of her mother's legacies after her death.

Chapter one deals with education at the time of Eleanor of Aquitaine as well as contemporary education today and provides criteria that would define a good mother then and now. It also gives an insight into Eleanor's own childhood and education which differed from the typical ones of her time, which could have been of influence on her own children's upbringing.

Chapter two is devoted to Eleanor's relationship to her eldest daughters from her first marriage, Marie and Alix. It dwells upon the political stakes behind her marriage to Louis VII, future king of France. The personality of each future spouse already put Eleanor in a position where she was practically doomed to lose her first children.

Chapter three is devoted to Eleanor's life during her second marriage to Henry II when she was in a position to care for the children and more particularly the daughters she had with him. It focuses upon Eleanor's relationship with her three youngest daughters, which contrasted with the ones she had with her two eldest daughters.

PART I – STANDARDS OF EDUCATION

People that label Eleanor a bad mother do so because they judge by today's standards. Therefore, before strictly considering Eleanor's relationship with her daughters, it is worth taking a quick look at standards of education and motherhood today. Once those are defined, they will be compared to standards of the Middle Ages in order to find out if roles and goals of today were fulfilled in the Middle Ages. Eleanor's own childhood will provide another standard which will enable to create a frame through which Eleanor's relationship to her daughters will be studied and analyzed.

A) EDUCATION AND MOTHERHOOD TODAY

Attachment studies show that “a child needs mothering. 'Mothering' includes providing for a child's physical needs” (Davenport 77), which is the first role of a parent. Indeed, Davenport theorizes the role of a parent today, a role that can be subdivided into three main goals. The first one is therefore for parents to provide their children “food, warm clothes, and shelter.” They also have to “‘nurse’ their child when they are sick, and comfort them when they are unhappy” (83). The second role is for parents to teach their children “to become economically independent” (83). Parents have to “teach their children some of the skills they will need to know in order to survive economically” (83). The third and final role is for parents to teach “the norms and values of their culture” (83). Parents have to “socialize their children into understanding ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ and what norms and values are acceptable in its culture” (84). Davenport adds that mothering also “includes providing a child with emotional security and a sense of trust” along with “social stimulation through play, games, explanations and social experiences such as going to the shops, or the

park” (77). Finally, another study show that “by around eight months babies could have become firmly attached to their primary caregiver” (73). The baby is not afraid of that person but afraid of strangers and is upset when that person is away from them (73).

B) EDUCATION AND MOTHERHOOD IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Expectations of a mother in the Middle Ages were not the same as today. Turner understands that and was persuaded that Eleanor was not the bad mother she is depicted to have been. He did defend her in his biography but only dedicated a handful of pages on the subject. Moreover, Turner took more into consideration Eleanor's sons than her daughters to make his point. However, he offers a great starting point for this work as well as an insight into education and motherhood in the Middle Ages.

There is enough evidence to believe the roles and goals parents have to fulfil today were fulfilled in the Middle Ages. The only difference with today is that they were fulfilled by several different people rather than the parents, and in this case, the mother, alone. One has to understand that in the Middle Ages, “family fulfilled a function; it ensured the transmission of life, property and names” (Ariès 411), which meant that the role of aristocratic women was not to raise the children they bore but rather simply to provide heirs to ensure the continuation of the dynasty line. This was their only duty as a mother and their principal responsibility as aristocratic women. Their other duty such as running a complex household or in the political sphere took time (Turner *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 182). It took even more time when it came to queens' duties (180).

Turner, states that queens and aristocratic women had “wet-nurses, clerks and knights, or other servants to provide care for [their children],” (Turner “Eleanor and her children,” 321). It was normal for members of the aristocracy and royalty to entrust domestics with the

care of their children (Turner *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 182). Children were indeed mothered; they formed an attachment bond with their caregiver. It just happened not to be their mother. And, they did not necessarily lack what a child need on an emotional level.

As for knowledge, children had teachers and masters. Once again, it just happened not to be their parents, and in this case, their mother, but they did not necessarily lack anything on an intellectual level, either. Another important thing to take into consideration is that daughters of aristocratic and royal backgrounds were sent at a very young age into their future husband's household and received the most part of their education there (Turner 186). Turner finally says, especially in Eleanor's case, that one should not look for personal investment on her part, which was very limited. He rather suggests looking for attentions that indicates that she cared (182).

C) ELEANOR'S OWN CHILDHOOD AND UPBRINGING

Before this work starts to explore, study and analyze Eleanor's relationship to her daughters with the help of the standard of education defined above, it is important to delve into Eleanor's own childhood and upbringing. Indeed, a standard represents what was most commonly done at the time by most people. However, it happens that Eleanor of Aquitaine does not exactly fall within the standards of her time.

Three deaths marked Eleanor's childhood: her mother's, her younger brother's and her father's. The first left her motherless at the young age of six years old (Turner *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 34). The second and third left her to become heiress to the duchy of Aquitaine, the biggest French duchy at the time (7) at thirteen years old (43).

From her own mother, Aénor of Châtellerauld, Eleanor did not get other than her name. In the same way, she herself passed her name down to her second youngest daughter, Eleanor of England. The logical connection between both names might not strike one as obvious but there is indeed one. If Aénor was the name Eleanor was given at birth, it did not stick for long. It is highly probable that in order to avoid confusion between mother and daughter, the newborn was soon given the name Aliénor - of which Eleanor is but the English equivalent. The name Aliénor itself, which simply means the “other Aénor”, is but a contraction of the Latin word *alia* meaning “other” and the name Aénor (Vigeois 435-436).

Unfortunately, Eleanor did not have the time to get much else from her mother as the latter died when Eleanor was eight years old, which was about the same age-Eleanor's firstborn, Marie, was when Eleanor walked out of her life. One can only assume that, according to today's standards of motherhood, lacking a mother figure growing up did not help Eleanor in being a mother to her own children when her turn came.

Be that as it may, with the death of her mother and that of her younger brother when he was still a child, Eleanor was indulged by her father William X and was raised to be the heiress to the duchy of Aquitaine despite the fact that she was a female. Her upbringing and the behavior that came from it were, without a doubt, quite unusual for the period she was living in but were rather normal for the southwest of France at the time. Indeed, according to Turner, women in the South at that time had more freedom than women in the North; they held positions of power and fathers were more inclined to make their daughters inherit their lands. The principle of primogeniture was just only beginning to be applied in the North at that time (12). One can only assume that it made her want to give her children, and particularly her daughters, the same forward and less restrictive education she received.

However, the fact that her father had not even yet promised her hand in marriage was unusual to everyone. The reasons behind such a choice remain a mystery even today. Some sources say the reason lies in the simple fact that he did not find any suitable match for Eleanor. This marks the first element that brought a series of events to unfold, events which cost Eleanor the custody of her first two daughters, something the next chapter will delve into further.

PART II – FIRST MARRIAGE AND FIRST CHILDREN

Historians are quick to point to the practically non-existent relation between Eleanor and her eldest two daughters as children as proof that she was a bad mother. What some fail to take into account, is that as a woman who sought an end to her marriage to Louis VII, Eleanor was powerless when it came to having custody of her children post annulment. As was the law of the time, the father retained custody, thus, not allowing Eleanor to maintain an on-going, fruitful relationship with her daughters. However, during Marie's adult life, Eleanor's eldest, hints of a friendly relationship can be found.

A) POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS BEHIND A WEDDING

The fact that William X did not betroth his thirteen-year-old daughter and heiress to the biggest dukedom of France at the time looks like carelessness on his part. Whatever the reasons may be, when he died in 1137, the unbetrothed Eleanor suddenly became the most suitable match of France and had no powerful male relatives close by who could take care of her. However, before he died suddenly, William X could not find a more suitable tutor to take care of Eleanor than the king of France himself, Louis VI, and the duke therefore entrusted the monarch with the care of his eldest daughter. The king married her to his own son, the future Louis VII (Turner, *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 45).

This is where historians disagree. Some say that William X did not only entrust the care of his daughter to the king but also wanted the king to marry Eleanor with his son Louis (Flori 42). Other historians say that the king himself chose to marry Eleanor to his son. He was very sick, had to act quickly and saw this as an opportunity to add the dukedom to Aquitaine to the kingdom of France (Turner *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 50). This seems more

likely than the former proposition, although when Louis and Eleanor married, her lands remained hers.

Whatever the case may be, this had not been planned beforehand and Eleanor and Louis could not have been more ill-suited for another. Their personalities clashed as they could not have been more different. While Louis had been raised in the North according to the standards of his time, Eleanor received a more forward and less restrictive education, typical of the court of her region. It was very hard for her to fit in Paris because of how forward she was. Moreover, the difference in their personalities does not end there and lies deeper. Louis VII was the second son of Louis VI and was not raised to be the future king but had studied to follow an ecclesiastical path (Turner 52). He would never have been king if were not for his older brother's death (53). He did not want to be king and carried on his studies after he was crowned. Louis was very pious to the point that he looked more like a monk than a king (53). He shared the same views as the Church on sexual intercourse between a married couple (78) to the point where the couple was still childless after seven years of marriage and despite Eleanor's young age (Turner 54).¹ Eleanor's fertility had even been questioned.² Louis and Eleanor were extremes; he was very inhibited and she was rather forward. These differences between them appeared when Louis ran the country; he was a timorous king and let Eleanor influence him heavily when it came to political decisions.

In the Middle Ages, aristocrats and royals did not marry for love but in order to form political alliances that suited both their families. Louis and Eleanor knew this. However, if it

¹ At the time, the Church deemed sexual intercourse between a married couple other than for reproducing purposes immoral. The Church also had restrictions on day a married couple could have sexual intercourse or not. They amounted to only forty-four or forty-seven days a year (Turner 77-78).

² According to Parsons, Eleanor "was, or was made to be, conscious of the childless state (258)."

suiting their respective families, to have married them to one another was most unfortunate and did a disservice to them both. Taking into consideration both of their personalities, it was almost fated that Eleanor would not remain married to Louis her entire life and the mere fact of marrying them already cost her the custody of the children she was about to have with him.

B) MARIE OF FRANCE

In 1145, after seven years of marriage and a miscarriage, a child was finally born to Louis and Eleanor. However, it was not the eagerly awaited male heir but a girl they named Marie. The girl only lived eight years in Paris before she was sent to the household of her betrothed, Henry I of Champagne, in 1153 (Labande 102). Throughout these eight years, she did not see either of her parents much. And, out of these eight years, her mother was only present for five. Indeed, Eleanor and her husband embarked on the Second Crusade when Marie was around two years old and, as they were away for two years, came back to a four-years-old daughter. Three years later, she was just seven when her parents' marriage was annulled and when her mother left Paris for the Poitou and soon after for England. A year later, Marie was sent to her future in-laws family's household.

After their parents' marriage was annulled, the custody of Marie and her younger sister was never an issue and was immediately awarded to their father as the children of the king of France could not be alienated from him. As mentioned earlier, aristocratic and royal mothers bore their children but did not raise them or take care of their needs. They were not seen as nurturing, a fact which was therefore not taken into account. The custom was that “toute femme a besoin d’un « protecteur », père, frère, oncle, ou généralement mari,” as Jean Flori

puts it (81).³ If a woman needed to be under the protection of a male from her family, her children could not be placed under her protection in case of a separation with their father. Eleanor must have known this; it was impossible for her not to. One can argue that she went through with the annulment nonetheless, knowing it would cause her the loss of both her daughters. However, had she stayed she would not have seen much more of Marie and Alix for they were sent to their betrothed's courts very early on in their childhood, at an even younger age than betrothed daughters from aristocratic or royal backgrounds usually were.

Therefore, it is unlikely that mother and daughters ever saw each other again. However, some historians argue that Eleanor and Marie did, in fact, meet again. There is no evidence to be found that proves that mother and daughter met but also no evidence that they did not which leaves historians with an unanswered question and divides them into two sides with compelling arguments each. On the one hand, there is John F. Benton. He does not believe Marie and Eleanor ever met nor does he believe they could have shared a relationship of any kind. His main argument is that: "it is quite possible that at the royal court Marie was brought up to despise her mother" (Benton 589). He insinuates that the matter would not be to know if Marie was willing to meet with her mother if they did indeed have possibilities to see each other on certain occasions rather than to know if it had been possible at all. On the other hand, June Hall Martin McCash dedicated her article "Marie de Champagne and Eleanor of Aquitaine: A relationship Reexamined to Marie and Eleanor's possible meetings and equally possible friendly relationship as she puts it. She is well aware of the lack of evidence, but to her it does not mean they never met but rather that if they did meet the evidence no longer exists or has not been found. Yet, as she states herself that "although it is true that no charter

³ : "Every woman needed a 'protector', a father, brother, uncle or, generally, a husband," -

remains nor chronicle exists that attests to the emotional bond or even a meeting of the two women after 1152, the absence of such documentation is no certainty that such a meeting never took place” (McCash 699). McCash speculates a friendly relationship with the help of interaction with writers associated with both their courts, and of interaction with mutual family members: Richard the Lionhearted and Geoffrey, Eleanor's sons from her second marriage and Marie's half-brothers, and Marguerite, her paternal half-sister as well as her sister-in-law. It is known that Richard and Marie knew each other at the very least through one of Richard's poem where he addresses his sister in a stanza. (Ibid 704) As for the relationship, she shared with her other brother Geoffrey, McCash states that it was a “significant one” (705). Indeed when Geoffrey died at age twenty-seven, she went to his funeral and established in his memory a revenue at Notre-Dame where he was buried, a gesture she only made towards him and never towards any of her other siblings. Now, one could argue that Marie would not have needed Eleanor to introduce Richard or Geoffrey to her or to know that they were her brothers any more than she would have needed her mother to meet with them. However, the mere fact that she did meet and maintain a relationship of such quality with some of her half-siblings indicates that she might have done so with her mother as well. At the very least, one can only assume that Richard and Geoffrey gave Marie news about their mother and gave Eleanor news about her firstborn and that through them, mother and daughter kept in contact.

Finally, McCash also recounts four possible meetings. According to her, their first meeting would have had taken place in June 1173, which is consistent with what most historians argue, that is to say that if mother and daughter met, it is more likely to have happened between 1170 and 1173. If such a meeting occurred it would have been in Poitiers where “Eleanor held court, independent of Henry II” (McCash 708). Indeed, if *The Art of*

Courtly Love, a book written by Andreas Capellanus at Marie of France's request is to be believed, Marie would have been at her mother's court in Poitiers between 1170 and 1173. Andreas was one of Marie's courtiers and gives in his book a glimpse of the life aristocratic women of the time led at court, including both Marie of France and Eleanor of Aquitaine (McCash 709). However, this is hardly received as evidence since Andreas's work may be fictional. And if not, it is possible that all the ladies were not at the same place at the same time which allowed Andreas to write about both Eleanor and Marie without them ever being together (709).

The second possible encounter would have had taken place in 1174. McCash states that Marie and Marguerite's friendship is a relationship that has been established. However, she recounts that although paternal half-sisters, they could not have bonded as children as Marguerite was born in 1158, five years after Marie had been sent to her betrothed's court. She argues that their friendship is likely to have begun "at the court of Poitiers, where Marguerite was known to have been with Queen Eleanor" (705), which means that Marie and Eleanor would have met and have had contact. The discovery of the third possible meeting was made by Françoise Bibolet. This meeting would have occurred in 1191. Bibolet claims, based on the "Letters and Charters of Eleanor of Aquitaine", that the Queen visited her daughter. Lastly, the fourth and last possible encounter would have occurred two years after in 1193, five years before Marie's death (Bibolet 72). Eleanor would have stopped to see her daughter on her journey back home to England as Marie's lands were on her way. It would have been odd for Eleanor not to stop and for Marie not to welcome her mother, according to McCash.

Some historians go as far as to say that the poet Marie de France, who coincidentally or not bore the same name as Eleanor's daughter, was actually Eleanor's daughter Marie herself (Pappano 337). Other historians think that the poet and the princess are two different people. They are able to provide birth and death dates that do not match the ones of Eleanor's daughter. The poet appears to be younger. Besides, as was mentioned earlier, Benton truly believes that Marie grew up at the French Court to despise her mother. However, to this day, the poet's identity has not been discovered. Nevertheless, would Marie the poet and Marie the princess have been one and the same person, mother and daughter would have seen more and more of one another and even form a relationship of sorts as it is known the poet became famous at the English Court and stayed there awhile.

C) MOTHER AND DAUGHTERS SEPARATED

Little is known about Eleanor's second daughter Alix and out of her five daughters, she is the one whom historians know least about. Like her sister Marie, Alix did not see much of her mother, nor much of her father either. She was about eighteen months old when her mother left the French Court after her marriage with Louis was annulled in 1152. She was sent to Blois when she was three years old but it is only in 1164 that Alix, aged fourteen, married Thibaut of Blois (Labande 104). How she came to be born, however, lies in the Second Crusade, the Antioch affair and the 'black legend' that surrounded her mother. Her parents set out on the Second Crusade in 1147, about four years before she was born. They stopped off at Antioch eight months after they left Paris (Turner *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 87). The Prince of Antioch was no other than Raymond of Poitiers, Eleanor's paternal uncle. From this fact, two problems arose. The first one was of a military matter. Indeed, Raymond and Louis had different opinions of how to proceed. Raymond wanted to take advantage of the

king's army to attack Aleppo and rescue Edessa while Louis wanted to go straight to Jerusalem. It did not help that Eleanor stood by her uncle's side rather than her husband's. From this arose the second issue: Raymond and Eleanor's ambiguous relationship. They were rumored to have had an incestuous affair which the name "black legend" refers to. To this day, no evidence has been found to shed light on the true nature of their relationship but Eleanor's reputation remains stained. However, Eleanor's excessive attention towards her uncle which he probably used to his own advantage is what most likely started the rumor. Indeed, Raymond might have reminded Eleanor of her childhood in Poitiers. Firstly because he was family. Secondly because that he was surrounded with Poitevins whom he brought along when he got married to Constance and settled in Antioch. This is where that Eleanor's admiration towards her uncle might have come from (88). Eleanor publicly went against her husband's opinions on the leading of the Crusade. This incident was the second to last strain on the royal couple's marriage.

Eleanor then gave an ultimatum to her husband: either he could stay in Antioch with her and proceed with Raymond's plans or go to Jerusalem without her while she would initiate the process of having their marriage annulled, officially on grounds of consanguinity (Ibid 89). They had not followed the Church's rule at the time which did not allow marriage if the two parties were related in fewer than seven degrees. Indeed, "[Louis] could count four generations back to their common ancestor while [Eleanor] could count five" (Bouchard 223). This was common knowledge, however clergymen did not prevent them from getting married on this ground. Pope Eugene III himself was aware of the fact and proclaimed that this marriage was never to be dissolved and especially not on this ground (Turner *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 97). However, Louis did not follow either choice his wife gave him and without

letting Raymond know, he just rode to Jerusalem in the middle of the night with Eleanor who was forced to come along with him (92).

On their return journey from the Holy Land, the royal couple sailed in two different ships (96). At this point, it was clear to all that Eleanor and Louis did not get along anymore. They visited Pope Eugenius III who took it upon himself to reconcile them. The Pope had a room decorated under his own supervision to create a favorable atmosphere so they could reconcile and he made sure the couple slept in the same bed. This might have been the night where Alix was conceived as Eleanor gave birth to yet another baby girl less than a year after, in 1150. However, Alix was also not, like her sister before her, the long-awaited heir and this was truly the last strain on Louis and Eleanor's marriage. If Eleanor had already wanted to have her marriage with Louis annulled in Antioch, Louis now finally wanted the same as she seemed unable to produce an heir to the Capetian dynasty line. In 1152, in Beaugency, the Archbishop of Sens finally declared their marriage annulled but nevertheless their daughters legitimate (Brundage 218).

Alix was born towards the end of a strained and loveless marriage of almost fifteen years. Her conception was the result of a sad attempt at reconciling her parents, which was all the more so when her mother already declared she wanted to separate from her father. Furthermore, Alix was the second child of the royal couple and yet another girl. Under such circumstances, it was no longer a matter of if her parents were going to get separated but rather when. When Alix was eighteen months old, her parents' marriage was dissolved. Customs and laws of the time awarded custody of her older sister and herself to their father. Several months later, Eleanor married Henry Plantagenet and left for England. More than her

sister Marie, it is very unlikely that Alix and her mother ever saw each other again. She was still at an early age when her mother left, and as royal and aristocratic offspring were taken care off by wet-nurses, not by their own mother, it is very unlikely that Alix and Eleanor had much contact during these eighteen months.

PART III – HENRY II'S DAUGHTERS

Eleanor's relationships with her three daughters born from her marriage to Henry II, was quite different from her relationship with her two eldest daughters. Not only did Eleanor follow the standards of her time when it came to the education and the relationship to her three youngest daughters as children, she also went beyond what was expected of her when they became adults. Eleanor did leave a strong imprint on her daughters' mind as some developed a devotion to the arts which mirrored their mother's own passion. Even in comparison to present standards of mothering, it is clear that Eleanor was far from a bad mother to those three daughters.

A) CHILDHOOD OF THE THREE PRINCESSES

After her marriage with Louis VII was annulled in March 1152, it did not take Eleanor more than a few weeks to become engaged anew and to a future king no less: Henry Plantagenet. The couple was married by May of the same year and in the span of thirteen years gave birth to eight children, born closer together than Louis's daughters ever were. Three of these children were girls: Matilda born in 1156, Leonor born in 1161 and Joan born in 1165.

Henry and Eleanor's second daughter was named Eleanor after her mother. She is, however, best known as Eleanor of England or Leonor of Castile ever since she married Alfonso VIII of Castile in 1177. Even though she only took on the Spanish equivalent of her birth name after she became Queen, she will be referred to as Leonor in the present study, even when talking about her life before her marriage, so as to avoid confusion between her mother and herself.

Oddly enough, while Eleanor was related to her former husband Louis VII in fewer than the seven degrees permitted by the church (Bouchard 223), not only she was also related to her current husband Henry but related to him to the third degree, closer than she ever was related to Louis. And just as it was known that Eleanor and Louis were related in fewer than the seven degrees permitted by the church, it was n

ot a secret for anyone that she was also more closely related so to her second husband.

Nobody tried to have their marriage annulled. Bouchard gives the reason why when she states that in the eleventh century, “the powerful began to marry third and fourth cousins, and although the church's initial reaction was highly negative, eventually those who wanted to remain in such unions were able to do so” (232).

Louis and Eleanor's marriage was an unhappy one, to say the least, and was annulled on grounds of consanguinity. Henry and Eleanor's marriage was tumultuous, to put it lightly, to the point where Henry even imprisoned his wife for sixteen long years and yet having their marriage annulled never occurred but had been intended on Henry's part (Flori 168). Yet Henry had in his mistresses, the famous Rosamund Clifford in particular, a flaw Louis never had. Nevertheless, although Eleanor and Henry were related more closely than she had been with Louis, the couple was allowed to remain lawfully married. However, these two family units shared no more similarities. Oddly enough, once again, if her unhappy marriage with Louis was the main reason why she had not been the mother she was expected to be to Marie and Alix, her unhappy marriage with Henry did not prevent Eleanor from having an actual relationship with her other three daughters.

Because Eleanor did not have her marriage annulled with Henry the same way she had with Louis, she was physically present, if little else, during Matilda, Leonor, and Joan's

childhood and up until they were sent to their betrothed. All of Eleanor's daughters had been sent to their future husband's households at a very early and even younger age than aristocratic daughters normally were, especially Alix, sent to Blois at three years old. Marie, Eleanor's first born, and Leonor, her second youngest daughter, were sent respectively to Champagne and Castile at eight years of age. Eleanor was proven luckier with Matilda and Joan as Matilda was sent to Saxony and Joan to Sicily when they were each eleven (DeAragon 97). She may not have had as much time as the other mothers of her time, but she at least got extra years with two out of her five daughters.

Not much is known of Matilda, Leonor, and Joan's childhoods. Matilda is known to have spent most of her childhood years with her mother (Bowie 30). As for her sisters, Flori and Turner think Joan spent most of her childhood years at Fontevraud Abbey with her brother John and think Leonor spent most of her childhood years between Fontevraud Abbey and her mother's side (Bowie 34). Bowie refutes their argument as they have not enough evidence to prove their point.

Not much is known indeed but what is known appears not to be enough to prove a point. As a matter of fact, from the moment she married Henry up to the moment he imprisoned her, Eleanor was quite the traveler. Her children were always included in her journeys and she never traveled without one or several of them by her side. Although her sons are written in the Pipe Rolls to have also traveled alongside their mother, it was generally Eleanor's last three daughters that journeyed with her the most (Bowie 44). Bowie listed all of Eleanor's journeys with Matilda, Leonor, and Joan, in her thesis on the three daughters by Henry II.

Joan, the youngest, is also the one to have journeyed with her mother the least. Her first trip was to England in October and November 1166, a trip she shared with her two sisters when she was one year old (Bowie 33). Her next trip was to Normandy at Christmas time of 1167 at two years of age (34), a trip she shared with Leonor, Richard and John. Her last recorded trip with her mother and her brother John was to England in July 1174, as she was nine years old and it was the last before Eleanor was made captive by Henry II (35). However, this does not mean it was the last she saw of her mother. Eleanor was allowed to see Joan after Henry imprisoned her and before she departed for Sicily (36). Indeed, Bowie states that the Sicily ambassadors first traveled to Winchester to see Joanna, who was residing there with her captive mother Eleanor of Aquitaine (74), clearly indicating Eleanor and Joan saw each other although Eleanor was captive. Eleanor had been made a prisoner because she was thought to have plotted with her sons in their rebellion against their father. It seems rather odd that being separated from her children was never part of her punishment, and that she was allowed to see her children since one of the main reasons she was being punished was because she was thought to have had a part in her sons rebelling against her husband (Bowie 35). Moreover, Eleanor was not kept in a dungeon or a cell but was given a “compulsory order of residence” (Turner *Eleanor of Aquitaine*, 285) and resided in different castles throughout her sixteen years of “imprisonment” (Ibid 285). Also, Henry II treated her fairly well, not to add anger on his sons' part towards him. Eleanor had more than decent living conditions. She had servants, money and expensive outfits (Ibid 283). She was also released on occasions such as Christmas for instance. This explains why, although she may have been captive, she was not a prisoner and enjoyed more freedom than an actual prisoner.

To come back to the matter at hand, Leonor, Joan's older sister, had four trips with their mother, one more than the latter had. Leonor never traveled with her mother alone. She

was barely older than one year old when she journeyed to Cherbourg at Christmas time with Matilda (Bowie 31). She was with Matilda and Richard when they went to Rouen in April and May 1165 aged three and a half (32). A year and a half year later, in October and November 1166, then aged five, both Matilda and Joan accompanied Leonor to England (33). Finally, Leonor's last recorded trip with her mother was at Christmas time 1167 with Joan, Richard, and John mentioned above (37).

Finally, there is Matilda, Eleanor's oldest daughter by Henry II. The total number of trips she took with her mother as a child amounts to eight, twice as many as her younger sister Leonor. Three of them have already been mentioned: the trip to Cherbourg in the winter of 1162 when she was six years old and the one to Rouen in the summer of 1165 when she was nine years old, both of which she took with Leonor, and the one to England in the autumn of 1166 when she was ten years old with Leonor and Joan (33). Matilda was not always alone with her mother during the five remaining trips, one or several of her brothers journeyed alongside them on occasion. Matilda first journeyed, as a few-weeks-old infant, with her mother and young Henry. Indeed, she was born in June 1156 in London and took a trip to Normandy in July of the same year. Eleanor went back to Normandy in January 1157 and brought seven-month-old Matilda and young Henry along. In February, Eleanor went back to England with her eight-month-old (30). The next trip Matilda took with her mother only happened three years later, in September 1160, to Rouen, when she was four years old. She had to wait another three years, then aged seven, to cross the English Channel to come back to England in January 1163.

Although Bowie recounts all the journeys Eleanor undertook with Matilda, Leonor and Joan and not all the journeys she undertook with her sons, three of them are mentioned

and traveled along with their sisters. Indeed, young Henry traveled twice with his younger sister Matilda, Richard and John traveled once with Leonor and Joan and John traveled once with Joan alone. Thus, young Henry, Richard, and John all journeyed twice each with their mother and sisters which are less than their sisters. Joan journeyed three times with her mother and siblings, Leonor four times and Matilda eight times. This had more to do with availability than preferences. One can only deduce that Eleanor might have wanted to spend as much time as possible with her daughters before they were sent to their future husband's family.

There is a final detail of significant importance: money. Between 1155 and 1173, Eleanor provided for her children financially, “including the cost of providing their clothes” as frequent entries in the Pipe Rolls show (36). That is to say, up until when Matilda was seventeen and already in Saxony for a few years, up until Leonor was twelve and long gone as well and up until Joan was eight. This might strike one as rather normal that parents provide for their children in such a way. But in the Middle Ages, girls were sent to their future husband's house and the family of their future husband took care of them monetarily. The fact that Eleanor provided for her children financially meant Matilda, Leonor, and Joan were financially independent from their husbands' families. Therefore, it indicates Henry and Eleanor cared for their daughter to the point where they offered them financial independence, which they were not expected to do. Indeed, Eleanor was not providing financially for Marie and Alix, her daughters from her previous marriage, for instance.

B) MARRIAGES, LATER LIFE AND OTHER ENCOUNTERS

Matilda and Leonor's last trip with their mother coincides with the moment they traded their native land for those of their future husbands. As seen earlier, Matilda was sent to Saxony in 1167 at age eleven. Bowie argues that Eleanor stayed in England with her until she left for Saxony to marry her betrothed Henry the Lion. More than that, the pair would have spent their time in wedding preparations and in the making of the trousseau of the wife-to-be (33). It is also likely that Eleanor accompanied her daughter on her journey towards her new home as far as Normandy which is more than she did for her Joan (64). As for Leonor, she was sent in 1170 aged eight to marry Alfonso VIII of Castile. She stayed with her mother in Poitou from 1168 to 1170 where she remained until she left for Castile (34). Her mother accompanied her on her journey there up to Bordeaux (35). Finally, Joan was sent in 1176, at eleven years old to marry William II of Sicily. Negotiations for Joan's marriage's arrangements began before Eleanor was made captive by her husband but they ended after.

When royals or aristocratic parents had daughters in the Middle Ages, they had opportunities to make alliances and to reinforce bonds between powerful families by marrying them. Henry II and Eleanor had three of them and they were princesses no less. However political the marriages of her three daughters were, as any other at the time, Eleanor had a say at least in whom one of her daughters were to marry or not to marry. She held the council that was meant to decide the arrangements for Leonor's marriage and Alfonso VIII of Castile was then chosen as Alfonso was looking for allies and Eleanor and Henry wanted to secure the Aquitaine's Pyrenean border.

Being sent to their betrothed to start off their new lives did not mean the end of all kinds of communication between mothers and daughters. Although no letters between Eleanor

and her daughters are to be found (37), that does not mean there never were any. Certainly, they might not have ever existed but they might also have simply not survived like many other documents from this period, or they might simply not have been found yet. However, better yet than mere correspondences, there is substantial evidence that Matilda, Leonor, and Joan each saw their mother again at least once in their adult years.

Matilda and Joan were not reunited with Eleanor through the most pleasant of circumstances. Indeed, due to Matilda's husband Henry the Lion's issues with Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, the former was sentenced to exile for three years. In 1182, the couple and their three children then took refuge in Matilda's native lands with her family and remained there until 1185 at Eleanor and Henry's expense (29). Surprisingly, there is no record of meetings between Eleanor and Matilda before 1184 but Labande states that Matilda and Eleanor saw each other numerous times during winter 1184 /1185 as Eleanor was still her husband's captive (106). However, Matilda and her family also spent Christmas of that year with Eleanor and journeyed with her mother in 1185 (Bowie 108). Unfortunately, this is the last Matilda ever saw of her mother as she was to die a few years later in 1189 at only thirty-three years old (Labande 106).

Joan was also reunited with her mother under similar circumstances. In 1191, Joan and Eleanor were reunited when the latter came to Messina, where Richard and Joan were. They were only together for four days and Eleanor came along with Berengaria of Navarra, the woman she had chosen to become Richard's betrothed. Eleanor entrusted Joan with Berengaria's care before they left for the Crusade to make sure the wedding took place (Labande 109; Bowie 47). Eleanor was reunited with her daughter some eight years later in May 1199 in Niort when Joan was five months pregnant (Labande 110). Like her sister

Matilda, it is also the last Joan ever saw of her mother as well as she died in childbirth a few months later, also aged thirty-three (105).

As for Leonor, her reunion with her mother, when she was thirty-five years old, happened under more pleasant circumstances. Indeed, Eleanor's son, John, King of England, promised his niece Urraca, Leonor's daughter, to King Philip-Augustus of France's son, Louis. Eleanor made the trip to Castile and came in person to take Leonor's daughter with her and bring her to the French Court to marry her betrothed the future Louis VIII of France, her first husband's grandson. Although minds were set on Urraca, it is finally Blanca, her younger sister, whom Eleanor chose. Some sources recount that Eleanor judged Blanca more befitting Louis's temperament, some others claim that it is because Urraca was an ugly name not befitting a French queen that Eleanor chose Blanca over her (Labande 107). It might strike one as rather odd that Eleanor would choose a wife for her former husband's grandson. However, according to DeAragon, "mothers and grandmothers probably played a larger role in family marriage negotiations, suggesting or even selecting spouses for their children and grandchildren" (105).

If there are no correspondence to be found between Eleanor of Aquitaine and her daughters – at least none surviving – there are surviving charters addressed to them. Eleanor always referred to all of her daughters in her charters as "carissima" or "dilectissima" (Bowie 40). The word *dilectissima* comes from *dilectus* which means "loved", "beloved" or "dear" and the Latin superlative suffix "most". The word *carissima* from *carus* which means "dear", "precious", "valued", "esteemed" or "beloved", and once again the Latin superlative suffix. Both of these epithets are usually translated to "dearest" or "fondest". Flori believes that there is nothing to read into these purely conventional terms and therefore nothing to be deduced

about Eleanor's feelings towards her children or her relationship to them. He argues that Eleanor used "carissimus" to describe her son John Lackland only once and it was when he was a king and that she used "dilectissimus" to talk about her late husband the King Henry II, implying that the terms were used out of politeness and respect that she was expected to have when addressing kings. However, it seems unlikely that she used these strong words in her charters just out of politeness. Indeed, Bowie believes that it might indicate on some level how much she cared about her children when she used those words to address them. Eleanor was addressing her daughter and not her queen; she may not have been expected to address the same respect she was for her kings and yet she used both Latin words to address her.

There is a final aspect not to be overlooked: the choice of the two eldest girls' patronage. It is usually believed that it is thanks to Matilda that literature and art bloomed in her kingdom as if she brought them along from her native lands when she left them for Saxony (Labande 105). Labande believes Leonor was a worshiped protector of troubadours just like her mother was before her (111). It clearly indicates that Matilda and Leonor not only had a relationship with their mother but also that it had been strong enough to influence them in their adult lives.

C) COMPARATIVE APPROACH BETWEEN THE TWO SETS OF DAUGHTERS

All the elements found during this research to try and determine if mothers and daughters developed a relationship and a mutual affection and attachment can be divided into seven categories. These categories were their family situation, their contact with their mother in their childhood, the person who arranged their marriage, how old they were when they left their native lands to marry their betrothed, if they met their mother again as adults, who cared for them financially and finally, their patronage.

As for their familial situation, both of Eleanor's marriages were ultimately unhappy and either loveless or tumultuous. While she and Henry were in love and spend many happy years together at the beginning of their marriage, such was not the case for Eleanor and Louis. She was closely related to both her husbands, which she used as an excuse to have the first one annulled. The second could have had been annulled on the same grounds but it was not. And because Eleanor did not leave Henry II like she left Louis VII, she was more able to be present in her younger daughters' lives before they went away to get married.

When it comes to contact with their mother in their childhood, Marie and Alix barely had any. Eleanor was only present in five of seven early years of Marie. She was away on Crusade for two of her early years. Nothing suggests Eleanor cared for Marie but nothing suggests she did not. Eleanor had to leave Marie in Louis's care when Marie was seven. Not much is known about her sister Alix. Eleanor had to leave Alix in Louis' care when Alix was about eighteen months old. Whatever bond Eleanor might have created with her daughter in such short period of time, Alix was too young to remember it and it probably did not leave too strong an imprint on her daughter's mind. However, she was far more present in Matilda, Leonor, and Joan's lives. Indeed, she traveled with them to the point where Matilda's journeys with her mother amount to eight in the first ten years of her life, Leonor's journeys amount to four and Joan's to three. Moreover, Matilda spent most of her early years by her mother's side. Between these travels, they spent many holidays together such as Christmas, Easter or Michaelmas. All in all, Eleanor had much more contact with her three youngest daughters.

As for their marriage arrangements, as Eleanor left Louis VII before her daughters were betrothed, Eleanor was not allowed to have a say in whom either Marie or Alix was going to marry. Their father arranged their marriages. However, she was heavily involved in

her second youngest daughter Leonor's marriage arrangements. Once more, Eleanor was more involved in her three youngest daughters' lives.

Concerning the ages they were when they left their family to marry their betrothed, Alix was three and Marie was eight. Leonor was also eight while Matilda and Joan were both eleven. The five of them were very young but Eleanor's daughters by Henry II were overall older and it seems she took advantage of the few extra years she was given, judging from the journeys she undertook with her daughters up to when they left for the land of their future husband.

The contact between a mother and her daughters did not have to cease after their childhood, and they could be reunited throughout the girls' adult lives. However, not a single encounter between Eleanor and Alix is to be found after Eleanor left Alix's father when she was eighteen months old. Moreover, all of the supposed encounters between Eleanor and Marie are undocumented to a point where no one is sure they ever happened. If they did indeed occur, Marie and Eleanor would have had met quite a few times throughout Marie's adult life. Her maternal half-sisters all did see their mother at least once in their adult life. Leonor met Eleanor through pleasant circumstances and Matilda and Joan, at times of troubles. It seems that Eleanor saw Matilda, Leonor, and Joan more than Marie and Alix. She then had more occasions to create and strengthen a relationship with Matilda, Leonor, and Joan than she had with Marie and Alix.

When it comes to caring for her daughters financially, indications are to be found that Eleanor did provide for Matilda, Leonor, and Joan in a financial way in their early years and even long after they were married. There is no evidence that she ever used her personal money to provide financially for Marie and Alix after there were married.

Finally, comes the issue of the girls' patronage; it seems Leonor followed in her mother footsteps as she appears to have been, just like her mother, a worshiped protector of troubadours. Matilda allegedly permitted art and literature to bloom in Saxony in a way that made it resemble the situation in her native lands. Furthermore, the poetess Marie of France was believed to be Marie, Eleanor's first daughter. If she was indeed, the fact that she was a poetess speaks for itself. Even on this last criterion, it seems Eleanor left a much stronger imprint on her three youngest daughters than on her oldest two.

Overall, Matilda, Leonor, and Joan saw their mother more than their maternal half-sisters, Marie and Alix. Eleanor was also more involved in the lives of the former than of the latter. One could not know if it was because she did not care. Eleanor could not have seen and cared for her daughters by Louis whether she wanted to do so or not as it was forbidden for her to do so. As for her youngest three daughters, Eleanor did not only see them and was involved in their lives, she cared for them on several other levels. Nevertheless, Eleanor's daughters by Henry II had more occasions to see her and create a relationship with her than her daughters by Louis VII and Eleanor influenced them more in their later life.

CONCLUSION

Eleanor of Aquitaine was a woman of exception in many regards. Yet, when it comes to her children, especially young Henry, Richard, and John, she is considered, even centuries later, a bad mother. However, this assumption seems ill-founded for two main reasons: it does not take into account all of Eleanor's children and is based on contemporary standards of education and motherhood and not on the ones of Eleanor's time.

Indeed, Eleanor had seven other children besides Henry, Richard, and John, five of whom were girls. Eleanor's relationship with her other children and especially her five daughters is not usually taken into account when judging her as a bad mother. Moreover, at the time, a woman of her station was not expected to do more for her children than to bear them in order to carry on the family name and the family line and, especially for queens, to produce an heir to the thrones.

Parents today have to care for their child's physical, emotional and intellectual needs. These duties towards a child were not fulfilled by the parents alone in the Middle Ages. Wet-nurses fed the children, changed them, rocked them to sleep, looked after them or played with them while teachers and masters were in charge of their education. A mother then showed little personal involvement but there were signs that showed that Eleanor truly cared.

This study and analysis of Eleanor's relationship with her five daughters reveals that Eleanor was not the bad mother she is often depicted as having been. She simply followed the standards of her time, especially when it came to Marie and Alix, her daughters from her first marriage. She was hardly present in their childhoods, and, when they were respectively seven years old and eighteen months old, she had to leave them in their father's care after she had

her marriage annulled from him. The only sign that indicates she cared was that their father and herself made sure that they remained legitimate despite the annulment so they kept their status and good standing.

Eleanor was, however, demonstrably a decent mother for Matilda, Leonor, and Joan, her other three daughters from her second marriage. When a mother was not expected to be present in her children's lives Eleanor took them on numerous journeys with her. Eleanor was quite the traveler during the years she was married to Henry II and always included her children in her travels, especially her daughters whereas she left Marie behind when she spent two years away on Crusade during Marie early years. This can be attributed to Eleanor's own unusual education in the South where the girls had a more prominent place than they had elsewhere, and shows a desire to spend as much time with them as she could before they were sent, way too young, into the household of their future husbands.

This study and analysis of Eleanor's relationship with her five daughters also takes into account their adult lives. Indeed, Eleanor might have seen Marie several times in her adult years and even developed a friendly relationship with her. She never saw Alix again but welcomed Joan and Matilda in times of troubles such as when Matilda's husband was exiled from his country for several years. She met Leonor in her adult life as well. She personally came and chose one of her granddaughters to marry the future king of France.

Another indication that Eleanor cared for her daughters, especially her three youngest ones, is money. Eleanor provided financially for her three youngest long after they were married when she did not have to. Matilda, Leonor, and Joan were thus independent financially from their husband's families.

Finally, Eleanor must have left her daughters a good impression as a mother as many followed in her footsteps: Marie requested Andreas Capellanus to write a book called *The Art of Courtly Love*, a social system developed at Eleanor's court in Poitiers; Leonor was a protector of troubadours, just like her mother; and Matilda allegedly permitted art and literature to bloom in Saxony in a way that made it resemble more the situation in her native lands. To conclude, Eleanor was not only a better mother than she is depicted to have been, but also she was a better mother than was expected of her for a woman of her station at the time.

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