ELITE WOMEN
AND THE ITALIAN WARS,
1494–1559

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Elements in the Renaissance

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Abstract: This Element analyses the critical importance of elite women to the conflict conventionally known as the Italian Wars that engulfed much of Europe and the Mediterranean between 1494 and 1559. Through its considered attention to the interventions of women connected to imperial, royal, and princely dynasties, we show the breadth and depth of the opportunities, roles, impact, and influence that certain women had to shape the course of the conflict both in wartime activities and in peacemaking. The Element thus expands the ways in which we can think about women’s participation in war and politics. It makes use of a wide range of sources such as literature, art, and material culture, as well as more conventional text forms. Women’s voices and actions are prioritised in making sense of evidence and claims about their activities.

Keywords: early modern women, Italian Wars, gender, Habsburg, Valois

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Managing War: Women in the Habsburg Dynastic Business</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Staging War: Women Producing Valois Masculinity</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Surviving War: The Political Work of Italian Princely Consorts</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>