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How can we measure the political significance of an early modern queen, apart from her essential childbearing role, especially during a potentially fragile regency for an underage son, a condition that was endemic to early modern France? With the exception of Henri IV, from 1560 to 1715, there was no French king who did not have a mother who served as regent.[1] Oliver Mallick offers a fine-grained and deep analysis demonstrating the myriad ways in which Anne of Austria exerted various kinds of influence and maintained political authority after her regency began, following the death of her spouse Louis XIII in 1643, in order to support the not-yet-five-year-old dauphin, the future Louis XIV. Mallick also tracks Anne’s discernable political presence after she was removed from the royal council on the death of Mazarin in 1661, when Louis XIV proclaimed that he would govern alone. As one of the book’s two subtitles indicates, Mallick organizes Anne’s activity into three large areas: the queen’s strategies of staging or self-representation, the organization of the court and household, and the rhetoric of friendship that Anne employed in correspondence and other exchanges to achieve desirable political ends.

By examining Anne’s system of patronage in depth, the author argues that the queen regent achieved political goals, even after she stepped down from the royal council. His book lays out evidence for his view that she was certainly not a naïve, pious, politically inept monarch who was entirely dependent upon the chief minister, Mazarin, but was instead a real political actor in Louis XIV’s government. He maintains that she had as much awareness of political power and how to use it as the Medici queen regents who preceded her. He suggests that Anne was keenly aware of and responsible for her own self-representation, including that of her piety, that went hand-in-hand with her role as regent, as well as for the organization of her court and relationship with friends (in the seventeenth-century sense, to be sure) who would support her political position.

Mallick’s book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides a helpful introduction, the second discusses ruling power and representation, the third analyzes Anne’s court, the fourth treats friendship and affection, and the fifth is a conclusion. Each has substantial subheadings, and chapters two through four have helpful “résumés.” Chapter one deals with the
sources and methodology that Mallick employs to approach the material and how they contribute to his argument, including Anne’s letters to office holders, clients, monarchs, and those accompanying the king’s orders. Part of Mallick’s methodology is to analyze Anne’s patronage and clientage along the lines developed in the work of Sharon Kettering.[2] The patronage he examines, including a large client base, was both formal and informal, and could involve gifts, which he regards as politically efficacious to evince loyalty (rather than freely given without expectation of return). Patronage also involved friendship (equally valid if symmetrical or asymmetrical). Mallick incorporates recent scholarship on earlier French queen regents, for example the work of Caroline Zum Kolk on the court and patronage of Catherine de’ Medici, and her work on regency in general.[3] By understanding the monarchy as consisting of interlocking structures at work, such as court organization or patronage, the monarchy itself is treated as part of a larger system rather than as a single source of power embodied by the king. This stance means that the queen, essential to any monarchy just by producing the heir, is acknowledged as an important part of the system.[4] Her court, her patronage, indeed her every interaction with those around her, revealed the political authority she potentially possessed and could employ.

Chapter two makes a case for how it was possible for a queen to acquire ruling power or authority (“Herrschaft”) within the cultural definitions and limitations of gender in the seventeenth century, and how that authority might be rendered in representations of many kinds. The only way for a queen regent to govern by making decisions de facto in the name of the underage king—when Mallick contends that Anne’s actual authority began—was to embody intelligence and moral virtues, many of which were portrayed in the femme forte tradition flourishing in aristocratic culture at this time. In Mallick’s view, the femme forte tradition (as found in the 1647 text La Gallerie des femmes fortes by Le Moyne, which was dedicated to Anne as queen regent) contributed to a queen regent’s positive political qualities: pious, morally strong, and virtuous. He argues that femme forte literature would not have transferred any negative masculine values of that trope to a queen, although a queen could be endowed with positive male virtues. There was always forceful opposition to this image of a queen, not least of all because of what Mallick and many others characterize as the failed example of her mother-in-law Marie as regent for Louis XIII. But he proposes that the femme forte tradition was nevertheless consonant with the notion emerging from the growing cult of the king, that a queen could possess reason and strength. To support the idea of a queen regent’s authority, he cites recent literature attributing two bodies to the queen, a natural body and a political one. Sarah Hanley has argued that this feature of English political theory for monarchs (male and female) did not apply to French kings (who incorporated both in one body). It only could be applied to French queens once the queen could be understood as having authority through a physical body that birthed the next king, and through another, political body as regent.[5] Mallick contends, however, that the queen even as regent could not share the maiestas that was limited to the king’s person. The author does not find that such amplification of the queen regent’s position, or queen-regent-as-femme-forte, clashes with the model of the caring mother that Katherine Crawford proposes was Anne’s primary form of self-representation.[6] Maternity was the lodestone of any queen regent’s authority in France, since queens were excluded from rule by a phrase in the so-called “Salic law” newly forged in the fifteenth century, or by other, constructed “laws of nature” that put men “naturally” in the dominant role in family, society, and governance.[7] Crucial for any queen’s potential legitimacy, however, was that when any rationale for female exclusion to rule was in force, this reasoning could paradoxically benefit the queen regent’s position, because she of all people
could be the most faithful advocate for her son, as she would not usurp him.[8] And this authority often continued after the kings had achieved their majority. Anne, like previous queen mothers, continued exerting influence after she left the royal council. Sources declare that Louis still consulted with her about affairs of state. Hence, Anne’s representation as a devoted mother was essential to maintaining her authority. Yet, Mallick argues that embodying other forms of power, richly alluded to in ceremony, art, and decoration, was also important to her position.

To that end, in the second section of chapter two, Mallick describes the detailed programs of almost all of the decoration in the domiciles Anne inhabited once she became queen regent and afterwards: the château of Fontainebleau, with its queen’s quarters already magnificently expanded by Henri IV for his new Medici bride; the redone Palais-Royal, the former Parisian residence of Richelieu that was willed to the queen and her young family, where they lived shortly after she became regent; and finally, the apartments of the Louvre, where the family moved in 1653, post-Fronde and following Louis XIV’s majority, where she was sumptuously housed by her son. He also discusses the portraits of Anne, mainly represented as a modest widow but also in allegorical form. In the extensive conclusion to the chapter where some of his best analysis is to be found, Mallick discusses Anne’s different personae—widow, doer of good works, woman of faith, and strategist—and quotes Barbara Gahtgens’s view that Anne declared her role in history through art works.[9] Since that is not his field, Mallick could have relied more heavily here on the art historical literature, since that literature has done an excellent job with documentation as well as analysis of the portraits and residences (albeit not as an ensemble, as he ambitiously attempts). He ends up presenting an iconographical condensation more than an analytical reflection upon artistic forms of representation. There are also a few errors, since he did not consult the up-to-date secondary literature as much as he might have, relying too often on older or less impressive recent works.[10] It might be asking too much of a historian who has so much to offer otherwise to engage in such depth with another field, but a lot of it is there for consultation, and more is forthcoming.[11]

In a chapter focusing on issues of gender, Mallick slides between two poles: Gender did matter when a queen could insist on her maternity as the heart of her authority but did not matter when a queen could supersede gender roles and possess male virtues (as long as they weren’t martial) to help her govern. The much-contested sources concerning women and queens at this time makes it hard not to skate around these oppositions. The varied ways in which queens were represented that either conformed to or conflicted with gender norms, as Mallick notes, would be more comprehensible if there were a more expansive way to regard queennship, one that would not exclude gender but would include both genders. A more capacious definition of what sovereignty was and who possessed it would serve such a purpose. Recently Derval Conroy has argued that in France, the queen consort was indeed sovereign, citing a 1609 text from the end of Henri IV’s reign declaring that she shared in the majesty and authority of the king.[12] In the next generation, Henri d’Audiguier du Mazet, Anne’s avocat général, wrote that regents exercised sovereign authority.[13] How is it possible for queens to have possessed sovereignty? Following a direction proposed by Louise Fradenburg, Conroy suggests that sovereignty must be understood as all-encompassing, requiring both genders (even androgyny) in its definition to express the full powers of the monarchy. It is necessarily expansive to encompass the entirety of the monarch’s powers.[14] This way of understanding the queen regent’s authority would alter the all too restrictively gendered definition of early-modern monarchy. And although it would not dispense with the bitter contemporaneous criticisms of
Anne (or any queen, given the normative misogyny of this era) or the arguable failures of her regency, it would explain better the conflicting (to us) ways women’s authority was represented.

For example, the imagery in her residences described in chapter two, much of it featuring gods, goddesses, and laudable women from antiquity, widens the picture of Anne as more than pious or maternal and enriches the idea of how she presented herself, comparatively and thus indirectly, as possessing authority. Further, in the many apartments she inhabited, the style of decoration was decidedly luxurious; her quarters did not have the look of a pious widow. Mallick makes a good case for the necessity of Anne’s representation of authority and power through the splendor of her surroundings, but, in his conclusion to the book, backtracks and contends that she kept her love of luxury and splendor in bounds (as if it were only a matter of her personal taste instead of part of her political representation) (pp. 103-105, 408). It would be worth speculating what exactly about being a woman in an often-precarious position necessitated giving the impression of such capacious luxury surrounding her, such as sets of silver furniture and gilded carving on the walls of her chambers, that was continued in a more exalted fashion by her son Louis XIV. Indeed, she used these expensive gilded apartments for political ends, by showing them to prominent visitors who wrote about how impressed they were by these splendid spaces. It was commonplace in Burgundian and Medicean courts that the display of magnificence materially aided the performance of rule, for queens as well as kings, and in France for Louis XIV. Recently Erin Griffey analyzed the royal culture of magnificence in relation to a queen, Anne’s sister-in-law Henrietta Maria, consort of Charles I of England. One might well rethink the traditional view of whether maestas was solely the domain of kings, at least in a sensually allusive visual realm.

Mallick’s strongest and most original contributions are found in chapters three and four. Chapter three, “Hofstaat und Hofhaltung,” examines important facets of court life, court culture, court ceremonies, and how the household of the court was organized after the regency began. Besides usefully taking the reader through various times of the queen’s day, he also examines court etiquette, ceremonies, and fêtes. He proposes that Anne wished her court to become a magnet for nobility and other potential clients, and that the public splendor the court presented to them gave clients the impression not only of royal power but also of piety and even holiness. But he also concludes that there was another important facet to Anne’s cultural patronage that other authors have often treated. The Salon culture of conversational literary and intellectual exchange among female courtiers in her circle (whom he identifies) was an important precedent for women intentionally shaping male manners, leading to the honnête homme in the court culture of her son Louis XIV.

Most compelling is Mallick’s analysis of the queen’s household. Following the example of Zum Kolck, Mallick emphasizes that one way to measure the importance of queens to the monarchy is by determining the size of their households, important opportunities for patronage by queens and ultimately a way for them to maintain political influence. Anne built up a network of clients who carried out her wishes and then, even when she was no longer regent, her stances, as reflected by her clients, benefited the monarchy in a wider way than is ordinarily acknowledged. Size mattered: Anne’s household had the largest number of office holders of any queen from 1491 to 1789, including Marie-Antoinette. In a chart, Mallick publishes the names and salaries of the highest office holders in her household and, in his analysis, discusses gender differences and their absence. He emphasizes, for example, that women and men alike could
hold many positions. Although careers were more limited for the women in her household, women profited from proximity to the queen and enjoyed her favor in the same offices for long periods of time. Men rose in the ranks more readily, but like women in her court, could not move easily to the king’s household. The office holders of Anne’s household, who would support her authority, in turn had clients in their own networks who then aided their own families, so that the munificence of the queen, and, conversely, the expected loyalty to the queen, was potentially spread throughout a larger body than just among courtiers and other office holders. Within this framework, Mallick examines the historical development of the three most important posts, what became the chef du conseil et surintendant de la maison et des finances, dame d’honneur, and grand aumonier, followed by case studies of three of the most prominent office holders. He maintains that in these three posts, as with others, there was an expectation of pliancy and adherence to the queen’s wishes. Hence, when Mallick analyzes Mazarin’s manifold roles for the queen regent and agrees with scholarship that chronicled how exactly Mazarin played a vital role in Anne’s political life, he argues that in the end, like other clients, the minister was dependent on the queen’s favor both during and after the regency. Indeed, in his will he placed his own family and clients under the queen’s protection.

In chapter four, “Freundschaft und Zuneigung,” Mallick defines the many layered ways in which he contends that seventeenth-century notions of friendship and attendant affection were intertwined with Anne’s system of patronage and clientage. He divides them into symmetrical and asymmetrical friendships, including “symmetrical” relationships with family members and other monarchs, who, if not literally related, were treated as family in diplomatic discourse and gift-giving. He also includes the clergy and especially abbesses in his analysis of friendships with the queen. Anne always remained a patron while a “friend,” Mallick concludes, so that this form of analysis must be understood in the larger terms of patronage. Mazarin, for example, was an example of a non-familial asymmetrical friendship relationship, according to Mallick, for the letters clearly indicate more than a business association. Indeed, Anne and Mazarin were famously accused in mazarinades and elsewhere of conducting a love affair with each other, but Mallick concludes that their client/patron relationship was defined by affectionate friendship, not by irreligious or immoral sensual bonds. Throughout this chapter, Mallick interrogates the contemporary rhetoric of affection employed in correspondence, a difficult task, to establish the character of “friend”/client relationships. He concludes from correspondence that the rhetoric of friendship became heightened when the patron wanted to enhance the client’s loyalty and support. In this chapter, he includes case studies of individuals, such as the noble Condé family, who were both clients and friends, and discusses more tempered consequences for friends who did not promote Anne’s agenda or were in fact disloyal. One might ask if political outcomes, rather than affection, might have played the essential role in forgiveness, or if indeed (as with the crucially important Condé family) the queen was always playing a long game. In the book’s concluding chapter, Mallick clarifies that in his view, in the case of Anne’s asymmetrical relationships with nobility and clergy, actual affection was in no way as important as keeping stable relationships between herself and her clients.

Some fundamental questions remain unanswered in much of the literature, including Mallick’s book: How do we measure whether queen regents such as Anne succeeded? After all, there were close to impossibly high bars when compared with male rule. Was it not true that every regency was built upon a profound disruption, so that whoever ran a government for an underage king was going to experience civil unrest regardless of sex, as Anne’s avocat général wrote in 1652?[20] Does a successful regency mean that the queen regent had a great deal of
visibility promoting the position of a woman in that role, or is the queen’s contribution to a successful regency measurable even when a queen such as Anne, while given public authority, still purposefully often placed herself in the background behind her son, the king, as Crawford and Mallick conclude? Arguably, queen regents had a much clearer mandate to reign visibly starting in the seventeenth century. Much contemporary evidence about the powers of queen regents was articulated by young kings at moments of potential crisis when it became essential to insist publicly upon the actual authority of their mothers. These statements before parliament in the *lit de justice* show that queen regents by the seventeenth century had gained the authority to rule, to govern, and to be obeyed. Anne herself refused to share authority with a co-regent (her husband Louis XIII’s mandate before his death) when she governed in the name of her son, and thus she had access to unencumbered power over the course of government during her time as its head. Yet, given political exigencies like disinterest in allowing the parlements to determine authority to rule, difficulties with women at the head of governments in France, and more, this seeming authority to reign was not easy to carry out. Still, Anne found ways that Mallick has extensively investigated, including choosing a canny chief minister to aid her who continued to serve her son the king. As Mallick points out, despite the civil war and endless criticism, she preserved her son’s inheritance and strengthened the monarchy by seeing him through to adulthood, and by establishing stable forms of etiquette and self-representation in a magnificent environment that served Louis’s reign, for good or ill.[21]

NOTES


[4] In Theresa Earenfight, ed., *Queenship and Political Power in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate Pub., 2005). Earenfight takes a comprehensive approach that incorporates the presence of women in the definition of monarchy. She contends that monarchy had a “corporate” character that “permitted a range of power-sharing options that fell under the general rubric of monarchy.... Politics has both official and unofficial avenues, and, like kingship, queenship resides in both places” (pp. xiv-xlv). For an expansive idea of the monarchy incorporating the queen in France, see Fanny Cosandey, *La reine de France: symbole et pouvoir*,


[7] Recent literature emphasizes that the “Salic law” was called into question as an authoritative source by political writers in this era but that other rationales for exclusion of women to rule were employed; Sarah Hanley, “Identity Politics and Rulership in France: Female Political Place and the Fraudulent Salic Law in Christine de Pizan and Jean de Montreuil,” in Michael Wolfe, ed., Changing Identities in Early Modern France (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 78-94; Hanley, “Configuring the Authority of Queens in the French Monarchy, 1600s–1840s”; Craig Taylor, “The Salic Law, French Queenship, and the Defense of Women in the Late Middle Ages,” French Historical Studies 29.4 (2006): 543-564; Cosandey, La reine de France; Derval Conroy, Ruling Women, Queenship and Power (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Pages 21-24 in Conroy’s work sum up the controversy about, contemporary objections to, and use of the falsified “law.”


[11] Barbara Gaehtgens and Damien Bril are preparing, respectively, a monograph and a dissertation on Anne of Austria’s representation.


[16] For example, in the 1650s alone, to Queen Christina of Sweden, the Duke of Modena, and the de Villiers brothers; Michel, “Le cadre de vie d’une reine de France au XVIIe siècle: Anne d’Autriche dans ses meubles,” pp. 275-278. For the concept of magnificence in the decoration of Anne’s era, see especially Emmanuel Coquery “‘Rien d’éclatant n’y manque...’ L’esthétique et le statut des arts du décor en France dans la première moitié du XVIIe siècle,” in Musée du Louvre and Réunion des musées nationaux, *Un temps d’exubérance*, pp. 53-63.


1550-1780 (Cambridge, U.K. and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) also focused on queens’ households. See also the useful article by Mathieu Da Vinha, “La Maison d’Anne d’Autriche,” in Chantal Grell, ed., Anne d’Autriche infante d’Espagne et reine de France (Paris: Perrin; Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica; Versailles: Centre de recherche du Château de Versailles, 2009), pp. 155-185, which uses solely the information provided by Eugène Griselle, État de la maison du roi Louis XIII, de celles de sa mère, Maire de Médicis; de ses sœurs, Chrestienne, Élisabeth et Henriette de France; de son frère, Gaston d’Orléans; de sa femme, Anne d’Autriche; de ses fils, le Dauphin (Louis XIV) et Philippe d’Orléans, comprenant les années 1601 à 1665 (Paris: P. Catin, 1912).


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