

## Well Represented or Missing in Action? Queens, Queenship and Mary Hays

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Miriam Wallace has argued that ‘Queens and Empresses are well represented’ in Mary Hays’s seminal *Female Biography*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed 53 out of the 300 figures in her collective biography are queens and royal women, including notable female rulers such as Elizabeth I and Catherine II ‘the Great’ of Russia. While this is a substantial number, there were several famous figures such as Elizabeth I’s sister and predecessor Mary Tudor who were omitted in *Female Biography*. Hays’s last work *Memoirs of Queens, Illustrious and Celebrated* published in 1821, redressed these omissions by bringing in more well-known queenly figures such as the aforementioned Mary Tudor, Isabel I of Castile and Marie Antoinette, as well as many of the royal women featured in her earlier collection. No collective biography can ever be considered to be exhaustive, however, and there are surprising omissions and gaps in both of Hays’s works with regard to queens and royal women. This chapter will intensively compare her two works on queens and will aim to shed greater light on her selection process in order to understand why certain figures were selected while others were ignored. It will also place her work on royal women in context with the wider collective biographies of queens produced in the pre-modern era. In sum, the chapter will highlight Hays’s work on queens, an area of her work which has been less studied, demonstrating the important contribution that she made to this particular sub-strand of collective biography and ultimately the modern discipline of queenship studies.

The academic field of queenship studies has always had an uneasy relationship with the pre-modern collective biographies of queens and royal women. Indeed, as queenship studies began to be recognized as an area of academic study in the 1980s and ‘90s, it almost defined itself against these prosopographic progenitors, arguing that queenship studies was about so much more than biography or celebrating ‘women worthies’. A backlash from feminist scholars such as Natalie Zemon Davis and Gerda Lerner against the study of ‘women worthies’ in the mid-1970s was concurrent with the early origins of queenship studies and was arguably influential on the development of the field, creating a desire to ‘justify’ study on these elite women by focusing on

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thematic elements in their lives, such as motherhood, intercession and agency, rather than biographical studies.<sup>2</sup> Thus, while individual biographies of queens have continued to be published by queenship scholars, the field has seen the development of numerous collections of thematic essays, rather than a focus on collective biography. John Carmi Parsons' edited collection *Medieval Queenship* is an excellent example of an influential collection from the early 1990s, drawing together a range of studies grouped by temporal and geographical connection in medieval Europe. Recent trends, however, have seen a push towards focused themes such as political power, representation in literature and the body of the queen itself as well as a desire to push into a more global framework of analysis.<sup>3</sup> The field of queenship studies, though arguably a variant of women's history, has also moved towards a more inclusive framework with regard to gender, with recent studies examining the relationship between reigning queens and consort kings and a wider movement towards royal studies, which includes studies of kingship and the context of the court.<sup>4</sup> The field of queenship studies has developed a rich interdisciplinary method of study, drawing together art historians, literature specialists, political historians, manuscript scholars and beyond, to investigate queens from every angle, delving into their administrative functions, exploring the power sharing dynamics of corporate monarchy, highlighting their patronage and diplomatic activities. However rich and varied this field of academic study may be today, it is undeniable that the roots of the field stretch back to the long held fascination with royal lives which produced a plethora of individual and collective biographies from the Middle Ages through to the twenty-first century, even though modern queenship scholars might be keen to distance themselves from this fact.

This push away from the collective biographies of queens from the pre-modern era has led to a lack of study of texts such as *Memoirs of Queens* or examination of the treatment of queens in wider biographical collections such as *Female Biography* by queenship scholars, although they have been extensively examined by literary specialists as part of the wider genre of collective biography and in the context of women's history. Yet these works of collective biography of queens and royal women have not only inspired and influenced (even if only subliminally) generations of scholars, but understandings and representations of the queens in popular culture as well. Thus further study of queenly prosopographies, particularly neglected texts such

as *Memoirs of Queens*, are vital in order to understand the genesis and development of the field of queenship studies itself.

### **Hays's work in the wider context of queenly prosopography**

Mary Hays was born in London in 1760 and died there in 1843. Hays was a noted and prolific writer who produced novels, essays and collective biographies during her lengthy writing career. She could also be described as somewhat avant garde, as she sprang from a family of Radical Dissenters and became a close friend of the colourful and controversial Mary Wollstonecraft. While Hays's feminist views were certainly influenced by Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) as can be seen in Hays's own 1798 pamphlet 'Appeal to the Men of Great Britain in Behalf of Women', her forays into collective biography appeared to contrast with Wollstonecraft's public rejection of celebrating female worthies in print.<sup>5</sup> Philip Hicks notes an interesting irony here: Wollstonecraft was later enshrined as a 'worthy' herself, and *Female Biography*, 'the most elaborate paean to the worthies yet to appear in the English language, issued from the pen of one of Wollstonecraft's closest colleagues.'<sup>6</sup>

Mary Hays produced her landmark *Female Biography* in 1803; it ran to six volumes and featured biographies of 300 women which ranged from a single paragraph to several dozen pages. These biographies were incredibly varied; it took in a temporal range from biblical figures to Hays' near contemporaries, spanned nearly the entire globe (though with a definite European emphasis) and included a range of 'heroines' such as female writers, scholars, saints, sinners and queens.

Hays wrote *Female Biography* in her forties, when she was already an established writer in perhaps the peak of her career. Nearly 20 years later, in 1821, Hays produced *Memoirs of Queens*. This volume was far more focused and concise than *Female Biography*, featuring 72 women in one volume. This collective biography of queens, empresses and royal women proved to be Hays's last work, though she lived another 22 years. Her lack of publications in the last years of life may have been due to her advancing age or the failure of *Memoirs of Queens* to make the same impact as *Female Biography*.

While *Memoirs of Queens* is not Hays's most famous nor indeed her strongest work, it is still worthy of far greater consideration.<sup>7</sup> In particular, it is useful to compare

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it with the queens and royal women in *Female Biography*, analysing the key differences between these two collective biographies and what this might indicate about Hays's influences, sources and how her perspective on queens may have shifted in the years between the production of the two volumes. Before engaging in a comparative analysis of Hays's two works, however, it is important to place *Memoirs of Queens* in the wider context of queenly collective biographies.

Just as in *Female Biography*, queens had long been included in collective biographies of 'women worthies' such as Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (c.1360) or Antoine Dufour's *Les Vies des femmes celebres* (1504).<sup>8</sup> In the seventeenth century, we continued to see collective biographies dominated by queens, including Père Hilarion de Coste's *Les Eloges et vies des reynes, princesses, dames et damoiselles illustres en piété, courage et doctrine, qui ont fleury de nostre temps, et du temps de nos peres* (1630) and Brantôme's *Les vies des dames illustres* (1665) which focused primarily on royal and noblewomen, including several famous queens such as Anne de Bretagne, Marguerite de Navarre and Mary Queen of Scots.

In keeping with the classical influence of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, some of these early works on royal women were collections dedicated to the careers of Roman Empresses such as *Histoire des impératrices avec les observations morales et politiques, enrichie de leurs portraits en taille-douce* (1646) or Jacques de Roergas Serviez's *The Roman empresses; or, the history of the lives and secret intrigues of the wives of the twelve Cæsars* (1752). Jean Puget de la Serre's 1648 work *L'histoire [sic] et les portraits des impératrices, des reynes et des illustres princesses de l'auguste maison d'Autriche, qui ont porté le nom d'Anne* (1648), dedicated to the regent Anne of Austria, demonstrates another emerging trend in queenly biographies: a national emphasis. Enrique Flórez's work, *Memorias de las Reinas Católicas* (1761), is another excellent example of this nationalistic trend.

Hays's *Memoirs of Queens* is an interesting in comparison to this early group. *Memoirs of Queens* was not nationalistic in scope, but was wide ranging both temporally and geographically, like *Female Biography*, incorporating a fair number of biblical and classical figures reflecting the on-going interest in the women of the ancient world. *Memoirs of Queens* also comes at an interesting moment, in a lull after the plethora of works in the seventeenth and eighteenth century but before the glut of

queenly compendia which emerged in the nineteenth century influenced, in England at least, by the long reign of Queen Victoria.<sup>9</sup>

The beginning of this later surge could be pinpointed to Hannah Lawrance, whose *Historical Memoirs of the Queens of England* was published in 1838, just one year after Victoria's accession, or Agnes Strickland's famous *Lives of the Queens of England* which followed two years after.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, collective biographies of English queens were plentiful in the nineteenth century; in the 1850s alone we have several publications including Mary Howitt's *Biographical Sketches of the Queens of England*, John Frederick Smith's *Romantic Incidents in the Lives of the Queens of England* and Francis Lancelott's *The Queens of England and Their Times: From Matilda, Queen of William the Conqueror, to Adelaide, Queen of William the Fourth*.

The surge of works on royal women was not delimited by Victoria's reign or kingdom, as Anna Jameson's *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Sovereigns* (1831) predates or even anticipates Victoria's reign, examining reigning queens across a wide sweep of period and place. Collective biographies of queens continue to emerge to the present day such as Olga Opfell's *Queens, Empresses, Grand Duchesses, and Regents: Women Rulers of Europe*, published in 1989, Lisa Hilton's 2008 collection *Queens Consort* or Claudia Gold's 2015 *Women Who Ruled*.<sup>11</sup> Nor was England the only realm to be favoured by nationalistic collections in the mid-nineteenth century as Annie F. Bush's *Memoirs of the Queens of France: With Notices of the Royal Favorites* (1843), Adélaïde Celliez's *Les Reines d'Espagne, suivies des Reine de Portugal* (1856) and Emma Willisher Atkinson's *Memoirs of the Queens of Prussia* (1858) demonstrate, co-existing with the surge of works on English queens.<sup>12</sup>

As demonstrated here, Mary Hays's queenly biographies, both in *Female Biography* and *Memoirs of Queens*, clearly fits into a wider context and long tradition of collective biographies of queens. It also occupies a distinctive space, however, building on but standing apart from earlier works and preceding the flood of interest from Victoria's accession onwards. Mary Spongberg has argued that Hays's work and that of her contemporary Elizabeth Benger, who wrote a trio of full-length queenly biographies which were also published in the 1820s, reflects a unique moment perhaps, nestled between the French Revolution and the accession of Queen Victoria. Miriam Burstein also groups Hays with Benger and Lucy Aikin, comparing the works of these three

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female authors who were all writing circa 1820 on queens and the royal court.<sup>13</sup> While Hays, Aiken and Bengler could not be said to be inspired directly by a reigning queen in the way that the later Victorian biographers might have been, these early nineteenth-century authors were certainly influenced by the destruction of Marie Antoinette as well as the tragic death of the British heiress Princess Charlotte of Wales in 1817 and the scandals attached to Charlotte's mother, Caroline of Brunswick, in their own lifetimes.<sup>14</sup> Spongberg has also argued that these works do not merely represent a fascination with queens but that the writers of this period, such as Hays and Bengler, saw 'biographies of royal women as an acceptable space where they could discuss the condition of women under patriarchy and make suggestions regarding its amelioration.'<sup>15</sup>

Mary Hays's preface to *Memoirs of Queens* echoes this premise, focusing not on royal women but the state of all women, pushing for 'the moral rights and intellectual advancement of *woman* [her emphasis]', noting that 'the throne itself, with but few exceptions, secures not woman from the peculiar disadvantages that have hitherto attended her sex.'<sup>16</sup> Indeed in both *Female Biography* and *Memoirs of Queens* Hays begins by noting that 'My pen has been taken up in the cause, and for the benefit, of my own sex.'<sup>17</sup>

### **Comparing the contents of Female Biography and Memoirs of Queens**

A comparative analysis of *Female Biography* and *Memoirs of Queens* reveals not only a great deal of expected overlap and similarity but also, perhaps surprisingly, notable differences between the two works. The obvious difference is focus; while *Memoirs of Queens* examines only royal women, queens make up only one-sixth of the 300 figures in *Female Biography*. Between the two works, 83 queens are featured: 53 in *Female Biography*, 72 in *Memoirs of Queens* and 42 which overlap. Another quickly visible difference is the size of the two volumes. *Female Biography* is an impressive work at six volumes and several entries which topped 25 pages each. Hays apologised for the excessive length of Catherine II of Russia's entry—which was 428 pages long—in the preface of *Female Biography*.<sup>18</sup> This mammoth entry demonstrates the difference in scale and size between the two works as *Memoirs of Queens* was only 479 pages in total length.

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Given this difference in size and scope, it follows logically that some of the queens which feature in both volumes, such as Margaret of Anjou, Christina of Sweden and Blanche of Castile, would have shorter entries in the later volume. Indeed, all three of these queens had entries which ranged between 17 to 29 pages in *Female Biography* which were scaled back to seven or eight pages in *Memoirs of Queens*. Catherine II of Russia's entry in *Memoirs of Queens* was pruned back to a far more reasonable 67 pages.<sup>19</sup> Hays did not merely 'recycle' the entries she had written for *Female Biography*, but appears to have rewritten them, keeping key elements but stripping back details, anecdotes and, in some cases, frustratingly perhaps, stripping out notes and citations. The more concise entries and lack of citations or annotation seem to suggest that Hays was aiming for a more commercial and popular market for *Memoirs of Queens*.

There are examples of entries that buck this trend for truncation in *Memoirs of Queens*. Eleanor of Aquitaine, a queen whose life has attracted a great deal attention from both scholars and popular culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, was given a perfunctory treatment in *Female Biography*, with a brief entry of two pages which largely omitted her reign as Queen of England.<sup>20</sup> Hays attempted to correct this in *Memoirs of Queens*, effectively doubling the length of her coverage of Eleanor's life to include more of her marriage to Henry II and her activity during the reigns of her sons Richard and John.<sup>21</sup>

A statistical overview reveals many interesting trends about the royal women featured in *Memoirs of Queens* and *Female Biography*. While Hays's geographical scope is fairly wide ranging, including figures from India and the Middle East, it is solidly based in Western Europe. England, unsurprisingly, dominates the picture with 17 royal entries across the two collections, fitting in both with Hays's own origin and the later popularity of works exclusively on English queens. Roman Empresses provide another eight entries in the works, reflecting the aforementioned wider interest in famous classical matrons such as Agrippina the Elder and Younger. France is another clear favourite of Hays; both works feature several medieval French queens such as Blanche of Castile, Isabeau of Bavaria and Anne de Bretagne. Indeed if Frankish queens, such as the sixth century Bathilda or Fredegonda, were added to French ones then this would make the second largest national grouping of queens in these works.

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This fits with the large number of French women featured more widely in *Female Biography*, including a number of Renaissance and Enlightenment ‘learned ladies’ such as Louise Labé, Emilie du Châtelet and Madame Roland.

A chronological breakdown is also quite interesting. The sixteenth century is clearly the most popular single century across the two collections, with 14 royal figures including several Tudor queens and a few lesser known European royal women. Overall there is a good balance between the Ancient and Classical periods, the Early Modern and the High Medieval eras. While the High Medieval period (defined here as tenth to fifteenth centuries) had the most consistent and even spread of entries, the other number of entries from the Classical and Early Modern eras are imbalanced. The large number of sixteenth century entries dominates the figures from the Early Modern era and the Classical period is very patchy, with seven figures from the first century BC while many centuries from this era are omitted entirely or have only a single entry. However, this emphasis on the sixteenth century and the early Imperial period of Roman history is hardly unusual in either the works of Hays’ contemporaries or modern historical works, as these eras continue to attract both scholarly and popular interest.

Many of the royal women featured by Hays mirror those in other collective biographies, and it is instructive to compare them with Alison Booth’s ‘pop chart’ on her website and in her book on collective biographies *How to Make it as a Woman*. In so doing we can see that Hays included in her works several queens who were featured frequently in prosopographies of queens and famous women, including Elizabeth I, Cleopatra and Catherine II ‘the Great’ of Russia.<sup>22</sup> Three well-known figures, however, were not accorded a place in *Female Biography* and feature only in *Memoirs of Queens*: Isabel I of Castile, Marie Antoinette and Maria Theresa. It is possible that Marie Antoinette was omitted from the earlier work due to the lingering influence of Wollstonecraft, who had savagely criticized the French queen in her own work.<sup>23</sup> The exclusion of Maria Theresa and Isabel I of Castile from *Female Biography* is less surprising, given the general dearth of Holy Roman Empresses and Iberian queens in this collection which will be discussed shortly. Adding these three celebrated figures to *Memoirs of Queens* may have been an attempt to rectify her earlier oversight as well to attract more readers, given popular interest in these famous women.

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The additions to *Memoirs of Queens* include 29 royal women who do not feature in *Female Biography*. Several significant queens had been bypassed previously, such as the famous English queens the Empress Matilda, Mary Tudor and Hays's contemporary Caroline of Brunswick, whose trial was mentioned in the preface and her portrait features in the frontispiece of the original edition.<sup>24</sup> In a general sense, these additions could be seen as a corrective to the contents of *Female Biography* in terms of geographic and temporal scope as well. Hays added several ancient and classical queens such as Nitocris, Queen of Babylon, and Panthea, Queen of Susa. Sixteen medieval queens were added from both the early and high periods such as Brunehaut, Queen of the Visigoths, and Constance of Sicily. Hays also attempted to add more 'exotic' non-European figures such as the Moghul Empress Mher-u-Nissa (also known as Nur Jehan or, as Hays spells it, Noor-Jehan) and Ketavane, Queen of Georgia.

There are also 11 royal women who were featured in *Female Biography* that Hays chose not to include in *Memoirs of Queens*. Many of these women had nebulous or questionable queenly positions, including regents such as Anne de Beaujeu, Henry Tudor's mother Margaret Beaufort, nine-day queen Lady Jane Grey and the Saxon princess Aethelflaed. Interestingly perhaps in terms of Roman Empresses, Agrippina the Elder is omitted in *Memoirs of Queens*, though Agrippina the Younger was featured in both collections. Helena, the sainted mother of the Emperor Constantine, was also dropped from the later collection.

Overall, while *Memoirs of Queens* can be seen as addressing some omissions or gaps in the earlier *Female Biography*, there is still a considerable lacuna in Hays's coverage of queenly figures. While English queens form the foundation of her royal prosopographies, three of the famous wives of Henry VIII are missing (Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves and Catherine Howard) and, perhaps more surprisingly, not a single Stuart queen of England appears in either of Hays's works. This includes the controversial Henrietta Maria and Mary of Modena as well as the two reigning sisters, Mary II and Anne Stuart (whereas the latter merits inclusion on Booth's 'pop chart' of frequently featured subjects in collective biographies of women).

Other well-known and controversial French figures, such as Marguerite de Valois (*La Reine Margot*) and the regent Marie de Medici are also bypassed by Hays, which contradicts her general interest in French women. Although *Female Biography* does

contain Iberian women such as Maria d'Estrada and the mystic Maria d'Agreda, the only Iberian queen featured is Isabel (or Elisabeth) de Valois, daughter of Catherine de Medici and wife of Philip II.<sup>25</sup> As mentioned previously, Isabel I of Castile was added to *Memoirs of Queens* but no other Iberian royal women are featured even though both Portugal and the Spanish kingdoms have a lengthy tradition of active and visible queens.<sup>26</sup> Although Roman Empresses are plentiful, Hays' work is very light on both Byzantine and Holy Roman Empresses; well-known figures such as the powerful Adelheid, Theophanu (who created an important link between the Byzantine and Ottonian courts), Theodora (wife of Justinian) and Charlemagne's contemporary, the Empress Irene are all missing.

### **Rationales for Queens who are 'Missing in Action' in Hays' works**

The important question here is why are these figures 'missing in action'? The answer, I believe lies in two key factors: contemporary interest and Hays's source material. Tracing the sources that Hays used can be a difficult and often frustrating task for scholars of her work. For some entries in her prosopographic collections, Hays cites sources. While some are clearly noted, such as Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* or *Historical Dictionary*, other citations are more opaque, such as references to a *History of France* which could refer to any number of similarly titled works.<sup>27</sup> Many of her entries cite no sources whatsoever. Indeed in *Memoirs of Queens* this is true of 34 entries out of the 72 overall, or approximately 50 percent of the work. Of those sources which are cited most frequently, two are clearly identifiable: Bayle (as mentioned above) and the anonymous *Biographium Faemineum* or *The Female Worthies*. Three others most often referred to are the vague *History of France*, *History of England* and *Roman History*. Hays's reliance on these sources, and her limited access to libraries, must have influenced her choice of figures about whom to write, both in terms of which queens she was aware of and whom she could easily research. Gina Luria Walker has argued convincingly that Hays had access to the large private library of William Tooke, the Elder and Younger, but no records have been found of its exact contents.<sup>28</sup> Bayle for example, whom we know she was heavily reliant on, did not feature many Iberian queens nor did he cover the Empress Theodora, for example, although her husband Justinian merited an entry in Bayle's compendium.<sup>29</sup>

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Contemporary interest may also explain Hays's choices, again both in terms of what she was exposed to and those women in whom she felt her readers were most interested. Returning to Iberian history, Hays certainly did not have had access to the works of her contemporary Walter H. Prescott, whose seminal *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic* was not published until 1838, far too late to have been of use to Hays's research. Indeed the current upsurge of interest and scholarship in Iberian queenship and history by English language scholars is a trend of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and not an academic area of study which would have been identifiable in Hays's lifetime. Nor would Hays have been able to read Enrique Florez's classic *Memorias de las Reinas Católicas* in Spanish, even if she had access to it.

What is more surprising is Hays's general omission of German entries, as England's clear links through the Hanoverian dynasty would logically signal a greater awareness of Germanic royal history in England. Moreover Hays might have been able to access works on German history in English, such as those of her contemporary Francis Hare Naylor.<sup>30</sup> We can also see interest in German queenly figures in the nineteenth century; Hays's direct contemporary Louisa of Prussia features strongly in Booth's 'pop chart' and, in 1858, Emma Willisher Atkinson published her aforementioned *Memoirs of the Queens of Prussia*.

The complete omission by Hays of the Stuart period may be linked to her contemporaries' scorn for the Stuart court, which was perceived as decadent, corrupt and influenced by Catholicism. Indeed many of the prosopographic works on the women of the Stuart period focus on the court 'beauties', many of which were the mistresses of Charles II.<sup>31</sup> Spongberg has argued that the Stuart queens and princesses were seen as a root cause of the problems of the monarchy in the seventeenth century and were particularly attacked by historians and writers such as Catherine Macaulay.<sup>32</sup> Hays, however, would have also been familiar with and had access to David Hume's famous *History of Great Britain under the House of Stuart* (1759) 'which offered sympathetic accounts of the Stuarts'.<sup>33</sup> Indeed the *History of England* that Hays does cite in her work, may well have been Hume's well known six volume work, *History of Great Britain*, from which his Stuart history stems. As mentioned previously, Anne Stuart was an entrant on Booth's 'pop chart' and thus clearly an object of interest to

Hays's readers, and it is particularly difficult to understand why Hays failed to include her. It is possible that Hays sought to avoid controversy by bypassing these controversial queens, both regnant and consort; however other queenly biographers, like her famous successors the Stricklands, did engage with the Stuart queens rather than avoid them *en masse*.<sup>34</sup>

In summary, it could be argued that the differences in the treatment of queens in Hays's collective biographies reflect both shifting contemporary interests and opinions in the early nineteenth century and her own reflections on the subject in the nearly twenty years between the production of the two works. Clearly Hays was writing for a different audience in 1821, who perhaps had a growing and more sympathetic view of queens given the popularity of Princess Charlotte of Wales, the attention given to the scandal surrounding Queen Caroline and potentially even interest in the birth of Princess Victoria in 1819, although Hays had no way of knowing the impact that Victoria's long reign would have on the both the realm and queenly prosopography. Hays had ample time to examine *Female Biography* and address any gaps she saw in its contents as well as reflect on how to repackage her previous research in a way to make *Memoirs of Queens* as accessible and appealing as possible to a new group of readers. This can be seen by Hays's decision to include more popular queens who were 'missing' in *Female Biography*, condense long entries and adopt a slightly softened, more romantic tone which Burstein argues 'foreshadows the direction that much Victorian royal life-writing would take'.<sup>35</sup>

While we may never be able to fully understand Hays's editorial decisions as she compiled her works on queens and royal women, further research may help us unlock a greater understanding of collective biographies of queens, their audience and impact. *Memoirs of Queens*, given its lack of study and its distinctive position in this transitional period between the early forerunners of queenly prosopographies and the flood of works in the later nineteenth century, is an ideal starting point for further research on collective biographies of queens. While queenship studies today, and indeed royal studies as a whole, is clearly about more than biographical studies or veneration of past 'worthies', it is important not to dismiss the work of our predecessors.

Hays and the authors of these queenly prosopographies created a foundation of study and interest in royal women which has inspired scholars, novelists, filmmakers

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and the general public, keeping these women in view instead of becoming lost to the vagaries of time. These collections can teach us a great deal about the changing perception of the queens and how their lives have been reinterpreted over the centuries; even charting how interest in particular figures waxed and waned over time or noting which figures were chosen for collections and which were omitted is incredibly revealing. While *Memoirs of Queens* is not Hays's most well-known or indeed greatest work, bringing it into comparison with *Female Biography* reveals her own changing attitude on queens and royal women which was influenced by growing societal interest in queens in connection with the events and changes in monarchy during her lifetime. It could be argued that, taken together, these two works reveal that over the course of her career, Hays increasingly moved away from Wollstonecraft's negative opinion of queens and 'illustrious and celebrated' women to produce *Female Biography* and later *Memoirs of Queens* which produced a sympathetic view of 'women worthies'.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, it should be noted that *Memoirs of Queens*, Hays's last work, recognised or even forecast a growing public interest in the lives of royal women and set a tone which her successors in queenly prosopography followed. It could be argued that Hays was a harbinger of emerging literary trends in collective biography and ultimately even a forerunner of the modern field of academic research, queenship studies.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace, 'Writing Lives', p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> See Davis, "'Women's history in transition'", and Lerner, 'Placing women in history'.

<sup>3</sup> For a few selected examples see: Levin and Bucholz (eds.), *Queens and Power*; Schutte (ed.), *The Body of the Queen*; and Woodacre (ed.), *Companion to Global Queenship*. See also Conroy's *Ruling Women*, a two-volume set which examines rhetoric about queenly authority in France in the seventeenth century and dramatic productions which reacted to the rise of powerful queen regents and rulers in this era.

<sup>4</sup> See: Beem and Taylor (eds.), *The Man Behind the Queen*; and Woodacre and Sarti, 'What is Royal Studies?'.

<sup>5</sup> Wollenstonecraft declaimed 'I wish to see women neither heroines nor brutes, but reasonable creatures'. Quoted in Gates, *In their Time*, p. 146. See also Walker, 'Invention of Female Biography', p. 85.

<sup>6</sup> Hicks, 'Women Worthies', pp. 181-184. See also Taylor, *Mary Wollenstonecraft*, p. 188.

<sup>7</sup> Miriam Burstein, somewhat uncharitably, argues that 'Hays had by this point abandoned scholarship in favour of much needed cash'; Burstein, 'Royal Lives', p. 499.

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<sup>8</sup> For a modern versions of these works see Boccaccio's *Famous Women* and Dufour's *Les vies des femmes celebres*.

<sup>9</sup> For a concise summary, see Burstein, 'Royal Lives', pp. 499-502.

<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that Hannah Lawrance, like Hays, also wrote a wider work on women's history. Her *History of Woman in England and Her Influence on Society and Literature*, published in 1843, focused on premodern history although though Joanne Wilkes argues that this was likely intended to be the first of a multi-volume work. On Lawrance and her works, see Wilkes, *Women Reviewing Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 58-68; and Dabby, 'Hannah Lawrance'.

<sup>11</sup> Gold's *Women who Ruled* was originally published in 2008 as *Queen, Empress, Concubine-Fifty Women Rulers from the Queen of Sheba to Catherine the Great*.

<sup>12</sup> Celliez also published a work on French queens: *Les Reines de France*.

<sup>13</sup> Burstein, 'Royal Lives', pp. 498-499.

<sup>14</sup> Hays's contemporary Queen Caroline clearly influenced *Memoirs of Queens*; Spongberg and Tuite argue that the life of Queen Caroline 'served as a rallying point for debating the role of women in the public sphere' while Burstein notes that Caroline has a prominent place on the frontispiece to the volume. See Burstein, 'Royal Lives', p. 499, and Spongberg and Tuite 'Introduction: The Gender of Whig Historiography, p. 681.

<sup>15</sup> Spongberg, 'Ghost of Marie Antoinette', p. 74.

<sup>16</sup> Hays, *Memoirs of Queens*, pp. v-vi.

<sup>17</sup> Hays, *Female Biography*, preface, p. iii. In *Memoirs of Queens*, Hays begins the preface with a direct reference to this; "Having more than once taken up my pen, however humble soever its efforts may have been, in the cause and for the honour and advantage of my sex...", Hays, *Memoirs of Queens*, p. v.

<sup>18</sup> This was spread across volumes 2 and 3 of *Female Biography*; ii, pp. 247-404 and iii, pp. 1-271.

<sup>19</sup> Hays, *Memoirs of Queens*, pp. 177-244.

<sup>20</sup> Hays, *Female Biography*, iv, pp. 68-70. See Evans's *Inventing Eleanor* for a useful survey of Eleanor's treatment in works ranging from medieval chronicles, pre-modern writers, modern historians and popular culture.

<sup>21</sup> Hays, *Memoirs of Queens*, pp. 286-290.

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<sup>22</sup> See Booth's 'pop chart' <<http://womensbios.lib.virginia.edu/popchart>> which charts the number of biographies of particular figures over the course of the extensive list of collective biographies featured in her research <<http://womensbios.lib.virginia.edu/>> and in her book *How to make it as a Woman*, pp. 394-396.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel O'Neill claims that 'for Wollstonecraft, she [Marie Antoinette] epitomized a morally bankrupt world'; O'Neill, *Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate*, p. 244. See also the aforementioned article from Spongberg, 'Ghost of Marie Antoinette', *passim*.

<sup>24</sup> Hays, *Memoirs of Queens*, p. viii and frontispiece.

<sup>25</sup> She is also featured as Elizabeth of France in *Memoirs of Queens*, pp. 306-308.

<sup>26</sup> Hays, *Memoirs of Queens*, pp. 326-330. For more on queenship in Iberia, see Earenfight's *Queenship and Political* and the Rainhas de Portugal series which features biographies of every regnant and consort queen over Portugal's history <<https://www.circuloleitores.pt/catalogo/1057626/rainhas-viiiixiii>>.

<sup>27</sup> Bayle's seminal work was reproduced in many editions in several languages, see the ARTFL Project <(https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaire-de-bayle)> for a delineation of these editions and a fully searchable electronic edition of the 1740 edition. Hays was most likely using a translation such as Bayle's 1734 *Dictionary Historical and Critical*.

<sup>28</sup> Walker, 'Invention of Female Biography', pp. 100-101.

<sup>29</sup> See Walker's discussion of Bayle's influence in 'Invention of Female Biography', pp. 88, 93-95, 97.

<sup>30</sup> See Naylor's 1816 work *Civil and Military History of Germany*.

<sup>31</sup> For examples see Jameson's *Memoirs of the Beauties of the Court* and Trowbridge's *Court Beauties of Old Whitehall*.

<sup>32</sup> Spongberg, 'La reine malheureuse', 750-751.

<sup>33</sup> Spongberg and Tuite, 'Introduction', p. 676.

<sup>34</sup> For a summary of the Stricklands' biographical treatment of Henrietta Maria, see Spongberg, 'La reine malheureuse', pp. 754-759.

<sup>35</sup> Burstein, 'Royal Lives', p. 499.

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<sup>36</sup> For more on the concept of ‘sympathetic history’ and how this relates to Hays and other female writers of the period, see Kucich paper ‘Romanticism and the re-gendering of historical memory’.