

Queen, Mother, and Stateswoman: Mariana of Austria and the Government of Spain. Silvia Z. Mitchell. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press: 2019. xx + 293. \$35. Paperback ISBN-13: 9780271083384.

Silvia Z. Mitchell, a faculty member at Purdue University since 2013, published in 2019 her book, *Queen, Mother, and Stateswoman: Mariana of Austria and the Government of Spain*. Mitchell analyzes the figure of Mariana of Austria during her regency from 1665 to 1675 and the first years of her son's reign until 1679, focusing on the different aspects of her tutorship and curatorship and the evolution of the relationship between her as a guardian and the future king of the Spanish Monarchy. To give the reader sufficient knowledge to understand the evolution of the widowed queen mother's agency, Mitchell contextualizes the Spanish Monarchy's political, diplomatic, and governmental situation since Felipe IV's death in 1665. The book aims to reconstruct Mariana's activities as a regent and participate in the revision of the historiography of Carlos II's minority by studying in-depth the role of the queen mother as a vital figure of the Spanish Monarchy in the second half of the seventeenth century.

The author bases her analysis on the body of scholarship of queenship studies to give a revised understanding of the political history of the Spanish Monarchy by focusing on the specific topic of Mariana's government. Hence, she uses gender studies to undo the image of Mariana as a weak woman, dominated by her favorites, the confessor Nithard and counsellor Valenzuela. Although Mitchell mentions both men on several occasions, she does not attribute them a significant influence, as they do not play an essential role in the overall narration of the book. The author analyzes their critical importance only in specific moments of the regency, where their influence is undeniable, as was the case for Nithard during his conflict with Juan José, Felipe IV's bastard, which eventually led to Nithard's expulsion. Consequently, this book differs from other pre-existing studies, as it intelligently examines Mariana's regency without focusing on the prominence of the two favorites mentioned above, allowing the queen mother to be the centre figure of the research.

For the analysis of this biographical study, the author uses primary sources from the Spanish National Library and five of the most prestigious Spanish archives: the General Archives of Simancas, the National Historical Archives, the Archives of the Palace, the National Historical Archives-Section Aristocracy, and the private Archives of the Duke of Medinaceli. She supplements her archival sources using printed sources such as the *Gazette*, the Collection of unedited documents for Spanish history, and revised secondary literature on the last Habsburg reign.

The book is divided into seven chapters, preceded by an introduction that emphasizes the historical significance of Mariana's tutorship and regency and concludes with a brief look inside the rest of Mariana's life after her son reached the age of majority until she died in 1696. Mitchell structures the chapters chronologically, starting with Mariana's birth, youth, and marriage, her role as regent and exile to the city of Toledo, and, finally, her return to the Madrid court in 1679, with which she ends the case study. Additionally, the author structures her argument in chapters 2 to 7 in three thematical blocks that analyze Mariana's regency from diverse perspectives.

In the first thematic block, Mitchell examines the strategies employed by Mariana of Austria at the beginning of her tutorship, emphasizing her ability to govern by collaborating with Counsellors of State, courtiers, and diplomatic envoys. The analysis of Mariana's capacity to govern and to implement a proper system that ensured her rule differs mainly from the traditional historiographical interpretation of her regency. In this particular aspect, Mitchell parts from Laura Oliván Santaliestra's studies about Queen Mariana to examine to what extent the queen actively performed her governmental duties by restructuring the court's administration and elaborating a network with courtiers and statesmen.

In the second block, the author studies Mariana's implication in foreign politics during her regency. She examines the strategies followed by the queen mother to defend the integrity of the territories of the Spanish Monarchy, which her son Carlos II would inherit. Mitchell describes the conflicts with Portugal which Mariana inherited from her husband and the delicate diplomatic situation with France as Louis XIV increased the pressure on the territories of the Spanish Lower Countries. Mitchell examines the strategy Mariana applied to ensure the creation of new alliances and treaties that would support Spain against the French king and thus protect the future of the Spanish Monarchy. The author states that despite the difficulties of her regency, Mariana strengthened the diplomatic position of the Spanish Monarchy and maintained almost the integrity of the territories. Even though the book's focus is to show how Mariana implemented the procedures to strengthen the Monarchy's influence in Europe, the author also studies the difficulties the regent encountered, especially with her brother and closest ally, Leopold I. Hence, international politics is omnipresent in the book's chapters and constitutes its principal axe.

The third thematic block examines the actions taken by Mariana to secure her power before, during and after her regency. Mitchell analyzes Mariana's strategies to ensure her power within the Madrid court and examines her governance's crisis. The author evokes the dissolution of the king's household in 1665 and the derived consequences for the courtly life of the nobility. Mitchell also analyzes the transitional phase shortly before Carlos II would emancipate and the strategic decisions made by his mother to maintain the power, which provoked her exile to the city of Toledo to ensure the king's complete separation from his former regent. Mariana's influence on Carlos II's life is emphasized by analyzing her relationship with her son, even during the short period when she was in Toledo. Throughout the book, Mitchell underlines the influence Mariana gained at court and her implication in the politics of the Spanish Monarchy, which led to her short distancing from her son. The author finally interprets Mariana's return to Madrid as a triumph over her opponents and the beginning of a new role in Carlos II's life as queen mother.

Even though the book has a clear chronological structure, the topics examined in the three blocks mentioned above repeatedly appear in different chapters challenging the reader's ease to follow the order of specific events linked to the hardships of Mariana's regency. To conclude, Silvia Mitchell's book uses a microhistorical approach to comprehend larger questions, such as the political and diplomatic situation of the Spanish Monarchy during the second half of the seventeenth century. She also employs methodology from gender studies and queenship that allows her

to shed light on new and insightful aspects of Mariana's regency, which have not been studied before.

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