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Anna of Denmark: The Material and Visual Culture of the Stuart Courts, 1589-1619

Jemma Field

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Anna of Denmark: The Material and Visual Culture of the Stuart Courts, 1589–1619. By Jemma Field. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020. ISBN 978-1-5261-4249-8. 254 pp. £80.00.

Anna of Denmark, wife of James VI & I and mother of Charles I, has received growing scholarly attention in the last twenty years. Leeds Barroll (2001), Clare McManus (2002, 2003), and Susan Dunn-Hensley (2017) are amongst those who have significantly contributed to our understanding of the Stuart queen consort and re-evaluated her performances, patronage activities, and confessional identity. A 2019 conference, held at Oxford University, and entitled "Crossing the North Sea: Anna of Denmark, Cultural Transfer, and Transnational Politics (1589–1619)," explored "new research and scholarship on her life, patronage and iconography." One of the presenters at this event was Jemma Field, whose recent publication *Anna of Denmark: The Material and Visual Culture of the Stuart Courts, 1589–1619*, seeks to provide "a more comprehensive understanding of the personal iconography, aims, interests, and alliances of the Stuart consort" (5). Field's reconstruction of Anna's patronage activities, relationship with James, political involvement at the Stuart court, and family connections abroad is an enlightening and enjoyable read. It expands the discussion around Anna's daily activities and interests beyond her masquing and confessional identity—which have been extensively examined within previous scholarship—and argues that historiography on Anna has thus far failed to showcase the significance of her pan-European identity.

The introduction to Field's work offers a brief but not overwhelming assessment of the existing literature, which is supported throughout the book by further analysis of the scholarship related to the specific themes and subsections found within each chapter. The first chapter contextualises the study, calling for a re-examination of the relationship between Anna and her son Henry, Prince of Wales, and suggests that the marital relationship between James and Anna needs to be read differently than it has been in the past. Field argues that "rather than marital strife, [James and Anna's] geographical separatism should be interpreted in line with Heide Wunder's theorisation of early modern matrimony as a 'partnership'" (22). To support this argument, Field discusses the usefulness of Anna's presence in London when James was residing at country estates, and the way in which Anna entertained diplomats and discussed various important pieces of state business that she would then communicate to her husband.

The second chapter discusses Anna's building, renovation, and landscape projects in detail, highlighting the Danish influence over these programmes and demonstrating that Anna had an unusual amount of autonomy and input into the design of these spaces. The section following this explores the material goods that would have been found within these spaces and examines the Queen's interests in relation to art, books, and music, and once again emphasises the importance of Anna's upbringing in the Oldenburg court in encouraging her engagement and interest in these areas. While textual sources are limited in terms of the Queen's art collection, Field importantly demonstrates that the artistic developments and the commissioning of paintings usually attributed to Henry, Prince of

Wales, are more likely to be connected to Anna (99). Here, Field challenges previous scholarship, showing that Anna's collecting was highly personal, that it took place before and after Henry's death, and that Anna actively collected and patronised artists not favoured by James. Field's discussion in this section, whilst admitting that there is little textual supporting evidence, suggests that the Danish Secretary, Jonas Charisius, may have been a suitable person to act as Anna's agent in these matters. He often represented Anna's brother Christian at the Stuart Court and was involved in securing "paintings and musical instruments for the [Danish] royal collection," placing him in an ideal position to act for the Stuart queen in a similar capacity (100).

Following on from the materials found within Anna's residences, the next two chapters examine the Queen's jewellery and clothing, and explore how Anna sought to use these in the self-fashioning of her image, emblazoned on her physical body at court and reflected in her portraiture. It also highlights the differences between Anna and James's upbringings, contrasting the formal, increasingly ceremonial Oldenburg court with the Scottish royal court that was "little different to that of major Scots landowners" (136). This difference, encountered by James when he visited Denmark, had the effect of encouraging him to reform access to the monarch in the Scottish Stuart court. Furthermore, Field argues that Anna's experience and replication of this ceremonial court later influenced Charles when he became king in 1625. The final chapter explores the rituals and ceremonies in which Anna took part, examining her roles during the births and baptisms of her children, and the wedding of her daughter Princess Elizabeth. It also discusses Anna's position during James's visit to Scotland in 1617. Previously, James's decision to not grant Anna the regency at this time has been interpreted as evidence "of her waning influence with James" (197). Field, however, challenges this idea, arguing that the "creation of a commission (as opposed to a regency)" highlights James's own political strategies rather than reflecting a declining personal relationship or suggesting inability on Anna's part (197). Finally, the chapter examines Anna's death, exploring how her funeral was used to celebrate her Danish familial ties and the security of the Stuart succession, as embodied by Charles and visible in his unusual position as chief mourner. In her death, Anna's importance in terms of forging connections between the Stuart and Oldenburg courts is clear, as it "left a diplomatic vacuum in British-Danish relations" (201).

Field's work is well argued, clear, and readable, with signposting and other scholarship throughout, so that despite its academic format and context, it would also appeal to general readers seeking to explore Anna of Denmark's life, interests, and legacy. This is especially important, as there are no up-to-date popular biographies that examine Anna. Despite not being a biography, Field still covers the key milestones of Anna's life, making it an accessible read to those who have not encountered her before. Field's interdisciplinary work means that the book should hold wide appeal and, as suggested in the conclusion, demonstrates that there is still much research to be done surrounding Anna, her court, her relationships, and her projects in Scotland. Although Field's work aims to examine the themes presented in relation to Anna's time in both Scotland and then later in England, there are some areas of the book that are unbalanced in this regard.

Where this is the case, however, the analysis is caveated with a discussion that highlights the more limited textual sources that are available for Anna's time in Scotland. Furthermore, in some cases—for example Henry's birth and baptism—fewer documents survive regarding Anna's lying-in period, whereas these do exist for Princess Elizabeth and for Anna's other children, so the events can be reconstructed through various documents and by precedent.

Field's aims to highlight "the centrality of Anna's dynastic heritage to her consortship, [and to] reassess the character, structure, and complexities of her relationship with James" have been achieved within this work, and as such it should be recommended to any general reader or scholar interested in queenship, gender, patronage, art, garden history, and architecture (220). Throughout, Anna is shown to be a pan-European queen, looking outwards to those countries with whom she hoped to align her family (mainly Spain), looking home towards her familial Oldenburg court, and towards other European houses, such as those in the German lands, to which she was connected through the marriage of her siblings.

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