



***Later Stuart Queens, 1660–1735:
Religion, Political Culture, and
Patronage***

**Edited by Eilish Gregory and
Michael C. Questier**

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This addition to Palgrave MacMillan’s *Queenship and Power* series offers a fresh examination of late Stuart queenship, arguing that “queens’ engagement with contemporary culture was a potent expression of their political influence” (8). It shares a pedigree with collections such as Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly and Adam Morton’s *Queens Consort, Cultural Transfer and European Politics, c.1500–1800* (2017), focusing on cultural expressions of queenly agency. Much ground was also recently covered in *Tudor and Stuart Consorts* (2022), edited by Aidan Norrie, Carolyn Harris, Joanna L. Laynesmith, Danna R. Messer, and Elena Woodacre, with similar themes of confessional tensions, cultural patronage and political influence. *Later Stuart Queens* is, however, differentiated by its exploration of queenship in all its multitudinous modes, including queens consort, dowager, regnant, regent and -in-exile. Co-editors Eilish Gregory and Michael Questier’s inclusion of art historians, literary historians, and museum curators—most of whom are early career or doctoral researchers—gives the collection an interdisciplinary flavour which values visual and material culture as much as the written word.

Although not an explicit objective, an important theme in this collection is queens’ bodies as sites of political legitimacy and opposition. Catholic Stuart queens were particularly vulnerable to charges of sexual impropriety or corrupting influence in the gendered attacks of Protestant polemic. Carolyn Harris argues that when pre-Civil War rumours of Henrietta Maria’s infidelity resurfaced after the restoration, they “directly challenged [Charles II’s] position as the legitimate son of the executed Charles I” (34). The king’s own licentiousness only exacerbated this, equating Henrietta Maria’s sexual reputation with the legitimacy of the restoration. Where criticism of the dowager challenged the reigning monarch, consorts were responsible for maintaining future legitimacy. Susannah Lyon-Whaley examines the contentious nature of Mary Beatrice of Modena’s public performance of conception, pregnancy and fecundity. Lyon-Whaley argues that Mary Beatrice’s employment of these modes of display, as well as her later artistic commissions, showed her as a conscious actor in dynastic politics. That the legitimacy of her pregnancy was so contested evidenced that “the queen’s body was a potent political symbol and weapon for assuring the Catholic succession” (133).

Contrasting the fecund bodies of the Catholic queens, Jessica Minieri argues that the “sickly and spent” body of the Protestant Anne undermined her authority, while Jennifer Farooq concurs that Anne’s exercise of her prerogative faced gendered judgements from “politicians who often underestimated her as a woman” (256).

Highlighting a gap in the literature, queens without a crown—both dowagers and exiles—feature prominently. Recent cultural histories by Maria Hayward, Erin Griffey, and Adam Morton, alongside Sophie Shorland’s accessible biography *The Lost Queen* (2024), constitute a growing literature on Catherine of Braganza. Yet, her dowagership remains understudied. Gregory argues that under the reign of James VII & II, Catherine could publicly observe her faith without fear of repercussions. Dowagership offered her “fresh opportunities to extend her patronage network”, exercising her influence by appointing a privy council of both Protestants and Catholics (51). Sharing many advisors with the new king, she remained abreast of the situation for Catholics in the kingdom, becoming an arbiter of disputes and advocate of toleration, wielding influence which scholars have underestimated. Catherine’s story is continued by Fleur Goldthorpe, who demonstrates that Catherine’s establishment of a dowager court in Lisbon “allowed her to preserve Anglophile customs, counsel, and influence” (95). Catherine exercised significant agency, asserting her status as a dowager above Queen Maria Sofia, being granted guardianship of the queen’s household after her death. Despite frosty relations with William III, the accession of Anne offered Catherine a central role in repairing Anglo-Portuguese relations. Using the Methuen Treaties of 1703 as a case study, Goldthorpe argues that Catherine’s status, experience, and bonds of kinship gave her influence in commercial and military negotiations. This response to Anglocentric studies of Catherine is a reminder of the potential for further study in the Portuguese collections.

The inclusion of Maria Clementina Sobieska, a queen who never wore the crown, offers unexpected insights into the continuing turbulence of the Stuart story. Through a reading of Clementina’s own letters in the Radziwiłł Archive, alongside diplomatic dispatches in the Stuart Papers, Stephen Griffin situates her exercise of personal agency in the context of international alliances. Clementina’s decision to enter a convent in 1725, following a marital dispute over control of her household and raising her eldest son, is represented as a diplomatic incident which highlighted disunity at the Jacobite court-in-exile. The reputational damage this caused is contrasted by Georgia Vullinghs’s work on Clementina’s afterlife in Jacobite material culture, building on her own previously published articles. Vullinghs shows that representations of magnificence, poverty and

piety at Clementina's funeral had a sacral quality, reflected in her burial at St Peter's Basilica in Rome, while commemorative cultural artefacts performed as relics. She asserts that "the material legacy of Clementina as Jacobite queen empowered her to act on and for her supporters in the afterlife" (303).

Amongst this collection's strengths are four chapters, including Vullinghs's and Lyon-Whaley's, taking an art historical approach. These demonstrate the integral nature of the visual and decorative arts to early modern queenship. Shifting the object of study from acts of patronage to the images themselves reveals new perspectives on the construction of queens' identities, legitimacy and cultural leadership. Amy Lim intriguingly argues that while queens were often the source of cultural transfer from foreign courts, Mary II's influence on interior decoration was of particular significance because of her positioning between two cultural worlds. Her "striking, sophisticated, and luxurious interiors" (196), featuring characteristically Dutch displays of Delftware, had an immediate cultural impact among the English elite, contributing to a programmatic Anglo-Dutch visual culture which underpinned royal authority. Emily Birch develops Lim's argument in the context of Mary's personal direction of improvement works at Hampton Court and their afterlife in the reign of Anne, the collection's only comparative study. Birch offers a noteworthy discussion of Anne's patronage of Antonio Verrio, analysing his work in the Queen's Drawing Room, and the commissioning of Christopher Wren to transform the Chapel Royal. Beyond the visual, literary sources of artistic expression are employed by Mindy Williams, who focuses on Mary Beatrice as a "creative muse" (98), and Edward Taylor, who analyses the panegyric construction of the character of Mary II's queenship. While these chapters contribute to a body of literature on individual or confessionally similar queens, they demonstrate a need for comparative study of the contrasting cultural identities of these two Protestant queens without a succession to the Marian fecundity of the Catholic queens in Lyon-Whaley and Vullinghs's chapters.

Reflecting on the volume's stated themes of "Religion, Political Culture, and Patronage", the chronological chapter arrangement perhaps misses an opportunity to emphasise these commonalities. This review has identified three additional themes—queens' bodies as contested sites of legitimacy, the influence of queens-without-crowns, and art historical and literary approaches to the construction of queens' identities—suggesting that the volume's objectives could be more strongly signposted. Moreover, the range of source material and methodological approaches used is the volume's main strength, but embracing such diversity gives a looseness to its organisation. It succeeds in

its intention of exploring cultural expressions of political influence, but more explicit thematic connections in the introduction and chapter arrangement would better guide readers through these valuable contributions to the literature.

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