AN ACTRESS' APPROACH TO THE ROLE OF ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE IN THE LION IN WINTER BY JAMES GOLDMAN

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

Eleanor of Aquitaine was a remarkable woman and a queen of international importance in the twelfth century. The story of her struggle with her husband, Henry II, at the time of the death of their eldest son, Henry the Young King, in 1183, has been made into a play by James Goldman, called The Lion in Winter, which was produced successfully on Broadway in March, 1966.

An actress approaching the role for public performance in her preparation includes rehearsal, character analysis, and research on the period and background of the play. A study of the stage history of the play, with particular emphasis on critical opinion of previous performances of the role, is of great use in planning interpretation and attack. Because of the unusually close historical accuracy of the play, research into the life of Eleanor of Aquitaine, the historical figure, serves as the character's biography, as the Stanislavski system of acting recommends. A rehearsal log, the day-by-day record of the process of creating the role, details the practical application of some of the techniques involved in projecting the role.

CHAPTER 1

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Ever since theater began, dramatists have drawn from history and presented historical characters according to their own sensibility and personal vision. The history play discovers, according to the particular playwright's specific purpose, dramatic, emotional, political, psychological or moral truths in the great events and personalities in the history of man.

Aeschylus is an early example of a playwright drawing contemporary meaning from the examples of history, and his play, The Persians, written in 472 B.C., is "the only extant Greek play on a historical subject."[1] This was a prototype. Shakespeare's purpose in writing his history plays was to glorify the past of his native land as found in its chronicles. Others, like Bertolt Brecht and George Bernard Shaw, used historical drama as a vehicle for personal dogma, as for instance Shaw's singular opinion that Joan of Arc was the first Protestant.[2] Such plays add a new dimension to the age in which they are written and give meaning

1. Meyer Reinhold, Classical Drama: Greek and Roman (New York, 1959), p. 20.

2. George Bernard Shaw, "Preface" to St. Joan (London, 1924), p. 41.

to historical events as they apply to their own time.

Thus a history play is like a parable. The playwright who wishes to say something about his own time finds historical parallel an expedient means of avoiding the confusion of issues which sometimes destroys the force of a play in a contemporary setting. Also, societies of the past were simpler, and issues appear more clearly when removed from the complexities of modern life. Distance in time, in other words, lends aesthetic proportion. Things can be put more simply.

In this light, the following remarks by James Goldman on his purpose in writing The Lion in Winter are significant:

> The play is only apparently historical. It is founded on the few facts we have, but these reveal only the outcome of relationships--such things as who kills whom and when. The content of these relationships, the people and their passions, while consistent with the facts, are my own invention. Both the content and the style are contemporary because the people are so. . . . The conflict of will between the king and the princes of The Lion in Winter are contemporary because they are universal.[3]

The Lion in Winter is Goldman's first major success, but not his first play. He studied to be a music critic until his post-graduate work at Columbia was interrupted by the draft. During his two years in the service he decided

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3. The Lion in Winter, film program prepared by Ronark Program Company (New York, 1968), p. 27.

to become a playwright. With his brother, the novelist William Goldman, he wrote the book and lyrics to a musical called The Family Affair, and a comedy, Blood, Sweat and Stanley Poole. Both plays opened on Broadway. His own play, There Might Be Giants, was directed by Joan Littlewood in a London production. His first novel, Waldorf, was published in the fall in 1967 by Random House to excellent reviews. Goldman currently lives in New York with his wife Marie and his daughter Julia.[4]

Broadway Production

The Lion in Winter opened March 3, 1966 at the Ambassador Theater in New York. The director was Noel Wilman, the designer of scenery and costumes was Will Steven Armstrong, and the producers were Eugene Wolsk, Walter Hyman, and Alan King with Emanuel Azenburg. The role of Eleanor of Aquitaine was created by Rosemary Harris. Robert Preston played Henry II, and Richard Lionheart was played by James Rado, who went on to co-author Hair. Walter Kerr gave the play an excellent review, with special kudos to Miss Harris:

> The knifing is delicious, the words are blisteringly well-formed and the people are right next to wonderful. . . . Author James Goldman hasn't found an ending yet, but he certainly has a play in front of it. . . . I think my own favorite winner is Rosemary Harris. Miss Harris comes on like a loser

4. "Program Notes" (anon.) Playbill: The National Magazine for Theatregoers, V (March, 1968), 30.

and every once in a while fools the wily folk around her into thinking that she is one. . . . There is chin strap to suggest that the flesh is playing dirty tricks on her, there is a deceptive paleness about the eyes that hints that some fires have gone out, and her smile is prettily but unmistakably wan.

Until she shows her teeth, which are quite dazzling enough to frighten jungle-monarchs everywhere. The evening is a series of power contests, and Miss Harris can sing the whole castle down, and she does so, Queen of Cats and all she surveys, at every opportunity. . . . When clawing at the bearded, maned and manic fellow her lover has become, she pauses to remember that it is Christmas and to break the word "Christmas" into two fragile halves, as though it were an ornament dropped from a sorrowing tree. . . . Let us not mince words. This is masterful work. . . . Wear a windbreaker. There's quite a gale.[5]

Stanley Kaufman, however, had some reservations:

The wrong question keeps growing in us: "What is Henry's successor to us?" In other words, Mr. Goldman's play, for all its considerable cleverness of construction, pith and memorable storming of words--never really shakes or concerns us. His characters are recognizable but not affecting; his drama is discernible but not gripping, and a theme, to justify the existence of the play here and now--is hard to find. . . .

The cleverness of their encounters palls, because they take on a pattern. Every scene--theirs and others--seems to begin with a statement of intent: which turns out to be a deception: which turns out to be a deliberately transparent deception, and so on. For a while it has the merit of seeming like diluted Shaw, particularly as, in a much lesser degree, Goldman has the same liking for an occasional present-day locution in the middle of royal rhetoric. But soon . . . the play becomes merely observable and remote.

Mr. Goldman's play, like its acting and directing,

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5. Walter Kerr, "Lion in Winter Opens at the Ambassador," New York Herald Tribune, March 4, 1966.

> has qualities in it to respect. But ultimately one does not want to respect a play, one wants to be taken in by it (sometimes without respect). That fundamental capture is especially important in a history play, or else the author leaves us wondering why he went back to that particular time and place. At the last, it is this question that Mr. Goldman, for all his merits, has not answered.[6]

Kaufman also had reservations about Rosemary Harris' performance:

> The wonder of the evening is Rosemary Harris as Eleanor of Aquitaine, especially marvelous when we consider that her last appearance was as a stock ingenue in You Can't Take It With You. Having said this, I must go on to report that the marvel consists of her displaying a repertory of dazzling acting resources--all seemingly conscious. As an admirer of some standing, I have never seen her show more scintillating virtuosity. But I have seen her virtuosity less apparent.[7]

After consideration, he made the following additional remarks in the Sunday Times:

> As for the language, although it has some wit and some enjoyable invective, it is not resourceful enough to compensate for the repetitiousness. . . . The characters also tend to make epigrams at each other instead of conversing. . . . Last, there is another question the author did not answer adequately before he began: whether the biographical facts, or their reasonable extension, would provide dramatic progress or conclusion. They do not. The play gradually dwindles in momentum, and it ends lamely.
>
> Rosemary Harris' performance as Eleanor, is, in my view, a crucial point in her career. She has most of the gifts that other actresses pray for: beauty, grace, a good voice, humor, intelligence, a remarkable range of emotions and character, and versatility in style. . . . She has always been an actress marked for the top. Now that she is there,

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6. Stanley Kaufman, "The Lion in Winter Opens," New York Times, March 4, 1966.

7. Ibid.

> she seems, for the first time, more in danger of becoming a star than an actress. Her Eleanor has technical mastery and large style beyond the reach of most of her contemporaries. But all through it there are also little wooings of the audience: quick glances at them, taking them along with her as she turns her head to speak; exaggerated pouter-pigeon syllabifications to tickle them. There is also a suspicion that she is beginning to share their enjoyment of her lovely voice.[8]

Some of the above are justifiable comedy techniques, in the writer's opinion.

The consensus of the national magazines that review Broadway plays was good. Newsweek's review is typical:

> Once the audience gives up the attempt to unravel the action and realizes that Goldman has no identifiable theme, it can enjoy the surface of his drama. This is composed with more than routine literacy and wit, marred only at times by a jarring contemporary note. . . . Most of the time Goldman gives his performers bright, pointed things to say and they take advantage of them. Rosemary Harris is the queen, in full panoply of acerbity and mannered hauteur, while Robert Preston as Henry is solidly leonine.[9]

Road Company Production

The play had a good run, and in 1968 two road companies were formed. The Overland Stage Company presented Walter Slezak and Margaret Phillips as Henry and Eleanor, with Elizabeth Farley as Alais, with whom the writer had acted at the Loretto-Hilton Repertory Theater in St. Louis

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8. Stanley Kaufman, "The Lion in Winter," New York Times, March 13, 1966.

9. "Theatre" (anon. rev.), Newsweek, March 14, 1966, p. 94.

in the winter season of 1967. The scenery and lighting were designed by Clarke Dunham, and the costumes (presumably the same ones) were again designed by Will Steven Armstrong. The production was seen by the writer in St. Louis at the American Theater, March 7, 1968, and was felt to be very mediocre. Margaret Phillips as Eleanor was often inaudible, and her delivery was much too rapid for the size of the theater house.

The second company featured George C. Scott and Colleen Dewhurst as Henry and Eleanor. Both productions were directed by Milton Katselas, graduate of the Carnegie Institute of Technology.[10]

Film Version

The play was made into a motion picture, begun November 27, 1967, and completed April 5, 1968, produced by Joseph E. Levine under Avco Embassy Pictures, starring Peter O'Toole and Katherine Hepburn as Henry and Eleanor, with a supporting cast of young British actors from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and the British National Theater. Hepburn received the Academy Award for Best Actress for her performance. She received the following panegyric from Arthur Knight of the Saturday Review:

> Despite all its other virtues, which are many and considerable, it is impossible to write of The Lion in Winter without launching into a panegyric

10. "Program Notes," Playbill, p. 30

> to Katherine Hepburn. This extraordinary woman . . . has that rare but essential quality in an actress of seeming to believe in whatever she is playing so completely that her audiences are compelled to believe as well. . . . All of these elements are to be found burnished to perfection in her wise, witty, fully-dimensioned Eleanor of Aquitaine. Agile of mind, her spirit unbroken despite years of neglect and virtual imprisonment by her regal partner, at once a political conniver and an anxious mother, Eleanor provides Miss Hepburn with a role that brings into play every facet of her talent.
>
> Because Eleanor was the most remarkable woman of her time--some have called her the first truly modern woman--and Miss Hepburn is one of the more remarkable people of our own day, there is a fusion, a merging of identities that makes this perhaps the finest characterization of her career. Certainly, after seeing her performance, it is difficult to imagine another actress who could bring to the role an equal range and intensity.[11]

On the negative side, Pauline Kael, in the New Yorker, found many faults:

> Plays are customarily coarsened when they're filmed, but James Goldman's play has been elevated--with serious emotions . . . and historical pomp. And it just won't do to have actors carrying on as if this were a genuine "deep" historical play, on the order of A Man for All Seasons. What made The Lion in Winter entertaining on the stage was Goldman's reducing of the Plantagenets . . . to a family of monsters playing Freudian games of sex and power. They were the jolliest collection of bad seeds since The Little Foxes. . . . On the screen, when their games are played in a real castle, and played not for laughs and melodrama but emotionally, with impressive dramatic performances and real tears for defeats, it all seems hysterical. One begins to wonder why the actors are getting all overwrought; the point of view is too limited and anachronistic to justify all this howling and sobbing and carrying on. They're playing a camp history play as if it were

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11. Arthur Knight, "Kiss Me, Kate," Saturday Review, November 2, 1968, pp. 59-60.

> the real thing--delivering commercial near-poetry as if it were the real thing.
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> This melodrama for two pros and some young semi-pros to horse around in is now full of the pitiful desperation of weak, weepy people trapped by need and greed. . . . And the quick transitions from feigned emotions to cunning, which on the stage were so shallow and silly that they were amusing, are exhausting when the actors try to make them convincing. Goldman has a facile but not very high-grade wit, and although his screen-play omits some of his cheaper epigrams . . . what's left is still rather sophomoric. . . . Everybody seems to have worked hard, yet the delusion that this conception and this dialogue could bear the weight of aspirations to grandeur, is crippling.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Katherine Hepburn is their mother, and her accent is so peculiarly her own that we just accept it as the way she talks.
>
> As Rosemary Harris played the role on Broadway, Eleanor of Aquitaine was hard and funny--a tough cat who enjoyed scratching and fighting--and it might have been a good role for the brittle high priestess of modernism if she had still held her own. But Hepburn plays Eleanor as a gallant lady. She's about as tough as Helen Hayes. In Guess Who's Coming to Dinner and much more in The Lion in Winter she draws upon our feelings for her, not for the character she's playing. When Hepburn, the most regal of them all, contemplates her blotches and wrinkles with tears in her anxious eyes, it's self-exploitation, and it's horrible.[12]

The division between the self of the actress and the self of the character is academic, in the writer's opinion. Kael takes advantage of the intimate knowledge the public has of a star's personal life. Hepburn's performance struck

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12. Pauline Kael, "Lioness in Winter," New Yorker, November 9, 1968, pp. 180-192.

the writer by its bone-bareness, the almost Spartan simplicity with which she achieved her effects. Her Eleanor is spare, clean and direct. One of the pitfalls of the role, in the writer's opinion, is its nefarious, cunning nature, and one was always aware, in this performance, of the human and emotional situation which causes Eleanor's actions.

There is a lesson here, for an actress embarking upon the role, in the comparison of Katherine Hepburn's and Rosemary Harris' unfavorable reviews. On one hand, Miss Harris was found to be removed, cold, and unpleasantly conscious of her theatrical effects. On the other, Miss Hepburn's emotionalism and personal involvement was felt to be too heavy, and absurd considering the slickness of the material. It is a thin line which must be walked with this role.

The film is faithful both to the play and to history. Goldman himself did the screenplay, retaining most of the original dialogue, and omitting the deliberate anachronisms. The film was directed by Anthony Harvey, a graduate of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and a former film editor, whose only previous credit was Dutchman, a small-budget film, in 1965.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Twelfth Century: Age of Eleanor of Aquitaine

The twelfth century was the age of Eleanor of Aquitaine. The most conspicuous individual of her time, she set her stamp on the international events in the lives of three generations.

The twelfth century was the age when chivalry came to its fullest fruition, and troubadours changed the course of Western literature, glorifying life, asserting the individual personality and the cult of the senses. "Joy and honor" were the supreme ends of life in the twelfth century, as embodied in the cult of woman and the ideal of courtly love.

The stirring of religious unrest which began in this century climaxed in the struggle between church and state which led to Wyclif, Lollardism, and finally the Reformation. It was the age of intellectual rebirth, the turn from the Romanesque to the Gothic in art, the rise of urban culture, the birth of great cities, and the beginning of the end of feudalism. The rise of vernacular literature, love poetry and the *savoir gai* were signs of a great European revival, culminating in an age of great historians, philosophers and

humanists. As David Knowles states, it was the intellectual and psychological adolescence of the new races of Europe.[1]

It was the age of Heloise and Abelard, Thomas Becket and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, William the Marshall and Ventadour, St. Anselm, John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, Frederick Barbarosa and Philip Augustus, Bertran de Born and Arnold of Brescia, Innocent III (the great reformer Hildebrand) and Nicholas Breakspeare (Adrian IV, the only English Pope in history), and Eleanor's four kings: Louis VII, Henry Fitz-Empress, Richard Coeur-de-Lion and John Softsword.

Eleanor knew all these persons, most of them personally. She was involved in all movements, she knew all cities--Paris, Bordeaux, Poitiers, London, Sicily, Rome, Byzantium, and Jerusalem itself. She was the cause of the feud between the Capets and the Plantagenets which led to the Hundred Years War that raged long after her death. She was the most beautiful, the richest, the most powerful, the most fascinating, scandalous, and notorious woman of her age.

The Historical Eleanor

The Duchess of Aquitaine was born in 1122 in the south of France (Belin and Bordeaux both claim to be her birth place) and christened Alia-Anor after her mother Anor. She had a sister, Petronilla, and a brother Agret who died with his mother of unknown causes when Eleanor, as she is called in history, was still a child.

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1. David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought (New York, 1962), p. 83.

From her father, Guillaume X, Duke of Aquitaine, she claimed descent from Charlemagne. Her grandfather, Guillaume IX, was famous as a crusader and poet. He brought vernacular poetry into vogue, and his own verse suggests a lusty, roving eye and a broad and liberal point of view that was typical of the Aquitanians.[2] The house was imbued with the highest standard of civilization and the richest culture in the West. Although they were too free spirited and pagan to be staunch or orthodox supporters of the church, the family had founded the Abbey of Cluny, where the great Cluniac-Hildebrandine Reform began, and they had seated popes in Rome.

Eleanor's dower, the Duchy of Aquitaine and the County of Poitou, was the richest on the continent. Extending along the western coast of France from the Loire to the Pyrenees, rich with meadows, vineyards, and walled cities, it was a land of fabulous wealth and beauty. The Aquitaine is said to have derived its name from the abundance of its waters. It included Lusignan, Saintonge, Angoumois, Perigord, the Limousin and Auvergne. It was ample, gracious, wide and fair; further, its addition, through the marriage of its duchess, to any of the kingdoms in Western Europe, would raise that kingdom to pre-eminence over its rivals.

The duchess herself was no liability to her rich patrimony. Avenante, vaillante, courtoise ("charming,"

2. Christopher H. Dawson, Medieval Essays (New York, 1959), p. 192.

"welcoming," "lively"), as she is described in the twelfth century chronicles,[3] her hair was dark, her skin was fair, and her features, as judged by the writer from reproductions of the effigies at Fontevrault Abbey, were noble. Her education was liberal, varied, and in the enlightened tradition of her family.

The sudden death of her father, Duke Guillaume, on his return from a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint James in Spain in 1137, left Eleanor an orphaned heiress, and was an event of international importance. Louis VI, King of France, himself ill and dying and so fat that he was unable to rise from his bed, was overlord to the dukes of Aquitaine, and he decided to marry his beautiful vassal to his own son, who would rule after him as Louis VII. The aquisition of her lands would more than double the size of France, and engulf on both sides the lands of Geoffrey the Fair, Count of Anjou (father of the future Henry II), who was his most rebellious and troublesome vassal.

The marriage took place on August 1, 1137, in Bordeaux, and shortly afterward Louis the Fat died. Thus it was that Eleanor arrived in Paris in the fall of 1137 as Queen of the Franks.

Taking up residence in the cold and dank Merovingian palace of the Capets on the Île de France, the fifteen-year-old queen probably continued her studies, learning hagiography

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3. Guillaume le Maréchal, L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal ed. and trans. Paul Meyer (Paris, 1891-1901), p. 28.

and Capetian genealogy. She of course had to master the langue d'öil, spoken by the Franks; her own native language was the romantic speech of the troubadours, the langue d'oc. It seems certain that she mastered dialectic and the syllogism, for she was later able to use these in her own behalf, citing scripture and arguing points with popes and philosophers.[4]

In these days Paris was first called the City of Light.[5] Thomas Becket and John of Salisbury were students of philosophy there, and Peter Abelard and St. Bernard of Clairvaux were engaged in their struggle for supremacy in the Church. Eleanor was probably present at Abelard's trial.[6] The queen first came in contact with St. Bernard at this time, and his disapproval of her dress and deportment was strong:

> The garments of court ladies are fashioned from the finest tissues of wool or silk. A costly fur between two layers of rich stuffs forms the lining and border of their cloaks. Their arms are loaded with bracelets; from their ears hang pendants enshrining precious stones. For head dress they have a kerchief of fine linen which they drape about their neck and shoulders, allowing one corner to fall over the left arm. This is their wimple, ordinarily fastened to their brows by a chaplet, a fillet, or a circle of wrought gold. Gotten up this way, they walk with mincing steps, their necks thrust forward; and furnished and adorned as only temples should be, they drag after them a tail of precious

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4. Amy Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings (New York, 1950), p. 19.

5. Guy de Bazoches, Éloge de Paris, trans. Helen Waddell, quoted in Amy Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings (New York, 1950), p. 14.

6. Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, p. 26.

> stuff that raises a cloud of dust. . . . Some you see who are not so much adorned as loaded down with gold, silver, and precious stones, and indeed with everything that pertains to queenly splendor.[7]

The queen was of course the leader in fashion and extravagance.

The marriage to Louis was not a success. "A saint in the nuptial couch was not Eleanor's idea of a marriage."[8] The last representative of the house of Aquitaine, she embodied the pagan and passionate spirit of the South: she was romantic, spirited, vivid and vivacious. Louis was mild-mannered and ascetic. Her exclamation, "I thought to have married a king, but find I have wed a monk," is famous.[9] She and St. Bernard conceived a strong dislike for each other, and she was thought by him to be an evil influence on her meek and gentle husband. When her sister Petronilla fell in love with a married man, the Count of Vermandois, Eleanor urged Louis to make war on any who opposed the setting aside of the first wife, and it happened that more than a thousand innocent people were burned to death seeking sanctuary in the Church of Vitry in Champagne. Louis was filled with pious remorse, and he was never able to escape a sense of guilt for this

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7. Bernard of Clairvaux, Epistolae, in Patrologiae Latinae: Cursus Completus a Tertulliano ad Innocentium III, ed. and trans. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844-1846), CLXXXII, 257-259.

8. Thomas Costain, The Conquering Family (New York, 1964), p. 52.

9. William of Newburg, Historia Rerum Anglicarum, in Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, ed. Richard Howlett, Rolls Series 82 (London, 1858-1899), LXXXII, 93.

crime. At the exhortation of St. Bernard, he decided to "take the cross" as an act of penance. Eleanor, though impenitent and unloving of the Christianity practiced by Louis, also fell victim to the preaching of the Church Militant and elected, at the age of twenty-five, to go the via crucis, accompanied by a troop of lady crusaders.

She had given birth a year earlier, in 1145, to a daughter, Marie, and she was bored by her husband's naïveté, immaturity and sanctimonious manner. She longed for excitement and travel.[10] The loss of Edessa to the Saracens, which had shocked and outraged the Christian world, put in danger the city and fief of Antioch, held by Raymond of Toulouse, who was the queen's uncle, son of her grandfather the crusading troubadour, and her nearest male relative, a shrewd and handsome man. Louis was dazzled by the thought of leading his troops to free the Holy Sepulchre.

When the crusaders assembled at Vézelay to receive the token of the cross from St. Bernard, it was discovered that Eleanor and her ladies had adopted a costume so distinctly masculine that Louis' clerical advisors were shocked and amazed. They wore short white tunics slit down the sides, with a red cross front and back, tight fitting hose and red boots.[11] With plumes and banners and white horses, Eleanor appeared like Penthesilia with her warriors. The Greek historian

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10. Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, p. 42.

11. Costain, Conquering Family, p. 53.

Nicetas, who recorded the Second Crusade, wrote:

> There were in the army women dressed as men, mounted on horses and armed with lance and battle axe. They kept a martial mien, bold as Amazons. At the head of these was one in particular, richly dressed, that went by the name of the 'lady of the golden boot.' The elegance of her bearing and the freedom of her movements recalled the celebrated leader of the Amazons.[12]

Eleanor's notorious exploits and scandalous behavior on the Second Crusade made her internationally famous. Her supposed affair with Saladin (who was then ten years of age) evidently has some basis in fact, for there was, according to the chronicle of William of Tyre, a mysterious Saracen chief who visited her under various disguises.[13] She is charged by William of Tyre with indiscretions unworthy of her dignity and disregardful of her marriage bond. John of Salisbury accuses her of adultery with her handsome uncle, Raymond of Toulouse.[14] But the low point of Eleanor's conduct in the Orient was in the wilds of Paphlagonia, where she was directly responsible for a major military disaster. The queen's chief vassal, Geoffrey de Rancon, had found a cool green valley on the march to Antioch, and, at the ladies' insistence, the king and his generals weakly agreed to camp there against all military advice. The place was a deathtrap,

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12. Nicetas Choniate, Histoire de Nicetas Choniate, in Bibliotheque des Croisades, ed. and trans. Joseph Michaud (Paris, 1829), III, 402-404.

13. William of Tyre, A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, ed. and trans. A. Babcock and A. C. Krey (New York, 1943), II, 180.

14. John of Salisbury, Historiae Pontificalis Quae Supersunt, trans. R. L. Poole (Oxford, 1927), p. 53.

for the hills were full of Turks who attacked the crusaders in the darkness, driving them back in a rout along the gorges of the mountain passes. Seven thousand Frenchmen were killed.

This catastrophe cost Eleanor much prestige, and she was blamed, through this and other causes, for the unqualified failure of the Second Crusade.

In Antioch, during a disagreement between Louis and Raymond on the course of strategy of the Christian forces, Eleanor announced that she wished to remain with Raymond in Antioch, to sever herself from the house of Capet, to renounce the crown of France and resume her title as Duchess of Aquitaine.[15] Louis, dumfounded, upset, and, according to John of Salisbury, cherishing the queen with an almost boyish ardor, asked her reason. Her reply is recounted by the Minstrel of Reims: "Why do I renounce you? Because of your fecklessness. You are not worth a rotten pear."[16]

On the advice of Louis' counsellor, Thierry of Galeran, the queen was taken by force and kept under surveillance for the remainder of the crusade, to the outrage of herself and her vassals. After seeing Jerusalem, the Frankish sovereigns sailed home in separate vessels, stopping to see Pope Eugenius III at Tusculum. Eleanor, full of rancor at her

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15. Ibid., p. 53; also see William of Newburg, Historia Rerum, pp. 32-33.

16. Minstrel of Reims, Chronicle of Reims, in Three Old French Chronicles of the Crusades, trans. E. N. Stone (Seattle, 1939), p. 259.

abduction from her uncle's palace and at the restraints upon her, begged the Pope to dissolve the marriage on the grounds of consanguinity, or blood relationship. Eugenius felt there was hope for reconciliation, and advised prayer and patience. Eleanor returned unhappily to Paris, and, if the child she bore in 1150 had been a boy, she would have remained Queen of France and the Hundred Years' War might not have been fought. It was, however, a girl, and none of the king's advisers saw reason for patience with a queen who, in addition to the other disasters she had brought upon the Franks, had failed for fifteen years to produce an heir for the Capetian dynasty.

It was during this period that Geoffrey the Fair, Count of Anjou, came to renew his oath of fealty to Louis, his overlord, and he was accompanied by his son Henry. Giraldus Cambrensis suggests adultery between Geoffrey and Eleanor at this time, as does Walter Map, who admits he is reporting gossip.[17] The son, Henry, was sixteen at this time, Duke of Brittany and Normandy, and, through his mother the Empress Matilda, pretender to the throne of Britain. He was a handsome boy--robust, courteous, bred for kingship and destined for greatness. The French hoped to marry him to Eleanor's eldest daughter, Marie, but they reckoned without the girl's mother. When Henry returned to Paris alone two

17. Giraldus Cambrensis, De Principis Instructionae, ed. G. F. Warner (London, 1937), p. 165; Walter Map, De Nugis Curialum, or Courtier' Trifles, ed. and trans. F. Tupper and M. B. Ogle (London, 1924), p. 297.

years later, after his father's sudden death from fever, he was invested with his father's provinces, Maine and Anjou, and his interest in Eleanor was the equal of hers in him. Besides her beauty of person and the magnificence of her tempestuous spirit, the thirty-year-old queen represented to him the chance for an empire. Her tarnished reputation and greater years meant little to him, and may even have enhanced her, giving her an air of glamor and melancholy sophistication.

Eleanor was freed from her Capetian captivity on March 18, 1152, at Beaugency on grounds of consanguinity. The daughters, Marie and Alix, were declared legitimate and awarded to Louis. Her domains were generously restored to her as she had possessed them before her marriage, a move of utter stupidity on the part of Louis' advisors. The news that she had quietly married Henry two months later, in Poitiers on May 18, 1152, struck them like a thunderbolt. Their rage was unbounded, and their chagrin was complete: for Eleanor's second marriage was more consanguinous than the one she had just dissolved. But in spite of Frankish fulminations, threats, and a few feeble military forays against the pair, the conjoined stars of Aquitaine and Anjou were in the ascendant. Henry was now more than the peer of his overlord, and an invincible claimant to the English throne. Eleanor, sharing his prospects, was raised to a status from which she could survey her former queenship without regret

or humiliation. In Rouen on August 17, 1152, she gave birth to a son, Guillaume, as a final affront to the Franks.

In Angiers, Henry's ducal city, Eleanor, as Countess of Anjou, was free at last to create her own milieu, and she drew to her a brilliant and cultured court over which she presided in the enlightened tradition of the South, and created a court etiquette which she had observed not in the dim palace of the Capets, but in Rome, Byzantium, Antioch, and all the brilliant cities of the East. When Henry went to England in 1153 to secure his successsion by treaty, he left her as regent, and she aquitted herself well. She was also the lodestar to a generation of poets. The beautiful, bountiful duchess did much to create the new vernacular literature of the century. Tristan and Yseult, Arthurian romance, Eastern themes brought back by the crusaders, and the love poetry of the troubadours were first heard in this period in her gay young household. Bernard de Ventadour celebrated her worth and beauty in some of the most exquisite lyrics of the century.

> And he [the poet Ventadour] went away and came to the Duchess of Normandy, who was young and of great worth, and she had understanding in matters of valor and honor, and cared for a song of praise; and the songs of Bernard pleased her; she received andwelcomed him cordially. He was a long time in her court, and he fell in love with her and she with him. He made many good songs. And while he was with her the King Henry of England married her and took her from Normandy and led her away.[18]

18. F. J. M. Raynouard, Choix des Poesies Originales des Troubadours, quoted in and trans. Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, pp. 109-110.

The countess' dalliance with the poet and the amorous nature of this relationship finally reached Henry's ears, and he summoned Ventadour to England to serve him in the composition of more martial poetry.

The collapse of the house of Blois, with the death of King Stephan in October, 1154, shortly following his son's death (who choked to death on a plate of eels), brought Eleanor her second crown. The coronation took place in Westminster Abbey, two weeks after their arrival in England, after a stormy, month-long crossing from France. Henry wore his short Angevin cloak, which might have caused amusement if first seen on a lesser man, and thus received the nickname of Curtmantle from his new subjects. Eleanor wore white and gold, her hair uncovered and in four plaits, and a long ermine train carried by two pages.[19]

Two months later, in February, 1155, she gave birth to a prince born in the purple, christened Henry, and designated the future Count of Anjou. Soon afterwards, Guillaume, the first son, died. A daughter was born next, in June, 1156, named Matilda, who was eventually married to Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony. Next, in September, 1157, came Richard, the future Coeur de Lion, the queen's favorite son, who was designated by her as the special heir to Aquitaine and Poitou. Then in 1158 came Geoffrey, named for the king's brother, and

19. Costain, Conquering Family, p. 60.

subsequently married to the heiress of Brittany. In September, 1161, a daughter was born and christened Eleanor, after her mother. She later married the King of Castile, reputedly the richest man in the world. In October, 1165, a third daughter, Joanna, was born in Angiers, who became Queen of Sicily and accompanied her brother Richard and his wife Berengaria of Navarre on the Third Crusade. And in December, 1166, at Oxford, the last of the eaglets, John "Lackland" or "Softsword" was born. These names are a roster of great medieval kings and queens. Eleanor's children were the instruments of Henry's diplomacy, which, no less than his military strategy, secured and solidified the power of the Angevin empire.

What had brought Henry and Eleanor together, besides passion and physical attraction, was their mutual ambition.[20] They now devoted themselves to welding the uneasy federation of provinces which were theirs by inheritance and conquest, into the powerful Plantagenet, or Angevin, empire. To round out the edges and solidify this massive domain became the object and desire of their lives.

After spending three years putting their house in order, imposing peace, security and justice on the anarchy left by Stephan, they went to Worcester Cathedral at Easter, 1158, and laid their crowns on the altar of St. Wolfstan, a Saxon saint of William the Conqueror's time, vowing never to wear them again. This act was intended to signify their break

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20. Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, p. 121.

with Norman tradition and their desire to associate the new Plantagenet dynasty with the line of English kings.

One of Henry's early acts was to appoint, on the advice of Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, a young Norman cleric named Thomas Becket to the post of Chancellor of England. Henry's dealings with Becket have overshadowed the other accomplishments of his life and reign. Eleanor seems to have resented Becket's intrusion between herself and her husband: he usurped her voice and power in the councils of government and was a rival for Henry's affection and confidence. She resented and opposed him. That Henry eventually was forced to have the troublesome archbishop murdered to prevent his single-handedly bringing about a schism between church and state, is a vindication of Eleanor's opinion, which is also held by many historians, among them John Harvey, who states:

> It was said that Henry was never known to choose an unworthy friend, but Becket's worthiness is a matter of opinion. Extraordinary mixture of well-to-do man-about-town, witty and extravagant, and self-willed, self-torturing, and, it must be said, self-advertising churchman, Thomas Becket won for himself an outstanding place in history by his genius for manoeuvring other parties into the wrong.[21]

While Henry was struggling with Becket, Eleanor kept her brilliant court, sometimes in London, sometimes crossing the Channel, or visiting important cities and castles in her

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21. John H. Harvey, The Plantagenets (New York, 1967), p. 45.

realm. She brought the new aesthetic literary movement to England, and these two famous poems, among many others, were dedicated to her:

> God save lady Alianor,
> Queen who art the arbiter
> Of honor, wit, and beauty,
> Of largess and loyalty.
> Lady, thou wert born in a happy hour
> And wed to Henry King.[22]

> Were the lands all mine
> From the Elbe to the Rhine,
> I'd count them little case
> If the Queen of England
> Lay in my embrace.[23]

After 1164 her relations with Henry deteriorated, and she withdrew to her ducal city of Poitiers, taking with her her favored son and heir, Richard, and there assumed the administration of her own provinces. Having returned to the mellow and sunny Mediterranean climate of her native land, she now began to create and preside over the fantastic Courts of Love. Drawing to her gifted poets, artists and philosophers, knights, noble ladies and chevaliers, and aided by her eldest daughter by Louis, the Countess Marie of Champagne, she created a civilized and elegant milieu, a household where most of the negotiable heirs and heiresses of the kingdoms west of the Rhine and north of the Pyrenees were sent for

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22. Philippe de Thaün, "Introduction," to Le Bestiaire, ed. and trans. Emmanuel Walburg (Lund, 1900), p. xviii.

23. Quoted in Des Minnesangs Frühling, ed. and trans. Karl Lachmann and Moriz Haupt (Leipsic, 1875), p. 138.

education, refinement and social grace. Eleanor, Marie, and her ladies would sit in judgement and gravely deliberate over intricate, artificial problems of lovers, and would award the palm of amorous courtesy to knights who championed their ladies according to a strict code of conduct, le savoir gai. Out of this came Andreas Capellanus' De Amore, or The Art of Courtly Love, one of the great works of medieval literature, supposedly written at least partially by Marie herself. One of the most arresting opinions in the book is the idea that love in its ideal state cannot exist between spouses.[24] One is tempted to impute this melancholy observation to Queen Eleanor, who by this time was fifty-two, and had found, through Henry's repeated betrayals, that, as another medieval lady wrote, "Mortal love is but the licking of honey from thorns."[25]

The cause of Eleanor's pain and estrangement from Henry was Rosamund Clifford. He had met and fallen in love with her at the age of seventeen. She was not lowly born, but she was no match for a king. Her father, Walter Clifford, was a Saxon and a vavasor, or knight, of Herefordshire. She bore Henry two sons, one reputed to have been the famous William Long-Espée; the other, Geoffrey the Bastard, became

24. Andreas Capellanus, De Amore, ed. and trans. J. J. Parry (New York, 1941), pp. 106, 175.

25. "Holy Meidenhed," quoted in Eileen Power, Medieval English Nunneries (Cambridge, 1922), p. 441.

Henry's chancellor after the demise of Becket. Geoffrey was the only son who never betrayed him. Eleanor's anger over this affair was not at the infidelity--there were many others she overlooked--but at Henry's open flaunting of his favorite. Giraldus Cambrensis wrote, "He [Henry] who had long been a secret adulterer, now flaunted his paramour for all to see, not that Rose of the World (Rose-mundi) as some vain and foolish people called her, but that Rose of Unchastity (Rosa-immundi)."[26]

Rosamund died young and repentant at the convent of Godstow, where she is buried, and which Henry liberally endowed. Eleanor was in durance in Salisbury Tower by this time and could not, as legend has it, have discovered the Fair Rosamund in a labyrinth of hedges where the king had secreted her, and offered her a choice between a dagger and a cup of poison. This image of Eleanor as a wicked, envious and treacherous queen has joined the body of world-myth, and remains the most vivid picture we have of her, just as Henry, in spite of all his accomplishments and his love of justice, is always thought of as a tyrannical potentate, the murderer of St. Thomas Becket.

Eleanor's vengeance, however, was aimed not at the beautiful object of the king's folly, but at Henry himself, and the sons supported their mother.

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26. Giraldus, Principis Instructionae, p. 165.

Henry made the mistake of dividing his lands among his sons, and this error was to make his last years dark and bitter, and his death lonely and miserable. By the Treaty of Montmirail, made with Louis in 1169, Henry the Young King, who had already been coronated (by the Bishop of York as an affront to Becket) did homage to the French king for his lands as Henry's heir. Richard did homage for the queen's provinces, and Geoffrey did homage for Brittany to his brother Henry. (Henry Fitz-Empress later tried to make the youngest son, John "Lackland", King of Ireland, but this was a miserable and costly failure.) Further agreements reached at Montmirail were the marriage of Henry the Young King to Princess Marguerite of France, and the engagement of Richard to Princess Alais. Her dower was to be the Vexin, a small but militarily strategic county whose border fortresses controlled the Seine from Rouen to Paris.

These sons, Henry, Richard, and Geoffrey, were ripe for the seditious plans of the injured queen. Young Henry discovered that his title as heir was an empty form, as his father retained the power and revenues of kingship. In 1173 rebellion broke out. Bertrand de Born, acknowledged as the greatest minstrel of the day, wrote a ballad which swept through the Angevin dominions in France, encouraging all the queens loyal vassals to rise up against her English husband. Richard and Geoffrey joined their brother, and Louis Capet

recognized Young Henry as King of England, proclaiming his father to be as good as dead. In Paris, the Young King parcelled out with a spendthrift hand various hard-won pieces of his father's empire in return for military support. But Henry, the Old Lion, as he was now called, was able to crush the rebellion within a year, and Eleanor was captured trying to escape from the Plantagenet treasure-fortress of Chinon into France, disguised as a man riding astride in breeches and cloak. She was brought back to Chinon under guard. Henry refused to see her, and she was shipped to Winchester Castle in England, where she paid the price of her folly by spending the next sixteen years in confinement. This lament was written for her by one of her vassals, the troubadour Richard le Poitevan:

> You have been snatched from your own lands and carried away to an alien country. Reared with abundance of all delights, you enjoyed a royal liberty. You lived richly on your own inheritance; you took pleasure in the pastimes of your women, in their songs, in the music of the lute and drum. And now you grieve, you weep, you are consumed with sorrow. But come back to your own towns, poor prisoner. Where is your court? Where are the young men of your household? Where are your counselors? Some, dragged far from their own soil, have suffered a shameful death; others have been deprived of sight; and still others wander exiled in far places. You cry out and no one heeds you, for the King of the North holds you in captivity. But cry out and cease not to cry; lift your voice like a trumpet and it shall reach the ears of your sons. The day will come when they shall deliver you, and you shall come again to live in your own lands.[27]

27. Richard the Poitevan, "Lament for Eleanor," quoted in Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, p. 239.

The struggle between Henry and his sons was a complex web of double treachery, intrigue, and confusion, much too complicated and repetitive to be related in detail here. Sometimes the sons would all be against the father, sometimes they fought among themselves, sometimes against their own allies in Brittany and Aquitaine. It suffices to say they ravaged Henry's lands for seventeen years, and were responsible for the deaths of many thousands of people. Henry always sought for peace and reconciliation, for it was more important that he secure the stability of the kingdom and the peaceful succession of his heir than that he severely punish treason, but the sons again and again renewed the quarrel, broke the uneasy peace, and rent their father like hungry eaglets tearing at their parent's breast (as the family was allegorically portrayed by an unknown twelfth century artist in one of the frescoes of Worcester Cathedral). During the struggle, Geoffrey, the second son, handsome, clever, and dishonest, called by Benedict of Peterborough "that son of iniquity and perdition,"[28] is said to have remarked, "Dost thou not know it is our proper nature, planted in us by inheritance from our ancestors, that none of us should love the other, but that every brother should strive against brother, and son against father?"[29]

28. Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, p. 220.

29. Giraldus, Principis Instructionae, p. 302.

In 1176, amid much other treason, intrigue, switching of sides and betrayal of allies, Richard turned on his mother, allowing Henry to wrest her lands from her and force her to sign them over to her son, ceding her power to him in fact as well as deed. Mother and son were for this reason estranged for several years.

Eleanor, though in Henry's hands, remained an object of conjecture and intrigue for Henry's enemies. She was occasionally brought out of custody for state functions, and Henry made a show of courtesy to her. He attempted at this time to force her into a convent, but she refused to be forced, defying Henry and supported by her eldest three sons. "Even at fifty-three," wrote Amy Kelly, "Eleanor felt no vocation for the monastic life. She refused . . . to renounce the pomps of this world and exchange the coronet of her forebears for the abbatical cross and other insignia of the Abbess of Fontevrault."[30]

Henry's next move was to appeal to Pope Alexander for license to repudiate her. In 1177, a scandal swept through England and France that again united all the sons against their father. Henry's daughter-in-law elect, the Princess Alais, affianced to Richard and raised from the age of nine in Eleanor's household, had been seduced by Henry, and was presiding at his table as well. Her father Louis appealed

30. Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, p. 240.

to Rome to enforce the marriage of Alais to Richard immediately on pain of interdict on all Henry's lands. Amy Kelly sums up the situation in these words:

> Giraldus relates that Henry, confident of his prospect of getting rid of the queen through his appeal to the Pope, intended to take the Capetian princess for himself, disinherit the fierce eaglets of Poitou as the bastards of a consanguineous marriage, and rear a new progeny to possess the Angevin empire. Giraldus, never more piously enthusiastic than when exposing Henry's vices, declares that after his separation from the queen, the king turned openly to the evil courses he had long secretly pursued . . . He made a mistress of his precious hostage, the daughter of his overlord, the bride affianced to his son. Did the Angevin mean to erase from his life story the chapter of his union with the disastrous Poitevan?[31]

These plans were thwarted, for the Pope refused to consider granting Henry a divorce, and all he could do was play for time, hoping Eleanor would die. Using the delaying and evasive tactics of legal verbiage, promising her sometimes to Richard, sometimes to John, Henry kept Alais as his mistress for the remainder of his life. She was not a beauty, but she was vivacious, witty, and intelligent, with a gift for wearing clothes and a natural grace of movement.[32] She was the object of Henry's infatuated attachment for seventeen years.

In 1180, Louis VII, Eleanor's meek and gentle first husband, died, and Philip Augustus ascended to the throne of

31. Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, p. 243.

32. Costain, Conquering Family, p. 143.

France. He was a boy of seventeen, destined to become one of the greatest rulers France ever had, and he burned with desire to avenge the insults done his father by the Plantagenets and to drive them from their continental possessions. Eleanor was now fifty-eight, and had been in prison for six years. In 1182 the sons again shook the empire in civil war against each other. Henry, deeming it politic to hold a great Christmas Court to reaffirm the prestige of the Angevins and give the impression of concord among them, chose the city of Caen in Normandy. A thousand knights attended, and it was the most resplendent occasion of the twelfth century.[33] In the absence of Eleanor, Queen Marguerite, wife to Henry the Young King, presided. Contrary to Henry's hopes for reconciliation, there arose a deadly quarrel between Richard and Henry the Young King, which developed into nothing less than a fratricidal war for the succession to the English throne. In June, 1183, Henry received a message that his eldest son was dangerously ill of fever in Limoges, and, repenting of the sin of Absalom, wanted to see his father and be forgiven. Henry, fearing treachery, for his sons had often attempted to kill him, on the advice of his counsellors sent his ring instead as a token. The news of his son's death on June 11, 1183 was a blow from which he never recovered.

The Young King's untimely death at the age of twenty-eight drastically altered the complex dynastic schemes which

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33. Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, p. 264.

had been set up at Montmirail in 1169. Henry was now fifty. Despising the logical claimant for the throne, Richard, as the tool of Eleanor, his election fell upon sixteen-year-old John, who emerged as the new favorite. He summoned his remaining three eaglets to Angiers to receive their portions.[34]

Such an upheaval in the dispositions of the Angevin empire could not ignore Eleanor of Aquitaine, and she emerged as Richard's champion. Brought out of durance for the Christmas Court at Windsor,1184, at the age of sixty-two, she refused her consent to the endowment of John, and the rectitude of her feudal decisions won her the support not only of her elder sons but of Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury and all of Henry's own barons. All Henry could do at this time was to force Richard to cede Eleanor's lands back to her, thus reducing the power of his eldest son.

In 1185 Geoffrey, the handsomest member of the family and conceded to have the best mind, was thrown from his horse and trampled to death in a tournament in Paris. The news of his death reached the queen at Winchester and filled her with deep grief, for she had loved Geoffrey next to Richard. To Pope Alexander she wrote, "The Young King and the Duke of Brittany both sleep in dust while their wretched mother is compelled to live on, tortured by the irremediable recollections of the past."[35]

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34. It is at this point in history that the fictitious action of The Lion in Winter, the Christmas Court at Chinon, takes place.

35. Costain, Conquering Family, p. 156.

In 1187 Richard again revolted against his father, joined by Philip of France. He did homage to Philip for all his father's lands at the elm of Gisors in 1188, thus obliterating Henry's hard-won independence from the Capetian overlordship. Henry died at Chinon on July 6, 1189, alone and friendless, literally hounded to death, killed by grief, exhaustion, and the last, mortal blow: the treachery of his favorite son John.

One of Richard's first acts as king was to release his mother from her captivity in Salisbury Tower. She was sixty-eight years old. Amy Kelly remarks:

> For fifteen years of her precious prime she had been restrained from that share in the fashioning of her era to which her feudal fortunes entitled her. Her years of grace had been squandered. Yet she came from her retirement not as one who had set her face against her day, but as one furnished with richer understanding and prepared to meet the issues of the hour. It had been impossible to keep her out of commerce with her world. She had had her occasional traffic with bishops and barons and with emissaries from her sons, with whom she had never lost her authority. Even in the utmost penury she had known the ministrations of chaplains and clerks, of keepers and serving folk. She emerged with no diminution of her energy or insight, but with a political sagacity and prudence that had not characterized her earlier days.[36]

As Richard attempted to cross the channel to claim his crown, Eleanor assumed the regency. She was a good and merciful queen, and one of her charitable acts was to release the thousands of poachers languishing in prison under the Norman game laws. She revoked cruel laws that punished

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36. Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, p. 315.

minor offenses with death; she standardized the English system of weights and measures, and stabilized the coinage of England, creating a standard monetary system for the empire. This and other measures of statesmanship of the queen regent were timely, practical, and extremely popular. She did not neglect to prepare a magnificent coronation for Richard. She installed her old rival, Alais Capet, in the role she had so long played herself: the prisoner of Salisbury Tower. This unfortunate woman, now thirty-two years old, was repudiated by Richard, who refused to marry her on the grounds that she had borne a son to his father (of which there is no record). Her brother, Philip Augustus, finally married her to a poor knight, William of Ponthieu, and she died in disgrace and obscurity.

Richard, though he had fought all his life for it, was not interested in governing England, but in winning glory in the Holy Land. Soon after his coronation he set out for Messina to join forces with Philip for the Third Crusade. In 1191 Eleanor journeyed to Navarre (an incredible feat in those days for a woman of her age) and brought to Naples the young Princess Berengaria. As Costain wrote, "Nothing her golden son could need or desire was too much for the silver-haired woman who had once been the toast and scandal of Europe."[37] Eleanor was interested in securing the succession

37. Costain, Conquering Family, p. 180.

with male heirs from Richard at the earliest opportunity. Berengaria married Richard in Cypress and accompanied him, along with one of Eleanor's daughters, Queen Joanna of Sicily, on crusade. A contemporary chronicler makes these observations on Eleanor's Sicilian journey:

> Queen Eleanor, a matchless woman, beautiful and chaste, powerful and modest, meek and eloquent, which is rarely to be met with in a woman; who was sufficiently advanced in years to have two husbands and two sons crowned kings, still indefatigable for every undertaking, whose power was the admiration of her age, came to Pisa . . . there to await the king's pleasure, together with the King of Navarre's ambassadors and the damsel. Many know what I wish none of us had known. The same queen, in the time of her former husband, went to Jerusalem. Let none speak more thereof; I also know well. Be silent.[38]

Eleanor remained in Italy only four days, returning to England to act as regent during Richard's absence. She successfully countered the manipulations of John to gain the throne, and supervised the collection of ransom for Richard from his captivity in Austria, signing herself, in one of her many letters appealing for help to Celestine III, "Eleanor, by the wrath of God, Queen of England."[39]

Amy Kelly writes of her in this period:

> As the perils grew that threatened the Angevin empire, she rose with a majesty that amazed her contemporaries. . . . Her sagacity, her decisiveness,

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38. Richard of Devizes, Chronicle, in Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, ed. Richard Howlett, Rolls Series 82 (London, 1858-1899), III, 402.

39. Quoted in Foedera, Conventiones, et cujuscunque generis Acta Publica, ed. Thomas Rymer and Robert Sanderson (London, 1704-1735), I, 72.

> her adroitness and dispatch, her vigilance, her multifarious activities, her sudden and wearisome journeyings, were the marvel of her age. Her acts in the crises of Angevin history that confronted her reveal a core of sound policy governed by a prudence and farsighted vision that had not characterized the conduct of her prime. From the time of her release her foremost place among the magnates of the realm was never questioned.[40]

Richard died without heir on April 6, 1199, of an arrow wound received at the siege of Chalus in France. He died in Eleanor's arms. She was now seventy-seven years old.

It is the consensus of historians that John, the last of Eleanor's eaglets, was the worst, the most iniquitous and the most inept king England ever had. He was responsible for the loss of the Angevin holdings in France to Philip Augustus. With his own hands, according to legend, he blinded and murdered Arthur of Brittany, his brother Geoffrey's son and the rightful heir to the throne John had usurped--largely by the aid of Eleanor's support and counsel. His injustices brought about the Magna Carta, which relinquished to feudal barons power and authority which Henry and Eleanor had spent their lives gathering to the throne of England. The one great exploit of his career was the relief of Mirebeau, on August 1, 1202, rescuing his aged mother from the attack of his nephew Arthur, whom he took prisoner.

After the siege of Mirebeau the queen withdrew to her ancestral provinces. As the Angevin empire collapsed around John, the queen died in her sleep, some say in Poitiers, some

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40. Kelly, Eleanor of Aquitaine, p. 367.

say at Chinon. She died on March 6, 1204, at the age of eighty-three. She lies at Fontevrault Abbey, between Henry Fitz-Empress and Richard Coeur-de-Lion.

Eleanor of Aquitaine was one of the greatest queens that ever lived. She has been called the first truly modern woman. She was also a great lady. She was the inspiration of the twelfth century troubadours and poets who created the ideals and conventions of courtesy, chivalry and romantic love which gradually spread through Europe and were the origin of all modern European literature.[41]

"Prudens femina valde, sed instabilis (A very intelligent woman, sprung from a noble race, but unsteady)," wrote Gervase of Canterbury.[42] Eleanor of Aquitaine is one of the most outstanding figures in history, and the passing of eight centuries has not blurred the sharp outlines of her impetuous, indomitable, magnanimous personality. She was a woman who made an art, not a circumstance, of being a queen.

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41. Christopher H. Dawson, Medieval Essays (New York, 1959), p. 191.

42. Gervase of Canterbury, Opera Historica, ed. and trans. William Stubbs (London, 1858-1899), II, 242-243.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTER

Goldman's play is remarkably accurate historically. He simplifies, combining the meeting of Henry and Philip in Angiers in 1183 with the Christmas Court at Windsor in 1184 into a fictitious Royal Court at Chinon in 1183, which brings all the main figures of the story together. His Eleanor is based on all available data, his major source being Amy Kelly's biography, Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Four Kings. He makes good use of the facts of her life, for the character makes many references to her more colorful exploits throughout the play: Her marriage to Louis (I,ii), the Second Crusade (I,iv; II,i), Rosamund Clifford (I,ii; I,iv; II,i), her rivalry with Becket (I,iii; I,iv), her romance with Henry (I,iii), Peter Abelard and the School of Paris (I,v), and her alleged affair with Henry's father, Geoffrey the Fair (I,iv; II,i).[1] All these references are factual. As for her character and her relationships with other characters, they are, in the writer's opinion, intelligent conjectures.

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1. These references and all subsequent quotations from the play are from the Samuel French acting edition of James Goldman, The Lion in Winter (New York, 1966).

Relationship of the Character to the Theme

The play has been criticized for its apparent lack of identifiable theme.[2] Henry Hewes jokingly suggests, "The only point The Lion in Winter seems to make is that history is a game in which the outcome is determined by such a complex clashing of motives that it might as well have been pure accident."[3] But it is essential for the actor embarking upon a role to ascertain the central idea of a play, in order to know what aspects of this idea he, in his capacity as a character, will be called upon to supply to the play as a whole. Therefore some possible central themes are suggested in the following pages.

Anthony Harvey, director of the film version, makes this commentary on the play: "I found it extraordinary in its penetrating observations of loneliness and the failure of human beings to communicate at the most vital moments of their lives.[4]

Another possible theme is the idea that great men and women, however brilliant and magnificent, do not necessarily make good parents. Eleanor, through her dominance and her engulfing, devouring love, has turned Richard into a homosexual; while Henry's favoritism and babying of John has

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2. See supra, pp. 3-5.

3. Henry Hewes, "Broadway Postscript," Saturday Review, March 19, 1966, p. 55.

4. The Lion in Winter, film program, p. 27.

made him into a whimpering, dishonest, cowardly, spoiled brat. The parental neglect and indifference to the middle son, Geoffrey, has created an emotionally stunted, ruthless, scheming monster.

Probably the best answer to the question of "central idea" is that of the dissolution of a great family, the Plantagenets--a family curiously destroyed by love, a potentially constructive force, which with them has become twisted in many various ways. In this light, the function of the character of Eleanor is to challenge and engage Henry, equalling his strength and defying his every move; they are evenly matched, like two stags with antlers locked together. This is the same "love-hate syndrome" which Edward Albee makes use of in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? .[5]

There are many minor themes (indeed a plethora of minor themes: Henry Hewes remarked, "Goldman has talent enough for a dozen plays, all of which are included in The Lion in Winter").[6] Some of these are the generation gap, the corruption of power, the idea of the human chess game with queens, kings, knights and pawns (mentioned in I,iii), and, more importantly, the winter of love, abiding and indestructible, between two great personalities.

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5. In the publicity and advertising for the film version of The Lion in Winter, the movie was amusingly referred to as "A Medieval Virginia Woolf".

6. Henry Hewes, "Broadway Postscript," p. 55.

Whatever Goldman meant to be his central point, all of the preceding themes are to be found in his play. The actress playing Eleanor has the responsibility of presenting, through the action, all these ideas to the audience, as she is central to each one. In conclusion, perhaps the best words on this subject are Katherine Hepburn's:

> For all her political manipulation and power struggles, Eleanor loved Henry. I think a lot of the narrative touches on something that everyone in the world has been through--the desperation that two people experience when they try to get together satisfactorily. It starts with a dream and no matter how impossible the circumstances become, the dream remains. It's something which can't be described because mere words would destroy it.[7]

Interpretation of the Role

"On the stage, truth is what the actor truly believes."[8]

The instruments of the actress are her voice and body. The vocal and physical requirements (leaving for a moment the even more demanding mental and emotional requirements) of a role of the length, depth, variety and scope of Eleanor of Aquitaine, are staggering, surprising as it may seem to the layman, who thinks acting or any other art is simply fortuitous accidental effect. A performance, like any work of art, must be planned, and a role of this stature must be attacked with all the strategy of a military campaign.

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7. The Lion in Winter, film program, p. 25.

8. Constantin Stanislavski, quoted in Charles McGaw, Acting Is Believing (New York, 1955), frontispiece.

Taking first the problem of the vocal requirement, the writer wishes to stress the importance of full range and variety. The basic instrument must be rich and full and free from any trace of regional dialect. Early in the rehearsal period and through the run of the play, the writer found it useful to vocalize with scales and sonnets: the voice can be hurt trying to reach for an effect without first being warmed up, just as the body can. This is standard procedure.

Vocal characterization, under the limitations mentioned above (the necessity of the greatest possible variety), involves age and quality of vocal production. The dialogue is not poetry, but it is highly stylized and epigrammatic. The arch, lilting delivery used for her many delicious quips, e.g., "Love, in a world where carpenters get resurrected, anything is possible" (I,iv), contrasts with her moments of majesty and anger: "Did your father sleep with me or didn't he?" (II,i). In moments of fury Eleanor roars like a lioness. Her wit is often venomous: "I never cease to marvel at the quickness of your mind" (I,iv), and the feline, honey-dripping tones used here must contrast with the tremulous, deep-timbered sound that comes from her when she is genuinely hurt: "I've lived without it this long--I'll endure" (II,iii). The above examples give a small idea of the range of the role.

The physical representation of Eleanor is a challenge to a young actress. Goldman's description of her is as follows: "Eleanor of Aquitaine is 61 and looks nothing like it. She is a truly handsome woman of great temperament, authority and presence. She has been a queen of international importance for 46 years and you know it." One of the problems posed here is Eleanor's age. The writer is reminded of a director's criticism she once received in the role of Madame Ranevskaya in The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov: "It is impossible. You are a young actress trying to look old, but Ranevskaya is an old woman trying to be young." Eleanor's movement must be steady and aged, but still lithe and graceful, energetic and forceful. She is a magnificent lioness of a woman. Her bearing must be utterly regal, her pace majestic, her gestures elegant (but they must be uncontrived). Eleanor is credited with the invention of the long, floor-length medieval sleeves; she was the first woman to wear them.[9] The writer was fortunate to be given these sleeves to work with in the rehearsal period and on the finished costume, which also had a small train. These sleeves played a large part in the creation of characteristic gestures for Eleanor. The deep curtsey, with crossed knees and bowed head, repeated twice in the first scene, added a touch of historical authenticity, and,

9. Mila Contini, Fashion (New York, 1967), pp. 71-73.

hopefully, also demonstrated Eleanor's grace and her ease in courtly ritual.

Any note of nervousness or shyness betrayed in the movement is completely wrong for the character.

Further physical characterization involved Eleanor's vanity and pride. The writer used heavily jeweled hands and a psychological gesture[10] of toying with a large signet ring in moments of deep thought or intrigue. She is very aware of a sagging jawline, and hides it by wearing a veil under her chin, fastened by a jeweled band around her brows at all times, with the exception of the intimate scene in her bedroom (I,v), where she literally "lets her hair down."

In an attempt to demonstrate the character's aggressive, unretiring nature, the writer represented these qualities by forcefully laying her hands on furniture, running her ring-decked fingers over the backs of chairs, and grasping the actors playing her sons firmly by the shoulders at various moments. Eleanor, as portrayed by the writer, often presses her body against Richard when she wants her way; on the other hand, she chucks Henry behind the ears, an affectionate, asexual gesture. In short, her dominance expresses itself in a great deal of physical contact.

One additional psychological gesture was used by the writer: lifting the proud head and regally arching the neck and back in moments of defiance.

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10. See Michael Chekhov, To the Actor (New York, 1953), p. 59.

Commenting on the style of the play, Goldman wrote, "The play, finally, contains anachronisms in speech, habit, custom and so on. Those the author is aware of--the way, for instance, Christmas is celebrated--are deliberate and not intended to outrage the historical aspects of the script."[11] Thus the style of the play is not specifically one thing or another; it becomes a paradox for the actor. It is similar to Shaw's historical comedies, such as Caesar and Cleopatra, and it is very enjoyable to play. The actress must keep in mind that the character is only a "toy" medieval person, and she must be able to step out of the reality of the situation for such anachronistic wise-cracks as "What family doesn't have its ups and downs?" (II,i) or "It's 1183 and we're barbarians" (I,v). This wry hindsight and others like it must not be allowed to become too jarring. This is a matter of control of the material, timing, and experience in handling an audience.

The style of the play is indisputably comedy, although it contains scenes for Henry and Eleanor of deep feeling and tragic emotion. Again quoting Goldman:

> I was researching material on the twelfth century for material on Robin Hood when I discovered the Royal Family--Henry II, his wife and sons--entirely by accident. I read that Henry kept Eleanor . . . locked up for sixteen years. . . . Then I discovered

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11. James Goldman, "Prefatory Note," The Lion in Winter (acting edition), p. 4.

> that Henry's mistress was, for 22 years, the fiancee of Richard. . . . But when on top of that Henry repeatedly tried to give the girl to John, his youngest son, it almost looked like farce. I didn't discover until later that it was Comedy. Comedy, as far as I'm concerned, is just as particular a form as Tragedy. From Tragedy emerges something larger and more terrible than tears; from Comedy comes something deeper and more penetrating than a belly laugh.[12]

Thus the acting style required by the play is all-inclusive. For the character of Eleanor, scenes of slick comedy, full of quips, puns, witticisms and bon mots, alternate with the tense, psychological confrontation between two unalterably opposing wills.

The mental and emotional make-up with which the playwright has endowed Eleanor is one he deduced from history: "a brilliant, noble woman, but unstable," wrote one of the twelfth century chroniclers.[13] She is a clever, witty woman, but emotionally volatile. A master of intrigue and political manipulation, she is a worthy opponent and a match for Henry in every manoeuver. Searching for the best word to embody the essence of her spirit, some that occur to the writer are "courageous," "indomitable," "great-of-heart." The playwright suggests that some of the fires of her youth have gone out: her sexuality and impetuosity. She remains a spirited, tempestuous, and extremely jealous woman. To

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12. The Lion in Winter, film program, p. 27.

13. Gervase, Opera Historica, pp. 242-243.

justify the extreme to which she goes to achieve her ends, and the eagerness and fierceness of her attack, it is essential that the actress, on the first entrance, convey the feeling of a stored-up energy, excitement, and tension resulting from her years in prison. She has waited a long, weary and frustrating time for this chance to take Henry on in battle again. One additional element in her character is best phrased by the playwright in his description of her first entrance: "Finally, she is that most unusual thing: a genuinely feminine woman thoroughly capable of holding her own in a man's world."

Eleanor's relationships with the other characters in the play are as follows:

1. Richard. Eleanor's "smother-love" of him has turned him into a pervert. He is her favorite, and she wants the throne for him, but not as much as she simply wants to thwart Henry's wishes in the matter. She consoles herself for Henry's turning to Rosamund Clifford by substituting Richard for Henry in her affections. She uses Richard as a weapon against his father, and although she professes to love him more than Henry (I,iii), she ruthlessly uses his perversion to advance her schemes against Henry (I,v), and she does not hesitate to bargain away the Aquitaine, to Richard's disadvantage, for the mere pleasure of seeing Henry give up Alais (I,iv). Richard is merely her pawn.

2. Geoffrey. Geoffrey is very like his mother; he has inherited her trait of silent, inscrutable observation, and her cunning and vast intelligence. Eleanor at times almost detests him, but she feels a sense of kinship and sameness with him. She knows better than to trust him.

3. John. Eleanor's attitude toward John changes from one of contempt to remorse after his breakdown in I,iii. She despises him for his stupidity and greed, and for being the tool of Henry. She has resented him ever since her miserable pregnancy while Henry dallied with Rosamund Clifford, but she is suddenly filled with maternal feeling at seeing his weakness and unhappiness. In all, the writer feels she regrets her neglect of John, but considers him a lost cause.

4. Philip. Eleanor is intrigued by Philip; and her remark, "I might have been your mother" (I,ii) has a nostalgic feeling and is almost sentimental. Beyond this, he is merely the object of her speculation: "How much can he be tricked of? How can he be used to advance my plans?"

5. Alais. Eleanor loves Alais like a daughter, and finds it ironic that the daughter is put in the position of rival and mistress. Nevertheless she is violently jealous. Her technique of dealing with the "Alais situation" is to be affectionate, maternal, and to ignore the girl's relation with Henry. This is a superb put-down, and this way Eleanor

puts Alais back in her place, at least in public. In short, the writer feels that Eleanor views Alais, the king's last fling, with sardonic humor and sorrow.

6. Henry. The nature of her relationship with Henry is a vast subject and is partially dealt with in other chapters. The writer feels that Eleanor's love of Henry is deep and abiding. It is the nature of these two warring personalities to hurt each other in their rough and savage play, "meaning no harm," as Kurt Weill wrote in a song about lovers who fought. They also have tremendous intellectual respect for each other. Embittered by his personal rejection of her and thwarted in her political ambitions, like a spoiled child she wants to "get even" with Henry. They are two affectionate adversaries whose lives are permanently and irrevocably intertwined.

The superobjective of the character, the spine, or the single unifying goal which motivates all her actions,[14] is clearly stated in II,iii: she wants Henry back. He is the only thing she has ever loved. The action of the play for her is the realization of her irrevocable loss of him. According to history, they never saw each other again after this meeting in 1183. Thus the motion of the play is tragic for Eleanor: the loss of what she loves through error in judgement.

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14. See Constantin Stanislavski, An Actor Prepares (Moscow, 1931), p. 256.

All Eleanor's actions in the play converge to carry out this superobjective: to get Henry back. She seems to be working at cross-purposes with herself in her ambition for Richard, but human nature is contradictory. She thinks she loves Richard, but she is only trying to hurt Henry, an illogical, contrary and perverse way of trying to make him love her again. Playwright Goldman explains this seeming contradiction in these words: "Every character has a double answer to what he wants. The truth often escapes the great leaders, but, being leaders, they have to behave as if they grasped it at all times."[15]

The personal interpretation of the writer in the creation of the role was in part forced by the physical limitations of a younger woman: this Eleanor is slighter, more emotional, edgy, and quick-tempered than what seems to have been the usual interpretation. She is less massive and grand, less sharp and cruel: an old Cleopatra rather than a Lady Macbeth. She is also, the writer feels, more sympathetic.

The metaphor chosen was, obviously, the old lioness. The animal imagery of the play--Eleanor often calls her children "My lambs" and Henry, "My wooly sheep dog"--is symbolic in this light. The characters try to devour one another ("Eat each other up for all I care," says Alais at one point) and no one is sure which are the lambs and which

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15. The Lion in Winter, film program, p. 27.

are the lions. Eleanor is an extremely feline personality, but not in a small or demeaning sense. She is magnificent. The love scenes between her and Henry are not sexual, but like two old lions, sitting in the sun, licking each other's faces.

CHAPTER 4

CREATION OF THE ROLE

Rehearsal Log

First Rehearsal--June 16

Director Peter R. Marroney spoke to the cast about the play and explained to everyone what was involved in a thesis production. There was a discussion of style and character. His first remarks to me were to beware of letting the age of the character mislead me into giving a "stodgy" performance. Eleanor must be vivacious and vital; her movement is not stiff but agile, quick and graceful. She has great composure and cunning, like Lady Macbeth. Every character in the play, the Director told us, is a master of intrigue.

Despite the modern tone and certain anachronisms in the text, we will strive for a medieval look and atmosphere. Speech will be standard stage English.

As we read through the play I discovered much alliteration, assonance, and consonance in my speeches, besides the obvious witticisms and happy turns of phrase apparent at first reading.

I have been thinking about vocal characterization. I must avoid sounding like Katherine Hepburn, for obvious

reasons: no one can do Hepburn as well as Hepburn herself. Pamela Brown, for her arch, dry quality, and Mary MacMurtrie (my first acting teacher) for her regality, and certain wonderful humorous inflections, are my models at this point. Eleanor's voice must be distinctive, and distinct from my own, but must use as much of my natural range as possible to avoid monotony in this very lengthy part.

Second Rehearsal--June 17

We blocked Act I, scenes i through iv. I discovered great silences of Eleanor's during crucial scenes between Henry and his sons and Henry and Philip. In moments of violent confrontation, she maintains a cunning and statue-like stillness. Geoffrey inherits this trait of hers.

I feel the blocking is excellent and I am delighted with the cast.

I find the problems of the role are some of the ones I had anticipated: vocal monotony must be avoided after finding the character's special voice. Also, one heavy, vicious scene follows another in rapid succession, which I fear will produce an unpleasant, heavy-handed impression, or what E. Martin Browne, director of T. S. Eliot's plays, called "mental indigestion" in the audience. I must strive for warmth, for the comedy, charm, brilliance and wit of the role; otherwise the play can seem talky, nasty and exhausting.

My working superobjective is "I want Henry back" (II,iii). I think Eleanor's betrayal of Richard in I,iv, by handing over the Aquitaine just to take Alais from Henry (and for her freedom) precludes any supposition that she is working for Richard's benefit. Just as Richard himself says in I,iii, he is a son used for vengeance against her father. She is working for herself. She still loves Henry. As in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, it sometimes happens that when a loving relationship is exhausted, the couple can only communicate through blows, the only things left after the power of kisses has worn away through the years. Of course, Eleanor's way of "getting Henry back" is devious, prideful, round-about, and self-defeating.

Third Rehearsal--June 18

We blocked Act I, scenes v and vi, and Act II today. I was not up to the other actors, particularly Henry.[1] My problems are my usual ones: movement, gestures, and authority.

I feel the final exit is awkward.

I have a reasonably clear idea of what I want the character to be like at this point. Some questions are still unresolved, but I rely on the coming weeks of

1. It gives me pleasure to designate both the actor, Henry Kendrick, and the character, Henry Fitz-Empress, as simply "Henry". I feel it is healthful not to divide the two in my mind.

rehearsal to open these mysteries. Some of the decisions must be made in consultation with the other actors, particularly Henry, with whom I play most of my scenes.

The Director feels that in all the scenes with Henry, the major underlying element must be the deep, unexhibited love between Henry and Eleanor. I agree with him fully.

Fourth Rehearsal--June 19

We reviewed the blocking of Act I, with few problems. As always, some of the beginning actors were unable to recall their blocking, causing a few traffic jams. After a shaky start, it was a good rehearsal. First entrance is always my downfall, and I can feel it happening to the first scene in this show. Perhaps there is a specific offstage preparation I can use.

My relationship with John feels very phony. Eleanor states in I,iv, that she hated John and resented her pregnancy. While she was carrying him, Henry was dallying with Rosamund Clifford. But her scenes with John in I,iii, and I,v, seem to be full of maternal feeling. There are several unfinished lines beginning "Oh, John, John . . . " Perhaps she is trying to say "I love you," but is unable to get it out. I think the appropriate subtext is heartfelt remorse at having let John become the pitiful weakling that Henry has made of him. I think Eleanor's feelings are genuinely hurt when John draws away from her caress when she tries to

thank him for the wine in the dungeon scene, II,iii. This is her moment of bleakest loneliness in the play. She says, "I've done without it this long. I'll endure."

The Director spoke today about my movement, saying I needed to vary the tempo of my crosses, particularly in the holly-hanging scene, I,ii. My slow, shuffling pace, he said, may have been the cause of some of the critics calling me "stiff" three years ago as Desdemona in Othello. This is very useful information, as was his remark to another actor that one should always stop short to punctuate the end of a line, not amble on a few more steps, which I realized I invariably do.

Fifth Rehearsal--June 20

We reviewed the Act II blocking, and went over scenes ii, iii, and iv of Act I for the benefit of the actor playing Richard, who was absent yesterday.

The Director commented that he was not getting from me the sense of a previous long domestic life with Henry. This is essential, he pointed out, for the audience's enjoyment of the repartee between the two. The audience waits with lively anticipation for the fight scenes between them, which must be full-fledged and exciting jousting tournaments, particularly I,ii, and II,i, in which one is dominant for a few lines until he is put down by the other and so on in a veritable wrestling match, which is sometimes

amiable, sometimes vicious, but always indicative of their complete and life-long engagement with each other. I must be more familiar with Henry, less guarded. It also occurred to me that I ought to make more of my first sight of him in I,ii.

The scene with John felt better today. I played it with full feeling toward him, quite openly, as though apologizing for my very nasty and sarcastic remarks, "You're always so clean and neat" (I,ii), and "I never cease to marvel at the quickness of your mind" (I,iv). I also realized she is never unkind or cruel to him again after this scene.

It came to me today that Eleanor must always lose, and Henry must always win, because Henry has a genuine objective and plan: to establish a dynasty and keep the empire together. Eleanor has no goal. Her whole person is concentrated on "scoring" against Henry. I think the line "I care because you care so much" (I,ii) is a true one. If she succeeds in putting Richard on the throne, she has won nothing for herself, she has simply kept Henry from having his way. As Henry says, "What's the Aquitaine to Eleanor? It's not a province, it's a way to torture me" (I,iv).

I notice this is true of myself, when I play games like chess, bridge, or monopoly. I have no strategy or overall plan, I simply make flashy, dangerous moves, and I

usually lose. I like to wreck other people's plans. Everything is on a personal level. I wonder if this is a universal difference between masculine and feminine psychology. In any case, Goldman is an excellent student of human nature.

Sixth Rehearsal--June 21

I did Act I without a script today, and was pleased with my work. Things always begin to take some semblance of shape for me as soon as I commit the dialogue to memory. It was a long and detailed rehearsal, with much repetition. I had a few minor blocking changes.

The Director and I had a disagreement on the interpretation of Eleanor's reaction to the kiss between Henry and Alais at the end of I,iv. I had thought that Eleanor was momentarily defeated by the collapse of her plan to marry Alais to Richard. She asks Henry to kiss Alais out of sheer masochism, to torment herself further, and show herself she can stand anything. The Director felt that she should still be dominant, showing Henry that she does not care whether he has a young mistress or not. I felt that this was merely her pose. We asked the actor playing Henry his opinion, and he made the intelligent comment that he thought Eleanor taunted Henry into kissing Alais, but that "it gets away from her." I will try playing the scene higher and more defiantly.

Henry's remark interested me, and I am beginning to think this is a phenomenon characteristic of their relationship. They start out bantering and teasing, and before they know it, the teasing has turned vicious and cruel, the conversation veers out of control and ends in hate. This often happens to me in private life.

I must be more warm and familiar with my sons on first entrance.

Seventh Rehearsal--June 23

We reviewed Act I, scenes v and vi, and Act II today. Much progress was made, particularly on the great scene between Henry and Eleanor, II,i, which had been lagging, but today surpassed the level reached at auditions, which was very exciting. The key to the scene seems to be the comedy of it. The Director pointed out that one of the pitfalls of the role of Eleanor was the temptation to play tragedy. I had thought so too when I first read the script, but have allowed myself to forget it.

I learned the song in II,i, from the actress playing Alais, and was able to achieve some feeling and rapport in the scene. I became aware of the beautiful ironic contrast Goldman has set up between the song and the spoken interjections: "'The . . . wine will keep you warm'--Don't shiver, child," and "'There's . . . cheer and comfort here'--Is that you crying?"

I did some work on Eleanor's anti-war speech in I,v. The Director thought I was sounding too young in it. I feel Eleanor is, as she says, "so sick of all of you," sick of the family's continual bickering, back-biting, and back-stabbing, and it is an eloquent plea for peace and love. It is heartfelt. The playwright undercuts these noble sentiments magnificently, as a moment later her blood-thirstiness returns as her hopes revive at the discovery of John's treason. The Director felt my delivery was too desperate, and we agreed that I should make another transition at "We have so much to love each other for," into a more controlled, dominant feeling. The speech is really strategic to the whole characterization. It is the voice of civilization.

Henry and I rehearsed three of our four scenes privately later this evening, and reached concord on many minor points of interpretation. This excellent actor is a great support to me. He makes things so much easier.

Eighth Rehearsal--June 24

We did a run-through of Act I today. All scenes are growing and becoming more solid. I felt particularly good about the monologue and the end of I,v, and particularly bad about the entrance. I must do some prescribed exercises before each rehearsal, not during the first scene.

The Director, fortunately for me, is one of those rare men who can instinctively put his finger on the missing

elements of a scene or portrayal. He has an utter grasp of the overall view of a play. Today he felt my first scene with Henry (I,ii) needed more of a connubial feeling. I argued that she had not seen Henry for a year, had not lived with him for ten years, but the fact is that there is a pure theatrical need for warmth in the scene, to set up what follows, and the Director was aware of this.

Ninth Rehearsal--June 25

We ran ActI, scenes i and iii, and Act II today, and it was exhausting. My first scene is still awkward, but II,i, came up even further. The last scene, II,iii, had some drama for the first time. I finally have my lines.

The Director and I had a disagreement about Eleanor's complete breakdown, "I want to die," repeated four times. He felt I sounded too young and that I should be more composed and in control. This seems to be the general pattern of our arguments about the role. I believe she must be utterly down at the moment when she realizes and says, "I've lost you," and it is essential to have this despair in contrast to the resurgence of her indomitable spirit when she smiles at Henry's joke, "You will, you know. Wait long enough and it'll happen." So much happens emotionally in these few lines. I know how I want to play it and I think it is a stunning piece of writing. It could be the most moving moment in the play. There is such a tremendous

transition into comedy and magnanimous, resilient love. One admires them both, Henry and Eleanor, for the recovery they make out of blackest hopelessness.

I was very tired at the end of rehearsal, and I must wait to get some proportion and perspective on today's work. I feel frustrated and unhappy.

Tenth Rehearsal--June 26

The Director remarked today that Henry was a naturalistic actor and I was a classical actress, and we both held the stage in different ways, with different techniques. He felt he could not tell yet if things would balance out, but he thought it was right for Eleanor to be "in the grand manner". I don't know what to make of these observations--perhaps Henry's being the correct age makes him look more natural. I am not really physically equipped for my role.

I am having some difficulty with the dagger scene, II,iii. I am very awkward with props; everything has to be set exactly before I feel at ease. Eleanor's wrist-slashing must be bigger, more theatrical, and I tend to minimize it, if such a thing is possible. The Director and I agreed there must be some indication that Eleanor's show-down with Richard is a repeated scene between them, that she manipulates his feelings to get the Aquitaine back. His obstinacy forces her to go to the extreme of cutting her wrist. Of course, she gives a good scene, and the moment must be

played very high. The actor playing Richard was absent today, but his understudy, assistant director Tim Gargiulo, is a pleasure to work with, and he has a good understanding of this character's function in the play.

Henry and I had applause from the crew for our exits today: for the "All my sons" exit, the jewel scene, and for our joint exit at the end of the show.

Eleventh Rehearsal--June 27

We had a run-through in Studio B today and the rehearsal-hall atmosphere produced interesting results. We had a little fun with the show.

The role is exhausting, and I am always worn out for the final scene, II,iii. An unnerving thing has happened with it once or twice. We're all playing with much intensity, and the scene has such a long crisis, that it struck some of the people in the house as funny. The scene needs work, as does the scene with Alais, which has been slipping. The last scene with Henry still is not right.

Twelfth Rehearsal--June 28

I invited my husband and father to rehearsal today, and tried to "perform" the role, as much as I am capable at this point. There were some good moments. Tears came at the end of the dungeon scene. (This is no guarantee that the acting is good, however.) But I felt a number of blank spaces in my performance. The first scene (I,ii), is like

a long empty desert to cross. I must work out the offstage imagery which precedes the scene.

My husband, William Prosser, who is a director, advised me to work for more consistency, particularly in age, and not to hunch my shoulders when I'm silently observing and concentrating on the action. He also said to beware of going into "set pieces," or arias, such as the peace speech, I,v. This is a problem, as the writing is quite rhetorical here. He agreed with the Director that in my more emotional scenes I become a different kind of character, and that my dry, acerbic scenes were producing the best moments. I think the role requires both kinds of acting. It is a true tour de force. I must work for consistency, now that the run-throughs have started.

Thirteenth Rehearsal--June 30

I did not feel like rehearsing today, although I tried to overcome the feeling as one I could not afford. The day was wasted as far as emotional development of the character is concerned. All my responses were technical repetitions, coming, as someone once said, "out of the vast eternity of nothingness". Everything was hollow, false, and empty. This was a setback and a very frightening experience.

There was some advance in physical characterization, however. I rehearsed in an old costume of mine from Henry IV, Part I when I played Lady Percy in 1966. It has

long trailing medieval sleeves, for which Eleanor is reputed to have started the fashion. Instead of the encumbrance I expected them to be, they were a great help in physically suggesting the character. They even suggested gestures to me. I also wore a funny little pink hat with a chin veil to substitute for the wimple I will wear, to give me the feeling of having something wrapped around my jaw. I also worked with a large, lion-head ring on my right forefinger. I am thinking of letting Eleanor toy with her signet ring in moments of concentration or intrigue as a psychological gesture, but it may look too nervous.

I had a private conference with the Director before the rehearsal today, and at his suggestion I am changing my metaphor from an old female eagle to an aging lioness. It may be more productive and more stimulative to my imagination and it obviously fits better with the imagery of the play. I am to think toward a more feline mind and movement.

I must also work on my movement, which is still a little stiff. I was afraid of losing the age of the character if I played her any more spry, but was reassured on this point.

Fourteenth Rehearsal--July 1

We spent about two hours having pictures taken for the newspapers and were unable to go through the last scene. I felt my work was skeletal--I merely went through the forms

of what had been set up in earlier rehearsals. I must get out of this slump.

The good scenes were down and the bad scenes were up for a change. II,i was not what it has been; it can't be done without tremendous energy. Also, it is becoming too set and rigid. But the first scene, I,ii, felt better and more relaxed today for the first time, as did the dagger scene (I,iii) with Richard. At last I am having an exchange of communication with him. The end of the scene must be more ecstatic, as Eleanor engulfs her prodigal son, and things are "back the way they were" (I,iii).

Eleanor is becoming a more solid and crystallized person in my mind. Now that the characterization is reasonably set, the Director again aroused my fears of monotony, saying today that the moments of brilliance were gone. The tempo is too slow.

He is still unsatisfied with the peace speech (I,v). It must be more commanding.

Fifteenth Rehearsal--July 2

We went carefully over Act I today, omitting the last two scenes of Act II. I had a few minor blocking changes, which were improvements.

Creativity is at a standstill.

Sixteenth Rehearsal--July 3

There seems to be an irreparable schism of inter-

pretation between the Director and me. I can only do what I think is right.

Seventeenth Rehearsal--July 4

We had our first technical run-through today and it was surprisingly smooth, with almost no stops. I was much stronger today, with energy to get me through the end of the play and to spare. It is simply a question of eating and sleeping properly. The Director still feels I am too weak, soft, and delicate, more like Guinevere than Eleanor.

I am still disagreeing with some of the criticism that is given me, and it is to be expected that my conception should become more firm and my opinions more rigid as we get closer to performance. It was suggested that my lullaby scene with Alais be played with less maternal feeling, with more of an atmosphere of distance and frustration as the roles of wife and mistress intrude on the relationship of mother and daughter. I feel that the closeness is essential. It is the one tiny, isolated scene of warmth and peace in the play, and it only lasts for a moment before the viciousness begins again. Eleanor and Alais want to go back to the loving, simple relationship they had before circumstance drove them apart. This is a recurring sentiment of Eleanor's: "I want us back the way we were," (I,iii) she says to Richard; also "I wanted Henry back" (II,iii), and "How, from where we started, did we

ever reach this Christmas?" (II,i).

The interpretation must be viable, or I cannot give a good performance.

Eighteenth Rehearsal--July 5

Our first dress rehearsal was excellent. Things went very smoothly, and there was only one stop, for sound.

My own work is much improved. I have been rethinking the characterization, and I tried today to make her stronger. II,i was especially improved. I was a little dissatisfied with the dagger scene (I,iii). It can still be better. The line, "Remember how I taught you numbers and the lute and poetry?" is dangerously close to being a comic non sequitur, and must be handled very carefully.

I find the costume a great help in visual characterization, and, working with it today for the first time, I experienced no difficulty.

It is such a relief to be on the right track again.

Nineteenth Rehearsal--July 6

Today was second dress rehearsal with make-up. At the Director's suggestion Channing Smith, who does the make-up, is going to copy the white circles Rosemary Harris put around her eyes, as the outstanding mark of age. This is what prison life has done to her. I am completely satisfied with the aid I have been given by costume and

make-up in the visual representation of Eleanor.

I am still on my upward swing from last week's slump and depression, but today was a day for dropped lines and props. In the dungeon scene Richard pulled back the cloth on the tray and accidentally flipped one of the daggers (extremely sharp Nazi dress swords) high into the air. I have already been stabbed once.

There were about ten new people in the house, and the laugh-reactions were satisfactory.

The actor playing Richard and I rehearsed the dagger scene (I,iii) privately, and it is somewhat improved. The Director cautioned us to be careful not to slice ourselves up in the heat of the scene! The daggers are quite dangerous, and there is a lot of fast and furious business with them.

Twentieth Rehearsal--July 7

It was another excellent rehearsal for me. I am still improving in the part. I discovered many new things today: nuances, mood, flow, gestures, glances, and so on; it means I have acquired the self-confidence which is an essential prerequisite of the inner creative state.

The Director and I have reached complete accord on interpretation, and his critique is perceptive and extremely useful. An interesting suggestion he gave today was to play the scene with Alais (II,i) as if I had poisoned Rosamund.

"Quit trying to be so innocent--you protest too much," he said. I will try this tomorrow.

Twenty-first Rehearsal--July 8

We had an audience of about forty friends and guests of the cast today, and their responses were most informative. I have always known the play was a comedy, and was expecting some difficulty in leading the audience in the quick shifts from mood to mood, as the changes are extremely rapid, sometimes going from comedy to tragedy in the space of a line. But the actual laughs still came as a surprise to me. I experienced a recurrence of some of the difficulty of the first rehearsals: the scene with John (I,iii) again felt awkward and devoid of feeling. My lines, "O, John", "Poor child", and "O Johnny, Johnny . . . " are painful to my own ears.

I tried the Director's idea of playing the scene with Alais as if I had really poisoned Rosamund. It worked beautifully, and is very funny.

I feel ready for the opening. There is much that I meant to do but have not: I planned for instance to divide the script into beats, or acting units, and to work more with Henry privately, but it is too late for that now. One is never really finished with a role, no matter how long one rehearses.

Evaluation of Performances

Opening Night--July 9

We played to a large and unusually responsive and intelligent audience. After a shaky start, Henry and I were in control. I felt the cast played beautifully as an ensemble. We had applause on three or four of the quips, and the credit for this is due to all the actors working and reacting onstage, not just the speaker. It was very hot onstage with the body heat of a full house of people, and by the end of the show I was dripping, dizzy, faint, and exhausted.

Every opening has its catastrophe, and an appalling thing happened in the second act. The sole of one of my shoes flapped loose as I was running upstairs for the warn of Act II. The stage manager tried to cut it off with a pair of scissors, but it was too thick, and in the meantime the curtain went up. In a moment of panic, I decided the best thing to do was to take both shoes off, and I barely got them unlaced and torn off in time to make my entrance a few seconds late. It was only then that I realized I had two big holes in my tights and my great toes were sticking out. It is not that I think any of the audience noticed it; it is that I was nervous, flustered and distracted by it. I dropped about four lines, and, in my opinion II,i, usually the best scene in the show, was marred.

Yesterday I had made the fatal mistake of listening to a tape recording of the final dress rehearsal, and was surprised and concerned to discover mine was the softest, lightest, and weakest voice in the show. I consciously tried to be louder, clearer and heavier tonight. The Director came backstage at intermission and advised me to tone down a bit, that I was "belting" some lines too much, and was too loud. It shows how a recording can mislead one.

After the show, I felt my usual depression and dissatisfaction. It is one of the hazards of the profession to be neurotic, insecure, and miserable, especially after opening night.

Second Night--July 10

The house was packed tonight, and there were a number of people seated in the aisles. The heat was stifling, and the show suffered from sloppiness, on everyone's part. The actor playing Richard gave me a number of wrong lines, late cues, and late moves to the wrong places in I,iii. I was filled with such irritation and tension that I could hardly keep a civil tone, even onstage. We will rehearse the scene tomorrow.

II,i, was better than last night. The audience was quiet and attentive, giving us few laughs; Henry and I both adjusted by playing the scene more furiously, and in a more deadly manner. I felt the effect was powerful, but will try

tomorrow night to return to the lighter style in which we had rehearsed the scene. It should contain moments of both styles. The uneven-ness of the performance was very straining. I wept through the last scene from nervous tension.

Third Night--July 11

After a rather lackluster beginning, we gave a smooth, even, and technically exact performance. I was a little off my stride at first, because late arrival prevented me from warming up my voice as usual. Henry came to my rescue however, and the wedding scene (I,iv) and the bedroom scene (II,i) were better than before. II,i was somewhat improved, but it will never be what it could.

I felt a little hostility from some of the audience; perhaps my first scene (I,ii) is too arch, dry, and nasty. Although Eleanor squelches all three sons within a minute of her entrance, I must not forget that the audience must be won first; then they will enjoy my wit, not resent it. It is essential to have them on my side. I felt they were all on Henry's side this evening. I must remember charm and warmth on the first entrance. It seems I have not yet conquered my problem with the first entrance of a performance.

We had forty people seated in the aisles.

Fourth Night--July 12

I will remember tonight as one of the great events of my life. We played to a packed house, plus sixty extra people seated in the aisles. The Director had spoken to me earlier about pushing too hard, or straining for effect, so I tried to start out "slow and easy". Somehow my timing was off on the first entrance, and it took me the first two scenes to gain control of the audience. Such a large mass of people has a slower reaction-time; in addition, they were an immature, slow audience that enjoyed the cheap effects. They were hard to manage. Some scenes were ruined by silly laughter. Of course, there are no bad audiences, only bad actors, as the old saying has it, and one must resist playing to their level.

The second act was everything I could have wished. II,i was stopped three times by applause. It was very funny, and I was crying at the end of it as well. Henry and I did everything right. I have never had better rapport with an actor onstage than I did with Henry in that scene this evening.

In the dungeon scene (II,iii) the actor playing John somewhat marred the drama of the situation by playing low comedy. I feel he let the audience control him and he disturbed the ensemble. Henry and I got things back under control however, and the last scene--a very emotional

moment for me, being my last appearance on the university stage--was, I felt, very moving.

This was our best performance.

Achievement

Of the three reviews the production received, all were excellent, commending both the production and the writer's individual performance. Richard Saltus, of the Arizona Daily Star, made the following comments:

> The Lion in Winter, which is old wine in a strange new kind of bottle, opened last night at the University of Arizona with a strong and sensitive performance by a well-chosen cast directed by Peter R. Marroney.
>
> Henry Kendrick and Roxana Prosser brought their impressive and seasoned abilities to bear on the roles of King Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, his queen.
>
> Mrs. Prosser, whose performance was in partial fulfillment of a master of arts degree, had an opportunity to exercise her individual yet flexible comic style, as well as her penetrating strength in conflict with Henry. She created a totally appealing character.[2]

Micheline Keating, drama critic for the Tucson Daily Citizen, was even more favorable:

> A very well done production of The Lion in Winter opened the summer season of the University of Arizona drama department last night.
>
> Each time I see this comedy-drama by James Goldman I like it better. It is a fascinating exposition of a fascinating period in history.
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> . . . . . .

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2. Richard Saltus, "The Lion in Winter Opens at the UA; Performance Called Sensitive, Strong," Arizona Daily Star, July 10, 1969.

> Ten years older than her husband, formerly the wife of the King of France, one of the richest women in Europe, Eleanor has given Henry good reason to keep her exiled from court. A brilliant and provocative woman, she has plotted with her sons against their father and incited rebellions.
> . . . . . .
>
> All three sons in the barbed and bitter family are scheming to gain the throne, but the spotlight in this blistering brawl is always on Henry and Eleanor who could love and hate each other with equal intensity.
>
> They also had a great respect for each other and each was out to do the other in, by fair means or foul. It is the rivalry between them that sparks the savage humor and spices the broiling mixture of ambition, greed and sex.
>
> The university production has been directed with force and vigor by Peter Marroney, drama department head. And he has been able to cast the demanding roles with actors who could give a good account of them.
>
> Interpreting Eleanor in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the master of arts degree in drama, Roxana Prosser makes a visually stunning and regally domineering queen. As the scorned and scorning Eleanor, Mrs. Prosser gives a nearly impeccable performance. The only flaw in her cold and steel-like playing of the powerful and wounded woman is to separate a comedy line from the general context of a speech and toss it at the audience for a laugh. She gets the laughs and spontaneous applause, but it does give an uneven edge to an otherwise outstanding performance. . . . It should definitely be a must on every theater-goer's list.[3]

The writer takes no offense at Keating's exception to the interpretation, but feels it is a problem of the script. Goldman, in his attempt to write a sure-fire hit after several failures,[4] seems to have included bits and dabs from many various kinds of plays, and the conflict in

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3. Micheline Keating, "Lion in Winter Well-Done Drama," Tucson Daily Citizen, July 10, 1969.

4. See supra, p. 3.

styles produces a discordant effect. This was intelligently noted in Saltus' review:

> James Goldman's play is a sort of pseudo-historical tragi-comedy. . . . Goldman's treatment is to reduce the conflicts in scale to the acrimonious wranglings of an Albee-like household. His method involves the juxtaposition of various tones--during an emotional, lyrically written passage a gagline straight from situation comedy TV will shatter the mood.
>
> It is this pastiche effect that makes one uneasy about Goldman's effects, if not, indeed, his purpose.[5]

Least favorable to the writer's performance was Joe Crystall's radio review on Station KOPO:

> As the domineering old queen who matches wits with Henry, Eleanor is portrayed as a cold, calculating grand dame of little human warmth but with the manner and morals of a sober 12th Century Virginia Wolfe sic . Mrs. Prosser's sensitive interpretation could be improved only with more flexibility of voice. Her strongest scenes are those played directly with Kendrick at which time the play is at its peak.[6]

The writer's own opinion of her achievement is of course much more critical. Physical limitatians made a perfect characterization impossible to achieve. It would be rewarding to play the role again at fifty. The play provides great opportunity for an actress to enlarge her range and skill in a great variety of acting techniques, skills, and emotions.

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5. Saltus, "The Lion in Winter."

6. Joe Crystall, KOPO Radio Review, Tucson, July 10, 1969.

In addition, the writer's life has been enriched through the acquaintance she gained with Eleanor of Aquitaine. The definitive play has not been written on this magnificent character, a proud and noble queen who kept her husband in love with her from a prison cell, and never bowed her head.

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