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Sharon Kettering, *Power and Reputation at the Court of Louis XIII: The Career of Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes (1578-1621)*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2008. ix + 265pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$71.22 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-7190-7786-9.

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Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes, the influential personal favorite of Louis XIII, was only in power for four years, from 1617, when he participated in the conspiracy that brought down Concini, favorite of Marie de Medici, and inaugurated Louis XIII's personal rule, and 1621, when Luynes died in December of scarlet fever. Luynes' short period in power and the highly negative assessment of his career and character on the part of most historians from the seventeenth century to the present has meant that his accomplishments and significance have been underrated in historical scholarship. In *Power and Reputation at the Court of Louis XIII: The Career of Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes (1578-1621)* Sharon Kettering sets out to rehabilitate Luynes. In order to accomplish this goal, she focuses in particular on refuting the main criticisms of Luynes that first surfaced in pamphlet literature, really propaganda, that Luynes' enemies wrote and circulated during his lifetime and after. Chief among those enemies, Kettering asserts, was Cardinal Richelieu, Luynes' successor as Louis XIII's favorite. Kettering argues that Richelieu and Luynes' other detractors were successful in blackening Luynes' reputation, and that the smears have enjoyed an extraordinarily long "shelf life" because scholars in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries have for the most part taken at face value the pamphlets and the writings of seventeenth-century scholars in the pay of Richelieu and of others who opposed Luynes for political or personal reasons.

Kettering's project is worthwhile and the result valuable to scholars because despite Luynes' brief career as a favorite, he was a pivotal figure in the reign of Louis XIII for two main reasons. Kettering follows A. Lloyd Moote, who in his important reassessment of Louis XIII demonstrated that Louis was much more assertive and played a much more central role in governing France, even during the ministry of Richelieu, than historians had previously believed.^[1] Thus Kettering does not argue that Luynes exercised any sort of dominant control over either the king or the French government. But it is clear that Luynes' personal support and encouragement played a central role in providing Louis with the self confidence to go forward with the conspiracy that brought down Concini and forced Queen Mother Marie de' Medici to step aside so that Louis could finally take the reigns of government. Eventually Louis would have taken this step, but it is highly likely that it happened sooner and the transition proceeded more smoothly thanks to Luynes. For this reason alone Luynes played a more important historical role than many historians have wanted to concede. Second, Luynes is significant because he was a transitional figure between Concini, who was what Kettering calls a "personal favorite," and Richelieu, who was a "minister favorite who created a national clientele" (p. 237). Moreover, Luynes taught Louis XIII how to govern with a favorite, even though Luynes' style and relationship with the king were quite different from those of Richelieu, who was in power for eighteen years, during which time he never established a strong personal rapport with Louis.

Luynes, in contrast to Richelieu, was all about personal rapport. In part this was due to his precarious position. Except for his promotion to Constable of France during the last year of his life—a promotion that was not particularly successful either in terms of Luynes' performance or of its effect on his

reputation—Luynes' power always rested on his personal relationship with Louis, who was not the easiest man to get along with, even for someone as affable and charming as Luynes. Luynes was more than twenty years older than Louis, and the fatherless young prince enjoyed spending time with Luynes, with whom he shared a passion for falconry. Between 1611 and 1617, when Louis finally entered his personal rule, Louis spent increasing amounts of time with Luynes, making him an ordinary gentleman of the king's bedchamber in 1615, and giving Luynes the money to purchase the office of grand falconer in 1616. By the end of that year Luynes enjoyed the rare privilege of having rooms in the Louvre above the king's own bedchamber so that he and Louis could easily communicate day or night. Kettering sides emphatically with those historians who reject the interpretation that Louis and Luynes had a homosexual relationship, arguing instead that their ties were much closer to those of father and son. But Louis was clearly emotionally dependent on Luynes, and Luynes' support helped the king to wean himself from his emotional dependence on his mother. Luynes was able to build this relationship with the king, Kettering argues, because of those very personality traits that made Luynes such an excellent falconer: patience, sympathy and empathy, intelligence and what we would call today "emotional intelligence," the ability to sense, identify with, and soothe or intensify the feelings of others.

Kettering spends much of the book refuting many of the accusations that Luynes' enemies raised against him—that he was a low-born, cowardly, unintelligent, politically inept opportunist who encouraged his hordes of penurious relatives from the Midi to descend upon the court and in concert with them enriched themselves rapaciously at the expense of the French treasury. Kettering sketches out the Albert de Luynes family history. Although of Italian origin, the family had for six generations been based in the upper Rhône valley, accumulating fiefs on either side of the Rhône River near the strategically important town of Pont-Saint-Esprit. Several generations of Luynes held the post of governor of the town. Luynes' father, like many provincial nobles in the sixteenth century, had a military career but eventually ended up at court, which was increasingly becoming the center of power and patronage that attracted ambitious nobles like moths to the flame. Honoré de Luynes had a checkered career, at times benefitting from royal favor, at others falling out of favor due to imprudent political alliances. But before his father's untimely death when Luynes was thirteen years old, Honoré had managed to obtain for his son a position as a royal page. Luynes lacked the means, and the personality, to be overly ambitious in his career, and remained a page and then in service in the household of the comte Du Lude for an unusually long period of time, from 1591 until 1604, when he obtained the post of a gentleman in the royal *fauconnerie*. Until Louis XIII began to bestow favors and positions in the royal household on Luynes beginning around 1614, Luynes seems to have been content to develop his skills as a falconer and rise in the *fauconnerie*. He did not exhibit signs of an ambitious or greedy nature.

Royal favor did bring fortune and power to Luynes, however, and how he worked to retain and enhance that power tells us much about his personality. In the most innovative chapter of the book Kettering analyzes how Luynes and Louis XIII together used ballet as a form of propaganda that celebrated their joint triumph over Concini and the respective roles of Luynes and Louis in their personal and political relationship. The two choreographed the ballets and danced in them, recruiting other influential nobles to dance as well. Roles in court ballets, especially ones in which the king personally danced, were a powerful form of royal patronage that helped to create and maintain alliances while sending political messages to friend and foe alike. Luynes consistently preferred diplomacy and dance to conflict and overt exercise of authority as he sought to build and secure a network of clients loyal to himself, and in this he operated very differently from Richelieu.

Kettering emphasizes repeatedly that in contrast to Richelieu, Luynes' power always resided in his ability to maintain his personal relationship with Louis. This often meant supporting Louis even in decisions to which Luynes was opposed, such as the successful invasion of Normandy in 1620 and the ill-fated siege of Montauban in 1621, or about which he was dubious, such as the decision not only to arrest Concini but, essentially, to execute him on the spot. Luynes, Kettering argues, was not a coward, as his enemies asserted, but rather preferred compromise and conciliation not only because these were in his nature but also because he recognized that the key to his own power lay in his ability to manipulate patronage and forge alliances. As a principal conspirator in the downfall of Concini, Luynes was well-

aware of how precarious his own position as favorite was, and he knew that he could not risk openly disagreeing with the king, or taking political actions that would lead Louis to become jealous and fearful of him. Louis knew his own mind and intended to rule. Kettering shows, therefore, that many of the decisions, such as the execution of Concini or the siege of Montauban, that had been blamed on Luynes, were really not his responsibility, but rather were Louis' choices that Luynes supported because of his relationship with Louis, regardless of whether or not Luynes personally agreed with them.

Luynes certainly did enrich himself and his family at crown expense. But Kettering analyzes Luynes' fortune and compares it to those of Richelieu and of other powerful nobles who benefited from royal largess, and demonstrates that Luynes was not as rich as his enemies claimed. Nor was Luynes inordinately greedy by the standards of his day. In early modern France it was considered normal and in fact moral for nobles to do everything in their power to enhance the wealth of their relatives. Clientage, the basis of power in this era, required patronage, and patronage necessitated material rewards. Luynes was very good at rewarding his friends and relatives for their loyal support, and usually tried rewarding (bribing) his enemies as well, resorting to harsher measures only when the carrot did not succeed. The king gave Luynes a substantial portion of the Concini fortune as a reward for Luynes' loyal support in the conspiracy, but Luynes probably only obtained about two million of the eight or nine million livres that comprised the total estimated fortune of Concini, well below what Luynes' detractors claimed. Luynes acquired a substantial fortune, therefore, during his four years as royal favorite, and his brothers also obtained offices, titles, and wealth. He rose in wealth and position from a secondary noble with a modest income from land and his office as falconer to that of a great noble with a fortune commensurate with, but not exceeding, that of many other great nobles in France. Moreover, the wealth he acquired pales in comparison to that amassed by Richelieu, his chief detractor, or Mazarin, albeit the latter two men had a much longer period to acquire their fortunes.

The brief duration of Luynes' career makes comparisons between him and his successors as favorite difficult. It also complicates any assessment of his career. Kettering successfully demonstrates that most historical appraisals of Luynes have been based on sources that were for political reasons biased against Luynes, and upon a dubious, uncritical reading of those sources. She makes a strong case for reassessing his achievements and rehabilitating his character. That said, Luynes' untimely death may have in fact proved very timely indeed for the royal favorite, more so than Kettering acknowledges. By 1621 discontent with Luynes was clearly rising both at court and in the provinces, and his weak performance as Constable during the siege of Montauban did not improve his reputation, even if many of the problems that forced the lifting of the siege were not his fault. Louis seems to have begun to snipe at Luynes more often in 1620 and 1621, and made unflattering remarks about Luynes' wealth and the size of his retinue. It is hard to say how Luynes' career may have ended had scarlet fever not claimed his life at the end of 1621. But there seems to be at least a good possibility that he would have ended up disgraced and exiled from court, or worse, as Louis aged and began to cast about for a favorite better endowed with the qualities he needed to assist him in consolidating his power in France and abroad. In other words, Richelieu may have hated and feared Luynes in large part because he perceived Luynes as an obstacle to his own rise to power, but it is possible that Richelieu may have supplanted Luynes anyway within a few years after 1621 precisely because Luynes was the sort of favorite and adviser Louis needed when he was seventeen, but was not able to be the sort of favorite and advisor Louis required ten years later.

Kettering does not speculate in this regard, and rather concludes with an analysis of the impact on Luynes' historical reputation resulting from the pamphlet campaign against him that expanded significantly in the last year of Luynes' life. One wonders to what extent the growth of that campaign was the result of Luynes' enemies sensing that Louis' confidence in Luynes was ebbing during that year. Kettering does a good job of demonstrating that the historical assessment of Luynes has been distorted, and of correcting that distortion. What would have enhanced this book and made it even more useful, however, would have been an assessment of Luynes' career. As a man, the Luynes that Kettering portrays was a much better person, morally and in terms of personality, than Richelieu. Moreover, he possessed more intelligence, courage, and character than historians have credited him with having. But what Kettering does not discuss very much is Luynes' significance. Because Luynes preferred to

operate behind the scenes, and opted for persuasion and compromise over conflict, his impact on royal policy is much harder to trace than that of Richelieu. But we are still left in the end with a portrait of a good man, for the most part, but one whose role in Louis' reign, impact on the course of events and historical significance remain in the shadows where Luynes himself seems to have felt most comfortable.

NOTES

[1] A. Lloyd Moote, *Louis XIII, the Just*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

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