eventual fall. The cardinal made mistakes and bore some blame for the demise of his personal empire of power and patronage, but he was also a victim of circumstance who, as a low-born royal servant, always depended on Henry's favour and never had any truly independent power. The book is easy to follow and balances narrative progression with a thematic focus on key areas of Wolsey's achievements, although I feel each chapter would have benefited from a brief conclusion gathering together its main insights.

Overall, in an admirably concise treatment, Richardson does justice to Thomas Wolsey's complexity, drawing out the cardinal's desire to be seen as a learned figure and patron of learning and eschewing simplistic portrayals of Wolsey as a schemer or overreacher. For all that, however, Richardson's most telling judgement on Wolsey is that 'His ambitions … ever outran his capacity to achieve them' (p. 151). In spite of his immense and impressive abilities, Wolsey simply bit off more than he could chew. This balanced, nuanced, and up-to-date biography will hopefully make Wolsey accessible to a new generation of scholars and bring his extraordinary legacy the attention it deserves.

Francis Young

Alexander Samson, *Mary and Philip: The Marriage of Tudor England and Habsburg Spain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020, pp. iii + 278, £80.00, ISBN: 978-1-5261-4223-8

For at least two decades, Mary Tudor's brief reign has been subject to re-examination. Eamon Duffy and John Edwards, among others, have sought to bury the myths created by confessionally-tinged historiographies describing the Marian period as a failure and dismissing her reign as anomalous and ultimately unimportant. To do this, they have overturned the image of a dour, violent, tactless, incompetent ruler. The revisionist line has insisted that the queen was in fact politically savvy and marked by grit that enabled her to survive challenges to her authority early on. Far from a monarchy in shambles, she worked hard to establish her authority and made strides toward real (political and spiritual) reform. By their telling, England, if briefly, became a central hub for Catholic spiritual renewal to the extent that, as Duffy put it, the Marian regime 'invented' (in the broadest sense) the Counter-Reformation. I confess from the start that I am skeptical. Indeed, I suspect that the other shoe of post-revisionism will soon drop, ending the current maximalist positive view which has overturned old maximalist points of view in the other direction. No doubt Samson's book casts its lot with the revisionist lot, but it stands out as one of the most analytically astute and plain interesting studies of the sort. This is partly the

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result of its tight focus on an ill-served topic, the Anglo-Spanish marriage between Philip and Mary, its origins, and some of its consequences.

The book is not a full narrative of co-rulership, but reads more like a set of deft essays that illuminate discrete sources underpinning a broader story. Samson begins with the 'prenuptial' moment and describes the relative strength Mary showed as she took power of a kingdom filled with supportive subjects. He then provides a nuanced account of qualms about the impending marriage contract between Philip and Mary (on both sides), while emphasizing the desire on both sides and the extent to which the process and outcomes fit European norms, and specifically Spanish models (in particular the marriage between Ferdinand and Isabella). The consequences were, of course, not all positive, as the Wyatt Rebellion attests to. Samson shows the ways in which that conflict, which he considers in the end marginal, questioned Mary's authority and heaped scorn upon her lustful betrothed. Despite the propagandistic claims among Protestants, and their perpetuation by modern scholarship, Samson argues (through a close reading of the Act for the Queen's Regal Power) that in no way was English sovereignty diminished by the marriage. To the contrary, her reign fortified the kingdom's constitutional underpinning. The next two chapters discuss the significance of key public events and performances, including the king's visit to Winchester Cathedral and a subsequent visit with Mary herself, as well as their royal entry to London. These chapters are filled with interesting morsels, including the Spanish representation of these events in the cast of romances and the details of the symbolic significance of various representations. With the London entry, Samson finds evidence of the broad-spread support of the power couple and of Philip himself, especially among merchants, who were interested in the promise of internationalism. Picking up on this theme of English openness to Spanish presence, Samson takes the issue head on by arguing that English xenophobia has been greatly exaggerated and that hispanophobia as expressed was really the reflection of propagandists in exile who had absorbed discourses from abroad, especially Italy. The final chapter seeks to underscore features of co-rulership, including Mary's tight control over affairs of state (which has been denied by an older historiography). He emphasizes the extent to which her critics were not primarily concerned with her role as woman, but by her Catholicism. This final chapter concludes with a discussion of Philip's presence, the cultural positioning of co-rulership and the splendidness of courtly culture that emerges as symbolic and indicative of success. In the end, both Philip and Mary transpire as fully engaged monarchs navigating a range of national and international engagements within a dynamic of complex power sharing.

On the level of close reading of texts to explore their meanings and possible significance, this book is a triumph. Where other scholars have

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shied away from exploring the Anglo-Spanish story due to incomplete sources, Samson has found a way to get substantial mileage from a range of legal, literary, and polemical documents to show the intermixing and hybridity of English and Spanish culture and politics during Mary and Philip's reign.

The book, though, is not fully convincing as a reconceptualization of the period. I suspect this is because it is framed as a project of rehabilitation. Samson wants to 'highlight the positive achievements of the reign and offer a balanced assessment of the glittering dynastic union of England and Spain' (p.14). Such a goal is justified in light of a negative scholarly tradition, not to mention the myths that prevail in popular culture. Despite claims of 'balance', however, the end product is a counterpunch as opposed to a full account of co-rulership, warts and all.

A rose-coloured tincture results from the sources used. That Samson takes seriously and studies deeply documents produced by the regime on both Spanish and English sides is important, but on occasion he takes these at face value, without a full consideration of their propagandistic nature. For example, despite his acknowledgment of the tensions and pockets of dissatisfaction in London, he uses descriptions of the royal entry there to show that 'Philip was welcomed with rejoicing' (p.133). This may be so, as far as the choreographed event is concerned, but such rituals are not meant to take account of dissatisfaction. Less than thirty years later, Philip II would be feted in Lisbon as he took the Portuguese crown. Contemporary descriptions describe effusive praise and hyperbole (especially, as in England, by merchants). And yet, the opposition to his Philip's reign there was real, deep, and consistent until the rebellion secession of the mid seventeenth century.

For Samson's positive take on the regime, critics need to be marginalized. On the one hand, of course, Samson is right to point out that Mary's relatively smooth thwarting of rebels upon Edward's death and the limitations of the Wyatt rebellion—'a tenth the size of the Pilgrimage of Grace' (p. 137)—do not imply anything like a wholesale, a priori rejection of Mary and even her consort. But, if the Elizabethan period has taught us anything, it is that so-called marginal voices can be quite important. Are we to say that the failure of the Northern Rebellion (a relatively contained affair) against Elizabeth, barely twenty years after the Wyatt affair, amid broad acceptance and even allegiance to Elizabeth, suggests that Catholics did not matter or were not significant players in the politics of her reign? A torrent of recent scholarship suggest not, so why would the dynamic be so profoundly different during Mary's reign?

Moreover, it is unclear whether or not most of England *actively* supported the queen and her husband. Samson does well to show that merchant interest certainly did, but there is no convincing evidence that the greater part of the population followed suit. The assumption that they did is coloured by the idea that 'Catholics were still the majority in England'

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(p. 125), a rather bold claim given all that we have learned about the ambiguities of confessional allegiances during the Tudor period. What do we mean by Catholic? This was as vexed a question during Mary's reign as it was before and after her. It is worth noting that critiques of Mary were not only the product of Protestant zeal, but also of a certain Jesuit sensibility later in the sixteenth century, which emphasized her failures of religious reform. Her shortcomings were linked to a supposedly corrupt court that could and did help dupe and mislead Mary and Philip.

Samson ultimately argues that the co-rulership of Philip and Mary was, in fact 'a great success, incorporating England into the heart of a global empire' (p. 223). To be sure, the cultural and political effects of the marriage are not primarily 'negative' but it would be remarkable if England departed from the realities of the rest of the empire, held together as it was in the shadow of instability and discontent, even within the Iberian Peninsula. If one were forgiven to dabble in counterfactuals, as much of the recent literature on Mary does, it is easy to imagine this early honeymoon period as described here descending into chaos amid contention between the regime and the papacy (the architect of religious reform, Reginald Pole, had been excommunicated by the Pope), potential ongoing punishments of Protestants, and deepening involvement of England in the various crises attending the Spanish Habsburg empire. It seems to me that a glittering court does not in any way reflect stability.

Ultimately, though, Samson has provided a foundational work in what he rightly identifies as a field awaiting more exploration. There is little doubt that his book is a sort of death knell for old-fashioned takes on Mary and Philip: it shows by example that there are all sorts of sources that have been untapped. Having helped establish this, I hope that scholarship will increasingly deal with the Marian regime outside the shadow of chauvinist and confessional scholarship that seems more dull and dilapidated with every passing year.

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Aislinn Muller, *The Excommunication of Elizabeth I: Faith, Politics, and Resistance in Post-Reformation England, 1570-1603*, Leiden: Brill, 2020, pp. x+242, €125.00, ISBN: 978-90-04-42600-9

The papal excommunication of Elizabeth I is probably one of the most infamous, and lesser explored, moments in late-sixteenth century British history. Issued in 1570, over a decade after Elizabeth I acceded to the throne, the papal bull *Regnans in Excelsis* declared the English queen a heretic and questioned her legitimacy. The excommunication changed the course of the Elizabethan regime's dealings with Catholics

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