A HEAD FROM A ROYAL EFFIGY

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It is always a great temptation to attach an important name to an unknown portrait. In the present instance, however, a detailed study of the bust illustrated on the opposite page justifies the conclusion that it represents the young princess Marie de France.

The bust must have originally formed part of a tomb effigy, or gisant, for the back of the head and the neck have been cut out so that the head could rest on a stone pillow in the manner of such effigies. In carving the head a band of stone was reserved for the attachment of a metal crown. Holes in the band indicate the positions of jewels that once studded the base of the crown. The general type of coiffure of our bust was popular among the ladies of the French court during the reign of Charles V, especially in the 1370's and 1380's, as can be seen in a number of plates in Montfaucon's *Monumens de la monarchie française*. Even closer parallels, however, can be drawn between the bust and two other tomb figures in the abbey church of Saint-Denis, one of which originally came from a church in Paris. These figures (see illus. p. 217) have been identified as representing Marie d'Espagne (died in 1379), a sister-in-law of Philip VI, and Jeanne de France (died in 1371), a daughter of Philip VI. The coiffures of these effigies, and that of our head, are characterized by the same tight braids of hair covering temples and ears and, what is even more unusual, by cloths hanging from the crowns, between the braids and the cheeks, giving the effect of a hair-bob of the 1920's. Similar coiffures of the period are represented in the altar frontal from Narbonne now in the Louvre and in drawings from the abbey of Saint-Vaast, Arras, and prove that what are here interpreted as cloths are not strands of loose hair as Viollet-le-Duc supposed.

Drawings from the collection of de Gaignières, reproduced in Montfaucon, show the tomb figures of the princesses Marie d'Espagne and Jeanne de France as they appeared in the seventeenth century and provide a basis for the identification of their effigies in modern times. A somewhat similar de Gaignières drawing, showing a coiffure identical with those in the drawings just mentioned and rendered with the same slight misinterpretations, represents the effigy that was on the tomb of Marie de France, the daughter of Charles IV and his wife, Jeanne d'Evreux, in the chapel of Notre-Dame-la-Blanche at Saint-Denis. In view of the fact that this effigy is missing from Saint-Denis and that it is the only figure with such a coiffure missing from the abbey, the temptation to identify our head as that of the third princess, Marie de France, is irresistible. The head of this effigy was already missing in 1793, when Dom Poirier reported that it had been separated from the torso "and stolen" (E. Despois, *Le Vandalisme révolutionnaire*, Paris, 1868, p. 214). The features of our head are very much like those of the effigy of Marie's sister, Blanche de France, at Saint-Denis. The effigies of Marie and Blanche, which were placed side by side on the double tomb in which they were buried (see ill. p. 216), were carved by Jean de Liège. This artist was one of the best known of the Franco-Flemish tomb sculptors of Paris who worked for the royal family. The tomb effigy of Jeanne d'Evreux from the abbey of Maubuisson, now in the Louvre, which he carved in 1371 (ill. p. 217), shows similarities to our bust as well as to the companion effigy of Blanche. A record of the time states that the effigies of Marie and Blanche were in his atelier in 1382, and Vitry surmises that "the two statues must have been installed [in Saint-Denis] by his pupil and successor Robert Loisel." In 1382, it will be
Marie de France (1327-1341), a daughter of Charles IV and Jeanne d'Evreux. Marble bust from the tomb effigy made by Jean de Liège about 1382, formerly in Saint-Denis. Gift of George Blumenthal, 1941.

noted, forty years had elapsed since Marie's death and Blanche was still living. The sculptor may therefore have worked from some record of Marie's features and, as was occasionally done, modeled Blanche's effigy from life.

Marie and Blanche were the last representatives of the Capetian dynasty in the direct line, Marie dying a maid of fourteen in 1341, and Blanche not until 1393. Like some other members of the royal family, Blanche had three tombs; the one at Saint-Denis contained her body, another contained her heart, and still another, in the abbey of Pont-aux-Dames, contained her entrails. The slab from this last tomb is in the Museum's collection of mediaeval sculpture.

While the pomp and circumstance of a royal funeral, such as Marie de France must have been given, never reached in the mediaeval period the theatrical extremes of the baroque pageants of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, the dramatic effects must
corners by the pallbearers who were presidents of the Parlement of Paris, was often made of blue samite and was decorated with gilded fleurs-de-lis and a large cross in flaming scarlet. Rich red and green stuffs were used in abundance. Shields emblazoned with the arms of France and of Paris were hung everywhere by the hundreds, over doorways, on the walls and columns of the churches, and on candles and torches. For the funeral services of Charles VI in 1422 curtains of blue cloth, covered with fleurs-de-lis, were hung in the naves of Notre-Dame and Saint-Denis, and wide bands of silk were stretched above the choir stalls of both churches. Some economy at least was effected by removing the curtains to Saint-Denis after the services at Notre-Dame. The value of such funeral trappings may be judged by the acerbity with which members of the royal household and others on several occasions disputed with the monks of Saint-Denis for their eventual possession. The monks seem usually to have won, basing their claims on ancient and time-honored custom. One fifteenth-century chronicler notes the meanness of the executors of Queen Blanche, who only allowed the abbey “for profit the silk hangings woven with gold which had served to envelope her body and of which the abbot of Saint-Denis made ornaments for the church.” Usually at such times the abbey was bequeathed rich presents in lands, revenues, jewels, reliquaries, or other precious objects.

Light played an important part in the obsequies of people of all classes. The richer the funeral, of course, the greater the number and size of the candles. Twelve thousand pounds (livres) of candles were burned at Notre-Dame, and later four thousand pounds at Saint-Denis, during the funeral services of Charles VI. Lights were set in every part of the church, especially around the coffin, which was placed within the chapelle ardente, a large wood catafalque which was customarily erected in the choir of the church and which seems to have acquired its name because it was so completely covered with candles “that it appeared to be on fire” (see ill. p. 219). Two hundred torches were carried in Charles’s funeral procession.

The tomb of Marie de France and Blanche de France in Saint-Denis. Black marble, with effigies in white marble. From a drawing made for de Gaignières before 1715

have been none the less awesome and magnificent, judging from contemporary accounts and manuscript illuminations.

Black was not yet obligatory except for the voluminous mantles and cavernous hoods of the chief mourners and parts of the funeral equipment. Usually gold brocade de Turquie covered the bed of state on which the body was exposed in the palace. A canopy, or “sky,” often of gold brocade or other rich colors, was carried above the body, or right behind it, during the processions from the palace to Notre-Dame and from Notre-Dame to Saint-Denis. Even the funeral pall, held at the four
Heads of French royal effigies. Above: Jeanne de France (1351-1371) and Marie d'Espagne (died 1379). Note that their coiffures resemble that of Marie de France (see ill. p. 215). Below: Blanche de France (1328-1393) and Jeanne d'Evreux (1325-1371), the sister and the mother of Marie de France, as portrayed by Jean de Liège, who also made Marie's effigy.
A royal funeral procession, probably that of Anne of Brittany. From a French woodcut

Since most royal funeral processions reached Saint-Denis at night, the effect must have been overwhelming to people unacquainted with the glare of modern illumination.

The Hannouars, members of the salt guild of Paris, had the privilege of carrying the coffins of the French kings from Paris to Saint-Denis. At a certain spot on the way the abbot and monks received the body from the Archbishop of Paris or a prelate of lesser importance. According to a custom recorded by Doublet, the prelate first solemnly assured the abbot "on his faith and word" that the body was indeed that of the royal personage and the abbot then promised "to give it equal and worthy sepulchre" with that of its predecessors. The chanting monks then accompanied the body to Saint-Denis. The procession (see above) consisted of members of the royal family, officers of the king's household and his bodyguard, princes and dignitaries of the realm, the Chamber of Finance, the Parliament of Paris in their scarlet robes, the provost of Paris, the aldermen, church dignitaries, monks, friars, and the clergy of Paris, representatives of the guilds, and countless lesser folk. Heralds with the royal arms emblazoned on their coats, sergeants at arms, and other officers and marshals with their batons of office were also present. The criers of the dead went before the body, ringing their hand bells and announcing the name of the deceased. The bells of the churches of Paris and Saint-Denis were also rung at intervals during the ceremonies.

An effigy of the deceased, dressed in royal robes, crowned, and laid upon the coffin, was carried in state in the procession and exhibited during the funeral services. The face, modeled in wax, was made from the death mask taken by the chief court painter. Even the hands and the feet were sometimes cast from the body to make the effigy more lifelike. These effigies may have been the models for the recumbent stone effigies on the tombs.

The death masks of the French kings were in Saint-Denis until the Revolution, when all except Henri II's were destroyed. The royal tombs, including that of Marie and Blanche, were likewise broken up at that time. Fortunately many of the effigies survived, and it is gratifying to add our charming head to the list.

There are faint traces of old paint on the bust. A modern restoration replaces part of the lower left section of the base, which was lost when the bust was broken off the effigy in the Revolution. Acc. no. 41.100.152; h. 12 1/4 in. Ex coll.: Dufay, Paris; Blumenthal.

The effigy of Anne of Brittany within the “chapelle ardente” erected for her funeral at Saint-Denis. From an engraving in Monfaucon, probably copied from a xvi century manuscript illumination.