6. Portraits of Eleanor of Austria

From Invisible to Inimitable French Queen Consort

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Abstract

This essay critically reexamines Eleanor of Austria’s status as a passive marital pawn subject to Habsburg marital ideology through her performative practice of portraiture. Eleanor’s brief marriage to the king of Portugal and hostile union with the king of France curbed her ability to exercise traditional forms of feminine political power and governance as a queen consort and regent. However, her elevated pedigree, merging Burgundian, Habsburg, and Spanish bloodlines, upbringing at Margaret of Austria’s famed court in Mechelen, and position as the eldest sibling of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, endowed her with a protective dynastic identity that would emerge in portraits executed during her most challenging tenure at the French court.

Keywords: Eleanor of Austria, cultural patronage, Habsburgs, queenship, dynastic image-making, Margaret of Austria, self-representation

Eleanor of Austria (1498–1558) holds a tenuously defined status as a Renaissance woman of power. Despite having been twice queen consort in the kingdoms of Portugal and France, her significance is comparatively elusive when juxtaposed against other women of political and cultural power in the Habsburg dynasty and Valois court during the first half of the sixteenth century. Her paternal aunt and guardian, Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), was not only regent of the Netherlands from 1509 to 1515, and 1519 until her death, but matched her competence in managing international affairs with discerning patronage of the visual arts, music, and architecture.¹ Eleanor

¹ Margaret of Austria was appointed Governor-General of the Burgundian Netherlands in 1507 before her promotion to Regent. On her exceptional quality and quantity of artistic, architectural, and musical patronage, see Eichberger, 2005b, pp. 48–55; Eichberger, 2005a,
of Austria’s younger sisters were also entrusted with regencies. In 1520, Isabella of Austria (1501–1526), the short-lived queen consort of Christian II (1481–1559), King of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, was regent of Denmark. In turn, Mary of Hungary (1505–1558) succeeded her aunt as regent of the Netherlands in 1531, following the death of her husband, Louis II (1506–26), King of Hungary, Croatia, and Bohemia. Likewise, the youngest Habsburg sister, Catherine of Austria (1507–1578), married to the king of Portugal, John III (1502–1577) from 1525 to 1557, served as regent for the Portuguese realm from 1557 to 1562. The three Habsburg regents were also active and innovative in their patronage of music and art, particularly Mary and Catherine. Conversely, Eleanor of Austria was not charged with formal responsibilities for governance or administration, and her cultural activities remain somewhat indistinct due to relatively limited primary sources. Her example not only demonstrates the limits of political power experienced by some queen consorts, but also highlights complexities and contradictions concerning fundamental conceptualizations of gender and power.

Eleanor of Austria’s illustrious Burgundian-Habsburg lineage, incorporating the Spanish royal bloodlines of Aragon and Castile, marked her as an elite woman of social access and cultural privilege. However, in her subjection to the diffusion of hierarchical power emanating from the central source of Habsburg dynastic rule that directed the conditions of her private and public lives, like many seemingly powerful Renaissance women, she was authoritatively powerless. Although the power of a ruler was usually only disrupted or usurped by coercive political interventions intended to affect change, the dynamics of sixteenth-century courtly society still afforded opportunities for men and women to wield personal influence or embody forms of ‘agency’ as ‘the capacity to act for oneself and by oneself’. For Renaissance women like Eleanor of Austria, agency was commonly expressed through modes of cultural patronage, such as portraiture. Portraits were affective communicative instruments of Renaissance court culture that could manipulate the perception of the viewer by shaping the contours of gender identity and amplifying visibility. As Stephen Orgel observes, ‘the


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crucial pictures in Renaissance collections are the portraits of the patrons, those specific manifestations of their view of themselves’. The ensuing discussion contextualizes and analyzes Eleanor of Austria’s representation in portraits produced before, and during, her second marriage to the French king, François I (1494–1547), one of the most frequently portrayed rulers of the first half of the sixteenth century. It moves beyond her reputed passiveness as a ‘valuable’ pawn exploited by Habsburg marital policy and neglected Valois queen consort, by calling attention to her active image-making practice at the French Renaissance court.

**Marrying and Making the Queen Consort**

The precise social function and relative power, influence, or agency of a queen consort was dependent on a complex web of personal, cultural, and political factors. While there was no definitive position description to fit the circumstances of all queen consorts, there was a general expectation for the reproduction of legitimate offspring and provision of an heir to the throne. If not called on to exercise direct political authority independently or as a co-ruler, a queen consort would typically perform various practical and symbolic tasks from overseeing the education of her children to evoking the honor of the king through her exemplary feminine demeanor (with moral virtue having been equated with physical beauty). Nevertheless, according to Theresa Earenfight, the role of queen consort was inherently political regardless of the way power was directly or indirectly exercised. This form of self-creation was:

an incessant daily project, a daily act of reconstruction and interpretation situated in a zone of multiple and overlapping cultures, in which personality and temperament have some degree of influence over a queen’s ultimate expression of her own unique practice of queenship.

Despite the brevity of Eleanor of Austria’s first marriage in 1518 to Manuel I (1469–1521), King of Portugal, she not only gave birth to her only surviving
child, Maria (1521–1577), Duchess of Viseu, but also amassed a veritable treasure trove of precious gems and exotic objects gifted by her husband who was 30 years her senior.\(^\text{11}\) The queen consort’s strategic placement at the Portuguese court at the age of nineteen, originally to marry Manuel I’s son and successor, John III, was instigated by her powerful brother, Charles V (1500–1558), Holy Roman Emperor, to safeguard the Iberian Peninsula by uniting the Habsburg and Avis dynasties.\(^\text{12}\) In turn, Charles V further strengthened the bond between these two prestigious royal houses in 1526 by wedding Manuel I’s daughter, Isabel of Portugal (1503–1539), in the same year that Eleanor of Austria was betrothed by proxy to François I.\(^\text{13}\) The emperor also entrusted the empress with the regency of Spain in 1527 and 1535.\(^\text{14}\)

Carefully calculated negotiations years in advance were not unusual for planning Renaissance royal marriages, especially for Habsburg brides and grooms destined to absorb foreign realms in service of the dynasty’s motto: \textit{Bella gerant alii: tu, felix Austria, nube!} (‘Let others make war: you, happy Austria, marry!’).\(^\text{15}\) Thrice married, Margaret of Austria had been subject to the matrimonial machinations of her imperial father, Maximilian I (1459–1519), who had himself been placed in a politically arranged marriage by his father, Frederick III (1415–1593), Holy Roman Emperor.\(^\text{16}\) Eleanor of Austria was the oldest sibling, and last of Charles V’s sisters, to wed. Her eligibility on the international marriage market was played out during her youth in a series of unresolved betrothals with powerful monarchs.\(^\text{17}\) The Flemish princess was portrayed as young girl on the right panel of a triptych, displaying Charles in the middle panel, with Isabella on his left side. Whereas the smallest child, Isabella, holds a doll, Eleanor clasps a small

\(^{11}\) Jordan Gschwend, 2010, pp. 2572–73, 2593–98; Rodrigues, p. 10; Jansen, p. 94. Manuel I had previously been married to Eleanor of Austria’s aunts, Isabella (1470–1498) and Maria (1482–1517) of Aragon-Castle.

\(^{12}\) Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2572; Elbl, pp. 87–111.

\(^{13}\) Knecht, pp. 247. An intimate double portrait commemorating the marriage of the imperial couple, an alabaster relief sculpture attributed to the Master of Metz (Jean Mone), dated to 1526, is held in Gaasbeek Castle, Brussels; see Lipinska, pp. 58–59.

\(^{14}\) Jansen, p. 105.

\(^{15}\) Patorouch, pp. 25–26; Fitchner, pp. 243–56.

\(^{16}\) Johnson, p. 61; Willard, p. 350. On Margaret of Austria’s betrothals and marriages, see Jansen, pp. 83–84, 86, 92; Tamussino, pp. 25–123; de Boom, pp. 1–63; Tremayne, pp. 3–5, 17, 25, 61–63.

\(^{17}\) Rodríguez-Salgado, pp. 42, 50, 90–91. Potential husbands included Henry VIII (1491–1547), King of England, Sigismund I (1467–1544), King of Poland, Louis XII (1462–1515), King of France, Antoine, Duke of Lorraine (1489–1544), and Christian II of Denmark. The youngest brother, Ferdinand (1503–1564) would accede to the post of Holy Roman Emperor in 1558, following the abdication of his brother, Charles V, in 1556.
‘pink’ (marriage flower) symbolizing her value as a future royal spouse.\(^{18}\) In turn, Charles V obliged his older sister to make a personal sacrifice beyond the acceptance of a short-lived elderly husband and accumulation of wealth and independence by relinquishing her daughter Maria to the Portuguese court in 1523.\(^{19}\) The separation of mother and daughter, when the *infanta* was not yet three years old, was due to Maria’s ‘rich fortune’, which was controlled by the new king of Portugal, John III.\(^{20}\) The strength of the Habsburg sibling bond, enmeshing the personal with the political, ensured that Eleanor of Austria would willingly forfeit her own desires to meet Charles V’s vision of universal empire with her second marriage and relocation to France in 1530.\(^{21}\)

### Conjugal Discord at the French Renaissance Court

Having performed her role as queen consort to the king of Portugal admirably, Eleanor of Austria’s arrival at the Valois court as a 31-year-old widow was beset with a challenging set of adverse historical, political, and personal conditions that complicated her experience as a mature queen consort. On the death of François I’s first queen consort, Claude de France (1499–1524), he was left with five of seven legitimate offspring, including the *dauphin*, François III (1518–1536), Duke of Brittany, and his two brothers, the future king of France, Henri II (1519–1559), and Charles II of Orleans (1522–1545).\(^{22}\) While a pregnancy was possible for Eleanor of Austria, the line of succession to the French throne was secure without expectations of auxiliary royal reproduction. François I, at 35 years, was, moreover, ensconced with his powerful mistress, Anne de Pisseleu, Duchess of Étampes (1508–1580), whom an imperial envoy described as ‘the real president of the king’s most private and intimate council’.\(^{23}\) His mother, Louise de Savoie, and sister,
Marguerite d’Angoulême (1492–1549), were also loyal women of political acuity entrusted with political authority.\textsuperscript{24} The power of François I’s three closest female companions was manifest in their ability to individually and collectively transform personal influence into political change at both the French court and within international affairs.\textsuperscript{25} Their relationship with the king was also characterized by familial or romantic forms of intimacy. In short, Eleanor of Austria entered a rival court where her ‘power [...] was curtailed’.\textsuperscript{26} The French court was marked by a distinctive gendered culture under the direction of a king who was criticized for the perceived permissiveness of his relations with women that stemmed from his close connection to his mother and sister as much the royal mistresses.\textsuperscript{27} On his sojourn in France in 1517, Antonio de Beatis (dates unknown), secretary of Cardinal Luigi d’Aragona (1474–1519), recorded that:

\begin{quote}
The Queen [Claude de France] is young, and though small in stature, plain and badly lame in both hips, is said to be very cultivated, generous and pious. And though the King her husband is a great womanizer and readily breaks into others’ gardens and drinks at many sources, there it is a matter of common report that he holds his wife the Queen in such honour and respect that when in France and with her he has never failed to sleep with her each night.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

The significance of this observation resonates with François I’s future conduct with Eleanor of Austria, whom he was reportedly reluctant to embrace in the royal bedchamber, and is elaborated on shortly.

François I appointed his mother as regent of France on two occasions to cover his absence during military campaigns in the ongoing Italian Wars.\textsuperscript{29} The Habsburg–Valois marital alliance of 1530, a consequence of the Treaty of Cambrai or Ladies’ Peace in 1529, was an outcome of a pivotal turn of events in François I’s pursuit of the Duchy of Milan from 1521 to

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{[24]} Levin and Meyer, pp. 347–48; Lindquist, pp. 197–221.
\footnotetext{[26]} Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2571.
\footnotetext{[27]} For an insightful summary of François I’s contemporary and later reputation with women, see Knecht, pp. 112–14, 249, 483, 549.
\footnotetext{[28]} Beatis, \textit{The Travel Journal}, pp. 76, 107. Antonio de Beatis, secretary of Luigi d’Aragona (1474–1519), penned his account of the cardinal’s journey throughout northern Europe and Italy from May 1517 to March 1518.
\footnotetext{[29]} McCartney, pp. 117–41.
\end{footnotes}
1526.\textsuperscript{30} Negotiated through the diplomatic collaboration between Margaret of Austria and Louise de Savoie, the institution of marriage was used as a peaceful compromise in the aftermath of François I’s disastrous defeat by imperial troops at the battle of Pavia in 1525, and subsequent incarceration in Spain.\textsuperscript{31} The traumatic nature of the loss extended to the dauphin, François, and his brother, Henri, who were held as imperial hostages in Spain for four years in exchange for the release of François I as part of the Treaty of Madrid in 1526.\textsuperscript{32} Congenial relations between the French king and his Habsburg queen consort were also marred by the clashing dynastic claims over Burgundy and Italy that continued the enduring Habsburg–Valois tussle for European dominance.\textsuperscript{33} Further hostility stemmed from the competitive enmity between François I and Charles V, on account of the French king’s failed candidature in the imperial election of 1519 following the death of Maximilian I.\textsuperscript{34} For the Habsburg dynasty, the union between Eleanor of Austria and François I was equally profound and went some way towards avenging Margaret of Austria’s thwarted marital destiny as queen of France in 1491, when at the age of eleven she was repudiated by Charles VIII (1470–1498) for the hand of Anne de Bretagne (1477–1514).\textsuperscript{35}

The ceremonial festivities interwoven with traditional allegorical references to peace that honored Eleanor of Austria’s coronation at Saint-Denis and her royal entry into Paris in 1531 were hardly able to offset the barbed personal and political reverberations that contextualized her experience of the French Renaissance court in words and portraits (Fig. 6.1).\textsuperscript{36} In his eyewitness reportage of the pageantry penned for Henry VIII on 23 March 1531, the Tudor ambassador, Sir Francis Bryan (1490–1550), noted that François I ‘rode to a house where Hely [Anne de Pisseleu, Duchess d’Étampes] was, and set her before him in an open window, talking two hours with her in sight of all the people, which was not a little marvelled at of the beholders’.\textsuperscript{37} Marguerite de Navarre confirmed the absence of connubial affection between the royal couple in a conversation with Thomas Howard,
Duke of Norfolk (1473–1554), which disparaged her Habsburg sister-in-law. The exchange was translated in Howard's report sent to Henry VIII in 1533:

[Marguerite] told me also that no man can be worse content with his wife than her brother is, ‘so that these seven months he neither lay with her, not yet meddled with her’. I asked her the cause why; and she said,
‘because he does not find her pleasing to his appetite’; ‘nor when he doth lie with her, he cannot sleep; and when he lieth from her, no man sleeppeth better’. I said ‘Madam, what should be the cause?’ She said, ‘She is very hot in bed, and desireth to be too much embraced’; and therewith she fell upon great laughter saying, ‘I would [not] for all the good in Paris that the king of Navarre were [no be]tter pleased to be in my bed than my brother is to be [in hers].’

While sexual allure for strategy or pleasure was a political asset and potential instrument of power typically in the remit of royal mistresses, it was possible for the queen consort to wield influence over the king beyond the need to breed. However, for Eleanor of Austria, intimacy with the French king, let alone maternity and eroticism, were blocked as pathways for achieving significant personal influence or wielding political power that would affect a profound change in Valois–Habsburg relations because of François I’s incentive to prevent any convergence between the Habsburg and Valois bloodlines that would threaten the future of the French throne.

The Agency of the Habsburg Queen Consort

Eleanor of Austria’s position between two of the most powerful rulers in sixteenth-century Europe makes it unlikely that she aspired to real political power, not only because of her independent wealth, but also the corporate framework that supported the collective mission of the Habsburg dynasty. However, scholarship has drawn attention to the queen consort’s agency at the French court in two key areas, notwithstanding burgeoning evidence of her patronage and collecting activities. The first area highlights her assertive use of Spanish-style clothing to proclaim her imperial allegiance. According to Ruth Matilda Anderson, wearing the foreign attire of a rival kingdom in a royal entry was ‘less than gracious in a new queen’. However, under adverse circumstances, it was just as likely to have been a protective

39 Rodríguez-Salgado, pp. 27–111.
mechanism and statement of dynastic pride and loyalty. The custom of changing apparel to indicate (private or public) cordiality or displeasure was an enduring political tactic for the women of Eleanor of Austria’s exalted pedigree. She had previously experienced the convivial impact of this performative display in Portugal, when Manuel I and his courtiers dressed in the Flemish style to honor the Habsburg queen consort’s foreign cultural heritage on her arrival at the court of Lisbon. In the unreceptive environment of the French court, Eleanor of Austria inverted this sartorial device in both her costumes and portraits. Wearing imperial garb interrupted François I’s practice of dressing his female courtiers (mistresses and other favorites) as a form of control that merged his renowned aesthetic discernment for feminine pulchritude with the politics of courtly display. In the first year of his reign, François I had requested fashion dolls and cosmetics from the Italian Renaissance authority on sartorial style, Isabella d’Este, marchesa of Mantua (1474–1549), in a letter written by her son (and ‘hostage’ of the French king), Federico II Gonzaga (1500–1540). Six years before her marriage into the Valois monarchy, Eleanor of Austria’s ladies-in-waiting had also entreated with the marchesa in 1524, but did so directly by way of Federico’s brother, Ferrante Gonzaga (1507–1557), then a page to Charles V, asking for ‘a mannequin doll with the latest dress of the Gonzaga court’ to be sent to the Spanish court in Valladolid. Yassana Croizat makes the astute point that ‘the request for a doll came from the women who would be wearing the fashions, rather than from the ruler whose court they graced’. Eleanor of Austria’s interest in cultivating fashion not only demonstrated her agency in acting for herself independently without masculine guidance before her marriage to François I, but also suggests an element of cultural compatibility — if not intimacy — aligned with the French king’s contemporary prominence as a patron and collector of precocious visual literacy. The queen had received an exceptional education at Margaret of Austria’s

45 Croizat, pp. 115–16, 118–19, 120, 122–24, 125.
46 Croizat, pp. 95–97. The future duke of Gonzaga was located at the French court as the king’s hostage following François I’s military triumph at the Battle of Marignano in 1515.
court in Mechelen. Domestic skills were complemented with tutelage in the visual arts, literature, dancing, and music, with the Habsburg princess having developed an aptitude for playing the clavichord. Eleanor of Austria and François I not only shared French as their arterial language, but were equally privileged beneficiaries of formative cultural influences that blended aesthetic sensibility with political nous in the realm of image-making. Moreover, as a consequence of her tenure in Lisbon, Eleanor of Austria’s acquisition of New World luxury objects procured from India, Turkey, and China, was complemented by her contacts with dealers and agents working at the Portuguese court. Her cultural capital was an asset for François I’s expansion of exotic objets d’art stored in the cabinets of curiosities at the châteaux of Fontainebleau and the Louvre.

The second area of Eleanor of Austria’s influence concerns the informal diplomacy she exercised during her tenure as queen of France. Her instalment at the French court was as inherently political as the pragmatic foundation of her second royal marriage. It not only equipped her with a sanctioned directive to diffuse tensions between François I and Charles V, but also to nurture the communicative network of the widely dispersed Habsburg dynasty. As the division between private and public spheres in Renaissance diplomatic culture was indistinguishable, various forms of inter-courtly exchange mingled personal sentiment with political intent. Eleanor of Austria’s selfless dedication to the welfare of her brothers and sisters replenished the emotional space left open by the demise of family’s surrogate matriarch, Margaret of Austria, in 1530. The queen consort’s exchange of letters and gifts with her Habsburg siblings not only kindled emotional bonds, but also functioned as a discreet conduit for integrating diverse personal, political, and cultural snippets of information about François I and his court. Informal diplomacy was, then, conjoined with formal efforts in (moderately successful) conciliation between the Valois king and his imperial archenemy and brother-in-law. Charles V’s quest

52 Mansfield, 2016, pp. 18–25.
57 Jordan Gschwend, 2010, p. 2577.
to expand his empire was, nonetheless, dependent on more than familial devotion and feminine loyalty; it required the unequivocal commitment and cooperation of his kin. The condition of service demanding obsequiousness and cooperation between Habsburg siblings had been inculcated since childhood at the court of Mechelen in narratives of Joseph and his brethren, and tales of virtuous models of feminine chastity and patience, such as Lucretia and Griselda.  

With only a brief interval as a widow after the death of Manuel I, and scant opportunity to operate as a conventional queen consort to François I, it made sense for Eleanor of Austria to maintain her lifelong dedication to Charles V during seventeen years of marriage to François I. She appears to have absorbed the virtuous ideal of a widow’s husbandly devotion advocated by the Spanish humanist, Juan Luis Vives (1493–1540), and exemplified by Margaret of Austria, in a revised mode redirected towards the steadfast support of the emperor. However, in line with her title of French queen consort and a powerful living foreign husband, the richly embellished costumes displayed in Eleanor of Austria’s portraits executed in the 1530s are juxtaposed against the subdued simplicity of the widow’s weeds commonly sported by her aunt and worn by the queen dowager after she returned to Flanders in 1548 following the death of François I. The fundamental political foundation of Eleanor of Austria’s complicated role at the French court not only explains the absence of maternal symbolism in her portraits and personal imagery, but also correlates with her desire to connect with her only daughter. Maria of Portugal’s immense inheritance not only impeded Eleanor of Austria’s determination to recover her, but also explains why the infanta remained an ‘eternal bride’ despite her eligibility. There was perhaps no stronger nor more poignant evidence of the queen consort’s powerlessness and devotion to her powerful brother than the forced estrangement that occurred between mother and child.

Instead, Charles V conducted himself as a paternal figure with his sisters, following the model set by Maximilian I, and Eleanor of Austria dutifully adopted an affectionate and affective sisterly role predicated on the obsequiousness of her first-born status in the family. The queen consort’s unstinting commitment to mediate between Charles V and François

58 Cartwright, p. 6.
59 Vives, Book III, pp. 309–26; Eichberger and Beaven, p. 241, n. 120.
61 Frade, pp. 52–53.
I prompted Ghislaine de Boom’s reference to Eleanor of Austria as having the ‘patience of Penelope’. However, her sibling obeisance is even more evocative of Octavia the Younger (c. 69/66 BCE–c. 11/9 BCE), an ancient archetype of sisterly virtue. Octavia was the loyal older sister of the first Roman emperor, Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus Augustus (63 BCE–14 CE), and long-suffering wife of his political rival, Mark Antony (c. 83/2 BCE–30 BCE). Octavia not only competed with her husband’s notoriously seductive mistress, Cleopatra (69 BCE–30 BCE), but also worked to broker peace between the two most powerful men of ancient Rome during the Second Triumvirate (43–32 BCE). On her repudiation by Mark Antony, she was honored in Rome with a spate of commemorative portraits in coinage and sculpture that rewarded her self-effacing brand of femininity and devotion to her imperial brother. While Eleanor of Austria appears to have exercised her agency by commissioning her own portraits at the French Renaissance court, it is clear that she possessed a sophisticated understanding of the ancient theoretical dynamism of the genre of portraiture for shaping and impressing her image and identity in the collective Habsburg and Valois memory.

**Habsburg Practices of Portraiture**

Eleanor of Austria was empowered with both the motivation and opportunity to draw on her knowledge of the dynastic portrait tradition established by Maximilian I and augmented by Margaret of Austria as part of her image-making enterprise at the French court. Her paternal grandfather’s active approach to the genre was demonstrated by his finesse in supervising representations of his ancestors and tweaking portraits of himself executed by his court artists with his own hand to help meet his desired likeness. The emperor also treated his portraits with communicative flexibility, promoting his ducal versus imperial image and identity for different regional audiences. In addition, Margaret of Austria’s comprehensive portrait

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63 De Boom, pp. 7–8.
64 On Augustus and Charles V, see Tanner, p. 113.
65 Ancient literary sources for Octavia include Plutarch, Appian, and Dio Cassius, and to a lesser extent Suetonius. See Wood, pp. 30–35. On women in the period of the Second Triumvirate, see Cluett, pp. 67–84; Kleiner, pp. 357–67.
67 See Silver.
collection in Mechelen, which functioned as an instructive image-making repository for Eleanor of Austria and her siblings, was complemented by the regent’s fabrication of her image and identity in portraits as a chaste, pious, and prudent widow devoted to the Habsburg dynasty. Margaret of Austria’s second appointment as regent in 1519 provided her with an opportune juncture to disseminate at least nine copies of her official portrait in widow’s weeds over the next two years in a series of paintings attributed to her court artist, Bernard van Orley (c. 1492–1541/42), his workshop and followers. Likewise, the state portrait of Eleanor of Austria (Fig. 6.2) executed by Joos van Cleve (c. 1485–1540/41) was replicated in at least nine variations by the Flemish artist’s workshop, reflecting the Habsburg practice for disseminating multiple likenesses as family or diplomatic gifts.

Well before Eleanor of Austria’s sojourn at the French court, both van Orley and Jan Gossart (c. 1478–1532) had executed betrothal portraits of her around 1515, which touted her youthful marriageability in the years shortly before her relocation to Lisbon as the queen consort of Manuel I. Before her arrival at the French court in 1530, all of Eleanor’s portraits appear to have been commissioned by other members of her family, such as her brother, Charles, who made a payment to Gossart in April 1516 for two paintings made from life of his ‘dear and beloved sister’. The precise identification of the specified works remains unknown. However, a half-length panel attributed to the workshop of van Orley (Fig. 6.3), dated to after 1516, presents a young courtly lady (probably a poor copy of the artist’s original portrait) in front of a neutral background as a demure Flemish princess with her hands resting on a parapet. While the finely attenuated fingers of her left hand display several rings set with gems, she delicately pinches a ring between

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70 Wauters, col. 265; Baudson, pp. 16–17; Eichberger and Beaven, p. 228; Eichberger, 2005a, p. 287. On the representation of widowhood, see Welzel, pp. 103–13.
71 Hand, pp. 168–70; Eichberger, 2014, pp. 100–01.
72 Jan Gossart, *Eleanor of Austria*, after c. 1515, 28 × 36 cm. The portrait is held in a private collection and shows the sitter holding rosary beads, see Friedländer, IV, p. 144 (Master of the Joseph Legend); Matthews, 2003, fig. 98.
73 Houdoy, p. 516. From the French translation, ‘deux tableaux de la portraicture au vif de madame Leonor, sa tres chiere et bien amée seur’.
74 Workshop of Bernard van Orley, *Portrait of a Lady* (probably Eleanor of Austria), oil on panel, 37.6 × 27.1 cm, Royal Collection, inv. no. RCIN 403467. This portrait resembles Eleanor’s likeness in the fourth tapestry of the Legend of Notre-Dame du Sablon series, which was designed by van Orley and commissioned by François de Taxis (1459–1517), the imperial postmaster: see Campbell, 1985, p. 108, no. 69; Campbell, 2002, pp. 168–74; Belozerskaya, pp. 119–20. For another possible early portrait of Eleanor of Austria, see Friedländer, VIII, p. 100, no. 74.
the thumb and forefinger of her right hand; a gesture replicated in a later portrait of Eleanor of Austria attributed to van Cleve’s workshop. Her sumptuous gown, augmented by voluminous ermine sleeves, is enriched by the heavy-set jewel collar draped around her lower neck, hinting at

her future displays of sumptuous costume and jewels in pageantry and portraits as queen of France. The Habsburg princess's charming oval face and standardized features in her betrothal portrait appear to have condensed the ideal likenesses of her foremothers: Mary of Burgundy (1457–1482), Isabel of Castile (1451–1504), and her paternal great-grandmother and namesake, Eleanor of Portugal (1434–1467). Her head is framed by a close-fitting Flemish-style hat set back from her forehead, which reveals her neatly combed hair parted in the middle in the same style as her most powerful maternal grandmother, the queen of Castile. She turns her face and diverts her gaze toward the left, in a pose that would be repeated throughout her mature portrait record at the court of France and beyond. Her countenance expresses a benign cast in the trace of a subtle closed smile. The injection of warmth animating Eleanor’s visage reflected Erasmian ideals of feminine benevolence, kindliness, and generosity. This northern humanist influence not only transformed the austerity of Margaret of Austria’s widow portraits, but was integrated in portraits (drawings and paintings) of François I with a slight smile conceived by Jean (c. 1480–1540/41) and François Clouet (before 1520–1572) from as early as 1518 as an enhancement of his eloquence and charisma.

Conversely, the king’s smile is barely visible in portraits by van Cleve and his workshop, which reinforces the probability, put forward by Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier, that the queen, rather than the king, was the driving force behind the Antwerp artist’s arrival in France in the early 1530s. Cécile Scailliérez has, in turn, contextualized van Cleve’s portraits of François I and Henry VIII as diplomatic gifts created to commemorate the second face-to-face meeting between the Valois king and Tudor monarch in 1532 at Calais and Boulogne. Eleanor of Austria’s absence at the royal interview was not surprising given that Henry VIII ‘was accompanied by Anne Boleyn

76 Master of the Magdalen Legend, Mary of Burgundy, 15th century, oil on panel, 26.5 × 22.5 cm, Musée Condé, Chantilly, inv. no. PE588; Juan de Flandes, Isabel of Castile, c. 1490–1492, oil on panel, 21 × 13.3 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, inv. no. Po7656; Hans Burgkmair the Elder, Eleanor of Portugal, early 16th century, oil on panel, 79 × 59.1 cm, Habsburg Portrait Gallery, Schloss Ambras, Innsbruck, inv. no. 4399.
77 Jansen, pp. 8–23; Liss, p. 120.
78 Rummel, p. 207. On the impact of Erasmus (1466–1536) on the visual arts and his influence at Margaret of Austria’s court, see Marlier; Checa Cremades.
Figure 6.3  Workshop of Bernard van Orley, *Portrait of a Lady (probably Eleanor of Austria)*, after 1516

Oil on panel, 37.6 x 27.1 cm. RCIN 403467, Royal Collection Trust. (© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017)
(c. 1501–1536), at François I’s suggestion.\textsuperscript{82} While this might have been the case, the Valois king’s purposeful negligence of his Habsburg queen consort would also seem to negate his role as the patron of the portraits. If the portrait of Henry VIII was a later speculative artistic venture sent to the English court by van Cleve, this would, in turn, cement Eleanor of Austria’s status as an influential patron of a popular courtly genre of painting.\textsuperscript{83} There is, nonetheless, a calculated individuality in the iconography of the three principal portraits.\textsuperscript{84} These peculiar attributes are balanced by the shared compositional and stylistic elements linking the images, from the green backgrounds with shadows to the left-facing direction of each figure’s gaze. As a loosely related configuration, the pictures not only encapsulate Eleanor of Austria’s marginalization from François I, but reinsert her pride of place and independence at the French court.

Eleanor of Austria’s patronage of portraiture in France was extended to Léonard Limosin (c. 1505–1575/77) and the Dutch painter Corneille de Lyon (fl. 1533–1575) as early as 1534.\textsuperscript{85} François I’s predilection for northern Renaissance portraitists, demonstrated by his enduring attachment to the Clouets, has traditionally been overshadowed by his (more securely sourced) preference for Italian Mannerism and antiquities. However, if the claim of Carel van Mander (1548–1606) that François I invited Jan van Scorel (1495–1562) to the French court in the mid-to-late 1520s is accurate, the king is also likely to have valued (or tolerated) Eleanor of Austria’s contacts with Flemish and Dutch portraitists as a matter of artistic covetousness.\textsuperscript{86} Margaret of Austria’s wise counsel to her niece on the eve of her second French marriage, encouraging her towards benevolent and gracious comportment in her relations with the close-knit trio of the king, his mother, and sister, appears to have been channelled into the queen’s artistic productivity in France.\textsuperscript{87} That Eleanor of Austria, as dowager queen,
would subsequently employ the services of van Scorel's renowned pupil and court portraitist, Anthonis Mor, in Brussels also highlights her status as an experienced and influential patron of portraiture motivated to manage her own image-making practice. 88

Although van Cleve did not work for the French or imperial court expressly, he had devised portraits of Maximilian I from life around 1509–1510 that were copied extensively. 89 His portrait of Eleanor of Austria was a resolute iconographic avowal of her imperial allegiance. The queen's (defiant) Spanish-style costume, donned in ceremonials and reproduced again in her portrait, was echoed by the emperor’s embracement of ‘Spanish dress, language and customs’ from 1529. 90 The theme of imperial victory is also made clear in the letter held by Eleanor of Austria evincing her exclusive title of ‘Most Christian Queen’ of France in Spanish script. 91 In a previously mentioned workshop copy of van Cleve’s portrait held in Lisbon, Eleanor of Austria’s glittering display of gem and pearl accessories includes a fine golden necklace with a pendant in the form of a small armillary sphere, the Imperial device of her previous spouse and father of her daughter, Manuel I. 92 That the painting was undoubtedly destined for the Portuguese court raises the prospect that Eleanor of Austria’s use of portraiture went beyond self-commemoration to maternal communication, functioning as a feminine role model for her beloved daughter in Portugal. The smaller dimensions of the Lisbon portrait and queen consort’s placement closer to the picture plane creates an infusion of intimacy that is intensified by the movement of her hands and is comparatively softened by her somewhat ambiguous facial expression that seems to implore the viewer.

A copy of a lost (betrothal) portrait of the youthful infanta Maria by Francisco de Holanda (1517–1585), dated to the 1540s, shows the influence exerted by Eleanor of Austria’s portrait attributed to the workshop of van Cleve. 93 An effort has been made to capture the physical resemblance between mother and daughter in terms of facial resemblance, pose, gaze,

88 Woodall, pp. 202, 215–16. Eleanor of Austria is depicted as queen dowager in widow’s weeds in a portrait attributed to the Workshop of Antonis Mor, Eleanor of France, 1549–1550, oil on panel, 99 × 85 cm, Convento de las Descalzas Reales, Madrid.
90 Matthews, 2003, p. 188.
92 On the symbolism of Manuel I’s device, see Jordan, 2005, p. 186; Pereira, 44–50.
93 Unknown artist (after Francisco de Holanda), Portrait of Maria of Portugal, c. 1541–1545, Church of the Convent of the Incarnation, Lisbon.
costume, and jewels. The *bateau* neckline of both gowns, strewn with a looped string of pearls, ruby pendant with drop pearl, fine necklace (with an unidentifiable pendant worn by Maria), and slashed sleeves are shared visual features. However, the *infanta*’s portrait is imbued with an air of gravity and stillness, reflected in her dark gown and impenetrable facial expression. In contrast to the congenial facial aspect of Eleanor of Austria’s early portraits by van Orley, the larger portraits by van Cleve, which place her at a distance from the viewer and show her holding a letter, represent the queen consort with a new mask of imperiousness. Her formality and aloofness are accentuated by the mannered flamboyance of her costumes and comparatively immobile face. This change in Eleanor of Austria’s representation appears to have aligned with Charles V’s imperial coronation on 24 February 1530, which motivated the reconfiguration of his image and identity as an authoritative ruler sporting armour in full-length portraits that accentuate his rigid sobriety. However, it also suggests the multifaceted functions and communicative nuances in van Cleve’s portraits pitched at different target audiences.

Eleanor of Austria’s definition in portraits showing the diluted facial contours of her Habsburg kin also appears to be an outcome of her role as queen consort of François I. In addition to the multiple private and public social functions performed by portraits, Renaissance rulers followed ancient precedent and invested in permanent and peripatetic court portraitists to devise and duplicate salient likenesses that reinforced political legitimacy through familial resemblance. Portraits played a vital role in transmuting the Habsburg dynasty’s genetic disfigurement of mandibular prognathism (Habsburg jaw) into a powerful physiognomic symbol of imperial resolve. Charles V’s early portrait record, before he grew a beard, appears to have delineated the physical severity of his affliction under the protection of this physiognomic bias. In contrast, Eleanor of Austria’s early portrait by

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95 A large nose was an established physiognomic symbol perpetuated in portraits of the Valois kings. On the symbolism of François I’s long nose in his portraits, see Mansfield, 2016, pp. 60–64. Maximilian I’s inheritance of his father’s hooked nose was also accentuated in his portraits. Physiognomic theory designated an aquiline nose as an exterior sign of imperial dignity or ‘regal spirit’: see Gauricus, p. 147.
96 See Rubbrecht; Thompson and Winter, pp. 838–42; Wolff, Wienker, and Sander.
97 Refer to the following examples: Anonymous Flemish artist, *Emperor Charles V*, c. 1514–1516, oil on panel, 43.8 × 32.2 cm, Royal Collection, inv. no. RCIN 403439; and Bernard van Orley, *Charles V*, c. 1520–1522, oil on panel, 72 × 51.5 cm, Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, inv. no. 1335. Profiles on medal obverses by Hans Schwarz (c. 1492–1521) also showcased the emperor’s angular face: *Charles V*, c. 1520, bronze medal, 6.5 cm diam., Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. The
van Orley (Fig 6.3) mitigates signs of the Habsburg jaw to meet Renaissance ideals of feminine beauty and enhance her desirability on the international marriage market. This may also have been due to the fact, established in modern medical diagnoses, that this ‘autosomal dominant trait’ usually affects ‘males more severely than females’. However, the theory and practice of Renaissance portraiture advocated excessive verisimilitude be tempered to create the most agreeable likeness of the sitter. Charles V patronized Tiziano Vecelli (c. 1488/90–1576), commonly known as Titian, as his prime image-maker in the 1530s and 1540s because of the Venetian painter’s ingeniously idealized physical interpretations of his innate imperial virtue.

Imaginably, the Habsburg jaw was an aesthetically challenging trait for the women of the dynasty despite the Renaissance rhetorical principle that ‘all good women are beautiful’. Whereas Charles V’s ‘extremely deformed jaw did not permit the upper and lower teeth or the mouth to close’, Eleanor of Austria’s left facing profile rendered on a boxwood game piece displays a rather more subtle extension of her chin and protruding lower lip with slightly open mouth. The conventional feminine softness of her facial outline contrasts the harder profile of her sister, Mary of Hungary, on another game board token, dated to around 1535, attributed to Hans Kels (1508/10–1565). The younger regent’s conspicuously protracted jaw (and slight dorsal hump of her nose) not only alludes to her imperial resolve, but also her reputed vigor and active political leadership in the Netherlands by way of her right facing profile, which replicates Mary of Burgundy’s game piece profile. Reflecting her real political power, reputed energy, and combative nature, Mary of Hungary’s dynamism would also be expressed

facial template outlined in the numerous versions of Schwarz’s medal was also used to depict Charles V’s profile portraits in panel paintings, woodcut prints, and a shallow relief sculpture in stone by Loys Hering after Hans Schwarz, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. 4371. On the positive intellectual connotations of Charles V’s high forehead and blue eyes, see Burke, p. 408.

99 Freedman, pp. 115–43.
100 Goffen, p. 64; Lozano, p. 153. Scholarship on Renaissance (poetic) ideals of femininity, beauty and portraiture is extensive; see the bibliographic list of primary and secondary sources in Firenzuola, pp. xliii–xlv.
102 Attributed to Hans Kels, Mary of Hungary, c. 1535, boxwood game piece (roundel), Kunsthistorisches, Vienna, inv. no. KK 3868; see Wilson-Chevalier, pp. 478, 482, n. 26.
103 Wilson-Chevalier, p. 485, n. 32. Mary of Hungary’s profile is strongly evocative of right-facing profiles of Charles V in medals attributed to Hans Schwarz, which spawned portraits (dated to
in a full-length bronze sculpture, executed by Leone Leoni around 1555, which bypassed the traditional artistic boundaries of gender and power in Renaissance portraiture through its imperial grandeur and audacious use of materials. Margaret of Austria had also demonstrated her physiognomic discernment in seeking the ‘faithful representation’ of her family members in the formation of her portrait collection. According to the anecdotal testimony of Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme (c. 1540–1614), Eleanor of Austria was acutely curious about the origins of the Habsburg jaw; having allegedly scrutinized the effigies of the Burgundian royal tombs in Dijon, she exclaimed:

Ah! I thought we did take our mouths from them of Austria; but by what I see here we seem rather to get them from Mary of Burgundy, our ancestress, and the Dukes of Burgundy, our ancestors. If ever I see the Emperor, my brother, I will tell him; nay! I will write him at once.

The portraits of Eleanor of Austria as queen of France by van Cleve and Limosin fabricated flattering facial templates without forfeiting Habsburg signs of identity in her thin oblong bone structure, narrow jaw, small pursed mouth with fleshy lips, and hooded eye lids topped with fine linear brows. However, van Cleve’s painting stretches the boundary between generic beauty and physiognomic likeness in the soft curve and smudgy outline around her chin and left cheek. Likewise, the decorative high collar that conceals her neck in Limosin’s enamel plaque of 1536 (Fig. 6.4) fashions a pretty white ruff that diminishes the extreme pointedness of her jawline by mirroring the paleness of her porcelain complexion. The curved frame for the lower face is replicated in the small rigid ruff worn by her daughter, the early 1520s) of the emperor in anonymous paintings and derivative prints by Daniel Hopfer (woodcuts held in Staatliche Museen, Berlin inv. no. 240-1974) and elsewhere.

104 Van Wyhe, pp. 135–68.
105 Eichberger and Beaven, pp. 227–28. Charles V also placed high value on accurate likeness in portraits of his spouse, Isabel of Portugal (1503–1539), Holy Roman Empress: see Lozano, p. 150; Checa Cremades, p. 275.
106 Cited in Jollet, p. 104.
107 The queen’s face is given explicit delineation (compact mouth with slightly distended, fleshy lower lip, in a three-quarter-posed likeness) on the boxwood game piece attributed to Hans Kels, Game piece with Eleanor of Austria/France, c. 1535, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. KK 3866: see Wilson-Chevalier, p. 485.
108 In the Lisbon portrait of Eleanor of Austria by Joos van Cleve, the queen raises her hands (with no rings visible on any of her fingers), as if on an invisible parapet, holding a single ruby ring between the two forefingers of her right hand.
Figure 6.4  Léonard Limosin, *Eleanor of Austria*, 1536

Enamel plaque. Musée national de la Renaissance, Écouen, inv. CI 2 520 (© RMN-Grand Palais (musée de la Renaissance, Château d’Écouen) / Droits réservés)
Maria of Portugal, in her betrothal portrait, and is used to similar effect in Titian’s portraits of the mature emperor with a beard. Eleanor of Austria’s French-style costume and headdress worn in the enamel plaque was likely due to her amiable nature and ‘assimilation’ after six years at the French court. However, it was not until 1537 that François I reportedly urged his Habsburg queen consort to adopt the fashions native to his kingdom permanently and dismissed most of her Spanish entourage. Her willingness to oblige the king’s request is confirmed in a drawing attributed to the Clouet workshop, dated to around 1540. There is no mistaking, however, Eleanor of Austria’s distinctive Habsburg face in either the enamel plaque or chalk sketch.

**ÚNICA SEMPER AVIS** (‘The bird that is ever unique’)

Symbolic layers of Habsburg collective identity and personalized imagery also pervade Eleanor of Austria’s *impresa* of the phoenix in flames, and Latin motto (derived from Ovid) ‘ÚNICA SEMPER AVIS’. The wondrous beauty and regenerative immolation of the mystical creature mingled classical allegory as an ancient Roman sign of filial *pietas* with the Christian tradition, alluding to both Christ’s Resurrection and the Virgin Mary’s perfect chastity. Eleanor of Austria’s adoption of the burning phoenix as queen consort of François I not only demonstrated her sensitive erudition and clarity of purpose, but, like her portraits, confirmed her cultural capacity and political agency as an image-maker. The legendary bird was not only aligned with Charles V’s imperial eagle, but also complemented François I’s *impresa* of the flaming salamander, epitomizing the symbolic dimension of her role as family moderator and international mediator in allusion to ‘the empire on which the sun never sets’. As Annemarie Jordan Gschwend explains, Eleanor of Austria’s inimitable presence as ‘a symbol of light promising peace, deliverance and reconciliation’, articulated by the Governor of Paris at her first royal entry, was matched only by her status as the first woman

111 Workshop of François Clouet, *Eleanor of Austria, Queen of France*, c. 1540, black chalk, sanguine, 31 × 22.6 cm, Musée Condé, Chantilly, inv. no. MN24 B275. On Eleanor’s close working relationship with the Clouets, see Wilson-Chevalier, pp. 492–93.
112 Nigg, pp. 221–22.
113 Jeffrey, pp. 611–12.
114 Scheicher, pp. 54–55; Mansfield, 2016, p. 18.
in a long line of future Habsburg queen consorts to hold royal office at the French court. 115

In this context, the portraits of Eleanor of Austria are a tacit reminder of the triumphant Habsburg infiltration of the French kingdom. The emotive psychology and political ambition embedded in the queen consort’s symbolic vocabulary was amplified by her use of portraits to adapt the contours of her physical identity with communicative nuance and stylistic panache. Portraits disseminated a perpetual public record of Eleanor of Austria’s physiognomic resemblance with both her esteemed feminine lineage and immediate Habsburg kin in a decisive — political and personal — episode of history for both the Habsburg dynasty and Valois monarchy. Put simply, the French queen consort’s portrait record was formed out of her poignant and quixotic personal narrative, which activated her agency as an image-maker and resulted in a permanent record of recognition. Although she was repositioned at the unwelcoming yet sumptuous French court, Eleanor of Austria’s portraits, both humble and imperial, distinguished and commemorated her face — and pride of place — in the Habsburg dynastic framework of sibling devotion.

The pragmatism underpinning the gendered lessons of her cultural and political heritage honed under the guidance of Margaret of Austria, one of the most powerful women politicians and patrons of the Renaissance, would empower the queen dowager to rise again after the death of François I as an accomplished patron of portraiture at Mary of Hungary’s court in Brussels from 1548. 116 While Eleanor of Austria’s power was universally contained and concentrated within the political ideals and ambitions of the Habsburg collective, her individual identity as the first Habsburg French queen consort could not be repressed despite François I’s unreceptiveness. She endured the challenging conditions of her second marriage with a subdued style of self-confidence, discipline, determination, and feminine grace. These inimitable personal qualities not only buttressed her role as the devoted sister of her siblings and most intimate ally of the emperor, but also provided a foundation for her self-directed approach to image-making. Eleanor of Austria’s portraits executed at the French court heightened her visibility as a unique queen consort and an agent of empire during the apogee of the genre of Renaissance portraiture.

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