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Sickly and Spent: Reassessing the Life and Afterlife of Anne of Great Britain

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CHAPTER 10

‘Sickly and Spent’: Reassessing the Life and Afterlife of Anne of Great Britain

Jessica L. Minieri

INTRODUCTION

In 1742, Sarah Churchill, duchess of Marlborough, reflected on the reign of Queen Anne, the last Stuart monarch of Britain and her one-time close ally. Sarah described Anne as “naturally obstinate,” and “overshadowed by the gloom of mental uneasiness and corporal suffering,” yet equally full of a “vindictive spirit.”¹ The duchess attributed the failings of the queen’s

¹ Sarah Jennings Churchill, ed. William King, *Memoirs of Sarah, and Duchess of Marlborough: Together with Her Characters of Her Contemporaries and Her Opinions* (New York: Dutton, 1930), 178, 240, 497.

This chapter is dedicated to Professor L. H. Roper and the Department of History at the State University of New York at New Paltz. Without the support of Professor Roper during the stages of research, writing, and editing of this chapter from its beginnings as my undergraduate thesis to its current form in this volume, this chapter would not be possible. His support, guidance, and mentorship since my days at SUNY New Paltz have made this chapter and the beginning of my career as a premodern historian possible.

reign to her physical ailments; in particular, her inability to produce an heir after the death of William, duke of Gloucester following a short illness in the summer of 1700. The death of her son placed greater pressure on Anne and her husband, Prince George of Denmark, to produce another heir to secure the succession, and, especially, to combat the claim to the throne of the Jacobite pretender, Anne's half-brother, James Francis Edward Stuart. Ever since, discussions of Anne's reign have tended to focus on the queen's body and her poor health, influenced by the duchess of Marlborough's personal account.

To consider the degree to which Anne's health influenced her negative historical reputation, it is first important to visit the challenges of Anne's life and reign in the context of events of the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Anne was born on 6 February 1665 at St James's Palace, Westminster, to James, duke of York and his first wife, Anne Hyde. The young Princess Anne was never intended to sit on the throne. Her uncle, Charles II, had been restored to his throne only five years previously in May 1660. Anne's position as a woman and as the second daughter of the reigning monarch's brother meant that she, like her elder sister, Mary, had little reason to think that she would ever wear the crown.

This situation changed dramatically, of course, with the exile of King James II in December 1688.² Upon the conclusion of the so-called Glorious Revolution, Mary and her husband, Prince William of Orange, formally acceded to the English, Scottish, and Irish thrones in 1689 with the expectation that they would pass their position to a living heir, preferably a male one. This hope ended with Mary's death from smallpox in December 1694, and, as William did not remarry and had no heirs, the throne was destined to pass to his sister-in-law, and Mary's sister, Anne. Following William's own death on 8 March 1702, Anne's accession

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² For more on the Glorious Revolution see: John Miller, *The Glorious Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2014); and Eveline Cruickshanks, *The Glorious Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

confirmed the Protestant Succession as prescribed in the Act of Settlement of 1701.³ The Act stipulated that, following the death of William of Orange, "Her Royall Highness the Princess Anne of Denmark and the Heirs of Her Body" will succeed to the English and Scottish thrones.⁴ If Anne could not provide a legitimate heir, Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and the "heirs of her body" would succeed to the British throne.⁵

This chapter reconsiders contemporary views of Anne's health, historiographical perceptions of her reputation, and the issue of the succession within the context of both her reign and wider discussions of dynasty, especially regarding premodern royal women. It argues that matters of health and the body are important for understanding the negative perception of Anne's legacy since the early eighteenth century because, like other royal women in early modern Europe, the matter of the royal succession—especially the political difficulties that disruption of the line of succession caused—could shape how contemporaries and modern historians understood the degree to which royal women physically fulfilled their allotted roles or failed to do so.⁶ Anne's position as sovereign intensified considerations of health and physical appearance. Her health, body, and reputation raise important questions about Anne and her reign, as well as the queenship of other female rulers in premodern Europe. Specifically, how did health affect the legacy of Anne and the broader legacies of female rulers in premodern Europe? Using Anne as a case study to investigate the ways in which premodern royal women were defined by their bodies and positions as mothers can enable scholars to situate how the body—as a

³ Edward Gregg, *The Protestant Succession in International Politics, 1710–1716* (New York: Garland, 1986); Cedric D. Reverand (ed.), *Queen Anne and the Arts* (Lanham: Bucknell University Press, 2014).

⁴ "Act of Settlement, 1701," in Andrew Browning (ed.), *English Historical Documents, 1660–1714* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1953), 129–134.

⁵ "Act of Settlement," 129.

⁶ Recent works by historians of queenship and early modern women have discussed the role of reproduction and dynasty in the lives of royal and aristocratic women: Kristen L. Geaman and Theresa Earenfight, "Neither Heir nor Spare: Childless Queens and the Practice of Monarchy in Premodern Europe," in Elena Woodacre, Lucinda H. S. Dean, Chris Jones, Zita Rohr, and Russell Martins (eds), *The Routledge History of Monarchy* (London: Routledge, 2019), 518–534; Mary E. Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jo Eldridge Carney, "The Queen's (In) Fertile Body and the Body Politic," in *idem* (ed.), *Fairy Tale Queens: Representations of Early Modern Queenship* (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 11–37.

category of analysis and a constant in the lives of royal women—shaped those women’s legacies.

THE REPUTATION OF A QUEEN—ANNE AND HER HISTORIANS

In the months and years after Anne’s death, biographers, historians, and political thinkers began to assess her reign and the contributions of her life to the history of Great Britain. Initially, these histories were divided on party lines; positive depictions of her life and tenure were generally written by Tory supporters while those condemning her and her supposed connections to her exiled relatives across the English Channel were written by Whig authors. In some instances, notably—*The History of the Reign of Queen Anne Digested into Annals* (1703–1713; reprinted in 1722) by the French writer, lexicographer, and Whig supporter, Abel Boyer—a balanced picture of Anne circulated in print from Whig authors.⁷

Boyer described Anne and her later years as a woman upon whose “health, the happiness of this kingdom, and liberties of Europe, did so much depend.”⁸ His concern with the relationship between Anne’s health and the political health of Britain recurs throughout his *History*. For instance, in the weeks following the death of Prince George on 28 October 1708, Boyer pleaded that “we humbly beseech your Majesty to moderate the grief so justly due to this sad occasion, since it cannot be indulged without endangering the health of your royal person.”⁹ Clearly, for Boyer and many others in the early eighteenth century, Anne’s health and physical appearance were not unreasonably a source of political anxiety.

Boyer’s description of Anne’s passing in 1714, went as follows:

Thus died Anne Stuart, Queen of Great Britain, a princess of as many virtues, as ever adorned a private life, and as few frailties as ever blemished a diadem. Her person was a middle-sized, and well made, but after she bore

⁷ Abel Boyer, *The History of the Reign of Anne, Digested into Annals. Year the Tenth. Containing, A Full and Impartial Account of all Transactions, Both at Home and Abroad* (London: s.n., 1712).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 261.

children corpulent. Her hair was dark brown, her complexion sanguine and ruddy; her features strong, but regular: And the only blemish in her face, was owing to the defluxion she had in her infancy, in her eyes, which left a contraction in the upper lids, that gave a cloudy air to her countenance.¹⁰

As both a figure embodying virtue and strength, Anne remained a “corpulent” and “blemished” figure for Boyer, despite his praises for her elsewhere in his work. She, unlike her sister and other Stuart predecessors, was fit to wear her crown in virtue and right, but not physically in body. Boyer concluded his assessment of Anne by suggesting that her “reign was justly a reflection against the Salic Law,” and “that monarchies are sometimes left administered when women fill the throne because then men govern, whereas when men bear the sceptre, it is generally swayed by women.”¹¹

Boyer’s focus on gender and the role of political parties in Anne’s reign was also the focus of other early assessments of her queenship. For instance, an anonymous 1712 poem entitled *A New Song being a Second Part to the Same Tune of Lilibulero* declares:

Over, over, Hanover, over, Haste and assist our Queen and our State;
Hast over, Hanover, fast as you can over; Put in your Claim, before ’tis
too late.... Whoe’er is in Place, I care not a fig; Nor will I decide ’twixt
High-Church and Low: ’Tis now no Dispute between Tory and Whig, But
whether a Popish Successor, or No.¹²

The discussion of Anne’s position to the House of Hanover and the “dispute between Tory and Whig” in this passage emphasised the degree to which both events—the Protestant Succession and the emergence of two major political parties in Parliament—were at the forefront of Anne’s reign and the criticisms surrounding it.

This anticipation by the *New Song*’s author of the future demise of Anne and the end of the Stuart dynasty in Britain is similarly presented in other songs, poems, and addresses written between 1714 and 1720 after her successor, the Hanoverian George I, took the crown. For instance, *An*

¹⁰ Ibid., 716.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Anonymous, *A New Song being a Second Part to the Same Tune of Lilibulero, &c* (London: s.n., 1712).

Excellent New Ballad (1714) and *The Whig Address to His Majesty* (1715) both celebrate the end of Anne's life and the beginning of the new "prosperous reign" of George I. The *Ballad*, in particular, welcomes George, with the author declaring that "now, now true Protestants rejoyce, stand by your laws and king."¹³ This welcome to the Hanoverians at the expense of Anne and her dynasty exploits the negative representations of her in circulation up to the early Hanoverian period by members of the Whig party. The interpretation of Anne's reign by many of her former rivals—in Parliament and at court—carried forward into the early historiographical presentations of her by Sarah Churchill, and, to a degree, Abel Boyer.¹⁴

These early discussions of Anne's queenship are an essential context for later studies of her reign by scholars such as David Green and G. M. Trevelyan in the twentieth century.¹⁵ Trevelyan's three volume 1930 study, *England under Queen Anne*, addresses the political and cultural history of eighteenth-century Britain during the reign of Anne. Considering his focus was less on Anne herself and more on the events of her reign—chiefly, the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), the Scottish Union (1707), and the crisis in Parliament after 1710—Trevelyan's study presents more of a balanced picture of Anne in comparison to later works in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by Anne Somerset and Edward Gregg.¹⁶ For instance, in his first volume, Trevelyan's positive assessment of the events of Anne's reign describes them as "involving great issues" that "move among a brilliant society."¹⁷ In focusing on the political events of Anne's queenship, Trevelyan highlights the ways in which Anne, as a head of state, was significant for events in Britain and on the continent as a series of dynastic wars raged on. This positive assessment, however, does not continue in later biographies. For instance, David Green's 1970 biography, *Queen Anne*, opens by presenting Anne as "no ordinary woman. She might appear so. In fact, she was strange as

¹³ Anonymous, *An Excellent New Ballad* (London: s.n., 1714).

¹⁴ *The Whigs Address to His Majesty* (London: R. Ward, 1714).

¹⁵ George Macaulay Trevelyan, *England Under Queen Anne* (3 vols., London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1930–1934); David Green, *Queen Anne* (New York: Scribner, 1970).

¹⁶ Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980); Anne Somerset, *Queen Anne: The Politics of Passion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014).

¹⁷ Trevelyan, *England under Queen Anne*, i, 1.

any Stuart and, at least towards the end of her reign, as unfathomable.”¹⁸ Green describes her reign as “unfathomable” and unordinary because of her ailing health, and that she was not “tutored in queenship.” Anne, in his interpretation, was not raised to be queen compared to other premodern regnant queens.¹⁹ For him, Anne lacked the physical, mental, and “queenly” qualifications.

More recent scholarship by Dorota Babilas, Rachel Carnell, Hannah Smith, Judith Lissauer Cromwell, James Anderson Winn, and Rachel Weil have begun to shift attention away from this description of Anne and her health and towards her role in culture, art, and political theology/religion in the early eighteenth century.²⁰ Cromwell’s *Good Queen Anne: Appraising the Life and Reign of the Last Stuart Monarch* (2019) sheds light on what she labels as the Stuart’s dynasty’s most “underrated” monarch.²¹ Cromwell argues that recent works which have focused on Anne’s political position—chiefly monographs written by Geoffrey Holmes and Edward Gregg—have overshadowed Anne’s personal life. Comparatively, Cromwell paints a more positive image of Anne as “a popular and sensible head of state, a loving and beloved wife, a woman who indulged in her passion for music, delighted in her gardens, enjoyed hunting and horse-racing.”²² Other works by Hannah Smith, James Anderson Winn, and Dorota Babilas similarly present a newly “rounded portrait” of Anne and her reign in the fields of art history and cultural history. Hannah Smith’s vision of Anne in “‘Last of All the Heavenly Birth’: Queen Anne and Sacral Queenship,” for example, reflects on the ways in which Anne’s position as queen regnant was depicted in the art adorning the ceiling of Hampton Court Palace. Compared to Winn’s

¹⁸ Green, *Queen Anne*, 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

²⁰ Rachel Carnell, *Backlash: Libel, Impeachment, and Populism in the Reign of Queen Anne* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020); Judith Lissauer Cromwell, *Good Queen Anne: Appraising the Life and Reign of the Last Stuart Monarch* (Jefferson (NC): McFarland & Co., 2019); Hannah Smith, “‘Last of All the Heavenly Birth’: Queen Anne and Sacral Queenship,” *Parliamentary History* 28 (2009), 137–149; Dorota Babilas, “Queen Anne’s Cultural Afterlife,” in Lucyna Krawczyk-Żywko (ed.), *Exploring History: British Culture and Society 1700 to Present: Essays in Honour of Professor Emma Harris* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015), 11–23; James Anderson Winn, *Queen Anne: Patroness of Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²¹ Cromwell, *Good Queen Anne*, 1.

²² *Ibid.*, 2.

focus on Anne's position as a patroness of art, Smith's focus on art and sacral queenship pushes scholarship on Anne in new directions in the fields of art history and culture.²³

Since the 2010s, serious attention to Anne as a cultural and political figure has allowed historical discussions of her reign to look beyond the ways in which her health apparently negatively affected her ability to govern. Anne remains a figure in British history whose reign and significance are overshadowed by discussions of her health, body, and challenges in childbed. While Anne is far from the only British monarch whose image is dominated by discussions of the body, it is apparent that further consideration of her career must look beyond her uterus and gut. As scholars have started to shift scholarly discussions of Anne away from her poor health and physical appearance, new studies that focus on the later Stuart period from 1688 to 1714 must continue to rectify the image of Anne that remains present within some areas of historical scholarship and the media; future scholarship must focus more on Anne as a politician and as a pivotal figure in her own right in the history of early modern Britain.

“RUBICUND AND BLOATED”—ANNE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Anne's afterlife in modern historiography stems largely from contemporary accounts of her health, size, and reproductive troubles by her advisers, allies, and political foes in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In many instances, the negative depictions of her reign were written by her political enemies—the Whig Party—and their allies. Anne's quarrels with the Whigs stem from her own Tory political values and her dismissal and replacement of prominent Whig party members—such as John Churchill, duke of Marlborough and Sidney Godolphin—in 1710 with the Tory ministry headed by Robert Harley. As tensions between Anne, her allies, and the Whig party worsened in the aftermath of the replacement of her ministry and the worsening War of the Spanish Succession, criticisms of Anne's health and physical appearance intensified—especially from those that Anne once held in great esteem.²⁴

²³ Smith, “Queen Anne and Sacral Queenship;” Babilas, “Queen Anne's Cultural Afterlife;” Winn, *Queen Anne*.

²⁴ Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1987), 51–116.

Most complaints about Anne's in/ability to rule in her later years centred around discussions of her physical health and the degree to which her illnesses, weight, and childlessness inhibited her capacity as a queen. For example, in Sarah Churchill's writings—most prominently, the 1742 *Memoir* and her 1710 "Farewell Message"—Sarah focused on Anne's size and how it affected her ability to rule at the height of the War of the Spanish Succession, and during the worsening tensions between the Tory and Whig parties. In her *Memoir*, Sarah claimed that Anne was a "person altogether of an inferior stamp" and was someone whose "importance was...overshadowed" by the divisions within Parliament and the problems of the succession. Sarah's memoir remarks on Anne's "shallow mind" and, again, the "peculiar vulgarity and common-place character of Anne's mind."²⁵ Sarah's characterisation of Anne's intellectual capacity and later inability to rule stems from the breakdown of their personal relationship, ending with Sarah's dismissal from Anne's service in 1711. While recounting the early years of her relationship with the queen, the duchess described Anne "as a lady of elevated rank, and, [that] afterwards as ruler [she] possessed *some* admirable qualities."²⁶

The duchess of Marlborough's dislike for the queen in the years following her dismissal appears glaringly in her formal farewell to Anne, published anonymously in 1710, entitled, *Sarah's Farewell to a C—t or a Trip from St. James to St. Albans*. In the work, the duchess publicly addressed the queen and her courtiers as she recounted her departure from her positions as the mistress of the robes, keeper of the privy purse, and groom of the stole. She described Anne as a "once fair mistress" while giving greater credit to the Whig politicians that the duchess aligned herself with, describing them as "poor men with zeal that did burn."²⁷

In comparison with her later *Memoirs*, the duchess's writing presents here an image of the queen as a physically failing monarch whose trust in the Tories set her against the "zeal" of the Whigs and their vision of British politics. We are faced here with contemporary views of obesity and the female body, which has been given particular attention in recent years by historians, including Sarah Toulalan. Toulalan analyses the early

²⁵ Churchill, *Memoirs*, 49, 53, 63, 80.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁷ Sarah Jennings Churchill, *Sarah's Farewell to a C—t or a Trip from St. James to St. Albans* (London, s. n., 1710), 1.

modern tendency to connect obesity, health problems, and sexual reproduction.²⁸ Sarah's focus on Anne's size and her childlessness reflected contemporary anxieties regarding Anne's personal challenges with the succession, and her physical ability to reproduce healthy living heirs.

The link between Anne's reproductive health and physical appearance was similarly discussed by Sir Roger Coke. In his early history of the Stuart dynasty, *Detection of the Court and State of England* (1719), Coke observed that:

She [Anne] was of middle stature and not so personable and majestic as her sister Queen Mary; her face round, rather comely than handsome...her face was somewhat rubicund and bloated.²⁹

Coke's description of Anne as "rubicund and bloated" was only one of the many negative assessments of Anne that he made in this text. He claimed that, by Anne's death in 1714, she "had grown monstrously fat, insomuch that the coffin wherein her remains were deposited was even bigger than that of the prince her husband, who was known to be a very fat and bulky man." Coke argued that the reason for this was due to her consumption of "so much chocolate" in her final years; he deemed Anne's gluttonous behaviour in her later reign as a significant contributory factor towards the deterioration of her health in her final months of life.³⁰

This sentiment was echoed in the correspondence between Thomas Wentworth, first earl of Strafford (1672–1739), and William Berkeley, fourth baron Berkeley of Stratton in 1712.³¹ In Wentworth's description of Anne's absence from church services in 1712, Wentworth wrote that "the Queen did not go to church but came out after into the drawing room looking very well, though she had not been so the week before with a cold, and the reason of her not going to church was a touch of the

²⁸ Sarah Toulalan, "'[To] Much Eating Stifles the Child': Fat Bodies and Reproduction in Early Modern England," *Historical Research* 87 (2014), 66.

²⁹ Roger Coke, *A Detection of the Court and State of England, During the Reigns of Kings James I, Charles I, Charles II, and James II. As Also the Interregnum* (3 vols, London: J. Brotherton and W. Meadows, 1719), iii, 481–482.

³⁰ Coke, *A Detection of the Court and State of England*, 482.

³¹ Wentworth was the first earl of Strafford of the second creation after the English Civil War (1642–1651).

gout in her foot. I am sorry to see that she grows fatter.”³² Towards the end of her reign, it was clear in the minds of some of her contemporaries, that Anne’s health problems were beginning to seriously impact her ability to rule and function in public. Both Coke’s and Wentworth’s descriptions of Anne’s size and gluttony suggest that they believed that Anne’s obesity and illnesses were central to Anne’s difficulties in her final years as queen.

This focus on Anne’s health and its relationship to her ability to rule similarly appeared in accounts of Anne’s dynastic failure to produce healthy living heirs following the death of her son William, duke of Gloucester, who died aged eleven in 1700. Anne’s reproductive troubles lasted for decades. Between her marriage to Prince George of Denmark in 1683 and the death of William in 1700, Anne carried seventeen pregnancies to various stages of gestation—eleven of which ended in miscarriage. With the death of her sister and William III’s acceptance of her as his heir in December 1694, the matter of Anne’s failed pregnancies became crucial. At Anne’s accession to the throne on 8 March 1702, the connection between motherhood, dynasty, and female rule was a prominent theme in the coronation sermon by John Sharp, archbishop of York, published under the title *A Sermon Preach’d at the Coronation of Queen Anne, in the Abbey-Church of Westminster*.

Sharp’s sermon presented Anne as both a “nursing mother” to her subjects (as the head of the Church of England) and as a queen without an heir. This connection between Anne and the idea of motherhood—imagined or in reality—highlighted the heavy pressure placed upon Anne’s shoulders as a female head of state to have more children to secure the crown against being appropriated by the senior Stuart line.³³ In discussing Anne’s position as queen regnant, Sharp described her as a “prince above all others” in an effort to compare her place as a childless regnant queen to that of another famous queen (Elizabeth I) who was the mother of her people, and also a staunch defender of the Church of England.³⁴ In his comparison of the two queens, Sharp declared that:

³² Thomas Wentworth and James J. Cartwright (eds), *The Wentworth Papers, 1705–1739* (London: Wyman, 1883), 301.

³³ John Sharp, *A Sermon Preach’d at the Coronation of Queen Anne, in the Abbey-Church of Westminster, April XXIII. MDCCII. By the Most Reverend Father in God John Lord Archbishop of York* (Dublin: Jo. Ray, 1702), 11–12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

The honor of perfecting that great work was reserved for a Queen. You all know whom I mean, the immortal Elizabeth, whose name will be precious, not only in this nation, but in all of the Reformed countries of Europe, as long as time shall last. Her reign alone will let us see, that it was not without great reason that in my text queens are joined as equal sharers with Kings, in making up the blessing which is here promised to God's people. And such another Queen we trust God has now given us.³⁵

Sharp makes an explicit comparison between Anne and Elizabeth—their childlessness at the time of their coronations did not prevent them from becoming mothers of their subjects. The hope was that Anne, too, would be a successful model of a queen without an heir and would be a “blessing” befitting the “promise of God's people.”³⁶

Sharp expanded this idea of Anne as a queenly mother further by describing that this position was given to monarchs so that they may “submit their scepters to that of Jesus Christ and become nursing fathers and nursing mothers to his Church and people.”³⁷ He continuously likened the relationship between the sovereign and subject to that of a parent and child. Sharp argued that “they [the monarch] would look upon the Kingdom as their own family and concern themselves as much for the welfare of their subjects as parents do for their children, or guardians for their pupils.”³⁸

By 1708, when Prince George died, Anne was forty-three years old. In her *Memoir*, the duchess of Marlborough observed that Anne's childlessness was a “disappointment.”³⁹ Anne's refusal to contemplate a second marriage provoked the duchess to remark that

the Queen, unsentimental though well intentioned, plunged deeper and deeper in petty political intrigues, after the respectable occupation of tending her invalid husband was at an end. Her grief was edifying as her conjugal affection had been exemplary; yet the parliament, not thinking it too late for such addresses, petitioned her Majesty that she would not allow her grief for the prince's death to prevent her from contemplating

³⁵ Ibid., 8.

³⁶ Ibid., 8.

³⁷ Ibid., 3.

³⁸ Ibid., 4.

³⁹ Churchill, *Memoirs*, 147–164.

a second marriage. But Anne continued to be, or, as some said, to seem inconsolable.⁴⁰

Even if Anne did contemplate a “second marriage,” as the duchess suggested that she should have done, the possibility of her producing a viable heir to succeed her was minuscule, especially when her past pregnancies and her age are considered. But her physician, Sir David Hamilton, in September 1710, expressed concern to Anne that some in her court, chiefly Simon, Lord Harcourt and her lord chancellor William, first earl Cowper, “feared that she was for the Pretender.”⁴¹ In November 1710, Hamilton himself lectured Anne that some at court and in Hanover thought that “care should be taken to secure” the Hanoverian succession.⁴² Hamilton discussed the Pretender with Anne again in early December 1710 when he mentioned news of a sermon that was preached by Gilbert Burnet, bishop of Salisbury to his congregation at Mercers Chapel, London. In his address, Burnet declared that he wished that the king of France, Louis XIV, would “bring in the Pretender even while the queen was alive” to succeed her and be installed as king.⁴³ While Hamilton did not record Anne’s response to this sermon in early December, he does claim that she was deliberately kept “ignorant” by those around her intimate circle.

From 14 July to 9 September 1712, Hamilton’s diary records Anne’s rebuff of the court gossip concerning her half-brother. Apparently, Anne told Hamilton that “none might impose upon me such impressions” regarding the designs of James Francis Edward to reclaim his father’s throne.⁴⁴ These concerns, however, began to take their physical toll on Anne for by the end of September 1712, Hamilton expressed concern regarding the Pretender’s impact on the queen’s health. By 8 October, as Anne’s health remained poor, Hamilton recounted court speculation, encouraged by Lord Cowper, that due to Anne’s illness, “they [advisers and others] endeavoured to make Her believe [that] he [James Francis

⁴⁰ Ibid., 157.

⁴¹ David Hamilton, ed. Philip Roberts, *The Diary of Sir David Hamilton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 17.

⁴² Ibid., 31.

⁴³ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 42.

Edward] had a right. If he has, he should have immediate actual possession [of the throne].”⁴⁵ Hamilton’s discussions with Anne regarding the Pretender reached their climax in October 1712 as Anne expressed her frustration with him regarding rumours circulating about the support for the Pretender. According to Hamilton, Anne lashed out at the rumours, lamenting that her ministers must think of her as a “child” to be “imposed upon” by the claims of James Francis Edward and those inclined to support him.

Following these events in late 1712, the matter of the Pretender’s movements in France and the Holy Roman Empire raised some concerns due to fears that he might attempt to mount an invasion. By 1713, the Pretender was settled in Lorraine with the Treaty of Utrecht stipulating that James was to move from France and into the Bar-le-Duc region between France and the Holy Roman Empire. The records of the House of Lords from early April 1714 reveal the serious political tensions that Anne and her government were faced with as James secured support from Irish Catholics, his followers in Lorraine, and from others in France. After much debate in the House of Lords on 5 April, the question was posed regarding the safety of the succession. The House of Lords requested that

Her Majesty will be graciously pleased to issue her royal proclamation, promising a reward to any person who shall apprehend the Pretender, dead or alive, in case he shall land, or attempt to land, either in Great Britain or Ireland, suitable to the importance of that service, for the safety of Her Majesty’s person, and the security of the Protestant succession in the House of Hanover.⁴⁶

LOOKING BEYOND THE BODY—THE FUTURE OF STUDIES OF QUEEN ANNE

Between contemporary portrayals of Anne and recent scholarship, the legacy and life of Queen Anne of Great Britain is still in earnest need of a corrective that focuses on aspects of her reign beyond her physical

⁴⁵ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁶ *LJ*, xix, 646–648. See Daniel Szechi, *1715: The Great Jacobite Rebellion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 30–51.

health, and the matter of the succession because of her fertility problems. While these issues are important in understanding the politics of Anne's reign, the oversaturation of studies that focus solely on the queen's health problems distracts us from other aspects of Anne's queenship. Anne's twelve-year reign oversaw the War of the Spanish Succession, the establishment of the United Kingdom of Great Britain (1707), and the development of two rival parties in parliament. These important events and their impact upon modern British history are often overshadowed by discussions of Anne's body and physical health throughout her queenship. While these matters are important for understanding Anne's reign and the passing of the line of succession to the House of Hanover, they should not be the only aspect of Anne's life that is remembered in modern biographies, films, and scholarship.

Moreover, the timeworn image of Anne as a sickly, incompetent, and unintelligent ruler put forward by Churchill and her later critics emphasises the degree to which her gender, health, and physical appearance have played a central role in how modern historians and popular audiences view Anne and the importance of her reign. The fixation on the role of bodies and gender in discussions about Anne and her image highlights the broader challenges in queenship studies regarding the memory of queens deemed controversial or unfit by (some) contemporaries.

Anne was, of course, only one among many European royal women to face challenges over dynastic issues and the question of their physical health. A re-examination of the reign of Anne in this context—one cognisant of the ways in which reputation and the body are important for the historical memories of royal women—can allow us to revisit some of the accepted wisdom here, and to consider *why* and *how* female rulers were and continued to be read through their health and fecundity. The intertwined issues of the succession and fertility, above all else, have dominated how historians and contemporaries have viewed the successes—and failures—of Anne's reign and her historical image. Anne has always been a queen defined by her inability to continue the Stuart line and safeguard the throne with Protestant (and preferably) male heirs. Yet, while the degree to which modern scholars view Anne as a "failed" or misunderstood monarch is up for debate, it is important to reflect on the ways in which discussions of Anne's body, her health, and the matter of the succession have informed modern understandings of her reign and how these reflections can inform the concept of reputation and image for all premodern queens alike.

As recent studies of other early modern queens such as Mary I have attempted to provide, Anne's life and reign similarly need the same kind of corrective attention that has allowed modern historians to look past the physical flaws of Anne's predecessors.⁴⁷ As a queen whose reign created the modern political unification of Britain and settled the dynastic disputes between Bourbon France and Spain, future studies of Anne must look past her bodily infirmities.

⁴⁷ Valerie Schutte and Jessica S. Hower (eds), *Writing Mary I: History, Historiography, and Fiction: Queenship and Power* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).