

GENDERING THE LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN WORLD



Fabian Persson

Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court

Power, Risk, and Opportunity

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Swedish Court



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Gendering the Late Medieval and Early Modern World

Series editors: James Daybell (Chair), Victoria E. Burke, Svante Norrhem, and Merry Wiesner-Hanks

This series provides a forum for studies that investigate women, gender, and/or sexuality in the late medieval and early modern world. The editors invite proposals for book-length studies of an interdisciplinary nature, including, but not exclusively, from the fields of history, literature, art and architectural history, and visual and material culture. Consideration will be given to both monographs and collections of essays. Chronologically, we welcome studies that look at the period between 1400 and 1700, with a focus on any part of the world, as well as comparative and global works. We invite proposals including, but not limited to, the following broad themes: methodologies, theories and meanings of gender; gender, power and political culture; monarchs, courts and power; constructions of femininity and masculinity; gift-giving, diplomacy and the politics of exchange; gender and the politics of early modern archives; gender and architectural spaces (courts, salons, household); consumption and material culture; objects and gendered power; women's writing; gendered patronage and power; gendered activities, behaviours, rituals and fashions.



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Acknowledgements

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My mother, Ann-Mari Sellerberg, an academic herself, has been encouraging and usefully insistent that I finish this book and a number of related articles. Many of my sources are in Stockholm, and my long-suffering siblings have all cheerfully put up with visits from their archive-bound brother. My friend Peter Ullgren has never failed in believing I can publish. Andreas Anderberg has kindly helped me to get hold of Swedish literature of the more obscure kind.

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Note on names

The problem of the many names unfamiliar to the reader was pointed out by a peer reviewer. In order to overcome this difficulty, I have compiled the skeleton for an additional 'Dramatis personae' section in the book following this note. This has taken the form of names, dates of birth and death, and some short explanatory words.

Stable family names inherited over generations were unusual in Sweden until the beginning of the seventeenth century. In the sixteenth century names would in most noble families change every generation as they were patronymic, that is daughters and sons taking the Christian name of their father and adding a '-dotter' (daughter) or '-son' (son). In accordance with scholarly usage and to keep things clear, I have added the family names later used by families for sixteenth-century women within parentheses. That does not mean that, for example, Agneta Arentsdotter (Örnflycht) actually used the name Örnflycht. She would be either Agneta Arentsdotter or Mistress Agneta to Sjösa (her manor). Örnflycht would only come into use later but can help readers to identify her and it is common scholarly practice to give the later family name within a parenthesis. Women in Sweden normally continued to use their maiden names after marriage until the later part of the eighteenth century. Thus, I have in general followed that rule.

English	Swedish	German	Danish	Polish
Adolf Frederick	Adolf Fredrik	Adolf Friedrich		
	Lovisa Ulrika	Luise Ulrike		
	Sophia		Sophie	
	Magdalena		Magdalene	
Frederick	Fredrik	Friedrich		
John Casimir	Johan Casimir	Johann Kasimir		
John	Johan	Johann		
Eric	Erik			
	Hedvig	Hedwig Eleonore		
	Eleonora			
Hedvig Elisabeth	Hedvig Elisabet	Hedwig Elisabeth		
Charlotte	Charlotta	Charlotte		
Maria Eleonora	Maria Eleonora	Maria Eleonora		
Sophia Dorothea	Sophia Dorothea	Sophie Dorothee		
Catherine	Katarina	Katharina		
Catherine	Katarina			Katarzyna
Jagiellon	Jagellonica			Jagiellonka

English	Swedish	German	Danish	Polish
Frederica	Fredrika	Friederike		
Charles	Karl			
Cecilia	Cecilia	Cäcilie		
Christina	Christina	Christine		
	Ulrika Eleonora		Ulrikke Eleonore	
Gustavus Adolphus	Gustaf II Adolf			

Place names

In general I have striven to use English forms of place names when possible, such as Tuscany, Prussia, and Sweden (rather than Toscana, Preussen or Sverige). These cases are in my view the obvious choices. A bit more complicated are the many instances where there are English forms of place names but these are less well-known, such as Hesse rather than Hessen and Brunswick rather than Braunschweig.

Dramatis personae

Ulrika Adlersten (1694-1757). Acting Court Mistress. Sharp observer.

Adolf Frederick (1710-1771). King of Sweden, 1751-1771. Transformed from a minor German princeling to heir to the Swedish throne in 1743 at the wish of the Russian Empress Elisabeth. Happily married to Queen Lovisa Ulrika. Unhappy with diminished royal power, though with limited talent for political manoeuvring.

Agnes of Holstein (1578-1627). Daughter of Duke Adolf of Holstein. Sister of Queen Christina of Sweden and resided with her in later years. A hunchback who got into skirmishes with other members of the royal family. Buried in Riddarholmskyrkan in Stockholm.

Agneta Arentsdotter (Örnflycht) (?-1602). Court Mistress from the lower nobility. Grandmother of Christina Kursell.

Anna (1545-1610). Daughter of Gustaf I of Sweden. Married Georg John Count Palatine of Veldenz. Given a lavish dowry but her husband spent it all and got heavily into debt.

Anna (1573-1598). Queen Consort of Sweden. Married to King Sigismund of Sweden and Poland. Daughter of Charles of Austria. The briefest of stays in Sweden in the 1590s. Wrote that she would not send a dog she liked to Sweden.

Countess Armfelt see *Hedvig Ulrika De la Gardie*

Anna Catharina Bårfelt (1673-1738). Seamstress and later Chamberer. Favourite of Queen Dowager Hedvig Eleonora. Overthrown and lived her later years 'in great misery'.

Märta Berendes (1639-1717). In her youth Maid of Honour and later long-time Court Mistress. Niece of Kerstin Kurck. Referred to in letter by Charles XII as Aunt Märta. Wrote numerous prayers and rather sad notes on her life.

Countess Bielke see *Fredrika Eleonora von Düben*



Magdalena Catharina Biörnmarck (fl. 1700s). Daughter of a clerk in Queen Dowager Hedvig Eleonora's court. Served as her Chamberer from 1704 to 1716. Disliked by her colleague Bärfelt as a potential competitor.

Rebecka von Brandenstein (?-1615). Maid of Honour. Married to Joachim von Berfelt. Grandmother of the favourite Anna Catharina von Bärfelt.

Sibylla von Brandenstein (fl. 1590s and 1600s). Maid of Honour and later Lady of Honour.

Maria von Brunkhorst (?-1607). Maid of Honour. Unhappy in love.

Mrs. Cardell see *Karoline Fliess*

Catherine of Saxe-Lauenburg (1513-1535). Queen Consort of Sweden. Married Gustaf I.

Catherine (1535-1621). Queen Consort of Sweden. Married Gustaf I. From a Swedish noble family. Niece of her predecessor as queen. Her 61 years as Queen Dowager partly spent squabbling about inheritance with her step-son Charles. Survived all her many step children but one.

Catherine (1539-1610). Daughter of Gustaf I of Sweden. Married Edzard II, Count of Ostfriesland. Imperious, energetic, and staunch Lutheran.

Catherine (1584-1638). Daughter of Charles IX. Married John Casimir of Zweibrücken-Kleeburg. Resided mostly in Sweden.

Catherine I of Russia (1684-1727). From very humble origins rose to become mistress of Peter the Great, then Empress, and eventually his successor.

Cecilia (1540-1627). Daughter of Gustaf I of Sweden. Married Christopher, Margrave of Baden-Rodemachern. Visited Queen Elizabeth of England and lived an adventurous life including involvement in a sex scandal at her sister's wedding and a conversion to Catholicism.

Beata Christiernin (fl. 1740s). Short-term mistress of Frederick I. She was 'infinitely dissatisfied, so that the King in the end grew tired of her'.

Margareta Christiernin (fl. 1740s). Veteran Chamber Mistress. Unhappy about her colleague Charlotte Forsberg's royal favour.

Christina (1626-1689). Queen Regnant of Sweden, 1632-1654. Daughter of Maria Eleonora. Abdicated 1654 and later lived in Rome.

Christina the Elder (1573-1625). Queen Consort of Sweden. Married Charles IX. Did not allow her Maids of Honour to be trifled with.

Anna Claesdotter (Uggla) (alive in 1559). Court Mistress. Married leading royal advisor Georg Norman from Pomerania.

Anna Maria Clodt (?-1708). A member of the Livonian nobility whose mother had been Maid of Honour. Was herself Maid of Honour and later acting Lady of Honour. A great favourite with Ulrika Eleonora the Elder.

Hedvig Ulrika De la Gardie (1761-1832). Maid of Honour and later Court Mistress. Married to the great favourite Armfelt and daughter of Court Mistress Magdalena Stenbock. Approached the knocks of life with some calm common sense.

Sophia von Deppen (was dead in 1646). From a family with court links and served at court herself. Married Otto Christopher von Metzgerode. Managed to cling onto donation of land.

Eufrosyna Heldina von Dieffenau (1550-1636). Maid of Honour. Married the Spanish officer in Swedish service Alfonso Cacho y de Canuto. Veteran service at court.

Michelle Elisabeth d'Ivry (?-1795). Originally from France but later Chamber Mistress and reputed spy on her mistress, Lovisa Ulrika.

Doska or Dosieczka or Dorothea (fl. 1560-1570s). Dwarf and servant of Queen Catherine. Came with her from Poland and was probably named Dorothea Ostolska. A close confidant of Queen Catherine. Alerted the guards when the deposed King Erik XIV tried to escape. Had as colleague Baska the dwarf.

Emerentia von Düben (1669-1743). Served at court since her youth and became the great favourite of Queen Ulrika Eleonora. Ennobled and made a baroness.

Fredrika Eleonora von Düben (1738-1808). Maid of Honour and later Chief Court Mistress. A member of the Düben court clan. An enemy claimed that she was 'overly proud and rude and mistress of two ambassadors after each other'.

Ulrika Eleonora von Düben (1722-1758). Maid of Honour. The niece of Ementia von Düben and 'a hot-tempered and cunning woman'.

Hedvig Ekeblad (1746-1812). Court Mistress who was not a smooth operator.

Elisabet (fl. 1620s). A female jester, 'narrinnan Elisabet'.

Elisabeth (1549-1598). Daughter of Gustaf I of Sweden. Married Christopher, Duke of Mecklenburg-Gadebusch. Lived most of her life in Sweden.

Maria Elisabeth Falkenberg (1638-1693). Maid of Honour. Married an officer in a remote province. Unhappy in the sticks.

Fedossa (fl. 1589-1594). Russian woman serving Princess Sophia.

Countess Fersen see *Lovisa Piper*

Ulrika von Fersen (1749-1810). Married a handsome young alcoholic courtier. Renowned for her beauty and bold behaviour.

Anna Charlotta 'Nickalotta' Fleetwood (1742-1780). Bookish Maid of Honour.

Anna 'Ancus' Fleming (1682-1737). Maid of Honour and later Lady of Honour.

Ursilia Sabina von Flentzen genannt von Münchhausen (alive in 1660s). Maid of Honour. Married an unsuitably young aristocrat.

Karoline Fliess (?-1821). Jewish divorcée married to German upstart and artillery officer Cardell. Her forced presentation at court created much resistance and she did not return to court.

Charlotte Forssberg (1766-1840). Scheming Chamberer known as Lotte. Part of a plot to establish herself as the illegitimate sister of Princess Sophia Albertina. Married the wellborn but feeble Count Stenbock.

Frederica (1781-1826). Queen Consort of Sweden. Married to Gustaf IV. Daughter of the Prince Hereditary of Baden. Struggled in Sweden as a shy princess from a minor court. Exiled with her family after the coup d'état in 1809.

Frederick I (1676-1751). King of Sweden, 1720-1751. Married to Queen Ulrika Eleonora, he was a German Prince who never learned any Swedish and was later seen as lacking interest in government. His devotion to hunting and young women was never in doubt.

Anna Charlotta von Friesendorff (1776-1818). Lady of Honour. From a distinguished court family. High spirited or even foolish. Sent away from court in disgrace.

Anna Hansdotter (Garstenberg) (alive in 1590s). Long-serving Court Mistress. From minor nobility.

Gunilla (1568-1597). Queen Consort of Sweden. Married at age sixteen to the widowed King John III. The daughter of a noble Swedish family, her non-princely birth became a bone of contention within the royal family.

Little Gunnell (fl. 1589-1590). Serving Princess Sophia. Presumably a dwarf.

Brita Gyllenstierna (1606-1653). Maid of Honour and later Lady of Honour.

Ingeborg Gyllenstierna (1633-1689). Maid of Honour. Battled with Hedvig Eleonora Stenbock about precedence.

Anna Bengtsdotter (Gylta) (?-1579). Mistress of the Court.

Countess Hamilton see *Johanna Maria af Petersens*

Hedvig Eleonora (1636-1715). Queen Consort of Sweden. Married to Charles X. A Holstein princess who was attached to the Holstein family all through her long life. Kept up a voluminous correspondence with her many German relatives. Known for her work in building, patronage of artists, collection, and her love of card games.

Hedvig Elisabet Charlotta (1759-1818). Royal Duchess and later Queen Consort of Sweden. Married to her cousin, Duke Charles (after 1809, Charles XIII). Daughter of Duke Frederick August of Holstein-Gottorp. Wrote diary annotations for decades showing both wit and her knowledge of key political players.

Hedvig Sophia (1681-1708). Princess. Daughter of Charles XI and Ulrika Eleonora. Married Duke Frederick of Holstein. Died early of smallpox.

Anna Hogenskild (1513-1590). Mistress of the Court.

Beata Sophia Horn (1736-1778). Veteran Maid of Honour from a Pomeranian family. Taken on at court after her uncle was executed for his part in planned royalist coup. Feeling increasingly trapped and despondent in the 1770s.

Catharina Ebba Horn (1720-1781). Mistress of King Frederick I, who paid well but lost interest.

Erik Horn (?-1626). Caddish nobleman who failed to slither out of a betrothal.

Maria Horn (?-1725). Maid of Honour. Took part in political manoeuvrings. Second wife of Nicodemus Tessin.

Juliana of Hessen-Eschwege (1652-1693). Raised at the Stockholm court. Gave birth to a son when in her carriage with the Queen Dowager. Later seduced her housekeeper's son. Not marriage material for Charles XI.

Frederike Wilhelmine von Knesebeck (fl. 1740s). Prussian noblewoman accompanying Lovisa Ulrika to Sweden. Stayed on as acting Maid of Honour and emotional support for some years.

Aurora von Königsmarck (1662-1728). Never served at court but active participant in court life. Later left Sweden and became the mistress of August, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, which resulted in the famous General Maurice, Maréchal de Saxe. Ended her life as Provostess at Quedlinburg.

Ulrika Koskull (1759-1805). Recruited to the court because of her outstanding beauty and made a brilliant marriage. After her death her widower married her niece.



Margrethe Luise Kressen (fl. 1740s). Chamber Mistress accompanying Lovisa Ulrika to Sweden. Stayed on for several years. Aunt of the two Mulacks.

Christina Kurck (1721-1769). Maid of Honour and Lady of Honour. Unusual in being unmarried and acting as Court Mistress for Princess Sophia Albertina.

Kerstin Kurck (1617-1688). Long-time Maid of Honour of Queen Christina. Got the distinction of being named the only known Chief Lady of Honour. Her uncle by marriage was head of the court. After the Queen's abdication, she left court and seems to have lived on her estate.

Christina Kursell (alive in 1647). Daughter of courtier and granddaughter of Agneta Arentsdotter (Örnflycht). Maid of Honour. Through some heavy-handed royal intercession married in 1624.

Gertrud Laxman (?-1640). Maid of Honour. Duke Charles had to issue a letter to guarantee her virtuous behaviour, which may have been unhelpful.

Charlotta Liewen (1683-1735). Maid of Honour. Political mover and shaker. Rumoured to have had little respect for her husband.

Henrika von Liewen (1710-1779). Maid of Honour and Lady of Honour. Politically active favourite of Lovisa Ulrika.

Lovisa Ulrika (1720-1782). Queen Consort of Sweden. Married to Adolf Frederick. Prussian Princess and sister to Frederick the Great. Dazzling in her literary and scholarly interests as well as in her looks. More admired than liked. Happily married. Had both a strong sense of duty and a rather vicious streak. Main aim was to strengthen royal power and was a prime mover behind the disastrous failed coup attempt in 1756.

Magdalene Sibylla of Hessen-Darmstadt (1652-1712). Moved to Sweden at an early age and was raised by her aunt, Hedvig Eleonora. In 1673 married the heir to the Duchy of Württemberg.

Brita Carlsdotter (Månesköld) (alive in 1623). Court Mistress from a minor noble family. Niece of Agneta Arentsdotter (Örnflycht). Impressively imaginative in naming her children and getting them into court service. Served the challenging Princess Sophia.

Karin Månsdotter (1550-1612). Queen Consort of Sweden. From lowborn mistress to Erik XIV, she was promoted to queen, which was seen as scandalous.

Margareta (?-1551). Queen Consort of Sweden. Married to King Gustaf I. From a non-princely noble family. Very active in handing out money and gifts.

Maria (1561-1589). Royal Duchess. Daughter of the Elector Palatine. Married Duke Charles (later King Charles IX).

Maria Eleonora (1599-1655). Queen Consort of Sweden. Married to King Gustaf II Adolf. Daughter of the Elector of Brandenburg. Waged long battle against the Council to be allowed to keep control of her husband's corpse after 1632. Eloped to Denmark in 1640.

Sophia Amalia Marschalk (fl. 1670s to 1690s). Maid of Honour to Ulrika Eleonora in Denmark before her marriage to Charles XI in 1680. Accompanied her to Sweden as an informal courtier and remained as a favourite. After the Queen's death in 1693 she left Sweden and converted to Catholicism.

Ingrid Maria Möller (1731-1793). Served Sophia Magdalena as a Danish Princess and followed her to Sweden in 1766. Chamber Mistress and favourite. Disliked by King Gustaf III.

Fredrika Mörner (1732-1803). Maid of Honour and later Lady of Honour. Many admirers but never married.

Miss Mulack (fl. 1740s and 1750s). Two sisters who served Lovisa Ulrika as Chamber Mistress. Accompanied her to Sweden from Berlin together with their Aunt Kressen. Distinctly less well liked than their Aunt Kressen by Lovisa Ulrika, who thought them 'impertinent creatures'.

Margareta Oxehufvud (1617-alive in 1655). Maid of Honour.

Manette Noverre (ca 1731-1762). Daughter of a Parisian perfume maker. Taken on by the Tessin family and later became Chamber Mistress at court. A court servant with shifting loyalties.

Hedvig Margareta von der Pahlen (1672-1755). Did not serve at court but received a pension.

Hedvig Margareta von Parr (1620-1686). Court Mistress. Made to suffer for not being born within the Swedish high nobility.

Agda Persdotter (fl. 1550s and 1560s). Mistress of Eric XIV.

Johanna Maria af Petersens (1755-1810). Lady of the Palace. Married the ugly Count Hamilton to climb, but was singled out for humiliation, probably because of her low birth.

Countess Piper see ***Hedvig Ekeblad***

Lovisa Piper (1777-1849). Maid of Honour and later Court Mistress.

Marianne Pollet (1773-1867). Maid of Honour from Pomerania. Overcame her initial homesickness and flourished at court, though seen as fast living. Her interest in and connection to Gustavian eighteenth-century poets (such as Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna) made her into their staunch guardian when she had long outlived them all.

Brita Sofia Psilanderhielm (1725-1788). Short-term mistress of Frederick I.

Occa Johanna von Ripperda (1619-1687). Dutch noblewoman married into the Swedish high aristocracy. Court Mistress. Disliked at court.

Carolina Rudenschöld (1762-1804). Maid of Honour. Friend of Sophia Albertina.

Magdalena Rudenschöld (1766-1823). Maid of Honour. Mistress to the favourite Armfelt. Disgraced at his fall and involved in machinations to push aside the Duke Regent in the 1790s. Letters published by enemies to smear her name through her love affair and abortion.

Lady Jane Ruthwen (?-1668). Maid of Honour. Daughter to Scottish royalist general in exile. Returned to England and married Lord Forrester.

Margareta von Scheiding (?-1650). Maid of Honour from an established court family. Eloped abroad with a courtier in 1640, which created a scandal.

Juliana Sophia Schierberg (?-1712). Chamberer. Favourite with Princess Hedvig Sophia.

Catharina Sophia Sinclair (1750-1818). Court Mistress. From court family. Furious when not allowed to insert a second daughter into court service.

Maria Catharina Siöblad (1681-1750). Maid of Honour. Ridiculed in old age by Lovisa Ulrika.

Märta Christiersdotter (Siöblad) (alive in 1596). Maid of Honour.

Helena Snakenborg (1549-1635). As a Maid of Honour to Princess Cecilia she came to England in the 1560s and stayed.

Karin Ulfsdotter Snakenborg (?-1640). Court Mistress. Got donations of land belonging to political refugees in exile. Sister to Helena Snakenborg.

Anna Maria Soop (1660-1735). Maid of Honour from a court family. Very wealthy and rumoured to have initiated Miss Bärfelt in sorcery.

Sophia (1547-1611). Daughter of Gustaf I of Sweden. Married the brutal Magnus II, Duke of Saxe-Lauenburg. A deeply unhappy marriage and a troubled soul, in general. Courtiers and servants in the habit of absconding from her court.

Sophia Albertina (1753-1829). Princess. Daughter of Lovisa Ulrika and Adolf Fredrik. Abbess of Quedlinburg Abbey. Both ridiculed and respected.

Sophia Magdalena (1746-1813). Married to Gustaf III. Danish princess. Stately but shy. One of many unsuited and unhappy royal marriages.

Beata Sparre (1662-1724). Maid of Honour and Lady of Honour for many years. At the end had to leave court and retire to her castle Grönsöö.

Brita Stina Sparre (1720-1776). Court Mistress and married to prominent courtier.

Ebba Sparre (1626-1662). Maid of Honour. Forced by the Queen to give up fiancé. Known as Queen Christina's favourite 'Belle'.

Margareta 'Greta' Carlsdotter Sparre (1682-1728). Maid of Honour to Swedish Princess Hedvig Sophia. Niece to Beata Sparre. Poor but admired by a Holstein prince.



Sophie Sparre (1761-1832). Maid of Honour. Married to admiral and artist Ehrensvärd, who sent her letters with lively drawings of their life.

Christina Elisabeth Spetz (?-1762). Daughter of the goldsmith Petter Hartman. Chamber Mistress and favourite.

Hedvig Eleonora Stenbock (1655-1714). Fröken at court. Known for her pride in her high birth. Married the lowborn courtier and climber Nicodemus Tessin.

Magdalena Stenbock (1730-1801). Court Mistress to Princess Sophia Albertina for decades.

Margareta Stenbock (1609-1631). Maid of Honour. Wooed in the sauna.

Karin Jöransdotter (Stiernsköld) (fl. 1590s). Maid of Honour.

Jeanna Stockenström (1754-1809). Maid of Honour. Close friend of Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta. In opposition to King Gustaf III.

Anna Magdalena Strokirch (1743-1797). Maid of Honour. Avid reader of newspapers and helped her mistress to master courtly conduct.

Agneta Strömfelt (1725-1761). Maid of Honour with many suitors.

Beata Charlotta Taube (1736-1778). Lady of Honour. Veteran at court who was said never to have been in great favour but neither out of favour, either.

Hedvig Taube (1714-1744). Maid of Honour. Mistress to King Frederick I.

Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695-1770). A child of the court. Brilliant impresario of court entertainments. Dramatic break with the Queen as he fell from grace in the 1750s.

Christina Juliana Thun (?-1769). Chamberer. Wanted to marry her lover and rejected her husband, which Carl Linnaeus sees as the reason why she was struck by divine retribution in the form of cancer.

Countess Törnflycht see ***Brita Stina Sparre***

Margareta Magdalena (Greta) Torstenson (1673-1747). Maid of Honour and then a veteran Lady of Honour. The last of her illustrious family.

Ulrika Eleonora (1656-1693). Swedish Queen Consort. Married to Charles XI. Mother of Ulrika Eleonora. Danish princess. Gained a reputation for being shy, sickly, and helping the poor.

Ulrika Eleonora (1688-1741). Swedish Queen Regnant, 1718-1720, and Queen Consort, 1720-1741. Long-suffering wife of Frederick I. Combined an earnest sense of duty with scant regard for the new restrictions on royal power. Emotionally dependent on her favourite Emerentia von Düben, who had served her since childhood.

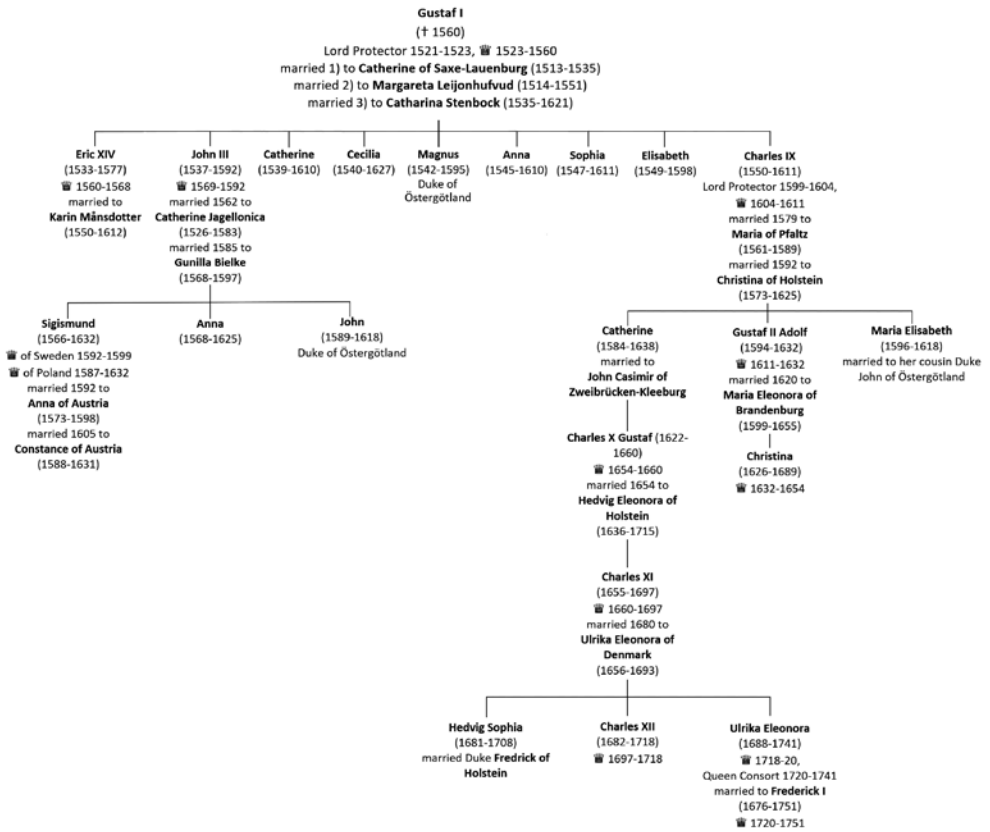
Eleonora Wachtmeister (1684-1748). Maid of Honour.

Margrete Westeborch (fl. 1579). Chamberer to Duchess Maria. Widow of Doctor Jacob Canisius of Worms.

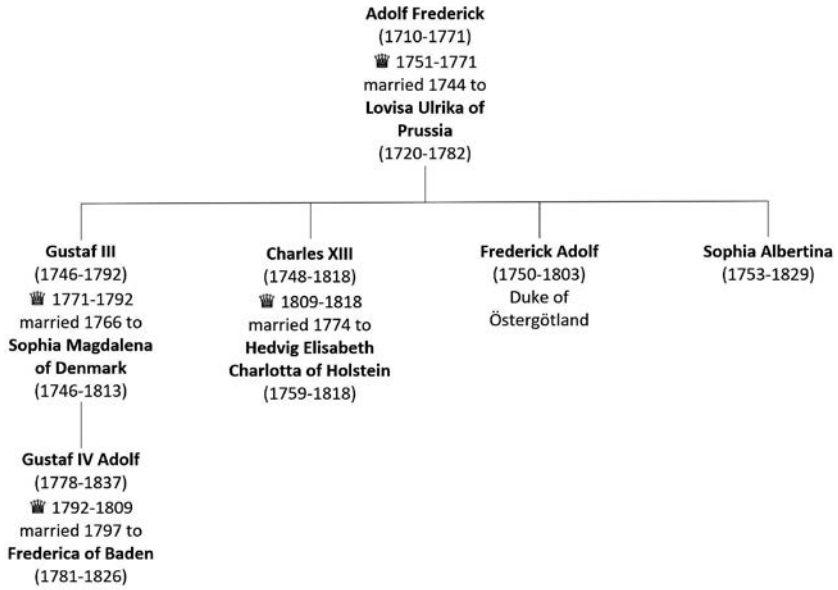
Beata Wittenberg (1644-1705). Court Mistress who got into a scuffle.

Maria Christina Wrangel (1638-1691). Mother of Aurora von Königsmarck as well as a son who was murdered by the future George I of Britain.

Genealogical charts



Genealogical_chart_1
The Vasa and Palatine dynasties



Genealogical_chart_2
The Holstein-Gottorp dynasty

Introduction: Women living with power

Abstract

Over the last decades women at court have been rediscovered, but focus has primarily been on royal women and their artistic patronage. The wider machinery of royal power of both royal women and women at court has been less explored. A challenge here is that women were often made invisible in early modern primary sources and listed without names.

Keywords: Female agency, gender, patronage, invisibility, sources

One day in March 1719, Ulrika Eleonora, born a princess of Sweden and now Queen Regnant Elect after the death of her brother King Charles XII approached the gate to the churchyard of Uppsala Cathedral. She walked in stately fashion under a canopy carried by eight generals, her train borne by Gentlemen of the Chamber from her court. Inside the cathedral the Archbishop and the other bishops took their positions as directed by the Master of Ceremonies. The Court Marshal then marched in with members of the court and the Diet's Estate of the Nobles. As the Queen processed into the cathedral, the musicians accompanying her – two kettledrummers and twelve trumpeters – stopped at the cathedral gate, and her entrance was heralded by a prayer led by one of the bishops, while other bishops and Royal Councillors took their places around the altar. The Archbishop stood ready with the balm in the ampulla, or oil horn. Once the Queen had taken her seat on the throne in front of the Banner of the Realm, one of the Councillors took her coronation mantle, a purple velvet affair decorated with golden crowns and tongues of fire and lined with ermine, and placed it on the altar. Another prayer followed, after which the regalia were placed next to the coronation mantle by the Royal Councillors, who then withdrew. There was a full divine service with music. The Queen then stood up, her robe was removed by the Mistress of the Court, Countess Horn, assisted by

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Press



Figure 1: Women at court took part very visibly in public ceremonies, such as the coronation of Queen Hedvig Eleonora.
 Juriaen Ovens, *Coronation of Hedvig Eleonora*, c. 1654. Copyright Nationalmuseum (Stockholm).

two Ladies of Honour (*kammarfröknar*), Countess Torstensson and Baroness von Düben. The Archbishop then lifted the coronation mantle from the altar and placed it on the Queen's shoulders while the three women helped fasten it. The Queen knelt before the altar on a golden cushion and swore her coronation oath. Then the Archbishop took the ampulla and anointed her head and wrists with oil while saying the consecratory formula. The Queen rose and took her seat on the throne again. The Archbishop then took the golden crown from the altar and together with a Royal Councillor placed it on the Queen's head. Only after Baroness von Düben had made sure the crown was 'properly fastened' did the Archbishop continue, uttering the words required by ritual, and handing the Queen the sceptre, the orb, the Key of the Realm, and, finally, the Sword of the Realm. Then a herald stepped forward and declared 'Now is Queen Ulrika Eleonora, and no one but her, crowned King over the realms of Svea and Götha and their dominions.' Outside there was a gun salute, while in the cathedral the music began and the congregation sang 'God give our Queen and Royals peace and good rule', to the accompaniment of the organ.¹

1 Riksarkivet (RA), Stockholm, Kungliga arkiv, Handlingar rörande Ulrika Eleonoras levnadsförhållanden och egendom K 258, *Coronation ceremony*, 1719. Unless otherwise stated,

The coronation of 1719 saw a Queen Regnant crowned and hailed as king to scotch any attempt by her ambitious husband, Frederick, Prince Hereditary of Hesse-Kassel, to slip into that position. It also saw several other women take a leading role in this, the most solemn ceremony of the reign. Countess Horn, Countess Torstensson, and Baroness von Düben all played a part in this highly public performance, the latter, the Queen's beloved favourite Emerentia von Düben, having the key role of making sure the crown was securely in place. This highlighted the political role of the upstart favourite, Emerentia – known as Menza – who, in 1718, when the question of the succession was raging, had been used by Ulrika Eleonora as a go-between and negotiator, to the chagrin of the leading Councillors. Düben was not just there for the Queen's coronation. She had been a constant feature of Ulrika Eleonora's household since joining it in 1691 when the Princess was three years old, during Ulrika Eleonora's courtship and eventual marriage, Düben was a key player in the negotiations. Years later, after the Queen's death from smallpox in 1741, Düben was one of two people who set out the Queen's possessions to be registered in the probate inventory.

Ulrika Eleonora and Menza von Düben were just two of the women at the Swedish court to wield power. Even when royal authority was at an ebb, contemporaries never doubted the power women could exert and the prominence royal favour could give women. After all, Ulrika Eleonora and Düben's relationship was almost an exact parallel to Queen Anne in Britain and her favourite, Sarah Jennings, just a decade earlier.² Influential women wielding power through the court was therefore a well-established phenomenon in 1719. In France, the late Louis XIV had been influenced by Madame de Maintenon; in Britain, George I had Melusine von der Schulenburg; in Spain, the Princess des Ursins was highly influential.³

The court was largely a male world. Most courtiers and servants were men. And yet women were always there – even when there was no female member of the Swedish royal family in the 1740s, a small group of women served at court. Rather than an aberration, women were a natural part of the jigsaw puzzle of early modern government. That did not mean that the opportunities open to women equalled those of men. Women and power is a complex issue today and was a complex issue in the early modern period.

all translations are the author's own. For the earlier coronation of Queen Christina in 1650, see Grundberg 2005; Tegenborg Falkdalen 2003 discusses rhetoric focusing on two Swedish queens regnant.

2 Harris 1991.

3 Bryant 2004; Beattie 1967; Hatton 1978; Noel 2004.



To be seen openly to wield power could scandalise contemporary observers. Yet, the vast machinery of informal power comprised both women and men, as was well known. When the English ambassador, Bulstrode Whitelocke, visited Queen Christina's Lady of Honour Lady, Jane Ruthwen, to offer his help, he had an ulterior motive because he had 'found that, among other visits, those to ladies are not unnecessary for an ambassador, especially in the Court of a Queen, whose ear they have more than her Councillors; and in all States their influence in the highest affairs is not to be despised'.⁴

Whitelocke also illustrated how the pursuit of influence at court often required taking part in its social life.⁵ The Puritan ambassador dutifully attended various social occasions during his stay in Stockholm, and Lady Jane Ruthwen danced with Whitelocke's son at court.⁶ Whitelocke not only cultivated Ruthwen, but 'received civilities and respect from divers of the Queen's ladies'. As most of them could speak French, Whitelocke was able to converse with them easily, and, as with Ruthwen, he had an ulterior motive here: when chatting with the women who served the Queen, he would 'discourse with them in drollery, yet of such matters as he was willing should come to the Queen's ear, and he knew the ladies would not fail to relate to Her Majesty; and this he found they did, and not to the disadvantage of him or his business, through the good opinion which his civility had gained them'.⁷

Women had a given place in monarchical regimes, although their opportunities and circumstances varied.⁸ Jeroen Duindam has remarked that '[d]ynastic reproduction and succession could be organised in many ways, and entailed a marked presence of women at court, even if their presence did not as a rule imply a share in formal responsibilities of government'.⁹ That was an evident truth: at the heart of early modern European power there were always women. Women lived in the palace itself.¹⁰ That placed them in a prime position to act not just as courtiers, servants, consorts, and

4 Reeve 1855, i. 282-283.

5 Hannah Smith (2006) has written about culture, politics, and social life at the early Georgian court, Elaine Chalus (2005) has discussed aristocratic women as political hostesses, and Susan Whyman (1999) has looked at elite sociability.

6 Reeve 1855, i. 293.

7 *Ibid.*, 283.

8 This volume focuses on Sweden in a European context, but naturally women in princely states outside Europe could also play vital roles. See, for example, Duindam et al. 2011; De Nicola 2017; Joshi 1994.

9 Duindam 2011, 1.

10 The gendered structure of space in royal residences has been studied in a volume edited by Chatenet and De Jonge (2014).



daughters, but as powerbrokers: the omnipresence of women at the heart of power was evident to contemporaries. As Olwen Hufton has remarked, ‘a court without women both looks and feels wrong’, and even in superficially very male cardinalate or papal courts women played an important part.¹¹ That said, it was a given that in the patriarchal society of early modern Europe, women did not have the same opportunities as their fathers, brothers, and husbands. In Sweden, daughters normally inherited half of what sons inherited. The sons of the nobility could make a life for themselves by finding a position in the army or the administration. Noblewomen had few chances of making a living through work, so for them the handful of places at court were a golden opportunity. Women’s lives were, at least in theory, supposed to be more limited, and they were to conduct themselves accordingly. Furthermore, women, to an even greater degree than men, were expected to act for their family networks. Hufton has emphasised how women at court were agents working for their families, noting that ‘most had a family agenda, varying from individual to individual, from marriage strategies to posts for husbands’.¹² Barbara Harris has also emphasised how women at court acted for their families – ‘For women from court families, appointments to the Queen’s household enhanced their familial careers by situating them in the most advantageous position to secure royal patronage.’¹³ I will return to the question of whether women were agents for their families or for themselves.

Opportunities

It could be said that any community is worth studying, sometimes because its intrinsic ordinariness may say something about the rest of society, sometimes because its unique character provides insights. Courts were spectacular places with consequences that reverberated through society. In a time when elites wielded immense power, courts were at the centre of elite life and imagination.

A number of issues will be addressed in this volume. At its heart is the question of whether women at court acted as intermediaries between the royal house and the elite. The received wisdom among scholars of early modern courts is that they were an all-important link between the ruler

¹¹ Hufton 2000, 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹³ Harris 2002, 6.

and the national elite. Courtiers were recruited to reflect the polity of the realm. David Starkey characterised the early Tudor court as 'built on rock' because it included the leading magnates and their networks.¹⁴ Geoffrey Elton famously described the court as a 'point of contact' between monarch and elites.¹⁵ The archetypical early modern courtier mediated between monarch and a throng of eager petitioners of all kinds. In words reminiscent of Elton's and Starkey's, Robert Evans characterised the early modern court as 'the nodal point' where monarch and elites met.¹⁶ Neil Cuddy viewed the court of King James VI & I as a balancing act, where both Scotsmen and Englishmen were represented because 'the court was regarded as the mirror of the ruler's territories'.¹⁷ Britain was only one of many conglomerate states in early modern Europe, and the court has been said to be the glue used to unite 'the extraordinarily heterogeneous élites of a union of kingdoms and territories'.¹⁸

Elton, Starkey, and Cuddy all had their gaze firmly on men serving at the Tudor and Stuart courts. Men, naturally enough, have long been the focus of many historians researching the early modern court. Women have increasingly come to the fore since the 1990s, however, though often in the form of articles and monographs focusing on queens and princesses rather than the institutional context of the women who served them. As will be made clear in this book, women at the Swedish court were not mere mirror images of their male counterparts. While men could move on to positions in the army and the administration, women at court either had to stay, marry, or retire from service; there was no matching *cursus honorum* for women. Another aspect was that women at court often lacked links to the elite for the simple reason that they were foreigners. The arrival of a royal bride from abroad brought an influx of foreign noblewomen in her retinue. To analyse why women served at court it is imperative to understand how they were recruited and their family backgrounds. It is also necessary to chart the rewards of court service, from salaries and all kinds of perquisites to the influence reached by a minority.

In some ways, women courtiers have always been thought different to male courtiers. A somewhat lazy assumption has been that women were instruments of family networks. As they could not aspire to high office

14 Starkey 1987, 22-23.

15 Elton 1976.

16 Evans 1991, 487.

17 Cuddy 1987, 256.

18 Asch 1991, 35.

or overtly political offices like Royal Councillor, it has been easy to see them as mainly working for the benefit of family members. While this was true to a certain degree, a number of women had their own agendas rather than their families', and the agency to match. To grasp the context, opportunities, and limits for women at court it is important to consider the organisational and spatial structure of each court, and of course any changes. It is in this context that the queens and princesses must also be seen. In the later chapters, I discuss the royal marriage market, what was required to be a successful queen, the roles that queen dowagers carved out for themselves, and the stark loneliness of life at the top of the court pyramid.

The book falls into three parts. The first looks at outsiders at court such as petitioners and beggars, but also aristocratic women taking in part in court life without strictly being part of the court; the second looks at insiders, the women serving at court; and the third, members of the royal family. The book sets out the spectrum of opportunities open to women both serving at court and interacting with the court, the complexities of women's agency in a court society, and, ultimately, the precariousness of power.

Growing interest

The last 30 years have seen an upsurge of interest in royal women and, somewhat later and to a lesser degree, women who served at court. This has had consequences both for political history and gender studies. Natalie Zemon Davis pointed out in the early 1990s that 'the courts of female rulers and their kingly counterparts encouraged women to political action within the framework of sovereign monarchy'.¹⁹ At the same time, empirically based research expanded and brought new nuance to the issue of women at the early modern court. In 1984, Simon Adams published his article 'Eliza Enthroned' dealing with the Elizabethan court as an institution, including women and not focusing merely on men.²⁰ One of the earliest systematic studies of women at an early modern court was Ruth Kleinman's article on the household of Anne of Austria.²¹ Kleinman analyses the people who

19 Zemon Davis 1993, 173-174.

20 Adams 1984.

21 Kleinman 1990. Naturally, there were others who were even earlier, such as Scheller (1966), but they rarely analysed the women who served at court as a collective with an understanding of the court as an institution.

served the Queen and tries to trace the complex threads of patronage and influence which linked the female and male courtiers to the rest of French nobility. In another article Barbara Hanawalt studied Lady Honour Lisle's networks.²² In 1990, Barbara Harris could write that 'the new emphasis on the centrality of the great household, patronage, and the court has made it both possible and necessary to integrate upper-class women into early Tudor political history'.²³ Harris followed this with a number of important texts.²⁴ Perhaps even more seminal was the work by Sharon Kettering on early modern French aristocratic women. In a series of publications, Kettering analysed the complex web of early modern patronage and power and the role of noblewomen.²⁵ Her detailed analysis fleshed out the words of one of the women who served Anne of Austria that 'the house of kings is like a large marketplace where it is necessary to trade for the maintenance of life, the interests of life, and the interests of those to whom we are bound by duty and by friendship'.²⁶

This new scholarship meant that in both gender studies and court studies as a whole, women at court became a recognised field. This brought a swift correction to one early text in an influential book on court studies, Pam Wright's 'A Change of Direction: The Ramifications of a Female Household' in David Starkey's trailblazing *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*.²⁷ While most contributors to the Starkey volume argued for the court as a place of power long overlooked by more formally minded historians, Wright painted the Marian and Elizabethan Privy Chambers as drained of influence due to the exclusion of early modern women, apart from queens, from arenas of formal decision-making such as royal councils. According to her, the Elizabethan Privy Chamber 'retreated into mere domesticity'.²⁸ Wright's stance, shared by David Loades – who described the change from the powerful Privy Chambers of Henry VIII and Edward VI to the female Privy Chambers of the 1550s as 'a glorified boudoir' – would not survive the onslaught of scholarship for long.²⁹ Almost immediately, Joan Greenbaum Goldsmith's dissertation, a mainly literary analysis focusing on the image of women at court, made the case for the power of Elizabethan

22 Hanawalt 1988.

23 Harris 1990, 260.

24 Harris 1997; Harris 2002.

25 Kettering 1997, 1989, 1993.

26 Madame de Motteville, quoted in Kettering 1993, 69.

27 Wright 1987.

28 *Ibid.*, 150.

29 David 1989, 191-192.

women.³⁰ A far more ambitious and empirically groundbreaking early study was Charlotte Merton's analysis in 1992 of women serving the Tudor queens Mary and Elizabeth.³¹ This has been widely used by later scholars of the Tudor court. With the force of her detailed empirical research, Merton drove home the many facets of power available to women serving Mary and Elizabeth, describing how the Marian and Elizabethan women at court

did not sit in the Council or in Parliament, or fight wars, or run the administration of the country; yet they held the key to the greatest power in the land simply because they organised the queens' lives, and spent hours in their company every day. Not only did they hold the key, they used it in the pursuit of wealth, power, and reputation for themselves, their close relatives and friends, and for any number of fee-paying clients.³²

Somewhat later, Helen Payne looked at women who served Queen Anne at the Jacobean court.³³ Payne, however, has argued that women were excluded from 'those positions in government and in the royal households which gave the degree of authority necessary for the exercise of significant direct and formal power, major influence and patronage'.³⁴ While conceding that most male courtiers were in a similar position, Payne argues that they could still aspire to such positions of power. While true as far as it goes, I will argue this view is unhelpful in understanding early modern power mechanisms. Such a dichotomy between formal and informal, vesting real clout in the latter, is misleading. It is of course true that women could not go on to careers in the same way as their spouses, brothers, and fathers, yet men with formal power, such as Councillors, were largely reliant on indirect power, too. The nature of early modern monarchical power was informal, and based on family and personal relationships rather than Weberian, formal, bureaucratic structures. As a further boost to the power of women at court came studies emphasising their influence not just in matters of appointment. Thus, Natalie Mears has seen women in the Elizabethan Privy Chamber as acting beyond patronage and in matters of high diplomacy.³⁵ This scholarly field encouraged me in my first research into women, serving at the seventeenth-century Swedish court, as part of a research project led

30 Goldsmith 1987.

31 Merton 1992.

32 *Ibid.*, 245.

33 Payne 2001. A later dissertation on women and the Elizabethan court is Howey 2007.

34 Payne 2004, 169.

35 Mears 2004, 68.

by my supervisor, Eva Österberg.³⁶ Another early scholar, Caroline Hibbard, broke away from the Tudors and analysed the household of Henrietta Maria in the influential volume *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, c. 1450-1650*, edited by Ronald Asch and Adolf Birke.³⁷

Since 2000, the role of women at court has been more widely acknowledged, though it should be noted that scholarly interest has focused more on royal women than those serving them.³⁸ A diversification in the history of royal women has helped this field to move beyond the trivial – as in ‘some women had power’ – into the meaningful. This has been a more obvious focus for scholars interested in the importance of royal courts for literature, music, and the other arts.³⁹ The arts’ centrality in dynastic glorification at court has been highlighted. Queens as collectors and patrons of art have become a more systematic field of research. An early scholar in this field was Annemarie Jordan, who studied the Portuguese court.⁴⁰ Portugal’s trading – and early colonial – outposts provided a supply of exotic items beyond the scope of most courts. Several other scholars have shed light on queens as collectors, including Erin Griffey on Henrietta Maria, James Anderson Winn on Queen Anne, and Joanna Marschner on Queen Caroline.⁴¹ For Sweden, Lisa Skogh has carried out a detailed analysis of Queen Hedvig Eleonora as a collector.⁴²

Theresa Earenfight was one of the first to study female royal power *per se*, in her case in fifteenth-century Castile.⁴³ Queenship studies has quickly expanded in the last fifteen years. Clarissa Campbell Orr edited two important volumes on British and European queenship, followed soon by Carole Levine and Robert Bucholz’s edited volume on English queens and power.⁴⁴ Individual case studies such as Magdalena Sánchez, Barbara Stephenson, and Elena Woodacre have greatly enhanced our knowledge of the opportunities, expectations, and challenges facing early modern queens.⁴⁵ Nadine Akkerman has analysed the important role of a queen

36 See Persson 1997.

37 Hibbard 1991.

38 For example, Schulte et al. 2006.

39 See, for example, Broomhall 2018; McManus 2003.

40 Jordan 1994.

41 Griffey 2015; Winn 2014; Marschner 2014; Marschner 2017.

42 Skogh 2013.

43 Earenfight 1997.

44 Campbell Orr 2002, 2004; Levin and Bucholz 2009.

45 Sánchez 2002; Stephenson 2004; Woodacre 2013.

through her correspondence.⁴⁶ The crucial importance to royal women of maintaining and creating dynasties has also come into increasing focus. Royal women moving across borders and the potential for cultural transfer inherent in that has also been a new field of interest.⁴⁷

Scholarly work on royal women in the context of a royal household, and not primarily as cultural patrons, has seen less progress. There are two major exceptions. In *The Augustan Court*, Robert Bucholz analyses a decline in court influence under Queen Anne, perceptible in both power and culture.⁴⁸ Indeed, in his analysis Bucholz integrates politics and culture as two sides of the same coin, in an approach not far from the one taken later by Tim Blanning.⁴⁹ Dries Raeymaekers's analysis of the archdukes in Brussels covers crucial institutional aspects such as spatial organisation and the structure of the court.⁵⁰ Work focusing specifically on the women who served at court rather than the royal women per se has been sparser after Merton, Kleinman, Kettering, Hibbard, and Bucholz. An important volume edited by Werner Paravicini and Jan Hirschbiegel in 2000 took that approach.⁵¹ Even clearer was the volume edited in 2014 by Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben.⁵² Two substantial studies have cast light on women serving at the Imperial and Bavarian courts, respectively. In her very thorough and scholarly study, Katrin Keller charts the careers, family backgrounds, and marriages of women at the Imperial court in Vienna.⁵³ Keller emphasises Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' as a reward for court service rather than the pecuniary advantages.⁵⁴ Britta Kägler has published a similarly thorough book on women at the Bavarian court.⁵⁵ Various articles have highlighted case studies of isolated but important aspects of the women in royal households.⁵⁶ For example, there is the question of how the reconstruction of the Queen's household could be part of a national reconstruction after a long period

46 Akkerman 2011-2015; see also Akkerman 2014.

47 Palos and Sánchez 2016; Watanabe-O'Kelly and Morton 2017.

48 Bucholz 1993.

49 Blanning 2002.

50 Raeymaekers 2013.

51 Paravicini and Hirschbiegel 2000.

52 Akkerman and Houben 2014.

53 Keller 2005.

54 Pierre Bourdieu's theory of 'cultural capital' had been used for the Austrian nobility by Karin McHardy (1999), and would continue to be used (for example, Persson 2014).

55 Kägler 2011.

56 Zum Kolk 2009; Whitelock and MacCulloch 2007; Richter 2005; Frost 2013.

of foreign domination.⁵⁷ There has been interest in the struggle for key positions for women reflecting political groups and differences.⁵⁸ It is as the beneficiary of this rapidly evolving and ever-richer field that I have written this book.

Sources and the challenge of invisibility

What primary sources can help an analysis of women at the Swedish court? There is always a source problem in that women tended either to be overlooked or demonised. Kevin Sharpe has written about how contemporaries saw ‘the spectre of influential, powerful women’ at the court of Charles II.⁵⁹ The female favourite was immediately pilloried and the extent of her power – and its origin – was the subject of malicious gossip even more than for male favourites. Another aspect was the challenge of informal influence defying written records, because such power tends to be elusive. In the records of the deliberations and decisions of formal forums such as the Royal Council or the Diet, women have a low profile. They have to be tracked down through letters, diplomatic reports, and gossip, all carefully weighed and analysed. For Sweden, the informal sources such as correspondence began in quantity after about 1600. Before that, the surviving letters are few and give a very patchy image of aristocratic life, and even after 1600 there were many gaps – for example, in the aftermath of a treason trial in 1651, letters appear to have been destroyed intentionally by the noble families concerned.⁶⁰

To study women at court is to be constantly hampered by the institutional invisibility of individual women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In many financial records, individual women are not named, and only figure as nameless members of groups such as ‘three Maids of Honour’ receiving fabric or shoes. Typically, expenses for noblewomen at the 1540s court normally did not mention names – just the number of Maids of Honour. At other times incomplete names or brief descriptions – ‘English Lady’ – make identification very hard.⁶¹ In English sources, women at court were usually named in coronation proceedings, even if not in the normal course

57 Marçal Lourenço 2005.

58 Borgognoni 2018.

59 Sharpe 2013, 216.

60 The trial of Arnold Messenius.

61 RA, Gustav Kassmans samling, vol. 2, ‘Mantalet på min N. Drotningz hoffolck datum den 13 Julij årh 1613’ with ‘the English Lady’ (‘Engelske fruven’).

of events. In Swedish procession lists, women, unless royal, are normally not named. In some cases women were simply left out of records, despite serving at court. Thus Queen Maria Eleonora, who had followed the King on campaign in Germany in around 1630, was characteristically late in paying Elizabeth Langenberg, one of her Chamberers. The reply she got was that the Treasurer had ‘carefully searched the records of payments for the past years, in particular for when Her Majesty was in Germany, to there ascertain what Your Majesty’s Chamberer should receive. But as her name among the salaried persons is nowhere to be found’, he could not pay Langenberg.⁶² Still, when Langenberg got married the following year, Maria Eleonora celebrated the wedding at one of her properties, Gripsholm Castle, and invited aristocratic guests.⁶³

To provide as full a picture as possible of women at the Swedish court, I have used a wide array of sources. Among the more important are the wardrobe accounts (*klädkammarräkenskaper*), kitchen accounts (*hovförtäringen*), cellar accounts (*vinkällaren*), royal correspondence (*riksregistraturet*), and diplomatic reports. To study space at court it is natural to study the royal palaces still in situ in Stockholm, Drottningholm, and Kalmar, as when studying courts the written sources can be used alongside built remains. The introductory example of Menza von Düben at Queen Ulrika Eleonora’s coronation can thus be compared to a painting of the coronation of Ulrika Eleonora’s mother in 1680, showing four women of the court attending on the Queen.⁶⁴ They were presumably her four Danish Maids of Honour who, dressed in white silk, carried her train in church.⁶⁵ There is, however, no mentioning of them helping the Queen with her coronation mantle or adjusting her crown.

This constant hunt for pieces of a jigsaw puzzle where most pieces are lost sometimes provides tantalising phantom pieces instead of more tangible and useful evidence. One of the earliest traces of women at the Swedish court is an account noting the cost of 26 pairs of red shoes for the Queen’s maids in 1539.⁶⁶ Hopefully this book can fill those shoes, and others like them, with people of flesh and blood.

62 RA, Kungliga arkiv, Maria Eleonora Ingångna skrivelser K 86, Gabriel Oxenstierna to Maria Eleonora, Stockholm, 2 November 1637.

63 RA, Kungliga arkiv, Maria Eleonora Utgående skrivelser K 83, Maria Eleonora to Knut Posse, Gripsholm, 2 July 1638.

64 Painting by David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl.

65 RA, Kungliga arkiv, Handlingar rörande Ulrika giftermål m.m. K 202, Coronation ceremony, 1680.

66 RA, Landskapshandlingar Uppland 1539:4.

