The Life and Afterlife of Isabeau of Bavaria

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Isabeau’s involvement in the Treaty of Troyes is a principal reason, or perhaps the principal reason, for her infamy. A recent biography of Joan of Arc reveals how the Treaty has served as a nexus in the popular imagination for different elements of Isabeau’s black legend, a point at which the charges of corpulence, greed, promiscuity, treachery, and maternal unworthiness converge:

Despite her weight, her shortness of leg and stature, and her ill health, she was infamous for her promiscuity. She was probably the lover of Louis of Orléans, her husband’s younger brother. Her flagrant infidelities gave credence to the belief that her son Charles was illegitimate. In the Treaty of Troyes, which she signed in 1420, she suggested that he was not the lawful heir to the French throne. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the uncertainty about Charles’s legitimacy, both to him and to the state. The sacred power of the king was his, literally, by blood, and if the blood could not be traced to his father, he was on the throne, not by the will of God, but by a subterfuge.¹
How a mother could such do a thing to her son is beyond understanding, continues the text: “For some reason, probably to safeguard her wealth and her place in the Burgundian court, Isabeau took sides against her son and in favor of the murderer of her lover. The complications of Isabeau’s relationship with Charles, her disloyalty to her son and the kingdom of France, are perplexing to the point of incomprehensibility. Certainly the Treaty of Troyes is a historical anomaly: a mother explicitly supporting her son’s enemies and implicitly casting doubts not only on his legitimacy, but on her own sexual probity.”

This version of Isabeau’s role in the Treaty of Troyes of course represents “popular” history. However, because the image of the queen that it perpetuates does not differ substantially from the one commonly presented in “serious” histories of that episode, it cannot be dismissed. Two ideas that this version foregrounds have been particularly tenacious: that in the Treaty Isabeau cast doubt on the paternity of her son and that in her approval of it, she betrayed the patrie. The first point has long been disproved. Still, it continues to crop up. For example, a recent analysis of the discourse from Joan of Arc’s trial holds that Isabeau pronounced her son a bastard in the Treaty of Troyes. Therefore, I address the point here. The second point is more complicated and will require contextualization before it can be addressed. I have been arguing that the Armagnac-Burgundian conflict must be viewed as a feud, as a dispute between factions. Although support of the dauphin gradually came to be construed and, indeed, experienced by some as patriotism—a struggle to maintain the God-appointed Valois line, which in turn equaled for some a struggle for France—this was not the only paradigm, nor necessarily the most appropriate, that can be applied to the situation. Although many of the French had earlier demonstrated their strong disinclination to accept an English king when they crowned Philip VI and rejected the claims of Edward III, and although signs of a sense of national identity were of course discernible before the infamous treaty, in 1419 the French were not in a position to make a choice about whether they would have an English or French king. Henry V and his troops were in France, and they were not going to leave. As Christopher Allmand observes:

By the summer of 1419 all Normandy was his: the major walled towns of the duchy, Caen, Falaise, Cherbourg, and Rouen had all fallen to the English besiegers. This marked an important change in English policy towards France. The day of the chevauchée, or prolonged military raid,
was now almost over. Henry wanted nothing less than military conquest. With it went the need to govern and administer lands thus acquired, and the demand that the inhabitants of those lands should recognise the legitimacy of English rule by taking an oath of allegiance to Henry.⁴

The choice, rather, was whether to continue the Armagnac-Burgundian feud. If, on the one hand, the factions put aside their differences and united, they might route the English eventually. If, on the other hand, they continued their feud despite the presence of Henry V, who was already occupying Normandy and planning to spread into the rest of France, it was inevitable that the English would hitch their cause to one of the factions and try to crush the other. Although the first choice, uniting, appears to be the better in hindsight, in 1419 all of the obstacles that had prevented the Armagnacs and Burgundians from resolving their differences earlier persisted. The hatred between the leaders was implacable, and neither side was willing to cede any advantage to the other for fear of extinction. In short, reconciliation meant that one or the other of the factions would lose power, which is also what would happen should one or the other ally with the English. Thus from the perspective of the faction leaders, there was no particular advantage to settling the feud. Despite the strong desire for peace among the larger population, the leaders were motivated by self-preservation.

Nonetheless, Isabeau long continued to seek a settlement between the factions. Indeed, she sought energetically to arrange an agreement between Jean sans Peur and the dauphin Charles throughout the summer of 1419. A meeting at Pouilly just north of Melun in July yielded promising results, with the men agreeing in principle to a peace the details of which would be worked out later. However, when the dauphin and his followers slew Jean sans Peur on the Montereau bridge, about fifty-six miles south of Paris, in September of that year, the possibility of a joint effort to overthrow the English vanished. This clear demonstration of mortal enmity revealed the queen’s hopes of a united front to be futile. Still, she persisted. Between the time of Jean’s assassination and her agreement to the terms demanded by Henry V in January 1420, she entered once again into contact with the dauphin, attempting to bring about reconciliation between the factions despite the intransigence of the opponents. The queen and her son were in contact as late as December 1419. But the story of her lengthy holdout against Burgundian pressure to settle with the English is omitted from the traditional story of Isabeau’s role in the Treaty of Troyes.
In this chapter, I first explore the events leading up to the Treaty. I then discuss the reasons why the crime of treachery traditionally imputed to Isabeau is anachronistic: from her position in the middle of a long-term fight to the death between factions, what was taking place around her could not possibly have been construed as a patriotic struggle between the dauphin, representative of the French nation, and a set of rebellious traitors, the Burgundians. Charles, unlike his brother, Louis of Guyenne, appeared to have had little interest in bringing the parties to an agreement. Although we do not know what finally persuaded Isabeau to cast in her lot with the Burgundians, something or someone must have convinced her of the dauphin’s bad faith. The terms to which she agreed in the Treaty of Troyes offered a possible solution to a feud that appeared susceptible of no other conclusion.

The Events Leading Up to the Treaty of Troyes

To understand the situation that resulted in the Treaty of Troyes, it will be necessary to follow Isabeau’s actions from the death of Louis of Guyenne in 1415. As we have seen, Isabeau had worked with the Armagnacs in the months following the suppression of the Cabochian uprising, continuing to groom her son to assume his father’s place and attempting to help him build a power base strong enough that he would eventually be able to dispense with the support of either of the factions and force them to reconcile. Beyond an excruciating loss for a mother who had worked so carefully and closely with her son Louis’s death on December 18, 1415, represented a terrible setback to her hopes of uniting the kingdom. Louis had been likely to bring peace between the Armagnacs and Burgundians. Until the studies of R. C. Famiglietti revealed the strategy behind a number of Louis’s apparently disjointed acts, this had not been sufficiently recognized by historians, who had relied almost uniquely on chronicles of the period for their assessment of the young man. The dauphin’s motives, like Isabeau’s, were not well understood by contemporary chroniclers, who never had access to all the information that would have been necessary to gauge his strategies and their effectiveness. To many of them, he appeared to be driven by caprice rather than a coherent plan. An exception is the chronicle attributed to Pierre de Fenin, which describes the death of the dauphin as a “grand dommage pour le Royaume,” because the young man had possessed a great desire to keep the people in peace. Even Pintoin, so enthusiastic in his praise of the
dauphin’s actions during the Cabochian revolt, reports that his death was not much mourned by his contemporaries.\textsuperscript{6}

Because the actions of Louis of Guyenne relating to the Armagnac-Burgundian feud will need to be compared with those of the future Charles VII to make sense of Isabeau’s eventual reason for abandoning the cause of her son to support the Burgundian alliance with the English, it is important to consider the strategy that the young duke was developing just before his death. Resisting the attempts of the Armagnacs to control him, just as he had earlier refused to be the pawn of Jean sans Peur, the dauphin was carefully amassing his own power base. Famiglietti has studied the members of Louis’s dramatically expanding household for the years just before his death and discovered that of the 536 people known to have held positions under him, “only two of those appointed after 1413 were also servants of Charles of Orléans [his cousin, whose father was murdered by Jean sans Peur in 1407],” and that these two, Famiglietti continues, were also officers of the king.\textsuperscript{7} Famiglietti drives home the conclusion to be drawn from these statistics:

It is obvious that although the prince’s household was continually increasing in size, the Armagnacs were unable to effect a successful infiltration. Louis was determined to keep them at a distance, and he was awarding the positions in his household to persons who would not be swayed by either Armagnacs or Burgundians. Clearly, the duke of Guyenne was in the process of forming his own political party. The number of new officers he appointed in 1414 and 1415 is impressive, and the fact that the total number of persons in his service at this time reached the high figure of 536 is quite extraordinary. The percentage of increase is all the more apparent when one considers that only 352 people, in all, are known to have been in his employ at any point during the sixteen years from his birth until 1413.\textsuperscript{8}

As we have seen, the power base that Louis was attempting to build cannot be equated with a modern political party, a fairly stable collection of like-minded individuals. Rather, like Louis of Orleans before him and the Dukes of Burgundy, Louis was attempting by distributing offices to form a base. Eventually this base would be powerful enough to lure away members of the Armagnac and Burgundian factions. At that point, he would be able to quash the feud. Following Isabeau’s lead, he did not envision himself as a participant in feud but intended to force both factions out of power.
The loss of Louis was dire. The new dauphin, Jean of Touraine, had been raised by the parents of his wife, Jacqueline, who were William Count of Hainaut-Holland and Marguerite, sister of Jean sans Peur; Isabeau had not seen the boy since she had been forced to hand him over to his in-laws after his wedding in 1406. Given his family relationship, it appeared likely that the dauphin would be inclined toward the Burgundians, which would significantly hinder Isabeau’s capacity to develop the base that had been her and Louis’s goal. Even before Louis’s death, Isabeau had begun to fall out with the Armagnacs, who, violently opposed to reconciliation with the Burgundians, had attempted to hold Louis on a tight leash. A Burgundian-controlled dauphin backed by the queen would pose an even greater threat to the Armagnacs than Louis had done; they determined to keep Jean of Touraine from his mother’s care. Bernard of Armagnac arrived in Paris days after Louis’s death where he was immediately nominated to the position of constable and appointed governor of all finances on February 12, 1416. Under Bernard’s surveillance, Isabeau’s ability to maneuver was circumscribed. But it was not only the Armagnacs who saw the queen as a dangerous obstacle. Since the defeat and exile of Jean sans Peur after the Cabochian revolt, she was no longer an ally of the Burgundians but was seen by that faction as attached to the Armagnacs.

In the meantime, the Count of Hainaut-Holland, well aware of the importance of the dauphin’s physical presence to both parties, took measures to ensure that the young man not fall into the hands of either. Yann Grandeau speculates on the reasons for the count’s hesitation: although a natural ally of Jean of Burgundy, the count’s turning the dauphin over to the duke meant “se résoudre à n’être plus qu’un instrument docile de ses ambitions, diviser le royaume en deux obédiences, entretenir la confusion, perpétuer la guerre civile” (to resolve never to be more than the docile instrument of his ambitions, divide the kingdom into two factions, continue the strife, perpetuate civil war). Thus William bided his time, assessing the possibilities.

Back in Paris, the queen worked cautiously while Bernard established his dominance over the city. As Pintoin describes the political situation surrounding Isabeau, the queen and those who governed with her during the king’s illnesses wanted only an enduring peace between the two parties (inter partes). In hopes of achieving this, they called on the Count of Hainaut-Holland to try to persuade the Duke of Burgundy to reconcile. In addition, they sent the Duke of Brittany (married to Isabeau’s daughter, Jeanne) to Louis of Anjou, fervent Armagnac and father-in-law of Charles, Isabeau’s
youngest son. The Duke of Brittany did travel to Anjou, but he then continued on to Burgundy—defying the queen, who had ordered against his visiting Jean sans Peur, apparently fearing that the two would collude rather than agree to negotiate with the Armagnacs. And indeed, the Duke of Brittany failed to bring about the conclusion Isabeau had been seeking. For this, she reproached him angrily and had it proclaimed in the name of the king that the currency of the Dukes of Burgundy and Brittany would no longer be honored in commercial transactions. For his part, Jean sans Peur initially rejected the proposals of the Count of Hainaut-Holland. Pintoin’s perspective on the machinations, which he claimed to glean from members of the Royal Council, however, is that Jean sans Peur was not fully responsible for the stalemate: certain powerful individuals who wished to unite themselves against the “enemies of the realm” intended to isolate the Duke of Burgundy entirely from the government, fearing that were he permitted to approach the king and regain influence over him, he would wreak a dreadful vengeance. Jean, of course, would never agree to being isolated from government, and therefore no agreement could be reached. The precariousness of Isabeau’s situation soon became frighteningly clear. In April 1416, when a group of Burgundian-backed Parisians plotted the overthrow of the Armagnac government and the execution of the faction’s princes and leaders, the queen was marked for elimination along with them. The conspiracy was foiled only by the purest chance. Tanguy du Chastel gathered a group of men at arms, who surprised the conspirators and arrested them. The leaders of the plot were themselves executed shortly thereafter.

Isabeau fled Paris for Vincennes immediately after the misfired plot came to light on April 19. May 20 found her at the monastery of the Trinity of Vendôme in the diocese of Chartres, placing part of her treasure in the care of the monks. In the case that she should fail to return to claim it someday, she instructed the monks that they could use it as they pleased as long as they said prayers for the souls of her husband and herself. The secret stockpiles she similarly entrusted to a series of churches eloquently witness her sense of danger from all sides. Spreading her treasure around for maximum security was a way of guaranteeing her continued existence and influence, as well as her ability to provide for her dependents. Isabeau’s itinerary reveals that she returned to Paris for only a few days during the months of July and August but returned finally at the end of August.

Grandeau speculates that the failed uprising forced Isabeau to recognize that she could no longer hope to continue the strategy begun with Louis of

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Guyenne. The dauphin Jean had failed to present himself as a leader, following his uncle’s lead rather than seizing control of the situation, and, disillusioned by this lack of initiative, the Parisians had taken matters into their own hands by plotting the uprising. Isabeau, according to Grandeau, realized that she could not achieve peace in the kingdom unless she collaborated with Jean sans Peur against the Armagnacs and crushed them. The necessary effect of allying with Jean, of course, was the abandonment of her goal of creating a group attached to the dauphin, a group capable of supersed ing the two factions. William of Hainaut-Holland was simultaneously recognizing his own dependence on Jean sans Peur. In September, he and the dauphin departed Le Quesnoy in Hainaut (in what is today southern Belgium) in preparation for the descent southward toward Paris. Although he had previously watched both factions warily, refusing to turn the dauphin over to either, he discovered that Jean had gone to Calais to meet Henry V on October 6. The prospect of an alliance between Henry V and the Duke of Burgundy was so unacceptable to William, whose territories lay between the two, that he determined to coax the duke away from the English. On November 12, he greeted Jean sans Peur in Valenciennes, where the next day, the two “jurèrent et promirent l’un à l’autre... en bonne et vraie fraternité, qu’ils mectröient peine et conseil à avoir bon gouvernement ès personnes de Roy et du Dauphin, et que eux deux s’entretenroient et porteroient l’un et l’autre en leurs honneurs sans aucune division” (swore and promised each other in good and true brotherhood, that they would strive to govern the persons of the king and the dauphin, and they would care for and support each others’ honor without dissension). After Christmas, William and the dauphin returned to Le Quesnoy, requesting that Isabeau meet them there. Isabeau declined, undoubtedly nervous about leaving herself vulnerable in northern territory. Instead it was agreed that they would meet in Compiègne, about a hundred miles south of Quesnoy. The queen then proceeded to the chateau at Senlis, slightly over halfway from Paris to Compiègne, with her daughter Catherine, her son Charles, and some of the Royal Council.

The day of her arrival, she received a note from the dauphin, signalling his desire to negotiate with her alone in Compiègne. Her position was difficult, for the Armagnacs were reluctant to accord her an important role in negotiations, fearing that she would cede too much to the Burgundians. Jean sans Peur, however, got around a potential impasse by sending the dauphin’s wife, who was his niece, Jacqueline, and the girl’s mother, Marguerite, who was his sister, to the queen at Senlis. The three negotiated intensely while a constant
flow of letters from the queen to the dauphin kept him informed of the progress. At the same time, the Count of Brittany worked directly with the dauphin’s representatives. But matters did not move as smoothly as Isabeau had hoped. For the Count of Armagnac, apprised of Isabeau’s actions and hearing that Jean sans Peur was concluding an alliance in Lille with the Duke of Brittany’s men, headed to Senlis himself. Still, it seems that a date for the dauphin’s return to Paris was decided by the time he arrived. Satisfied that this was imminent, Isabeau returned to Vincennes on February 21 to plan for the young man’s entry into Paris.

The Count of Hainaut-Holland, however, seems to have concluded that Isabeau’s influence with the Armagnacs was limited and, suspicious, decided to go to Paris himself to test the situation. When he arrived, he announced before the Royal Council that he would only permit the dauphin to enter Paris in the company of Jean sans Peur. If peace were not reached by the king and his Council, he would take the dauphin back to Hainaut. At this, the Council demanded that the king have the Count of Hainaut-Holland arrested. He managed to escape arrest by feigning a pilgrimage.

Whatever the case, the problem of Jean sans Peur’s involvement was obviated when disaster struck again on April 4, 1417. On that day the dauphin suddenly died in agony of an abscess in his ear. Once again, Isabeau’s hopes of bringing an end to the feud were dashed. Only one son, Charles, remained, but he was married to Marie of Anjou, and, as we have seen, the Anjous were fierce Armagnacs. The faction was not going to leave the dauphin in the possession of his mother. On April 17, the Armagnacs arranged for a sweep of the queen’s chateau at Vincennes on the pretext that her courtiers were leading dissolute lives, and they sent her to first to Blois, more than a hundred miles south of Paris, and then to Tours, where she was effectively imprisoned. Despite its flagrantly political motivation, this incident has long been held out as evidence of Isabeau’s debauchery. Charles VII’s biographer, Fresne de Beaucourt, for example, accepts uncritically the pretext sounded by the Armagnacs, claiming without substantiation that Isabeau’s conduct had always been scandalous. And yet in the next sentence, astoundingly, he goes on to hypothesize as to the real reasons behind the queen’s arrest: perhaps the Count of Armagnac had intercepted a message between her and the Duke of Burgundy; perhaps he was worried that she would pull the new dauphin under her influence; perhaps he wanted to seize her treasure. Surely with such obvious political motivation, the exile does not require the additional explanation of debauchery. But Fresne de Beaucourt’s analysis demonstrates

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the effectiveness of propaganda on nineteenth-century historians. In contrast, contemporary chroniclers were less gullible. Monstrelet, for example, notes that the queen was watched over by three guardians appointed by the Armagnac government controlling her husband and son, who would not let her so much as write a letter. With the queen safely under lock and key, Monstrelet continues, the dauphin and the Armagnacs helped themselves to her hidden treasures.\(^{22}\) Louise Fradenberg’s assessment of the risks faced by queens, always marginal figures as they tried to hold factions together, illuminates the situation of Isabeau, trapped between the two factions whose conflict she had so long attempted to settle:

> When, on the basis of their foreignness, their femaleness, the in-betweenness of their regencies, or the ambiguous nature of their sovereignty, queens are constructed as what, in Turner’s terms, we might call “liminal” figures—marginal to official institutions and practices of authority, though in various ways embedded within them, or made “symbolic” of them—the result is their particularly intense association with the concepts both of division and of unity. The symbolic capital of queenship is thus built upon the central role of queens in alliance-formation: queens embody the unity of nation or people or land, or they embody the forces that might tear that unity to pieces.\(^{23}\)

For the queen, perpetual mediator possessing no army of her own, the only means of escape from imprisonment by the Armagnacs was to call on their rival Jean sans Peur. For his part, the Duke of Burgundy was quick to leap at the opportunity to appropriate for himself the authority that the queen lent his own cause. He delivered her from her house arrest on November 2.

The response was a royal ordinance promulgated by the Armagnac-controlled king in his Council on November 6, 1417, revoking the queen’s right to deal with affairs during his “absences” and informing the subjects of the realm that Charles, the dauphin, would serve as regent as necessary.\(^{24}\) Isabeau traveled with Jean sans Peur from Tours back north to Vendôme and on to Chartres, where they arrived on November 11.\(^{25}\) From there she took action, transmitting letters to “plusieurs bonnes villes du royaume de France” in which she explained the situation at hand and justified her and the Duke of Burgundy’s recent actions: the king was under the control of the Armagnacs and “d’aucunes gens de petit estat” (certain people of low degree).\(^{26}\) The Armagnacs, she wrote, had conceived a mortal hatred toward the good and loyal of the kingdom and were freely confiscating their goods. More-
over, when she, the queen, had tried to reconcile the factions dividing the kingdom, a reconciliation that the king himself ardently desired during his lucid moments and that he had sought to ensure through his negotiations with Count William (whose death had followed the dauphin’s by only a month), the Armagancs had separated the queen from the king, imprisoning her, to prevent her husband’s learning the truth about their true motives. The dauphin countered on November 27, 1417, proclaiming that in fact the queen was a prisoner of Jean sans Peur.27

With Jean sans Peur, the queen proceeded to Troyes to form a government.28 In a letter of January 10, 1418, she assumed her customary auxiliary position, granting regency powers to Jean.29 But despite her clear alliance with the Duke of Burgundy, the queen soon resumed attempting to reconcile the factions. Unity was more necessary than ever with Henry V having effectively colonized France. The Count of Armagnac was unrelenting. However, other members of the faction recognized the folly of refusing to come to terms with the Burgundians, and, in the spring of that same year, peace suddenly appeared to be a possibility. Fresne de Beaucourt writes: “C’est ce que comprirent, avec un noble patriotisme, certains des conseillers de la Couronne qui, pendant que le connétable était en train de faire le siège de Senlis, où il avait emmené en grande pompe l’infortuné Charles VI, firent taire leurs antipathies et leurs rancunes pour préparer un rapprochement avec le duc.” (That was understood by certain of the king’s counselors, who, motivated by a noble patriotism, silenced their antipathies and rancor to prepare a reconciliation with the duke while the constable was besieging Senlis, where he had taken the unfortunate Charles VI in great pomp.)30 An assembly in Paris convened on April 18, 1418, and arrived at a resolution on May 26, requiring just the signatures of the interested parties. The city erupted in joy as messengers started off to Troyes and Montbéliard to inform the queen and the Duke of Burgundy of the progress. Unfortunately, the Count of Armagnac continued to oppose the settlement.31 When the dauphin called his Council together at the Louvre to approve the resolution, Bernard refused to participate. Undaunted, the dauphin approved the treaty despite the count’s intransigence.32

When news of this internecine conflict leaked out, crowds manifested a strong displeasure (vif mécontentement).33 The Burgundians took advantage of this tense atmosphere to seek their revenge for their years of exile after the Cabochian revolt and retake Paris. On May 29, they infiltrated the city, taking prisoner and later executing Bernard of Armagnac, assassinating other
Armagnac leaders and supporters, and routing sympathizers. The dauphin and his followers fled south to Bourges. Still, the Parisians continued to hope for a reconciliation: on June 8, greffier of the Parlement, Clément de Fauquembergue, reports that at a meeting of that body, two representatives were selected to approach the queen and the dauphin and beg them to unite the kingdom in peace. In addition a group of bourgeois of Paris were sent to request that the queen and the Duke of Burgundy return to the city to restore and maintain the peace in the wake of the massacre. The pair made a formal entry into the city on the July 14, where they were joyfully welcomed by a large group of Parisians. They were led to the king, who greeted them affectionately. With the king and the queen reunited, Paul Bonenfant notes, moderate Burgundians and Armagnacs began at once to form a parti du roi. On October 26, the dauphin responded by claiming the title of regent for himself.

The initial enthusiasm with which the Parisians had greeted the queen and Jean sans Peur into Paris began to evaporate as Henry V pushed on through France, faith in the ability of the king and the Duke of Burgundy to stave off the English onslaught diminishing in the face of Henry’s successes. In August the English retook Harfleur in northern France; Calais, Caen, Cherbourg, and Honfleur fell in close succession. Rouen, besieged in July 1418, fell on January 13, 1419. Fauquembergue describes the apprehension and danger of uprising that reigned in the capital while the residents watched anxiously as Rouen fell:

Le prevost des marchans et autres pluiseurs de la ville de Paris et les lieutenans du prevost de Paris furent mandez par la Court pour apaisier et pourveoir aucuns murmures et sedicions que on doublait à venir, et pour pourveoir à la paix et tranquillité des habitans de Paris et au gouvernement et bonne police de la Ville, sur quoy pluiseurs assembléez et consultacions avaient esté faictes, qui avoient sorti petit effect. Et pour ceste mesme cause, se rassemblerent lendemain au Conseil, en la Chambre de Parlement, après disner.

[The prévôt of the merchants and others of the city of Paris and the lieutenants of the prévôt of Paris were sent by the Court to appease and watch out for complaints and unrest that were feared to be coming, and to watch out for the peace and tranquility of the residents of Paris and for the government and police of the city, for which reason several assemblies had been called, from which issued little result. And for the
same reason, the next day the Council met after dinner in the Chamber of the Parlement.\[39\]

The queen and Jean sans Peur met with Henry V in Meulan, thirty-one miles northwest of Paris, in June. The English king demanded the hand of Catherine of France in marriage, along with all of the territories won by the English with the 1360 Treaty of Brétigny. In addition, Henry claimed full sovereignty over Normandy. Nor did he agree to renounce his claim to the throne of France or rights over Anjou, Maine, the Touraine, Brittany, and Flanders.\[40\] The queen and the duke recoiled in the face of the exorbitant demands. But the Parisians were applying pressure for an accord, and, furthermore, the dauphin became more open to an agreement when he saw that the Burgundians were dealing with Henry V.\[41\] Temporarily rebuffing Henry, Jean met with the dauphin at Pouilly, just north of Melun, on July 8, 1419. Several days of tense negotiation between them followed. Pintoin recounts that on July 11, negotiations seemed on the verge of complete rupture after a bitter argument. But the day was saved when one of Isabeau’s dames d’honneur, the Dame de Giac, intervened.\[42\] Sent by the queen, the Dame de Giac was dearly loved by the dauphin, whom she had known as a child. She was also well regarded by Jean sans Peur. She appears to have fulfilled her mediating role with great flourish. In tears, she supplicated the two to return to the table. An hour later they were appeased and reappeared amid cries of “Noël.”\[43\] The result was that the dauphin promised to join Isabeau and Jean sans Peur to create a general peace that would be “ferme et estable entre les royaumes de France et d’Angleterre, et mesmement entre les subgiez de ce royaume” (firm and stable between the kingdoms of France and England, and also between the subjects of this kingdom [France]).\[44\] When the treaty had been sworn, the duke and dauphin exchanged gifts: for the dauphin was a golden fermail, a brooch, decorated with large diamonds, while Jean received a horse from the less wealthy dauphin.\[45\] Pintoin describes the joy with which the Parisians received news of the accord.\[46\]

The two men parted, then, with the understanding that they would meet again soon to agree on details, but they both believed that an accommodation had been reached. At least this is what Isabeau describes in a letter written later, on September 20, 1419, to Henry V.\[47\] That this generally was believed to be the dauphin’s intention, or at least that the dauphin let it be known that such was his intention, is indicated by Fauquembergue, who writes that Jean sans Peur went to Montereau “en intencion d’entretenir les-
dis traitiez des alliances, paix et union dessusdis, et pour pourveoir de commun assentement au gouvernement, à la garde et conservacion de ce royaume, et pour ordonner officiers pour demener et conduire le fait de la guerre et aussi de la justice de ce royaume” (with the intention of discussing the said agreements of alliance, peace, and union and to bring about common assent to government, the guard and conservation of this kingdom, and to order officers to work and make war and also justice on behalf of this realm). However, the dauphin seems to have misled his cousin as to his intentions. For when the two next met on the Montereau bridge on September 10, the dauphin’s men brutally slew the Duke of Burgundy.

In retrospect, the dauphin’s scheme seems clear. He repeatedly postponed the promised meeting; as Isabeau notes in the same letter to Henry V, the dauphin delayed again and again. Paul Bonenfant doubts that the dauphin ever had any intention of actually joining forces with his relatives because to do so would have meant the end of his own regency. Even if the dauphin were sincere, concludes Bonenfant, his Armagnac counselors never would have permitted such an arrangement, for they would have continued to fear Jean sans Peur, given his long tradition of monopolizing power. Bonenfant speculates that the dauphin had decided to give in to public pressure to join the king, queen, and Duke of Burgundy by meeting with Jean sans Peur, but with the intention of murdering him: “Pourquoi ne pas . . . saisir l’occasion de cette entrevue pour se débarrasser enfin et à jamais de ce redoubtable rival, ce qui vengerait du même coup la mort du duc d’Orléans?” (Why not seize the opportunity to get rid of this powerful rival for good, avenging the death of the Duke of Orleans?)

Isabeau reacted to the news of Jean’s assassination with panic and dread. Nothing would prevent the dauphin and the Armagnacs from marching on Troyes and seizing her and the king. She appealed to Jean’s widow, Marguerite, and his heir, Philip, the new Duke of Burgundy, to send troops to Troyes immediately. The chancery was busy night and day preparing letters to be sent out to the towns of the realm, requesting them to remain loyal to the king.

The news of the Duke of Burgundy’s assassination was received with equal distress in Paris. Fauquembergue describes reaction in the capital, deploring the inevitable difficulties that he knew would result from the dauphin’s action:

Duquel fait les habitans de la ville de Paris, qui tant avoient esté desirans et joyeux de la publicacion des aliances et traitiez de paix et union
In vengeful fury, Parisians rounded up and executed partisans of the dauphin, according to Monstrelet. The dauphin attempted to justify himself and arouse the Parisians to his side in letters sent to the capital, but these met with no positive response. Rather, captains, men at arms, prévôts, merchants, bourgeois, workers, and other inhabitants of Paris gathered together and swore their loyalty to the Count of St. Pol, earlier named lieutenant of Paris by Jean sans Peur, pledging to fight against the malfaiteurs responsible for the death of the duke.

The Parisians feared that the Armagnacs would now team up with the English. As for Isabeau, now that her hopes of a joint Armagnac-Burgundian army to defeat the English were extinguished, she too feared becoming the victim of an alliance, but one between Henry V and the new Duke of Bur-
gundy, Philip. At least this appears to be the case, judging by her attempt to take up negotiations with the English king. In the letter of September 20 mentioned above (a copy of which she forwarded to Philip, presumably to signal to him that she had taken control of the situation), she requests that Henry send an embassy of about forty to Troyes to meet with Charles VI and herself, as well as “ceulx de son sang et lignage, et aultres grans et loyauxx barons et notables gens de cest royaarme” (those of his blood and lineage, and other great and loyal barons and notable people of this kingdom). However, Isabeau was not granted her meeting, for Henry was being solicited at the same time by the Parisians, who for their part had decided that the only way to prevent an alliance between the Armagnacs and the English was to negotiate with the King of England. An embassy departed Paris on September 19 to seek an audience with Henry at Gisors in Normandy, reaching the castle just as Isabeau’s letter arrived by messenger.

At Gisors the group was stunned to learn that Henry was demanding nothing less than the crown for himself in return for an alliance. The embassy returned to Paris, accompanied by a group sent by the English king, to discuss the matter further. In Paris, the Count of St. Pol and the Royal Council expressed their shock at the demand, reminding the English embassy of the earlier negotiations between the king and the Duke of Burgundy, “duquel traitié ilz se devoient bien contenter” (which treaty should be satisfactory to them). The response of the English was curt: things had changed: “les choses estoient autres, et en autre dispocision” (things were different, and differently disposed).

Jean sans Peur was buried on October 22 at the cathedral of St. Vaast in Arras, while the new Duke of Burgundy for his part circulated in his territories, making entries and gathering the support of his followers for the struggles to come. At this point, Philip was still unaware of the demands that Henry V was making. When he learned of these from messengers shortly after his father’s funeral, he held a council to discuss the pros and cons of joining forces with the English king under the outrageous terms set out. It was decided that an alliance with the English was the lesser of two evils. Bonenfant writes: “Enfin ne valait-il pas mieux, puisque le duc ne pouvait s’assurer la couronne après la mort de Charles VI, la voir passer au roi d’Angleterre plutôt qu’au dauphin ou aux Orléans? Cette considération seule devrait suffire à le déterminer sans retard.” (In the end wasn’t it better, given that the duke could not control the crown after the death of Charles VI, to see it pass to the King of England rather than to the dauphin or to the House
of Orleans? This alone would have sufficed to determine the answer without hesitation.)\(^\text{60}\)

Philip had made his choice: it remained to convince Isabeau, who because Henry had not sent her the requested embassy, was still unaware of that king’s condition that he assume the crown of France. As far as Isabeau knew, Henry’s condition for alliance was still the cession of the lands originally ceded to England by the Treaty of Brétigny, as he had demanded the previous May.\(^\text{61}\) When Philip made the demands of Henry V known to the queen by messenger, she balked, showing herself to be significantly less malleable than Philip had hoped she would be.

As Bonenfant observes, it has always been assumed that the queen acceded easily to the agreement at this point. But the historian demonstrates that this was not the case. Unfortunately, despite his careful reading and interpretation of the documents, his analysis has been ignored in the rare discussions of the queen’s attitude toward the Treaty of Troyes. However, these arguments are crucial to reconstructing the story of Isabeau’s actions leading up to the Treaty of Troyes. I review them in what follows.

Isabeau initially resisted Henry’s demand. A letter patent of November 7, which she issued in the name of the king, bears witness to her opposition. On the one hand, the letter patent grants Philip the power to conclude a general truce with the English: “Trieues & Abstinence de Guerre, bonnes & Seures, generales ou particuliers” (truces and cessation of war, good and secure, general or limited).\(^\text{62}\) On the other hand, it does not grant him the power to conclude peace. Obviously this limited authority threatened to stall negotiations with the English.

Still, the Burgundians devised a way out by stipulating in the accord that they signed with English ambassadors in Arras on November 30 that the absence of the king’s consent would not necessarily render the accord invalid.\(^\text{63}\) Two days later, Philip added his approval and swore to persuade the king and queen to accept the accord.\(^\text{64}\) It is important to emphasize that Philip was well aware that the queen’s assent would not be won easily: indeed, that he feared she might try to escape from Troyes when she discovered that he was prepared to yield the concessions demanded by Henry. This is clear from Philip’s instructions to his man Jean de Blaisy, whom the duke sent to Troyes to speak to his mother, Duchess Marguerite, and to bring the queen up to date. In a letter dated early December 1419, Philip insists that Jean de Blaisy impress on Marguerite the importance of keeping the king, the queen, and the princess Catherine surrounded by “good and faithful people,” in other

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words, reliable Burgundians (“qu’elle face bonne diligence que le roy, la roynne et Madame Katherine soient seurement et de bonnes et fiables gens accompaignées”). Why would the royal family need to be securely accompanied by loyal Burgundians if Philip were not afraid that they would try to take flight? After the murder of Jean sans Peur, Marguerite, planning to go to Troyes herself, had called up men-at-arms to accompany her to Troyes, undoubtedly to guarantee that the queen remain in place, although the duchess fell sick and was not able to make the trip as planned.

Far from the assent that Philip hoped for, on December 17 Isabeau sent Philip’s man Regnier Pot to deliver to the duke the noncommittal response that she was ready to negotiate for the honor of the king, her lord and husband (“a l’onneur du roy, son seigneur et espoux”). In addition, she tried to buy time by requesting that some properties and goods be returned to her. For at that precise moment, she had entered into contact once again with the dauphin. On December 21, the dauphin responded to a no-longer extant letter from her, explaining that he had dispatched a messenger to her who would speak to her about the secret matters she had touched on in an earlier message to him. A letter from the dauphin’s chancellor, Robert de Maçon, to that same Regnier Pot, confirms that an agreement between the dauphin and his mother was under way. Charles had called on Regnier Pot to deliver a message to Philip on October 15, in which he reproached the duke for negotiating with the English. Regnier Pot, then, was in the thick of the intrigue. In his letter, Robert de Maçon thanks Regnier for all he had done to advance the cause of peace. Bonenfant remarks, “N’est-il pas symptomatique dès lors que ce soit lui que la reine ait chargé le 17 décembre de porter au duc de Bourgogne une réponse que l’on a toutes les raisons de qualifier de dilatoire?” (Is it not symptomatic from that time on that he happened to be the one that the queen charged with carrying to the Duke of Burgundy on December 17 a response [i.e., Isabeau’s request for the restitution of certain lands and funds] that can only be qualified as a delaying tactic?) Isabeau, then, was clearly waffling on settlement with Philip of Burgundy and Henry V while attempting to negotiate an agreement with her son.

What happened? Why was the agreement not realized? It is impossible to know exactly what transpired between the date when Isabeau tried that one last time to reach an accord with her son and January 17, when the king and his Council released letters patent announcing the king’s condemnation of the dauphin. A number of factors may have played a role in Isabeau’s de-
cision to abandon the dauphin’s cause. One may have been that she was inti-
midated into her final capitulation to the Burgundians. Although she was able to slip messages to the outside world, she was surrounded in Troyes by “loyal” Burgundians, which must have been a source of considerable pres-
sure. This issue is raised by the anonymous writer of the Répons d’un bon et loyal François, composed in the winter of 1420 in reaction to the December accord between Philip and Henry V at Arras:

Considerez en quelle liberté et franchise ont esté et sont la royne et sa fille, madame Katherine, qui se sont voulu partir de Troyes, la ou elles estoient comme l’en dit, mais on ne l’a pas souffert jusques a tant que on les ait mises es mains des anciens ennemis du roy et du royaume et d’elles mesmes, par espoventement et force de gens d’armes.

[Considering whether the queen and her daughter, Madame Catherine, have been or are free; they wanted to leave Troyes, where they were, as they say, but this was not permitted; they were delivered into the hands of the ancient enemies of the king and the kingdom and of themselves, by terror and the force of men at arms.]72

The claim has been dismissed as Armagnac propaganda or wishful thinking or perhaps as an offer of a way out for Isabeau. Nicole Pons writes of the queen that at the time the Répons was composed, “she had totally cast her lot on the side of Henry V and Philip of the Good.”73 True, Isabeau had made her choice. But the point that she had been forced into it cannot be dismissed given the very real presence of the duke’s supporters.

At the very least, the “loyal” Burgundians would have formed a layer between Isabeau and alternate sources of information about what was happen-ing beyond Troyes. Thus she would not have been able to discern what was true and what was being said to persuade her to comply. Once again, the Répons makes this point, albeit in an exaggerated way.

Considerez la premiere malice, car ce traictés ilz ont fait et formé en latin contre le commun usaige des tracitiez qui souloient estre faiz entre François et Anglois; et ce ont fait afin que plus legierement et couvertement puissent estre induiz ceulx qui n’entendront (point le) latin a l’accorder, comme le roy, la royne, madame Katherine et la plus grant partie des nobles, bourgeois et autres du royaume, et car le latin puet avoir plus divers entendemens par equivocation que le François.

[Considering the first trick, they wrote and formulated the treaty in
Latin, against the common usage of treaties between the French and the English; and they did this because those who do not understand Latin can be more easily and covertly persuaded, like the king, the queen, and Madame Catherine and the greatest part of the nobles, bourgeois, and others of the kingdom, for Latin is more susceptible to equivocation than French.]

The accusation cannot be wholly true. Still, like the argument that she was being held prisoner, it may be understood as revealing a partial truth: that Isabeau was being misinformed. We know that the Duke of Burgundy fed her stories. For example, in October he had instructed Jean de Blaisy to emphasize that the Armagnacs were negotiating diligently with the English, “ou grant prejudice du roy et de ses obeïssans” (to the great detriment of the king and his followers). This was almost certainly not true. The incident demonstrates that Isabeau was given information about her son that may not have been accurate. Surrounded by Burgundians determined to persuade her to come to their side and lacking the details necessary to decide whom to trust, Isabeau would have been unable to make an informed decision. She would have had no good reason to trust Charles and his followers: against their own interest and that of the kingdom, they had slain the Duke of Burgundy. It may have been relatively simple for a messenger of Henry V to convince the queen of her son’s treacherous intents regarding her.

In any case, the one-man embassy of Louis Robersart seems to have been the decisive factor in Isabeau’s decision to abandon her son’s cause and revert once and for all to that of the Burgundians. Bonenfant points out how odd it is that Henry V would send an individual to the court of Troyes in an age when embassies commonly numbered about half a dozen. The secrecy surrounding the mission—little is known about the man and nothing about his message—indicates that Henry V did not regard this as an ordinary diplomatic visit. Clearly the king chose Louis Robersart carefully: he was a man calculated to appeal to all parties involved in the negotiations, trusted on all sides. As Bonenfant writes, he was a native of Hainaut and his first language was French; he was related to the House of Bavaria, belonging to the same branch of Wittelsbach as the Duchess of Burgundy; and having served the king of England for twenty-five years, he possessed English citizenship.

The queen, surrounded by loyal Burgundians, appears to have yielded to Robersart’s recommendations. Not only was she surrounded by Philip’s men,
but even her own counselors were bribed by the Duchess of Burgundy, writes Bonenfant, who “distribue largement à ceux-ci, non point des pots, mais des queues de vins, ‘afin qu’ilz soient plus enclinz es affaires’ du duc” (distributed lavishly to them, not jars but “queues” [280 pint measures] of wine, “so that they would be more inclined toward the affairs” of the duke).78

Furthermore, there was the question of money. Isabeau had virtually no funds remaining. A long tradition reproaches the queen for her desire to provide for herself and her household. Even Bonenfant writes in this regard that “il eût fallu à Isabeau un désintéressement et une force d’âme qu’elle ne possédait certainement pas pour repousser, en de telles circonstances, la tentative d’un secours financier bourguignon” (Isabeau would have required a disinterest and force of spirit that she certainly did not possess to reject under the circumstances the temptation of financial aid from the Burgundians).79

After ceding to Robersart, Isabeau was paid 6,000 livres on March 3. But to see the queen’s desire to provide for her dependents as signs of greed and collaboration is to ignore the fact that she was responsible for a household, a group of followers, whose very existence depended on her. She did not have the luxury of worrying simply about feeding herself. It is more accurate to see the queen’s decision as one in favor of her dependents and against a son whose followers had imprisoned her, a son who was as likely as not to turn on her if she managed to escape from Troyes.

The Treaty of Troyes, finally signed on May 20, 1420, was not viewed as a disaster by everyone. Many Parisians were very happy to receive the news. Fauquembergue relates that on Monday, April 30, an assembly including the Count of St. Pol, the chancellor, the presidents and the councillors of the three chambers of Parlement, representatives of the University of Paris, the prévôt of Paris, clerks, people of the church, bourgeois and inhabitants of Paris “en grant nombre, tant que ladicte Chambre de Parlement en estoit toute plaine et occupée” (in large number, such that the said Parlement was totally filled and occupied) gathered in the Parlement.80 They were informed that after laboring over the question of peace and accord between the two kingdoms of France and England, the Duke of Burgundy, acting for the king and queen and the Royal Council at Troyes, had brokered peace in the form of a treaty:

lequel traictié et accord le duc de Bourgoigne avoit esté esmeu de pour- suivir, non mie pour occasion d’aucune vengence contre quelconques personne, mais seulement pour obtemperer, obeir et ensuir le commande-
The group responded enthusiastically, demonstrating their approval: they “respondirent en truba que oyl par les bouches de pluiseurs en très grant nombre” (responded vocally, in large number, their assent with their mouths).82

That Isabeau disinherited her son as a bastard in the Treaty of Troyes came to be believed only after her death. The idea is based upon a mistranslation of a common expression used in the treaty, “so-called” (soi-disant), as I noted in the introduction. Later historians, already believing in Isabeau’s promiscuity, read soi-disant as a veiled reference to Charles’s uncertain paternity. But, as we saw, the interpretation cannot be justified, for the term was part of standard insult vocabulary, meaning that the bearer of a title was unfit.
The Problem of Patriotism

For nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians, the dauphin was the center around which French patriotism took its form; for them, supporting the dauphin against the Burgundians was an act of patriotism, and the queen’s attempt to block her son’s accession to the throne an act of treason. Calmette and Déprez exemplify this perspective:

autour du “dauphin,” décrié et contesté, se cristallise le loyalisme. Une voix s’élève, celle d’une opposition qu’on peut bien dire nationale. C’est la protestation de ceux qui se haussent à cette vue, incontestablement patriotique, qu’en aucun cas et sous aucun prétexte il n’est licite de favoriser l’étranger contre le pays, qu’en face d’un impérialisme déchainé il faut taire les passions partisanes, imposer silence aux préférences individuelles, sacrifier délibérément les intérêts particuliers et brider les égoïsmes, même collectifs.

[around the dauphin, decried and contested, loyalty crystallized. A voice was raised, that of an opposition that we can call national. The protestation issuing from this voice that was indisputably patriotic held that under no circumstances was it licit to favor the foreigner against the country, and that in the face of unbridled imperialism it was necessary to halt partisan sentiments, silence individual preferences, deliberately sacrifice particular interests, and rein in self-interest, even collective.]\(^\text{83}\)

The reading of Calmette and Déprez presents a number of problems. First, it ignores the purely aleatory nature of the dauphin’s allegiance to the Armagnac rather than Burgundian faction. If a national voice can be discerned rising out of the \(mêlé\), it is only because in retrospect events have been assembled purposefully into an interpretational grid that locates the origins of patriotism in the voices supporting the dauphin. Originally scheduled to marry Jean of Burgundy’s daughter, Anne, the dauphin eventually married Marie of Anjou.\(^\text{84}\) Had he been the son-in-law of the Duke of Burgundy, the history of France would have been different. The Armagnacs would have had little justification to continue their struggle had Charles been embedded in the Burgundian cause, and the double monarchy of Henry V would have been impossible. To further emphasize the contingency of the dauphin’s position, even the Angevin attachment to the Armagnac cause was never a given but occurred as a result of the personal enmity between Louis II, Duke of Anjou, and his cousin Jean sans Peur for reasons to be explained below.

\(\text{Revisiting the Treaty of Troyes}\)
After the Cabochian revolt, Louis assumed that the Armagnacs were likely to remain in power and decided that they therefore represented the better risk. The notion of the dauphin as a focal point for patriotism must thus be significantly nuanced. It was not clear to those on the ground in around 1420 that Charles would become a rallying point around which patriotism would develop. From a contemporary perspective, the dauphin had inherited a feud: in fact, it was precisely the dauphin who refused to “taire les passions partisanes” (halt the partisan sentiments), the dauphin who finally rejected Jean sans Peur’s attempts to reconcile the factions in the face of the English juggernaut in the strongest language possible, by slaying the leader of one faction and a blood relative on top of that.

Loyalty to the Armagnacs cannot be understood, then, uncritically, as a form of nationalism or patriotism. Arguments that the king could not legally disinherit his son, promoted from 1417 on, represented the position of a significant population. Still, the passionate mutual hatred expressed by supporters of the factions did not derive from political ideology but followed the logic of a feud. A variety of different interests were latched on to one or the other of the factions for reasons of kinship and local interests. That the struggle as Isabeau experienced it was waged as a feud between warring factions is supported by an examination of what motivated the different houses to join forces with one or the other of the two parties. The most obvious reason was close familial ties. The dauphin’s closest followers were from Angevin families. Pierre, seigneur de Beauvau, erstwhile counselor of Charles’s father-in-law, Louis II, Duke of Anjou and seneschal of Anjou and governor of Provence, was assigned to Charles by his mother-in-law, Yolande of Anjou. The grand maître of Charles’s household, Hardouin, seigneur de Maillé, had begun his career serving the House of Anjou. Robert de Maçon, Charles’s chancellor, was the son of a secretary and counselor of Louis II of Anjou. Jean Louvet, président of Provence, part of the Angevin holdings, married his daughter to the Bastard of Orleans, Jean of Dunois, natural son of Louis of Orleans. Tanguy du Chastel, close advisor and one of the principal instigators of the assassination of Jean sans Peur, had accompanied Louis II of Anjou in his Italian campaigns and later served as the prévôt of Paris under the Armagnacs. The loyalty of these followers was assured through the careful and efficient dispensing of favor; as Malcolm Vale writes, they were men of relatively low standing, dependent on Charles’s patronage for their prestige, for Agincourt had deprived the kingdom of a large portion of its nobility, potential allies of the dauphin. “Such men,” writes
Vale, “could be trusted as long as they were rewarded.” Among the nobility, the Dukes of Bar, Savoy, and the Duchess of Bourbon all clung to the Angevin, that is to say, the Armagnac cause, for reasons of kinship. These alliances were not based on a sense of patriotism, loyalty to France, but on family interest.

On the Burgundian side, too, followers were motivated by family interest rather than ideological commitment. Marguerite of Burgundy solicited Pope Martin V to declare that the dauphin perjured the oath he swore at Pouilly. But the Pope declined, mindful that his own candidate for the kingship of Naples was the son of Yolande of Anjou. Even the Pope thought first of kinship. The Burgundians had also depended on the support of the Duke of Lorraine. However, his daughter, Isabelle, was about to marry René, another son of Yolande, which pulled him from the Burgundian camp.

Further reinforcing the idea that the dauphin’s cause should be viewed in the context of feuding rather than patriotism is that the dauphin himself couched his claims to be the injured party in terms of a feud. Calling on the cities for their support, he requested aid for the seigneurie of his father, which was being damaged by rebels. His appeal was never cast in terms of patriotism; it was never a call to rise up and defend the patrie:

Attendu que mondit seigneur est de present et par ladicte traison es mains des dessusdiz ses rebelles et desobeissans et destruisseurs de ceste seigneurie, et à nous, qui sommez son seul filz, tant par vertu du pouvoir de lieutenant general que il nous a donné comme par droit naturel, appartient plus que à nul aultre pourvoir à la bonne garde et entretenu ment de sa seigneurie, à laquelle chose faire chescun doit avoir à nous recours et nous y faire ayde et preste obeissance.

[Given that Monseigneur is at the moment, because of the said treason, in the hands of the above-mentioned rebellious and disobedient subjects, destroyers of his seigneurie, it is up to us, his only son, as much by virtue of the power of lieutenant general he has vested in me as by natural right, more than to anyone else to watch out for the guard and care of his seigneurie, and for this, everyone should have recourse to us and give us aid and obedience.]91

Historians frequently refer to the Armagnacs as the “French,” in opposition to the Burgundians. The effect of the binary is to reinforce the impression that the feud can be viewed from a patriotic perspective, with the Armagnacs representing the beleaguered nation. However, this is not accu-
Northern chroniclers refer to the Armagnacs as foreigners, in contrast with themselves, pointing to their bizarre language and birthplace in distant lands. The kingdom was divided between the factions; the “French” could be either Armagnacs or Burgundians. Indeed, individual cities within the French kingdom were divided. The behavior of members of the Burgundian faction within cities won back from the Armagnacs in 1417 as described by Juvénal des Ursins demonstrates that to the villagers torn between loyalties, the conflict was not attached to patriotic principles. On the contrary, the popular outrage that erupted into violence against the Armagnac officiers of the king suggests the dispute was experienced as local in nature.

Partout on prenoit les gens du Roy, qui au temps estoyaient officiers, et leur cuppoit-on les testes, et pilloit, et roboit-on leurs biens. Et pour faire tuer un homme, il suffisoit de dire “Cestuy là est Armagnac.” Aussi pareillement quand on pouvoit savoir ou trouver quelques un qu’on scavoit tenir le party du duc de Bourgogne, ils estoient punis, et leurs biens pris: c’estoit grande pitié à gens d’entendement, de voir les choses en estat qu’elles estoient. [Everywhere they snatched the king’s people, who at that time were officers, and they chopped off their heads, pillaged them, and robbed them of their goods. To get someone killed it sufficed to say “That one is an Armagnac.” Also, if someone found out that someone else belonged to the party of the Duke of Burgundy, they were penalized, and their goods taken: it was a great pity to people of sense to see things in such a state.]

This outrage followed from the harsh rule and destruction attributed to the Armagnacs, who themselves feared and despised the Burgundians. The Armagnac faction had been thoroughly discredited by its ruthless suppression of the Parisians when it gained power after the Cabochian revolt. Isabeau, then, had good reason to continue to see the struggle in the same terms in which it had always been cast since the early days when she was first appointed mediator. Ever attempting to chart a path between the Scylla of the Armagnacs and the Charybdis of the Burgundians, she had allied herself with the Armagnacs after the Cabochian uprising. But finding herself trapped in a feud she could not contain, she labored to transcend the factions. The goal proved to be illusory.

Undoubtedly signs of a budding patriotism were apparent in the fifteenth century. But they were just that: signs. As Etienne Balibar signals, foundation myths are illusory and frequently retrospective. The development of a na-
tion is never inevitable; it is only afterward that we imagine a trajectory with a clear teleology. National formation, rather, first “consists of a multiplicity of qualitatively distinct events spread out over time, none of which implies any subsequent event. Second, these events do not of their nature belong to the history of one determinate nation.” As David A. Bell argues, national sentiment was aroused by the Hundred Years War, but this was different from “nationalism” in ways pertinent to this discussion of Isabeau’s role in the Treaty of Troyes. The medieval notions of the nation were based on an awareness of a shared history and geography, but mostly on shared subjugation to the French king. “Nationalism” emerges from the willed construction of a collective identity, a nation, and such nationalism is located above any individual leader. The national sentiment of the fifteenth century was attached to a figure, the king, not to a nation.

To assess Isabeau’s role in the Treaty of Troyes, the Burgundian-Armagnac conflict must be detached from its familiar position within the narrative of a national struggle against the English and reconsidered in terms that would have been familiar to the queen and her contemporaries. Marie-Luise Heckmann argues that this would have been the language of dynasty. As we have seen, the notion of female complementarity, a view that Isabeau clearly shared with her contemporaries, eased the eventual adoption of Salic Law. However, Salic Law had not yet been firmly established in 1420. Nor had it been settled definitively whether the king had the right to determine his heir or whether the heir succeeded simply by “natural” right. Ralph Giesey has demonstrated the hazardous nature of the principles of French succession, writing that the apparently fundamental law must be seen as “a congeries of different ideas coming from the different legal systems of medieval times.” When the king disinherited the dauphin in 1419 for having Jean sans Peur assassinated, it was not clear whether or not he had the right to do so. Jean de Terre Rouge’s treatise in favor of the dauphin would help decide the issue, but this came after the king had already acted, and, moreover, the treatise did not receive wide distribution until a century after it was written. Heckmann argues that from Isabeau’s perspective, her daughter Catherine could reasonably form the family link to the throne if the dauphin Charles were refused succession:

Isabella von Bayern dachte und handelte vor allem nach dynastischen Kategorien. Das gilt auch für den Übergang der französischen Krone an den englischen Prätendenten im Mai 1420. Für die Königin war es
ebenso vorstellbar, dass ihre Tochter die französische Krone weitergeben könnte, wie dass ihre Sohn das tat.

[Isabeau of Bavaria thought and behaved in accordance with dynastic categories. This was the case for the transfer of the French crown to the English claimant in May 1420. For the queen was it equally imaginable that her daughter would pass on the French crown as that her son would do so.] 99

When Salic Law, with its exclusion of women from succession and its claim that the king did not possess the right to disinherit his eldest son, became a “fundamental” law of the land, it retrospectively invalidated Isabeau’s assumptions. But in 1420, the question of succession was still moot. From Isabeau’s perspective, then, the Treaty of Troyes must have looked like a plausible means of bringing an end to the conflict between the Burgundians and Armagnacs by joining the Burgundian cause to the superior power of Henry V, who would be able to force the dauphin’s faction to submit. In fact, the treaty did not succeed at this goal. However, in 1420, the actors could not “take into account some five centuries of subsequent historical development,” as Mark Warner has observed. 100

It is reasonable, then, to consider the ostensible advantages the treaty appeared to offer in 1420. One feature of the double monarchy that has not been sufficiently considered, as J. W. McKenna argued already in 1965, is that once the reign of Henry V had passed, a French king would sit on the throne of France. The French had resisted vigorously an English king on the throne since Edward III first pressed his claim in 1338. But Henry V’s son, Henry VI, son of Catherine de Valois, was half French, a normal status of the heir to the throne, whose mother was frequently from a different land. Charles VII, of course, was French, but his mother was Bavarian. A program of propagandistic genealogical trees was created to support the image of Henry VI as French. In fact, the claim did not take hold in the popular imagination; no one today thinks of Henry VI as French. But at the time there was no reason not to believe that such would be the case. The hope that Henry VI would be perceived as a French king was all the more reasonable in 1420 when Henry V’s premature death in 1422 was not foreseeable. Jean Chartier, who continued the chronicle of Pintoin after the monk’s death, writes almost positively of the recently deceased Henry, suggesting that he might have succeeded at his goal of reigning over a peaceful kingdom had he survived to old age:

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Nec suo tempore ullus princeps eo sufficiencior, quo ad patriam subigen-
dam et conquirendam, racione policie, prudencie et justicie aliarumque
proprietatum in eo existencium videbatur, quamvis divisiones et dissipa-
ciones inter regni Francie principes ad subiciendam patriam quam sub-
jecit ipsum permaxime adjuvarent, quoniam *Omne regnum in se
divisum*, etc. Firme enim sperabat, ut ante dictum est, liliorum corone
sublimari et regno Francie jure hereditario racionibus superius dictis,
quamvis minus racionabiliter, succedere.

[There was no prince in his time who was more capable of subjugating
and conquering the land, through the reasonableness of his politics, pru-
dence, justice, and other qualities that he clearly possessed, although the
divisions and problems among the princes of France greatly aided the
subjection that he planned: as it is said, *Omne regnum in se divisum*, etc.
He firmly hoped, as we have said, to succeed to the crown of *fleur-de-lis*
and the kingdom of France as legal heir, for the reasons stated above, al-
though this was unreasonable.]\(^{101}\)

Henry’s success in uniting the kingdom, had he survived, is not a given, or
even highly probable, in the face of the tenacity of Charles and his followers.
Yet, he might have appeared likely to succeed, not unreasonably, to Isabeau.
Had Henry V lived to old age or had a mentally stable Henry VI ascended the
throne, either one might well have been accepted as a French king.

Another aspect of the double monarchy created by the Treaty of Troyes
that must be considered in judging Isabeau’s role in it is that its chances of
creating and maintaining peace would have been greater had Philip of Bur-
gundy become regent after the death of Henry V. Instead, the late king’s
brother, John, Duke of Bedford, immediately assumed the reins of power,
even though Henry V appears to have designated Philip regent.\(^{102}\) The too-
great popularity of the Dukes of Burgundy had always been a problem as far
as the royal family was concerned: but in this case it would have worked to
their advantage, helping to arouse support for the baby king, Henry VI.

The treaty did not produce the results that Isabeau had hoped. But had she
rejected the English king’s offer, the seemingly endless Armagnac-Burgun-
dian feud would have continued in the same way. True, Henry V’s early death
might have resulted in an earlier peace had the treaty not existed, but she
could not have foreseen that. Nor would Henry V have received the moral
authority he presumably enjoyed because of the support of the king and
queen. Nonetheless, he would have continued his conquest of France as long
as he lived.

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