Introduction

Some of the most famous and infamous women in medieval England served as ladies-in-waiting. Among the well known were Alice Perrers, mistress of Edward III; Philippa Chaucer, wife of the celebrated author Geoffrey; Eleanor Cobham, alleged witch and duchess of Gloucester; and, of course, Anne Boleyn, one of the catalysts of the English Reformation. Riveting tales about ladies-in-waiting have made their way into Shakespearean drama, contemporary novels, and television series. Stories of royal mistresses such as Alice Perrers, Katherine Swynford, and the Boleyn girls, and tales of those who rise "above their stations" only to fall spectacularly, captivate both medieval and modern audiences. Other female servants, like Anne of Bohemia's attendant Agnes Launcecrona, scandalized their contemporaries, but remain little known today. Desiring Agnes, Robert de Vere, ninth earl of Oxford, repudiated his wife Philippa de Coucy, granddaughter of Edward III; Philippa's discarding was "one of the principal causes of the hatred all England bore [de Vere]."[1] Some medieval attendants are popular today. Literary scholars have delved into the marriage of Philippa and Geoffrey Chaucer, who both served as courtiers, while Maria de Salinas earns respect for her steadfast loyalty to Catherine of Aragon during and after Henry VIII's abandonment of his first queen.

This book illuminates the quotidian aspects of life for English ladies-in-waiting, beyond the salacious or notorious tidbits that have made their way into modern dramatizations. In medieval literature, the damsel-in-waiting often facilitates the heroine's romantic goals, like Brangaene in *Tristan and Isolde*, or furthers other narratives, as when the capture of Guinevere's cousin and servant Elibel (when delivering her queen's message) led to war between Arthur and King Claudas.[2] Most female attendants in late

[1] Froissart, *Chronicles*, 2: 264.
[2] Fuller, "Damsels-in-Waiting," 1; *Lancelot-Grail*, V: 60, 255–62, 401–2; Caples, "Brangaene and Isold."

medieval England lived their lives and experiences behind the scenes of both mundane days and great ceremonial occasions.

Their ordinariness did not make them unimportant, however. Elite female servants played significant roles in royal and noble households, though their value and influence receive little acknowledgment from historians. Rewards earned for service, including lands, dowries, retirement annuities, and material commodities, demonstrate attendants' value to employers. Families sought to promote their daughters and wives at court and in great households, because female servants could gain both remuneration and intangible patronage opportunities for themselves, their families, and their associates. The significance of some ladies-in-waiting is revealed in the roles they played in major political events, in ways that assisted and promoted the monarchs, but sometimes they were targeted by other courtiers hostile to what they saw as undue influence. As monarchs and noblewomen came to be served by a greater number of women during the Middle Ages, well-dressed women in their entourages enhanced their grandeur at coronations, marriages, tournaments, diplomatic gatherings, and other significant events.

This study provides the first comprehensive scholarly examination of elite female servants in medieval England, by investigating the lives and experiences of over 1,200 ladies-in-waiting who served queens and aristocratic women during the last three medieval centuries with almost 4,000 references to specific activities chronicling their experiences.[3] A *longue durée* methodology documents both continuity and change over time. Households increased in size and complexity over the period, creating greater roles and opportunities for female servants. Yet this investigation also reveals continuity, in the frequency of marriages contracted between male and female household staff, for example, and in the cyclical swings of hostility against immigrants – kin and friends of foreign queens – serving at court. Although it is possible to reconstruct full biographies for some elite attendants, many appear in only one or two sources – perhaps receiving livery or bequests – and thus this study proceeds thematically using prosopographical techniques to capture the lived experiences of the

[3] To be precise, my database contains 1,240 women with 3,992 references to their service activities, plus 259 examples of female attendants who are not identified by name in the records (for example, the unidentified damsel of Sibyl Beauchamp, given livery by the crown for a mid-fourteenth-century tournament (TNA, E 101/391/15, m. 7) or the rewards given to *diversis dominabus et damicellae Regine* (diverse ladies and damsels of the queen) granted a century later by Margaret of Anjou (TNA, E 101/409/14)).

many unknown and uncelebrated women who served medieval queens and noblewomen.

Historiography

Scholars have not entirely neglected the lives of medieval English ladies-in-waiting, but female attendants before the Tudor era have been explored mainly in gossipy books that focus on famous servants,[4] or in works centered on some of the better-known women who served as ladies and damsels in royal courts, especially in the later fourteenth century. Edward III's mistress Alice Perrers, his son John of Gaunt's mistress and later wife Katherine Swynford, and Katherine's sister Philippa Chaucer have each received much attention.[5]

The Tudor era and beyond is better represented in English scholarship analyzing the roles of female attendants.[6] Theresa Earenfight has investigated Catherine of Aragon's household, especially before her coronation as Henry VIII's queen;[7] Jeri McIntosh compared the pre-regnal households of Tudor sisters Mary and Elizabeth,[8] while Charlotte Merton's dissertation focused on the female servants in these two women's regnal households.[9] Scholarly studies of women who served later queens in the seventeenth to twentieth centuries are abundant.[10]

[4] Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*; Weir's *England's Medieval Queens* series include several stories about royal attendants. Ashdown, in *Ladies-in-Waiting*, examines medieval ladies in Ch. 1 and those serving Catherine of Aragon in Ch. 2, but the rest of the book covers more modern households. Although Ashdown limits her medieval examples to famous women, she examined some chronicles and archival sources.

[5] For Perrers, see Bothwell, "Management of Position," 31–51; Ormrod, "Alice Perrers and John Salisbury," 379–93; Ormrod, "Who Was Alice Perrers?" 219–29; Tompkins, "Uncrowned Queen," 41–44; Tompkins, "Alice Perrers and the Goldsmiths' Mistery," 1361–91; Tompkins, "Edward III's Gold-Digging Mistress," 59–72. I thank Laura Tompkins for sharing her thesis with me. On Swynford, see Lucraft, *Katherine Swynford*; Weir, *Mistress of the Monarchy*; Perry, "Katherine Roet's Swynfords," 122–31, 164–74; Goodman, *Katherine Swynford*. For the Chaucers, see Galway, "Philippa Pan, Philippa Chaucer," 481–7; Hulbert, "Chaucer's Official Life"; Krauss, "Chaucerian Problems."

[6] Like Ashdown earlier, Somerset's *Ladies in Waiting: From the Tudors to the Present Day* focuses on entertaining anecdotes from the period.

[7] Earenfight, "A Precarious Household," 338–56; Earenfight, "Raising *Infanta*," 417–43; Earenfight, "Shoes of an Infanta," 293–317; Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon*.

[8] McIntosh, *From Heads of Household to Heads of State*.

[9] Merton, "Women Who Served Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth." On Elizabeth's servants and confidantes, see also Whitelock, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows*.

[10] Fry, "Perceptions of Influence," 265–85; Akkerman, "Goddess of the Household," 287–309; Wolfson, "Female Bedchamber of Queen Henrietta Maria," 311–41; Bucholz, *Augustan Court*; Weichel, "Ladies-in-Waiting at the British Court," 41–61.

Many of these examples demonstrate that studies tend to focus on a single reign or a few successive ones, and various scholars have considered the roles of female household attendants within their biographies of queens or important noblewomen. Queens are currently in fashion, and queenship studies have proliferated in recent years, with publications that have moved away from strict biography to more incisive analyses of gender and politics at royal courts.[11] John Carmi Parsons initiated the trend in medieval English studies, with an important study of Edward I's first consort, Eleanor of Castile, in the introduction to his edition of one of her wardrobe books, published in 1977. The late 1990s saw Parsons' biography of Eleanor and Margaret Howell's monograph on Eleanor's predecessor, Eleanor of Provence.[12] Twenty-first-century scholars have furthered analyses of English queenship, with the publication of Lisa Benz St. John's examination of three fourteenth-century queens, Kristen Geaman's and Elena Woodacre's studies of Anne of Bohemia and Joan of Navarre, and Joanna Laynesmith's investigation of the four queens who experienced the Wars of the Roses.[13]

Before the late-twentieth-century onset of feminist scholarship into medieval English queens and noblewomen, several scholars of English monarchy and its bureaucratic accounts had offered perceptive analyses of queenly finances and political power within broader projects to understand royal administration. Hilda Johnstone's chapter on "The Queen's Household," despite its early publication, is still cited frequently because she offered a complete understanding of the complex workings of the queen's landed and fiscal resources and how they were administered.[14] Also writing in the middle of the twentieth century, A. R. Myers delved into the finances of medieval queens, although he focused on fifteenth-century monarchs.[15] Seeking to understand the late medieval court, Myers also translated and edited a series of regulations that outlined

[11] For comprehensive overviews of historiography of medieval queenship in Europe, see Bárány, "Medieval Queens and Queenship," 149–99; Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe*, 1–12.

[12] Parsons, *Court and Household*; Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile*; Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*.

[13] Benz St. John, *Medieval Queens*; Geaman, *Anne of Bohemia*; Woodacre, *Joan of Navarre*; Laynesmith, *Medieval Queens*. Briefer analyses of all later medieval queens are in Aiden Norrie *et al.* (ed.), *Later Plantagenet and the Wars of the Roses Consorts*. A comparative project with much broader focus of chronology and geography is Earenfight's textbook *Medieval Queenship*.

[14] Johnstone, "Queen's Household," in *Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England*, 5: 264–84. Johnstone offers a narrower chronological focus in "The Queen's Household," in *The English Government at Work,* 1: 253–66.

[15] Myers, "Captivity of a Royal Witch," 263–84; Myers, "Household Accounts of Queen Margaret," 79–113; Myers, "Household of Queen Elizabeth Woodville," 207–35.

responsibilities of court officials, including some women, as well as limits upon their appointment to restrict financial extravagance.[16]

The experiences of medieval noblewomen have also drawn attention, primarily from the late twentieth century, as historians have drawn insight from diverse sources such as account rolls, charters, letters, and archaeological remains to explore female lives. Jennifer Ward details the life of Elizabeth de Burgh while providing a valuable survey on medieval noblewomen.[17] Linda Mitchell explores various case studies of (mostly) thirteenth-century elite women, while Nicola Clark examines the women of the preeminent Howard family who commanded social and political power in early Tudor England.[18] C. M. Woolgar's studies of aristocratic households consider (among other areas) household composition, servant life, and uses of space in medieval residences.[19] Investigating late medieval and early Tudor aristocratic women, Barbara Harris explores the life-cycle of highborn women and, most pertinently for this current investigation, includes a final chapter on their service at court. Harris designates their periods of service as "careers," which, given that female servants worked and gained rewards for their work, provides a helpful framework for our understanding of ladies-in-waiting.[20]

Studies focusing exclusively on ladies-in-waiting are more abundant outside England (apart, perhaps, from the Tudor queens-regnant Mary and Elizabeth). Susan Broomhall's research on women at the Burgundian court offered early insights about cross-cultural interactions when foreign brides travelled abroad to wed; similarly, Katrin Keller's investigation of Habsburg ladies-in-waiting highlighted the rising influence of female courtiers in Vienna.[21] Research by Marie-Véronique Clin and Caroline zum Kolk illuminates the roles of female courtiers in late medieval and early modern France,[22] while women in Iberian royal households have been well served by Diana Pelaz Flores, Manuela Santos Silva, and María

[16] *Household of Edward IV*. [17] Ward, *Elizabeth de Clare*; Ward, *English Noblewomen*.
[18] Mitchell, *Portraits*; Clark, *Howard Women*.
[19] Woolgar, *Great Household*; Woolgar, "Queens and Crowns"; Woolgar, *Senses*.
[20] Harris, *Aristocratic*, 5–6. Harris (ibid., 67) offers the following definition of career: "a set of activities that formed the center of their lives and defined their place in society." Compare Reynolds' book *Aristocratic Women and Political Society in Victorian Britain*, which similarly offers a chapter on ladies at Victoria's court.
[21] Broomhall, "Gendering the Culture of Honour," 81–93; Broomhall, "Orbit of the King," and several of the articles in Broomhall (ed.), *Women, Power, and Authority at the French Court*, including Bouchard's "Power of Reputation and Skills," 241–62; Keller, "Ladies-in-Waiting at the Imperial Court," 77–97; Keller, *Nur die Frau des Kaisers?*; Keller, *Hofdamen*.
[22] Clin, *Isabeau de Bavière*, esp. 58–61; Kolk, "Household of the Queen of France," 3–22; Kolk, "La naissance de la 'cour des Dames,'" 23–47.

Narbona Cárceles.[23] Finally, two comprehensive volumes with trans-regional scope are very helpful. Several articles from the admirable volume *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-in-Waiting across Early Modern Europe* have already been cited, and the editors have provided a fruitful comparative introductory essay that addresses the power and influence of early modern women at court.[24] Even more global is Anne Walthalls's collection *Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History*; the articles therein consider female servants as well as royal women, mistresses, and concubines.[25]

This proliferation of scholarship investigating royal and aristocratic women, along with female courtiers and other serving women, from the 1980s and beyond, demonstrates that paucity of historical documents cannot explain earlier failures to investigate these women. They may have been previously invisible, or at least "obscured," but that "obscurity" stemmed from historians' interests, not surviving medieval records themselves.[26] Earlier scholars writing biographies of monarchs or analyses of royal power touched on women infrequently. When women's history gained ground in the 1960s and especially the 1970s,[27] the Marxist training of those interested in groups subjugated by dominant powers meant that non-elites were the main focus of historians who wrote important works on peasant women and townswomen but were less interested in queens and courtiers.[28] Royal women and their highborn servants, with their access to power and influence, are also worthy of study. As Earenfight writes, elite women "are everywhere and they are busy"; records reveal their involvement in "diplomacy, hospitality, patronage," and numerous other areas of medieval courtly life.[29]

Court and Household

Royal ladies-in-waiting operated in the households of queens or royal daughters, which formed part of the court, yet scholars have raised the

[23] Pelaz Flores, *Casa de la Reina*, 104–26; Santos Silva, "Portuguese Household of an English Queen," 271–87; Narbona Cárceles, "Women at Court," 31–64; Narbona Cárceles, *La corte de Carlos III el Noble*; Narbona Cárceles, "De Casa de la Senyora Reyna," 151–67; Narbona Cárceles, "Noblas Donas," 89–113.

[24] Akkerman and Houben, "Introduction," 1–27. [25] Walthall (ed.), *Servants of the Dynasty*.

[26] Earenfight, "Highly Visible, Often Obscured," 86. Earenfight (*Queenship*, 2, 20–21) argues that royal women were "highly visible to their contemporaries."

[27] Although note Eileen Power's earlier interest in medieval women's history. See her essays published in *Medieval Women* as well as Berg, *A Woman in History: Eileen Power, 1889–1940*.

[28] A point also made by Earenfight, "Highly Visible, Often Obscured," 86–7. Among many works, see Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside*; Hanawalt, *Ties that Bound*; Goldberg, *Women, Work and Life-Cycle*.

[29] Earenfight, "Highly Visible, Often Obscured," 88; Earenfight, *Queenship,* 5.

question of whether courts even existed in the medieval period. According to Harriss, the later Middle Ages marked the transition period between the "small, mobile, military household of the earlier Middle Ages to the hierarchical palace establishments of the later 'Court Society.'"[30] For some, the medieval monarch had a household, but not yet a true court, which, in the words of Renaissance author Sigismondo Sigismondi, was "the household of a great, absolute ruler . . . and it consists of various officials and minsters related to each other within a hierarchy" of various ranks; "some serve only for honour and receive no pay, while others are salaried."[31] Asch notes that medieval records employed the term "household" rather than "court" in both England and France, and that the word "courtier" did not arrive until late-fifteenth-century England.[32] Such a view is consistent with the influential thesis developed by Norbert Elias linking growing state power to the "civilizing process" that occurred in the expansive early modern court.[33]

On the other hand, Vale, Horrox, and others allow a longer-term view, critiquing modern historians who see courts as a more recent development. For Vale, the household gave rise to the court, but the terms cannot be viewed as synonymous.[34] Certainly change over time occurred, but one cannot say that "because Versailles was a court, Winchester cannot be. That would be to ignore real continuities of purpose and attitude."[35] According to Horrox, "the court is the environment in which the king existed."[36] Writing in the late twelfth century, Walter Map understood this too, although he also found the term troublesome to define: "in the court I exist and of the court I speak, but what the court is, God knows, I do not."[37] Moreover, the concept of a royal court must predate the use of the adjective "courtly," which appears from the middle of the fifteenth century.[38]

This investigation of female attendants follows the positions of Vale and Horrox, arguing that court is a useful term for understanding the

[30] Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, 14. The household could be synonymous with "*familia*," a term not identical to our contemporary word "family" but rather indicating a group of "co-residential nuclear kin." See Grace, "Family and Familiars," 189. Household is itself a complicated and unstable term. See Riddy *et al.*, "Concept of the Household in Later Medieval England," 117–21.

[31] Sigismondi, *Prattica Cortigiana,* 15–16. Quoted in Guerzoni and Alfani, "Court of Renaissance Ferrara," 8.

[32] Asch, "Introduction: Court and Household," 9–10; Morgan, "The House of Policy," 70.

[33] Elias, *Court Society*. There have been many critiques of this thesis, for example, see Vale, *Princely Court*, 17–18 and Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 7–9, 261, 295.

[34] Vale, *Princely Court*, 15–16. Griffiths ("Court during the Wars of the Roses," 44) sensibly worried that some late medieval historians use the terms "court" and "household" interchangeably.

[35] Horrox, "Caterpillars," 2–3.

[36] Horrox, "Caterpillars," 2. See also Vale, *Princely Court*, 23.

[37] Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, 2–3; Griffiths, "Court during the Wars of the Roses," 67.

[38] *OED*, s.v. "courtly."

proliferation of ceremony (religious, diplomatic, dynastic) experienced by medieval English ladies-in-waiting in the presence of king, queen, or both simultaneously. Hayward's description of early modern courts identified with a central figure (king) "with a style of dress and regalia of his or her own, and a carefully orchestrated daily and annual cycle of ceremonial activities that were both religious and social" holds true for my understanding of the thirteenth-, fourteenth-, and fifteenth-century monarchy and its regal entourage.[39]

While arguing that the terms court and courtier can be used, unanachronistically, to describe the lives and experiences in medieval palaces, this study nonetheless distinguishes between the terms court and household. Vale's definitions for the medieval period are particularly helpful. He describes the court as "the space, or ambiance, around the king . . . the term does not denote an institution, department, or specific place. On the other hand, the household . . . was the formal body which provided a permanent framework, or structure, for the court."[40] The king's court in medieval England brings to mind important state occasions, such as the opening of Parliament, Edward III's tournaments, or dynastic ceremonies such as christenings, marriages, and coronations, along with important seasonal events such as Christmas and Easter festivities.[41] The royal household was present for daily duties at these events but also in ordinary times, when queens attended matins, for example, or when they met privately with the king, their councilors, or estate officials. Her household helped her wake, dress, eat, stay healthy, accomplish daily tasks, and pass the time through leisure activities. As we will see, different duties characterized those who might be termed courtiers from those who were household staff. Courtiers received summons for major ceremonial events while household members were formally appointed in their employment. Overlap occurred sometimes between court and household; some great ladies appear living and waiting upon the queen within the household, and lesser household staff members, such as damsels and maids of honor, appeared on some significant events and rituals as part of the wider court.[42]

[39] Hayward, *Dress*, 217.

[40] Vale, *Princely Court*, 23; Griffiths, "Court during the Wars of the Roses," 46, 53; Asch, "Introduction," 9.

[41] Vale, *Princely Court*, 28.

[42] According to Vale (*Princely Court*, 15), "Court and household were never entirely synonymous, yet courts could not have existed without household organizations behind and within them." See also Horrox, "Caterpillars," 3; Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 38, 187, 305.

Recognizing that we may employ the term "court" to understand political machinations enveloping the pre-Renaissance monarchs does not overlook how methods and meanings of ritual and propaganda changed at court, although many of these changes were, in Vale's words, "perhaps more of degree than of real substance."[43] As Map wrote, "the court is constant only in inconstancy."[44] Royal courts defy definition precisely because so many diverse activities centered on them. For Bucholz, courts were places that intermingled "administrative, financial, political, social, and cultural aspects, none of which can be examined properly in isolation from the others."[45] Courts also changed over time, because the personae and dynamics of rulership changed over time.[46] Courtiers and household staff often played similar roles. In the ambit of the monarch – or in the space around a great aristocrat – they can be found offering and receiving hospitality and other favors; they worked to enhance their own social capital, sometimes through factions, and built important social networks through the recruitment, promotion, and forging of ties with others at court.[47]

Women cannot be isolated from this picture. Olwen Hufton compared female courtiers to a body's nervous system, arguing that women eased communication of messages and favors and that their lack of formal position made it possible to advance network opportunities in channels beyond official appointments and rewards.[48] One way to understand the royal court is to view it as a series of households that included "secondary households" of the queen, the nursery, and, at times, adult royal children and siblings.[49] Since ladies-in-waiting enjoyed opportunities to gain the ear of kings and queens in the royal household, understanding the nature of, and access to, power at court is crucial to interpreting the female and familial networks in which such ladies operated.[50] Research into the career paths of male members of the household is also important for our

[43] Vale, *Princely Court*, 18–20. See 26–8 for some of those evolutionary changes. Also see Duindam (*Vienna and Versailles*, 3) and Costa Gomes (*Court Society*, 20–21) on the evolutionary nature of courtly change in Western Europe.

[44] Map, *De Nugis Curialium,* 3; Griffiths, "Court during the Wars of the Roses," 67.

[45] Bucholz, *Augustan Court*, 4.

[46] Griffiths, "Court during the Wars of the Roses," 64.

[47] McIntosh, "Diversity of Social Capital in English Communities," 460, 466; Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 313.

[48] Hufton, "Role of Women," 1.

[49] Duindam, "Versailles, Vienna and Beyond," 413. See also Guerzoni and Alfani, "Court of Renaissance Ferrara," 9–12.

[50] Harris, "Women and Politics," 259–81; Bousmar and Sommé, "Femmes et espaces féminins," 47–78; Münster, "Funktionen der *dames et damoiselles d'honneur*," 339–54; Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 239.

understanding of female attendants, not only for comparisons but because ladies-in-waiting operated within male-dominated familial networks.[51]

Women and Power

The rise of feminist scholarship, and especially the desire to understand the experiences of elite women from the late 1980s and beyond, focused attention on women's access to political power, which in turn has greatly aided understandings of how gendered power dynamics impacted both men and women. Seeking to add women to the power structures traditionally viewed as almost entirely male (apart from "exceptional" examples like Eleanor of Aquitaine or Queen Elizabeth I) delineated how consorts could wield "private" influence and "informal" power. The importance of Bourdieu's theories about symbolic power has informed many studies, consciously and unconsciously.[52] Helen Maurer, building on anthropological works, separated power from authority in her study of Margaret of Anjou, demonstrating that while that consort may have lacked official authority to rule, Margaret had many informal means to wield power and get things done.[53] Yet through Margaret's example, Maurer reminds us that even influential women faced limits to their political role or authority that men with the same status did not.[54]

Many have identified problems with the dichotomous frameworks that often theorize power: authority/power; formal/informal; public/private; institutional/personal; male/female. The public/private distinction, for example, does not work for all regions, let alone time periods. It is particularly problematic in the medieval period, because the household was the main institution that governed not only rulership but also business and trade.[55] There was no significant relegation of women to "separate spheres" in medieval England – in theory or actuality.[56] We need to be careful about infusing the past with our contemporary ideas of separateness

[51] See Given-Wilson, *Royal Household and the King's Affinity*; Brondarbit, *Political Power-Brokers*.
[52] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Ch. 4; Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, Book 1, Ch. 7; Benz St. John, *Medieval Queens*, 17; Weiss, "Qué Demandamos de las Mugeres?" 237–74.
[53] Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, 5; Lamphere, "Strategies, Cooperation, and Conflict," 98–100; Rosaldo, "Women, Culture and Society," 21.
[54] Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, 62.
[55] Benz St. John, *Medieval Queens*, 9; Kelly-Gadol, "The Social Relations of the Sexes," 809–23; Skinner, *Studying Gender*, 35–42.
[56] Dronzek, "Private and Public Spheres," 670–1; McSheffrey, "Place, Space, and Situation," 960–1, 986–90.

or privacy. Private does not always mean "inside" or "domestic" in other times and places.[57]

Recent scholars argue that medieval power structures cannot be simplified into easy dichotomies, nor can authority be categorized entirely as male. Theresa Earenfight's works have been particularly influential, with her book on María of Castile drawing attention to the complex domestic and political relationships within one ruling family and challenging standard dichotomies frequently employed by scholars when discussing female power and agency in the Middle Ages.[58] Similarly, Graham-Goering argues that late medieval power should be seen instead as a process – a "structurally informed but contingently negotiated process."[59] Even authority, Graham-Goering argues, should not be seen as part of a theoretical dichotomy because official authority emerged and was wielded as a "particular expression or manifestation of power."[60] Courtiers in England, like Graham-Goering's Breton aristocrats, also witnessed "multifocal power structures," with the opportunities to be flexible in transitioning between multiple households.[61]

Historians such as Earenfight and Graham-Goering have reasserted the primacy of family and *familia* (household) within regal power structures, thereby destabilizing the simple categorization that lumps together formal power and public authority with male leaders and informal power and influence with feminine participants. As Earenfight writes, monarchy was "an institution devised for governing organized around a family," and thus recent scholarship has begun to "dismantle these artificial dichotomies and break apart the tight linkage of kingship and monarchy."[62] In her study of princely power, Graham-Goering points out that there were many components of "formal" power in medieval society that today we would align more with "private"; these include components essential to the role of lady-in-waiting: family, household, and intercession.[63]

[57] Nelson, "The Problematic in the Private," 355–64; Skinner, *Studying Gender*, 80.

[58] Earenfight, *King's Other Body*. Earenfight also challenges gendered power binaries in "A Lifetime of Power," 271–93, and her textbook *Queenship in Medieval Europe* establishes new paradigms about ruling queens and queens consort by synthesizing recent scholarship conducted across the chronological and geographic span of medieval Europe. Several recent collections build temporal bridges of analysis across the medieval/early modern divide. See Oakley-Brown and Wilkinson (ed.), *Rituals and Rhetoric of Queenship*; Levin and Bucholz (ed.), *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England*. See also the two older collections that encompass medieval Europe: Parsons (ed.), *Medieval Queenship* and Duggan (ed.), *Queens and Queenship*.

[59] Graham-Goering, *Princely Power*, 10, 80. [60] Ibid., 94. [61] Ibid., 99.

[62] Earenfight, *Queenship*, 24–5. [63] Graham-Goering, *Princely Power*, 95.

The medieval king, therefore, was not simply "one who governs." Medieval scholars no longer accept that queens or female aristocratic rulers could not govern, or that they could exercise only occasional political power.[64] Neither queens nor kings ruled in isolation; instead, monarchy had more of a "corporation character."[65] Challenging dichotomies like public/private and formal/informal clarifies roles of women at court and better elucidates the workings of kingship. Kings, councilors, and male courtiers also used "private" or "informal" power mechanisms just as queens engaged in the public political sphere throughout the Middle Ages, even if final decisions and proclamations did not often rest upon their shoulders.[66] Earenfight therefore suggests that "rulership" might be a more useful term than "monarchy," which too often is associated solely with masculine.[67]

This better appreciation of complex power relationships surrounding dynastic rulership reinforces how examining courtiers – male and female – broadens our understanding of medieval governing institutions. The households of queens and royal children played roles in perpetuating dynastic stability, and their attendants helped them fulfill these roles. At the same time, courtiers' loyalties could be divided, or swayed, since they had obligations to their own families. Often an attendant's familial interest coincided with their monarch's, but not always.[68] Individualized circumstances, such as age, personality, or spousal connections, could augment or limit servants' power at court or in great households.[69] For female courtiers, loyalties could be divided even further, between natal and marital families, or even between personal goals and family interests.[70]

Gender analyses inform our understanding of medieval mindsets and women's abilities to access and wield power. Women contended with the fact that sermons, among other texts, linked women with particular frailties, among them foolishness, a tendency to gossip, love of fashion, and sexual proclivities, that made them poorer leaders.[71] On the other hand, male authors demonstrated keen interest in matters that nineteenth-century scholars may have termed "women's issues," as when heralds,

[64] Tanner, Gathagan, and Honeycutt, "Introduction," in *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400*. See the papers in this volume as well as numerous works by scholars such as Theresa Earenfight, Amy Livingstone, and Miriam Shadis.
[65] Earenfight, "Without the Persona," 7–8. [66] Earenfight, "Without the Persona," 10, 13.
[67] Earenfight, "Without the Persona," 10. As she writes (p. 14), "Kings and queens were not paired opposites but complementary elements within a hermeneutic system."
[68] Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 313, 319. [69] Earenfight, "Lifetime of Power," 275, 288.
[70] Clark, *Howard Women*, 4, 12, 93.
[71] Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, 7, 11; Pizan, *Treasure of the City of Ladies*, 74–6, 89–105.

writing presumably for a largely male audience, described the christenings of Prince Arthur and his sister Margaret in the 1480s. The earl of Oxford, who begged to serve as Elizabeth of York's chamberlain at her coronation, or the aristocratic men who supported baby Prince Arthur at his baptism, recognized the symbolic power of involving themselves in such female-oriented ceremonies.[72] As Earenfight writes, "the fact that, in a monarchy, male rule was always and everywhere privileged ... does not exclude queens from discussions of rulership," and this statement also holds true for queens' households.[73] At the same time, acknowledging the potential influence of the queen's household, along with its significance for dynastic propaganda, does not mean that kings and queens (or earls and countesses, or married household attendants) lived lives of egalitarian partnerships.[74] Female courtiers enjoyed influence, built female-dominated social networks, and also operated within a masculine milieu that offered courtiers of both sexes access to power.

Sources and Methodology

The chronological parameters of this study span three centuries, from 1236, when Eleanor of Provence arrived as Henry III's bride, to 1536, when Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, died. I begin with Eleanor of Provence because very few female attendants can be discerned before the mid-thirteenth-century explosion in bureaucratic record-keeping.[75] The end date in the 1530s is not necessarily Eltonian,[76] but reflects my opinion that a wider disruption occurred with the queens' households and attendants at that point than other potential dates. Since Henry VII and Elizabeth of York were still alive when Catherine and her attendants arrived in England, there is no obvious break. Moreover, Catherine of Aragon was England's last foreign-born medieval consort, and during her life the religious upheaval ushered in by the Reformation also brought dramatic social and political change. And although the reigns of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon highlight vibrant Renaissance trends, with both monarchs showing interests in Christian humanism, for example, there was no sharp disruption to the experiences of life in queenly

[72] *Herald's Memoir,* 102–5, 122–3.
[73] Earenfight, *Queenship*, 6.
[74] Benz St. John, *Medieval Queens*, 9.
[75] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record,* 58–82; Turner ("Household of Eleanor of Aquitaine," 10, 15–16) found a few of Eleanor of Aquitaine's female attendants, while discussing the difficulties of identifying male household members throughout his paper.
[76] Elton, *Tudor Revolution in Government*.

households until the Reformation led to the dismissal of many of Catherine's attendants.[77]

Information about the experiences of ladies-in-waiting in royal and aristocratic households survives in diverse sources, but no single type offers a comprehensive understanding of how they gained their positions, spent their days, and were rewarded for service. Much of the surviving evidence focuses on fiscal and administrative matters, and accountants were more concerned with record-keeping than depicting daily activities. Exchequer documents, particularly the accounts of the King's Remembrancer, classified at E 101 in the National Archives, prove invaluable in allowing the study of royal ladies and damsels. The "Wardrobe and Household Subseries" of E 101 contains the most references, outlining livery grants to household members, payments made to attendants, and presents granted to or from them.[78] Thus we learn what ladies-in-waiting wore and how they were rewarded for their service at court when monarchs offered salaries, annuities, and other gifts. These sources are patchy; sometimes we find records of household attendants in the queen's wardrobe records, sometimes the king's and queen's households were combined,[79] and some reigns offer more records than others. There is no obvious explanation like an expansion of records and improvement of record-keeping across the later Middle Ages to clarify variations.

Other important exchequer documents that include numerous references to annuities awarded to queen's damsels and other royal servants are the Issue Rolls (classified at E 403) and related Warrants for Issues (E 404) that record payments out of the Lower Exchequer. Some miscellaneous wardrobe materials, along with Elizabeth of York's privy chamber book,[80] appear in E 36 while kings' chamber books, from the reign of Edward IV,

[77] Warnicke, *Elizabeth of York*, 154. Feminist historians such as Joan Kelly-Gadol (especially "Did Women Have a Renaissance?") have documented how eras do not begin and end as obviously as male-oriented dynasties, and periodization can be troublesome. Earenfight ends her *Medieval Queenship* textbook in 1500, arguing that the Renaissance and Reformation trends changed notions of monarchy at that point. Yet, since the Reformation caused the rupture between Henry VIII and his first wife, and since there was great continuity in households between the monarchs Henry VII and his son, a wiser termination for this study seems to be the death of Catherine, which occurred shortly after Henry's divorce and the final break from the Catholic church (Earenfight, *Queenship*, 16). Unfortunately, I have to wait to read Nicola Clark's book on Tudor ladies-in-waiting (*The Waiting Game: The Untold Story of the Women Who Served Tudor Queens* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2024) as it came out during this book's production process.

[78] Not all of these royal sources are held by the National Archives. See, for example, isolated accounts at other archives such as BL Add 17362, JRULM, MS 234, SoA, MS 216.

[79] See below, page 37.

[80] Printed in *Privy Purse*.

provide additional information about payments.[81] By the late Middle Ages, the Lord's Chamberlain accounts (LC) provide additional references to clothing, especially for special events. After the turn of the fourteenth century, aristocratic household accounts shed light on the duties and rewards of women who waited upon noble- and gentlewomen. Some are from the highest echelons of the aristocracy, such as the registers of John of Gaunt, second son of Edward III; the household accounts of Elizabeth de Burgh, cousin to Edward II; and account books of Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry Tudor. Others illuminate the attendants who served in the gentry households of Dame Alice de Bryene or Sir John Howard.[82] Sometimes such payments allow us to glimpse a highborn attendant's daily tasks and material surroundings.

Copies of letters sent out from the crown, collected into the published *Calendars of Close Rolls* and *Patent Rolls*, also provide information about female attendants. The Close Rolls record grants of corrodies (maintenance at religious institutions) to retiring servants, while the Patent Rolls document annuity grants and other privileges, such as royal pardons, offered to household members. Patchy surviving letters document the daily lives of royal female attendants, but none are extensive until the Lisle letter collection details how Lord Lisle's daughters gained positions in noble and royal households during the 1530s. References to waiting women in the Paston, Plumpton, and Stonor letters from the Middle Ages reveal some experiences of lesser-status servants serving gentlewomen and noblewomen. Some letters speak of employers' needs to find new servants as well as complain about existing ones.[83] Unfortunately, no diaries offer personal insight into court culture or the experiences of medieval ladies-in-waiting until the modern era.[84]

Across court societies in Western Europe, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed the introduction of specific regulations designed to bring structure to households full of servants, courtiers, and visitors. These ordinances regulated access to the ruler and household resources.[85] Early English regulations include the very limited *Constitutio Domus Regis*

[81] These payment and receipt books appear both in the National Archives (under E 101 and E 36 classifications) and in the British Library (several Additional Manuscripts). See www.tudorchamberbooks.org/editorial-method/.

[82] Howard later joined the nobility, receiving parliamentary summons in 1470 and elevation to duke of Norfolk in 1483, but he was still a knight when most of his household records were written.

[83] Kirby, "Survival and Betterment," 104.

[84] Bury, *Diary of A Lady-in-Waiting*; Antim, *Louisa, Lady-in-Waiting*.

[85] Vale, *Princely Court*, 34–5.

(c. 1130), and royal ordinances of 1279 and 1318.[86] These early texts covered budgets, material rewards, and specific duties rather than formal ceremony.[87] There is then a long break until the courtly atmosphere found in the *Black Book of Edward IV*. Since the gendered composition of the medieval great household was overwhelmingly male, protocols designed to regulate elite households naturally focused on male servants and expectations. The *Black Book of Edward IV* offered guidelines for the king's masculine household before stipulating that the queen's service "must be nigh like unto the king," with "ladies and other worshipful men and gentlewomen, their services and liveries after as it according to high and low degree."[88]

Aristocratic households sometimes also had guidelines, or even formal regulations, especially by the close of the Middle Ages. The "Boke of Nurture," authored in the mid-fifteenth century by John Russell (servant of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester), stipulated where each household member should sit at meals ("each person to his degree") and other table manners.[89] Russell focuses on the masculine household, but other protocols provide better evidence for female experiences. The earl of Northumberland's ordinance from the early sixteenth century, for example, distinguished between the lady's "Gentlewomen" and her "chamberers," stipulated where they should sit at dinner (at the "knights' board" at the first dinner), and clarified the wages paid to them (5 marks and 40 shillings, respectively).[90] A second Northumberland household book outlined the christening ritual that required the countess's gentlewomen to kiss the infant's mantel.[91] The protocol for the household of Cecily Neville, duchess of York and mother of Edward IV, offers more intimate details about the lady's daily schedule including interactions with her female servants, described as "honest mirth" and informing us that her ladies and gentlewomen were allocated some of the kitchen leftovers after supper.[92] Unfortunately, the household ordinances of the duchess's political rival, Margaret Beaufort, do not survive, but Margaret's confessor remembered that they were read out loud four times annually, presumably

[86] *Dialogus de Scaccario,* 195–216. In comparison, the earliest ordinances from France survive from 1261 and 1286. See Vale, *Princely Court*, 42; Given-Wilson, *Royal Household*, 111–38, esp. 136–8.
[87] Vale, *Princely Court*, 42.
[88] *Household of Edward IV*, 92. The text is then concerned about costs of diet and livery and how to keep accurate accounts. See Myers, "Introduction" to *The Household of Edward IV*, 22–9.
[89] Russell, *Boke of Nurture*, l: 267; Kunz, "Hospitality, Conviviality, and the English Gentry," 106.
[90] *Regulations and Establishment of the Household of Henry Algernon Percy*, 46, 351.
[91] Phillips, "Invisible Man," 154. [92] Laynesmith, "Order, Rules and Constructions," 183–5.

to ensure all servants were aware of all of guidelines and protocols.[93] Nevertheless, we should acknowledge that protocols and ceremonies sometimes diverged from proscribed ordinances.[94]

Some eyewitness descriptions of activities, particularly important royal ones, can, like Margaret's priest, enlighten us about how well theory translated into practice. Various anonymous heralds who witnessed significant ceremonial events documented the pageantry of court rituals, along with participants.[95] One such herald wrote a vivid account of the arrival of Catherine of Aragon into England, documenting the Spanish attendants who arrived with her, their clothing, and their ceremonial activities.[96]

Literary texts that depict aristocratic women and their female servants also inform our understanding of ladies-in-waiting, their tasks, and the rewards that they received for their service, though, like regulations, they must be handled carefully, and we should deem them reflecting ideals and not necessarily reality. We also have to consider change-over-time in fictitious accounts. Thus, a French Romance possibly owned by Edward IV "describes to perfection the dress, games, chivalry and manners of a fifteenth-century court, albeit a court from the previous generation since the text was written in the 1440s."[97]

The inconsistent survival of relevant sources, along with the fact that some types of records, such as gentry letters and household ordinances, illuminate primarily the fifteenth century, complicates explaining the chronological developments in the roles and lifestyles of the medieval English lady-in-waiting. Similarly, many noble and gentry accounts have not survived (or were not kept), making direct comparisons challenging.[98] By combing through the surviving sources, however, one can build a prosopographical study of medieval English ladies-in-waiting. Compiling a collective analysis of a large group of servants lets us explore and analyze the experiences of all known women who served at the royal court, in the establishments of lesser female royals, or who served other noble and gentle women in the great households of later medieval England.

[93] Jones and Underwood, *King's Mother*, 187.
[94] Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 217. Indeed, Joanna Laynesmith argues ("Order, Rules and Constructions") that the ordinances prescribe a degree of order and piety that deliberately contrasted with the more lascivious court of her son King Edward IV.
[95] *Herald's Memoir*. [96] *Receyt*.
[97] Sutton, "Dress and Fashions," 17, referring to *Cleriadus et Meliadice*, Chs. IX–XII, XXI–XXII, XXXII–XXXV.
[98] The surviving fourteenth-century accounts of one noblewoman, Elizabeth de Burgh, make up roughly 20 percent of all (nonroyal) extant medieval accounts. Ward, *Elizabeth de Burgh*, xxiii.

Prosopography is often described as "collective biography" but Keats-Rohan objects to that term, writing that it is more than biographies of multiple individuals; it is a tool of analysis that allows us to study connections and relationships.[99] Unlike biography, the focus is not on the individual, but on a group of individuals who share a particular characteristic (in this case, women who served as household attendants in elite households in medieval England).[100] As is traditional in prosopographical methodology, I compiled a list of standardized questions to ask the sources about each attendant.[101] Whom did they serve? When? What were their duties? What were their rewards? What kin and marital relationships can be determined for them? The answers to these questions, when discoverable in medieval sources, were recorded in a Microsoft Access relational database which contains three distinct tables: Biographical Information, Service Activities, and Relatives.[102]

Importing information from medieval records into a modern database requires choices and creates complications. Take, for example, the most basic question – an attendant's name. Women's names changed not only upon marriage, but, in the higher aristocracy, titles changed upon elevation to the peerage, and many sources list courtiers by title only. Which name should be used? My solution was to employ multiple relational databases. In the "Biographical Information" form, I entered the attendant's natal surname, when possible, while in the "Service Activities" form I recorded the name (or title) as they were written in the source. Some servants, especially lower status ones, are recorded with surname "unknown" while others, who appear in the records with no forename, but merely "Mistress Parker" (for example), were recorded as forename "unknown" unless it could be gleaned from another source.[103] As scholars of medieval women know, it is not always easy to definitively ascertain female identities. For instance, despite popular tradition, the queen Elizabeth Woodville (known, upon marriage to her first husband, as Elizabeth Grey) was not

[99] Keats-Rohan, "Biography and Prosopography," 140–3. For a useful introduction to prosopography, see the entire volume Keats-Rohan (ed.), *Prosopography Approaches*.

[100] Keats-Rohan, "Biography and Prosopography," 143. See also Verboven *et al.* ("Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography," 41) which states that "the ultimate purpose of prosopography is to collect data on phenomena that transcend individual lives. It targets the common aspects of people's lives, not their individual histories."

[101] Keats-Rohan, "Biography and Prosopography," 146–7. See *passim* for a greater understanding of prosopographical techniques and methodological concerns.

[102] On database construction, see Cohen *et al.*, "Towards a Mixed Method Social History," 211–30.

[103] See Keats-Rohan, "Biography and Prosopography" (*passim*) for the vagaries of adopting modern naming techniques for historical records.

one of Margaret of Anjou's ladies; that Elizabeth Grey was a different woman of the same name.[104]

Discerning kinship links is also complicated. In my database, each relative (or surmised relative) received a unique KinID related to the woman's ID number, but I also included a drop-down menu for "Relationship Certainty" which offers a shorthand glimpse of the certainty of the relationship. For example, in the case of Isabella de la Mote (LIWID 214), I entered data in the Relatives table for William de la Mote, KinID 214B. For "Relationship Certainty," I have indicated that the factoid is known and not surmised because one of my references from 1338 explicitly calls her "Isabella the widow of William de la Mote."[105] Understanding the family, friend, and acquaintance connections of ladies and damsels at court or in great households is crucial for analyzing their placement, patronage, and reward opportunities, but the terms "family" and "friend" are complicated, not necessarily aligning with our modern connotations of the words (and "friend" can be a complicated term even today).[106] A database cannot record the full spectrum of relationships, and medieval sources rarely describe the quality of the relationships that they mention.[107]

Despite these concerns, prosopographical methodology allows greater analysis than biography or descriptions of court life and enables us to understand the lives and experiences of the lower status courtiers and servants for whom we do not have enough surviving sources to reveal their individual stories. Prosopography, moreover, can highlight long-term developments, offering the opportunity to illuminate governance, power, and patronage, over generations.[108]

This is not the first prosopographical study of a royal court, but employing this methodology allows us to analyze the point at which "the history of institutions coincides with the history of its members."[109] Most relevant to this study is Narbona Cárceles's analysis of 364 women at the court of Navarre during the reign of Carlos III at the turn of the fifteenth century.[110] This included lower status servants and artisans supplying the

[104] Laynesmith, *Medieval Queens*, 229.
[105] Rymer (comp.), *Foedera,* 2 (ii): 1044. On factoids (what a source claims is a fact) as opposed to true facts, see Tinti, "Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England," 197–210.
[106] Goldy, "Prosopography and Proximity," 16–17.
[107] Goldy, "Prosopography and Proximity," 16–17. Further information on database construction is in Dunn, "All the Queen's Ladies," 182–7.
[108] Guerzoni and Alfani, "Court of Renaissance Ferrara," 3–4.
[109] Autrand, "De l'histoire de l'ètat à la prosopographie," quoted in Guerzoni and Alfani, "Court of Renaissance Ferrara," 4.
[110] Narbona Cárceles, "Woman at Court."

household. Hervin Fernandez Aceves has analyzed the aristocracy of the Italo-Normans in Sicily,[111] while Frederik Buylaert and Jan Dumolyn examined the nobility of late medieval Flanders using prosopographical techniques.[112] Prosopography allows us to elucidate the shared experiences of highborn female attendants and illuminate lives hitherto obscured.

Terminology and Status

The women who served in elite households during the later Middle Ages can be classified into three main status categories, although their titles were not always official and did not remain static over the period.[113] Female attendants who were ladies in their own right stood at the apex of the hierarchy under their royal or noble employer. They were followed by servants often categorized as gentlewomen or damsels.[114] "Under-damsels" appear in the fourteenth century, a category that exists only in the household records of Philippa of Hainault between 1330 and 1369 and probably equates to the "chamberers" found in records dating from the early fifteenth century and beyond. From the early sixteenth century, we start to see a new category at court, the "maids of honor" who inflated the royal entourage and built important connections at court. Numerous other records either employ lesser-used terms for their female status or offered no official title.

Despite the title of this book, primary sources do not actually refer to female attendants as "ladies-in-waiting." This modern understanding of a servant "waiting" upon an employer appears only at the end of the period under examination, seen in examples from two letters both dating to 1476. John III Paston wrote to his mother Margaret to inquire whether she would "awayte" upon the duchess of Norfolk,[115] while Elizabeth Stonor used the term several times when she wrote to her husband about her dealings with the duchess of Suffolk and Cecily Neville, mother of Edward IV:

[111] Fernandez Aceves, "Royal Comestabuli and Military Control," 1–39.

[112] Buylaert and Dumolyn, "Nobility and Prosopography," 137–54. For other examples (not limited to royal courts or nobility), see Guerzoni and Alfani, "Court of Renaissance Ferrara," and works they cite on 4–5.

[113] For France, Kolk also divides female servants into three categories: (1) the most important noblewomen of the land, (2) those related by blood or clientage to queen's family, and (3) the queen's "personal clients and friends." See Kolk, "Household of the Queen of France," 15.

[114] In Navarre, Narbona Cárceles ("Women at Court," 45) found *damas* and *damiselas* as well as more generic "servants" (*servidora*), "maidservants" (*moza*), "handmaidens," and "waiting women."

[115] *Paston Letters*, 1, no. 371.

> I have been with my lady of Suffolk, as on Thursday last was, and *waited* upon her to my lady the King's mother, and hers, by her commandment. And also on Saturday last was I *waited* upon her there again, and also from thence she *waited* upon my lady her mother . . .[116]

In the next decade, the chronicler describing the St. George's Day festivities wrote of the women who "awayted" upon the queen and the king's mother in 1488.[117] The term "lady-in-waiting" came later still, with the *Oxford English Dictionary* attributing its first use to the early eighteenth century.[118] Although anachronistic, I will use the term throughout this text as a synonym for "highborn female attendant," partly to avoid constant repetition but also because the term is now entrenched; the concept of elite female service is so ingrained with the more modern terminology that it is difficult to sever that association. With the caveat, therefore, that no one in medieval England spoke about the "ladies-in-waiting" who served queens or noblewomen, I argue for the acceptability of using a modern term for a concept that predates the common parlance.

Ladies

The ladies, or *dominae*, who appear at the royal court in service to the queen themselves fall into two categories: those who were, with their male counterparts, expected and often required to attend ceremonial occasions and those who were chosen for personal attendance. Even if the former were sometimes required to attend functions, such requirement does not preclude their enjoyment or their achievement of personal goals (their summons to court helped to solidify their aristocratic status in their localities).[119] The noblewomen and prominent gentlewomen who appear as ladies in the queen's company mainly appear in the documents as doing just that, accompanying the queen on various occasions or receiving livery or fees that demonstrate their presence in the routine household, not merely their appearance for rituals. Sometimes we learn of specific duties or expectations for ladies, such as when Lady Verney delivered money for

[116] *Stonor Letters*, no. 172 (emphasis added). The slightly later Northumberland Household Book (begun 1512) includes a discussion of gentlemen ushers "waiting" upon the earl as well as the title "yeoman waiters." *Regulations and Establishment of the Household of Henry Algernon Percy*, 298. Chris Woolgar provided me with this reference (personal communication, July 2013). By this point, there developed the idea that servants might rotate on and off duties, hence some were "in waiting" and some were "out of waiting." See Woolgar, *Great Household*, 38.

[117] *Herald's Memoir*, 159. [118] *OED*, s.v. "lady-in-waiting, n." and "waiting, adj."

[119] Harriss, *Shaping the Nation*, 22–3; Benz St. John, *Medieval Queens*, 67.

Queen Elizabeth of York or when Marie de St. Pol dined with dowager Queen Isabella.[120] For the most part, however, it was lesser-status servants who performed daily duties and received financial rewards (salary or annuities) for such service.[121]

Damsels, Gentlewomen, and Mistresses

The term "damsel," recorded in Latin and French documents only, appears in sources from the mid-thirteenth century until the second half of the fifteenth century when records switch over (primarily) into English. Thus, Henry III granted an annuity to "Mabel de Drunal, *domicelle*," who served the countess of Pembroke, in 1238, and up to the late 1460s, seven of Elizabeth Woodville's attendants received salaries in a Latin account that records them as *damicellis*.[122] Hundreds of references record the service of damsels during the intervening centuries, employing the term *domicellae* or *damoiselles*.

The many married damsels found in the records underscores the fact that *damsel* was a term that characterized household status, not marital status. Most attendants were of this middling social status that outnumbered the ladies in service; thus, in Winter 1311, the staff of Isabella of France included four ladies, nine damsels, and two laundresses, and Margaret of Anjou's mid-fifteenth-century household included a remarkably similar number of four ladies, nine damsels and two chamberers.[123] There was more fluidity than seems apparent from this consistency. Margaret's records from later that same year reveal a few more damsels plus women formerly described as chamberers now recorded as damsels, so Laynesmith hypothesizes that "the distinction may not have been very precise."[124] Indeed, the occasional use of the phrase "damsels of the chamber" implies some fluidity.[125] All attempts to definitively categorize highborn elite servants in royal and aristocratic households should heed this warning.

[120] *Privy Purse*, 36, 39; BL Cotton Galba E XIV, cited in Bond, "Last Days," 459.
[121] A few rare salary or annuity grants to ladies can be seen at Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, 105; Myers, "Household of Margaret," 404; BL MS Harley 433, 158; Harris, *Aristocratic*, 226; *Privy Purse*, 214.
[122] TNA, C 66/48, m. 10; TNA, E 36/207, fol. 9v; transcribed in Myers, "Household of Elizabeth," 2: 451–2.
[123] *Queen Isabella*, 157, 165; Laynesmith, *Medieval Queens*, 226.
[124] Laynesmith, *Medieval Queens*, 226. Myers, "Household of Margaret," 403–6. For more on household size and composition, see Chapter 1.
[125] *CPR, 1361–1364*, 377.

English-language records begin to proliferate by the second half of the fifteenth century, and at this point we see the term "damsel" replaced by the category "gentlewomen," with individual women identified as "Mrs." or "Maistres" (Mistress). The earliest examples I uncovered date to Sir John Howard's household accounts from 1455 and 1467, which contain the headings "Gentil women" and "Gentylwomen" in two staff lists, with some of those women identified elsewhere as "Mastres Jane" or "Mastres Annes."[126] The Stonor family paid for shoes for their servant Catherine, "my lady's gentylwoman" in the late 1470s.[127] Royal records also began to document reimbursements, payments, and gifts in English which offer further opportunities to see "Mistress" and "Gentlewoman." Queen Elizabeth of York's Privy Purse Accounts from 1502 refer to "Maistres Anne Say" and later records indicate payment for Say boarding as "one of the queen's gentilwomen."[128] Around the same time, Lady Margaret Beaufort, the king's mother, gave a gown to "Mistress Mabel Clifford," and in 1509 ensured that "Mrs Clyfford," along with others titled "Gentlewomen," received mourning attire for Henry VII's funeral.[129]

The terminology for the lowest tier of attendant also evolved from the earlier period, as chamberer replaced under-damsel in the late fifteenth century. This time, however, the change predated the English replacement of Latin and French documents. A few early examples describe in Latin women or girls as "of the chamber" or similar phrasing;[130] however, the term was not used in the records of Philippa of Hainault, although many include the word chamber when describing damsels (*domicellae camera Regine*).[131] Instead, during Philippa's reign, we see the introduction of a new category of under-damsel (in Latin records *subdomicellae* and in French *souzdamoiselles*). Far fewer under-damsels than damsels served Philippa during her queenship, but they can be found in records dating from the earliest years of her reign (1330–1) through to her funeral (1369).[132]

We find some chamberers in the Latin records (two women separately described as *una camerariarum*) during Anne of Bohemia's subsequent

[126] *Howard Household*, 1: xxxix, xl, 297; 11: 337.
[127] *Stonor Letters*, no. 234.
[128] *Privy Purse*, 38, 48.
[129] *L&P,* 1(1): 13; SJC, SJLM/2/2/2, 3; Powell, "Textiles and Dress," 150. Unfortunately, Susan Powell's edition of Margaret Beaufort's accounts (*The Household Accounts of Lady Margaret Beaufort (1443–1509)* [Oxford University Press, 2023]) came out too late to be of use to my research, but most of my citations to Beaufort's archives will probably be found within.
[130] BL Harley Charters 57 B no. 47 (1302); TNA, E 36/203, m. 101; TNA, E 403/262, 1 July; Ward, *Elizabeth de Burgh*, 71.
[131] For example, at TNA, E 101/375/9, 29d.
[132] BL MS Cotton Galba E III, fols. 183r, 189v, 190r; TNA, E 101/395/2, n. 236.

reign and then another "damsel of the chamber" during Joan of Navarre's queenship.[133] As already mentioned, Margaret of Anjou's mid-fifteenth-century household included chamberers below the ranks of ladies and damsels, and one of her records also describes the duchess of Suffolk's own chamberer.[134] The Latin remained in use until at least Elizabeth Woodville's reign, for in 1466–7 Johanne Martyn was identified as "*une camerariarum prefate regine*" ("one of the chambers of the aforementioned queen").[135]

In the 1480s, the Howard household records again lead the way in offering English-language terminology, recording payment of wages to their servants "Anes Chamberer" ("Agnes the Chamberer") and "Kateryn of the Chamber."[136] Royal accounts followed in their transition to English references, so that Elizabeth of York provided funeral livery for chamberer Elizabeth Ansted, as well as "chief chamberer" Alice Skyling.[137] That queen's daughter-in-law, Catherine of Aragon, had gowns made for her two chamberers, Margaret Pennington and Elizabeth Vargas, in 1511 and 1514, respectively.[138]

Maids of Honor

The concept of "maids of honor" clearly predates its terminology. A foreign visitor praised the young women of Elizabeth Woodville's chamber, writing that he had never seen "such exceedingly beautiful maidens."[139] As we have seen, earlier damsels could be married or single, and it may be that later English-language documents demonstrate the desire to differentiate by marital status, with married female courtiers now termed "gentlewomen" and "mistresses" and young, single, servants labeled maids. The term "of honor" probably derived from the courtly practices of France, where the queen's attendants were distinguished as "*dames d'honneur*" and "*filles d'honneur*" by the late fifteenth century.[140] It is hard to know how to classify these maids of

[133] *CPR, 1381–1385*, 546; *CPR, 1401–1405*, 501. [134] TNA, E 101/410/2.
[135] TNA, E 36/207, fol. 9v; transcribed in Myers, "Household of Elizabeth," 2: 452.
[136] *Howard Household*, 11: 142, 304, 319.
[137] TNA, LC 2/1; Neale, "Queen's Grace," 194–5. This concept of hierarchy among the female servants appears very early, as when Eleanor of Castile's servant Ermentrude de Sackville was "in a position of some authority over other ladies in 1289, when the queen sent her messages relating to their management." In later years, some women are identified as "chief damsels," such as Marie Sante, Joan of Navarre's head of damsels in 1406, and Alice Norys, "*capitalis damisellarum*" for Margaret of Anjou. Cockerill, *Eleanor of Castile*, 257–8; *CPR, 1405–1408*, 159; TNA, E 101/409/14.
[138] TNA, E 101/417/6, no. 85; TNA, E 101/418/5, no. 31. [139] *Travels of Leo of Rozmital*, 46–8.
[140] Mcilvenna, "'Stable of Whores'?" 189–90; Kolk, "Household of the Queen of France," 9; Clin, *Isabeau*, 58–64.

honor. In terms of ancestral status, they were high-ranking, especially as we move into the Tudor era. Yet, at the same time, we should recognize that many of these young women were new to court and its ways, and most were there in hopes of making good matrimonial connections.[141] One assumes that their unmarried state and unfamiliarity with the workings of the household and court meant that they often took orders from long-standing courtiers who may have been their social inferiors. By the late sixteenth century, Queen Elizabeth's female servants were ordered into more standardized hierarchical categories, yet Merton also emphasizes how even then some confusion remained about appropriate titles.[142]

Uncommon Terms

Examining medieval records for female servants reveals a number of less-commonly used terms. Like the maids of honor, but typically of lower social status, were the *ancillae* who served in households great and middling. Unlike "damsel," "ancilla" usually denoted unmarried status; as Goldberg writes, "the term *ancilla* thus encompasses implications of youth, of sexual purity, and of spiritual obligation in the context of divine or saintly protection."[143] Royal records referred to one Johanna de Brackley as gentlewoman Alice Tyngewyck's *ancilla* in 1324, but her "*domicelle*" the following year.[144] Whether Brackely married, was promoted, or clerks are merely demonstrating inconsistency in terminology, is unclear.

Other uncommon terms for female servants include the two female "chamber valets" serving Edward II (not his wife) and the *veilleresses* found in the household of Philippa of Hainault. Anneis de May and Joan Traghs both appear in Edward II's accounts as wives of male valets, and surprisingly earned the same income as the men.[145] The term *veilleress* seems to refer to women assigned to watch, or guard, the queen's safety at nighttime.[146] A century later, the Howards similarly employed a female servant, Cateryne, as a "wacher."[147]

[141] Some, of course, remained as attendants after their marriages. Warnicke, *Elizabeth of York*, 24; Harris, *Aristocratic*, 210.
[142] Merton, "The Women Who Served Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth," 5–10, 15.
[143] Goldberg, "What Was a Servant," 1–2. [144] TNA, E 403/210, m. 10; TNA, E 403/213, m. 7.
[145] Warner, *Edward II*, 128.
[146] Tompkins, "Perrers and the Goldsmiths," 1380. The *Dictionary of Medieval Latin* is unhelpful, including an entry from 1220 for "viella" which the compilers translate, with some hesitation (a question mark), as an "old woman." Yet at least two of the women in Philippa's entourage (Philippa Pycard and Alice Preston) cannot have been elderly at this point, since they were still receiving annuities twenty-four and thirty-five years later.
[147] *Howard Household*, 11: 51.

A specialized category of female attendants are children's rockers, nurses, and governesses, who have been included in this study only when they, at some point in their lives, were listed in the records as damsels serving a queen or noblewoman.[148] Nurses came from a lower social strata than most damsels. As Nicholas Orme points out, one can often denote their rank from their husbands' occupations.[149] On the other hand, the governess, normally termed "lady mistress of the nursery" in medieval England, was of higher status, normally gentle-born and sometimes even reaching into the nobility.[150] When children aged out of the nursery, girls continued to be tutored by mistresses such as Cecily Sanford, Theophania de St. Pierre, and Katherine Swynford.[151]

Finally, two unnamed enslaved women – likely Muslim *conversas* – accompanied Catherine of Aragon upon her arrival, but slavery had not yet returned as an official category of servitude in England and it seems they were freed. One was likely the Catalina of Motril identified as "once the Queen's slave" in the divorce deposition records.[152]

Untitled Servants

Some female attendants also had no official service title. Instead, they appear in the records in various ways that indicate some kind of service, with rank unspecified. Some texts talk about women who "accompanied" a queen or noblewoman, or who were "attending" a highborn employer.[153] Another colloquial usage found in letters is the simple word "with," as when Agnes Paston bequeathed a prayer book to "Maistres Bygote with my Lady Merquys" and Elizabeth Stonor mentioned that she had been "with my Lady of Suffolk."[154] Other references relate even more vaguely that a woman was in the queen's household. Thus, Ida LeStrange and other women attending Queen Philippa received gifts under the heading

[148] See Chapter 1 for transitions from nursery to damsel status.
[149] Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, 12. [150] Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, 13.
[151] Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, 27; Ward, *English Noblewomen*, 53. For more on mistresses, see Chapter 3.
[152] TNA, PRO 31/11/12; *ODNB*, s.v. "Catalina of Motril." Tremlett, *Catherine of Aragon*, 292. Catalina had returned to Spain at some point and married a crossbowmaker in a town with links to Catherine's chief attendant, Elvira de Manuel.
[153] See the earl of Shrewsbury's letter to Sir Robert Plumpton that discussed one Dame Joyce Percy, "now attendinge vpon my wife." *Plumpton*, no. 108. Also *Herald's Memoir*, 164; TNA, E 36/207, fol. 9v; transcribed in Myers, "Household of Elizabeth," 2: 451.
[154] *Paston Letters*, 2: 616; *Stonor Letters*, no. 172.

"La mesnee ma dame la Reine."[155] Two other women were identified as women "co-living in the chamber" (*coadvivand in camera*) with the countess of Hereford.[156] Another young woman was "retained in the queen's service."[157]

A significant number of other household attendants can be found with no titles or official household status, yet received fees, wages, or livery in the manner of household attendants. Thus, Christine de Marisco gained fees in the household of Eleanor of Castile in 1286 and 1288, and female attendants gained similar fees in the fourteenth-century accounts of Elizabeth de Burgh, Margaret of Brotherton, and Sir John Catesby.[158] Liveries also help us identify those who served in royal and aristocratic households. One entry in the Howard accounts includes a list of "What persones ben in the howsold of my master Ser John Howard, knygt," and recorded livery given to Agnes Banyard, Edith Culberton, and other attendants.[159] Livery lists provided for servants of queens and royal daughters offer further information about household membership even when they record no titles.[160]

During and after their employment, many damsels and some underdamsels received annuities in texts that record their "good service" or their "long service." In many, but not all, cases, we know their official household title from other sources. Agatha Lyngen, for example, appears in the 1381 Issue Rolls receiving her annuity "for good service" (*pro bono servicio*), but the first grant of the annuity, in 1370, refers to her as a damsel in the late queen's service.[161] All of these varied ways of referencing elite female servants in medieval documents make distinguishing them, and their places in the household, challenging, but the overall trends in nomenclature elucidate female employment roles in late medieval England.

Parameters of the Study

The above exploration of the terminology used to denote female service demonstrates how chronological change and fluidity of terms complicates

[155] TNA, E 101/384/18. Other gifts were granted to those in the "mesne" of the queen's young heir, Edward. Ibid.
[156] TNA, E 101/368/5, m. 3.
[157] *CPR, 1452–1462*, 583.
[158] TNA, E 101/352/7, m. 1–2; TNA, E 101/510/21; Ward, *Elizabeth de Burgh*, 4–5; Archer, "Estates and Finances of Margaret of Brotherton."
[159] *Howard Household*, 1: 582–6.
[160] TNA, E 101/390/8, fol. 8v; TNA, E 101/368/5, m. 3; TNA, E 101/386/6.
[161] TNA, E 403/487, 13 November; *CPR, 1367–1370*, 342.

decisions about whom to include in such a study and how to analyze them. My goal has been to identify and explore the lives of the well-born women who served monarchs and aristocrats in late medieval England, and I have therefore made conscious selections.[162] This project relies upon English records but has a wider geographic scope because the documents reveal not only the immigrant courtiers who arrived to serve foreign queens but also the English women sent to help English brides establish households upon marriages at foreign courts. As mentioned, women serving only highborn children, as nurses or rockers, have been excluded unless they also appear at other stages of life – or in other sources – serving a queen or noblewoman. Throughout the medieval period, laundresses served a gendered role as one of the consistently female servants in medieval households – male and female – but their lower status excluded them from this analysis. Although the line dividing countesses from chamberers is wider than the line dividing most chamberers from laundresses, I included chamberers and under-damsels for three reasons. First, some under-damsels can be traced to elite women of higher rank (Margerie Olney, for example, was probably the daughter of Philippa's usher and her damsel, John and Stephanetta Olney).[163] Second, some under-damsels/chamberers themselves earned promotion to damsel/gentlewoman, thereby demonstrating that this line was not fixed.[164] Finally, under-damsels/chamberers spent significantly more time in the personal space of the queen or noblewoman whom they served, while laundresses oversaw laundering operations elsewhere in the household.[165]

Another dividing line has been made between those women who formally waited upon a queen or noblewoman and those whose extended relatives and other allied youth were informally residing or fostered in the household for a time.[166] Some overlap can be seen in these examples too. As we will see in Chapter 1, relatives were favored choices for attendants and therefore close and extended kin have not always been excluded, but only if there are no other documents outlining specific service roles in the household. I disregarded, therefore, those who were merely brought up in the household of a great lady or lived in the household for a reason other than service. Thus, the granddaughters of Elizabeth de Burgh have not been included in

[162] On difficulties of selection, and decisions about including/excluding, see also Mertes, *English Noble Household*, 56–7; Reynolds, *Aristocratic Women and Political Society*, 22.
[163] TNA, E 101/395/10. [164] Below, pages 64, 67, 74.
[165] That laundresses could have close relationships with monarchs, however, is demonstrated in the story of Edward I losing a bet to Matilda de Waltham and owing her a warhorse. Prestwich, *Edward I*, 111. For more on laundresses, see Mertes, *Noble Household*, 50–1; Rawcliffe, "A Marginal Occupation?" 147–69.
[166] Harris, *Aristocratic*, 26; Ward, *English Noblewomen*, 97.

my database, nor was Jeanne de Montfort, usually identified in Edward III's and Philippa's records as the "damsel of Brittany" (Montfort and her brother grew up as exiles in England due to the conflation of the Breton War of Succession and the Hundred Years' War).[167]

The parameters of household status also need to be explored briefly. A significant number of royal household records survive from each of the centuries under consideration, and, although they are still incomplete, they provide a wealth of material about royal servants. I chose to extend the exploration beyond the monarchy, however, to explore female attendants serving in noble and gentle households, to the extent that document collections allow.[168] This facilitated comparison of experiences of well-born serving women across the country, and across social gradations, and enabled me to track cases of transition between households of different status. Moreover, it is not always possible to differentiate royals from elites.[169] My choice was to classify households as follows: royal (queens only), female and male royal (the monarch's parents, children [including daughters-in-law], or siblings if living in the royal household), noble (all other households of the peerage, including children), and gentry. This categorization yielded 2,960 references to service in royal households (72.3 percent of 4,251 total), 571 references to service in households of female royals (13.4 percent), 98 references for male royals (included only when women also served at some point in a female household (2.3 percent), 316 for noble households (7.4 percent), and 190 references to service in gentry households (4.5 percent). Fortunately, although categorization can be helpful, such lines do not need to be drawn for us to understand the lives of medieval English ladies-in-waiting. To some extent, experiences might differ, but duties and types of reward were remarkably similar at all status levels. Aristocratic elites shared with their rulers ideas about servitude, including expectations of service and responsibilities toward servants.

Organization of the Book

Part 1 focuses on the peopling of the household. Chapter 1 explores household composition, demonstrating similarities of servant arrangements at all levels of elite society, even while households of every status grew over time. I also investigate how servants gained their positions, through

[167] Graham-Goering, *Princely Power*, 22.
[168] On households of nobility and gentry, see Coss, *Origins of the English Gentry*, 239–40; Given-Wilson, *English Nobility*, 72–3; Walker, *Lancastrian Affinity*, 250–1; Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, 23–4.
[169] Earenfight, "Introduction: Personal Relations, Political Agency," 10.

patronage opportunities that favored their placement and promotion. Employers chose servants who could be both useful and also trustworthy, and credible servants could gain influence for themselves and their families. In Chapter 2, I analyze kinship both between employer and servant and between the female attendant and her other family members in service. The surviving documents allow us to trace how courtier families used kinship ties to build networks of influence. In return, employers gained new servants from connections already known and trusted.

Part 2 turns to investigate the everyday lives of ladies-in-waiting. Chapter 3 explores the kinds of domestic duties undertaken by women in gentle, noble, and royal establishments. Chapter 4 considers the extraordinary participation of royal ladies-in-waiting: their prominent positions in coronations, marriages, christenings, and other ceremonies designed to cement and further dynastic prestige, and their service at seasonal events and diplomatic spectacles that also aided the monarchy's propaganda program.

Part 3, "Power and Its Rewards," explores in Chapter 5 the more active roles played by ladies and damsels in political events of the realm. Female courtiers found ways to access privilege for themselves, their families, and other associates through intercession. They dramatically and courageously assisted queens during periods of crisis. On the other hand, gendered stereotypes of the failings of women contributed to hostile experiences faced by some female servants. Finally, in Chapter 6, I reveal and analyze the extensive rewards that ladies-in-waiting earned for fulfilling their duties, during both usual times and periods of national importance and political tension. Some earned straightforward wages, but in-kind remuneration in the form of room, board, and clothing was more universal. A significant number of female courtiers, especially in the fourteenth century, earned retirement perks of annuities and corrodies. Lands, wardships, jewels, and privileges are all found among the rewards accumulated by late medieval ladies and damsels.

Women who served the royal family dominate some chapters of this book, especially Chapters 4 and 5 that focus on ceremony and politics, but, for the most part, lesser-status waiting women employed in noble and gentry households are incorporated thematically with the women who served queens and other members of the dynasty.

Why Study Servants?

Service was the norm throughout elite life. Members of the highest nobility were expected to serve their royal lieges and in return expected to be waited upon by gentle-born attendants and lower status maids,

laundresses, and countess male "below-stairs" servants. Some ladies-in-waiting were lifelong servants, but for many it was a temporary position in life. Servitude offered many opportunities for networking connections (for marriage or other associations), as well as financial benefits.[170] In addition to having tasks performed for them, maintaining an entourage was increasingly important for cementing and elevating the status of employers, so service rewarded both parties.[171]

Examining the lives and experiences of medieval ladies-in-waiting reveals that they were far more than pretty girls sewing in the queen's chamber while seeking to catch the eye of eligible bachelors (or the king himself). These women had familial interests to advance along with personal ones.[172] They built bridges between families through marriage, and between kin and court through employment. Foreign-born courtiers helped nonnative queens strengthen diplomatic ties between countries. Their rewards demonstrate how highly employers valued their service. The courtier elite formed an integral part of governance in medieval monarchies and thus, as Duindam writes of later centuries, "no student of power structures and processes in early modern monarchy can safely disregard them."[173]

This study of ladies-in-waiting focuses on late medieval England, with nods to points of comparison elsewhere in medieval Europe and beyond. Building such connections reveals that women's history, in the words of Amy Stanley, "looks more continuous – and lingers longer – than we might previously have imagined."[174] This investigation also sheds light on modern issues, such as the value of networking, issues of work–life balance, and anti-immigrant hostility. Networking was crucial to the placement of female courtiers and to allow them to bring further rewards to their kin. Since so many ladies-in-waiting were already married before they gained their positions, or remained in service after marriage, this project sheds light on the historical challenges women faced when negotiating the kinship networks of both natal and spousal lineages and juggling motherhood with career opportunities. Adding the international dimension, in the cases of foreign ladies-in-waiting, of immigration, diplomatic ties, and concerns about xenophobia, reveals the important roles that could be

[170] Given-Wilson, *English Nobility*, 5. [171] Woolgar, *Great Household*, 21.

[172] Earenfight ("Raising *Infanta*," 419) makes a similar point about the overlapping borders between feminine spaces and politics, family concerns, and public life.

[173] However, modern scholars focusing on the rise of the administrative state often ignored the impact of courtiers and the royal household. Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 7, 259.

[174] Stanley, "Maidservants' Tales," 441, 459–60. See 447–57 for comparative maidservant experiences across Eurasia.

played by these surprisingly understudied medieval women. Although they were subordinates, and always answerable to the needs and commands of their royal and aristocratic employers, understanding the history of ladies-in-waiting clarifies the nuances of power wielded by women who traditionally lacked official authority within governing institutions or patriarchal households.