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Remembering Queens and Kings in Early Modern England and France: Reputation, Reinterpretation, and Reincarnation

Estelle Paranque (ed.)

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Within the last ten years, there has been an increase in historians considering the purpose of history outside of academic realms. Popular culture has been slowly making its way into museums, while the use of history in popular culture has increased drastically. Going to the movies to see a period film is easier than ever and is even drawing in new audiences with major celebrities from all genres (Harry Styles, Margot Robbie, and Christian Bale, to name a few) participating in the cult of celebrity histories. Celebrity is not the only way that popular culture interacts with history though, as the essays in *Remembering Queens and Kings in Early Modern England and France: Reputation, Reinterpretation, and Reincarnation* prove.

Remembering Queens and Kings of Early Modern England and France, edited by Estelle Paranque, is the fifty-ninth instalment in Palgrave Macmillan's "Queenship and Power" series. The book features contributions by historians that focus on how the memory of queens and kings of England and France have been portrayed in the years since their death. The book is split into four sections, and in each section, the authors demonstrate that the memory of queens and kings is anything but stagnant. This artfully assembled collection will hopefully spur more research and critical thinking into how culture affects our relationships to the past outside of historiographies.

In part one of the book, five authors look at themes in premodern literature, showing the ways that cultural context affects both fictional and factual writing. One of the biggest themes in this section is the issue of agency. While the agency of women has been a hotly debated topic, each author takes care to address evidence and underutilized examples from premodern literature to illustrate their points. Carole Levin examines agency that is added to Boudicca from the writings presented to Elizabeth I, as well as the perceived agency Boudicca offers to Elizabeth. Valerie Schutte touches upon an opposite problem when examining the history of romance novels addressing Mary Tudor and Charles Brandon. This examination sees the loss of agency on the part of Mary, and the novel mainly sees her as a lovestruck woman, and ends upon her happy marriage to Brandon, essentially implying that once she was married, she was no longer useful to the reader.

Stephanie Russo and Benjamin M. Guyer, who wrote Chapters Four and Five respectively, also explore the issues of agency and presentations in premodern literature. Russo examines the agency attributed to Anne Boleyn by female authors during the long eighteenth century with the rise of the "cult

of sensibility" and the critique of male manipulation and the danger of cunning men (54). During this time, female authors were confronting the supposed manipulation of Anne by the men around her. Guyer focuses on the complex legacy of Edward VI's reputation as a foil for the assertion that the English Reformation was an accident. Authors featured by Guyer tend to use Edward's short life and reign as a catalyst for continued religious strife.

The final chapter in Section One can be seen as a unification of the problems in reading premodern literature as a source for history from the last four chapters. In Chapter 6, Jurriaan van Santvoort explores the way that the clichéd over-romanticisation of Elizabethan England was perpetuated through the work of Richard Hurd. This chapter is the perfect subject to tie up section one, as it uses a simplistic but eloquent way to show the reader how an initial impression of an era can quickly spiral into a dominating force, which goes on to influence shifts in historical paradigms.

Section Two features four chapters analysing the reinterpretation of monarchs through art. Estelle Paranque and Imogen Peck examine vastly different subjects, but come to similar conclusions about the manipulation of presentation for political purposes. Paranque's chapter sees this manipulation by playwrights writing about Charles IX of France, while Peck illuminates the manipulation of the memory of the execution of Charles I on 30 January 1649 in British history in a wide plethora of sources. Both chapters show the manipulation to be done by both sides of the political spectrum.

Chapter 9 by Sarah Betts and Chapter 10 by Benjamin L. Wild both incorporate the concept of the romanticizing of their respective subjects. Betts explores the complex perceptions of Henrietta Maria and her translations through the lenses of the cultures that she was being interpreted from, even though this generally brought out a flat character. Wild deals with similar issues in the Victorian understanding of the Stuart era. The cultural changes during the Victorian era left people with the need to seek understanding of their places in life. One of the ways that this was done was by using the Stuart era to translate people's roles in society, which led to the interpretation of the Stuart era as a moral and reserved period in time. Both Betts and Wild see the translation of their chosen subjects into a reflection of the era the art was being produced into, as opposed to the original era. In Chapter 15, Susan Dunn-Hensley also shows that contemporary writers still depict Henrietta Maria as a one-dimensional character.

The final section of *Remembering Queens and Kings* deals with direct pop culture representations of history. The three most convincing chapters in this section are chapters 12, 13, and 16. Each of these chapters deals with direct representations of history in television shows or movies, with the exception of Chapter 13, which only deals with reflections of history in television. In

Chapter 12, K.D. Peebles features the case of the CW television show, *Reign,* making Francis II into an accomplished and attractive king. In Chapter 13, Estelle Paranque asserts that the depiction of Daenerys from *Game of Thrones* borrows elements from Elizabeth I to create a strong female Queen. Both Daenerys and Elizabeth face troubles concerning the legitimacy of their reign, gained power as their stories progressed, and gave inspiring speeches. The final chapter of the book is written by Courtney Herber and discusses the increase in fictional influence on the understanding of history, with exclusive attention to Marie Antoinette. Herber concludes that while Marie's reputation is becoming less focused on excess and childishness, the classic phrase "Let them eat cake" has not yet been erased.

As Elizabeth Ann MacKay points out in Chapter 14, writing history and fiction are two sides of the same coin. Writers often feel the need to force engaging literary elements from their own times onto the characters they are writing about or take advantages in gaps in scholarship to engage with audiences. This instalment in the "Queenship and Power" series does a good job of contextualizing major works and acknowledging their worth in the relationship between history and the public.

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