

The Queen's Affinity: Anne of Bohemia and the Politics of the Realm, 1381–1394

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“It is unfortunate,” Nigel Saul wrote in his 1997 political biography of Richard II, “that Queen Anne is a figure who leaves a blurred impression on the pages of history.”¹ Within the last quarter-century of his seminal biography's publication, historians and literary scholars have generally agreed with Saul's interpretation of the queen and have worked diligently to bring our impression of Anne of Bohemia into sharper focus. Both groups, as did Saul himself, use Gervase Matthew's 1968 *Court of Richard II* as their base and have perceived Anne as both the catalyst and the epicenter of a new, glittering court culture brought to London from the Imperial court in Prague, that focused on literature, fine living, fancy dress, dances, pocket handkerchiefs,² and music.³

While historians and literary scholars often agree that Anne of Bohemia served as a patron of arts and literature, when it comes to politics both groups note that outside of serving in a traditional queenly role as an intercessor for royal mercy, Anne was politically inconsequential. For example, May McKisack thought that Richard II loved his wife dearly because of her “docility,”⁴ Anthony Goodman argued Anne was “mild and unobtrusive,”⁵ and Nigel Saul found Anne to be of great comfort and aid to Richard II, but he did not find her to be a force in politics.⁶ More recently Chris Fletcher has found Anne to

¹ Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 455.

² M. V. Clarke, “Forfeitures and Treason in 1388,” in *Fourteenth Centuries Studies*, ed. L. S. Sutherland and May McKisack (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 115–45. George B. Stow, “Richard II and the Invention of the Pocket Handkerchief,” *Albion* (1995): 221–35.

³ Gervase Matthew, *The Court of Richard II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968). For a brief sketch of Wenceslas IV's life, especially in regard to his patronage of the arts, see Barbara Drake Boehm and Jiří Fajt, “Wenceslas IV,” in *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia*, ed. Barbara Drake Boehm and Jiří Fajt (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 91–104. (When the dukes of Berry and Bourbon went to collect Wenceslas for a celebratory dinner during his visit to Paris in 1397, they found him fast asleep reeking of wine. His retainers found the duke's reaction quite amusing and noted that this sort of gross alcoholic intemperance was Wenceslas's custom, p. 101.).

⁴ May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century, 1307–1399* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 427.

⁵ Anthony Goodman, *Joan, the Fair Maid of Kent: A Fourteenth Century Princess and Her World* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2017), 158.

⁶ Saul, *Richard II*, 455–57.

be of little political value to Richard II. He argued her marriage to the king was a way to promote Richard's ascendancy to adulthood, but the marriage turned out to be a complete failure. The queen spent lavishly, her Bohemian friends were a burden, and she could never escape the fact that she was childless. The whole marriage was "a waste of the king's resources" by an "inadequate vessel."⁷

Literary scholars have been likewise dismissive of Anne as a political actor in her own right. Paul Strohm argued for Anne's principal role being as being that of an intercessor, which, in fact, marginalized her as a political figure,⁸ while Lynn Staley clumsily argued that Anne could not understand the nature of her queenship and that poets like Christine de Pisan and Geoffrey Chaucer "invented a new agency for Anne in order to make a new history for England,"⁹ and Alfred Thomas argued that Anne "did not wish to exercise political power," but rather acted as a "cultural mediatrix" bringing the divergent strands of literature, music, art together to enhance and transform the Court of Richard II.¹⁰

We as academics have been quite free with our opinions, but it would be nice to actually know some things about Anne as a political agent in the reign of Richard II supported by some documentary evidence. Therefore, was Anne of Bohemia really a political lightweight or an "inadequate vessel" who was not intelligent enough to know how to rule so contented herself with patronizing poets and organizing court activities? In her 2023 biography of Anne, Kristen Geaman answers this question with a resounding "no." She argues that Anne was a powerful political figure in her own right across the twelve years of her reign as queen.¹¹ Michael Bennett also argued in 2023 that Anne played a "central role in the projection of regal power and splendor in the early 1390s."¹² While both Professor Bennett's and Dr. Geaman's contentions on Anne of Bohemia are well considered, their discussions of the queen as

⁷ Chris Fletcher, *Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 238–39.

⁸ Paul Strohm, "Queens as Intercessors," in *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 95–119.

⁹ Lynn Staley, "Anne of Bohemia and the Objects of Ricardian Kingship," in *Medieval Women and their Objects*, ed. Jenny Adams and Nancy Mason Bradbury (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2017), 112.

¹⁰ Alfred Thomas, *A Blessed Shore: England and Bohemia from Chaucer to Shakespeare* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2007), 18.

¹¹ Kristen Geaman, *Anne of Bohemia* (London: Routledge, 2022).

¹² Michael Bennett, "Richard II, Queen Anne, Bohemia: Marriage, Culture, and Politics," in *England and Bohemia in the Age of Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown and Jan Čermák (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2023), 37.

a patron and as a political figure leave ample opportunity for more work to be done on Anne as a political figure, and while Dr. Geaman has done a superb job in creating a comprehensive list of Anne's servants, there is more room to define and explore her affinity.

What this article seeks to do is to demonstrate some aspects of Anne of Bohemia's political influence and power through the lens of her affinity: in essence, the men and women who can be identified as her servants and who wore one of her livery badges, the White Ostrich or the Fern Leaf.¹³ This article will turn on three main points: first on the composition of the queen's affinity itself. Anne, of course, brought a number of Bohemian men and women with her, but this number expanded soon after her arrival with senior Englishmen who served Anne as household/estate officers. Because of Anne's age and inexperience with English practices along with the age of her husband, these English officials were given to her by the king's mother. As her time in England went on, Anne began to attract and retain a number of local gentry in counties where she held lands and their connections and offices. While "nothing succeeded like success" in the king's service, it was also true of service to the queen. Second, this article will focus some attention on the role of her retainers at war. Thomas Walsingham's snide comment that the knights of Richard II's court were more "knights of Venus than of Mars" is as errant as it was tactless.¹⁴ The knights and esquires who wore the queen's livery were not strangers to the camp or the battlefield during Anne's reign. Third and finally, this article will focus on the role of Anne's retainers and members of her affinity who procured selection to Parliament across the twelve years of her reign. As Mark Ormrod notes, Anne was very active when Parliament met and while she is not recorded as attending the sessions it is not surprising to find a number of her servants selected as members of Parliament.¹⁵ These men were clearly well-connected in their counties and their presence in Parliament to help serve both the queen's interests as well as the king's.

It is important to note at the outset that while military service was an important component of the careers of male members of Anne's affinity,

¹³ Both the Ostrich and the Fern Leaf are etched onto Anne's bronze effigy on her tomb. The fact that no fewer than five of Anne's livery collars of either the White Ostrich or Fern Leaf survive ranging in value £ 4 to £334 strongly suggest that not only Anne, but that her retainers possessed them and wore them as well, Jenny Stratford, *Richard II and the English Royal Treasure* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012), 16–17.

¹⁴ *The St. Alban's Chronicle*, ed. John Taylor, Wendy Childs, et al., 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), I: 814.

¹⁵ W.M. Ormrod, *Women and Parliament in Later Medieval England* (London: Palgrave, 2020), 27–28.

Richard II's reign was generally a time of peace and the key nexus between the Crown and its affinity was a strong household or estate/political service link.¹⁶ It also needs to be noted here that while Anne was raised in the most magnificent court in Europe,¹⁷ the court of Richard II possessed no small amount of magnificence in its own right.¹⁸ Richard's court was the heir of his father's glittering court at Angouleme where the Black Prince ruled the southwestern quarter of France as an uncrowned king for more than a decade.¹⁹ Richard, who was an extremely status-conscious king presided over a court that was even more prestigious than his father's.²⁰ It is curious that scholars have shied away from exploring the significant female presence at Richard's court because powerful women made up a large part of it in the 1370s and 1380s.²¹ Richard II's court included the king's mother, Princess Joan "the fair maid of Kent," who, for a time at least acted as an uncrowned queen. The court included the powerful and thoughtful Constanza *de jure* queen of Castile, married to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and titular King of Castile. Constanza's younger sister was lively and vivacious Isabella (of whom the young king was especially fond), married to another of the king's uncles, Edmund of Langley, Earl of Cambridge and Duke of York, after 1385 was also often at court in these years.²² Anyone entering this court environment would have found it daunting with two kings (Richard II and John of Gaunt), two queens (Anne and Constanza), two princesses (Joan and Isabella) and a myriad of dukes, earls, barons, and their wives. Perhaps it is not surprising that with such an eclectic mix of personalities that contemporaries found Anne to be quiet and demure. Nonetheless, as Michael Bennett suggests, Anne was as well-educated as any of those listed above and possessed a quiet determination that made her an influential political figure and a powerful lord who attracted men and women

¹⁶ Shelagh Mitchell, "Ladies of the Garter: Edward III, Richard II, and Elizabeth II," *The Court Historian* 22 (2017): 165; John Leland, "The Abjuration of 1388," *Medieval Prosopography* 15 (1994): 138; James Gillespie, "Ladies of the Fraternity of Saint George and of the Society of the Garter," *Albion* 17 (1985): 259–78.

¹⁷ Goodman, *Joan of Kent*, 86–87; David Green, *The Black Prince* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 2001), 89, 106.

¹⁸ Bennett, "Richard II, Queen Anne, Bohemia," 21–22.

¹⁹ Goodman, *Joan of Kent*, 86–87; Green, *Black Prince*, 106.

²⁰ A. K. McHardy, "Richard II: A Personal Portrait," in *The Reign of Richard II*, ed. G. Dodd (Stroud: Tempus, 2000), 20.

²¹ Bennett, "Richard II, Queen Anne, Bohemia," 23.

²² Isabella was reported by Thomas Walsingham as being a lady of "sensual and self-indulgent disposition," *St. Alban's Chronicle*, I: 962–63.

to her service and saw to the interests of her servants across the twelve years of her time as queen.²³

In terms of the composition of Anne's affinity if is worth viewing it in the same way that Chris Given-Wilson described the king's affinity in 1986: as a series of concentric circles with those who came with Anne of Bohemia from Prague, initially at least, in her inner circle; a second circle of senior men and women to manage her estates and household who were chosen for her by her mother-in-law; and a third circle of men and women Anne drew into her service after growing into adulthood. Of course, an individual's place in the queen's affinity (or in any royal or noble affinity for that matter) was not static but shifted and moved closer or further away from Anne depending on those personal connections that both waxed and waned over time. In a marriage as close as Richard and Anne's it is difficult, if not impossible, to find where the king's affinity began and the queen's affinity ended.²⁴ This is not, of course, to suggest that king failed to bring women into his affinity, the Ladies of the Garter being only one example,²⁵ but there were more "queen's damsels" in Anne's affinity than there were in Richard's. These ladies, often of Bohemian or German origin and married to well-to-do English knights or noblemen, were an important component of Queen Anne's affinity.²⁶

To follow Given-Wilson's model, Anne's affinity consisted of three main circles emanating from her at the center. The inner circle (at least initially) was constituted of the Bohemian men and women who accompanied her to England in 1381. Contemporary chroniclers often accused these Bohemians

²³ Bennett, "Richard II, Queen Anne, Bohemia," 21–22.

²⁴ Thomas Walsingham claimed that Richard "rarely if ever allowed her [Anne] to leave his side," T. F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Medieval England*, 6 vols. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1928–33), V: 260. It is also clear that on occasion Richard used Anne's signet seal to communicate directly with the great officers of state and his council, The National Archives: London, UK (TNA) C81/1354, item 15. See also Henry C. Maxwell-Lite, *Historical Notes on the Use of the Great Seal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), 321. To take only one example of this closeness of affinities; on 10 March 1385 Richard granted £12 per annum to Richard Long, a king's esquire, and Margaret, a lady of the queen's chamber, for the life of Margaret (*CPR, 1381–85*, 546).

²⁵ James Gillespie, "Ladies of the Fraternity of Saint George and of the Society of the Garter," *Albion*, 17 (1985): 259–78.

²⁶ The role of women in Richard II's court is well documented and some contemporaries complained about this even after Richard's deposition. For example, Archbishop Arundel gave the opening address in the Parliament of 1399 he noted that the realm "had for a long time been led, ruled, and governed by children and the advice of widows." This was not only a swipe at Richard and Anne, but also at the large number of women who were at court – possibly including the king's mother. See Joan of Kent, *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275–1504*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2012), VIII: 9.

as possessed of “shameless avarice.” Avarice, of course, is in the eye of the beholder, but judging from the grants that the queen's Bohemia friends received none were out of line with what other members of the English political community received from both Richard and Anne.

The men and women in this inner circle came with Anne from Bohemia in 1381.²⁷ As Marek Suchy suggests, we do not know the names of all of those who accompanied Anne on her journey from the Empire or who stayed with her, but quite a few names can be gleaned from the documents.²⁸ It is possible that Anne relied heavily on the advice and counsel of her uncle, Przemislaus, Duke of Teschen from their advent in December 1381 until his departure for home in August 1382, but from then on Anne needed to increasingly manage affairs on her own.²⁹ One of the most successful members of the inner circle of Anne's affinity was Roger Siglem. He came to England as an esquire in Anne's household establishment and by 1385 could be counted as a king's esquire.³⁰ Siglem's relationship with Anne and Richard II turned on household rather than military service. He had enough influence to receive a pardon for murder,³¹ and was one of those Bohemians who drew specific criticism of the Appellants and their supporters because he was married to an English woman, Katherine “by royal command” in 1387.³² Whatever the case, Richard and Anne were quite close with Roger and Katherine and as their family grew they named their first son Richard (most likely in honor of the king) and the king served as the boy's Godfather.

While Roger Siglem left an impression in the administrative record there were other Bohemians who were resident in England but are more difficult to trace. Nicholas Ryvenys possibly distinguished himself for his martial

²⁷ A letter from Richard II to Wenceslas IV dated 29 March 1381 gave full power to Edmund of Langley, Earl of Cambridge; Hugh Seagrave, Richard's Seneschal; and Alfred DeVere, Richard's Chamberlain to negotiate with Wenceslas's ambassadors for Anne's hand in marriage. Czech National Archives, Prague, Czech Republic, Archives of the crown, Charter no. 1232.

²⁸ Marek Suchy, “England and Bohemia in the Time of Anne of Luxembourg: Dynastic Marriage as a Precondition for Cultural Contact in the Late Middle Ages,” in *Prague: The Crown of Bohemia*, ed. Barbara Drake Boehm and Jifi Fajt (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 11.

²⁹ Michael Bennett argues that Przemislaus guided Anne during these eight months or so, Bennett, “Richard II, Queen Anne, Bohemia,” 20.

³⁰ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1385–1389 (CPR, 1385–89)* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1900), 6, 15.

³¹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1388–1392 (CPR, 1399–92)* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1902), 437.

³² TNA, E 403/518.

prohess. Anne noted in a letter to her brother Wenceslas IV in 1384–1385 that a “Nicholas” had “produced great distinctions in peace as well as in war.”³³ He also caught on in Richard’s service and was a king’s knight by 1392.³⁴ His service to the royal household can be gauged by the fact that he married Anne Goeymens, one of Anne’s English ladies. While working through all of the men who came with Anne in 1381 would be impractical in a short article, we do know that a number were taken into the king’s service as well as the queen’s. For example, Sir Herman Hanz and Sir Herman Bergh were noted as king’s knights from 1386, Otho Granson from 1392, and James Schleya was noted as a king’s esquire from 1392.³⁵

While the men who accompanied Anne from the Empire had varied careers in England, so too did the Bohemian ladies who accompanied the queen. As Marek Suchy suggests, a number of women in Anne’s initial entourage left for home after her wedding in December 1381, but many stayed on to make their lives in their newly adopted homeland.³⁶ Kristen Geaman has shown that no fewer than six Bohemian damsels stayed with Anne in 1381.³⁷ The most socially prominent member of this group of damsels, was Margaret Felbrigge. She came to England in Anne’s company and was the daughter of Premzylus, Duke of Teschen and Silesia. Margaret served as the queen’s maid of honor at her wedding was soon married to Sir Simon Felbrigge, Richard II’s standard bearer and an important king’s knight.

By far the most notorious of the queen’s damsels to contemporaries was Agnes Lancekrona. She caught the eye of Robert de Vere, Duke of Ireland. Even though Duke Robert was already married he was apparently infatuated with Agnes. While we do not know how Agnes felt about de Vere, perhaps one measure of her feelings may be gauged by the fact that the only way de Vere could get Agnes to come away from court with him was to have her kidnapped and spirited away by two of his servants.³⁸ This caused quite a scandal at court

³³ Geaman, *Anne of Bohemia*, 260; Kristen Geaman, “A Personal Letter Written by Anne of Bohemia,” *English Historical Review*, 128 (2013): 1086–94.

³⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rols, 1391–1396 (CPR, 1391–96)* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1905), 72.

³⁵ For Hanz, see Chris Given-Wilson, *The Royal Household and the King’s Affinity (RH&KA)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 284; for Bergh, *RH&KA*, 285; for Schleya, *CPR, 1388–1392*, 514.

³⁶ Suchy, “England and Bohemia,” 10–11.

³⁷ Geaman, *Anne of Bohemia*, 110.

³⁸ *CPR, 1388–92*, 20.

and contemporaries heaped all manner of abuse on her.³⁹ After the Merciless Parliament of 1388 the marriage was annulled and it is unknown what happened to Agnes.

Three more damsels of the queen's inner circle of her affinity, who had accompanied her from Prague, were Margaret Sarnesfeld, Isabel Paveley, and Ofka Morton. It seems Margaret and Isabel were targets of the Appellant's wrath in 1387 because both were married in that year by royal command; Margaret to the king's knight Sir Nicholas Sarnesfeld, one of his father's old friends, and Isabel to the young Sir John Paveley, an up and coming king's knight. Ofka Morton served in Anne's household until the queen's death. She was able to avoid all of the unpleasantness surrounding Anne's Bohemian courtiers in the 1380s and was quite close to Richard because he referred to her in a 1396 grant as the "king's beloved Ofka."⁴⁰ After Anne's death in 1394 she married Robert Morton.

The second circle are those men and women who were chosen for Anne (probably by Joan of Kent, the king's mother) to manage her household and her estates. It is possible that at fifteen years of age that Anne had some rudimentary ideas of how to run her household, but the intricacies of English estate administration would almost certainly have been a mystery to her, and thus it was necessary to provide her with loyal officials. While Kristen Geaman argues that many of the men and women in this circle came to Anne's service through their connections with Richard, it seems unlikely.⁴¹ The men and women in this second circle were those who had served the Black Prince or Princess Joan and were trusted and highly experienced. For example, one of Anne's most senior officials was Sir Richard Abberbury. He was already in his fifties by the time Anne arrived in England from the Empire in December 1381. His long career had its origins in service to the Black Prince, who had knighted Abberbury by his own hand in 1359; he was especially close to Joan of Kent and he would serve as one of the executors of her will. He was well-connected in his home counties of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, serving as JP and a tax collector in 1379, in addition to being a member of Richard's council in 1382–83.

His service to Anne began in December 1380. Abberbury served as the queen's attorney in 1382, and by 1383 he became her Chamberlain. The

³⁹ By far the most vitriolic was the St. Alban's monk, Thomas Walsingham who claimed that Agnes was a low-born daughter of a saddler and was "ugly," Walsingham, *St. Alban's Chronicle*, I: 822–23.

⁴⁰ CPR, 1391–96, 712.

⁴¹ Geaman, *Anne of Bohemia*, 113.

experienced Abberbury was a good choice as one of Anne's senior servants because his holdings in Oxfordshire and Berkshire were in close proximity to the queen's dower lands in those two counties. In Oxfordshire, the queen held four large manors and the Wooten Hundred. In Berkshire, Anne held six large manors and the Forest of Wychwood. Abberbury's main seat at Donnington Castle in western Berkshire was surrounded by Anne's manors of Bray, Carswell, Cookham, Hampsted Marshall, and Swallowfield – all less than a day's ride from Donnington.

Even though he was forced to abjure the court in 1388,⁴² Abberbury remained on numerous commissions of inquiry, oyer and terminer, and array, along with long service as a Justice of the Peace in both Oxfordshire and Berkshire. All of this local service clearly demonstrates his standing as a senior statesman in the counties where he held lands. As Simon Walker suggested, Abberbury's role in local government helped see to the smooth running of both Oxfordshire and Berkshire and "his conscientiousness in discharging them was sharpened [by the fact] that he owed [his position in the county] directly to the favor of the Crown."⁴³

Another of Queen Anne's more senior servants chosen for her was Sir Bernard Brocas who succeeded Abberbury as the queen's Chamberlain in 1386 or 1387. Brocas held reasonable sized holdings in Oxfordshire and held a significant number of administrative offices in the county. His connections with the Crown dated back to the 1360s when he received £40 per annum at the Exchequer from Edward III who made him Keeper of the King's Buckhounds a year later. He was one of Edward III's household knights and seems to have served with the Black Prince on the Najera campaign of 1367. Like Abberbury, Brocas can be found serving on commissions of array, oyer and terminer, surveying castles, overseeing repair to their fabric, and gaol delivery in addition to being sheriff of Wiltshire in 1382–83. Brocas also served as a nearly perennial Justice of the Peace for Hampshire from 1380 till his death in 1395, and for Wiltshire from 1391 to 1394. Like Abberbury, Brocas's important position at the top of the Wiltshire's, Hampshire's, and Oxfordshire's power structure helped to ensure the smooth running of the queen's estates in these counties. His relationship with the queen may perhaps be gauged by

⁴² Leland, "Abjuration of 1388," 115–38.

⁴³ Simon K. Walker, "Sir Richard Abberbury (c. 1330–1399) and his Kinsmen: The Rise and Fall of a Gentry Family," *Nottingham Medieval studies* 34 (1990): 113–40.

the fact that the only inscription on his tomb notes that he was a soldier and the Chamberlain of Queen Anne.⁴⁴

Like Abberbury and Brocas, Sir Richard Waldengrave was another senior member of the king's court circle who took up service as Anne's Steward in Norfolk and Suffolk. Waldengrave was born in 1338 and was forty-four years old when he became Anne's Steward in 1382. Unlike Abberbury and Brocas, Waldengrave did not come to the queen's service through being retained by the Black Prince but through connections with Joan, "the Fair Maid of Kent." From his seat at Smallbridge he presided over significant estates of his own that ranged across the central and eastern parts of Suffolk. He was a very influential member of the Suffolk county gentry. Waldengrave served almost continuously as a Justice of the Peace from 1382–97, and served the county as a Member of Parliament on no fewer than nine occasions between 1381 and 1399, in addition to serving as Speaker of the House of Commons in 1381.

Just as senior Englishmen were chosen from among Princess Joan's most trusted servants to surround the young Anne, so too did Joan choose her initial female servants, many of whom became fast friends. Joan of Kent's actions gave Anne a circle of English friends and servants to help Anne navigate court, learn what privileges she had as queen, as well as managing her dower lands, which were supposed to bring in an income of £4,500 per annum. Joan's long-time friends and servants like Blanche de Mowbray, whose husband, John Worth, had served as steward of Joan's lands since 1378 soon found themselves as part of Anne's household establishment.⁴⁵ Joan, Lady Mohun, was the widow of John Mohun, Lord of Dunster, who had been in Prince Edward's household since 1354.⁴⁶ She was the daughter of Bartholomew Burghesh the elder, and sister to Bartholomew the younger, one of the founders of the Order of the Garter. By 1384, Joan Mohun was receiving Garter robes as one of Richard's Ladies of the Order.⁴⁷ Last but not least was Margery, Lady Moylens. She was connected to Joan, Lady Mohun, through family which accounted for her place in Joan of Kent's inner circle. All of these ladies-in-waiting to Queen Anne were close enough to her to have earned the reputation of having undue

⁴⁴ *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1386–1421*, ed. J. S. Roskell, Linda Clarke, and Carol Rawcliffe, 4 vols. (HoC) (Stroud: Alan Sutton for History of Parliament Trust, 1992–93), II: 359–62. For a discussion of his tomb and its inscription see, "Sir Bernard Brocas, soldier," *Westminster Abbey*, accessed 5 February 2024, <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/sir-bernard-brocas>.

⁴⁵ *Calendar of Close Rolls, 1377–81* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1914), 128.

⁴⁶ Tout, *Chapters*, V: 334.

⁴⁷ Gillespie, "Ladies of the Garter," 265.

influence on the king and queen and all were forced to abjure the court by the Appellants in 1388.⁴⁸

The third circle of the queen's affinity were those English men and women who came to Anne as her reign wore on, her mother-in-law faded from court and passed away, and Anne grew into being an adult. There is no doubt that she shared many, if not all, of her servants with her husband and many were both the White Hart and the White Ostrich, but it is also true that some men were drawn into Anne's service before they were drawn into the king's. Thus, a number of members of the political community saw Anne as an effective patron and while "nothing succeeded like success" in the king's service much the same could be said of taking up service with the queen.

The draw of Anne's service to ambitious Englishmen should not be underestimated and many even left comital affinities for the queen's service. Several examples of this are Sir Hugh Luttrell and Robert Bukton. Luttrell came of age in 1385 and took up service with John of Gaunt. While many Lancastrian retainers thought the collar of SS's would give them the moon and the stars, Luttrell found otherwise and he transitioned into the queen's service by 1391. Anne thought highly of Luttrell and in 1391 granted him a series of lands out of "her love for him," and she later granted him private apartments in the king's manor of Eltham. Another example of a young man leaving a powerful noble affinity for the queen's service is that of Robert Bukton. He began his career in the service of Thomas Percy, younger brother of Henry, Earl of Northumberland, and through his connections with Thomas became known to the royal household. In December 1392, Anne granted Bukton a pasture in her lordship of Eye in Suffolk in which she referred to him as "our esquire."⁴⁹

While the queen's service attracted men from comital affinities, it also attracted ambitious young men from counties where Anne held lands. For example, John Stokes was a socially prominent esquire from Derbyshire. He had served his home county in Parliament on no fewer than three occasions between 1384 and 1390 before taking up service with the queen and serving as the bailiff of Anne's liberty in both the town of Derby and in the shire as a whole.⁵⁰ Another local man who sought Anne as his patron was Sir Philip Tinley from Lincolnshire. He was one of Anne's tenants on her Lincolnshire estates and often approached her as his intermediary with the king.⁵¹ Finally,

⁴⁸ Leland, "Abjuration of 1388," 124–26.

⁴⁹ *CPR*, 1388–92, 435.

⁵⁰ *HoC*, IV: 480.

⁵¹ *HoC*, IV: 618–20.

Henry Barton, who would rise to be an MP for his borough of London in 1419, began his long and eventful career as a servant in Anne's household.⁵²

One of the king's servants who transitioned into Anne's service was John Woodhouse who was Anne's receiver for her lands in Wales. Her lands in Wales were part of the principality and many were very lucrative. For example, the county and lordship of Merioneth brought in at least £700 per annum, and Conway would have provided at least that much if not more.⁵³ Woodhouse has also served the king as Chamberlain of Chester since at least May 1390.⁵⁴

One of Anne's English ladies-in-waiting, who possibly used her connections to secure a place in the royal affinity for her father, was Perrin Whitney. Exactly when Perrin came to court is unknown, but it predates 1392, when she married Thomas Clanvove, son and heir of Sir John Clanvove, one of Joan of Kent's closest confidants.⁵⁵ Perrin's service to the queen seems to predate her father's because her father, Sir Robert, is not recorded as a member of the king's retinue until October 1393 when he is mentioned as the Harbinger of the Household.⁵⁶

Regardless of where Bohemian and English men and women stood in our constructed model of concentric circles, many of the men who served the queen were heavily involved in military careers. Older retainers like Richard Abberbury and Bernard Brocas did not participate in military affairs after 1381, but by that time both were in their fifties. Nonetheless, their early lives were filled with military accomplishments. Abberbury was knighted by the Black Prince in 1359 and served his ailing master in Gascony in 1368 and 1369.⁵⁷ Even in his forties, Abberbury can be found serving on garrison duty in Brest in 1378.⁵⁸ For Bernard Brocas, the pattern of military service was similar. He too was active on military service in the 1360s, he was Master of the King's Buckhounds from 1361, and received Edward III's livery in 1363, and Brocas ended his military career in his forties on garrison service in Calais in 1379.⁵⁹

If senior members of the queen's affinity had left the life of the camp behind, younger members of the queen's affinity were much more active in military affairs during Anne's time as queen. Sir Philip Darcy first went on

⁵² CPR, 1391–96, 488.

⁵³ Geaman, *Anne of Bohemia*, 257.

⁵⁴ CPR, 1388–1392, 247, 502.

⁵⁵ Goodman, *Joan of Kent*, 162, 169.

⁵⁶ HoC, IV: 838–40.

⁵⁷ TNA, E 101/29/4, m. 1.

⁵⁸ TNA, E 101/37/2, m. 1.

⁵⁹ TNA, C 76/52, m. 15, C 76/64 m. 27.

campaign to France in 1380 and then on Bishop Despenser's Crusade to Flanders in 1383.⁶⁰ Sir John Paule's first military service was naval service with Lord John Beaumont's company as part of Richard, Earl of Arundel's failed expedition of 1387.⁶¹ Sir Ralph Stafford's first military service was in the company of Thierry "the Canon" Robessart that was part of Edmund of Langley, Earl of Cambridge's expedition to Portugal in 1381.⁶² The failure of the Portuguese expedition to achieve its objectives did not dim young Stafford's desire to continue his military service, because he had barely returned home from Iberia before he signed up to go on Bishop Despenser's Crusade to Flanders in 1383, and finally to Scotland in 1385.⁶³ It is possible, as May McKisack noted, that Stafford "grew up in the household of Anne of Bohemia," and was one of Anne and Richard's closest friends.⁶⁴ His promising career as a courtier and soldier was cut short at the hands of John Holand in July 1385.

While the queen's English knights were busy on campaign, so too were at least some of her Bohemian Kinsmen. Their prowess on Richard II's Scottish expedition is well known, and as we have seen Anne could not help but brag to her brother about the military exploits of Nicholas Ryvenys in 1384.⁶⁵

The queen's esquires were no less active on campaign than her knights. Robert Buckton first found military service in the company of the Black Prince in 1369, and served on a number of expeditions to France until his last as a member of a garrison at Brest in 1382.⁶⁶ John Wakerle served on a number of occasions between 1379 and 1387, while John Stokes's first service was in 1380 and then on throughout the queen's lifetime.⁶⁷ There is no doubt that English victories in the middle stages of the Hundred Years War were few and far between, but it was not for want of trying and the Bohemian and English supposed "knights of Venus" who wore the queen's livery served as readily as the elder members of her affinity had in a younger day.

⁶⁰ TNA, C76/64, m. 3, 4.

⁶¹ TNA, E 101/40/33, m. 16.

⁶² TNA, C 76 65, m. 12. See also my articles on Edmund of Langley's expedition to Portugal: "A Voyage or Rather and Expedition to Portugal: Edmund of Langley in Iberia 1381/82," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 7 (2009): 57–74, and "Chasing the Chimera in Spain: Edmund of Langley in Iberia, 1381/82," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 15 (2016): 79–98.

⁶³ TNA, C 76/67, m. 12. N. B. Lewis, "The Last Medieval Summons of the English Feudal Levy, 13 June 1385," *English Historical Review* 73 (1958): 1–26.

⁶⁴ May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century, 1307–1399*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 439.

⁶⁵ Geaman, *Anne of Bohemia*, 259–61.

⁶⁶ TNA, C 61/82, m. 12; C 76/67, m. 25.

⁶⁷ For Wakerle: TNA, E 101/38/27, m. 4; E 101/30/44, m. 14.

One of the most undiscussed aspects of the Queen Anne's affinity is the role of her servants and retainers in Parliament. As Mark Ormrod has demonstrated, Anne clearly understood the importance of Parliament as queen and was very active when the assembly met. Even before she was crowned Anne was using her influence as an intercessor to mediate between the king and those looking for mercy from the Peasants Revolt of 1381. In 1384 Anne sought mercy, albeit unsuccessfully, for former London mayor John Northampton, and during the "Merciless Parliament" of 1388 she fell to her knees in front of Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, seeking mercy for Richard's former tutor and her friend Sir Simon Burley. As Ormrod notes it is unclear if Queen Anne's acts of intercession were conducted in Parliament or in some other chamber or venue, but as Ormrod further suggests the queen chose her timing carefully.⁶⁸

Thus, Anne would have known the business of the assembly at any given time and this knowledge not only came from her husband and his supporters but also through information provided by members of her own affinity who were present in Parliament. The men who wore the White Ostrich or the Fern Leaf in Parliament were nowhere near a majority of the members, but their numbers were not insignificant. Over the twelve years of her reign, fifteen Parliaments met. No fewer than ten members of Anne's affinity served, occupying a grand total of thirty-five seats. The queen had at least one member of her affinity in each Parliament in her reign except for November 1384 and November 1390. The largest number of Queen Anne's affinity members in any given assembly were, arguably, the most important Parliaments of the reign: The "Wonderful Parliament" of 1386, the "Merciless Parliament" of 1388, and "Restoration Parliament" of 1390 with five members each.

Of course, it is not known exactly how the selection process for Members of Parliament worked in the fourteenth century, but the counties who returned members of the queen's affinity were those where Anne held significant portions of her dower lands. Since so many of her servants and retainers were shared with her husband it is impossible to discount the king's influence in any given selection process. But, it may be demonstrated that in some cases an individual MP's service to Anne predated their service to Richard II. Therefore, it may be surmised that Anne was able to exert some influence on the selection process.

Not surprisingly, the queen's most trusted servants were returned to Parliament on multiple occasions. Richard Waldengrave was returned no fewer than nine times for Suffolk; 1381, May 1382, October 1382, February 1383 October

⁶⁸ Ormrod, *Women and Parliament*, 27–28.

1383, 1386, February 1388, September 1388, and 1390.⁶⁹ John Parker served for the burough of Malmesbury in Wiltshire in 1381, May 1382, October 1382, October 1383, February 1388, and January 1390.⁷⁰ William Wilcotes served no fewer than five times for Oxfordshire; 1385, February 1388, January 1390, 1391 and 1394.⁷¹ John Stokes served in four Parliamentary assemblies for Derbyshire; November 1384, 1386, January 1390 and 1393.⁷² Philip Tinley served four times for his home county of Lincolnshire; 1385, February 1388, September 1388, and January 1390.⁷³ Bernard Brocas service thrice once for Hampshire in 1386, for Wiltshire in 1391, and Hampshire again in 1393.⁷⁴ Alexander Oxenford served twice for the borough of Malmesbury in Wiltshire; 1386 and February 1388.⁷⁵ Robert Bukton served for Suffolk in 1394, Thomas Clanvove for Hertfordshire in 1394, and Richard Abberbury, served for his home county of Oxfordshire in 1386.⁷⁶

In his Ford Lectures in 1953, K. B. McFarlane noted that royal and noble women gave the late medieval royal court much of its splendor. He also noted that these women were “rich and respected—or feared,” and had a significant impact on politics as well as high culture.⁷⁷ The main conclusion of this brief discussion of Anne of Bohemia’s affinity is to agree with McFarlane’s, Bennett’s, and Geaman’s suppositions on Anne’s political significance. Anne came to England as a well-educated and highly cultured young woman and although a stranger in a strange land she worked to understand and master the political and social world in which she found herself. Probably enhancing the challenges before her was the fact that Anne was the youngest of a number of older and just as cultured royal women whose personalities she needed to navigate and manage. Naturally, Anne’s first servants were men and women from the Empire who were either family or whom she had been brought up with. But these Czech and German servants had no experiences with the nuances of English politics, the intricacies of the English court, or of English estate man-

⁶⁹ Waldengrave seems to have been in the queen’s service before also serving the king in important posts after 1390, *HoC*, IV: 7835–39.

⁷⁰ Parker entered the service of the queen in 1386 and transitioned into Richard’s service after her death in 1394, *HoC*, IV: 10–11.

⁷¹ Wilcotes was in the queen’s service quite probably before he entered Richard’s, *HoC*, IV: 863–66.

⁷² *HoC*, IV: 480.

⁷³ *HoC*, IV: 838–40.

⁷⁴ *HoC*, II: 359–62.

⁷⁵ *HoC*, III: 888.

⁷⁶ *HoC*, II: for Bukton see pp. 408–10, for Clanvove see pp. 576–78, for Abberbury see pp. 2–4.

⁷⁷ K. B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 65.

agement, and Anne had to find English servants to supplement her circle of servants and friends. Her first servants were clearly chosen for Anne by Joan of Kent. These men and women were those who had been close to Princess Joan and/or her late husband Edward of Woodstock. There is no doubt that Joan chose them well, for they all served Anne well after the death of Princess Joan, some to the end of Anne's life in 1394. Michael Bennett's argument that Anne's "personal agency was limited" in the early 1380s is mainly due to the two factors listed above.⁷⁸ But, as she grew toward adulthood and Joan's influence progressively waned from 1383 till her death in 1385, when Anne grew into her own. As she learned more about estate management from her servants, she began to attract English men and women to court and to her estates. Anne also realized the need to supplement her husband's affinity with one of her own and her livery symbols of the White Ostrich and the Fern Leaf were distributed.⁷⁹ Some of her servants and members of her affinity distinguished themselves in war, both in France and in Scotland. Last, the queen also was very active when Parliament met. Although she did not appear in the assembly herself, members of her affinity did; and while the numbers of men who wore the White Ostrich or the Fern Leaf were nowhere near a majority of the membership in any given Parliament, their presence was not insignificant. In the final analysis, what emerges from this study is the fact that while Anne of Bohemia may have been mild and retiring, she was no fool and it is misguided to see her as lacking intelligence or as being a mere appendage of her husband. Anne grew to be a powerful patron and lord who managed her servants well and attracted ambitious men and women to her service. Her role as queen was significant and future study needs to continue to see Anne in her proper place in the world of Ricardian politics.

Abstract

Anne of Bohemia, queen of Richard II from 1381 until her death in 1394, is often seen as "docile" or "demure" by British medievalists. Even though few records relating to Anne survive in the National Archives in London, through an investigation of her affinity one can gain a measure of Anne's political place

⁷⁸ Bennett, "Richard II, Queen Anne, Bohemia," 19.

⁷⁹ There can be little doubt that these livery badges were distributed and worn. In fact, Richard II himself wore the White Ostrich to his meeting with Charles VI at Ardres for his marriage to Isabelle of France in 1396, L. Mirot, "Isabelle de France, reine d'Angleterre: le mariage d'Isabelle et l'entrevue de Charles VI et de Richard II a Ardres," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, 19 (1905): 63–95.

in Richard II's reign. This article considers the composition of her affinity, the military roles played by her retainers, and the presence of her retainers in Parliament. What emerges from this brief discussion is a portrait of Anne's affinity starting from the group of men and women who accompanied her from the Empire to London in 1381, then the additional Englishmen and women chosen for her by her mother-in-law, and finally to a group of men and women who were drawn to Anne by her own abilities and skills. What emerges from this short study is a conclusion that Anne of Bohemia was a skillful manager of people and a powerful political patron. Men and women sought her as their lady and patron and careers were made in her service.

Keywords: Anne of Bohemia; Richard II; Parliament; Affinity; Retaining; Joan of Kent

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