

James Anderson Winn. *Queen Anne: Patroness of Arts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. xxi + 792 pp. + 35 illus. + 18 col. pl. + 28 mus. ex. \$39.95. Review by MOLLY McCLAIN, UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO.

Known for gambling heavily and dining too well, Queen Anne also had an appetite for the arts, in particular, music, theater, and painting. She devoured works by some of the most prominent artists of her age and helped to popularize Italian opera. At the same time, she was a lackluster patron who failed to establish anything like the glittering court culture advanced by England's rival, King Louis XIV. Instead, she relied on London—the biggest city in Europe by 1700—to attract and support composers, playwrights, poets, and visual artists.

James Anderson Winn reveals the extensive menu of literary, theatrical, and musical entertainments enjoyed by English elites. Unfortunately, he burdens that information with a political narrative and a biography (of sorts) that takes the reader from 1675 to 1714, not always in chronological order. The result is a book that is as dense and unwieldy as the queen herself. Fortunately, it is a great deal more articulate and insightful.

Queen Anne's grandparents, Charles I and Henrietta Maria, were great lovers of the arts. They acquired an impressive collection of paintings by Renaissance masters, and encouraged the production of masques, great court spectacles that combined music with singing, dancing, scenery, and dramatic costume. The picture collection was long gone by the time that Anne and her sister Mary grew up, but the fashion for court masques remained. In fact, dance, music, and literature took center stage in their educations of the young princesses, along with a hefty dose of history and theology. The girls performed in John Crowne's *Calisto: or, The Chaste Nymph*, designed to showcase Mary's eligibility for marriage, and Nathaniel Lee's steamy tragedy, *Mithridates*. At center stage were mythological figures, epic battles, heroic deeds, and pagan gods at their most capricious.

Anne developed a real love for theatricals, according to Winn, using them as a way to escape from uncomfortable realities at the Stuart court. She practiced two instruments, the guitar and the harpsichord, and took every opportunity to see operas, concerts, and plays. As the

duchess of Denmark, she provided employment to eight musicians and offered patronage to Richard Elford, one of her favorite singers. She appreciated the harmonically advanced music produced by John Blow and George Frideric Handel and announced that she was “extremely well pleas’d” by the latter’s aria for the kidnapped Almirena in *Rinaldo* (547). She attended a theatrical or an opera on her birthday every year.

She also invested life at court with drama and ceremony. According to Sarah, duchess of Marlborough, the queen had “the greatest memory that ever was, especially for such things as are all forms, & ceremonys, giving people their due Ranks at Processions & their proper Places at Balls, & having the right order at Installments & funerals” (97-98). Despite her illness and obesity, Anne made a point of appearing in regal splendor at the time of her coronation, modeling her costume on a portrait of Queen Elizabeth. She put her court into mourning on the death of Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I, despite the fact that the latter had not done the same when King William III died in 1701.

Queen Anne recognized that the role of the monarch had changed in the partisan political world of early eighteenth-century England, but she remained nostalgic about ancient customs, the royal prerogative, and the unbroken relationship between King and Church. In Alexander Pope’s *Windsor-Forest* (1713), she appears as the “great *Anna*” who reverses the damage done by the plague, fire, and the civil wars and ushers in a new age of peace and plenty (606). Her character comforts the reader with the platitudes offered by earlier Stuart monarchs while simultaneously presiding over a country in the midst of rapid social and economic change. Britain stood on the brink of imperial adventure and the oaks of Windsor Forest would soon be “transformed into the planks of sturdy merchant ships” (603).

The changing nature of monarchy is a central theme in this book. Winn points out, “Anne appears to have lived in two time frames: her fondness for the panegyric imagery embodied in odes and masques is in keeping with her traditional trappings of monarchy, but her acquiescence in the wider distribution of the New Year’s and birthday music shows a surprisingly modern desire to include more of her subjects in these celebrations, thus building political support” (325).

The arts responded to the changed nature of political power, shedding the heroic and mythological for the mundane. Poets avoided

writing original epic poems, perhaps “because they recognized that the heroic principles and beliefs underlying the epic were moribund” (374). Instead, they created mock-epics like Pope’s *Rape of the Lock* in which lords and ladies battle like gods over a trivial lock of hair. Mythical allusions that had buttressed seventeenth-century monarchy came to seem “overblown or empty” and often charged with Tory party rhetoric (418).

In this context, Italian opera became increasingly popular with English audiences. A vehicle for star singers, operas showcased music, not prose or poetry, and routinely debased epic sources such as Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Castratos with their high-pitched voices took on the roles of “rough old Romans,” while women became ancient heroes and generals (442). Audiences began to appreciate hearing music for music’s sake; they also recognized that their pursuit of commerce and leisure had undermined the values of an older, martial age.

Queen Anne contains valuable insights on a wide range of subjects, from iconography to warfare, and offers close readings of many texts. It includes excerpts from musical scores by Henry Purcell, Jeremiah Clark, and George Frideric Handel, among others; a companion website allows the reader to hear these selections played by a group of specialists in early music. The author also discusses the visual arts, architecture, coins and medals, and tapestries, including the “The Famous Victories of the Duke of Marlborough,” now hanging in Blenheim Palace. It is most useful, however, as a work that contextualizes the literary, musical, and theatrical productions of the era.

Winn may be unable to provide hard evidence that Queen Anne was an important patron of the arts, but he proves that she was well educated, culturally sophisticated, and appreciative of the talented men and women who appeared on the London stage. Scholars interested in any aspect of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century politics and culture would be well advised to spend time with this weighty and erudite work.