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## The Queen as ‘social mannequin’. Consumerism and expenditure at the Court of Isabeau of Bavaria, 1393–1422<sup>☆</sup>

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### Abstract

Unjustifiably, but often, dismissed as the driest of sources, medieval accounts can be a mine of historical and social information, and those of Isabeau of Bavaria, queen of Charles VI of France, are particularly fascinating. One of the many consequences of the king’s lifelong mental instability was the development of an entirely separate financial administration for his wife and children, and this combination of radical innovation and unprecedented levels of expenditure has meant that scrutiny of Isabeau’s accounts — the best preserved and most extensive of any medieval queen of France — has been considered fundamental in almost all biographical works. Although this paper looks at what could be regarded as a frivolous topic in Isabeau’s wardrobe, the social concept of the royal lady as decorative fashion-plate has been particularly pertinent in recent years, but also has a long-standing pedigree. The necessity and public display of wealth were always an intrinsic element of medieval queenship, and a number of these wider themes will be explored alongside detailed analysis of two example accounts. © 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Isabeau; Institutional; Social; Financial; Fashion; Sources

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My first exposure to the concept of medieval wife ‘as social mannequin’ came from a paper by Dyan Elliott published in 1991, on the use of dress as an outward reflec-

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<sup>☆</sup> This paper amalgamates ideas first explored in presentations made at the conferences of the Graduate Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Reading (1 July 1998) and of the Society for the Study of French History, Edinburgh (29–31 March 1999). I would like to extend my thanks here to members of both audiences and to the J.M.H. reader for their helpful comments, as well as to the Leverhulme Trust because additional archive work and the writing of this paper were completed during my tenure of a Study Abroad Studentship (1998–2000).

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tion of inner piety.<sup>1</sup> Elliott's choice of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary to illustrate her argument is particularly pertinent in this instance, given that she was Isabeau of Bavaria's name saint.<sup>2</sup> After Elisabeth's husband, Ludwig of Thuringia, died whilst on crusade with Frederick II, she adopted an extreme Franciscan lifestyle — austere almost to the point of masochism — before her own death, four years later, aged twenty-four.<sup>3</sup> Even during her marriage, though, dress can be seen as a metaphor of the conflict between her two *persona* — of dutiful aristocratic wife and of pious penitent.

When her husband was absent, blessed Elisabeth would pass whole nights in vigils, genuflections, scourgings and prayer; she also put off her rich clothes and ornaments and dressed herself as a widow with a nun's veil on her head. She would wear harsh wool or haircloth next to her skin, even when she was outwardly dressed in magnificent apparel.<sup>4</sup>

However, when her husband returned, she was careful to 'look the part', reassuming the opulent dress expected of her rank, although, on occasions, Elisabeth's liberal almsgiving with her clothes could lead to minor crises. Her hagiographer, Theodoric of Thuringia, relates that, when her husband learned of the imminent arrival of important visitors, he feared that he would be shamed by her shabby appearance, until Elisabeth received divine assistance and surprised the court by appearing in a sumptuous azure, pearl-encrusted robe.<sup>5</sup> Although Isabeau of Bavaria acquired her luxurious outfits through slightly more prosaic means, rather than having them miraculously 'dropped from Heaven' straight into her wardrobe, this little tale has some relevance to the content of this paper, in that the notion that God Himself would see fit to intervene to prevent sartorial embarrassment emphasises the importance of clothes to the reflection and maintenance of rank, and perhaps even validates this public rôle of the queen as 'social mannequin'. The frivolity of fashion does not necessarily deny it historical importance, for, as Michèle Beaulieu summarised:

<sup>1</sup> Dyan Elliott, 'Dress as mediator between inner and outer self: the pious matron of the high and later Middle Ages', *Mediaeval Studies*, 53 (1991), 279–308. Phrase appears on 298.

<sup>2</sup> The Wittelsbach had allied themselves by marriage many times with the family of St Elisabeth, and the name was a popular choice. Isabeau's grandmother was another Elisabeth of Hungary, while a great-aunt, aunt and cousin were also christened for the saint. See Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France [henceforward, BNF] français 20780, f.338–9; Marcel Thibault, *Isabeau de Bavière, reine de France. La jeunesse, 1370–1405* (Paris, 1903), 20–1.

<sup>3</sup> She died in 1231. For discussion on Elisabeth's self-denial, see Andre Vauchez, 'Charité et pauvreté chez sainte Elisabeth de Thuringe, d'après les actes des procès de canonisation', in: *Etudes sur l'histoire de la pauvreté*, ed. Michel Mollat (Paris, 1974), vol. I, 163–73.

<sup>4</sup> Elliott, 'Dress as mediator', 299 — the translation of Nesta de Robeck, St Elisabeth of Hungary (Milwaukee, 1954), 160–1, from 'Libellus de dictis quatuor ancillarum', the dispositions of four servants in the case for Elisabeth's canonisation, in: *Quellenstudien zur Geschichte der hl. Elisabeth Landgräfin von Thüringen*, ed. Albert Huyskens (Marburg, 1908), 117.

<sup>5</sup> Elliott, 'Dress as Mediator', 298–9, taken from Theodoric of Thuringia, *Libri octo de S. Elizabeth*, 2.6 (Thesaurus monumentorum ecclesiasticorum et historicorum), ed. H Canisius (Antwerp, 1725), vol. 4, 125–6.

Dans l'Occident médiéval le costume a été, à la fois, instrument et expression de pouvoir. Costume et status social constituent un des aspects de toutes les sociétés mais, au-delà des données politico-économiques, le costume est aussi miroir de la sensibilité, dont il reflète la plupart des expressions.<sup>6</sup>

Despite Scattergood's assertion that 'in the twentieth century the choice of what one wears or does not wear is a personal matter, a matter of taste',<sup>7</sup> all professionals, particularly women, know that there are still unwritten rules of dress that must be followed if one is to be accepted and taken seriously. Away from the workplace, the majority dress as they please, but paparazzi glee in snapping celebrities in no make-up, looking fat in baggy sweatpants, or committing 'fashion suicide' in some other way illustrates that a level of social pressure to maintain a public profile continues for some, demonstrated most obviously in the praise and vitriol heaped by the press in equal measure on the late Princess of Wales and the Duchess of York. Late medieval princesses did not have quite such a torrid experience with fashion, largely because fashion as we know it was so new. The great innovations in male and female attire that assailed the whole of Western Europe pretty well simultaneously around 1340 have been taken by many costume historians as the beginning of 'fashion as a phenomenon', a way of looking at clothes that could impose an ever-changing rhythm on a restricted social group. Henceforth, detail would be in constant flux, while major modifications of the essential silhouette took place every few decades.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, clothes made and purchased for Isabeau of Bavaria and her family can be regarded as addressing a number of pertinent issues. Solely from the factor of timescale, she is an interesting choice in the history of fashion, given that her surviving accounts begin in 1393, as one distinctive female silhouette was starting to be replaced by another, and end abruptly with the queen's removal from power in 1417. More particular points of interest here are what she bought, why she bought, the sums she spent, and the accounts themselves from which this information is extracted. During Isabeau's reign, the financial offices of the queens of France underwent dramatic reconstruction, leading to unprecedented levels of independence and expenditure. The costs of her court were very much related to its size and composition, which in itself had much to do both with the size of her family and her political prominence in the wake of Charles VI's first attack of insanity on 5 August, 1392. At that time Isabeau was twenty-two years old, had been married just over seven years and was the mother of three children, two others having already died

<sup>6</sup>Michèle Beaulieu, 'Le costume, miroir des mentalités de la France médiévale (1350– 1500)', in: *Mélanges offerts à Jean Dauvillier* (Toulouse, 1978), 83.

<sup>7</sup>John Scattergood, 'Fashion and Morality in the Late Middle Ages', in: *England in the Fifteenth Century. Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Suffolk, 1987), 256.

<sup>8</sup>Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages*, trans. Caroline Beamish (London, 1997), 65. Originally: *Se vêtir au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1995).

in infancy.<sup>9</sup> On his recovery from this initial bout, the king ensured that, if he died, as was clearly feared, from this mysterious ailment, Isabeau would have a prominent role in government as principal guardian of the dauphin, until he reached his majority at thirteen, and as a member of the regency council. Her success as a peacemaker between the rival dukes led Charles to entrust her initially with powers of mediation in any further disputes and, subsequently, with the authority to deal with all government business when he was incapable of so doing. When it was finally admitted in 1403 that the bouts of insanity occurred too often for this style of ad hoc government to continue, Isabeau was created the head of a new Regency Council, which included all the royal dukes and others of the king's regular councillors, who would rule by majority vote in Charles VI's name in periods when he was considered insane.

The assassination of Louis of Orleans in 1407 began the actual physical conflict of the civil war between Burgundians and Armagnacs. The need of both sides to control the queen and the dauphin in order to be deemed legitimate rulers led to what has, in the past, been perceived as factional instability as Isabeau agreed to a series of defensive pacts aimed at ensuring continued recognition of her right to represent the king in government whatever happened militarily between the princes. When her last son, Charles, became dauphin in 1417 and, for the first time, the Armagnacs had possession of the heir, as well as control of Paris and the king, Isabeau's position was finally untenable. In April 1417, on the count of Armagnac's orders, she was deprived of her finances, her servants and her liberty, then held in captivity at Tours for six months before being 'freed' by John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy. Her situation henceforward was fundamentally different: maintained, financed and protected by him, with her son set up by the Armagnacs in opposition to her as the king's deputy, she had little choice but to attach herself to the Burgundian cause. Hence, her name was united with Burgundy's in all decisions of state, up to and including the surrender to the English in the Treaty of Troyes of 1420. The death of Charles VI in 1422 began thirteen years of impoverished, isolated and largely ignored widowhood in English-occupied Paris, before her own death in 1435, at the age of sixty-five.

A brief biography seemed a necessary inclusion at this stage because Isabeau's political career and the development of her personal finances are very much two sides of the same coin — in fact, interdependent — particularly as so many developments in both spheres had root in the unique situation in which she found herself. The king's frequent incapacity, and Isabeau's corresponding rise in importance, necessitated new flexibility in royal administration; the political role and financial changes go together as a unitary package that only happened because of the madness. To ensure that royal administration could continue to operate with or without the king's control, in the event of his death or over a sustained period when he was too ill to govern, various provisions were made at the start of 1393 for the maintenance

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<sup>9</sup>With the deaths of Charles in 1386 and Jeanne in 1390, the surviving children in 1392 were Isabelle, almost three years old; another Jeanne, aged eighteen months; and the dauphin Charles, just six months old. A further seven children would be born in the years to come: Marie (1393), Michelle (1395), Louis (1397), John (1399), Catherine (1401), the future Charles VII (1403) and Philip (1407).

of his wife and children in either of these circumstances. If Charles died, custody of the royal children, although principally Isabeau's responsibility, would be shared by the king's uncles, the dukes of Burgundy, Berry and Bourbon, and the queen's brother, Lewis of Bavaria,<sup>10</sup> and specific lands were also set aside now to fund their care,<sup>11</sup> as well as lands in the form of a widow's dower assignment for Isabeau personally.<sup>12</sup> In recognition that it would need to be in an position to function independently of the king during his lifetime as well as in the event of his death, the queen's administration during Isabeau's reign became almost entirely separate. After 1409, it collected its own assigned revenues direct from source, rather than being paid through the royal bureaucracy, and subject only to irregular checks and auditing.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the queen's offices and entourage swelled in size and in levels of expenditure, in line with her own rise in importance.

The necessity and display of wealth were always an intrinsic element of medieval queenship,<sup>14</sup> but the particular problems confronted by Isabeau of Bavaria made it even more vital that she was assured of her financial stability. Her position of power was secured only by her status as the heir's mother and was dependent on her husband's continued insanity. As a foreign consort on whom a regency-like responsibility had been bestowed but who was under continuous pressure from jealous, combative princes when she exercised her prerogatives, and who was subject to the king's control when he was believed sane, Isabeau's political and financial status was precarious, transitory, and only maintained through her efforts. Deprived by the madness of the protection and support that a medieval woman would normally expect from her husband, she was forced to become more self-reliant than any of her predecessors, faced, as she was, with an unprecedented situation for the wife of a reigning king, an opportunity, albeit unsought and exigent, for self-determination and independence normally only demanded of royal widows. Isabeau had become ultimately responsible for her own economic security and welfare and, consequently, the provision of her income was of crucial importance, crucial enough to inspire innovations in the management of her affairs which, in themselves, have given rise to accusations from almost all historians of the period, and some contemporaries, of cupidity and materialism. A combination of radical innovation and historical controversy has

<sup>10</sup>*Ordonnances des rois de France de la troisième race...*etc. (22 vols., Paris, 1723–1849), vol. 7, 530–6 for the complete regency legislation of 1393. As part of the amended provisions of 26 April, 1403 (Paris, Archives Nationales [henceforward, AN] J402, no. 13), this was changed to a sole tutelage by Isabeau.

<sup>11</sup>Domainal and taxation revenues of Senlis, Melun, the king's lands in Normandy and the *vicomté* of Paris.

<sup>12</sup>Isabeau was assigned exactly the same lands as had been earmarked for Charles VI's mother, Jeanne of Bourbon in the Gâtinais, Champagne, Normandy and Champagne, to a value of 25,000 *francs* per year. In 1403, she was permitted to exchange the majority of these for a more unified settlement in Normandy (91% of her income) that had previously been held by Philip VI's long-lived second wife, Blanche of Navarre (d. 1398), but she kept hold of properties such as Crécy-en-Brie and Melun which made up the other 9% of the 25,000.

<sup>13</sup>For example, the first *trésorerie* account (1409–11) would not be audited until 30 March, 1417 (AN KK48, f.74) and the fourth *argenterie* account of Jean Le Blanc (14056) only reached the *Chambre des Comptes* on 28 May, 1408, and was not actually audited until 5 August, 1411. See Maurice Rey, *Les finances royales sous Charles VI: les causes du déficit, 1388–1413* (Paris, 1965), 254.

<sup>14</sup>Colleen Mooney, 'Queenship in fifteenth-century France'. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ohio (1977), 72.

meant that her bureaucracy and spending have been considered a fundamental part of almost all biographical studies.<sup>15</sup> In addition, her financial records are the best preserved and most extensive of any medieval queen of France, with some form of detailed account having survived from 1393–1406 and 1409–1417 — as well as (unrelated to this particular study) 1420–1422.

From unexceptional beginnings after her wedding in 1385, at the head of a modest court designed for her by her husband, run by officers whom he had appointed, and with all but the most mundane housekeeping expenses of the *Chambre aux deniers* authorised and accounted for by his administrators, Isabeau's finances were transformed over the course of the period illustrated by her extant accounts. The inauguration, first, of an independent *argenterie* in May 1393 and, then, after an abortive first attempt to centralise her receipts in 1405, of a personal *trésorerie* in December 1409 brought hugely increased sums of money into the queen's private purse. The diagram below (Fig. 1) gives a simplified visual illustration of the path through which all income intended for the queen's use passed once her offices had developed to their fullest extent in 1409, showing major sources of income, the central collection by her *trésorier*, and the consequent distribution of capital through her bureaucracy to the personnel of each accounting department.

By far the largest proportion of the queen's income — around 70%, in fact — came from the receipts of the *aides de la guerre*, which, although being instituted in the thirteenth century specifically as a levy intended to fund the royal armies,<sup>16</sup> were by now utilised as just another source of general income by central adminis-

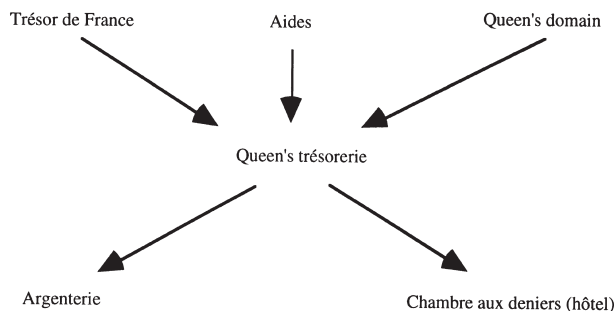


Fig. 1. Progress of the Queen's revenues after 1409.

<sup>15</sup>In his book covering Isabeau's life prior to 1405, Thibault, *Isabeau*, 235–90, discussed her finances (or, as he titled it, her 'préoccupations égoïstes') in a chapter second in size only to that in which he looked at her rôle in foreign diplomacy. Jean Verdon, *Isabeau de Bavière* (Paris, 1981) devoted two of the seven chapters (69–105, 201–34) of his biography to Isabeau's bureaucracy, dower and spending habits, while Mooney chose 'Finances' and 'The Court & Household' as two of five areas needing to be explored in her PhD thesis on medieval French queenship (see 72–117, 216–30). My own thesis included four chapters — over 40% of the central text — on Isabeau's financial institutions, where much of the following material is explored more fully than is possible here.

<sup>16</sup>Ferdinand Lot and Robert Fawtier, *Histoire des institutions françaises au moyen âge*, 3 vols (Paris, 1958) vol. 2, 217. In 1291, the *aides* made their first appearance at a rate of 1d in the livre (pound). With vendor and purchaser liable for half each, a halfpenny or obol — a rate of 1/480 (that is, 0.21%) — was moderate but, through a lack of collectors and organisation, particularly in the countryside, very little was brought in.



tration. Perhaps the clearest way to describe the *aides* is as a 'Value Added Tax', for they were raised as a surcharge on all goods sold, first at varying rates,<sup>17</sup> and, then, in the 1360s at a definitive rate of 12d/l, 'sur tout marchandise vendue, à domicile ou ailleurs, denrées alimentaires ou produits fabriques'.<sup>18</sup> Monies were collected locally by *receveurs des aides*, then either transferred to the central accounting office of the *receveur-général des aides* who organised payment of sums authorised for the queen's use, or alternatively, in instances involving sums collected from lands held by Isabeau herself, sometimes paid to her accountants directly.<sup>19</sup> More traditional sources of revenue from the queen's private estates at Vaux-la-Reine, Saint-Ouen, the lands of her favourite château of Melun and in the regions of Champagne and Brie were a small but reliable part of her income. As lands from the royal demesne, these were gifts for life only, but there were no other restrictions on Isabeau's power as seigneurial 'lord', and thus they brought her the same privileges and were administered in much the same way as Crown land held personally by Charles VI. Therefore, as well as profits from the exploitation of the lands themselves, this domain income included all secondary revenues to which she was entitled as the landholder, such as *péages* or tolls for passage on roads and bridges, *tonlieux* on the merchandising of goods within the markets of her towns, ecclesiastical dues, and charges raised on the use of kilns, windmills, etc.<sup>20</sup>

The third and final source of the queen's income was what could be described as a Civil List allowance assigned by the *Trésor de France*, the 'clearing-house' of the revenues of the Crown. The 'ordinary' revenues of the royal demesne were used to finance the queen in the same way as did income from her own lands, and as the royal demesne supported the court and household of the king. Although account entries are not broken down into different kinds of levies, monies received from the *Trésor* probably included the same types of income as those raised on her own lands — the *rentes*, revenues from land cultivation, tolls on roads and bridges, dues for market privileges — as well as the profits of the *eaux et forêts* and the royal mints.<sup>21</sup> As well as domainal revenues, the *Trésor de France* also collected some

<sup>17</sup>Lot and Fawtier, *Histoire des institutions*, vol. 2, 218. After an abortive attempt in 1295 to raise money through tax on the stocking of goods, the sales tax was resurrected again in 1296, with solely the vendor liable for an amount on a proportional sliding-scale: for example, 6d on an animal costing less than 20s, 8d if it was worth between 20 and 40s. Further trials of an *aide* were made in 1314 and again in 1327.

<sup>18</sup>Maurice Rey, *Le Domaine du roi et les finances extraordinaires sous Charles VI, 1388–1413* (Paris, 1965), 177 — thus, a VAT of 5%. The 'starting-date' of the *aides* is set normally at December 1355, when the *États-généraux* voted an *aide pour la guerre*, and nominated specific agents named '*élus*' to supervise the collection. However, this levy, and the *aide* elected in 1356, were still regarded as provisional measures (Lot and Fawtier, *Histoire des institutions*, vol. 2, 275). It was only under Charles V, having to find the funds to pay off his father's ransom and, in 1369, finance renewed war against the English, that the *aides* were accepted for enough successive years to be seen as permanent.

<sup>19</sup>For example, in the queen's treasury account for 1409–1410, *aides* totalling 10,700 *livres tournois* are recorded as being collected directly from Isabeau's personal estates in Champagne (AN KK48, f° 15v°–18).

<sup>20</sup>See W.M. Newman, *La domaine royale sous les premiers Capetians (987–1180)* (Paris, 1937), 19–31, for definition and discussion of the operation of French 'feudal' levies.

<sup>21</sup>See Rey, *Domaine*, 125–154 for an examination of royal profits and prerogatives in these areas. For fuller discussion on domainal taxes and levies as part of the queen's income, see Rachel C. Gibbons, 'The Active Queenship of Isabeau, 1392–1417. Voluptuary, Virago or Villainess?'. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading (1997), 290–7.

forms of 'emergency' direct taxation. In an age of family income, taxation could be raised, not on the person, but on the household or hearth, which is from where the *fouage* tax was derived in order to support the military. During the reign of Philip IV (1285–1314), rates were set around the actual equipping of individual soldiers<sup>22</sup> but, as the concept of national taxation developed, the supply of men was replaced by a sum of money, either charged individually to each 'hearth',<sup>23</sup> or levied as a lump sum on the whole realm and then subdivided into smaller regional units collected locally.<sup>24</sup> Charles V abolished the *fouage* on his deathbed in 1380<sup>25</sup> and, although his decision was reversed only a few years later, this form of taxation was henceforth mainly used in areas of the kingdom that had been declared exempt from the *aides*, such as much of the Languedoc and the Dauphiné.<sup>26</sup> A source of raising money that became increasingly important during the reign of Charles VI was the ordering of one-off levies called *grande tailles*, the one in 1387–8 being the first raised through apportioned direct methods by the *Trésor*.<sup>27</sup> Originally, revenues due to the queen from the *Trésor de France* actually came from it, as lump-sum payments from one of the *changeurs du trésor* direct to her *argentier* or the *maître de la chambre aux deniers* of her household. After 1409, once the queen had been granted full authority over her finances, she also had the ultimate responsibility of ensuring that they were collected safely and promptly by her officials. Revenues set aside for Isabeau tended to come from the same regions year on year, including all the lands which had been set aside for her future dower. This was most probably a decision made with the motive of effective but simplified maintenance of her business, neces-

<sup>22</sup>In 1303–4, villeins were mandated to contribute enough to support two sergeants for every hundred hearths, while subjects of royal vassals were charged for four sergeants per 100 hearths (Lot and Fawtier, *Histoire des institutions*, vol. 2, 219). This was, therefore, a similar system to that used in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of England, when one soldier had to be provided for the king's *fyrd* for every five hides of land and when, in 1008, under Æthelred II, every 300 hides was responsible for the provision of one ship for the national fleet. See H.R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England, 500–1087* (London, 1984) 31–2; D.J.V. Fisher, *The Anglo-Saxon Age, c. 400–1042* (New York, 1992), 307.

<sup>23</sup>As in Carcassonne in 1346, when their tax was set at ten *sous* per hearth, a rate that rose to fifteen *sous* in 1351–5 (Lot and Fawtier, *Histoire des institutions*, vol. 2, 223).

<sup>24</sup>M. Nordberg, *Les ducs et la royauté. Etudes sur la rivalité des ducs d'Orléans et de Bourgogne, 1392–1407* (Stockholm, 1964), 10, relates that the rate of *fouage* was fixed for the year, then the généraux-conseillers divided up this sum between the regional tax-districts, the *élections*, according to their relative wealth. The local officers, the *élus*, shared out the amount assigned among the parishes of their *élection* and, in the parish, onto each household.

<sup>25</sup>Even during Charles V's reign, the levying of a *fouage* remained an occasional measure, consented to and set by the provincial Estates in response to specific military need, and thus it was that he abolished the *fouages*, wishing that the people of France 'relever en aucune partie des aydes à quoy ils ont esté imposez .... yceulx fouages avons abatuz et abatons' (*Ordonnances*, vol. 7, 710). Although the *fouage* had provided the backbone of state and war finance over the previous three decades, it was not the only way of raising money and, despite protest and revolts, indirect taxation was just expanded to make up the shortfall. See Françoise Autrand, *Charles VI* (Paris, 1986), 69–119; John Bell Henneman, *Olivier de Clisson and Political Society in France under Charles V and Charles VI* (Philadelphia, 1996), 105–9.

<sup>26</sup>Rey, *Domaine*, 348–66.

<sup>27</sup>Henneman, *Olivier de Clisson*, 135; *Ordonnances*, vol. 7, 186–9. *Grandes tailles* would continue to be levied periodically throughout his reign: for example, in 1396, to finance the marriage of his daughter Isabelle to Richard II of England; also, the controversial levy ordered by the duke of Orleans in 1405, purportedly to mount a defence against Henry IV. See Rey, *Domaine*, 281–366, particularly 324–40, for the operation of the *tailles* in this period.



sitating as little intervention as possible from royal officers who, given the disorientation caused by the king's insanity, civil war and invasion, must have had enough problems in central administration without having to deal with those of the queen.

As the earlier diagram illustrated, the foundation of a *trésorerie de la reine* in December 1409 provided a clearing-house for all the queen's revenues. This was not an innovation completely without precedent — there had been a short-lived attempt to centralise her income in 1405, with the appointment of Adam de Brage-longne as *receveur-général* of her finances<sup>28</sup> — but the *trésorerie* would prove to be a longer-term enhancement of Isabeau's position. Hémon Raguier, previously the queen's *argentier* and a central administrator of the *aides de la guerre*, was appointed as the first *trésorier de la reine* in French history, to act as the initial point of contact within her administration once money had been collected safely from the local *receveurs* or the officers of central government. After he had supervised the receipt of income, the *trésorier* was responsible for ensuring that all areas of the bureaucracy, court and household were funded correctly. A major responsibility was to ensure payment of pensions to the queen's courtiers, officials and servants, and then the *trésorier* was entrusted with forwarding receipts intended to fund the other two financial institutions. Thus, to a large extent, the expenses of the *trésorerie* were the receipts of the *argenterie* and *chambre aux deniers* of the hôtel. Accounts are extant, if fragmentary, for the years 1409 to 1416.

The *hôtel de la reine*, with its accounting department of the *chambre aux deniers*, was an ancient and largely unchanging structure that was at Isabeau's disposal from the earliest days of her marriage in August 1385. The vast majority of its funds were devoted to the daily provisioning of foodstuffs for the household, between 75% and 96% (averaging 90%) in the extant biennial accounts covering 1398 to 1406. The remainder was also spent on what could be described as 'housekeeping', such as equipment for the household staff, liveries and wages for some officials, stationery, requirements for the chapel, and postal charges, through expenses to envoys and letter-carriers. For the years of 1393 to 1405, the *chambre* was also in receipt of additional revenue to pay the annual pensions of Isabeau's dozen or so female attendants.

The final accounting department within the queen's administration was the *argenterie de la reine*, an office largely comparable to the Wardrobe in the medieval English court. The *argenterie* handled the purchase of what could be described as consumerables: that is to say, everything required by the queen, her children, their attendants and servants that was not classed as everyday housekeeping. Therefore, the official in charge, the *argentier*, accounted for purchases of clothing, furniture, jewellery and personal items, such as books, table-knives, musical instruments and toys, and hence wrote the accounts from which will be drawn the vast bulk of material for the rest of this paper. From the first days, pay to casual workers was

<sup>28</sup>The appointment was made in October or November 1405 (AN KK43, f.33), then abandoned after less than two years for no immediately obvious reason and with no alternative measures proposed to solve the organisational problems of the queen's independent finances. See Mooney, 'Queenship', 222; Rey, *Les finances royales*, 255.

included as another expense within the category of purchase on which they worked, such as the wages of the queen's *lingière* within the linens section, and the employment of an outside embroiderer under the tapestries class. For the first time, in the October, 1405–September, 1406 account, pensions for the queen's ladies were paid through the *argenterie*, after previously being a responsibility of the *hôtel*.<sup>29</sup> Prior to the foundation of the *trésorerie*, receipts into the *argenterie* had been co-ordinated by officers of the king and, before its own establishment in 1393, the business of the *argenterie* also was handled centrally, with each purchase or service being approved and paid for separately within the *argenterie du roi*. Given that the king's *argenterie* developed apart from his household only at the start of the fourteenth century,<sup>30</sup> and thus it, in itself, was a relatively new concept, one should not feel that Isabeau was battling against centuries of tradition in witnessing the establishment of her own institution. In fact, even without the pressing motive of the king's insanity demanding a unique level of self-reliance and autonomy by his wife and her offices, this separation from central control in 1393 could be seen as a natural progression.

When the queen's *argenterie* was established in May 1393, it was assigned a budget of 10,000 *francs*, or 8,000 *livres parisis*. This sum would eventually be dwarfed by the amounts passing through the hands of her financiers, as her court personnel and responsibilities expanded at the same time as, for want of central supervision, expenses and acquisitions that would previously have been the responsibility of royal officials and have no place in the queen's private accounts had to be processed through the *argenterie*. Sums such as the 24,000 *l.t.* to repair and refurbish her castles, ordered in June 1400,<sup>31</sup> and 2,240 *l.p.* stated specifically under its entry in the receipts as to buy furs for Isabeau's new sister-in-law, Anne of Bourbon,<sup>32</sup> are one-off charges that, in more usual times, would have been handled centrally. Extraordinary payments like these were no substitute for a more reasonable budget and, eventually, in 1401, it was admitted that standard sums could not be applied to a queen with a large brood of dependent children and, perhaps, additional demands on her purse because of heightened political, and hence, social responsibility.<sup>33</sup> For the financial year following October 1401, a sum of 48,000 *francs* was authorised

<sup>29</sup>AN KK43, f.170. The irregularity of payments into the *chambre aux deniers* that made a change of system appropriate also dogged the *argenterie*. Although the 1405–6 account is the last complete one surviving, and thus there is no record of any payments made for 1406–7, we know that a new experiment was begun in October 1407. Herbelet de Petitpas was appointed to collect assigned revenue and handle the payment of pensions within an entirely separate account (AN KK48, f.153–60v), before responsibility was handed to the *trésorerie* on its inauguration.

<sup>30</sup>Rey, *Les finances royales*, 137. See 137–72 for the fullest account of the development and function of the *argenterie du roi* during the reign of Charles VI.

<sup>31</sup>BNF Clairambault 93, f.7203, no. 38. With payment direct from the *Receveur-général des aides*, Alexandre le Boursier, the first 7000 *l.t.* was received by Raguier on 28 February 1401, and 3,500 *l.t.* is recorded as arriving on 17 August (Clairambault 93, f.7203, nos 38 and 41). See AN KK42, f. 1v–3v.

<sup>32</sup>Anne of Bourbon, widow of John of Berry, count of Montpensier, married Lewis of Bavaria on 2 October 1402. See BNF nouvelles acquisitions françaises 5085, no. 157; Rey, *Les finances royales*, 27; Thibault, *Isabeau*, 367–8.

<sup>33</sup>Mooney, 75, agrees that any queen could expect variations in her funding because of general political or financial currents in the kingdom, but also because of her personal situation, since 'if she were pregnant or living with her young children, her revenues would be higher than otherwise'.

for Isabeau's ordinary expenses,<sup>34</sup> increased to 53,000 *francs* the following year. Payments earmarked specifically for the expenses of two of her children, Isabelle, widowed queen of England and John, duke of Touraine, remind us that Isabeau remained responsible for the support of several children who were considered emancipated adults, in status if not in years.<sup>35</sup> The presence of her children, several years after marriage and puberty in some instances, necessitated that her household be considerably larger than it would have been only to support Isabeau, with a multiplication of attendants and servants in direct proportion, and expense of all kinds.

*Argenterie* accounts are detailed, with purchases itemised and priced individually, and the final recipient usually noted, thus providing the historian with a good depth of information. Purchases are grouped into accounting categories, that were restricted to quite specific types of expenditure (see Table 1). For the most part, examples in this paper will be taken from two accounts that provide quite different snapshots of Isabeau's life and spending patterns. First, the second account ever, covering twelve months from 1 July, 1394 to 30 June, 1395, during which period Isabeau gave birth to her daughter, Michelle, and thus was providing within her household for five

Table 1  
Structure of the *comptes de l'argenterie* of Isabeau of Bavaria

Accounting categories	Nature of purchases or services
Achat de draps de laine	Purchase of fine quality woollen fabrics
Tonture	Cutting-up of the above
Façons des robes	Tailoring of garments
Draps d'or et de soie	Purchase of luxury fabrics
Achat de toiles	Purchase of textiles
Pennes et fourrures	Purchase and tailoring of furs
Chambres et broderies	Embroidery of bed-hangings and clothes
Tappiserie	Purchase of wall-hangings and tapestries
Coffres et malles	Purchase of trunks and baggage
Orfèvrerie et achats de 'madres de cuillers'	Jewellery & other precious metal items
Coutellerie	Purchase of knives
Chapeaux, gants etc.	Purchase of accessories & personal items
Communes choses	Other 'everyday' items (pins, capes etc.)
Chaucement (or) cordonnerie	Purchase of shoes & cobbling services
Gages d'officiers	Wages of <i>argenterie</i> officers
Despenses communes et voyages	Other expenses & <i>argenterie messages</i>
Deniers baillés comptant à la reine	Cash given straight to the queen

<sup>34</sup>AN KK42, f.2v-3, recorded in the account covering February 1401–January 1402. The king's *argentier*, Charles Poupart, had altered his dating system to begin financial years on 1 October, a method not copied by the *argenterie de la reine* until Jean Le Blanc took over in 1403 (see Rey, *Les finances royales*, 242).

<sup>35</sup>Given the background to her departure from England in 1401, it is not surprising that the thirteen-year old Isabelle received no dower provisions from her marriage, so was wholly supported by royal funds within her mother's household. Despite being only four, John had already paid homage to his father for his duchy-apanage of Touraine on 28 February, 1402 (Rey, *Les finances royales*, 325–6), and these funds quite possibly came from the profits of his own lands.

children under six.<sup>36</sup> The balance of this account would have been a royal accountant's dream: income of 10,650 *livres*, including a special payment to cover the expenses of a lying-in;<sup>37</sup> outgoings of 7,515, so a surplus of over 3,000 *livres*. Not so the second example account: this is the first under the supervision of Isabeau's second *argentier*, Jean le Blanc, covering just eight months (effectively an interim account, as the many royal offices were then being rationalised to follow a single 'tax year' system) between 1 February and 30 September, 1403. Despite covering just two-thirds of the time of the other surviving accounts, this one has the third highest total expenditure, at 47,190 *livres*, after an income of 41,600, leaving a deficit of 5,590 *livres*. During 1403, given the birth of the future Charles VII on 22 February, Isabeau had seven of her children living with her — the widowed Isabelle having returned from England in 1401, the second dauphin Charles dying the same year, and Marie entering the royal convent of Poissy in 1397 — with ages ranging from thirteen to newborn. Also within her household at this stage were her brother and his wife, and an indigent maternal cousin, Bonne Visconti,<sup>38</sup> as well, for half the period, her daughter-in-law, the dauphine, Margaret of Burgundy. This is one of five of the fourteen accounts that has sustained some damage over the centuries — in this case, the loss of several folios at the end. Before commencing with the main analysis, it would seem wise to provide some clarification into late medieval French money and prices. As was the case in Great Britain right up until 1971, the accounting system on paper was £.s.d — twelve *deniers* to the *sou*; twenty *sous* to the *livre* — which, in medieval France, had minimal correspondence to actual coinage in circulation; as for prices, 4s would have been a day's pay for a skilled stonemason, perhaps the best paid of artisans;<sup>39</sup> and, although none of Isabeau's own *journaliers* or daily lists of food purchases for the household have survived, in her time, a whole pig cost 16s, butter was just over 1s per lb, and eggs were 9s per hundred.<sup>40</sup>

Always one of the largest categories, because of its use for all household personnel, was the first of these, covering the purchase of woollen cloth. Although woollen clothes were everyday apparel for all throughout the Middle Ages, there was a great diversity in the quality and price of fabric, ranging from the coarsest undyed worsted to the finest Flemish and English broadcloth *écarlates* for those able to afford the

<sup>36</sup>Her first two babies had died in infancy in 1386 and 1390. The eldest of these surviving children was Isabelle, born on 9 November, 1389.

<sup>37</sup>AN KK41, f.40. 2,500 *francs* or, in the preferred money of account, 2,000 *livres parisis*. Payments were made on 7 and 26 November, 1394 (800 and 560 *l.p.*), 8 December (240 *l.p.*) and 13 June, 1395 (400 *l.p.*), 'pour convertir et employer au fait de la prouchaine gesine de la Roynie'.

<sup>38</sup>The daughter of Isabeau's maternal uncle, Carlo Visconti, and Beatrix of Armagnac, and born in exile after the fall of Bernabo, Bonne lived in Savoy until 1392, when she was forced to seek asylum in France. She was welcomed by Isabeau, first being pensioned as a *dame* in 1403, when she was sixteen, Yann Grandeaue, 'De quelques dames qui ont servi la reine Isabeau de Bavière', *Bulletin philologique et historique (jusqu'à 1610) du comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, année 1975* (Actes du 100e congrès des sociétés savantes), (Paris, 1977), 237–8.

<sup>39</sup>Jenny Stratford, 'Das Goldene Rößl und die Sammlungen des französischen Königshofs', in: *Das Goldene Rößl. Ein Meisterwerk de Pariser Hofkunst um 1400*, ed. Reinhold Baumstark (Munich, 1995), 45–6.

<sup>40</sup>Details from pieces in BNF nouvelles acquisitions françaises 5903: Comptes de la Maison de Bourgogne, 1409–56.

best. Measurement, and thus clear assessment of price, is difficult for fabrics, despite having a purportedly standard measure in the aulne, for this varied not only just according to geography but also depending on what was being measured: for example, in fifteenth-century Brussels, the aulne used in the markets for silk was 657 mm and that for woollens was 695 mm, while the size of an aulne was smaller further east, perhaps acting as a diminisher of high prices in areas that could not support them. Therefore, alongside the Brussels aulne of 695 mm, we have the Prussian aulne of 570 mm, the aulne of Riga at around 530 mm, while that of Novgorod barely passed 440 mm.<sup>41</sup> Isabeau's main stockist was a family firm of Parisian drapers: in 1403, all orders — covering six double-sided folios — were placed with Phelisot de Compens le jeune who (debts to the treasury tell us) was still supplying the queen in 1416, while the majority of 1394–5 business was done with a Felisot de Compens, whom we presume was his father. The cost of good-quality woollens, bought to clothe the queen and her children, was dependent on its place of production and its colour, as concentrated shades developed in this period are more expensive than others.<sup>42</sup> Wool of the finest quality was in many cases more expensive than silk and other luxury fabrics: a superior wool supplied from Brussels called 'grant maison' was bought in 1394–5 for 52s the *aulne* in green and violet and for 56s in 'sanguine' red. The costliest woollen manufactured in this period was *escarlata*, a luxury fabric characterised by the processes used to finish it — fulling (scouring and beating),<sup>43</sup> teasing and clipping to give it a felted, smooth appearance — but, above all, by the specific vivid red in which it was wholly or partially dyed. The scarlet dye or grain was extracted from the eggs of the shield lice or *kermes vermilio*, then the wool dyed as a yarn or fabric. The kermes was a Mediterranean insect common to Provence and the Languedoc and, when the unhatched eggs were dried for crushing to make the powdered dye, they resembled small grains, which explains the name of the finished product.<sup>44</sup> Some *escarlates* contained additional dye, such as woad blue as an affixative or weld yellow, which explains why some medieval *escarlates* were said to be purple, brown, black or even green. During the fiscal year of 1394–5, Raguier bought *escarlates* for his queen in violet and pink and, by far the most costly, *escarlata vermeille*, which was dyed wholly in the rare, expensive grain and actually scarlet in colour. In this account, 'deux *escarlates vermeilles*' were bought

<sup>41</sup>Simone Abraham-Thisse, 'Les aunes des drapiers au Moyen Âge', *Cahiers de metrologie*, 11–12 (1993–4), 385–99.

<sup>42</sup>Prices such as 24s the aulne for black 'drap d'angleterre', 32s for green 'drap de monstervillier', and 44s for pink 'drap de broisselles' (AN KK41, f.41–42). Piponnier and Mane, *Dress*, 17 states: 'the art of dyeing progressed in leaps and bounds during the last couple of centuries of the Middle Ages; many more substances were used for colouring — vegetable, animal, mineral, local or imported. Colours became more diverse and saturation by dyes improved'.

<sup>43</sup>Carried out by labourers trampling cloth in vats of hot water with additives to encourage shrinkage and felting, but gradually taken over by machinery. Hydraulic beaters became more common in the fifteenth century, with foot fulling reserved for the better quality fabrics, whose width would be reduced by up to 1.5m by the process (Piponnier and Mane, *Dress*, 16).

<sup>44</sup>Piponnier and Mane, *Dress*, 16; *Comptes de l'Argenterie des rois de France au XIVe siècle*, ed. Lucien Douet-d'Arcq (Paris, 1851), 'notice', xviii and n2.

at the huge price of 104 *l.p.* each.<sup>45</sup> Deep scarlet seems to have been a particularly favourite shade of Isabeau's, for it occurs in great quantities despite its price and is a colour in which she has been depicted.<sup>46</sup> In the 1403 account, in line with all others, colours for the queen and her children are almost always scarlet, black and 'vert gay de londres' or 'd'angleterre', which presumably must have been a deep, vibrant shade, perhaps like a Lincoln Green. These are colours which feature just as heavily in the king's surviving accounts,<sup>47</sup> and thus could be regarded as a 'court palette' which Isabeau maintained, through preference or as a visible statement of social unity. With more detailed accounting in the records of 1403, specifying the exact purpose of each purchase, we know, for example, that all the children received at least one complete outfit in each of the three favoured colours, including hoods, with six pairs of red-and-white hose made for both Louis and John, black hose for the queen and Catherine, and several pairs in grey for Isabelle. As for the newborn Charles, crib covers in green and scarlet were ordered, along with a quarter-aulne of the best quality 'escarlante vermeille' costing 28s to make baby bonnets, and 6 aulnes of slightly cheaper white woollen cloth to make nappies.<sup>48</sup>

Luxury, oriental fabrics also made up a large proportion of the royal wardrobe, as recorded in the descriptive category of *Draps d'or et de soie*. Comparable values of these fabrics is even more complex than with the woollens because, although they are most often bought in weight, by the ounce, quarter-pound, or pound, some purchases are made in 'pieces' of varying size with, again, the measurement of an aulne altering with geography, but also with the type and quality of cloth. However, as the vast majority of the fabrics were imported from the Mediterranean, and even further afield, it is safe to presume that the purchase of any luxury fabric was a major expense, even for a woman with the disposable income of the queen of France.<sup>49</sup> In the account of 1394–5, the fabric bought in the largest quantities was sendal, a silk taffeta that was often interwoven with precious metal threads and then finely embroidered. Given such lavish preparation, it is not surprising that sendal was also one of the most expensive fabrics purchased in this account.<sup>50</sup> As with woollens, the same favoured colours appear again and again: black, white, green, and the costly scarlet. Ornate cloth-of-gold was supplied by Nicolas Maulin at a cost of 12*l* 16s per piece — 'six vermillion, four green and two white' — while taffeta and satin also were bought in green and black. Silk in many different shades was purchased

<sup>45</sup>AN KK41, f.42v.

<sup>46</sup>See the frontispiece of the complete works of Christine de Pisan (London, British Library, Harley 4431), famously depicting the author presenting a dedication copy to Isabeau, surrounded by her ladies in her chamber.

<sup>47</sup>See, for example, KK21, f.4–109 (1 June 1390–31 January 1391).

<sup>48</sup>AN KK43, f.5v. F5–10v for whole woollens section.

<sup>49</sup>François Bouchier, *A History of Costume in the West* (London, 1967), 212–3, deduces that the rapid development of the Venetian silk industry in the fourteenth century, with an influx into the city of Tuscan weavers and its increased trade with the Far East, led to a far greater supply of silk into Western Europe, facilitated by the fairs of Paris, Bruges and Champagne.

<sup>50</sup>AN KK41, f.45v–46. White sendal cost 21s the *aulne*, and by piece for 5*l*. 12s, the same as green sendal. When dyed in Isabeau's favourite shade of scarlet, the price rose to 44s the *aulne*, or (differently) 24s per pound in weight, the same price as in black.



by the ounce, with colours ranging from tan through black, green, white and scarlet,<sup>51</sup> to silk costing 10s the ounce in a shade described as 'ardent de paris', presumably an orange or gold tone. The most expensive fabric was velvet, with black costing almost five *livres* per aulne, and white velvet lined with silk priced at thirty-two *livres* per piece. The most extravagant purchases of 1394–5 were described in great detail: three pieces of black velvet with needlework in green and white were bought for seventy-two *livres* each, while one piece of 'vermilion embroidered in Cyprus gold, with little songbirds in Cyprus gold and small white rosebuds' cost the *argenterie* fifty-six *livres*. With the growing popularity of the deepest shades in the fifteenth century, Isabeau was extremely fashionable by having black velvet as the most popular purchase in the 1403 account, although her four favoured colours appear in satin, sendal and damask, as well as ten aulnes of violet satin, at 64s the aulne, to make a dress for the queen. One final item is particularly worthy of note: two and a half 'pieces' of black velvet embroidered in gold with what is described as the queen's device which was, in fact, an interwoven design of hers and the king's favourite motif. These were *branches de genestre et de moron entrelacees l'une parmi l'autre*<sup>52</sup> — for Isabeau, the 'mouron' or pimpernel, and for Charles, the *planta genesta* or broom plant. These velvets cost a mammoth eighty *livres* per piece.

Extravagance in the choice of fabric was often balanced by simplicity in garment fashions, as we are given some hints by the separate category for tailoring. The queen had a tailor of her own, while in the 1393–4 account, a second was employed for the dauphin. In 1403, the boys and the girls shared two tailors who were valets within the household, and a 'freelancer' from Paris, named Jean Barnier, was paid to make liveries for the queen's equerries.<sup>53</sup> These are described as forty-four *Robes miparties de blanc et de vert [avec] escharppe destailles noires blanches vertes et vermeilles*, along with matching hoods and hose.<sup>54</sup> The young princes were provided with *pluseurs robes royales* (a four-garment, ceremonial court dress),<sup>55</sup> *houppelandes* (shorter with voluminous sleeves), *doublez* (short thigh-high tunic), *chapperons*, *chausses et autres chases*. For the princesses and Isabeau herself in 1403, orders were placed for dresses described as robes, houppelandes, cotehardies and corsets, as well as sleeves.<sup>56</sup> This latter purchase reminds us that, for the most part, sleeves were made separately and were detachable to enable style or colour changes, considering sleeve-shape was one of the fastest-changing indications of fashion through-

<sup>51</sup>6s the ounce for tan and black; 7s for white, green and scarlet.

<sup>52</sup>AN KK43, f.13.

<sup>53</sup>AN KK43, f. 11 v–12.

<sup>54</sup>A description that can be easily compared with the illustration for May in the 'Très Riches Heures' of the duke of Berry which famously depicts a group of mounted young noblemen and women, accompanied by minstrels, dressed in very similarly two-colour liveries. Illustrations from this manuscript, held by the Musée Condé at Chantilly, have been widely published; see, for example, Jean Defournet, *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry* (Paris, 1995), 29.

<sup>55</sup>Under-robe, closed surcoat, open surcoat and cote.

<sup>56</sup>Bouchier, *History of Costume*, 198–9, 204–5. For the development of women's fashion, see Herbert Norris, *Costume and Fashion*, vol. II: *Senlac to Bosworth, 1066–1485* (London, 1927), and also Max von Boehn, *Modes and Manners*, vol. I: *From the Decline of the Ancient World to the Renaissance*, trans. Joan Joshua (London, 1932).

out the Middle Ages,<sup>57</sup> and, to be more mundane, perhaps for easier laundering. The cotehardie was now really an undergarment with narrow sleeves and worn underneath the cotelette or surcoat, a pinafore-shaped overgarment often called a 'sideless gown' because it split to the hip at the sides then closed to the floor, thus displaying most of the cotehardie. The borders of the surcoat's deep armholes were accentuated by braid, fur or a contrasting band of cloth. The making of surcoats is ordered in the 1394 account and, as an archetypal fourteenth-century silhouette — coming into fashion, along with 'fashion' itself, around 1340 — was becoming a little dated by the beginning of the fifteenth century. However, the style remained in use for several more decades in ceremonial wear, most interestingly as a favoured design for wedding dresses,<sup>58</sup> perhaps within a similar tradition that today sees sharp-suited career women still wafting down the aisle in a Victorian-style hooped 'meringue'. In the early period of Isabeau's reign, the almost unisex houppelande also was popular among court women. It was a wide robe with closed or flaring voluminous sleeves, buttoned down the front and caught in tightly at the waist by a belt which formed the material underneath into regular pipe-like folds. In the fifteenth century, the most common female silhouette was produced by the gown or corset, an adaptation of the houppelande that used less material and hence fell in fewer folds in a more graceful line, usually finishing in a train.<sup>59</sup> The gown fitted tightly around the bust and, in a development of the turned-down collar and V-neckline of the houppelande, plunged in a pointed décolletage to a wide high-waisted belt called a bandier. Modesty was preserved with the tassel, a band of usually black cloth which was layered underneath the pointed collar to cover the chest and produce a square-shaped neckline.

Furs also played an important role in late medieval luxury fashions, during which period it became more fashionable to line and trim garments with large quantities of fur. Preferences were for the northern grey squirrel, fox, marten, beaver, and lettuce, which was white and similar to ermine, with trade mainly via the Hanseatic League's outposts in Russia and the port of Bruges, well placed between the northern producers and the major European buyers.<sup>60</sup> Squirrel fur was especially favoured: the back of the pelt was called 'gris' and was often used by itself but, when it was arranged in a chessboard pattern with the white belly fur, 'menuvair' was produced. The grey back-fur of squirrels was bought in huge quantities: in 1394–5, Colin Testart supplied 3,500 pelts at a cost of 64s per hundred, while other Parisian merchants sold for prices between 54 and 100s. Perhaps because it was difficult to tempt the *argenterie* buyers to go to the trouble of purchasing outside the capital, the most reasonable merchant was Jean la Foy from Tournay, who supplied a total of 5,000 pelts of *gris* at prices of 50 and 48s per hundred. He also provided 232 squirrel

<sup>57</sup>Boehn, *Modes*, 240–1, describes some of the new shapes in sleeves in the late fourteenth–early fifteenth centuries.

<sup>58</sup>Beaulieu, 'Le costume', 68; and n15, where she cites a miniature in the *Chronique de Flandre* (Bibliothèque de Bruges, manuscript 437, f.395) of the engagement of Marie of Burgundy to Maximilian of Austria in 1477.

<sup>59</sup>Boehn, *Modes*, 395–6, estimates that it continued to be made up in one piece until the mid-fifteenth century, when a skirt and bodice (and, of course, sleeves) began to be made separately.

<sup>60</sup>Bouchier, *History of Costume*, 214; Norris, *Costume*, 283.

bellies at a cost of 88s per hundred and five hundred pelts from red squirrels for eleven *livres*. The contrasting menuvair was bought in large quantities, with complete grey-white skins costing from 32 to 60 *sous* per hundred, while rabbit sold very cheaply, at just a few pence per pelt. In 1403, as well as purchases similar to the above, the *argenterie* bought 188 lettuces at 24 *s* per dozen and seven skins of foal for 48 *sous* each.

As well as the manufacture of clothes, fabrics of all kinds bought through the *argenterie* were put to other uses, such as hangings and other decoration. In 1394, six green tapestries were made for the queen's *garderobe* or withdrawing-chamber, each with a lozenge at the centre containing the double coat-of-arms of Charles VI and Isabeau<sup>61</sup> and, in 1403, hangings in scarlet and silver were made for the queen's best carriage, decorated with pimpernels and other flowers. There were also accessories such as hats and shoes. In the first years of Isabeau's reign, it was popular to dress the hair in 'reticula' or nets of gold thread.<sup>62</sup> A statue of the queen herself, at the Palais de Justice in Poitiers, depicts her around 1390 in a surcoat with her hair in two bags of net or 'cauls' on the side of her head, one of the most attractive of these reticulated headdresses. These headdresses were also often surmounted by circular or rectangular veils of linen or silk which draped around the back of the neck. The catch-all phrase for the more elaborate, almost architectural hats of the fifteenth-century female aristocracy is the hennin, the infamous horned headdresses about which Juvénal des Ursins wrote in 1417,<sup>63</sup> saying that the 'two great ears' were so large that, when two ladies wanted to walk into a room, they had to turn sideways, cheek to cheek, or else they would not fit through the door. The popular image of medieval women's headgear — for everyone from Guinevere to Shakespeare's Anne Neville — the very tall, cornet-shaped hennin with long diaphanous veils suspended from the peak, was virtually unknown before the 1440s and it is a double-lobed heart shape that was most favoured by Isabeau.<sup>64</sup> The construction of these headpieces was achieved in various ways: the butterfly or *beaupré* shapes were formed by a framework of brass wire over which were draped veils at the front and back, depicted on Christine in the Harley miniature; while the double-lobed style, as worn by the queen and her ladies, consisted of fabric rolls stuffed with horsehair. Or at least that was what they said: a fiery outraged preacher of the time condemned the mortal vanities of noblewomen wearing headdresses 'stuffed with the hair of dead women who may well be in Hell'.<sup>65</sup> A widely-reproduced engraving from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France that is thought to represent Isabeau depicts the queen in a taller headdress,

<sup>61</sup>AN KK41, f.51.

<sup>62</sup>Norris, *Costume*, 437–9. See 433–48 for the most detailed look at male and female headgear of the period.

<sup>63</sup>Jean Juvénal des Ursins, *Histoire de Charles VI, roy de France*, ed. Michaud and Poujoulet (Nouvelle Collection des mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la France), sér. 1, vol. ii, (Paris, 1836), 533.

<sup>64</sup>See Bouchier, *History of Costume*, 200, 209; Norris, *Costume*, 445–8.

<sup>65</sup>Additionally: 'Fell doune the pride of wommens hornes'. *Historical Poems of the 14th and 15th Centuries*, ed. Robbins (New York, 1959), no. 53 — quoted by Scatterbrook, 'Fashion and Morality', 267.

which is probably not contemporary,<sup>66</sup> but which is a clear development on the heart-shaped style. In addition, this picture shows other fashion developments — the V-necked gown, ceremonial surcoat, and some reasonably modest-length poulaine shoes. The most popular types of footwear among the wealthy in the early part of Isabeau's reign were ankle-boots, made of leather, velvet or silk, laced up the side or open-sided with a tie round the ankle between the front and back of the boot's collar, or alternatively 'pattens', which were just flat heels and soles of tough leather sewn onto tight fabric shoes or attached directly to the hose.<sup>67</sup> By the early fifteenth century, many women had added masculine pointed poulaines to their wardrobe. Isabeau was among them, but women's styles did not reach the extravagant lengths of those worn by the most fashionable dandies in the last decades of the fourteenth century — the popular picture of toes so long that they had to be fastened to the wearer's garters or around their knees with a gold or silver chain.<sup>68</sup>

A major area of consumerism among the medieval elite that can be explored through Isabeau's *argenterie* accounts is book-ownership, through records of her library of pious and secular volumes. Even as early as 1387, a leather-bound leather trunk was in use to transport the queen's books and, despite the lack of a real catalogue, certain titles are known to us through the accounts. For example, in 1398, she ordered the writing and illumination of a 'Life of St Margaret', newly commissioned a 'Passion of Our Lord', and ordered the making of two gold clasps, engraved with her coat-of-arms for a chapel Psalter — the same book that, in 1401, was recovered in black velvet with embroidered scarlet pimpernels.<sup>69</sup> She owned books in the vernacular, such as the 'Hundred Ballads', by the Burgundian Otto de Grasson, that she bought in 1399 for 14l 8s, and several Books of Hours, which it is clear that she used, not just admired. One modest collection, containing only the Hours of Our Lady (and costing under nine *livres*) was written up for her in October, 1398, but needed some pages whitening and rewritten in June 1399, then to be rebound, then subject to some additional minor repairs in 1401.<sup>70</sup> Page markers and turners, whether silk ribbons with seed pearls attached to weight them or tiny, flat-tened metal 'pipes' engraved with the queen's arms also feature in her accounts,<sup>71</sup> as does a small ivory lantern in which to place *la chandelle quant la Royne dit ses heures*<sup>72</sup> early in the morning or after dark without the risk of dripping wax onto

<sup>66</sup>Aroused by fact that it greatly resembles a Burgundian-style hennin in which Isabelle of Portugal is depicted in a portrait of c.1440, as does the dress and jewellery in which Isabeau is portrayed (Norris, *Costume*, 397 and plate xxii).

<sup>67</sup>Presumably providing an item rather like a modern slipper-sock. In order for these to be practical in northern Europe, wooden overclogs or platformed pattens were worn out of doors.

<sup>68</sup>Norris, *Costume*, 274, says that Bohemians who came to England with Queen Anne in the 1380s were first to fasten excessive toes in this manner, although it is a fashion that Boehn, *Modes*, 228 'blames' on James I of Scotland. Outlandish fashions were also condemned by English contemporary writers on the Hainaulters, Italians blamed the French, and the general French historical tradition for several centuries has been to blame Isabeau of Bavaria.

<sup>69</sup>AN KK41, f.184–5, 172; KK42, f.48.

<sup>70</sup>AN KK42, f.185, 187, 228, 256, 30.

<sup>71</sup>AN KK41, f.55v<sup>o</sup>; KK23, f.149.

<sup>72</sup>AN KK41. f.66. The lantern cost 32 *sous* and was delivered on 6 March, 1394 to Catherine de Villiers, the lady-in-waiting who was entrusted with particular care of the queen's library.

the parchment. Books were also bought for the queen's children — Psalters and Books of Hours for their individual chapels — and what is described as an *A, b, c des psaulmes* bought for Michelle in January 1403, as she celebrated her eighth birthday, and intended to teach her to read as well as act as a devotional work.<sup>73</sup>

Purchases for her children also feature among the queen's extravagances in jewellery, from shoe buckles bought for the elder dauphin Charles and Marie in 1394, to three ounces of gilded buttons intended to adorn the robes being made for Easter, 1395 for the princesses Isabelle, Jeanne, and Marie,<sup>74</sup> to a silver crucifix made as a baptismal present for the baby Michelle.<sup>75</sup> During 1395, items bought by the queen for herself included two rings: a signet and a diamond solitaire both costing 32 *sous*, and a jewelled collar made to be hung around the base of a hat, consisting of two gold pod-shaped sections, held together by two clasps. Adorning each clasp was an ornamental tiger embellished with rubies, diamonds and pearls, at the massive cost of 98 *livres*, which was almost the annual salary of the *argentier*, Hémon Raguier.<sup>76</sup> Presents bought by Isabeau include a hallmarked goblet to be sent to the marquise of Montferrant to congratulate her on the birth of a son,<sup>77</sup> and a collar scattered with black-enamelled pods from which hung little golden bowl shapes, made especially to be attached to a black velvet houppelande, both of which were presented by Isabeau to Charles VI at a party that she held for him at her recently-refurbished *hôtel* of Vaux-la-Reine on 22 May, 1395.<sup>78</sup> The next entry details the queen's order of fifteen gold rings to be given to his companions, enamelled in green with a setting for a solitaire diamond.<sup>79</sup> Jewellery expenditure was particularly high in the accounts of 1401–3, totalling over 37,000 *livres* while descriptions of the queen's possessions that formed part of the collection of royal jewels pawned in 1405 illustrate the fantastic sums that she was prepared to spend, given that one headpiece is described as being set with forty-four balay rubies and forty-two solitaire sapphires, ninety pearls and a large central diamond.<sup>80</sup>

The luxury of being able to keep animals solely as pets, rather than as workers or food, is a potent symbol of a consumer society. Our knowledge of Isabeau's pets comes mainly from the one surviving account of her coffer or 'petty cash' expenses, covering March 1415 to April 1417.<sup>81</sup> She must have adored animals, for she owned a veritable menagerie, many of whom seem to have travelled with her. In May 1416,

<sup>73</sup>AN KK42, f.56v.

<sup>74</sup>AN KK42, f.57v. The newer tight fashions made a greater use of buttons essential, as clothes could no longer be drawn over the head or hips without unfastening them in some way (Boehn, *Modes*, 230).

<sup>75</sup>All remaining jewellery examples in AN KK41, f.57–59v.

<sup>76</sup>AN KK41, f.59, 69.

<sup>77</sup>AN KK41, f.61. The goblet cost 23*l*, and the account also reproduces the exact details of how it was sent to the recipient. From Clereboure, it was 'baillie par la Roïne a marguerite de germonuille demoiselle de son corps pour presenter par ladite dame a 1 escuier qui avoit porte lettres de la marquise'.

<sup>78</sup>AN KK41, f.60. See Thibault, *Isabeau*, 260–1.

<sup>79</sup>AN KK41, f.60. The rings themselves cost 24*s* each. Fourteen stones of various sizes were bought for these as the next item, costing a total of 255*l* 12*s*.

<sup>80</sup>Léon Mirot, 'Etudes Lucquoises, Galvano Trenta et les joyaux de la couronne', *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 101 (1940), 156. See 128–9; Eugene Jarry, *La vie politique de Louis de France, duc d'Orléans, 1372–1407* (Paris, 1889), 317–8; and BNF nouvelles acquisitions françaises 5085, no. 158–9, for comment.

<sup>81</sup>AN KK49, with extremely detailed entries covering fifty-four folios.

she paid sixpence to two men who carried her *oiselets* (baby birds) from Paris to her house in the Bois de Vincennes; on 23 July that same year, she took her birds with her from Vincennes to Saint-Germain-en-Laye, just for an overnight stay. She owned several turtledoves, for whom wheat and millet costing four *sous* was purchased every month, and even a barn owl.<sup>82</sup> The children, too, are known to have kept birds: parrots were owned by the princesses Isabelle, Jeanne and Michelle in 1401, and turtledoves by Catherine in 1416.<sup>83</sup> Two more exotic animals owned by the queen must have attracted a great deal of attention. A leopard was given to her by her son John in March 1417 — there are mentions in this account of whole sheep being bought to feed it<sup>84</sup> — and, in common with several women of her status, Isabeau kept a monkey, who was luxuriously dressed by her own tailor in a turquoise robe, lined with grey fur, and carried around on a red leather collar and lead.<sup>85</sup> As did most of her contemporaries, Isabeau kept falcons to hunt, along with dogs,<sup>86</sup> but also had pet dogs — most commonly greyhounds — of whom the most famous was Lancelot, who is preserved for posterity in the 1394 account when his mistress bought him a silver collar.<sup>87</sup> Lancelot was a litter-mate of Charles VI's companion, Roland, who also makes an appearance in this account, at the party that Isabeau held for Charles at her recently-refurbished *hôtel* of Vaux-la-Reine in May 1395. When Isabeau presented the king and his companions with jewellery at the function, a silver vermeil dog collar, enamelled with Charles' coat-of-arms, had been bought for Roland,<sup>88</sup> thus ensuring that he was not left out as the only member of the royal entourage not to receive a gift.

As has been indicated during the course of this paper, there were several justifiable and practical reasons for mounting costs within the queen's administration, particularly the size of her family and her extraordinary circumstances as head of the governing council. However, her finances attracted a level of disquiet at the time and much criticism from historians over the last two centuries. The resilience of the harsh nineteenth-century image of the queen as absorbed with *la soif de possession, la fièvre de l'or, une sorte de cupidité rapace qui l'anima toute sa vie*<sup>89</sup> demands continued attention and, although not wishing merely to bite back and present a whitewashed, equally unrealistic image of her, an initial and seemingly most logical response to criticism of her spending is pragmatism, and agree with the landmark financial historian, Marcel Rey, that one cannot really blame her for making use of benefits put at her disposal.<sup>90</sup> It should also be recalled, of course, that all enhance-

<sup>82</sup>AN KK 49, where two chickens were bought to feed the owl.

<sup>83</sup>AN KK42, f.9; KK49, f.49v.

<sup>84</sup>AN KK49, f.47v, records payment to Perrin Saoul, a butcher from Nogent-sur-Marne, on 10 March, 1417. See Lille, Archives Départementales du Nord B 17497 for the leopard's delivery to Isabeau.

<sup>85</sup>AN KK49, f.47v. Monkeys on chains, if unclothed, sit on the arms of Margaret Tudor and Katherine of Aragon in portraits by Daniel Mytens and Lucas Hornebolte (Maria Perry, *Sisters to the King* (London, 1998), plates 8 & 18, between 110 and 111).

<sup>86</sup>AN KK49, f. 15, 17 — the seven dogs 'de l'extraction des marteles de Bourbon qui sont a ladicté dame'.

<sup>87</sup>AN KK41, f.58.

<sup>88</sup>AN KK41, f.60v.

<sup>89</sup>Auguste Vallet de Viriville, *Isabeau de Bavière* (Paris, 1859), 12.

<sup>90</sup>Rey, *Les finances royales*, 247. 'Elle ne devait pas se faire fame, on le verra, d'en user de la sorte!'



ments to the queen's bureaucracy and to the sums of money which she accessed through it, were not just unilateral actions on Isabeau's part. The greater independence she exercised after 1393 was granted, not seized and, more often than not, granted personally by Charles VI himself during a period of what was perceived as lucidity. For example, the establishment of her *argenterie* occurred in May 1393, toward the end of a ten-month period of remission between the first and second outbreak of the king's insanity.<sup>91</sup> Equally, the major rises in the assigned budget of the *argenterie* were authorised in July 1401 and 2 October, 1402, as mentioned earlier, which are dates that also fall in intervals when Charles was recognised universally as 'sane'.<sup>92</sup>

Certainly, there are cases when rises in expenditure appear to be rooted in nothing more than pure frivolousness on the part of the queen, such as the accounts of 1401–1403 where, despite recording the highest amounts under *deniers bailliés* (cash in hand) of around 24% of expenditure, sums spent on jewellery were 47% and 35% respectively of total expenses. Figures such as these can only be damaging to Isabeau's image, even when, for example, the fact that she hosted embassies from the recently-elected Emperor Rupert III during this period provides some justification for escalated spending on glamour and adornment for herself and her family. When given access to these large sums, it is clear that, during her time as queen of France, Isabeau had developed extremely expensive tastes. In the account of 1402–3, 800 *livres* was spent on just two pieces of cloth-of-gold and the enormous total of 68,233 pelts of *vair* were bought.<sup>93</sup> Isabeau had the personality and the potential to record extremely large expenses on her personal pleasures and fancies, and in this area she has certainly attracted criticism, such as Alfred Coville who, in 1888, wrote that *elle tourmentait sans cesse le roi et les gouverneurs des finances de ses demandes et ses besoins*.<sup>94</sup> However, when one compares her expenditure to the people around her of the closest status, the apanaged *princes du sang*,<sup>95</sup> sums allocated to and spent by the queen appear in greater perspective, and more to her credit. Gifts and pensions made to the royal dukes were regular, and high: Louis of Bourbon received 12,000 *francs* per annum and John of Berry enjoyed an annual pension of 18,000 *francs* after 1383, which was doubled to 36,000 *francs* in 1400,<sup>96</sup> while many princes were permitted frequently to collect for themselves part or all of the *aides* due on their

<sup>91</sup>The initial outbreak ended on 8 August, 1392 and the king remained stable until mid-June 1393. See Religieux de Saint-Denis, *Chronique de Charles VI*, ed L-F Bellaguet [Collection de documents inédits sur l'Histoire de France], (6 vols, Paris, 1839–52), vol. 2, 25 and 87.

<sup>92</sup>The king recovered his sanity in early June 1401, but was mad again by December. After falling prey to another attack in mid-July, he was perceived as recovering on 1 October, but only for just over a week before 'il retomba dans son état ordinaire de démence'. See Religieux de Saint-Denis, vol. 3, 11, 15–17, 37 and 47.

<sup>93</sup>AN KK42, f.61, 73.

<sup>94</sup>Alfred Coville, *Les Cabochiens et l'ordonnance de 1413* (Paris, 1888), 21.

<sup>95</sup>See Rey, *Les finances royales*, 218–21, 589–607.

<sup>96</sup>Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Bold. The Formation of the Burgundian State* (London, 1962), 57.

lands.<sup>97</sup> At the peak of his political power in 1404–6, Louis of Orleans received nearly 100,000 *francs* a year, just as a pension,<sup>98</sup> while it has been assessed that, in total, he could count on over 450,000 *l.t.* from royal funds, of which 158,835 *livres* came from *aides* ceded to him, nearly 45,000 *l.t.* in revenue from his own lands, and the remainder in personal gifts from the king.<sup>99</sup> However, Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, surpassed all his relations in appropriating the financial resources of France for his own use: as well as an annual pension of 36,000 *francs* and access to almost the whole of the proceeds of the royal *aides* within his territories, his biographer, Richard Vaughan, has calculated that, between 1382 and 1403, gifts from the king to his uncle reached the enormous total of 1.3 million *livres parisis*.<sup>100</sup> Although the household records of Charles VI are far more fragmentary than those of his queen, some level of comparison can be made in this area too. During the term of Saint John, 1406, the *dépenses des journées* in the *hôtel du roi* totalled 40,109 *l.p.*, as opposed to 21,668 *l.p.* spent by Isabeau's household, while the *princes du sang* also spent far more than the queen in similar years, with Philip the Bold averaging 90,000 *l.p.* per annum over 1402–4, and the duke of Berry around 60,000 *l.p.*<sup>101</sup> Therefore, compared to the expenditure of the great magnates of the kingdom, Isabeau of Bavaria's 'fortune' appears rather less impressive, and amounts received by her *trésorier* during her two greatest years of income, averaging 171,181 *l.t.* per year,<sup>102</sup> rather pale beside the 450,000 to 500,000 *l.t.* that Philip the Bold could expect to receive from all sources in his later years.<sup>103</sup>

To a far greater extent than might be thought at initial analysis, Isabeau of Bavaria can be cleared of some guilt from the oft-repeated accusations of calculated, unjustified, malicious, and peerless extravagance. As has been emphasised already, her large family of children led automatically to a household of unprecedented size which, inexorably, led to unprecedented costs. The queen's unique political rôle appears, also, to have led to additional expenditure in entertainment, official gifts and the adornment of Isabeau herself and her courtiers, costs which, if they had (as they should have) been the responsibility the king, would have been accounted for separately as 'extraordinary' expenditure and not have corrupted the picture of everyday expenses. A more incidental increase in expenditure that corresponded with the rise in the queen's political profile, such as the value of New Year's gifts or *étrennes* given by her to family, courtiers and servants,<sup>104</sup> tempts one to develop this line of argument even further and query whether there was a perceived need for conspicuous

<sup>97</sup>Coville, *Les Cabochiens*, 52, tells us that, for 1402–4, Orleans was given all taxes raised on his county of Vertus; Jacques of Bourbon, count of La Marche got 33% of the *aides* and *gabelle* on his lands in 1405; and John of Berry was awarded the *aides* of Berry, Poitou, Étampes, Boulogne and the Auvergne in 1402.

<sup>98</sup>Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 57.

<sup>99</sup>Coville, *Jean Petit. La question du tyrannicide au commencement du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1932), 374.

<sup>100</sup>Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 57, 229.

<sup>101</sup>See Rey, *Les finances royales*, 589–607, for full details.

<sup>102</sup>As 50% of the total received in the first account of the queen's *Trésorerie* (1409–11), which was 342,362/9s 4d.t.

<sup>103</sup>Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 229.

<sup>104</sup>Stratford, 'Das Goldene Rößl', 46, confirms that 'auch die sich steigernde Größenordnung von Isabeau Neujahrsgeschenken muß im Zusammenhang mit ihrer veränderten politischen Rolle gesehen werden'.

consumption above and beyond any personal, selfish desires of Isabeau herself. Perhaps she believed, or was advised, that she ought to ensure a convincing propaganda show of wealth, beauty and economic confidence in order to inspire or reassure those around her, and the populace at large, that the fate of the royal family and the nation was secure, despite political events and all other indications to the contrary in the first years of the fifteenth century. Naturally, a suggestion of motive in this case can be little more than speculation but, in any case, there is no motive or justification that will ever totally clear Isabeau's name against charges of profligacy and cupidity, and nor should there be. The reason for this is exactly the same as that which demands that she should not be wholly condemned — the contextualisation of her actions within the realities of her life and situation. During the period, disquiet at Isabeau's financial weaknesses was not so much directed at the management of her personal budget, but her incrimination by default in the downward spiral of the fortunes of the nation.

Although no fifteenth-century subject would dream of expecting the tightening of purse-strings demanded of Elizabeth II in the 1990s, an ever-widening gulf did develop between Isabeau and many of her people because of her finances, for she was patently becoming richer at exactly the same time as the rest of France became even poorer because of increased wartime taxation. Thus, even though a common weapon of the few surviving contemporary complaints is the subject of her personal expenditure, the queen's association with state finances is more likely to have been the root cause of dissatisfaction, particularly when one takes into account the origin of the critical material, which was strongly Burgundian in leaning in two periods when the dukes of Orleans held political ascendancy, in 1405-6 and 1413. Even when the queen's private finances are the subject, the real targets for attack are often her administrators and, as with the case of Cabochien attacks on state finance in 1413, it is 'corrupt officials', badly serving and advising the Crown rather than the royal family themselves who are particularly vulnerable. In 1406, the political verse pamphlet, the *Songe Véritable*, had four stanzas on Isabeau, but great swathes of vitriole against the Grand Master of the King's Household, Jean de Montagu, while, even in the queen's case, the anonymous author knew enough of her affairs to mention her ex-argentier, Hémon Raguier by name, and blame him specifically for the poor state of the queen's affairs.<sup>105</sup>

Although in January 1391 Isabeau had obtained a personal *coffre*, or what could be described as a privy purse, used for small everyday sums,<sup>106</sup> the foundation of her *argenterie* was the first time that she exercised real control over a large proportion of her finances. As such, no matter the relative success or failure of the exercise, it was a development bound to cause disquiet among those who challenged her right to any kind of independence from central control. However, the queen's most fervent critics seem to feel able to argue from opposite directions at once: the nature of her

<sup>105</sup>In addition, Raguier is among a long list of royal officials accused of pillaging the finances of the king — 'ce qu'ils en ont peu prendre aux mains'. See *Le Songe véritable*, ed. H. Moranvillé, *Mémoires de la Société de l'Histoire de Paris et de l'Ile-de-France*, 17 (1890), 264.

<sup>106</sup>Rey, *Les finances royales*, 177.

luxury purchases, from cloth-of-gold to prayerbooks to pet doves, condemns her as a spendthrift, indulging herself on the dwindling national reserves, but the pursuit of local receivers who were not punctual in their surrender of due taxation, at her own expense, is not praised as an effort to ensure that the state was not being short-changed or swindled out of rightful revenue, but condemned, again, as proof of a deviant cupidity. The claim that *l'amour d'argent était une des passions dominantes d'Isabeau* is not unusual,<sup>107</sup> but that does make it any the less unjust.

As has been said before, condemnation of Isabeau for visible extravagance in a period of national crisis and deepening poverty is not a charge that it is totally possible to defend her against, because the statistics and itemisation of her accounts show it to be true. However, equivalent disregard for the poor economic state of the nation was shown by the French princes. Although it could perhaps be asserted that the queen had more of a responsibility than any other member of the royal family to act as a rôle model, the equivalent or even greater sums of money accepted or requisitioned by the royal dukes from central funds, and spent equally lavishly, should be remembered. In addition to the figures given above, the 100,000 *francs* authorised by the king himself to pay and equip an escort for his daughter, Isabelle, in October 1396, when she was travelling to Calais and her new home in England, is a further element of a definite culture of extravagance at the French court, and proves that the king's blood relations were happy to take their share of it, given that Philip of Burgundy and John of Berry were both paid 10,000 *francs* for attending the princess.<sup>108</sup> Equally, amounts spent through the personal accounts of the dukes could often dwarf even the worst excesses of the queen's *argenterie*. Purchases of jewels by Philip the Bold and John the Fearless totalled 39,343 *livres* in 1400 and 54,770 *livres* in 1410,<sup>109</sup> and (as mentioned already) Isabeau's highest ever total was 37,000 *livres*. By contrast, comparing sums of money spent by Isabeau and her predecessors, as was done by the Cabochien rebels in 1413 and by historians since, is quite spurious. Earlier queens did have their own household organisations but, as has been explained, this entails little more than the provisioning of daily necessities within a small and rigid budget. The type of expenditure for which Isabeau is widely condemned — that driven by personal taste on luxury items — was not in the hands of earlier queens. Prior to the creation of the *argenterie de la reine* in 1393, the queen and her household were absorbed within the general budget of the royal household, and any purchases for them had to be authorised, ordered and paid for by the officials of the king. Naturally, large sums of money were spent on all queens of France, who were clothed and bejewelled in line with their status but, because they personally did not spend it through their own institutions, the cost to the nation of its queens can rather get subsumed within the funding of an all-inclusive royal

<sup>107</sup>J. de Pétigny, 'Charte inédite et secrète de la reine Isabelle de Bavière', *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, 10 (1848–9), 332.

<sup>108</sup>Religieux de Saint-Denis, vol. 2, 413–5; *Choir de pièces inédites relatives au règne de Charles VI*, ed. Lucien Douet-d'Arcq, 2 vols (Paris, 1863), vol. 1, 130–4, lists the attendants and servants who accompanied the princess.

<sup>109</sup>Coville, *Les Cabochiens*, 94.

entourage. Historians of Isabeau of Bavaria are fortunate — although, for the sake of her reputation, perhaps the queen herself is less so — that her expenditure is obvious and well-documented, but it should be remembered that, until her reign and the creation of separate institutions, 'queen's expenditure' was a matter of definition, difficult to pin down and, hence, far less likely to be criticised.

Lavish tastes that Isabeau acquired as queen of France were short-sighted and foolish, perhaps, but certainly not unique. From across the Channel in England, Eleanor of Castile (1272–90) was widely condemned during her lifetime for her greed and questionable business ethics in the acquisition of land, but has been lauded by historians since Agnes Strickland as a 'virtuous woman and excellent queen [who] won the love and goodwill of her subjects',<sup>110</sup> while Philippa of Hainault (1328–69) was a notorious spendthrift but, luckily for her future reputation, Edward III was prepared to clear her debts and supervise her future expenditure.<sup>111</sup> As well as being deprived of similar guidance from her husband, the upbringing of Elisabeth of Bavaria might well not have prepared her adequately for the responsibilities that come with great wealth. When she arrived in Hainault in 1385 before her wedding, her great-aunt, the duchess, did not allow her to keep the clothes in which she had arrived, seeing them as too plain and simple for French taste, so arranged more extravagant garments to be made for her.<sup>112</sup> Indoctrination with what a queen was expected to be cannot have failed to make an impression on a young princess, while the luxury and spectacle of Charles VI's court to which Isabeau had been exposed and which, in 1389 particularly, with an Entry into Paris and coronation that so dazzled Froissart, had been directed at her personally must have re-emphasised this self-image as a glorious butterfly-like creation, reflecting the power and influence of the Crown through display and beauty. Thus, as a closing and slightly more sober thought, it could be suggested with some justification that the kingdom of France may well have got the queen that she deserved, for France herself had moulded her.

<sup>110</sup>Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England from the Norman Conquest*, 12 vols (London, 1840–7), vol. 2.196, where she insists that 'nothing but good is recorded of Eleanora by the pen of history'. However, see John Carmi Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile: queen and society in thirteenth-century England* (New York, 1995), 119–156, particularly, for the queen's criticised financial dealings.

<sup>111</sup>Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England, 1100–1547* (Stroud, 1994), 93–4.

<sup>112</sup>Jean Froissart, *Les Chroniques de Sire Jean Froissart*, ed. J.A.C. Buchon, 3 vols (Paris, 1885), vol. 2, 320.