



***Habsburg England:
Politics and Religion in the Reign of
Philip I (1554–1558)***

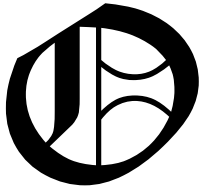
By Gonzalo Velasco Berenguer

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Reviewed by: Johanna Strong



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ver the course of the past few decades, many historians have re-examined the life, reign, and legacy of Mary I, England's first crowned queen regnant. Beyond Alexander Samson and his *Mary and Philip*, however, few monographs have deeply engaged in re-examining and interpreting Philip's role as Mary's king consort from 1554 until her death in 1558. Gonzalo Velasco Berenguer's *Habsburg England* does just that, re-examining how both Mary and Philip defined Philip's role in England and asserting that Philip should be established in the historical narrative as a co-monarch rather than simply a titular consort with little political role. Although there are points where his argument lacks conviction, Velasco Berenguer's focus on returning to key sources, his proposal that Mary and Philip's tenure be seen as a joint monarchy, and his argument for Philip's large role in guiding Marian religious reform all serve to establish that Philip's role as king cannot be seen as simply an empty title.

Velasco Berenguer's argument centres around the re-examination of Philip's role in England, seeking to "balance [...] the historiographical debate" about Philip as King of England and "correct[ing] some of the misunderstandings that have marred previous interpretations of the reign" (23). Of particular focus are the "ideological, political, religious, and social mechanisms" which resulted from Mary and Philip's marriage and the way in which their marriage sought to fit England into the wider Spanish monarchy (23). Further, he proposes that Mary and Philip were effectively a joint monarchy (16). *Habsburg England* has the potential to be a field-defining work, though at some points the analysis and rationale could be extended further to strengthen the effectiveness of the argument.

From the beginning, Velasco Berenguer establishes his contribution to the field in the re-translation and re-examination of key sources relating to Philip's role in England. Though some sections of the literature review effectively tie this research to the established historiography and draw in discussions of these re-assessed sources, some portions read as if largely unaltered from the thesis submission from which this research is drawn; these sections provide a summary of other historians' arguments largely without directly engaging in conversation with them. Similarly, the loose ties between the points raised and the overall argument extends through the analysis itself; in the first chapter, for example, Velasco Berenguer details those who came to England with Philip in the

Spanish fleet but ultimately does not detail their role in England upon their arrival (112–116). This lengthy exposition is not used as effectively as it could have been in supporting the monograph's argument. As a result, some portions of this work are more argumentative than others, overall undermining the contributions which Velasco Berenguer proposes to make to the field.

The most intriguing component of the monograph is the assertion that Mary and Philip existed as co-monarchs. Velasco Berenguer suggests that Philip, rather than seeing Mary as a queen regnant of a realm for which he was a consort, saw her instead as his regent, a representative in a nation which formed part of his composite monarchy (69–70). Working within this framework, Velasco Berenguer's proposition that Mary and Philip were co-monarchs reads rather convincingly. There could, however, be further exploration of this definition of co-monarchy, particularly as this work presents Mary and Philip's joint monarchy in light of Ferdinand and Isabella's in Iberia. Additionally, *Habsburg England* does not directly address the tension between Mary and Philip's married identity as co-monarchs of England and their own individual identities as monarchs who are married to other rulers. It would be interesting, too, to see future intellectual collaboration between Velasco Berenguer's arguments on the nature of Mary and Philip's rule in England and the definitions and practices of co-rule in the medieval world, which historians such as Gabrielle Storey have recently put forth.

Where Velasco Berenguer's examination falls most short, though, is in the lack of recognition of the role of gender in this interpretation of Philip's consortship in England. There is acknowledgement that "[s]ince the monarch was the head of the body politic of the kingdom, Philip's arrival meant the end of the schism initiated under Henry VIII and of the development of a Protestant Church under Edward VI" (95). What is lacking, though, is the recognition that it was Mary, even in the framework of Mary and Philip as co-monarchs, who had begun to end this schism when she acceded to the English throne, prior to Philip's arrival. Furthermore, the reliance on the argument that Philip took on the role of religious leader in England, and so used his Spanish background and experience in order to lead England through the religious changes of Mary's reign, fails to take into account the notion that this role may have fallen to Philip not out of his desire to lead but because, as a man, he was the only one of the couple who was seen to have legitimate authority in the context of the Catholic Church. As a result, Velasco Berenguer's argument that Mary and Philip created a co-monarchy out of a voluntary desire falls short of its aim, particularly because of the lack of discussion surrounding gendered norms at the time and

the way in which this would have affected Mary and Philip's own perceptions of their monarchy. Where Philip is given credit, rightly, for the religious changes he brought to England during his tenure, there is a lack of recognition of the gendered causes behind this role, an acknowledgement of which would have greatly nuanced discussions of Mary and Philip's religious policies and their co-monarchy more broadly.

In sum, Gonzalo Velasco Berenguer's *Habsburg England* broadens the current historical understandings of Mary's reign, Philip's tenure in England, and their position as co-monarchs. Although the monograph's arguments are limited in some places and would benefit from deeper analysis and the inclusion of more gendered perspectives, it remains a significant intervention in the historiography and is one which does much to suggest new interpretations of English co-monarchy and of Mary and Philip's time in power on the English throne.

JOHANNA STRONG

Independent Scholar