Royal Marriage and the Politics of Transition in Stuart Drama 1603-1630

Dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation discusses the Stuart stage’s participation in an ongoing reflection on royal marriage in the early modern period. I focus on the taxonomies of otherness, religion, foreign policy, gender politics, and race that Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Henry VIII* (1613), Fletcher’s *The Island Princess* (1621), and Massinger’s *The Roman Actor* (1626) stage in order to understand how dramatic texts incorporated the vocabulary of dynasticism into their fabric. Taken collectively, these plays suggest that the belief in the efficacy of royal marriage is illusory at a historical juncture when matrimonial politics occupied center stage. My analysis starts with the competing Spanish, French, and Savoyard marriage proposals for the Prince of Wales (1612-14), which were intended to balance Princess Elizabeth’s marriage to the militant Protestant prince, Frederick V of the Rhine, where I argue that *Henry VIII* breaks the prescriptive binary of “foreign” and “domestic.” I then propose a new way of reading the drama surrounding the famous Spanish match (1621-1624) by showing how *The Island Princess* invokes the interlocking themes of “virtuous pagans” and imperial expansion to stage a successful but qualified dynastic marriage that can only be achieved after the use of military force. This study ends with the aftermath of the Anglo-French marriage between Prince Charles and Henrietta Maria (1625) and examines how *The Roman Actor*’s treatment of its queen foreshadows the demonizing scripts that targeted Henrietta Maria in the 1630s. The main object of this study is to show how the drama of the period allows us to see the larger picture of the problems of royal marriage across time, and to appreciate the stage’s contribution to a pivotal conversation that would dominate subsequent decades.
For my parents Charbel and Zoubeida Assaf with love
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“What God hath conjoined then,” King James VI of Scotland and James I of England famously told his first English Parliament in 1604, “let no man separate. I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the Head and it is my Body; I am the Shepherd and it is my flocke.”¹ A commonplace in the rhetoric of monarchy, the image of a monarch wedded to the commonweal acquired special gravitas in post-Reformation England, particularly after the failure of the French match between Queen Elizabeth I and the Duke of Anjou in the early 1580s, and the sanctification of the image of Elizabeth as a Virgin Queen thereafter. For the “cult of Elizabeth” ensured that the monarch’s marriage to the realm always superseded his or her dynastic politics. Upon his accession to the English throne in 1603, the new Stuart king drew on his Tudor predecessor’s marital iconography to legitimate and mobilize his cherished dream of uniting his two kingdoms into one strong Great Britain; to efface his stark foreignness beneath a grand project of union; to emphasize the dynastic stability and continuity that his wholesome family—most importantly, two legitimate Protestant sons—embodied; and to distance himself from a long history of Anglo-Scottish enmity, which had culminated with the controversial execution of his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, by her English cousin, Elizabeth I, in 1587.

By incorporating his unification project within the framework of dynastic marriage, James I, the self-appointed rex pacificus, rewrote an earlier “marriage” project ¹

between England and Scotland in the nuanced vocabulary of the *via media*. A few generations earlier, Henry VIII had also dreamed of “the Empire of Great Britain,” where England would subdue Scotland, Ireland, and other territories, and firmly occupy “the only supreme seat.”² In what came to be known as the “rough wooing” of Scotland, King Henry VIII had relentlessly attempted to force a marriage between James’s then infant mother Mary Stuart and Prince Edward, the future King Edward VI of England from 1547, for dynastic marriage and military conquest were the warp and weft of international power politics in the late medieval and early modern periods.³ Mirroring Henry’s unfulfilled desire for supremacy via marriage was that of the rival Houses of Habsburg and Valois; most successful of the triad was the Habsburg dynasty, whose famous motto, “*Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria nube,*”⁴ emblematized its complex web of matrimonial alliances that ultimately established its Spanish branch as the most powerful player on the European stage.⁵

I.

This dissertation investigates dynastic marriage in the early Stuart period, and assesses the theatre’s contribution to the more widespread and diverse discussion of

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⁴ “Let others wage war; thou, happy Austria, marry.”

dynasticism beyond the Stuart court. Its main aim is to show how the Stuart stage, a prolific social institution, registered complex and paradoxical responses to an extremely choreographed and contested royal prerogative. Mirroring and problematizing the matches they evoke, the plays discussed here negotiate key matters, such as the new queen’s religion and political power; her markers of difference and suspect loyalty to her new realm; the promises of a dowry and other material gains her arrival symbolizes; and the staging of her body as a locus of competing ideologies on which the success of a dynastic alliance and royal succession hinged. In the ambiguities of plot and ambivalence of characters are the all too thinly concealed anxieties and conflicts attending royal marriage. Such an approach enriches our understanding of the relationship between theatre, culture, and politics during pivotal points in the early Stuart period by bringing an intense focus to canonical plays, such as Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Henry VIII*, and lesser-known ones, such as Massinger’s *Roman Actor*, and reading them alongside contemporary attitudes to dynastic politics as voiced in sermons, treatises, as well as the literature in the immediate temporal vicinity of a matrimonial project.

This study is bookended by international peace and domestic rupture: it opens with the accession of King James in 1603, whose rhetoric of ecumenicalism and Christian unity diametrically opposed the discourse of Protestant militancy that dominated the last decade of Elizabeth’s reign, and immediately translated into signing the peace treaty of London (1604) with England’s staunchest enemy, Roman Catholic Spain, thereby establishing from the outset that a Catholic match and Catholic tolerance were indivisible issues. It ends with King Charles I’s break with Parliament in 1629, after it refused
granting subsidies to sustain the crown’s scandalous military campaigns in France and Spain. As a result, Charles signed the two treaties of Susa with France (1629) and Madrid with Spain (1630), and focused on domestic reform, which the platonic iconography of his royal marriage came to symbolize.

With the twinned issues of dynastic marriage and Catholic tolerance in mind, this study emphasizes the generally overlooked competing Spanish, French, and Savoyard marriage proposals for the Prince of Wales (1612-14), which were intended to balance Princess Elizabeth’s marriage to the Protestant prince, Frederick V Elector Palatine, in 1613. It also re-theorizes the politics of the famous Spanish match (1621-4); and the Anglo-French marriage treaty between Prince Charles and Henrietta Maria (1625), which was immediately followed by the breakdown of relations between England and France (1625-1626).

The historical events of this three-decade period include the Gunpowder plot of 1605, which confirmed the danger English Jesuits posed to king, church, and state, and further disenfranchised English Catholics; the Bohemian revolt of 1618, the outbreak of the Thirty Years War, and the ensuing political and religious controversy that the crisis stirred; and an increasingly recalcitrant and militant Parliament that insisted on making its right to levy taxes and grant subsidies contingent on its right to decide foreign policy.

By the end of the English Civil War, Parliament appeared to have killed dynastic marriage stone dead. Yet it would be another few decades before the Glorious Revolution

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(1688) and the Act of Settlement (1701) solved the problem of cultural mixing by establishing the constitutional guarantee of a Protestant succession. Upon the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, dynastic marriage certainly had more life left in it; Catholic and foreign, Catherine of Braganza (1662) and Maria of Modena (1685) assumed the title of England’s queen consort to Charles II and James II, respectively. Nonetheless, the breakdown of the dynastic system did not happen overnight. As the following chapters will show, the literary and dramatic texts of the early seventeenth century were deeply sensitive to the fraught complexities of dynastic marriage, its problems and possibilities, and its pivotal position in the tensions unfolding in England and Europe that would dominate subsequent decades.

From another perspective, royal marriage offers an especially rich ground for exploring the intersection of hard politics and the longue durée of culture. Indeed, dynastic marriage was a centerpiece of vertical politics—war, peace, and court intrigue; in the post-reformation and concomitant counter-Reformation, England’s relationship with continental superpowers was reconfigured in terms of stark polarities. From 1585 onward, England’s links to Europe rested on confessional affinity, joining the Dutch revolt against Hapsburg Spain in the Low Countries, and fighting alongside the Huguenots in the civil wars in France (1589-95). English Catholics, on the other hand, sought refuge in the seminaries of Salamanca, Douai, and Valladolid, which became hotbeds for Catholic resistance and were directly funded by the Spanish crown. However,

7 “La longue durée” is a concept developed by Fernand Braudel and later expanded by the historians of the Annales movement.
the cultural *longue durée* paralleled and complemented historical moments of high politics, where continuities as well as ruptures figure in England’s contact with its historical rivals, France and Spain, leaving us with a far more nuanced reading of England’s cultural vectors than the much-discussed contemporary denunciations of the Spanish match or the vilification of Henrietta Maria would suggest.

II.

Given the critical “turn to religion” as well as revisionist diplomatic history in early modern studies, the time seems ripe for rethinking dynastic marriage through a different theological and political context. The work of revisionist historians including Peter Lake, Anthony Milton, and Christopher Haigh has opened up new critical paradigms that complicate our understanding of the confessional landscape of the period. Michael Questier’s work on “loyal” or “conformist” English Catholics has added a complex dimension to explorations of anti-Catholicism, crypto-Catholicism, and recusancy in the Jacobean period. As Questier argues, “the fact that James had started a public debate about what constituted loyalty to the regime, and where the division between public duty and private conscience should be fixed, did allow [Catholic loyalists] the opportunity to negotiate a way into royal favor and make a pitch for toleration.”

One of these avenues, revisionist historians have pointed out, was mediating the regime’s contact with its Catholic counterparts, including royal marriage negotiations.

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Furthermore, revisionist historiography has brought to our attention the influence of a pragmatic circle at the Jacobean court that favored progress and stability rather than expensive and unpredictable wars. Free of strict confessional allegiance, the pragmatists saw in English Catholics a legitimate source of revenue to the crown. Instead of enforcing penal statutes against recusants and alienating a moneyed minority, they advocated incorporating propertied Catholics into the patronage system. Indeed, this group attracted not only powerful elites, but also well-connected merchants who benefitted from conflict-free trade routes and global connections. For the merchant class, the peace treaty of 1604 had facilitated finance, intelligence, and overseas trade with Spain, and opened up the Mediterranean basin as well as long routes to the Americas.

Historians have also stressed the important but often overlooked point that James’s irenic *cri de coeur* was not a lone voice in the wilderness of European power struggle. Quite the contrary, James’s policy of European peace coincided with a welcoming continental mood depleted by a century of religious turmoil, violent wars, and civil unrest. From the perspective of the court of the young and newly anointed Philip III

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of Spain (1598-1621), Spain was weary after decades of warfare with England, France, and the United Provinces, its coffers saddled with enormous financial burdens. Indeed, Philip III also proclaimed himself a pacifist king ruling over the *Pax Hispanica*: a foreign policy of *conservación* that tempered his father’s “Grand Strategy” (Geoffrey Parker’s term)\(^{11}\) of military and imperial bravado, and pursued diplomatic relations with former rivals and tactical retreat from contested territories, such as the United Provinces.\(^{12}\)

“Spain could no longer afford to act as Europe’s policeman,” Antonio Feros remarks, “and instead had to choose its interventions carefully and to focus on those that seemed most likely to advance the monarch’s desires for territorial and political conservation.”\(^{13}\)

Quite certainly, Philip III consolidated Spain’s realignment, which started to bear fruit in the early 1600s. To the north, peace with France had settled without major setback, and paved the way for another peace between France and Savoy in 1601. In the Italian peninsula, the Duke of Savoy maintained his strong alliance with Spain.\(^{14}\)

To keep France in check, Philip III saw in an Anglo-Spanish rapprochement a favorable strategy to

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counterbalance the longstanding Franco-Scottish alliance ancienne.\textsuperscript{15} Eventually, England buried the hatchet with its fiercest Catholic enemy, thereby initiating a virtually unprecedented political alliance in the post-Reformation period.\textsuperscript{16}

Furthermore, historians are quick to emphasize that peace was not a seventeenth-century afterthought. Before becoming a national icon of Protestant interventionism, Queen Elizabeth not merely maintained peace for thirty years, but indeed entertained marriage offers from both Philip II of Spain in 1559 as well as the Duke of Anjou in 1578-1582. In the Elizabethan fin de siècle, when foreign policy was no longer linked to the queen’s marriage, a shift in mode of thought about English foreign relations surfaced within her Privy Council. In light of England’s failed campaigns in Cadiz (1596) and the Azores (1597), Henri de Navarre’s sudden conversion to Catholicism and his subsequent imposition of (limited) toleration for Huguenots in the Edict of Nantes (1598),\textsuperscript{17} a sharp factional struggle within Elizabeth I’s Privy Council, fuelled by the circulation of

\textsuperscript{15} Otherwise known as the Auld Alliance. Signed in 1295 and renewed by every French and Scottish monarch, with the exception of Louis XI, until the mid-sixteenth century, the alliance culminated in 1558 with the union of the French and Scottish crowns but was shortly terminated upon the death of Francois II in 1560. Henry IV and James VI made overtures to renew the alliance in the 1590s but declined slowly after the union of the Scottish and English crowns in 1603. See Elizabeth Bonner, “French Naturalization of the Scots in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries.” The Historical Journal 40.4 (1997): esp. 1085-86; and Alexander Grant, Independence and Nationhood: Scotland 1306-1469. London: E. Arnold, 1984.


manuscripts and tracts, spilled into the more public of spheres.\textsuperscript{18} “The peace party” or “the pragmatists,” headed by Elizabeth’s longtime counselor William Cecil, Lord Burghley, his son, Robert Cecil, and Buckhurst, Lord Treasurer, considered England’s depleted financial situation, and thus recommended cautious diplomatic measures and the re-establishment of trade relations with England’s enemies.\textsuperscript{19} Avoiding military confrontation at any cost, the pragmatists emphasized that “any links established with a foreign power must be based on their contribution to English safety rather than their consequences for the general Protestant cause,” as Wallace MacCaffrey puts it.\textsuperscript{20}

Against this program stood the pro-war party, led by the charismatic Earl of Essex, the queen’s favorite. This circle vehemently opposed peace with the Popish antichrist and the enemies of Christendom, whose aggressive designs were providentially botched in 1588, and advocated a pan-Protestant militarism instead.\textsuperscript{21} In this apocalyptic spirit, England was upheld as the defender of true religion; its natural allies the persecuted Dutch Calvinists and French Huguenots. From a worldly perspective, Essex’s imperialist streak and military adventurism competed against Philip II’s own fantasies of world domination. To counter Philip’s imperialism, equally ambitious English men, à la Walter


\textsuperscript{21} For a basic outline of Essex’s views at this time, see the tremendously influential tract typically referred to as “Essex’s Apology,” which originally appeared in manuscript during 1598: Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, \textit{[An Apologie of the Earle of Essex].} [London: 1600]. (STC 6787.7).
Raleigh and Francis Drake, adopted a sort of virile Protestant privateer/adventurer/merchant persona, attacked and pilfered Spanish ships, and established military bases in Spain’s colonial territories, in hopes of ultimately monopolizing the bounty of the New World.\textsuperscript{22}

III.

Adopting the new analytical tools of revisionist historiography, literary critics have focused on unpacking the complexity of denominational difference in the drama and literary output of the period. A groundbreaking representative work is Alison Shell’s \textit{Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660} (1999), which offered a nuanced picture of Catholic and anti-Catholic epistemologies in literary texts. In the same vein, studies by Frances Dolan, Arthur Marotti, Christopher Highley, and most recently Gillian Woods have underlined the diverse ways in which Catholic narratives articulated an English identity or carried Catholic traces while promoting their (still problematic) loyalty to England.\textsuperscript{23}

In their trenchant interrogation of political and cultural discourse, feminist and postcolonial scholars have urged a radical reconsideration of English attitudes to racial, ethnic, and gender ideologies in the literary and dramatic output of the period. Phyllis

\textsuperscript{22} Hammer, \textit{Polarisation}, 244.

Rackin and Jean Howard’s *Engendering a Nation* (1997) has prompted us to rethink the sort of charged “anti-historical” work queen consorts perform in the histories of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Most significant for postcolonial studies in particular has been Ania Loomba’s *Gender, Race, and Renaissance Drama* (1989), which opened up questions about the nature of global contact, moral superiority, and fantasies of assimilation typified in constructions of eroticized native women and their conversion to Christianity. Equally important to this study’s thesis is Jean Howard’s *Theatre of A City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (2007), which invites us to think of how the “spatial stories” of citizen (instead of city) comedy offer a more complex understanding of categories of inclusion and exclusion through the lens of cultural geography and urban psychology. Indeed, Howard’s argument has provided this study with an invaluable framework for thinking about how playgoers imagined difference in terms of specific locales, such as Gresham’s Exchange, and their connection to the wider cultural sphere; and whether these “spatial stories” might have resonated with plays evoking the human market of interdynastic marriage given its pivotal position in the tensions of the Stuart period.

In many respects, these critical strands generate new readings of classics as well as lesser-known texts when combined or placed against each other. Undoubtedly, religion was a key subject in debates on dynastic marriage, but so too were questions of gender and the political role of royal women. Moreover, the nature of commerce, global relations, and English expansion shaped marital diplomacy as much as confessional alignment did. Yet the question of how drama blends marital diplomacy, theology, taxonomies of
otherness, and gender politics in an equivocal form remain unanswered. When connections between marital diplomacy and drama are investigated, they are treated as important yet stratified micro-historical moments, such as in critical studies on the first extant tragedy in English, *Gorbuduc* (1561-2), in the context of Lord Robert Dudley’s courtship of Queen Elizabeth I; the Norwich entertainments of 1578 and the Anjou match; or Thomas Middleton’s classic *A Game at Chesse* (1624) against the fiasco of the Spanish match (1624); or even Queen Henrietta Maria’s Frenchified “court of love” as dramatized in the drama of William Davenant and James Shirley in the Caroline period.

Moreover, the scholarship of Stephen Orgel, Martin Butler, David Lindley, and John Peacock has been instrumental in drawing attention to the complex dynamic of political context surrounding the performance of court masques in the early modern period. This provoked a surge in critical analyses that saw in wedding ceremonials,

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masques, and other entertainments a fertile ground where marital diplomacy was played out and political unions were performed in the Stuart period. Kevin Curran’s *Marriage, Performance, and Politics at the Jacobean Court* (2009) has been particularly instrumental in drawing attention to the iconography of intermarriage in court masques commissioned to celebrate a number of Anglo-Scottish or Catholic-Protestant marriages that James I personally sponsored. Curran’s work shows that intermarriage was central to the Jacobean court’s vocabulary of union and reconciliation from early on in the reign. However, the adoption of the methods used to investigate “elite” genres in studies of the commercial stage remain in their earlier stages. This study is an attempt to make this leap.

IV.

In the wake of the Reformation, political interest and religious doctrine overlapped, and consequently marital diplomacy became inherently connected to confessional politics. Royal households on both sides of the aisle asserted their legitimacy by proclaiming themselves as the defenders of the faith against heresy. In the later sixteenth century, for example, Philip II of Spain abandoned his conservative *el Rey Prudante* stance and fully embraced the fundamentalist persona of *el Rey Católico*, which stemmed from that of *el Rey Cristiano*—a persona he had reluctantly adopted upon his

accession to the Spanish throne in 1555.\textsuperscript{29} For Charles V had also bequeathed the new king Spain’s “guerra santa,” whose main mission was defending Rome against the encroachment of Islam and the Ottoman Empire from the Levant and the Maghreb.\textsuperscript{30} Indeed, when he changed his foreign policy, Philip adopted the propaganda machine of the guerra santa to couch Spain’s political motive. In 1568, for instance, Philip II commissioned his ambassador in Rome to talk Pope Pius V out of sponsoring a union between his rival, King Charles IX of France, and Archduchess Elisabeth, second daughter of Philip’s cousin Emperor Maximilian II.\textsuperscript{31} This went against Philip’s agenda, which sought a marriage between Elizabeth and King Sebastian I of Portugal; for an alliance between Vienna and Versailles enabled France’s encirclement. Therefore, the Spanish king invoked religion to caution the pope that “affairs in France were in such ruinous condition that it would not be well either for religion or for the security of Italy for the emperor to make pledges to the Christian King [of France],” as the Spanish ambassador recorded.\textsuperscript{32}

In England the political was also predicated on the confessional. Although metaphors of dynastic union between the English and Scottish crowns mitigated the


\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, 30.


\textsuperscript{32} Qtd. in Michael J. Levin, \textit{Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy}. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005. 87.
succession of the Stuarts and the end of the Tudor line, zealous Protestants ensured that
the new king got the details right; they overstated England’s hard line against Spain and
Rome, and emphasized that the dynastic continuity between the Tudors and Stuarts was
predicated on England’s ongoing reformation of true religion and its militant foreign
policy. In *Ecclesia Triumphans* (1603), Andrew Willet, a rising star in the godlier wing
of the state church, reprises the marriage iconography of the Anglo-Scottish union in a
providentialist frame, casting it as “Gods prouidence” to strengthen true religion and
defeat the antichrist. For this reason, he compares James to the biblical kings David and
Solomon: “So that we may now say of this Isle, as Dauid here of Ierusalem, it is a
kingdome compacted togethier in it selfe”; and ends with a preemptive warning against
slipping into lack of virtue as in “the fall of Dauid, the backsliding of Salomon.” 33 In his
celebration of the Anglo-Scottish union, therefore, Willet had already established that
conjuring up the biblical typography of David and Solomon to represent providential
unions is also hedged with images of sin and divine retribution. By using the biblical
exempla of David and Salomon’s unification of the Israelites, Willet implied that for the
Anglo-Scottish marriage to succeed, the new regime must adopt the policies of militant
Protestantism that went against James I’s pacifism. Moreover, by invoking David and

33 Andrew Willet, *Ecclesia Triumphans*. [Cambridge]: 1603. 26; For discussions of *Ecclesia Triumphans*,
Martin’s, 1981. Esp. 231-235; Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant
Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995. Esp. 13-26; and
Solomon’s intermarriage that brought about their demise, Willet emphasized England’s repudiation of foreign marriages on the basis of idolatry.

Yet King James was a pragmatic yet elusive ruler who fundamentally abhorred conflict and believed in the efficiency of diplomacy. As King of Scotland, his *modus operandi* was to navigate factional extremes by mastering what Diana Newton calls “the art of the possible.”

His mercurial approach to policy-making allowed him to resolve a number of longstanding Scottish conflicts, and secured his uncontested succession to the English throne. For this reason, he built bridges with major European superpowers, including Rome, in attempts to garner as much support from as many sources as he could. To that end, the King’s official as well as secret envoys in Rome made peace overtures to Spain to be subsequently cemented by a marriage alliance between the Stuarts and Habsburgs from as early as 1596.

What is more revealing is that the *Ecclesia Triumphans* links Anne of Denmark, the new Queen of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, to a string of biblical and historical Annes, “whose true and diligent service [to] the Church and commonwealth of

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England,” have “not onely dubbled, but multiplied […] this common ioy.” After conjuring Anne’s biblical namesakes, “Anna of Elkanah for her godly posteritie in Samuel, Anna of Phanuel for her devout pietie in praying in the temple,” Willet invokes “[t]wo other of this honourable and Christian name Anna” from “the Chronicles of this nation, both vertuous Queenes.”38 Anne of Denmark’s “worthie predecessours” are “one wife to Richard the [Second] sister to Wincelaus king of Bohemie; the other, ladie Anna Bullen, wife to king Henrie the [Eight] and mother to our late gratious Soueraigne Q[ueen] Elizabeth.”39 He declares:

The other [Anne of Bohemia] is commended for her excellent vertues; as her sincerity in true religion, her Christian charitie and princely liberalitie toward the poore, whose almes giuen that way in three quarters of a yeare, are summed to be [thirteen] or [fourteen] thousand pound.40 […] That innocent ladie Queene Anna Bullen, though by the malice of her aduersaries traduced, yet both by her godly death, and Gods blessing vpon her posteritie is sufficiently cleared.41

37 Willet, Ecclesia Triumphans, 2v.

38 Ibid. 3r.

39 Ibid. 3v.


41 Willet, Ecclesia Triumphans, 3v-4r.
Willet’s account of Anne Boleyn’s queenship and martyrdom is an almost verbatim adaptation from Protestant historiography, most famously John Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* (1563, 1570, 1576, and 1583). In addition to her many virtues, Anne’s Protestant life and martyrdom attested to her pivotal role in perpetuating the English Reformation and the Tudor line. To prove his point, Willet retrieves some “propheticall verses” from Anne’s coronation in 1533: “As Anna Queene of princely race doth equally descend, / So to her people golden daies her offspring shall extend.”42 In this formulation, Willet locates Anne Boleyn’s English providentialism in the new king’s Danish wife who bore her name and also “issued” an Elizabeth:

These [verses] had their due accomplishment afterward, in the happie issue of this Ladie, then vnborne, Queene Elizabeth, by whome indeede this Church of England enjoyed a golden time. And it is the comfortable hope of this nation of England, tha[t] God hath raised your Highnes vp another fruitfull Anna, by whose royall offspring this lan[d] may long haue fruition of like golden and happie daies, which God in his mercie graunt.43

By yoking Anne of Denmark to Anne Boleyn via Elizabeth Tudor, Willet was able to decipher God’s master plan that underpinned the Stuart succession. By aligning the new queen with English Protestantism, he also defiantly reverses what Clare McManus calls

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Anne of Denmark’s “gesture of withholding,” when she refused to be solemnized in a Protestant coronation and symbolically announced her Catholic faith.\textsuperscript{44} Indeed, Anne’s conversion to Catholicism in the previous decade was widely known in Europe.\textsuperscript{45} From another angle, Willet’s flagrant prolepsis shows how the vocabulary of dynasticism eventually came to signify a shared religious enterprise, which supplemented an earlier English/non-English taxonomy of otherness. In its most extremes forms, Willet’s use of religion to ascribe difference would burst forth fully in Thomas Scott’s series of polemical pamphlets, \textit{Vox Populi}, \textit{Vox Dei}, \textit{Vox Regis}, and \textit{The Second Part of Vox Populi} (1620-1624), to oppose the Spanish match and call for military intervention in the Palatinate.

IV.

How did the politics of dynasticism become a \textit{de facto} extension of a Protestant and English national identity in the late Elizabethan period and beyond? To answer this question, we need to revisit Queen Mary I’s controversial dynastic marriage to Philip II of Spain (1554-1558). For the story of royal marriage’s transition from the restricted domain of royal prerogative to that of ideological struggle starts there. In providentialist historiography, England’s loss of Calais in 1557 and Mary’s heirless demise were

\textsuperscript{44} Clare McManus, \textit{Women on the Renaissance Stage}. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002. 94-5.

directly linked to her Spanish match and thus interpreted as acts of divine retribution. Not only did the half-Spanish queen marry an unpopular, power-hungry Spaniard, but she also reinstated the tyrannical rule of that other prince of darkness, the Pope of Rome.

Until recently, few attempts were made to question whether Mary I’s short reign deserves history’s opprobrium. Similarly, the popular, even scholarly, view of a failed dynastic marriage had lingered on for a long time before revisionist historians opened it to correction.  
Sarah Duncan has re-evaluated how Mary’s humanist education under Juan Luis Vives shaped England’s first female monarchy; and how the legacy of Mary’s maternal grandmother, Isabel of Castile, particularly her joint rulership with Ferdinand of Aragon provided Mary with a unique model of female sovereignty that Queen Elizabeth later built on and expanded. Alexander Samson has gone so far as to argue that Mary and Philip’s marriage was a qualified “success,” their co-monarchy a “delicate balancing act between competing factional, national, and personal interests.” From the perspective of international power politics, “England ought to have felt a greater degree of strategic

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security,” Stephen Lee has pointed out, as its “markets in the Netherlands were guaranteed, since Philip II had inherited Burgundy along with Spain and southern Italy.”  

Most certainly, the terms of the marriage treaty, whose rationale was securing succession and continuity, were in line with the expectations of marital diplomacy. Despite its diplomatic appeal, the Spanish match of 1554 was far from a walk in the park. At the most basic, Mary’s gender unsettled a long tradition of monarchical theory. As an anointed monarch, the queen was expected to marry and bear an heir to the throne. Possessing “a male body politic in concept while a female body natural in practice,” according to Carole Levin, Mary’s childbearing window was extremely time-sensitive (she was thirty-seven years old) vis-à-vis a timeless expectation of fertility. At this point, the queen’s body became an object of public scrutiny and subsequently a locus of divine punishment, which John Knox’s infamous image of “a woman cursed of God” crystallized. Parliament not only pressurized the queen to secure dynastic continuity, but indeed requested that she married one of her subjects. This recommendation went against the tradition of dynasticism as a means of advancing geopolitical ends, for “the


49 Philip and Mary would rule jointly, although Philip’s actual powers over domestic affairs in England would be strictly limited. The eldest child of the marriage between Mary and Philip would inherit England from Mary and the Netherlands from Philip, while Philip’s existing son, Don Carlos, would inherit Spain and its territories. If Don Carlos died without an heir, then the next English monarch would inherit all of Spain and England’s dominions. Finally, Philip would have no claims on England if a childless Mary predeceased him. Therefore, when Mary died in 1558, the terms of the treaty were automatically voided. Ibid. 94-5.


51 John Knox, The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous regiment of Women (1558), 30v.
process of identifying a pool of foreign-born candidates from which a […] consort could be chosen had long been a familiar one at early modern courts,” Retha Warnicke explains; that Mary’s father, King Henry VIII, “had married four ladies who were not members of foreign dynasties is one of the most unusual characteristics of his unions.”

From another perspective, as Paul Hammer points out in his discussion of Queen Elizabeth and Robert Dudley, domestic candidates were ruled out because “they raised even thornier problems of how subjects would react to the elevation of a former subject to royal status—especially as a wife was theoretically required to be obedient to her husband.” Mary quickly made it clear that she had no intention of marrying any of her own subjects, particularly Edward Courtney, who was put forward by the English nobility and backed by France from behind the scenes.

In this light, it is significant that Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587) presents Mary’s dynastic politics as an episode of capricious maladroitness:

> And touching Edward Courtneie, she not onelie aduanced him to the earldome of Deuonshire, but also to so much of his fathers possessions as there remained in hir hands; whereby it was then thought of manie, that she bare affection to him by the waie of marriage: but it came not so to


passe (for what cause I am not able to giue anie reason) but surelie the subiects of England were most desirous thereof.\textsuperscript{54}

Without justifying her policy, according to the \textit{Chronicles}, Mary disregarded the wishes of her subjects and discarded Edward Courtney after she had given him—and the realm—every signal that she would marry him. In contrast to the portrait of a fickle queen that the \textit{Chronicles’} account of the episode implies, however, Mary provided every reason her marriage to Philip stood as a natural alliance with a powerful dynasty against England’s historical rival France, especially in light of the royal union of Henry II of France’s son, the Dauphin François, to Mary, Queen of Scots. Therefore, Mary asked her advisers to “think of the present condition of affairs […] what benefit the country could look for were she to marry [Edward] Courtenay, and what profit might accrue to it if she chose a foreigner.”\textsuperscript{55} In November 1553, a joint deputation of the Lords and Commons sought to talk the queen out of the Spanish match. Their concerns are illuminating: to them, Philip had a vast kingdom to rule, and therefore, would not be able to dedicate himself to England; that if Mary married the Spanish prince, England would have to go to war with France; and that “the country would never abide a foreigner.”\textsuperscript{56} The Speaker of the Commons, Sir John Pollard, warned the queen that Philip might coerce her “out of husbandly tyranny”; if Mary died and left behind a young heir, he might usurp the crown;

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\textsuperscript{55} Qtd. in Anna Whitelock, \textit{Mary Tudor: Princess, Bastard, Queen}. New York: Random House, 2009. 221.

\textsuperscript{56} Lee, \textit{The Mid Tudors}, 120; Whitelock, \textit{Mary Tudor}, 221.
and if Mary died childless, Philip would deplete the royal exchequer and artillery before leaving the realm. Therefore, the delegation recommended that the queen marry an Englishman, preferably none other than Edward Courtney.

As outlandish and paradoxical as the parade of consequences that would occur should the marriage project proceed were, the Spanish match did certainly evoke an enveloping and unfolding sense of vulnerability that Pollard and his mid-sixteenth century Commons could not put their fingers on; however, their panic is worth pausing over because it throws into relief a burgeoning “[counter]-alliance between Protestantism and English national identity.” What is also worth noting is that Mary’s subjects, even the religiously conservative ones like Bishop Stephen Gardiner, viewed Philip as an interloper poised stealthily to dismantle the fabric of the commonweal.

Concurrently, a surfeit of suitors pursued the new Queen of England’s hand in marriage, particularly because the balance of power between the Houses of Habsburg and Valois hinged on the new regime’s foreign agenda. While Emperor Charles V pursued a match between Mary and his son Philip to keep France in check and maintain the Hapsburgs’ prominence in Europe, Henry II aggressively campaigned against the Anglo-Hapsburg marriage via his machiavellian ambassador, François de Noailles, who had supported the Earl of Northumberland’s thwarted coup d’état in July 1553. Noailles


58 Highley, Catholics Writing the Nation, 12.

59 Edwards, Mary I: England’s Catholic Queen, 84-5.
spared no strategy to derail the negotiations; he secured the opposition of his Venetian counterpart, and fanned the flames of xenophobia and self-interest in the ranks England’s nobility, who feared that a Spanish contingent in their midst would most certainly dilute their influence and threaten their personal interests. No sooner had “Parliament agreed to repeal Edward VI’s religious legislation, to ratify the marriage treaty and to sanction the alliance with Philip II,” than a “nativist” uprising, led by Sir Thomas Wyatt, headed from Kent towards London to thwart what they considered a Trojan horse to usurp England from its people and annex it to Spain. Wyatt’s patriotic stance was stealthily fomented by the intrigues of the French ambassador Noailles. Similarly, under the spiritual guidance of Emperor Charles V, the Marian regime portrayed Wyatt’s rebellion as a manifestation of the “new religion,” which “constitute[ed] a far greater threat to English national integrity than a handful of high-ranking Spaniards,” as Christopher Highley notes.

In light of the long-standing tradition of late medieval and early modern diplomacy, the alliance, as Marian apologists saw it, was only geared towards strengthening the realm, particularly when the remaining options were international isolation or war. In his account of Wyatt’s uprising, *The Historie of Wyates Rebellion* (1554), John Proctor recounts the queen’s address to the realm at the Guildhall. In it, the queen is emphatic:

60 Lee, *The Mid Tudors*, 120.

61 Highley, *Catholics Writing the Nation*, 13.
For I am already married to this Common Weal and the faithful members of the same; the spousal ring whereof I have on my finger: which never hitherto was, no hereafter shall be, left off. Protesting unto you nothing to be more acceptable to my heart, no more answerable to my will, then your advancement in wealth and welfare, with the furtherance of God’s glory.\textsuperscript{62}

Not surprisingly, pragmatism and ideology motivated Mary’s dynastic politics; the Spanish match would bolster her union with the commonweal and improve the realm’s finances, while fulfilling her providential calling to further God’s glory. Furthermore, Proctor castigates those subjects who are “loth to be ouer run with strangers” and reminds them of France’s ill-will, while also warning against its continuing menace:

\begin{quote}
But for that we know most certainly that ther is ment no maner of euil to vs by those strangers [the Spaniards], but rather aide, profit & comfort against other strangers our auncient enemies [the French], with whom they as most arrant & degenerate traitors do in dede vnkindly & vnnaturally ioine: we in her graces defense wil spende both life & what we haue beside to the vtter most peny against them.\textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

Simply put, Spain is England’s friend, France its enemy; therefore, the Anglo-Spanish union secures “aide, profit & comfort,” while an alliance with France is “unnatural.”

\textsuperscript{62} John Proctor. \textit{The Historie of Wyates Rebellion}. London: 1554. 54.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Ibid.} 22.
Perhaps the most striking feature of these narratives is how both sides imposed a set of assumptions to define “natural” and “unnatural” royal marriages, which would become mainstream directives in the seventeenth century. In their most extreme forms, these nebulous categories would form an ideological yardstick against which subsequent dynastic unions were measured. In Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587), for instance, Wyatt’s scaffold speech is driven by a proselytizing thrust; his appeal to the audience does not suggest defeat, but a galvanizing call to arms:

> “I am no traytor, quoth Wiat, and the cause wherefore I haue gathered the people, is to defende the Realme from daunger of being ouerrunne with straungers, which must follow, this mariage taking place.”

In this formulation, the moral implications of Wyatt’s treasonous attempt to depose an anointed monarch—which endangered Elizabeth as well as Mary—are diminished, while his hostility to the dynastic marriage is justified.

Indeed, we can depict the earliest representation of the natural-unnatural marriage binary in Mary and Philip’s royal entry in August 1554, where Philip’s Plantagenet/Lancastrian ancestry occupied center stage. For Philip, who also received the Order of the Garter at the coronation, was descended from King Edward III, the founder of that very chivalric order, whose main aim was “to secure the support of the English

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65 Holinshed’s *Chronicles* 1587; III, 1105.
nobility for his campaigns in France.” 66 In fact, both Philip and Mary could be traced back to John of Gaunt’s daughters, Philippa and Catherine; therefore, Christopher Highley points out, “Philip’s legitimate if distant claim to the English crown makes his arrival in England no ‘invasion’ but a sort of homecoming.” 67 Yet, one can go further and argue that the wedding pageantry, as John Elder’s scrupulous account of the day shows, figures Philip’s homecoming as an act of retrieval of a historical loss. This is most obvious in the final and hence most prominent pageant at Cheapside—“the fourth and most excellent pageant of al,” Elder proclaims—where the royal couple’s ceremonial procession ended. In a spectacular piece of political theatre, the final tableau staged Mary and Philip’s “moste noble Geneology from kinge Edward the third,” which:

was most excellently, and moste ingeniously set out with a great Arboure or tree: vnder the roote whereof was an olde man liinge on his left side, with a long white beard, a close croune on his head, and a sceptour in his ryght hand and a ball Imperial in his lefte. Which olde man signified kinge Edward the third, of whom both their maiesties are linially descended, which grene Arboure or tree grewe vp of bothe the sides with braunches, whereon did sit young faire children which represented the persones of


67 Highley, Catholics Writing the Nation, 16.
such kinges, quenes, Princes, dukes, Earles, lorde & ladies as descended
from the said king.  

Tellingly, Edward III presides over an inscription whose congratulatory verses 
corroborate Philip’s English lineage:

England, if thou delight in ancient men
Whose glorious acts thy fame abroad did blaze,
Both Mary and Philip their offspring ought thou then
With all thy heart to love and to embrace,
Which both descended of one ancient line
It hath please God by marriage to combine.

In another set of celebratory verses, Edward III gives the marriage a providential purpose:

“The Devil old enemy of mankind did not wish / That the English Queen Mary marry
English Philip / And that the royal stock return to its source, / But God, the provident
hope of the English, did wish it.”

To Philip, parading his English lineage served a different purpose. In fact, the
Spanish train, as the newly crowned Philip wrote to his sister Joanna of Austria, “went to
see in the castle [Winchester] the Round Table of king Arthur” after the wedding; to the
Spaniards, Henry Kamen notes, England embodied “the legendary island of chivalry, the

home of king Arthur and of Amadis [of Gaul].”

Interestingly, by pointing to a shared discursive heritage, as Amadis is said to have performed many of his chivalric stunts in Wales, Philip manipulated generic links to bolster his position and rebut his critics. In a similar vein, Philip focused on cultural forms as visible loci of interaction between the two realms; in as early as December 1554, Philip attempted to marry el juego de cañas with its English cognate, the joust. Although the attempt was short-lived and subsequently derided, the symbolic synthesis of martial tradition, Rory Rapple suggests, was as a prelude to the projected consolidation of military forces to defend and expand the Hapsburg Empire. When push came to shove, military make-believe translated into indelible humiliation and loss; in 1557, England joined the Hapsburg wars against France and consequently lost the strategic city of Calais, “the last remnant of an Anglo-French empire that once extended from Ireland to the Pyrenees.”

That King Edward III is exhumed to corroborate Philip’s English DNA, who in turn plays it up without compunction, both operates within and points to a burgeoning contradiction to the concept of dynasticism as pre-Reformation England knew it. At a


72 See # 155 in Jenaro Alenda y Mira, Relaciones de solemnidades y fiestas publicas de España. Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1903. 50.


74 Rapple, Martial Power, 92-3.

discursive level, a shared ancestry, John Edwards notes, provided the foundation to substitute “the Tudor myth of the reconciliation of the houses of York and Lancaster, after the Wars of the Roses, with one of a Lancastrian restoration, which would also reconcile Spain and England.” However, this Marian rendition of a Lancastrian restoration carried the markings of the ancien régime which England had only recently revoked after Henry VIII’s divorce from Katherine of Aragon and schism with Rome. As we shall see in later chapters, opponents as well as apologists of Stuart dynasticism would repeatedly attempt to either obliterate or expose a foreign consort’s “un-Englishness.” Added to the complex machinations of international diplomacy, dynastic marriage, in its post-Reformation format, would only be tolerated if it subscribed to a loosely defined English and Protestant agenda. Given the dilapidated conditions of royal finances, the crown turned to an increasingly militant Parliament for subsidies. Consequently, the erosion of the hallowed arcana imperii was unavoidable, especially when the future of the (Protestant and English) realm hinged on its core prerogatives: dynastic marriage and royal succession. Under these circumstances, the politics of dynasticism, particularly in the Stuart period, provoked contention between the crown

and the House of Commons, and ultimately proved divisive in the aftermath of the Bohemian revolt and the crises of the early 1620s.\footnote{Michael Questier’s introduction to his \textit{Stuart Dynastic Policy and Religious Politics, 1621-1625.} (Cambridge 2009) provides a thorough analysis of the political and religious context of the early 1620s, which forms the basis for my discussion of the Spanish match in Chapter 3.}

V.

From this perspective then, it is significant that Philip’s Lancastrian credentials regained currency in the late Elizabethan period, only to be violently scratched out across a range of different media. Following the execution of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, in 1587, Philip resurrected his English ancestry and presented himself as Queen Elizabeth I’s “natural” successor. This time, Philip’s genealogy circulated in print in the infamous \textit{A Conference about the Next Succession to the Crowne of England} (1595), where the English Jesuit Robert Parsons, under the pseudonym “R. Doleman,” presented yet another genealogical tree that bolstered Philip’s suit as Elizabeth’s most lawful successor (see fig. 1). Indeed, Philip invoked Pope Gregory XIII’s proclamation in 1580 that condoned the assassination of a heretic ruler, to justify what came to be known as the “Enterprise of England.” Philip did not support Pope Pius V’s excommunication of Elizabeth in 1570 in light of an informal détente between England and Spain that lasted thirty years, however. Not to mention that after Mary Tudor’s death, Philip was among the first suitors to seek his sister-in-law’s hand in marriage in 1559.\footnote{See Susan Doran’s “Religion and Politics at the Court of Elizabeth I: The Habsburg Marriage Negotiations of 1559-1567.” \textit{The English Historical Review} 104 (1989): 908-26; for earlier treatments of the Philip II marriage negotiations, see Doran, \textit{Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I.} London: Routledge, 1996. Esp. 21–26; Levin, \textit{Heart and Stomach of a King}, esp. 48–54.} When a

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matrimonial prospect failed, Philip and Elizabeth avoided direct confrontation and established what John Watkins describes as “a relationship between two polities sealed in the more abstract form of ‘friendship and brotherhood’ rather than interdynastic marriage and a common progeny” that lasted up until the Armada years (1585-88).79

As many scholars have noted, the drama of the 1590s, particularly the chronicle history play, participated in constructing English nationalism by staging English history as a causal framework of dynastic succession, crises, and continuity; and as a providential triumph over the incursions of alien forces, including those of the Roman Catholic Church, bent on destroying the blessed Protestant isle. In light of Philip’s transformation from a treasured son to feared enemy, George Peele’s treatment of Queen Eleanor of Castile in Edward I (ca. 1591; printed in 1593) is worth consideration. The play is no dramatic homily, but a hodgepodge of vaudevillian comedy and lowbrow history that casts the Spanish wife of the thirteenth-century Plantagenet king as a fickle opportunist, sexual predator, and jealous murderer.80 By dramatizing the Lancastrian past’s darker (read Catholic and Spanish) story line, the play aims its fire at Philip II of Spain and brings his claims of Englishness to an ignoble end.81

79 John Watkins, “Marriage a la mode,” 90. During this two-decade period, however, Philip provided English, Scottish, and Irish exiles with all the resources and manpower to resume their counter-Reformation; Elizabeth supported the Dutch rebels in the Low Countries, and encouraged privateers to raid Spanish ships and territories in the New World and elsewhere.


81 Hammer, “Royal Marriage and the Royal Succession,” 69.
Fig. 1. Philip II of Spain’s Genealogy in *A Conference about the Next Succession to the Crowne of England* (1595).
Tellingly, *Edward I* divests Eleanor of Castile (Elinor in the play) of the tropes of piety and grief associated with her image in the cultural vocabulary of the late medieval period.\(^82\) Peele’s much-quoted lines in tourist guidebooks, “Erect a rich and statelie carued Crosse, / Whereon her stature shall with glorie shine, / And hence forth see you call it Charing crosse,” are cropped out of a speech imbued with irony, where King Edward envisions a royal funeral for his “chariest and choicest queen”:

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In euerie time of their enforste aboade,
Reare vp a crosse in token of their worke,
Whereon faire *Elinors* picture shall be plaste,
Arriued at London neare our Pallas bounds,
Interre my louelie *Elinor* late deceast,
But soft, what tidings with these Purciuants? (L3)
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Here, of course, Peele evokes Eleanor’s three iconic tombs and twelve gilded crosses (“Eleanor crosses”) that the bereaved King had erected to commemorate his “chère reine’s” funeral procession and burial at Westminster Abbey.\(^83\) Up until the Reformation, these shrine-like memorials symbolized Eleanor’s piety, almsgiving, and intercessory

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\(^{83}\) Most of these monuments were destroyed during the English civil war and only three survive today at Hardingstone, Geddingtone, and Waltham. For a brief history of the crosses, and analyses of their iconography, see Doreen Shakesby’s “The Crosses of Queen Eleanor.” *Medieval History* 3 (1993): 26-9; and John Carmi Parsons, *Eleanor of Castile 1290-1990: Essays to Commemorate the 700th Anniversary of Her Death: 28 November 1290.* Ed. David Parsons. Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1991. 206-13.
ability. Significantly, Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587) retained the cultural and secular appeal of the Eleanor crosses, but stripped them of references to Catholic theology, like burning candles, or Eleanor’s Castilian heritage. Rewritten as English and proto-Protestant, Eleanor merited a mention as a “godlie and modest princesse, full of pitie, and one that shewed much fauour to the English nation, readie to releeue euerie mans greefe that sustained wrong, and to make them freënds that were at discord, so farre as in hir laie” (emphasis added).

In Peele’s play, however, King Edward’s desire to memorialize his queen by commissioning crosses where “faire Elinors picture shall be plaste” is interrupted with news from his “Purciuants,” immediately belying any possibilities of the survival of popery, idolatry, and superstition that Elinor’s candlelit tombs and ornate crosses connote. A few lines earlier, the disguised king assumed the role of a “holie frier” to perform the sacrament of penance at the dying Elinor’s behest. What he learns from his unsuspecting wife is beyond appalling: that their daughter Jone (Joan of Acre) “Is baselie borne begotten of a [French] Frier”; that she hoped that the French friar’s “true and lawfull sonne / […] should succeed” to the English throne; still worse, that she had committed incest with “His brother Edmund beautifull and young, / Vppon [her] bridall couch by

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86 Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587): VI, 285.
[her] concent, / Enioies the flowre and fauour of [her] loue” (Lrv). Therefore, when the betrayed King Edward sums up Elinor’s transgression against his “love,” “the law,” and “nature” (L2v) he defaces any trace of Englishness Philip II of Spain had claimed, announces the end of Anglo-Spanish history, and ushers in the return to a fenced-in, prelapsarian (Protestant and English) garden.

To return to Mary and Philip’s marriage of 1554: We can trace how the discourse of dynastic marriage has shifted in the second half of the sixteenth-century by looking at a character called Captain Bret in two texts: The Chronicle of Queen Jane, an anonymous eyewitness account of Wyatt’s uprising, and Thomas Dekker’s and John Webster’s The famous history of Sir Thomas Wyat (performed ca. 1602). In the Marian text, Bret rallies a troop of defectors in a speech suffused with the imagery of conquest, pillage, and rape: “Yf we should be under their subjection they wolde, as slaves and villaynes, spoyle us of our goodes and landes, ravyshe our wyfes before our faces, and deflowre our daughters in our presence.”

At the turn of the century, however, when The famous history of Sir Thomas Wyat was performed the virile Spanish conquistadores have alchemized into effeminate androgynes. Captain Bret, who warned Londoners against the Spanish war

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machine in *The Chronicle of Queen Jane*, is resurrected to jolt Londoners into joining the revolution. Bret’s call to arms is illuminating:

Bret: Philip is a Spaniard, and what is a Spaniard?

Clown: A Spaniard is no Englishman that I knowe.

Bret: Right, a Spaniard is a Camocho, a Callimanco, nay which is worse, a Dondego, and what is a Dondego?

Clown: A Dondego is a kinde of Spanish Stockfish, or poore Iohn.

Bret: No, a Dondego is a desperate Viliago, a very Castilian, God blesse vs. There came but one Dondego into England, & hee made all Paules stincke agen, what shall a whole army of Dondegoes doe my sweete Countrimen?

Clown: Marry they will make vs all smell abominably, hee comes not here that’s flat.

Bret: A Spaniard is cald so, because hee’s a Spaniard his yard is but a span.

Clown: That’s the reason our Englishwomen loue them not.

Bret: Right, for he caries not the Englishmans yard about him. (E2r–v)

As raucous and uncouth as this interlude might sound, Dekker and Webster’s play performs Philip’s otherness by stigmatizing his genitalia as non-English. In doing so, it participates in disseminating a fantasy of virile English Protestantism, and emblems a Spaniard’s effeminate otherness.
Christopher Haigh has argued that in 1554 “the Protestants had played the Spanish card, and lost.” Even though opponents of Mary I’s Spanish match drew a line in the sand on what constitutes a “good” or “bad” royal marriage, this episode registers the earliest stirrings of an ideology where the prescriptions of “pure” and “Protestant” would eventually take precedence over any other consideration. It is significant that this historiographical binary emerged amidst the tensions surrounding Mary’s succession, her marriage to Philip of Spain, England’s loss of Calais, and the queen’s heirless death, henceforth locking in a teleological narrative that would be conjured, as the following chapters will show, in relation to the Palatine match in 1613, the project of a Spanish match in 1621-23, and the French match in 1625-27.

VI.

Covering a three-decade span, the following chapters suggest alternative ways in which dramatic texts staged royal marriage as an institution in transition. My aim in the following chapters is to offer a snapshot of what playgoers saw at a very restricted period of time when debates over dynasticism reached unprecedented heights and uncharted waters. Each chapter examines the tropes that get adopted and adapted in the drama of that historical moment, which images might have seeped into the collective consciousness of playgoers, and which ones reveal resonances between texts from different periods. I do not suggest that these plays are representative of a cultural consensus on the representation of dynasticism; however, the authors (Shakespeare, 89

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Fletcher, and Massinger), playing company (the King’s Men), and playhouses (the Globe and the Blackfriars) arguably occupied close links to court, mainstream politics and religion, and catered to a wide and diverse clientele.

Chapter 2 positions William Shakespeare’s and John Fletcher’s *King Henry VIII* within the context of the Palatine marriage, and reflects on King James I’s dynastic plans for the royal offspring in the decade after his accession to the throne. It examines the play’s tacit acknowledgement of the need of pragmatism under the guise of grand ideological anxieties (confessional, political, gender). To do so, the chapter reads the play in juxtaposition with sermons preached at the wedding of Princess Elizabeth to the staunchly Protestant Elector Palatine, which adopt the strictures of biblical and historical exempla to castigate cultural mixing. In staging the related issues of King Henry VIII’s watershed divorce from Katherine of Aragon, followed by his equally controversial royal marriage to Anne Bullen, and the providential birth of Queen Elizabeth, the play addresses James’s early attempts to forge an alliance with a Catholic superpower to counterbalance the Palatine Marriage in 1611-1613.

Chapter 3 turns to what was by far the most turbulent period of the Jacobean period, particularly to the project of the infamous Spanish match in 1621-1623. In it, I read John Fletcher’s *The Island Princess* (1621), which draws on the jingoistic *Conquista de las Islas Malucas*, written by the Spaniard Bartolemé Leonardo de Argensola (Madrid 1609), through the lens of the Palatinate crisis, the plight of English Catholics, and King James’s effort to balance the hostile forces in Europe by securing a Spanish bride for Prince Charles. Reading the play against the backdrop of hot debates over James’s non-
interventionist policy and the possibility of a Spanish and Catholic queen, this chapter shows how the play invokes the interlocking themes of “virtuous pagans” and imperial expansion to stage a successful dynastic marriage that can only be achieved after the establishment of a level military field.

To do so, this chapter investigates Fletcher’s appropriation of Argensola’s grand narrative of the Spanish conquest of the island of Ternate in the Moluccas in 1606, as monumentalized in the Conquista’s title page. By appropriating the typology of the Conquista’s title page, Fletcher turns Argensola’s narrative of a failed promise of miscegenation on its head; indeed, The Island Princess dramatizes how the possibility of a gendered conversion to Christianity fulfills the colonialist fantasy of assimilation as well as the full and legitimate acquisition of the islands’ bounty. In the same vein this chapter examines the play’s reflection on contemporary theorization of well-intentioned Catholics, ill-intentioned Catholics, and their role in the English political mainstream in the frame of “virtuous pagans.” My aim is to show how the play offers a model of statecraft where force and virtue combined pave the way for proper marriage negotiations and the pursuit of political ends.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the Anglo-French marriage of 1625 and the events surrounding it, particularly the end of the peace treaty and subsequent war with Spain in 1624, as well as France’s transformation from ally to enemy in the course of two years. Nuptial celebrations in France and England are examined to recover the ideological discrepancy in the work both parties envisioned a dynastic marriage would perform. The chapter argues that this discrepancy is thrown into relief in Philip Massinger’s The

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Roman Actor (1626), whereby the dialogical correspondence between dynastic marriage and military conquest is questioned and ultimately rendered inefficient in the shifting relationship between international conflict and internal struggle.
Chapter 2: Dynastic Marriage in Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Henry VIII* (1613)

This chapter examines how William Shakespeare’s and John Fletcher’s *King Henry VIII* (1613) weaves the problems and possibilities of both the Palatinate marriage and the Catholic dynastic projects (French and Spanish) of 1613 into its fabric. Although *Henry VIII* stages a Protestant narrative of the foundational events of the English Reformation, its political and religious concerns echo those of the immediate 1612-1613 conjuncture. At stake was a moment pregnant with multiple possibilities and conflicting options, one of which was the dynastic marriage of King James I’s children. This chapter illustrates how the play grasps the tensions of dynasticism at that critical stage when they are just about to break into more public spheres and take on the form of widespread protest against the Spanish match in 1621-1624.

Jacobean audiences experienced dynastic marriage as distilled providentialism that linked a divinely endorsed dynastic marriage to England’s military prowess, to peace, and to plenty. In incorporating confessional, gendered, and national “either/or” binaries, the play gives its Jacobean audience a magnifying glass through which they see the inner workings of dynasticism, which, with the naked eye, they cannot see at all. In this respect, *Henry VIII*’s unmasking strategy works not just by embedding a more pragmatic dimension to dynasticism into its fabric, but also by mimicking old tropes and dichotomies: biblical allusions, anti-Catholic tropes, racial or ethnic “othering,” and anti-
Spanish and anti-French stereotypes. This pointed juxtaposition of providentialism with pragmatism throws into relief the complex fault lines underlying dominant dynastic marriage discourse.

I.

Drawing primarily on Raphael Holinshed’s revised *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587), *Henry VIII (All is True)*, tells the story of the triumph of English Protestantism.¹ Despite its fragmented chronology, the play’s dramatic action traces major moments in Henry VIII’s schism with Rome: the divorce between Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon, his marriage to Anne Boleyn (Bullen in the play and from hereon), the fall of Cardinal Wolsey, the rise of Archbishop Cranmer, and the birth of Elizabeth Tudor.² It also dramatizes central historical events which shaped this turbulent period: the celebration of the Anglo-French alliance at The Field of the Cloth of Gold (1520), the French abrogation of the alliance, the trial and execution of the Duke of Buckingham, the rise of Bishop Stephen Gardiner, the trial of Cranmer, and much more.

After teetering under the influence of the corrupt Wolsey, Henry eventually emerges as

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¹ While both editions of Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1577 and 1587) are collaborations between authors across the religious spectrum, the critical consensus is that the Holinshed authors were directly influenced by Hall and Grafton’s treatment of Henry VIII’s reign in *Union*. For this reason, it is difficult to speak of the Henry VIII account in the Holinshed’s *Chronicles* as distinct from Hall’s, since the bulk of the Henry VIII account derives from it. The play’s source is chiefly Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587 edition) except for the story of the plot against Cranmer and his subsequent vindication in Act 5, which follows closely John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* (1570), where Archbishop Cranmer’s “truth and integrity” is tested and approved. Paulina Kewes et al., eds. Prologue. *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. xxix-xxxvii.

² I follow Gordon McMullan’s title *King Henry VIII (All is True)*. All quotations are taken from McMullan’s Arden Third Edition.
an independent and assertive Christian king bent on good and just governance. The political and religious re-orientation of Henry’s reign is sealed with the baptism of Elizabeth Tudor, whose golden age of peace and prosperity is only a prelude to that of her successor, King James I.

Despite its imbrication within Holinshed’s grand narrative of the Henrician reformation, *Henry VIII*’s pressing concerns, as many critics have noted, reflect topical events in 1612-1613. For much was at stake in the court and international politics of the winter and spring of 1613, precisely at the moment when *Henry VIII* premiered on the stage of the Globe as a “new play” entitled *All is True*. The play’s first recorded performance, which indulges our wish to locate what Gordon McMullan calls “the firmest dating evidence of any play in the Shakespeare canon,” comes from Sir Henry Wotton’s famous account of the burning of the first Globe theater at the first performance of *Henry VIII* on June 29, 1613. Wotton writes:

> The king’s players had a new play, called “All is True,” representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage; the knights of the Order, with their Georges and Garter, the guards with their embroidered coats and the like, sufficient, in Truth, within a while to make greatness very familiar if not ridiculous. Now King Henry making a masque at the Cardinal Wolsey’s House and certain

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3 McMullan, Introduction, 63.
canons being shot off at his entrance, some of the paper, or other stuff wherewith one of them was stopped, did lighten the thatch, where being thought at first but an idle smoak, and their eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole House to the very grounds.⁴

Wotton bears witness to a “represent[ation of] some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII,” in an immediate, almost grotesque dramaturgy, “mak[ing] greatness very familiar if not ridiculous.” Taking Wotton at his word, critics have read the play’s tantalizing recreation of “many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty”—certainly, marriage and divorce, queen consorts and royal children, coronations and baptisms, spectacle and royal pageantry—as an invaluable framework for understanding the “pomp and majesty” of the Jacobean politics of this period, specifically in relation to dynastic marriage. Joining this conversation, this chapter asks how a hybridized historical romance, blending elements of chronicle history, de casibus tragedy, romance, and courtly masques, remembers two of Henry VIII’s royal marriages and prophesies a seamless, marriage-free transition to the present Stuart period.⁵ Moreover, it focuses on

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⁴ Qtd. in McMullan 59.

how *Henry VIII* interrogates the biblical and historical tropes in contemporary dynastic discourse distinguishing a “good” matrimonial alliance from a “bad” one.

Representing issues of marriage, divorce, and succession from the recent past became particularly problematic in 1612-1613. The wider English public was saturated with references to the “godly” Palatinate marriage of Princess Elizabeth, who was frequently compared to her namesake, Queen Elizabeth. The “godly” marriage, however, was counterpointed by what the hotter sort of Protestants, and the majority of King James’s subjects, feared as the biggest threat to the true English Church: the “bad” project of a Catholic match for the Prince of Wales. Certainly, *Henry VIII* confronts these artificial and sectarian lines of division, and complicates the representation of dynastic marriages that *The Island Princess* (1621) and *The Roman Actor* (1626) explore, wrestle with, and expand.

London’s playgoers were most probably familiar with mixed marriage theories that Protestant sermons echo, as the discussion below of Andrew Willet’s Palatine marriage sermon *Salomon’s Marriage* (1613) shows, and *Henry VIII* parodies. It takes only a glance at Shakespeare and Fletcher’s plays of the period to see that themes, assumptions, and prejudices about dynastic marriage emerge time and time again. The obvious case is *The Tempest* (1611), where Claribel’s marriage to the King of Tunis, and Miranda’s orchestrated betrothal to Ferdinand frame the play. So too is the resolution in

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A Winter's Tale (1611), where a marriage alliance between Perdita and Florizel reconciles Leontes and Polixenes, Sicily and Bohemia. It can hardly be a coincidence that in Beaumont and Fletcher’s A King and No King (1611-1612), a mixed marriage between Arbaces and Panthea, which is mistaken for an incestuous and thus “unnatural” one until the final act of the play, ensures, in a quite convoluted manner, peaceful relations between Iberia and Armenia.⁷

Alternatively, Beaumont and Fletcher emphasize in their Maid’s Tragedy (1610-1611), which is one of Henry VIII contemporary sources, how an interdynastic marriage based on lies and self-interest eventually destroys the state. Moreover, Fletcher’s Bonduca (1612), a tragedy about the first-century warrior queen Boadicea, “one of the bravest Shee Worthyes in the whole universe,”⁸ offers starkly opposite assumptions about mixed marriage; the titular Briton queen staunchly rejects intermingling with the conquering Romans; instead, she kills her daughters (and then commits suicide) to avoid marrying them off to the foreign invaders. In the final moments of Bonduca, however, both the Romans and the Englishman Caratach establish some sort of a working relation that forms the basis of their peaceful co-existence.⁹

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⁷ For a reading that links marriage in the play with contemporary thinking about the rule of both King and Parliament, see Zachary Lesser, “Mixed Government and Mixed Marriage in A King and No King: Sir Henry Neville Reads Beaumont and Fletcher.” English Literary History 69.4 (2002): 947-977.


Most poignantly, John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613) pushes the question of dynastic mixing and incest to a brutal extreme. When the widowed Duchess clandestinely marries her social inferior—indeed she acknowledges she is “going into a wilderness / Where I shall find nor path, nor friendly clue” to be her guide (1.2.267-8)—her brothers, the Cardinal and Ferdinand, rage against the threat her action embodies to their lineage in a most gruesome manner. Tellingly, they voice their opposition by deploying the imagery of sexual degeneracy and contamination, which in turn underscores the perversity of their own incestuous logic. For instance, Ferdinand can only see his sister’s mixed marriage as a literal and ongoing vortex of sexual engagement “with some strong-thighed bargeman, / Or one o’the woodyard that can quoit the sledge / Or toss the bar, or else some lovely squire / That carries coals up to her privy lodgings” (2.5.43-6).¹⁰ The brothers’ failure to recognize the generative possibilities of their sister’s mixed marriage is partly conditioned by the disjunctive incursion of an alien element into an ideological monolith, but that incursion throws their failure into relief and makes it all the more problematic.

While it is true that it is difficult to pin down Shakespeare, Fletcher, or Webster’s standpoints on dynastic politics, it is also the case that the plays I outline reflect on dynastic marriage assumptions: they are aware of their basic templates, they reveal their conflicts and paradoxes, and they raise bigger questions about their nature and purpose. As a historical romance, *Henry VIII*’s political providentialism is more restricted (it ends

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with a strong gesture towards the golden age of Elizabeth Tudor); however, it does incorporate the binaries of polemic, challenge them, and bring to the surface the kinds of questions related to how a certain match for the Prince of Wales is endorsed or opposed.

II.

For a long period of time, *Henry VIII*’s resurrection of an idealized Tudor culture and legacy was read as a direct allusion to Princess Elizabeth Stuart’s dynastic marriage to the Calvinist Frederick V, Elector Palatine, and as an opposition to James’s plan to balance the very Protestant marriage of his daughter with a French, Savoyard, or Spanish match for his heir. The play’s emphasis on a sense of loss and recovery has been considered, to use Jerzy Lemon’s term, as part of an über “text-in-performance”: a conglomeration of private and public performances surrounding the Palatine marriage festivities, which laments the untimely death of Prince Henry in November 1612, celebrates the ideological significance of a strengthened Protestant union via dynastic


marriage,\textsuperscript{13} and denounces an irenic regime that made peace with Spain (1604) and kept its Protestant allies in Europe at bay.\textsuperscript{14} However, in light of revisionist scholarship’s “turn to religion,” which exposed the false and reductive dichotomies of Renaissance sectarianism, critics have generally moved away from pitting English Protestantism against Catholicism; instead, the current critical trend is to trace areas of overlap and unpack the ambiguous religious discourses of dramatic and non-dramatic texts.

Furthermore, \textit{Henry VIII} is one of the many plays that revisionist historians have used as sources to answer questions about Jacobean history. Peter Lake, one of the foremost proponents of reading drama as historical source, notes that plays are “sites on which contemporaries could imagine, play with, act out and question the ideological and cultural contradictions and concerns of the day with rather great freedom, or at least with less overt constraint, than they tended to show in other more ‘serious’ or ostensibly ‘reality-based’ genres.”\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, Lake and other critics have provided invaluable points of connection between the court politics of the Stuarts and the play’s representation of the


\textsuperscript{14} Famous critical readings on the play’s political grievances include Ivo Kamps’s analysis of the play in \textit{Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama}. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Esp. 92-4, 107, 122. For a different view, see Leonard Tennenhouse in “Strategies of State and Political Plays” in \textit{Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism}. Ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. 2\textsuperscript{nd} Ed. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994. 109-128. While Tennenhouse sees the play as a piece of legitimation propagating James’s absolute monarchy, Kamps has suggested that Cranmer’s prophecy of a period of peace and prosperity is a manipulated vision of history, which serves James’s vision or royal legitimacy and privilege.

Henrician Reformation. Lake himself has drawn parallels between *Henry VIII*'s dramatization of the fall of the Tudor favorite Wolsey and the libels denouncing Robert Cecil, Lord Salisbury, after his death in 1612; the showdown between Cranmer and Gardiner, according to Lake, as speaking to post-Cecil factionalism at court between hot Protestants and crypto-Catholics; and the combination of personal and confessional rivalries in the play as boiling down to the recent falling out between Archbishop George Abbot and the Earl of Northampton over the Howard-Essex divorce, where Abbot inflamed anti-Catholic panic via anonymous libel, orally-transmitted rumor, and newsletters.¹⁶ In this way, Lake sees in the play’s representation of the “sectary” Gardiner a mirror reflecting Abbot’s divisive agenda; therefore, while the play appears to be condemning the popery of Gardiner, it is in fact staging and criticizing the behavior of Abbot, the prime “sectary” of the period.¹⁷

In a similar vein, several scholars have puzzled over the exceptionally sympathetic portrayal of Katherine of Aragon as the paragon of Christian virtue and true piety in the play, especially in light of her absence from Samuel Rowley’s earlier, more polemical play on Henry VIII’s reign, *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1605; revived in 1613). In Rowley’s version of the Henrician Reformation, which is to *Henry VIII*’s Prologue a “merry, bawdy play” and “a noise of targets” (14, 15), historical truth is

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¹⁷ Donna Hamilton adopts a similar topical lens. However, she sees in Wolsey’s machiavellian politics a direct allusion to the influence of the crypto-catholic, pro-Spanish Howard faction at court and its fall from grace in *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1992. 164.
unquestionably religious truth; therefore, the quest for true religion is initiated by Henry, energized by his wife Katherine Parr, completed by his son Edward, and finalized by the efforts of his daughter Elizabeth. Why, then, critics have asked, is Katherine of Aragon presented front and center in a play that ultimately celebrates a king who had cast her off and repudiated Roman Catholicism? For some critics, the answer lies in the rivalries at the Jacobean court. According to Susan Frye, the dramatization of the blighted Katherine "prompts us to recover both Anne of Denmark’s political functions, together with a sense of her contemporaries’ acknowledgement of them."¹⁸ In particular, Frye reads in Cardinal Wolsey’s plot to bring down Katherine an analogue for Anne of Denmark’s marital battles with James and her competition with James’s favorite, Robert Carr.¹⁹ Along the same lines, some critics linked the trial of Katherine at the legatine court to the divorce trial of Frances Howard in 1613.²⁰

To be sure, Katherine has been thoroughly examined in critical discussions exploring a queen consort’s relationship to king and court, and the nature of her political

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role in the commonweal.21 Where some critics read in Katherine’s dramatization an “Englished” and “Protestantized” figure of virtue, patience, and charity à la very popular devotional texts of Robert Parsons and the Spanish Franciscan Friar Luis de Granada, others see a Catholic Katherine of Aragon who embodies both counter-reformation martyrdom and post-reformation recusancy.22 Glynne Wickham, for instance, reads in the play’s rehabilitation of Katherine a reflection of King James’s persona of Christian prince of peace and reconciliation.23 Where Ruth Vanita unpacks Katherine’s intercessory prayers and their evocation of the Virgin Mary, Amy Appleford relates Katherine’s condition to the recusancy of Catholic noble families; associates Katherine with high-profile women, active in Counter-Reformation mission work, such as the “venerable” Mary Ward (1585-1645) and the contemporary espagnola inglesa, María Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza (1566-1614); and suggests a direct link between Katherine’s rehabilitation and rememorialization onstage to Mary, Queen of Scots’ exhumation and


22 For instance, Betty Travitsky reads Katherine in non-sectarian terms; to her, Katherine “had become depoliticized by the latter part of the sixteenth century” and had come to represent a “type of pious, learned, and domesticated woman […] more widely celebrated in that age” in “Reprinting Tudor History: The Case of Catherine of Aragon.” Renaissance Quarterly 50.1 (1997): 164-174. 170.

royal burial in Westminster Abbey in 1612.\textsuperscript{24}

Less contestably, the interplay of virtue and sexuality in Anne Bullen’s dramatization is a centerpiece of the feminist criticism of the play: is she a sexual predator or a hunted prey? How active or passive is she in precipitating the divorce?\textsuperscript{25}

Overall, commentators tend to agree on the play’s dramatization of Anne Bullen as the locus of sexual energy and object of desire, praised by major male characters because she proves a successful conduit for the much-anticipated Protestant royal offspring. As Linda Gregerson puts it, “Anne’s retroactive association with English Protestantism makes her a figure of national consolidation.”\textsuperscript{26} Most famously, Anne’s recovery as a learned, virtuous, charitable advocate for the true church is foregrounded in John Foxe’s widely disseminated \textit{Actes and Monuments} (1563; 1570), where the account of Anne’s Protestant

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life and martyrdom attests to her providential role in perpetuating the English Reformation and the Tudor line.

From a more literary-focused perspective, the larger critical puzzles of Henry VIII’s vexed relation to any “truth”—be it historical, topical, generic, political, confessional, social, or gendered—have been arguably sorted. Literary scholars have established that the logic of the play, starting with its ironic subtitle “All is True,” is purposeful ambiguity, resonating more fittingly with Leontes’s statement, “All is true that is mistrusted” (2.1.48), in The Winter’s Tale (1611), or even Falstaff’s “Is not the truth the truth” (1H4 2.4.233-4). Therefore, the starting point of any reading of the play ought to pay homage to Lee Bliss’s emphasis on “an essential ambiguity in the play’s ‘truth’” especially since “establishing the ‘truth’ in any given situation is exceedingly complicated; prior certainty repeatedly dissolves in the face of later revelations.”  

Gordon McMullan aptly sums up the quandary of the play’s “truth” as follows: “what we are not given is a sense of testimony as the recounting of the truth: as with numerous pamphlets entitled ‘A True Report’ or ‘A True Account’ that were printed in the period, there is no need to assume that all is true.” In light of these interlocking claims to truth, “the burden is on the reader or viewer,” as Frances Dolan notes, “who learns to negotiate among competing truth claims in part by encountering their rivalry.” Dolan invites us,


therefore, “to grasp the associations among the various contenders who move in and out of the positions of king, queen, favorite, or Phoenix.”

Taking its cue from Dolan’s reading, this chapter investigates the ambiguous connotations of mixed marriage that saturate Henry VIII. In what follows I read Henry VIII through the lens of dynasticism and cultural mixing, which puts the London stage in conversation with the tensions inherent in James’s ongoing dynastic marriage policies. Rather than strictly reproducing the binary distinctions of polemic, Henry VIII plays with the fluid boundaries of theological imagery and the nuanced vocabulary of historical narratives in presenting and representing dynasticism to a broad and heterogeneous audience.

III.

In Condell and Heminges 1623 Shakespeare Folio, The Famous History of the Life King Henry the Eight is positioned as the last of the “histories” on T3r, opposite the very last scene of The Life and Death of Richard the Third on T2v (see fig. 2). While the earlier history play ends with Henry VII’s anthem of thanksgiving for his providential marriage to Elizabeth of York, thereby “unit[ing] the white rose and the red” and shepherding a future of “smooth-faced peace, / With smiling plenty, and fair prosperous days!” (R3 5.5.19; 33-34), Henry VIII opens with a different variation of marriage imagery: an account of the triumphant celebration of peace between England and France at “The Field of the Cloth of Gold” (1520), where Henry VIII and Francis I, “those sons

A. The Life and death of Richard the Third.

Note: Richard, Duke of York, King of England, and of the house of York. His death at Bosworth Field, where he was killed by Henry Tudor, later Henry VII, is the event that marks the end of the Wars of the Roses.

B. The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth.

Note: This work is a continuation of the life of Henry VIII, who was known for his six marriages and his passionate pursuit of religious reform.

FINIS.
of glory, those two lights of men” (*H8* 1.1.6) staged, with much pomp and opulence, their epicurean alliance. The narrator, the Duke of Norfolk, relays to the Duke of Buckingham the details of the historical event he witnessed firsthand “in the vale of Andres […] ’Twixt Guînes and Ardres” (1.1.7-8). Where in *Richard the Third* Richmond and Elizabeth are “the true succeeders of each royal house, / By God’s fair ordinance conjoin[ed] together” (*R3* 5.5.32-31), Henry and Francis’s Mammonesque union is one where “pomp was [no longer] single, but now married / To one above itself” (*H8* 1.1.15-16). Norfolk’s account invites the audience to recognize both the appeal of what he witnessed and his implicit rejection of this dynastic union.

This contrast between images of harmonious and fruitful dynastic alliance at the end of *Richard III* and images of monstrous and sterile cross-cultural couplings at the opening of *Henry VIII* chimes with Christopher Marlowe’s *The Massacre at Paris* (1592), based on recent upheavals in France. In it, the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre and the ensuing French civil war are dramatized as the direct outcome of the marriage between the Protestant Henri IV of France, King of Navarre and the Catholic Margaret of Valois in 1572. Act 2 opens with an apocalyptic portrayal of the union’s “unnatural” associations. Guise rhapsodizes:

> If ever Hymen lour’d at marriage rites,
> And had his altars decl’d with dusky lights;
> If ever sun stain’d heaven with bloody clouds,
> And made it look with terror on the world;
> If ever day were turn’d to ugly night,
And night made semblance of the hue of hell;
This day, this hour, this fatal night,
Shall show the fury of them all. (Massacre 1.2.1-8)

Central to both Norfolk’s description of the union in the first scene of Henry VIII is an undercurrent of futility, even sin. Scattered throughout his long exposition is the language of the ocular, with such words as “saw,” “beheld,” “view,” “eye,” “discerner,” “seen”; the language of religion, with such words as “believed” and “worship”; and the language of idolatry, with such words as “earthly glory,” “wonders,” “heathen gods,” “gilt cherubims,” “paintings,” “lustre,” and “fabulous story.” Not coincidentally, Norfolk’s recollection of the union between Francis and Henry does not suggest generative possibilities, but is imbued with burlesque images of monstrous procreation: “I was then present, saw them salute on horseback, / Beheld them when they lighted, how they clung in their embracement as they grew together, / Which had they, what four throned ones could have weighed / Such a compounded one?” (H8 1.1.8-12); followed a few lines later by another bizarre description of the two kings’ union, which generates an inherently unstable trompe-l’oeil: “Equal in lustre, were now best, now worst, / As presence did present them: him in eye, / Still him in praise, and being present both, / ‘Twas said they saw but one” (1.1.29-32). In this way, Norfolk’s account of the Anglo-French political alliance shapes the play’s conception of matrimonial alliances with

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France as locales of dismemberment—alliances as trifles where, Buckingham bitterly notes, “the body and limbs / Of this great sport [are set] together” (1.1.46-7).

_Henry VIII_ exploits an anti-French tradition of thought enshrined in King Henry VI’s advice to his nobles in _1 Henry VI_: “and you, my lords, remember where we are / In France, amongst a fickle wavering nation” (4.1.137-8). Indeed, _Henry VIII_ reprises familiar images of English masculinity and exalted bravery epitomized in “warlike Talbot,” who obviously heeded his King’s brawny call to arms (_1 Henry VI_ 2.2.36).

Many critics have showed how France was one of various pagan, effeminate, cowardly “others”—including the Welsh, the Scots, and the Irish—against which chronicle history plays defined “Englishness” and developed a sense of national identity. At the time of _Henry VIII_’s composition and production, however, the opposition between a blessed English “X” and a damaging foreign “Y” took on the language of Protestant purity and anti-Catholic miscegenation in response to the Palatinate marriage and the projected Catholic match for the Prince of Wales.

Broadly speaking, the logic of this black-and-white binary is simple: based on biblical and historical example, a Catholic spouse, with her “promised mountaines of gold,” is idolatrous, promiscuous, and contaminated while a Protestant one is “as a pure virgine to Christ,” according to the Calvinist divine Andrew Willet. If we turn, for

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example, to Willet’s marriage sermon, *A Treatise of Salomons Marriage*, preached on the wedding day of Princess Elizabeth (14 February 1613), we find this opposition to Catholic consorts sanctioned through biblical models. Just as Scripture insistently identifies intermarriage and idolatrous practice as the root cause of national weakness, so, too, do painful episodes from English history testify to the dangers of dynastic mixing. Therefore, *Salomons Marriage* plainly addresses the antipode of providential, Protestant marriages i.e. the fates of England’s dynastic alliances with France and Spain, “with the two latter vnhappily.” Willet argues: “Out of France came that manlike Ladie, which was the firebrand of the ciuill wars betweene the houses of Yorke and Lancanster: Out of Spanish blood budded that branch, that ouershadowed the Gospell in England.”

In his quest for historical exempla the godly Willet invokes only two royal marriages gone awry. His descriptions are revealing: the first, an alliance with France, fanned the flames of the War of the Roses; the second, an alliance with Spain, begot Queen Mary who is remembered as a bloody religious persecutor and a barren Catholic bigot. But shaping Willet’s invective is not merely an abomination of the Roman Catholic Church, or a condemnation of intermixed marriage, but a warning against “manlike Ladie[s]” with sullied bloodlines—here the French Margaret of Anjou and the half-Spanish Mary Tudor. In other words, a French or Spanish queen threatens to subvert not only the state’s gendered hierarchy (Margaret Anjou was both a man and a woman), but

also the social, religious, and political health of the commonweal (the afflictions caused by Mary Tudor’s mixed and tainted lineage).

In a suave rhetorical move, Willet’s sermon continues with an exposé of successful matrimonial alliances extracted from the annals of history: “This famous kingdome of our nation,” Willet reports, “hath ioyned in matrimoniall affinitie diuers times, with other adioyning countries”; however, “the nuptiall conjiunction [that] hath bin prosperous” are with “the valiant Germanes.” Willet here, in light of the present Palatinate marriage, reconfigures the dynamics of “godly” unions in his appeal to historical examples and arguments to include dynastic marriage with Germany. Unlike the “bad” foreign and Catholic queens figured earlier, Salomons Marriage recuperates foreign but proto-Protestant queens whose “good” reigns point to the providentialism interwoven into England’s history. Despite being culturally “other,” therefore, intermingling with queens from “Germanie” is celebrated on sectarian grounds, which override any intrinsic English fear of racial or cultural miscegenation. In this reconceptualized landscape, English national purity is Protestant international unity.

Correspondingly, Salomons Marriage employs the biblical typology of “unnatural unions” to hammer its point home: “This conjunction with France and Spaine was like to that mixture of clay and iron, wherewith the toes of the image which Nabuchadnezzar saw in his dreame, were tempered: but it would not hold, though they were by humane

\[33 \text{Ibid. Av.}\]
seed, and carnall affinity ioyned together.”

In recalling the inscrutable dream of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel, Willet invokes Daniel’s prophecy of civil unrest, internal divisions, captivity, and enslavement as a powerful context for his audience’s understanding of the dangers of intermarriage, where Nebuchadnezzar’s seemingly invincible kingdom is weakened and ultimately divided when infiltrated by strange seeds.

Then, Willet addresses his audience, and directs their responses to “unnatural union[s]”; he asks: “what true loue can there be betweene a protestant and a Papist, a professor of the true faith, and a detester thereof,” particularly when contrasted to “this matrimonial combination contracted with Germanie [that] doth represent vnto vs, the two tallies or pieces of wood which the Prophet [Ezek. 37:15-2] put together: whereby hee signified, that Israel and Iuda should grow into one people.”

Such endogamous union, like the grafting of the two sticks in Ezekiel’s parable, is granted “the blessing of Salomon, that obtained together with wisedome, honour and riches.” As the following chapter shows, this tradition of protesting intermixed marriage

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34 Ibid. A1r-v.

35 According to Naseeb Shaheen, the Book of Daniel was the “subject of much speculation” during the early modern period, an observation borne out by the survival of three 1591 “penny godlies” pamphlets commenting on Nebuchadnezzar’s rise and fall. Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Plays. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1999. 70.

36 Willet, Salomons Marriage, A1v.

37 The grafting trope in dynastic discourse is employed in Barnabe Barnes’s policy treatise dedicated to James I, where the author eagerly awaits the time when the royal children would be introduced by “inoculation into other kingdomes” so that the Stuarts “may beare rule and preheminence in all the goodliest gardens of the world.” Foure Bookes of Offices. London: 1606. 78.

38 Willet, Salomons Marriage, A1v.
in biblical terms would dominate the hot Protestant opposition to the Spanish match. Like Willet, Joseph Hall warns against the evils of cultural mixing in 1622 by telling the story of Solomon’s ruin because of “the idolatry of his heathenish wives.”

Against this ideologically-charged backdrop, *Henry VIII* gives a wide berth to the anxieties of cultural mixing, and expands and loosens the certainties of polemic. As a result, the audience is given an opportunity to think of how unstable, fluid, and reversible these prescriptive templates are. From its opening scene, *Henry VIII* promises a feast of anti-French invective, which foregrounds and puts pressure on the idea of national (Protestant) purity. Norfolk’s account of the opulent pageantry following Henry and Francis’s meeting at the Field of the Cloth of God is premised on an implicit sense of English superiority; where “Every [English] man that stood / Showed like a mine,” his French counterpart appeared as a swarm of “dwarfish pages [...] / As cherubims, all gilt” (1.1.21-3). Here, Norfolk is especially concerned with demonstrating how English masculinity, defined by prowess, earthiness, and (physical) uprightness is diametrically opposed to that of airy, glitzy, and underdeveloped Frenchmen. By doing so, he employs a national binary established through the language of gendered difference. Manly men are English; infantilized androgynes are French.


40 Ironically, Norfolk’s account of effeminate Frenchmen is reversed in a famous scene in *1 Henry VI*, where the Countess of Auvergne—French, female, and Catholic—desperate to behold Talbot, “the scourge of France,” “the man / Whose glory fills the world with loud report” (2.2.42-3) concocts a plot to invite the famed English warrior to her castle (with the intention to trap him). When they finally meet, she is utterly disappointed by the physique of “a weak an writhled shrimp.” She complains: “I thought I should have seen
Furthermore, cultural stereotyping intersects with a fear of theatrical impersonation and Catholic dissemblance. In 1.3, Lovell’s announcement of a new proclamation on “The reformation of our travelled gallants / That fill the court with quarrel, talks and tailors” brings a wave of opprobrium deriding not only the courtiers’ French airs and graces, but also their transgressive role-playing, which turned them into what Jean Howard calls a “Frenchified dandy” in discussing Brisk in Ben Jonson’s Every Man Out of His Humour. Moreover, the old nobility sees sartorial alteration or “tailoring” as an assault on a “fixed” English identity, and thus rejects any form of Anglo-French cross-pollination: “I would pray our monsieurs / To think an English courtier may be wise / And never see the Louvre” (21-3); the Chamberlain wonders whether “Is’t possible the spells of France should juggle / Men into strange mysteries” and frowns at “their clothes’s […] pagan cut” (1.3.1-2, 13); Sandys thinks the “New customs […] unmanly” and “there’s no converting of them” (1.3.4); to Lovell, the French language suggests sexual opportunism and obscenity: “A French song and a fiddle has no fellow” (1.3.41); “They may, cum privelegio, oui away / The lag end of their lewdness” (1.3.34-5)—but more urgently, these comments highlight a fear of “the mongrelism of English,” or French infiltration under a linguistic guise.42 Along the same xenophobic

some Hercules, / A second Hector, for his grim aspects / And large proportion of his strong-knit limbs. / Alas, this is a child, a seely dwarf” (2.3.18-22).

41 Howard, Theater of a City, 87.

lines, English fascination with French savoir vivre threatens to transform cultural contact into sexual contamination. Notice, for example, how the account of French mannerisms is conflated with the ever-lurking “Frenchified” disease, which English courtiers have “grown so catching”: “They have all new legs, and lame ones. One would take it, / That never see ‘em pace before, the spavin / And springhalt reign among ‘em” (37, 10-12).

More significantly, the threat of sartorial conversion is vocalized with the language of sectarianism. Clothing, the embodiment of stable social identity, becomes instead a metaphor of apostasy when manipulated by foreign agents. Sectarian undertones reverberate in the nobility’s ideologically-charged terms, such as “spells,” “strange misteries,” “pagan,” “Christendom,” “reformation,” “renouncing,” “faith,” “converting,” in addition to the previously cited idolatrous imagery of 1.1, which confirms the confessional alignment in the anti-French invective. Earlier, we encountered this sectarian “othering” in Norfolk’s description of Francis I’s retinue as a vortex of dazzling “wonders,” which drew the English ineluctably in: “Today the French, / All cliquant all in gold, like heathen gods / Shone down the English; and tomorrow they / Made Britain India” (1.1.18-21).


44 Syphilis’s cosmopolitan names include: the “French Disease,” or “Spanish Sickness,” “Neapolitan bone-ache,” and “Morus Gallicus.” Jonathan G. Harris, Sick Economies, 44.


46 For a more detailed discussion of tropes of apostasy and conversion in Protestant polemic, see chapter 2 of the present study.
The way the French are spoken of suggests their idolatrous and inscrutable arts. In a moment echoing Ben Jonson’s *Epicene* (1610), where “painted and burnished” French ladies are given prosthetic faces (1.1.121-22), Norfolk applies a polemical anti-Catholic trope—that of the painted face and freshly done hair of Jezebel, the wicked queen from Sidon whose dynastic marriage to King Ahab brought idolatry and persecution into Israel, indeed the very queen evoked in Catholic polemic denouncing Anne Boleyn in his account of the ladies in Francis’s entourage: “The madams too, / Not used to toil, did almost sweat to bear / The pride upon them, that their very labour / Was to them as a painting” (1.1.23-6). The physical attributes of the ladies as painted and adorned are part of a familiar network of gendered metaphors associated with the deceit of the Catholic Church. These attributes are also applied in Willet’s character assassination of a potential Catholic queen in *Salomon’s Marriage*. He pontificates against makeup:

> There should be a difference between the handmaidens of God and the diuell, &c. *Iesabels [...]*; that which is giuen the body by birth, is the worke of God, that which is counterfeit, is the worke of the diuell”; and warns “against the colouring and dying of the heare, and making of it

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48 See discussion of Catholic polemic above; and Chapter 4 of the present study for a discussion of allusions to Jezebel in hot Protestant attacks on Charles I’s queen consort, Henrietta Maria. Especially in G.S. *Sacrae Heptades, or Seaven Problems concerning Antichrist*. Amsterdam: 1625.

yellow, and the wearing of dead bodies heare: which euill and corrupt vsages: They prognosticate vnhappilie to themselues by their flaming heare, a signe of hel fire.”50

On the account given by Norfolk and his band of noble brothers, and the anonymous Gentlemen, then, it might be safe to conclude that a French and Catholic match carries with it the threat of contamination, feminization, and idolatry. Indeed, this view is corroborated in Archbishop Cranmer’s incantatory prophecy of a Protestant England as the enclosed, self-sufficient garden of the Song of Songs at the end of the play. But such a reading is too simple.

After describing the pomp and majesty at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, Norfolk reveals that the costly production was designed and stage-managed by the machiavellian counselor, Cardinal Wolsey. Pointedly, the underlying motive for Norfolk’s charged account of the Anglo-French peace is unmasked. According to the testimony of his enemies, Wolsey is a clear-cut villain: he is a lowborn spider who has excluded the ancient nobility from the King’s counsel:

There’s in him stuff that puts him to these ends;
For being not propped by ancestry, whose grace
Chalks successors their way, nor called upon
For high feats done to th’crown, neither allied
To eminent assistants, but spider-like,

50 Willet, *Salomons Marriage*, F2v-F3r.
Out of his self-drawing web, a gives us note. (1.1.58-63)

To Buckingham, Wolsey is a “cunning cardinal,” a “top-proud fellow,” a “count Cardinal,” an “ambitious finger” with “fierce vanities, a “keech,” a “butcher’s cur,” a “beggar’s book” that “outworths a noble blood” (1.1.68, 151, 172, 53, 54, 55, 120, 122-3). To Norfolk’s second interlocutor, Lord Abergavenny, Wolsey’s major fault is pride, which “peep[s] through each part of him” (1.1.69). Indeed, Norfolk and his band of noble brothers denounce the Field of the Cloth of Gold on pure politicking ground, as it is orchestrated and monopolized by the villain counselor, who wheels and deals in foreign policy in order to achieve his own political ends.

Certainly that is how Buckingham sees the making of foreign policy and why he deplores it. “This cunning Cardinal,” Buckingham complains:

The articles o’th’ combination drew
As himself pleased; and they were ratified
As he cried, ‘Thus let be,’ to as much end
As give a crutch to th’ dead. But our Count-Cardinal
Has done this, and ‘tis well: for worthy Wolsey,
Who cannot err, he did it. (1.1.169-74)

However, no sooner had “this last costly treaty [with France], th’interview / That swallowed so much treasure” been signed and sealed, than Wolsey, according to Buckingham, struck a behind-the-scenes deal with Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, to break the Anglo-French treaty “like a glass […] break i’th’ rinsing” (1.1.165-166). Interestingly, Norfolk had earlier revealed that “France hath flawed the league and hath
attached / Our merchants’ goods at Bordeaux” (1.1.95-96). In Buckingham’s account, however, the volte-face in foreign policy is motivated by bribery:

[...] For I am sure the Emperor

Paid ere he promised, whereby his suit was granted

Ere it was asked—but when the way was made

And paved with gold, the Emperor thus desired

That he would please to alter the King’s course

And break the foresaid peace. (1.1.185-90)

Crucial here is the subtext of Wolsey’s diplomatic skill, albeit for his personal interests rather than the greater good of the commonweal, in taking advantage of the precarious balance of power in an alliance system and winning benefits from the deep distrust between superpowers. According to Buckingham, Charles V’s “fears were that the interview betwixt / England and France might through their amity / Breed him some prejudice, for from his league / Peeped harms that menaced him” (1.1.180-184). Even though personal rivalry and deep-seated resentment of Wolsey’s convoluted success story animate Buckingham’s and, to a lesser extent, his noble ally Norfolk’s taunting of foreign alliances and misalliances, what is woven into their accounts of the scarlet cardinal’s corrupt methods and motivations is a rendition of foreign policy, its formulation and conduct, as a messy process, which on one level, enables their audience to think of the politics of dynastic marriage as a series of relentless interactions, and associative cues and responses. Moreover, while the precariousness of the Anglo-French peace in the
opening scene is a foregone conclusion, in its polysemous narration and generic hybridity, it sets the movement of the play as a whole.\(^{51}\)

What is interesting is that this movement is calibrated in that same first scene. Despite their intimate knowledge of the messiness of diplomacy, Wolsey’s enemies invoke a set of sexual, economic, and confessional tropes to denigrate the making and breaking of the Anglo-French peace treaty. Witness, for instance, how Buckingham’s response to Norfolk’s economic assessment is congruent with the rhetoric of providentialism characteristic of Protestant polemic. To Norfolk and Abergavenny, the peace is anticipated by the language of cash value, consumption, and profit: “The peace between the French and us not values / The cost that did conclude it,” complains Norfolk, whereas Abergavenny provides a more accurate picture of the financial loss: “I do know / Kinsmen of mine—three at the least—that have / By this [peace] so sickened their estates that never / They shall abound as formerly” (1.1.87-8, 80-3); Buckingham, on the other hand, sees the shift in Anglo-French relations as divine intervention: “Every man,” he claims,

After the hideous storm that followed, was

\(^{51}\) According to Andrew Fleck, Norfolk’s account of the Field of Cloth of Gold “parrots phrases from Holinshed’s *Chronicles* as he struggles to find words to give shape to events. He traverses from theater, to historiography, to romance, all the while blurring the boundaries of genre in a futile attempt to describe a spectacle that—from his perspective—was a nearly unnarrateable current event.” Unlike Fleck, I see a patterned integration of generic modes and tropes in the fabric of the play as a whole. In this way, the play becomes a landscape of familiar forms—indeed theatre, historiography, romance, and polemic—though always shifting, colluding, and evolving within a representational framework. Andrew Fleck, “‘Conveyance of History’: Narrative, Chronicle, History, and the Elizabethan Memory of the Henrician Golden Age.” *Henry VIII and His Afterlives*. Ed. Rankin, Mark, Christopher Highley, and John N. King. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. 225-26.
A thing inspired and, not consulting, broke
Into a general prophecy, that this tempest,
Dashing the garment of this peace, aboded
The sudden breach on’t. (1.1.90-4)

Unsurprisingly, a providential storm—perhaps the same storm that would destroy the mighty Spanish Armada in 1588—followed the signing of the treaty, where every Englishman was divinely inspired to not only prophesy that the “hideous tempest” was an apocalyptic sign against an alliance with France, but also the imminent breach of the treaty.

Then again, Buckingham’s apocalyptic description—with all its violent breaking and dashing—is undermined in two ways. First, his evocation of tempests, storms, and sea journeys encodes those “Tales, Tempests, and such like Drolleries” in popular romance that the Induction to Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) railed against, without the signature sophistication of “separation, suffering, and transformation” in, say, *The Tempest* or *A Winter’s Tale.* Second, Buckingham’s equation of the English retinue’s moveable feast of sexual degeneracy and financial profligacy with downward mobility reprises elements central to the city comedies of the early seventeenth century. “This French going-out,” Buckingham had observed a few lines earlier, is a “vanity / But

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minister communication of / A most poor issue” (1.1.73; 85-7). In Arden 2, Foakes notes that “issue” has strong procreative undertones, which adds a sexual layer to Buckingham’s previous line: “many have broke their backs with laying manors on ‘em / For this great journey” (1.1.84-5). McMullan’s Arden 3 adds to Foakes’s gloss, extending the implication that “aristocratic children (possibly illegitimate children) are now born into impoverished families.” On this account, Henry VIII, by incorporating credit tropes, sexual innuendo, romance narrative, and anti-Catholic polemic, problematizes the prescriptive dichotomies of polemical texts, questioning what constitutes an “evil” alliance and a “godly” one.

To return to the dynastic politics of Henry VIII, once a deal is sealed, a dynastic marriage follows suit. In this case, one of the consequences of Wolsey’s diplomatic machinations is a dynastic rearrangement, unveiled by a string of plebian and “official” figures. Indeed, we first learn from two unnamed Gentlemen of yet another diplomatic shift. Because Charles V did not heed Wolsey’s own private agenda, the cardinal plots the destruction of Queen Katherine of Aragon, the Emperor’s aunt, who is also his vociferous political opponent, defying him on his taxations in the presence of the King (1.2); and mends relations with France via a dynastic marriage. Their whispered conversation goes as follows:

2 Gentleman: […] Either the Cardinal

Or some about him near have, out of malice

54 McMullan, Henry VIII, 220 n86.
To the good Queen, possessed him with a scruple

That will undo her. [..]

1 Gentleman: ‘Tis the Cardinal;

And merely to revenge him on the Emperour

For not bestowing on him at his asking

The archbishopric of Toledo this is purposed.

2 Gentleman: I think you have hit the mark. But is’t not cruel

That she should feel the smart of this? The Cardinal

Will have his will, and she must fall. (2.2.155-168)

In the following scene, Norfolk corroborates this gossip in a lengthy exposition:

For now he has cracked the league

Between us and the Emperor, the Queen’s great nephew,

He dives into the King’s soul and there scatters

Dangers, doubts, wringing of the conscience,

Fears and despairs—and all these for his marriage.

And out of all these, to restore the King,

He counsels a divorce. (2.2.23-29)

Such a view is confirmed by the Lord Chamberlain, who laments that “These news [of a divorce] are everywhere—every tongue speaks ’em, / And every true heart weeps for’t. All that dare / Look into these affairs see this main end / The French King’s sister” (2.2.36-40). Similarly, Katherine identifies Wolsey’s corrupt strategies and challenges his presence as jurist at her trial: “You are mine enemy […] For it is you have blown this
coal betwixt my lord and me, / Which God’s dew quench” (2.4.75-78). This is followed by a declaration coming directly from Wolsey’s own mouth; in an aside, Wolsey unfolds his master plan *sotto voce*: “It shall be the Duchess of Alençon, / The French King’s sister; he shall marry her” (3.2.85-6); and his ploy to sabotage Anne Bullen’s matrimonial prospects: “This candle burns not clear. ‘Tis I must snuff it; / Then out it goes” (3.2.96-97).

Not only does the play dramatize the messy, unpredictable, and fraught nature of foreign policymaking that is driven more by personal ego and rival agendas than by the national interest, but it reveals widespread knowledge of its processes among early moderns. Every speaker here, Norfolk, Chamberlain, Katherine, and Wolsey himself, expect their fictive and real audience to recognize the speculation and concern, the deal-making and deal-breaking, moves and counter-moves of the behind-the-scenes politicking of dynastic marriage. In particular, the conversation between the two anonymous Gentlemen reveals that foreign policy is not distant from the concerns of the population. More strikingly, the play presents dynastic alliances in secular, realpolitik, cash-nexus terms via a series of iterations with variation of speaker and setting. This repetition enunciates a far more problematic narrative: the politics of dynasticism as the politics of pragmatism, dynastic marriage as statecraft, the golden age as the age of gold.

The play’s relentless analysis is further fuelled by the circumstances of 1611-1613, which saw a reconfiguration in international power politics, especially between England’s traditional rivals, France and Spain. An alliance with the Protestant Union represented a way for England to balance the revival of the Catholic league between the
Hapsburgs and the Bourbons in March 1611. Indeed, several historians argue that the Palatinate marriage was in part a direct response to the double dynastic marriage treaty between France and Spain, made public in January 1612.\textsuperscript{55} Crucially, in the eyes of King James, the Hapsburg-Bourbon realignment necessitated an Habsburg or Bourbon match for the Prince of Wales to balance Princess Elizabeth’s Palatine marriage; by 1612, the wheels were in motion to secure a dynastic marriage with either the Bourbons or the Habsburgs, who were both heavily invested in preventing an English alliance to the other dynasty. Francis Bacon clarifies why the combination of forces between England, France, or Spain threatens the singled out state. In “Of Empire” (1625), Bacon identifies a pattern of disruption and recalibration in “the balance of Europe”; first, European superpowers monitor the activities of other superpowers: in fact, “princes do keep due sentinel, that none of their neighbours do overgrow so (by increase of territory, by embracing of trade, by approaches, or the like), as they become more able to annoy them than they were”; and culls from English history the example of Henry VIII’s shifting alliances with Francis I and Charles V in “Considerations Touching a War with Spain” (1624):

It is so memorable, as it is yet as fresh as if it was done yesterday, how that triumvirate of kings, Henry the eighth of England, Francis the first of France, and Charles the fifth, Emperor and king of Spain, were in their times so provident, as scare a palm of ground could be gotten by either of

\textsuperscript{55} Anthony Milton, \textit{Catholic and Reformed}, 403.
the three, but that the other two would be sure to do their best to set the balance of Europe upright again. Importantly, the broader dimension of Bacon’s point reflects an implicit recognition of the dirty politics of European diplomacy, including trade relations, dynastic marriage, and warfare. Against this backdrop of matrimonial alliances and counter-alliances, of sealed and broken treaties, *Henry VIII* stages Wolsey’s fall from power as grounded not on any grievances about his questionable conduct, but rather on his obstruction of Henry’s wishes over the divorce, and his monopoly over both domestic and foreign policy to achieve his personal interests rather than those of the King and commonweal.

In one respect, the play presents Wolsey as aiming for the papacy via shifting alliances, which allowed him to pocket and pay bribes along the way. At one point, Henry expresses his dismay upon discovering Wolsey’s inventory of wealth—what the King describes as “his treasure / Rich stuff and ornaments of household”—amassed in the course of his dealings with foreign princes: “Since I had my office, / I have kept you next my heart, have not alone / Employed you where high profits might come home, / But pared my present havings to bestow / My bounties upon you” (3.2.124-125,156-160); which is immediately followed by Wolsey’s own reflection on what brought about his demise: “This paper has undone me. ‘Tis th’account / Of all the world of wealth I have drawn together / For mine own ends—indeed to gain the popedom / And fee my friends in Rome” (3.2.210-213). A few lines later, Norfolk triumphantly tells Wolsey that he was

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excoriated because “in all you writ to Rome, or else / To foreign princes, ‘ego e rex meus’
/ Was still inscribed, in which you brought the King / To be your servant” (3.2.313-316).
On this account, therefore, Wolsey’s fall is precipitated by his extreme and unrelenting
pursuit of worldly glory and the papal crown at the commonwealth’s expense, and for
overstepping his boundaries and equating himself with the King.

On another level, the play makes clear that what brings Wolsey down is his role in
delaying the formal annulment of Henry’s marriage to Katherine. Norfolk explains: “In
the divorce his [Wolsey’s] contrary proceedings / Are all unfolded” (3.2.26-27); which is
followed by Suffolk’s spirited exposition:

The Cardinal’s letters to the Pope miscarried
And came to th’eye o’th’ King, wherein he read
How that the Cardinal did entreat his holiness
To stay the judgement o’th’ divorce; for if
It did take place, ‘I do’, quoth he, ‘perceive
My King is tangled in affection to

A creature’s of the Queen’s, Lady Anne Bullen.’ (3.2.30-36)

On this basis, one might conclude that up until his fateful encounter with Anne Bullen,
the King had turned a blind eye to Wolsey’s plots and maneuvers. Indeed, amidst the
divorce proceedings, Henry regards Wolsey as “the quiet of my wounded conscience,” “a
cure fit for a king,” a respite to “many a groaning throe” and “full sickness,” concerning
“our marriage with the dowager, / Sometimes our brother’s wife” (2.2.73-4; 2.4.196, 201,
177-178). In the course of his lengthy account of his “scruple of conscience,” Henry
discloses that he was on board with the Anglo-French negotiations, albeit concerning a marriage for his daughter Mary, whose legitimacy was questioned “I’th’ progress of this business.” He claims:

My conscience first received a tenderness,
Scruple and prick on certain speeches uttered
By th’ Bishop of Bayonne, then French ambassador,
Who had been hither sent on debating
A marriage ‘twixt the Duke of Orléans and
Our daughter Mary. (2.4.167-172)

The logic of the working relationship between King and Cardinal suggests that as long as Wolsey’s personal interests overlap with Henry’s desires, his service is described as “the good of [the King’s] most sacred person and the profit of the state” (3.2.173-4). However, when Wolsey goes against what the King wants, the latter drops his willful ignorance and calls Wolsey “corrupt and treasonous” (1.1.156).

IV.

The play situates Anne Bullen in the same context of competing agendas and figures her as a potential player in court politics. Indeed, the scholarly debate concerning Anne’s moral compass, her innocence or cunning, virtue or hypocrisy, is ongoing; regardless of the nature of her motives, what is relevant to this discussion is the profusion of biblical allusions, anti-Catholic tropes, and colonial conquest imagery embedded in the play’s treatment of Henry’s second queen. For the play shows Anne to be, by her own claims and those around her, a virtuous queen. Even Cardinal Wolsey admits at one point
that she is “virtuous and well-deserving” (3.2.97). To Sir Thomas Lovell, Anne is “a good creature and, sweet lady,” thus “Deserv[ing] our better wishes” (5.1.25-6). One unnamed gentleman witnessing Anne’s Coronation exclaims: “Thou hast the sweetest face I ever looked on. / Sir, as I have a soul, she is an angel” (4.1.43-4). Moreover, Anne presents herself as a deeply moral figure. She describes herself as a “handmaid”\(^57\); she praises Katherine as “so good a lady that no tongue could ever / Pronounce dishonour of her,” and pities her condition: “it is a pity / Would move a monster” (2.3.2-11); and lovingly performs her duties: “It faints me / To think what follows. / The queen is comfortless, and we forgetful / In our long absence” (2.3.103-106).

Presented as the play’s villain, Wolsey is the reference point for the play’s wide-ranging investigation of Anne Bullen, where charged tropes converge in his assessment of Anne’s political threat—certainly, he ultimately blames her for his demise: “There was the weight that pulled me down,” he tells his servant Cromwell, “The King has gone beyond me. All my glories / In that one woman I have lost for ever” (3.2.408-10). For she is not one of the Cardinal’s groomed creatures—notice, on the other hand, his reaction to Gardiner’s arrival: “that good fellow, / If I command him, follows my appointment. / I will have none so near else” (2.3.131-33)--but have foisted on his lavish banquet and stolen the King’s heart; therefore, she must be removed. From Wolsey’s

\(^{57}\) Kim Noling reads Anne’s description of herself as a “handmaid” (with the implicit reference to Mary as the handmaid of the Lord) as a patriarchal gesture, with Henry being the “Father” and Anne the “vessel” of his will. “Grubbing up the Stock” 303.
perspective, then, Anne is an unsuitable consort because of her unharnessed sexual allure: “Anne Bullen? No, I’ll no Anne Bullen for him: / There’s more in’t than fair visage”; her lowly social origins: “the late Queen’s gentlewoman? A knight’s daughter / To be her mistres’ mistres? The Queen’s Queen?” which resonates with the Chamberlain’s “Sir Thomas Bullen’s daughter, / The Viscount Rochford, one of her highness’ women” upon introducing Anne to the King (1.4.92-3); and her religious affiliations: “I know her for a spleeny Lutheran, and not wholesome to / Our cause, that she should lie I’ the bosom of our hard-rulled King” (3.2.87-9, 94-5, 98-101). Taken together, Wolsey’s objections suggest that Anne is an outsider—a potent mix of gendered, political, confessional, and cultural “Other”—whose unstable, porous identity threatens his hold over King and commonwealth.

When dismantled, however, these tropes draw attention to the ideological binaries in polemical narratives of dynastic marriage. In his analysis of the religious scene of Elizabeth I’s reign, Peter Lake argues that the official church incorporated an “assemblage of beliefs, assumptions, and practices,” which is “best seen as a number of attempts, conducted at very different levels of theoretical self-consciousness and coherence, at creative bricolage, mixing and matching, as a variety of cases or pitches were made for popular support.” Certainly, Henry VIII is nothing short of a parody of this “creative bricolage,” or an intelligible exposé of the “powerful ideological and discursive weapons” at the disposal of what Lake dubs in his essay “perfect Protestants.”

There is no shortage of sexual innuendoes, as critics have noted, used by both official and peripheral or “choric” characters (McMullan’s term)—such as the feisty Old Lady in 2.3 and the three unnamed Gentlemen in 4.1—in discussions of Anne’s sensual magnetism. Upon seeing Anne for the first time, Henry experiences that loss of self-control which anti-theatrical diatribes ranted against (Stephen Gosson in the Elizabethan period; William Prynne in 1633)—the capacity of the theatre to enthral through bewilderment. Dressed up as a visiting Frenchman who is performing a shepherd’s role in Wolsey’s masque, the King as “King” is twice removed; his disguise creates a space within which transgressive ideas and emotions can breathe. He notices Anne as a “dainty one” among a “sweet society of fair ones” who have already been treated to “good company, good wine, good welcome,” which perhaps is a subtle hint at the King’s sexual tastes (1.4.94, 14, 6); when Wolsey nudges Henry that he might be getting carried away, “I fear, with dancing is a little heated,” Henry admits “I fear too much” (1.4.100-1).

In her conversations with Sandys and the Old Lady, Anne’s virginal front is challenged as a precarious one at best. Both figures take it upon themselves to unmask what Lisa Jardine calls “sexual knowingness—cannily getting a partner, astutely making a match”; according to Jardine, behind a “virtuously knowing” woman, i.e. witty and knowledgeable, is “the female sensuality which is readily released into potential for harm (specifically, harm to men).” In Sandys’s sexual banter, where he offers Anne his largesse, (which she politely refuses), “if I make my play. / Here’s to your ladyship; and

pledge it, madam, / For ’tis to such a thing,” there is a salacious attempt to reveal Anne’s sexual knowledge and desire (1.4.45-48). For underpinning Sandys’s badinage, even if Anne deflects the moment, runs a deep-seated anxiety about any woman’s chastity, let alone one who is figured at the heart of a royal banquet attended by the regime’s most powerful men.60 As Theodora Jankowski elucidates, “female virginity is to be conceived of solely as a means of protecting male bloodlines and male inheritance patterns and should be maintained by women only until replaced by parentally sanctioned marriage.”61 Indeed, Sandys’s suggestion of sexual openness frames and eroticizes the dynamics of a standardized dance, whereby Henry’s open hand is Henry’s hand taken62—he exclaims, “The fairest hand I ever touched. O Beauty, / Till now I never knew thee” (75-6)—thus charging the running subtext of Anne’s sexual availability.

This sense of unease is magnified in the Old Lady’s much-analyzed dismissal of Anne’s reluctance—she swears by her “troth and maidenhead”—to be queen. In a female interlude reminiscent of Desdemona and Emilia’s “willow scene” in 4.3 Othello, the Old

60 This anxiety is emblematized in Othello’s Temptation Scene in 3.3, where Iago questions Desdemona’s sexual “boldness”: “Ay, there’s the point; as to be bold with you, / Not to affect many proposed matches / Of her own clime, complexion, and degree / [...] / Foh, one may smell in such a will most rank, / Foul disproportions, thoughts unnatural!” (3.3.233-38).


62 I follow here Patricia Parker’s analysis of the rhetorical trope of dilato, or opening and expansion, in the context of the Temptation Scene 3.3 in Othello, “that made possible the easy movement between rhetorical and sexual opening, between the open palm of rhetoric and the open hand or palm taken (as in Othello or The Winter’s Tale) as sign of the openness of a woman and her sexual appetite” in Othello and Hamlet: Dilation, Spying, and the ‘Secret Place’ of Woman. Shakespeare Reread: The Texts in New Contexts. Ed. Russ McDonald, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994. Esp. 112-3.
Lady, typed as the transgressive “female talker,” sees a chance of social and political advancement via sex:

Beshrew me, I would,
And venture maindenhead for’t; and so would you,
For all this spice of your hypocrisy.
You, that have so fair parts of woman on you,
Have, too, a woman’s heart which ever yet
Affected eminence, wealth, sovereignty;
Which to say sooth, are blessings; and which gifts—
Saving your mincing—the capacity
Of your soft cheverel conscience would receive,
If you might please to stretch it. (2.3.25-33)

In the cynical observer’s exhortation to drop the veil of modesty and discuss openly Anne’s political motives, there is an implication that Anne has yielded her maidenhead to the King. More emphatically, when Anne persists in denying that “for all the riches under heaven” she would not be queen, the Old Lady’s retort is “’Tis strange: a threepence bowed would hire me, / Old as I am to queen it. But I pray you, / What think you of a duchess? Have you limbs / To bear that load of title,” followed by “In faith for little England / You’d venture an emballing” (2.3.35-9, 46-7). As McMullan points out in 3 Arden, this short scene is rife with sexual implications: the pun on “bowed” and “bawd.”

followed by the double entendre of “queen” and “quean” (whore in early modern parlance), evoke a world of prostitution, of reaping profit from sexual favors; the phrase “limbs to bear” suggests too readily reproduction after sexual activity; “cheverel conscience,” proverbial for a malleable conscience, figures as “pliable conscience/vagina”; and “emballing” connotes, in addition to royal investiture, sexual initiation.\(^6^4\)

Here, the semantically nimble Old Lady outlines what is (or ought to be) Anne’s agenda in a nutshell. Although her insistence to turn the moment into profit may have been said out of genuine concern for Anne’s future (she is, after all, a seasoned servant at court, privy to the morals, or lack thereof, of her superiors), the Old Lady’s taxonomy suggests two antithetical views, thus disrupting the neat ideological binary between “good” and “bad” queen. On the one hand, she recognizes and admires Anne’s entrepreneurial eye for the possibilities of the court’s market economy. From this perspective, we can read one observer’s exalted description of the solemn theatricality of Anne’s coronation ironically, where his remark “She had all the royal makings of a queen,” confirms the Old Lady’s view that sexual currency allows any woman to purchase the “markings” of rank and respectability (4.1.87).

On the other hand, she mimics the “normative” moralizing denunciation of a sexually loose woman’s route to power—one who will parley her charms for the most coveted female spot in the kingdom. In this way, the Old Lady’s definition of a potential

queen’s sexual, political, and economic relationship to the King, together with Sandys’s evocation of a threat to the order of succession, resonate with contemporary sectarian discourse, both Catholic and Protestant, warning against “wicked” queen consorts. Certainly, Catholic polemicists employed the tropes of Biblical *femmes fatales* to denounce Anne Boleyn’s seduction of Henry VIII and her promotion of heresy in England.\(^65\) In his analysis of counter-Reformation polemic, Christopher Highley outlines the biblical typography employed by Catholic émigrés in a number of interpretations of the great schism. For instance, Cardinal Reginald Pole’s *De Unitate* (1539, 1555, 1587) urges Henry to return to the church and invokes the example of King Ahab, whose “impious wife alienated his mind from the true worship of God as not it is clear that a new Jezabel has turned your mind away from the truth.”\(^66\) In the mid-Elizabethan period, Nicholas Sander anchors his historiography of events in England since “the revolt of King Henry the Eight,” *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani* (1585), in the narrative of Biblical kings undone by their idolatrous wives. Comparing Henry VIII to King Solomon, Sander claims that “the two great kings forgot themselves and let themselves be led by their passions and their loving fire, that their misbehavior caused marvelous disaster and ruin, not only to themselves, but also to their own subjects.”\(^67\) In


\(^66\) The citation of *De Unitate* is from the 1587 edition that was printed in Ingolstadt. Qtd. in *ibid.* 164.

\(^67\) Qtd. in *ibid.* 157.
this formulation, Solomon’s and Henry VIII’s “passions” and “loving fire” to Philistine women and Anne Boleyn, respectively.

In Protestant polemic, the image of a whore strongly connotes the Catholic Church typed as the Whore of Babylon, whereby “Catholic practice (aesthetically dazzling),” Gillian Woods writes, “was akin to a corrosive, sexual deception that feminized all who fell prone to its allure.”68 As Chapter 3 of this study shows, the trope of the Whore of Babylon is unanimously evoked in polemic denouncing the Spanish match (1621-1624). In the context of the Palatinate marriage of 1613, however, the Whore of Babylon becomes a potent signifier against which the blessed Protestant union is measured. In Andrew Willet’s Salomon’s Marriage (1613), for instance, the Palatinate marriage is lauded because it “haue maried religion to religion, and haue matched the Gospell with the Gospel”; as opposed to one with “that Babylon-Rome, that red scarlet whore, that is drunke with the blood of the Saints, […] Which hath been a firebrand of the world, and the very Vulcans forge of rebellion, and bellowes of sedition.”

The power of the virgin-whore discourse to reveal the fragility of the line between a “good” and “bad” queen is evident in another strand in which Henry VIII entangles us. Running against the trope of the lusty enchantress is a colonial fantasy of male conquest of a fertile, feminized land. Amidst Norfolk and Suffolk’s discussion of Henry’s “great matter,” Suffolk wryly notes: “his conscience / Has crept too near another lady” (2.2.15-6)—a remark later picked up at Anne’s coronation procession, where an observer is

68 Woods, Shakespeare’s Unreformed Fictions, 32.
ravished by the new queen’s allure and therefore, cannot fault the King for his course of
action: “Our King has all the Indies in his arms, / And more, and richer, when he strains
that lady. / I cannot blame his conscience” (4.1.45-7). When his companion informs him
that “They that bear / The cloth of honour over [Anne] are four barons / Of the Cinque
Ports,” the first observer declares, mockingly or yearningly: “Those men are happy, and
so are all are near her” (4.1.48-50). Anne’s association with sexual conquest, imperial
expansion, and exotic locales is instructive, particularly when we read it against the
play’s omission of her cultural ties to France. “So what are we to make of it in
Shakespeare’s play,” Linda Gregerson asks, “when Henry Tudor courts Anne Boleyn in
the guise of masquer who ‘speak[s] no English’ but only French (1.4.56)?” 69 Indeed,
Gregerson cites a contemporary account of Anne’s francophilia, nurtured during her eight
years as a maid-of-honor in French courts, where Lancelot de Carles writes, “no one
would ever have taken her to be English by her manners, but a native Frenchwoman.” 70

From this aspect, the play can be seen as alluding to a centerpiece theme in the
construction of a Protestant English identity via what Nina Levine calls “the theme of
sexual domineering” across Shakespeare’s history plays. 71 For the representation of a
subdued, francophile Anne problematizes the pro-war, nostalgic narrative of the hot
Protestant faction, which upheld Queen Elizabeth’s, and by association her mother

69 Gregerson, “French Marriages and the Protestant Nation,” 255.

70 Qtd. in ibid. 255.

71 Nina S. Levine, Women's Matters: Politics, Gender, and Nation in Shakespeare's Early History Plays.
Anne’s, interventionism in direct opposition to James I’s ecumenicalism in 1611-1613. Certainly, the play establishes the historical enmity between England and France despite the Field of the Cloth of Gold interlude. Early in the play, Katherine of Aragon relays to King Henry that his subjects’ discontent is directly linked to “the pretence for [the Amicable Grant],” which “Is named your wars in France” (1.2.59-60). In addition, the indelible mark of the French language on the maritime towns of “Cinque Ports” bespeaks England’s “documented” history of contact—peaceful or violent—with its Gallic neighbor. More important, Anne’s place-name “Bullen” or “de Boulogne,” a referent to Boulogne Gate in northern France, is not only incompatible with the topical connotations of “pure” lineage and English providentialism, but also undermines Protestant imperialism via sexual conquest. For the Salic law barring succession through female lines nullifies any “status” Anne’s “inherited name” carries, specifically from the perspective of Katherine Maus’s formulation that an aristocratic name is “the name of what is inherited, the piece of property that guarantees its owner income and status.”

Therefore, the semantic alignment of “Bullen,” “Cinque Ports,” and “wars in

72 This view was voiced by a vociferous coalition of court politicians and parliamentarians grouped around Pembroke, Southampton, and Archbishop Abbot, ideologically committed to a militant international Protestantism, vehemently anti-Spanish, and hostile to any Catholic match. In Princess Elizabeth’s marriage to the leader of the Protestant union, it saw an extension of the pro-war policies of Queen Elizabeth I and her strong military, religious, and political alliance with Protestant Europe, which in turn, was espoused by the court of her late brother, Prince Henry of Wales. See Andrew Thrush, “The Personal Rule of James I, 1611-1620.” Politics, Religion and Popularity in Early Stuart Britain: Essays in Honour of Conrad Russell. Ed. Thomas Cogswell, Richard Cust and Peter Lake. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 84-102; and W.B. Patterson, “The Synod of Tonneins.” King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom, esp. 155-195.

France” recalls Henry VIII’s military triumphs in France, when the “battered Bullen” of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey’s poem “Norfolk Sprung Thee” (8)74 surrendered to Henry’s relentless offensive after a two-month siege in 1544.75 Indeed, the image of the battered “Bouloigne” was appropriated by John Reynolds’ polemical Vox Coeli to attack the Spanish match, whereby Henry laments, from his royal seat in heaven, England’s cowardly foreign policy under James I: “France knew that I found Souldiers in England when I tooke Tourney and Bouloigne.”76

From a lighter angle, Richard Johnson’s 1612 ballad, “A Princely Song Made of the Red Rose and the White,” recounts the story of James’s royal ancestry and his legitimacy as the successor to both Yorkist and Lancastrian claimants to the throne.77 In one episode, the ballad describes how Henry, a “King of noble fame,”

conquered Bullen by his sword, / With many townes in France: / His manly might, and fortitude, / did Englands fame aduance.” The ballad may well have been written several years before 1612, but what is relevant are the images it conjures of Henry’s “manly


76 John Reynolds, Vox Coeli. London: 1624. 35.

77 Richard Johnson (1573-1659) was a prolific writer, best known for his collection of poetic monologues called The Nine Worthies of London (1592) and prose romance The Seven Champions of Christendom (1597). First published in 1612, Richard Johnson’s collection of 25 broadside ballads, A Crowne Garland of Goulden Roses, is a jingoistic celebration of England’s history. These ballads, which might well have already appeared as a broadsheet, are populist in tone, intended to transmit the heroic deeds of the royal figures of English history to commoners. According to Bruce Smith, “of the 4,000 ballads likely published before 1600, only bout 260 sheets survive, including fragments and duplicates in The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1999. 170.
might, and fortitude” in subduing the “conquered Bullen,” the town or perhaps his second wife, with his phallic sword.

This sexualized account of Henry VIII’s military campaign in France, with its charged imagery of siege, conquest, and submission of Bullen, points backwards, towards a pervasive chivalric past, evoked in the representation of King Henry V’s much-discussed sexual conquest of Katherine of France in *Henry V* (1599). More nuanced, perhaps, is *Edward III*’s (1596) dramatization of the famous English victory in the naval Battle of Sluys (or L’Ecluse) in 1340, where a French character reports on the grave losses of two mighty French ships: “Much did the Nonpareille, that brave ship; / So did the Black Snake of Boulogne [Bullen in Qt.], than which /A bonnier vessel never yet spread sail” (*King Edward III* 3.1.177-9). The two French vessels, “Nonpareille” and “the Blacksnake of Boulogne,” although not mentioned in the play’s main source, Holinshed’s revised *Chronicles* (1587), are given highly suggestive names; while “Nonpareille” announces the enormity of the English victory over the French fleet despite its unequalled greatness, the destruction of “the Blacksnake of Boulogne/Bullen” evokes the Biblical trope of Eve’s subordination as God’s punishment for seducing Adam, whereby both Bullen the fallen queen and the fallen French city are likewise subdued.


Yet, in a play where the mutable nature of foreign alliances and the pragmatic politics of dynasticism run parallel to active and loaded binaries, the image of sexual conquest and contamination is bound to be challenged. At Wolsey’s banquet, when the King is announced with “warlike voice,” “drum and trumpet,” and “discharged chambers,” Wolsey assures the ladies, among them Anne Bullen, “Nay, ladies, fear not: / By all the laws of war you’re privileged” (1.4.49-52). Blurring several lines of distinction, Henry and his troupe are disguised as “A noble troop of strangers, / For they seem. They’ve left their barge and landed, / And hither make, as great ambassadors / From foreign princes” (1.4.54-6). In this heightened metatheatrical moment, the king might be a noble or a savage stranger. But a “stranger” he definitely is—and a French one, too. Strangers are potentially everywhere; props and other trappings shape identity; binaries are realized, reversed, and then dissolved.

Perhaps most remarkably, polarizing binaries are thrown into carnivalesque confusion in a mongrel scene that would have Philip Sidney rolling over in his grave.\footnote{Famously, Philip Sidney denounced the “grosse absurdities” of “mongrel tragicomedy” in \textit{An Apologie for Poetrie}. “Playes be neither right Tragedies, nor right Comedies: mingling Kings & Clownes, not because the matter so carrieth it: but thrust in clownes by head and shoulders, to play a part in maiestical matters, with neither decencie, nor discretion. So as neither the admiration & commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mungrell Tragy-comedie obtained.” \textit{An Apologie for Poetrie}. London: 1595. K2.} In the Porter and his Man’s lurid attempts to cordon off the throngs of roaring Londoners at Elizabeth’s christening procession, the language of military conquest, colonial imperialism, and Christian morality fuses with that of transgressive sexuality and uncontrollable fecundity:
Is this Moorfields to muster in? Or have we some strange Indian with the
great tool to come to court, the women so besiege us? Bless me, what a fry
of fornication is at the door! On my Christian conscience, this one
Christening (baby Elizabeth’s) will beget a thousand: here will be father,
godfather and all together. (5.3.31-6)

The disorder contrasts sharply with the order, balance and proportion, of the state
pageantry of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, Wolsey’s banquet, Katherine’s trial, Anne’s
coronation procession, and Elizabeth’s baptism. Moreover, the effusion of free-for-all
sexual encounters and their resultant “Christenings” mirrors Cranmer’s prophecy at
Elizabeth’s own christening, where the virgin queen is envisioned as “promis[ing] / Upon
this land a thousand thousand blessings, / Which time shall bring to ripeness,” her
“natural” heir James I as imperially conquering and “mak[ing] new nations” bearing “the
greatness of [their] name,” Jamestown and Virginia (5.4.19, 51-2).

On another level, the gendered imagery of military conquest as sexual subjection,
discussed earlier in relation to allusions to Henry’s siege of “battered Bullen,” is reversed.
Urban London is a space marked by fecundity and excessive life: feisty English
women—indeed, “an army cannot rule ‘em” (74)—besiege and prey on the strange
Indian’s largesse within the walled city, whose gates the Porter and his Man cannot “win
the work” nor “carry the fort” (55, 47). At Anne’s coronation a few scenes earlier, where
“Great-bellied women, / That had not half a week to go, like rams. / In the old time of
war, would shake the press, / […] No man living / Could say ‘This is my wife’ there; all
were woven / So strangely in one piece” (4.1.73-81), the imagery of warfare, soldiers,
and battering rams alludes to violent acts of impregnation of female “rams” that grow into an overwhelming mass men cannot control. Moreover, in comparing the women’s aggressive influx into the city proper to that of the army town of Moorfields (31), where London wenches provided sexual services to soldiers, the play figures the city as a free market and meat market, a fairground overrun by the rules of supply and demand; in this figuration, the meat of “chine,” “cow,” and (female) rams is bought and sold in the same entrepreneurial spirit, and thus, obliquely mirrors the court’s own market economy.

Yet, the dramatic power of the play’s cityscape cannot be overstated, as the only “natural” unions there are “unnatural” ones. In its conception of urban London as a meeting place of difference, the unruly crowd scene (5.3) is particularly forthright about depicting what Henry VIII assumes: that England’s rich and prolific history of mingling—cultural, linguistic, racial, social, and of course, confessional—could not be wiped out and could not be confined to the lawless suburbs.

In this hybridized landscape, the culturally exotic is familiarized; insiders become outsiders and vice versa; physical and figurative boundaries are blurred. For example, the residual language of the unreformed past, in “penance” and “Limbo Patrum” (61), leaks out. Moreover, in one of his observations on the intractability of the crowd, the Porter’s Man alludes to Samson and the Philistines, “I am not Samson,” he complains, “To mow ‘em down before me” (21-2), thus evoking not only allusions to Samson’s violent masculinity and racial superiority, but also his recognition of his inability to resist the
sexual allure of the foreign and idolatrous Delilah.\(^{82}\) In phrasings such as “You i’th’ chamblet, get up o’th’ rail / I’ll peck you o’er the pales else” (5.3.85-6), the sophistication of expensive and fashionable clothes fuse with images of “barbaric” Ireland (and England’s responsibility to reform it)\(^{83}\); “Under the [equatorial] line” (34) interweaves images of the warm temperature of exotic locales, sexual heat (cf. Henry’s “heated dancing” in 1.4.100), and Christian hellfire.

From a postmodern angle, it is hard not to envision Ursula the pig-woman of Jonson’s Bartholomew Fair (1614), Francesca of John Marston’s The Dutch Courtesan (1605), Moll Cutpurse of Thomas Middleton’s and Thomas Dekker’s The Roaring Girl (1613), Pisario, the Portuguese Jew, of William Haughton’s An Englishman for my Money (1598), or Quomodo of Middleton’s Michaelmas Term (1605) as making a cameo appearance in this scene. In the same vein, it is hard to resist seeing the bearbaiting garden in “Do you take the court for Paris Gardens,”\(^{84}\) with its smelly bears, loud roaring, and vulgarized linguistic mutability, as a wry parody of the enchanted, sanitized garden of Cranmer’s prophecy.

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\(^{82}\) In his discussion of biblical allusions in Love’s Labour Lost, Hannibal Hamlin underlines the importance of Don Armado’s list of biblical heroes, “undone by the temptations of women, including Samson and Solomon, […] (and by implication Delilah, the Queen of Sheba, and all women) in concluding that ‘there is no evil angel but love’ (1.2.165-7).” The Bible in Shakespeare. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. 149.

\(^{83}\) Famously enshrined in Edmund Spenser’s A View of the [Present] State of Ireland (written 1596; published 1633).

\(^{84}\) “This celebrated beargarden on the Bankside was so called from Robert de Pan’s, who had a house and garden there in the time of Richard II.” Edmond Malone, Henry VIII. Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare. Vol. 9. London: 1857. 299.
Moreover, this rambunctious scene is a Janus-faced anti-masque, pointing backward to the masques danced around the Anglo-French union in 1.1: “Now this masque / Was cried incomparable; and th’ ensuing night / Made it a fool and a beggar” (26-8); its “Fire-drake” (34) links the scene to the fiery dragon in the chivalric romances of Bevis of Hampton and counterpoints Henry and Francis’s own performance of chivalry: “that former fabulous story / Being now seen possible enough, got credit / That Bevis was believed” (135-37); and the pastoral masque at Wolsey’s banquet, where in the “hour of revels” Henry notices and falls for Anne Bullen (1.4.72).  

It also points forward to the Christening scene, whose georgic vision of the island’s blessed destiny and “peace, plenty, love, truth, terror” (5.4.47) is a return to the Garden, albeit an insular and self-regenerative one, where “every man shall eat in safety / Under his own vine what he plants” (5.4.33-4); where causes of difference and discord have been removed, or swept under a royal (Indian?) carpet; and a Tudor-Stuart lineage has been established as strong and auspicious, without any mention of the trappings of dynastic negotiations or

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85 The allotment of one hour for a masque performance is somewhat accurate. According to Peter Walls, the antimasque is performed from 9:03 to 9:15; the masque follows until 9:45, and then the social dances, known as the measures and revels, are initiated. See Peter Walls, *Music in the English Courtly Masque, 1604-1640*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996. 2-3.

86 According to Blair Worden, “terror” connotes “reverend fear,” which together with “love,” epitomizes the qualities of a model sovereign in sixteenth-century political philosophy. Warden cites from the council correspondence on Anglo-French negotiations, PRO SP 78/2/68 CSPF 1578-9, 182, the following: “monarchies be or ought to be ruled with love and fear together; neither without that commixture can that government hold, as for example our state of England.” *Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney’s Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1996. 18.

87 Hannibal Hamlin describes the tension created by the influence of Virgil’s fourth, “messianic” Eclogue of a Golden Age on Western thought, and Luther and Calvin’s rejection of a return to a prilapserian state of innocence, *The Bible in Shakespeare*, 148.
succession crises. Excluded from this national reconciliation, in a form of Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, is London’s massed public. For commingling with the urban masses is a form of miscegenation, or “unnatural” union, which Cranmer’s purist Protestant jurisprudence denies. Indeed, this “fry of fornication” is ultimately controlled when, upon hearing “the trumpets sound” of the royal procession, perhaps alluding to the trumpets of the Apocalypse, the grubby Londoners are silenced.88

V.

Similar to Anne Bullen, Katherine of Aragon moves in and out of the binaries—gendered, political, national, confessional—that define her, and commands theatrical attention in scenes that flesh out the complexity of her historical and dramatic significance. Indeed, her loaded Spanish place-name, “of Aragon,” is in itself problematic, especially in the context of what critics call the “Armada paradigm,”89 which is premised on an ever-lurking popish threat to the enclosed garden of Protestant England, executed by Roman Catholic Spain. Like Anne, she negotiates the burden of proving the veracity of her questioned claim to “truth” in “All is True,” by defending herself against the “scruple” of “unnatural unions” which eventually renders her marriage to Henry illegitimate. Anne presents not only an ideological, political, gendered, national, and religious challenge to Katherine, but a phenomenological alternative; for Anne’s physical


immediacy throws into startling relief the over-determined absence imposed on Katherine. At Anne’s coronation procession, an unnamed gentleman pities Katherine’s downfall, “Alas, good lady,” lying sick and in exile at Kimbolton palace; yet in the same breath he announces the arrival of his new queen: “Stand Close. The Queen is coming” (4.1.35; 36). Rory Loughnane argues that Anne’s physical presence as the new queen “forces the comparison of queens, past and present, that the political ceremony [in this instance, Anne’s coronation procession] aims to efface and replace.”

Scholars agree that despite Katherine of Aragon’s “negative” attributes—Spanish, female, Papist, and “unqueened”—she is the center of moral consciousness in *Henry VIII*’s maelstrom of machiavellian statecraft and personal duplicity. In what follows, however, I want to underline how the figure of Katherine confuses not only the stereotype of Catholic and foreign “manlike Ladie[s]” and “Heathenish wives,” theorized by the likes of Andrew Willet, but also contemporary representations of the historical Katherine of Aragon as a virtuous everywoman—a Penelope working her loom, or a patient Griselda figure. For instance, in Richard Johnson’s 1612 ballad, “The story of ill may-day,” Katherine takes on an intercessory role, pleading mercy on behalf “a thousand” London apprentices who had butchered a number of Spaniards, “Though it concern’d her country dear”: “And so, disrob’d from rich attires, / With hair hang’d down, she sadly hie, / And of her gracious lord requires / A boon, which hardly he denies.” Likewise, John Taylor, the self-appointed moralizer of the Jacobean period writes:

90 Rory Loughnane, *Late Shakespeare*, 132.
I Read that in the seauenth King Henries Raigne,
Faire Katherine, Daughter to the Castile King,
Came to England with a pompous traine
Of Spanish Ladies, which she thence did bring.
She to the eighth Henry married was,
And afterwards diuorc’ed, where virtuously
(Although a Queene) yet shee her dayes did pas
In working with the Needle curiously,
As in the Tower, and places more beside,
Her excellent memorials may be seene:
Whereby the needles Praise is dignified
By her faire Ladyes, and her selfe, a Queene
Thus for her Paynes, here her reward is just,
Her workes proclaime her praise, though she be dust.\textsuperscript{91}

Nevertheless, in \textit{Henry VIII}, Katherine’s association with Christian charity, selfless labor, and virtue is problematized. From the outset, she appears as someone with deep understanding of the inner workings of governance. First, she voices the protests of the commons against the Amicable Grant levied by Wolsey without the King’s knowledge:

[…] The subjects’ grief

Comes through commissions which compels from each
The sixth part of his substance, to be levied
Without delay; and the pretence for this
Is named, your wars in France: (1.2.56-60).

Having presented the commons’ plight to the King, she justifies their widespread
discontent against him:

[...] This makes bold mouths:
Tongues spit their duties out, and cold hearts freeze
Allegiance in them; their curses now
Live where their prayers did: and it’s come to pass,
This tractable obedience is a slave
To each incensed will. (1.2.60-5)

She evokes the dangers of “each incensed will,” yet insists that the “grieved commons”
(the phrase is Wolsey’s) do not harbor rebellious sentiments. As a servant of the
commonwealth, her selfless interception on behalf of Henry’s subjects works from within
the parameters of royal supremacy and allegiance to the crown. When Wolsey attempts to
exonerate himself by blaming it all on the “single voice” of the Privy Council and the
“learned approbation of the judges” (1.2.70; 71), Katherine rejects his claims and
contradicts him to his face:

[...] No, my lord
You know no more than others, but you frame
Things that are known alike, which are not wholesome
To those which would not know them and yet must

Perforce be their acquaintance. (1.2.43-7)

In a skillful rhetorical performance, she accuses Wolsey of usurping the royal voice, which in turn results in breaking off the commons’ bonds of allegiance to the King and thus sanctioning Plebeian sedition: “yea such which breaks / The sides of loyalty and appears / In loud rebellion” (1.2.26-8). By taking on the “bold mouths” and “tongues,” Katherine merges her political, gendered, and sexual transgressions; for the Books of Homilies, as Richard McCabe notes, “holds it axiomatic that rebellion constitutes an ‘unnatural’ crime of the sort of which incest provides a perfect metaphor.”

Norfolk’s response to Katherine’s reportage is instructive; he corrects her nuanced account of the rebellion and firmly declares: “Not almost appears, / It doth appear” (1.2.30); and presents an almost clinical reportage of the “spinsters, carders, fullers, weavers, who / Unfit for other life” are “Daring th’event to th’teeth, are all in uproar, / And danger serves among them” (1.2.33; 36-7). This “uproar” at the beginning of the play anticipates that at 5.3, when London’s lowlife “o’th’ suburbs” symbolically overtakes Henry’s court, all attempts at separating both worlds faltering (5.3.69). At one point, the Chamberlain chides the Porter and his Man for their lackluster performance in warding off the deluge of “roaring” people—beadles, haberdashers, apprentices, city wives, braziers, and so fort—at the city gates: “They grow still, too. From all parts they are coming, / As we kept a fair here!” (5.3.65-6); and invokes the language of punishment,

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“If the King blame me for’t” with “lay[ing] ye all / By th’ heels, and suddenly, and on your heads / Clap round fines for neglect’ and “find[ing] / A Marshalsea shall hold ye play these two months” (5.3.75-7, 82-3). By juxtaposing Katherine’s passionate defense of London’s lowlifes against Norfolk and the Chamberlain’s abhorrence of any form of miscegenation, the play throws into relief Katherine’s blurring of social boundaries and her absorption of cultural difference.

Perhaps too predictably, Wolsey’s denounces “ignorant tongues” and treats Katherine as a freakish creature with an “unnatural” appetite by alluding to “sick interpreters, or weak ones,” “which ever, / As ravenous fis[es], do a vessel follow” (1.2.72; 82; 78-9). In one scene, then, Katherine asserts her political “tongue” and assumes a dissenting voice under the guise of her wifely Christian duty; she straddles different representational modes, moving seamlessly between variant and competing political, social, and gendered hierarchies.93

Looking at another instance of Katherine’s oratory, we notice how the Spanish queen skillfully manipulates her national identity. In a scene where the two cardinals Wolsey and Campeius try to induce her to submit to the will of the king, Wolsey breaks into Latin. Katherine interrupts him:

O, good my lord, no Latin.

I am not such a truant since my coming

93 According to Thomas Betteridge and Thomas S. Freeman, “Katherine’s gender has the effect of equalizing the status of the other principal characters in this scene, Norfolk, Henry and Wolsey. This in turn has the effect of making Wolsey look less like an arch-villain and more like a typical Tudor Politician.” Henry VIII and History. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012. 18.
As not to know the language I have lived in.

A strange tongue makes my cause more strange, suspicious.

Pray speak in English. (3.1.41-5)

Here we have positive proof that this “strange” woman from Spain is more loyal to England and its commonwealth than Wolsey. By refusing to be addressed in Latin and equating truth with the English language, Katherine responds to Wolsey’s “ignorant tongues” charge, and challenges one of the most tangible taxonomies of foreignness which rendered any foreign queen doubly “suspicious”: her “strange tongue”—indeed a loaded signifier of female dissembling, seduction, and transgression, whose silencing is epitomized in the ripping out of Lavinia’s tongue in Titus Andronicus.

As a skilled rhetorician, Katherine invests her narrative with powerful immediacy by invoking her plebeian audience and voicing their desire for the truth: “Here are some will thank you, / If you speak truth, for their poor mistress’ sake. / Believe me, she has had much wrong” (3.1.45-7). In drawing her audience to her, Katherine triumphs through incorporation: her subjects are incorporated under the unified idea of “truth,” making up a force that supports “their poor mistress” and proves that “she has had much wrong.”

More importantly, speaking of sinning and sacramental absolution, she merges her political cause with her interior, spiritual condition: “Lord Cardinal, / The willingest sin I ever yet committed / May be absolved in English” (3.1.47-9). Unlike active counter-Reformists who adopted Latin to appeal to their continental co-religionists, Katherine expresses a quintessential Catholic doctrine in English to heighten the appeal of her
 plight and to deprive Wolsey of his power over her.94 In fact, her appeal for absolution in
the common vernacular, backed by the support of her English subjects, is almost a direct
response to Samuel Rowley’s Katherine Parr in When You See, You Know Me (1605). In
Rowley’s play, Parr is represented as a staunch advocate for a sort of native conformist
Calvinism. In a debate on doctrinal issues, Parr mockingly asks the Papist Gardiner and
his associate Bonner:

    What scripture have ye
    To teach religion in an unknown language
    Instruct the ignorant to kneel to saints,
    By bare foot pilgrimage to visit shrines,
    For money to release from purgatory,
    The wildest villain, thief or murderer.
    All this the people must believe you can.
    Such is the dregs of Rome’s religion. (H4r)

In Parr’s tirade, the Popish religion preys on the people’s ignorance of Latin to enforce its
heinous practices. In Katherine’s rejection of Latin, she invokes and undoes theological,
gendered, and political templates at the same time. She eschews the language of
international diplomacy and opts for her subjects’ native tongue and their love of truth;
she undercuts Wolsey’s ecclesiastical authority as she upholds the tenets of Catholicism;

94 On Latin as a lingua franca for Catholic activists, see Christopher Highley, ‘‘A Pestilent and Seditious
Books’: Nicholas Sander’s Schismatis Anglicani and Catholic Histories of the Reformation,’’ 151.
and by doing so, she threatens both Cardinals’ gendered hierarchy even as she insists on her weakness, “I am but a weak woman.”

After establishing her “English” identity, Katherine shifts gears and reclaims her foreignness:

Would I had never trod this English earth
Or felt the flatteries that grow upon it.
Ye have angels’ faces, but heaven knows your hearts.
What will become of me now, wretched lady?
Shipwrecked upon a kingdom where no pity,
No friends, no hope, no kindred weep for me,
Almost no grave allowed me [...] (3.1.143–51)

Throughout the play, Katherine contemplates her own contingency and contradiction. “Ye turn me into nothing,” she tells Wolsey, “I am old” (3.1.114; 120); at her trial, she invokes the wisdom and international purview of her father: “Ferdinand, / My father, King of Spain, was reckoned one / The wisest prince that there had reigned by many / A year before” (2.4.45-8). Her last words are a final stab at self-definition, which turns out to be a confusing swirl of kinship terminology: “Although unqueen’d, yet like / A queen, and daughter to a king, inter me” (4.2.171–2); however, the conflation of “unqueened,” “queen,” and “daughter” betray the futility of pressing the distinction on. As a woman who has straddled the full representational landscape of queenship, foreignness and its extreme opposite, Levitical incest, Katherine thus becomes a particularly resonant and
multifaceted signifier of the play’s construction of queen consorts and its presentation of the kaleidoscopic permutations of dynastic marriage.

VI.

*Henry VIII* famously concludes with a prophecy relayed, under the bidding of heaven, by Archbishop Cranmer, the quintessential symbol of the English Reformation, meditating on the providential birth of Queen Elizabeth, “the maiden phoenix” from whose “sacred ashes” James I is born, “as great in fame as she was,” who reprises his predecessor’s age of peace and plenty *ad infinitum* (5.4.40, 45, 46). Speaking of James, Cranmer links Elizabeth’s reign to that of her Stuart “heir” via biblical imagery: like Abraham, “Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine, / His honour and the greatness of his name / Shall be, and make new nations”; like Solomon, “He shall flourish, / And, like a mountain cedar, reach his branches / To all the plains about him” (5.4.50-4); where this biblical typography is taken to presage a Jacobean age of stability, expansion, and international prestige (à la Solomon and Abraham). He associates Queen Elizabeth with the Queen of Sheba, and by proxy, King James, with Solomon, the builder of the Temple and the wisest, wealthiest king in Israel and Judah. Cranmer declares: “Saba was never / More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue / Than this pure soul shall be” (5.4.23-23).

Yet, in a play that has realized and dissolved binaries throughout, Cranmer’s prophecy of a harmonious set of sexless, undifferentiated union and succession is anomalous, specifically as Jacobean playgoers, in Simon Palfrey’s words, are “forced
[…] to judge the appropriateness of Cranmer’s ‘Oracle of comfort.’” For Frances Dolan, the play as a whole “requires relational imagination from its audience,” she notes, “that not only reads in rather than through, against the grain and for the plot, but also attends to what a text does not include and requires the reader to supply.” In consequence, the argument that the providential ending resonates with the sermons preached around the Palatinate marriage, which saw Princess Elizabeth as the “jewel of this isle and non-pareil of the reformed world,” Frederick “as Abraham, a Father of many Nations,” and their union as the hope of a providentially sanctioned Protestant expansionism, is not convincing.

While Henry VIII silences its two queens and ends with the purity of a good English (read Protestant) succession well protected from foreign incursions, its atemporal and circular rendition of Tudor and Stuart history is the political equivalent of dissonance. In its refusal to end, Cranmer’s performance of an effortless, asexual, and apolitical succession draws its audience in and holds them in a state of unrelieved alertness. As

96 Frances Dolan, True Relations, 227, 221.
97 George Webbe’s A Bride Royall. London: 1613. A5r. For Naseeb Shaheen, for instance, “the biblical references in [Cranmer’s prophecy] seem to have been made as Shakespeare followed the convention of complimenting the royal family by applying those [biblical] texts to them.” In a similar but more specific frame, Gordon McMullen has picked on the relationship between Willet’s Salomons Marriage and the biblical typology in Cranmer’s prophecy, which sees in Queen Elizabeth and her namesake Elizabeth Stuart “the return of God’s favour to His chosen nation in the wake of irreligious behaviour on the part of her [Princess Elizabeth’s] father”; the link between Elizabeth Tudor and Elizabeth Stuart “has its echo in the direct connection between Solomon and Frederic […]: rechristening Princess Elizabeth’s fiancé in this way makes the wedding a marker of the return of divine favour to England, and provides a fitting and optimistic conclusion to the play, which foreshadows the ultimate happy ending of the Protestant comedia apocalyptica.” Shaheen, Naseeb. Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1999. 473; McMullen, Introduction, 91-2.
Hannibal Hamlin notes, “[biblical] allusions were obviously [in plays] to be recognized and interpreted, and presumably they were.”\(^98\) We can also assume that the binaries anchoring these allusions were also recognized and interpreted. Cranmer’s attempt to reinforce the “truth” of pure lineal descent staggers under a series of biblical tropes; for his prophesy only foregrounds the happy state of these biblical kings and their monochromatic kingdoms before they broke God’s covenant, intermixing with foreign women, and turning to idolatry. Indeed, the Queen of Sheba is a referent to both wisdom and foreignness. Solomon is famous for his wisdom, peace, and wealth as well as forming strong political alliances and expanding his kingdom by means of dynastic marriage. The cedar tree is associated with solid lineage as well as international trade and exchange; and the vine is a referent to filial obedience as well as the “degenerate” and “unnatural” vine where the fruitless branch is burnt.\(^99\) If Cranmer’s prophecy organizes the past, present, and future in anachronistically biased terms, *Henry VIII* as a whole shows such binaries and anachronisms are hard to sustain.

IX.

When we posit the nationalistic triumph in *Richard the Third* T2v against the denunciation of an Anglo-French union in *Henry VIII* T3r in Shakespeare’s 1623 First Folio, and then again against a celebration of a pure Tudor-Stuart Protestant lineage in


\(^99\) Solomon’s foreign marriages as a means of forming strong political alliances in 1 *Kings* 3:1; Jeremiah’s emphasis on a “degenerate” and “unnatural vine”; “wild grapes” *Isa* 5:2; the fruitless branch is burnt in *John* 15:16; or Ezekiel’s 15:1-8 “worthless vine.”
Cranmer’s prophecy, the limitations of such an artificial opposition are thrown into relief. Richmond may claim that his marriage to Elizabeth would “increase / […] this fair land’s peace” (*R3* 5.5.38-39); Lord Abergavenny may scorn “A proper title of a peace, and purchased / At a superfluous rate” (*H8* 1.1.96-97), but the truth of the matter is, as this chapter has demonstrated, that the politics of dynasticism are never the clear-cut binaries that the above-quoted excerpts from both plays realize and dissolve. And they certainly do not lead to the sort of sanitized succession that Cranmer’s prophecy envisions at the end of the play.

It is not without significance that the Tudor culture that produced *Henry VIII’s* main source, Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, also unleashed the first major “public” outcry against “unnatural” interdynastic marriage. John Stubbs’ horrid image of the *Gaping Gulf* (1579)—the sink from which England might never emerge if Queen Elizabeth married the French Catholic Prince of the blood, Frances Duke of Alençon and Anjou—as well as his chopped right hand become emblematic of an era where royal prerogative and public opinion had their first major showdown. This image foreshadows, we might suggest from the perspective of this chapter, the hysteria that would break out a few years later in response to the proposed Spanish match. In the next chapter, I turn to the early 1620s, and in particular to qualified scenarios of successful intermarriage in John Fletcher’s *The Island Princess* (1621).
Chapter 3: The Spanish Match in John Fletcher’s *The Island Princess* (1621)

In 1618, a wholesale war in the name of religion, The Thirty Years War, plunged Europe into a maelstrom of escalating violence, political upheaval, economic devastation, and international divisions. In England, the self-appointed Christian prince of peace, King James I, to the dismay of hot Protestant contemporaries who saw the dynastic link with the Elector Palatine in religious terms as propagating the “Protestant Cause,” fitted the conflict into his own irenic narrative. For James, a Spanish match for the Prince of Wales became the ultimate strategy to balance the hostile forces in Europe. Indeed, a projected union between two countries whose recent shared history was one of panic, paranoia, and war emerged as the focal point of a large-scale political, religious, and public debate. On the Jacobean stage, John Fletcher, like many other playwrights, commented on these intense and immediate political and religious conflicts. By appropriating a Spanish source and by selecting as the main plot a political kidnapping resolved by the prospect of a dynastic marriage, Fletcher situates his tragicomedy *The Island Princess* (1621) in the context of the Palatinate crisis, the projected Spanish match, and the debate surrounding James’s policies regarding Catholicism in England. In this chapter, I read *The Island Princess* as a text that engages in the debate over Catholics in England and what it means to have a dynastic alliance with Spain in the realm of foreign affairs. By doing so, the play imagines a model of statecraft where force and virtue combined pave the way for proper marriage negotiations and the pursuit of political ends.
On 26 December 1621, when the King’s Men performed Fletcher’s *The Island Princess* at court, England was poised at a riveting politico-religious moment.\(^1\) Opposition to Jacobean pacifism, spearheaded by the Commons and Archbishop Abbott, reached unprecedented heights as King James’s pursued his long-cherished but deferred dynastic alliance with Protestant England’s “natural enemy,” Roman Catholic Spain. Diametrically opposed to this faction were the “Catholic loyalists” or Pro-Spanish, who actively pursued tolerant measures for English Catholics and supported James’s Spanish match for Prince Charles.\(^2\) A third influential movement was that of the financial retrenchers within the Stuart regime who truly believed that waging a war against the Habsburgs was a fiscal recipe for disaster.\(^3\) Channeling these political torrents, the play explores the consequences of incorporating good Catholics into the political mainstream and forging successful marital alliances with Spain, both of which militant Protestants

\(^1\) *The Island Princess* is one six plays performed by the King’s Men at court in the winter season of 1621-2: Massinger’s (lost) *The Woman’s Plot* (5 November 1621); (lost) *The Woman is Too Hard for Him* (26 November), Fletcher’s *Pilgrim* (1 January 1622), *Wild Goose Chase* (24 January), and *Coxcomb* (5 March). The payment for all six, made on 27 March 1622 to John Heminges, is recorded in the Inner Temple MS 515, No. 7 (first transcribed by Murray, 2:193). Since this payment covers performances over a four month period, it presumably includes all the plays given by the company during that period in Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, eds, *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture*. Oxford: Clarendon P, 2007. 111.


viewed as the ultimate threat to true religion, only after military and political disputes are leveled.

I.

Although marriage negotiations between England and Spain had been on the royal foreign policy backburner for more than a decade, public debate about the Spanish match intensified when it became inextricably linked to another major foreign policy rift in the late Jacobean period: the Palatinate crisis. In 1618, James’s policy of peacemaking and vision of Christian union was thrown to the wind when James’s son-in-law, Frederick V, accepted the Bohemian crown from the Protestant nobility after they deposed the Catholic Archduke Ferdinand of Austria. The question of England’s duty to protect the European Protestant cause was thus raised in an especially intense and urgent form. For many people in England, including Prince Charles, the return of these lands to their Protestant rulers was a point of honor and a religious duty. However, James was unwilling to fight the Hapsburgs, preferring instead to pursue diplomatic solutions to the crisis, i.e. a marriage for Charles with the Spanish Infanta.

On a more pragmatic level, James was in no fiscal position to wage a continental war and therefore needed to broker a peace with Spain in order to receive a huge cash

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injection. The prospect of the infanta’s dowry promised replenishment for depleted royal coffers as James’s dependency on Parliament’s amenability intensified. The course of events in England and on the continent created the right moment for a reassessment of what Patrick Collinson calls “the negative importance of the impossible dream” of the (Protestant) “republic of Christ,” on the one hand, and on the other, a re-evaluation of the plight of obedient and moneyed Catholic subjects. By the early 1620s, when the Palatinate crisis grew wider and public response spiraled out of control, with serious arguments both for and against a Spanish alliance, James banned the discussion of foreign policy, the match, or other arcana imperii; warned parliament not to meddle in “princes’ prerogatives”; and pitched a positive image of the Spanish match as an assurance of peace as opposed to the ever-lurking specter of war.

II.

The Island Princess, whose source is the Spanish Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola’s jingoistic Conquista de las Islas Malucas (The discovery and conquest of the Molucco and Philippine Islands, printed in Madrid in 1609), documents Fletcher’s engagement with Spanish sources as England grappled with a changed cultural climate and a shifting international scene. Like many of his European contemporaries, such as Le

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Sr. de Bellan in his *Histoire de Ruy Dias, espagnol, et de Quixaire, princesse des Moluques* (1615) and Samuel Purchas in his *Hakluytus posthumus, or Purchas his pilgrimes* (1625), Fletcher mined Argensola’s grand narrative of the Spanish conquest of the island of Ternate in the Moluccas, adapting his story loosely from the plot of one of the text’s many narrative digressions: the inset story of the interracial and international rivalry for the hand of the native princess, Quisara. Encyclopedic in its scope, Argensola’s account is an overarching celebration of the Spanish Habsburg’s expansion in Asia and the Pacific; it spans over a century and ventures as far as Cambodia, coastal China, the Banda islands, and the Philippines. As a piece of political propaganda, Argensola’s history, as monumentalized on its title page, reproduces Spain’s imperial and crusading project epitomized by Don Pedro d’Acuña’s conquest of the island of Ternate in the Moluccas from the Dutch in 1606.

Framed in a grand, marble-pillared engraving, the title page, at first glance, is no different from the title pages, engravings, paintings, and maps that had begun to appear throughout Europe since the 1570s. It advertises the return of Spanish domination of the Spice Islands via a Hapsburg-armed rainbow overcoming “Maluca.” Gendered and eroticized, the conquered island (and its inhabitants) is figured as a half-naked native

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10 Argensola also draws from an array of sources such as the medieval travel narratives of Marco Polo, Avicenna, Joao de Barros, Diogo do Couto, Giovanni Maffei, and Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, and from Antiquity geographies of Ptolomy.
woman, adorned with a feathered headdress, carrying a branch of cloves, and straddling a crocodile (see fig. 3). In the background are scattered clove trees symbolizing the islands’ wealth, and an active volcano emitting plumes of smoke and flame.

What is quite remarkable in the title page are the almost antithetical voices it produces. For instance, drawing on traditional biblical typology in discourses of early modern colonization, the title page presents two loaded allusions: while the rainbow evokes Noah’s rainbow after the deluge and God’s covenant not to flood the earth again in Genesis, the volcano alludes to hellish fire and the imminence of divine judgment in Revelation. In this formulation, the possibilities of redemption and damnation hinge on the gendered figure of Malacca, who becomes the site for a European fantasy of appropriation, conversion, and assimilation. This Maluca, figured as a woman actively anticipating the Hapsburg take-over while straddling the ultimate emblem of indigenousness, a crocodile, is given the choice of Christian salvation or eternal punishment in hell. Indeed, this is another form of colonial fantasy, which differs from the woman-land metaphor of the uninhabited and rich New World where no competing lands and civilizations existed. Emblematized in “allegorical personifications of America as a female nude with a feathered headdress,” New World narratives, as Louis Montrose argues, conflate European imperialism and the subordination of women as “the blending

11 Clove trees are symbolic here as clove was the rarest of oriental imports sought and fought over for its aphrodisiac and medicinal, among many others, benefits. Indeed, Argensola pointed that the clove is “the true Fruit of Discord, rather than the fabulous Apple of the three Goddesses, since for it there has been, and still is, more Fighting, than for the Mines of Gold” (40). He also provides a historical sketch of the clove trade from ancient times, under the control of the Chinese to more recent rivalries of the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and English in the Moluccas. John Stevens. The Discovery and Conquest of the Molucco and Philippine islands. London: 1708.
of these basic ingredients of protocolonialist ideology with crude and anxious misogynistic fantasy” in a “powerful conjunction of savage and feminine.” 12 While Argensola’s narrative is one of a failed promise of miscegenation, Fletcher will adapt from the rhetoric of the original’s title page where the fantasy of assimilation is lived out in the possibility of a gendered conversion to Christianity and by extension, the full and legitimate acquisition of the islands’ bounty.

Fig. 3. The tile page of Argensola’s *Conquista de las islas Malucas* (1609).
In Argensola’s official narrative, the trajectory is from loss to victory, a celebration of the “reduction” of the Moluccas to Hapsburg domination as one of the many stepping-stones to a universal form of Christianity. The heroes of this monological account are the Iberians (Spanish and Portuguese) and the villains are both the Mahometan natives and heretical Dutch and English. On another, more porous, level, Argensola’s narrative, with its many digressions and inset stories, often derided by detractors for their haphazard relation to the main plot and triviality of content, becomes one of polyvocal disjunctions and contradictions. One of these many digressions tells the story of another, albeit failed, form of “reduction” (reducción) of the Moluccas--a

13 The *incipit* locates the *Conquista*’s territorial acquisitions within a large framework of counterreformation writings aimed at the creation of a single Christendom:

I write the reduction of the Moluccas to the obedience of Philip III, King of Spain, and of their rulers to their former subjection, acknowledged by their predecessors and reintroduced by Don Pedro de Acuña, Governor of the Philippine Islands and Admiral of the Spanish Fleet; a victory worthy the foresight of such a Godly monarch, the application of those worthy Statesmen that compose his Supreme Council, and the Valour of our Nation; not so much on account of the Wealth, and Fertility of those Counties, as for that it took from the Northern Nations all occasion of Sailing in our Seas, and Debauching the new Converted Asiaticks, and the Inhabitants of our Colonies Trading among them. (*Discovery and Conquest 1*)

14 In its many digressions, the account becomes sensationalist descriptions of the apostasies of the heathens and Mahometanos and their persecutions of Christian martyrs:

The Heathens and Mahometans […] strengthened themselves with Works and other Preparations, erected Forts on high places, and bending their Minds against the Christians put many of them to cruel Martyrdoms: that so the foundation of our Faith may be all parts cemented with the sight of the still living Trunks. They impal’d the women, tore out their Bowels, and they surviving themselves beheld their still quivering Flesh in the Hands of their Executioners. Children were pull’d Piecemeal before their Mothers eyes, and Infants still in embryo were rent from their Wombs. (*Discovery and Conquest 65*)

15 Lupercio Leonardo de Argensola, “A los lectores,” in Bartolome Leonardo de Argensola’s *Conquista de las Islas Malucas* (1609) mentions the texts’s detractors’s objection to these stories “fuera del primer proposito” (unrelated to the main plot) and “no dignos de un autor grave y sacerdote” (not worthy of a serious author and priest). 9-10.
vestige of what will later become an organized form of conversion and assimilation in South American colonial history. When Philip II annexed Portugal to Spain in 1578, he also took control of Portugal’s overseas territories and entrepôts. The episode here is from the Portuguese-controlled Malaccas which tells the story of the botched interracial romance plot between the native princess Quisaira and the Portuguese captain Ruy Diaz. The doomed love story becomes emblematic of the European failure to infiltrate Malaccan society and culture via intercultural mixing.

In Argensola’s original, there is an uncanny sense of relief when the interracial plot founders, the Portuguese lovers are killed, and Quisaira marries a native prince. The narrative starts immediately after the kidnapping of sultan Capabugna of Tidore at the hands of enemy Ternatean forces. Capabaguna’s sister, Quisaira, vows to marry the man who will return her brother dead or alive. She hopes her Portuguese lover, Ruy Diaz de Acuña, will rise to the task and claim her hand in marriage. While Diaz is apprehensive about acting (quite tellingly avoiding the long-cherished interracial marriage), a native suitor called Cachil Salama undertakes the venture; he reaches Ternate disguised as a merchant, frees the sultan, and returns with him to Tidore amid a public spectacle of national jubilation and festivities. While the sultanate celebrates Salama’s achievement and pronounces him as “the Defence of the Kingdom,” Quisaira and Diaz scheme to have

16 “In parts of colonial South America: a village or settlement established by Spanish colonists or missionaries to accommodate the indigenous population in an environment where they could be converted to Christianity, and become assimilated into European culture.” “reduction, n.” OED Online. Oxford UP. June 2012.
the hero of the Tidorean people murdered.\textsuperscript{17} However, Diaz’s recurrent hesitation to act provides his nephew, Roque Pinheiro, with an opportunity to take the initiative. He arranges with Quisaira to kill both Diaz and Salama in exchange for the princess’s affection and favor. He succeeds in killing Diaz, but is killed by Salama in a duel. At this point, a spark is ignited between Quisaira and Salama, they marry, and ultimately, Salama succeeds to the throne of Tidore, whose status quo is left intact. The narrative ends with an antithetical sense of loss. The Portuguese lament the public defeat of their men but not the failed romance while the sultan is enraged by his loss of a precious horse during this episode.\textsuperscript{18}

The ambivalence towards the Portuguese failure in implementing a “reduction” of Ternate collides with Argensola’s grand narrative of Spanish imperialism and trade expansion as symbolized by the real and historical conquest of the Maluccas by D. Pedro D’Acuña in 1606. This disconcerting oscillation between official narrative of Spanish imperialist expansion and marginal vignette of aborted interracial marriage leaves no stable frame of reference for a coherent and truthful view of “history.” The startling juxtaposition between these two representational planes, one of expansion and the other of failed interracial contact, suited Fletcher’s retheorization of England’s own foreign policy with dynastic marriage at its heart. In that context, it is significant that the play focuses on the Portuguese rather than the Spanish. For Portugal is, in terms of treaties and

\textsuperscript{17} Conquista 101.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. 99-102.
alliances, England’s oldest ally. The fact that Spain annexed Portugal in 1578 was one of the big issues that hung over all Anglo-Spanish negotiations; to the flag-waving, breast-beating Protestants, it was a constant reminder of Spanish perfidy. However, by rewriting Quisara’s story in a hybridized space, enabling a cross-cultural union, and launching a gradual shift towards religious conversion, Fletcher is able to present a more sympathetic portrayal of Catholicism, while keeping up the heat on idolatry and the Jesuits, who are simply the unacceptable face of Catholicism. Ultimately, Fletcher offers his Island Princess as commentary on and even as counsel about how to handle the European crisis and the Spanish match through the context of the colonial world, bringing the domestic into conjunction with the colonial in a more apposite way, and ultimately, gesturing towards fresh vistas of dynastic realignment, trade relations, and religious compromise.

III.

The Island Princess is an exotic “travel” play set on the faraway Indonesian Spice Islands; like its source, it involves dashing Portuguese adventurers, an alluringly beautiful island princess, Quisara, her brother, and a rather philosophical King of Tidore, whose island is favorable to foreign traders. The nebulous “Tirnatean forces” in Argensola’s original are replaced in Fletcher’s play by the villainous Governor of Ternata, who is a “feirce knave/ Unfaithfull as he is feirce” (1.1.14-15). When the governor captures the King, Quisara assumes the throne and seeks to liberate her brother from captivity by announcing to her eager suitors that whoever saves him (by force, since the governor


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happily offers to barter her captured brother for her) will win her hand for marriage.

Similar to Argensola’s account, she secretly hopes that the Portuguese captain, Ruy Dias, who has already won the Princess’s “favor” with his reputation of valor despite having done little to deserve it, will rise to the occasion and save her brother, but to her surprise, he is too indecisive to enact a rescue plan. The opportunity is not seized by the native Salama but another handsome and dashing Portuguese, Armusia, who disguises himself as a merchant, sets Ternata on fire, and in the ensuing turmoil rescues the captive King. When Armusia claims his reward, the King, ever-grateful, is ready to bestow it upon him. However, Quisara reneges on her promise to marry Armusia and commissions Pyniero, Ruy Dias’s nephew, to kill Armusia. Ruy Dias and Armusia eventually duel, and the latter first defeats and then pardons the captain, who becomes Armusia’s admirer and ally. Where the Portuguese die in Argensola’s story, they thrive in Fletcher’s play. Indeed, faced with a growing Portuguese coalition, the frustrated Governor of Ternata disguises himself as a “Moorish priest” and appeals to the king’s and later Quisara’s religious and nationalistic sentiments. The plot reaches its culmination when Quisara, with her delicacy and tact, asks Armusia to renounce his faith for the island’s religion, a development that emphasizes the trope of the sexual route to apostasy familiar to early modern playgoers.  

In a furious monologue of hardline Christian fundamentalism, Armusia curses Quisara and her faith, which makes Quisara desire him and his religion even more. Now, it is Armusia’s turn to be thrown in prison for insulting the islands’ gods. Fletcher’s ending  

20 Famous examples are Thomas Kyd’s *Solomon and Perseda* (1592), Robert Daborne’s *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612), and Philip Massinger’s *The Renegado* (1624).
comes about when the Portuguese community comes together to rescue their fellow national whom the King has imprisoned and to expose the wicked governor. Ultimately, Quisara announces her readiness to suffer “fell tortures” (5. 2.129) to convert to Christianity, the governor’s real identity is discovered, and Armusia and the island princess are betrothed to be married. Having seized Ternata, the King gives the governance of its main city and castle to Piniero, who by now has assumed the role of mediator between natives and Portuguese colonists, and announces that he too is “half-persuaded” (5.5.66) towards the new faith.

*The Island Princess* has acquired a rich critical history over the last decade, with a number of critics developing a range of differently directed interpretations that explore the colonial underpinnings of the play. Reading the play with Richard Hakluyt’s *Divers voyages* (1582), *Principall Navigations* (first edition 1589), and *Principal Navigations* (3 volumes 1598-1600) and Samuel Purchas’s *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Piligrimes* (1613, 1614, 1617, 1626), and other travel literature in mind, scholars have aligned *The Island Princess* with the group of “travel” plays, exemplified by William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, which played out fantasies on the English stage of overseas expansion, discovery, and conquest. In the fraught moment of the Spanish match,

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22 Especially since *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (London 1626) quotes from “two letters taken out of Batholomeo Leonardo de Argensola his Treaise, called *Conquista de las Islas Malucas*.” Chapter ten is entitled “Albuquerque Exploits and the first knowledge of the Molucca’s” and is dedicated to the discovery of the Moluccas.
Philip Massinger’s tragicomedies, *The Sea Voyage* in collaboration with John Fletcher (1622) and *The Renegado* (1624), stand out as close correlatives to *The Island Princess*, where conversion fantasies, imperial conquest, and military prowess might be seen as alluding to hot debates surrounding mixed dynastic marriage.

Fletcher’s *Island Princess* has been read as the ultimate dramatization of colonial and sexual narratives in foregrounding Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch competition to control the Spice Islands, where all wealth, material abundance, and of course, women, are subjugated and objectified. Some critics focus on the play’s charged narratives of interracial marriage and religious conflict between Islam and Christianity. Gordon McMullan, for example, reads the play with the much-publicized John Rolfe-Pocahontas marriage (1614) in mind, since both unions “demonstrate through the metaphor of a native woman as object of desire the anxieties which seem characteristic of the colonial.”

Michael Neill, Shankar Raman, and Andrew Hadfield have also explored the questions of colonial enterprise in *The Island Princess* but from the East Indian context. While Neill treats the play as a celebration of English mercantile gains, with the Governor of Ternata as a stand-in for the Dutch rivals of English merchants, Raman argues that the play is a projection of nascent Protestant English “mercantile imperialism”


in the East, with Armusia as a stand-in for Sir Francis Drake. Also focusing on Armusia, Hadfield sees in his character an embodiment of “the two extreme states of European reaction”—the fascination and hostility—“towards the lure of the exotic.”

The conversion trope in the play has also received a generous scholarly treatment; Ania Loomba, adopting a feminist postcolonial lens, concentrates on the ideological work performed in “the fantasy of an Eastern queen who willingly crosses religious and cultural boundaries” while Jonathan Burton argues for a “Turk” pretext whereby “Fletcher’s Moluccans are not only Moluccans but also inexactively ‘Mahumetan,’” and therefore, the play “participates in a dramatic recuperation of Christian masculinity that works to offset the effeminizing specter of turning Turk.” The scholarly consensus, up until Clare McManus’s very recent Arden edition of The Island Princess, has agreed that the play capitalizes on popular fascination with exotic marvels—settings, bodies, commodities—which transform the stage into a space where the crude and often brutal realities of the colonial enterprise were either “metamorphosed into a dream of chivalric


29 John Fletcher, The Island Princess, ed. Clare McManus (Arden Early Modern Drama, 2013). This chapter was drafted before McManus’s edition came out.
heroism and erotic conquest, vicariously transporting its audience to a scene of projected national triumph,” presented a more skeptical view of travel through the dramatization of the ascetic Armusia, and/or embodied the anxieties about England’s shifting borders and its place and power on the world stage.30

Indeed, the complex and conflicted colonial dimensions of *The Island Princess*, on one level, dramatize how two disparate groups—the Portuguese colonials and native islanders—came in contact, intermingled, and started to negotiate a new world order where diversity is viable despite what appears like an unbridgeable cultural and religious chasm. In scene after scene, Jacobean audiences witnessed moments of enmity, violent competition, and xenophobia. For instance, the Portuguese captain Piniero describes the islanders as “false and desperate people, when they find / The least occasion open to encouragement, / Cruelle, and crafty soules ” (1.1.4-5), and Quisara as duplicitous: “They that observe her close, shall find her nature, / Which I doubt mainly will not prove so excellent” (1.1.43-44). Jacobean audiences also saw moments of civil and social interactions and xenophilia; indeed, Armusia described the islanders as “goodly persons” (1.3.48). And of course, playgoers witnessed Armusia and Quisara’s cross-cultural union in a highly prescribed ritual that plays a role in international relations and helps establish and preserve dynastic power.

It has become a critical commonplace to assume that when English writers represented foreign locations, they were simultaneously thinking of the political and

30 Neill, “‘Material Flames,’” 313.
cultural situation in England. These “travel” texts, relying on a complex series of allusions, parallels, and allegories, offered a space to reflect upon political issues vis-à-vis England as well as the emerging ethics and constructions of empire. At the historical juncture of 1619-1621, *The Island Princess*’s parallel to a colonial context can also be referring to a European pretext and can be read against the background of dynastic and intra-Christian religious politics during the waning years of James I’s reign. The exotic setting of the Spice Islands and intriguing encounters with the colonials and the natives (which contrasts sharply with Argensola’s bifurcated account of the Iberian colonial experience) provide a titillating storyline and serve the project of the Spanish match well; it constructs a set of fictions, in a faraway, extra-European space where everything is different and arcane, aimed at imagining the efficacy of dynastic marriages as a qualified symbol of union and political consolidation in a Europe on the brink of self-destruction. For this reason, I suggest that the play is in effect an allegorical response to the proposed match between Prince Charles and the Spanish Infanta Maria, an alliance undertaken by James I as a means of finding ways to intervene pacifically in the Palatine crisis. On the one hand, the conflict between Ruy Dias and Armusia dramatizes different ways of approaching that crisis: the former’s inaction echoes James I’s own reluctance to intervene militarily whereas Armusia represents the more active, interventionist ethos that James I remains reluctant to adopt. On the other hand, the eventual union of Armusia and Quisara, two lovers different in almost every aspect of life, speaks to the solution that James I actually pursues: to unite Catholic Spain and Protestant England via marriage. However, the play does not endorse such a “happy” ending unequivocally, seeing
dynastic marriages as a route that should only be pursued once an active intervention (à la Armusia) has set and neutralized the political stage.

Although *The Island Princess*’s major episodes only hint at contemporary political affairs, the play’s allusions to religious conversion and apostasy, marriage negotiations and dowries, and its very production at a moment of charged intra-European debate cannot but resonate with the range of responses to the projected match with Spain as a pacific policy to counter the crisis in the Palatinate. In fact, the play stages encounters between two religious groups: the Christians and the pagans. Although the Christians in the play are originally Portuguese Catholics, there is no mention of their Catholicism *per se*; instead, their foremost figure, Armusia, embodies a form of universal Christian virtue and piety as simultaneously actively achieved and given wholly by grace.\(^{31}\) The pagans, on the other hand, are divided into two groups; virtuous pagans, as represented by the King and Quisara, who are good through half-conversion and full conversion, and morally depraved ones, as represented by the Governor of Ternata, who remains adamant against converting to Christianity. This differentiation is a rather philosophical attempt at theorizing pagans that had occupied church fathers, including St. Paul, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas, and Reformers such as Calvin and Luther.

Although the theology of natural religion has an old patristic pedigree, it gathered momentum in the later period of the Jacobean period where a rigorous assessment of

religious pluralism, tolerance, and freedom can be best examined against the background of the religious and political situation—the rise of Arminianism, the Thirty Years War, the Anglo-Spanish marriage alliance, and the corollary of a toleration for Catholicism. By the early 1620s and if the Spanish match were to succeed, major doctrinal issues needed to be negotiated before the imminent assimilation of Catholicism to Anglican mainstream political life. Indeed, rigid Calvinistic views on unconditional predestination, limited atonement of the elect, and irresistible grace required a theological adjustment in light of this imminent theological shift. By turning to the European encounter with indigenous peoples, the play picks up on this doctrinal shift and turns to natural theology as an analogue of piety, obedience, and virtue that can be understood, naturalized, and incorporated in an Anglican discourse.³²

In early modern Christian schemes derived from Pauline theological ethnography, pagans were not exposed to God’s revelation and were therefore blameless for maintaining “heretical” practices. Along the same lines, the conquista raised exegetical problems of evangelization in an acute form and a new Christian explanation of paganism

³² Colin Kidd calls this attempt to understand Extra-European polytheistic pagan cultures in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries “ethnic theology.” He argues that ethnic theology was the first attempt “to construct systems of historical theology which accommodated the seemingly bizarre world of paganism to the traditional framework of Christian knowledge and belief.” This “embryonic science of comparative mythology […] had its central task the unmasking of the traces of Biblical history which lay beneath the legends and cults of pagan cultures” since all pagan cultures bear “the traces of patriarchal revelation” in British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. 12-13.
and its deviations from monotheism became an urgent necessity. While these virtuous, unevangelized pagans existed in a state of natural and universal felicity and longed for virtue, they are granted some values while remaining unambiguously subordinate to Christianity. Contemporary attempts to understand and incorporate natural theology into heterodox Protestant thought figure highly in Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1620), Martin Fotherby’s *Athemastix: clearing foure truthes, against atheists and infidels* (1622), and Godfrey Goodman’s *The creatures praysing God* (1622). According to these accounts, primitive natural theology, in and of itself, never suffices for the knowledge of divine mysteries and hence, must be augmented by Christian divine revelation. Between this state of natural religiosity and human salvation, there exists both a chasm and a bridge. The chasm is the pagan’s degeneration into idolatry while the bridge is provided by “true” religion. In this version of paganism, colonials saw the hope of future conversion where indigenous peoples are converted to “true” religion, naturalized, and assimilated into the Christian moral universe.

Contrarily, a battle over a degenerate view of paganism occurred especially when it became associated with the status of Roman Catholicism in Reformed Europe. After the Henrician reformation, Tyndale, Cranmer, and Foxe “used the apostle Paul’s sense of idolatrous imagination to recast medieval Catholicism as the foreign custodian of pagan

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33 Especially in influential accounts of the Spanish conquest, evangelization, and colonization of the Americans, such Peter Martyr d’Anghera’s *De Orbo Novo Decades* (translated to English in 1555) and Bartolomé de Las Casas *The Spanish Colonie* (translated to English in 1583).

34 As in *1 Henry IV*, when Hotspur blasts an unidentified lord who doubts the rebels’ plans to overthrow the king: “What a pagan rascal is this, an infidel” (2.3.28).
Indeed, this narrative is echoed in the works of Spenser, Sidney, and Milton. We know that Catholics were one of several stigmatized non-Christian groups repeatedly associated with Jews, Turks, and indeed, pagans, and New World Indians and equated with false belief, barbarism, and idolatrous rituals. In various forms of anti-Catholic polemic, Roman Catholicism was indeed characterized as the near cousin of pagan idolatry, with its blasphemy, deception, and hypocrisy often referred to as “pagano-papism.” To English reformers, heathen, pagan, infidel, and Catholic were lumped together and were virtually synonymous; rather than being viewed as potential converts, Roman Catholics, having succumbed to false gods, were prejudged as agents of


37 This recalls Lancelot’s address to Jessica in William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* “Adieu! Tears exhibit my tongue, most beautiful pagan, most sweet Jew!—If a Christian do not play the knave to get thee, I am much deceived” (2.3.10-12).

38 According to Christopher Highley, the powerful ideological charge represented by the “Turk” was also masterfully exploited by the Catholics in their religious war of ideas with Protestant heretics. *Catholics Writing the Nation* 57.

Babylon or the Antichrist. Indeed, “Poperie is a naturall religion” as Robert Rollock squarely affirms.  

This theological backdrop becomes a rich medium to explore issues of religion and conversion in Fletcher’s play. By dramatizing different versions of paganism and focusing on the successful tale of cultural mixing, *The Island Princess*, through its complex and dynamic dramatic allusions and tropes, attempts to reconcile the question of how to distinguish between different sorts of Catholics and insert them into contemporary political life. By this token, the reality that some islanders are virtuous and some are not disrupts the very notion of a unified, demonized Catholic identity, and echoes the complexities of the response to Catholicism on the late Jacobean stage. Clearly, the play seems to posit, there is a version of Catholicism, even though it had strayed into error and superstition, which is virtuous *in essence* and can indeed be restored into an Anglo-Protestant narrative on the eve of the Spanish match.

IV.

From the outset of the play, the conflict moves from the abduction of the King to the marriageability of Quisara as she becomes an appealing target in the Spice Islands: “his [her brother’s] ruin stiles her absolute / And his imprisonment add to her profit” (1.1.33-4). In the first scene, the play explores four different scenarios of dynastic marriage negotiations that occur at court. Quisara summons her suitors--the King of Bakam, the Prince of Syana, the Governor of Ternata, and the Portuguese Ruy Dias--to her court and 

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prompts them to start openly their negotiations and marital bids. Her condition is that he who would marry her must win her with his worth and valor and not through sheer military force: “Therefore, the man who [would] be known [her] lover must be known her [brother’s] redeemer, and must bring him either alive or dead to her embraces” (1.3.148-9). The first scenario is based on little to no diplomacy or wit; both rulers from neighboring islands, the haughty King of Bakam who is lovingly referred to as “a fellow that farts terror” (1.3.47) and the sprightly Prince of Syana are “mad for her” and “her fair hopes” (1.1.49, 51). According to Piniero, who maintains a detached relationship with the islanders throughout the play, Quisara is “fair” but not in complexion, and not really beautiful, or at least not as beautiful as she is rich and powerful. Already “othered” as a beautiful means to power, Quisara mobilizes all her resources, including her qualified beauty and royal prerogative, to secure her brother’s liberation. This first model of marriage negotiations is a very revealing one. The suitors’ buffoonery and acrobatic bickering over Quisara’s hand—the stage direction reads “Princes flie at one another” (1.3.64)—is framed so that it humorously emphasizes the fact that both princes are angling for an alliance with the island of Tidore for political, confessional, and territorial reasons beyond a high-school infatuation with the girl next door.

It is worth asking, therefore, how much of what I want to call a “Pan-Spice Island” alliance was part of the native princes’ marital equations. Would a proposed match with Tidore cement an insular Spice Islands league? We can conjecture that if Quisara were to marry one of her native suitors, a fundamentally different reconfiguration of the Spice Islands would emerge. We get an intimation of this insular model in Act Five when
Bakam and Syana reveal a form of native solidarity as they strategize a parochial defense policy to counter a Portuguese attempt to rescue Armusia and infiltrate the islands. As they give the deluded king “counsell” and “Helpes” (5.5.13), they ensure that their “temples” and “gates” are well-guarded to protect the islands from any Portuguese takeover:

_Bakam_: Let my men guard the Gates.

_Syana_: And mine the Temple,

For fear the honor of our gods should suffer,

And on your lives be watchful.

_Bakam_: And be valiant;

And let’s see, if these Portugalls dare enter;

What their high hearts dare doe: Let’s see how readily,

The great _Ruy Dias_ will redeem his Countrey-men;

He speaks proud words, and threatens.

_Syana_: He is approv’d, Sir,

And will put fair for what he promises;

I could wish friendlier terms,

Yet for our liberties and for our gods,

We are bound in our best service

Even in the hazard of our lives. (5.5.1-11)

Here, Bakam and Syana are no longer the desperate suitors childishly fighting over Quisara’s hand, but have become bulwarks against the menace of an expansionist
Portuguese civilization bent on domination at any cost. On one level, this native alliance is reminiscent of Argensola’s narrative where Quisaira ends up shunning her “foreign” Portuguese suitors and marrying one of her own, the native hero, Salama.

Indeed, this isolationist narrative must have stuck a cord with 1621 playgoers. In the early 1620s, the hotter sort of Protestants urged James to pose as a leading figurehead of the pan-European “Protestant cause” that he indulged by arranging the Palatine marriage for his daughter, Princess Elizabeth, with the Calvinist Frederick V in 1613. In this light, we cannot but argue that the play, at least, undermines the cause of an insular Pan-European Protestantism as reinforced by a dynastic marriage alliance at this charged political and confessional moment. A Protestant union, as the Rolling Stones wisely tell us, “is not the way to go.”

41 The combination of politics, territorial advancement, and sheer coercion is another failed scenario for dynastic unions which the play explores and presents as “compel’d, or forc’d affection” (1.1.80). Presenting himself as a suitor to Quisara, the evil Governor of Ternata bullies the princess into marrying him in exchange for the release of her captive brother. In response to the other suitors’ inflated promises, the Governor retorts:

These cannot doe, Their power and arts are weak ones.

‘Tis in my will, I have this King your brother,

He is my prisoner, I accept your proffer,

And bless the fair occasion that atchiev’d him:
I love ye, and I honor ye, but speak;
Whether alive or dead he shall be rendred,
And see how readily, how in an instant,
Quick as your wishes Lady. (1.3.175-183)

As expected, Quisara rejects his marriage proposal and adds a clause to her marriage treaty. She will only marry the suitor who liberates her brother by force because “By force he was taken; he that shall enjoy me, / Shall fetch him back by force, or never know me” (1.3.187-89).

On one level, the main emphasis here is on the bitter interplay between Quisara and the governor as they negotiate a possible marital alliance which reveals the first dimension of the evil governor’s true colors; his machinations and duplicity to gain unlimited power over the islands reveal him as the uttermost secular opportunist political villain. Through his ruthless cunning and like a true machiavel, he will later resort to confessional stir-ups when his political maneuverings fail. However, from a more urgent political perspective, the play, by revealing the bankruptcy, let alone unpredictability, of this model of dynastic union, goes to the very heart of the problem and argues that marriage alliances could no longer automatically settle political and territorial disputes. The key characteristic to look for in a political treaty is a settlement reached between independent and equal powers, one not being in any way, shape, or form subordinate to the other.
What the Portuguese captain Ruy Dias perceives as a marriage based on “cunning diplomacy” and “honourable courtship” turns out to be another failed way of thinking about dynastic marriages in the wake of the Palatine crisis. In fact, his “wise delaying” (2.4.77) in going to the aid of the captured king mimics James’s refusal to intervene in his son-in-law’s ordeal in the Palatine. Indeed, military action is a weighty business for the circumspect Portuguese captain who would rather ponder a more diplomatic, or cunning, solution to the crisis:

Quisara [Aside]. No stirring yet, no start into a bravery?

Ruy Dias [aside]. Madam, it may be, but being a maine danger,

Your Grace must give me leave to looke about me,

And take a little time, the cause will aske it,

Great acts require great counsells.

Quisara [aside]. Take your pleasure, I fear ye Portugall. (1.3.163-68)

Quisara expects that the brave man she has idolized will rescue her brother and is thus appalled by what appears like Ruy Dias’s counterintuitive mulling over the situation. When, in the final act, Ruy Dias intervenes against the people of Tidore to rescue his fellow countryman, Armusia and Quisara have already lost respect for him; too little, too late, so-called brave Portuguese soldier. Given the importance of the topicality of the Palatinate, Ruy Dias’s shocking inaction becomes quite telling when we think of it in conjunction with James’s attitude towards his son-in-law’s ordeal. Although the play has rejected a straightforward endorsement of a Pan-Protestant model of support for
Frederick, it does not favor James’s apparent wishy-washy pacifist foreign policy either.42

*The Island Princess* is therefore a play centrally concerned with the many clauses of the Anglo-Spanish peace treaty of 1604, its factionalizing of the English domestic sphere, and its interconnected, highly oppositional international system. What the play does is promote a plan of action that goes beyond polarized court parties and factions—one committed to rapprochement with Spain and the other to “political Puritanism” (Simon Adams’ term)—but appears to be vigorously informed by complex contemporary political procedures as well as theological discussions and religious divisions. Rather than utterly rejecting or fully endorsing a match with Spain, the play rehearses a *via media* strategy whereby military action, or semblance of military action, becomes the necessary first step for a marriage treaty reached between independent and equal powers. In what follows, I want to argue that the play represents not merely a commentary on the current conjuncture but also a piece of counsel concerned with how James ought to impose an international settlement that starts with military action and ends with dynastic marriage.

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42 I say “apparent” because James had to show a desire for war in order to request subsidies from the parliament in a moment when Spain considered him weak and unable to muster the support of Parliament.
V.

To make this connection, we need to look specifically at the Anglo-Spanish negotiations, the proceedings of the 1621 Parliament, and the heat generated by its two sessions in the wake of the crown’s recent inadequate attempt to raise revenue via a grant of supply, the news of Frederick’s defeat at the battle of the White Mountain in Bohemia and his subsequent exile, and, also, Louis XIII of France’s military campaign against the Huguenots. In a skillful act of political maneuvering, James summoned parliament to advise him and to provide the means to defend the Palatinate of the Rhine against attack. At the same time, James advocated peace and intensified his negotiations with the Spanish ambassador, Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, the Count of Gondomar, in the hope that the talks would ameliorate conditions of Catholics in England. James’s ambivalent position was a necessary one; in an account of James’s dramatic and unprecedented stratagem in this critical period, Michael Questier provides the following narrative for calling parliament in 1621 to request subsidies in a political moment when Anglo-Spanish negotiations were at their peak but also, when Habsburg Spain questioned James’s prowess as he appeared unable to even muster the support of his parliament.

According to Questier,

43 In light of the situation in central Europe and the increasing pressure from the elector’s supporters to intervene militarily in his favor, the Anglo-Spanish match became more and more an urgent necessity for James.


The apparent incoherence of James’s policy allowed others, particularly the Franco-Bohemian faction, to make a bid for influence which they would not otherwise have; and it seemed to give the Spanish ambassador, Gondomar, extraordinary sway over the king. Ironically, therefore, the eruption of godly pro-palatine sentiment augmented the power of those whom contemporaries identified as part of a Spanish faction in English politics. In order to make the Habsburgs negotiate with him, James had to have popular (and ultimately parliamentary) backing for a war. But, in making a pitch in this way to belligerent godly Protestant public opinion, he risked convincing people that he really intended to fight, which was not the case.46

In this immediate context, some semblance of military action as sponsored by the English parliament in defense of the palatinate needed to be showcased for Spain to maintain peace talks with the Stuart monarchy. When parliament reassembled in November 1621, James made it clear that Protestant forces currently defending the Palatinate should be kept in place (although made no direct call to arms), and that nothing should be done to jeopardize the proposed dynastic treaty with Spain.47 This situation spiraled out of control as the Commons demanded an effectual punishment of Catholic nonconformity and a

46 Questier, Stuart Dynastic Policy, 21

47 Ibid. 24.
rejection of the Spanish match, with petitions, responses, declarations, and protestations flying from opposite directions, leading to the dissolution of Parliament.\textsuperscript{48}

This, then, is the immediate political context of \textit{The Island Princess} on the eve of its production in December 1621. James’s complicated position becomes an almost hand-in-glove fit to the fourth model of dynastic marriage our play promotes. While the first three models fail, the fourth, based on valor, daring, and piety, is successful; indeed, such a success would communicate to its curious Stuart audience the benefits of such a model effectively and eloquently. New on the island, the “goodly fellow” and “brave companion” Armusia (1.1.121) is an embodiment of all-Christian virtues: boldness, chastity, humility, and being prepared to accept martyrdom. He is struck by Quisara’s beauty and spirit during her announcement at court, and his imagination is inflamed by the nature of her challenge: “What an action / Wou’d this be to put forward on, what a glory, / And what an everlasting wealth to end it? / Methinkes my soule is strangely rais’d” (1. 3. 228-31).

In an inventive feat featuring disguise and gunpowder—“The fire I brought here with me shall do something, / Shall burst into material flames, and bright ones, / That all the Island shall stand wondring at it, / As if they had been stricken with a Comet” (2.2.38-41)—Armusia rescues the imprisoned king despite the dangers such an endeavor entails. His conniving show of power definitely confuses the islanders; in a scene which shows the ordinary citizens of Ternata commenting on the fires, one comically comments:

\textsuperscript{48} This session culminated in the petition of 1 December, read in the Commons on 3 December, the king’s vitriolic response, the declaration of 8 December, the royal replies of 11 and 17 December, and, finally, the protestation of 18 December. Questier, \textit{Stuart Dynastic Policy}, 24.
“Let’s home and fright our wives, for we looke like Devils” (2.4.13-4). Yet his theatrical rescue plan also serves his primary purpose upon taking on such a challenge at the beginning of the play: “I am determin’d; / And though I lose, it shall be sung, I was valiant, / And my brave offer shall be turn’d to story, / Worthy the Princesse tongue” (1.3.238-41). This is precisely what has happened here, and it is what puts Armusia in a favorable light and establishes his reputation—what Piniero later calls Armusia’s “fair fame”—as the valiant and virtuous hero of the play, and eventually results in his union with the island princess.  

There is a clear rationale in *The Island Princess* that a royal marriage will not bring peace and stability; fractured international alliances in Europe should be remedied with virtue and force first. Armusia’s actions in the play experiment with what it considers the right relations between marriage negotiations and the pursuit of political ends—how properly pursued marriage negotiations will produce an alliance on equal footing between England and Spain. At a historical conjuncture when James had to show a degree of military prowess to ensure the continuation of the marriage negotiations with Spain, force and virtue, the play suggests, become the starting point of a solid foreign policy and only after that can a dynastic union occur. 

Seen from this angle, Armusia’s version of virtue and valor appears to transcend religion and to resonate instead with a Jacobean vision of unity and consensus via

49 Armusia reiterates the same point when orchestrating the rescue plan: “Better a few, and clearer fame will follow us, / However, lose or win, and speak our memories, / Than if we led our Armies; things done thus, / And of this noble weight, will stile us worthies” (2.2.19-22).
dynastic marriage. But dig a little deeper, and it gets even murkier—complicated by the accretion of conflicting views towards Catholicism and its incorporation in English public life. Thus, the next item on the play’s agenda is the issue of Catholicism and how a Spanish match is widely associated with a far more tolerant attitude to English Catholics. As we have seen earlier, the Spanish, with solid support from Rome, insisted that English Catholics be granted tolerant measures. Unsurprisingly, hot Protestants resisted such an outcome, exploiting pulpits, pamphlets, and of course, parliament, to warn against the threats of popery.  

Against this backdrop, religion, fantasies of assimilation, and fears of conversion take on a charged meaning in the play. Populated by virtuous pagans and morally corrupt ones, the play becomes the perfect laboratory to experiment with ways to differentiate between well-intentioned and ill-intentioned Catholics, and ways to insert the good ones into the political system. Throughout the play, we are confronted by differences between the play’s virtuous pagan islanders, such as the king and his sister, and the quite malicious ones, such as the governor especially as a disguised Moorish priest after his humiliating defeat at the hand of Armusia.

To make this case, let us start with the central depiction of Quisara in the play. For here is a pagan princess presented as a paragon of nobility and virtue, of sisterly (translated wifely) duty, and political loyalty. Given what we have seen was the intense contemporary concern (both pro and con) about the prospect of a Spanish match for the  

Prince of Wales, Fletcher’s choice to feature this semi-dark princess is unlikely to have been accidental. Her virtue and influence become more apparent through the comments of a range of other characters, through the nature of her conduct, and indeed through the princess’s intermittent commentary upon the sequence of events. As the sister of the kidnapped king, she emerges as the classic self-effacing female figure. Central here is Christophero’s characterization of her as both “stout and virtuous.” She “is all pure honor” (1.3.225), as one admirer of her performance at court says. Pedro, another Portuguese soldier, describes her as “the fair and great Quisara, / Has shew’d a noble mind, and much love in’t / To her afflicted brother, and the nobler still it appears, / And seasons of more tenderness” (1.1.29-32).

However, Quisara’s virtue is questioned twice, once when she engineers Armusia’s assassination, and the other when she asks him to renounce his religion for hers. After commissioning Piniero to murder Armusia, she quickly discovers his overwhelming virtues, and is overcome by shame: “I wou’ desire you to attempt no farther / Against the person of the noble stranger, / In truth I am ashamed of my share in’t” (4.2.74-76). Her second scuff with virtue occurs when she tries to convert Armusia before she recoils and converts to Christianity herself. Her conversion is epiphanous, leading straight to an endorsement of martyrdom:

- When the streams flow clear and fair, what are the fountains?
- I do embrace your faith, Sir, and your fortune;
- Go on, I will assist ye, I feel a sparkle here,
- A lively spark that kindles my affection,
And tells me it will rise to flames of glory:

Let ‘em put on their angers, suffer nobly,

Shew me the way, and when I faint, instruct me [.](5.2.120-25)

Despite her temporary fall from virtue, Quisara is established as a professor of political and moral orthodoxy, loyalty to the crown, and absolute service to the state. Fletcher suggests there is nothing wrong with marrying foreign, Catholic, and indeed, Spanish princesses. Such a marriage would be anything but the Antichristian sin described by hot Protestants. Rather, it could be expected to provide the Prince of Wales with a spouse of exemplary virtue and absolute wifely obedience, while fostering the cause of Christian unity at home and abroad.

As mentioned earlier, the King of Tidore is another figure established by the play as a spokesperson for pagan virtue. Act two shows the King’s noble suffering in prison where his wretched incarceration is described by one of his keepers as follows:

[… I nere saw before
A Man of such a sufferance; he lies now
Where I would not lay my dog, for sure ‘twould kill him.
Where neither light or comfort can come near him;
Nor air, nor earth that’s wholsome; it grieves me
To see a mighty King with all his glory,
Sunk o’th sudden to the bottome of a dungeon. (2.1.2-8)
Not only that, the king’s tortured body becomes a site of “strange wonder,” the symbol of spiritual treasure, of utmost virtue, almost echoing martyrdom imagery. As another keeper observes:

Load him [the King] with Irons, oppress him with contempts,
Which are the Governors commands, give him nothing,
Or so little, to sustain life, ‘tis next nothing;
They stir not him, he smiles upon his miseries,
And beares ‘em with such strength, as if his nature
Had been nur’d up, and foster’d with calamities. (2.1.11-6)

What the king calls “a misery / A most inhumane, and unhandsome slavery” (2.1.95-6) reaches an unprecedented crescendo of torture. The Governor’s inhumanity builds up gradually. He ultimately orders to:

Give him [the King] no liberty,
But let his bands be doubled, his ease lessened;
Nothing his heart desires, but vex and torture him:
Let him not sleep, nothing that’s dear to nature
Let him enjoy; yet take heed that he dye not;
Keep him as near death, and as willing to embrace it,
But see he arrive not at it [.]. (2.1.115-21)

This “purifying” experience in prison prepares the king to an imminent spiritual awakening, ultimately announcing Armusia as his redeemer upon his rescue: “I must thank heartily, indeed, and treuly, / For this Man saw me in’t, and redeemed me: / He
lookt upon me sinking, and then caught me (2.6.126-29); and believes Armusia is his own personal Jesus: “This, this Man from the bowels of my sorrows / Has new begot my name, and once more made me” (137-8).

The king’s redemption can be seen in the context of religious conversion. By virtue of Armusia’s heroic stint, “redemption” no longer refers to the *quid pro quo* exchange that got Armusia to save the King in the first place, when Quisara announced: “Therefore that Man that would be known my lover, / Must be known his redeemer, and must bring him/ Either alive or dead to my embraces” (1.3.148-9). Because he experienced Christian virtue, the King reconfigures the meaning of redemption to connote Christian redemption and damnation, and reinserts it into this pagan landscape.

Like Quisara, however, the king slips into the absence of virtue, falling victim to the blandishments of the false priest and subsequently imprisoning Armusia for denouncing the island’s heathen gods. Not only is he swayed by the disguised Governor, “You have well advised me, / And I will seriously consider father,” but gives him “faire accesse / Unto my sister, advise her to your purpose” (4.1.76-79). After discovering the Governor’s treachery, the king remembers his “redeemed” status, however: “the Town and Castle, / In which I lay my self most miserable, / Till my most honourable friend redeem’d me” (5.5.80-2).

Embedded in irony, the ultimate direction of *The Island Princess* is toward timeless social harmony and reconciliation where the king is the indispensable actor. The play’s sense of religio-political resolution becomes more apparent as the king re-maps his islands as locales of universal Christendom:
Come Friends and Lovers all, come noble Gentlemen,
No more Guns now, nor hates, but joyes and triumphs,
An universal gladness fly about us:
And know however subtle men dare cast,
And promise wrack, the gods give peace at last. (5.5.89-94)

The king sanctifies a place and time for solidarity rather than subtlety, deference rather than criticism, and piety rather than revisionism. In the play’s imagination, a virtuous commonweal can be achieved through the mobilization and reaffirmation of group loyalty under the virtuous leadership of a wise king even in the absence of absolute religious uniformity.

We have seen that increasingly the play is seeking, by deploying an irenic rhetoric of unity and reconciliation, to legitimate what were highly controversial courses of action, the results of which on English domestic opinion would be anything but unifying or irenic. What was at stake was a renegotiation of the post-Reformation settlement in church and state of the sort that many Catholic loyalists had in fact envisaged, and been denied, in 1603/4. As we have seen, the play presents pagans of the highest virtues as stand-ins for loyal English Catholics who have ingratiated themselves with the regime in London as a means to allow them the religious freedoms for which they regularly petitioned and insert them into the political process in England’s new religio-political landscape. However, James’s toleration of English Catholics—suppressing inflammatory anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish sermons and pamphlets, relaxing financial penalties
against recusants, and releasing imprisoned priests—did not mean toleration of papists with a separatist agenda.

Indeed, the play finds ways to refute fears about a marital alliance with Catholic Spain by reminding its audience of the various forms of paganism and the possibility for hybridization discussed earlier. To do so, it dramatizes degenerate pagans who clearly want to subvert true religion and monarchical authority. Indeed, the virtue of the king and his sister in the play are continually juxtaposed with diametrically opposed actions of the evil governor especially as he disguises himself as a “Moorish priest.” On one level, the Governor is the classic villain of the play. He is described as “a fierce knave, / Unfaithful as he is fierce too, there’s no trusting”; “‘Has dangerous eyes/ A perilous thief and subtle / And to that subtlety a heart of iron/ […] and thunder in the eyes” (1.1.14-15; 1.3.57-60). Indeed, he is a power-hungry, opportunist politician who ruthlessly aims at dominating the Spice Islands.

When his secular methods fail, the governor disguises himself as a prophetic “Moore priest” on a spiritual mission to save the islands. By disguising his villain, Fletcher exploits a very standard trope in Reformist propaganda literature; he casts his evil governor as a vicious arch-manipulator, a shape changing machiavel, indeed, a wily and crafty Jesuitical “father”—(both Quisara and the King refer to him as such in 4.1.36; 2.176)—who puts himself in a spiritual confessor’s collusive role to exploit psychological weaknesses and perform religious work for political purposes. In Donne’s Ignatius his Conclave (1611), in which the machiavel changed shapes for secular ends, the Jesuit was the ultimate bête noire, associated with satanic designs and false
martyrdom.” Many radical Protestants trumpeted this point: a Jesuit is “an Amphibion, that conuerseth in two elements of Ciuill, and Ecclesiasticall affaires.” Indeed, members of the Jesuit mission were always regarded as both a religious and political threat, but the Anglo-Spanish rapprochement at this historical conjuncture had exacerbated English suspicion of the order. As Barbara Fuchs points out, Jesuits “were associated with the doctrine of equivocation or mental reservation—strategies essential for the survival of persecuted Catholics in England but which were perceived as proof that Jesuits could not be trusted.”

The best example is Thomas Middleton’s *A Game At Chesse* (1624) that dramatizes a stage devil named, unsurprisingly, Ignatius Loyola, the Spanish founder of the Society of Jesus, who lands in an England free of Catholics. His opening lines are revealing:

Ha! Where? What angle of the world is this,

That I can neither see the politic face,

Nor with my refin’ed nostrils taste the footsteps

Of any my disciples, sons, and heirs,

As well as my designs as institutions?

I thought theyde spread ouer the world by this time


Covered the Eaths face and made the Land

like the Egyptian Grasshoppers. (Induction 1-8)54

Although his “children’s monarchy” is “unperfect yet” (Induction 11-12), Loyola
believes the English realm is a place ripe for an aggressive Jesuitical proselytizing
takeover on the eve of the Spanish match. In a similar vein, The Island Princess features
an archetypal popish prelate, albeit in disguise, tapping into a long line of familiar
Catholic stereotypes that its Jacobean audiences will surely recognize. More important,
the play registers a nuance in its approach to the Jesuit society that even English
Catholics regarded with suspicion and fear. Moderate English Catholics indeed felt
alienated by the militant agenda of the Jesuit order.55 Many wanted a quiet and simple life,
were loyal to the throne, and lobbied to be engaged with the English political
mainstream.56 Indeed, by taking pains to separate its critique of Jesuit polity from
Catholicism proper, the play, in contrast to the observation made by Middleton’s Loyola,
acknowledges the pervasive Catholic presence in England first, and then, registers the
exact kind of Catholicism that should be feared and fought and the kind that should be
nurtured and assimilated into England’s Christian commonweal.


55 See Alexandra Walsham, Church Papists. Catholicism, Conformity, and Confessional Polemic in Early

56 Ethan Shagan provides a survey of revisionist (Eamon Duffy and Christopher Haigh) and post-revisionist
(Lake, Milton, Walsham) traditions in examining the peculiar status of English Catholics in his
“Introduction: English Catholic History in Context” in Catholics and the ‘Protestant Nation’: Religious
Politics and Identity in Early Modern England. Catholics and the Protestant Nation. Manchester:
Although the king has earlier confronted the governor with his craftiness and guile—he produces a comprehensive indictment of the governor’s personality and methods in Act Two: “Nothing thou hast done brave, but like a thief, / Atchiev’d by craft, and kept by cruelty; / Nothing thou canst deserve, thou art unhonest; / Nor no way live to build a Name, thou art barbarous” (2.1.106-109). As the most vocal exponent of isolationism, the disguised governor’s first mission is to “advise” the king against friendly relationships with the Portuguese colonists and marital alliances with Armusia:

These men came hither, as my vision tells me,
Poor weather-beaten, almost lost, starv’d, feebled,
Their vessels like themselves, most miserable;
Made a long sute for traffique, and for comfort,
To vent their childrens toys, cure their diseases:
They had their sute, they landed, and to th’ rate
Grew rich and powerful, suckt the fat, and freedom
Of this most blessed Isle, taught her to tremble,
Witness the Castle here, the Citadel,
They have clapt upon the neck of your Tidore,
This happy Town, till that she knew these strangers,
[…………………………………………………]
Though you be pleas’d to glorifie that fortune,
And think these strangers gods, take heed I say,
I find it but a handsome preparation,
A fair-fac’d Prologue to a further mischief:
Mark but the end good King, the pin he shoots at
That was the man deliver’d ye; the mirror,
Your Sister is his due; what’s she, your heir, Sir?
And what’s he a-kin then to the kingdom?
But heirs are not ambitious, who then suffers?
What reverence shall the gods have? and what justice
The miserable people? what shall they do? (4.1.34-54; 57-67)

Associating the Portuguese hold on the island with the union between Armusia and
Quisara, the governor’s speech cynically interrogates the value of cultural mixing and
convinces the king of the detrimental consequences of a colonist control over the islands.
In the governor’s perspective, opening the islands up to cultural miscegenation is akin to
the death knell of the island’s exceptionalism should the marriage alliance take place.
More fascinating, however, are the echoes of James’s vision to unite the kingdoms of
Britain and style himself “king of Britain,” completing thus the work of union begun by
Henry VIII. The governor strikes a raw nerve in a long dream of a unified Britain and
adopts the ideological foundations advanced with such a dream; his unified Britain is a
“blessed isle” a “happy town.”\(^{57}\) In this way, the disguised governor morphs into both a
Jesuit machiavel and a radical Protestant who co-opts the vision of an idyllic, “blessed
isle” for his own isolationist agenda. The play does endorse this vision of a “blessed isle”

\(^{57}\) This echoes John of Gaunt’s paean to England and nascent English nationalism *Richard II*: “This royal
throne of kings, this sceptred isle. / This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England” (2.1. 40-2).
union only to nuance it. Indeed, the King of Tidore is installed as sovereign ruler of both islands at the end of the play: “His island we shall seize into our hands” (5.5.79).

However, Quisara’s marriage to the Portuguese is advertised as promoting a sense of “universal gladness,” albeit tenuous, which might well be effected in terms of territorial mergers and royal succession. More tellingly, the king relegates the governance of Tidore to Piniero, a decision symbolic of trust, appreciation, and future cooperation, which complements Piniero’s role as go-between the natives and the colonists throughout the play.  

Added to the governor’s isolationist agenda is a standard Jesuitical tactic where he persuades Quisara, who dutifully calls him “Father,” “reverend sir,” and “reverend father,” to demand Armusia’s conversion to her religion: “You are a Saint esteem’d here for your beauty, / And many a longing heart” (145-6). Therefore, he advises that she “Use it discreetly. / For I perceive ye understand me rightly, / For here the gods regard your help” (153-55). The “priest’s” rationale for employing Quisara’s beauty to entrap Christian men is illuminating:

These [Christians] are the men your miracle must work on,

Your heavenly form, either to root them out,

Which as you may endeavour will be easie,

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58 As we have seen earlier, Piniero plays a crucial role in this play as a mediator between Quisara and the other two Portuguese, his uncle, Ruy Dias, and Armusia. He is also the one to uncover the deceit of the disguised governor and bring about the peaceful resolution. Piniero’s characterization contrasts sharply to Argensola’s original where he is described as a ruthless renegade whose self-interest leads to both his and his uncle’s demise.
Remember whose great cause you have to execute,

To nip their memory, that may not spring more,

Or fairly bring ‘em home to our devotions,

Which will be blessed, and for which you sainted. (4.2.160-66)

Anti-Catholic references abound here. I refer specifically to the governor’s insistence on Quisara’s “Sainthood”—saint worship believed idolatrous in anti-Catholic polemic—in light of her attempts to convert Armusia to her pagan religion. What is more revealing, however, is, Panura’s, observation: “If this Prophet were a young thing, / I should suspect: him now, he cleaves so close to her; / These holy Coats are long, and hide iniquities” (4.2.177-79).

Quisara’s waiting woman notices how the disguised Governor uses intimacy to seduce Quisara. In anti-Jesuit polemic, one central charge was that women were a particular focus of anxiety since they were purportedly the vulnerable link in the family. In the confessional, Jesuits allegedly used the intimate exchange of confidences to seduce gullible wives and gather information from them. In William Prynne’s account of the trial of Archbishop Laud, for example, we find the claim that Jesuits:

Fixed at last of latter times upon a more prevalent and successful means than any of the former; to wit, a project of mating to the Whore of Rome by matching the heir of the Crown of England to a Romanist. They found many precedents, texts in scripture, and ecclesiastical [h]istory ascertaining them, that idolatrous queens and wives were a most infallible prevailing means to draw kings and whole kingdown to idolatry, for
which very reason God expressly enjoined the Israelites to make no marriages with the Cannanites.\textsuperscript{59}

On this account, the defining moral and political corruption of the disguised governor is Jesuitical par excellence. Crucial here is his control over the king and the rhetorical skills he uses to persuade the king of his plight as he takes refuge in arousing a collective sentiment concerning the islands’ gods. He then scorns other religious orders and conjures up the idolatrous worship of false heathen Gods:

[...] but since the cause

Concerns the honor of our gods, and their Title,

And so transcends your power, and your compassion,

A little your own safety, if you saw it too,

If your too fond indulgence did not dazle you,

It cannot now admit a private pitty;

‘Tis in their Wills, their Mercies, or Revenges,

And these revolts in you, shew mere rebellions. (5.2.12-19)

The governor, however, presses on with his smooth assurances of his good intentions, citing again his standing as a churchman and loyal servant of the king. A master of the rhetoric of public virtue, service to the crown and state, and loyalty to the person of the monarch, he uses beautifully crafted versions of these principles to mask the pursuit of his own private interests. In the following speech, the governor uses his

knowledge of the past to pursue his own ends, while claiming to be acting only on the authority of the pagan gods and covering his actions with the false cloak of a holy man. He confesses to the king:

I have liv’d a long time Son, a mew’d up man,
Sequester’d by the special hand of Heaven
From the worlds vanities, bid farewell to follies,
And shook hands with all heats of youth and pleasures,
As in a dream these twenty years I have slumber’d,
Many a cold Moon have I, in meditation
And searching out the hidden Wils of heaven,
Lain shaking under; many a burning Sun
Has sear’d my body, and boil’d up my blood,
Feebl’d my knees, and stampt a Meagerness
Upon my figure, all to find out knowledge,
Which I have now attained to, thanks to heaven,
All for my countreys good too: and many a vision,
Many a mistick vision have I seen Son.
And many a sight from heaven which has been terrible,
Wherein the Goods and Evils of these Islands
Were lively shadowed; many a charge I have had too,
Still as the time grew ripe to reveal these,
To travel and discover, now I am come Son,
The hour is now appointed,

My tongue is touch’d, and now I speak. (4.1.11-31)

It is as this point that we receive further proof of this consummate hypocrite’s maneuverings from his own mouth. In the guise of a “holy man,” he controls the interpretation of religion, shapes the islands’ foreign policy, and ultimately calls for an isolationist governance to achieve his own ends rather than those of the king or commonwealth. He warns the king: “Beware these Portuguese, I say beware ‘em, / The smooth fac’d strangers, have an eyes upon ‘em. / The cause is not the God’s” (4.1.33-4).

Here, then, is the governor’s modus operandi in a nutshell. Although religious differences provide the ostensible rationale for the conflicts he outlines, religion, the interest of the state, and the authority of the king become the means to achieve his obsessive struggle for power and influence.

When Piniero eventually discovers the real identity of the “holy” priest, he takes on the role of pursuivant in pursuit of Jesuits on the run to attack the evil Governor. Resorting to anti-Jesuit polemic, Piniero employs a hunting metaphor to refer to methods of chasing underground Jesuits in secret chambers and hidden passageways: “I conjur’d for him, King. / I am a sure Curr at an old blind Prophet. / I’ll haunt ye such a false knave admirably, / A terrier I; I eartht him, and then snapt him” (5.5.44-7). It is easy to see how this allusion to hunting and hunting hounds has a resounding contemporary relevance as Jesuits on their English mission hid in priest-holes where they celebrated the sacraments,
taught the faithful, and converted souls.\textsuperscript{60} On a more theatrical level, viewers of the play presumably followed its blatant Jesuitical references such as “hood,” “holy coats,” “beard,” and “taking orders.” Moreover, the governor’s obsession with power and seduction allows for many asides which become a central technique for rendering the governor’s duplicity onstage: “‘Tis strange I should, and live so near a neighbor; / But these are not my ends” (4.1.56); “I, that belief’s well now, and let me work then, / I’ll make ye curse Religion e’er I leave ye” (9-10); and finally, “The destruction of you all, a general ruine, / And when I am reveng’d, let the gods whistle” (80-1).

Ultimately, of course, the chorus of condemnation launched against the Governor by almost all characters is corroborated not only by the nature of the Governor’s own actions but also, at crucial junctures, by his own entirely amoral, machiavellian commentary upon those actions (“I had paid you all, / But fortune plaid the slut” (5.5.63-4)). Add to all this the material evidence of disguise; Piniero charges: “I’ll tear him thus before ye. / Ha? What art thou? Pulls his Beard and haire off” (5.5.52-3). In the face of these even that arch-manipulator, that shape changing machiavel, the governor admits defeat, “And here I stay your sentence” (5.5.67). Therefore, the account of the governor in the play is designed to evoke contemporary perceptions of militant Catholicism as the prospect of a Spanish match became imminent. The play can thus be taken to be rewriting, indeed, in some sense, to be correcting views of English Catholicism as a monolithic bogey. Against such views the play presents the King and

Quisara’s noble but fallible virtue as the safest response to the period’s political and religious exigencies.

When put into the right frame, then, virtuous pagans are “good” simply insofar as they participate in a Christian worldview. They are not dangerous because they lack the attributes of the evil Machiavel audiences witnessed in action minutes ago. This contrast gives the play a rare power to rebuff confidently the finer points of hot Protestant’s objection to the Spanish match. In this way, the question is no longer centered on whether the play expresses Catholic or Protestant sympathies. The ultimate direction of the play is toward a cultural fantasy of harmony and reconciliation that has something of a utopian ethos in it. Fletcher’s sense of political resolution and dynastic healing as the king draws the maps of the future of his islands is a Jacobean fantasy written in the optative mood. In his closing remarks, the king says: “Take her friend, / You have halfe persuaded me to be a Christian, / And with her all the joyes, and all the blessings. / Why what dreame have we dwelt in?” (5.5.65-7).

The King’s “half-persuaded” conversion is very suggestive; on a surface level, it is an allusion to a happy Jacobean fantasy of Christian union, political power, and the conversion of the Infanta. The king, even if not persuaded when the action takes place, is on his way to full conversion. In this sense, he seems to be saying: “I am not persuaded, but I might be in the future.” On a deeper, more precarious level, the king seems to be saying: “I am not persuaded, and won’t be, but I can see things from your point of view, so we will get along better now.” In a sense, his half-conversion hangs in the balance between conviction of an idea, i.e. the superiority of an undifferentiated Christianity, and
persuasion to action, i.e. the king’s full conversion. This fantasy of universal harmony is checked by the contingency implicit in the statement. The King’s diffidence is augmented by the unequivocal reminder of human limitations of integration in the final scene. We are left a long way from a world of “joyes and triumphes” and “universall gladness” in what constitutes a warning about what may come, or about the need to act so as to produce a desired outcome. However, the king’s half-hearted conversion, together with this pressing desire for dynastic healing, opens up, at the very least, fresh vistas of dynastic realignment and religious compromise where conciliation and unity might not be far behind.

There is a clear rationale in The Island Princess that a royal marriage is a compensatory fiction, which, in reality, will not bring peace and stability; fractured international alliances in Europe should be remedied by virtue and force. Armusia’s insight about engineering the king’s rescue plan is telling: “What we beg[a]n with policy, my dear friends, / Let’s end with manly force; there’s no retiring, / Unless it be with shame” (2.2.17-8). In this way, the play represents a piece of prognostication at a highly charged political moment concerned with what should happen next. In a manner typical of political agents and authors taking their cue from the political and rhetorical modes of James I, the actions of the play call for the right relations between marriage negotiations and the pursuit of political ends—how properly pursued marriage negotiations will produce an alliance on equal footing between England and Spain. Force and virtue should

61 I am grateful to Luke Wilson for proposing this formulation.
be the starting point of England’s foreign policy and only after that can marriage negotiations start.

On this basis, it seems safe to conclude that by the play’s end, the rigid division between Christian and pagan, heresy and orthodoxy, between—although the play never uses the terms—“Catholic” and “Protestant” have all broken down. We are left with something like a fabricated fantasy of an undifferentiated Christianity, typified by the loyalism of Quisara and the king as well as the political passivity of Ruy Dias and the virtue of Armusia. Certainly, by the end, Fletcher concentrates on the colonial encounter as a displaced metaphor where ill-considered dynastic unions lead to a self-perpetuating cycle of mutual suspicion. In the end, it is only by approaching these years from a fundamentally transnational perspective that we can gain crucial insight into how a difficult peace and dynastic union were negotiated in imagined as well as real worlds, exotic as well as mainland locales.
Chapter 4: The French Connection in Philip Massinger’s The Roman Actor (1626)

Why did a Roman tragedy on Domitian Caesar’s reign of terror open the 1626-1627 season, hot on the heels of the Spanish match fiasco, the precarious Anglo-French match, the ensuing domestic crises in parliament, and England’s rapid descent into wars with Spain and France? What did Domitian Caesar’s Rome have to do with 1626 London? Why incorporate running allusions to Helen of Troy, Lucrece, and the Trojan Wars in the narrative of Domitian Caesar’s demise? The answers lie in large part in the ideological significance of three strands of extremes: first, its classical sources, namely the senatorial accounts of Pliny, Tacitus, and Suetonius, filter a deep-seated hostility to the Roman imperial system.\(^1\) This scenario is further illuminated by the ideological valence of the language of mythical union in the play resonant with the wedding panegyrics praising King Charles’s marriage to Princess Henrietta Maria of France. A third strand is King Charles’s adoption of the bellicose persona of the “rising glory of that House of Candour,” enshrined in Thomas Middleton’s A Game at Chesse (4.4.18), upon his return from Madrid without the Catholic infanta. The chief aim of this chapter, therefore, is to examine how The Roman Actor teases out these antithetical but interlacing strands, and thus offers its Caroline audience a particular perspective on dynastic

\(^{1}\) For a summary of these historical accounts’ biases, see Mellor, Ronald. Introduction, Tacitus’ Annals. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. 3-9.
marriage within the matrices of Roman history that has not been staged before—that of the conquistadorial emperor who mastered the theatrics of power and heroic chivalry, and who ensured an imperial union to the most beautiful woman in Rome is closely tied to his iconography. Furthermore, this chapter suggests that the topical constellation of the new queen’s “negative” attributes—her physical allure, moral depravity, and love of theatre—and Domitian Caesar’s military and sexual bravado reflect the anxiety generated by Henrietta Maria and the predicament of England’s wars on the continent. For in *The Roman Actor*, the iconography of Roman imperialism, the prescriptive rhetoric of Roman virtue, and literary allusions to mythical unions coalesce in an interpretive process that destabilizes the way the politics of royal marriage were represented in 1625-6.

I.

At the heart of Massinger’s chronicle of the tyrannical reign of Domitian Caesar lies a sense of unease over his new queen, the “young and faire” Domitia, and the aftermaths of his wars on the continent.¹ As an exemplar of excessive, tyrannical rule in the Early Principate, Domitian Caesar is a slave to passion, addicted to excessive opulence; he cruelly suppresses any sign of dissent; shows no deference to the senate; and oversees an aggressive network of spies and informants.² Because his imperial power overrides human law, he deliberately violates every conceivable legal and moral


² The Early Principate period spans the reign of terror and despotism of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Nero, and Domitian (AD 14-96).
constraint, and forces a divorce between Domitia and Lamia, a Stoic opposition senator, marries her, and grants her the title of “Augusta, great Domitian’s empress” (1.4.73). Yet, Domitia does not resist this assault on her marriage, but considers Caesar’s summons, “Our god on earth,” a “means” “to cast an eye of favour / Upon his humble handmaid” (1.2.19-21), thus “transporting” her to a very exclusive locus. However, she immediately shifts her affection and attention to Paris, the titular Roman actor and Caesar’s favorite client, who resists her unrelenting pursuit at first, “I dare not, must not, will not,” but immediately gives in to her “will” (4.2.97, 104).

Diametrically opposed to Domitian Caesar’s rule of tyranny are representatives of the party of Roman virtue, familiar in the accounts of Tacitus, Sallust, and the republican tradition. The senators Rusticus and Sura embody an antiquated ideal of selfless service to the commonweal; they lament the erosion of the Roman republic, despise Caesar’s machiavellian and spy-infested court, belittle his military success, and scoff at his spectacles of magnificence. When they breach their ideal of “passive fortitude” (1.1.118) and openly denounce Caesar’s absolute rule—we learn at the beginning of Act 3 “that they did lament his cruel sentence / On Paetus Thrasea the philosopher / Their patron and

3 In Suetonius “Life of Domitian,” Massinger’s main source, Lamia is prosecuted for writing libelous verse (10.2). For factionalism in Domitian’s government, see Steven H Rutledge, Imperial Inquisitions: Prosecutors and Informants from Tiberius to Domitian. London: Routledge, 2001.

4 Some critics read Domitia’s response as an ironic rewriting of Mary’s song of praise at the Annunciation “And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaid” (Luke 1:48); For readings of the scene through the lens of the Annunciation, see A.P. Hogan “Imagery of Acting in The Roman Actor.” The Modern Language Review. 66.2 (1971): 273-281. 275; and Jessica Dyson, Staging Authority in Caroline England: Prerogative, Law and Order in Drama, 1625-1642. Burlington: Ashgate, 2013. 68.
instructor” (3.1.104–6)—they are, perhaps too predictably, accused of treason, publicly tortured, and executed in what is considered a masterful representation of tyrannical violence on the early modern stage.6

Royal princesses of the blood, Domitilla (Domitian’s cousin), Julia (Titus’s daughter and Domitian’s niece), in addition to Caenis (the former concubine of Domitian’s father Vespasian), are fixtures in Domitian’s ménage.7 The play establishes that they are not the virtuous and loyal antidotes to Domitia’s promiscuity from the moment they appear onstage in 1.4. Indeed, their ideological stance is elusive at best; they uphold the narrative of “passive fortitude” and compare Caesar’s assault on their bodies to the virtuous women whose rapes established the Roman republic. Yet, they also enjoy the trappings of the imperial court, bicker over ceremonial precedence, and resent Domitia’s status as Caesar’s new favorite queen. Certainly, their ultimate act of resistance, killing their rapist, does not carry the heavy political weight of regicide, but is cast as a domestic vendetta.

5 In Suetonius, Massinger’s main source, Domitian executed Rusticus for “publishing eulogies of Thrasea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus and for calling them the most upright of men” (Dom. 10.3). Tacitus’s describes the Stoic senator Paetus Thrasea as the symbol of lost Republican values (Annals 15.20). He staged his suicide after the Emperor Nero accused him of treason for arguing against the providential votes of thanks to the senate in AD 66. Suetonius only mentions Palfurius Sura once as an orator who was banished from the senate (Dom. 13.1). According to Brian Jones, it is possible that he was one of Domitian’s informers (delatores). The Emperor Domitian, 103-4, 181.


7 Domitilla, Julia, and Caenis might be taken to be Domitian’s wives since cohabitation constituted a binding marriage in Rome.
Also problematic is the play’s treatment of Domitian’s loyal freeman, Parthenius, who represents something more menacing than a mere manifestation of servitude or an instrument of repression inherent to the Roman imperial system (or any Gestapo system in general). At the beginning of the play, we see him relishing in executing Caesar’s despotic command over members of the senatorial elite, who in turn despise his flattery and lack of moral integrity. However, when he senses that Caesar’s axe is getting dangerously close to his neck, he joins Caesar’s “domestic” opposition—Domitia, the princesses of the blood, and their servant Stephanus—and masterminds his assassination. However, Parthenius’s behavior, and the stoic senators’ condescension, reflect deeper ideological valences at work and bring to the surface the deep-seated cultural prejudices toward outsiders embedded in the play’s senatorial sources. Accordingly, the play prompts its audience to evaluate the anxieties underlying a freeman’s negative representation—his hybridized and thus suspect ethnicity, lowly social origin, and status transgression—against the hostile reaction to cultural mixing accompanying dynastic marriage in the early Stuart period.

Inasmuch as The Roman Actor’s inquiry into the classical origins of royal absolutism and contested rights could be seen as politically inspired, the play’s tour de force, as critics note, are its three inset plays—The Cure of Avarice, Iphis and Anaxerete,

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and The False Servant—through which the action develops and dramatic theories are
tested. Upon witnessing Domitia’s seduction of the actor Paris, Domitian Caesar
commissions a final court performance, where he fictively re-enacts the alleged betrayal
of an “injur’d lord” and in retribution, stabs Paris, the “false servant” of the inset play
(4.2.223). After Paris’s climactic death, Caesar’s inevitable demise unfolds, revealing the
extent to which theatricality, which his favorite Roman actor emblematized, is the
linchpin of Caesar’s political and personal existence. In the final act, Caesar’s expansive
hold on power crumbles: Domitia hysterically rejects him; a soothsayer predicts his
imminent death; and even his patron goddess Minerva abandons him. Like many other
despots, Caesar does not die a natural death. He is finally a ripe target for his assailants to
overthrow him. In the end, a nameless tribune grants Domitian a stately funeral because
 “[Caesar] was our prince, / However wicked” (5.2.77-8). Thus the play ends with a well-
rehearsed answer to the age-old question “what is our choice if the monarch is clearly a
tyrant?” (We just bear with a tyrannical monarch because it is our civic and Christian
duty, and because the watching gods both protect and judge princes.)

The Roman Actor and the Semiotics of Censored Theater.” English Literary History 68.2 (2001): 359-376;
Edward L. Rocklin, “Placing the Audience at Risk: Realizing the Design of Massinger’s The Roman Actor.”
Acts of Criticism: Performance Matters in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: Essays in Honor of

10 In the opening scenes, Paris is summoned to the Senate to answer charges of libel for satirizing the
grandees of Roman society, where he delivers a ringing, albeit conventional, defense of the moral,
reformative function of the stage. The value of Paris’s apologia is still the subject of critical debate. For an
evaluative summary, see Vernon Guy Dickson’s “’Act[ing] an Orators Part’: Emulation, Rhetoric, and the
Limits of Theater in Massinger’s The Roman Actor” in Emulation on the Shakespearean Stage. Burlington:
Ashgate, 2013. 156-186.
What Domitian Caesar’s death does underscore, however, is the purposeful ambiguity that imbues the play as it reprises and mimics the hostilities of the 1620s. For in Caesar’s violently asserted mythical union with Domitia (and her arresting response to violation), the play questions a foreign policy premised on a mutually exclusive marital and martial dynamic. By responding to the current predicament of the Anglo-French alliance and the disastrous war with Spain, *The Roman Actor* offers a straw in the wind to what will become the centerpiece of Restoration drama until the breakdown of the European dynasticism following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Act of Settlement of 1701. In 1626, however, the European dynastic system is alive though unwell, partly due to a shifting pan-European geopolitical re-alignment, which increasingly placed logistical needs for “foreign” marriages; and partly because imperial adventuring under the guise of a confessional crusade clashed with the conciliatory logic of these very “foreign” marriages. *The Roman Actor* presents a rarified view of the inherent contradictions between these two strands by positioning them at the heart of Domitian Caesar’s reign of terror; but to be able to understand how the work problematizes the French Match, Charles I’s confused and contradictory military campaigns, and the attendant breakdown in Anglo-French relations, this chapter differentiates each strand, so that it can highlight how they add up to a more seamless whole.

II.

Following Martin Butler’s seminal reassessment of Caroline drama in *Theatre and Crisis 1632–42* (1984), critics including Annabel Patterson, Ira Clark, and Butler
himself, have localized The Roman Actor in the context of the rising tide of absolutism in early Stuart monarchy and its direct connection to the truisms of “the illusion of power” and “the spectacle of state.” Many read the play’s dramatization of Domitian Caesar’s tyranny a topical reference to the nepotism and corruption in the early Caroline court, the new King’s absolutist tendency, and its encroachment on parliamentary liberties, and a pessimistic commentary on the polarized landscape of the turbulent 1620s in general. In a very recent study, Jessica Dyson invokes James I and Charles I’s Roman iconography and subsequently insists that “whilst it would be pushing the political engagement of the play much too far to suggest that Massinger represents either of these monarchs in Domitian, the play does suggest an alternative, much less positive interpretation of ancient Rome than James or Charles was to do.”

In large measure, this sinister impression, exemplified in Dyson’s clear-cut distinction between “good” emperors, such as Augustus and Trajan, and notoriously “bad” ones, such as Nero and Domitian, derives from the epochal shifts 1625-6, which only intensified the general sense of insecurity and unease, obsessively evoked and crystallized in the late Jacobean tragicomedies of John Fletcher, over the future of

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England: the controversy over the coronation oath\textsuperscript{14}; the French queen’s overt Catholicism and refusal to recognize the authority of the English bishops and Charles’s subsequent coronation without his Queen; parliament’s constitutional anxieties, which only fueled its growing sectarianism; and the financial shortage of the new regime, aggravated by the Duke of Buckingham’s—the ever-thriving royal favorite—reckless war campaigns and parliament’s insufficient subsidies, prompting the imposition of the forced loans.

On a more localized level, the severe outbreak of plague that killed John Fletcher, Massinger’s friend and collaborator, ravaged London for eight months in 1625. One contemporary Parliamentarian summarized the city’s infestation as a “heavy scourge of the pestilence which God had sent upon this sinful land and nation,” while another warned that only by “cleansing the land from the sins wherewith he is provoked would His punitive hand be lifted.”\textsuperscript{15} Given the disastrous direction Charles’s reign was taking in 1626, critics agree that \textit{The Roman Actor}’s representations of the violent antics of an absolutist ruler, contrasted to the stoical endurance of a handful of virtuous Romans, mark a feeling of deep mistrust in the new monarch, and offer a pressing warning against slipping into tyranny.


This picture is inevitably modified when we add The Roman Actor’s depiction of Domitian Caesar’s marriage to Domitia Longina, its dirty politics as well as stage-managed mystique, in the aftermath of his war victories over Rome’s brutish enemies, however. In thinking about how the play exposes the springs behind the mythical imagery of dynasticism and the narrative of military action, we need to plunge right into Domitian Caesar’s triumph, which plays so powerfully to the larger-than-life topos of Roman belligerence in the early modern imagination, and frames Caesar’s imperial marriage within its political ramification. So thoroughly absorbed was the political and aesthetic iconography of the Roman triumph into the early modern experience that, as Margaret McGowan notes, it “was immediately recognizable as having a universalizing effect, and its meaning were readily understood.” Perhaps its most enduring “meaning” is that it “ceremonialized the end of fighting”—its “universalizing” tropes echoing


Roman valor, military conquest and domination, and the splendor of imperial glory. To London playgoers, a Roman triumph allegorized the most public of occasions: the new monarch’s state entry into the city of London, and in a more localized milieu, the annual Lord Mayor’s show. Famously, James I’s royal procession through London in 1604 incorporated the imagery of Augustus Caesar bringing peace and unity to Troynovant after a long period of civil war. In 1625, elaborate plans were made for a ceremonial triumph, welcoming the new king’s consort and celebrating the royal marriage. Because the plague had broken out in London, however, all festivities were suspended; Londoners were deprived of the grand monarchical pageantry that their French neighbors witnessed in Paris, Amiens, and Boulogne.

On this account, then, the meaning of Domitian Caesar’s triumph is shaped by the 1625-6 moment. In particular, his triumph creates open tension between what is represented on stage (a ritual which stressed the power of the Roman war machine) and what is absent from the plot (a topical ritual which asserted dynastic continuity and succession). What starts as a Roman triumph celebrating the apotheosis of military conquest—Caesar first appears “married to conquest [and] triumph” (1.3.147)—is

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21 See Graham Parry, *The Golden Age Restor’d*, especially Chapter one, for an analysis of the iconography of James I in Harrison’s *Arches of Triumph* (1604).
interrupted by the poetic logic of mythical matrimony. This discursive interruption cues the audience into noticing that Caesar’s martial victory and his imperial marriage occupy the same interpretive nexus.

Toward the end of the triumph, Domitian contrives to stage his union with Domitia in an allegorical tableau. He chooses Domitia over his other queens and thus elevates her from the world of mortals to a divine, lyrical realm: “(The Lesser gods applauding the encounter) / As Jupiter, the Giants lying dead / On the Phlegraen plain, embraced his Juno” (1.4.65-67). But in the sphere of sexual politics the spectating gaze is not that of “the lesser gods,” but the men in both the fictional and real audience, echoed in Lamia’s lascivious word play: “she will be graced and greased” (1.4.63). By appropriating the iconography of royal union, he extends his claim over the symbolic rewards of military victory—here monopoly over power and glory—to the realm of sexual politics. In consequence, the heroic victory that grants Caesar a triumph in the first place becomes personal (he defaces the memory of his father Vespasian and brother Titus), marital (he weds Domitia on a mythologized terrain), and national (he ensures Rome’s peace and plenty). To be sure, once Domitian gives his new Augusta the formal kiss of homage, “by this kiss I make it good” (72), he drops the language of supernatural love, orders “soft delights” (77), and ends the scene on an absolutist note: “This ‘tis to be a monarch, when alone / He can command all, but is awed by none” (1.4.84-5). The play insists that we notice this shift in register, clarified and reinforced by the language of hierarchy and subjection with which the following scene opens: “My son to tutor me!
Know your obedience / And question not my will,” a miserly father demurs (2.1.1-2). For Caesar, this mythically wrought union has served its political purpose.

Certainly, Massinger had already grappled with the relationship between conquest, rape, and marriage, on the one hand, and wider geopolitical power struggle, on the other hand, in The Bondman (1623). In this tragicomedy, topical hints work within a deeply contradictory matrix of Roman virtue, military siege, sexual assault, deception and disguise, against the backdrop of the Spanish match and the Palatinate crisis. What emerges is no unified voice but a cacophony of political and social difference competing for the audience’s approval. Set in the context of the Punic wars, the play takes up the questions of military (in)action and the martial glorification of the returning war hero, specifically in connection with the woman-prize narrative. The Syracusans, reluctant to defend their city against a Carthaginian attack, delegate the Corinthian general Timoleon “to defend / Our Country, and our Liberties” (1.3.8-9).

But when the Syracusan noblemen finally go to war, their slaves start a revolt under the leadership of Marullo, take Syracusan women into captivity, and in turn, demand “Libertie” (2.1.314). In a rousing speech to the slaves, who are eager to amass “money to buy a place” and “to burne a Church or two” (2.3.89-91), Marullo plays off the imagery of military conquest, pillage, and rape:

Now if you dare

Fall on their Daughters, and their wives, break up

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Their Iron Chests, banquet on their rich Beds,
And carve your selves of all delights and pleasures
And have beene barr’d from, with one voyce cry with me,
Libertie, Libertie. (2.3.109-13)

The play culminates in a rhetorical showdown between Marullo, who claims the chaste Cleora as his booty (but treats her well), and the ill-willed nobleman Leosthenes, who upon his victorious return from the wars, also assumes Cleora as his woman prize. Military victory serves as a means of examining the nature of both men’s claim to marriage within a charged context of internal and external struggle for power. In the end, Marullo turns out to be a disguised nobleman, Pisander, whose frustration with the state of affairs in Syracuse drove him to start his own revolution under a false identity. After “proving” his somatic similarity (Pisander is a native Syracusan nobleman and not a “thick-skinn’d slave”), and justifying his dissimulation (the slaves were “instruments to serve [his] ends”), Pisander is finally eligible to reap the rewards of valor by marrying his woman prize. Despite its generic “happy” ending which a high-caliber marriage promises, the play holds up Leosthenes and Marullo/Pisander’s vindication of sexual conquest via military might to scrutiny, and ends with an element of ethical dislocation that is very hard to put a figure on.

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_The Roman Actor_ revisits _The Bondman_’s preoccupation with the dialectic of military success and imperial union at a moment when the Anglo-French alliance had reached a breaking point. In the summer of 1626, it became glaringly apparent that the French match did not yield the grand political and military gains that its panegyrist had
claimed it would. While Philip Massinger was most probably composing *The Roman Actor*, his debut play as the King’s Men’s leading dramatist, the French ambassador extraordinary, Maréchal François de Bassompierre, arrived in London on a mission to resuscitate the French match and its attendant military and religious components.\(^{23}\)

Certainly, the early Caroline period was enveloped in these issues, not least because King James I’s foreign policy had explicitly twinned the project of a Catholic match with the restitution of the Palatinate to Elizabeth of Bohemia and her husband since the outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War in 1618. After the failure of the Spanish match, the ailing James revived the French match of 1612-3 in a final bid to steer England away from war, while an alliance between Charles, Buckingham, and parliament lobbied for a long deferred *guerre à outrance* against the Hapsburg anti-Christ to restore Protestant England’s “honor.”\(^{24}\) Symptomatically, an ill-conceived military naval campaign against Spain inaugurated Charles’s monarchy, and turned his first five years on the throne into a quagmire of domestic divisions and foreign crises.

Equally damaging was the discovery that Charles had not fended off the ever-lurking Popish threat upon his triumphant return from Madrid, but simply substituted the Spanish Infanta with the lesser of two evils, the Catholic and French Henrietta Maria.\(^{25}\)


\(^{24}\) See Chapter 1 for a discussion of a Catholic match project, including a French proposal, which James I sought for the Prince of Wales to balance Princess Elizabeth’s Palatinate marriage in 1613.

As far as the hotter Protestants were concerned, the French church was too close to Rome to be trusted.\textsuperscript{26} All Papists were idolatrous in their worship of images; they were deceitful, aggressive proselytizers, who should not be re-admitted into civil life at any cost. And by marrying Henrietta Maria, Charles had compromised the public trust in him, especially since he vowed to Parliament in 1624, “yf he did treat of mariage with any of contrary religion, yt shold be with that caution that there shold be no manner of connivance but for herself and her servants straungers.”\textsuperscript{27}

The apocalyptic rhetoric notwithstanding, war with Spain dictated an alliance with France to maintain equilibrium in the balance of European power. Given the nature of Protestant England’s \textit{metus hostilis}, “fear of the enemy,”\textsuperscript{28} whose unanimous zeal to conquer the anti-Christ plateaued after the Spanish match fiasco, the fine print of the matrimonial union with a historical Catholic rival, which demanded strict religious concessions to English Catholics,\textsuperscript{29} could not be divulged openly and publicly.\textsuperscript{30} Instead, the regime disseminated a more positive outlook, focusing on Henrietta Maria’s dowry in

\textsuperscript{26} Milton, \textit{Catholic and Reformed}, 265.

\textsuperscript{27} Qtd. in Questier, \textit{Newsletters}, 81.


\textsuperscript{29} In the \textit{écrit particulier}, a secret document separate from the main treaty, English Catholics would be allowed freedom to practice their religion. It was issued by James and signed by Charles and the English secretary of state in November 1624. Patterson, \textit{James I and the Reunion of Christendom}, 352-54.

the form of what Thomas Cogswell dubs an “all-out [French] assault on the Habsburg behemoth.” For instance, George Marcelline, the wedding’s foremost propagandist, assured his readers in *Epithalamium Gallo-Britannicum* (1625) that Henrietta Maria “will not forsake the fountaine of living water, to seeke the puddles which were digged by humane inventions”; and that this dynastic marriage signaled “the destruction and ruine of Antichrist, the establishment of the true Faith, the propagation of the Gospell, the restitution of the Palatinate.” Otherwise, welcoming panegyric eschewed ideological grandstanding, emphasizing instead the dynastic marriage’s importance in strengthening true religion as well as England’s international position.

Given the controversial nature of the period, it is unsurprising that Ben Jonson’s last Jacobean masque, *The Fortunate Isles and Their Union*, danced on 9 January 1625, is imbued with a cautionary undertone. Based on the unperformed *Neptune’s Triumph for the Return of Albion* (1624), which glorified Charles’s safe return from Madrid and his reunion with King James, *The Fortunate Isles* anticipates the Anglo-French marriage: “*And sing the present Prophecie that goes / Of ioyning the bright LILLIE, and the ROSE*” (360-2); and presents Charles and Henrietta Maria as the idealized twins and

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patrons of the arts, Apollo and Diana, living peacefully in the fecund land of Neptune. However, this peaceful state only occurs if England is “in firme estate, / And ’mongst the winds, do’st suffer no debate” (644-645). Jonson’s masque presents what Martin Butler reads as a “relatively formulaic” vision of “the gifts of peace” as materializing only after “both at Sea, and Land, our powers increase” (646-47). As Butler succinctly puts it, “it is difficult to feel that his assertions of confidence in the future are entirely convincing.”

Equally telling is the silence of Thomas Middleton’s *The Triumphs of Health and Prosperity* over the dynastic marriage. Only tangentially does Middleton’s opening triumph for the 1626 Lord Mayor’s show mention the new monarch as the source of “grace, which [the city] strives to inherit” (171)—what Bryan Reynolds describes as “an over-determined rhetoric underscoring the substitutive and synechdochical relations in a line of influence from God to Monarch to Lord Mayor to City of London to Londoners [in] a desperate attempt to convince its London audience that [the city] is together an exemplary site of collaboration with the monarchy.”

Although a wave of good press accompanied her arrival in June 1625, the nation’s “darling” Henrietta Maria was not. In a famous account of the new queen’s first appearance in London, the Parliamentarian Sir Simonds D’Ewes notes that he “could not

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abstain from divers deep-fetched signs to consider that she wanted the knowledge of true religion.”

Not surprisingly, D’Ewes was not alone in suspecting the agenda of the new queen, for “[i]t is never safe to trust to French papists”; indeed, parliament vehemently opposed the match once details of the treaty trickled down cheaper news circuits. Most shocking was granting the queen and her entourage “free exercise of the Roman religion”—certainly a freedom that hot Protestants saw as the prop of Popish tyranny.

III.

Following Charles’s sinful covenant breaking with God, which Andrew Willet and Joseph Hall had sinisterly anticipated, as we have seen in the previous chapters, in 1613 and 1621, respectively, hot Protestants did not react gently to the divine wrath that the “unnatural” Anglo-French union must have provoked. Extremist divines resorted once again to biblical tropes of mixed marriage and idolatry to prognosticate God’s impending punishment. For instance, in “The Church’s Deliverance” (November 1626), Thomas Hooker railed against Charles’s transgression: “An abomination is committed, Judah hath married the daughter of a strange God, the Lord will cut off the many that


doeth this.” In a letter to Buckingham, dated 12 December 1626, George Montaigne wrote to inform the Duke that he had zealous preachers, among them Hugh Peter, “in safe custody for some undutiful and bold speeches they used in their prayers concerning both the King and Queen.” Apparently, Hugh Peter “prayed for the Queen that God would remove from her the idols of her father’s house, and that she would forsake the Idolatry and superstition wherein she was and must needs perish if she continued in the service.”

Significantly, the Earl of Warwick, one of the fiercest opponents to anything Catholic in parliament, dispatched Peter to London to organize opposition to royal policies in 1626, in particular the forced loan. And famously, William Prynne, who experienced Henrietta Maria’s “wickedness” firsthand in that cause célèbre of 1633, later summarized the danger and allure of the French queen: “[she] is left free, by all meanes and arts that may be, to withdraw the King from the Protestant Religion to her owne, and his children too: Wee have great cause to feare (if Adams, Solomons, or Ahabs seducements by their wives be duly pondered).”

If Protestant polemic compared Henrietta Maria and the French match to wicked women of Scriptures—Eve, Salomon’s idolatrous wives, and Jezebel—and their role in

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44 Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series, 1625-49, 175.


bringing forth the apocalypse, then *The Roman Actor*’s dramatization of the disobedient Domitia as an *agent provocateur* in Domitian Caesar’s tyrannical regime must have reminded the audience of a resounding eschatological narrative. Like the idolatrous temptresses of hot Protestant polemic, Domitia is alluring, proud, and adulterous—what Caesar summarizes as “all / Invectives which bitterness of spirit / Wronged men have breathed out against wicked women” (4.2.120-3). Like Shakespeare’s oriental temptress, Cleopatra, who “makes hungry / Where she most satisfies” (*Antony and Cleopatra* 2.2.237), Domitia is dangerously irresistible. Throughout the play the effect of her beauty on Caesar is constantly invoked. He exists in a perpetual state of longing for her beauty and her siren song; he protests the nature of “the magic of [his] dotage […] / That [he] must still make suit to hear those charms / That increase [his] thraldom” (5.1.87-9). Similarly, Paris justifies his pseudo-biblical “sin” in terms of his “frailty / Her will, and the temptation of that beauty” (4.2.180-81).

Even after he witnesses her seduction of Paris, Caesar cannot resist Domitia’s beauty, which renders him helpless and unable to take decisive decisions:

[...] What power
Her beauty still holds o’er my soul, that wrongs
Of this unpardonable nature cannot teach me
To right myself and hate her! Kill her! Hold!
Oh, that my dotage should increase from that
Which should breed detestation! (4.2.141-6)
So overwhelming is her power over him that he can only describe it through paradoxical hyperbole. Images of fire and liquidity figure his inner struggle: first, she drains his élan vital: “she […] borrows all her light from [me] / And knows how to use it” (4.1.146-137); and then, turn him into a leaky vessel—a powerful emasculating trope that, as Gail Kern Pastern has shown, carries the “humiliating exposure” of the association of women’s bodies with water.47 His heated desire threatens to dissolve his self-control, and with it his chivalric honor, in the sea of her lusty dominion: “If I look on her longer I shall melt / And sue to her, my injuries forgot, / Again to be received into her favour, / Could honour yield to it!” (4.2.147-50). Indeed, onlookers corroborate her emasculation of Caesar: “Such is the impotence of his affection” (5.1.14).

But Massinger is not one for straightforward topical allusions. There is a sense of restlessness in The Roman Actor’s attempt to devise ways of defining Domitia, and by extension, ways of defining the new queen. In Massinger’s main source, Suetonius’ Life of the Twelve Caesars (trans.1606), that promiscuous seductress, “whom [the people] hate more / Than civil war or famine,” accused of fuelling “strange passions in Caesar” and labeled “the machine on which all this mischief moved” (5.1.16-7, 6, 11), is portrayed in a most positive light. When Domitian wanted to divorce her to marry his niece, the people of Rome demanded that Domitia gets reinstated as Caesar’s foremost wife. After his death, she retired to a villa outside Rome where she retained her title of Augusta and all Domitian’s wealth. Indeed, Domitia’s change from a public benefactress

in Suetonius to a decadent queen in *The Roman Actor* problematizes her affinity to the whore of Babylon image, and accentuates other competing clusters of imagery that foreground her elusive position in the play.

One of these clusters is that of the disposable pawn in the hands of powerful men in the game of sexual politics. After coercing Lamia into relinquishing his wife, Caesar turns the episode into an act of public homage at his triumph: “Lamia, ‘tis your honour that she’s mine” (1.4.68); he acknowledges Lamia’s dear “present”: “You that could part with all delights at once, / The magazine of rich being contained / In her perfections, uncompelled, delivered / As a present fit for Caesar” (2.1.189-92); and in return, Caesar may grant Lamia a consulship: “every grace and feature, / Prized to the worth, bought at an easy rater / If purchased for a consultship” (2.1.200-02). Accordingly, when the spy Aretinus relays Lamia’s protestation against the illegality of the divorce—“Cannot a man be master of his wife,” he demurs (1.2.65)—Caesar lashes out: “Dares Lamia pretend / An interest to which that I call mine / Or but remember she was ever his / That’s now in our possession” (2.1.136-140). Ultimately, Caesar charges Lamia with treason because of his “hope or wish to repossess / What we love more than empire” (2.1.233-34). This is a world where sexual conquest displaces political conflict, in which Domitian’s queen, despite her “consent,” is a “possession,” occupying the semantic field of “interest,” “surplus,” and “debt.”

Domitia makes the same point at the very beginning of the play in response to Caesar’s marriage offer. This is the closest the play gets to staging marriage negotiations, where Parthenius, Caesar’s envoy, uses the language of the marketplace to lure Domitia
in: first, he “pay[s] [his reverence] / As a debt due to her that’s Caesar’s mistress” (1.2.2-4); then describes the “state, and greatness, and the honours / That wait upon Augusta” (6-7); and finally, offers her absolute power:

When all the beauties of the earth bow to you,
And senators shall take it for an honour,
[...] to kiss these happy feet;
When every smile you give is a preferment,
And you dispose of provinces to your creatures [.](12-6)

But she responds with the language of entrapment and shame, expressing that she is not “pure and untainted” nor “mistress of [her]self” but “another’s, not [her] own” (34-5, 39).

The play hammers this point home by embedding running allusions to the mythical Lucrece and Helen of Troy in its treatment of Domitia. In fact, one of Caesar’s spies informs him that to his critics, Domitia is seen as a raped Lucrece figure; in this formulation, Caesar’s lust bears the seeds of the destruction of his empire:

But the divorce Lamia was forced to sign
To her you honour with Augusta’s title
Being only named, they do conclude there was
A Lucrece once, a Collatine and a Brutus,
But nothing Roman left now but in you
The lust of Tarquin. (2.1.130-135)

Interestingly, Caesar pushes his detractors’ analogy further, insisting that Tarquin should be praised for scorning “[...] such as think that our unlimited power / Can be confined”
Here, Caesar reprises one of the great rapes that founded the Roman republic to link his sexual conquest of Domitia to his imperial expansion. Unlike Collatine, Lamia will not avenge the rape of his Lucrece, banish Domitian Caesar, and herald the return of the republic, or walk the talk of “passive fortitude” and like his mentor Thrasea, commit suicide—the ultimate act of reclamation in stoic philosophy. Indeed, when Rusticus and Sura are tortured, they endure the pain out of devotion to their stoic mentor, for they were “well taught by [Thrasea’s] example / For whom [they] suffer.” (3.2.61-2).

In this context, the play makes a point about emphasizing that Lamia’s regimen of passive fortitude, or any regimen of prescriptive morality, cannot be applied in a shifting political culture. While Lamia evokes the paradigm of conquest through rape in connection to Helen of Troy, he does not enact his part in the sack of Troy and the foundation of Rome either. Instead, he prays that Domitia should indeed prove another “ravished” Helen of Troy to Caesar’s Paris:

> [...] To the gods

> I bend my knees, for tyranny hath banished

> Justice from men; and, as they would deserve

> Their altars and our vows, humbly invoke ‘em

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48 These mythical rapes are the following: the rape of the Sabine women, the rape of Lucrece, the rape of Ilia, and Aenas’s marriage to Lavinia, which threatened to repeat the rape of Helen of Troy. For the trope of rape as conquest and the founding of the Roman republic, see Melissa M. Matthes, *The Rape of Lucretia and the Founding of Republics: Readings in Livy, Machiavelli, and Rousseau*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2000.
That this my ravished wife may prove as fatal
To proud Domitian, and her embraces
Afford him in the end as little joy,
As wanton Helen brought to him of Troy. (1.3.103-109)

“As wanton Helen,” Domitia’s will is overdetermined. Accordingly, she is bound to betray someone; to cleave to Domitian is to betray her husband, to stay with Lamia means disobeying Caesar. When in Act 4 she seduces her “Trojan Paris,” Domitia is faithful to her script: “[…] Kiss me again. / Kiss closer. Thou art now my Trojan Paris, / And I thy Helen” (4.2.102-4). Ironically, Domitia recognizes that “leaving” Caesar for Paris is predetermined. She tells Caesar: “Thy lust compelled me / To be a strumpet, and mine hath returned it / In my intent and will, though not in act, / To cuckold thee” (4.2.135-135). Earlier, she makes a similar point, when she insists that playing the role of the porter would indelibly fix the actor in the rogue ethos: “A Rogues part, will never leave him” (3.2.214). Contrary to Lamia’s prayers, Domitia’s adultery will not bring about the sack of Troy because she is bound to an always already act of betrayal. Upon witnessing Domitia’s amorous rendezvous with Paris from a balcony, Caesar-as-Paris-the-voyeur is transformed into Menelaus-the-cuckold: “And I am Menelaus” (105). The play offers its audiences a rare chance to view Domitia’s state of suspension unfold in “real” time, so to speak. This reconfiguration of Domitia is certainly at odds with the dangerously scheming temptress, the despised Whore of Babylon, which Caesar as well as Lamia and Paris claimed she embodies.
Although the critical treatment of Domitia has come a long way since Peter Davison’s early 1960s characterization of an “evil mistress” who tempts an “honest servant,” Domitia is arguably still read as a manifestation of tyrannical hedonism set against an ethos of spiritual fortitude. In Martin Butler’s view, for instance, “[Domitian’s] rule is flawed […] because internally his ‘dotage’ on Domitia weakens him (5.1.87) and externally he alienates men sufficiently to cause them to desire to take independent political action.” With an eye on the relationship between Plato and morality plays, on the one hand, and on the other, sexual excesses and effeminization of tyrants, Rebecca Bushnell sees Domitia as a projection of “the tyrant, crazed by desire”—one that “magnifies Domitian’s image as a tyrant and suggests the slipperiness of the gender categories used to establish that image. That Caesar and Domitia look so much alike, both powerful and dispossessed, and literally consumed by desire, doubly condemns the tyrant.”

In the 1990s, Ira Clark observed in passing how “[t]he empress and emperor […] prove an immediately applicable principle about the failure of personal and political absolutes in front of an audience considering Buckingham and Charles.” In his study of early Stuart court corruption and the politics of intimacy and royal favor, Curtis Perry


50 Martin Butler, “Romans in Britain,” 138-40.

51 Rebecca Bushnell, Tragedies of Tyrants, 173, 178.

52 Ira Clark, Moral Art of Philip Massinger, 72.
develops Clark’s suggestive remark, and thus reads Domitia as a variation of the maligne favorite figure (à la Buckingham) who “(literally or figuratively) bewitched his king […] using both sex and magic.” With Buckingham’s despised influence over both Stuart kings in mind, Perry considers Domitia a metaphor for everything unlawful and grotesque in Domitian Caesar’s reign. Recently, Warren Chernaik has remarked that “there is no figure analogous to Buckingham, and the role of court favourite is divided between the actor Paris, well-meaning but corruptible, and the beautiful, amoral Domitia, who exercises erotic mastery over the Emperor.” Undoubtedly, Buckingham’s meteoric rise in the Jacobean court made him suspect and unpopular in many circles. In the 1620s, his image as the epitome of court corruption and evil counsel plateaued. Despite employing “parliamentary addresses short and long, poets courtly and popular, and newsbooks and sermons to win back popular favor,” as Peter Lake and Thomas Cogswell note, Buckingham’s mishandling of England’s military campaigns (under Mansfeld to the Palatinate in 1624, to Cadiz in 1625, and La Rochelle in 1627) provoked downright acrimony, most famously in 1626, when Sir John Eliot compared him to the epitome of

53 Curtis Perry, Literature and Favoritism, 258.

54 For critical analyses of Domitia, see Rebecca Bushnell, Tragedies of Tyrants, 173-78; Curtis Perry, Literature and Favoritism, 257-59.


the evil councilor, Sejanus, in parliament.\textsuperscript{57} His poor military judgment, administrative mistakes, and shady fiscal policies notwithstanding, Buckingham maintained his position at the center of the Caroline court and his “parlement proofe” privilege up until August 1628, when a disgruntled soldier assassinated him.\textsuperscript{58}

However, in light of Karen Britland, Amanda Bailey, and James Knowles’s reassessment of Henrietta Maria’s cultural and political valence in the context of the early Caroline court, together with Marie-Claude Canova-Green’s illuminating work on the rich and loaded iconography of Marie de Médicis, connections between Domitia and Henrietta Maria become impossible to ignore. Although Erica Veevers, Caroline Hibbard, Frances Dolan, and Sophie Tomlinson among others, have expanded our understanding of the historical biases associated with Henrietta Maria and subsequently rehabilitated her centrality in the study of the Caroline period and beyond, they tend to agree that her influence is more discernible in the 1630s; for Henrietta Maria had to “transition from princess to queen” (the title of one of Hibbard’s articles) before she could occupy a position of influence at court. In the early years of the reign, as Michelle White puts it, “the queen’s public image was far from complimentary or endearing: she was uncrowned, foreign speaking, emotionally remote, offensively behaving above her gender station by performing in court plays, and ardently Catholic.” Only after the old favorite’s death in

\textsuperscript{57} The French and the Dutch signed the Treaty of Compiègne in the summer of 1624. See Brennan Pursell, \textit{The Winter King}, 230.

\textsuperscript{58} The phrase “parlement proofe” is from John Chamberlain and is quoted in Martin Butler, “‘We are one mans all’: Jonson’s \textit{The Gypies Metamorphosed},” \textit{Yearbook of English Studies} 21 (1991): 257.
1628, according to first-wave critics, was Henrietta Maria able to win her husband’s heart and trust, and exert her growing political, cultural, and religious influence.  

Most certainly, Henrietta Maria consolidated and propagated her role as the foremost patroness of the arts in the 1630s; concurrently, her iconography of chaste beauty, neo-platonic love, and marital harmony gained wide currency, emblematized in her eight-hour production of Walter Montagu’s refined romance, *The Shepherds’ Paradise* (1633). At the opposite end of the theatrical scale were plays that echoed the infamous treatise by William Prynne *Histriomastix* (1633) that focused obsessively on Henrietta Maria’s sexualized body and love of theater. The apotheosis is Nathaniel Richards’ *Messallina the History of the Roman Empresse* (ca. 1635), which depicts Messalina, the third wife of the Roman Emperor Claudius, as a sex fiend and stages her depraved passion for the actor Silius, to attack the Queen as the embodiment of Popish depravity.


But this does not imply, as Karen Britland asserts, that Henrietta Maria did not promote herself through theatre and dancing earlier on. In fact, Britland argues that the new queen had adopted a distinct cultural vocabulary (which Britland reads as a strategy of resistance) before she even set foot in England. Britland’s work, together with that of Jean Jacquot and Canova-Green, among others, has examined the wedding panegyrics, and tapestries presented during the protracted fiancailles (from July 1624 to May 1625), at her wedding in Notre Dame, and on her journey to England, that collectively stressed France’s hope for its daughter: that she would return Charles (and England) to Catholicism and promote an Anglo-French alliance against the Habsburg monolith.

Moreover, French ballets foregrounded France’s unique position of superiority in Europe by virtue of Marie de Médicis’ rigorous politics of dynasticism. Melinda Gough notes that Lord Kensington’s letters to Charles and Buckingham from the Parisian court in 1624 “may have signaled the strategic benefit to be gained from cultivating Marie de

62 Lord Kensington was dispatched to Paris as ambassador extraordinary in February 1624 to begin informal deliberations on the subject with his French counterparts. Patterson, James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom, 353.

Medici's favor.”64 By emphasizing this Pan-European perspective, French panegyrists presented England as the *de facto* beneficiary of the Anglo-French alliance and not the other way around. More unusually, one would expect these pageants to create a stir in England at least on the diplomatic level; however, critics are quick to note the scarcity of description in ambassadorial dispatches from France and in English pamphlets even though it was understood that these performances were charged with ideological subtexts. Consequently, critics tend to read French and English panegyrics side by side, to trace their cultural emphases, and to tease out their key oppositions, allusions to foreign policy and domestic concerns, and religious aspects, to create a narrative outlining their ideological subtexts.

At Whitehall, Henrietta Maria practiced what Britland calls “a policy of non-participation” as a defense mechanism “to maintain her religious and national integrity […] in the face of increasingly desperate incursions on the part of the English.”65 In a significant departure from the mores of the early Stuart court, she sailed too close to the wind, dancing and acting with her French ladies in the first court performance of the new reign, Racan’s pastoral romance, *L’Artenice*, on 21 February 1626 at Somerset House. According to the Florentine ambassador, the queen,

[...] acted in a beautiful pastoral of her own composition, assisted by twelve of her ladies who she had trained since Christmas. The pastoral


succeeded admirably, not only in decorations and changes of scenery, but also in the acting and recitation of the ladies—Her Majesty surpassing all others. The performance was conducted as privately as possible, inasmuch as it was an unusual thing in this country to see the Queen upon the stage.[66] So elaborate was this “successful pastoral” that word circulated about its content and Henrietta Maria’s part in it some two months in advance. Writing to parliamentarian Sir Francis Nethersole, Benjamin Rudyerd, for instance, remarked how “the demoiselles mean to present a French pastoral wherein the Queen is a principal actress.”[67] Amanda Bailey stresses that staging L’Artenice was “no theatrical whim,” but an elaborate production where “over £2000 was spent on costumes alone”[68]; moreover, “a stage was specially constructed by Inigo Jones, with a proscenium arch, perspective scenery, and changing scenes after the French fashion.”[69] Whether its vision is one of proselytization and cultural defiance, as Britland suggests, or “combin[ing] her official role as Queen of England with her personal commitment to the Catholic faith,”[70] as Bailey argues, the

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[67] CSP Domestic 1625-26, 179.


[70] Bailey, Staging the Old Faith, 37.
importance of *L’Artenice* for this chapter rests on the generic dissonance of a French pastoral romance. For in addition to announcing the new queen’s physical, political, religious, and cultural presence, *L’Artenice* gestures toward a neoplatonistic discourse of moral reform, refined but erotic desire, and heroic pacifism that would eventually become what Martin Butler terms the “official” royal idiom in the 1630s, but is in sharp contrast to the new King’s iconography of the *defensor fidei* in 1625-6.

Such a provocative presence might be expected to bear some influence on Massinger (whose court connections fell on both sides of the political spectrum), particularly in light of his new appointment as the King’s Men main playwright in 1625. That Massinger should have found Henrietta Maria’s provocative theatricality, her Catholicism, and Frenchness a particularly apt backdrop for Domitia’s domination over Caesar is likely due to two important factors: first, the profusion of Marie de Médicis’ charged iconography, which drew on the moral aesthetic of Clorinda in Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata* and the virtuous heroism of the Mélandre of Honoré d’Urfé’s pastoral romance *L’Astrée* (translated into English in 1620) to ascertain her centrality in French domestic politics and control over foreign policy upon her return to Paris in 1620. Indeed, English diplomats and aristocrats were aware of Marie de Médicis


iconography of peace and spiritual devotion, epitomized in the figure of the goddess Minerva, in particular because she insisted that Rubens’s *La Vie de Marie de Médicis* cycle is given “une affaire d’État”; therefore, the propagandistic representation of her life in twenty-four panels was unveiled on May 8, 1625 as part of the official marriage festivities at the palais de Luxembourg.74

Second, the mystification of the royal couple’s first encounter in 1623, when on their way to Madrid, Charles and Buckingham witnessed Henrietta Maria performing as the goddess Iris in Anne of Austria’s *Grand Balet de la Reyne representant les Festes de Junon la Nopciere* in Paris, became a central trope in wedding panegyrics; French poets heavily exploited this episode in promoting the myth of Charles’s infatuation with Henrietta Maria from the moment he set his eyes on her, his ensuing trials and tribulations in Spain, culminating in his total surrender to Henrietta Maria’s harmonious love upon his return from his heroic quest (cf. Jason and the Golden Fleece allusions in the pageant the city of Amiens presented).75

In the “Recit de Galathee au balet de la Reyne d’Angleterre” (ca.1624/25), for instance, François le Métel de Boisrobert locates the reason behind Henrietta Maria’s irresistible beauty; hers is linked to the transcendent and the infinite. The poem describes


how Henrietta Maria’s aerial, divine beauty, as represented by Juno, lifts Charles up, the most powerful god of the sea, from his state of submersion in the Spanish infanta’s, here the beautiful sea goddess Tethys, watery domain:

IE fôrs de l’humide fejour
De la belle Tethys à qui ie fais la cour
Pour voir dedans les airs, vne beauté plus grande
Qui defia luy commande,
Charles que i’ofe bien nommer
Le plus puiffant des Dieux qui regnent fur la mer
Fait gloire de foufmettre à fon obeyffance
Son fceptre é fa puiffance.76

According to Britland, Henrietta Maria’s representation as “the leading nymph of the air” is an assertion “that only the winds and storm might be said to be able to triumph over” Charles’s naval power and the “maritime imagery associated with England.”77


[I leave my humid stay
With the beautiful Tethys whom I was courting
Where I saw in the air, a grander beauty
Whom I must obey]

[Charles who I dare name
The most powerful God who reigns over the sea
Glorifies the chance to relinquish
His scepter and his power to her]. (178)

77 Britland, Drama at Court, 25.
Significantly, the poem, to push Britland’s reading further, dwells on the adjective “puissant” and noun “puissance” to underscore the magnitude of Charles’s power, which he happily surrenders to Henrietta Maria. But “puissance” equally refers to sexual potency; in this way, the poem casts Charles as relinquishing his phallic scepter and virility (“Son sceptre é sa puissance”), to Henrietta Maria’s spiritual, beatific beauty.

In an “Ode présentée à la Reine d'Angleterre, par Monsieur le Comte de Carlile, de la part du Roy son Espous” (ca. 1624/25) Charles is again the speaker in Boisrobert’s panegyric, who substitutes his martial valor for a state of pastoral bliss:

L’ambition des autres Princes
Est de conquerir icy bas,
Et fe voir apres cent combas
Triomphans de mille provinces.
Mais la mienne est de vous cherir
Comme le feuil bien où i’affpire,
Et de vous laiffer conquerir
Mon Coeur, aucque mon empire,
Qui ne peut au gré des humains,
Tomber en de plus belles mains.  

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[The ambition of other Princes
Is to conquer near and yonder,
And to be seen after battles
Triumphant in a million provinces.
But mine [ambition] is to cherish you
As the only wellbeing that I breathe
And to let you conquer]
The poem anticipates Henrietta Maria’s neutralization of Charles’s power. Therefore, Charles pre-emptively allows Henrietta Maria to “conquer” both his heart and empire as he acknowledges that imperial conquest constitutes the fundamental agenda of monarchy. From the French perspective, then, Charles’s military bravado and imperial authority are insignificant in the presence of Henrietta Maria’s all-commanding beauty, which becomes a euphemism for her uncontested power. In another stanza, Prince Charles imagines Henrietta Maria’s sea crossing from Calais to Dover en route to London:

Le chemin de Calais a Douure
Qu’on tient fi rude à trauerfer,
Vous couftera moins à paffer
Que les beaux promenoirs du Louure,
L’air é le Ciel qui vous riront
Seront plus doux que de coustume,
Et les mers qui fe calmeront
Perdant toute leur amertume,
Plairont au gouft de vos Nochers
Autant que les eaux des rochers.79

My heart, along with my empire,
That cannot in any human being’s fantasy,
Fall into more beautiful hands.] (Recueil 536)

79 [The journey from Calais to Dover
Which one considers tortuous to cross
Shall be less costly for you to travel
Than the beautiful promenades of the Louvre
The air and the sky shall smile at you
Here, the poem mystifies Henrietta Maria’s journey from her patria to the host country, invoking the new queen’s control over not only two dominions, the French and the English, but also natural elements like the sea, the rocks, the winds, and the skies. Inextricably linked to Henrietta Maria’s dominance over man and nature, the latter emphatically bitter and wrathful, is Charles’s assurance that this marriage would not “cost” (“coûter”) her, and by extension France, a thing, as long as they (man and nature) could “taste” (“goût”) her divine beauty.

Interestingly, Domitian Caesar shares Charles’s vocabulary of erotic submission to Henrietta Maria’s divine attributes as presented in French panegyric. Caesar is particularly generous in expressing his excessive subordination to Domitia, “for she rules him / whom all men else obey” (2.1.171-72); and therefore, he relinquishes his power to her: “Anything / That does content thee yields delight to me; / My faculties and powers are thine” (3.2.145-6). However, he assures his viewers that she is equipped to rule as “She is all excellence” (4.1.177), and her “discourse / So ravishing, and her actions so attractive” (2.1.202-3). Moreover, he exists in a perpetual state of longing, satisfaction consistently eluding him: “The swift minutes / Seem years to [him], […] that divorce Domitia / From his embraces. His desires increasing / As they are satisfied, all pleasures else / Are tedious as dull sorrows” (2.1.277-80). In the course of the play, we get an intimate glimpse of the joys of their marital bed: “The pleasures of her bed I dare not

They shall be softer than usual,  
And the seas shall calm down  
Losing all their bitterness  
They will be pleased to taste your vessel  
As much as the sea waters (like to taste) the sea rocks.] (Recueil 540).
trust / The winds or air with, for that would draw down, / In envy of my happiness, a war
/ From all the gods upon me” (2.1.202-09). Indeed, the erotic splendor of their marriage
creates an elemental conflict (earth versus air), where the ethereal (the gods) descends
into the world of the material and is immersed in its primal forms of aggression, envy and
war.

Understandably, the gods might be envious because he is bedding every goddess
in Greek and Roman mythology, for Domitia is his Phoebe, the sun-goddess, and Juno,
the goddess of marriage; she is his life force, a Diana to his Virbius: “from this living
fountain / I could renew the vigor of my youth / And be a second Virbius.—O my glory! / My life! Command! My all!” (3.2.125-28). Yet, her effect on him is also spiritual; when
he hears Domitia’s “angelical voice,” he is transported to a mythical world where he is
serenaded by “Fair-haired Calliope on her ivory lute” (2.1.224); and her kisses taste of
immortality: “There’s no drop / Of melting nectar I taste from her lip / But yields a touch
of immortality / To the blest receiver” (2.1.198-200).

It is hard to resist seeing Caesar’s blissful surrender to Domitia’s beauty as a wry
reflection on Charles’s uxoriousness in French royal panegyrics. Although the awareness
of these texts in England is conjectural, Canova-Green and Britland have argued that the
iconography of French panegyrics reached an aristocratic and diplomatic audience
throughout Europe. For instance, Britland reads the imagery of Buckingham’s masque in
Bassompierre’s honor, which celebrated the renegotiated Anglo-French marriage in 1626,
as replicating Andre-Antoine Mareschal’s wedding ballet, Les Dieux Descendus en
France (ca. 1624-5). According to Britland, the royal favorite might have seen
Mareschal’s ballet at the banquet that Marie de Médicis sponsored in his honor at her palais de Luxembourg.\textsuperscript{80} Certainly, \textit{Le Mercure Francois} reported on the wedding entertainments presented for seven consecutive evenings upon Buckingham’s arrival in May 1625 to oversee Henrietta Maria’s departure.\textsuperscript{81} Furthermore, while the ambassador-extraordinary Lord Kensington’s letters to Charles and Buckingham reported the details surrounding the ballets in which Henrietta Maria performed at court, they are elusive on their dramatic content and structure, despite the abundance of information in the \textit{livrets} (the printed booklets distributed to spectators before or after the performance).

More intriguingly, in honor of Kensington’s arrival in 1624, Anne of Austria commissioned a ballet, Melinda Gough notes, whose “\textit{livret} not only describes the ballet's dramatic structure and includes the texts of its various sung \textit{récits} (airs); it also includes the ballet’s ‘verses.’”\textsuperscript{82} Following the ballet, Kensington’s letter to Charles, dated 24 February 1624, focuses only on Henrietta Maria’s physical and moral attributes that seem to resonate with some of Caesar’s comments mentioned earlier: she is “a Ladie of as much Lovelinesse and Sweetnesse to deserve your affection, as any creature under Heaven can do” and that she is “the sweetest Creature in \textit{France}”; that “her infinite value, and respect unto you” are discernible; “Her growth is very little, short of her age; and her wisdom infinitely beyond it”; and ends with a comment on her singing and dancing

\textsuperscript{80} Britland, \textit{Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria}, 24.

\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.} 22.

\textsuperscript{82} Melinda Gough, “A Newly Discovered Performance by Henrietta Maria.” 440.
abilities: “She dances (the which I am a witnesse of) as well as ever I saw any Creature; They say she sings most sweetly, I am sure she looks so.”

While Ben Jonson’s *The New Inn* (1629) is considered the earliest dramatic treatment of Henrietta Maria’s emergent neoplatonic cult of love, Domitia’s effect on Caesar is not far from the troubling representation of Charles’s subjection to Henrietta Maria in marriage panegyrics. What panegyrics present as ennobling love and spiritual rapture translates into sexual enslavement in *The Roman Actor*. Under the thrall of Domitia, Caesar is catapulted from his godly status to that of a passionate lover and ultimately, vengeful and emasculated cuckold. Moreover, Caesar’s debasing infatuation and self-deceit result in a barren imperial union, and thereby the rationale of succession and continuity underlying dynastic alliances is thwarted. Equally instructive is Caesar’s open disavowal of the ideals of stringent Roman masculinity as exemplified in Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*, whose martial heroism and self-sufficiency Charles had adopted upon his “blessed revolution.”

One way of understanding this iconographical dissonance is to situate it against Domitia’s generic difference insofar as genre, if we follow Richard Helgerson’s

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83 Qtd. in *ibid.* 440.


formulation, is a reflection of national identity. “Like chivalric romance,” Helgerson writes of late sixteenth-century genre, every form […] depended for its meaning and its effect on its difference from some openly or latently competing form.”86 As Britland argues, Henrietta Maria’s production of *L’Artenice* was her own “cultural manifesto” through which she declared her difference.87 In her work on Anne of Denmark’s “cultural manifesto,” to use Britland’s term, Clare McManus has underlined similar instances of the Jacobean queen’s “display of difference” from the English.88 Domitia also demonstrates her aesthetic difference; she is an avid thespian as well as theatre savvy—she praises the “neat delivery” and the “tuneable tongue” of “the fellow / That played the doctor” and “ha[s] read the poets” (2.1.412-14)—which are taken to be a reflection of her social and thus moral inferiority. In a female interlude in 3.2, the royal princesses turn their “childish lamentations” and “womanish complaints” (3.1.21, 25) about their “injuries, “tender wounds,” “weak defence,” and how Caesar, “won by his perjuries that he would / Salute you with the title of Augusta / Your faint denial showed a full consent /And grant to his temptations” (11-14), into petty, languorous gossip. In particular, they are appalled that “[Domitia] could descend / To grace the room of persons” and mix with common actors: “where, all state laid by, / she does inquire, who acts this part, who that /


87 Britland, *Drama at the Courts*, 52.

88 Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage*, 94.
And in what habits. Blames the tire-women / For want of curious dressings.” (86-7, 88-91).

Yet, Domitia declares her “cultural manifesto” in one of the play’s most famous lines: “For the subject / I like [the play] not. It was filched out of Horace” (2.1.410-11). Domitia here dismisses the didactic subject matter of the play’s first inset play, The Cure of Avarice, which is closely based on Horace’s moralizing Satires II. What she wants is to be “transported” into the realm of literary allusion and Ovidian myth. Indeed, her own theatrical venture is “filched” from an episode from Ovid’s Metamorphosis. In her own rendition of Iphis and Anaxerete, she not only “instruct[s] / The Players how to act,” but “cut[s] off / All tedious impertinency” and “contract[s] / The tragedy into one continued scene” (3.2.131-34). Most of this “continued scene,” we discover, focuses on Iphis’s anguished description of his unrequited love to the aloof Anaxerete. In the “seduction” scene, Domitia invites the now-compliant Paris to “the feast / Where I shall wish that thou wert Jupiter / And I Alcmena, and I had power / To lengthen out one short night into three, / And so beget a Hercules” (4.2.108-12); and when Caesar kills Paris, she turns into a furious Omphale, Queen of Lydia, the epitome of a woman’s domination over a man, who even had “less command / O’er Hercules than you usurp o’er me,” Caesar tells her (4.2.55-6).

What Caesar, and even Paris, are unable to fathom, because they are both engulfed in their own role-playing games, is that Domitia’s identity, language, and actions are based on the narrative trappings of Ovidian romance. As a parvenu in the imperial court, she is not inculcated with the ideological thrust that drives Volumnia or
Cleopatra’s behavior, or tied to the Roman virtue that her counterparts Domitilla and Julia uphold. The convoluted “Annunciation” scene in 1.2 is highly significant not merely, as critics note, for fixing Domitia as an opportunist and decadent queen for the rest of the play, but for staging the moment she is “transported” from the realm of the real to that of pagan myth, where she could freely express her erotic desire as well as her sad complaint.89 Her response to Parthenius’s announcement of Caesar’s impending rape—as we saw earlier, “faint denial showed a full consent”—is to turn it into mythical romance, laying bare the dirty (sexual) politics behind the mythical veil of her royal marriage. If in *The Island Princess*, the audience is invited to think of a “foreign” queen consort as a qualified agent of salvation—be it confessional, political, or financial—in *The Roman Actor* she figures as one of multiple agents that bring about a tyrant’s demise. While the play by no means endorses Domitia’s demonization at face value, it does not charge her ultimate act of resistance with timely or significant political meaning. In its treatment of Caesar’s queen, the play seems to acknowledge its confusing themes and contradictory cues as it advances them. Nonetheless, we can argue that the play dramatizes the very restlessness and confusion of a playwright trying to locate the new French queen within debates on dynastic marriage that have filled the metaphorical ether of the realm, as this study shows, since 1554.

IV.

89 As opposed to Ira Clark’s reading of the scene, which sees in Domitia’s response an Eve-like “aesthetic gullibility” that gets “infected with aspirations for godhead by a tempter.” *The Moral Art of Philip Massinger*, 72.
In order to connect this restlessness and confusion surrounding the French marriage to the regime’s war on the continent, we need to return to Domitian Caesar’s triumph, which twinned the themes of erotic and military conquest. In the closely defined framework of the triumph, aberrant behavior is easy to isolate and critique. Indeed, Caesar closely observes the formal rituals of the triumphal entry, famously dramatized in the opening scenes of *Julius Caesar* (1.1 and 1.2.) and the last scene of *II Tamburlaine* (4.3; also anticipated in *One* 2.4). His procession through the streets of Rome, “Riding in triumph to the Capitol,” culminates at the Temple of Jupiter, thereupon “touch[ing] the height of human glory” (1.4.15, 14); then comes the lavishly decorated chariot pulled by war captives: “Let these whom this victorious arm hath made / The scorn of Fortune and the slaves of Rome / Taste the extremes of misery” (16-18); followed by the display of the booty, which “enlarged the empire” (25); and finally, the triumph is concluded with the post-triumph revelry: Caesar “command[s] the poets,”

To use their choicest and more rare intervention
To entertain the time, and be you careful
To give it action. We’ll provide the people
Pleasures of all kinds. (76-80)

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90 For the role of the triumph in Roman life, see Mary Beard. *The Roman Triumph*. Cambridge: Belknap, 2009.

91 The stage direction stresses decorum: “Enter at one door Captains with laurels; DOMITIAN, in his triumphant chariot; [Caesar’s actors and freemen] met by [Roman senators], FULCINIUS; prisoners led by him” (1.4.13.1-4).  

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Caesar’s triumph, however, differs from its Shakespearean and Marlovian antecedents, in one momentous respect. For added to the visual markers of Caesar’s imperial glory is his orderly, albeit grandiloquent, exposition of his case for the wars. Unlike Tamburlaine’s effusion of self-glorifying monologues, Caesar’s speech rallies popular support for his military campaigns that is nowhere to be found in the play’s sources, and the triumph tradition in general. Given the contemporary resonances of his speech, Caesar’s breach of decorum warrants scrutiny.

More than half a century ago, John H. Crabtree noted that Massinger “consciously employ[ed] the art of oratory” in his plays, and that Domitian Caesar’s speech is “organized according to the basic five-part outline of the classical oration as it was described in the textbooks conventionally used by Elizabethan schoolmasters.”92 Caesar’s is undoubtedly a skillful rhetorical performance: he starts with an assertion of the love between him, “the adored monarch of the world,” and his “thankful subjects” (1.4.28, 36)—a representative example of what Quentin Skinner calls “the normative vocabulary” of early modern political theory93: “To tell you you are happy in your prince / Were to distrust your love or my desert, / And either were distasteful” and “My love to all […] spreads itself among you” (21-3, 53); he demonstrates that the war was necessary for Rome’s survival, for he spared Rome “the god of war / And famine, blood and death,


Bellona’s pages / Banished from Rome to Thrace in our good fortune” (40-2); describes the scale of his victory over Rome’s enemies, “the Daci / And grey-eyed Germans whom I have subdued” (29-30); stresses their danger as his soldiers “broke through horrors” (25-6); invites his subjects to “taste the fruits of peace / Whose sword hath ploughed the ground and reaped the harvest / Of your prosperity” (43-5); justifies his own monopoly of power since it is “an assurance of a calm” (56); and finally asserts his earned glory, unable to even “think / That there is one among you so ungrateful, / Or such an enemy to thriving virtue / That can esteem the jewel he holds dearest / Too good for Caesar’s use” (45-9). In his mind, Caesar has offered the Romans a quasi-providential deliverance from two of the greatest dangers to the empire’s security, and boasted a range of conquests that “the style / Of lord and god […] / (Not my ambition) is deserved” (35-7).

Although considered the apotheosis of Domitian Caesar’s self-deification, his speech is highly problematic on several counts, nevertheless. First, Massinger works within two established traditions of writing about Roman imperialism: a hostile senatorial one, represented in the historical accounts of Pliny and Tacitus, and a panegyric one, represented in the works of the Roman poets Martial and Statius. Yet, as already mentioned, Massinger deviates from his sources to make the iconography of Caesar’s triumph more distinct. For instance, Massinger adds an entirely new dimension to Caesar’s relation to his father, Emperor Vespasian, and his older brother, Emperor Titus,

94 In his Revels edition, Martin White points out that Domitian was indeed the first Roman emperor, according to Philemon Holland’s translation of Suetonius’s Life of Domitian (1606), to advance beyond the Rhine.
presenting the tyrant as relishing in his absolute independence from his predecessors. But in his miscellany, the *Silvae*, Statius notes the grand dynastic mausoleum, “a sacred shrine for his everlasting family” (5.1.240-1), that Domitian Caesar had built to house Vespasian’s and Titus’s ashes.\(^9\) Furthermore, Domitian Caesar deliberately erected the building on the site of his father’s house where he himself was born, as Suetonius remarks in his biography of Domitian, Massinger’s principal source for the play (*Dom. 1.1*); Suetonius also mentions Domitian’s ashes, which his nurse Phyllis secretly transported to the mausoleum in fulfillment of the slain emperor’s wish (*Dom. 17.3*). Massinger’s Domitian, however, goes in an opposite direction.

In a remarkably modulated rhetorical move, Domitian invokes the legacy of Vespasian, Titus, and Julius Caesar, only to deface publicly their exalted glory and subsequently emerge *sui generis*, his political and military power uncontested: “The ghost of Julius will look pale in envy, / The great Vespasian’s and Titus’ triumph / (Truth must take place of father and of brother) / Will be no more remembered” (1.4.30-4). Elsewhere, he commands his ménage of royal princesses of the blood to wipe out the memory of previous patriarchies: “Julia, forget that Titus was thy father; / Caenis and Domitilla, ne’er remember / Sabinus or Vespasian” (2.1.249-51). More unusually, the Stoics reverse Domitian’s act of filial and brotherly severance, which is particularly timely in 1625-6.

\(^9\) Qtd. in Jones, Brian W. *The Emperor Domitian*. London: Routledge, 1993. 87-8; Martial also mentions the building in his multi-volume collection of epigrams 9.3.12; 9.34.2.
After the failure of the Spanish match, Charles adopted the cherished persona of the virtuous and militant Protestant prince. As Jonathan Goldberg and Martin White have suggested, the references to Titus, especially his moral and chivalric virtue, calls attention to the military ethos of Prince Henry of Wales, whose short-lived court (1610-1612) espoused an interventionist, pan-Protestant ideology. In Jonson’s unperformed masque *Neptune’s Triumph* (1624), Charles and Buckingham are depicted, as Martin Butler notes, “as adventuring heroes, escaping danger by the skin of their teeth,” while Charles’s return from Spain was planned as a triumphant Roman emperor entering Rome that “was the first of what were to be a series of festivities for Charles in the imperial manner.”

From this perspective, the Stoics’ nostalgia for a bygone imperial reign, as they bemoan the degenerate state of affairs, is quite odd. While Rusticus and Lamia strike conventional rhetorical notes, such as “To be virtuous / Is to be guilty” (1.1.78-9), or references to sickness in the “body politic”: “That the state, sick in him, the gods to friend, / Though at the worst will now begin to mend” (118-20); Sura, that paragon of stoical virtue and republican restraint, soon to be publicly tortured for eulogizing his mentor, Paetus Thrasea, exhumes the memory of Titus and compares him to Domitian. He is baffled:

96 Graham Parry, *Golden Age Restored*, 64-94.

97 Martin White, Introduction, 88 note 81-3.

98 Martin Butler, “Introduction to *Neptune’s Triumph,*” *Cambridge Ben Jonson.*

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That two sons of so different a nature
Should spring from good Vespasian. We had a Titus,
Styled justly the delight of all mankind,
Who did esteem that day lost in his life
In which some one or other tasted not
Of his magnificent bounties; one that had
A ready tear when he was forced to sign
The death of an offender [...] (1.1.82-8)

But even in the process of making his argument about the wide chasm between Titus and Domitian, Sura appears, in his extravagant verbal constructions “delight,” “esteem,” “tasted, and “magnificent bounties,” to be endorsing a Roman emperor’s absolutist sway over the empire as associated exclusively with Titus’s brief three-year reign. By implication, if Caesar’s expansive grandeur is associated with the decadent, Hellenistic East, Titus’s imperial fame rests on his conquest of Jerusalem, the locus amoenus of the Protestant apocalypse. This opposition between the political and moral virtue of Titus’s conquest of Jerusalem and Domitian Caesar’s conquest of unchartered, feminized hinterlands carries strong topical allusions to Charles’s short but scandalous war-mongering experience. Rather than joining the Thirty Years War as Protestant crusaders, Charles and Buckingham were outmaneuvered by the cunning Cardinal Richelieu; instead of providing naval assistance to the Genoese, English ships sailed to La Rochelle to suppress the Huguenots.
Second, while the play establishes from the outset Caesar’s absolutism, (“When power puts it its Plea the laws are silenced” 1.2.44), and his resounding reputation in the battlefield (“‘Tis frequent in the city he hath subdued / The Catti and the Daci / The second time will enter Rome in triumph” 1.1.43-5), its rendering of a demi-god’s deliberate adherence to the fundamental Roman imperial imperatives of booty and glory is nonetheless problematic. For in the Roman imperial tradition, as the accounts of Dio Cassius, Tacitus, and Levy attest, a returning triumphator has to “persuade,” albeit ritualistically, the people of Rome and the senate—who “voted” for war in the first place—that his booty justifies a triumph as opposed to the lesser ovation. Despite his full-blown tyranny, Domitian Caesar undergoes without compunction the bureaucratic traditions required of all seekers of a triumph. Earlier, Sura informs Rusticus and Lamia that Caesar has sent a letter to the senate outlining his military successes, the spoils of war he plundered, and thus demanding the glory of a triumph: “I have letters / He’s on his way to Rome, and purposes / To enter with all glory. The flattering Senate / Decrees him divine honours, and to cross it / Were death with studied torments” (1.1.109-12). Whether his triumph is earned or enforced is beyond the scope of this chapter; of high relevance, however, is how Caesar’s emotive exhortation resonates with the hot debates of 1625-26.

Is it a coincidence that Caesar’s rhetorical argument is closely connected to the ongoing debate about military action on the continent? Why deliver an emotive speech

full of appeals to the necessity of war to a crowd certainly not known for its pacifism?\textsuperscript{100} Despite Domitian’s heightened rhetoric about the importance of his phenomenal military conquests, the threat of neighboring states, and his downplaying of the cost, in fact the anti-Domitian senators do denounce his show of bravado. Their derogatory replies and reactions include sarcastic phrases, such as “A bloody entrance!” (1.4.20) and “this is no boast” (28), as well as elitist self-restraint, such as “Base flattery! / What Roman could endure this” (53), in pointed contrast to the commentary of sycophants: “celestial sacrifice” and “all we possess / Our children / Wealth / And throats, / Fall willingly beneath his feet” (38, 49-51). In their whispered conversations and “midnight meetings,” the stoical senators dismiss Domitian’s war victories, “murmur at his triumphs as mere pageants,” (2.1.118, 117) and ridicule his doctrinal providentialism: “For his escape, / In the Vitellian war he raised a temple / To Jupiter, and proudly placed his figure / In the bosom of the god” (1.1.102-5).\textsuperscript{101}

Targeting Caesar’s providentialism leads in contradictory directions, however. By dismissing Caesar’s adulatory rituals, the stoical senators on the one hand highlight Domitian’s self-deification. On the other hand, they neutralize Caesar’s defiance of augury (4.1.35-41), and thus give credence to his delusional belief in military power. Most important, the articulation of an anti-providential view that ridicules Caesar’s


\textsuperscript{101} On coins and in the works of Statius, Silius Italicus, or Martial, Domitian is portrayed as Jupiter’s subordinate, his “warrior-vice regent,” and not his equal, as Massinger’s senators claim. Brian Jones. The Emperor Domitian, 99-100.
providential survival in the Vitellian war from within a senatorial milieu undermines a fundamental Protestant logic, especially in the context of the “Armada paradigm”\(^\text{102}\) that the previous chapters discussed. In the context of the disastrous Spanish War of 1625-9, the play certainly gives the lie to militant Protestantism that prophesied England’s rise to imperial prominence in the wake of Roman Catholic Spain’s 1588 defeat. Forty-years on, Hapsburg Spain does not look like a depleted power, but Stuart England definitely does.

Hinting at another topical moment, the stoical senators strike at Caesar’s providentialism from the grave, “ravishing” his patron-goddess Minerva, a figure linked directly to Marie de Médicis’ iconography in 1622-25. Throughout the play, Caesar has emphasized that he lives in “forfeit of [Minerva’s] favour” (4.2.201); and that his power will not been shaken “till Wisest Minerva, that from [his] first youth / Hast been [his] protectress. Dost forsake [him]” (5.1.148-50). Accordingly, his end is in sight when in 5.1, the stage direction reads: “A dreadful music sounding, enter RUSTICUS and SURA, with bloody swords; they wave them over his head. Caesar, in his sleep troubled, seems to pray to the image [Minerva’s]: they scornfully take it away” (180.2-4). When he awakes, he discovers that “These sacrilegious spirits […] / Robbed [his] hopes and being” (186-87); and ultimately admits defeat: “And methought / Minerva, ravished hence, 

whispered that she / Was for my blasphemies disarmed by Jove / And could no more protect me” (206-09).103

Interestingly, Domitian’s adulation of Minerva is termed “superstitious veneration” in Suetonius’s senatorial account (Dom. 15.3); it is superstitious because the Flavians (Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian) identified the Egyptian goddess Isis with Minerva, and “the followers of Isis were supported by all three Flavian emperors to an extent not seen again until the end of the second century.” Indeed, Domitian’s biographer notes that “[Domitian] “was certain that Isis’s support would come to join him as Jupiter’s earthly representative.”104 Therefore, Domitian Caesar’s Minerva is not the goddess of wisdom and icon of western civilization, but a “ravished,” eroticized, Oriental deity, pointing yet again to both Shakespeare’s Cleopatra, who donned “the’habiliments of the goddess Isis” (Antony and Cleopatra 3.6.17), and Marie de Médicis’ France. By evoking Cleopatra, the play casts the assault on Minerva’s statue in an iconoclastic, anti-Catholic light, whereby residual Catholicism paradoxically haunts the ghosts of the stoical senators whose own Catholic affect they deny. At the same time, their attack carries unambiguously anti-French elements, for Domitian’s adulation of Minerva is premised on political subordination to a spiritualized female authority. According to Jean Dubost, Rubens’s La vie de Marie de Médicis cycle visualizes how the regent queen’s image as “France personified” (“la France personnifiée”) is established via an absolute appropriation of

103 In Suetonius, just before Domitia Caesar was killed, he claimed that Minerva came to him in a dream to inform him that she was no longer able to protect him because Jupiter had disarmed her (Dom. 15.2).

104 Brian Jones, Emperor Domitian, 100-01.
Minerva’s symbolism; accordingly, the regent queen’s consummate triad of Marie-France-Minerve enshrined her cult of spiritualized female beauty, and underpinned the reach of her political influence.\textsuperscript{105} Yet, neither Marie-France-Minerve’s political reach, as represented by her daughter Henrietta Maria, nor the hot Protestant’s fragmented and sectarian attitude to English Catholics, are the only threat to the commonweal, as the play’s finale shows.

Caesar eventually admits that his “proud wreath,” the symbol of military prowess, “Is no assurance” (5.1. 207-08, 211-12); his superhuman confidence in his military might, which throughout the play, “bid defiance” to “intestine foes,” “foreign enemies,” and ultimately, “[astrologers] and fate” (4.1.107, 102-3, 108), is transformed into a ringing admission of weakness:

\begin{quote}
Let proud mortality but look on Caesar,
Compassed of late with armies, in his eyes
Carrying both life and death, and in his arms
Fathoming the earth, that would be styled a god
And is for that presumption cast beneath
The low condition of a common man,
Sinking with mine own weight. (5.1.273-78)
\end{quote}

Yet countercurrents trouble Caesar’s mortal despair. To be sure, his assassins plot their final stroke around Caesar’s deep-rooted imperial ideology. In 5.2, Parthenius tricks him

\textsuperscript{105} Dubost, Marie de Ménédès, 667-8.
into believing that the time is past his “fatal hour” (266), as Ascletario the Chaldean had prophesied in the previous scene (5.1.115-20). However, the bait that leaves Domitian unguarded, and thus a ripe target for assault, is news of war victories in Syria: “There is a post new lighted / That brings assured intelligence that your legions / In Syria have won a glorious day / And much enlarged your empire” (5.2.52-5). Predictably, news from abroad—ironically referred to as the promise of a “deferred peace,” “full of joy and wonder” restores Caesar’s military delusions; “How strangely hopes delude men” (61) is the tribune’s response to Caesar’s confidence in his military success.

More unusually, the detail of the fabricated news of military victory from Syria is Massinger’s invention and thus warrants further scrutiny. Certainly, Syria was already an established and prosperous province that enjoyed a positive relationship with Caesar at the time of his death.106 Of Massinger’s sources, Suetonius’s account of the events of Domitian’s murder is the most elaborate, where a group of “subalterns” and “Parthenius his principal Chamberlain,” without any mention of Domitia, “turned him another way, saying there was one come who brought tidings […] of great consequence.”107 The false news of victory in Syria symbolizes a delusional last attempt to restore his imperial might; it mirrors his victories over the Daci and Catti, ridicules his triumphal entry, and compromises his mythical marriage.

106 Even of Massinger’s senatorial sources, such as Pliny and Tacitus as well as Suetonius, endorse this positive view, justifying Syria’s prosperity as an indication of Domitian’s hatred for Rome and its people. Pleket, H.W. “Domitian, the Senate and the Provinces.” Mnemosyne. 14.1 (1961): 296-315. 304.

107 Qtd. in Martin White, Introduction, 11.
On another level, the play questions the growth of news circulation in England since the outbreak of the Thirty Years’ War. Of course, the play’s immediate contemporary is Ben Jonson’s satirical comedy, *The Staple of News* (1626), whose central focus is a booming market for news in the context of the European wars. In the Jonsonian landscape, “state secrets” become commodities to be collected and sold by trained “intelligencers,” and in an oblique way, Caesar’s acceptance of the fake news from Syria at face value chimes with Staples’s gullible customers. In fact, Caesar’s blind trust in reportage has already cast grave doubt on his political acumen. At the beginning of the play, Parthenius tells Domitia, who is baffled by the marriage proposal, that Caesar was “fired,” Desdemona-style, “with the relation of [her] story,” her “virtues” and “goodness,” which Parthenius “have sung” “with […] zeal” (1.2.27-30); and his account of her indescribable beauty as “nature’s masterpiece” and “As the pure abstract of all rare in woman” (1.2.22, 23).

Most important, the fabricated victory in Syria and Caesar’s stage-managed mythical love become a means through which the play resets the dialogism of dynastic marriage and peace and/or war. In the context of French wedding panegyrics, Syria is a location of great symbolic resonance, particularly in Abraham Rémy’s pastoral romance, *La Galatée, ou les aventures du prince Astiagès* (1625). Similar to Boisrobert’s poem, Rémy allegorizes the historical events that led to the collapse of the Spanish match and the ensuing Anglo-French marriage. In this long account, dedicated to Henrietta Maria, France becomes Cyprus, England Cilicia, and Spain Syria. Syria is presented as Cyprus’s
fiercest enemy, its alliance with Cilicia a pretext for imperial domination. Karen Britland notes *La Galatée*’s interventionist subtext that urges both England and France to take up arms against hegemonic Spain. In this configuration, Domitian Caesar’s conquests beyond the Rhine at the beginning of the play and his counterfeit victory in Syria come full circle, frame his disastrous marriage to Domitia, and tie the play to the Thirty Years’ War and the Anglo-French marriage at a highly charged moment of yet another renegotiated politico-religious realignment.

Concurrent with *The Roman Actor*’s appearance on the stage of the Blackfriars in October 1626, Buckingham and Bassompierre finalized a renegotiated marriage treaty, whose premise in the first place was the restitution of the Palatinate. However, France and Spain had already secretly signed the Treaty of Monzón in March 1626, whereby “the two great Catholic states […] would unite with both naval and land forces to invade England and a provisional date for the invasion was even set for the summer of 1627.” At York House, nonetheless, Buckingham treated Bassompierre, under the auspices of Charles and Henrietta Maria, to the banquet of a lifetime—“le plus superbe festin que je vis de ma vie” as the French ambassador wrote in his *Mémoires.*

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111 “The most superb banquet that I have ever seen in my life.” Bassompierre, *Mémoires*, III, 274.
Henrietta Maria presented her own reconciliatory masque at Somerset house. An aura of goodwill enveloped Buckingham and Henrietta Maria’s pageantry, which recuperated the wedding iconography of harmony and love, and dramatized a “constructive interdependence between royal affinities,” as Martin Butler has suggested. Under the iconographical guise of unity and conciliation, Bassompierre and Buckingham’s diplomatic settlement temporarily raised hopes of a peaceful solution to the Anglo-French crisis, but failed to secure any lasting achievements.

It is difficult not to adopt a retrospective view in reading The Roman Actor against Bassompierre and Buckingham’s promise of European unity and confessional transcendence, as some months later Buckingham set out on a naval expedition to La Rochelle while England’s war with Spain was ongoing. But we can read, on a discursive level, an embedded act of dissent. By giving Domitian Caesar a false victory over Syria, the play suspends the dialogical relationship between dynastic marriage and peace/or war, and bids its viewers to stare at a medieval dynastic system struggling to contain confessional, political, and economic forces that were working to reshape the wider political culture.

Embedded in The Roman Actor is an underlying sense of ambivalence, which wrestles with its inherently contradictory pulses, dissent and conciliation. The play’s final tableau eschews closure, in particular because Caesar’s death adds little more than tragic ambiance; its silence on the political future of the realm or the fate of Caesar’s assassins

112 Martin Butler, The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture, chapter 9; Britland, Drama at the Courts of Henrietta Maria, 57-60.
is one of several antithetical moments that have recurred in the play. On the one hand, the ideologically fraught nexus of internal political struggles and external imperial conquest with which *The Roman Actor* opens is recast as a domestic tragedy. For his assassins have no political capacity, but avenge personal injuries as wronged wives and oppressed servants, not as (dis)loyal wives and (un)devoted subjects. Yet, for a fleeting moment, Caesar’s assassins occupy center stage, and articulate the play’s one form of consensus: the former slave, the violated women, the servant, and the Orientalized queen push political difference to the edge. Interestingly, Domitian Caesar’s military imperialism, as well as the senators’ republican virtue, seem to embody two extreme positions that, for better or worse, do not define this critical moment; their ideological legacy displaced by the values of a more pragmatic, individualistic group, including women and freemen. Whether this altered terrain reflects a wider dissolution of political ideals or the potential of a historical threshold is a question Massinger seems reluctant to answer.
This study has focused on micro historical moments of massive anxiety, dissonance, and change—what Julie Sanders and Ian Atherton identify as “fields of force”\(^1\)—when debates around dynastic marriages were the hot topic of the day. Pausing to consider these charged moments enables a multilayered understanding of how plays such as William Shakespeare and John Fletcher’s *Henry VII* (1613), Fletcher’s *The Island Princess* (1621), and Philip Massinger’s *The Roman Actor* (1626) stage the pressing concerns surrounding England’s dynastic politics—indeed, issues considered exclusively by the great, the good, and the godly—for a mixed and wide audience. On a more expansive level, this study has brought to the surface the long ideologically-charged tradition of dynasticism that informed contemporaries’ reaction to Stuart matrimonial alliances, and registered an episode in the drawn-out breakdown of royal marriage.

L’après-Henrietta Maria brought back memories of an earlier iconoclasm. When the English Civil War broke out, monuments commemorating royal consorts were the first to receive the iconoclast’s blow. Indeed, the ultimate act of erasure occurred when the tomb of Katherine of Aragon in Peterborough Cathedral was ransacked. David Cressy tells us that the Eleanor crosses as a site of remembrance, particularly Cheapside Cross, were demolished in 1643 “and appears to have faded from memory.”\(^2\) These violent acts  

\(^1\) Julie Sanders and Ian Atherton, eds, *Introducing the 1630s*, 6.  
\(^2\) David Cressy, *Agnes Bowker's Cat*, 250.
of obliteration symbolized the desire to deface an entire set of foreign, Catholic, and female figures who occupied a locus of intense anxiety before a new age of “puritanism” and national security could begin.

In 1662, when upon the Restoration of the monarchy a marriage alliance with the newly-independent Kingdom of Portugal was hastily arranged, London resurrected a ritualized performance of royal continuity last seen at the occasion of the Palatine wedding in 1613. There is an irresistible circularity in the city’s celebration of Charles II’s wedding to Catherine of Braganza. In one of the texts of the royal entry, *Aqua Triumphalis* (1662), the Thames tells the king that his island and Portugal are:

> [...] one in Fame,

> There is no difference ‘twixt ‘em but in Name,

> Lisbon is London Tagus Thames, and then,

> The Portugues are become Englishmen

> The English, Portugues, both meet in hearts,

> Thus Providence unites remotest parts.  

The desire of the Thames to become one with the Tagus is justified in light of the large dowry Catherine of Braganza brought with her—Tangier in North Africa and Bombay in India—which mirrored the promise of an heir her fertile body symbolized.

However, as the frontispiece to Pierre de Cardonnel’s *Complementum Fortunatarum Insularum* (1662) throws into relief, Catherine of Braganza’s austere appearance was far

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from Charles II embodiment of opulence and royalty (see fig. 4). For Catherine had been living in a convent for a number of years before she was suddenly summoned to play Queen of England.

It is significant that Richard Fanshawe’s translation of Luis de Camões’s jingoistic epic, Os Luciadas, was reprinted in 1664 (first printed in 1655). First published upon the seafaring poet’s return to Portugal from India in 1572, Camões Luciadas crystallized Portugal’s imperial heydey before it was annexed to Spain in 1578, and its publication in England constitutes an ultimate act of retrieval of a time when Portugal and England were unhinged by the hegemonic power of Spain. It is also an almost desperate affirmation that dynastic marriage brings gifts—material and symbolic—that no parliamentary power could substitute.

Most important, however, is the hollowness of Fanshawe’s recourse to an epic poem as a propagandistic tool to reincorporate dynastic marriage in the Restoration. In fact, Fanshawe, as Charles II’s liaison in negotiating the marriage, had every reason to save face. For Catherine’s promised dowry of gold translated into bags of spice and sugar upon the English fleet’s arrival in Lisbon to take the future consort to England in 1661. Indeed, Richard Fanshawe and others of his ilk would live to see the day when the future of the kingdom would never again be attached to a Catholic and foreign royal woman, no matter how appealing the material gains appeared to be.
Fig. 4. Charles II of England and Catherine of Braganza in Pierre de Cardonnel’s *Complementum Fortunatarum Insularum* (1662), frontispiece.
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