

The *Eastern European History Review* is an international and interdisciplinary annually online and open access peer-reviewed journal about studies on Central and Eastern Europe in the Modern Age (XV–XIX). The Journal is also the expression of the Study Center CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna – Center Study on the Age of Sobieski and Modern Poland) of the University of Tuscia, born in 1997.

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FROM EAST TO WEST. WOMEN JOURNEYS

Edited by Jarosław Pietrzak



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Special issue

FROM EAST TO WEST.
WOMEN JOURNEYS IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD TO
ITALY
(XVII–XVIII CENTURIES)

Edited by
Jarosław Pietrzak



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TO ITALY
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EASTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY REVIEW: LA RIVISTA

Il Comitato redazionale e scientifico è lieto di presentare al pubblico la rivista scientifica *Eastern European History Review*.

Con un carattere internazionale e interdisciplinare, una cadenza annuale e una fruibilità *open access* la rivista focalizza i propri interessi sulle dinamiche occorse nell'Europa Orientale durante tutta l'età moderna (XIV-XIX). *Eastern European History Review* è espressione del Centro Studi dell'Università della Tuscia CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna) nato nel 1997 per intuizione del Prof. Gaetano Platania, Direttore Emerito della Rivista.

L'iniziativa editoriale che presentiamo nasce dall'evidente mancanza in Italia di una rivista scientifica relativa alla storia dell'Europa centro-orientale in Età Moderna, nonostante la penisola abbia giocato un ruolo fondamentale per la Storia e la Cultura di una parte integrante del continente, a torto considerata come lontana e periferica.

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The Editorial and Scientific Board are proud delighted to present the *Eastern European History Review* under the aegis of Sette Città Editore.

The *Eastern European History Review* is an international and interdisciplinary annually online and open access peer-reviewed journal about studies on Central and Eastern Europe in the Modern Age (XIV-XIX). The Journal is also the expression of the Study Center CESPoM (Centro Studi sull'età dei Sobieski e della Polonia Moderna – Center Study on the Age of Sobieski and Modern Poland) of the University of Tuscia, born in 1997, from an idea of Prof. Gaetano Platania, today Director Emeritus of this journal.

It publishes articles with significant approaches and original interpretations in all research fields concerning Central and Eastern Europe, with specific attention to the History sciences.

The editorial initiative we present comes from the obvious lack of a journal, in Italy, concerning the history of Central and Eastern Europe during the Modern Age, this despite its fundamental role in the history and culture of that part of the continent, wrongly considered distant and peripheral.

Quite the contrary is true, in fact. Main objective of the journal is to create a space for reflection and discussion on topics pertaining to Central and Eastern Europe, but also relations with Continental Europe, encouraging dialogue between scholars and experts in the field, and between different approaches of scientific research.

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THE RETURN JOURNEYS OF THE QUEEN-WIDOWS: AN UPSIDE-DOWN RITUAL OR IRRELEVANT PAGEANTRY?

ABSTRACT

In medieval and early modern Europe, interdynastic princely unions caused an unprecedented movement of royal figures. Princely brides travelled across the continent, accompanied by massive retinues in a choreographically staged cycle of ceremonies. However, these princely women sometimes ventured back to their natal courts. While there have been some excellent studies, looking into particular cases, a comparative approach might bring a deeper understanding of this travel. This paper examines the return journeys of three queens from Central Europe to Italy, particularly Beatrice of Aragon (1500–1501), Bona Sforza (1556), and Maria of Spain (1581). This study reveals differences and similarities between these transfers and other types of princely mobility. Like bridal transfers, these journeys were important for social networking and entailed a similar level of festival splendour but this was closely connected to the queen's social and political capital. On the other hand, they lacked a strong ritual layer and differed in the use of emotions. Most importantly, the main difference is the very reason they took place: these three return journeys were a direct consequence of queens' wills and thus a testimony of their agency and power.

KEYWORDS: Female travel, Elite lifestyle, Space of encounter, Networking, Travel writing.

Bridal journeys were not only great festivals but were crucial moments for the people involved in them, most notably for the travelling princess, the young bride who could prepare herself for her future role, to get information about her new family, manage her own court and finances, learn new skills and language, and build a network of social contacts. In other words, the journey of the young bride could have been a time for accumulating social and cultural (or intellectual) capital. But can the same be said about its inversion – the returns of the foreign queens to their natal homes?

The return of foreign princesses was definitely not unusual. On the contrary, it was quite logical in cases when their husbands died and the queen-dowagers found themselves in an unstable material and political situation. As Pauline Stafford has observed, returning to their native home and family was the most effective protection for royal widows who lost the safety of marriage. The native environment could provide material support and personal safety for those royal women who lacked stable income and/or whose very lives were in jeopardy if they posed a threat to the new rulers¹.

1 Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Batsford Acad. & Educ., 1983), 175-77.

Unfortunately, not much is known about these returns, other than the fact that they happened. The source situation is however much better in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when we possess chronicle accounts, festival books, princely and ambassadorial correspondence, orations and poems, and many other types of evidence. This paper looks into the return journeys of three Central European queens, that each crossed northern Italy: Beatrice of Aragon [1457–1508], daughter of Ferrante I, King of Naples, and wife of Matthias Corvinus of Hungary and later to Vladislaus II; Bona Sforza [1494–1557], daughter of Gian Galeazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan, and wife of Sigismund I, King of Poland; and finally, Maria of Austria [or Spain, 1528–1603] was the daughter of Emperor Charles V and wife of Maximilian II, her cousin. These three return journeys can serve as an ideal comparative example because they are relatively well documented and their itineraries overlapped to some extent (e.g. crossing the Venetian territory). Furthermore, the three queens had a very similar fate – all three were widows, travelling to the natal courts without prospects of remarriage. Scholarship on Beatrice has mostly concentrated on her first wedding², while her widowhood and return journey to Naples was studied by Albert Berzeviczy³. Beatrice's social networks, especially with her Ferrarese relatives, have been recently studied by Jessica O'Leary⁴. Bona Sforza's departure to Italy is only briefly discussed in her biographies⁵, however, there are also several separate studies looking into her return journey. The circumstances before and during her departure from Poland were closely observed by Alexander Przezdziecki, which carefully follows and recounts relevant Polish sources (envoy's letters, royal mandates, Górnicki's diary, see more below), but does not trace the Italian leg of the journey nor try to put the events into the international context⁶. On the other hand, two studies by Luigi Cini and Francesco Luciola, concentrate on Bona's passage

2 For example, Volker Honemann, "The Marriage of Matthias Corvinus to Beatrice of Aragón (1476) in Urban and Court Historiography", in *Princes and Princely Culture, 1450–1650*, eds. Martin Gosman, A. James Macdonald and Arie Johan Vanderjagt, vol. II (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 213–26; Antonín Kalous, "Tři týdny slávy, tři roky šťastného manželství: Beatrix a Matyáš", in *Manželství v pozdním středověku: Rituály a obyčej*, eds. Paweł Kras and Martin Nodl (Praha: Filosofia, 2014), 187–205; Ilona Kristóf, "Beatrice d'Aragona nel ruolo materno e politico", *Verbum Analecta Neolatina*, 23/2 (2022): 375–90; Tibor Martí, "La dote di Beatrice d'Aragona. Nuove fonti per la storia delle relazioni di Mattia Corvino con Napoli (1474–1476)", *Verbum Analecta Neolatina*, 23/ 2 (2022): 349–74.

3 Albert Berzeviczy, *Beatrix Királyné (1457–1508). Történelmi élet-és korrajz* (Budapest: A Magyar történelmi társulat, 1908). The Italian translation: Alberto Berzeviczy, *Beatrice d'Aragona* (Napoli: Corbaccio, 1931).

4 Jessica O'Leary, *Elite Women as Diplomatic Agents in Italy and Hungary, 1470–1510: Kinship and the Aragonese Dynastic Network* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022).

5 Maria Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, 4^o ed. (Warszawa: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2009), 237–41; Gerardo Cioffari, *Bona Sforza: donna del Rinascimento tra Italia e Polonia* (Bari: Levante, 2000), 260–65.

6 Alexander Przezdziecki, *Jagiellonki polskie w XVI. wieku*, vol. 2 (Kraków: W drukarni Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1868), 225–46.

through northern Italy, with a special focus on the festival books that describe the queen's arrival and sojourn in Padua and Venice⁷. Maria of Austria's departure and return transfer has been closely studied by Elisabeth Schoder and partially (within his biography of the queen) by Rubén González Cuerva⁸.

Beatrice's journey is mostly documented from the Venetian (Marino Sanuto) and Ferrarese (*Diario Ferrarese*) narrative sources⁹ and her correspondence with the Este¹⁰. Bona's passage through northern Italy gave rise to three sources which can be classified as festival books: an anonymous occasional print describing her sojourn in Padua and Venice, a description of the triumphal arch raised in her honour in Padua by Alessandro Bassano¹¹, and a letter by Agostino Valier describing the queen's entry to Venice¹². Maria's journey in the Venetian territory (which will be the prime interest of this article) is closely described by the report of the Republic's special envoys, whose task was to take care of the queen's visit¹³. Quite similar to this account is the description in the republic's ceremonial books¹⁴, however the latter focuses on festive aspects only while the former contains also the envoys' comments

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- 7 Luigi Cini, "Passaggio della regina Bona Sforza per Padova nell'anno 1556", in *Relazioni tra Padova e la Polonia. Studi in onore dell'Università di Cracovia nel VI centenario della sua fondazione*, ed. Comitato per la storia dell'università di Padova (Padova: Antenore, 1964), 27-65; Francesco Lucioli, "Regine a Venezia nel Cinquecento: Bona Sforza in un'epistola di Agostino Valier e qualche osservazione sulle descrizioni di ingressi trionfali", *Filologia & Critica*, 39 (2014): 73-96.
 - 8 Elisabeth Schoder, "Die Reise der Kaiserin Maria nach Spanien (1581/82)", in *Hispania-Austria II. Die Epoche Philipps II. (1556-1598). La Época de Felipe II (1556-1598)*, ed. Friedrich Edelmayer (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1999), 151-80; Rubén González Cuerva, *Maria of Austria, Holy Roman Empress (1528-1603): Dynastic Networker* (London: Routledge, 2021).
 - 9 Rinaldo Fulin, ed., *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 3 (Venezia: A spese degli editori, 1880); Giuseppe Pardi, ed., *Diario Ferrarese dall'anno 1409 sino al 1502*, vol. VII (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1934).
 - 10 Enrica Guerra, ed., *Il Carteggio tra Beatrice d'Aragona e gli Estensi (1476-1508)* (Roma: Aracne editrice, 2010).
 - 11 Both are edited in Júlia Benavent, ed., *Carlos V y el regreso a Italia de la reina Bona de Polonia. Edición de documentos inéditos* (València: Universitat de València, 2021), 173-99. Benavent's book is the edition of 104 letters, mostly exchanged between Bona and her agents. Unfortunately, there is no extant correspondence particularly relevant to the journey itself.
 - 12 Edited in Lucioli, "Regine a Venezia", 91-5.
 - 13 Printed in Joseph Fiedler, ed., *Fontes Rerum Austriacarum. Zweite Abtheilung, Diplomataria et Acta, XXX: Relationen Venetianischer Botschafter über Deutschland und Österreich im Sechzehnten Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Aus der kaiserlich-königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1870), 381-401.
 - 14 Printed in Teodoro Toderini, ed., *Cerimoniali e feste in occasione di avvenimenti e passaggi nelli stati della Repubblica Veneta di duchi, arciduchi ed imperatori dell'augustissima Casa d'Austria dall'anno 1361 al 1797* (Venezia: Tipografia di Sante Martinengo, 1857), 26-35.

and observations of the queen's background and retinue.

How did the journey look like? Was it a low-key event or a long sequence of festivities and ceremonies, just like wedding journeys? And what was the queen's role? Comparing the documentation from three return journeys, this study aims to show that this kind of mobility was no less modest than other types of princely mobility. Yet, ceremonial splendour was only one, a rather superficial aspect. More than anything else, these journeys were inherently linked to queenly agency. The queens not only used travel to promote their social contacts (via gifts, audiences) and build their status (via affective display) but the whole fact these transfer took place were a direct consequence of their wills. As already pointed out, the trajectories of the three queens overlapped to some extent, especially in Venetian territory. This enables us to compare the quality of these journeys for common patterns. But before anything else, we must first shed light on the motives for leaving their kingdoms, then try to identify some patterns in these journeys and finally, compare these journeys to wedding/bridal journeys.

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MOTIVES FOR DEPARTURES

After the death of her first husband, Matthias Corvinus, Beatrice of Aragon was married to the next king of Hungary and Bohemia, Vladislaus II. However, this marriage was never consummated and Vladislaus sought to annul it due to Beatrice's infertility. For a long time, it looked like Beatrice would stand her ground and force Vladislaus to keep his promises, mostly thanks to her natal relatives. But in 1500, the political landscape shifted: Milan was invaded by France and the pope and Venice needed Vladislaus in the fight against the Turks. In April 1500, the pope pronounced the annulment of the marriage and on top of that, Beatrice had to pay all legal fees. However, Vladislaus did not want Beatrice to leave the country: on the one hand, he would be obliged to return her dowry, and on the other hand, he feared that the queen might hinder his already ongoing marital negotiations with the French¹⁵. At any rate, with the help of Neapolitan and Spanish envoys, Beatrice got permission to leave and via Vienna and Villach she headed to Italy and finally, Naples, where her brother, the king, had already given to her the city of Salerno for her maintenance¹⁶. Her departure was thus largely driven by an insecure financial situation and political isolation.

15 Berzeviczy, *Beatrice d'Aragona*, 266-75.

16 Tibor Martí, "Oklevelek Aragóniai Beatrix hagyatékából. Magyar vonatkozású források a spanyol katonai lovagrendek iratanyagában", *Történelmi szemle*, 3 (2017): 520-23.



Fig. 1 - Beatrice of Aragon's journey (1500-1501)

Bona Sforza's departure was also a result of several reasons. After the death of her husband, Sigismund I, Bona lost a great deal of influence in political and economic matters and had frequent conflicts with her son, Sigismund August, the new king of Poland. Officially, Bona justified her (only temporary) trip to Italy because of her bad health, specifically rheumatism, which she wanted to cure in the Abano baths near Padua¹⁷. As Krzysztof Żaboklicki and other scholars have shown, there were serious discussions that Bona might become a new viceroy of Naples, at that time occupied by the Spanish Habsburgs in exchange for a huge loan of several hundreds of ducats. These prospects were not realistic, but Bona still had hopes to play a significant role in southern Italian politics, since she held several castles and estates in the Duchy of Bari as inheritance from her mother, Isabella of Aragon¹⁸. After long strives and disputes, Bona got permission to leave Poland from her son and the assembly, but the queen had to renounce her land properties and estates and could only take her personal objects¹⁹. But even this compromise from Bona's side

17 Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, 237-40.

18 Krzysztof Żaboklicki, "Bona e gli Asburgo, alla vigilia del ritorno della regina in Italia. Bona i Habsburgowi w przeddzień powrotu królowej do Włoch", in *Bona Sforza: Regina di Polonia e duchessa di Bari: Catalogo della mostra*, eds. Maria Stella Calò Mariani and Giuseppe Dibenetto, vol. 1 (Roma: Nuova Comunicazione, 2000), 219-26; Stanisław Cynarski, "Sprawa ostatniego testamentu królowej Bony", *Zeszyty naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace historyczne. Zeszyt*, 56 (1977): 139; Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, 239.

19 Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, 240.

arose major discontent in Polish society who vilified the queen for “smuggling” the treasures out of the country²⁰.

Similarly to Beatrice and Bona, Maria found herself isolated after her husband's death. But she explained her departure by a desire to enter the monastery of Las Descalzas Reales, founded by her late sister Juana in Madrid. Her relatives opposed her plan: both her son, Emperor Rudolf, and her brother, King Philip II of Spain, wanted her to stay at the imperial court and arrange a marital alliance between them²¹. On top of that, if Maria wants to enter the monastery, the Spanish court said, there is no need to risk the perilous journey across the continent – she can very well do so in Central Europe²². Two events changed the situation: the vacancy in the Portuguese throne, which Maria and Philip might have claimed, and the death of Philip II's wife and Maria's daughter Anne. Suddenly, Philip saw Maria as an ideal figure to be a pro-tempore viceroy in Portugal and a tutor for his children. Maria agreed to these plans, but only for the time being. Still, her ultimate goal was the monastery²³.

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A BETTER BRIDAL JOURNEY? FESTIVITIES, SOCIAL NETWORKING, MEMORISATION

What did the actual return journeys look like? Bona Sforza and Maria of Spain's journeys through the Venetian territory can be best characterised as long sequences of festivities and triumphal entries²⁴. Large crowds and solemn delegations waited for them in every city they passed through; triumphal arches were raised; the palaces chosen for their accommodation were refurbished and decorated. Both queens were greeted not only by the Venetian envoys, local authorities, and triumphal arches but also by local poets and humanists: such as Cassandra Fedele, Cieco d'Adria²⁵, Issicratea Monte and Valeria Miniati²⁶. The queens remunerated the orations with precious gifts: for instance, Cassandra got a necklace which Bona grabbed from the neck of one of her ladies standing nearby²⁷.

20 Przeddziecki, *Jagiellonki polskie*, 241-42.

21 González Cuerva, *Maria of Austria*, 158.

22 Schoder, “Die Reise der Kaiserin Maria nach Spanien (1581/82)”, 154.

23 González Cuerva, *Maria of Austria*, 175-76; Schoder, “Die Reise der Kaiserin Maria nach Spanien (1581/82)”, 154-55.

24 González Cuerva rightly points out that Maria did not enter major Italian centres (Venice, Ferrara, etc.) nor participated in theatrical performances, but her journey was far from being an ordinary trip, which would lack ceremonial splendour. If Maria really wanted to eschew ceremonial and festivities, she could have opted for travelling *incognito* (like Marie Casimire in 1699), but there is no proof she tried to do so. González Cuerva, *Maria of Austria*, 176; Jarosław Pietrzak, “Venezia è molto grande e bella – Due soggiorni della regina Maria Casimira d'Arquien Sobieska a Venezia e in Veneto negli anni 1699 e 1705”, *Italica Wratislaviensia*, 12/1 (2021): 69.

25 Cini, “Passaggio della Regina Bona”, 55-8, 59-60.

26 Franco Tomasi, “Monti, Issicratea”, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 76 (2012), [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/issicratea-monti_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/]

27 Cini, “Passaggio della Regina Bona”, 58.



Fig. 2 - Bona Sforza's journey (1556)

Both Bona and Maria followed a similar track and stopped in the same places overnight (Spilimbergo, Sacile, Conegliano, Treviso)²⁸. While the similarity of itineraries was probably a result of logistical factors, (good roads, resources of places to lodge massive groups of people), the similarity in celebrations was a result of protocol and precedents. The relation of Venetian envoys from 1581 lists several such precedents, for instance, Maria was officially greeted by the envoys on a meadow before the town of Venzone, which was the same spot where Henry of Valois was met in 1574²⁹. In Padua, Maria and Henry alike were lodged in the Palazzo dell'Arena³⁰. On the other hand, the queens' journeys also contributed to the changes to the ceremonial. Although Bona was welcomed in Venice according to old models, the triumphal arch raised in her honour in Padua (inspired by an ancient Arco dei Gavi in Verona) served as a blueprint for similar ephemeral architecture during the solemn entry of the new dogaressa to the Palazzo Ducale in 1557. As Maximilian L.S. Tondro points out, the arch built for the dogaressa was the first such architectural feature constructed in Venice. Bona's visit had thus a deep impact on the republic's ceremonial³¹.

²⁸ See the itineraries in Appendix.

²⁹ Fiedler, *Relationen venetianischer Botschafter*, 382.

³⁰ Fiedler, *Relationen venetianischer Botschafter*, 387.

³¹ Maximilian L.S. Tondro, "The First Temporary Triumphal Arch in Venice (1557)", in *Court Festivals of the European Renaissance: Art, Politics, and Performance*,

Yet the honourable welcome ceremonies for Bona and Maria contrast sharply with Beatrice's journey through Venetian territory. Venice refused to host her free of cost and to lend her a ship to transport her to Naples. This differs not only with the attitude towards the other two queens but also towards Beatrice herself: in 1476, when Beatrice, as a young princess, travelled to Hungary to reach her husband, King Matthias, the *Serenissima* prepared a lavish welcome. In addition to a delegation of twenty nobles in Choggia and forty others in Malamocco, Beatrice was solemnly welcomed by Doge Andrea Vendramin with councils, colleges and noblewomen who set forth for Isola San Clemente on the bucentaur³². The expenses of Beatrice and her entourage were covered by the Venetian host and on top of that, the senate allocated a generous set of provisions (wine, poultry, spices, confectionary) as a gift³³. The senate even instructed their representative to beg the princess not to alter her route when rumours started to circulate that she would bypass Venice and travel via Padua and Treviso instead³⁴.

Why did Venice have such a change of heart towards Beatrice? What might seem inconsistent behaviour is actually quite logical: like in 1500, like in 1476, the interests of the *Serenissima* were closely tied with the king of Hungary as a major ally in the fight against the Turks. The thing that changed was the king of Hungary: in 1500, it was no longer Beatrice's husband so there was no benefit in currying favour with a woman who was no longer the queen of Hungary. However, Beatrice was not the only case – Marie Casimire [1641–1716], queen-widow of King John III Sobieski also experienced quite two different ways of reception when passing through Venice by the turn of the eighteenth century. While during the first visit in 1699, the queen was magnificently hosted and many pageants were arranged in her honour, in 1705 she was treated as an undesirable guest due to the current political landscape, namely the ongoing War of Spanish Succession. Arranging honours for the royal woman with familial links to France, Bavaria and Palatinate could have enraged Venice's ally, Emperor Leopold³⁵.

Hosting the foreign princess was an inherently political act, which is explicitly expressed in 1581: the Venetian envoys taking care of Maria's progress conclude

eds. James Ronald Mulryne and Elizabeth Goldring (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 335–37.

32 ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni, Secreti, Registri 27, 101r.

33 ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni, Secreti, Registri 27, 101r. An abstract of the gifts in Lipót Óváry, *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Történelmi bizottságának oklevél-másolatai*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia történelmi bizottsága, 1890), 140.

34 «Nuy havemo ricevuto vostre lettere de dì XVIII, le qual ne ha dato meraviglia et anche affano. Intendendo la deliberatione de la serenissima regina de Hungaria de declinar questa nostra cita et per Padoa, Treuixo et Friul tenir el camin suo. [...] pregaretela [Sua Maestà, i.e. Beatrice] che la non vogli mutarla ma perseverar in essa et venir qui, dove aliegra et honorissimamente serà veduta per nui et per tuta questa cita». ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni, Secreti, Registri, *The Senate to Girolamo Zane*, Visdomino of Ferrara, 19 October 1476, f. 101v.

35 Pietrzak, "Venezia è molto grande e bella", 80.

the first part of their report to the senate stating that the queen was satisfied with the reception. «And there is no doubt», the report continues, «that Her Majesty [=Maria] will give account about this to the Emperor [Rudolph], her son, and to the King [Philip II], her brother. With both of them, Your Serenity has so many [common] interests»³⁶. Interestingly, just a year and a half after Beatrice, another princess, Anne of Foix, the new French wife of Vladislaus II, was received with major honours, feasts and celebrations in Venice and her Italian territories³⁷. Anne's visit, together with Bona Sforza's, came down as glorious events in the republic's history, whereas Beatrice's journeys suffered a sort of *damnatio memoriae*. The letter of Agostino Valier, which describes Bona's arrival in Venice and can be categorised within the genre of festival books, starts with listing the queens that visited the city. Besides Bona, these were Dorotea of Denmark in 1488, Caterina Cornaro, queen of Cyprus in 1489, and the just-mentioned Anne of Foix in 1502³⁸. Neither Beatrice's first nor second journey is mentioned. As Francesco Lucioli pointed out, the ultimate goal of celebrations, orations, and festival books was not the queen but the city of Venice herself, her glory, values, and virtues³⁹. The 1581 report confirms this view:

The entire court, both Spaniards and Germans, both women and men, both servants and masters – everybody praised out loud not only comfort and splendour but also largeness of lodgings, generosity of provisions [...] which turned out to be great praise for this excellent republic⁴⁰.

Insinuating that there was a queen who was not received properly would cast a shadow on the image of the maritime republic, so Valier's account omits Beatrice's both journeys. However, the absence of triumphal arches, panegyric compositions, or luxurious gifts does not mean that there was no protocol at all or that Beatrice travelled incognito: we read in Marino Sanuto, that in the town of Portogruaro, the queen was received by an extramural delegation led by the local bishop and she was accommodated in the republic's palace⁴¹.

The queen's social capital thus determined the nature of her return journey to a great extent. At the court of her brother-in-law in Ferrara, Beatrice was magnificently greeted and many feasts, balls, and theatrical performances (probably of Plautus and Terence) were staged in her honour in the palace⁴². But the queens did not

36 Fiedler, *Relationen venetianischer Botschafter*, 391.

37 Attila Györkös, *Reneszánsz utazás. Anna királyné 1502-es fogadtatásának ünnepségei észak-Itáliában és Magyarországon* (Máriabesnyő: Attraktor, 2016), 38-52.

38 «Quatuor reginas in hac civitates, quae est domicilium optimae et florentissimae Reipublicae, singulas magnificentissimo et plane regio apparatu acceptas, patres nostri viderunt. Regina Dacie [...], Catharina Cypri insulae fertilissimae Regina [...], Anna Pannoniae Regis uxor». Lucioli, "Regine a Venezia", 91.

39 Lucioli, "Regine a Venezia", 83, 86.

40 Fiedler, *Relationen venetianischer Botschafter*, 390-91.

41 Berzeviczy, *Beatrice d'Aragona*, 275.

42 Pardi, *Diario ferrarese dall'anno 1409 sino al 1502*, VII, 264-5; Berzeviczy, *Beatrice d'Aragona*, 275.

only capitalise on their social contacts but also gained new ones during their return journeys: Maria met a long list of prominent individuals, such as Cardinal Borromeo, Duke and Duchess of Ferrara, Mantua, Parma and many others who rushed to pay homage to her⁴³. Duchess of Brunswick⁴⁴ accompanied Maria for five days, from Treviso to Vicenza⁴⁵.



Fig. 3 - Maria of Spain (Austria)'s journey (1581/2).

These encounters had a form of audiences or exchange of gifts: the afore-mentioned duchess of Brunswick got pearls from Maria, and in return, the duchess presented Maria's favourite lady-in-waiting, Jana of Pernštejn, with a fan decorated with jewels. The queens were not interested in meeting the prominent personages only. In Sacile, Maria was reportedly curious to see the daughters of her host. All of them, dressed in white clothes with silver trimmings and rich ornaments were presented to the queen by their father. Maria asked them «about various things with her great delight and upon her farewell, she presented their father with a necklace»⁴⁶. Queens could bond via rituals and banqueting: Bona stood as a godparent to Lavinia, daughter of the Ferrarese ambassador Gerolamo Faletti during the sacrament of confirmation (*lavar la cresima*) and to Rinuntio (Ranuccio) Gambara⁴⁷. In return, Ranuccio's

43 Toderini, *Cerimoniali*, 32-3.

44 This was probably Dorothea of Lorraine (1545–1621), the daughter of Christina of Denmark and the wife of Eric II, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg. Dorothea was evidently in the 1580s present in Venice, where she made pious donations to Jesuits. Antje Middeldorf-Kosegarten, "Eine sächsische Madonna des Dreizehnten Jahrhunderts in Forlì", *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, 14/4 (December 1970): 443. Dorothea and Eric had also close relations with the Spanish court. Julia Cartwright, *Christina of Denmark, Duchess of Milan and Lorraine, 1522–1590*. (New York: E.P. Dutton and company, 1913), 655-58.

45 Toderini, *Cerimoniali*, 31-2.

46 Toderini, *Cerimoniali*, 30.

47 Benavent, *Carlos V y el regreso*, 198-99. Ranuccio was the son of Brunoro, count of Pralboino, a loyalist of Emperor Maximilian I and later serving as a master

mother, Virginia Pallavicini together with the *honoratissime gentildonne venetiane* organised a feast for the queen, which lasted until the evening. The middle of this banquet marked a sumptuous *collatione di lavori di zucchero* of various sorts and great quantity⁴⁸. Hosting the queen could also be a form of social networking or exchanging of favours. In Vicenza, Maria refused to stay in the palace prepared for her and instead, wished to be lodged in the house of Count Lunardo, who was a relative of the lady-in-waiting to Maria's aunt, Mary of Hungary. He used the queen's stay to ask her for favour and to intercede in his financial matters in Milan⁴⁹. Hosting a princess was a big honour and the host might use it for his interests: when Bona's envoys and Venetian delegates were looking for lodging for the queen in Padua, a certain nobleman, Marco Antonio Cornero offered his house free of cost. The Venetian government accepted his offer but only under the condition of a payment of 150 scudi granted to him so he would not exploit the free-of-cost hosting for some ulterior motive⁵⁰.

Similarly to the bridal journeys, the queens also used the return journeys to visit extraordinary places. Both Bona and Maria visited the tomb of St Anthony in Padua. Maria even asked the canons to close the basilica to the public and then, she entered it via an underground tunnel to have privacy at the shrine⁵¹. The visit was not accidental, already several months prior to her journey, the news circulated that Maria asked the Venetian authorities to permit her to take with herself to Portugal the relics of St Anthony and Lucy⁵². The Venetian envoys also remarked on Maria's *particular deuotione* to St Anthony⁵³.

However, unlike bridal journeys, we do not know much about the queens' farewells and arrivals of the queens. Bona's daughters reportedly bade farewell to their mother in tears, and the eldest, Isabella, accompanied her to the first lodgings⁵⁴. But that is all. We do not know about the rites or speeches that welcomed the queen "back home". In fact, the term "home" with reference to a particular topographical spot is nowhere to be found. A vague relationship of this sort can be seen in Agostino Valier's letter when he speaks about how Bona wished to visit Italy, «where she was

of the camp of Emperor Charles V. His brother Gianfrancesco Gambara later became cardinal. Michele Di Sivo, "Gambara, Gianfrancesco", in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 52 (1999), [[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gianfrancesco-gambara_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gianfrancesco-gambara_(Dizionario-Biografico))].

48 Benavent, *Carlos V y el regreso*, 198.

49 Toderini, *Cerimoniali*, 32; Fiedler, *Relationen venetianischer Botschafter*, 388.

50 Cini, "Passaggio della regina Bona", 29.

51 Fiedler, *Relationen venetianischer Botschafter*, 387; Toderini, *Cerimoniali*, 32.

52 «Di Venetia il dì 10 marzo 1581 [...] Et fin hora s'intende solo che la imperatrice dimanda a questi signori [di Venezia] reliquie di Santo Antonio di Padova et di Santa Lucia per portarle seco in Portogallo». ASF, Mediceo del Principato, 4027, f. 52.

53 Fiedler, *Relationen venetianischer Botschafter*, 387.

54 Przewdziecki, *Jagiellonki polskie*, 236, 243.

born and educated»⁵⁵. Yet Valier goes on saying that Italy is also the noblest part of the world (*quae totius orbis terrarum est nobilissima pars*), so he clearly does not attribute Bona's desire to her homesickness but the to the attractiveness of Italy. The memorial plaques refer to Maria only as «going to Spain»⁵⁶ or «on the way to govern Portugal»⁵⁷. This fact along with the absence of rites of passage should caution us from viewing these journeys as simple reversals of wedding journeys. Yet Maria's progress through the Venetian territory gave rise to four memorial inscriptions, which is a staggering amount given how scarce are similar monuments extant from bridal journeys⁵⁸. There are (or were) five such memorials, three of them memorise the queen's sojourns in Sacile and Trevice, and in Palazzo Valmarana in Vicenza⁵⁹. The other plaques commemorate a mass, celebrated for Maria by Agostino Valier, Veronese bishop, and Cardinal Ludovico Madruzzo in Oratorio di San Zenone in Verona and Camposampietro⁶⁰.

The role of emotion is also different. During bridal journeys, they usually serve to record or exaggerate the ritual transition of the bride, hence the sorrowful scenes of farewell to parents and joyful first meeting with the husband⁶¹. On the other hand, during return journeys we can see emotions used as a rhetorical tool: Maria frequently calls the imperial court a prison, a cruel world, from which the departure is her only rescue⁶². On the contrary, when Polish prelates tried to dissuade Bona from departure, they appeal to her maternal love to not leave children behind or not to suffer with rosy retrospection in respect to Italy: «You will not like Italy in the same way as during your youth», they say, «it is your young years you long for, not the Italian land»⁶³. Yet this, like other appeals, only aroused Bona's anger

55 Lucio, "Regine a Venezia", 92.

56 The memorial plaque in Trevice states «in Hispaniam profiscisceretur»; Sacile: «in Hispaniam proficiscens». Toderini, *Cerimoniali*, 31 and 29.

57 Camposampiero: «Maria [...] hac transiens ad regimen Lusitaniae regni»; Vicenza: «ad regendum Lusitanorum». Toderini, *Cerimoniali*, 19 and 32.

58 There is only one such monument from Eleanor of Portugal's journey [1451/2]. A similar plaque was in one Sforza's wedding but eventually did not realised. Patrik Pastrnak, *Dynasty in Motion. Wedding Journeys in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2023), 205-06.

59 Toderini, *Cerimoniali*, 29, 31, 32.

60 Toderini, *Cerimoniali*, 33, 19. The memorial in Camposampiero has the wrong date – 1559 instead of 1581.

61 Pastrnak, *Dynasty in Motion*, 139-41; Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, "Mit Öffentlich-Ausgebrochenen Liebes=Thränen" – How and Why Early Modern Festival Books Depict Emotions", *History of Emotions – Insights into Research*, November 2014, <https://doi.org/10.14280/o824134>.

62 Schoder, "Die Reise der Kaiserin Maria nach Spanien (1581/82)", 157.

63 «Nie mniemay W. K. M. żeby Włoska ziemia miała się teraz W. K. M. tak podobać, iako się w on czas podobała, gdyś ieszczé W. K. M. panienką była. Podobanie ono, z lat młodych rosło, y teraz nie ziemią to Włoska W. K. M. smakuie, gdy o niey myślsz, ále smakuią one lata młodziuczkie, iako wszyscy

and cemented her resolve to leave⁶⁴. As Susan Broomhall points out, royal women, like royal men, used emotional performances – either via words, gestures, or their appearance – to achieve their specific goals and strategies⁶⁵. The queens' affective display did not stop with the moment they set out. Writing from Vienna, the Ferrarese correspondent Domenico Sandonnini reported the queen's words, that she had suffered so «many oddities, unworthy in dealing with such a lady and so well deserved about this kingdom [of Poland]», «was forced to renounce the dowry» and after having arranged the wedding of all her daughters «nothing will draw her back»⁶⁶. Body and outward appearance were also powerful tools of emotional display. Beatrice is portrayed to make her solemn entry to Ferrara «in a carriage, dressed in black satin» (*raso negro*)⁶⁷. Bona, too, was dressed in black widow clothes (*panno nero da vedova*) but this – together with the old age – allegedly did not diminish her *colori nativi* and *anticha belleza*⁶⁸. While Bona and Beatrice displayed their widowhood as a constitutive part of their identity, Maria also chose to visualise their resolve to leave the emotional prison. The Venetian envoys refer that Maria has «better colour and got more meat [i.e. got some weight?], especially when she arrived in Italy». Maria even reportedly called Italy *terra di promissione*, the promised land⁶⁹. Emotions and affections, expressed in words or appearance were thus crucial tools to enact the journeys and status.

ludzie bardziej lubią Wiosnę, niż zimę»: Łukasz Górnicki, *Dzieie w koronie polskiey za Zygmunta I. y Zygmunta Augusta aż do śmierci iego z przytoczeniem niektorych postronnych ciekawości od roku 1538 aż do roku 1572* (Warszawa: Drukarnia J.K.M y Rzeczypospolited Collegium XX Scholarum, 1754), 118. The parts of the speech and context in Przezdziecki, *Jagiellonki polskie*, 226-27

64 Bogucka, *Bona Sforza*, 240.

65 Susan Broomhall, "Affective and Emotional Strategies of Power and Authority among Early Modern European Monarchies", in *The Routledge History of Monarchy*, eds. Elena Woodacre et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 671-72.

66 «[...] che Sua Maestà desidera assai, esser nel regno allo stato suo di Bari, et giudico anche che io non ne tenga altra notitia, che doverà restare in d'esse parti, poi che al partirsi di Pollonia, li sono state usate, per quanto se intende, molte stranezze, indegne da usarsi a si valorosa signora et tanto bene merita di quel regno, che dicono sia stata forzata rinuntiar il dotalitio et ogni lassito fattoli dal marito di re, et oltre ciò siando maritate o per conchiudersi e publicarsi in breve il matrimonio di tutte tre le figlie, non haverà cosa che la richiami in Pollonia [...]», ASMo, ASE, Cancelleria estero, Ambasciatori [...], Polonia 11, Domenico Sandonnini, Dispaccio, *Domenico Sandonnini to Duke Ercole II d'Este*, Vienna, 26 February 1556, 2.

67 Pardi, *Diario ferrarese dall'anno 1409 sino al 1502*, VII, 264.

68 Benavent, *Carlos V y el regreso*, 188.

69 «mostrandolo in questo uiaggio, con hauer fatto miglior colore, et messa anco più carne, massime dopo arriuata in Italia; dicendo liberamente entrata che fù nel stato di V. Ser.tà, d'essere arriuata in terra di promissione». Fiedler, *Relationen Venetianischer Botschafter*, 392.

Perhaps the starkest difference between the return and bridal journeys is the sole reason why they took place: whereas the bridal journeys were a consequence of the heads of dynasties, the return journeys were the results of the queens' own doings, who were able to enact their will against their families' wishes. Before receiving permission to leave, Maria was so determined to leave Central Europe that she threatened to travel to Trent and there wait for consent to continue further⁷⁰. These wishes were hardly comprehensible to contemporaries, so they resorted to gossips. The rumours about Bona's misappropriation of royal funds, circulating already before her departure from Poland, have been already discussed. But there were also allegations to sexual desires, for instance, seventeen-century pamphleteers (Silvio and Ascanio Corona) attributed Bona's return to Italy to her insatiable passion for Gianlorenzo Pappacoda, the queen's agent and castellan in Bari⁷¹. These negative reactions show us that the return journeys were not a laudable conduct, at least from the perspective of the queen's subjects who saw her departure as a form of betrayal. We can thus conclude that the return journeys of the queen widows relied heavily on the current political situation and social connections of the queen and if these were favourable, the journey was a long sequence of festivities and ceremonials. But the return journey was not only a triumphal procession but first and foremost, testimony of the queen's power: not only they used the journey to expand their social and cultural capital but the very fact they happened were the result of the queen's will.

70 Schoder, "Die Reise der Kaiserin Maria nach Spanien (1581/82)", 153-54.

71 Ludovico Pepe, *Storia della successione degli Sforzeschi negli stati di Puglia e Calabria e documenti* (Bari: Trani, 1900), 225.

APPENDIX

ITINERARY OF BEATRICE OF ARAGON (150/1501)

Date	Place
	Esztergom
	Vienna
11 Dec 1500	Villach
	Aquileia
Dec 1500–21 Jan 1501	Portogruaro
30 Jan–11 Feb	Ferrara
12 Feb	Ravenna
	Ancona
16 March	Naples

27

ITINERARY OF BEATRICE OF BONA SFORZA (1556)

Date	Place
1 February	Warsaw
28 February	Vienna
22 March 1556	Osopo
23 March	Osopo
24 March	San Daniele dei Friuli, Spilimbergo
25 March	Sacile, Conegliano, Treviso
26 March–26 Apr	Padua
26 Apr–4 May	Venice
13 May	Bari

ITINERARY OF BEATRICE OF MARIA OF AUSTRIA

Date	Place
1 Aug 1581	Prague
12 Aug	Vienna
	Wiener Neustadt
6 Sept	Bruck an der Mur

	Sankt Michael in Obersteiermark
	Judenburg
	Neumarkt in der Steiermark
	Friesach
	Sankt Veit an der Glan
	Feldkirchen in Kärnten
	Villach
16 Sept	Tarvisio
17 Sept	Pontebba
18 Sept	Venzona
19 Sept	Spilimbergo (via Ospedaletto, San Daniele)
20 Sept	Sacile (via Villa di San Foca)
21 Sept	Sacile
22 Sept	Conegliano
23 Sept	Treviso (via San Salvatore, Lovadina)
24 Sept	Treville (court in Castelfranco Veneto)
25 Sept	Padua (via Camposanpiero, Vigodarzere)
26 Sept	Padua
27 Sept	Padua
28 Sept	Vicenza
29 Sept	Monteforte d'Alpone
30 Sept	Verona
1 Oct	Desenzano del Garda (via Peschiera, Rivoltella)
2 Oct	Brescia (via Lonato del Garda)
3 Oct	Soncino (via Orzinuovi)
4 Oct	
	Genoa
	Savona
	Marseille
	Colliure
6 Jan–20 Jan 1582	Barcelona
	Zaragoza
6 March	Madrid

ABBREVIATIONS

ASFi: Archivio di Stato di Firenze

ASVe: Archivio di Stato di Venezia

ASMo: Archivio di Stato di Modena

ASE: Archivio Segreto Estense

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