

Fall 2001

Review of Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England*, and Retha Warnicke, *The Marrying of Anne of Cleves: Royal Protocol in Tudor England*

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Levin, Carole, "Review of Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England*, and Retha Warnicke, *The Marrying of Anne of Cleves: Royal Protocol in Tudor England*" (2001). *Faculty Publications, Department of History*. 53. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/historyfacpub/53>

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Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England*

Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000. xii + 276 pp. n.p. ISBN: 0-7190-5074-X.

Retha Warnicke, *The Marrying of Anne of Cleves: Royal Protocol in Tudor England*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. xv + 23 pls. + 343 pp. \$27.95. ISBN: 0-521-77037-8.

There have been a number of books and articles in the last decade that focus on family and marriage, including courtship, in early modern England or on the negotiations of specific marriages. Many of these studies were written in response to the pioneering but often controversial work by Lawrence Stone. Literary scholars,

such as Catherine Bates and Ilona Bell, and historians such as Barbara Harris, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, Eric Carlson, Alan MacFarlane, and Ralph Houlbrooke have brought a variety of view points and much more subtlety to the whole discussion. The two books under review here, *Courtship and Constraint* and *The Marrying of Anne of Cleves*, both demonstrate the serious scholarship and new insights into this growing field.

The word "court" in sixteenth-century England had a multiplicity of meanings. As a verb it could be a man seeking a woman's hand in marriage or alternatively pursue the woman romantically/sexually if not being willing to offer her marriage. But it also had a very different, if occasionally related meaning, since the noun "court" meant the place of the ruler, the center of power.

O'Hara's book deals almost exclusively with the first meaning of the word; and in fact she argues in the study that in all social classes throughout the sixteenth century, courtship was structured and had more to do with economics than with personal attraction. As O'Hara defines it, courtship was a part of the essential negotiations that was part of the accompanying transfer of worth, whether of property, dowries, or other settlements that were made upon the marriage. The book for the most part deliberately focuses on those who were less wealthy and often had left less written records; much of her research comes from a thorough study of the ecclesiastical records of the diocese of Canterbury. Traditionally, scholars have suggested that while upper class marriages were made for reasons of land and politics, those who had lower status often had more choice in whom they married. O'Hara argues that economics played the primary role in these marriages as well, and very few people in sixteenth-century England, even those of humblest origins, would marry for what we in the twenty-first century consider romantic love. O'Hara does not deny the frequency of secret and private sexual relations between individuals, but argues convincingly that betrothals were not simply between individuals but part of a whole construct of kin and community.

One of the most creative aspects of the study is the work on gifts. She looks at how a range of gifts demonstrated the social importance of the various stages of courtship and the ways in which tokens and gifts helped to define both personal and social relations. Gifts were not only a personal exchange but also a morally and socially public matter, and often they were exchanged through intermediaries.

The major theme of O'Hara's study is to examine the social, cultural, and economic aspects of sixteenth-century courtship. O'Hara's research is thorough and she gives many examples to support her assertions. O'Hara states that her study is not directly concerned with how the religious and political changes of the sixteenth century influenced courtship. Warnicke's study, however, is clearly concerned with religious and political change and connects the two very different meanings of the word court.

Just as Warnicke's previous study, *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn* (1989), challenged ideas about the reasons for the dissolution of Henry VIII's second marriage and provided readers with a fascinating theoretical argument, so too does her new study that grew out of that book. *The Marrying of Anne of Cleves* provides the first

major study of the king's fourth marriage, and, like its predecessor, also engages in questions of the gender system in the sixteenth century, court politics and battles between conservatives and reformers, and the how accusations of witchcraft and sexual deviance could be used to destroy political enemies. *The Rise and Fall of Anne Boleyn* deals with the accusations against Anne and the men accused of being her lovers, including her brother George, Lord Rochford. Though Anne of Cleves survives her marriage's annulment, Thomas Cromwell, Henry's Principal Secretary who had arranged it, and his client Lord Hungerford were both executed. Hungerford was accused of consulting witches to see how long Henry VIII would live and also of "abominable and detested vice and sin" of buggery with a number of his male servants. Sodomy had become a capital crime forbidden by statutory law in 1534.

After the death of Jane Seymour from puerperal fever when she gave birth of the future Edward VI in 1537, Henry desired to marry for a fourth time so that he could further secure the Tudor succession by having a second son. Henry first attempted to secure a French bride but he failed and the English became very concerned when Pope Paul III successfully negotiated a truce and then alliance between France and Spain. After several other possibilities that went unrealized, in 1540 Henry decided to marry Anne, sister of Duke William of Cleves. As Warnicke's study points out, the negotiations and the marriage treaty were not unusual; what was more exceptional was the fact that the marriage was never consummated and subsequently annulled, though such events were not unknown.

What is perhaps more striking is Warnicke's discussion of Henry's belief that his impotence was caused by his belief that witchcraft was involved, and his turn against Thomas Cromwell, who had arranged the marriage. Cromwell was charged not only with treason but with being a sacramentary, a radical form of heresy associated with witchcraft. His ally Lord Hungerford was executed for sodomy. There were many rumors that he also practiced witchcraft, and had attempted to compute the king's death. Henry's second and fifth marriages ended with each wife's execution. While Anne of Cleves survived, Cromwell was the scapegoat of this fourth marriage. Anne, after the marriage was referred to as "the king's sister." Henry gave his word that she would remain financially independent. But after Henry's death his successors broke this promise leading to financial difficulties and hardships for Anne. She lived until 1557, staying in England, still feeling like a stranger in a foreign land.

Warnicke's book is extremely helpful in understanding the meanings methods, and rituals of diplomacy in Tudor England and the ways that royal marriages were arranged and conducted. This study affords its readers more insights into Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell, and presents Anne of Cleves as a far more nuanced character than earlier studies of Henry's six wives. With both clear and sophisticated analysis she weaves together political history with an understanding of the implications of gender and beliefs about sexuality. Both *Courtship and Constraint* and *The Marrying of Anne of Cleves* are first rate historical studies, each of which should gain a wide readership.

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