



***“Wishing to Defend Her Country”:  
Philippa of Hainaut, Royal Marital  
Partnership, and the Battle of  
Neville’s Cross (1346)***

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**“Wishing to Defend Her Country”<sup>1</sup>: Philippa of Hainaut, Royal Marital Partnership, and the Battle of Neville’s Cross (1346)<sup>2</sup>**

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**Abstract:** This article re-examines the chronicle accounts of Philippa of Hainaut, Queen of England, being present at the Battle of Neville’s Cross through the lens of constructing ideal queenship models. It argues that there is more evidence for Philippa’s presence than have previously been considered, including an often-overlooked account from Valenciennes. Even if this was an exaggeration of the evidence by Flemish chroniclers, the construction of Philippa’s role expands our understanding of ideal queenship in late medieval England. Philippa’s military participation is praised as a mirror to her husband’s victory at Crécy to construct an ideal of English queenship which could involve military leadership alongside motherhood and intercession. In examining the similar descriptions of the two battles provided by Froissart’s *Chronicles*, the article outlines how kingship and queenship were dually constructed and mutually dependent. One could not be fully realized without the other.

**Keywords:** royal studies; queenship; marital partnership; Battle of Neville’s Cross; Battle of Crécy; English monarchy; Philippa of Hainaut

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<sup>1</sup> Keira Borrill, trans., “Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, Book I, Folio 145v,” in *The Online Froissart*, eds. Peter Ainsworth and Godfried Croenen, version 1.5 (Sheffield: HRIOnline, 2013), accessed 20 August 2022, <http://www.dhi.ac.uk/onlinefroissart>.

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**P**hilippa of Hainaut, Queen of England (c.1310/15-1369), has long been recognized as a paragon of merciful queenship, and even ideal queenly behaviour.<sup>3</sup> A chronicler working in the court of her son, Edward the Black Prince, recorded her as "the perfect root of all honour and nobleness, of wisdom, valour, and bounty."<sup>4</sup> Within a decade of her death, she was recognized as having been an essential part of her husband's rule, when the speaker of Parliament called upon his fellows to "consider, lords, if ever any Christian king or other lord in the world had so noble and gracious a lady for his wife or such children (princes, dukes, and others) as our king has had."<sup>5</sup> It is telling that this speech was given during the last six months of her husband, Edward III's (r.1327-1377), life. As a retrospective on what made him a great king before his decline into senility, the speaker chose to highlight the ideal monarchical partnership which Edward III and Philippa devoted their married life to portraying. But a facet often left out of Philippa's scholarly reputation as an ideal queen is that of her as a warrior at the Battle of Neville's Cross (1346). Despite scholars' curt dismissals, there are unconsidered sources which point to her potential presence near the battle and her role in organizing the defence of the realm. Beyond debates of accuracy, depictions of Philippa at Neville's Cross also highlight that military prowess was an important part of ideal queenship, a traditionally masculine activity. Philippa's use of military force was understood as part of her marital partnership with Edward III; understanding how this partnership was constructed reveals how intricately ideal kingship and queenship were linked for English audiences.

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<sup>3</sup> Agnes Strickland, writing one of the first collective biographies of English queens in 1864, attributed the "happiness, good fortune, and even the respectability of Edward III and his family" to Philippa's influence and actions. *Lives of the Queens of England*, (London, 1852), 1:590. In the abridged version (1867), Strickland is even starker, noting "Philippa was infinitely beloved," especially when after her death Edward III's court was found less than satisfactory. *Lives of the Queens of England*, abridged edition (New York, 1867), 133. B.C. Hardy makes a similar statement in her biography of Philippa, "[Edward III] had depended more than he knew upon her steadfast and straightforward character" in *Philippa of Hainault and her Times* (London: John Long Ltd, 1910).

<sup>4</sup> Mildred K. Pope and Eleanor C. Lodge, trans., *The Life of the Black Prince By the Herald of Sir John Chandos: Edited From the Manuscript in Worcester college with Linguistic and Historical Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), 135.

<sup>5</sup> "Edward III: January 1377," in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, ed. Chris Given-Wilson, Paul Brand, Seymour Phillips, Mark Ormrod, Geoffrey Martin, Anne Curry and Rosemary Horrox (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005), *British History Online*, accessed August 31, 2022, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/january-1377>.

## Merciful Queen Philippa and Angry King Edward

Philippa, like many queens, cultivated a reputation for being a merciful intercessor along the lines of Marian theology.<sup>6</sup> Intercession intersected with the other major roles of queens: motherhood, diplomacy, and patronage.<sup>7</sup> Philippa gave birth to at least twelve children (six lived to adulthood), more than fulfilling her role as a royal mother and lending credibility to her role as an intercessor. As both Louise Tingle and Kristen Geaman have argued in the case of Anne of Bohemia, however, motherhood was not a prerequisite to successful intercession.<sup>8</sup> This may explain why Philippa was able to participate in rituals of intercession from early on in her tenure as queen consort. Her intercession endeared Philippa to subjects of all classes and built up her reputation as a good queen. But we should not lose sight of the fact that her participation in this ritual was a political act, and one designed to highlight the complementary roles of the king and queen. Philippa and Edward III cast themselves in the roles of unbounded mercy and unswerving justice, respectively. This allowed the royal unit as a pair to balance the two competing impulses of the English legal system. As Theresa Earenfight argues, intercession made visible “proof of royal partnership, albeit unequal, rather than a demonstration of kingly authority and queenly subordination.”<sup>9</sup>

Edward and Philippa reflect in many ways the kinds of marital partnerships highlighted by Elena Woodacre in her study of the queens regnant of Navarre and Erika Graham-Goering in her study of Jeanne de Penthièvre, Duchess of Brittany.<sup>10</sup> As Woodacre argues, medieval co-rulership depended on “a healthy power-sharing dynamic” wherein both partners “work[ed] together to support one another” in governing effectively.<sup>11</sup> The power-

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<sup>6</sup> For intercession and good queenship in England, see Kristen L. Geaman, *Anne of Bohemia* (London: Routledge, 2022), 52–89. For Philippa in particular, see Louise Tingle, *Chaucer’s Queens: Royal Women, Intercession, and Patronage in England, 1328-1394* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 34–43.

<sup>7</sup> Tingle, *Chaucer’s Queens*, 11–13 and 34–43. Tingle also explores Philippa’s role as a patron in fourteenth-century England in great detail in later chapters.

<sup>8</sup> Geaman, *Anne of Bohemia*, 52–89; Tingle, *Chaucer’s Queens*, 33–53.

<sup>9</sup> Theresa Earenfight, *Queenship in Medieval Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Elena Woodacre, *The Queens Regnant of Navarre: Succession, Politics and Partnership, 1274-1512* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Erika Graham-Goering, *Princely Power in Late Medieval France: Jeanne de Penthièvre and the War for Brittany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Woodacre, *The Queens Regnant of Navarre*, 9.

sharing need not be equal, but both parties needed the other to perform their roles successfully. Each of the examples of Philippa’s intercession in this section highlight the ways in which chroniclers constructed these incidents to draw attention to Philippa’s partnership with her husband.

In the English historical context, Philippa’s partnership with her husband was in some ways a reaction to the disintegration of her in-laws’ marriage in the 1320s, when Isabella of France led a coup against her own husband with the help of his relatives and nobles. Up until their marital breakdown, Isabella was portrayed in ways similar to Philippa, as an intercessor and political peace weaver.<sup>12</sup> Edward III had to be careful, as well, as the tumultuous rule of his father did not offer him an easy kingship to follow; he needed to be able to embody the authority and might of a king who was not influenced by favourites at the court, but who also did not tip over from authoritative to tyrannical. His righteous anger thus needed to be tempered by the only acceptable figure, his wife and queen. In order to re-establish the prestige of the English royal family, Edward and Philippa had to present themselves to the world as a united couple, finding a balance between justice and mercy.

Intercessions can be observed in both chancery records and narrative sources. The chancery records include letters patent which record the queen securing legal pardons for specific individuals, while the narrative sources often highlight specific instances of the public performance of intercession. While chancery records only indicate an average intercession rate of 2.2 “intercessory acts” per year,<sup>13</sup> Lisa Benz St. John found that Philippa was able to use her intercessions with the king to not only help those she favoured but also to present herself as a conduit of royal patronage.<sup>14</sup> Her unparalleled access to the king, whether or not he granted everything she asked, made her a powerful potential benefactor.<sup>15</sup> Pardons secured by the queen also tempered the harsh legal system undertaken by the king’s courts. The formula “By the K[ing] at the instance of queen Philippa” in the Patent Rolls highlights this

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<sup>12</sup> Lisa Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens: Queenship and the Crown in Fourteenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 3-4, 52-60.

<sup>13</sup> Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, Appendix I, 173.

<sup>14</sup> Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 46-57.

<sup>15</sup> Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 57.

partnership.<sup>16</sup> Justice was done in the name of the king, and at his orders, but mercy was done at the queen's insistence. This made clear even in everyday legal proceedings and chancery letters that the royal couple were partners in balanced governance.

We know more about Philippa's intercessions that are recorded admiringly in the chronicles of the fourteenth century. These examples help to give context to and also illustrate the performance of the king's anger and the queen's rush to forgiveness. During a tournament at Cheapside in 1331, for instance, Philippa was observing with her ladies in canopied tents. When the tents collapsed, either on top of her or dropping her onto knights waiting below (the chronicles disagree slightly),<sup>17</sup> the king was furious. Philippa, however, "did not allow the carpenters to be punished, but by her prayers and genuflections so recalled the king and his friends from their anger that by this act of mercy she caused everyone to love her, as they thought about her goodness."<sup>18</sup> The construction of "did not allow" paints Philippa as having some form of moral authority over her husband, or at least equal to him in this moment. It paints her as a partner with power to halt Edward's actions. Philippa's intercession enabled Edward to express righteous anger that his wife had been endangered, without tipping over into unjust punishments for what was clearly an accident. It saved his reputation, for what king could allow such shoddy workmanship in his court, but also prevented him from going into excess.

Additionally, this portrayal establishes a theme of remembrance for Philippa: her special graciousness to the English people. One chronicler, Geoffrey le Baker, explicates the scene of her intercession as part of her early reputation building ("she caused everyone to love her"),<sup>19</sup> a way in which she could establish her importance to her subjects. The 1331

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<sup>16</sup> For example, see *Calendar of the Patent Rolls, Edward III, 1343-1345*, 100, 124, 157, 364. These were not all pardons, but Philippa's intercessory acts secured grants, commissions of oyer and terminer to right wrongs, and other forms of justice outside of the King's Bench.

<sup>17</sup> For dropping onto the knights waiting below, see *Annales Paulini*: "Accidit autem primo die hastiludii mirabile infortunium; solarium maque quod fuerat in transversum, in quo residebant regina et omnes aliae dominae ad spectaculum intuendum, subito cecidit solotenus; unde multi tam dominae quam milites graviter fuerunt laesi et vix periculum mortis evaserunt." William Stubbs, ed. *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II* (London, 1882), 1.355.

<sup>18</sup> David Preest, trans., *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker of Swinbrook*, ed. Richard Barber (New York: Boydell Press, 2012) 43.

<sup>19</sup> Preest, trans., *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker of Swinbrook*, 43.

tournament was an early event in which Philippa could come into her own as a queen after her husband assumed his personal reign in November 1330. Aside from her coronation, in March 1330, and her churching after the birth of her eldest son, Edward, later that year, this was one of the first ceremonial spaces where she could exert her influence as part of the royal couple. It set a tone for her queenship that would be repeated in later chronicle episodes.

The portrayal of her intercession for the burghers of Calais is a famous—although slightly exaggerated—moment that defined good medieval queenship.<sup>20</sup> It is worth returning to the ways in which le Bel and Froissart construct this moment of intercession on Philippa’s part. Following the long siege of Calais (1346–47), the city finally capitulated to Edward III’s army, and was required to send out six leading townsmen with halters around their necks.<sup>21</sup> The sight of these men apparently evoked pity in all parties—except for Edward III, who insisted that “their heads [were] to be struck off immediately.”<sup>22</sup> While other nobles attempted to intercede, it was only the appearance of Queen Philippa that saved the burghers when “pregnant as she was, [she] humbly threw herself on her knees before the king ... weeping.”<sup>23</sup> After a few minutes, Edward, finally overcome, apparently declared, “My lady, I could wish you were anywhere else but here. Your appeal has so touched me that I cannot refuse it. So, although I do this against my will, here, take them. They are yours to do what you like with.”<sup>24</sup> Philippa then fed and clothed the burghers, having saved their lives in this very public manner.

As Paul Strohm points out, there are exaggerations in this account, as Philippa was probably not heavily pregnant in 1347.<sup>25</sup> While the depiction of the queen as pregnant likely

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<sup>20</sup> Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Geoffrey Brereton (New York: Penguin, 1978) 107–109; See also Jean le Bel, *The True Chronicles of Jean le Bel*, trans. Nigel Bryant (New York: Boydell Press, 2015) 202–3; Kervyn de Lettenhove, ed., *Récits d'un Bourgeois de Valenciennes* (Louvain, 1877), 260.

<sup>21</sup> Froissart, *Chronicles*, 107; le Bel, *True Chronicles*, 202.

<sup>22</sup> Froissart, *Chronicles*, 107; le Bel, *True Chronicles*, 202.

<sup>23</sup> Froissart, *Chronicles*, 107; le Bel, *True Chronicles*, 203.

<sup>24</sup> Froissart, *Chronicles*, 107; le Bel, *True Chronicles*, 203.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Strohm, *Hochon’s Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 96–105; Some genealogists, like Alison Weir, cite the birth of a Thomas of Windsor in late 1346, although I have never seen the primary source evidence upon which this is based. It is possible, however, that Philippa was pregnant at this time and miscarried, for which documents may not have survived. There is enough time between the birth of Margaret of Windsor in July 1346 and the supposed birth of William of Windsor in June

ties into the trope of pregnant wives offering counsel, there are other important elements to this story. Edward’s insistence that he cannot refuse Philippa—and, significantly, he can refuse the other lords who attempted to intercede, like Walter Mauny, one of the king’s most trusted household knights—highlights just how important gaining Philippa’s intercession was to a petitioner’s success. She alone had the highest level of connection with the king. The event happened in an open space, before the assembled nobility, which reinforced her position as part of the crown and the closest counsellor to the king. Again, Philippa’s intercession allowed the king to express appropriate royal rage at those who had refused to surrender to him and cost the lives of many of his soldiers, yet it prevented him from entering into unmanly tyranny. Moreover, Philippa’s role in providing the burghers with food, clothes, and protection made them indebted to the queen. When they were eventually able to return to the city, they would not have forgotten this act of mercy by her. Now would any who heard the story of this event; it cemented Philippa as a merciful queen, even for the enemies of her husband.

Philippa thus emerges as a powerful intercessor in the chronicles, but even more powerful as a partner to her husband. Her ideal queenship encompasses a variety of political acts that were beneficial to the corporate monarchy and not just to herself or those she saved. This certainly earned her the praises she received on her death as a “lover of the English” and the “root of ... wisdom and bounty.”<sup>26</sup> By tempering the worst of Edward III’s anger, she also allowed him to thrive as an ideal king, a font of justice. His military might did not spill over into tyranny when she was able to play her prescribed role as intercessor. Her ideal queenship, however, did not stop at mercy. Understanding how she was also the root of “valour” is essential to understanding not just Philippa’s portrayals as an ideal queen, but also how ideal queenship could include military prowess.

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1348 for another child to have been born in late summer 1347. See Alison Weir, *Britain’s Royal Families: The Complete Genealogy* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), 115.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, trans. Henry Thomas Riley (London, 1863), 1.309; Pope and Lodge, *The Life of the Black Prince*, 135.



## The Battle of Neville’s Cross: A Reassessment of the Sources

Philippa’s role as Edward’s partner was also shown by her defence of the realm. This aspect of her role, however, has often been erased or glossed over by historians. Neville’s Cross occurred shortly after Crécy, on 17 October 1346, in the county of Durham. The Scottish invasion was halted at Neville’s Cross and the invading force so overwhelmed that many of the great military leaders of Scotland were killed. Had the battle ended differently—had the English lost—it would have forced Edward III to abandon his campaign on the continent and return to England. It was vital to his military agenda that England be able to weather the attacks.<sup>27</sup> The spectacular victory, far from just weathering the storm, put an end to the threat of a real invasion from Scotland for at least a decade.<sup>28</sup>

It is a notoriously tricky battle to reconstruct, however, as the surviving chronicles are “confusing and contradictory.”<sup>29</sup> Twenty-four different chronicles, the majority of which are monastic chronicles (thirteen out of twenty-four), document the battle of Neville’s Cross and almost none agree entirely on what happened.<sup>30</sup> In Alexander Grant’s table comparing eight

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<sup>27</sup> W. Mark Ormrod, *Edward III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 284–285.

<sup>28</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, 284–285; Michael Prestwich, “The English at the Battle of Neville’s Cross,” in *The Battle of Neville’s Cross, 1346*, eds. David Rollason and Michael Prestwich (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 1998), 14.

<sup>29</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, 284.

<sup>30</sup> The chronicles which discuss the Battle of Neville’s Cross: Froissart, *Chronicles* [see Keira Borrill’s translation in *The Online Froissart*]; Jean le Bel, *The True Chronicles*; Lettenhove, ed., *Récits*; Preest, *Chronicle of Geoffrey Le Baker*; Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*; Herbert Maxwell, trans., *The Lanercost Chronicle* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1913); Edward A. Bond, ed., *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa* (London, 1867), 3 vols.; V. H. Galbraith, trans., *The Anonimale Chronicle, 1331 to 1381* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1927); Edward Maunde Thompson, ed., *Adae Murimuth continuation chronicarum; Robertus de Avesbury de gestis mirabilibus regis Edwardi Tertii* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889); Andrew Wynton, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wynton*, trans. F. J. Amours, *Scottish Texts Society* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1908), vol. 6; John of Fordun, *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, trans. Felix J. H. Skene, ed. William F. Skene (Edinburgh, 1872); James Tait, ed., *Chronica Johannis de Reading et Anonymi Cantuariensis, 1346-1367* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1914); Felix J. H. Skene, ed., *The Book of Pluscarden* (Edinburgh, 1880); Frank Scott Haydon, ed., *Eulogium Historiarum Sive Temporis: Chronicon Ab Orbe Condito Usque Ad Annum Domini M.CCC.LXVI, A Monacho Quodam Malmesburiensi Exaratum* (London, 1858); Thomas Gray, *Scalacronica, 1272-1363*, trans. Andy King (New York: Boydell, 2019); Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon: in Latin and English*, ed. D.E.R. Watt (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987-1998), 9 vols.; Henry Knighton, *Knighton’s Chronicle, 1337-1396*, trans. G. H. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Giovanni Villani, “Nuova Cronica” in *Cronisti del Trecento*, ed. Roberto Palmarocchi (Rome: Rizzoli & Company, 1935); Auguste Molinier and Émile Molinier, eds., *Chronique Normande du xiv<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris, 1882); and three chronicle extracts from the *Pipewell Chronicle* (BL, Cotton Julius MS. A.I, fol.50v-62v), *Historia Roffensis* (BL, Cotton Faustina B.V), and

sources, while chroniclers agree on broad strokes, the details are sketchy. Plenty of details are only agreed upon by two sources at most in Grant's table.<sup>31</sup> Not all agree on the location of the battle or its participants. This confusion, however, has not stopped historians like Clifford Rogers from declaring Philippa's participation in the campaign was "pure fantasy."<sup>32</sup> Rogers himself says it is odd that he finds Froissart's account so unsatisfactory, as the chronicler was known to have interviewed survivors for his account.<sup>33</sup> Rogers is not alone in his scepticism, as Michael Prestwich claims that Jean le Bel was simply "inventive" in his account, "a splendid read: but it bears little relationship to the truth."<sup>34</sup> Prestwich dismisses le Bel's story on three accounts: the presence of the queen (whom he claims was in Ypres although does not provide a source), the location of the battle (near Durham instead of Newcastle-upon-Tyne), and the capture of King David by a man he names "John de Chappelein."<sup>35</sup> But as Nigel Bryant translates in his edition of le Bel's *True Chronicles*, King David was captured by "John de Copeland"<sup>36</sup> which matches a "Johanni de Coupeland" in a list of nobles who came to Westminster to discuss the Scottish campaign and wrote to the king of their arrival on 10 December 1346.<sup>37</sup> As for the location, Newcastle-upon-Tyne is only twenty miles away from the location of the battle and was a well-known port city. It is a logical place to land if one was sailing up the coast.

The issue of the visit to Ypres will be discussed below, but if one dismisses the worthiness of accounts by the presence of women, it will be hard to untangle what actually happened from our own ideas about what was possible for medieval women. Regrettably, subsequent historians of Edward III and Philippa have simply cited Prestwich. That the other chronicles do not mention Philippa is not surprising. Beyond the three Flemish chronicles,

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*Pakington* (BL, Cotton Tiberius A.VI) which are printed in Clifford J. Rogers, "Appendix," *Northern History* 34:1 (1998), 70–82.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Grant, "Disaster at Neville's Cross: The Scottish Point of View," in *The Battle of Neville's Cross, 1346*, eds. David Rollason and Michael Prestwich (Stamford: Shaun Tyas, 1998), 26–27. Details, including the Scottish schiltrom, John Graham attacking the English archers, or even what time the battle took place, appear in only two sources.

<sup>32</sup> Clifford J. Rogers, "The Scottish Invasion of 1346," *Northern History*, 34:1 (1998), 62 n.56.

<sup>33</sup> Rogers, "The Scottish Invasion of 1346," 62 n.56.

<sup>34</sup> Prestwich, "The English," 9.

<sup>35</sup> Prestwich, "The English," 9.

<sup>36</sup> le Bel, *The True Chronicles*, 190–191.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Rymer, *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae ...* (London, 1825) 3:1, 97.

only Geoffrey le Baker and Adam de Murimuth mention Philippa more than three times during her entire tenure. Seven of the chronicles do not mention Philippa at all, and a further eight mention her three times or less.<sup>38</sup>

Geoffrey Brereton’s Penguin edition of Froissart’s *Chronicles* does not even include the section describing the battle. Rather than contend with Philippa’s role as commander and defender, he provides a summary in which Philippa “accompanied the English army” but did not lead them.<sup>39</sup> Instead, this edition focuses on the feasting that occurred around Calais after Philippa’s arrival.<sup>40</sup> Even those scholars who do advocate for Philippa as an astute “administrator of the realm,”<sup>41</sup> like Lisa Benz St. John, cite those military historians whose historical analysis of the various—and contradictory—accounts of Neville’s Cross never seem to include a thoughtful analysis of Philippa’s role. Thus, in an entire volume dedicated to the battle, Philippa’s connection to the battle is dismissed with only the note that it comes from “a totally unreliable tradition ... given unwarranted publicity.”<sup>42</sup> Brereton’s editorial choice, and historians’ larger impulse to dismiss any potential for Philippa’s involvement in the battle, has real consequences for the ways in which we understand ideal queenship and the royal couple’s partnership.

First, there is the issue of whether Philippa was even present at the Battle of Neville’s Cross. While this might seem like a question with an easy answer, pinpointing the exact location or itinerary of a medieval queen is more difficult than it might appear. There are two major issues: a lack of documents and a difference between what the document can prove and what it can suggest. The pushback against Philippa’s involvement is based around the dates and locations of a series of entries in the Patent Rolls and Rymer’s *Foedera*. However, these readings assume much about the absolute certainty of these documents and what they can

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<sup>38</sup> *The Chronicle of Geoffrey le Baker* mentions her 9 times, *Adae Murimuth Continuatio* mentions her 8 times.

<sup>39</sup> Froissart, *Chronicles*, 98

<sup>40</sup> Froissart, *Chronicles*, 98; A similar phenomenon occurs in Brereton’s discussion of the Castilian campaign of John of Gaunt, where he does report the numerous times where towns are said to surrender to Catalina, the Duchess of Lancaster, and instead chooses to record the one snippet Froissart includes of a few low-level knights complaining about the presence of women in a military campaign. This skews the perception of readers about the presence of women on campaign and the political significance of Gaunt, his wife, and his three daughters all being present for dynastic reasons.

<sup>41</sup> Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 137–139.

<sup>42</sup> Prestwich, “The English,” 9.

actually tell historians. For instance, often cited are the letters of protection, issued on 10 September to those clerics crossing the sea with Philippa.<sup>43</sup> While one could read this as evidence that Philippa did, in fact, cross the channel shortly after September 10<sup>th</sup>, the “transmarinas profecturus est” clause only tells that this cleric is “about to advance across the sea” in the train of Philippa. What is not preserved is an arrest of ships—a document which orders ships to be taken temporarily into the king’s service to provide conduct for his business—for the queen or an order to prepare lodgings for her in Calais. The document, therefore, implies that there were plans for Philippa to advance to Calais, but not necessarily when they were undertaken. And queens were expected to secure “[letters] of protection for household members ... traveling on the business of the queen” by the fourteenth century.<sup>44</sup> A similar set of letters were issued, for instance, for Princess Isabella of Woodstock to sail to Gascony for a marriage in 1351, but she apparently did not leave the country at this time and the marriage never took place.<sup>45</sup> Documents like the patents issued offer interesting suggestions, but little hard proof, of the movements of people.

These permissions to travel are usually taken as fact because of two letters patent that were enrolled from September 1346, which include phrases like “letters patent of Queen Philippa, dated before Calais” and another from 25 October, 1346 which uses the same phrase.<sup>46</sup> Kathryn Warner takes this view, citing that “[the] queen had already crossed the English Channel to join her husband on the continent, and was certainly in Calais on 21 September and 23 October 1346; the battle was fought near Durham, 350 miles to the north of Calais, on 17 October.”<sup>47</sup> However, Philippa was known to use attorneys for her business, like most of the nobility. Her independent household possessed its own “council, exchequer, and writings offices” which enabled her to administer her properties.<sup>48</sup> In 1344, for example, she attorned two clerks to sue and defend her in legal battles as well as appoint other attorneys to assist them.<sup>49</sup> Philippa was not the only royal absent when documents were sealed in her name.

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<sup>43</sup> Rymer, *Foedera*, 3:1, 90.

<sup>44</sup> Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 86–87.

<sup>45</sup> CPR, 1350-1354, 184–185.

<sup>46</sup> CPR, 1345-1348, 477.

<sup>47</sup> Kathryn Warner, *Philippa of Hainault: Mother of the English Nation* (Stroud: Amberley, 2019), 179.

<sup>48</sup> Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 84–85.

<sup>49</sup> CPR, 1345-1348, 364.

There is at least one instance in the Patent Rolls where Edward III declared that a letter had been sealed by his privy seal but without his knowledge.<sup>50</sup> Using the evidence of the patent rolls is tricky even when discussing important military leaders. On 12 October, for instance, a pardon was granted at Philippa's request and enrolled "by Calais" at the same time a grant made by Henry, earl of Lancaster, was enrolled "by Calais" as a gift to one of the king's yeomen. Neither calendar entry cites the presence of an attorney or the delay in dating or enrolling these letters, but Henry, earl of Lancaster, was almost certainly in Gascony.<sup>51</sup> It is possible that this grant being dated at Calais is evidence that the queen was consulting with the king on this grant, as her independent governance of her lands was not absolute, and Edward III did at times become involved in her household's administration.<sup>52</sup> It is also possible that this business was handled at Calais because some of it needed the king's approval. Pardons were decided by the king, and so the dating at Calais may signify his approval was necessary more than it gives solid evidence of Philippa's location.

This evidence is further complicated by the king's correspondence from 30 September and 2 October which give advances on money to the Queen "or to her attorney" in the ports of London for expenses incurred while caring for the royal children.<sup>53</sup> Philippa had been given custody of all the royal children, except the Prince of Wales, from 1343, when she was granted control of the earldom of Richmond to sustain them.<sup>54</sup> This would seem to indicate there was some confusion as to who, exactly, would receive the funds on behalf of the queen, and that perhaps it was unclear in early October where the queen would be staying. What we can observe, then, is that there is enough reasonable doubt as to question the location of Queen Philippa in late September and early October of 1346.

The final point of evidence for scholars' belief in Philippa's absence from the Battle of Neville's Cross has to do with a meeting she attended in Ypres with her sister Margaret of

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<sup>50</sup> CPR, 1343-1345, 337: "Memorandum that on 20 August, 27 Edward III, these letters were surrendered and cancelled because they emanated surreptitiously without the king's knowledge."

<sup>51</sup> CPR, 1345-1348, 475.

<sup>52</sup> Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 86-87.

<sup>53</sup> *Calendar of the Close Rolls, Edward III: Vol. 8, 1346-1349*, 109.

<sup>54</sup> CPR, 1343-1345, 42-43. The precise location of the children is not documented in the grant, although at some point in early 1347 Isabella of Woodstock joined her parents outside Calais during the negotiations for her potential marriage to Louis of Mâle, Count of Flanders. The Prince of Wales was already in France, as he participated in the battle of Crécy.

Hainaut, Holy Roman Empress. We know that a meeting probably took place based on several items.<sup>55</sup> There is a writ of aid, enrolled on Patent Roll on the 8 October, “to the good men of Flanders” for Empress Margaret of Hainaut, “who is coming to Flanders to have speech with her sister the queen of England.”<sup>56</sup> Again, we might assume, as we did in the letters patent or the protection letters, that this means Philippa did indeed travel to Ypres sometime around the 8 October, but the documents do not allow that kind of certainty. It is possible that the town was prepared in advance of a meeting between the sisters and that, given events regarding the safety of England, Philippa’s travel was somewhat delayed. There is, additionally, a chirograph in the Hainaut collection at Mons which is dated to 17 October 1346, which is purportedly an agreement between Philippa and her sister Margaret.<sup>57</sup> This evidence is also complicated, however, by the presence of attorneys. Philippa appointed one “Teodoricus lord of Mountjoy and Falkenburg, acting as an arbitrator between the king and queen Philippa and her sisters and their husbands in any questions arising touching the queen’s inheritance from William, late the count of Hainault, her brother.”<sup>58</sup> The third piece of evidence, discussed below, comes from a chronicle from Valenciennes which records a meeting between the two sisters after the battle, although the chronicle does not give a date for the meeting. It conceivably could have happened any time between the middle of October and the end of the year.

Nor was the trip by boat from any part of the eastern side of England to Calais a particularly long journey. Some historians have argued that it was unlikely that Philippa could have made a trip from Sandwich or Dover to Calais to see Edward, then back up to Durham, and then back down to Calais, and, finally Ypres.<sup>59</sup> Most of these estimates, however, rely on the over-land distance between these places instead of factoring in that sailing would have dramatically cut down travel time. Even a fairly slow-moving ship, only making four or five

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<sup>55</sup> That chronicle account will be discussed below.

<sup>56</sup> CPR, 1345-1348, 517.

<sup>57</sup> Gabriel Wymans, *Inventaire analytique du chartrier de la Trésorerie des comtes de Hainaut* (Bruxelles: Archives générales du Royaume, 1985), 190. The inventory does not provide information on how this charter is dated to 17 October and notes that the document’s text is mostly illegible.

<sup>58</sup> CPR, 1345-1348, 150.

<sup>59</sup> Kathryn Warner claims that the story of Philippa at the battle was “invented in the sixteenth century” and that the queen was “350 miles” away from Durham when the battle was fought. Warner, *Philippa of Hainault*, 179.

knots,<sup>60</sup> could have sailed the 302 nautical miles between Dover and Newcastle-upon-Tyne in just under three days—even less with favourable winds. Calais and Ypres were only about eighty miles from one another, easily travelled by horse in around two days. And Calais and Dover are only about eighteen miles apart—a relatively quick journey with good winds, as Froissart records several times that the trip took around half a day or less.<sup>61</sup>

There is good reason, then, to have some doubt about where exactly the English queen was during this time frame. Her exact movements are unclear, and the possibility of her involvement remains a credible, if not provable, option. Three different chronicles—not just Froissart and Le Bel, as Prestwich claims—place Philippa within the story of Neville’s Cross. The *Récits d'un Bourgeois de Valenciennes*, an anonymous account probably authored by Jean Bernier of the political concerns of the merchants in a Flemish town,<sup>62</sup> also records Philippa’s involvement in the battle, notably before her arrival at Ypres to meet with her sister, the

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<sup>60</sup> Calculations on how fast a cog could travel differ, in part because there were no helpful timetables of arrivals and departures as with modern transportation. In Force 4 (“moderate breeze” according to the WMO classification), an experimental archaeology team on board the *Wisseмара* sailed at a speed of four knots—although they all became violently sea-sick. Susan Rose, *England’s Medieval Navy* (Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013), 112. Ian Friel has estimated that merchant cogs sailing around France and the Channel could reach speeds of 3.6 knots without issue. Friel, *The Good Ship: Ships, Shipbuilding and Technology in England, 1200-1520* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 84–86. Moreover, *ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World* calculates that a Roman sailor could have traveled from Gesoriacum (modern day Boulogne-sur-Mer) to Sgedunum (modern day Newcastle-upon-Tyne) in less than five days using a coastal route. Walter Schiedel, Elijah Meeks, et. al. *ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World*, accessed 19 July 2020. Given the military circumstances, the fact that cogs of this period could combine sail and rowing power, and that the speed was greatly dependent on good weather, an average of four knots does not seem unlikely.

<sup>61</sup> For instance, Froissart describes a trip from Portugal to Cornwall as only taking four days, when that was thousands of nautical miles. Borrill, “Book III, Folio 261r,” Philippa “had such favourable winds, thank God, that she was soon across” when going from Dover to Calais after Neville’s Cross, Borrill, “Jean Froissart, Chronicles, Book 1, Folio 147r.”

<sup>62</sup> The *Récits d'un Bourgeois de Valenciennes* is an anonymous text, focused on events of the fourteenth century that were important to the bourgeoisie of Valenciennes. There have, however, been some efforts to identify the author and explain the two contradictory voices that tell much of the chronicle. One narrator, apparently a contemporary of events in the 1350s to 1360s, and a later editor who comments retrospectively from about 1407. Halsberghe argues persuasively that this was probably the work of two men named Jean Bernier, who were important members of the merchants of Valenciennes—one grandfather and one grandson, both of whom are recorded at various points in positions of authority for the town. See Rosette Halsberghe, “Etude historiographique des « Récits d'un Bourgeois de Valenciennes » (1253-1366)” *Revue du Nord* vol. 258 (1983): 473–475.

Empress Margaret.<sup>63</sup> Unhelpfully, the *Récits* does not provide a date for Philippa’s meeting with her sister. The chronicler records both the battle and the meeting of the two sisters:

HOW DAVID, KING OF SCOTS, WAS TAKEN IN BATTLE IN ENGLAND AND WAS LED TO PRISON, AND MANY EARLS AND KNIGHTS WITH HIM.

After the battle and taking of Théroutanne, before the 17<sup>th</sup> day of October in the year of grace 1346, King David of Scotland, who having married the sister of King Edward of England, assembled all the high barons, knights, squires, gentlemen and other men-at-arms of the realm of Scotland and they were well 40,000 men on horseback, amongst the archers, for they knew well that the king of England was not in the country, because he was at the siege outside Calais. And they say that (it was) by the encouragement of the King of France that they entered into England, by wasting, burning, and pillaging the country, and they came close to Durham. And when the Queen of England knew this, she assembled great people and hastily ordered the Bishop of Durham and the Archbishop of Warwick [York?],<sup>64</sup> and they were many good people on horseback up to the number of 70,000 English men, and they went against King David of Scotland and his people ... and there had the archbishop of Werwich the honour; and he made the king of England, who was then outside Calais, rich by all who there were taken prisoner.

HOW MARGARET, QUEEN OF GERMANY AND EMPRESS OF THE ROMANS, COUNTESS OF HAINAUT, HOLLAND, AND ZEELAND, WENT TO YPRES TO SEE THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND, HER SISTER

After this battle of the English against the Scots, outside the city of Durham, in England, in which King David of Scotland and his high barons were taken, and which the king and queen of England had certain news of before Calais, of which they had great joy, in this time was Margaret, queen of Germany and Empress of the Romans, and sister of the queen of England, coming into Hainaut, to take up the county which was deprived by the Count William de Hainaut their brother, and the said empress summoned the queen of England, her sister. And King Edward, her husband, did not want to give her a leave to go no further than Ypres only; and thus the queen resent to the empress by the same message, that she would find her at Ypres. And about this the queen prepared herself very richly and *took her leave from the army*, and the king chose to go with her, the earl of

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<sup>63</sup> *Récits d'un Bourgeois*, 241–242.

<sup>64</sup> The idea that ‘Werwich’ might mean ‘York’ stems from a gloss from Froissart who states that “the city of York which is called Berwick, in the county of Northumberland”—clearly there was still some confusion about exact place names, but the only two archbishops in England were Canterbury and York. See Borrill, “Book 1, Folio 145r.”



Warwick and a great plenty of knights and squires from his very fine household, and 200 archers. And she came to Ypres earlier and more quickly than the empress was there ...<sup>65</sup>

It is only *after* having assembled the great men and the completion of the battle that the author of the *Récits* records the meeting between Philippa and Empress Margaret, which many have cited as the very reason she could not have been at the battle.<sup>66</sup> Her main contribution, while it might have been simply the organizing of the leaders who actually fought the battle, was enough to merit comment by the Flemish layman who authored the text. Indeed, the verb he uses (*assambla*) to describe Philippa’s organization of the military defence of the realm is the same verb he uses to describe King David gathering his invading army.<sup>67</sup> le Bel’s version agrees, claiming that “as soon as the Queen of England heard the news [of the Scottish invasion] she

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<sup>65</sup> Lettenhove, *Récits*, 241–243:

“Comment David d’Escoce fut prins en bataille en Engleterre et menés en prsion, et pluseurs contes et chavliers avoec luy.

Après celle bataille et prinse de Terewane, avint que le XVII<sup>e</sup> jour d’octobre l’an de grâce mil CCC et XLVI, que le roi David d’Escoce, qui avoit espousée la suer du roy Édouart d’Engleterre, assambla tous les hauls barons, chevaliers, escuiers, gentils hommes et aultres gens d’armes du royaume d’Escoce; et estoient bien IIII<sup>xx</sup> mil hommes à cheval, parmy les archiers, pour ce qu’ils sçavoient bien que le roy d’Engleterre n’estoit mye au pays, ains estoit au siège de Callais. Et disoit-on que [ce fut] par l’enort du roy de France qu’ils entèrent en Engleterre, en gastant, ardant et pillant le pays, et vindrent pès de Durames. Et quant la royne d’Engleterre le sceult, elle assambla grans gens et manda hastivement l’évesque de Durames et l’arcevesque de Werwich, et furent bieu de bonnes gents à cheval jusques au nombre de LXXX<sup>m</sup> hommes englecqs, et vinrent contre le roy David d’Escoce et ses gens ... et y eult l’arcevesque de Werwic l’onneur; et fist le roy d’Engleterre, qui alors esoit devant Callais, riches tous celux qui y prinrent les prisonniers.

Comment Marguerite, royne d’Allemaigne et empereys de Romains, contesse de Haynaut, de Holande et de Zelande, vint a Yppre voir la royne d’Engleterre sa suer.

Après celle bataille des Englecqs contre les Escoçois, devant la cité de Durames, en Engleterre, en laquelle le roy David d’Escoce et ses hauls barons furent prins, et que le roy et la royne d’Engleterre en eurent certains nouvelles devant Callais, don’t ils eurent grant joie, en ce tamps estoit Margueritte, royne d’Allemaigne et empereys des Romains, et suer à la royne d’Engleterre, venue en Haynault pour relever la conté qui luy esotit escheue de par la conte Guillame de Haynault leur frère, et avoit ladite empereys mandé la royne d’Engleterre sa suer. Et le roy Édouart, son mary, ne luy volut donner congiet d’aller plus avant que jusques à Yppre tant seulement; et ainsy le remanda la royne à l’empereys par le message mesmes, et qu’elle le toruveroit à Yppre. Et sur ce s’apparilla la royne moult ricement et se partit de l’ost, et fist le roy aler avoecques luy le conte de Werwich et grant plenté des josnes chevaliers et escuiers à moult belle maisnie, et CC archiers. Et vint à Yppre avant et plus tost que l’empereys y fust.”

<sup>66</sup> Lettenhove, *Récits*, 242.

<sup>67</sup> Lettenhove, *Récits*, 242.

went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne to give heart to her people there, and summoned the bishops, archbishops, and all the able-bodied men left in England to muster between the city of Durham and Northumberland” which reinforces the idea that Philippa played a key role in the assembling of the army.<sup>68</sup> le Bel continues that she “prayed and requested them to fight and to defend the possession and honour of the king, and she gave command of the campaign to four prelates and four knights who most willingly accepted.”<sup>69</sup> Froissart largely agrees with le Bel, although his account is discussed in more detail below. le Bel gives us our only hint at the date of Philippa’s arrival before Calais, when she “reached the army outside Calais three days before All Saints.”<sup>70</sup>

The Flemish chronicles highlight Philippa’s commitment to the defence of England, which she best served by organizing the generals who undertook the actual fighting. le Bel highlights how important her role was as a figurehead for the monarchy, as she “[gave] heart to her people” in the North by her presence. The English knew a Scottish invasion was likely, as can be seen in the writs issued in August of 1346, which explicitly empower a group of northern lords, led by Ralph Neville and Henry Percy, and the archbishop of York, to prepare against any invasions.<sup>71</sup> At the very least, there was discussion from the king’s camp outside Calais and the court left in England about the very real possibility that this would be the moment the Scottish would strike. Yet, le Bel, Froissart, and the *Récits* all agree that it was Philippa who assembled the defence of England, not Edward or the archbishop.<sup>72</sup> While the archbishop may have led the battle, and the *Récits* says he gained much honour in doing so, he did not have the authority to assemble the armies. Philippa, on the other hand, apparently could do so as part of her duties of queenship.

A realistic accounting of events may have been that Philippa in some way organized the defence of the realm before heading to Calais. She may have either still been in the country or been moving between Calais and England. She either assembled her lords in the south and sent them north, or herself sailed to the north of England. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, as a coastal city, would have made a good landing point near Durham. She might have stayed for the battle

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<sup>68</sup> le Bel, *The True Chronicles*, 189.

<sup>69</sup> le Bel, *The True Chronicles*, 189.

<sup>70</sup> le Bel, *The True Chronicles*, 191.

<sup>71</sup> Rymer, *Foedera*, 3:1, 89.

<sup>72</sup> le Bel, 189–90; Borrill, trans., “Book I, Folio 145v”; Lettenhove, *Récits*, 241.

and then sailed to Calais, having heard of the victory. The accounting of just how well the English had done against the Scots was probably not known until after she arrived at Calais, and this was probably included in the celebrations there with her husband. Most likely she was involved in some part of the assembling of the army, and accounts of this more than likely circulated in the Low Countries. Sometime after her arrival, in late autumn, she met with her sister in Ypres.

The following entry in the *Récits* illuminates why these accounts may have circulated around this region in particular. This was a critical year for Edward III and Philippa. Edward needed this costly campaign to be successful to sustain enthusiasm in England for the war against France. At the same time, Philippa’s inheritance in the Low Countries was under threat. Her brother’s defection and then death meant that there was room for the royal couple to solidify their hold on an important trading partner once again, but French loyalties, or even neutrality, could undermine Edward’s war efforts. The victories at Crécy and Neville’s Cross could easily have been seen as divine favour on the royal couple and highlighting Philippa’s role in the Flemish towns in particular would have also boosted the diplomatic pursuits of the royal family. Circulating such stories before Philippa’s meeting with her sister, the Empress, would have given Philippa an impressive reputation and placed her on more equal footing with her sister in inheritance negotiations. The royal couple was also attempting to arrange a marriage between the new count of Flanders, Louis de Male, and their daughter, Isabella of Woodstock, after the count’s father died at Crécy. That accounts may have circulated in the region highlighting the fitness of Philippa of Hainaut—a hint at what her daughter would have learned and been capable of providing to the Flemish towns as their countess—was probably not an accident.

That the monastic chroniclers, like those behind the *Anonimalle Chronicle*, *The Lanercost Chronicle*, or the *Meaux Chronicle*, did not highlight Philippa’s involvement should not be a surprise, as they very rarely make mention of the queen in many other situations where her presence was a given, such as court festivities around Christmas or the new year.<sup>73</sup> As Heather Tanner argues, monastic chroniclers “elided women unless the narration of events would

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<sup>73</sup> The *Anonimalle* does not make any references to the queen, the *Lanercost* gives only three mentions of her (all of which occur before 1341), and the *Meaux (Melsa) Chronicle* mentions her only two times, although notably only lists her arrival in Calais *after* discussing the Battle of Neville’s Cross *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, 3.63.

make no sense without them.”<sup>74</sup> So when historians rely primarily upon these texts, as Michael Prestwich does in his analysis of the Battle of Neville’s Cross, without considering the patriarchal attitudes of the writers, it can be easy to assume Philippa’s absence from their texts is evidence of her absence from the realm itself. What it may actually signify is a desire on the part of monks to record the importance of figures like the archbishops to the defence of the realm. In 1341, the archbishop of Canterbury had been accused of sabotaging the king’s war efforts abroad, so the monks may have wanted to highlight that in a key moment the religious leaders were very much on the king’s side. What was important to the monasteries to remember and promote was not necessarily exactly what happened or what the crown found important.

### **Froissart’s Depiction of Ideal Queenship**

The agreement of the Flemish chronicles is worth investigating for its implications on Philippa’s public reputation and the medieval understanding of her role as queen, even if the bureaucratic evidence of her involvement is shaky. The chronicles are notable for their persistent attempt to highlight Queen Philippa’s actions and movements. They also were written by men who were well connected with the royal courts.<sup>75</sup> Jean Bernier, the probable author of the *Récits*, served in the household of Jeanne of Valois, Philippa’s mother,<sup>76</sup> and Jean le Bel supposedly wrote his chronicle at the command of Philippa’s paternal uncle, Jean de Beaumont.<sup>77</sup> Attempting to reconstruct what wider themes chroniclers might have been tapping into, instead of focusing on the exact facts of the case, is not a revolutionary concept—at least not when discussing men’s deeds. As Nigel Bryant points out in his recent translation of *The History of William Marshal*:

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<sup>74</sup> Heather Tanner, “Anger, Violence, and the Exercise of Power in Medieval French Chronicles,” (paper presentation, Gender Memory, and Documentary Culture 900-1200, Rylands Library in Manchester, 2019), 3.

<sup>75</sup> The only chronicle written by a layman which does not mention Philippa is the *Scalachronica* by Thomas Gray, which makes exactly zero mentions of the queen in his entire chronicle. You could be forgiven for thinking there was no queen of England after Isabella of France in his recounting of events.

<sup>76</sup> Halsberghe, “Etude historiographique,” 473.

<sup>77</sup> Nigel Bryant, “Introduction” in *The True Chronicles of Jean le Bel*, 1.

And that, surely, is the crucial point: Marshal’s life was ‘witnessed by so many’, was lived so much in the public eye, and the events involved were of such magnitude, that excessive claims—let alone downright falsehoods—in this biography would have struck his contemporaries as risible and shameful, and, far from impressing and earning him the respect and adulation of posterity, would have been a matter of dishonor.<sup>78</sup>

Nigel does not bring this same complexity of approach to the story of Philippa and Neville’s Cross in his translation of *The True History of Jean le Bel*, however, and merely footnotes “Queen Philippa was in fact not present at Neville’s Cross at all.”<sup>79</sup> But Philippa patronized Jean Froissart, if not the other two authors, and his inclusion of this event would have been embarrassing to Philippa if so many members of her court knew it to be an utter falsehood. Unlike the story of Edward’s rape of the Countess of Salisbury, about which Froissart expresses his doubts despite sharing it, he expresses no doubts about Philippa’s involvement in the battle.<sup>80</sup>

The real issue with outright denying Philippa any involvement in Neville’s Cross because of its unprovability misses quite a bit of the point for medieval chroniclers and their audiences. When it comes to accuracy, Katrin Sjursen argues, “they sometimes got events wrong, but the deeds were nonetheless *credible* or they would not have passed le Bel’s and Froissart’s filters for accuracy,” even when discussing women who were engaged in combat or who otherwise took over important aspects of warfare, like raising supplies or strategizing with the generals.<sup>81</sup> Chronicles, then, can help us understand wider attitudes as much, if not more than, they explain specific events. Philippa’s presence at the Battle of Neville’s Cross appears to be one of those moments where it might be worth questioning where the credibility—rather than the accuracy—of the story leads in an investigation of ideal queenship.

Even if Philippa of Hainaut was not involved in the battle of Neville’s Cross, the construction of her as an ideal queen of England included this military adventure as a key

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<sup>78</sup> Nigel Bryant, “Introduction” in *The History of William Marshal*, trans. Nigel Bryant (New York: Boydell, 2016), 9.

<sup>79</sup> le Bel, *True Chronicles*, 190, fn. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Katrin E. Sjursen, “The War of the Two Jeannes: Rulership in the Fourteenth Century” *Medieval Feminist Forum* 51, no. 1 (2015), 16.

<sup>81</sup> Sjursen, “The War of the Two Jeannes: Rulership in the Fourteenth Century,” 16.

moment of royal partnership. We can see what is happening with Philippa’s reputation most clearly by comparing the two major campaigns of 1346 in Froissart’s retelling of events. His story is by far the most detailed, if exaggerated, and makes the most obvious attempts to mirror the actions of the king and queen as commanders. First, there is the parallel of information gathering between the king and queen. Edward is described as being “well informed that the king of France was following him with a large force and had a strong desire to engage him in combat,”<sup>82</sup> while the opening description about Philippa is “However, the king of Scotland could not send out his summons so secretly that the queen of England ... might not come to know of it and be informed of everything, and would not provide a solution as soon as she learnt of what was going on.”<sup>83</sup> Both king and queen come to know of the presence of an enemy quickly and rapidly respond to this change of situation—they do not find out by themselves, but are reliant upon the network of informants that assist in warfare and defence. Interestingly, Philippa is called upon to “provide a solution” to the problem of invasion by the Scots, because that was part of the expected duties of a queen. Philippa was then “advised to look to her friends and summon all those who held lands of the king, her lord,” eventually summoning Percy, Neville, Ros, Mowbray, and the archbishops of York and Canterbury.<sup>84</sup> While the idea that she was advised might undermine a modern reader’s conception of Philippa’s authority, it was the duty of the English monarch to act with the advice and consent of the great lords. It is therefore unsurprising that an idealized picture of Philippa would highlight the fact that she did things wisely and with good counsel.

Froissart also emphasizes that Philippa’s summons was heeded by many different groups of men. The lords of the realm came to her aid, and she received them “with joy.” Many “men-at-arms and archers who were still in the country” after hearing “the summons sent by *the good lady* ... strove to be present on the appointed day, for it was *the lady’s intention* that the Scots should be fought” and so they hurried to Newcastle-upon-Tyne where she was “gathering *her men*” (emphasis my own).<sup>85</sup> Froissart goes out of his way to highlight that Philippa was the one raising the army, that the men respond to her authority, and that she chooses where the knights should marshal before battle. It is clear that Philippa’s grasp on

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<sup>82</sup> Borrill, trans., “Jean Froissart, Chronicles, Book I, Folio 136r.”

<sup>83</sup> Borrill, trans., “Book I, Folio 145v.”

<sup>84</sup> Borrill, trans., “Book I, Folio 145r.”

<sup>85</sup> Borrill, trans., “Book I, Folio 145v.”

power as queen of England was firm enough to organize troops without question. There is no discussion of Philippa’s femininity undermining her ability to summon troops, nor any hint that the lords were nervous about her command. Instead, Froissart emphasizes that “wishing to defend *her* country,” she went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne to be with the army, and that “each man summoned had endeavoured to rally against the Scots, *as much out of affection for the queen* as to do all in their power to defend their lands.”<sup>86</sup> The loyalty of the troops is to the person of the queen, just as one would expect in any description about the king of England before battle. This was more authority than an archbishop or one of the lay elites could have commanded—their sphere of influence was regional, but Philippa could call on the loyalty of anyone left in the kingdom. While Philippa was not named regent specifically, her son Lionel was, and he had been in her custody since at least 1343.<sup>87</sup> This lack of regent authority, however, does not appear to be a problem in Froissart, le Bel, or the *Récits*, all of whom assume that the queen was the one giving the commands. And as Benz St. John argues, although Philippa was not named officially to Lionel’s council, she “[acted] closely with the chancellor and other of the council, which demonstrates that she was involved in ruling in the king’s absence” and that queens’ administration of the realm in the king’s absence was “routine.”<sup>88</sup> Philippa, by her control of her son and by her marriage to the king, remained the living embodiment of the crown in the absence of her husband.

The mirroring continues in both the preparation and execution of the battle. Both Edward and Philippa entrust the ranks to various commanders, who divide the army—three divisions for Crécy and four for Neville’s Cross.<sup>89</sup> Then, both the king and queen used a show of their own person as a means to rally the troops and call on them to fight for the honour of the royal family and the country. Edward, “mounted a small palfrey, with a white staff in his hand and his marshals on his right. He then rode back and forth through the ranks, urging and *entreating* the earls, barons, and knights to protect his honour and defend his rights,” while the men awaited the arrival of the French army for the battle.<sup>90</sup> Ormrod praised Edward’s personal touch with the men who served him, and how this passage highlighted his personal

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<sup>86</sup> Borrill, trans., “Book I, Folio 145v.”

<sup>87</sup> Lionel was appointed “keeper of the realm” on 25 June 1346 in Porchester. *CPR, 1345-1348*, 142.

<sup>88</sup> Benz St. John, *Three Medieval Queens*, 137.

<sup>89</sup> Borrill, trans., “Book I, Folio 136v” and “Book I, Folio 145v.”

<sup>90</sup> Borrill, trans., “Book I, Folio 136v.”

ability to inspire great feats of chivalry and military might.<sup>91</sup> Philippa’s role in the preparations for Neville’s Cross mirrors this moment of lordship. After watching the men form the divisions under the various commanders who answered her summons, “the good queen ... *entreated* them kindly to do their duty well and protect her lord’s honour, and that each should be ready to put up a good fight,” before she gave command to “the four prelates and the four barons there, and they gave her their word that they would acquit themselves faithfully.”<sup>92</sup>

The Tudor era translation of Froissart’s chronicle by John Bourchier, Lord Berner goes even further into the speech, describing how Philippa “[promised] them that to her power she would remember them as well or better as though her lord the king was there personally.”<sup>93</sup> In this translation, Philippa deliberately invoked her role as a replacement for her husband, Edward III. Philippa’s personal showing at the battle of Neville’s Cross was clearly portrayed as a mirror of Edward’s riding among the troops, highlighting the force of royal personality in rousing the troops, but also in establishing that both members of the royal couple could take on the same lordship activities. Edward himself, like Philippa, did not engage directly in the battle of Crécy, but instead watched from “higher upon the mound of a windmill” as the battle raged.<sup>94</sup> Philippa’s retreat to watch the battle from Newcastle was as much part of her safety as it was the expected role of royal commanders—it would be foolish for either her or Edward III to have risked being captured in these moments, for their ransoms would have been quite large. As John Gillingham observes, “the surest way to win a battle was to kill or capture the opposing commander,” so taking the field would have been too great a risk for either Edward or Philippa unless absolutely necessary.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Philippa may have known of the treatment of captured Scottish royal women during the first war of Scottish Independence, and probably did not want to suffer a similar fate.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, 279.

<sup>92</sup> Borrill, trans., “Book I, Folio 146r.”

<sup>93</sup> John Bourchier, Lord Berners, trans., *The Chronicles of Jean Froissart*, ed. William Paton Ker, *The Tudor Translations*, 6 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1967), 1.313.

<sup>94</sup> Borrill, trans., “Book I, Folio 139v.”

<sup>95</sup> John Gillingham, “Richard I And the Science of War in the Middle Ages,” in *Medieval Warfare 1000-1300*, ed. John France (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 304.

<sup>96</sup> Cynthia Neville, “Widows of War: Edward I and the Women of Scotland during the War of Independence,” in *Wife and Widow in Medieval England*, ed. Sue Sheridan Walker (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 109–139.



Philippa not taking part in the actual trading of blows should not stop us from seeing her as a military leader in this context. As Megan McLaughlin observes, medieval military leaders were given the title for their involvement "in a battle to a significant degree, not the number of blows" they inflicted on their enemies.<sup>97</sup> While McLaughlin did not extend this idea to medieval women when constructing her definition of female warriors, Katrin Sjursen has effectively demonstrated that management of military activity was part of the post-thirteenth century definition of good lordship, and one which allowed noblewomen to participate in medieval warfare even if they did not lead troops in battle.<sup>98</sup> If it would have been demeaning for Edward III to take the field against Philip VI of France because of his claims to French kingship,<sup>99</sup> surely the same would have applied to Philippa when dealing with the Scottish king, when England had been claiming overlordship over Scotland since 1290 and technically refused to recognize David II's kingship. Ormrod does not suggest that Edward's lack of direct involvement on the battlefield should deny him the glory or honour for the victorious battle, and neither do the chroniclers.

The final mirroring comes in the reaction of king and queen to the battle. After the battle, "King Edward, who had not donned his basinet [war helm] once all that day, came in orderly fashion with his whole division before the prince his son; he kissed his son and embraced him ... the English were of happy heart and joyful when they realized that they had won the field."<sup>100</sup> Similarly, after Philippa received news of the victory, she "rejoiced. She straightway mounted a palfrey and came as quickly as she could to the place where the battle had been fought ... [the] queen remained with them and celebrated the fine knights who had been involved in the affair."<sup>101</sup> Just as Edward III celebrated the honour won by Prince Edward at the battle, Philippa rejoiced with the lords who had gained honour in the victory at Neville's Cross. It was their role, as highest lord and lady, to emphasize the honour and chivalry of those that served them and to celebrate their accomplishments. Lordship was just as much about

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<sup>97</sup> Megan McLaughlin, "The Woman Warrior: Gender, Warfare, and Society in Medieval Europe," *Women's Studies: An Inter-disciplinary Journal*, 17:3-4 (1990), 196.

<sup>98</sup> Katrin E. Sjursen, "Weathering Thirteenth-Century Warfare: The Case of Blanche of Navarre," *The Haskins Society Journal* 25 (2014), 211, 221-222.

<sup>99</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, 280-281.

<sup>100</sup> Borrill, trans., "Book I, Folio 140v."

<sup>101</sup> Borrill, trans., "Book I, Folio 146v."

giving the honourable men who served Edward the ability to show off their chivalry at Crécy as it was about directly fighting. By celebrating the vassals who were loyal to both her and the king, Philippa was participating in effective co-lordship by taking on the role traditionally performed by her husband.

Philippa's role in Froissart's text shows both her ability to step into the role of her husband and her continued identity as the queen. She was literally filling the "institutional gap"<sup>102</sup> as well as personnel gap created by naming a child keeper of the realm in her husband's absence. While not being named officially regent, Philippa was clearly seen as someone who could "assume temporary duties of governance."<sup>103</sup> And she did not have to use her husband's name to perform these powers; instead, they were considered part of her role as queen consort. As much as her husband was king of England, just so she was queen, and she must defend *her* country. Looking at the royal couple's partnership through Woodacre's definitions of the three kinds of co-rulership, Edward and Philippa most closely resemble the "Team Players" model, and while "they generally chose to remain together, when necessary they were able to separate" for the good of the realm.<sup>104</sup> Philippa did eventually join Edward at the siege of Calais, but not before ensuring that England was protected against the threat of Scottish invasion. Froissart's mirroring of actions, while preserving their separate identities and separate powers, highlights the power-sharing dynamic at the heart of their successful monarchical partnership.

The descriptions of these two battles were only six folios apart in Froissart's *Chronicles* and only a few months apart in reality. Their importance to the military efforts of England cannot be understated. Crécy was a major turning point in this early stage of the Hundred Years' War, and a victory badly needed by Edward III. But Neville's Cross was also an incredibly important battle, harder to see because its success was so great in the capture of David II and the death of so many Scottish lords, that Scotland was neutralized for several decades.<sup>105</sup> Whatever Philippa's role in the defence of the realm may have been, how her contemporaries

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<sup>102</sup> Theresa Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe," *Gender and History* 19:1 (April 2007), 8.

<sup>103</sup> Earenfight, "Without the Persona of the Prince: Kings, Queens and the Idea of Monarchy in Late Medieval Europe," 9.

<sup>104</sup> Woodacre, *The Queens Regnant of Navarre*, 66.

<sup>105</sup> Prestwich, "The English," 14.

understood her involvement is more important. The description of her highlights the part of her ideal queenship that is often overlooked because of her motherhood, piety, and mercy. She was seen as an effective substitute for her husband, and probably played more of a role in the rulership of England under her young sons' various regencies than she has been given credit for. To assume that the entirety of her role was fabricated would be to also assume that Froissart, le Bel, and the *Récits* meant to shame Philippa or subject the English royal couple to ridicule by falsifying such an important and memorable event. There was something credible in either her access to power through co-lordship or in her assembling of the army that eventually went on to defeat David II in battle. In being so focused on the provability of Philippa's presence—the factual accuracy of all the accounts—we have missed the much broader picture of what this portrayal was meant to accomplish. That this account is followed in the *Récits* by an account of the meeting between Philippa and her sister, Empress Margaret, and that the next major role she plays in both Le Bel and Froissart is her intercession at Calais, shows that there was clearly an attempt among courtly chroniclers to portray her as both diplomat and general, capable of Marian mercy or royal might when the situation demanded it. That these accounts were all from Flemish authors might indicate the circulation of these stories particularly in Flanders or the rest of the Low Countries.

Nor can we be certain that Philippa's role was entirely fabricated. The exact location of the queen remains opaque, and the distances between Calais, Newcastle, Sandwich, and Ypres are all easily travelable. In particular, sailing between Calais and any English coastal town in the east would have been feasible during this time. Instead of being so quick to dismiss her participation, we need instead to question what purpose those stories serve and why we feel the need to discount them in modern translations or remove them entirely. There are certainly other portions of the chronicles that are just as difficult to prove or disprove, and yet they remain. That this incident, which features a queen in charge of magnates and a battle, would be dismissed so easily by historians seems to have much more to do with her role as a woman in power than with our not unusually shaky trail of writs and literary depictions.

### **The Ideal Queen: Mercy and Might**

If we move away from questions of accuracy, we can see the ways in which Philippa's depictions in Le Bel, Froissart, and the *Récits* can inform the larger project of understanding

queenship in England. Philippa was not the only English queen to receive praise from chroniclers for her defence of the realm. There was clearly an acceptance in earlier chronicles of a female general, so long as she "was acting within her rights, or on behalf of her husband or family."<sup>106</sup> Queen Matilda (of Boulogne) and Eleanor of Aquitaine both took up defence of the rights of their husbands and sons in the twelfth century.<sup>107</sup> In France, Blanche of Navarre, Countess of Champagne, was also able to wield military authority by right of her office as countess in the thirteenth century to protect her son's inheritance in the county.<sup>108</sup> And in the fourteenth century, Jeanne de Montfort's ability to take up the reins of the Montfort cause in the Breton Wars of Succession emphasized her role in protecting her sons' rights.<sup>109</sup> There were already models for Philippa to emulate in both England and France, beyond being a mirroring of lordship with her husband. As mother of the keeper of the realm and as the queen consort, Philippa was acting within well-established patterns in her defence of the realm.

Nor was this pattern only seen in queenship before Philippa's time. Her experiences as the defender of the realm against a Scottish invasion mirror closely her own descendant, Katherine of Aragon. Katherine was made regent during her husband, Henry VIII's, absence from the realm on a military campaign in France. When Katherine's forces defeated and killed the Scottish king, she sent his bloody coat to her husband in France. Theresa Earenfight highlights that the "English people noted approvingly of her role in the victory at Flodden in manuscripts" and various European courts were impressed by her victory.<sup>110</sup> While Philippa was not granted the title of regent, both queens shared in an ideal queenship that involved military leadership as a co-ruler with their husband.

Katherine and Philippa also shared in a reputation, like Matilda of Boulogne, that involved intercession alongside military engagement. Like Philippa's intercession for the burghers of Calais, Katherine of Aragon's intercession for the apprentices of London who rioted in the Evil May Day of 1517 was a highly political event.<sup>111</sup> Public intercession by the

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<sup>106</sup> Helen Nicholson, "Women on the Third Crusade," *Journal of Medieval History*, 23, no. 4 (1997), 346.

<sup>107</sup> Nicholson, "Women on the Third Crusade," 346. See also Heather Tanner, *Families, Friends, and Allies: Boulogne and Politics in Northern France and England, c. 879-1160* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 195-197.

<sup>108</sup> Sjurson, "Weathering Thirteenth-Century Warfare," 221.

<sup>109</sup> Sjurson, "The War of the Two Jeannes," 10-30.

<sup>110</sup> Theresa Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon: Infanta of Spain, Queen of England* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 103.

<sup>111</sup> Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon*, 118 and 204.

queen enabled a king to be merciful, while maintaining both his masculinity and his role as the arm of justice in England. Matilda of Boulogne also had a reputation for her intercession, and both Pope Eugenius III and Bernard of Clairvaux sought her aid in interceding with her husband, King Stephen.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, when William of Malmesbury described Matilda of Boulogne’s actions in the Anglo-Norman Civil War, he included both her intercession on her husband’s behalf with his brother, the Bishop of Winchester, as well as her role in leading Stephen’s men after the king’s capture.<sup>113</sup> Ideal queenship for all three women included both intercession and military authority under specific circumstances, usually as co-ruler for an absent (or captured) king.

All three queens shared, at least for a time, in active co-rulership with their husbands, and each king’s reputation depended in part on the military action undertaken by their wives. King Stephen’s coins minted after his captivity in 1141 show the royal pair “standing beside one another ... [to] emphasize the dual rulership of Stephen and Matilda, to declare that ... Matilda was still acting as ruling authority on his behalf.”<sup>114</sup> Stephen’s kingship hinged on his wife’s ability to lead armies to secure his release from his cousin, Empress Matilda. Katherine of Aragon and Henry VIII’s joint coronation likewise emphasized their co-rulership, when “pomegranates entwined with Tudor roses decorated the stages and streets” of London and Westminster.<sup>115</sup> And despite the problematic legacy of Margaret of Anjou, Henry VIII named Katherine regent of England when he sailed to war in France.<sup>116</sup> While later Tudor chroniclers like Holinshed “undercut the significance of her actions,” Katherine’s defence of England enabled her husband to pursue the ideal of the warrior king. It also saved the realm from an invasion that might have had serious geopolitical consequences. Like Matilda of Boulogne, Katherine was “deeply enmeshed in the governing of the realm” during these early years of her marriage.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Tanner, *Families, Friends, and Allies*, 207–208.

<sup>113</sup> Katherine Weikert, “The Queen, the Countess, and the Conflict: Winchester 1141,” in *Early Medieval Winchester: Communities, Authority and Power in Urban Space, c.800- c.1200*, ed. Ryan Lavelle, Simon Roffey, and Katherine Weikert (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2021), 158.

<sup>114</sup> Mariah Cooper, “A Female King or a Good Wife and a Great Mother? Seals, Coins, and the Epitaphic Legacy of the Empress Matilda,” *The Haskins Society Journal* 32 (2020), 157.

<sup>115</sup> Earenfight, *Katherine of Aragon*, 91.

<sup>116</sup> Earenfight, *Katherine of Aragon*, 99–100.

<sup>117</sup> Earenfight, *Katherine of Aragon*, 103.

While Philippa was never named regent in her husband's absence, she was an active co-ruler with her husband. This can be seen most clearly in Froissart's *Chroniques*, which goes to great lengths to mirror the actions and experiences of the royal couple in 1346. In doing so, Froissart links their performances of ideal kingship and queenship together. Philippa was able to operate within the military context in part because her victory did not upstage or unman her husband. Her ideal queenship is, in this text, intricately tied to her husband's performance of ideal kingship. At the same time, Edward could not have continued his military endeavours without Philippa's victory at Neville's Cross. The English losses to the Scots during the Weardale campaign had resulted in a treaty known to contemporaries as "the 'shameful peace.'"<sup>118</sup> Edward was thus reliant on his wife's active partnership to sustain his own efforts to win glory and fame, and to ensure that he was not forced to sign yet another humiliating treaty. As Ormrod notes, the twin victories of Crécy and Neville's Cross "transformed Edward III's reputation at home and abroad."<sup>119</sup> By refusing to take seriously Philippa's role in the Battle of Neville's Cross, we miss the ways in which her co-lordship with her husband was essential in building his reputation as a victorious and idealized king.

Philippa's role in monarchy ranged from mother and intercessor to military leader. Whether or not we can prove beyond a doubt that Philippa was involved in the Battle of Neville's Cross, her contemporaries believed that she was. By not taking seriously the accounts of Froissart, le Bel, and the *Récits*, we miss the ways in which Philippa's idealized queenship included both mercy and military might. The men who fought in the battle, according to Froissart, did so "out of affection for the queen" as she defended "her country."<sup>120</sup> It was her goodwill, built up over the years of her queenship as a good patron, mother, and intercessor, and her active participation in the war effort that rallied the English to victory. This is not to devalue the importance of Edward's victory at Crécy; *both* were necessary for their growing reputation as an ideal royal couple. Philippa's military role also serves as a crucial link in understanding the pattern of idealized English queenship from Matilda of Boulogne to Katherine of Aragon. The pattern that emerges points to an acceptance of military activities by an English queen, so long as she did so in partnership with her husband.

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<sup>118</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, 71–72.

<sup>119</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, 293.

<sup>120</sup> Borrill, trans., "Jean Froissart, Chronicles, Book I, Folio 145v."

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