

## CONTINUITY AND IDENTITY AT THE COURT OF FRANCE: PARTIES AROUND QUEEN MARIE DE MEDICI AND QUEEN ANNE OF AUSTRIA

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### I. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyse the factors of continuity and identity in the parties around Queen Marie de Medici and Queen Anne of Austria in the period between 1600 and 1666. During the first half of the 17th century, the evolution of the parties around the queens varied significantly according to their status (queen consort, mother of the heir or regent).<sup>1</sup> Recent historiography by Jean-François Dubost,<sup>2</sup> Chantal Grell<sup>3</sup> and Fanny Cosandey considered how, as early as the time of their weddings, women rulers intervened in politics:

*The woman ruler has a duty to be present in the very places of power, within a court which is also the centre of a political world, over which any power is forbidden to her, but which she is not spared from attending. Already tricky in itself, this situation is made more difficult for her by the place which she occupies at the side of the King given that her matrimonial bonds turn her into a major component of the political exchequer.*<sup>4</sup>

While their work is mostly focused on the Spanish world, the research of Jean-Pierre Dedieu<sup>5</sup> and José Martínez Millán<sup>6</sup> allowed a better understanding of the clientelist functioning of factions at the court. The same can be said of Alain Hugon's analysis of Spanish diplomacy's role over this period.<sup>7</sup>

Over a reasonably continuous timeline, both Marie of Medici and Anne of Austria directed regencies for a minor King. They came from two different dynasties: the Medici of Florence and the Habsburg of Spain, and therefore approached their respective regencies in different ways.

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<sup>1</sup> About the parties, Norbert Elias, *La société de cour* (Paris: Flammarion, 1985), 189. See also Jacques Heers, *Les Partis and la vie politique dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris: PUF, 1981). About the evolution of queens in politics, Fanny Cosandey, *La reine de France, symbole et pouvoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 271 and 295.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-François Dubost, *Marie de Médicis, la reine dévoilée* (Paris: Payot, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Chantal Grell, ed., *Anne d'Autriche, Infante d'Espagne et Reine de France* (Paris: Perrin, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, 379.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Pierre Dedieu, *Réseaux, familles et pouvoirs dans le monde ibérique à la fin de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> José Martínez Millán, *Instituciones y elites de poder en la monarquía hispánica durante el siglo XVI* (Madrid: Ediciones de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Alain Hugon, *Au service du roi catholique: « honorables ambassadeurs » et « divins espions », représentation diplomatique et service secret dans les relations hispano-françaises de 1598 à 1635* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2004).

This contribution aims to answer the following questions: what are the factors of similarity and continuity of parties at the court of France? What kind of relationship did these parties have with the two queens, Marie de Medici and Anne of Austria? To what extent did these parties have any influence on French politics?

These questions are of great importance because the progress of parties at the court determined not only the development of the monarchy itself as an institution, but also France's foreign policy in the first half of the 17th century.

## II. The Parties at the Court of Marie de Medici (1600-1642)

### II.1. 1600-1610: Rivalries and Political Clientelism around the Household of Marie de Medici

As highlighted by David Hume's analysis,<sup>8</sup> divisions between parties in the 17th century were not founded so much on differences of opinion as on personal hostility, carried over several generations by the great families of the nobility. Each of the houses wanted not so much to monopolise the king's power but rather to share it with him in the manner of great vassals.<sup>9</sup>

At the court of Paris in 1600, rivalries between courtesans were not determined by religious issues (for instance the Duke of Guise, a Catholic, was a great friend of Protestant Sully<sup>10</sup>) but on clannish rivalries, inherited from the Wars of Religion. This is what Alain Hugon calls the «deconfessionalization of nobiliary strategies».<sup>11</sup> Indeed, since the beginning of religious tensions between Catholics and Protestants in the 17th century, two noble clans had opposed each other at the court: the princes of Condé, leaders of the Protestants, and the Dukes of Guise, leaders of the Catholic Party. Henri, Prince of Condé and his uncles, Louis of Bourbon and the Prince of Conti, were declared opponents to the marriage between Henry IV and Marie of Medici because such marriage meant for them to lose their inheritance rights.<sup>12</sup> For this very reason, the Guises were favourable to the union.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> David Hume, "Of parties in General," (1742), in his *Essay, Moral and Literary*, Part I, essay VIII (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund INC, 1987), <http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Hume/hmMPL.html> (consulted on 4 May 2015). Also see Dedieu, *Réseaux, familles et pouvoirs*, 50-51.

<sup>9</sup> On that subject see Elias, *La société de cour*, 189-190.

<sup>10</sup> Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 314.

<sup>11</sup> Hugon, *Au service du roi catholique*, 324.

<sup>12</sup> Despite indecision and political and religious about-turn of the head of the family Antoine de Bourbon, the Condé distinguish themselves as the leaders of the Protestant parties during the religious wars, thanks to Antoine's younger brother, Louis of Condé, and later to Condé's son, Henry of Condé. See Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 785.

<sup>13</sup> Marie of Medici was thus encouraged to carefully cultivate her own dynastic links with the house of Lorraine. That strategy was greatly facilitated by the affinity, which grew due to a simple question of age, between Louise-Marguerite of Guise and Marie of Medici. Ibidem, 115.

When Marie of Medici arrived in France in 1600 on the occasion of her wedding, she learned about the parties within the court, as well as about the members of her household. The choice of the court members was Henry IV's decision, but his ministers and mistresses could also express their views. Marie of Medici's household was composed of four hundred and twenty people, riddled with army officers, who owed their nomination to her rival, Henriette of Entraques, the former mistress of the King, whose intrigues had led to two plots involving Spain over two years.<sup>14</sup>

This particular context raised for Marie of Medici the alarming question of her children's safety.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Henry IV had a broad sense of family: he chose to have all his children, legitimate and illegitimate alike, brought up at Saint-Germain castle. The Queen feared that the royal mistresses would poison her children, as evidenced by her correspondence with their governess, the Baroness of Montbazou.<sup>16</sup>

Marie of Medici's survival instinct was crucially important at court in the context of conflicts between factions that put her and her descendants at risk. For that reason, the Queen had to position herself as a patron at the head of a network of men and women devoted to her service. Until 1609 there was not any real 'party of the Queen' in the political sense of the term, because the Queen did not have any political autonomy, but she endeavoured to patiently conquer significant spaces of influence. Thus, Marie of Medici did not have the right to directly appoint the members of her household but at least had succeeded in obtaining the power to nominate substitute members in case of an officer's death or resignation.<sup>17</sup> Marie of Medici did not rely on the conventional groups of the nobility and the clergy, which were more autonomous and consequently less reliable. She selected from her staff some agents of modest origin whose promotion she personally made possible. Denis Barbot presented La Fontaine as an example. He began as a cabinet servant and fourteen years later became an usher in the cabinet. When Marie of Medici was held prisoner in Blois in 1617, La Fontaine proved sufficiently discreet to be entrusted with various courier missions in Paris.<sup>18</sup> In 1618, most likely to reward him for his services, La Fontaine was a table companion, eating at the tables of the household.

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<sup>14</sup> In 1602, Henriette of Entraques plotted with several powerful men: the Duke of Montmorency, the Duke of Espernon, the Duke of Bouillon, and the Prince of Joinville, the Duke of Guise's younger brother. The project was to assassinate the King and then to dismantle the kingdom to the profit of both the great nobles and Spain. In 1604 Henriette of Entraques returned to her intrigues with Spain and was supported by the Count of Auvergne, who was her half-brother and the natural son of Charles IX. Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 113-114; Hugon, *Au service du roi catholique*, 174, 318-319.

<sup>15</sup> In eight years (from 1601 to 1609), Marie of Medici gave birth to five children (Elisabeth, Louis, Gaston, Christine and Henriette), which reinforced her prestige at court.

<sup>16</sup> BNF, ms 3811: *lettres de Marie de Médicis à ses enfants*.

<sup>17</sup> Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 249.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, 158.

In order to establish her clientele, the Queen also carefully chose the godparents for the baptism of her protégées.<sup>19</sup> She also endeavoured to create unions between families of Italian origin and from the French elite, as with the Bonsis and the Bartolinis.

In order to gain the support of the financial circles, Marie of Medici entrusted her income to two among the top families of the Parisian gentry: the Potiers and the Harlays.<sup>20</sup> For ecclesiastical appointments, the Queen favoured the officers and families of her household.<sup>21</sup>

When the King was murdered in 1609, Marie of Medici was appointed Regent of the kingdom. At that time, she had an important clientele among her staff, the financial, and the judiciary circles. However, her political line regarding the parties of nobility was yet to be defined.

## **II.2 1610-1617: The Regency: Marie of Medici against Henri, Prince of Condé**

The status of regent is politically fragile, as noted by Fanny Cosandey.<sup>22</sup> The transference of regency essentially relied on the political context,<sup>23</sup> that is to say, on the balance of power between the pretenders to the throne and the historical precedents.<sup>24</sup> The political weakness of the Regent did not lie in the powers granted to her, but in the balance of power which she had to maintain, operating within the limits of governance. This situation led her to act as a party leader, seeking alliances and creating new loyalties. The regency's mission in itself demanded the transmission of an unimpaired inheritance to the future King.<sup>25</sup> The political direction usually defining regency was a conservative one which involved the pursuit of both interior and exterior peace.

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<sup>19</sup> Such as that of Ginevra Rinuccini, and a daughter of the Duke of Bouillon named Marie. Ibidem, 256.

<sup>20</sup> Three sons of Nicolas Potiers of Blancmesnil presided over the Court of Auditors and at the Queen's Council between 1610 and 1616. Achille de Harlay, the Marquis of Bréval, was the favourite intermediary of the Queen in her correspondence with the House of Lorraine. Marie obtained the archbishopric of Rouen for a Harlay. Ibidem, 262.

<sup>21</sup> In 1604 she obtained from the Curia that her *premier ecuyer*, Bréhaut, Sieur de la Roche, could run an abbey in Brittany. Because she was a Medici princess, the Queen's patronage could reveal efficient and both the Cardinals Sourdis and Joyeuse got closer to her, certainly for that reason. On that point see Bénédicte Lecarpentier, "La reine diplomate: Marie de Médicis et les cours italiennes," in *Femmes et pouvoir politique, les princesses d'Europe, XVe-XVIIe siècle*, ed. Isabelle Poutin and Marie-Karine Schaub (Paris: Bréal, 2007), 183-192.

<sup>22</sup> Cosandey, *La reine de France*, 317-318.

<sup>23</sup> A decree from 1407 established the rule of male transmission and recalled the custom to grant the regency to the Queen mother in order to guarantee against the risk of usurpation. It limited the Regent's power and the duration of her mission to the King's fourteenth year, that is, to his majority. Despite that decree, the Queen mother needed the support of the parliament and of the princes of the blood to govern. See Gérard Sabatier and Sylvène Edouard, *Les monarchies de France et d'Espagne, 1556-1715* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2001), 152.

<sup>24</sup> On that point see Pierre Dupuy, *Traité de la majorité de nos Rois et des régences du Royaume* (Paris: 1655), 268-269, as well as Félix Olivier-Martin, "La Régences et la majorité des rois (1060-1375)" (Doctoral Thesis, University of Paris, 1931).

<sup>25</sup> Cosandey, *La reine de France*, 309.

Thus Marie of Medici sought to neutralise the monarchies which had traditionally been enemies of France - Spain, England - in exchange for alliances with her daughters, and in order to tighten the bonds with the Curia.<sup>26</sup> With regard to internal politics, the Queen mother provided some guarantees to both Catholics<sup>27</sup> and Protestants,<sup>28</sup> but civil peace was compromised by the opposition which the Prince of Condé led between 1610 and 1614. Like any monarch invested with power, the Queen had both political and personal preferences, which prompted her to favour some Grandees over others. From 1613, Marie of Medici offered her trust to her servant Leonora Galigai as well as to her husband, Concino Concini.<sup>29</sup>

The Prince of Condé, however, refused to be kept aside from power by the Regent. He disputed the project of the double Spanish marriages, which had been planned for Louis XIII with the infanta Anne of Austria, and for Elisabeth of Bourbon with Prince Philip.<sup>30</sup> Jean-François Dubost states that between 1610 and 1616 Condé would have snatched away over three million of *livres* from the crown.<sup>31</sup> Condé gathered around him the Duke of Nevers, the Duke of Vendôme – who was the half-brother of Louis XIII –, the Duke of Bouillon, and the Duke of Longueville. The coalition looked like an unsatisfied family clan.

While proclaiming the majority of Louis XIII in October 1614, Marie of Medici obtained from Parliament the right to continue to govern as the Council's Chief. The Spanish weddings took place in 1615. Her authority came out reinforced, but she nonetheless decided to get Condé arrested on 1 September 1616. This decision proved a strategic error that precipitated the kingdom a step further into civil war. The oldest noble families (the Guises, the Gondis, Epernons and Montmorencys) abandoned the court of the Queen mother. The new war resulted in the edict of Loudun in 1616, compelling Marie of Medici to share the power with Condé, who became the new head of

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<sup>26</sup> Marie of Medici's three daughters guaranteed her strong alliances in Europe: Elisabeth in Spain, Christine in Savoy and Henriette in England. The alliance with England counterbalanced the Spanish alliance and allowed to buy a temporary 'diplomatic peace'.

<sup>27</sup> The Catholics were Marie of Medici's allies because they saw her as the instrument to definitely bring the King to support the Catholic cause. Such was the position of the State Secretary Villeroy, of historiographer Pierre Matthieu and Jesuit Poussevin, of the Gondis, and of the Guises. Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 265.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 316.

<sup>29</sup> If Henri IV let Marie of Medici exercise her influence on the function and the naturalisation of Leonora Galigai Concini in the court, it was because of an agreement between Marie of Medici and Henriette of Entragues. In exchange, the royal mistress would be tolerated in the court. Ibidem, 480. About Concini, see Hélène Duccini, *Concini: grandeur et misère du favori de Marie de Médicis* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> See Hugon, *Au service du roi catholique*, 354.

<sup>31</sup> Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 431. Norbert Elias states in his study that the growing number of revolts among the nobility in the first half of the 17th century was also due to social changes. Imports of metals from overseas and the increase in the means of payment resulted in considerable depreciation of the currency and a decrease in purchasing power. This situation affected the nobility, compelling them to find other means of subsistence on top of their annuities. Elias, *La société de cour*, 161.

Finance in the kingdom. At that time, the party of Condé seemed to have won over that of the Queen.

In 1617, the assassination of Concini ordered by Louis XIII, changed radically the French political chessboard. From that time on, Marie of Medici no longer had the King's favour and lost much of her political autonomy.

### **II.3. 1619-1622: the Wars between the Mother and the Son**

The Queen's household, the court and the parliaments were purged by the Duke of Luynes, Louis XIII's new advisor. Luynes logically chose to rely on the main opponent to Concini and Marie de Medici: the Prince of Condé. Marie of Medici was sent into exile to Blois. She had lost her power but she kept her money, her servants and her status.<sup>32</sup>

Consequently, the relationship of Marie of Medici with the great nobles changed radically because the Queen mother had to position herself as the leader of the discontents in order to return to power. According to Jean-François Dubost, she supported

*their financial interests, their ideology and their rhetoric, by positioning herself as the "natural adviser" to the King: a vast scope because the progress of parties at the court determined the progress of monarchy as an institution.*<sup>33</sup>

In 1617 the Queen mother defended the participation of the great nobles in the government.<sup>34</sup> In 1619, she escaped from Blois with the complicity of her personal staff: La Mazières, Rucellais, Chanteloubes.

Between 1619 and 1620 the three wars called 'of the mother and the son' took place. Marie of Medici was supported by the Western half of France, that is, the provinces where the Queen mother had most developed her networks and her financial interests.<sup>35</sup> This series of wars resembled the many conflicts opposing the aristocrats to a Regent. Every episode ended up in a treaty in which the King granted his forgiveness and the rebels gained significant advantages. The last episode in July 1620 ended up with the submission of Normandy to Louis XIII and the success of the negotiations reconciling mother and son.

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<sup>32</sup> Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 586.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, 604.

<sup>34</sup> In order to justify the 'unnatural' character of their opposition to the King, Marie of Medici's propagandists, such as Mathieu of Morgues, sought models of shared power between the mother and the son and of the advisory role of the Queen mother. They found their main inspiration in Blanche of Castille. Mathieu de Morgues, *Diverses pièces pour la défense de la reine mère du roy très chrestien Louis XIII* (s.l.: n.d.), 16.

<sup>35</sup> Her supporters included the Dukes of Bouillon and of Epemon, the Count of Soissons and his mother Anne of Montafié, the Duke of Mayenne as well as Retz, Roannez, Rohan, Montmorency and Coligny-Châtillon, then the Duke of Nemours, and the Knight of Vendôme. She also relied on the support of Protestants like Rohan, La Trémoille, Roquelaure, Coligny. Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 612.

Jean du Plessis, who was the bishop of Luçon, became the Queen mother's protégé as she considered that she owed him her reconciliation with the King. To thank him, she obtained for him the cardinal's biretta and since then he was known as Cardinal Richelieu.<sup>36</sup> The departure of Condé for Italy gave a free hand to Marie de Medici's supporters at the court.<sup>37</sup> However, this reconciliation had a price: Marie of Medici returned to the Council but only as a member and after the death of Luynes in December 1621. What's more, she was compelled to abandon her main supporters in 1622: Villesavin, Chantelouble and La Marks, as well as the Count of Braine, Rucellai and the Maulny brothers.<sup>38</sup>

#### **II.4. 1622-1630: New Struggles between Factions and New Factions: The Accession of Richelieu**

The divisions between members of the royal family suited the court factions. Richelieu became the chief minister in 1624. In order to bring back political stability, he applied himself to slashing the power of factions by using his own clientele and implementing extraordinary measures.<sup>39</sup> In 1626 it seemed that the Queen mother's chamber had returned to being the central nerve of power, but in reality her dependence to Richelieu was growing. At that time, Spanish diplomacy was compromised, along with the Queen Anne of Austria, in the conspiracy of Chalais, which aimed to have the cardinal assassinated.<sup>40</sup> In 1626 Richelieu obtained the executions of Chalais and the Count of Montmorency. He also allied himself with Condé, allowing him to make his return into the good graces of the court. In 1627, the European courts witnessed the reconciliation between Marie of Medici and the devout Catholics Pierre de Bérulle and the Marillac brothers.<sup>41</sup> The Queen mother also allied herself with her daughter-in-law Anne of Austria, and repositioned herself as the leader of the discontents. After the King's illness in August 1630, both queens tried to arrange for Richelieu to be dismissed. But on 11 November 1630, the day after the meeting between Louis XIII and Marie of

<sup>36</sup> Thanks to the intervention of his faithful ally, Father Joseph. See Benoît Pierre, *Le père Joseph, l'éminence grise de Richelieu* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 174. On Richelieu, see Philippe Erlanger, *Richelieu* (Paris: Perrin, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 641.

<sup>38</sup> The reconciliation obliged her to support those intransigents defending the submission of the great nobles. This position was at odds with the consensus which would have served her interests and also unfavourable to the Protestants. They had supported her consistently and saw in her the widow of Henry the Great, who cared for the heritage of a political balance. According to Dubost, she did not seem to have perceived the drawback of this new political position. Ibidem, 745, 760.

<sup>39</sup> Richelieu placed Claude Bouthillier as Secretary for command, his sister Nicole du Plessis as lady-in-waiting, and in 1625, his niece Mme of Combalet in the place of Nicole du Plessis. Ibidem, 685-686.

<sup>40</sup> In addition to this, the delay of the Spanish help in support of the siege of La Rochelle, which in 1627 had been promised to the French by Olivares, seemed to have heavily influence the radicalisation of the Cardinal Richelieu. Cardinal Richelieu to Bérulle, 20 October 1627, in *Les papiers de Richelieu, section politique intérieure. Correspondance et papiers d'état*, ed. Pierre Grillon (Paris: Pédone, 1975-1979), II, 586.

<sup>41</sup> Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 751.

Medici, the latter's supporters, including Michel of Marillac, were arrested: it was the Day of the Dupes.

## **II.5. 1631-1642: The Factions in Exile, the Reinforcement of the Royal Power**

Marie of Medici was arrested in Compiègne, on 19 February 1631. She subsequently made a strategic error by fleeing to reach the Spanish Netherlands<sup>42</sup> with the complicity of her domestic clientele: La Mazure, Bernard Potier and Maupas du Tour. As she intended to wage a war against her son from abroad, Marie of Medici destroyed her political image in France.<sup>43</sup> Her supporters were declared guilty of lese-majesty on 12 August 1631.<sup>44</sup> Exile struck the princesses who had encouraged the Queen mother: the Princess of Conti, and the duchesses of Elbeuf,<sup>45</sup> Ognano and Roannez. These three joined Marie of Medici in the Netherlands together with the Duke of Vendôme. The Duke of Guise left for Italy, where he died in 1640.

According to Jean-François Dubost, the Queen mother was in the Netherlands «suspect in the eyes of every party».<sup>46</sup> Olivares was informed that Marie of Medici's followers included many spies, paid by Richelieu.<sup>47</sup> Marie of Medici suggested some new conspiracies to Spain,<sup>48</sup> but she was often betrayed by the nobility in exile, who used these plots to negotiate their return to France.<sup>49</sup> Without money, the Queen mother was no longer a major political force and therefore many nobles turned away from her.

France declared war on Spain on 19 May 1635. In the context of a war, Marie of Medici could prove a significant asset for Spain in the course of the negotiations, all the more as she had found an ally who was a real war leader: the Count of Soissons. In addition, after the storming of Corbie in August 1636, Philip IV demanded openly to Louis XIII that the Queen mother would be reinstalled in her office in France. But the death of the Count of Soissons in 1641 tipped the balance of power in favour of the French King. Even the Potiers returned to France.

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<sup>42</sup> As for them, the Spanish diplomats seemed totally taken aback by Marie of Medici's arrival, such as shown by Council of State and the archdukes' messages. Count-Duke of Olivares to Philip IV, Madrid, 1638, AHN, E, leg. 869, fos 166-170v; *Consulta sobre si la Reina de España había de responder a la carta de su madre la Reina de Francia*, 1638, AGS, E, K1644-D9.

<sup>43</sup> Her belongings and her dower were held: she relied financially only on Philippe IV's generosity. Ibidem.

<sup>44</sup> Marillac and Montmorency were executed in 1632. Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 792-793.

<sup>45</sup> Catherine of Bourbon, daughter of Gabrielle d'Estrées.

<sup>46</sup> Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 837.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem, 831.

<sup>48</sup> Marie de Medici thus suggested taking Calais as well as a revolt in the Languedoc. She also sought to negotiate her return to France, playing the card of ecclesiastical mediation by Mazarin in July 1635. But the latter torpedoed any request. Ibidem, 821.

<sup>49</sup> Between 1632 and 1635, Marie de Medici lost the support of the Princess of Phalsbourg, of Thomas de Savoy, of the Duchess of Ognano and of the Duke of Elbeuf. Ibidem.



Spanish diplomacy neglected the Queen mother, who decided to go the United Provinces in August 1638.<sup>50</sup> But for the Dutch as for the English who welcomed her in 1641, the Queen mother had become *persona non grata*, politically of no use, or even embarrassing, because she was heavily in debt. The Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinand II was the only one who accepted to receive her, in 1642. She died on the road from Cologne, before setting foot on Italian ground.

Marie of Medici ceaselessly shifted her alliances: as a queen first and then as a regent; as party leader, she even went as far as to threaten the royal power of her son. Her progress illustrated how the game of factions at the court did not solely operate around the female sovereigns. The next Queen of France, Anne of Austria, was no exception to this.

### III. The Parties at the Court of Anne of Austria

#### III.1. 1615-1638: The Party of the Victims of Richelieu

In 1615, the Princes of the Blood' opposition to the Spanish marriages impeded the triumphal arrival of Anne of Austria to the court. Her position at court was also weakened by the infertility of the royal couple, which Anne of Austria harshly experienced.<sup>51</sup> The King's hostility towards his spouse was also promoted by her too numerous trail of Spanish servants and the privileges she had granted the Spanish ambassador – while Princess Elisabeth in Madrid was not allowed to guarantee the same privileges.<sup>52</sup> Anne of Austria also proved reckless as she compromised her reputation because of the Duke of Buckingham's affair and was involved in the Chalais conspiracy.<sup>53</sup> Marie of Medici's jealousy and distrust also meant that the new Queen could not easily find her place at the court of France.<sup>54</sup> In 1615 the opponents to the Queen mother had their leader, Condé, and sporadically Gaston of Orléans. The others, such as Luynes, woo the King with the hope of obtaining Concini's fall. At that time, Anne of Austria was at the margin of the struggles between factions.

It was only with the assassination of Concini and the exile of the Queen mother to Blois in 1617 that Anne of Austria's rank at court was truly

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<sup>50</sup> John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn* (London: Everyman, 2006), 39.

<sup>51</sup> Her miscarriage in 1622 created tensions in the couple. Laurent Avezou, "Les deux reines. Anne d'Autriche au miroir de son temps," in Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 325.

<sup>52</sup> Philip III to Duke of Monteleón, AGS, K1454, fol. 78; Marquis of Mirabel to Philip III, Paris, 14 November 1620, AGS, K1454, fol. 148; Philip III to Louis XIII, 24 November 1620, AGS K1455, fol. 190. See also María José del Río Barredo and Jean-François Dubost, "La présence étrangère autour d'Anne d'Autriche (1615-1666)," in Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 120-121.

<sup>53</sup> Jean-François Dubost, "Anne d'Autriche, reine de France: mise en perspective et bilan politique du règne (1615-1666)," in Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 45.

<sup>54</sup> Instead of enjoying the first rank after her husband in monarchical ceremonies, she must surrender that place to her mother-in-law. See Dubost, "Anne d'Autriche", 43.

recognised. In 1620 Louis XIII entrusted her with regency *in absentia*,<sup>55</sup> while he waged the latest war against his mother. The reconciliation between mother and son sent Anne of Austria back to absolute «political nothingness» among the French elites until 1628.<sup>56</sup> Her incapacity to give an heir to the King was the main factor: indeed, who would have invested in a potentially repudiable Queen?

Nonetheless, from 1628 common hostility against Richelieu reconciled Anne of Austria and Marie of Medici.<sup>57</sup> In 1631, following the Day of the Dupes, the exile of the Queen mother and then of Gaston of Orléans, made Anne of Austria appear as a suitable leader for the opponents to Richelieu. This perspective was summarised by La Rochefoucauld: «To me, the domination of Cardinal of Richelieu was unfair. I thought that the Queen's party was the only one that was honest and that one could follow».<sup>58</sup>

Behind the word “unfair” is the idea of a strong preoccupation among factions to find a new opposition’s leader and the fear to disappear from the chessboard of Court’s power. Thus, the Queen was at the head of a party by default and not because of any personal effort on her part: this was a major difference from Marie of Medici. Anne of Austria also enjoyed a narrower margin of manoeuvre at the court than her mother-in-law: in 1626, Richelieu ensured that she could neither nominate anyone in her household nor promote any servant; her financial autonomy was also more limited than Marie de Medici’s.<sup>59</sup> The Duchess of Chevreuse was her main ally: she acted under the pseudonym of «la Chevette»<sup>60</sup> as a spy inside and outside the Court with all the opponents to the Cardinal. Richelieu arranged for the duchess to be exiled to Touraine in 1631. In 1637, Richelieu disclosed to the King the secret correspondence between Anne of Austria and the Duchess of Chevreuse as well as and with her brothers, Philip IV and the Cardinal-Infant, at the very time when France had been at war against Spain for two years.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> The regency *in absentia* of 1636 was purely symbolic: Louis XIII, at war against his mother, did not have anyone else to whom he could entrust the kingdom. The Queen was under the supervision of a council of ministers. Ibidem.

<sup>56</sup> Alain Hugon highlights that the Spanish ambassador, Mirabel, no longer had the possibility to access her rooms. In addition, her diplomatic correspondence gives an account of the court's hostility towards the Queen and rumours of marriage's cancellation in the absence of an heir. Hugon, *Au service du roi catholique*, 194. See also the letters of Marquis of Mirabel and Navaz, March-April 1629, AGS, K1437, fol. 75.

<sup>57</sup> The irony is that this reconciliation had been wanted and initiated by the cardinal, to bring back harmony among the royal couple, solve the issue of the conception of an heir and put an end to any claim of Gaston of Orléans to the throne. Dubost, “Anne d’Autriche”, 45.

<sup>58</sup> Duke of La Rochefoucauld, *Mémoires*, in his *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 46.

<sup>59</sup> According to Jean-François Dubost, what made the revolts of Marie of Medici possible were the financial opportunities which she could dispose of. The income from her dower and annuities increased her solvency and allowed her to borrow money at favourable terms. Richelieu will not forget it to later neutralise Anne of Austria. Dubost, *Marie de Médicis*, 253, 616.

<sup>60</sup> Duchess of Chevreuse to the Count-Duke of Olivares, n. d., AAE, Correspondance diplomatique, Espagne, vol. 6, leg. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Dubost, “Anne d’Autriche”, 49.

### III.2. 1638-1651: The Regency: the Regency and the Fronde

Fortunately for the Queen, the birth of Louis Dieudonné on 5 September 1638 at last established Anne of Austria in her role and status as Queen of France. The birth of Philippe, two years later, sanctioned the naturalisation of Anne of Austria in the eyes of the French. From that moment onwards, her political positioning progressed towards the defence of her son's interest and therefore she reconciled with Richelieu. In 1642 the conspiracy of Cinq-Mars projected the assassination of the cardinal and involved Gaston of Orléans, the Duke of Bouillon, Cinq-Mars and La Rochefoucauld, with the backup of Spain. La Rochefoucauld suspected the Queen to have transmitted to Richelieu a copy of the Madrid treaty which revealed the scope of the conspiracy:

*The circumstances which led to the disclosure of that terrible Spanish treaty remain uncertain and, without limiting myself to the various suspicions which hung over the loyalty or the silence of those who knew about it, it is preferable to choose an innocent opinion and believe that this treaty was found in the mail suitcase from Spain, which is nearly always opened when it travels through Paris.*<sup>62</sup>

After Louis XIII's death on 14 May 1643, Anne of Austria became the regent of the kingdom.<sup>63</sup> The deceased King had organised the regency according to the model of regency *in absentia* by placing the Queen under the ministers' political supervision.<sup>64</sup> Anne of Austria did not agree that the King's power, which she exercised in his name, should be shared: on 18 May 1643, she had Louis XIV hold his first *Lit de Justice* in order that he would revoke his father's will and restore the absolute power of the queen in her capacity as regent.

The rivalries between factions had changed in comparison to Marie de Medici's regency. At that time rebellions were a good business: Henri, Prince of Condé, negotiated at a high price the balance of power with the royal power. By contrast, under Richelieu rebellion resulted in decapitation, as that of the Count of Montmorency. Richelieu had consequently raised both a strong opposition and great loyalties, including that of the Prince of Condé, in 1626-27.<sup>65</sup> The Guises supported Anne of Austria, because she came from the Habsburg house and they were favourable to a political line which promoted both peace between Catholics and the stability of the kingdom. Thus, thanks to the intransigence of Richelieu to submit the factions to the State, Anne of

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<sup>62</sup> La Rochefoucauld, *Mémoires*, 56-57.

<sup>63</sup> Gaston of Orléans had discredited himself in the eyes of Louis XIII by his repeated rebellions. Dubost, "Anne d'Autriche", 55.

<sup>64</sup> The Council was composed by Gaston of Orléans, Henri Prince of Condé and the men in government, Mazarin, Séguier, Bouthillier and Chavigny, all allies of Richelieu. Ibidem, 56.

<sup>65</sup> On that point, see the studies of Arlette Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte. La noblesse française et la gestation de l'Etat moderne (1559-1661)* (Paris: Fayard, 1989) and Katia Beguin, *Les princes de Condé: rebelles, courtisans et mécènes dans la France du Grand Siècle* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1999).

Austria began her regency under good auspices as she could rely on the support of the two main rival clans at court.

Initially, the Queen sought a consensus and called back the exiled who were the former opponents to Richelieu: Marshal Bassompierre, the Marquis of La Vieuville, the Duke of Elbeuf, the Duchess of Chevreuse, the Duke of La Valette, Fontrailles. Their leader was the Duke of Beaufort, the son of the Duke of Vendôme.<sup>66</sup>

As highlighted by Jean-François Dubost,<sup>67</sup> while Marie of Medici wanted to identify her action with the defence of peace, Anne of Austria established hers on dynastic defence, which compelled her to continue Richelieu's politics. In a favourable context to the French<sup>68</sup>, the Regent took the decision to continue the war against her own family, the Habsburg.<sup>69</sup> But the pursue of this political line also compelled Anne of Austria to support the next minister nominated by Louis XIII, Cardinal Mazarin.<sup>70</sup> This decision was particularly misunderstood by her exiled supporters, who tried to plot so that Mazarin would fall. Anne of Austria responded by arresting the Duke of Beaufort, on 2 September 1643. Here is a new difference of reaction: where Marie of Medici tried to buy the opposition, Anne of Austria chose intransigence following the manners of Richelieu.<sup>71</sup> As a consequence, the group of discontents could unify their complains: ingratitude was consequently the reason for the former allies of the Queen - La Rochefoucauld and the Duchess of Chevreuse - to rebel against her.

From the beginning of the conflicts, the political legitimacy of Anne of Austria was openly contested by the *mazarinades* (5500 pamphlets written in five years).<sup>72</sup> The Regent also suffered from the bad image of Marie of Medici due to the propaganda organised by Richelieu to discredit female power but, unlike Marie de Medici, Anne of Austria decided not to fight the propaganda war and refused to justify her action.<sup>73</sup> She did not have the same finances available to Marie de Medici in order to build a clientele, so she tried to resort to a multiplicity of honours. Between 1648 and 1652 she created twenty duke-

<sup>66</sup> Dubost, "Anne d'Autriche", 65-66.

<sup>67</sup> Ibidem, 86.

<sup>68</sup> Indeed, in 1648, peace in Westphalia freed France of a war with the Emperor. Louis XIV had obtained the recognition of French sovereignty over the three bishoprics which had been occupied since 1552 and of his feudal rights over the landgraviate of lower Alsace. However, Spain refused to deal with France. Ibidem, 69.

<sup>69</sup> The famous sentence uttered by Anne of Austria when she joined Philip IV on the occasion of Louis XIV's wedding in 1660, followed naturally in the wake of this political line: «May your Majesty forgive me for being such a good French woman, I owed it to the King, my son and to France». According to Fanny Cosandey, beyond the humility of the wording, the real office of the queens of France was summarised: to devout themselves to the kingdom and to the King, whether he was a spouse or a son. Fanny Cosandey, "Reines de France, héritières espagnoles," in *Les cours d'Espagne et de France au XVIIe siècle*, eds. Chantal Grell and Benoît Pellistrand (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2007), 61-76.

<sup>70</sup> See also the biography by Claude Dulong, *Mazarin* (Paris: Perrin, 2010).

<sup>71</sup> Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 66.

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem, 82.

<sup>73</sup> Avezou, "Les deux reines", 342.

peerages (a dignity hereditary in the masculine line) and one simple duchy,<sup>74</sup> which opened access to the duchy to certain families originating in the nobility of the robe, such as the Potiers and the Villeroys.<sup>75</sup> In times of crisis, the Marshal's baton was another way to reward outstanding war leaders such as Turenne in 1643 and Plessis-Praslin in 1645.<sup>76</sup>

Between June 1648 and 1649 the Fronde essentially concerned political and administrative claims made by members of the Parliament.<sup>77</sup> It consisted of rebellions with little organisation or structure that were repressed by the Prince Louis of Condé, who successfully led the siege of Paris between January and March 1649. The strategy of civil war which was adopted in 1649 proved efficient to rally urban financial circles to the Queen's party, seen that the rebels were engaging in systematic looting.<sup>78</sup>

The second phase of the Fronde (March 1649-1651) was called «the Fronde of the princes» and relied on the discontentment of the Prince of Condé, who felt insufficiently rewarded for his efforts.<sup>79</sup> Once again, ingratitude was the cause for important changes in the political chessboard. Indeed, Mazarin had begun to build a network of loyal followers and he exercised his patronage above all in the military to the detriment of Condé's influence. Condé succeeded in gathering behind him various powerful social groups of opponents: the parliaments, the state nobility, the towns' corporations and the representatives of the high nobility. During that time, part of the allies engaged in negotiations, betrayed the alliance, struggled against their former allies and occasionally joined them.<sup>80</sup> Each of these groups was animated by the desire to weak the King's position but at the same time each feared to reinforce the position of a rival faction.

In January 1649, the royal family left Paris to flee to Saint-Germain-en-Laye: it was the eve of Twelfth-Night. Condé defeated the royal army in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the bourgeois of Paris opened him the city's doors. When he entrusted his friends and supporters with some important posts, some divisions emerged. The parliament of Paris split between the «jusqu'aux-boutistes» and the moderates who were favourable to negotiating with the Regent. In January 1650, Anne of Austria got Condé arrested as well as his brother Conti and their brother-in-law, the Duke of Longueville. In January 1651, Gaston of Orléans joined the party of the princes and Mazarin went away to Cologne, from where he continued to advise Anne of Austria.<sup>81</sup> The political crisis of that second phase was played between various parties:

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<sup>74</sup> Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 83.

<sup>75</sup> The quarrels of precedence which resulted at the court of Anne of Austria were mocked in the *mazarinades*. BNF, mss Clairambault, 718, fol. 159. See also Fanny Cosandey's analysis about this episode: Fanny Cosandey, "Les préséances à la cour des reines de France," in Pouttrin and Schaub, *Femmes et pouvoir politique*, 267-278.

<sup>76</sup> Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 83.

<sup>77</sup> See the studies of Robert Descimon and Christian Jouhaud, *La France du premier XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Belin, 1996), ch. 6.

<sup>78</sup> Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 85.

<sup>79</sup> Ibidem, 67-69.

<sup>80</sup> Elias, *La société de cour*, 190.

<sup>81</sup> Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 74.

the parliament, the Cardinal of Retz, the princes, and the party of Anne of Austria/Mazarin. The Cardinal of Retz believed that he could supersede Mazarin; the Prince of Condé claimed that he had no intention to reform the state but as a prince of the blood he intended to replace Mazarin as regent.<sup>82</sup> Mazarin presented his party as the King's and that of political legitimacy even though he acted like a great noble, by defending his interests and his clientele.

Each party sought to triumph in order to impose their vision of the power and for that purpose they did not hesitate to compromise yesterday's alliances. The strategy of Anne of Austria's party was to save time until Louis XIV would come of age and approve the Regent's measures.

### III.3. 1651-1666: the Triumph of the Queen's Party and of Mazarin

In order to avoid for Louis XIV to become hostile to them as Louis XIII had been towards Concini, Mazarin and Anne of Austria chose very early to initiate Louis XIV to the affairs of the kingdom. In December 1651, Louis XIV reached his majority and agreed with Anne of Austria to recall Mazarin. The consequence was named «the Union of both Frondes». The opposition was this time directed against Louis XIV.<sup>83</sup> Paris's Hôtel de Ville was ransacked by the supporters of the Prince of Condé in July 1652, but the war was unpopular and, without financial support, the rebels divided: Condé, Gaston of Orléans and the parliament were competing for power while the countryside was plundered and beggars flowed into towns.<sup>84</sup> The King's support to Mazarin, the lack of popularity of rebellions and the faltering support from abroad – Spain itself was at war against France and its poor finances did not allow providing much help to the opposition – forced Condé to exile. On 13 October he travelled to the Spanish Netherlands in order to join the service of Philip IV, who immediately promoted him *generalissimo* of his troupes in the Netherlands.<sup>85</sup> The population of Paris gave in to the sovereigns and Mazarin recovered his position at the head of the government in February 1653.

The same year, Mazarin called all his family from Rome to naturalise them French and one of his nieces married the Prince of Conti. Conti had seemed to draw the lessons from the failure of his brother Condé and declared his allegiance to Mazarin.<sup>86</sup> Anne of Austria obtained the ratification from the parliament for the naturalisation of Mazarin and his role as the protector of the state during the Fronde. The party of Mazarin and Anne of

<sup>82</sup> According to Guy Joly, Condé «only aims to make himself the absolute master of the cabinet and business». Ibidem, 80

<sup>83</sup> The *Lit de justice* held on 22 October 1652 by the King in the Louvre in front of the parliament cancelled all legislation passed during the Fronde. Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 82-83.

<sup>84</sup> Christian Jouhaud, «Révoltes et contestations d'Ancien Régime», in *Histoire de la France, l'État et les conflits*, ed. André Bouguieres and Jacques Revel (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 44.

<sup>85</sup> The parliament of Paris declared Condé guilty of lese-majesty, condemned him to capital sentence *in absentia* and confiscated all his properties and offices to the King's profit. Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 86.

<sup>86</sup> As a reward Conti was nominated governor of Champagne, generalissimo of the King's army in Languedoc and at the death of Gaston of Orléans in 1660, he took over after him as the governor of Languedoc. His wife was chosen in March 1661 to the office of superintendent of the House and Finances of Anne of Austria. Grell, *Anne d'Autriche*, 87.

Austria had triumphed not only by arms but also by law, since it had succeeded in asserting itself as the party of the State.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, this party succeeded in shifting the contractual relationship uniting the King and his subjects from «financed compliance» with the power towards «privilege which was purchased by the subjects and which included granting compliance and financial support to the King».<sup>88</sup>

The unity of the Bourbon family was reinforced by the latest diplomatic triumph of Anne of Austria: the marriage between Louis XIV and the eldest Spanish infanta, Maria Theresa of Austria, in 1660.<sup>89</sup> Anne's withdrawal from politics in 1661, when Mazarin passed away, allowed her to revive her image as the ideal regent, who withdraws from politics as soon as her mission of transfer has been accomplished. She died of breast cancer on 20 January 1666.

#### IV. Conclusions

The grand nobles, a limited circle linked to royalty,<sup>90</sup> were those who set themselves up as the protectors of the nobility<sup>91</sup> and determined the interactions of the political parties at court, including the Queen's party. What characterised the identity of these parties at the court were their motivations regarding personal interest, lineage or faction. At the same time, these family networks were not immutable or closed, because they participated in the process of historical changes: the key to their continuity resided in their capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. Thus, in most cases, as for the princes of Condé, the opposition could choose to become loyal to royal power.

Ingratitude was the reason put forward by many rebels or spies for changing party and/or to become an ally of Spain. Nonetheless, the many troubles or internal revolts were neither organised nor thought out in the long term, but they tested the balance of power and reminded to the Crown what it owed to the nobility.<sup>92</sup> If it is true that the term of loyalty implied the notion of allegiance, the religious origins of the nobility's acceptance compelled it to duties towards the King. The aristocrats who plotted with Spain failed their duty of vassalage in order to form «factions composed of clienteles»,

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<sup>87</sup> Ibidem, 88.

<sup>88</sup> Ibidem, 93.

<sup>89</sup> According to Jean-François Dubost, Anne of Austria then experienced the satisfaction to marry her son in her own house which in her eyes was the only alliance worthy of the King, the one which paved the way for France to seize the Spanish inheritance. The alliance with Cromwell's England, in 1655, compelled Philip IV to sign the Pyrenees peace treaty, to the advantage of France. This peace was ratified by the marriage of the eldest infanta Maria-Theresa with Louis XIV, in 1660. Ibidem.

<sup>90</sup> Elias, *La société de cour*, 189.

<sup>91</sup> Ibidem, 193.

<sup>92</sup> Gaston of Orléans's words in a letter to the King of Spain, accurately summarised the position of the nobles on that point: the Spanish support was accepted but in case the armies of the Catholic King entered France «all will turn against him and himself [Sir], while being so obliged to V.M. will be forced to oppose him because if he does not do it, this will outrage all of France against the Duke of Orléans.» Consultation of the Council of State, March 1632, AGS, E, K1421, fol. 4.

according to the expression of Yves Durand,<sup>93</sup> unlike at the time of religious wars. The period studied here reveals how the sense of treason was still under-developed among top nobles of the kingdom and the royal family if one considers Marie of Medici: they claimed to act out of a duty of rebellion against a supposed tyranny. Yet, the question of the boundary between tyranny and monarchy was not well defined. For the nobility, ingratitude and the hogging of honours by a minister were elements of despotism.<sup>94</sup>

Marie de Medici and Anne of Austria maintained extremely variable relationships with the parties at court. Complacent towards opponents when the queens were politically isolated, they became intransigent when they had the responsibility to exercise their power as regents. At the time of Marie of Medici, divisions in the Bourbon family eased the development of court factions. Richelieu's actions and the hardship of civil war allowed the policy of Anne of Austria to triumph. As a consequence, the Bourbon family became more united and the submission of the parties to royal power was ratified against pensions and honours which granted its protection against socio-economical changes. At the end of these regencies, rivalries between factions remained, but the balance of their power compared to royal authority was deeply transformed into the basis for an absolute monarchy.

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<sup>93</sup> Yves Durand, "Clientèles et fidélités dans le temps et dans l'espace," in *Hommage à Roland Mousnier. Clientèles and fidélités en Europe à l'époque moderne*, ed. Yves Durand (Paris: PUF, 1981), 3-24.

<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless the high nobility was rarely condemned for high treason, because royal power needed them for its own prestige. The same was not true for their servants. Hugon, *Au service du roi catholique*, 350-357.