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Queen Anne and British Culture (1702-1714)

(Tercentenary commemorative special issue)

Dedication

This special issue is dedicated to the memory of Professor Kevin Sharpe (1949-2011), whose interdisciplinary work on Stuart court culture is a great legacy and a gift to scholars working on the period.

Edited by Claudine van Hensbergen and Stephen Bernard

Introduction

Claudine van Hensbergen and Stephen Bernard

This was no ordinary woman. She might appear so. In fact she was strange as any Stuart and, at least towards the end of her reign, as unfathomable.

Her health was appalling. No other queen has had to be carried to her coronation. None has been less tutored in queenship, nor any more determined to serve well. She loved her country. She loved her Church. She had the strongest possible sense of duty. It was still not enough.

A queen needs to be infinitely wise. Should she not be so, she must rely on wise ministers and for better or worse stand by them. In this Anne failed, and perhaps for no culpable fault. She lacked perception and in spite of a stubborn will she was too easily imposed upon. She lacked too that royal detachment which would have spared her emotional strain; and on top of all this she took rebuffs too personally and was far too easily hurt.¹

So begins David Green's 1970 biography of Queen Anne.

Reading it some four decades later we might be tempted to raise an eyebrow at its outmoded style and judgmental claims: Anne's health was appalling; she was unprepared for her duties; she was overly emotional, and ultimately she was a failure. In these opening paragraphs, Green delivers a negative, even hostile, account of the queen, and we might question why, if this was his general assessment, he embarked on a biography of Anne at all. Green himself quickly goes on to acknowledge the existence of two Annes – the caricature, and the real woman: 'Yet beneath all those layers of robes and bandages, buried deep in that gross and gout-ridden form, there breathed a human being'.² Too often we forget to realise that the caricature of Anne which has developed over the centuries has become so influential that we cease to question its validity. Thanks to Swift's cutting comments on the queen, and Sarah Churchill's tactical demolition of Anne's character in her insider account, *The Conduct of the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough* (1742), Anne has become one of the least fashionable figures of her reign, and she attracts far less scholarly attention than many of her contemporaries.

Anne died on the 1 August 1714, making this year the tercentenary of the close of her reign and, indeed, that of the later Stuart monarchy. Readers might be excused for believing that with the wealth of scholarship undertaken on the early eighteenth century since 1970 accounts of

Anne's role and achievements as a monarch have since become somewhat more nuanced. Yet despite his generalising account of Stuart family character and its flights of hyperbole, the narrative Green here perpetuates remains a familiar one. Scholars of the period are better-acquainted with the caricature image of Queen Anne as a permanently ill and debilitated queen who relied on her ministers to oversee state affairs, and who was little involved in the major political achievements of the age (military victories in Europe; peace with France; union with Scotland), than they are with the reality of a queen who was a far more capable and engaged monarch than these accounts allow. We might learn with surprise, for example, that Anne attended more cabinet meetings than any other monarch in history, and was an avid lover of country sports, leading Swift to remark in 1711: 'she hunts in a chaise with one horse, which she drives herself, and drives furiously, like Jehu, and is a mighty hunter, like Nimrod'.³

Indeed, as Kevin Sharpe has recently noted, the contrasts

between the spectacular achievements of the reign and the low estimation of the ruler may be unparalleled in our early modern history [...] Yet we should recall how contemporary panegyrists in hundreds of verses, songs and sermons figured Anne as that symbolic centre, as the effective 'cause' of Britain's victories and aggrandizement.⁴

Sharpe's call here to recover the Anne that her contemporaries knew and celebrated has yet to be properly answered. Biographical studies of Anne still list in the low single digits (Green, 1970; Gregg, 1980; Somerset, 2012), and appear markedly less often than those written on the majority of her Tudor and Stuart forebears.⁵ All of these biographical accounts are heavily indebted to the correspondence between Anne and Sarah Churchill held in the Blenheim Papers, the largest single archival source of its kind, containing over a thousand letters. As useful as this resource undoubtedly is, its centrality to accounts of Anne's life raises an important issue: if we continue to access Anne's biography primarily through her correspondence with Sarah Churchill, then we will continue to see her through a narrow lens – to conceive of her always in relation to Churchill, and in terms of a friendship that had flourished during Anne's years as a princess, but turned increasingly sour during her time as queen. This is only one way to access and, indeed, *assess*, Anne's character and achievements. Whilst the correspondence held in the Blenheim Papers offers a fascinating insight into the relations between the women and constitutes the most substantial single archival source available to scholars, it is hoped that the essays in this collection will make clear the potential breadth of other material available to those wishing to study Anne's life and influence.

Such work has been attempted before. Edward Gregg's groundbreaking 1980 biography of Queen Anne constituted a remarkable attempt to shift wide-held historical presumptions about Anne's reign, and reposition the queen at its heart, an agenda neatly summarised on the study's dust jacket:

The reign of Queen Anne, the last Stuart monarch, was a period of significant progress for the country: Britain became a major military power on land, the union of England and Scotland created a united kingdom of Great Britain, and the economic and political basis for the golden age of the eighteenth century was established. However the queen herself has received little credit for these achievements and has long been depicted as a weak and ineffectual monarch, dominated by her advisers. This landmark biography shatters that image and establishes Anne as a personality of integrity and invincible stubbornness, the central figure of her age.

Gregg's ambitions were well-founded, and his study put into contention a new historical narrative of Anne's reign, primarily a political one in which he shows her to be an active, albeit cautious, player in state affairs. Gregg was building on the work of G. M. Trevelyan, whose three

volume study *England Under Queen Anne* (1930-4), had offered new historical interpretations upon the major events of her reign, but had focused little on Anne's role within this. Today, it is debatable whether Gregg's study shattered the prominent and largely negative assumptions about Anne which remain in circulation. Anne is still overshadowed by other key figures of her reign: her ministers, Harley and Bolingbroke; her war hero, the Duke of Marlborough; the major poets who courted yet ultimately failed to gain her patronage, Pope and Swift; and not least, her ladies of the bedchamber, Sarah Churchill and Abigail Masham. An overview of recent publications on the politics and culture of the period undoubtedly suggests that the level of scholarly attention paid to these figures in many cases outweighs that paid to Anne, and at times these figures have come to act as surrogates for the queen; as figures who are seen to stand in for Anne in some way, be it in shaping the political, military or cultural realities of her reign. Witness, for example, Pat Rogers's excellent recent study, *Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts* (2005), and Ophelia Field's *The Favourite: Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough* (2002).

The present collection of essays aims to readdress this neglect in wider research into Queen Anne's life and role in her own reign by focusing on her personal relationship to British culture of the period. Critics have generally argued that Anne took little or no interest in court culture or wider literary and artistic developments of the period. In his seminal volume, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (1993), Robert Bucholz noted the lack of an artistic aesthetic 'directly inspired by Queen Anne, her taste, or the specific experience of being at her court', and explained Anne's personal disinvestment in the Arts through the queen's ongoing health problems and the Crown's strained finances when she acceded to the throne in 1702.⁶ Bucholz's research into the public and court-based expenditures of the later-Stuart courts provides essential reading for those wishing to gain an overview of a royal investment in the Arts during the period. Anne, it seems, was a more austere monarch than most, and understood the problems inherent in sinking huge sums of money into court projects, especially at a time when the monarchy was increasingly answerable to parliament. And Anne was, as Bucholz points out, personally less-interested in many of the artistic forms that her predecessors had patronised. She seems to have taken all but no interest in the theatre, and commissioned few portraits of herself for the Royal Collection. There is little evidence she read poetry or took a particular interest in the work of the leading writers of the age. But this can largely be explained, as Bucholz tells us, by the fact that Anne had terrible eyesight – making reading and viewing difficult, whilst her wider health problems made visits to the theatre and out in public problematic. Bucholz's wider research, published as journal articles and book chapters, presents an image of a queen who was personally interested in developing and investing in those areas of British culture close to her heart, largely centred on the Church. As Bucholz details, Anne revived royal rituals such as touching for the king's evil (she was the last British monarch to do so), she undertook Royal Progresses and wanted to use the newly complete St. Paul's Cathedral as the focus for frequent celebrations of national thanksgiving. Anne did not manage to roll out the latter projects on the scale she envisaged due to ongoing health problems which made it increasingly difficult to venture beyond the court. And yet it is maybe here, in her ambitions to be involved in publicly-facing projects, rather than court-centred ones, that we should chiefly look for a cultural aesthetic linked to the queen. Indeed, despite the cultural decline of her own court Anne remained a key figure at the heart of wider, national cultural developments, and her person and image proved a popular subject commemorated by countless writers, artists, musicians, institutions and other parties who lived during her reign.

Despite Bucholz's excellent contributions to scholarship on Anne's personal role within her reign, few other scholars have paid the subject much regard in recent years. This situation is, happily, one now undergoing change. Kevin Sharpe's posthumously printed monograph, *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy, 1660-1714* (2013), will undoubtedly prove a

landmark study in the cultural history of the later Stuart monarchs. The study is the final instalment in a trilogy tracing the cultural construction of the royal image from the Tudor to the Stuart dynasty. Sharpe dedicates a substantial section of his volume to Anne's reign, and unlike the majority of scholars, he focuses on her personal interventions in the construction of her royal image. In doing so he shows her to be a far more formidable and independent monarch than generally accepted, and one who engaged directly with her people:

To those who regard her as rather colourless and bland, an argument that she was an effective orator must seem unpersuasive [as] even allowing for the conventions of praise, there were many contemporary testimonies to the queen's effectiveness as a speaker and to the impression that her words made on auditors in parliament and her subjects beyond Westminster.⁷

The image of Anne that arises from Sharpe's wide-ranging study is one of a queen who took great interest in her subjects, and intervened in the cultural, religious and political life of the nation. Sharpe discusses Anne's use of royal proclamations, speeches from the throne, her ordering of national thanksgiving services, and her introduction of Queen Anne's Bounty, an act which augmented the income of the poor clergy and which Sharpe terms 'a remarkable personal initiative' and one which 'represented her charity and care of the fabric of the established church'.⁸ Sharpe's wide-ranging analysis extends beyond a consideration of court culture in tracing the diverse cultural media employed in commemorating and representing Anne's person, including painting, medals, sculpture, poetry, ballads, music, newspapers and printed engravings. In doing so it reveals a new understanding of Anne's cultural legacy, one which promises to undergo further development this year with the publication of several volumes focused on the queen and her relationship to British culture. Later this summer James Anderson Winn's monograph, *Queen Anne: Patroness of Arts*, will be published by Oxford University Press. Winn's study promises to offer an unprecedented culturally contextualised account of the queen's life, and the flourishing of the wider Arts during her reign. This promising new scholarship on Anne's personal relationship to the Arts will be further supplemented by a collection of essays forthcoming with Bucknell University Press, edited by Cedric D. Reverand II and O. M. Brack Jr.

The present collection of essays contributes to new developments in scholarship on Anne's reign by offering eight new insights into aspects of British culture within which she proved a central figure. Contributors to this volume work across the Humanities, and come from the fields of architectural history, art history, garden design, church history, sermon culture and literature. Taken together, the essays demonstrate that research into an aesthetic and culture directly inspired by and linked to the queen needs to reconsider the court, but also to look beyond its traditional confines, with Anne's image widely promoted as a symbol of church and nation. As well as reassessing Anne's personal interest in various areas of art and culture (including painting, garden design, architecture and sermon culture), this volume also considers the high-profile public projects that were personally endorsed and enabled by the queen (for example, the 1711 establishment of a commission to build fifty new churches in and about the City of London – often known as the 'Queen Anne Churches' – and the construction of Blenheim Palace from 1705). Large-scale projects like these created a wealth of artistic commissions but have yet to be properly analysed in relation to Anne's own personal and political vision. The present collection does not claim to be an exhaustive survey of Anne's relation to British culture and aims, rather, to be a useful starting point: more work needs to be done on the painted image of the queen, of her commissioning of music for the Chapel Royal and, perhaps most importantly, her connection to wider cultural attempts to endorse Anglicanism. Religion was at the heart of Anne's agenda, as many of the essays included here make clear.

In the collection's opening essay, Joseph Hone provides a comprehensive overview of the panegyric poetry written to mark Anne's accession and coronation, considering how this functioned as a propagandist force. Panegyric, as Hone shows, proved a hotly contested ground, with bi-partisan agendas transparent in the varying praises Anne attracted. Hone considers a swathe of panegyrics written in 1702, moving from a discussion of triumphal Tory panegyric, to that of Whiggish representations of Anne as William's political inheritor, with the latter offering a means to extend the scope of Williamite elegy. Hone next considers the employment of partisan prophetic strategies in which Anne must adhere to Tory politics in order to guarantee future glory, before moving on to explore crypto-Jacobite references latent in certain panegyric texts. His essay concludes with an analysis of Whig mock-panegyric in which Tory rhetoric is satirised, before turning to ways in which this was countered through Nahum Tate's reappropriation of Whig rhetoric. Hone's attention here to a range of poets whose work has received little recent attention reminds us of the range of poetic voices at play during these years, and recovers a sense of the continuing importance of political panegyric in a period widely conceived of as an age of satire.

The second essay in the collection addresses another cultural output that, despite its contemporary importance, has likewise received little scholarly attention today: sermon culture. Jennifer Farooq ably navigates the huge swathe of sermons preached and printed during Anne's reign, in some cases at the queen's immediate request: Anne was the leading sponsor for sermons during her reign and was the last monarch to regularly sponsor their publication. Court sermons were, as Farooq argues, an important public forum in which Anne took a keen interest, and which provided her with a means of influencing an official state-sanctioned message regarding church teachings. To this end, Anne was personally involved in the appointment of her preachers and monitored and censored the content of their sermons. Farooq provides a nuanced political analysis of Anne's relationship to sermon culture, showing how despite her own Tory leanings, the queen promoted bi-partisan sermon content, displaying both her commitment to moderation and her prioritisation of wider church teaching over party politics. Nigel Aston's essay on Anne's relationship with the University of Oxford ('the intellectual powerhouse of Toryism') likewise provides a more nuanced interpretation of events than often found in scholarship of Anne's political loyalties. Aston traces how the close relationship perceived to have existed between the queen and university was a view that developed only in the aftermath of her reign. Anne, Aston argues, was far more moderate in her political dealings than her Tory supporters within the University had hoped she would prove, a fact which led to a growing formality and distance between both parties.

James Legard's essay on Anne's role in the construction of Blenheim Palace points, likewise, to the ultimate inability of any individual advisor or institution to control Anne entirely. Legard reconstructs a clear chronology behind the palace's conception and construction, showing how it was only later in Anne's reign, once Whig influences were diminishing in government, that standard public accounts of the palace as a gift marking royal favour were circulated by the Marlboroughs. Legard argues that the Blenheim estate was initially a more discreet gift, given by Anne to reward and raise up a family who had supported her during the difficult closing decade of the previous century. In his important new analysis of the foundation of Blenheim Palace, Legard reveals a firm and calculating side to Anne's character, and a subtle appreciation of 'the implicit exchange of service and reward that was fundamental to her concept of sovereignty'.

In the collection's fifth essay, David Jacques charts developments in garden design that were initiated at Anne's court, and which reflected her own tastes and pursuits. Jacques's research shows how Anne took a personal interest in her parks and gardens, investing growing

sums in their development, and was responsible for initiating a series of fascinating improvements: she took the role of Ranger and Keeper of St James's Park upon herself, and elsewhere introduced new gravel ridings at Hampton Court and Windsor to enable her to hunt from her carriage at greater speeds (up to a staggering forty miles an hour according to Swift). Within his remarkable account, Jacques reveals the wider significance of Anne's legacy as we learn that the Dutch influence of William III's court on English gardens was soon redirected, and that the garden fashions developed at Versailles, adopted elsewhere in the courts of Europe, were rejected in favour of Anne's plainer designs. 'Anne's gardens', as Jacques demonstrates, 'lay at the beginning of the changes that led away from the fussy formality of William's reign to the naturalistic gardens and parks of the mid eighteenth century'.

Within months of the publication of these essays Scotland will vote in a referendum that may lead to the dissolution of the 1707 Act of Union seen to be one of the major political achievements of Anne's reign. Juan Christian Pellicer's detailed analysis of John Philip's poem, *Cyder*, is therefore a timely analysis of a key poetic response written to celebrate and shape contemporary responses to the Act. Pellicer reveals how the poem's charting of a shared national past acted as pro-Union propaganda at this auspicious moment, and adeptly traces how in Philip's "Cyder-Land", even recent history is understood as a palimpsest overlaid on the mythic substratum of the land'. Pellicer decodes the latent Toryism at the heart of the poem, one that hoped that Anne's High-Church Anglicanism would ensure her prioritisation of Tory interests, and that viewed her not as the rightful Stuart heir, but rather as a "placeholder" 'placed in troubled expectation of future Stuarts who, it turned out, would never arrive'.

The final two essays in this collection focus on the iconography of Queen Anne and her husband, Prince George of Denmark. Claudine van Hensbergen's essay again draws upon the context of Anne's relationship to the Anglican Church in an exploration of a series of sculptural projects undertaken during Anne's reign to raise public statues of the queen. Tracing Matthew Prior's interest and involvement in such schemes, van Hensbergen goes on to show that early schemes targeted to stress Anne's military glories were abandoned whilst those that stressed her dual status as head of church and state were to gain Anne's personal and financial support. Van Hensbergen discusses the role poetry played in both the construction of and response to these projects, and shows how Prior's 'Ode to the Queen' (1706) ironically provides a more durable monument to Anne's legacy than the public sculptures he helped to envisage. In the final essay in the collection David Taylor conducts new, and much needed, research into the iconography of Anne's consort, Prince George of Denmark. Anne's personal attachment to her husband is well established, and Taylor here shows how painted portraits of George – also circulated as mezzotints – were used to shape wider ideas about his position and role at court. Taylor traces key shifts in George's iconography as attempts were made to negotiate his evolving status from son-in-law to James II, to brother-in-law to Mary and William, to Anne's consort. This led, as Taylor fascinatingly concludes, to George's eventual depiction in portraiture as a naval and military leader (despite his lack of actual prowess in such roles), as this was deemed to reflect his raised royal status whilst not detracting from his wife's position as regent.

Acknowledgements

by Claudine van Hensbergen

It was whilst I was working as a postdoctoral researcher on the AHRC-funded project 'Court, Country, City: British Art, 1660-1735', run in conjunction between Tate Britain and the

University of York, that I first took an interest in public sculpture of Queen Anne, and became fascinated by the evident lack of scholarship on sculpture of the period in general, but even more so by the little published material I could find on Anne's relationship to wider culture. It seemed to me that there was much evidence to be found to suggest that such a relationship *did* exist and was worth exploring, and this became increasingly clear as I made contact with the contributors to this volume and learned about the respective original research they were undertaking. My thanks go out to them for their excellent contributions to this special issue, and for their patience and cooperation in bringing the essays to publication. Thanks also go to the team at York and Tate Britain with whom I was lucky to work with from 2011-12, and who I learned so much from, notably Mark Hallett, Martin Myrone, Nigel Llewellyn, Tabitha Barber and Tim Bachelor. Matthew Grenby and the team at *JECs* have provided invaluable encouragement and support in first accepting, and subsequently seeing this issue through the press, and their professionalism and punctuality in this process is reflected in the growing reputation and strengths of the journal in their hands – it is hoped that this special issue will only add to its merits.

¹ David Green, *Queen Anne* (London: Collins, 1970), p.11.

² Green, p.11.

³ R. O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford UP, 1993), p.51; Jonathan Swift, *Journal to Stella: Letters to Esther Johnson and Rebecca Dingley 1710-1713*, ed. by Abigail Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.252.

⁴ Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy, 1660-1714* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), p.670.

⁵ Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne*, 2nd edn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001); Anne Somerset, *The Politics of Passion* (London: Harper Press, 2012).

⁶ Bucholz, p.228-229.

⁷ Sharpe, p.521.

⁸ Sharpe, p.520.