



# Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France

*By Kathleen Wellman*

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**Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France** By Kathleen Wellman

This book tells the history of the French Renaissance through the lives of its most prominent queens and mistresses, beginning with Agnès Sorel, the first officially recognized royal mistress in 1444; including Anne of Brittany, Catherine de Medici, Anne Pisseleu, Diane de Poitiers, and Marguerite de Valois, among others; and concluding with Gabrielle d'Estrées, Henry IV's powerful mistress during the 1590s.

Wellman shows that women in both roles—queen and mistress—enjoyed great influence over French politics and culture, not to mention over the powerful men with whom they were involved. The book also addresses the enduring mythology surrounding these women, relating captivating tales that uncover much about Renaissance modes of argument, symbols, and values, as well as our own modern preoccupations.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"*Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* is an important book. . . . The topic is timely, important, and will draw a wide audience of scholars and non-specialists with an interest in Renaissance France."—Deborah Losse, Arizona State University  
(Deborah Losse)

"Wellman achieves that rare mix of the scholarly and accessible while making a compelling case for queens and mistresses as crucial facets of the political and artistic development of Renaissance France."—Katherine Crawford, Vanderbilt University  
(Katherine Crawford)

"*Queens and Mistresses of Renaissance France* is a scholarly but accessible account of the most powerful women ever to sway the French monarchy. Thanks to Wellman's vivid portraits, we see French royal women certainly 'had' a Renaissance."—Kathryn Norberg, University of California, Los Angeles  
(Kate Norberg)

"An exceedingly complex dynastic period is made comprehensible and compelling."—*Library Journal*  
(*Library Journal*)

"Wellman renders comprehensible the gender relations and emotional expectations of the nobility in early modern France in ways most narrative textbooks cannot." —*Choice*  
(*Choice*)

"...Wellman has succeeded in demonstrating how crucial these women were in shaping court culture, the visual arts, and politics, thus being able to argue that women did have a Renaissance."—Isabel dos Guimaraes Sá, *Universidade do Minho*  
(Isabel dos Guimaraes Sa)

### About the Author

**Kathleen Wellman** is Dedman Family Distinguished Professor and chair of the Clements Department of History at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX.

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