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Abstract:	Medieval castles and palaces have not traditionally been studied in terms of women and gender. Castle studies have produced analyses confined, on the whole, to defence and warfare, and palaces have acted as the backdrop to constitutional/political histories peopled almost exclusively by 'great men', or for studies of developments in court bureaucracy that show little concern for gender. Yet since the 1990s studies have emerged which have made women more visible. European coverage remains patchy, however. For example women's quarters in French palaces have receive little detailed attention; there and elsewhere problems of textual survival complicate the possibility of equating spaces unequivocally with the domains of women. Nevertheless, the complexity of interior patterns of access in high-status domestic architecture is now recognised as having gendered significance.

Castles and Palaces

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Scholars of medieval castles and palaces have been silent on questions of gender and women until relatively recently. Traditionally palaces have acted as the backdrop to studies of court bureaucracy or constitutional history peopled almost entirely by "great men," while castles were studied almost exclusively in terms of defense and warfare. Even today lacunae remain - in a recent magisterial and meticulously researched Europe-wide survey of seats of power connected with the Hundred Years' War the terms "gender" and "women" do not feature in the index. Elsewhere, however, analyses of domestic space from the early 1990s have put gender firmly on the historical agenda and even where documentary sources are lacking, the complexity of interior patterns of access is recognized as having gendered significance. Yet European coverage remains patchy. For example, French high-status architecture has been subjected to meticulous scholarly analysis but, with a few exceptions, the apartments of French royal women have received little detailed attention. As Annie Renoux has said of the castles and palaces of late ninth to late eleventh-century Northern France, making women visible remains "something of a challenge" even where good documentary evidence exists. Indeed it must be acknowledged that few countries can match England's centralised series of transchronological documents, such as the close and patent rolls, which detail the construction, repair and decorative schemes of specifically-named female and male areas. Nevertheless sufficient evidence remains, and enough studies have been completed, to make broad statements about the arrangement of gendered space in elite medieval buildings across several European countries.

Although castles are increasingly recognized as complex structures of which defense was just one facet, most people could confidently put forward a definition. "Palaces" are rather more problematic. Though the earliest surviving written reference in England dates to the late tenth century, and the concept was familiar in Europe from c. 800, only a tiny number of royal residences were referred to as such during the Middle Ages. Consequently, scholars have tended to reserve the term for the noncastle residences of the crown and higher nobility. Yet such distinctions were probably less clear-cut to contemporaries. Even the Tower of London, clearly a fortress, encompassed suites of well-appointed royal apartments. Therefore compared with most castles palaces generally did not emphasize defense, but in regard to domestic space the terms can be used interchangeably.

In Britain, late medieval palaces reemerged as a field of study in the early 1990s and attention was immediately paid to the involvement of royal women. In particular the influence of foreign-born queens consort on the development of English palatial architecture was hypothesized. To paraphrase O'Keeffe, these narratives revealed not *the* story of palaces, but *a* story of their construction, and although women were now included in that story there was little explicit discussion of gender. Parallel developments can be seen in castle studies. Valuable works have been—and still are—produced that include whole chapters on women as castellans and defenders. However, few explicitly address gender as part of the overall narrative, or acknowledge the role of architecture in its social construction. A significant proportion of female Irish castle-builders or owners, for example Rohesia de Verdun (d. 1247), seem to have flouted gender stereotypes generally, and it has been suggested that active involvement with castles might have influenced women's gender identities—a proposal that would repay further study.

Direct evidence is scant for medieval women's active involvement in palace and castle building. However, Abbot Suger (c. 1081–1151) apparently regarded the construction of castles as entirely normal queenly behaviour, having relayed a story of Constance of Arles (c. 986–1032), wife of

Robert the Pious, building Le Puiset Castle in the early eleventh century. Indeed in some ways women's participation in the construction or renovation of high status residences can be easier to uncover than their precise living arrangements. Examples demonstrating both are rare, but one such concerns the chateau of Germolles near Beaune in Burgundy. After its acquisition in 1380 by Duke Philip the Bold, Germolles was immediately appropriated by Philip's wife, Margaret of Flanders, who transformed this fortified house into a reflection of her taste and a demonstration of her own status. Despite the house's resultant "domestic character" (Emery), and Margaret's apparent lack of interest in politics, she retained the original gateway to give her residence "presence" and commissioned a pastoral scene c. 1393 depicting herself and the duke surrounded by sheep, symbolising their joint concern for Flemish prosperity. Margaret's own apartments were arranged in a sequence of six intimate chambers reminiscent of Fairclough's ceremonial "axes of honour", normally associated with powerful male figures and intended to enhance the status of the occupant as well as that of the visitors allowed to proceed through them. Not neglectful of her responsibilities, Margaret also retained elements of defence in her rebuilding, perhaps mindful that the mercenaries who had decimated the area in the 1360s might return.

Renoux has similarly shown that that the queens of late ninth to late eleventh-century France held major responsibilities within the kingdom and that in consequence they played key roles in reinforcing palatial complexes both conceptually and practically, even instigating new fashions in architecture through their building programmes. Lower down the social scale widowed women might stay on in their husband's residences and have them modified according to gender norms, as in the case of Hawisia, who remained in the fortified manor of Haversham (Buckinghamshire) after her husband William de la Plaunche's death in 1335. She occupied the highest-status private rooms, with assured privacy from public areas such as the hall and kitchen, which, it was stipulated, must remain "shut" from her at her pleasure during her tenure. Such evidence demonstrates women's agency in reinforcing the gendered spatial traditions which have long been observed by scholars of late-medieval women and high status architecture.

The idea that architecture not only replicates but also constructs gender ideologies is not new. In the 1980s, high-status late Anglo-Saxon planning—notably the communal hall—was considered to be symptomatic of a relatively egalitarian social structure. That is, the comparatively unsegregated space of the hall both reflected and actively encouraged greater access to power for women and other less advantaged groups. This premise has since been disputed. Concomitantly the "retreat" from such communal spaces, represented by the establishment of separate households for noblemen and women by the early thirteenth century, has been read as evidence of a decline in women's status. However, the meaning of such segregation has been problematized. Many interpretations center on contemporary ideas about the female body. The French surgeon Henri de Mondeville (1260–1320), for example, proposed that "interior space…is a feminine place; for the first dwelling-place of man is buried deep in the secret places of women" (Gilchrist). Scholars have recently correlated these ideas with the architecture of public and private space. More generally, women's association with the most "private" areas of castles and palaces is no longer equated solely with political and social marginalization. The household of Eleanor of Provence (c. 1223–1291), for example, seems to have afforded her a unique power base during the factional struggles of the Lusignans, half-brothers of King Henry III, and her Savoyard relatives. Thus the apparent architectural seclusion of elite women followed the same principles as that of their husbands, not necessarily demonstrating their perceived weakness and need to be hidden, but instead a reflection of their power and influence.

Detailed comparative studies of gendered spatial patterns in late medieval Europe might reveal much about similarities and differences in regional social organization. In continental Europe and in Scotland, kings' and queens' apartments usually occupied different floors, the queen's traditionally

above the king's as in King Charles V's (r.1364–1380) Louvre, Paris, and the Emperor Charles IV's (r.1346–1378) Karlstein Castle, near Prague. However, at Suscino Castle in the Duchy of Brittany, developed by John IV (1339–1399), the duchess seems to have occupied a series of second-floor rooms linked with those of the duke above by a mural staircase. Similarly, when stacked lodgings briefly became popular in England at the end of the fifteenth century, the kings' rooms invariably occupied the higher floors. Yet through most of the late Middle Ages, English royal apartments were generally on one level, as were the suites of Louis II of Anjou (1377–1417) and his duchess Yolande at Tarascon Castle in the Rhone Valley in the early fifteenth century. A comparable pattern existed at Jaime II of Aragon's (1267–1327) Almudaina Palace in Palma, Majorca, modified from 1279, as well as at his slightly later palace at Perpignan near the French/ Spanish border. Like many later royal residences, the latter was divided into kings' and queens' "sides," the queen closer to the great hall than the king—another rare pattern in English palaces and castles.

Regional traditions aside, elevated views characterize the chambers of medieval elite women. Perhaps paradoxically, such vistas arguably reinforced the symbolic enclosure highlighted in architecture by gender historians. Women could at once remain invisible while gazing out over castle and palace interiors or enclosed parks and gardens, which offered the type of privacy "readily attainable only outdoors" until well into the seventeenth century (Crane), and which functioned as metaphors for the chaste female body. At the English royal palace of Clarendon in Wiltshire a window was specially ordered in 1250 providing Eleanor of Provence with views over the gardens and inner park below her chambers, and at the Black Prince's Palace of Kennington near London, built in the 1340s, the apartments of Joan of Kent (1328–1385) were set in the gardens and were entirely divorced from the complex's more public and ceremonial spaces. Furthermore at Jaime II of Aragon's Almudaina Palace (Majorca) the thirteenth-century royal apartments each featured views over the sea, but it was the queen's, not the king's, which in their entirety overlooked the gardens, also incorporating an early, purpose-built gallery facing them, affording exercise and contemplation. Many other examples regarding the relationship between femininity and enclosed or intimate exterior areas could be cited. Indeed scholarly attention regarding medieval gender and space has now begun to turn to external spaces such as parks, following suggestions that Europe-wide seigneurial "spatial ideologies" (Creighton 2009) reached "beyond the castle gate" (Richardson 2011).

The great hall as a center of power, however symbolic, remains key to understanding medieval gender dynamics. Here the ideal of separate gender domains organized according to a public/private divide is evident in the startling dearth of imagery depicting women in English halls throughout the later Middle Ages. Moreover from the mid-fourteenth century, as the meeting-places of chivalric brotherhoods, halls appear to have become equated with the martial ethic increasingly underlying the gender role of the male nobility, reinforcing them as "male space". For example Edward the Black Prince (1330–1376) deliberately had his chambers built onto the impressive, ceremonial hall of Kennington Palace c. 1350. Such a hypothesis calibrates other work. In particular the joint tombs fashionable from the third quarter of the fourteenth century—for example that of Richard II (r. 1377–1399) and Anne of Bohemia (1366–1394)—have been seen as symbolizing women's increased political marginalization by replicating the growing emphasis on their intercessionary role. That is, the tombs embodied the joint responsibility for just rule underscored in the English coronation *ordo*, which stressed the queen's mercy and her role as mediator between her husband and the realm. But if fourteenth-century English halls were "male space," epitomised by the statues of kings commissioned for Westminster Hall by Richard II, this may not have been the case throughout Europe. The contemporary series of "kings" in the hall of the Palais de la Cité, Paris, included queens consort despite the exclusion of women from the succession under Salic Law.

Evidence from contemporary art, chronicles, and romances confirms that sexual segregation was practiced at formal occasions such as feasts and tournaments. Yet the picture was more complex in everyday life. Guests of both sexes would have been received in female households, as well as male officials and administrators, so that they were more sexually and socially mixed than those of their male counterparts. This is reflected in the types of imagery employed in the gendered domains of castles and palaces. In the chambers of medieval English kings, depictions of men far outweighed those of women, while in queens' rooms "mixed" imagery predominated—either depicting both sexes or neutral patterned motifs. Other characteristics of female apartments include the provision of private chapels, emphasising the key religious role of high-status women as intercessors, as in the castles of Portchester (Hampshire), Castle Rising (Norfolk), Pickering (North Yorkshire), and Carisbrooke (Isle of Wight). This was more than an English phenomenon; in France elite women also helped to promote and increase the number of chapels in palace and castle complexes.

Many of the social patterns observed here continued into the early modern period, although evidence from Thornbury Castle (Gloucestershire), built c. 1511, suggests that gendered traditions in architecture were at last beginning to change. Instead of her apartments occupying the castle's least accessible areas, Eleanor Stafford shared equal access with her husband, Edward Stafford duke of Buckingham, to the great hall, courtyard and privy garden, the latter of which could be accessed or overlooked only from their rooms. The scheme at Thornbury echoes the relatively symmetrical gendered patterns of access found in Henry VIII's new palace of Nonsuch (Surrey), built from 1538, and it has been proposed that by the early sixteenth century privacy was understood not as a gendered, but a high-status privilege (Thorstad). Yet sexual segregation was still practiced at formal occasions in the British Isles. During the 1503 wedding celebrations of Margaret Tudor (b. 1489) and James IV of Scotland at Holyrood, the king's and queen's parties dined in separate halls. Margaret's party remained socially and sexually diverse; noblewomen, including the ladies of her household, sat at one table, another accommodated noblemen, a third was occupied by gentlewomen, and a fourth by gentlemen.

A further aspect of gendered space in castles and palaces deserves highlighting. It was to Margaret's great chamber that James IV later went to dance. Although evidence is scant, such nuggets may indicate how queens' chambers were actually used through the Middle Ages. Certainly in 1302, Edward I and Margaret of France were sharing a bedchamber when fire broke out at Winchester Castle, and a 1238 attempt on Henry III's life at Woodstock was foiled because he was sharing a bed with Eleanor of Provence in her chamber—to the chagrin of the would-be assassin. Spatial segregation in medieval castles and palaces may have replicated ideas about gender difference and the social order, but the relative privacy of noblewomen's apartments clearly held resonance for both sexes.

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See also

Noble Women; **Queens and Empresses: The West**; **Space, Sacred: and Gender**; **Space, Secular: and Gender**; **Warfare**