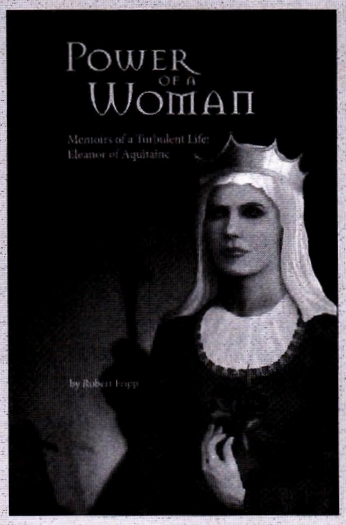
Power of a Woman. Memoirs of a Turbulent Life: Eleanor of Aquitaine

By Robert Fripp
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The narrator of "Power of a Woman" is Eleanor of Aquitaine herself as an elderly woman living in an abbey at Fontevrault. She tells her life story to her maid Aline, who records every word. While the general concept of a first-person narrative told by Eleanor directly to her maid is generally sound, the premise that someone would be able to commit the story to writing so quickly with medieval writing tools is rather implausible. However, with disbelief suspended, the intimate voice of friendship between Eleanor and Aline creates a compelling read. In Eleanor's voice, author Robert Fripp (no, not the guitarist from King Crimson; this Robert Fripp is a freelance writer in Toronto, Canada) leads us through the events, political conflicts and maneuverings of her life, and shows Eleanor to be an incredibly brilliant political strategist and an eminent survivor.

Fripp's enthusiasm for his subject is infectious, and the breadth of his knowledge is impressive. "Power of a Woman" has strong character delineation and development, and meticulously recreates the events and atmosphere of the period. The character development adds extra color and personality to medieval figures we have read about in history books. The novel gives us further insight into what their motivations and interests were or might have been.

The author's admirable enthusiasm for every detail and event of the period unfortunately also leads to his occasionally forgetting the needs of the reader, and detracts from the novel's thematic unity. If one is not intimately familiar with all the intricacies of Eleanor of Aquitaine's life and the period as a whole, it is easy to lose the thread of the story. However, Fripp does provide a timeline of events (entitled "Eleanor of Aquitaine Timeline") on his website, robertfripp.ca.

"Power of a Woman" is truly sweeping in its scope and yet makes one feel [illegible] Eleanor of Aquitaine personally. If you acquaint yourself with Eleanor of Aquitaine's life and the period's general history before beginning this book, you will experience an enjoyable read.

–Samantha Lord