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Abby E. Zanger. *Scenes From the Marriage of Louis XIV: Nuptial Fictions and the Making of Absolutist Power.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997. xv + 244 pp. $45.00 US (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8047-2977-2.

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The Queen is Sweating! Long Live the Queen!

Abby E. Zanger's new book, *Scenes From the Marriage of Louis XIV*, is a valuable contribution to the study of a perennially intriguing topic: royal propaganda during the reign of Louis XIV. In spite of many reflections on this subject by Louis' contemporaries and subsequent historians, and in spite of the recent, encyclopedic study by Peter Burke, we are far from consensus on this issue.[1] Two approaches have dominated the study of louisquatorzian ritual and representation in the last several decades. The first school, heavily influenced by anthropological models and the classic work of Ernst Kantorowicz on "the king's two bodies," emphasizes the way in which Louis and his advisors modified or abandoned royal ceremonies to update a doctrine of paternalistic kingship around which a divided France might cohere. The excellent work of Ralph Giesey on royal funerary ceremonies, Sarah Hanley on the *lit de justice*, and Lawrence Bryant on royal entries typifies this scholarship, which places changes and consistencies in French royal ritual during the reign of the Sun King into a long-term perspective.[2] The second approach, steeped in post-structuralist thought, insists on the inconsistencies of the texts and images concocted to represent the Sun King to his increasingly disempowered subjects. The seminal studies amongst these works are those of Louis Marin on "the portrait of the king," and of Jean-Marie Apostolides on Louis' transition from a *roi-machiniste* who created his own image, to a *roi-machine*, a hollow presence at the center of the state capable of being filled by any body, individual or corporate, who could lay claim to power.[3] Scholars familiar with both sets of literature are therefore led to ask whether the events of 1658-1715 were consistent in a general sense with the rituals of state-building that went before, or whether they represented a megalomaniacal, and ultimately catastrophic, departure from established custom. Both approaches, the anthropological and the literary, exert an influence on Zanger in her study of the "nuptial fictions" surrounding the marriage of Louis XIV to the Spanish infanta in 1660.

The author, an associate professor of French Literature at Harvard University, has chosen to focus her skills on the visual and textual products of this major diplomatic event, or what she calls the "marriage archive." She makes this choice for several reasons. First, as she states, there is no "critical" study of the marriage, meaning that previous treatments of these events have simply restated the official narratives of the wedding found in contemporary pamphlets and other media. Second, borrowing explicitly from the anthropologist Victor Turner, she wishes to emphasize the "liminal" or transitional nature of the event, which transpired after the tumultuous events of the Fronde rebellion but prior to the fixing of royal iconography in the 1660s, 70s, and 80s studied by Marin and Apostolides. The decision to probe these "nuptial fictions" affords Zanger an opportunity to examine the royal myth-making process at a moment when the goals of fashioning a kingly image were not yet codified. Furthermore, by focusing on the ritual of the wedding, rather than on funerary rites, judicial rituals, or royal entries, the author has chosen a set of ceremonies where the king must share pride of place with his bride. Indeed, until the couple produced an heir to the throne in 1661 the queen's body was at least as important as the king's to the long-term survival of the dynasty and the kingdom. Although Zanger correctly situates the marriage in the larger context of the peace negotiations between France and Spain, she is primarily concerned with French attitudes towards the royal wedding itself. To examine these sentiments, she proposes a series of close readings of almanac images, occasional pamphlets, plays and fireworks commissioned to celebrate the wedding, and other contemporary materials. Her procedure closely follows not only the semiotic reading strategies of Marin and others but also the materialist approaches employed by Roger Chartier, Christian Jouhaud, and other French scholars of print in this period; that is to say, she attends

not only to ideas in their textual form, but also to the printing and performance histories of the various texts and spectacles under review.

Zanger first turns to 1658 and 1659 almanac images of the king and his potential mates (Louis XIV was twenty years old in 1658). Widely-circulating almanacs, as Genevieve Bolleme has reminded us, "were the books of people who hardly read"; the images which accompanied them influenced the views of their consumers as much as the printed word. Zanger argues here that the images of the young king, which prominently display one of his bare or scantily-clad legs as a phallic substitute, were meant to emphasize the monarch's potency. This reassurance was particularly important, she claims, following the dynasty-threatening inability of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria to produce an heir during the first twenty-three years of their marriage. In contrast to the virile king, Zanger draws our attention to the framed portraits of the faces and upper torsos of his potential spouses in these almanac engravings, which always cut off their limbs and otherwise contain their sexuality. These images, Zanger argues, were intended to affirm the virility of the king and the French state by suggesting Louis XIV's wholeness and dominance over the women who symbolically represent France's enemies. Yet the troublesome reminder of female sexuality, present in its absence and necessary for the Bourbon dynasty to replicate itself, could not be hidden by the frames in which the women were circumscribed. These early portraits of the king, she suggests, underscored the fallibilities of an unmarried monarch who had not yet produced a successor.

Zanger then moves forward to the actual marriage of Louis XIV and Maria Teresa, the daughter of Philip IV of Spain, in 1660; in particular, she settles on descriptions of the new queen found in the ten- to sixteen-page official pamphlets produced to describe the scene to the French reading public. The wedding took place on an island in the Bidassoa River between France and Spain; the transitional status of the infanta mirrored this geographical liminality. Anne of Austria, the mother of the king and herself formerly a Spanish princess whose marriage had ended an earlier conflict between the kingdoms, insisted that Maria Teresa shed her Spanish clothing in favor of French fashion for the wedding. Zanger's analysis of the pamphlets highlights their authors' concern to document the new queen's sartorial conversion; the writers' especially stress the unfashionability of the Infanta's huge hoop skirt, or *guardainfante* in Spanish, which had been stylish among female elites throughout the continent in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries but which had been replaced in France by less ostentatious, more narrowly cut skirts. French commentaries about the skirt, Zanger writes, revealed an anxiety about the queen's body, hidden in the hoop, which needed to be both virginal and nubile. Accordingly, on the day of the marriage mass, the Infanta was clothed in less spacious French attire which symbolized her appropriation as "an allegory of French triumph and potency" and which reinforced France's upper hand in the Treaty of the Pyrenees. The body of the newly clothed French queen, however, did not entirely cooperate with the spectacle designed for it by the French. In one of the book's most fascinating passages, the author explains that the pamphleteers all note the queen was dripping with sweat (*toute en eau*) by mid-afternoon on the day of the wedding and that she was forced to retire to her room where she was undressed and put to bed. Zanger explicates the multiple meanings of the Queen's perspiration: on the one hand, her body appeared to resist the new, Gallic role scripted for it by the French, but on the other hand the presence of the queen's bodily fluids underscores her sexuality and her readiness for reproduction. The regime's nuptial fictions simultaneously suppressed dangerous feminine sexuality while promising imminent offspring.

In addition to dissecting the central representations of the king and the queen at the time of the marriage, *Scenes From the Marriage of Louis XIV* lays out what Zanger calls the "technologies" which produced these images. The author sets out to demonstrate that pamphlets, like the images of the queen and nuptial fictions more generally, prop up the regime at the same time that they are regulated by it; the king and Mazarin must rely on print, as the most widely disseminated Old Regime media, to convey the wedding spectacle staged on its borders to the king's subjects. Unfortunately, the business of writing, printing, and distributing the pamphlets led to legal conflicts between one author, Francois Colletet, and the "King's Printer," Jean-Baptiste Loyson, who published the bulk of the pamphlets describing the wedding. At first, as the wedding ended and the royal participants moved northward into the French kingdom, writer and printer collaborated to produce a series of pamphlets spreading the news throughout the kingdom. Soon, though, the writer obtained a separate *privilege* from the crown and published an almost identical narrative of the marriage with a different publisher, which led to a lawsuit between the former collaborators. Zanger comments that the resemblance between the pamphlets churned out by different publishers reinforces the unitary interpretation of the marriage which the king and Mazarin wished to distribute. In all the pamphlets, for

example, one finds the first encounter between the future king and queen narrated from Louis' perspective; the queen remains silent and passive. Zanger furthers her study of nuptial technologies by analyzing a fireworks display and a drama performed on the occasion of the wedding. The story of the Golden Fleece provided the theme for both the fireworks staged to complement the entry of the royal couple into Paris in August 1660 and a machine play written by Pierre Corneille to celebrate the wedding.

Zanger complements her study of officially sanctioned almanacs, pamphlets, and spectacles with an examination of the preface to a 1661 novel by Madeleine de Scudery. She chooses to focus on the preface to *Celinte* because it features a discussion between several *mondains* of the royal entry of the King and Queen into Paris the previous year. In their conversation, the characters quickly turn to a philosophical evaluation of the merits of curiosity, the very human condition that the events on the border had evoked throughout the kingdom. Curiosity might be negative and associated with female weakness, as in Eve's curiosity about the apple. Or it might be positive, and largely masculine, as in the desire for knowledge which motivated early modern scientists to seek a greater understanding of nature and God. The fictional conversation finally turns to an evaluation of *cabinets de curiosite*, or *wunderkammern*, the collections of natural curiosities in the early modern period which both facilitated scientific study and underlined the knowledge and power of their owners. Ultimately, Zanger argues, the jewel-bedecked queen who entered the capital under the curious gaze of the Parisians in 1660 was reduced to the status of an object in the King's cabinet, displayed to the public in order to emphasize his power. In an afterward, Zanger briefly discusses the ceremonies which surrounded the death of Maria Teresa in 1683 when the queen once again assumed a public persona for the first time since the birth of the Dauphin in 1661. Kantorowicz and Giesey both stress the death of a king as a moment of high anxiety for the state, when the fiction of the king's (and the state's) eternal body must be renewed in light of the demise of the individual king's earthly, corrupt body. In contrast, Zanger writes, "the queen's dead body posed no liability for the state," since a French royal custom, the Salic Law, prohibited women from the inheritance. Instead, the queen's body had fulfilled its state obligations by producing a male heir. Interestingly, Louis did not attend any of the ceremonies around the death and burial of the queen. Zanger notes, however, that the Dauphin played a prominent role in these rituals and speculates that his presence served to link the queen to her primary role in reproducing the state. It could also have been the case that attacks on Louis over public affairs with his mistresses shamed him from attending the funeral.

This summary hardly does justice to the subtlety of Zanger's analysis; she adroitly combines interpretations of disparate primary source materials with a deep sensitivity to the seventeenth-century meanings of words and the ritual importance (and danger) of royal wedding ceremonies for the contemporaries of the Sun King. Some readers may find the psychoanalytic interpretations put forth in *Scenes From the Marriage of Louis XIV* overly exclusive of other interpretive modes, but the topic at hand is, after all, a ritual designed to legitimize and channel carnal desire. Most historians, however, will come away from this work wondering how the author has modified our understanding of the "portrait of the king." Zanger suggests that there is an important difference between the study of royal representations during funeral ceremonies (Kantorowicz and Giesey), and weddings. The former are rituals which "mark an end and anticipate a beginning, merging these two moments together to preserve the integrity of one state." The funeral substitutes one body for another. In contrast, marriage is a process of combination, "adjudicating tensions between…two states" (p. 8). Once the new queen had produced an heir in 1661, it was possible to exclude her (and Spain) from any representation of Louis XIV and the French state; her lack of importance in public ceremonials until her death underscores this point. Until the dynastic succession was secured, however, Louis could not claim to embody the eternally enduring French state. This careful study of the words and images produced before and during the wedding reminds us that the mythical Sun King did not appear immortal to his subjects before he began his personal reign in 1661.

The attention devoted to Maria Teresa in this study also puts it in line with recent studies of Marie-Antoinette, a later and more ill-fated French queen. As the work of Elizabeth Colwill, Lynn Hunt, Sarah Maza, Jacques Revel, and Chantal Thomas has demonstrated, the French invested a great deal of meaning in the "many bodies" of their last queen before the Revolution.[4] While we know a fair amount about pornographic representations of eighteenth-century queens and royal mistresses, Zanger's study of the Spanish Infanta suggests that there may be an important history of the queen's body across several centuries waiting to be written. Interestingly, she observes that accounts of Anne of Austria's marriage to Louis XIII in 1615 also discussed her clothing and noted her perspiration on the day of the

wedding. In a similar vein, preoccupations with the young King's virility call to mind concerns at court and beyond about the sexual tendencies of the young Louis XV on the eve of his wedding to Marie Leczinska of Poland in 1725. Courtiers worried that the fifteen year-old king did not take a sufficient interest in the attractive women who surrounded him, and Voltaire, then at court for a performance of one of his plays, noted in a letter that one young male courtier had been exiled "for sticking his hand down His Majesty's pants once too often." French royal weddings and their preliminaries may yet have much to tell us about the fashioning of the monarchy.[5]

Finally, we can see the tension between the anthropological and literary approaches to royal image-making under Louis XIV at work in Zanger's discussions of the wedding. Although a literary scholar by training, she readily acknowledges the ritual importance of the wedding for the French state and the King's subjects; her textual analyses are always informed by the knowledge that the various pamphlets and other items were intended to spread the message of state coherence to a populace only seven years beyond the Fronde. Yet the close readings she performs, informed by semiotic and feminist thought, continually reveal the inconsistencies in the nuptial fictions the state attempted to propagate. Ultimately, *Scenes From the Marriage of Louis XIV* is a rich effort to imagine the workings of absolutist symbolic politics from our post-absolutist perspective.

Notes

[1]. Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven and London, 1992).

[2]. Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957); Ralph Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva, 1960); Sarah Hanley, *The Lit de Justice of the Kings of France: Constitutional Ideology in Legend, Ritual, and Discourse* (Princeton, 1983); Lawrence Bryant, *The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony* (Geneva, 1986). For a convenient summary of this work, see Roger Chartier (trans. Lydia Cochrane), *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham, 1991), pp. 124-28.

[3]. Louis Marin (trans. Martha M. Houle), *Portrait of the King* (Minneapolis, 1988); Jean-Marie Apostolides, *Le Roi-machine: Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris, 1981).

[4]. Elizabeth Colwill, "Just Another *Citoyenne*?-Marie-Antoinette on Trial, 1790-1793," *History Workshop*, 28 (Autumn 1989): 63-87; Lynn Hunt, "The Many Bodies of Marie-Antoinette," in *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore & London, 1991); Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Celebres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), pp. 167-211; Jacques Revel, "Marie-Antoinette in Her Fictions: The Staging of Hatred," in *Fictions of the French Revolution*, ed. Bernadette Fort (Evanston, 1991); Chantal Thomas, *La Reine scelerate, Marie-Antoinette dans les pamphlets* (Paris, 1989).

[5]. Jeffrey Merrick is preparing a study of royal representations during the Old Regime that will include an analysis of the events surrounding the marriage of Louis XV.

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