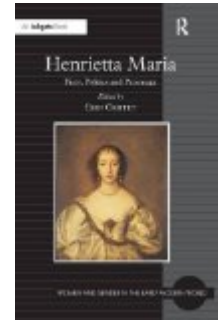


Erin Griffey, ed.. *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics, and Patronage*. Women and Gender in the Early Modern World Series. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. Illustrations. xii + 227 pp. \$99.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-7546-6420-8.



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Erin Griffey's edited volume *Henrietta Maria* is the latest contribution to an incredible wave of renewed interest that has taken place over the last few years in the political, religious, and cultural activities of Charles I's controversial queen consort.[1] This specialized work by new and established scholars takes as its central theme the interconnectedness of Henrietta's politicking, religious devotion, and cultural sponsorship.

Following a valuable introduction by the editor, Malcolm Smuts supplies the first chapter. This is a sophisticated and absorbing evaluation of the queen and her courtiers' political maneuvering throughout the period 1625-41. According to Smuts, from roughly 1626 to 1638, a "polyglot French and English, Catholic and Protestant entourage" developed around the queen (p. 24). He contends that over the course of that period Henrietta conscientiously aligned herself with whichever group (many of whom themselves collaborated across religious and secular lines) helped best to promote her political or religious agenda. For example, despite Henrietta's obvious dislike of

Cardinal Richelieu, by 1635 she started to advance his interests at the English court, reassured that in so doing "French inducements" would be her reward (p. 27). For Smuts, Henrietta's strategy of shifting alliances changed around 1638 when, from that point until 1640, she judiciously clung to those who advanced pro-Spanish interests, promoted wars against the Scots, and advocated "aggressive Catholic proselytizing at court" (p. 36).

Chapter 2, by Diana Barnes, is a thoughtful assessment of the 1638 English translation of Jacques du Bosque's politically and religiously laden *The Secretary of Ladies*. Through her skillful reading of this collection of fictional female-authored letters, Barnes credibly argues that at the time of its publication (when, as the author explains, "the scandal of court conversions was at a peak"), *The Secretary of Ladies* helped to give women at court an active public voice and encouraged them to convert to Catholicism (p. 51).

Karen Britland's chapter contains a perceptive analysis of the queen's theatrical patronage

during the years 1633-34 and 1634-35. Highlighting one of the more endearing aspects of the royal marriage, Britland's assessment reveals that during the former season, Charles and Henrietta sponsored separate but "mutually complimentary plays" that spoke of their desire to promote "themselves to be jointly engaged in the enjoyment and promotion of theatre" (p. 66). During the latter season, the culturally and politically sophisticated queen took a more independent role in court theatrics, at one point possibly using her sponsorship of an itinerant French troupe to advance French political interests at the English court.

Continuing the theme of theatrical patronage is Sarah Poynting's fascinating piece on the life-long personal and professional relationship between Henrietta and the courtier, playwright, and Catholic convert Walter Montague. Looking in detail at Montague's *The Shepherd's Paradise* (1632), the author challenges Stephen Orgel's and Kevin Sharpe's assertion that the play was an "unquestioning endorsement of Caroline government" (p. 86). For Poynting, the play's real political significance rests in its frank appreciation of the power women could command at court and could exercise through the theater. Readers will find particularly scintillating Poynting's novel observations about the play's erotic undertones (when, for instance, Moramante removes Bellessa's glove to kiss her hand) and what that might reveal about contemporary sexual mores.

Three of the collection's chapters deal with visual imagery of Henrietta. The first, by Jessica Bell, compares and contrasts portraits of Henrietta with those of her mother, Marie de Médicis. Bell's conclusions are tentative and, perhaps, not entirely surprising: to construct her public royal image Henrietta drew on her French, Catholic heritage but tailored that image to make it more palatable to her English, Protestant audience. For example, in Henrietta portraiture (in sharp contrast to that of Marie de Médicis) references to

Marian imagery are clearly played down. While not discounting alternative interpretations, Bell does offer the possibility that subtle references to the Virgin Mary can be found in those portraits of the Henrietta which include such images as an orange tree, roses, or olive trees.

A nice accompaniment to Bell's study is Gudrun Raatschen's wonderful investigation of Anthony van Dyck portraits of Henrietta. Raatschen reads into these portraits much more than mere ornamentation; rather, she finds overt references to the queen's fidelity, fertility, virtue, and beauty, and (in agreement with Bell) subtle allusions to the queen's Catholicism.

The last chapter on imagery by Griffey examines Henrietta iconography from 1625 to 1641 with particular attention to "the potential significance of the appearance (or absence) of devotional jewellery" (p. 165). Especially intriguing are Griffey's findings: first, that after 1636 the queen made a more concerted effort to fashion her public image; and, secondly, that the "visual persona" she helped to create included religious accoutrement (p. 175). At the center of Griffey's investigation is establishing why devotional jewelry appears in some public images of the queen and why it is conspicuously absent in others. Part of the answer, which is entirely plausible, is that one must consider the audience. According to Griffey, when devotional jewelry appears, the work was no doubt intended "for recipients with Catholic sympathies"; when it is absent, the audience was "almost certainly" Protestant (p. 184). Griffey also posits that the increased occurrence of religious jewelry in the visual art of Henrietta parallels (and is perhaps even emblematic of) the increased presence of Catholicism at court—largely because of the opening of the queen's chapel at Somerset as well as the growing number of Catholic conversions taking place there.

Through her meticulous investigation of Henrietta's household accounts, Caroline Hibbard provides a revealing study of Henrietta as patron of

artists and artisans. Hibbard's mastery of these largely underutilized sources reveals a great deal about the queen's influence on material culture. Among the recipients of Henrietta's patronage, for example, were dressmakers, costume makers, tailors, jewelers, mercers, musicians and music boys, cabinetmakers, and artists. The fact that many of these individuals were Protestant (even Huguenot) supports Smuts's earlier observations that Henrietta's fraternizing and patronage often extended across the religious spectrum to embrace non-Catholics.

The final chapter by Jonathan Wainwright is an exploration of sacred music commissioned for the queen's chapel at St. James's Palace. By Wainwright's own admission, his conclusions are speculative but, nevertheless, telling. Advanced here is the theory that the overtly Catholic music played in the queen's chapel, particularly after 1636, symbolically represented both the Virgin Mary and the queen, "the Blessed Virgin's champion on earth" (p. 206).

Overall, only a few criticisms about the work are of note. First, Bell's chapter (chapter 5) might have been paired with Raatschen's (chapter 7) and Griffey's (chapter 8), as all three deal with visual representations of Henrietta. Having to skip over Hibbard's piece (chapter 6) every time Raatschen and Griffey referenced a figure from chapter 5 proved troublesome. Arguably, all the illustrations would have been more easily accessible if they had been grouped together either at the center of the book or at the end. Secondly, the index (which runs just over two pages) could have been expanded. For example, under the heading Charles I, only three pages are listed; by my count he is mentioned on at least eighteen. In the end, these criticisms are minor and do not detract in any way from the fact that this is an illuminating and impressive collection that makes an excellent contribution not only to the plethora of Henrietta Maria scholarship produced in recent years, but

also to the increasing body of work lately devoted to early modern queenship in general.[2]

Notes

[1]. For example, my *Henrietta Maria and the English Civil Wars* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Karen Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Henrietta Maria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Rebecca A. Bailey, *Staging the Old Faith: Queen Henrietta Maria and the Theatre of Caroline England, 1625-42* (Manchester: Manchester United Press, 2009).

[2]. Recent publications include Robert Bucholz and Carole Levin, eds., *Queens and Power in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed., *Queenship in Europe 1660-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed., *Queenship in Britain, 1660-1837: Royal Patronage, Court Culture and Dynastic Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

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