

“DANCING QUEEN”^{*}
THE COURT BALLETS OF ANNE OF AUSTRIA, QUEEN OF FRANCE
(1615–1635)

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the ballets danced by Queen Anne of Austria at the French court in the years 1615–1635 to show how their form and content were less the result of personal preferences, but had more to do with the queen's naturalization and “domestication.” Anne was constantly reminded of her duties of loyalty and submission to her royal husband and made to pay homage to her mother-in-law in a show of subservience without precedent.

KEYWORDS

French court ballet; *saraos*, *máscaras*, *comedias*; saraband; pastoral plays; Queen consort; motherhood; beauty; dependence; submission; Salic law

* This is how Melinda J. Gough entitles her remarkable study of Marie de' Medici's ballets at the court of Henri IV. Melinda J. Gough, *Dancing Queen: Marie de Médicis' Ballets at the Court of Henri IV* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019).

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In early modern Europe, dance was the courtly art *par excellence*. It promoted an image of expense and conspicuous consumption¹ and helped to create an aura of magnificence around the ruler. It soon became one of the favourite pastimes of royalty and served to entertain courtiers and princely visitors throughout the year. Because it was a behavioural art and taught control of the body, as well as developing its agility and gracefulness, dance encouraged personal display and was a means of self-projection and self-promotion at court. Kings and queens willingly engaged in social dancing and participated in ballets and masques, in which they were revealed in roles symbolic of control and power. A small number contented themselves with being spectators, but many were accomplished dancers who loved dancing and were keen to perform in public.

Queen Anne of Austria, daughter of Philip III of Spain, was no exception. Having learned dancing as a child, like her brothers and sisters, she spent part of her leisure time practising and joined in a variety of *máscaras*, *saraos*, and *comedias* given in the royal palaces.² After marrying Louis XIII in 1615 and becoming queen of France, she carried on dancing, both in the relative privacy of the royal apartments and in full view of the court, in the large-scale public performances held every year to celebrate Carnival. Both her mother, Margaret of Austria, and her mother-in-law, Marie de' Medici, had taken part in entertainments that showcased the magnificence, grandeur, and primacy of the monarchy. Theirs had been a supporting role intended primarily to enhance the prestige of their royal husbands by their appearance and dancing skills.

Recent studies have highlighted the significant part played by queens consort in the cultural and artistic life of early modern courts.³ In particular they have emphasized the active role they played in the conception and organization of entertainments entitled *Ballet de la Reine*⁴ in France or "the Queen's masque" in England, in which they appeared on stage surrounded by an elite of courtly ladies. In the early 1600s, although their agency and decision-making power were dependent on court conventions and the goodwill of their husbands, Marie de' Medici in France or Anna of Denmark in England made the entertainments in which they danced serve political aims and used them either to build up their authority and influence, or as subtle opportunities to try and intervene in diplomatic affairs.⁵ In Vienna Eleonora Gonzaga gave her

¹ See Georges Bataille, *La Part maudite* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1949).

² For a more detailed account of her childhood, see Martha K. Hoffman, *Raised to Rule: Educating Royalty at the Court of the Spanish Habsburgs, 1601–1634* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 7–13.

³ See Anne J. Cruz and Maria Galli Stampino, eds., *Early Modern Habsburg Women: Transnational Contexts, Cultural Conflicts, Dynastic Continuities* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013) and Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly and Adam Morton, eds., *Queens Consort, Cultural Transfer and European Politics, c. 1500–1800* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016).

⁴ The term was used for the first time in 1581 for a ballet entitled *Balet Comique de la Royne*, which had been commissioned by the Queen Mother, Catherine de' Medici, and was danced by the Queen Regnant, Elisabeth of Austria, married to Charles IX.

⁵ See Gough, *Dancing Queen*, and Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage: Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing in the Stuart Court 1590–1619* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

patronage to Italian musicians and dancers, and turned the imperial court into a centre for Baroque music, while Sophie Elisabeth dominated court festivities in Wolfenbüttel between the years 1652 and 1656. Did Anne of Austria enjoy such artistic freedom? Did she have a say in the organization of these so-called *ballets de la reine*, in which as the new Queen Regnant she was expected to participate? While expressing political views was unwelcome in a kingdom that barred women from power, to what extent was she free to express cultural preferences (she was said to like pastoral plays and to enjoy the saraband)? In particular what part did she play in the introduction and development of the *mode espagnole* that took hold of the French court in the early seventeenth century? More specifically, what influence did she exert on the evolution of French court entertainments during Louis XIII's reign? Her unique position as foreign consort made her "a facilitator of cultural transfer,"⁶ a *porteur culturel*.

We are faced with an apparent paradox: on the one hand, guitars, castanets, sarabands, and other Spanish identifiers appeared with increasing regularity in the king's ballets in the 1620s and 1630s; on the other Anne seemed to give up the *ballets à l'espagnole* she had danced in the privacy of her own apartments with her ladies-in-waiting in the early years of her marriage, and publicly performed in formal *ballets à la française* instead. Admittedly the prompt naturalization and acculturation of a foreign queen were standard practice in early modern European courts, and what suited a Spanish infanta would no longer have been acceptable for a French queen. Tastes shaped by a foreign culture might have aroused suspicions about her loyalty. Artistic choices were riddled with political implications. However, this process of acculturation was carried out at the French court against a background of growing discord between husband and wife, which was no doubt born out of differences in temperament, but was also fuelled by Anne's repeated political faux pas at a time of increasing tensions between her native land and her adoptive country.

Moreover, as though the outward cultural assimilation of the queen did not fully satisfy Louis, he seemed intent on the public "domestication" of his wife, so that the court ballets in which she danced projected an image of the ideal, dependent, even subservient royal spouse that he and the French monarchical regime expected her to be. In other words, Anne's public appearances in *ballets de la reine*, far from showcasing any personal agency she might have had at court, instead gave Louis the opportunity to control her image and effectively mute her by containing her voice within dominant modes of expression.

THE SARAOS OF THE INFANTA ANA MAURICIA

From her early years, the infanta Ana Mauricia had shown an interest in dancing. Like so many other princesses in Europe, she had a dancing master⁷ who had taken care that she learned "the beautiful demeanour, graceful movements, and proper manners"⁸ recommended by Caroso in

⁶ Watanabe-O'Kelly and Morton, *Queens Consort*, 4.

⁷ His name is not known.

⁸ Fabritio Caroso, *Nobiltà di dame* (Venice: il Muschio, 1600), 3.

his popular *Nobiltà di dame*, and acquired the “graceful perfection” praised by Esquivel in his 1642 *Discursos sobre el arte del dançado*.⁹ Above all her dancing master had taken great care that she matched the gracefulness of her movements with the “majesty of her bearing,”¹⁰ required by her dignity and status. Last but not least, even for a princess, dancing was a means to enhance one’s charms. In *El maestro de danzar* (1594), Lope de Vega called dance “the soul of beauty,” for “it makes the ugly beautiful, and the beautiful even more perfect.”¹¹

On 16 June 1605, at the age of four, the infanta Ana Mauricia took part in her first public theatrical performance, an allegory of the virtues given in honour of her brother’s birth and christening, in which she appeared as “la virtud que las comprehende a todas” (the virtue that embodies all virtues).¹² Wearing a golden helmet sparkling with diamonds and holding a golden sceptre in her hand, she made her entrance seated on a golden throne in a chariot drawn by ponies and shaped like a ship’s stern. On 20 April 1609, at the age of seven, she attended her first court dance at the marriage of the sister of Queen Margaret of Austria’s best friend. Diego de Guzmán (who eventually became her tutor in 1610) wrote that “It was the first time that the Infanta Ana danced.”¹³ On 8 November 1609, together with her parents, she took part in another *sarao* at the court. She was to dance again on a number of occasions signalled by Guzmán until the death of her mother Margaret in 1611 brought all such choreographic performances in front of Philip III to an end for two years. After her betrothal to Louis XIII of France, on 3 November 1614, she played the part of Aurora in Lope de Vega’s *comedia*, *El premio de la hermosura*, in which she received the prize of beauty from her brother, the future Philip IV, who played Cupid. The main account for this court event, the *Relación*, claimed that the infanta had not only “danced . . . with the greatest lightness,” she had also “led the masque with the greatest skill and with such care that whenever one of the other dancers missed a step, they could not get lost.”¹⁴ The French ambassador Vaucelas compared her dancing skills with those of the princess Élisabeth, Louis XIII’s younger sister, who was to marry Ana’s brother Philip, the following year.¹⁵

In addition to these well-documented events, the young infanta probably danced in the seclusion of the royal apartments in Valladolid, Madrid, and other royal residences. Even though sources do not mention it, it is likely that she occupied some of her leisure time with the

⁹ Juan de Navarro Esquivel, *Discursos sobre el arte del dançado* (Sevilla: Juan Gómez de Blas, 1642).

¹⁰ François de Grenaille, *Le Plaisir des dames* (Paris: Gervais Clousier, 1641), 332.

¹¹ Mod. ed.: Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1930, XII, 480. Quoted in Maurice Esses, *Dance and Instrumental Diferencias in Spain during the 17th and Early 18th Centuries* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992), 518.

¹² “Sarao celebrado en el Palacio de Valladolid por el nacimiento de Felipe IV.” Teresa Ferrer Valls, ed., *Nobleza y espectáculo teatral (1535–1622): estudio y documentos* (Alicante: Biblioteca virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2014), 238–39.

¹³ “Memorias” [1609–1610], Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, Collection Salazar 9/476, fol. 32v. Quoted in María José del Río Barredo, “Enfance et éducation d’Anne d’Autriche à la cour d’Espagne (1601–1615),” in *Anne d’Autriche. Infante d’Espagne et reine de France*, ed. Chantal Grell (Paris: Perrin, CEEH, Centre de Recherche du Château de Versailles, 2009), 26.

¹⁴ “Relación de la famosa Comedia del Premio de la hermosura,” in Valls, *Nobleza y espectáculo teatral*, 255.

¹⁵ Mentioned in Armand Baschet, *Le Roi chez la reine ou histoire secrète du mariage de Louis XIII et d’Anne d’Autriche* (Paris: Plon, 1866), 153.

dances and games that she was to perform in private at the French court in the early days of her marriage.¹⁶ Although their own mother Margaret was rumoured to dislike dancing and sought instead to encourage her daughters' piety and devotion, both Ana and her sister María developed an early taste for dancing and spectacle in general.

A TASTE FOR ALL THINGS SPANISH

On 18 October 1615 Ana married Louis XIII by proxy in Burgos, while in Bordeaux Élisabeth the French king's sister wedded the Spanish heir to the throne. On 9 November the French princess and the Spanish infanta were exchanged on the river Bidassoa with much pomp and rejoicing, and on 21 November Anne d'Autriche, as the infanta was now called, arrived in Bordeaux. The marriage was celebrated on 25 November. After a fortnight of festivities, the royal party left Bordeaux for Paris, which they finally reached in June 1616.

However, this slow progress through western France was enlivened by a number of amateur theatre and ballet performances, notably in Tours where the court stayed for a few weeks in the spring. Jean Héroard, the French king's physician, painstakingly lists a number of *ballets de la Roine* that were danced in the king's presence in her chambers or the queen mother's, as well as Louis's own ballets in front of his wife and mother. As early as 1 December 1615, a few days after the wedding ceremony in Bordeaux, Louis "Va chez la Roine où il void danser ung balet a l'Espagnole par les filles de la Roine, elle en estoit aussi; puis ils se mettent (sic) a jouer a des petits jeux . . . qui estoit aussi d'Espagne" (went to the queen's apartments to watch a ballet in the Spanish style danced by the queen and her ladies-in-waiting. The ballet was followed by little games, . . . also of Spanish origin).¹⁷ On 10 April 1616, during the royal party's stay in Tours, Louis "void le balet qui fust fait par la Roine" (saw the ballet danced by the queen).¹⁸ Two months later, on 27 September 1616, once in Paris, Louis "va chez la Roine, sa mere où il void danser un ballet a la Roine" (went to the queen mother's apartments, where he watched a ballet danced by the queen),¹⁹ and again, on 29 September, "va chez la Roine sa mere, où il void danser la Roine qui y dansoit son ballet" (went to the queen mother's apartments, where he saw the queen dance her ballet).²⁰ On 15 December 1616, Héroard records: "A sept heures et demie, revient en sa chambre où il fait danser ung ballet que la Roine faisoit faire a ses filles. Va chez la Rne sa mere où il le void encore danser" (At seven thirty in the evening, [he] went back to his bedchamber, where he asked for a ballet prepared by the queen's ladies-in-waiting to be danced. Went to the queen mother's apartments, where he saw it again).²¹

These *ballets de la reine* were semi-private, small-scale entertainments that did not appear to require much preparation—some might have even been impromptu performances—and were

¹⁶ See note 17.

¹⁷ Jean Héroard, *Journal de Jean Héroard, médecin de Louis XIII*, ed. Madeleine Foisil (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 2:2333.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:2362.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:2399.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2:2428.

given for the sole enjoyment of Anne and her immediate entourage. The participation of her Spanish ladies-in-waiting was noted by contemporaries, notably Maréchal de Bassompierre, who reported that the ballet danced by the queen during Shrovetide 1616 in Tours was “un assés chetif balet d’Espagnoles” (a rather paltry ballet of Spanish ladies), which he jingoistically contrasted with the much better ballet she “voulut danser . . . avec des Françaises; ce qu’elle fit seulement en l’anti-chambre de la Reyne, sa belle mere” (decided to dance . . . with French ladies, although it was only given in the antechamber of the queen mother, her mother-in-law), a year later.²² Despite Bassompierre’s belittling of their efforts, the queen’s Spanish ladies still continued to participate in her *ballets* until the *Maison espagnole de la Reine* was expelled in November 1618 on the orders of Louis XIII. Whether this decision was motivated by a distrust of Anne and her Spanish entourage, suspected of spying, by a desire to weaken her links with her native country to facilitate her adoption of French manners and customs, or even by a rejection of the policies followed by Marie de’ Medici and the Duke of Lerma, Philip III’s favourite, is not known.²³ In any case, two of Anne’s ladies-in-waiting, Luiza de Ozoria and Antonietta de Mendoza, remained in Paris until 1619 and 1621 respectively. Their names appear in the list of dancers for the *Ballet de la Reine représentant la Beauté et ses nymphes* in February 1618.²⁴

In addition to being performed by Spanish ladies, these ballets were referred to as *ballets à l’espagnole* (ballets in the Spanish style) by Héroard. Was this because they were danced to the sound of castanets and guitars, the two instruments most commonly associated with Spaniards in French court ballets?²⁵ Visual sources for some of the ballets danced in the 1620s and 1630s show dancers and musicians dressed according to the Spanish fashion and holding or playing either castanets or guitars, or both. Their dance sequence might even have included sarabands, reportedly danced to the sound of castanets in Spain²⁶ and commonly associated with Spaniards at the French court. Originally from Spain, where it was banned in 1602 for reasons of decency, the saraband became very popular in France in the 1620s. Whereas in Spain, it had been a gay and lively dance, in its French form it eventually became slow and stately, although it might have retained some of its original character during the reign

²² François de Bassompierre, *Mémoires du Mareschal de Bassompierre contenant l’histoire de sa vie* [1665] (Cologne: Pierre du Marteau, 1692), 1:434. This ballet is mentioned by Héroard in his entry of 6 February 1617: “A minuict, [le roi] va chez la Rne sa mere où il void danser le balet de la Roine” (At midnight, [the king] went to his mother the queen’s apartments, where he saw a performance of the queen’s ballet). *Ibid.*, 2:2442.

²³ See Laura Oliván Santaliestra, “Retour souhaité ou expulsion réfléchie? La maison espagnole d’Anne d’Autriche quitte Paris (1616–1622),” in *Moving Elites: Women and Cultural Transfers in the European Court System*, ed. Giulia Calvi and Isabelle Chabot, 21–32, <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/14234> (last accessed: 12 April 2021).

²⁴ Clara Rico Osés, “*Mesdemoiselles* Ozoria y Mendoza: dos damas de honor españolas y el *Ballet de cour* francés a principios del siglo XVII,” *Cuadernos de historia moderna* 29 (2004): 147–65. In the accounts Luiza de Ozoria is referred to as a *dame d’atours* (lady-in-waiting), whereas Antonietta de Mendoza is referred to as belonging to the *demoiselles espagnoles*. She appears to have been one of the young women that were part of Anne’s original household.

²⁵ See Clara Rico Osés, *L’Espagne vue de France à travers les ballets de cour du XVIIe siècle* (Geneva: Éditions Papillon, 2012), 120–28.

²⁶ Marin Mersenne, *Seconde Partie de l’Harmonie universelle* (Paris: Pierre Ballard, 1637), “Livre septieme des instrumens de Percussion,” 48.



1. Unknown artist, *Louis XIII and Anne d'Autriche dancing in front of Marie de Médicis and the court*, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la photographie [RES A-Lb36-704 (A)]. Photo BnF.

of Louis XIII. It was soon a favourite in court balls and was often danced as a choreographed theatrical *entrée* in ballets. Louis XIII, who had learned to dance it as a young child,²⁷ liked it very much, as shown by its frequent inclusion not only in the queen's ballets, but also in his own. In 1625, a saraband was performed for the finale of the *Ballet du monde renversé*, in 1626 the *Ballet du grand bal de la Douairière de Billebahaut* included an *entrée* of "Grenadins danseurs de sarabande," while in 1636, le *Ballet des improvisistes* featured a Spanish dance. Significantly, the music to which Anne danced her *entrée* in the French-style *Ballet de la Reine representant*

²⁷ It is mentioned by Héroard as early as January 1605. On 2 February 1607, Louis danced it "faisant cliquer les castagnettes" (clicking castanets). Héroard, *Journal*, 1:1167.

la Beauté et ses nymphes on 25 February 1618, adopted the triple time characteristic of the saraband.²⁸

Anne's arrival in France seems to have encouraged a curiosity in her new subjects for everything Spanish, although Édouard Fournier's statement that "the court became Castilian, just as it had been Tuscan" is somewhat of an exaggeration.²⁹ Guitar, saraband, castanets and the like had found their way into France well before 1615. Nevertheless, Anne's presence undoubtedly catalysed the development of Spanish cultural influence at the French court. In spite of his refusal to allow musicians and actors from her native country to be part of her household,³⁰ Louis XIII apparently shared his courtiers' interest in the foreign culture. In the early days of his marriage, Héroard describes him attending Spanish comedies or tragicomedies in the queen's apartments (4 February 1617, 20 October 1618), enjoying the visit at court of Spanish actors (25, 31 August 1619), or singing Spanish songs in his own bedchamber until late at night (12 April 1624). To judge by the number of court ballets featuring guitars, castanets, and sarabands in the late 1620s and 1630s, the king's taste for Spanish music and dance lasted throughout his reign, despite the increasingly hostile relations between the two countries. However, the adoption of foreign cultural elements was counterbalanced in court ballets, as elsewhere, by a propagandist image war that was particularly aggressive towards Spain and its inhabitants, who were generally represented as braggarts and vagabonds. Curiosity and condemnation were shared in equal measure at the French court.

Even though adverse international circumstances did not bring the *mode espagnole* to an end at court or elsewhere,³¹ it would seem that political and personal considerations nonetheless put an end to the public show by the queen of her Spanish culture. In the same way as she was soon pressured into dressing in the French fashion by her husband,³² she was called upon to dance publicly in formal court balls and ballets that came to be regarded as a typically French genre.

THE QUEEN OF FRANCE'S BALLETS DE COUR

Anne loved dancing and often engaged in the weekly balls given at the Louvre. Although these court balls were not as strictly regulated as they became under Louis XIV, they appear to have followed an ordered sequence of dances,³³ including slow dances such as the *branles* and the *allemande*, as well as more rapid and virtuosic ones such as the *courante*. The queen generally retired from dancing when the latter started. She was also expected to participate in

²⁸ See Rico Osés, "Mesdemoiselles Ozoria y Mendoza." The same triple time was adopted in the *grand ballet*.

²⁹ Édouard Fournier, *L'Espagne et ses comédiens en France au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Dupray de la Maherie, 1864), 7.

³⁰ This is in contrast to Louis XIV's decision to allow a company of Spanish actors to be included in Queen Maria-Teresa's household in 1660.

³¹ Alexandre Cioranescu, *Le Masque et le visage. Du baroque espagnol au classicisme français* (Geneva: Droz, 1983).

³² Mará José del Río Barredo and Jean-François Dubost, "La présence étrangère autour d'Anne d'Autriche (1615–1666)," in Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 121–52.

³³ Jean Duron, ed., *Regards sur la musique au temps de Louis XIII* (Wavre: Éditions Mardaga, 2007).

the elaborate ballets that were given every year as part of the Carnival celebrations at court. For a number of years, the *ballets de la reine*, for which she was the principal masked dancer, alternated with the king's own ballets, generally danced a few days beforehand. Both the queen's and the king's ballets were followed by social dancing in which the noble dancers mingled with the spectators. To perfect her dancing skills, Anne benefited from the experience of her *maître à danser*, one Jacques Cordier, known as Bocan,³⁴ who returned to France in 1621 after a distinguished career at the Stuart court.

Sources mention at least six *ballets de la reine*, for which libretti are still extant. These are:

- *Ballet de la reine représentant la Beauté et ses nymphes, le dimanche gras* (25 February 1618)
- *Ballet de Psyché* (18 February 1619)
- *Ballet de la reine représentant le Soleil* (2 March 1621)
- *Ballet de la reine représentant les fêtes de Junon la nopcière* (6 March 1623)
- *Ballet de la reine dansé par les nymphes des jardins* (February 1624)
- *Les Nymphes bocagères de la forêt sacrée* (February 1627).

A few other *ballets de la reine* are listed in Héroard's *Journal* and Michel Henry's *Recueil*,³⁵ notably a *Ballet de la reine femme du Roy fait le mardi* [i.e., gras?] (6 February 1617), which included at least two *entrées*, one of which featured professional dancers and musicians, and might have been the companion piece to the king's *Ballet de la délivrance de Renaud*, another *Ballet de la reine* danced on 26 January 1620,³⁶ as well as unspecified ballets danced in 1620 and 1622. If we are to believe La Porte, in the spring of 1625 Anne rehearsed a ballet for the wedding celebrations of Henrietta Maria, the youngest of Louis's sisters, and Charles I, but the ballet was apparently cancelled as a mark of respect after the death of James I on 27 March 1625.³⁷ There is no further mention of a *ballet de la reine* after 1627. In fact, no king's ballet is mentioned either, with the exception of two ballets danced in 1635 and 1636. Louis XIII's wars and his ill health might explain their absence in the late 1620s and early 1630s or their replacement in the late 1630s by entertainments performed instead "in front of their Majesties." However, it does not fully account for the absence of any *ballets de la reine* in 1635 and 1636 to complement those of the king, although Anne and her ladies danced in the *grand ballet* that concluded the king's *Ballet des triomphes* in 1635. Unlike Louis, Anne enjoyed excellent health, and was still young enough to perform

³⁴ Bocan's career started in England in the early 1600s, where he became quite famous. He was Queen Anna of Denmark's dancing master between 1603 and 1619 and was employed by Prince Henry in 1608. In 1621 he was back in France and in the service of Louis XIII. Another Bocan, maybe his brother, taught dancing to the queen's maids of honour in 1636 and 1639 and is credited with inventing the *boccone*, a popular dance during the reign of Louis XIII and during the regency of Anne of Austria.

³⁵ As well as other ms sources, notably BnF ms fr 24353 and 24357.

³⁶ They were both given in the royal apartments, unlike the other six, which were performed in the *grande salle de bal* at the Louvre.

³⁷ Pierre de La Porte, *Mémoires*, ed. J. F. Michaud and J. J. F. Poujoulat (Paris: Éd. du commentaire analytique du code civil, 1839), 7.

in public.³⁸ Was her absence from the “stage” merely the consequence of the king’s own absence and his growing reluctance to dance? Or was it a sign of her growing disfavour with her husband, who suspected her of collusion with Spain? Was she intentionally side-lined, before her two long-awaited pregnancies in 1638–1640 put an end to her dancing career? To answer these questions, we need to turn to political as well as domestic considerations.

The *ballets de la reine* danced by Anne between 1618 and 1627 were traditional in both form and content, and were structurally modelled on the king’s own ballets. They consisted of a series of discrete dances or *entrées*, which were vaguely unified by a common concept and featured either professionals or court ladies. They concluded with a grand finale, known as *grand ballet*, in which only the noble masquers participated. Their mythological, allegorical, or pastoral themes were regularly put in the service of king and country, and the praise of the queen generally led to a glorification of the king. Regardless of their atemporal aura, they frequently engaged with current affairs and topical issues. In particular they celebrated the arrival of Anne, the return to favour of Marie de’ Medici, the queen mother, who had been exiled from court after the assassination of her favourite, Concino Concini, in 1617, or Louis’s victories over the Protestants. Very often topics were chosen to highlight the complementarity between the king and the queen. Thus, in the late 1610s, the king’s ballets celebrated his martial virtues,³⁹ while the queen’s corresponding pieces extolled her beauty and her gracefulness. As strength and courage were the necessary attributes of a king, beauty was the requisite quality of a queen. In the 1620s poets chose to illustrate the benefits of the king’s restoration of peace and order, and more generally his good government, whereas in the late 1630s they preferred to honour his triumphs in the Thirty Years’ war.

Like a number of other princesses married off to former enemies of their countries, Anne was celebrated on her arrival as a token of peace and concord. Her exchange with Élisabeth de Bourbon sealed the alliance between France and Spain. It strengthened the peace signed at Vervins in 1598 and augured well for the future. As late as March 1621, the *Ballet du Soleil* still hinted at these hopes, although it was clear by then that they had come to nothing. Moreover, it was hoped that her arrival in France would bring to an end the years of internecine strife between the *Grands*, the Huguenots, and the monarchy, given that the revolts had been largely financed by Spain. It promoted calm and the restoration of order. In a mumming presented to her in February 1616 Anne was addressed as the

Bel astre qui doux et riant

.....

Vient d’Occident en Orient

Dissiper nos vapeurs civiles.⁴⁰

³⁸ According to Mme de Motteville, she kept her fresh complexion and youthful figure well into the 1640s. Françoise Bertaut de Motteville, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire d’Anne d’Autriche* (Amsterdam: François Changuion, 1723), 1:230.

³⁹ *La Délivrance de Renaud* (1617), *La Folie de Roland* (1618), or *Les Aventures de Tancrede en la forêt enchantée* (1619).

⁴⁰ “Les Vers recitez en un momon présenté à la Roynie,” in *Ballets et mascarades de cour de Henri III à Louis XIV*, ed. Paul Lacroix (Geneva: Paul Gay, 1868–1870), 2:94.

[Beauteous star, gentle and bright, who comes from West to East to disperse our civil fog.]

In an echo of the wildest dreams cherished by the *Ballet du triomphe de Minerve* in March 1615, the mummings asserted that her marriage with Louis heralded a glorious future of conquests for France. Seconded by the hoped-for *dauphin*, the King would head crusading expeditions in the Holy Land, in which militant Catholicism and territorial imperialism combined for the greater glory of the Bourbon dynasty:⁴¹

Mais nous voulons gagner de toy
 Qu'aussitost que les Destinées
 Auront sur nostre aymable Roy
 Fait couller deux ou trois années,
 Tes grâces et tes doux appas
 N'empescheront plus que ses pas
 Ne tournent vers la Palestine
 Et ne l'emportent au Levant
 Replanter l'Eglise Latine
 Et fouler au pied le turbant.⁴²

[However, we hope that, as soon as Fate has added two or three more years to the age of our amiable king, your graces and sweet charms will no longer prevent him from turning his steps in the direction of Palestine and speeding towards the Levant to restore the Roman Church and trample the turban under foot.]

Moreover, the mention of a *dauphin*, the living embodiment of the union of the French and Spanish crowns, served to remind Anne of the prime duty of a queen consort: to bear children and above all to produce a viable male heir to ensure dynastic continuity. A similar message was conveyed by the present given to her by the city of Lyon in December 1622. It was a massive gold statuette which represented a lion carrying a shield on which a sleeping queen was depicted. A crowned arm coming out of heaven pinned a medal with the picture of a lion on her stomach. The meaning was clear: the present, inspired by the premonitory dream of Alexander the Great's father, carried the hopes of the French people to "veoir leur repos affermy par les benedictions d'une lignee Royale" (see their peace guaranteed by the blessings of a royal lineage).⁴³ A new queen not only embodied femininity, youth, beauty, and love, she also embodied fecundity. The survival of the dynasty and with it the future of the kingdom were at stake. The queen's beauty might delight the eye of the beholder and give pleasure to her royal

⁴¹ The same themes were illustrated by the *Ballet du triomphe de Minerve* and the royal entry into Bordeaux in 1615, and taken up by the king's ballets in the late 1610s.

⁴² "Les Vers recitez en un momon présenté à la Royne," 2:95.

⁴³ *Reception de Tres-chrestien, Tres-juste, et Tres-victorieux Monarque Louis XIII . . . et de Tres-chrestienne, Tres-auguste, et Tres-vertueuse Royne Anne d'Austriche* (Lyon: Jacques Roussin, 1623), 27, 28.

husband,⁴⁴ but its prime function was to arouse his desire and help propagate his lineage. Hence the enthusiasm with which witnesses to the wedding ceremony in Bordeaux in 1615 highlighted the promising exchange of glances and smiles between the young couple, as well as the profuse sweating of Anne, who was dressed in heavy royal garments, because sweating was believed in the early modern period to be an unmistakable sign of female fertility.⁴⁵ The queen had to become a mother to be fully recognized as a queen.

The first court ballets danced in Paris by Anne provided an opportunity to portray the new queen of France. However, far from providing an accurate description of her, they kept to clichéd characteristics. They mentioned her beauty, and for once the conventional praise rang true because Anne was a very beautiful woman according to early modern canons of beauty. She was blonde, with a fair complexion and green eyes. Her “graces & doux appas” (graces and sweet charms)⁴⁶ matched the “douce Majesté” (gentle Majesty) of her bearing.⁴⁷ In the 1618 *Ballet de la reine représentant la Beauté* she appeared to Boitel “si brillante & radieuse qu[']elle offusqua la veuë des plus assurez. C'estoit le Soleil qui presidoit entre les estoilles de son Zodiaque” (so radiant and sparkling that she dazzled the eyes of the most confident spectators. She was the Sun who presided amongst the stars of her Zodiac).⁴⁸ Her beauty was said to inspire both love and respect, and naturally to have enthralled the king. Convention dictated that their union be presented as a love match and the years of difficult negotiations were passed over in silence.

Poets did not content themselves with waxing lyrical about Anne's beauty and charm. They also traced the more political portrait of the queen that she was expected to be, and outlined the attitude required of her towards her royal husband. In February 1618, the *Ballet de la reine représentant la Beauté* emphasized her obedience. Although as infanta Anne had been a potential heir to the Spanish crown, she had to renounce her claims to the throne in order to marry Louis:

Mais je quitte cette puissance
Et me range à l'obeissance
D'un Juste & d'un aimable Roy,
De qui l'ame en vertus feconde
Reçoit autant de vœux de moy
Que j'en reçois de tout le monde.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Jean Liébault, *Trois Livres de l'embellissement du corps humain* (Paris: Jacques Du Puys, 1582), 15.

⁴⁵ Abby E. Zanger, “Making Sweat: Sex and the Gender of National Reproduction in the Marriage of Louis XIII,” *Yale French Studies* 86 (1994): 187–205.

⁴⁶ “Les Vers recitez en un momon présenté à la Royne,” 2:95.

⁴⁷ Pierre Guéron, Air “Sur l'arrivée de la Reine Anne d'Autriche” (Paris, BnF, ms fr 24353). The first court ballet danced by Marie de' Medici in 1602 also celebrated her beauty.

⁴⁸ Pierre Boitel, *Histoire mémorable de ce qui s'est passé tant en France qu'aux pays étrangers* (Rouen: Jacques Besongne, 1620), 465.

⁴⁹ *Vers pour le Ballet de la Reine, representant la Beauté & ses Nymphes* (Paris: Jean Sara, 1618), sig. Aij.

[However, I relinquish my power and submit to the dominion of a Just and amiable King, whose soul is rich in virtues. To him I pay as many respects as I am paid by all.]

The loss of her prospects and subordination to her husband even offered hope that Spain might one day yield to France as the superior power in Europe.

Three years later, in 1621, the *Ballet du Soleil* similarly stressed the submission and dependence of the queen. Anne was made to acknowledge that she was "soudmise à [la] loy" (subject to the law) of her husband and bowed before the "beau Soleil qui [lui] donn[ait] le jour" (bright Sun that gave her light):

Le pouvoir d'un Amour extremes,
Qui m'a sousmise à vostre Loy,
Me change si bien en vous mesme,
Que je ne suis que vous, & cesse d'estre moy.⁵⁰

[The power of an extreme Love, which has made me subject to your Law, has so well changed me into you that I am only you and cease to be myself.]

The hackneyed metaphors of reciprocated love revealed the political duality of the queen consort in France⁵¹: as queen, Anne was both queen and subject, sovereign and dependent, and thus occupied an intermediate position between the king and his people. In a monarchical regime that was shaped by the Salic law and where women could not accede to power in their own right, but only as queen regent, whether in the king's absence or in the case of his death, the queen of France had little political agency. Besides, Louis XIII was known to be extremely jealous of his authority and had in the past resented his own mother's interference in government. Anne could not, therefore, hope for much participation in her husband's affairs. Contrary to tradition, she was not even admitted to the deliberations of the King's Council.



2. A ballet costume drawing for Anne of Austria (*Ballet des nymphes bocagères*, 1627), private collection. Repr. after: Margaret M. McGowan, *The Court Ballet of Louis XIII: A Collection of Working Designs for Costumes 1615–33* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1986), Fig. 119.

⁵⁰ *Grand Ballet de la Reyne representant le Soleil*, 200.

⁵¹ See Fanny Cosandey, *La Reine de France. Symbole et pouvoir (XVe–XVIIIe siècle)* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

Unsurprisingly in the *Ballet du Soleil* she was represented as a “feint Soleil” (fake Sun),⁵² who shone with a borrowed light, whereas the king was extolled as the true sun, whose beneficial influence was felt far and wide, and drove out winter from the land.

Other astrological images were resorted to over the years in order to make her subordinate position even more manifest. She was “the moon to Louis’s sun”⁵³ or the dawn that precedes sunrise.⁵⁴ One of the tableaux decorating the triumphal arch dedicated to her “perfections” in Lyon in 1622 showed the goddess Aurora “affublee d’une robe d’escarlate, laquelle regardant d’un œil fixe & arrêté le visage d’Apollon tout rayonnant, changeoit peu à peu les traits de sa face, & se metamorphosoit en luy” (in a scarlet dress, whose features slowly changed as she stared fixedly at the shining face of Apollo and metamorphosed into him).⁵⁵ One of the accounts of the Lyon entry stated that the same was true of queens,

qui sont des Aurores dans les Royaumes, mais leur lumiere est feminine, & empruntee de l’esclat du Soleil de la Royauté, qui leur communiquant les privileges, & prerogatives de leur Majesté, fait qu’au lieu d’Aurores matinières, elles deviennent Soleils en leur Zenit, & apogee de gloire.⁵⁶

[who are like so many Auroras in their Kingdoms, but their light is feminine and borrowed from the light of the Sun of Royalty, which, by giving them the privileges and prerogatives of their Majesty, ensures that from being morning Auroras they become Suns in the Zenith and apogee of their glory.]

Not only is the light of dawn a borrowed light, it vanishes when the sun rises, for as the sun begins to warm the atmosphere, “il n’y a plus d’Aurore” (Aurora is no more), and “celle-ci perd son nom, & son estre, dans celui du Soleil” (it loses its name and its being in that of the Sun).⁵⁷ There could not be a more explicit metaphor of the lack of autonomy and independence of the queen of France.

Mythological figures too could be called upon to highlight the fact that the queen only acquired political significance through her marriage to the king. In the 1619 *Ballet de Psyché* Anne danced the part of Juno. In the same way as the goddess had benefited from her union with Jupiter, the supreme ruler of the gods, her own “appas divers” (many charms) were

⁵² *Grand Ballet de la Reyne representant le Soleil*, in *Ballets pour Louis XIII. Danse et politique à la cour de France (1610–1643)*, ed. Marie-Claude Canova-Green (Toulouse: SLC, 2010), 201.

⁵³ As in one of the speeches delivered during her entry into Bordeaux in 1615. François Garasse, *La Royale Reception de leurs Majestez Tres-chrestiennes en la ville de Bourdeaux* (Bordeaux: Simon Millanges, 1615), 130.

⁵⁴ As on the two tableaux decorating one of the triumphal arches constructed for her entry into Lyon in December 1622.

⁵⁵ *Le Soleil au signe du Lyon. D’ou quelques paralleles sont tirez avec le tres-Chrestien, tres-Juste, & tres-Victorieux Monarque Louys XIII. Roy de France & de Navarre, en son Entree triomphante dans sa Ville de Lyon* (Lyon: Jean Jullieron, 1623), 118.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

rendered “plus augustes” (more august) thanks to her marriage to the French monarch.⁵⁸ Her status and dignity were enhanced, her glory increased. Even though her blonde beauty and radiance, which were heightened by her dazzling costume of white satin, embroidered with pearls and gold, added to her natural grandeur, she was only “queen” through her marriage to the one who was the source of absolute power in the land. He and only he could validate the majesty of his queen. As royal spouse the queen had no dignity, no status, let alone authority of her own. Absolutism was a highly masculine system of governance, which not only forbade women from power, it also concentrated all authority in the hands of the king. His power was “absolute” insofar as it was independent, free from any other authority except the will of God, to Whom only he was accountable.

The *Ballet des fêtes de Junon la nopcière* danced by Anne in March 1623 testified to her increasingly subordinate position at court. The verse reiterated her subservience to her royal husband, as well as insisted on the deference—that was no mere polite gesture—due to the queen mother. As goddess of women and marriage Juno chose to step aside in favour of both Marie de’ Medici and Anne on the grounds that “l’une [la] pass[ait] en Majesté, l’autre en beauté” (one outdid her in Majesty, the other in beauty).⁵⁹ In spite of her superior standing as Queen Regnant and the wife of the “plus grand des Roys” (the greatest of Kings),⁶⁰ Anne was made to pay homage to Marie, who, through her sons and sons-in-law, ruled over several kingdoms:

Vous m’ostez ma gloire & mon nom,
Grande & favorable Junon,
Qui presidez au mariage;
Puis que c’est de vos mains que je tiens mon Espous.⁶¹

[Great and favourable Juno, who preside over marriage, you take away my glory and my name, since it is to you that I owe my husband.]

Marie was the true Juno. Not only was she a mother many times over and had fully discharged her duty as a royal spouse, she had also succeeded in marrying her children into the main ruling houses of Europe, whereas Anne had so far been unable to bear the king a child. A masque given in honour of Maréchal de Bassompierre at York House in London on 5 November 1626 ended on a similar conceit: the scene suddenly changed into a marine view representing the sea which divides France from England, and above the queen mother could be seen, sitting on a regal throne amongst the gods beckoning with her hand to her children “to come and unite themselves with her amongst the Gods, to put an end to all the discords

⁵⁸ *Discours du Ballet de la Reyne. Tiré de la Fable de Psyché*, in Canova-Green, *Ballets pour Louis XIII*, 154.

⁵⁹ *Le Grand Ballet de la Reyne [representant les festes de Junon la Nopcière]*, in Canova-Green, *Ballets pour Louis XIII*, 210.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

of Christianity.”⁶² The homage paid to Marie in the *Ballet des fêtes de Junon la nopcière* heralded the long political eclipse of Anne, who lived in the king’s shadow—which was normal in the political culture associated with Salic law—and the queen mother, to whom, contrary to precedent, she would soon be obliged to give way in any public ceremony at court.⁶³

In February 1627, in the *Ballet des nymphes bocagères de la forêt sacrée*, Anne was made to ask her mother-in-law to keep an eye on her:

Ayez pour moy les yeux ouverts,
Et si je vous suis agreable
Je veux plaire à tout l'Uniuers.⁶⁴

[Keep your eyes open for me; and should I find favour with you, I wish to content the whole world.]

Did Anne need to be closely watched because of her rumoured tryst with the Duke of Buckingham in Amiens in the spring of 1625? The dashing duke, who was believed to have fallen in love with Anne during his recent stay in Paris,⁶⁵ reportedly decided to try his luck one evening in the secluded garden of her residence in Amiens. Another encounter is thought to have taken place a few days later in Anne’s bedchamber, although it is unlikely that anything even remotely approaching the sexual assault graphically described by some contemporaries happened on either occasion.⁶⁶ Or was it because of her suspected involvement in the Chalais conspiracy, the following year? The Chalais conspiracy had been hatched against the government by some of her acquaintances and closest friends with a view to eliminating Richelieu. Although there was little evidence of her direct involvement, she had been obliged to defend herself before the King’s Council in the presence of the king and his mother. Her rapport with her husband, increasingly “irritable and suspicious,”⁶⁷ had deteriorated further. With hindsight her claim that she aspired to draw “la regle de [ses] actions” (the rule of her actions) from the “perfections” of Marie makes one smile given the queen mother’s fractious past and her incessant plotting against her son!⁶⁸ In the verse addressed to the king in the same ballet, Anne submitted completely to her husband:

⁶² Amerigo Salvetti, *Correspondence*, Historical manuscripts commission, 11th report, appendix, part I: The Manuscripts of Henry Duncan Skrine (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), 94.

⁶³ Mathieu da Vinha, “La Maison d’Anne d’Autriche,” in Grell, *Anne d’Autriche*, 162.

⁶⁴ *Les Nymphes bocagères de la forest sacrée, Ballet dancé par la Reyne, en la sale du Louvre*, in Canova-Green, *Ballets pour Louis XIII*, 251.

⁶⁵ He had been sent to France by Charles I to escort his new bride Henrietta Maria to England. The royal party stopped for a few days in Amiens on the way to Boulogne.

⁶⁶ Marie-Claude Canova-Green, “Love, Politics, and Religion: Henrietta Maria’s Progress through France and the Entry into Amiens,” in *The Wedding of Charles I and Henrietta Maria, 1625: Celebrations and Controversy*, ed. Marie-Claude Canova-Green and Sara J. Wolfson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 109–10.

⁶⁷ Richelieu, *Mémoires*. Quoted in Claude Dulong, *Anne d’Autriche, mère de Louis XIV* (Paris: Perrin, 2000), 87.

⁶⁸ *Les Nymphes bocagères de la forest sacrée*, 250.

Ce qui plaist à vos yeux me ravit, & je n'aime
Que ce que vous aymez.⁶⁹

[What pleases you delights me, and I like only what you like.]

Only the double entendre of the verse lessened its impact and spared her a very public humiliation. Besides, these lines were not spoken on stage, instead they were included in the *livrets* to be read silently by the spectators during the performance. The fact remains that her options were extremely limited. Contrary to the degree of agency, autonomy, and even criticism, that Marie enjoyed in her own *ballets de la reine* in the 1600s,⁷⁰ Anne's freedom seemed to consist only in taking on the image of submissiveness and dependence that Louis wanted her to project and which her own conduct repeatedly called into question.

And yet, the last two ballets that the queen danced at court in the winters of 1624 and 1627 respectively suggest that she might have had a greater say in the "invention" of some of her entertainments than has previously been thought. Anne was known to like pastoral fiction. To justify their choice of entertainment during her visit to Lyon in December 1622, the Jesuit fathers from the local college claimed that they had "apris que la Royne se plaisoit fort aux Pastorelles" (learned that the Queen was very fond of pastoral plays).⁷¹ She might have developed a taste for them in her early years, for it has been suggested that the Spanish royal family engaged in recreational reading and shared some popular reading interests.⁷² Jorge de Montemayor's *Diana* (1559?) and Tasso's *Aminta* (1573) had taken European courts by storm and it is known that Guarini's *Il pastor fido* was performed for Anne's mother, Margaret of Austria, during her visit to Mantua in 1598. She was offered a German translation of the text after the performance and might have taken it with her to Spain.⁷³

The play put on by the Jesuits in Lyon in December 1622 was a pastoral allegory of Joan of Arc's heroic deeds against the English. Joan's transformation from shepherdess to warrior is well known but the representation of King Charles VII of France as a shepherd is more unusual. As the Reverend Fathers explained, it was customary to call kings "Pasteurs des peuples" (Shepherds of the peoples).⁷⁴ At the end of the play, the prophecy uttered by two Spanish shepherds extended the use of the metaphor to Louis XIII, who was credited with the restoration of peace and plenty in the kingdom: "le bon-heur de la France sera lors accompli, quand ANNE du sang de ces grands Pasteurs, qui possèdent les vergers Hesperiens seroit jointe au grand berger LOUYS" (the happiness of France will be achieved when Anne, born of the blood of the great Pastors who own the Hesperian orchards, is joined to the great shepherd

⁶⁹ Ibid., 251.

⁷⁰ Gough, *Dancing Queen*.

⁷¹ *Reception*, 59.

⁷² As shown by the presence of *Amadis of Gaul* in the possessions of her tutor.

⁷³ Teresa Ferrer Valls, "Las fiestas públicas en la monarquía de Felipe II y Felipe III," in *La morte e la gloria: apparati funebri medicei per Filippo II di Spagna e Margherita d'Austria*, ed. Monica Bietti (Livorno: Sillabe, 1999).

⁷⁴ *Reception*, 60.

Louis).⁷⁵ If nothing else, the prophecy heralded the themes developed in the last two ballets danced by Anne in the mid and late 1620s, *Les Nymphes des Jardins* and *Les Nymphes bocagères de la forêt sacrée*.

The king's ballets in 1617–1619 had celebrated the quelling of aristocratic and Protestant revolts and the restoration of order. The queen's ballets in 1624–1627 illustrated the beneficial effects of the king's actions as announced in the 1621 *Ballet du Soleil*, although the prosperity of France was attributed less to the "pastoral power"⁷⁶ of the king than his solar influence. France was depicted as a harmonious and well-ordered garden, with an abundance of flowers, whose beauty was manifest in the graceful nymphs taking part in the *grand ballet*. More generally it was a *locus amoenus*, complete with shady groves, running waters, and gentle breezes, where shepherds and shepherdesses danced to the music of flutes. It was a land of eternal spring and happiness, leisure and pleasure, which showed beyond doubt that the royal sun had brought the kingdom back

Sous le plus doux climat des Isles fortunées,
Où les felicitez ne sont jamais bornées,
Où regne l'abondance au milieu des plaisirs,
Qui contente, & jamais ne lasse les desirs.⁷⁷

[Under the gentlest climate of the Fortunate Isles, where happiness knows no bounds, where abundance reigns in the midst of pleasures, which satisfies and never exhausts desires.]

The delights of the pastoral world combined with those of the Golden Age to turn France into a unique land, a haven of peace in the troubles that engulfed Europe. The long-awaited "âge doré" (golden age), heralded in the *Ballet du triomphe de Minerve* in 1615 and prepared by the return to earth of Astrea and Themis in the *Ballet de Psyche* in 1619, was now fully realized.

A number of ballet costume drawings by Rabel for the *Ballet des Nymphes bocagères de la forêt sacrée* in 1627 bring to life the variety of mythological and rustic characters that peopled this earthly paradise, wood spirits, woodland gods and nymphs, shepherds and shepherdesses, Silenus and Cephalus, etc. Even huntsmen appeared on stage, perhaps as a reminder that death too inhabited the pastoral world, unless it was to flatter the king's passion for hunting and falconry. Anne dazzled the audience in the guise of a woodland nymph, "in a very rich dress with gold embroidery covering its incarnadine panels, ruff and fringes. Her hair is threaded through with sprigs of gold and pink flowers."⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁷⁶ The concept of *pastorat* or *pouvoir pastorat* is analysed by Michel Foucault in *Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au collège de France. 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart (Paris: Hautes Études, 1984), 151. It qualifies the relationship between men and monarchs (as shepherds of men), between God—or the gods—and men (God as the shepherd of men), and finally between God and monarchs, as delegated pastors.

⁷⁷ *Les Nymphes bocagères de la forêt sacrée*, 243.

⁷⁸ Margaret M. McGowan, *The Court Ballet of Louis XIII: A Collection of Working Designs for Costumes 1615–1633* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1986), no. 119.

At a time when war and conflict raged in Europe, the imaginary Arcadia depicted in the queen's ballets might have been a way to evade reality, a form of compensatory day-dreaming. Above all it testified to the popularity of pastoral literature and in particular the continuing success of Honoré d'Urfé's pastoral novel, *L'Astrée*, whose fourth and last part was published in 1627. However, although Anne's last two ballets were certainly an indication of her literary tastes, they could hardly be regarded as the sign of a newly-found autonomy and agency on her part. She was given a voice—albeit the silent one of the *vers pour les personnages*—but only to profess, yet again, her dependence on the king. She was securely placed under his control and the restraining influence of her mother-in-law, who was now extolled as her role model. In fact, it was not just her dependence and her silence that were encoded in the ballets, but her "mutedness." In Anne's case the conventional silence of the masquers had become containment. Shirley Ardener remarks that "the theory of mutedness . . . does not require that the muted be actually *silent*. They may speak a great deal. The important issue is whether they are able to say all that they would wish to say, when and where they wish to say it."⁷⁹

Anne was not able to say all that she might have wished to say and if she spoke (silently) it was in a borrowed voice, which only conformed to dominant modes of expression or conveyed the king's will. Far from offering her an opportunity to make her own voice heard, Anne's own *ballets de la reine* contributed to her marginalization.

FROM QUEEN REGENT TO QUEEN MOTHER

Louis XIII died in May 1643. After his death, Anne never danced in public again, although she continued to attend court balls and ballets until her death in January 1666. Mme de Motteville wrote in her *Memoirs*: "La Reine alors n'avoit pas renoncé à tous les plaisirs qui lui avoient plû autrefois, & qu'elle croyoit innocens. Elle avoit aimé le bal. Elle en avoit perdu le goût, avec la jeunesse" (The Queen had not given up all the pleasures that she had enjoyed in the past and that she believed to be innocent. She had loved dancing. She lost the taste for it with her youth).⁸⁰ As queen regent, she also enjoyed the new Italian operas sponsored by Cardinal Mazarin, her chief minister, and even insisted that the premiere of the first opera performed in France, entitled *La finta pazza*, at the Petit-Bourbon on 14 December 1645 should include comic ballet interludes by Giovanni Battista Balbi to amuse the child king.⁸¹ Born out of a concession to the French taste for *ballet de cour*, this intercalation of opera and ballet became the norm for subsequent productions of Italian operas at court.

Interestingly Spanish style entertainments were ordered (by her? by Louis XIV?) to celebrate the birth of the new *dauphin*, Louis's son and heir, in November 1661. Abbé de Choisy recorded that "il y eut des feux allumés partout, et les comédiens espagnols dansèrent un ballet dans la cour des Fontaines, devant le balcon de la reine mère, avec des castagnettes, des harpes

⁷⁹ Shirley Ardener, introduction to *Defining Females: The Nature of Women in Society*, ed. Shirley Ardener, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).

⁸⁰ Motteville, *Mémoires*, 1:227.

⁸¹ Giovanni Battista Balbi, preface to *Balletti d'invenzione nella finta pazza di Giovan Batta. Balbi* (Paris, 1645).



3. Peter Paul Rubens and workshop, *Portrait of Anne of Austria*, ca. 1625, private European collection. Photo © KIK-IRPA, Brussels.

vet des guitares” (there were illuminations everywhere, and the Spanish actors performed a ballet with castanets, harps and guitars, in front of the queen mother’s balcony, in *the cour des Fontaines*).⁸² It is highly likely that Anne and/or the king were trying to please Louis’s queen, the infanta Maria-Teresa of Austria, and alleviate her feelings of strangeness. Moreover, this choice of entertainment might testify to a new self-confidence and more relaxed attitude of the French

⁸² See François-Timoléon de Choisy, *Mémoires de l’abbé de Choisy pour servir à l’histoire de Louis XIV*, ed. M. de L’Escure (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1888), 163.

monarchy towards Spain and all things Spanish than had been the case under Louis XIII. The Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 had consolidated French preeminence in Europe. Negative images of Spain and its inhabitants soon disappeared from court ballets and "domesticated" versions of Spanish dances became fully integrated into French culture.⁸³

In addition, the performance of a Spanish ballet in full view of the court might reveal Anne's new attitude towards her native Spanish culture. Jean-François Dubost has claimed that while her husband was alive and later, during her regency, it might have been prudent not to show her Spanish tastes and preference for her native culture too openly and instead display her "Frenchness."⁸⁴ Her father Philip III had commented on her altered appearance and behaviour in the years following her marriage to Louis XIII: "I was greatly amused to learn that you are being reproached for your French looks; this is as it should be. However, I do believe that you are still Spanish inwardly."⁸⁵ Removed from power during the personal rule of her son, Louis XIV, Anne could indulge again in the Spanish tastes of her youth without arousing suspicion of betrayal.

* * *

As queen consort in a kingdom ruled by an absolute monarch, Anne of Austria could not have presumed to play an active role in French political affairs, although her father had hoped she might be able to advance Spanish interests. In fact, she appears to have had no political ambition of her own. On the other hand, she might have been expected to exert a considerable influence in her new court and country, and to make a contribution to its culture by patronizing artists, promoting new fashions and cultural trends, and above all by creating a "cultural encounter"⁸⁶ between the two countries. Although the *mode espagnole* had arrived in France well before her arrival, her presence undoubtedly catalysed the craze for all things Spanish at court, whether they be Spanish gloves, *airs de cour* with Spanish lyrics, sarabands, or guitars and castanets. However, given the increasingly bellicose relations between France and Spain in the 1620s and 1630s, this cultural influence was mitigated by highly negative representations of Spain in court ballets and more generally in contemporary discourse.

Whereas the court indulged their curiosity for Spanish culture, Anne seems to have been obliged to forgo her "Spanishness" publicly. She soon adopted French customs, learned to speak French fluently, and dressed in the French fashion, although she kept a love for jewels and other costly adornments that was put down to a supposedly Spanish penchant for bling. After the expulsion of her *Maison espagnole* in 1618 her dependence on her native culture was

⁸³ Rico Osés, *L'Espagne vue de France*, 112–15, 157–61, 167–71.

⁸⁴ Jean-François Dubost, "La Cour de France face aux étrangers; la présence espagnole à la cour des Bourbons au XVII^e siècle," in *Les Cours d'Espagne et de France au XVII^e siècle*, ed. Benoît Pellistrandi and Chantal Grell (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2007), 163–64.

⁸⁵ Philip III, *Cartas de Felipe III a su hija Ana, reina de Francia (1616–1618)*, ed. Ricardo Martorell Téllez-Girón (Madrid, 1929). Quoted in María José del Río Barredo and Jean-François Dubost, "La Présence étrangère autour d'Anne d'Autriche (1615–1666)," in Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 122. My translation.

⁸⁶ See Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed., *Queenship in Europe, 1600–1815: The Role of the Consort* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

lessened and she adapted to new forms of entertainment such as the formal *ballets à entrées*. Admittedly the naturalization and acculturation of a foreign queen consort were not unusual in early modern European courts. However, in Anne's case, other factors shaped this process. The worsening international situation and the queen's own mistakes fuelled Louis's distrust of and growing estrangement from his wife. Her "foreignness" and continuing relationship with her native land after war broke out between the two kingdoms in 1635 were regarded as acts of treason.⁸⁷ The influence she might have had at court was severely limited by the king's resentment and her long-lasting inability to bear him a male heir. Even the opportunity for personal agency and autonomy that her participation in *ballets de la reine* might have allowed her was taken away from her. Instead, these ballets enabled the king to control his consort's representation as an assertion of power. The tensions inherent in the Spanish match had worked against Anne, although they did not inhibit her popularity with the people. Only when she became queen regent after Louis's death in 1643, did she finally acquire the political power and cultural agency that had eluded her for nearly thirty years.⁸⁸ But this is another story.

⁸⁷ In particular, she carried on a secret correspondence with her brothers, Philip IV of Spain and Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand, governor of the Spanish Netherlands, until she was caught in the summer of 1637 and forced into a public confession of guilt.

⁸⁸ In fact, with the exception of her conventual patronage and the Val-de-Grâce project that was started as early as 1624, very little is known of Anne's patronage of the arts in her husband's lifetime, although it is clear that her own example encouraged luxury and refinement in elite circles, and she became a fashion arbiter.

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