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Mary and Philip: The Marriage of Tudor England and Habsburg Spain

Alexander Samson

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Mary and Philip: The Marriage of Tudor England and Habsburg Spain. By Alexander Samson. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020. ISBN 978-1-5261-4223-8. ix + 279 pp. £80.

Alexander Samson's *Mary and Philip: The Marriage of Tudor England and Habsburg Spain* is a wholly revisionist study of both Queen Mary I's reign and the co-monarchy of Mary and Philip. Over the last thirty years, much work has been done to rehabilitate both monarchs, yet their poor reputations remain. These reputations are tied to the Reformation, the British Empire, and the providentialist idea of England's Protestant destiny. In popular imagination, Mary is still either the bloody murderer of martyrs or a tragic, childless queen. Furthermore, the marriage of Mary and Philip is often interpreted as unpopular and ineffective. Samson takes issue with these outdated interpretations, suggesting that "in terms of contemporary expectations of dynastic alliances, and given the European political context, it is hard to see the alliance as anything other than a success" (9). He finds that their reign brought about cultural and religious achievements. The purpose of his book is to contest, debunk, or problematize many traditional interpretations of Mary and Philip's marriage.

In the first chapter, Samson explores the year of Mary's queenship prior to her marriage with Philip. In the second chapter, he offers an in-depth analysis of the marriage treaty and how Mary and Philip's co-monarchy was formed on paper. Through both chapters Samson shows that Mary and Philip's marriage was one of mutual agreement; England was key to Habsburg commerce hegemony and Philip was well aware of the benefits of the marital alliance. Samson acknowledges that historically Mary's marriage has been viewed as un-English and an attempt to undermine English sovereignty. That view, however, construes the many issues at play in 1553—gender, religion, and foreign matrimony—into one issue. Samson picks these issues apart to show that suspicions of Mary's foreign match were not entirely xenophobic, but also based in fear of female rule and the possibility that a foreign husband would seize England from Mary, or use their heirs to further his own agenda.

The third chapter turns to Wyatt's Rebellion and Mary's regal power. Samson points out that the issues surrounding Mary's choice of spouse and Wyatt's Rebellion have often been conflated and generalized, which has led to an interpretation of dislike for Mary as queen. Samson instead suggests that "although anti-Spanish statements might figure heavily in the Protestant propaganda of the period, which ... were highly effective and to a large extent overshadowed the official response, it cannot be assumed from this that these sentiments were deeply felt of widely shared by the silent majority of the English" (91). Protestant exiles often connected the marriage to the return of

foreign, papal jurisdiction. Yet, statutes for Mary's regal power expressly forbade foreign jurisdiction, papal or Spanish.

Chapters four and five explore Mary and Philip's wedding at Winchester Cathedral and their entry into London. For both events, Mary was positioned on the right side, the side traditionally reserved for kings, to ease anxieties of Philip's potential precedence. Likewise, Philip was dressed in English-style dress, given to him by Mary, to show his acceptance as King of England under Mary. While the marriage was designed to ease English fears of foreign sovereignty, the royal entry celebrated internationalism. The organizers of the royal entry were mostly aldermen who were deeply connected to trade, specifically in the Low Countries, where Philip ruled. Samson takes on the idea that both Philip and his religion were deeply disliked in England. Rather, he argues, that dislike has been overstated through the lens of religious polarization that took place in the decades after Mary's reign. Philip brought with him markets, the New World, and old religion, all things that were welcome in London.

Chapter six addresses anti-Spanish sentiment in early modern England. Traditionally, anti-Spanish sentiment has been given a central role in Marian historiography; the marriage is said to have failed because of Hispanophobia. This chapter challenges the idea that virulent xenophobia was commonplace in early modern England and undermined an Anglo-Spanish alliance. There is no question that the marriage was unpopular with some, as evidenced by Wyatt's Rebellion, but the extent of that unpopularity is questionable. However, anti-Spanish sentiment is prolific in the historiography because it became conflated with anti-Catholicism. Anglo-Spanish resentment glosses over the complexities of the marriage, such as female kingship, co-monarchy, dynasty, and religion. Through the chapter, Samson shows that anti-Spanish sentiment was not prevalent in the sources during Mary's reign. It was Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* that did much to create Mary as tragic and unwanted by Philip, and this view was cemented by later eighteenth-century writers celebrating British Imperialism.

Samson structures his study by beginning each chapter with historiography of one particular aspect of Mary's reign or marriage and then goes on to challenge, complicate, or outright debunk it. For this final chapter, Samson takes on Mary's position, status, and agency after her marriage. Some scholars, such as David Loades, saw Philip as powerless as King of England. Other scholars, particularly specialists of Elizabeth I, found Mary to relinquish all power to Philip. Fully discovering their co-monarchy is difficult, but it is impossible to deny that Philip was involved in English government. Samson uses this chapter to rehabilitate Mary, much like the recent work of Judith Richards, Sarah Duncan, and Anna Whitelock. Samson claims that Mary was a

shrewd political operator, educated and prepared to rule, involved in government, and involved in religious reform. She was successful as both king and queen of England, as was noted in her funeral sermon. Samson suggests that the co-monarchy of Mary and Philip should not be regarded as a failure. Rather, their court was vibrant and dynamic, Catholic reform flourished, and Philip showed genuine sadness at Mary's death.

Altogether, Samson suggests that Mary's reign needs to be understood with more nuance and balance between actual source material and national myths. Many ideas of Mary's reign have been mischaracterized by reading them through the lens of the Armada. Unlike most studies of Mary's reign, Samson heavily incorporates Spanish sources, automatically providing a more balanced picture of Mary and Philip's marriage and co-monarchy. This is a truly excellent revisionist study of the reign of Mary I, and should be read by specialists and students so that rehabilitation of Mary I can continue.

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