



ELITE WOMEN AS DIPLOMATIC AGENTS IN ITALY AND HUNGARY, 1470–1510 KINSHIP AND THE ARAGONESE DYNASTIC NETWORK

by
JESSICA O'LEARY

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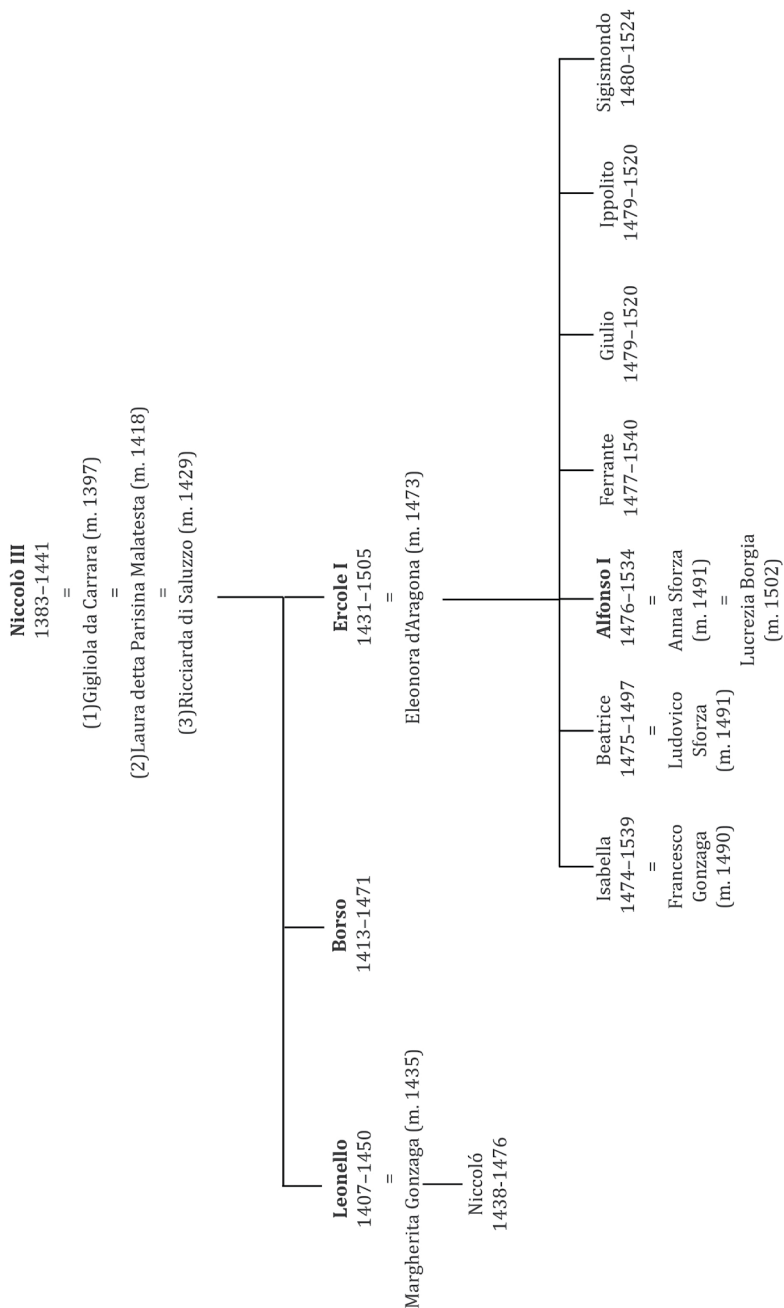


Figure 2: Abridged genealogy of the Este family.

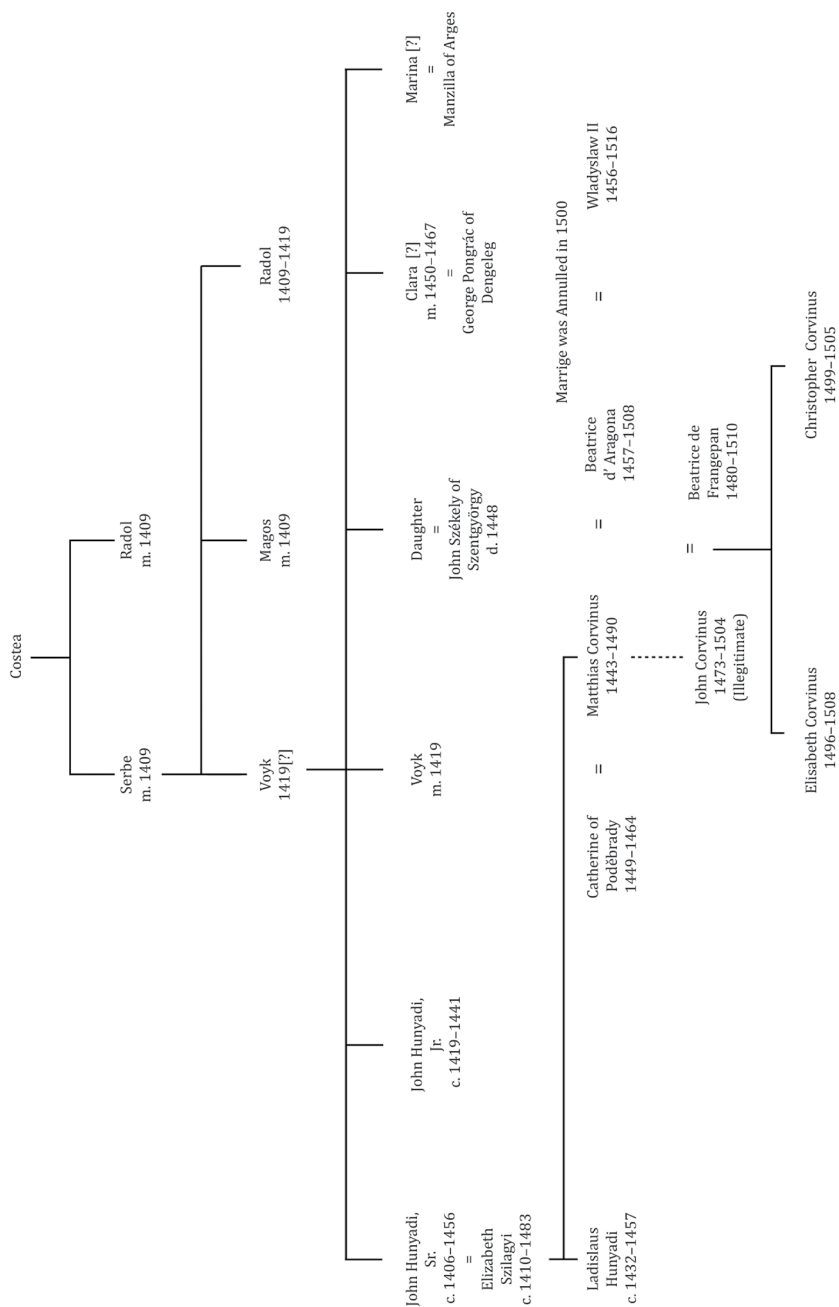


Figure 3: Genealogy of Matthias Corvinus.



Figure 4: Map of Italy during the late fifteenth century.



Figure 5: Map of the Kingdom of Hungary during the conquests of Matthias Corvinus.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASMo	Archivio di Stato, Modena
ASMn	Archivio di Stato, Mantua
AG	Archivio Gonzaga
CD	Cancelleria ducale
CeS	Casa e stato
LS	Lettere sciolte
RD	Ramo ducale
b.	busta (box)

CHRONOLOGY

- 1442 Alfonso V, king of Aragon, conquers Naples
- 1454 Treaty of Lodi
- 1455 Alfonso Borgia becomes Pope Callixtus III (r. 1455–1458)
- 1458 Ferrante I becomes king of Naples; Silvio Bartolomeo Piccolomini becomes Pope Pius II (r. 1458–1464)
- 1464 Pietro Barbo becomes Pope Paul II (r. 1464–1471)
- 1465 Neapolitan War of Succession ends
- 1469 Lorenzo de' Medici becomes de facto leader of Florence (r. 1469–1492)
- 1471 Francesco della Rovere becomes Pope Sixtus IV (r. 1471–1484)
- 1473 Eleonora d'Aragona marries Ercole d'Este, duke of Ferrara
- 1476 Beatrice d'Aragona marries Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary
- 1478–1480 Pazzi War
- 1479 Ludovico Sforza becomes duke of Bari (r. 1479–1500)
- 1482–1484 War of Ferrara
- 1484 Giovanni Battista Cybo becomes Pope Innocent VIII (r. 1484–1492)
- 1485–1486 Baronial Rebellion
- 1487 Ippolito d'Este travels to Hungary
- 1489 Ferrante I excommunicated
- 1490 Matthias Corvinus dies; Isabella d'Este marries Francesco II Gonzaga
- 1491 Beatrice and Alfonso d'Este marry Ludovico and Anna Sforza respectively
- 1492 Rodrigo Borgia becomes Pope Alexander VI (r. 1492–1503); Lorenzo de' Medici dies
- 1493 Ippolito d'Este becomes cardinal; Eleonora d'Aragona dies
- 1494 Ferrante I dies (Jan); Alfonso II d'Aragona becomes king of Naples (Jan); Ludovico Sforza becomes *de jure* duke of Milan (r. 1494–1499); Ippolito returns to Italy (Aug); invasion of Charles VIII (Sep).
- 1495 Charles VIII conquers Naples (Feb); Charles VIII loses Naples, Ferrandino d'Aragona reclaims Naples (July); French expelled from Italy following Battle of Fornovo (July).
- 1496 Ippolito returns to Italy permanently
- 1497 Ippolito exchanges see of Esztergom for see of Eger
- 1498 Charles VIII dies; Louis XII becomes king of France

- 1499 Louis XII invades Milan; Ludovico flees
- 1500 Treaty of Granada splits kingdom of Naples between Spain and France
- 1501 Beatrice returns to Naples
- 1503 Francesco Todeschini becomes Pope Pius III (r. September to October 1503); Giuliano della Rovere becomes Pope Julius II (r. 1503–1513)
- 1504 Ferrandino d'Aragona dies; Ferdinand II of Aragon reclaims all of Naples, removing French rule.
- 1505 Ercole d'Este dies
- 1506 Ferdinand II of Aragon arrives in Naples with his wife, Germaine de Foix
- 1508 Beatrice d'Aragona dies

INTRODUCTION*

IN 1497, A lavishly illustrated volume of biographies dedicated to Beatrice d'Aragona, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia (1457–1508), was published in the northern Italian city of Ferrara.¹ Jacopo Filippo Foresti's *De plurimis claris selectisque mulieribus* (1497) featured one hundred and eighty-six women, one of the largest to have ever been published in the tradition of Giovanni Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (1374).² The accounts were ordered chronologically, beginning with Eve and ending with a number of contemporary Italian women deemed worthy of praise. One of the final women featured was Beatrice's sister, Eleonora d'Aragona, duchess of Ferrara, (1450–1493).³ Eleonora was praised for her prudent administration, skills Foresti claimed were given to her by their mother, Isabella di Chiaromonte, Queen of Naples (1424–1465).⁴ Both Isabella and Eleonora's woodcut portraits are very similar, each woman wielding the sceptre of power in refer-

* All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. The original language only appears where the source is unpublished.

1 Albert Berzeviczy, *Beatrice d'Aragona* (Milan: Corbaccio, 1931); Péter Farbaky, "The Sterile Queen and the Illegitimate Son: Beatrice of Aragon and John Corvinus's Rivalry at Matthias Corvinus's Court," in *Artem ad vitam. Kniha k počtě Ivo Hlobila*, ed. Helena Dáňová, Klára Meziohoráková, and Dalibor Prix (Prague: Artefactum, 2012), 419–28; Jessica O'Leary, "Wife, Widow, Exiled Queen: Beatrice d'Aragona (1457–1508) and Kinship in Early Modern Europe," in *Women on the Edge in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Aidan Norrie and Lisa Hopkins (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 139–58.

2 Jacopo Filippo Foresti, *De plurimis claris selectisque mulieribus* (Ferrara: Laurentius de Rubeis de Valentia, 1497). Foresti was an Augustinian monk originally from Solto Collina in the territory of Bergamo, who had spent much of his life in Brescia. See Stephen Kolsky, "The Containment of Court Women: The *De plurimis claris selectisque mulieribus* (1497 and 1521)," in his *The Ghost of Boccaccio: Writings on Famous Women in Renaissance Italy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 117–47, at 117. Foresti's text was effectively a censored version of Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's *Gynevra de le clare donne* (1492) favoured by Eleonora d'Aragona's daughter, Isabella d'Este: Carolyn James, "In Praise of Women: Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's *Gynevra de le clare donne*," in *The Intellectual Dynamism of the High Middle Ages*, ed. Clare Monagle (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), 297–315.

3 Foresti, *De plurimis claris*, fols. 161^v–63^r. On Eleonora, see Luciano Chiappini, *Eleonora d'Aragona, prima duchessa di Ferrara* (Rovigo: S.T.E.R., 1956) and Werner Gundersheimer, "Women, Learning and Power: Eleonora of Aragon and the Court of Ferrara," in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. Patricia Labalme (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 43–65; Jessica O'Leary, "Politics, Pedagogy, and Praise: Three Literary Texts Dedicated to Eleonora d'Aragona, Duchess of Ferrara," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 19, no. 2 (2016): 285–307; Valentina Prisco, "Eleonora d'Aragona e la costruzione di un 'corpo' politico al femminile (1450–1493)" (PhD diss., Università di Salerno/Universidad de Zaragoza, 2019).

4 Foresti, *De plurimis claris*, fol. 151^v. See Irma Schiappoli, "Isabella di Chiaromonte, regina di Napoli," *Archivio storico italiano* 98 (1940): 109–24; Pasquale Corsi and Maria Greco, eds., *Isabella Chiaromonte di Copertino regina di Napoli* (Galatina: Panico, 2017). On queens during this period, see Giovanna Motta, ed., *Regine e sovrane. Il potere, la politica, la vita privata* (Milano: Motta, 2002); Claudia Corfiati, "Isabella di Chiaromonte: ritratto di una regina," in *La letteratura e la storia: atti del IX Congresso Nazionale dell'ADI, Bologna–Rimini, 21–24 settembre 2005*, ed. Elisabetta Menetti and Carlo Varotti (Bologna: Gedit, 2007), 415–22; Claudia Corfiati, *Il principe e la regina. Storie e letteratura nel Mezzogiorno aragonese* (Firenze: Olschki, 2009).

ence to their brief periods deputizing for their husbands.⁵ Beatrice was also linked to her Neapolitan origins; Isabella's woodcut was inserted into the final part of the prologue, instructing the Queen of Hungary and Bohemia to learn from the example of other illustrious women, including those closely related to her.⁶

Beatrice and Eleonora, two princesses of Naples, led illustrious lives driven by their connection to Italy's sole kingdom.⁷ At the time of their birth, the Aragonese kingdom of Naples was the largest sovereign state in Renaissance Italy, stretching over seven hundred kilometres from Reggio Calabria on the Mediterranean shore to Teramo between the Apennines and the Adriatic.⁸ Although the French House of Anjou held the kingdom for almost two centuries, their dynasty began to decline around 1400.⁹ Sensing an opportunity, the sisters' grandfather, King of Aragon, Alfonso V (r. 1442–1458), conquered Naples and brought a new era in Neapolitan history.¹⁰

5 Foresti, *De plurimis claris*, fol. 151^v and fol. 161^v. On deputizing, see M. T. Guerra Medici, "Regine, madri e reggenti nel diritto medievale," *Rivista di storia del diritto italiano* 70 (1997): 209–45 and M. T. Guerra Medici, *Donne di governo nell'Europa moderna* (Rome: Viella, 2005).

6 Foresti, *De plurimis claris*, no pagination.

7 Michele Maria Vecchioni, *Notizie di Eleonora e di Beatrice d'Aragona figlie di Ferdinando I Re di Napoli maritate con Ercole I, Duca di Ferrara, e di Modena, e con Mattia Corvino Re di Ungheria* (Naples: Vincenzo Orsino, 1791). On princesses during this period, see Katherine J. Walsh, "La principessa in epoca premoderna: il suo ruolo e il suo campo d'azione," in *La società dei principi nell'Europa moderna (secoli XVI–XVII)*, ed. Christof Dipper and M. Rosa (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005), 263–94. On the education of elite young women: Monica Ferrari, "Educazione femminile: cultura delle donne, cultura per le donne tra tardo Medioevo e prima età moderna," in *Nuove frontiere per la storia di genere*, ed. Laura Guidi and Maria Rosaria, 3 vols. (Salerno: Università degli studi di Salerno, 2013), 3:19–30.

8 On the history of Naples, see Vittorio Gleijeses, *La storia di Napoli: dalle origini ai nostri giorni* (Naples: Società Editrice Napoletana, 1974).

9 Beginning in the thirteenth century, kings from the Capetian House of Anjou reigned over Naples. Descendants of the French kings, the first Angevin king was crowned in 1282, and his ancestors held vast territory across southern France, Hungary, Croatia, Albania, and Poland for much of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. After a period of decline and unclear succession, René of Anjou (r. 1435–1442) lost Naples to the King of Aragon, Alfonso V. Alfonso had been gifted Naples by the childless Giovanna II (r. 1414–1435), the last Capetian ruler of the kingdom. However, their relationship deteriorated, and Giovanna reneged on her promise just prior to her death in 1435. See Giuseppe Galasso, *Il Regno di Napoli: Il mezzogiorno angioino e aragonese: (1266–1494)* (Torino: UTET, 1992). The ensuing struggle between René and Alfonso eventually resulted in an Aragonese victory in 1442 and the beginning of the House of Trastámara's reign. See David Abulafia, *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms, 1200–1500: The Struggle for Dominion* (London: Longman, 1997).

10 The classic texts on Alfonso's reign are Ernesto Pontieri, *Alfonso il Magnanimo, re di Napoli, (1435–1458)* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1975) and Alan Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous: King of Aragon, Naples, and Sicily, 1396–1458* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). See also Ernesto Pontieri, "Alfonso V d'Aragona nel quadro della politica italiana del suo tempo," in *Estudios sobre Alfonso el Magnánimo con motivo del quinto centenario de su muerte. Curso de conferencias (mayo de 1959)* (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 1960), 245–307; Alfonso Caridi, *Alfonso il Magnanimo. Il re del Rinascimento che fece di Napoli la capitale del Mediterraneo* (Rome: Salerno, 2018). On the Crown of Aragon, see Flocel Sabaté, ed., *The Crown of Aragon, A Singular Mediterranean Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). On Aragon, see Daniela Pietragalla, "La Corona d'Aragona ai tempi di Alfonso il Magnanimo," *Archivio Storico Italiano* 156, no. 2 (576) (1998): 367–76.

Inheriting a capital practically in ruins, Alfonso V and his son Ferrante I (r. 1458–1494), revitalized the city, transforming it into a thriving urban hub and artistic centre.¹¹ Alfonso V committed to a host of public works to improve the city's defences and reputation:¹² he repaired the city walls, founded the famed Academy of Naples helmed by Giovanni Pontano, and installed the imposing triumphal arches at the entrance of the Castel Nuovo to memorialize his defeat of the Angevins.¹³ As the city grew, so did its reputation further north, which attracted prominent scholars, artists, and musicians to the court.¹⁴ Alfonso thus became involved in the politics of the Italian peninsula, interacting with its various rulers to ensure that he was not left out of key alliances which could protect him against potential French pretenders.¹⁵ He largely left governance in Aragon to his wife Maria of Castile and his brother Juan II.¹⁶

By 1500, Naples' population had tripled to as many as one hundred and fifty thousand residents living within the city walls.¹⁷ Following Alfonso's example, his son, Ferrante I, expanded the walls and embarked on a number of ambitious construction projects which slowed following his death. Ferrante I's patronage changed the face of the city: ruins transformed into grand monuments which memorialized his many military victories.¹⁸ Orchards and public gardens disappeared in favour of residential buildings; and the opulent Castel Nuovo epitomized the ascent of the Aragonese dynasty.¹⁹

11 According to the Ferrarese ambassador, Naples was in ruins. See Eleni Sakellariou, *Southern Italy in the Late Middle Ages: Demographic, Institutional and Economic Change in the Kingdom of Naples, c.1440–c.1530* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 105n166.

12 See Guido M. Cappelli, *Maestas: politica e pensiero politico nella Napoli aragonese (1443–1503)* (Rome: Carocci, 2016) and Bianca de Divitiis, "Alfonso I of Naples and the Art of Building: Castel Nuovo in a European Context," in *A Renaissance Architecture of Power: Princely Palaces in the Italian Quattrocento*, ed. Marco Folin, Flavia Cantatore, and Silvia Beltramo, 320–53 (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

13 On the arch, see George L. Hersey, *The Aragonese Arch at Naples, 1443–1475* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973). On politics and culture, see Jerry H. Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) and Giuliana Vitale, *Ritualità monarchica, cerimonie e pratiche devozionali nella Napoli aragonese* (Salerno: Laveglia, 2006).

14 Alfonso drew on different visual identities as needed: see Fulvio Delle Donne, *Alfonso il Magnanimo e l'invenzione dell'umanesimo monarchico: ideologia e strategie di legittimazione alla corte aragonese di Napoli* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo, 2015). On music, see Allan W. Atlas, *Music at the Aragonese Court of Naples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

15 See Georges Peyronnet, "Distant Origins of the Italian Wars: Political Relations between France and Italy in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494–95: Antecedents and Effects*, ed. David Abulafia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), 29–54 esp. 37–41. On the political situation, see Riccardo Fubini, *Italia quattrocentesca: Politica e diplomazia nell'età di Lorenzo il Magnifico* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1994).

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

17 Population numbers in the fifteenth century vary from fifteen thousand to sixty thousand: Sakellariou, *Southern Italy in the Late Middle Ages*, 105n170.

18 See Nicole Riesenberger, "King of the Renaissance: Art and Politics at the Neapolitan Court of Ferrante I, 1458–1494" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2016).

19 Sakellariou, *Southern Italy in the Late Middle Ages*, 105.

Over the course of his reign, Ferrante I's cunning outwitted Angevin pretenders, local barons, and inspired fear in rivals further north.²⁰ A consummate tactician, he survived many efforts to remove him from the throne.²¹ He did not, however, ignore diplomacy and the benefits of an alliance.²² He therefore, like many before and after him, planted his daughters and granddaughters in courts across Europe.²³

This book explores how Eleonora and Beatrice, daughters of Ferrante I, King of Naples, negotiated familial, marital, and political duties from the late 1470s through to the early 1500s. In doing so, we may glean new insights about the role of elite women in dynastic politics.²⁴ While marriage may have set the stage, Eleonora and Beatrice found a degree of agency through their targeted use of skills in language, diplomacy, and the navigation of familial and geographic relations. During Eleonora and Beatrice's married lives, their father demanded that they use their respective positions as consorts in the northern Duchy of Ferrara and the kingdom of Hungary to influence local affairs in Ferrante's favour.²⁵ This book, therefore, is about these sisters' abilities and, arguably, how they were enabled or diminished by the dynastic system in place around them.²⁶

Many men in elite dynastic networks used their female relatives to extend their family's influence in medieval and early modern Europe. Outside of Italy, elite women acting as inter-dynastic mediators was a common phenomenon across Europe, from the Medi-

20 See *Regis Ferdinandi primi instructionum liber (10 maggio 1486–10 maggio 1488): corredato di note storiche e biografiche*, ed. Luigi Volpicella (Naples: Pierro, 1916); Ernesto Pontieri, *Per la storia del regno di Ferrante I d'Aragona re di Napoli. Studi e ricerche* (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1969); Francesco Storti and Francesco Senatore, *Poteri, relazioni, guerra nel regno di Ferrante d'Aragona* (Naples: FedOA–Federico II University Press, 2011); and Francesco Storti, *El buen marinero. Psicología política e ideología monárquica al tempo di Ferdinando I d'Aragona* (Rome: Viella, 2014).

21 David Abulafia, "Introduction: From Ferrante I to Charles VIII," in *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494–95: Antecedents and Effects*, ed. David Abulafia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), 1–28, at 3–7.

22 On his diplomacy, see Alessio Russo, Francesco Senatore, and Francesco Storti, eds., *Ancora su poteri, relazioni, guerra nel regno di Ferrante d'Aragona. Studi sulle corrispondenze diplomatiche II* (Naples: FedOA–Federico II University Press, 2020). See also Francesco Senatore, "Ferrante d'Aragona (1424/31–94)," in *The Encyclopedia of Diplomacy*, ed. G. Martel (Hoboken: Wiley, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118885154.dipl0094>.

23 See Stephen Rhys Davies, "Marriage and the Politics of Friendship: The Family of Charles II of Anjou, King of Naples (1285–1309)" (PhD diss., University College London, 1998).

24 See further Susan Broomhall, "Diplomatic Emotions: International Relations as Gendered Acts of Power," in *The Routledge History of Emotions in Europe, 1100–1800*, ed. Andrew Lynch and Susan Broomhall (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 283–302.

25 Italian migration to Hungary existed: Katalin Prajda, *Network and Migration in Early Renaissance Florence, 1378–1433: Friends of Friends in the Kingdom of Hungary* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018). See also Katalin Prajda, "Florentines' Trade in the Kingdom of Hungary in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries: Trade Routes, Networks, and Commodities," *The Hungarian Historical Review / Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, n.s., 6, no. 1 (2017): 40–62.

26 On this familial-political model, see M. T. Guerra Medici, "Family Affairs and Affairs of State. A Mediterranean Model?", *Rivista internazionale di diritto comune* 16 (2005): 141–76.

terranean in the south to the Black Sea in the east.²⁷ In late thirteenth-century England, four Plantagenet and Capetian women collaborated with each other and their kin to negotiate peace and exchange favours during a tense period in Anglo-French relations.²⁸ In the fourteenth century, Anne of Bohemia served as a vital link during the tumultuous period of the Western Schism as an intermediary for her father, Charles IV, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Bohemia (r. 1346–1378), and King Richard II (r. 1367–1400).²⁹ In the fifteenth century, Catherine of Lancaster was able to strengthen ties with Portugal and England while she was regent (1406–1416) because her half-sister, Philippa of Lancaster, was Queen of Portugal (r. 1387–1415) and her brother, Henry IV, King of England (r. 1399–1413).³⁰

Similarly, four queens of Navarre, Aragon, France, and Hungary and Bohemia, all first cousins, reigned simultaneously during the chaotic turn of the sixteenth century. Following their own agendas, they undermined or supported one another during a rapidly-changing political environment.³¹ But perhaps the most famous use of dynastic marriage belongs to the Habsburg dynasty, providing the origin of the phrase: *Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria nube* (Let others wage war: you, blessed Austria, marry).³² As late as the seventeenth century, the great Habsburg empress Marie Theresa (r. 1740–1780) ordered her daughter Marie Antoinette (1755–1793), Queen of France, to regularly report to the Austrian ambassador.³³ Women, therefore, were sent across Europe to create or enhance relationships between the continent's ruling elite.³⁴

Fortunately for Ferrante I, he had had eight legitimate children, at least nine illegitimate children, and over thirty grandchildren including fifteen legitimate (see figure 1 above) to marry. His eldest illegitimate son had ten children, of which nine entered

²⁷ See Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly and Adam Morton, eds., *Queens Consort, Cultural Transfer and European Politics, c. 1500–1800* (London: Routledge, 2017) and Joan-Lluís Palos and Magdalena S. Sanchez, eds., *Early Modern Dynastic Marriages and Cultural Transfer* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016).

²⁸ Kathleen B. Neal, "Royal Women and Intra-Familial Diplomacy in Late Thirteenth-Century Anglo-French Relations," *Women's History Review* 30, no. 5 (2021): 790–804.

²⁹ Kristen L. Geaman, "Beyond Good Queen Anne: Anne of Bohemia, Patronage, and Politics," in *Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400: Moving beyond the Exceptionalist Debate*, ed. Heather J. Tanner (Cham: Springer, 2019), 67–89.

³⁰ Rebeca Gainza Fernández, "Diplomacia, parentesco y poder: las relaciones políticas entre las casas de Trastámara y Lancaster (1388–1418)," *Ucrea: Repositorio Abierto de la Universidad de Cantabria*, September 27, 2017, <https://repositorio.unican.es/xmlui/handle/10902/12229>.

³¹ Elena Woodacre, "Cousins and Queens: Familial Ties, Political Ambition and Epistolary Diplomacy in Renaissance Europe," in Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James, eds., *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (London: Routledge, 2016), 30–45.

³² Annemarie Jordan Gschwend, "For the Love of Dynasty: Habsburg Wives, Widows and Nuns," *The Court Historian* 21, no. 1 (2016): 54–58.

³³ Carolyn Harris, *Queenship and Revolution in Early Modern Europe: Henrietta Maria and Marie Antoinette* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 44.

³⁴ There is a thriving Iberian historiography: see Jean-Pierre Jardin, José Manuel Nieto Soria, Patricia Rochwert-Zuili, and Hélène Thieulin-Pardo, *Cartas de mujeres en la Europa medieval: España, Francia, Italia, Portugal (siglos XI–XV)* (Madrid: La Ergástula, 2018).

advantageous marriage contracts. Ferrante had a clear strategy which involved pairing legitimate children with prestigious families outside of the kingdom of Naples and illegitimate children with members of the Neapolitan nobility.³⁵ There were some exceptions, which usually coincided with moments of crisis during Ferrante's reign. Yet, the purpose of dynastic marriage was not merely to formalize alliances between two clans; it also placed daughters and granddaughters in positions of influence at rival courts.³⁶

Eleonora and Beatrice were critical to Ferrante I's diplomacy, but their agency has been either obscured in historiography or rarely viewed as a distinct and impactful element of Aragonese policy. Yet, the daughters, in addition to their mother, nieces, and half-sisters, all featured at strategic moments in Ferrante's reign. Ferrante wrote letters to these women, and they to him, to rally the dynastic network behind political and military campaigns which were in the best interests of the clan. The attention that the pragmatic and ruthless king paid to his kinswomen during these watershed moments, and the relative peace with which he left them in others, reveals the consistent value their actions as intermediaries, mediators, and agents had for Italy's most powerful ruler.

Using the remaining correspondence and diplomatic reports which survive from this period, this book will explore how Eleonora and Beatrice remained tied to Naples throughout their lives, though the nature of this relationship changed over time. Studying their actions as diplomatic actors will reveal that the political success of a princess was not solely based on cleverness or shrewdness but also depended on their relationship with their husbands, cultural differences, and whether they could birth an heir.³⁷ An heir meant they could continue as a dowager queen or regent in the event their husbands died before them.³⁸ Having many children also opened the possibility of multiple marriage alliances, leading to strategic relationships independent of her father's influence.³⁹

Characterizing this behaviour as political opens up the possibility of three key insights: it will expose the role of women within the broader Aragonese diplomatic net-

35 On these southern courts, see Fulvio Delle Donne and Giovanni Pesiri, eds., *Principi e corti nel Rinascimento meridionale: i Caetani e le altre signorie nel Regno di Napoli* (Rome: Viella, 2020).

36 The seminal text is Paula Sutter Fichtner, "Dynastic Marriage in Sixteenth-Century Habsburg Diplomacy and Statecraft: An Interdisciplinary Approach," *The American Historical Review* 81, no. 2 (1976): 243–65. See further: John Watkins, *After Lavinia: A Literary History of Premodern Marriage Diplomacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

37 See Catherine Ferrari, "Kinship and the Marginalized Consort: Giovanna d'Austria at the Medici Court," *Early Modern Women* 11, no. 1 (2016): 45–68.

38 See Serena Ferente, "Women and the State," in *The Italian Renaissance State*, ed. Andrea Gamberini and Isabella Lazzarini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 345–67; Serena Ferente, "Women, Lifecycles, and Social Mobility in Late Medieval Italy," in *Social Mobility in Medieval Italy (1100–1500)*, ed. Sandro Carocci and Isabella Lazzarini (Rome: Viella, 2018), 217–27. There are many examples outside Italy, but the French court had a number of powerful regents, including Louise of Savoy and Catherine de' Medici: Susan Broomhall, ed., *Women, Power, and Authority at the French Court, 1483–1563* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

39 See, for example, Christina Antenhofer, "From Local Signori to European High Nobility. The Gonzaga Family Networks in the Fifteenth Century," in *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond*, ed. Christopher H. Johnson, David Warren Sabean, and Francesca Trivellato (New York: Berghahn, 2011), 55–75.

work; highlight the degrees of agency for women within this network; and, finally, show how dynastic fidelity was closely aligned to fertility and political circumstance. Through the story of Beatrice and Eleonora, this book therefore contributes to the field of women and diplomacy, examining the sisters' lives to reveal their concerns, hopes, and schemes within the wider world of fifteenth and sixteenth-century Europe.⁴⁰

Marriage, Politics, and Diplomacy

It was very difficult to separate marriage and politics at an elite level in premodern Europe.⁴¹ Love matches were virtually non-existent because dynastic alliances were so deeply embedded in fifteenth and sixteenth-century diplomatic practices.⁴² A wise match could build an empire while an ill-fated pairing could do the opposite.⁴³ For this reason, the process of negotiating, signing, and marrying during this period required time and careful evaluation of each party's credentials.⁴⁴ Decisions were made based on many factors—prestige, a generous dowry, even beauty—but these were usually subsumed into the most important ingredient of all: power.⁴⁵

Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, Italy was divided into a number of city-states.⁴⁶ During the fifteenth century, the largest and most powerful polities were the republics of Venice and Florence, the duchy of Milan, the papacy, and of course the kingdom of Naples.⁴⁷ The two republics generally restricted marriage to prominent local

40 See further: Giovanna Casagrande, *Donne tra Medioevo ed età moderna in Italia* (Perugia: Morlacchi, 2004); Ottavia Niccoli, *Rinascimento al femminile* (Rome: Laterza, 2006); Letizia Arcangeli and Susanna Peyronel, eds., *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento* (Rome: Viella, 2008); Benedetta Craveri, *Amanti e regine. Il potere delle donne* (Milano: Adelphi, 2013); Antonella Cagnolati and Sandra Rossetti, eds., *Donne e potere: paradossi e ambiguità di una difficile relazione* (Rome: Aracne, 2015).

41 For an excellent case-study, see Carolyn James, *A Renaissance Marriage: The Political and Personal Alliance of Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga, 1490–1519* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020). For a general survey of marriage, see Silvana Seidel Menchi, ed., *Marriage in Europe, 1400–1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

42 See Margaret M. McGowan, *Dynastic Marriages 1612/1615: A Celebration of the Habsburg and Bourbon Unions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

43 Dynastic marriage led to the empire of Charles V: Geoffrey Parker, *Emperor: A New Life of Charles V* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

44 See the negotiations which led to Eleonora and Ercole's marriage in Jane Fair Bestor, "Kinship and Marriage in the Politics of an Italian Ruling House: The Este of Ferrara in the Reign of Ercole I (1471–1505)" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1992).

45 See Jacqueline Murray, ed., *Marriage in Premodern Europe: Italy and Beyond* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2012); David d'Avray, *Papacy, Monarchy and Marriage, 860–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and John Watkins, "Marriage Diplomacy," in *The Encyclopedia of Diplomacy*, ed. G. Martel (Hoboken: Wiley, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118885154.dip10448>.

46 See Andrea Gamberini and Isabella Lazzarini, *The Italian Renaissance State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

47 See Alison M. Brown, *The Renaissance*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), especially Chapters Six and Seven.

families with some exceptions.⁴⁸ By contrast, Naples, Milan, and the papacy frequently intermarried with the numerous smaller states largely located in the central and northern regions.⁴⁹ Primarily principalities, these states were usually nominal fiefs of the Holy Roman Empire or the papacy. The former included the marquisate of Mantua, Saluzzo, and Monferrato while the latter were known as the Papal States and included the Duchy of Ferrara and smaller principalities such as Ravenna, Rimini, and Forlì (see figure 4).⁵⁰ Ordinarily, women from more powerful states married down when it was strategically important to do so. Conversely, princely rulers often aspired to greater influence, and so vigorously pursued marriages with higher-ranked families for prestige or peace.⁵¹

Despite the importance of dynastic marriage, political historians have not always seen dynastic wives as diplomatic agents. In his seminal *Renaissance Diplomacy*, first published in 1955, Garrett Mattingly argued that the institution of the Italian League (1454) was the origin of diplomacy as it is understood today.⁵² The Italian League, created after the Treaty of Lodi (1454), established an alliance between the Republic of Venice, the Duchy of Milan, the Republic of Florence, the Papal States, and the Kingdom of Naples.⁵³ No signatory could invade another without violating the terms of the agreement.⁵⁴ This led to the professionalization of a diplomatic corps, where resident ambassadors became necessary to work out disputes through negotiation without recourse to war. While Mattingly remained a touchstone for almost five decades, Italophone historians began to question if contemporary diplomacy was truly limited to professionals. Isabella Lazzarini and Daniela Frigo, among others, have demonstrated that diplomacy was not an exclusive practice, but rather was conducted by a number of diverse individuals and was responsive to changing social conditions, court customs, and economic structures.⁵⁵ More broadly, the rise of global history has prompted useful dialogues concern-

48 Stanley Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve Essays on Patrician Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). Florence began to change with the marriage of Clarice Orsini to Lorenzo de' Medici: Natalie R. Tomas, *The Medici Women: Gender and Power in Renaissance Florence* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

49 See, for example, the marriage negotiations discussed in Christine Shaw, "Alexander VI, Lucrezia Borgia and Her Marriage to Alfonso d'Este," *Iacobus: Revista de Estudios Jacobeos y Medievales* 19 (2005): 219–40.

50 See Trevor Dean, "The Courts," *The Journal of Modern History* 67 (1995): 136–51 and Isabella Lazzarini, *L'Italia degli stati territoriali: secoli XIII–XV* (Rome: Laterza, 2003).

51 See the discussion in Carolyn James, "Florence and Ferrara Dynastic Marriage and Politics," in *The Medici: Citizens and Masters*, ed. Robert Black and John E. Law (Florence: Villa I Tatti, 2015), 365–78.

52 Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London: Cape, 1955).

53 On the peace it produced, see Isabella Lazzarini, ed., *A Cultural History of Peace in the Renaissance (1450–1648)* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

54 Peyronnet, "Distant Origins of the Italian Wars," 40–41.

55 Isabella Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict. Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350–1520* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) and Daniela Frigo, *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Catherine Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Tracey Sowerby, "Early Modern Diplomatic History," *History*

ing the informal and gendered nature of much medieval and early modern diplomacy and the limitations posed by an ambassador-only model of analysis,⁵⁶ shifting the focus to elite women and the role they played in the informal diplomatic arena.⁵⁷

Dynastic wives were expected by their husbands and fathers to play a mediator-like role between their natal and marital families throughout the duration of their marriages.⁵⁸ In areas where small city-states dominated such as Italy and Germany, this phenomenon is well-recorded both in the archives and in the historiography.⁵⁹ For example, the rulers of the small Italian city-state of Mantua commonly married highly ranked German women throughout the fifteenth century to improve their prestige, thanks to their wives' princely connections, before moving to Italian brides.⁶⁰ In Milan, women married into nearby courts in Lombardy and on the border with France to cultivate a wider influence in the region.⁶¹ As Milan grew more powerful, these women's ambitions were mirrored in their prestigious marriage contracts; women were sent to and from the kingdom of Naples, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the kingdom of Poland, to name a few examples.⁶²

Compass 14, no. 9 (2016): 441–56; Isabella Lazzarini and Monica Azzolini, eds., *Italian Renaissance Diplomacy: A Sourcebook* (Toronto: PIMS, 2017).

56 See Corina Bastian, Eva Kathrin Dade, Hillard von Thiesen, and Christian Windler, eds., *Das Geschlecht der Diplomatie: Geschlechterrollen in den Außenbeziehungen vom Spätmittelalter bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Böhlau, 2014); A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings, eds., *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c.1410–1800* (New York: Routledge, 2017); and Maurits Alexander Ebben and Louis Sicking, eds., *Beyond Ambassadors: Consuls, Missionaries, and Spies in Premodern Diplomacy*, *Rulers and Elites* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

57 See the essays in Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James, eds., *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (London: Routledge, 2016) as well as Catherine Fletcher, “The Ladies’ Peace Revisited: Gender, Counsel and Diplomacy,” in *Queenship and Counsel in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Joanne Paul, Helen Matheson-Pollock, and Catherine Fletcher (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 111–33; Tracey Amanda Sowerby, “Early Modern Queens Consort and Dowager and Diplomatic Gifts,” *Women’s History Review* 30, no. 5 (2020): 723–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2020.1827732>.

58 See Carolyn James, “Women and Diplomacy in Renaissance Italy,” in Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James, eds., *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (London: Routledge, 2016), 31–47. A useful case study is: Nicola Clark, *Gender, Family, and Politics: The Howard Women, 1485–1558* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

59 See Ebba Severidt, *Familie, Verwandtschaft und Karriere bei den Gonzaga* (Leinfelden-Echterdingen: DRW, 2002); on Barbara Gonzaga, see: Christina Antenhofer and Valentina Nucera, *Barbara Gonzaga: die Briefe (1455–1508)* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2013) and Sarah D. P. Cockram, *Isabella d’Este and Francesco Gonzaga: Power Sharing at the Italian Renaissance Court* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

60 See Sarah D. P. Cockram, *Isabella d’Este and Francesco Gonzaga: Power Sharing at the Italian Renaissance Court* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). For Barbara Gonzaga, see: Christina Antenhofer and Valentina Nucera, *Barbara Gonzaga: die Briefe (1455–1508)* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2013).

61 Maria Nadia Covini, *Donne, emozioni e potere alla corte degli Sforza: da Bianca Maria a Cecilia Gallerani* (Milano: Unicopli, 2012); Maria Nadia Covini, “Tra cure domestiche, sentimenti e politica. La corrispondenza di Bianca Maria Visconti (1450–1468),” *Reti Medievali Rivista* 10 (2009): 315–49.

62 For example, see Ippolita Maria Sforza who married Alfonso II: Evelyn S. Welch, “Between Milan

In Naples, Ferrante's first wife Isabella di Chiaromonte (d. 1465), princess of Taranto, was a critical role model for her daughters.⁶³ Ferrante was an illegitimate son, and his succession was contested by both the Angevins and local nobility.⁶⁴ When Ferrante faced the War of Succession (1458–1465), Isabella mediated with her powerful family in the Apulian principality of Taranto to help calm tensions.⁶⁵ Similarly, her granddaughter and namesake, Isabella d'Aragona, married into Milanese nobility and worked as an intermediary between her in-laws and her father.⁶⁶ The marriage of Isabella's half-sister, Sancia, to Goffredo Borgia, youngest son of Pope Alexander VI, was a critical element of a peace treaty between the Aragonese and the pope, and the marriage of Juana II—also known as Giovannella—to her nephew Ferrandino, helped smooth succession in the 1490s.⁶⁷ Illegitimate granddaughters married nobles within the kingdom and became duchesses of Amalfi, Arce, and Sora, and even a princess of Altamura, to keep watch over challengers to Ferrante's sovereignty.⁶⁸

Eleonora is another example of Ferrante's attempts to keep his enemies under surveillance. In 1473, she married Ercole d'Este (r. 1471–1505), duke of Ferrara, despite the complicated relationship he and the king of Naples shared.⁶⁹ When Ercole was four-

and Naples: Ippolita Maria Sforza, Duchess of Calabria," in *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494–95: Antecedents and Effects*, ed. David Abulafia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), 123–36. On Bianca Maria Sforza, who married Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I, see: Daniela Unterholzner, "Bianca Maria Sforza (1472–1510): Herrschaftliche Handlungsspielräume einer Königin vor dem Hintergrund von Hof, Familie und Dynastie" (PhD diss., University of Innsbruck, 2015).

63 On normative aristocratic female behaviour, see Maria Antonietta Visceglia, *Il bisogno di eternità: i comportamenti aristocratici a Napoli in età moderna* (Naples: Guida, 1988), 141–74.

64 On the relationship between Neapolitan kings and the nobility, see Denys Hay and John E. Law, *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance, 1380–1530* (London: Longman, 1989), 185–90 and Elisabetta Scarton and Francesco Senatore, *Parlamenti generali a Napoli in età aragonese* (Naples: FedOA–Federico II University Press, 2018).

65 Rosanna Alaggio, "Conciencia y sentido del poder en la comunicación epistolar de Isabella Chiaromonte (1456–1465)," in *Autoridad, poder e influencia: mujeres que hacen historia*, ed. Henar Gallego Franco and María del Carmen García Herrero (Barcelona: Icaria, 2018), 15–29. On the tensions, see David Abulafia, "The Inception of the Reign of King Ferrante I of Naples: The Events of Summer 1458 in the Light of Documentation from Milan," in *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494–95: Antecedents and Effects*, ed. David Abulafia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), 71–90.

66 Francesca M. Vaglianti, "Governare, io donna: Isabella d'Aragona principessa delle due Italie," in *Con animo virile: donne e potere nel Mezzogiorno medievale, secoli XI–XV*, ed. Patrizia Mainoni (Rome: Viella, 2011), 455–84. See also Carlo Canetta, "Le sponalie di Casa Sforza con Casa d'Aragona," *Archivio storico lombardo* 9 (1882): 136–44.

67 See discussion in Chapters Three and Four.

68 See Aragonese family (figure 1).

69 Ferrara was a small, marshy city-state located about halfway between the republics of Florence and Venice. Less prestigious than its republican neighbours, the Este rulers began looking for ways to ennoble themselves. Leonello d'Este (r. 1441–50) established Ferrara as a cultural centre favoured by scholars like Guarino Veronese, artists, and musicians. His reign was followed by that of Borso d'Este (r. 1450–1471) who acquired the titles of duke of Modena and Reggio from the Holy Roman Emperor in 1452, and duke of Ferrara from Pope Paul II in 1471 (see figure 2). See Trevor Dean, *Land and Power in Late Medieval Ferrara: The Rule of the Este, 1350–1450* (Cambridge:

teen years old, he and his younger brother were sent to Naples to keep Ferrante company.⁷⁰ Ferrante was eight years older and the young men rode, hunted, and socialized together at the royal court.⁷¹ While King Alfonso favoured Ercole, and left him a number of privileges in his will, Ferrante did not honour his father's promised titles and territories. Ercole did not take the news well. During the Neapolitan War of Succession, Ercole deserted Ferrante and accepted a mercenary contract from the French.⁷² The king did not forget Ercole's infidelity. The lack of trust between the two men required careful navigation, particularly by those obliged to both, like Eleonora.

The marriage alliance between Eleonora and Ercole was therefore tactical.⁷³ Although the two courts had a history of intermarriage, this was the first time that a legitimate daughter was married to a duke of Ferrara.⁷⁴ Eleonora was a princess, a rank which placed her above her husband.⁷⁵ While true that Ferrara had increased in prestige following the previous two rulers' program of cultural and artistic patronage, the Este still relied on mercenary contracts from their more powerful neighbours to survive.⁷⁶ They were also vulnerable to attack from the republic of Venice, with whom they shared a border and difficult history. From the Aragonese perspective, the marriage between Ercole and Eleonora was not one of social advancement but rather political surveillance. Following her arrival in Ferrara, Ferrante made it clear that Eleonora was expected to act as an Aragonese diplomatic agent; a complex task given the animosity between her father and her husband.⁷⁷

Ferrante's second daughter Beatrice and her marriage are representative of this expansionist strategy.⁷⁸ Beatrice married the King of Hungary, Hunyadi Mátyás (r. 1458–

Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Marco Folin, *Rinascimento estense. Politica, cultura, istituzioni di un antico stato italiano* (Rome: Laterza, 2001).

70 Ercole was the eldest legitimate son of Niccolò III d'Este, marquis of Ferrara (r. 1393–1441). It is far more likely, therefore, that the illegitimate Borso sought to remove Ercole in order to prevent a coup.

71 Thomas Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara: Ercole d'Este, 1471–1505, and the Invention of a Ducal Capital* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9–12.

72 Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara*, 12.

73 On Ferrante's diplomacy, see Paul M. Dover, "Royal Diplomacy in Renaissance Italy: Ferrante d'Aragona (1458–1494) and His Ambassadors," *Mediterranean Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 57–94.

74 Leonello d'Este married one of Alfonso V's illegitimate daughters, Maria d'Aragona, in 1445. On women at the Estense court, see Maria Serena Mazzi, *Come rose d'inverno: le signore della corte estense nel '400* (Ferrara: Comunicarte, 2004).

75 On the early years of their marriage, see Diana Bryant, "Affection and Loyalty in an Italian Dynastic Marriage: The Early Years of the Marriage of Eleonora d'Aragona and Ercole d'Este, 1472–1480" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2012).

76 For example, on architectural splendour, see Francesco Ceccarelli and Marco Folin, eds., *Delizie estensi: architetture di villa nel Rinascimento italiano ed europeo* (Florence: Olschki, 2009).

77 On her political role, see Marco Folin, "La corte della duchessa: Eleonora d'Aragona a Ferrara," in *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento*, ed. Letizia Arcangeli and Susanna Peyronel (Rome: Viella, 2008), 481–512 and Valentina Prisco, "Eleonora d'Aragona come corpo politico itinerante: il simbolismo del corteo da Napoli a Ferrara (23 maggio–3 luglio 1473)," *Revista de historia Jerónimo Zurita* 96 (2020): 203–27.

78 While Beatrice d'Aragona is less well-known to modern historians, she was identified as one

1490), also known as Matthias Corvinus, by proxy in 1476 and was crowned queen just before Christmas of the same year (see figure 3).⁷⁹ Like his father-in-law, Matthias Corvinus also endured a troubled path to the throne, firstly imprisoned by King Ladislaus V (r. 1440–1457), then being elected after the monarch's sudden death. Corvinus's rule was characterized by continual territorial disputes with the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick III (r. 1452–1493), and incursions on his eastern and southern borders by the Ottoman empire. However, thanks to the Black Army—Hungary's mercenary army composed of Czech, German, Serbian, and Polish soldiers—Corvinus conquered an enormous amount of territory in thirty years. His many conquests included the key regions of Silesia and Moravia—in modern-day Poland and the Czech Republic, respectively—and large parts of Austria, including the Habsburg capital, Vienna (see figure 5). Matthias Corvinus's army also assisted Ferrante I during the Ottoman invasion of Otranto (1480–1481).

Beatrice used her position as Queen of Hungary to procure favours for her father's family, such as additional men-at-arms or prestigious ecclesiastical appointments.⁸⁰ Through her husband, she was able to offer the wealthy and influential metropolitan see of Esztergom to her brother, Giovanni d'Aragona.⁸¹ The archbishopric of Esztergom was a powerful position, responsible for crowning the kings of Hungary, but also ordinarily serving as a key advisor to the crown. Sadly, Giovanni died prematurely in the mid-1480s and the see was left vacant. Childless, Beatrice offered the position to Ippolito d'Este (1479–1520), Eleonora's third-born son, who had recently started his clerical training.⁸² Although Ippolito was only seven years old, Beatrice was able to engineer the appointment through negotiation with her husband. It was important to have a cardinal in the family for the purposes of papal diplomacy, and the archbishopric was an almost

of three prominent widows in the Neapolitan Aragonese dynasty: Kenneth Gouwens, "Female Virtue and the Embodiment of Beauty: Vittoria Colonna in Paolo Giovio's *Notable Men and Women*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (2015): 33–97, at 40.

79 Ágnes Bakos, Beatrix Basics, and Péter Farbaky, eds., *Matthias Corvinus, the King: Tradition and Renewal in the Hungarian Royal Court, 1458–1490* (Budapest: Budapest History Museum, 2008). On Corvinus and the connections between the two courts, see Péter Farbaky and Louis Alexander Waldman, eds., *Italy and Hungary: Humanism and Art in the Early Renaissance* (Florence: Villa I Tatti, 2011) and Péter Farbaky, "Patrons and Patterns: The Connection between the Aragon Dynasty of Naples and the Hungarian Court of Matthias Corvinus," *Journal of the Institute of Art History* 41 (2017): 23–31.

80 See Árpád Mikó, "Beatrice d'Aragona e Il primo rinascimento in Ungheria," in *Italy and Hungary: Humanism and Art in the Early Renaissance*, ed. Péter Farbaky and Louis Alexander Waldman (Florence: Villa I Tatti, 2011), 409–25. On connections between Hungary and Italy, see Katalin Prajda, "Representations of the Florentine Republic at the Royal Court in the Kingdom of Hungary," in *The Routledge History of the Renaissance*, ed. William Caferro (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 373–85.

81 Edith Pásztor, "Aragona, Giovanni d'" in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 3 (Rome: Treccani, 1961), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-d-aragona_res-a1222702-87e6-11dc-8e9d-0016357eee51_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-d-aragona_res-a1222702-87e6-11dc-8e9d-0016357eee51_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

82 Árpád Mikó, "Ippolito I d'Este e Beatrice d'Aragona a Esztergom: una residenza all'italiana in Ungheria," in *Delizie estensi: architetture di villa nel Rinascimento italiano ed europeo*, ed. Francesco Ceccarelli and Marco Folin (Florence: Olschki, 2009), 295–304.

certain road to Rome. However, Beatrice wanted to adopt Ippolito which did not align with Estense expectations. The resulting conflict between the sisters regarding custody shaped much of their relationship from the mid-1480s until Eleonora's death in 1493.

While it is tempting to see favours exchanged among kinfolk as straightforward outcomes of dynastic collaboration, elite women negotiated with their kinfolk according to their own political agendas. Beatrice was, in fact, barren and could not have a son of her own.⁸³ Eleonora, by contrast, quickly had an heir, Alfonso, followed by three other boys, Ferrante, Ippolito, and Sigismondo, between 1476 and 1480 (see figure 2). While Beatrice hoped to adopt Ippolito to protect her should Matthias Corvinus die before her, Eleonora refused.⁸⁴ Politically, it was not in her best interests to leave her son in Hungary for many reasons, the most pressing of which was the fear of a French invasion in Naples and the collapse of the Aragonese dynasty.

Ferrante I had never quite managed to shake the French threat to his crown, which his opponents used to their advantage.⁸⁵ Eventually, King Charles VIII of France invaded Italy in 1494 with disastrous consequences. The French descent is commonly thought to be the beginning of the Italian Wars (1494–1559), a series of wars contesting sovereignty over various states on the Italian peninsula. By the end of the conflict, the kingdom of Spain, united under Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500–1558), emerged victorious.⁸⁶ The new configuration of power would radically change the scope of Italian political autonomy for almost two centuries.

The lead up to the Italian Wars divided rulers—and sisters. Over four chapters, we will see how Beatrice and Eleonora championed and sabotaged each other's plans as their father's power peaked and then waned on the eve of the sixteenth century. Using Eleonora and Beatrice's correspondence, we will see how women linguistically carved out agency within dynastic families.⁸⁷ Their example will enhance our understanding of intradynastic diplomacy and, in particular, how daughters negotiated paternal rhetoric once married.⁸⁸ The sisters' participation and resistance to Aragonese policy confirms that dynastic networks were a participatory space for women to engage in political affairs, but that they exploited each other as necessary for their own survival.

83 On this tension, see Farbaky, "The Sterile Queen and the Illegitimate Son."

84 Beatrice may have been able to rule if Corvinus adopted Ippolito; see Elena Woodacre and Carey Fleiner, eds., *Royal Mothers and Their Ruling Children: Wielding Political Authority from Antiquity to the Early Modern Era* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

85 See Abulafia, "Introduction," in *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy, 1494–95: Antecedents and Effects*, ed. David Abulafia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995), 1–28.

86 On the sixty-year long series of conflicts known as the Italian Wars (1494–1559); see Michael Mallett and Christine Shaw, *The Italian Wars, 1494–1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow: Pearson, 2012).

87 See, for example, Elena Woodacre, "Ruling and Relationships: The Fundamental Basis of the Exercise of Power? The Impact of Marital and Family Relationships on the Reigns of the Queens Regnant of Navarre (1274–1517)," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 46, no. 1 (2016): 167–201.

88 See, for example, Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline van Gent, "In the Name of the Father: Conceptualizing Pater Familias in the Letters of William the Silent's Children," *Renaissance Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2009): 1130–66, at 1131.

Dynastic Children and Futureproofing

At the heart of Eleonora and Beatrice's adult relationship was their dispute over Ippolito. Kin expected each other to share resources, including co-opting children into dynastic projects designed to advance family interests. Married women, however, experienced a divergence in loyalties that their fathers, brothers, and husbands never encountered. As the following chapters will show, Eleonora was devoted to her father at the beginning of her marriage, but her children complicated this relationship. She needed to make decisions that benefited their futures which was sometimes at odds with what her father wanted. Beatrice, by contrast, tried to adopt Ippolito so that he would protect her when he became of age. Eleonora, however, resisted her father and sister's attempts to assert control over Ippolito's future. The conflict reveals another aspect of fifteenth and sixteenth-century diplomatic practice: the importance of children and their future allegiances.⁸⁹

Children were an exceptionally valuable resource for elite Italian families during this period. They represented the continuation of the lineage and the opportunity to forge new household alliances through marriage. For aristocratic Italians, family had a dual meaning: the domestic group/household and the lineage, known as a larger group descended from the same male family head.⁹⁰ Each lineage had its own distinct culture which influenced decision-making within the clan and enhanced enduring feelings of belonging and obedience.⁹¹ Women, such as Eleonora and Beatrice, as well as children sent abroad for their education, always remained part of a broader web of kinfolk despite moving between different households, physically and emotionally, over the course of their lifetime.⁹² Continued membership of mothers within their natal families enabled them to provide alternative opportunities for their children born into their husband's lineage.⁹³ Eleonora's son, Ippolito, thus had access to an elite ecclesiastical position at a young age due to his mother's connections, not his father's.

As a result of these opportunities, children sometimes grew up attached to both their mother and father's familial identities. For example, in notoriously patriarchal Venice,

89 See Enrica Guerra, "L'educazione militare del cardinal Ippolito I d'Este," in *Formare alle professioni. La cultura militare tra passato e presente*, ed. Monica Ferrari and Filippo Ledda (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2011), 101–15.

90 F. W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: The Family Life of the Capponi, Ginori, and Rucellai* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977). See also Thomas Kuehn, *Family and Gender in Renaissance Italy, 1300–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

91 Thomas Kuehn, *Emancipation in Late Medieval Florence: A Legal Institution in Theory and Practice in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 162; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Kinship and Politics in Fourteenth-Century Florence," in *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. David I. Kertzer and Richard P. Saller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 208–28.

92 Lyndan Warner, "Family, Kin and Friendship," in *The Routledge History of Women in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Amanda L. Capern (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 53–76; Kent, *Household and Lineage*, 293.

93 On the reputation of royal mothers, see Carey Fleiner and Elena Woodacre, eds., *Virtuous or Villainess? The Image of the Royal Mother from the Early Medieval to the Early Modern Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Stanley Chojnacki has shown that children had far more complex kinship orientations during the medieval and early modern period than previously understood by scholars.⁹⁴ They were their mother's children as much as their father's and thus possessed "an elaborate kinship orientation [...] whose commitment to their patrilineal kin fuses with links to their mother's relatives."⁹⁵ Children, therefore, could be used in both paternal and maternal networks for political ends.⁹⁶ Eleonora's children were exploited by her father and sister, despite being Este in name, in order to advance the clan's interests.

When children grew up, they were expected to remain loyal to their kin and to the dynasty. Ippolito is an interesting case because both Eleonora and Beatrice considered themselves to be his mother and, therefore, assumed that he would always act in their best interests. The sisters' correspondence and instructions to intermediaries show that both were aware that childhood was a critical site of identity-making, and so they each contested control over Ippolito's younger years.⁹⁷ In the end, Ippolito favoured his Este connection: As an adult, he financially supported Beatrice, but did not act as her agent in either Rome or Ferrara, as Chapter Four shows.

While historians have debated the extent to which fifteenth and sixteenth-century individuals understood childhood as a distinct stage in the life cycle, much recent historiography has put forth the notion that parents formed affective relationships with their children and sought to ensure their welfare during their formative years.⁹⁸ During this period, we have considerable evidence of how elite parents raised their children.⁹⁹ Italian scholars working in the fields of education and childhood have shown that elite offspring endured burdensome expectations concerning their education, reputation, and future prospects.¹⁰⁰ Parents groomed their children for civic, ecclesiastical, and military

94 Cordula Nolte, "Gendering Princely Dynasties: Some Notes on Family Structure, Social Networks, and Communication at the Courts of the Margraves of Brandenburg-Ansbach around 1500," *Gender & History* 12, no. 3 (2000): 704–21, at 707.

95 Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice*, 207.

96 Susan Broomhall, "'My Daughter, My Dear': The Correspondence of Catherine De Médicis and Elisabeth De Valois," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 4 (2015): 548–69, at 562.

97 See further Monica Ferrari, "Tra madre e figlia: lettere tra Milano, Mantova e Ferrara nelle corti del XV secolo," in *Correspondencias entre mujeres en la Europa medieval*, ed. Jean-Pierre Jardin, Annabelle Marin, Patricia Rochwert-Zuili, and Hélène Thieulin-Pardo (Paris: e-Spania, 2020). Online at <https://books.openedition.org/esb/2762>.

98 Beginning with Philippe Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood* (New York: Vintage, 1962), many historians in the 1960s and 70s believed that premodern individuals treated their offspring as small adults with commensurate responsibilities and behavioural expectations. Recent research, however, has shown that while childhood was different to its modern iteration, it nonetheless had features which made it distinct to adulthood. See, for example, Joanne M. Ferraro, "Childhood in Medieval and Early Modern Times," in *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World*, ed. Paula S. Fass (New York: Routledge, 2013), 61–77.

99 Monica Ferrari, "Education and Things. Pedagogical Ideologies and Didactic Materials in Two European Courts (15th–17th Centuries)," in *Die Materialität der Erziehung. Kulturelle und soziale Aspekte pädagogischer Objekte*, ed. Karin Priem, Gudrun König, and Rita Casale (Weinheim: Beltz, 2012), 92–104.

100 Monica Ferrari, Isabella Lazzarini, and Federico Piseri, *Autografie dell'età minore: lettere di*

careers by demanding manners, intellectual knowledge, and behaviour equivalent to that of an adult, while at the same time recognizing the building blocks of human development and the fundamental need for children to play.¹⁰¹ Eleonora, for example, insisted that Ippolito have some playmates his own age on his journey to Hungary, an incongruity among the lists of men sent to shape his upbringing and maintain his princely image.¹⁰²

The story of Ippolito's sojourn in Hungary and the contest between his mother and his aunt for control over his education and lifestyle help us better understand the intersection between familial and diplomatic relationships in the late fifteenth century. The time frame under analysis in this book—the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries—shows an Italy in transition. Dynastic families had always guided the peninsula's political direction and friendships between clans were critical to realize any meaningful diplomacy. Eleonora and Beatrice's experience with their father and Ippolito helps shed light on how Italian rulers coped with political change by relying on the family network which usually protected them.

The Elite Family Letter

Letters were the primary vehicle through which the Aragonese coordinated political and diplomatic policy across time and space.¹⁰³ The correspondence various members of the dynasty left behind are the foundation of this book's analysis, revealing how family members compensated for geographical and increasingly emotional distances.¹⁰⁴ Women were especially prolific letter writers due to the so-called duty to write, a trope

tre dinastie italiane tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento (Rome: Viella, 2016). See also Monica Ferrari, "Lettere di principi bambini del Quattrocento lombardo," *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 109, no. 1 (1997): 339–54. On Eleonora's childhood education, see Valentina Prisco, "La formazione politica di Eleonora d'Aragona presso la corte di Napoli (1450–1468)," in *Il Regno. Società, culture, poteri (secc. XIII–XV): Atti della Giornata di Studi Università degli Studi di Salerno, 8 maggio 2019*, ed. Mario Loffredo and Antonio Tagliente (Salerno: Università degli Studi di Salerno, 2021), 145–62.

101 See Jessica O'Leary, "Cultural Immersion: Diplomacy, Learning and Mobility in the Childhood of Federico II Gonzaga during the War of the League of Cambrai (1508–1516)," *Parergon* 38, no. 2 (2021), 41–66.

102 Instructions to Cesare Valentino, June 7, 1486. ASMo, Ambasciatori, Ungheria, b. 1.

103 This was common across the peninsula, see: Francesco Senatore, *Uno mondo de carta: Forme e strutture della diplomazia sforzesca* (Naples: Liguori, 1998) and, more broadly, Isabella Lazzarini, ed., "Scritture e potere. Pratiche documentarie e forme di governo nell'Italia tardomedievale (XIV–XV secolo)," *Reti Medievali Rivista* 9 (2008): 6–23; Nadia Covini et al., "Pratiche e norme di comportamento nella diplomazia italiana: i carteggi di Napoli, Firenze, Milano, Mantova e Ferrara tra fine XIV e fine XV secolo," in *De l'ambassadeur: Les écrits relatifs à l'ambassadeur et à l'art de négocier du Moyen Âge au début du XIX^e siècle*, ed. Stefano Andretta, Stéphane Péquignot, and Jean-Claude Waquet, Collection de l'École française de Rome (Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome, 2016); Isabella Lazzarini, "Lettere, minute, registri: pratiche della scrittura diplomatica nell'Italia tardomedievale fra storia e paleografia," *Quaderni storici* 51, no. 152 (2016): 449–70.

104 See Susan Broomhall, "Ruling Emotions: Affective and Emotional Strategies of Power and Authority among Early Modern European Monarchies," in *The Routledge History of Monarchy*, ed. Elena Woodacre et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 668–84; Monica Ferrari, "Un'educazione sentimentale per lettera: il caso di Isabella d'Este (1490–1493)," *Reti Medievali Rivista* 10 (2009): 1–21.

which appears frequently in familiar letters.¹⁰⁵ It was a means by which to show deference to superiors by accounting for oneself and one's actions, but it was also a vital means to keep connections alive between geographically distant relatives. This particular letter has been labelled the courtly family letter because it adheres to the traditional salutations, usage of full titles, and formal rhetoric of chancery writing while blending "domestic conversations with matters of state."¹⁰⁶

In fifteenth and sixteenth-century chancery correspondence, letter writers generally followed a model based on the highly regulated medieval *ars dictaminis*.¹⁰⁷ Letters usually opened with a *salutatio* which established the social status of the sender and receiver, followed by the *captatio benevolentiae*, *narratio*, *petitio*, and *conclusio*. Any deviation or modification of these structures was carefully considered and designed to be recognized as divergent to the receiver.¹⁰⁸ This included who was writing; letters were, except in rare circumstances, dictated to a scribe and constituted a rhetorical performance bound by contemporary standards of epistolary expression.¹⁰⁹ When a letter writer transgressed normative standards, their words or handwriting could and did prompt different emotions in the reader.¹¹⁰

105 Monica Ferrari, *Per non manchare in tuto del debito mio: L'educazione dei bambini sforza nel Quattrocento* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2000). See also Maria Luisa Doglio, *Lettera e donna: Scrittura epistolare al femminile tra Quattro e Cinquecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1993); Gabriella Zarri, ed., *Per lettera: La scrittura epistolare femminile tra archivio e tipografia: secoli XV–XVII* (Rome: Viella, 1999); Isabella Lazzarini, "Lessico familiare: linguaggi dinastici, reti politiche e autografia nella comunicazione epistolare delle élites di governo (Italia, XV secolo)," in *Cartas—Lettres—Lettere: discursos, prácticas y representaciones epistolares (siglos XIV–XX)*, ed. Antonio Castillo Gómez (Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá, 2014); Monica Ferrari, "Diventare donne: riflessi e motivi dell'educazione femminile nei carteggi delle corti italiane del Quattrocento," in *Cartas de mujeres en la Europa medieval: España, Francia, Italia y Portugal (siglos XI–XV)*, ed. Jean-Pierre Jardin et al. (Madrid: La Ergástula, 2018), 247–61. This was a European phenomenon: Brigitte Diaz and Jürgen Siess, eds., *L'Épistolaire au féminin: Correspondances de femmes (xviii^e–xx^e siècle). Colloque de Cerisy-la-Salle, 1er–5 octobre 2003* (Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen, 2017).

106 Carolyn James, "Marriage by Correspondence: Politics and Domesticity in the Letters of Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga, 1490–1519," *Renaissance Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2012): 321–52, at 321–24.

107 See Francesco Senatore, "Ai confini del «mundo de carta». Origine e diffusione della lettera cancelleresca italiana (XIII–XVI secolo)," *Reti Medievali Rivista* 10 (2009): 239–91. See also, Florian Hartmann and Benoît Grévin, eds., *Ars dictaminis: Handbuch der mittelalterlichen Briefstillehre* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2019).

108 See Kathleen B. Neal, *The Letters of Edward I: Political Communication in the Thirteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2021).

109 See Judith Rice Henderson, "On Reading the Rhetoric of the Renaissance Letter," in *Renaissance Rhetorik*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993), 143–62.

110 See Isabella Lazzarini, "Il gesto diplomatico fra comunicazione politica, grammatica delle emozioni, linguaggio delle scritture (Italia, XV secolo)," in *Gesto—immagine: tra antico e moderno. Riflessioni sulla comunicazione non-verbale*, ed. Monica Salvadori and Monica Baggio (Rome: Quasar, 2009), 75–94. See also Carolyn James and Jessica O'Leary, "Letter Writing and Emotions, 1100–1700," in *The Routledge History Handbook to Emotions in Europe, 1100–1700*, ed. Susan Broomhall and Andrew Lynch (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 256–68.

This book primarily uses the published and unpublished correspondence of the Aragonese located at the Archivio di Stato di Modena.¹¹¹ Written documents are vital tools to understand the complex social and cultural processes at play in political systems.¹¹² There are over two hundred published letters between Beatrice d'Aragona and the Este that include letters to Eleonora, Ercole, and Eleonora, and some unpublished letters to her niece Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua.¹¹³ We have fewer sources available for Ferrante I and his sons due to the Neapolitan archives' destruction in World War II. However, some letters survive in two volumes of correspondence and legal instruments edited by Francesco Trinchera in the mid-nineteenth century.¹¹⁴ The second volume contains one letter to Beatrice and four to Eleonora as well as a number of useful letters to various ambassadors located in Hungary, Rome, and Ferrara.¹¹⁵

Fortunately, more letters survive in the Estense archives. There are about forty letters from Ferrante to Eleonora and sixty from Alfonso to Eleonora from the 1470s until the early 1490s, which form the foundation of the first chapter's analysis.¹¹⁶ Fewer letters survive from Eleonora to her kin: while some hundred and fifty draft letters to Ferrante and Alfonso exist, very few are signed by either the duke or the duchess.¹¹⁷ The letters which do bear a signature are mostly in Ercole's name, with a small number signed by Eleonora. In addition to these family letters, there are also unpublished ambassadorial instructions, letters, drafts, and published material to assist with reconstructing the parties' relationships.¹¹⁸ We also have letters from other members of Eleonora's family, including her brother Federico, stepmother Juana I, and correspondence with their sons and daughters.¹¹⁹

The second chapter of this book relies heavily on the letters between Ippolito d'Este and his parents. We have just under seventy letters from Ippolito to Ferrara between 1487 and 1495, with approximately twenty-five addressed to Eleonora and the remain-

111 On Eleonora's letters, see Valentina Prisco, "Il carteggio di Eleonora d'Aragona come luogo di esercizio del potere (1478–1493)," in *Ancora su poteri, relazioni, guerra nel regno di Ferrante d'Aragona. Studi sulle corrispondenze diplomatiche II*, ed. Alessio Russo, Francesco Senatore, and Francesco Storti (Naples: FedOA–Federico II University Press, 2020), 55–72.

112 Isabella Lazzarini, *L'ordine delle scritture: il linguaggio documentario del potere nell'Italia tardomedievale* (Rome: Viella, 2021).

113 Enrica Guerra, ed., *Il carteggio tra Beatrice d'Aragona e gli Estensi (1476–1508)* (Rome: Aracne, 2010).

114 Francesco Trinchera, ed., *Codice Aragonese, o sia Lettere regie, ordinamenti ed altri atti governativi de' sovrani aragonesi in Napoli riguardanti l'amministrazione interna del reame e le relazioni all'Estero*, 3 vols. (Naples: Cataneo, 1866–1874).

115 See Chapter Three.

116 ASMo, CD, RD, Documenti spettanti ai principi estensi, principi non regnanti, b. 19 and ASMo, Estero, Napoli e Sicilia, b. 1246/2.

117 ASMo, Estero, Minute di lettere ducali a principi e signorie (Italia), da Monaco a Napoli, b. 1511/30.

118 The documents are contained in ASMo, CD, Ambasciatori–Ungheria, bb.1–2, Firenze b.1, and Napoli bb. 1–2, 7–8; On these different types of documents, see Lazzarini, "Lettere, minute, registri."

119 ASMo, Estero, Minute di lettere ducali a principi e signorie (Italia), da Monaco a Napoli, b. 1246/2 (Federico) and 1247/3 (Juana and Ippolita).

der to Ercole.¹²⁰ Between 1487 and 1490, however, Ippolito wrote about sixteen letters to his mother and only ten to his father. To Ippolito, there are just over twenty drafts mostly between 1487 and 1489. Only a few were signed by Ercole.¹²¹ During the initial stages of Ippolito's sojourn, Eleonora bore the burden of writing to and supervising her child abroad until political changes forced a change of tack, as we shall see in the third chapter.

Correspondence was central to diplomatic instruction and negotiation; ambassadors and women alike were expected to write extensively and appropriately.¹²² Beatrice and Eleonora addressed their correspondents formally, and dutifully reported on political matters similarly to functionaries and ambassadors.¹²³ However, their correspondence was flavoured by writing about their health, sending and receiving gifts, and commenting on the minutiae of their daily life.¹²⁴ The sisters were not at the top of their natal or marital hierarchies and could not rely on their superiority to facilitate their own ambitions. Instead, they used a specialized epistolary vocabulary to manipulate diplomatic situations in their favour and to dissimulate the gulf between their professed familial loyalty and subsequent actions.¹²⁵

An analysis of the letters exchanged between Ferrante, his daughters, and courtly intermediaries provides insight into the linguistic dynamics at play in elite familial interaction.¹²⁶ They used distinct registers, vocabulary, and stylistic features to negotiate with kinfolk, which changed as time and circumstance dictated. As this book will show, close

120 ASMo, CeS, b. 135.

121 ASMo, CD, Minutario–LS, b. 3, there are some letters in CeS, b. 132.

122 See Francesco Montuori, “I carteggi diplomatici nel Quattrocento: riflessioni per la storia della lingua,” *Filologia e critica* 42 (2017): 177–204 and Francesco Senatore, “Forme testuali del potere nel Regno di Napoli. I modelli di scrittura, le suppliche (secoli XV–XVI),” in *Istituzioni, scritture, contabilità: il caso molisano nell’Italia tardomedievale*, ed. Isabella Lazzarini, Armando Miranda, and Francesco Senatore (Rome: Viella, 2017), 113–46.

123 On diplomatic communication, see E. Plebani, E. Valeri, and P. Volpini, eds., *Diplomazie. Linguaggi, negoziati e ambasciatori fra XV e XVI secolo* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2017); Isabella Lazzarini, “À propos de diplomatie médiévale: pratiques, modèles et langages de la négociation en Italie (xiv^e–xv^e siècles),” *Médiévales* 74, no. 1 (2018): 133–54; and Isabella Lazzarini, “‘Tutto è bene a sapere’: Gathering, Ordering, and Using Information in Diplomatic Communication (Italy, 1350–1520 Ca.),” *Annali dell’istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento* for 2019, no. 2 (2019): 155–72. For examples, see the series *Carteggio degli oratori mantovani alla corte sforzesca (1450–1500)* (Rome: Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 1999–).

124 Carolyn James, “What’s Love Got to Do with It? Dynastic Politics and Motherhood in the Letters of Eleonora of Aragon and Her Daughters,” *Women’s History Review* 24, no. 4 (2015): 528–47, at 528–30.

125 See further Susan Broomhall, “Ordering Distant Affections: Fostering Love and Loyalty in the Correspondence of Catherine de Medici to the Spanish Court, 1568–1572,” in *Gender and Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Destroying Order, Structuring Disorder*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 67–86.

126 See, for example, Francesco Storti, “The Diplomatic Communication in the Secret Rooms of Ferrante of Aragon (1458–1494): Psychoanalytic Setting or ‘Artificio di franchezza,’” *Studi storici* for 2020, no. 1 (2020), 71–101.

scrutiny of Beatrice and Eleonora's letter-writing, in conjunction with examination of intermediaries' diplomatic work, will reveal how each woman worked with and against her family to achieve personal political imperatives.¹²⁷ Women were the first port of call for diplomatic matters concerning children and the many letters addressed to them in this regard is testament to the role they played connecting different familial nodes. By analyzing this correspondence, we gain insight into how families depended on each other for political favours and services and the vital role women played in diplomatic practice within fifteenth and sixteenth-century European dynasties.

127 See Paul M. Dover, ed., *Secretaries and Statecraft in the Early Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).