

## POETRY OF POWER: QUEEN MARY OF HUNGARY (1382-1395) IN A VENETIAN MIRROR

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The fourteenth century has been called a century of calamities by historians.<sup>1</sup> Marked by famines and plagues, endemic warfare and peasant risings, the Hundred Years' War, the Avignon papacy and the Great Schism, it was also a period when royal authority was attacked by the power of the barons. In Hungary and Poland the death of Louis the Great on 16 September 1382 without a male heir resulted in great confusion and the emergence of a number of pretenders to both thrones. The eldest daughter, Mary, eventually crowned king of Hungary, had been engaged to Sigismund of Luxembourg (brother of the Holy Roman Emperor), was later promised to Louis of Orléans (brother of the king of France), and was for a short interval deposed from the throne as a result of the demands of Charles of Durazzo, king of Naples and relative of Louis the Great. The situation was similar with Louis' younger daughter, Hedvig, crowned king of Poland, who had been engaged to William of Valois, but eventually given in marriage to Jogaila of Lithuania, son of the last pagan ruler in Europe.

This period of turbulence is rich in written accounts where charters and donations are concerned, but its disclosure in literature and international politics is still incomplete. Lorenzo Monaci's *Carmen seu historia Carolo II cognomento Parvo Rege Hungariae*<sup>2</sup> is a 560-line Latin hexametric poem.<sup>3</sup> Monaci was the

<sup>1</sup> Barbara W. Tuckman, *A Distant Mirror* (London: Macmillan, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> This article is based on Ilona Ferenczi, "Poetry of Politics: Queen Mary of Hungary in Lorenzo Monaci's *Carmen* (1387)," MA thesis (Budapest: Central European University, 2008), published as Ilona Edit Ferenczi, *Poetry of Politics: Lorenzo Monaci's Carmen (1387), The Daughter of Louis I, Queen Mary of Hungary in Venetian Eyes* (Saarbrücken: VDM Publishing House, 2009). The only surviving manuscript of the poem "*Carmen seu historia Carolo II cognomento Parvo Rege Hungariae*" is in the Vatican Library, Vat. Lat. 11507, in Rome, Mario Poppi. "Ricerche sulla vita e cultura del notaio e cronista veneziano Lorenzo de Monacis, cancelliere cretese, "*Studi veneziani*" 9 (1967): 170 (hereafter: Poppi, "Ricerche"). It was first published as "Laurentii de Monacis Veneti carmen seu historia Carolo II cognomento Parvo Rege Hungariae" in *Laurentii de Monacis Veneti Crete cancellarii chronicon de rebus Venetis etc.*, ed. Flaminio Cornelius (Venice, 1758), 321-338 (hereafter: Monaci, *Carmen*), later included in *Analecta Monumentorum Historicorum Literariorum*, Vol. 1, ed. Franciscus Toldy (Pest: Acad. Hung. Typographus, 1862) (hereafter: Toldy, *Analecta*), 112-132, and translated by Sándor Márki, "Monaci Lőrinc krónikája Kis Károlyról" (Lorenzo Monaci's chronicle about Charles the Little) *Középkori krónikások*, ed. Ferenc Gombos (Budapest: Albin, 1910) vol. 10, 131-153.

<sup>3</sup> "Composto nella redazione definitiva verso il 1388, il carmen narra i fatti d'Ungheria, dalla chiamata a

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notary<sup>4</sup> accompanying the Venetian ambassador, Pantaleone Barbo, on a mission to Hungary in 1386 to negotiate an alliance with Queen Mary of Hungary (1382-1395) and the Queen Mother Elizabeth. By the time Barbo arrived, the queens had been taken prisoner by a rebellious group of barons. Monaci rushed home to secure naval help from the Signoria for their rescue.

Mission completed, in 1387 Monaci met Queen Mary, whom he recorded as commissioning him to write a history of Hungary with special emphasis on the role of Venice in the events that took place in Hungary at the close of the century. Instead of a historical account, Monaci wrote a poem; instead of compiling a history of Hungary, he summarized her recent past.

### Mary's Rule in Hungary

On 17 September 1382, twelve-year-old Mary was crowned “king of Hungary” (*rex Hungariae*) and the queen mother, Elizabeth, was appointed as regent. For the first time in the history of Hungary, a woman was elected to rule the country. Contemporary sources note the peculiarity; a woman had been crowned king: *domina Maria filia enior antedicti regis in civitate predicta coronata fuit in regem*. In the formulations of her charters and letter formulas Queen Mary asserted that she followed her father by birthright and ascended to the throne as if she were a son, but entitles herself “queen.” By 1384, the aristocracy was divided into two parties: one supporting, another opposing the queens.

In 1385, the Horváti clan invited Charles of Durazzo to take the Hungarian throne. Charles was in line to succeed to the Hungarian throne, the next male offspring of the Angevin House on the Neapolitan branch. Sigismund fled to Bohemia at the news that Charles of Durazzo had landed in Dalmatia. The queens and their party were forced to submit to their distant Angevin relative. Charles was

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Buda di Carlo II al suo ferimento a morte a causa di una congiura,” Poppi, “Ricerche,” 169-170.

<sup>4</sup> Coming from a family of notaries and educated in this tradition, Lorenzo Monaci (1351-1428) was also a prolific man of letters. His poetry and historical writings were well-received and appreciated by his contemporaries as well as posterity. He wrote both vernacular and Latin poetry, composed orations, epistles, and a history of Venice. He became a member of the *avogadori di comun* in 1363, *notarius auditorum sententiarum* in 1371, *notarius Venetiarum* in 1376, and *notarius curiae maioris* (composed of functionaries and the doge's counsellors) in 1386. Monaci took part in the Republic of Venice's annexation of Argos and Nauplion in 1388. Foreign diplomacy took him to Hungary, Germany, and France. He was governor of Crete for forty years.

crowned king of Hungary on 31 December 1385. In a summary of the events “one of the three pretenders to the throne thus came at arm’s length to his goal, another one gave up, and the third one just interfered in the struggle.”<sup>5</sup>

The thirty-nine-day-reign of Charles of Durazzo meant a “cohabitation” of the new king with the former queens in the castle of Buda. Was it a “double rule”? Debate over this problem<sup>6</sup> has pointed out the insecure political situation: the chancellor would not specify the name of which king he was issuing charters in, and both the king and the queens signed donations. In this atmosphere a plot was organized by the queens’ party against Charles of Durazzo which cost him his life. Balázs Forgács, hired by Palatine Garai and the queen mother, assaulted and mortally wounded King Charles on 7 February 1386. As a result of this the queens were attacked at Gara (Gorjani) during a journey to appease their subjects in rebellious territories. All the queens’ men were killed, including Palatine Miklós Garai and Balázs Forgács. Only the son of Miklós Garai escaped alive and the two queens were imprisoned. During the months of captivity in the fortress of Újvár (Novigrad), Ban János Horváti had Elizabeth strangled in front of her daughter. The young queen was freed by joint troops of Sigismund and Venice. When she encountered Sigismund in Zengg (Senj), the latter, having accepted the conditions imposed by the barons, had already been crowned king of Hungary.

## Queen Mary in a Venetian Mirror

Lorenzo Monaci’s poem is an epic about the Neapolitan king, Charles of Durazzo, who seized the Hungarian crown in the time of the queens, Elizabeth and Mary. Epics were very much *en vogue* in the Middle Ages because they addressed the political and ideological concerns of the age. Such a concern was “the search, never fulfilled, for a final perfection; equilibrium amidst the instabilities of power; the difficulty

<sup>5</sup> Szilárd Süttő, *Anjou Magyarország alkonya* (The dusk of Angevin Hungary) (Szeged: Belvedere, 2003), 101.

<sup>6</sup> Iván Bertényi, “Beszélhetünk-e kettős uralomról hazánkban (II.) Kis Károly országlása idején?” (Can we speak of double rule in Hungary during the reign of Charles II?), *Studia professoris – Professor studiorum. Tanulmányok Érszegi Géza hatvanadik születésnapjára*, ed. Tibor Almási, István Draskóczy, Éva Jancsó (Budapest: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2005); Szilárd Süttő, “Volt-e kettős uralom Magyarországon Kis Károly országlása idején? Válasz Bertényi Ivánnak” (Was there a double rule In Hungary during the reign of Charles II? Reply to Bertényi Iván), *Aetas* 2-3 (2006): 232-246; Iván Bertényi, “Kettős hatalom hazánkban 1386 elején. Viszontválasz Süttő Szilárdnak,” (Double rule in our country at the beginning of 1386. Reply to Süttő Szilárd), *Aetas* 2-3 (2006): 247-256.

in distinguishing between good and evil; and anxiety about the succession.”<sup>7</sup> The ancient Latin epics were central cultural and educational texts in the time of Monaci, and due to their universal concern with apocalyptic struggles between good and evil they readily offered themselves to adaptation by the Christian epic poets, too.<sup>8</sup> Epic poetry in antiquity and the Middle Ages proved to be not only literature, but a form of historiography. It was regarded as “a representation, in mixed narration, of significant events in the past of a community.”<sup>9</sup> Monaci not only narrated historical facts, but pronounced universal truths about them. The genre he chose allowed the author to make his position clear and to make value judgements. Undertaking the open detraction of the Neapolitan king, Charles of Durazzo in an epic poem, Monaci presented Charles as a representative of the universal image of the bad king and Mary as the image of the good ruler.

Monaci assesses Charles of Durazzo on two levels; in the contemporary political situation he is unfit as king of Naples, which he manages disastrously, and not suitable for the Hungarian throne, a kingdom which he comes to exploit. On the level of the universal, Charles represents the prototype of the bad king. In Monaci’s judgement Charles set off to restore the dire condition of Naples with Hungarian wealth,<sup>10</sup> but he only disclosed this to his wife. The author judges that in Charles’ decision to go to Hungary reason fell prey to desire.<sup>11</sup> The people welcomed his arrival as the end of the internal political turmoil, but the scale of the political fights diminished compared to the universal disturbance of the natural order that the coronation of the usurper unleashed. Following Charles’ coronation, a tornado swept through Buda Castle, destroying houses and blowing the roofs off palaces, accompanied by the maddening noise made by a quarrel of crows bickering and fighting until they bled. The image of the world about to succumb to chaos is very powerful, foretelling the bloody events to follow and Charles’ tragic end.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1993) (hereafter: Hardie, *The Epic*), xi.

<sup>8</sup> Hardie, *The Epic*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Page Dubois, *History, Rhetorical Description and the Epic* (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1982) (hereafter: Dubois, *History*), 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Pauperiem taceo; Hungariae si gentis habenas  
Attigero, Hungaricis supplebo viribus haustum  
Apuliae regnum.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 124-126.

<sup>11</sup> *Victa cadit ratio superata cupidine regni.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 94.

## Double Mirrors

The poem has two titles, suggesting two focuses: *Carmen seu historia Carolo II cognomento Parvo Rege Hungariae*, fixing Charles in the centre of events, and *De miserabilis casus Reginarum Hungariae*, defining the two queens as the most important characters of the plot.<sup>12</sup> The work has two dedications:<sup>13</sup> Monaci dedicated his work to Queen Mary and to the captain of Crete, Peter Aimò,<sup>14</sup> a former ambassador to Hungary.<sup>15</sup>

The double agenda Monaci pursued for the benefit of Mary and in the service of Venice as well as his own career is shown not only by the titles and the double dedication of the poem, but also by his statement of the motive for writing it. On the one hand, he praises the queen for her wisdom and manly concerns in commissioning him to write a history of Hungary. He presents his *oeuvre* as the chivalrous initiative of a Venetian public figure to defend the Hungarian queen against Italian gossip: Surely your Majesty is not unfamiliar with what was being widely spoken in Italy and especially between the Tuscans, that Charles, king of Apulia, was the furthest from the ambition of the Hungarian throne, who thought no such thing, was invited by you and your fairest mother to the sceptre and urged, though innocent, and betrayed by the cause had been surrounded by your trickeries and was deprived from the light of his life. ... Thus I send this to your majesty, to defend you and your innocent mother, if it can, from the disgraceful sin and the insolent teeth of the mass throughout the centuries.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> "Carmen seu historia Carolo II cognomento Parvo Rege Hungariae" in *Laurentii de Monacis Veneti Cretae Cancellarii Chronicon de Rebus Venetis etc.*, ed. Flaminio Cornelius, and "Pia Descriptio miserabilis casus illustrium reginarum Hungariae," in Toldy, *Analecta*; the two titles are based on two manuscripts Cornaro mentions in his first edition of Monaci's works.

<sup>13</sup> "Ad Serenissimam Dominam Mariam Hungariae Reginam" in the dedicatory letter preceding the poem, hereafter *Dedication*, and "Ad Egregium Strenuum Militem Dominum Petrum Aimò Insulae Cretensis Capitaneum" before the *Carmen* itself.

<sup>14</sup> Captain of Crete in 1385-1386, the first ambassador to be sent by Venice after the queens' ascension in Hungary *Dizionario Biografico Degli Italiani*. Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> *Dum tu frena Regis Create, clarissime miles...* Monaci, *Carmen*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Sane Maiestatem Tuam non lateat, quod in Italia, et praesertim apud Etruscos, late ferebantur, Carolum Regem Apuliae, ab ambitione Pannonici culminis remontissimum, nil tale meditantem, ad sceptrum Hungariae per Te, et serenissimam genitricem tuam sponte vocatum, et sollicitatum, insontem, et proditum ab re, vestris fuisse circumventum insidiis, et vitali lumine spoliatum.... Transmitto igitur illud Maiestati Tuae, Te, et innocentissimam genitricem, si quid potest, ab infami culpa et procacis vulgi dentibus per secula defensurum*, Monaci, *Dedication*.

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Monaci casts himself in the role of the chivalrous poet rushing to the defense of the virtuous, virgin queen. It is humanist self-fashioning and building the image of the queen as the prototype of a gentle and frail lady in need of the protection of strong men and the alliance of strong states.

### Contrasting Charles and the Queens

Monaci presents Charles of Durazzo as usurper, an unlawful ruler without a well-founded claim to the Hungarian throne. The poet chose a traditional rhetorical method for the *mise en valeur* of the qualities of Queen Mary: working with contrasts. The author holds up to his audience a negative mirror of Charles of Durazzo, the proud, ambitious, and deceitful king. In his shadow and in the turmoil of events Mary almost has to be lured out from behind her mother's skirt to reinforce the idea of the good ruler.

Popularizing female rule in Hungary was no easy task. The few attributes that characterize Mary (*generosa Maria, Altera natarum, solium regale parentis*),<sup>17</sup> her few short monologues and actions, are used by Lorenzo Monaci to draw an image of a gentle virgin, crowned king of Hungary; a submissive woman with the manly qualities of a ruler. As a virgin, Mary's gender is hidden in her role;<sup>18</sup> she is portrayed as a woman whose gentle rule dissatisfies the barons.<sup>19</sup> She is, however, the legitimate ruler of Hungary based on royal lineage and noble blood. She steps as a king into the lineage of rightful royal ancestors, two of whom are mentioned: King Stephen, the "apostle" of Hungary, and Mary's father, King Louis the Great.

Mary is set in the *Carmen* in the company of powerful women rulers like her mother, Elizabeth Kotromanić, who assumed the regency during her reign; Joan of

<sup>17</sup> Monaci, *Carmen*, 45-46

<sup>18</sup> *Scandit inaequali auspicio generosa Maria,  
Altera natarum, solium regale parentis,  
Virgineumque caput sacrum diadema coronat.  
Hanc regem appellant animis concordibus omnes  
Regnicolae, illustrent hoc regis nomine sexum.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 45-49.

<sup>19</sup> ... sic pestibus implent  
*Regnum virginei spreto moderamine sceptri;  
Postquam animus procerum insolita dulcedine captos  
Imperii blandi affectus tenuere superbi.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 78-81.

Naples, the scandalous but successful Neapolitan queen, loved by her people;<sup>20</sup> and Margaret, wife of Charles, the wise, prophesying queen, whom history proved right in her warning. As a royal child, Mary is submissive to the queen regent and her advisors. Contrary to her wish to retain the throne, she followed the instructions of the queen mother, although in Monaci's assessment this affected her deeply; while the mother complains, the child does not retaliate but accepts the situation with silent tears.<sup>21</sup> In Elizabeth's argumentation, the loss of power is not as bad as if they would meet the end of Joan of Naples; "God forbid," she says, „that we have the violent death of Joan.”<sup>22</sup> Monaci uses the *topos* of the wise old oracle, representing collective memory, to warn the people not to forsake the rule of the queens. The old man depicts the end of Joan's reign and the results of the mid-fourteenth century famine on the peninsula as punishment for the Neapolitans for having forsaken their queen, and suggests that this will happen to the Hungarians, too, if they are disrespectful of the memory of Louis the Great and thus the reign of his daughter.<sup>23</sup>

Queen Margaret, wife of Charles of Durazzo, is an example of the good wife, pleading with Charles not to leave. She is deserted by her husband,<sup>24</sup> but as a wife she stays loyal to him, asking to be allowed to follow him. Not being able to hide her pain, the crying child, Queen Mary, eloquently declares: "I will not give up the crown of my father which is rightfully mine, allow me to leave Hungary and follow my husband into exile."<sup>25</sup> By this she becomes the symbol of loyal wife as well.

<sup>20</sup> Ciro Raia, *Giovanna I di Angio regina di Napoli*. (Naples: Tullio Pironti Editore, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> *Dum tantas rumpit genitrix miseranda querelas,  
Filia nil contra; lacrymarum flumina fundunt  
Lumina; multiplicat gemitus rude pectus amarus,  
Et crebri intorsum singultus verba vocabant.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 322-325.

<sup>22</sup> ... *quod absit,  
Restat ut aesquemus violenta morte Johannam.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 320-321.

<sup>23</sup> *Apuliae populos pacem, sortemque secundam  
Inconstanti animo libertatemque ferentes,  
Atque novarum avidos rerum inclinare superbo  
Praedoni, et tantae dominae calcare ruinam  
Non puduit.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 267-271.

<sup>24</sup> ... *insidias speculatus ab omni  
Parte Sigismundus deserta coniuge fugit.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 211-212.

<sup>25</sup> *Viscera redentem lacrymosa puella, dolorem  
Dissimulare nequit, sic apta voce locuta :  
Nolo, refutare, ingeminat, diadema paternum  
Et mihi iure datum. Hungariam, permittite, linguam,  
Exul ad expulsum coniux properabo maritum.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 301-305.



Mary's features are constructed on the one hand through her roles as a virgin ruler, a royal child, and a wife, on the other hand, in contrast to those possessed by Charles. Her humility contrasts with his pride; her renunciation contrasts with his ambition; her clarity and directness of speech define her as an eloquent ruler and are juxtaposed to the lies and deceitfulness of the Neapolitan. Charles lies to the queens about his reason for coming to Hungary;<sup>26</sup> he asserts that he came to pacify the kingdom, but the queens know that he speaks dishonestly and is driven by the desire to rule.<sup>27</sup> Charles alleges respect for the memory of Louis the Great,<sup>28</sup> but cunningly prepares a takeover of power by gathering people for the election.<sup>29</sup>

Mary's three verbal manifestations in the poem summarize the essence of her position: she is the daughter of Louis the Great, wife of the brother of the Holy Roman emperor, and anointed ruler of Hungary. Her monologues in the role of the rightful ruler are characterized by courage. These acts of courage make her, according to the medieval interpretation, less like a woman (less weak) and more like a man (more virile).<sup>30</sup> It is when she is weak that Mary becomes strong. Just like Richard III, Mary also refuses to "un-king"<sup>31</sup> herself. She would rather die or go into exile than forsake the sacred legitimacy of her royal blood and lineage.

By refusing to give up the crown Mary emphasizes the indelible character of sacred kingship. The deposition is not valid because the unction cannot be annulled by words; the coronation of a female ruler is as valid as that of a male king. Monaci presents her as a gentle virgin queen, silent and moved to tears by the loss of the throne,<sup>32</sup> and a responsible ruler, defining her position by political

<sup>26</sup> ... at ille

*Pectoreum gratae pietatis imagine falsa*

*Conatus velare nefas.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 214-215.

<sup>27</sup> ... falso licet ore locutum

*Reginae credant regni cupidine tractum.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 222-223.

<sup>28</sup> ... Parens reverenda, soror carissima, reddit,

*Dum calidus nostros agitabit spiritus artus*

*Magnanimi patris, et meritorum haerebit imago.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 239-241.

<sup>29</sup> ... rerumque invadit habenas,

*Moxque velut pacem sancturus, grande sub astu*

*Colloquium edicens, vulgorum seditiosa*

*Colluvie complet Budam.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 245-248.

<sup>30</sup> Nancy Black about Esther and Judith in *Medieval Narratives of Accused Queens* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

<sup>31</sup> Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 35.

<sup>32</sup> *Dum tantas rumpit genitrix miseranda querelas,*



speech. Monaci depicts her as the rightful queen for Hungary and the universally accepted ideal of a good ruler. Mary is the hero of the poem, characterized by wisdom, eloquence of speech,<sup>33</sup> manly concern for history, nobility and the invincibility of the soul of an elderly person, strength and endurance of character, as well as gratitude to the Venetians.

Monaci uses the rhetorical device of directly addressing both rulers; he addresses Mary to tell her that her fame will live forever, and addresses Charles to tell him that the news of his disgrace will last for eternity. "Flee to Naples," Monaci warns Charles before his murder, and continues: "Think about what the sign on your ship says: that you will be shipwrecked and will not be interred. Desiring a kingdom without any right, you will die and lie unburied."<sup>34</sup> "Neither the great wealth, your kingdoms, nor depriving the queens were worth anything. The all-powerful fate denied you even the grave. You will be the subject of a sad poem and will stand as a negative example for kings for centuries to come."<sup>35</sup>

On the chessboard where the queen wins because the king is annihilated, Lorenzo Monaci records with sharp accuracy the movements of the other players, too. Elizabeth, the queen mother, is the most dynamic character of the *Carmen*, supported by one group of barons and opposed by another. She controls, instructs, uses diplomacy, pleads, and plots. Her dramatic presence is powerful and she writes

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*Filia nil contra; lacrymarum flumina fundunt  
Lumina; multiplicat gemitus rude pectus amarus,  
Et crebri introrsum singultus verba vocabant.  
Corde puellari, mirum, tantum potuisse  
lacturam regni, et tantum licuisse dolori.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 322-327.

<sup>33</sup> *Adiecisti insuper in supremo colloquio...* [Besides you added with elevated speech], Monaci, *Dedication*.

<sup>34</sup> *Effuge in Apuliam, et letalem desere terram.*

*Contemplare tuae signum fatale carinae,  
Quam tu armamentis spoliata pectore gestas.  
Quid nisi naufragium pertenditur absque sepulcro?  
Ardua regna petens sie vi, sine iure parentas.  
Sulcantem sine remigio, e temone profundum,  
Qui tandem in media perit insepultus arena.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 447-453.

<sup>35</sup> *Nunc quid opes, quid regna tibi, quid profuit altis  
Reginas sceptris spoliare potentibus! Ecce  
Heu dolor, heu levis ad dandum tam grandia regna  
Urbibus ex tantis, eadem nunc illa sepulcrum  
Omnipotens fortuna negat, per secula magnum  
Exemplum aerumnae humanae, et miserabile carmen  
Certe eris, ac speculum et documentum Regibus ingens.* Monaci, *Carmen*, 554-560.

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her own history. Despite the fact that in the *Dedication* Lorenzo Monaci sets out to defend the reputation of both queens,<sup>36</sup> the poem leaves Elizabeth with the stain of the murder of Charles of Durazzo and the image of the “scheming woman.”<sup>37</sup> In Monaci’s construct, Elizabeth is the powerful queen regent, defined by her political actions and their justification; she is the one who abdicates in the name of her daughter, and the one who regains the throne of Hungary by arranging the murder of Charles.

Elizabeth is nowhere around at the time of the commission of Monaci’s poem, having been killed by the rebellious barons so she can be sacrificed as a scapegoat<sup>38</sup> on the Venetian altar. The constructs about her and the other characters of the poem were made by Monaci in the knowledge of the *status quo* of events in 1387: Elizabeth and her advisor, Miklós Garai, dead, carry the blame for the murder of the rival king; Mary, ruling at Sigismund’s side, becomes the model of an exemplary wife and Venetian-friendly queen. Her image survives as a literary construct of the Venetian poet-notary from amongst the debris at the end of the fourteenth-century Hungarian internal turmoil, as well as the larger Mediterranean political landscape.

Monaci’s poem is a synthesis of poetic principles, rhetorical devices, ancient models, and Christian symbols. It presents a certain version of the events in late fourteenth-century Hungary while exhibiting strong Venetian consciousness and humanist pride in an artfully subtle way.

<sup>36</sup> *Transmitto igitur illud Maiestati Tue, Te, et innocentissimam genitricem, si quid potest, ab infami culpa et procacis vulgi dentibus per secula defensurum.* Monaci, *Dedication*.

<sup>37</sup> For more on the topos of the scheming woman, see Michelle Bolduc, *The Medieval Poetics of Contraries* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006).

<sup>38</sup> János Bak “Queens as Scapegoats in Medieval Hungary,” in *Queens and Queenship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: The Boydell Press, 1997), 222- 233.