

AT: Welcome to the Infinite Women podcast. I'm your host, Allison Tyra, and today I'm joined by historian, author and royal commentator, Dr. Carolyn Harris, who teaches history at the University of Toronto. She is the author of *Queenship and Revolution in Early Modern Europe* and co-editor of the English Consort Series published by Palgrave MacMillan, and she's here to talk about queens and revolution. So let's start with how we're defining revolution in this context.

CH: Yes, revolution can be defined in a variety of different ways, and sometimes it can be applied to bigger social or religious movements like the Reformation or the Enlightenment, and it can be applied to all sorts of different kinds of political change. In my own research into queenship and revolution, I focus on events where it's not simply the monarch who is under attack, but monarchical government itself. So definitely there have been revolutionary time periods where particular monarchs have attracted a great deal of opposition. In my first book on Magna Carta and its gifts to Canada, I looked at Magna Carta being imposed on King John by his barons in 1215, and certainly the barons wanted to see limits on King John's power. They wanted to see some degree of oversight to the monarch's arbitrary rule, wanted to ensure that England was governed according to the promises that have been made in past coronation charters, such as that of Henry I, and we see a very wide range of opposition to King John - the papal legate, 25 rebel barons, the Prince of Wales, the King of Scotland. All of these figures all coming together to limit King John's rule, but it's not an attack on monarchical government as a whole. After King John's death, his little son Henry III becomes king at the age of 9, as one of the clauses in Magna Carta was that an underage heir was not to be deprived of his inheritance. So this time period where the first barons war was underway, there was a French invasion. This could have led to the end of King John's family being on the throne, but this was really an effort to limit the power of an unsuitable monarch who was breaking all of those norms expected of a medieval monarch.

So that's a case where the opposition is against the monarch. And in the cases where I've researched regarding queenship and revolution, we have a wider attack on monarchical government - the English Civil Wars, for instance, that led to the overthrow and beheading of Charles I. The French Revolution of 1789, where you have a brief period of constitutional monarchy for Louis XVI. But then we have the declaration of a French Republic, we have The Terror, we have the execution of Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette. And then in 1917, the Russian Revolutions, the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in March 1917 in the February Revolution, as Russia was under the Julian calendar at that time. And then Lenin and the Bolshevik Party coming to power with the October Revolution in November of 1917.

And in all three of these cases, because the opposition is to monarchical government, rather than just to the monarch, we see these instances of those who were opposing the monarchy as a whole, initially being uncomfortable attacking the monarch directly. So there's all sorts of ways around this, one of which is to say the monarch is surrounded by evil advisors. And that is a trope as old as time, that some advisors need to be removed. And often that was how some of the early opposition unfolded.

But then we see those who weren't always comfortable attacking the monarch directly did feel more comfortable attacking the monarch's consort, the queen or the empress, who was a foreign woman, sometimes of a different religious background. If there was a European war or conflict, that she might be seen as possibly being on the wrong side, whether that was accurate or not. And often debates about the influence of the monarch's spouse end up becoming part of these wider debates about the role of women in the family and in society. And during all these periods of revolution, often there's bigger debates unfolding about what role should women be playing in the public eye. And we start seeing women's influence being associated with court culture. And some of these revolutionary movements, even when both men and women are very strongly involved in these revolutionary movements, these movements end up portraying themselves as restoring this sort of masculine rule against all these feminine influences that were there in court culture.

So we see the monarch being portrayed as, often as a hen-pecked husband at various times and placed in the context of these wider debates concerning in the 17th century, the influence of Catholic wives over their Protestant husbands in England and Scotland. Or in France, debates in the Enlightenment, was a women's

subordination to men? Was this a civic condition or was it natural law, as a Rousseau argued. And then of course, with the early 20th century with the Russian Revolution and World War I, women were achieving more and more leadership roles in the public eye with the First World War. So discussion and debate was ensuing about what women's roles should be in this rapidly changing society. So we see women and power becoming part of not just these political change, but social change of the time period as well.

AT: It's really interesting that we're talking about the queens being scapegoated. So whether that's Tsarina Alexandra's obsession with Rasputin or Marie Antoinette being solely blamed for the excesses of the French court at that time and saying that "these are why the monarch can't be trusted because look what his wife is doing." But what's really interesting to me in that regard is that I feel like with both the Russian and French revolutions, you had situations where the men were promising that the women would be equal. So the whole fraternite, liberte, egalite; the Russian revolutionaries claiming that, well, in our society, women will have equality. But inevitably, that doesn't happen.

CH: Well, it's complicated in that during the French Revolution, the National Assembly is created. There's a whole debate regarding who should be represented in the National Assembly and it's agreed that religious minorities, Jewish people, Protestant Huguenots, who traditionally been persecuted in Catholic France, they should have representatives in the National Assembly representatives, landowners who were mixed race arriving from San Domingue, which later became Haiti, which has its own revolution. And one of Napoleon's sisters was there for part of this revolution at that time as her husband was expected to restore order there, which did not happen. So we see people of various racial backgrounds stepping into the National Assembly. But when it came to the issue of women sitting in the National Assembly, that was too revolutionary for the French Revolution. Even though there are such profound female thinkers during this time, Madam Roland, Lucile Desmoulins, the wife of the journalist Camille Desmoulins. There were very prominent women involved in crafting a lot of these ideas regarding the French Revolution. Of course, we have the march of the of the Market Women of Paris on Versailles in late 1789 that led to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette and their children being removed to Paris to the Tuileries Palace.

In terms of women having their own independent political power, Olympe de Gouges, the playwright, she famously publishes the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*, which took the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* and made clear that women should have the same responsibilities, the same rights, and should face the same penalties, that they shouldn't be viewed as children being subject to their husbands. And it's interesting, Olympe de Gouges, despite her revolutionary views, dedicates the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman* to Marie Antoinette, as that's the most prominent woman at court who she can think of at that time. And Olympe de Gouges ultimately was beheaded during The Terror. And we see some of the more revolutionary ideas regarding family structure, illegitimate children having the same rights as legitimate children to inherit, for instance, some of these efforts to make divorce easier, efforts to introduce more equality in the family. Napoleon Bonaparte, who was quite conservative in many ways, would roll all of that back with the Napoleonic Civil Code. And he would focus on higher education for men, training at civil servants. Certainly his stepdaughter and his sisters went to a private school run by a Madame Campan, a former lady in waiting of Marie Antoinette. But in terms of public education for women in France at the secondary level, that doesn't really come in until the 1880s.

And so it's interesting to see the French Revolution had begun in this environment of liberty, equality, fraternity, but that brotherhood didn't necessarily mean there would be equal rights for women, especially after that first revolutionary ferment. And we see the same thing with the Russian Revolution, that the International Women's Day March in March of 1917 was key to the disorder in St. Petersburg beginning that would lead to the abdication of Nicholas II. And Nicholas and his wife, Alexandra, didn't take this as seriously as they should have. Alexandra thought it was that milder weather. It was a balmy - 5 Celsius. So lots of people were out and about who normally wouldn't be out in the winter. And she thought just when the

weather

gets colder again, that everyone will go back inside. And Nicholas was willing to admit there were supply chain issues. There was problems getting bread to the cities. There were women standing in long bread lines after working in the munitions factories. But he thought just once they win the war, all of this can be addressed, the view of how much longer could World War I go on, the United States will hopefully join. And this will be the end of the supply chain issues. So Nicholas did acknowledge there were problems, but thought that these could be addressed. Alexandra dismissed all of this as hooligans, people running around in the comparatively balmy weather and didn't take this as seriously as she should have. We know that the women who came out of munitions factories then went to metalworking factories and threw snowballs at the windows to get the men to come out and march as well. And so the men described the women shouting for them to come out and go on strike. And then the soldiers not wanting to fire on groups of women and children. And we see in the photographs, lots of onlookers. This is where Alexandra may have had a point about the slightly milder weather. Lots of people not involved in these marches coming out to have a look. They're smiling at the cameras. We get the sense of lots of people out and about seeing what's happening here.

So once Nicholas abdicates, as it was clear that his generals were not going to violently put down these uprisings in St. Petersburg, and they weren't going to keep fighting the war under his command. And also, Alexandra and their children were stuck at the Alexander Palace. The children had the measles. So Nicholas wasn't really in a position to continue to fight on alone when he was separated from his family in this way. So after Nicholas abdicates, the new provisional government that came to power promised there would be votes for men and women once elections were held. They were planned for early 1918. And so we get suffragettes from various parts of the world. Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Sylvia, for instance, thought that there was this brave new world being created in Russia, that women were allowed to serve in the armed forces. This was seen as a way of shaming the men who were deserting, if regiments of women were going off to war. So there are many women around the world who thought that this is a brave new world where there's going to be opportunities for women.

This changes with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. We do get the first female cabinet minister, Alexandra Kollontai, who was the minister of social welfare. She had difficulty taking charge of her own department as the staff there didn't really believe she was the new minister, and initially thought she was another impoverished war widow looking for aid and that she had to explain that she was now the minister of social welfare. But she wanted greater social change than her male colleagues felt comfortable with, that she thought that women were being oppressed within the family structure, that there needed to be big communal meal halls so that women aren't always having to cook and clean for their families. We need more communal family life, easier divorce.

She was in favor of free love. And this made her male colleagues quite uncomfortable, Lenin and Trotsky and Stalin. They were interested in collectivizing the farms and the means of production. They weren't interested in upheaval to the family structure in quite the same way. So Alexandra Kollontai only has a year in power as a government minister. She eventually becomes ambassador to Norway, she goes on having a career in the Soviet system.

But when we look at the Soviet Union, they tended to keep their wives in the background and there weren't that many high-ranking women in their own right. So it's interesting that when Mikhail Gorbachev's wife, Raisa Gorbachev, passed away, she was described as the most influential Kremlin wife since the Tsarina Alexandra. So it's interesting to see that in terms of Gorbachev's close relationship with his wife and her influence, what was coming to mind for many commentators both in the West and in Russia was Nicholas and Alexandra. So it's interesting to see in both the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution, there were initially women who were very significant to these movements and a lot of promises that there would be more rights for women. But changing conditions within the home, providing women with greater political power that that proved to be more difficult even as new forms of employment, particularly in the 20th century, were opening up to women. It was a lot harder for them to achieve political representation, especially when the idea of women exerting influence

was associated with Marie Antoinette or with the Tsarina Alexandra, who'd become quite controversial figures.

AT: When we're talking about the invisible labor of women, the unpaid domestic labor that even today, it seems like a lot of guys just think the laundry gets done by magic like a Disney movie. But you do have to assume that there is an understanding of the value of that work by these men in charge. You have to assume that they've realized that if we let the women leave the home, who's going to cook the meals, who's going to take care of the children, who's going to clean the house? It is sort of funny that as we're talking about communal shared labor and overthrow of capitalism and all of that, it's like, well, it all comes back to the women's labor.

CH: Well, it's very interesting to see the debates regarding women's labor have gone back in the past, more centuries than we might think. We tend to think controversies about women working outside the home are a 20th century phenomenon. But Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed that in a state of nature that women were in this natural subordinate role to men, which is very different from what Diderot and d'Alembert wrote in the *Encyclopédie* about that it was a civic subordination, that it's simply the way our society is structured and people who live in our society live like this. And it's not necessarily the only way to live. Rousseau argued that it was natural for women to be in these roles. And he very much condemned mothers sending out their children to be wet-nursed. And we tend to think of that as something that royal women or aristocratic women did, that Marie Antoinette wanted to nurse her first child herself as she'd heard about Rousseau and these ideas of nature and wanted to nurse her daughter. And her mother, the Empress Maria Theresa, urged her to send her daughter to be wet-nursed so that she could become pregnant as quickly as possible with a son, as nursing was seen as having a contraceptive effect, which for women further up the social scale, if you wanted to have more children, it was seen that nursing your own children would slow that down. If you were further down the social scale, perhaps the contraceptive effect was seen as something very useful. So we tend to associate wet nurses with something that royalty does, that Marie Antoinette's being urged to employ one. But Rousseau was, in fact, criticizing not just well-to-do women, but the wives of artisans in cities, for instance, sending their babies out to the countryside to be nursed by peasants. There were many reasons for this. The cities were seen as being unhealthy. There were disease epidemics there that weren't good for young children with the infant mortality rate being as it was. But also, a blacksmith shop is not going to be the most child-friendly place for children crawling around. This is also why swaddling was very popular at that time and Rousseau also spoke against that. But it enabled the wives of merchants and artisans to go back to work as quickly as possible, be able to work in the shops, selling the goods that were being made by their husband.

So we get these debates about women and the family. During the First World War in Russia, many women were volunteering to become nurses, far more than there was training available. And so we remember this from Boris Pasternak's novel, *Dr. Zhivago*, where Lara says, "I'm not a trained nurse, I'm a volunteer." And at that time during the First World War, there was a perception of these wartime nurses, these new opportunities for women that were opening up, that many were either under-trained or were simply there to follow the troops. So these postcards that depicted the Empress Alexandra and her daughters in their nursing uniforms, as they did train very well under Russia's first female surgeon of the Princess Gedroits, some who trained them in their nursing skills, that these postcards went over very well in Britain, where there was a much longer history dating back to Florence Nightingale and the Crimean War, women nursing. But in Russia, because there was this perception of either nurses being useless women or chasing after the soldiers, that it was seen as being beneath the dignity of an empress and her daughters to be in nursing uniforms, some of the officers being nursed by Nicholas and Alexandra's daughters felt embarrassed, the idea of having the emperor's daughter changing your bedpan, for instance, was not something they wanted to experience.

So it's interesting to see that where we have women in what we might think of as the workforce, whether further up the social scale or further down the social scale, we get these debates about what is appropriate based on class and gender and family responsibilities. And that goes back a very long time. It is not a debate that comes out of the '50s and the '60s and the post-World War II in environment. And where we see very

prominent women, assuming new roles in the public eye, that this would lead to discussion and debate about what the trickle-down influence of this would be if the empress and her daughters are training to be nurses, yet that many other women are going to see that as a way for them to contribute to the war effort.

AT: I feel like we're also getting into the, I would say, tired trope of restricting what women are allowed to do in the name of protecting them, which is ridiculous in a couple ways, but is also quite infantilizing, I think. But this was one of the arguments against like women's suffrage is, oh, no, politics is a dirty business. We don't want it corrupting the women. And it's always hilarious because they put women up on this pedestal, but also ignore a lot of times like the working class women. So the idea that like women can't have jobs, like well, you're talking about middle-class women, lower class women have always had to work.

CH: Yes. And certainly, Canadian suffragists like Nellie McClung, some of whom here were farm women in Manitoba, made very clear that they thought it was ridiculous that they were considered too delicate to vote, considering the amount of farm chores that they were doing, the amount of heavy labor that was expected of women on the frontier in societies in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Australian and New Zealand women achieved the vote sooner than they did in Britain and the United States. It's important to keep in mind, however, that the idea of voting and political participation, this changes over time that in Britain, until the Great Reform Bill of 1832, most men couldn't vote as well. So women not being able to vote, it didn't stand out to the same degree as most men were not 40 shilling freeholders and were unable to vote themselves. But gradually over the course of the 19th century in Britain, more of these bills are passed that allow votes for men, votes for middle-class men, eventually working-class men as well. And then it stood out that even the most well-born ladies weren't able to vote. So some of the earliest examples of votes for women had a class element to those votes for ladies, that why was it that well-to-do women who were used to having leadership roles in their communities and having a lot of influence at a municipal level were not able to vote more widely.

Also, there were changes to how voting took place over time. Initially, before the secret ballot, voting could be a very violent affair with gangs of toughs there for either side. And so the argument was made that if women were trying to vote in this environment where the drinks were flowing freely and there were groups of toughs, that they could be assaulted. And certainly there are cases of suffragists being manhandled, assaulted in really awful ways while they were marching for the vote, that there were clearly men who saw this as an excuse. You couldn't normally grab a strange woman on the street, but the suffragette marches in Britain were seen that men could behave badly to women in this way. But once the secret ballot is introduced and voting becomes more genteel, so to speak, the arguments for being unsafe for women really fell away that once again, when there hadn't been the secret ballot, it wasn't particularly safe go for regular men to be stepping up to the polls. You could easily end up in a drunken fight if you were on the wrong side. But as voting became more genteel in Britain, that the arguments for keeping women away for their own safety made at less and less sense.

In places like Russia, which was going from, the serfs had just been freed in 1861, and so the society was going very quickly from feudalism to industrialization to the overthrow of Nicholas II and the provisional government. It seemed that there was a great deal of work to be done to create a society that would mirror those in Western Europe, and we get the debates between the Slavophiles and the Westernizers. Those who argued that this newly revolutionary Russia should look like a Western European society, and those who argued this is Russia, we do things differently, and that this should be a very different society.

In France, there had long been a debate about women's roles in the public eye. Louis XIV, for instance, had tried to limit women owning their own businesses and having their own purchasing power, trying to reinforce that sort of male headship of the family. But there were many men who appreciated their wives carrying on dressmaking businesses on the side, that was useful additional income. So even though Louis XIV was an absolute monarch, he couldn't really enforce at the village level what was happening in terms of women's employment. So we get the French Revolution of 1789. There was some very vocal, assertive working class women, market women, women who were involved in dressmaking and mantua-making, who had very strong

views regarding how society should be structured. And traditionally, had the right to address the queen directly. So of course, they become involved and crucial to that march on Versailles, bringing the king and queen and their children to Paris.

So different societies, whether we're talking about a constitutional monarchy, an autocratic monarchy in Russia that's fresh from feudalism, or in France, a theoretically absolute monarchy, where the monarch isn't always able to achieve authority at the local level. There are different discussions and debates ensuing about what role women should have in the public sphere. And in all cases, often women found ways of getting into the public sphere, by emphasizing that it was an extension of the private sphere, that they had to bring their moral authority in the home into that public sphere, to ensure the sick were looked after, or children were educated, or particularly the English-speaking world, the temperance movement, which was treated very much as a women's issue, that men are being paid and then they're spending all of their their earnings at the pub, instead of bringing that home to their wives for her to manage. So we see in many different time periods, women stepping into the public sphere, arguing that this is an extension of their family roles, and all three of the of the queens that we're talking about, Henrietta Maria during the English Civil Wars, Marie Antoinette during the French Revolution, and Tsarina Alexandra during the Russian Revolution, emphasized their roles as wives and mothers, as you know, their sons were future monarchs, that they had a very clear interest in the governance of the countries that they had married into. And that was also a way of pushing back against accusations that they were foreigners, that no, this is where their children's interests were. And so therefore, their interests were with the the countries that they had married into.

AT: So we haven't gotten much into the English Civil Wars, because by your definition, the focus was on the monarchy is the problem. So how does that work with Henrietta Maria and the English Civil Wars?

CH: Well, Henrietta Maria, she's born in 1609, her father is Henri IV, the king of France, the first of the Bourbon monarchs. He was a Protestant initially, and then famously declared during the French Wars of Religion, "Paris is worth a mass" and converted to Roman Catholicism, so that he could become the king of France, succeeding his Valois cousins. He had first been married to Marguerite of Valois, unfortunately, their wedding reception had degenerated to the Saint Bartholomew's Eve massacre, in which many of his Protestant entourage were murdered by Roman Catholics, and that extended to the Protestants more widely in Paris in 1564. So his first marriage had taken place in rather horrifying circumstances. And then after the French Wars of Religion, he needed money to establish himself. So he had his marriage annulled, though Marguerite de Valois remained very much at court, was a sort of honorary auntie to his children with his second marriage. But he marries on Marie de Medici, a niece of Catherine de Medici, who'd also been a French queen consort. And Marie de Medici behind her back was nicknamed the fat Tuscan banker, that she was seen as someone coming from Italy with a great deal of money, rather than royal pedigree. And Henri IV and Marie de Medici emphasize that this was the new Bourbon royal family. So they sat for royal portraits with all their children, the future Louis XIII and Gaston the Duke D'Orlean, but also their daughters, Elizabeth the future queen of Spain, Christine, who would be the Duchess of Savoy and Henrietta Maria, the baby of the family. And Henri IV is assassinated when Henrietta Maria is quite young. And Marie de Medici steps into that role as regent for the nine year old Louis XIII. So Henrietta Maria becomes very close to her household, her governess Madame de Montglat, who she called Mamagat, and her daughter-in-law Madame de St. George, and this French household and also her siblings. There's some really nice letters in the Bibliotheque Nationale of Elizabeth the queen of Spain, sending toys home for her younger siblings. So even though Marie de Medici wasn't as involved in Henrietta Maria's upbringing, we get a sense of a warm environment with lots of loyal retainers, lots of loving siblings who even after they left home, continued to be quite interested in her life. And then this court culture of learning, at music, at dancing, the ballet, being trained for, as the youngest daughter, likely a marriage to a minor French prince. But she ends up having a much more exalted marriage. She is briefly glimpsed by the future King Charles I of England when he was on the way to Spain to marry a Spanish infanta.

He is turned down by the Spanish royal family. And in order to preserve his honor, he says that well, he'd spied Henrietta Maria first, and so he chosen to marry a French princess. And so Charles I succeeds to the throne in 1625. There is a proxy marriage. Charles I does not attend his own wedding. The Duke of Chevreuse represents him in Paris. The wedding takes place in front of Notre Dame Cathedral. There's a reception at the Louvre. This is some of the first coverage of royal weddings, as many English people were curious about this. So we see these these very text-heavy documents, not a lot of images in them, but they describe in detail who was there, what they were wearing, the bride had worn a dress with a gold fleur-de-lis. But we also see publications of the marriage contract. This young woman was a Roman Catholic, and she technically under the contract was able to bring her French household and manage her children until they were 13. And Charles I would send home the French household and insist that the children be baptized as Protestants. So what happened on the ground was a little different than what was in the contract.

And Henrietta Maria, like a young teenager who'd found her cause, wanted to see Catholic emancipation in England and Scotland. She later formed a lot of friendships with Protestants as well. She proved to be more pragmatic in that sense. But she initially arrived, very determined to uphold her Catholic beliefs as she would be throughout her life. And this created problems. And so we see these handwritten newsletters by people at court at that time, showing the king and the queen quarreling, that Charles wanted to send back her French household, Madame de St. George, those people who she had grown up with. And she reacted very badly and was 15 and furious, was breaking windows and shouting. And the 20-something Charles I didn't quite know how to deal with this. But the newsletter praises this conflict, that he is asserting himself, that he is telling his consort that he is in charge. So it's interesting seeing these male newsletter writers thinking, this is all for the good, she needs to be reigned in, shown who is in charge here. So much of the French household gets sent back to France. She is provided with an English household who are seen as treating her with more decorum. She was much more informal with the French who she had grown up with. And after her French household's expelled and the assassination of Charles I's friend, the Duke of Buckingham, who was causing a lot of trouble within the royal marriage. It was his wife and his mistress who were Henrietta Maria's new household. And she was not pleased that to have these English ladies surrounding her and not her French Catholic household. She and her husband become very close after this.

And Charles I prorogues Parliament in 1629. So he can reign without Parliament's interference. And this is the period of all the Van Dyke paintings showing Charles I and Henrietta Maria very close to one another. And so questions arose, if Parliament's not being called, who is influencing the king? And it looked like it was his Catholic wife. And it didn't help that many people in England who perhaps hadn't seen the inside of a Catholic chapel were curious to see the queen's chapel. It looked like people were going to mass just to get a glimpse of the queen. The queen was seen bringing her children to mass, even though they've been baptized Protestant. There was conflict with France with the treatment of the Huguenots at La Rochelle. So peace between England and France didn't last long. So the queen being French and Catholic but having influence over the king was an enormous problem. Charles I eventually runs out of money. And he recalls Parliament in 1640, expecting this to be a discussion about money. He was fighting the Bishops' War against his Scottish subjects, who did not want the Church of England imposed on them. They were Presbyterian and happy with that. And then what happens is Parliament wants to discuss what's happening in the royal household. They want to ensure the future Charles II is with his Protestant governor, the Duke of Newcastle and not his mother. They're concerned that a marriage is being arranged too early for the young princess Mary to the Protestant Prince of Orange. But this was seen as the king trying to get his own source of funds from the very prosperous Dutch monarchy or the Dutch stadtholders, it's not quite a monarchy at this time. And the Queen is being called on to make an oath of loyalty to the English state. There's speculation that Parliament wants the Queen taken into custody. All sorts of rumors are flying around. So Charles I tries to arrest five members of Parliament. He is unsuccessful and the English Civil Wars break out in 1642.

Henrietta Maria goes abroad ostensibly to take her daughter to the Netherlands. But she pawns some of the crown jewels there. She hires mercenaries for the royalist cause and comes back as She Majesty

Generalissima. Henrietta Maria was never lacking self-confidence and she was determined to help her husband bring Parliament to heel. She had a very clear sense of her own importance and was horrified that representatives of the House of Commons thought that they could tell her how to behave, how to conduct her marriage. And it's interesting seeing the print culture of this time. Some of the parliamentary accounts compare her to Margaret of Anjou who prolonged the Wars of the Roses, that she was this kind of she-wolf or warrior queen that was causing problems between the king and his subjects, exacerbating the civil wars. But then there were other royalists accounts who said that, well, a wife is supposed to support her husband, that this conflict is between the king and Parliament, and as the king's wife, of course she's doing all that she can in order to ensure that her husband is successful, that are other wives who support their husbands and their time of difficulty to be judged in this way? So it becomes this bigger debate about women and their families and what their role is and Catholic women influencing their Protestant husbands.

The House of Commons in 1643 votes to impeach the queen on eight different charges, pawning the crown jewels, inciting the Irish revolt. And it's unknown exactly what this means. Shall she simply be excluded from the prayers? Or if apprehended, will she be placed on trial? And this is a situation in England where Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard had both been executed, two of the wives of Henry VIII, but that was supposedly for crimes against their husband rather than for supporting him. And France made very clear that the Civil War could become a European war if a French princess was being placed on trial. So Henrietta Maria flees to France, and she's there at the time that Charles I loses the English Civil Wars, he's placed on trial, he's executed. But because Henrietta Maria's in France, she outlives her husband by 20 years. It's a very different experience than either Marie Antoinette or the Tsarina Alexandra.

So she tries to manage her sons with varying degrees of success. She tries to convert her youngest son Henry the Duke of Gloucester to Catholicism. He's just 14, but he was there the day before his father was executed and it had this very farewell scene. He was just 9, where he was told to obey his mother in all things except religion. So he makes clear he made a promise to his father. And so Henrietta Maria basically turns him out, he has to go live with his elder sister in Holland. Charles II makes very clear that he is not following his mother's advice in a variety of ways, but he also emphasizes harmony within the royal family. So when he's restored, there's been 11 years of interregnum from 1649 to 1660. When Charles II comes back to the throne, his mother comes back with him for periods of time. There's all sorts of speculation about is she keeping too lavish accord at Somerset House? Has she secretly married one of her gentlemen-in-waiting, the first Earl of St. Albans? It's interesting, you know, Henrietta Maria being his focus of Scandal well into her 50s about her public role. She eventually returns to France, but it's interesting to see that Charles II, even if personally he found his mother rather difficult, in the public eye, he was determined that his mother would receive the same respect as any other monarch's mother. We don't see such a prominent mother of the sovereign at court until Queen Victoria's mother, the Duchess of Kent in the 19th century.

So Henrietta Maria has a different experience than Marie Antoinette or the Tsarina Alexandra in that she sees a restoration of the monarchy after its overthrow and is back as a queen mother figure and a focus of scandal in her own right. And I've written about this for the volume co-edited by Eilish Gregory and Michael Questier on later Stuart queens. My chapter on Dowager Queen Henrietta Maria discusses how rumors swirled about her reputation and she manages to cause controversy as a queen mother as well as the widow of Charles I. So one of the reasons Henrietta Maria, despite being a British queen, is less well known, is because we don't have a dramatic scene at the guillotine as we do with Marie Antoinette or the tragic massacre of the last imperial family, that Henrietta Maria managed to escape the fate of her husband. And often many biographies of Henrietta Maria end with the execution of Charles I and ignore that last 20 years where she was attempting to exert influences as an elder stateswoman, whether it was as the aunt of Louis XIV of France and her role in negotiating the Secret Treaty of Dover or her efforts to influence her children in various ways.

So this is why I wrote that recent book chapter about the legitimacy of the monarchy during the Restoration and how that intersected with Dowager Queen Henrietta Maria's reputation, as sometimes there will be a focus on the most dramatic years of a Queen consorts life and sometimes those later years can be just as significant,



just as we see with the medieval period Eleanor of Aquitaine that period when she goes on to be queen mother to both Richard the Lionheart and King John is just as significant if not more so than her time as Queen consort to Louis VII of France and Henry II of England.

AT: And you touched briefly on the education of women and how Napoleon was very much not a fan. But it seems like there is this larger thread of, as education and new ideas flourish we're more likely to see revolution, and part of that is that educated women particularly those in power are often seen as a threat. And so these educated queens that we're seeing more and more of who are being active or visible in different ways are seen as part of the problem.

CH: Well, education for elite women doesn't uniformly increase over time. Sometimes the pendulum swings back and forth. During the Tudor period we have these very well-educated royal women educated in the traditions of Renaissance humanism. Elizabeth I who could speak seven languages and often didn't need a translator and was translating prayers from Latin when she was a child. Mary Queen of Scots who is sometimes dismissed as the pretty one compared to Elizabeth I being the smart one. But Mary Queen of Scots was quite interested in French vernacular literature, she was raised at the French court as the daughter-in-law of Catherine de Medici and the future wife of Francois II of France. So she received quite a Renaissance education there in France as well. And we see a lot of examples of prominent men who are philosophers or nobles who wanted to prove that it was possible to educate women just as well as men were educated. So we get Thomas Moore and his daughter Margaret Roper for example who became a translator and intellectual in her own right. The pendulum swings the other way for a time during the 17th century in that when James I is introduced to Bathsua Makin, this very prominent intellectual and he's told she can speak Greek and Latin and Hebrew and his response is, "well can she spin? That's what matters." And so James I who we can tell from his writings was distrustful of women and rights that he would not have married if matters of state had not required it and had a very tumultuous relationship with his own queen, Anne of Denmark. We don't see his daughter Elizabeth, later the queen of Bohemia receiving the same classical education but there's a very strong cultural education participating in court entertainments and court masques and courtly accomplishments. So in France, Henrietta Maria may not have had the most intellectual education but she knew how to present herself at court and had very clear ideas about the role of the queen should be.

Marie Antoinette suffered in some ways from being the 15th of the 16 children of the reigning Empress Maria Theresa of the Habsburg Empire. And Maria Theresa despite the pragmatic sanction in Austria making very clear that she was going to be next in line to the throne, she hadn't been particularly well-educated herself and there's some evidence her father hoped that he might have a grandson who was old enough to succeed and the issue of female succession would never come up. So we see Maria Theresa's husband being invited to be on the council but not in her case. But Maria Theresa learned a great deal from the process of becoming empress, the War of the Austrian Succession, using motherhood as a way of asserting her own role, holding up her baby son Joseph. "He is being deprived of his rights by Frederick the Great in Prussia," meanwhile Frederick the Great couldn't believe that he was facing women at war, whether it was Maria Theresa of the Habsburg Empire or Peter the Great's daughter the Empress Elizabeth in Russia. Maria Theresa and Empress Elizabeth were very different characters. Maria Theresa emphasized her respectability and disapproved of all of Empress Elizabeth's lovers but was able to make an alliance on the grounds that Frederick the Great did not respect female rule. So Maria Theresa learned a great deal on the job so to speak, but because she was so busy having 16 children and ruling her empire, her husband Francis of Lorraine was placed in charge of the children. And this was interesting to many outside observers, they seemed to have switched roles. And Francis of Lorraine drew up educational programs for his sons and one of his elder daughters Marie Christine, was quite intellectual herself. But the younger daughters Maria Carolina and Maria Antonia who went on to be Marie Antoinette, didn't seem that important how well they were educated, but there's some evidence that their governess just did their homework for them. They spent a lot of time sledging and skating, and Marie

Antoinette looked back on her childhood as this golden period that her father was very kind. There wasn't a lot of the pressure, that she had all of the of these older siblings, there was lots of time for playing outside and learning to dance and being in court theatricals. And then sadly due to a series of smallpox deaths and disfigurements among her older sisters, she becomes the future bride of Louis XVI. So suddenly Maria Theresa takes an interest in her 11-year-old daughter. Marie Antoinette is married at 14 so there's a kind of three-year crash course in, she has to learn French fluently, she needs to become a more fluent reader, that no attention had really been paid to what she was reading and in fact Jeanne Campan, her lady of the bedchamber who'd go on to educate Napoleon's sisters in the early 19th century, acted as Marie Antoinette's reader when she was a queen, reading aloud books to her while Marie Antoinette was having her hair done. But the problem with Marie Antoinette doesn't seem to have been that she was unintelligent. She was quite interested in theater, novels she was a patron of female artists like Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun and Madame Tussaud and her early wax museum. But Marie Antoinette had never learned study skills. She'd never had to focus and so we see all these letters back and forth after Marie Antoinette's wedding where her mother's urging her to read more, that Louis XVI was interested in the Scottish Enlightenment and learned some English to be able to read David Hume and Marie Antoinette just didn't have the focus to sit and read these large books. You get the impression Jeanne Campan, the lady of the bedchamber who was the daughter-in-law of the court librarian, that her job was basically to follow Marie Antoinette around while she was getting ready and read aloud these books. So with Marie Antoinette, she's more intelligent than she's often given credit for but her early life didn't set a very good grounding for having the study skills.

In the Tsarina Alexandra's case, her mother on Princess Alice, the second daughter Queen Victoria was quite intellectually minded and was quite in fact disappointed in her husband Louis of Hesse-Darmstadt as he was as he was a soldier and was quite happy living a less intellectual life. He wasn't really interested in exploring the deeper questions, that he was somebody who was quite happy to just take life as it came to him and so there are some letters from Alice to Louis where she complains, she writes to him, "you just tell me about the weather and yes I know we love each other very much but that you just aren't willing to have these conversations" and it's striking that in earlier centuries, a princess would be glad that that she had a kind husband who loved her, rather than worrying that "we just don't seem to be on the same plane in terms of intellectual interests." Alice dies when her daughter, the future Tsarina Alexandra, is only six years old but Alexandra was quite well-educated by her governess Miss Jackson. Her older sisters had intellectual interests as well and her grandmother Queen Victoria took charge of these young motherless children and ensured that they not only were well-read and learned languages, but also that they had practical skills. So Alexandra was somebody who could knit and do embroidery and could bake and make a bed and was quite shocked when she married into the Russian imperial family and found that Russian court ladies were used to their servants doing absolutely everything. And the memoirs of one of Alexandra's friends Lili Dehn she recounts during the February Revolution that Lili Dehn stayed with the the imperial family. A lot of the servants had either run off or weren't looking after the imperial children who had the measles, and Alexandra comments like "oh I know how to make up a bed, you Russian ladies were never taught anything practical but my grandmother ensured that I learned these skills."

So Alexandra had this very strong training in the kind of practical skills that would be expected of any Victorian housewife as well as the the intellectual opportunities that were becoming more and more available to women in the 19th century. And Alexandra faced difficulties at the Russian court as when she arrived she was viewed as being too British. She was quite critical of Russian court society, young women staying in bed until noon and then dancing all night at court balls and she thought they ought to be doing more knitting and charity work and their dresses were too low-cut. So Alexandra gets viewed as too much of a Victorian British princess in her early years as empress and then World War I breaks out and it's the German side of the family that is viewed as a problem. She's seen as too German even though Hesse-Darmstadt had been the victim of Prussian aggression with the unification of Germany and she was no fan of her cousin Kaiser Wilhelm II and his activities. It becomes her German ancestry is held against her. So Alexandra has a wide variety of, she could

sing, she could play the piano, she could knit and embroider, speak multiple languages, read widely but she was always out of step with what was expected in Russian high society and so Nicholas and Alexandra ended up withdrawing more and more into the family circle at the Alexander Palace, especially after the arrival of their son Alexei in 1904, who had hemophilia.

AT: It seems like a big catch-22 that queen consorts generally are foreigners by virtue of, this is what is beneficial for the country, we are bringing political alliances. But then they're the ones stuck there when things go bad, when war breaks out, when there's civil unrest, you get the xenophobia of blaming the foreigner. Marie Antoinette even said "as to me, I am a foreigner. They will assassinate me." And that's on top of often teenage girls - so you're saying Marie Antoinette was 14 Henrietta Maria was 15. These young girls are being sent to a foreign country. In Henrietta Maria's case, you mentioned he took her friends away.

CH: Yes.

AT: She had friends that she could speak her own language with, who knew her, who she trusted, who she was comfortable with in this foreign land where she might never see her family again. And it just seems like a really awful situation that queens were continuously put in where things that they had no control over, I mean whatever the angry people might say about the influence they supposedly have, they have no control over what say their brother the king in the other country is doing but they're the ones who are getting blamed for it.

CH: Yes it's a very complicated situation for a foreign royal bride. We do get some instances of brides who were closer to home. Richard III and his queen Anne Neville for instance - Richard had been fostered by the Earl of Warwick, Anne Neville's father, so Richard III and Anne Neville actually grew up together in the same castle, Warwick Castle and Middleham in Yorkshire so we don't know whether they were childhood sweethearts or whether this was purely an effort for Richard to secure her vast estates as she was her father's co-heiress with her sister but certainly they would have been two people who'd had the same life experiences and the same worldview. Mary Queen of Scots was sent to the French court when she was just 6 and then marries Francois II at 16. So once again we don't know how she felt about Francois II but certainly she was very good friends with his sister Elizabeth of Valois and so she may well have loved him on some level even if it was loving him like a brother rather than as a consort. So we do see a few examples of monarchs who did know their spouses well but then we had these dynastic marriages to virtual strangers

AT: Well it seems like Mary Queen of Scots then had the opposite problem when she returned to Scotland where now it's like "oh you're too French" but there's no winning.

CH: Yes, yes, then Mary Queen of Scots arrives in Scotland having been raised to be a French queen consort and also the Scottish Reformation had taken place while she was in France. So she's now a Catholic queen of a Protestant country. She's personally disliked by John Knox, who famously had these confrontations with Mary Queen of Scots and then wrote the the first trumpet blast against the "monstrous regiment of women" and that seems to have been personally directed at Mary Queen of Scots and Mary Tudor as well. It seems to have been Catholic women who particularly offended him. The John Knox House in Edinburgh emphasizes there's no evidence that Knox mistreated his wives or had conflict with women in other contexts. It seems to have been Catholic women in power that particularly caused problems for John Knox as father of the Scottish Reformation. So we get these examples whether it's Anne Neville or Mary Queen of Scots who had the opportunity to get to know their future spouses. Though in the case of Mary Queen of Scots' second husband Lord Darnley clearly she did not know him well enough and he turned out to be an enormous disappointment in many ways after they married. But when we look at many of these European and British princesses over time that their marriages were arranged and we do see some instances of princesses pushing back against this.

One of Edward III's daughters famously refused to board the ship that would have taken her to France in a dynastic marriage and Edward III was seen as a very indulgent father for forgiving her this and continuing to pay her allowance and allowing her to marry a minor prince when she was in her 20s. And so Edward III was viewed as by the standards of the time quite an indulgent father, that his children were allowed to have much more autonomy in their life choices than would have been the case for many royal children.

By the time we reach the 16th century the humanist philosopher Erasmus was deeply critical of dynastic marriages because he thought that this was a lot of pressure on young women and it didn't actually create lasting peace in Europe. And he held up the example of Henry VIII fighting his brother-in-law James IV, the king of Scotland who was married to Henry's sister Margaret Tudor and James IV fell at the Battle of Flodden Field. And so Erasmus wondered does this system of dynastic marriage benefit anyone in particular at the time, that these young women are not being sacrificed for lasting peace, the wars in Europe are continuing. And we get some interesting examples of sets of royal siblings who were very close to one another - Isabella, the sister of Charles V the Holy Roman emperor, when she was being sent off to marry the king of Denmark Christian the Tyrant of Denmark. But she wrote to one of her sisters saying how difficult it is to leave one's home and one's friends and family and travel to the ends of the earth, to devote one's life to a man that one is never met, well one does not even speak his language. So you get a real sense of this young woman who was very close to her siblings finding this to be an enormous shock and was perhaps a bit envious of her sister Mary who would marry Louis of Hungary, but Louis had been raised with them. He was a sort of honorary seventh sibling, where she was being sent off to marry a stranger in Denmark.

And so for Henrietta Maria, certainly we see early conflict with Charles I as he's dismissing her French household and she found that to be very difficult. Marie Antoinette famously had to remove all of her Austrian garments and put on French garments and receive a new French household at the border between the Habsburg Empire and France. And she broke protocol - she's only 14 and when she was introduced to the comtesse de Noailles who's to be her new mistress of her household, the young archduchess threw her arms around this rather severe Frenchwoman who she'd later nicknamed Madame Etiquette, who was in charge of teaching her proper etiquette at court. But you see this is a very emotionally overwhelming moment. She's leaving her Austrian life behind and this is her new French life. So it's perhaps not surprising that she would simply hug the first person she saw of her new French household. And Marie Antoinette although she and Louis XVI sort of reached an accord as times passed they had a great deal of difficulty early in their marriage. The marriage wasn't consummated for years, whether it was because Louis was against the Austrian alliance or there was a physical problem as has been argued by some biographers or there was simply a lot of teenage awkwardness and not knowing the facts of life until Marie Antoinette's brother came to visit and explained everything, and then a child was born the next year - that there's a variety of different factors. And also Marie Antoinette noted that their interests were different, that she enjoyed going to Paris for the opera, going to balls, whereas Louis XVI's interests were hunting and locksmithing, eating large meals. And so Marie Antoinette actually complained to an Austrian envoy about that, "oh but that my husband's interests are different from mine." And her mother was very critical, "how could you speak to a commoner about your disappointments in your marriage, that is how a royal mistress speaks, that's not how a queen consort speaks" and is very much, "remember your diplomatic role" as Marie Antoinette had a habit of, if there was a visiting Austrian at court, of treating them like a family friend and being very open in a way. And it's wonderful for historians that Marie Antoinette seems to have spoken to Madame Campan about how much she enjoyed her childhood and spoken quite openly to the Austrian ambassador, that we have all of these ideas of what she was thinking or feeling. But her mother was emphasizing, "you have this diplomatic role, you keep your feelings to yourself, you have a son, you make this marriage work." That sort of musing aloud about "oh, but we're very different people," that was the influence of rising romanticism that more companionate marriages were coming into vogue and royalty weren't able to have that experience, and that that was very difficult for Marie Antoinette. Nicholas II and the Tsarina Alexandra, they loved each other passionately and had known each other for a number of years. The sticking point had been that Alexandra was unwilling to convert to the Russian Orthodox

faith, which was necessary for a future empress. So they'd met when she was 12 and he was 16 as her sister had married his uncle. And so they knew each other from the family gatherings, she went to Russia to visit her sister and then she would meet Nicholas at court balls. So when she was 17 and he was 21, they were dancing together and they wrote these very intense letters to one another. He was trying to persuade her to give up the Lutheran faith and become Russian Orthodox as that was the sticking point. If he couldn't marry her, he'd marry no one at all and this became a very passionate romance. And ultimately Alexandra agreed, in 1894 Nicholas and Alexandra became engaged and unfortunately Nicholas's father died that same year. He succeeds to the throne, so rather than Alexandra having time to learn Russian, to get to know her new language, her new faith, her people she's thrust into this role of empress.

She's older than Henrietta Maria or Marie Antoinette. She's 24 when she steps into this role and so had had more of an adult life behind her but she proved to be quite unwilling to accept advice. Her grandmother Queen Victoria tried to mentor her in queenship, saying how important it is to gain the love of your people. But Alexandra became convinced that Russia was different, that this was a mystical place full of peasants and folk traditions. And it was an autocratic monarchy, it wasn't like Britain where gaining the love of your people was important, that instead her husband needed to reign with an iron fist. So we see Victoria trying to manage her granddaughter and giving some advice but even though Victoria and Alexandra had a very close relationship, Alexandra sort of had this idea of what Russia was that didn't really reflect this rapidly industrializing society where there was a lot of revolutionary discontent.

AT: I mean it sounds like she's one of the ones who actually did kind of contribute to the problem.

CH: Well it's interesting, if we place Alexandra in context, there's the questions to what degree was she influencing Nicholas and to what degree were they simply very similar people who both had a bit of siege mentality about the outside world and unwillingness to take advice that would have been useful to them. So the question then arises, like was she indeed the driving force or did she simply have a stronger personality but that they had had quite similar views in a lot of ways. Alexandra, if we place her in the context of her times as well, sometimes she's singled out as being this uniquely hysterical figure but some of her interest in faith healing and mysticism, some of this reflected the time. She came under the influence first of a Frenchman, Philippe Vachot, then famously Gregori Rasputin who was supposedly able to alleviate her son's hemophilia. And it's interesting to see that this was a time period when faith healing and mysticism were in vogue. Arthur Conan Doyle for instance, even though his Sherlock Holmes stories are very focused on logic and deduction, in terms of Conan Doyle's own personal life, he was quite fascinated by seances. And then we see the magician Harry Houdini was trying to unmask faith healers and mediums who were taking advantage of people who had lost family members and who wanted to connect with them. Canada's longest serving prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King tried to contact his mother through mediums and he seems to have been introduced to this during the the First World War. So Alexandra's interest didn't come out of a vacuum, this focus on spiritualism. There does seem to have been a spiritualist craze that took in a lot of quite prominent figures in the early 20th century.

What stands out in Alexandra's case was that it wasn't really made public why Gregori Rasputin had such influence. There were a lot of concerns about making Alexei's hemophilia public, as he was going to be the next autocrat of Russia. Would that undermine him if it was known he was a chronic invalid? And so it seemed as though that Nicholas and Alexandra were withdrawing from Russian society. Alexandra disapproved of how society ladies operated but this Siberian peasant seemed to be able to come and go from the palace. And so this led to a lot of speculation, what is he doing there? What is his influence? And we see the foreign press trying to figure out what was wrong with Alexei. It was clear he was being carried at certain public ceremonies like the Romanov tricentennial in 1913. So we see the old, "does he have a wasting illness? Has he been the victim of an assassin's bomb?" that we see all the speculation of what is wrong with this little boy. And of course some of that speculation is, there is the "English disease," now we think of it as the royal disease of

hemophilia that could be carried by female carriers and passed to their sons. This got into the Spanish royal family as well. Another of Queen Victoria's granddaughters, Alice of Athlone whose father Leopold is a hemophiliac, she was the vice regal consort of Canada during the Second World War and her son had hemophilia. So it got through Queen Victoria's family, so certainly that was one of the theories but Nicholas and Alexandra never really did the call for understanding, "our son has this condition. There isn't a medical answer. We are looking for answers to this." So it's very different from King Charles III nowadays who's very open that he has a benign prostate condition but cancer has been discovered, cancer is being treated and he encourages other people who might be experiencing symptoms to have their their medical checkup. So the openness that say King Charles III in the United Kingdom is displaying, that was not the case at the Russian court in the early 20th century. And once again this wasn't unique to Nicholas and Alexandra. George V and Queen Mary, George V who's famously Nicholas II's look alike cousin of the matching Van Dyke beards. George V and Queen Mary, their youngest son John had epilepsy and may have had autism as well and he was raised separately from his family, had a loving nanny, friends to play with, lots of toys and perhaps he had an easier time than his brothers who were packed off to the naval college. But he was isolated from the royal court and George V never seems to have spoken about Prince John's condition, even when writing to Nicholas II, who you think would be understanding about your children with medical conditions. So some of the reticence regarding these kinds of medical conditions within the family that now we see a lot more openness in royal circles about these kinds of conditions. And that contributed to this idea that Alexandra was completely hysterical or otherwise was behaving irrationally, because not all the facts were known. So certainly, she was the wrong person at the wrong time to be empress of Russia in that particular role. But sometimes she gets singled out as if she was the only one who had some of the issues that she experienced. And in fact some of the interests she pursued, whether it was spiritualism or mysticism, she was drawing on some of these wider currents of the times. She'd been introduced to Rasputin by two Montenegrin princesses, Milica and Stana. So certainly as well as Alexandra influencing Nicholas, there were influences on Alexandra at that time that were not particularly helpful.

AT: It does seem like the insularity of monarchy is probably one of the biggest contributing factors that we're seeing here in the sense that, I mean Marie Antoinette when you're talking about, she would latch on to any Austrian she saw and tell them her deepest feelings. To me that's someone who grew up feeling probably neglected and unloved in this big family, that she's not getting a lot of attention from her parental figures. Her mother sounds quite critical and then as we discussed anyone that she knew before was just taken from her, even her clothes were stripped from her. I mean she just sounds very lonely and wanting affection and approval. And as we've discussed with Alexandra that insularity led to not understanding what was actually going on in the country because she has been removed from it. And I'm just wondering because I think we do see that disconnect with rich people even today but I think it would be a lot harder for particularly leaders to be quite that unaware of serious things happening.

CH: I think nowadays that royalty have more opportunities to have the same experiences as other people even if it's on a grander scale. So Prince William for instance, the Prince of Wales, he went to university and met his future wife Catherine Middleton, who'd grown up in what was considered in Britain a middle-class family though her parents were self-made millionaires. And she'd gone to quite a posh school, but was someone who was outside of royal circles and could bring an outside perspective. And then William and Catherine dated for a long time before getting married. It was very different from past royal marriages, even that of Charles and Diana where they had perhaps spent time together on maybe a dozen occasions before the engagement and their marriage had not turned out well. So William and Catherine met in university, they were able to live together, to date for a long time. They get married, they take their time starting a family. William has a career for a time as a search and rescue pilot and so he's able to interact with university friends or with fellow search and rescue pilots and have a wider social circle. Whereas when we look at some of these past royal

personages, many of them, their social life came from their extended families. So we see Nicholas and Alexandra getting to know one another because her sister had married his uncle, so they're at the same family gatherings. Nicholas II became quite close to his cousin King George V as they got to know each other through the family circle. And with Marie Antoinette, she was in a situation in France where her Austrian household had been taken away and she was expected to befriend people based on their social status rather than whether they were the same age or shared her interest. So her lady of the bedchamber Madame Campan, who wrote a memoir, describes that Marie Antoinette noticed her as she was the librarian's daughter-in-law and was reader to Louis XVI's aunt. And since Marie Antoinette noted someone else close to her own age who was there at court and invited her, "oh, you can be my reader." And so then Jeanne Campan was raised to being lady of the bedchamber and it was Marie Antoinette recognizing, "oh there's someone else close to my own age." And then Marie Antoinette developed these very intense friendships with the Princess de Lamballe, who was Savoyard, so Italian by descent and the Duchess de Polignac. Once again people who were fairly well-to-do but weren't considered by age or rank qualified for positions like superintendent of the queen's household or governess to the children of France. And Maria Theresa was quite critical of her daughter befriending these people and basically, "you should be focused on your husband and your marriage." And she pointed out that, well her husband had no problem with her friends and comes with her to visit the Duchess de Polignac and finds my friends to be pleasant people as well and that if her husband had no objection why couldn't she cultivate these friendships? So Marie Antoinette spends time with the Petit Trianon where she could create a court of other young people and many people resented this at the French court who by rank or by age thought they should be the ones

spending time with the queen or mentoring the queen. Instead she's gathering all of these young people who just want to act in court theatricals or dress up as shepherdesses or otherwise just have fun. And it makes sense from a modern perspective, we see Sofia Coppola's film *Marie Antoinette* that plays up Marie Antoinette as a teenage girl who's discontented, so what she going to do? Go shopping. So the modern film portrayals are more sympathetic to this, but at the time, this was seen as her as her stepping out of her role. It was unbecoming for a queen to go and befriend people who weren't the top rank at court.

With Tsarina Alexandra, we see her disapproving of some of the titled women of the Russian aristocracy, these very fashionable figures who were not interested in Alexandra's initiatives, like let's all knit for the poor and the sort of thing that went over very well with the British monarchy. But the view of some of the Russian aristocracy is, "yeah we have servants to do that" and sending their maids to knit things, that they're not going to come there themselves. So Alexandra ended up befriending figures like Anya Vyubova, Lili Dehn, people who were connected to the court in some way but weren't titled aristocracy. And once again there were resentments about these obscure women who didn't seem to contribute much to court culture beyond also being in favor of Rasputin's influence at court, that it was seen that Alexandra was surrounding herself with non-entities rather than women who might have a better sense of what was happening at court. Alexandra had difficulties with her mother-in-law and some of the other senior women within the wider Romanov dynasty that created complications as well. Even Alexandra and her sister, the grand duchess Elizabeth, had conflict as Elizabeth disapproved of Rasputin. So we see these choices of friends at various times causing difficulties for queens consort because if they were choosing friends based on their own inclination, which perhaps might make sense to some degree, they might also be cutting themselves off from from influential figures in society who could help to shape public opinion of during very difficult times.

AT: It does seem counterintuitive that these two women who were attacked and overthrown and everything by "the common people" were also vilified for making friends with the common people.

CH: Yes, that they were making friends with people who were seen as being beneath the dignity of being at the royal court. This was a challenge that Marie Antoinette faced in her fashion. She's accused of being very extravagant and so in the 1780s she simplified her fashions considerably and starts wearing these very light

muslin dresses and straw hats rather than all of the silks and the feathers and the gold embroidery. And this causes a couple of problems. First, her portrait painter Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun, who was a young woman her own age. We see Marie Antoinette feeling much more comfortable around them other women her own age so Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun paints her in these simple muslin dresses and then like any artist wants to know what people are saying about the painting. And what they're saying is that this is a queen looking as though she's posing in a petticoat or in her underwear, that this isn't suitable for a queen to dress this way, that it's one thing for bourgeois women to take up these simpler fashions but a queen represents France and dressing this way is a problem. Also the silk merchants of Lyon, the feather sellers in Paris - they were making a very good living off all of these extravagant court costumes. And Marie Antoinette simplifying her fashions and presenting a simplified image was seen as being bad for the the French economy. So it's one of these challenges that France was in fact dealing with enormous financial problems because of the lack of a central bank and because of the amount of money being put into the American Revolution to help the colonists fight the British in order to reduce the influence of Britain worldwide, so the salaries of figures like Lafayette who were traveling to what became the United States that there were a lot of reasons why France was dealing with financial issues. But at first it was Marie Antoinette's extravagance that seemed to be the problem and then once she simplified, that this was seen as beneath the dignity of an empress.

And we see some similar issues with the Tsarina Alexandra that she and her daughters did not purchase new clothing during the First World War, they often wore their nursing uniforms and that was also seen as, they're supposed to be the public face of the empire and not just look like any other women nursing during the First World War. So it was a very difficult situation for a queen consort to be in, that if you were too extravagant you're blamed for being out of touch with the conditions of the people. But if you start projecting the "royalty - they're just like us" image, then it's seen as "well you're not putting a good face forward, representing the wider prosperity of the country." So we sometimes talk about today how royal women get overly scrutinized by the tabloid press and it can be very difficult to walk the right line. And often the solution is simply longevity, being on the scene for long enough can lead to public acceptance. So we look at Queen Camilla for instance and how she was perceived early in her relationship with Prince Charles versus how she's perceived as queen consort, that she's had a remarkable rehabilitation, at least in the public eye though there remains some discussion and debate regarding her reputation. With Catherine the Princess of Wales as well, early in her relationship with Prince William, the tabloids nicknamed her Waity Katie, that she was waiting around for a marriage proposal, wasn't pursuing a career of her own and now she is the Princess of Wales and the mother of the future sovereign. And so both Camilla and Catherine went from being royal outsiders to royal insiders. And there was a time when a divorced woman or a middle-class woman wouldn't be seen as suitable queens consort but then simply longevity in the role, undertaking lots of public philanthropy, successful public engagements enabled them to become more accepted.

So certainly there's lots of cases of royal women both then and now who do manage to adjust to royal life. But we see with Henrietta Maria, Marie Antoinette and the Tsarina Alexandra, they all had very strong ideas of how they should present themselves to the public and these public images were all unsuccessful and they became targets of a popular criticism that intersected with wider debates about the role of women in the family. And because they were unsuccessful, sometimes there's the view that that none of them cared how they were perceived and there's evidence they did care to a degree but their idea of what their public image should be just wasn't in keeping with popular ideas at the time. And so all three of them at various times end up being more unpopular than their husbands who are sometimes treated a little more sympathetically as being surrounded by bad advisors, whereas a foreign female influence at court could be more easily vilified.

AT: And were there any other common themes that you wanted to share with us?

CH: Well something that connects Henrietta Maria, Marie Antoinette and the Tsarina Alexandra is, they all had powerful female role models that may have contributed to this sense of how they wanted to shape their own



images, and perhaps an unwillingness to follow advice that might have been useful to them. Henrietta Maria had her mother Marie de Medici. Although they didn't spend a lot of time together, Marie de Medici was the regent to Henrietta Maria's older brother, Louis XIII and Marie de Medici would visit the English court, so Henrietta Maria did get to see her mother again. And this led to some controversies, the king was seen as supporting his controversial mother-in-law at the English court.

For Marie Antoinette, although she seems to have had more respect and awe for her mother than affection, we know from her letters that she desperately wanted to please her mother Maria Theresa and to live up to her expectations that were sometimes contradictory. Maria Theresa was a reigning empress, and yet she taught her daughters that they had to submit to their husbands and be good royal consorts, which was very different from being a reigning empress who had to take on Frederick the Great in order to defend the Austrian empire. And for the Tsarina Alexandra, although she lost her mother very young, she had her grandmother, Queen Victoria, and this big extended family where there were a lot of powerful women and influential women there at court. So Alexandra's view that perhaps that it was up to her to take charge or exert influence, this may have been the result of being in an environment where there were so many strong royal women and seeing how Queen Victoria what was treated with such respect by this extended family of monarchs and consorts and royal houses across Europe who were all very closely attached to the queen and closely related to her.

So it's interesting seeing that all of these royal consorts who had a great deal of difficulty stepping into these roles had powerful female role models who were much more successful. Certainly Queen Victoria, Maria Theresa, Marie de Medici faced more problems as regent to Louis XIII. But it's important we look at royal houses, to not just look at the male influences but these networks of women who influenced one another and these matrilineal dynasties that emerge of women mentoring and influencing one another with varying degrees of success

AT: Join us next time on the Infinite Women podcast and remember, well-behaved women rarely make history.