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“I NEITHER OMIT AUGHT, NOR HAVE I OMITTED AUGHT”:
EMBODYING A SOVEREIGN—THE RESIDENT AMBASSADOR
IN THE ELIZABETHAN COURT, 1558-1560

by

Sarah M. Gawronski

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

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2011

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ABSTRACT

“I neither omit aught, nor have I omitted aught”:
Embodying a Sovereign—The Resident Ambassador
in the Elizabethan Court, 1558-1560

by

Sarah M. Gawronski, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2011

Major Professor: Dr. Norman Jones
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In November 1558, Elizabeth I ascended the throne of England as a single Queen with Protestant tendencies in a male-dominated Catholic world. Her council believed it was imperative that she marry immediately, and the rest of Western Europe agreed. Catholic suitors sought to bring England back under Catholic control. Protestant suitors hoped for an ally in the religious wars that were ravaging Europe. Even Englishmen sought to become king. Ambassadors from the Spanish Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Baltics and Scotland came to negotiate the suits of their monarchs.

Ambassadorial correspondences are often used as primary source material for historians, yet few rarely recognize the importance of the ambassador and his role in the court, especially during the marriage negotiations of Elizabeth I. Ambassadors left their home to live in a foreign country, often for long periods of time. The ambassadors were

the embodiment of their sovereigns during the negotiations, and often success or failure rested on their abilities. An ambassador was the eyes and ears of the Elizabethan court for his sovereign in a foreign country. They wrote minutely detailed letters that included basic facts and information along with court gossip and personal opinions and recommendations. Their intimate relationship with the Queen and her court made their recommendations invaluable to their monarch. They were far more than mere note takers and should be recognized as such.

The focus of this thesis deals primarily with the ambassadorial reports of the Spanish and Hapsburg ambassadors as they participated in the negotiations in one form or another during the time frame discussed, 1558-1560. They also not only wrote about their own negotiations but the negotiations involving Protestant and English suitors. Their reports are full of pertinent information that, without, their monarchs would have been blind to the goings on of the English court. The marriage of Elizabeth I was seen as a priority by all except her. During the first two years of her reign, more than a half dozen suits were pursued, not just by kings and dukes, earls and knights, but, more importantly, by their ambassadors.

(131 pages)

To my parents Jim and Cathy Gawronski
who have never stopped believing in me.

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CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. ENGLISH SUITORS	17
III. CATHOLIC SUITORS	54
IV. PROTESTANT SUITORS	89
V. CONCLUSION	110
REFERENCES	120

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A resident ambassador would leave his own country to reside in a foreign country of either friend or foe in order to dutifully serve his sovereign and ensure the safety and affluence of his own country and crown. Ambassadors were very important in mediating the relationships between allied and enemy countries. And they became vitally important when Elizabeth I ascended the throne of England in 1558 as a single woman with Protestant tendencies in a male dominated Catholic world. It was very unusual for a single woman to take the seat of power and rule without a husband for a significant length of time.¹ This fact changed the dynamics of the political arena in which Elizabeth would be participating. Because of Elizabeth's unique situation, marriage negotiations with England became a dominant factor in the foreign policy of many countries, both Catholic and Protestant. Within England, Elizabeth's foreign policy, her religious preferences, and her marriage prospects were all intricately intertwined. And it was the duty of the ambassador to successfully mediate both the foreign policies and the marriage negotiations.

It was clear at the first of her reign that Elizabeth would remain separate from Rome just as her father dictated and her brother maintained. It was also quickly apparent that she would maintain Edwardian Protestant principles. By the summer of 1559 Parliament had made it clear, through a series of mandates, that England would be a

¹ Her sister Mary took the throne as a single queen, but she actively sought a husband and shortly afterwards married Prince Philip of Spain.

Protestant nation.² However, Elizabeth maintained a very moderate religious practice. As long as one was faithful and loyal to the crown, private practices would be tolerated. Her reasons for moderation were to avoid a religious civil war which were occurring across the European continent and to maintain peace with her powerful Catholic neighbors. Philip II of Spain and the Pope were reluctant to wage war against England because they believed a Catholic husband could return the country to Catholicism and Rome. Within days of Elizabeth's accession, Count de Feria, the Spanish ambassador, wrote home to Philip, "The more I think over this business, the more certain I am that everything depends upon the husband this woman may take. If he be a suitable one religious matters will go on well, and the kingdom will remain friendly to your Majesty, but if not it will all be spoilt."³ Carol Levin argues, "She [Elizabeth] wanted the Catholic powers to think she was not that different from them so they would tolerate her and not launch a Holy Crusade against England."⁴

However, because she maintained Protestant principals throughout her realm, other Protestant powers looked to her as a beacon of hope and an ally. Within the first year of her reign, Elizabeth had to decide just how Protestant she was when the Scottish Lords of the Congregation entreated her for help in support of their rebellion against their Catholic French rulers. Elizabeth was diametrically opposed to rebellion against an anointed sovereign. However, Elizabeth's council, especially her chief advisor, Sir

² Wallace MacCaffery claims that one of Elizabeth's primary goals for selecting a Protestant religious settlement was political, so that the state would maintain control of the church. Wallace MacCaffery, *Elizabeth I* (London: Edward Arnold, 1993), 71-73.

³ *Spanish Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs. Vol. 1 Elizabeth 1558-1567, ed. Martin Hume (England: Public Records Office), 3, November 21, 1559.*

⁴ Carol Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 25.

William Cecil, understood that Scotland was England's back door and open for enemy invasion. This was of particular importance since the Scottish born, French wed, Catholic Mary Stuart claimed the English throne as her own. The council's argument was that by supporting the rebels she was also safekeeping her kingdom by barricading that door against the French. Wallace MacCaffery states that "The English Queen and the Scottish rebels found common ground in two long-term causes – the exclusion of Continental intruders from their island and the advancement of reformed faith."⁵ In 1560, the Scottish Lords of the Congregation, with the help of Elizabeth's army, evicted all but a handful of French troops from Scotland under the terms of the Treaty of Edinburgh.

Despite the Protestant mandates and her support of another Protestant power, Elizabeth was able to delicately balance her Catholic subjects and Catholic neighbors. The most significant way she did this was through her marriage negotiations and the foreign ambassadors residing in her realm.

Foreign ambassadors resided in England in order to help maintain peace, conduct foreign policy, and especially to help facilitate the marriage negotiations of Elizabeth I. The purpose of this thesis is to argue that too often ambassadors are dismissed by historians as nothing more than fact finders, note takers, or transcribers, yet they were diplomatic links between both allied and enemy countries. The ambassador's greatest asset was his ability to listen, not just to official court proceedings but also to rumors and conjectures. He would then relay all of this information back to his sovereign in minutely detailed letters. However, an ambassador did not simply transcribe the information he found from listening, he also relayed personal opinions and recommendations. Because

⁵ MacCaffery, *Elizabeth I*, 63.

of the ambassador's intimacy with a foreign court, his advice and personal comments were invaluable to his sovereign. At the same time, the ambassador would be acting on his sovereigns behalf in a foreign court. At times, especially during the marriage negotiations with Queen Elizabeth I, an ambassador would not only be his sovereigns eyes and ears at the court but often his sovereign by proxy. The failure or success of a particular negotiation was often dependent upon the ability of an ambassador and his relationship to the Queen and her court.

Once Elizabeth took the throne, it was assumed that she would take a husband who would help her rule England and produce an heir. As far as her Privy Council was concerned, it was a political necessity in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the kingdom. There was no precedent for a strong English queen whose reign was successful. Matilda's brief reign in the twelfth-century was plagued by civil war, and Mary Tudor's was plagued by foreign war and religious martyrs. It was also the natural order under heaven—a woman was supposed to have a husband to rule her. MacCaffery argues, “that she *would* marry was taken for granted: it was unthinkable that she should hold the reins of power by herself.”⁶ Even if Elizabeth intended on taking a husband, the necessity was not great enough to force her to rush the process. Throughout her reign, Parliament tried to pressure her into picking a husband. To this she would answer that she was content with the single life, was wedded to her kingdom, and her subjects were her children, but if God or political necessity prompted a change she would then choose a husband, but she would not choose a man who would bring her into conflict with her Parliament or her

⁶ MacCaffery, *Elizabeth I*, 70 (italics in original).

subjects.⁷ With this she was able to temporarily placate her councilors and then continue to avoid the issue.

There is great debate about whether or not Elizabeth intended to remain unmarried or if that assumption was just a byproduct of the fact that she never married. Because marriage was such a societal obligation for women in her day, it was naturally assumed by all that she would get married. This was an assumption shared by all except Elizabeth herself. Because of the time she lived in and this societal norm, some historians, like Susan Doran author of *Monarchy and Matrimony*, argue that as a female ruler she had every intention of getting married and she conducted the negotiations seriously with the end purpose of marriage, but it was the various circumstances and conflicts that prevented this. Doran calls Elizabeth's oath to a life of virginity a "myth" and argues "too often . . . historians dismissed the queen's courtships as 'empty charades', 'political dalliance' or 'diplomatic games', which had no chance of success because of her intransigent opposition to marriage." Her work is designed to "treat seriously all those marriage negotiations that were taken seriously by Elizabeth and her contemporaries . . ." ⁸ However, to do this, a key element has to be ignored or explained away—the fact that from the start of her reign Elizabeth made it clear to ministers, parliament, ambassadors, and other monarchs that she intended to remain unmarried, but, argues Jones, "no one wanted to believe her."⁹ As early as 1559 she declared to her Parliament, "I have made choice of this kind of life [the single life] . . . I am already

⁷ Leah S. Marcus et al, "Her answer to [the Commons'] petition that she marry," 1559, in *Elizabeth I Collected Works*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 59-61.

⁸ Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1.

⁹ Norman Jones, *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age: England in the 1560s* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1993), 154.

bound unto an husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice you.”

And again she declared, “And in the end, this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a Queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin.”¹⁰

The ambassadors’ letters home are filled with her many comments and declarations that she wished to remain single:

She began to answer me by keeping to her old arguments for not wishing to marry. . . . That she had no desire to marry, as she had intimated from the first day. . . . She replied that she had very good reasons by which she could prove to me that it was not desirable that she should marry at present, but that the reason why she did not marry was really only because she could not incline herself to change her state and she did not know how long this condition of mind would last . . .”¹¹

Both Norm Jones and Carol Levin also argue that, with few exceptions, Elizabeth never had any real intention of getting married. Jones concludes his discussion of the issue of Elizabeth’s marriage with, “Elizabeth, to her credit, understood the assumptions about the proper place of a married woman and refused to assume it . . . she knew she could not be fully queen and a dutiful wife at once. . . . She was open and blunt about her preference to remain single.”¹² Levin argues the same, with the exception of Dudley in the early part of her reign and the Duke of Alencon in the latter.¹³ This did not change the fact, however, that Elizabeth was willing to use the marriage suits to her political advantage.

Ambassadors came from many Western European countries to promote the suit of their sovereigns. Lutheran suitors from the Baltic hoped for a Protestant ally who would help defend their religious independence. Catholics hoped to restore England to

¹⁰ Elizabeth I, “Her answer to [the Commons],” 59. Also quoted in Jones, *Elizabethan Age*, pp. 123.

¹¹ *CSP Spanish*, vol. 1, 28, February 20, 1559; 33, February 29, 1559; 122, February 3, 1560.

¹² Jones, *Elizabethan Age*, 154.

¹³ Carol Levin, *Heart and Stomach of a King* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 65.

Catholicism and Rome. Strategically, England was crucial because it controlled the shipping route up the English Channel. Both religion and politics played a significant role in the pursuit of Elizabeth I. Any monarch who could win her hand would also gain her country and an ally in the combined religious and political wars. Therefore, ambassadors of many nations and both religions had a daunting and very important task ahead of them: they had to convince an evasive queen, a skeptical parliament, and a paranoid country that their monarch was the superior choice for a husband to Elizabeth and a king to England.

The use of resident ambassadors to help maintain peace and gather information first began in the Italian states and then spread to the rest of Europe by 1500. An ambassador was generally an educated upper class male, who was of sufficient rank to be acceptable at court, and who was a loyal servant of his king. Ambassadors may have lived and worked in foreign countries for a significant part of their lives, and in some cases may have taken foreign spouses, but they were first and foremost servants to their own monarchs. Ermolao Barbaro, the first man to write about the resident ambassador, describes their work: “The first duty of an ambassador is exactly the same as that of any other servant of a government, that is, to do, say, advise and think whatever may best serve the preservation and aggrandizement of his own state.”¹⁴ An ambassador was the voice of his monarch in a foreign court.

An ambassador’s job was to listen to and observe every detail that was occurring around him and then write minutely detailed letters reporting anything and everything to

¹⁴Ermolao Barbaro quoted in Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (London: Butler and Tanner, 1955), 109.

his monarch. As Garrett Mattingly describes, “The collecting, processing and packaging of information were the resident ambassador’s main task.” An ambassador also needed to have a good reputation and retain the trust of the monarch: “Conspiracy, assassination, corruption, and chicane” was not recommended, rarely useful, and “almost always ruined the reputation, and therefore future usefulness” of an ambassador.¹⁵ However, at times, ambassadors would trade, buy, or bribe their way to useful information or gossip. According to Carol Levin, “. . . foreign ambassadors bribed the women of Elizabeth’s bedchamber for intimate information about her life . . .”¹⁶

Gathering and reporting information was the key task of any resident ambassador. However, they were more than just note takers. Ambassadors’ letters are filled with recommendations on how his sovereign should handle a particular situation, whether the monarch followed this advice or not, it was still expected. The letters are also filled with opinions, some political and some simply personal. A successful and invaluable ambassador was one who could gain the trust of a foreign monarch and the court and did not neglect the trivial things or deem himself unworthy to pass along both recommendations and opinions. Ambassadors did not rely simply on official discussion regarding the marriage negotiations but also the unofficial or court gossip, and they diligently reported this home too.

I will not be using the ambassadors’ reports to try and determine what Elizabeth was saying or how she was representing herself because, far more important, is not what she said but how the ambassadors heard it. Because, as Levin argues, Elizabeth’s

¹⁵ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 110-15.

¹⁶ Levin, *Heart and Stomach*, 86.

representation of herself may not be true thoughts or feelings of this queen, “they [Elizabeth’s words] reveal not so much what she felt about marriage but what she felt would be politic for her to say about marriage.”¹⁷ The importance of the ambassador’s reports is: what they heard, how they interpreted it and reported it, and what recommendations and opinions were sent with it. The most detailed letters are from the Spanish ambassadors, Count de Feria and Bishop Quadra, and the ambassadors of the Holy Roman Empire, Count Helffenstein and Baron Casper Breuner.

These ambassadors were the eyes and ears of the English court for a sovereign on the continent. They were also the embodiment of their sovereign’s wishes and desires. The ambassadors’ correspondences are often used as primary sources for many historians, yet they are often just viewed as reports and the ambassadors as reporting machines. It is rarely recognized that ambassadors were often confidants of their sovereigns, gave opinions, recommendations, and advice that were critical to the sovereign’s decision making and the direction of foreign policy.

Count de Feria was a very trusted servant of Philip II. David Loades argues, “Feria was not regarded as particularly gifted, but he was loyal, personable, and without ambition. He was also transparently honest . . . He was regarded as second in influence only to the king's Portuguese secretary, Ruy Gomez da Silva.”¹⁸ Feria was respected by Queen Mary, but things changed dramatically when Elizabeth came to the throne. Very early on, it was apparent that Feria would not have the same status and respectability he

¹⁷Levin, *Heart and Stomach*, 44

¹⁸ David Loades, “Suárez de Figueroa, Gómez, first duke of Feria in the Spanish nobility (1520?–1571),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, October 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/70578> (accessed April 12, 2010).

had under Mary. Mattingly remarks, “in general the Renaissance diplomat understood that his job was to win and hold the confidence and respect of the people among whom he worked, since otherwise he could neither be believed himself, nor obtain the information which he sought.”¹⁹ Feria was regarded with suspicion by the new queen and her government. This made him an ineffective ambassador.

In late spring 1559, only six months into Elizabeth’s reign, Count de Feria was replaced as ambassador by Alvaro de la Quadra, Bishop of Aquila. Martin Hume argues that Aquila was the best choice because he was “supple, patient, insinuating and unscrupulous . . . he was the type of the ecclesiastical diplomatist that especially suited Philip’s cautious, stealthy methods when religion and politics were almost interchangeable words. Thenceforward for nearly five years . . . Aquila, was a foremost factor in English politics.” Hume continues to argue that “the difference between Feria’s rough methods and the gentle softness of the Bishop is soon apparent in a better understanding between the Queen and the Ambassador.”²⁰

Despite a “better understanding” between the queen and Bishop Quadra, both ambassadors were very critical of Elizabeth and her court. They considered her a weak and unsuitable queen and thought her government unstable. And, as qualified ambassadors, they dutifully wrote even their most derisive opinions. Bishop Quadra reported,

I have lost all hope in the affairs of this woman. She is convinced of the soundness of her unstable power, and will only see her error when she is irretrievably lost. . . . I should be glad if that woman (Elizabeth) were to quite lose her head and bring matters to a point, *although when I think*

¹⁹ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, 115.

²⁰ Martin Hume, “Introduction,” in *CSP Spanish*.

what a baggage she is and what a crew she is surrounded by, there is probability enough of my wish coming true. . . . her language (learnt from Italian heretic friars who brought her up) is so shifty that it is the most difficult thing in the world to negotiate with her. *With her all is falsehood and vanity.*"²¹

Count Helffenstein and Baron Casper Breuner were the two ambassadors sent to England by the Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand. Count Helffenstein was sent over earlier, shortly after Elizabeth took the throne. He was sent not to initiate marriage negotiations but to test the waters for a potential match with one of the Emperor's sons. He was there to see if Elizabeth would be receptive to such an offer and more importantly to see if the religious changes in England would be conducive to a match with the Holy Roman Empire. Once it was determined that the Emperor would begin negotiations he replaced Helffenstein with Baron Casper Breuner. Breuner was sent over to begin official negotiations between Elizabeth and one of the emperor's sons. Both Helffenstein and Breuner wrote about Elizabeth and her court in a much more favorable light than any of Spanish ambassadors' letters portrayed her. In February 1559, Helffenstein reported to Ferdinand the kindness and generosity of the queen and in a postscript to that same letter he stated that "the Queen was a beautiful, clever, intelligent, and sweet tempered woman."²² These statements are quite contradictory to those that Feria reported to the King of Spain. The ambassador's from the Holy Roman Emperor seemed to genuinely hope for a match between the two. According to Susan Doran, "Helffenstein was optimistic. Religion seemed to him no bar to a marriage," since it appeared to him that

²¹ *CSP Spanish*, 89, July 27, 1559 and 106, October 14, 1559 (emphasis added).

²² Victor Von Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and some feigners; being a series of hertherto unpublished letters from the archives of the Hapsburg family* (London: John Lane and Bodley Head LTD, 1928), 31, 26 February 1559.

the Catholicism was being maintained throughout England, and like Feria, he believed that a strong Catholic king would be able to completely restore Catholicism in England.²³

Organization and Sources

The focus of this thesis dates from the time of Elizabeth's accession in November 1558 until about September 1560 when Robert Dudley's wife was found dead under mysterious circumstances. At that time greater scandal surrounding Dudley ensued, he was able to become a legitimate suitor, and many of the early suits had dissipated. The next important negotiation would be the renewal of the Archduke Charles suit in 1563. The organization of this thesis will be as follows: Chapter I will discuss Robert Dudley and the other English suitors both Catholic and Protestant; Chapter II will look at the prominent foreign Catholic suitors of this time, Philip II of Spain and the Archduke Charles of Austria, and Chapter III will look at the prominent foreign Protestant suitors of this time, Eric XIV of Sweden and James Hamilton, the Earl of Arran.

Chapter I will discuss the English suitors who were considered 'serious' candidates: William Pickering, Henry Fitz-Alan, the Earl of Arundel, and Robert Dudley. However, it focuses primarily on the suit and scandal surrounding Robert Dudley, a man who was clearly recognized as the queen's favorite within months of her taking the throne. These suitors are looked at primarily through the point of view of the Spanish ambassadors with minor insertions from the Imperial ambassadors. Through the use of secondary sources and the ambassador's letters I will answer the questions: Who was Robert Dudley? What were his credentials for being a "serious" suitor to the queen? And

²³ Susan Doran, "Religion and Politics at the Court of Elizabeth I: the Habsburg marriage negotiations of 1559-1567" in *English Historical Review* (London: Longman Group UK Limited, October 1989), 908.

when and why did his suit fail? It also explores the scandal surrounding both Robert Dudley and Elizabeth at home and abroad before and after the death of Dudley's wife, Amy Dudley. It will also show how the ambassadors attempted to use Dudley's status as the favorite to their advantage. Many of these answers may have a biased slant as these ambassadors greatly disliked Dudley for himself, his heritage, and more because he was a minor Englishman seeking to marry the Queen of England.

Chapter II will explore the Catholic suitors focusing on Philip II, King of Spain and Charles, Archduke of Austria and son of Emperor Ferdinand of the Holy Roman Empire. Both of these men were from the Hapsburg dynasty, so their suits did not happen simultaneously. Philip II was married to Elizabeth's sister, Mary. In order to maintain some control over England and ensure its Catholicism, Philip sought to marry Elizabeth. In order to do this, Philip often put affairs of the state over religion. However, neither person, Philip nor Elizabeth, desired this match and by April 1559 Philip had dropped his suit of Elizabeth and became betrothed to the French king's daughter as part of the Cataeu-Cambresis peace negotiations. Philip, however, did not give up his dream of having England as a Catholic ally, and, therefore, he encouraged the suit of his cousin, the Archduke Charles. The major complication with this suit was that he could not comply with Elizabeth's demand that she see any man who wished to be a serious candidate or with her religious policies. The suit of Charles would grow stagnant and then reignite multiple times over the course of many years before eventually failing. The Imperial ambassadors tried tirelessly to secure this suit, not just with Elizabeth, but also with the Emperor who was occasionally hesitant to proceed.

Chapter III looks at the primary Protestant suitors at this time focusing on Eric, Prince of Sweden and James Hamilton, the Earl of Arran in Scotland. Eric was an early suitor of the Princess Elizabeth and returned to try again when she became queen. Fairly early, it was apparent to many, including the Spanish ambassadors, that Elizabeth had no intention of accepting the Prince's proposal. This, however, did not stop him from lavishing Elizabeth and England with many gifts and much money through his ambassadors. He also attempted a voyage to comply with her demand of seeing a foreign suitor before he was forced to turn back. The Earl of Arran was considered a likely candidate not only because he was Protestant but because he was a potential heir to the Scottish throne if Mary Stuart were to die or be deposed without an heir. However, his immediate status and mental instability kept him from achieving his suit. The ambassadors' writings on which I will primarily focus come from Catholic countries, so their main concern is for the Catholic suits; however, in order for a Catholic suit to succeed they must know and understand their competition, which was the Protestant suitors.

Even though the suitors are separated out individually it must be remembered throughout the reading of this thesis that these negotiations happened nearly simultaneously. In her book, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, Susan Doran categorizes all these suits under the heading of "Early Suitors" because all seven suitors participated in negotiation with Elizabeth in the first two years of her reign. Philip II's suit ended by the time Archduke Charles' began, but Charles, Eric of Sweden, James Hamilton, Robert Dudley and the other English suitors all pursued Elizabeth at the same time from

November 1558 until even after the death of Amy Dudley when the dynamics changed because Robert Dudley was now available to marry as he was not before. However, by 1562 all of these early suits had ended, with the exception of Dudley, and for the rest of her reign, suitors would seek her hand one at a time, again with the exception of Dudley, starting with the renewal of Archduke Charles' suit in 1563.

The conclusion will sum up my primary argument that the ambassador's interpretations were more important than what was actually said by the Queen or at court, and that they were the pillars of the negotiations.

My primary sources for this thesis are of course the letters of the ambassadors of the Holy Roman Empire and Spain, compiled in Victor Von Klarwill's *Queen Elizabeth and some foreigners; being a series of hitherto unpublished letters from the archives of the Hapsburg family and Spanish Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs preserved principally in the Archives of Simancas* respectively. As well as letters from English ambassadors and council members found in *Calendar of State Papers Foreign and Domestic*. My strongest and most used secondary sources are from Martin Hume, the editor of the Spanish Calendar of State Papers, Susan Doran's *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I*, and her article, "Religion and Politics at the Court of Elizabeth I: The Habsburg marriage negotiations of 1559-1567"; Carol Levin's, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, and Garrett Mattingly's *Renaissance Diplomacy*. Martin Hume's introduction to the Spanish Calendar of State Papers gives great insight into the workings of the Spanish Ambassadors and answers the questions of why it was these men chosen to facilitate the marriage negotiations between Elizabeth

and Philip and what their strengths and weaknesses were. He also sheds some light on King Philip's motives for pursuing the suit and faults while participating in the marriage negotiations. Susan Doran's *Monarchy and Matrimony* is probably my strongest source because she goes chronologically through all of Elizabeth's suitors. She gives information on the men involved and recounts the negotiation and outcome of each one. Her article about the Habsburg negotiations focuses more intimately on the Archduke Charles and gives detailed information about the ambassadors of the Holy Roman Empire. Carol Levin's work gives information about the marriage negotiations, but the most relevant part of her work is her focus on Elizabeth, explaining what Elizabeth was doing during these negotiations. Garrett Mattingly's *Renaissance Diplomacy*, is the classic account of the workings of resident ambassadors during this time. He outlines their roles and responsibilities, what their code of conduct was, and what makes an effective or ineffective ambassador.

I use many other sources as well just in a more minor capacity, but they are all significant to the writing and organization of this thesis. Some of these sources are biographies from the Oxford Dictionary of National Biographies, Norman Jones' *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age: England in the 1560's*, and Wallace MacCaffery's *Elizabeth I*.

CHAPTER II

ENGLISH SUITORS

The Native Candidates

For, if the Queen were to take the noblest and fittest man in her realm, she would affront one-half of the Kingdom, for there are thousands who deem themselves worthy to be made the Queen's consort.²⁴

There were many foreign princes who sought to marry Elizabeth and become King of England; however, there were also a few native Englishmen who sought this same prize. There were three Englishmen who were considered potential candidates by the ambassadors who were looking at the competition. The Earl of Arundel, a wealthy elderly gentleman who was a devout Catholic; Sir William Pickering, a young knight and a Protestant; and Robert Dudley, a man with a tainted family-history who quickly became the Queen's favorite. Arundel and Pickering were considered enough of a threat to the suits of the European kings to be mentioned by their ambassadors. However, their threat was nothing compared to the suit of Robert Dudley, a man who soon after his arrival in the Queen's court became her favorite. However, the greatest threat of all was Elizabeth choosing an Englishman over a foreign king.

The ambassadors greatly feared that Elizabeth and her Council would prefer an Englishman to their foreign sovereigns. So, one of their primary responsibilities was to convince the queen that an Englishman could not provide her with the same security and international respect that a great monarch could. In November of 1558, Count de Feria

²⁴ Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 53, June 11, 1559.

was already writing home regarding the debate raging in England about whether a foreigner or an Englishman was a better choice for a husband,

Everybody thinks that she will not marry a foreigner . . . What can be done with the Councillors . . . is to dissuade them from her marriage with an Englishman . . . I do not know which way the queen is inclined, for . . . she complained to me of her sister's having married a foreigner . . . We must begin by getting her into talk about your Majesty, and run down the idea of her marrying an Englishman, and thus to hold herself less than her sister, who would never marry a subject. . . . then place before her how badly it would look for her to marry one of these men whilst there are such great princes whom she might marry. After that we can take those whom she might marry here and pick them to pieces one by one, which will not require much rhetoric, for there is not a man amongst them worth anything, counting the married ones and all.²⁵

The debate in England was carefully related in the ambassadorial correspondences. The debates started as early as November but would last through the length of her courtships. The Spanish ambassador was not the only one reporting this information home. Giovanni Michiel, the Venetian ambassador in France, and an anonymous source from London who submitted a letter which was enclosed within a letter of Paulo Tiepolo, a Venetian ambassador with King Philip II, also reported on this affair respectively,

With regard to her marriage it was reported in England that she would marry an Englishman, though no one is named in particular. . . . Parliament also sent a deputation to pry the queen that she be pleased to marry within the realm . . . [she] replied . . . that she had well seen how many inconveniences her sister was subject to, from having married a foreigner.²⁶

²⁵ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 8, November 21, 1558.

²⁶ *Calendars of State Papers and Manuscripts relating to English Affairs existing in the archives and collections of Venice and in other libraries of Northern Italy*. Vol. VII 1558 -1580, Ed. by the late Raudon Brown and the right Hon. G. Cavendish Bentinck M.P, 1890, 6, January 2, 1559 and, 27, February 6, 1559.

Here, the ambassador's not only relate the court gossip, but the official court proceedings. Where the information came from rarely mattered to the ambassadors; they diligently reported it all.

In the correspondence from Count de Feria, we see that he is actively placing himself in the center of the King's affair. When these last two correspondences were written, Feria was still trying to persuade the Queen to accept Philip II's proposal. At this stage, Feria was the one responsible for making the negotiation succeed. However, Feria most often speaks in the plural "we" because he is fully aware that he is working in the king's name. As King Philip's proxy in the English court, he must be proactive in his attempts to convince the queen of the benefits of a foreign monarch and discredit the idea of an Englishman. His first plan involves bypassing the queen and speaking directly to her council. He is aware of the mandate that allows Parliament to ultimately vote on the Queen's marriage. Elizabeth must submit to her Parliament before making a final decision on a husband.²⁷

His next attempt focuses on Elizabeth's distaste for her sister. Yet, he has to strategically avoid any implication that this distaste arises from her marriage to a foreign monarch. He sets out to argue that if Elizabeth wishes to appear greater than her late sister, she must not stoop so low as to marry an Englishman because any Englishman will be her subject and thus her inferior. He also must speak of Philip in such a favorable way that would disassociate him with the "foreigner" whom Elizabeth associated with the collapse of Mary's reign—even though Philip was that exact foreigner. After that, he

²⁷Susan Doran argues that it is because of this mandate that Elizabeth was never able to choose a husband, there was never consensus among her Councilors. Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 210.

would focus individually on any potential English prospect. This is where he is most intimately involved. Feria's physical location and intimate knowledge of the English court and its inhabitants makes him especially qualified for the kind of work he is proposing, and both he and the king know this.

One of the more intriguing details of this correspondence is Feria's inclusion of his personal opinion regarding the discrediting of the English potentials, ". . . which will not require much rhetoric, for there is not a man amongst them worth anything, counting the married ones and all."²⁸ The political purpose this seems to have is informing Philip how easy it will be to perform this job—in a sense, boosting his own self-worth in Philip's eyes, and at the same time, complementing Philip that he is of far better quality than any English. This opinion, the like of which are found throughout the writings, appear almost comical and petty, but it was the type of opinion the sovereigns wished to hear. Ambassadors were not required to submit just facts and recommendations, but personal opinion no matter how biased it might be. This last comment also suggests that married men were also vying for the position of consort—perhaps the first unaccredited reference to Robert Dudley.

The February 1559 correspondence by Count Helffenstein, the Hapsburg ambassador, tells a different story of the Englishman vs. foreigner debate happening in England,

The Estates do not desire to give her any advice as to whom she should marry, but he must not be an Englishman. . . . Thereupon the Queen bluntly answered . . . [she] would only wed a man who was not only King in name, but would also govern her Royal self and the whole Kingdom . . . From all this it is easily to be inferred that she has not much mind to wed

²⁸*CSP Spanish*, vol. 1, 8, November 21, 1558.

one of her own countrymen. . . . The Queen had also made up her mind to wed no one who was a native of the realm, even were she to remain a maid her whole life long.²⁹

In this correspondence, it appears that no one, including Elizabeth, considers an Englishman a viable option for a husband whereas in the Spanish letters it seemed preferred. The correspondences of the Spanish ambassadors and of the Hapsburg ambassadors are dated only three months apart, yet they offer contradictory views of what was taking place at Court. There are four possible conclusions: First, Elizabeth and the members of her court were vacillating so much on this topic that within three months' time their opinions did change on which one was preferred. Second, one of the two ambassadors was mishandling information and, in essence, lying to their sovereign. This case being highly unlikely as both ambassadors were highly respected and trusted by their individual sovereigns. Third, they are each only relaying one side of the argument; again this is unlikely as they would be failing in their duties as ambassadors. And fourth, that one of the ambassadors, most likely Count Helffenstein, had a more trusted position with the Queen of England; therefore, getting a different set of information. It is obvious from previous letters that Elizabeth much preferred Helffenstein's graciousness to Feria's scorn. This shows that Elizabeth, as well as members of her court, used the ambassadors to relay information they wished to have passed on. The ambassadors were not simply note takers, forgotten in the background; they were used by Elizabeth and others to help attain personal goals. Whatever the reason for the two contradictory accounts, they show that different ambassadors were getting different information and acting upon them in their own way.

²⁹ Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 41-44, February 26, 1559.

Whether Elizabeth listened to Feria's advice, held this view all along as Helffenstein suggests, or was simply saying what her political body required, she informed her ladies in waiting that she had no desire to sink to such a position as to marry a subject when broached about her marrying Robert Dudley: "Dost thou think me so unlike myself, and so unmindful of my Royal Majesty, that I would prefer my servant, whom I myself have raised, before the greatest princes of Christendom, in choosing of an husband."³⁰ And again later she commented to the Emperor's ambassador that "she would die a thousand deaths rather than marry one of her subjects."³¹

Considering the statements by the Queen mentioned above and the debate reported by the ambassadors, we now must consider the English candidates. There were very few strong English suitors, it could even be questioned whether Pickering and Arundel were 'strong' suitors, the reason for this is because an English subject was not considered a suitable match for the Queen of England, even though some preferred an Englishman to a foreigner. Their significance rests mainly on the fact that they were English suitors while Elizabeth's Parliament debated on whether an Englishman or a foreign monarch would be a better choice for a husband. They represented an obstacle to the ambassadors and their foreign sovereigns vying for Elizabeth's hand. The real significant Englishman was Robert Dudley who, as the prominent English suitor and Elizabeth's favorite, dominated the ambassadorial reports, especially those of the Spanish ambassadors.

³⁰ Quoted in Levin, *Heart and Stomach of a King*, 73.

³¹ *CSP Spanish*, 80, June 27, 1559.

Sir William Pickering and the Earl of Arundel were the first two English suitors who were considered “serious” possibilities. How seriously the queen considered them or how serious they considered themselves is not entirely known. Though they did not hold the same importance or long term implications as Dudley, they were made prominent only by the attention given to them by the ambassadors.

Henry Fitz-Alan twelfth earl of Arundel was a wealthy landowning gentleman and a devout Catholic who wanted to marry Queen Elizabeth. However, there are only a very few references to his suit in the ambassadorial correspondences. Yet, he was serious enough to be referenced by the ambassadors, an example of how minutely detailed their letters were. In January 1559, Il Schifanoia a Venetian ambassador commented, “Some persons declare that she [the Queen] will take the Earl of Arundel, he being the chief peer (*principale barone*) of this realm notwithstanding his being old in comparison to the Queen. This report founded on the constant and daily favors he receives in public and private from her majesty.”³² Anniina Jokinen argues that Arundel was distrusted and that these favors could have been her way of not wanting to alienate a powerful subject.³³ To this ambassador, however, they were an indication of her favor and possible affection towards him. Though this is simply gossip, Il Schifanoia reported it, he gave it credibility because Arundel was an important person in Elizabeth’s court, and if she were to choose an Englishman to wed, it would be someone of Arundel’s status or the equivalent. As J.E. Neale suggests, “Arundel had nothing but rank and family to commend him.” Arguing

³² *CSP Venice*, vol. VII, 19, January 23, 1559.

³³ Anniina Jokinen, “England Under the Tudors: Henry FitzAlan, 12th Earl of Arundel (1511?-1580) in *Luminarian: Encyclopedia Project*; viewed online January 13, 2010 at <http://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/arundel12.htm>

that though he had the pedigree to be the Queen's consort, he had none of the baser qualities to make him attractive to the young Queen.³⁴ Baron Breuner, the Hapsburg ambassador, also wrote to Emperor Ferdinand concerning Arundel, "I believe, that he and he alone entertains this hope [of marriage], for he is somewhat advanced in years and also rather silly and loutish, is not well-favoured, nor has a handsome figure."³⁵ Unlike Il Schifanoia who was at Brussels at the time, Breuner was writing from London and was, therefore, at the court of Queen Elizabeth to witness these events. This is important because he contradicts Il Schifanoia and claims that Arundel is 'not well-favoured' and argues this as one of the reasons why he should not be taken as a serious candidate or a threat to the Hapsburg suit. However, both ambassadors bring up his age which was forty-seven. Arundel was nearing his fifties, and in sixteenth-century England, he was already considered an old man. Another factor would be Elizabeth's attraction to him. Like her father, she seemed interested in marrying someone who was pleasing to her and not just someone who would be a political advantage.³⁶ Susan Doran argues that of all the men who might be suitable enough to marry the Queen, "only Henry Fitz-Alan twelfth earl of Arundel thought himself a serious candidate. In December 1558, it was rumoured that he was borrowing money on the strength of his matrimonial prospects and using some of it to bribe the queen's ladies-in-waiting to speak well of him." She goes on to say

³⁴ J.E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1992 ed.), 73.

³⁵ Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 113, August 6, 1559.

³⁶ I believe this is one of the reasons why she insisted on meeting anyone who was to become a serious candidate, she did not wish to fall into the same trap her father did with Anne of Cleves.

that he sold many of his possessions in order to buy gifts for the Queen and to make his estate suitable for a visit from her.³⁷

The Earl of Arundel quickly disappears from the ambassadors' writings and thus their attentions, and it appears that none of them took his suit very seriously in the first place. And though Arundel tried for some time to secure the queen's hand, he probably lost all consideration early on because he was some twenty years her senior and an ardent Catholic. It did not help his cause when in September 1559 he was suspected of plotting to poison his rival Robert Dudley and possibly the queen.³⁸

The other English candidate was Sir William Pickering, though he did not share the same popularity as Dudley, he was a fairly frequent topic of discussion for the ambassadors. Pickering was a Knight and a Protestant, even radically so, and though he was only five years younger than Arundel and still some fifteen years older than Elizabeth, he was considered much more attractive. Like Arundel, Pickering was also mentioned early on in the reign by various ambassadors,

It is said by the vulgar that one Master Pickering will be her husband. . . .and concerning her marriage it is still continued to be said that she would that Master Pickering. . . . The day before yesterday there came Sir William Pickering, who is regard by all the people as the future husband of her Majesty. He remains at home, courted by many Lords of the Council . . . It was said they wished to settle in Parliament what title they should give him, what dignity . . . Pickering arrived here on the night of Ascension Day and has been much visited by the queen's favourites, She saw him secretly two days after his arrival, and yesterday he came to the palace publicly and remained with her four or five hours. In London they are giving 25 to 100 that he will be king.³⁹

³⁷ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 21-22.

³⁸ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 95, September 7, 1559.

³⁹ *CSP Venice*, vol. VII, 27, February 6, 1559; 35-6, February 23, 1559; 84, May 10, 1559; *CPS Spanish*, 67, May 10, 1559.

For months, Pickering made the headlines of the ambassadors' correspondences. The people of England considered him a very likely prospect; they were even taking bets in the streets that he would be the future king. Norm Jones comments in his book *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age* that “. . . even the peasants worried about Elizabeth's marriage prospects.”⁴⁰ This is supported by the ambassadors when they reference “the vulgar” or that bets that were being taken in the streets. Ironically, when Pickering was first noticed by the ambassadors, he was not even residing in England. He was sent to Dunkirk on a diplomatic mission by Queen Mary and did not return to England until May 1559. Yet, he was mentioned early on by the ambassadors as a potential suitor and, argues Susan Doran, “on his return to England he was evidently taken seriously as a suitor.”⁴¹ The ambassadors noted that Pickering was visited personally by the Queen. And not only was the Queen attracted, but he was also being courted by the Queen's favorites and members of her council, an important tidbit considering Elizabeth needed Parliament's consent on her choice of a husband. Who the court and council favored or disliked was just as important as who the Queen favored. Pickering seemed a very likely choice for the English Protestant husband and future king of England. If this were true, than he would indeed be a threat to the European suits, thus the constant reference to him in the ambassadorial letters. However, Doran argues that Pickering “was just a courtier and a minor diplomat”⁴² and therefore would not have been held in high regard by those searching for a husband for the Queen. She also claims, “He [Pickering], however took

⁴⁰ Jones, *Elizabethan Age*, 3.

⁴¹ Susan Doran, “Pickering, Sir William (1516/17–1575),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online, ed. Lawrence Goldman, 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22212> (accessed January 19, 2009).

⁴² Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 21.

himself less seriously, and stated his personal view that the queen intended to die a maid.”⁴³ This reinforces the argument that Elizabeth did not intend to marry but simply used the negotiations and ambassadors to maintain peace. Breuner wrote, “At first they made much ado about him [Pickering]. This cry is now stilled, he being ill and much in debt.”⁴⁴ His being ill would have definitely taken him out of the running as they need a healthy man to help rule and bring forth a child. Much of the ado about Pickering began while he was still overseas, and it continued some when he returned in May, but by August, Pickering no longer made headlines. And Robert Dudley became the last hope for an English husband.

The rumors and the information regarding Arundel and Pickering began at the very first of Elizabeth’s reign and lasted about six months. Their frequency in the ambassadors’ letters started to decline once Dudley was noticed. By April 1559, Dudley dominated the ambassadorial correspondences. Perhaps, those opponents of Dudley’s who still wished for an English king continued to support Pickering and Arundel, for whisperings of them remained in the ambassadorial correspondences for a few more months; however, it was soon very clear which Englishman Elizabeth favored.

Robert Dudley

Robert Dudley’s story is one of treason, ambition, and scandal. By April 1559, it was apparent to the ambassadors that there was an unequivocal attraction between Elizabeth and Dudley, and that Elizabeth had found in him a favorite companion which

⁴³ Doran, “Pickering”.

⁴⁴ Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 113, August 6, 1559.

led to the speculation that Dudley was seeking the Queen's hand in marriage. So why is Dudley's story so much greater or different than the other two English suitors or even of the European monarchs? It is because he is one of very few that Elizabeth showed great and constant affection for. It was because he dominated the ambassadorial correspondences for many years, and he remained Elizabeth's favorite for nearly two decades. It was because, despite his noble lineage, his was a family history tainted and attainted with treason, twice over; therefore, he was considered by many an unworthy candidate. And it was because, when he became her favorite and was recognized as a suitor, he already had a living wife. He was not her first suitor nor would he be her last, but he was one of the most talked about and dominated the limelight longer than most.

A Tainted Lineage

During the Tudor rule, members of the Dudley family were kings, suitors to queens, great soldiers and advisors, and traitors. Edmund Dudley was the first Dudley to serve the Tudors in the late 1400s and early 1500s. During the reign of Henry VII, Edmund began to gain favor and prestige with the King, but the people hated him. Therefore, in order to placate the people who were skeptical about the stability of the second generation Tudor king, Henry VIII had Edmund Dudley beheaded as a traitor in the Tower of London in 1510. In his work *Tudor England*, John Guy states, "The execution was a calculated ploy to enable the new regime to profit from the stability won by Henry VII without incurring any of its attendant stigma."⁴⁵ Edmund Dudley was also

⁴⁵ John Guy, *Tudor England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1990), 81.

attainted in the process: his rights and property were confiscated by the crown including his titles. This attainder also affected his children.

Great power was achieved by Edmund Dudley before his demise; even greater heights would be taken by his son, John Dudley. Like his father, John was a politically ambitious man; however, he had the misfortune of being associated with a traitor. His titles and lands were taken by the crown when his father was executed. Through charisma, bravery, and hard work he was able to climb the ladder of political power and favor of the new king, Henry VIII. Thereby, bringing honor back to the Dudley name and restoring the family's tainted blood, and eventually his father's attainder was cancelled which restored to John the land and titles which were lost. After serving successfully under Henry VIII, John was made one of three primary guardians of the new king, Edward VI, in 1547. And in 1549, John Dudley took on the key role of Lord Protector of the young king. Dudley used his position and Edward's affection for him to bring about his own will. David Loads argues that Edward sought Dudley's advice on nearly everything and "regarded him as almost a father."⁴⁶

John Dudley used his power to disrupt the royal line. He tried to usurp the throne from King Henry VIII's willed line of succession. Regardless of the motivation, John Dudley died a traitor for this act. Though Edward VI was a young king, he was an enthusiastic Protestant, and he fully understood the ramifications of his father's will that placed the Catholic Mary on the throne were Edward to die without an heir. Prior to his death, he created his own will which placed the Protestant Jane Grey on the throne with

⁴⁶ David Loades, "Dudley, John, duke of Northumberland (1504-1553)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online, ed. Lawrence Goldman, 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8156> (accessed January 19, 2009).

her husband Guildford Dudley, John Dudley's son. Once Edward died, Dudley was the one designated to put in place the new succession; he was also the one later held responsible for it. Loades argues that Dudley's real intentions behind his unlawful act cannot be known, "Whether this was calculated self interest, a reckless gamble, or an honest endeavour to honour a commitment, is not known."⁴⁷ However, Mary Tudor had other plans, no one was going to usurp her throne, and the lords and townspeople who sent their men to support her agreed. Mary was able to gain the support of Catholics and Protestants alike because the people did not favor the idea of an advisor with a traitorous father trying to prematurely disrupt the Tudor dynasty. Even the young Jane Grey denounced her father-in-law for the rash act that placed her on the throne and in the path of the ax, "wo worthe him! he hath brought me and my stocke in most myserable callamyty and mysery by his exceeding ambicion."⁴⁸

With his own council turning against him in London, Dudley's armies were crushed and Queen Jane and her husband were overthrown and placed in the Tower along with John Dudley and his sons. In August 1553, John and Guilford Dudley were tried and charged with treason by the same councilors who placed Guilford and Jane on the throne.

Placed in the Tower alongside John and Guilford Dudley was John's fourth son, Robert Dudley who would eventually achieve greatness, but first he had to be cleared of treason and released from the Tower. John and Guilford Dudley along with Jane Grey sufficed as scapegoats. So after 14 months, and with the active support of King Philip, Robert Dudley and his two remaining brothers were released from captivity. At the time

⁴⁷ Loades, "Dudley, John."

⁴⁸ quoted in Loades, "Dudley, John."

that Robert was placed in the Tower he was 21 years old. To show their loyalty to the new queen and king they diligently fought in the wars against France. For their loyalty, Robert, and his remaining brothers and sisters were “restored in blood by the Parliament of 1558.”⁴⁹ Philip’s business with Robert would not end with Mary’s death—he would approach Robert again with propositions for greatness when Elizabeth took the throne and began searching for a husband.

“The Favourite”

[Elizabeth’s] reign produced a controversial novelty: the male favourite, whose leading characteristic was his physical and personal attraction for the Queen. . . . they were individuals who both occupied the central positions at the Court, and enjoyed an apparently unequalled degree of intimacy with and indulgence by the Queen.⁵⁰

The length and complexity of Elizabeth and Dudley’s relationship prior to her becoming queen is a highly debated subject. Dudley may have remarked that “I have known her better than any man alive since she was eight years old.”⁵¹ Susan Doran argues that though they may have known each other at such a young age it is unlikely that they were close playfellows. They were also incarcerated in the Tower at the same time when Dudley was accused of treason and Elizabeth posed a threat to Mary’s throne by being implicated in the Wyatt rebellion—the same rebellion that got Jane Grey beheaded. Once again, their relationship resulting from captivity is questionable. Doran suggests that it is unlikely that they ever had contact while they were in the Tower.⁵² On the other hand, Carol Levin claims that “they apparently became friends while both were in the

⁴⁹Simon Adams, “Queen Elizabeth’s eyes at Court: the Earl of Leicester,” in *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 134.

⁵⁰ Simon Adams, “Favourites and factions at the Elizabeth Court,” in *Leicester and the Court*, 46.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Jenkins, *Elizabeth and Leicester* (New York: Cowar-McCann, Inc., 1961), 49.

⁵²Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 40. She calls this “a popular but unsubstantiated belief.”

Tower.”⁵³ Simon Adams argues, “Contact between them cannot be ruled out, but its significance may be doubted.”⁵⁴ He also states, “For all the speculation about a romance in the Tower in 1554, the only statement by either Elizabeth or Dudley on the subject describes a childhood friendship in 1540-41.” He goes on to say “It is quite likely that Dudley was with Elizabeth at Hatfield House when she received the news of her sister’s death . . .”⁵⁵ When their paths first crossed and a relationship began is debatable; however, it is very likely that some form of relationship was in place prior to Elizabeth becoming queen because immediately upon accession she made him her Master of the Horse, a position which kept him in near constant attendance to herself. However, according to Doran, the favors she bestowed on the Dudleys’ were not abnormal favoritism; it was simply returning to them what had been taken under the reign of Mary. It was not until he became Master of the Horse and her constant companion that the intimacy really began.⁵⁶ This argument seems likely as his debut in the ambassadorial correspondences did not occur until April 1559, six months after Elizabeth took the throne. There seems to be very little consensus on when the relationship began, but by spring 1559, it was becoming apparent that a deeper attachment was forming.

By April 1559, only six months after Elizabeth’s coronation, Robert Dudley was already the subject of gossip as was Elizabeth’s abundant favor and increased intimacy towards him. It was also assumed that Dudley’s ambitions tended toward the throne and

⁵³ Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King*, 46.

⁵⁴ Simon Adams, “Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online, ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8160> (accessed January 19, 2009).

⁵⁵ Simon Adams, “Queen Elizabeth’s eyes at Court: the Earl of Leicester,” in *Leicester and the Court*, 134.

⁵⁶ Doran, *Monarch and Matrimony*, 41. I use the term “intimately” or “intimacy” to mean deeply affectionate and close, but I do not use it to imply that they were having a sexual relationship.

the royal hand of the queen. Dudley's suit to the queen did not go unrecognized by the resident ambassadors, and he was frequently discussed in their correspondences home. In April 1559, Count de Feria, the Spanish ambassador, wrote to King Philip II regarding Dudley,

During the last few days Lord Robert has come so much into favour that he does whatever he likes with affairs and it is even said that her Majesty visits him in his chamber day and night. . . . I can assure your Majesty that matters have reached such a pass that I have been brought to consider whether it would not be well to approach Lord Robert on your Majesty's behalf, promising him your help and favour and coming to terms with him.⁵⁷

This is the first time Feria mentions Lord Robert in his correspondence, yet the rumors have already gotten so scandalous that he has heard she frequents his chambers. MacCaffery claims that Dudley was not a member of Elizabeth's Council "and so had no direct role in state affairs."⁵⁸ Yet, Feria claims that Dudley "does whatever he likes with affairs." Perhaps Feria is exaggerating Dudley's role in order to undermine the Queen's ability to handle state affairs or perhaps those members of Elizabeth's court who objected to Dudley's closeness to the Queen hinted this information to Feria to discredit him for their own personal gain. Whatever the case, Feria is suggesting that Dudley has great power *because* of his personal favor with the Queen.

Feria is also proposing to Philip that Dudley's importance should not go unrecognized especially if he has a hand in affairs as suggested. At this point, Philip has dropped his suit of Elizabeth, though he still wishes to be a player in the negotiations so that he can ensure a Catholic King for England. It seems by Feria's suggestion of

⁵⁷ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 57, April 18, 1559.

⁵⁸ MacCaffery, *Elizabeth I*, 72.

“promising him your help and favour” that he is suggesting to Philip that he bribe Dudley by means of a pension or other monetary gain. And his comment, “coming to terms with him” could be a subtle hint that Philip should remind Dudley that his release from the Tower was due in large part to Philip’s help. Feria is suggesting that the high regard in which the Queen seems to hold Dudley could be beneficial to the King of Spain if he took advantage of the situation early, especially if Dudley’s suit were to eventually succeed. It also appears, from Feria’s suggestions, that perhaps the ambassador did not consider Dudley’s wife much of a hindrance if the Queen were truly inclined to marry Dudley.

Having Philip’s support would have also greatly benefited Dudley. At this point, Philip had given up his suit to Elizabeth and married another. However, he offered his support and guidance as a brother and former brother-in-law to Queen Elizabeth. Elizabeth would be forced to take Philip’s recommendations or condemnations of her choice of husband very seriously as he was the most powerful monarch in Western Europe. Elizabeth could not afford to displease Philip, if possible, because her small country and young throne may not have been able to sustain the repercussions. And she was already beginning to displease him with her choice of religious practices. If Philip were to heartily recommend Robert Dudley, than she would be forced to at least appear that she was considering him—that is if he could rid himself of a wife.

In this first correspondence relating to the Dudley affair, Feria offered his recommendations from firsthand knowledge, a responsibility he was expected to assume. Philip would not follow this recommendation for another two years, but he did eventually

approach Dudley with the scheme. Philip understood Count de Feria's position and how this made his recommendations invaluable. Feria was the only member of the Spanish court who was also intimately involved with the English court. Philip was forced to depend on him and was frequently willing to follow his guidance because of his position in the Queen's court, even though that position had greatly diminished since the death of Mary I.

After April, the rumors regarding Robert Dudley became more frequent in the ambassadors' correspondences. Soon Dudley was being recognized by many as a potential suitor, whether that was his intentions early on or not. At the same time, however, the ambassador's knew that Dudley still had a living wife. This is one of the major reasons why Elizabeth's affection for him caused such great scandal. So, why was Dudley found to be such a serious possibility for a suitor? After all he was the son and grandson of convicted and executed traitors. His traitorous pedigree was also a pedigree of greatness. His grandfather had found great favor with King Henry VII; it was the hatred of the people that got him executed. His father was the Duke of Northumberland, a Protestant reformer, President of the King's council, and his most trusted advisor. So trusted that Edward depended on him to promote treason and divert the line of succession away from the Catholic Mary. Robert Dudley was born and bred with the same ambition that drove his grandfather and father; he simply chose to channel it in a more appropriate manner. MacCaffery argues that Dudley was not on the Council and supposedly had no role in state affairs; however, "he plainly enjoyed the private role of the favourite, with

the associated public advantages of patronage and influence.”⁵⁹ And Feria was hoping to use this influence. As far as the issue of a wife went, it was reported by the ambassadors that his wife was ill with a potentially fatal malady, and the issue of a living wife might soon be taken care of naturally.

Was this enough to make him suitable to be the King Consort? According to Levin, “. . . his prospects for marrying the queen came *not* from the suitability of his birth but from Elizabeth’s personal affection for him.”⁶⁰ Though his heritage was filled with greatness, and though he had significant rank and a strong family pedigree, the most recognizable feature to the council and to his opponents was his treasonous past. It was Elizabeth’s personal feelings for him that made him a legitimate suitor. According to Neale, “His enemies gibed at his tainted blood, but with Elizabeth it was the man that mattered.”⁶¹ And it was the intimacy shared between the two that caught the attention of the resident ambassadors more than his political achievements. Il Shifanoya, the unofficial Venetian ambassador, commented in May 1559, “Meanwhile my Lord Robert Dudley is in very great favour, and very intimate (*priva molto*) with her Majesty.” Il Shifanoya wanted to share “the opinion of many” but he feared that his letters might be intercepted by the wrong people.⁶² It can be deduced from other ambassadors’ writings at this time that the opinion of many was that Dudley was a persistent suitor and, by evidence of the queen’s behavior, a very likely choice. Count de Feria also claimed in April 1559, “. . . they say she is in love with Robert Dudley and never lets him leave

⁵⁹ MacCaffery, *Elizabeth I*, 72.

⁶⁰ Levin, *Heart and Stomach of a King*, 45.

⁶¹ Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I*, 78.

⁶² *CSP Venice*, vol. VII, 84, May 10, 1559.

her.”⁶³ Here he appears to relating rumor he has heard, but because the rumors about the two are so rampant, it seems likely that their preference for each other is obvious to all the court. In years to come, it would become very true that Elizabeth would not let him leave her, in fact she often refused to send him on military campaigns because she could not bear to be apart from him. Within a month of the above comment, Count de Feria was replaced as ambassador by the Bishop of Aquila, and within days of his arrival Aquila was already relating to King Philip that, “Robert is as highly favoured as usual.”⁶⁴ In these last three instances the ambassadors are simply relaying information home without opinion or recommendation. But there is still much responsibility behind these comments as the ambassadors are the eyes and ears of their sovereigns in the English Court. And much can be deduced from mere observations. For a foreign monarch who wished to become the consort of the Queen of England, it might be demeaning to know that she favored a lowly Englishman especially while the English debated whether it was better to have a foreign prince or an English subject. And it might verify the assertions that women are not fit to rule because they are more often ruled by their emotions. As Conyers Read suggests, “The woman in her, for the time being at least, had the better of the Queen.”⁶⁵ And that is exactly what these notes by the ambassadors suggested. Not only are the ambassadors witnessing Elizabeth’s behavior toward Dudley, but they are carefully listening to gossip and giving it credibility. Enough credibility to mark it worthy of the ears (eyes) of their sovereign. These comments were meant as proof to their sovereigns that Elizabeth was showing significant preference for Dudley, perhaps enough preference

⁶³ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 62, April 29, 1559.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 71, May 30, 1559.

⁶⁵ Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 1961), 198.

to make him the King Consort. This was very important to the recipients of the letters, especially if they intended to become serious suitors of Elizabeth. It let them understand their competition, their chances, and that they needed to up their game if they had any chance of winning the allusive queen.

Another attribute that Dudley had to make him a favored suitor among Elizabeth's Council and the people of England was that he was English. As stated above, Elizabeth's Council and Parliament continued to debate on whether or not it was better to have a foreign prince or an English subject. And it soon grew apparent to the Spanish ambassadors that the people preferred an Englishman. Many also preferred an Englishman who was Protestant, something Dudley claimed to be. Levin argues, "In terms of being English and Protestant, Dudley did have certain advantages as a potential husband." And Simon Adams suggests that "In Dudley's favour as a consort were their apparent compatibility and the widespread preference for a domestic marriage – particularly among Protestants – in the aftermath of Mary's marriage to Philip."⁶⁶ The people feared a foreign monarch especially after experiencing the personal inquisition of Queen Mary and her husband King Philip II. Even though many may have preferred an Englishman that did not mean they preferred Dudley, as Levin points out, "He was, however, also the son and grandson of executed traitors, and deeply disliked as an arrogant upstart."⁶⁷

Dudley's primary opponent, especially when it came to his suit to Queen Elizabeth, and one who considered him an "arrogant upstart" was Elizabeth's chief

⁶⁶ Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester,' 8.

⁶⁷ Levin, *Heart and Stomach of a King*, 45.

advisor, William Cecil. According to recent historiography, Cecil and Dudley's antagonism towards one another was not great enough to cause court factions and, at times, they were even amiable in their work together on some policy making, though they often argued about such things as the marriage negotiations, succession, religion, and foreign intervention. According to Simon Adams, Cecil and Dudley were "men from a similar political milieu . . . [who] had too much in common for permanent antagonisms to be established."⁶⁸ However, this sometime working relationship did not extend towards Elizabeth's marriage negotiations. Cecil did not deem Dudley worthy enough to become the Queen's consort and feared that a marriage to him would ruin her reputation. He also feared that should Dudley become consort his own political position would be put in jeopardy.⁶⁹ Cecil was sent to Scotland to handle the peace negotiations between the Scots and the French in the treaty of Edinburgh. It was when he returned from Scotland that he fell out of favor with the Queen. According to MacCaffery, it was Cecil's Machiavellian approach to the peace negotiations and his ease at supporting the rebels over their anointed sovereign that initiated the displeasure of the Queen.⁷⁰ Read argues, "The Queen apparently would have none of him. She was altogether absorbed in dalliance with her Master of Horse."⁷¹ In 1560, Cecil was so aggrieved by his current position and by the Queen's intimacy with Dudley that he threatened to resign, and he had a conversation to this effect with the current Spanish ambassador, Bishop Quadra,

I had an opportunity of talking to Cecil, who I understood was in disgrace, and Robert was trying to turn him out of his place. After exacting many

⁶⁸ Simon Adams quoted in Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 216.

⁶⁹ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 45.

⁷⁰ MacCaffery, *Elizabeth I*, 67.

⁷¹ Read, *Secretary Cecil*, 199.

pledges of strict secrecy [sic], he said the Queen was conducting herself in such a way that he thought of retiring. He said it was a bad sailor who did not enter port if he could when he saw a storm coming on, and he clearly foresaw the ruin of the realm through Robert's intimacy with the Queen, who surrendered all affairs to him and meant to marry him."⁷²

It is unlikely that Cecil had any real intention of resigning, but, as stated before, members of the court knew when and how to use the ambassadors to their own personal advantage. Cecil knew that by giving this kind of scandalous information to an ambassador, it would further tarnish Dudley's reputation on the European scene which would also make him a less attractive marriage candidate. He also knew that by giving this information to the ambassador it would get back to Elizabeth, as J.E. Neale notes, "[Cecil] begged Quadra, in God's name, to point out to Elizabeth the effect of her misconduct and persuade her to give some attention to business."⁷³ Read suggests that his objective with telling the Spanish ambassador these details was "probably to get certain facts before her, through a man who though hostile to him was in great favour with her."⁷⁴ Cecil suggested that the Queen was so enamored with Dudley that she, perhaps, put affairs of the state in his care because of this affection, this is similar to the statement made by Feria in his April 1559 correspondence. Likely, this was a personal attack because Elizabeth was not holding Cecil in the same esteem as she once had (and would again).

Cecil was likely arguing that her personal affection for Dudley interfered with her political responsibilities, such as his own falling from grace, or that she is giving him more political responsibility than his political position should allow. At the very least he

⁷² *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 174, September 11, 1560.

⁷³ Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I*, 80.

⁷⁴ Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, 200.

is suggesting that she allowed Dudley more interest in state affairs than she would have if he were not her favorite. He is also recognizing that their intimacy could cause great scandal that could ruin the Queen's reputation with the other European monarchs. Scandal that was already transpiring: in August 1559 Breuner claims that Elizabeth's Lady of the Bedchamber, Catherine Ashley, begged the Queen "to marry and put an end to all these disreputable rumours, telling Her Majesty that her behavior towards the said Master of the Horse occasioned much evil-speaking; for she showed herself so affectionate to him that her Majesty's honour and dignity would be sullied."⁷⁵ Even if Cecil supported the idea of an English marriage, he never would have supported Dudley for that role. It seems he preferred a consort who could add to England's prestige and protection.

If the debate truly favored an English consort as Feria claimed, than Robert Dudley may have appeared as the ideal match for Elizabeth—he was English, he was Protestant, and Elizabeth clearly favored him above all others. However, Elizabeth's council had one major objection to an English husband: nothing would be gained by such a match. As William Cecil, one of the greatest opponents to the Dudley match, claimed, "Nothing is increased by marriadg of hym either in Riches, Estimation, Power."⁷⁶ And a son (or any other child) would only contain half royal blood, and it was feared that this would not be able to stand up to Mary Stuart's claim to the throne. Plus Robert Dudley had one great impediment of his own—greater than a tainted past or mighty opponents—Robert Dudley was already married.

⁷⁵ Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 113-114.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 211.

In 1550, Dudley married Amy Robsart, the only daughter and heir of Sir John Robsart, a landowner of multiple great estates and a member of the landed gentry. This seemed to be a marriage based more on love and happiness than on securing the best political advantage.⁷⁷ However, when Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, Dudley spent far more time at court and far less time with his wife.

Amy Dudley and her life and death became a major factor in the ambassadorial correspondences as soon as Robert Dudley became the topic of discussion. From April 1559 to September 1560 the letters home were filled with the scandal of Elizabeth, Robert Dudley, and his still living wife, Amy. Dudley led a very public life; therefore, all the members of Elizabeth's court, including the resident ambassadors, knew that he had a wife living in the country whom he rarely visited. This fact did not keep people from speculating that Dudley would one day be Elizabeth's husband, but it added a twist: how would he rid himself of one to marry another? This was resolved in September 1560 when Amy Dudley was found dead at the foot of a staircase with a broken neck. A whole new scandal began: was it murder, suicide, or accidental death? The jury ruled it an accidental death; however, that did not quash the rumors that Robert Dudley had murdered his wife. This scandal would haunt him for the rest of his life, and may have ultimately prevented his marriage to the Queen. Her death was a pivotal event because it was a mystery, it did free Robert to marry another – perhaps the Queen, but it had also been rumored about for a year and a half prior to her death which placed suspicion on all parties including the queen.

⁷⁷ Simon Adams argues that this was an advantageous marriage because it associated Robert with the landed gentry, yet it was not the most substantial marriage John Dudley could make for his son. Therefore, he suggests that the marriage was based on a mutual affection between the two children.

The earliest ambassadorial reference to Robert Dudley also included a reference to Amy Dudley. On April 18, when de Feria first wrote home to Philip II regarding the Dudley affair, he also included this snippet about Amy Dudley, “People talk of this [the intimacy between Dudley and Elizabeth] so freely that they go so far as to say that his wife has a malady in one of her breast and the queen is only waiting for her to die to marry Lord Robert.”⁷⁸ The significant piece of gossip here is not that Amy Dudley was ill, but that Elizabeth was already determined to marry Robert, but must first wait for the death of his wife. Her illness could have simply been a fabrication that added to the reality of the queen’s intentions to marry Dudley, a way for the people to justify their intimacy and Robert’s intentions, or it could have been an honest report that she was ill, perhaps with breast cancer. Ian Aird suggests that Amy had a form a breast cancer that led to a brittle spine which is what ultimately ended her life.⁷⁹ Whatever else the gossip revealed, it primarily tells that the public honestly believed that the affair between Elizabeth and Dudley had transformed so dramatically that she would have married him if only he was not already taken. Paulo Tiepolo, the Venetian ambassador in Spain, also remarked that Amy Dudley was ill in May 1559, and if she were to die from this illness the queen would marry Robert. The fact that Amy Dudley’s illness was reported by multiple people gives it more credibility, and since both speak of her death as if it were likely, it seems logical to consider that Amy Dudley was actually fatally ill. However, the importance of these comments is that they suggest that queen was intimately involved with a married man, so close, in fact, that the *only* impediment to her marrying him was

⁷⁸ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 57, April 18, 1559.

⁷⁹ Ian Aird, “The Death of Amy Robsart,” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 71, No. 278, (Jan. 1956).

his dying wife. It is also important to consider that the rumors of her death took place some 17 months prior to her death. When she did not die within months of these reports, the rumors began to escalate into murder. Those who wished to see Dudley take the throne needed a way for him to be rid of his wife—regardless of if that way were plausible or true.

Since Dudley could not marry the Queen while he was married to another, and it seemed that Amy was not yet ready to die of natural causes, conspiracy theorists began to assume that Dudley would have to find another way to rid himself of a living wife. The only two options then were divorce and murder. In the ambassadors' reports home, murder seems to be the far more trendy option than divorce. In fact, divorce is only mentioned once, and it is written about in between two different letters that pass on the rumor that he will poison his wife.

In November 1559, Queen Elizabeth was in the midst of numerous marriage negotiations. Bishop Quadra believed that Elizabeth was only engaging in these negotiations until Dudley could poison his wife and marry Elizabeth: “. . . Lord Robert has sent to poison his wife. Certainly all the Queen has done with us . . . and will do with the rest in the matter of her marriage, is only keeping Lord Robert's enemies and the country engaged with words until this wicked deed of killing his wife is consummated.”⁸⁰ Here it is apparent that Quadra honestly believes that Dudley will go to the extreme measure of killing his wife in order to secure Elizabeth. This comment also implicates Elizabeth in the business as he argues that she is purposefully using the marriage negotiations to keep her council and country occupied while Dudley completes his task.

⁸⁰ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 111, November 13, 1559.

He also seems to believe that once Amy is dead, the queen will immediately rush to the altar with Dudley. In hindsight, this seems absurd since it was the scandal revolving around Amy's death that kept Dudley from court and kept the Queen from marrying him. However, they did not have the benefit of hindsight, and for a country so desperate for a king and with a queen so affectionate toward a subject, this may have seemed like a reasonable assumption. These reports by the ambassadors had the added effect of spreading these scandalous rumors to the continent.

In March 1560, Dudley reportedly made a comment that has tainted him with Amy's murder since. Bishop Quadra wrote "I have understood Lord Robert told somebody . . . that if he live another year he will be in a very different position from now. . . . and is assuming every day a more masterful part in affairs. They say that he thinks of divorcing his wife."⁸¹ Ironically, this line seems to implicate Dudley in his wife's murder, after all, why would he make such a comment unless he knew his wife would be out of his life? Yet, it is this correspondence where the only reference to divorce is made. It appears that Quadra assumed that in a year, Dudley would have divorced his wife rather than murder her to marry the queen. Whichever circumstance would occur, it is obvious that Dudley assumed he was the chosen suitor, if the report of his comment is true. Here is also a clear example of the kind of base rumor the ambassadors were willing to report: "Lord Robert told *somebody*. . ." Who is this somebody? This letter caused much scandal and yet the validity of his comment was never verified. The letter again remarks that Dudley is participating more in the queen's political affairs. To the readers of this correspondence, this is simply another proof of her affection for him.

⁸¹ Ibid., 141, March 28, 1560.

The last reference by the Spanish ambassador of a potential premeditated murder is actually recorded three days after Amy Dudley's death; therefore, we must assume that there is a lapse of time from his gathering of information to his recording it. It is this lapse of time that has confused scholars and conspiracy theorists, and has caused Elizabeth to be implicated in Amy's death. The correspondence was written on September 11 and Amy's death occurred on September 8. Sometime in September 1560, prior to Amy's death, Cecil had a confidential conversation with Quadra where he related that he believed Dudley was planning to kill his wife: "He [Cecil] ended by saying that Robert was thinking of killing his wife, who was publicly announced to be ill, although she was quite well, and would take very good care they did not poison her." Here, Cecil refutes the arguments that Amy has been ill; however, other contemporary sources differ with this and it seems logical to assume that Amy was ill and maybe even dying. It is likely that Cecil was using the ambassador to further discredit Dudley and tarnish his reputation with the ambassadors and the monarchs abroad. Quadra relays this statement with such confidence of Dudley's thoughts, as if Dudley would tell his deadliest secret to Cecil—his greatest opponent.

In the same correspondence, Quadra continues to relate the events revolving around Amy's death,

The next day the Queen told me as she returned from hunting that Robert's wife was dead or nearly so, and asked me not to say anything about it. Certainly this business is most shameful and scandalous, and withal I am not sure whether she will marry the man at once or even if she will marry at all, as I do not think she has her mind sufficiently fixed. . . .but the outcome of it all might be the imprisonment of the Queen and the proclamation of the earl of Huntingdon as King. . . .The cry is that they do not want any more women rulers, and this woman may find herself and

her favourite in prison any morning. . . . Since writing the above I hear the Queen has published the death of Robert's (wife), and said in Italian, "She broke her neck." She must have fallen down a staircase.⁸²

The issue with this letter is the time confusion. Quadra makes it sound like Elizabeth reported Amy's death before it had even occurred, which seems unlikely for such a competent person. Jenkins discusses this misinterpretation of time, ". . . if he had gained news of this importance by Saturday 7th, why did he delay to write of it till Wednesday 11th? . . . the suggestion that Elizabeth, with her exceptional acuteness and talent for intrigue, would have behaved with a stupidity that a woman of even average capacity would have been expected to avoid can hardly be taken seriously." Quadra leaves his time references open to interpretation as he does not give exact dates for his various conversations. Often these interpretations have led to the belief that Elizabeth was either actively involved in or at least had knowledge of Amy Dudley's imminent death. Why he left his letter so ambiguous is unknown, if, as Jenkins suggests, it were to discredit her, he would have simply included the dates that proved foreknowledge of the event, but he did not.⁸³ Whatever his motives, his ambiguity did help to scandalize the Queen.

In the midst of this scandalous letter, he still included a remark about her constant indecision to wed and pick a suitor. In this September 11 letter, Quadra commented that Elizabeth may not marry Robert after all. Throughout many of the previous letters, he, as well as other ambassadors, had alluded to the idea that Elizabeth would undoubtedly marry Robert if his wife were out of the way. Now he hesitates and says she may not marry him at all. This goes against the implications of his, and others, previous letters. Or

⁸² Ibid., 174, September 11, 1560.

⁸³ Jenkins, *Elizabeth and Leicester*, 64.

perhaps this is more personal knowledge he had of the queen's mind than rumor. In the immediate aftermath of Amy's death, the scandal was so great that Quadra even suggested that the queen was intimately involved and would be sent to prison for it. If this were to happen, the queen would no longer be a legitimate choice for a bride to any monarch. The evidence suggests that these remarks are simply the prejudice of Quadra against Elizabeth, for he seems to be the only one remarking that the queen is guilty and will be replaced. At the same time, he could have been reporting the immediate scandal this news caused. Within days it was "proven" by the Coroner's Jury whose foreman was the "Queen's man"⁸⁴ that Amy Dudley had died by an unfortunate accident, and that may be why no other report of the Queen's concrete guilt can be found—though for a long time she was suspected of complicity.

The juries' findings did not absolve Dudley, or even the queen, of all guilt. For the rest of his life Dudley would be tainted with the mystery of his wife's death, for there were those who always believed that Dudley had plotted to kill his wife so he could marry the queen. Perhaps if Amy had died of natural causes than scandal could have been avoided and Dudley's suit may have succeeded, as Levin suggests that Dudley was one exception of Elizabeth not wishing to marry; however, that is delving into 'What If' history.

With Amy's mysterious death, scandal and suspicion erupted across Europe. Nicholas Throckmorton was the English ambassador in France, and he constantly reported home the rumors and the degrading talk about Elizabeth abroad,

⁸⁴ Jones, *Birth of the Elizabethan Age*, 127.

Wishes he were either dead or hence that he might not hear the dishonourable and naughty reports that are made here of the Queen . . . "One laugheth at us, another threateneth, another revileth the Queen. Some let not to say, What religion is this that a subject shall kill his wife, and the Prince not only bear withal but marry with him? . . . All the estimation the English had got is clean gone, and the infamy passes the same so far, as his heart bleeds to think upon the slanderous bruits he hears, which if they be not slaked, or "if they prove true," their reputation is gone for ever, war follows, and utter subversion of the Queen and country. . . . the state of England is in great danger of utter ruin. . . . God and religion will be out of estimation, the Queen discredited, contemned, and neglected, and the country ruined, and made prey. . . . A marriage to Lord Robert in the circumstances would so extinguish the Queen's reputation, she would cease to carry any weight in European diplomacy.⁸⁵

Throckmorton had firsthand knowledge of how the scandal of Amy Dudley's death was being received on the continent. And it was being received with scorn and derision. People across Europe chose to believe that the Queen of England was complicit in the death of Amy and had plotted with Dudley to get rid of her. They were probably more likely to believe this of a woman than if a man was held accountable because women were believed to be weak and jealous creatures, ruled more by emotion than logic. Because of the validity given to these rumors, Throckmorton understood that, if she were to marry him, the scandal would be so great that England or at least Elizabeth as Queen might not be able to withstand the attack. He feared not only for the queen's reputation but for the safety of England and her throne.

It can be argued that after the death of his wife, Dudley's chances of winning the Queen's hand had increased because he was now free to wed as he was not before, at the same time the scandal it caused and would further cause was too much to be ignored.

⁸⁵ 'Elizabeth: October 1560, 6-30', Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth, Volume 3: 1560-1561 (1865), pp. 334-380. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=71874> (accessed January 20, 2009).

Simon Adams argues that if the Queen was planning on marrying Dudley, it would have occurred in 1560-61, but the scandal resulting from Amy's death "allowed" her to refuse yet another suitor.⁸⁶ Susan Doran also argues that it was "sometime during the autumn and winter of 1560 Elizabeth seems to have made up her mind that a marriage to Dudley could not be risked, as it would endanger her throne and discredit her abroad." She even refused to ennoble Dudley, thus not giving him the status necessary to become consort.⁸⁷ MacCaffery states, "It seems reasonably certain that by now [summer of 1561] the queen had resolved against marrying Dudley, although she had no intention of dropping him from favour."⁸⁸ In October 1560, Cecil remarked to Quadra that the Queen had told him that she would not marry Dudley.⁸⁹ Also, in the immediate aftermath of Amy's death, Dudley was banished from court until proven innocent. Elizabeth understood that to marry Robert would tarnish her reputation, dishonor her, and would threaten her throne, all of these were excellent reasons for her to not marry Dudley, but he never stopped being her favorite, and it would be another decade before he would pursue another woman.

Robert Dudley continued in his suit with Elizabeth and remained her faithful companion, and, in return, she faithfully continued to favor him and share a deep affection with him. Adams describes their relationship as that of a surrogate marriage.⁹⁰ In 1564, Cecil wrote to Christopher Mundt regarding both the continuing debate about a foreign prince or an English subject and Robert Dudley's prospects,

⁸⁶ Adams, "Robert Dudley," 9.

⁸⁷ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 45-46.

⁸⁸ MacCaffery, *Elizabeth I*, 75.

⁸⁹ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 176-77, October 15, 1560.

⁹⁰ Adams, "Robert Dudley," 9.

He [Cecil] can with certainty say nothing further than that he perceives that she would rather marry a foreign than a native prince, and that the more distinguished the suitor is by birth, power, and personal attractions, the better hope he will have of success. Moreover, he cannot deny that the nobleman who with them excites considerable expectation, to wit Lord Robert, is worthy to become the husband of the Queen. The fact of his being Her Majesty's subject will, however, prove a serious objection to him in her estimation.

Nevertheless his virtues and his excellent and heroic gifts of mind and body have so endeared him to the Queen that she could not regard her own brother with greater affection. From which they who do not know the Queen intimately conjecture that he will be the future husband. He however sees and understands that she merely takes delight in his virtues and rare qualities, and that nothing more is discussed in their conversations than that which is most consistent with virtue and furthest removed from all unworthy sentiments.⁹¹

From this correspondence it appears that in 1564 some still considered Dudley a worthy candidate to be the Queen's consort, but both Cecil and Dudley knew that a marriage between the two would never take place.

Yet, as the years passed, any hope of becoming an actual husband and king of England became apparent to more than just Dudley and Cecil. In 1564, Elizabeth offered Dudley as the King Consort to Mary Stuart. It was one of the requirements if Mary wished to become Elizabeth's heir, and it showed other Elizabethan suitors that Dudley was no longer a threat. However, this marriage never took place. In coming years, Dudley would continuously sabotage marriage negotiations with other suitors, so that he could remain in the game or at least retain his position as the favorite. But in 1570, he grew tired of the game and of being Elizabeth's constant companion without the hope of

⁹¹ "Sir W. Cecil to Christopher Mundt." Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Salisbury, Preserved at Hatfield House (Hertfordshire. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1883), 301. State Papers Online. Gale. University of Oxford, <http://go.galegroup.com/mss/start.do?p=SPOL&u=oxford> (accessed February 24, 2009).

becoming her husband, and so he began an affair with Lady Sheffield, with whom he had an illegitimate son. During this affair, Elizabeth began to look on another with favor, and Dudley's position as favorite was threatened by Christopher Hatton. But both of these relationships petered out over time, and Dudley again regained favor with the Queen. Dudley entered into another relationship without Elizabeth's knowledge or permission in 1578, this one resulting in a marriage to the Countess of Essex. Though he tried to keep it a secret, Elizabeth found out and was absolutely enraged. The consequence was the revoking of her favor and subsequent economic troubles for the favorite. However, her hatred was primarily directed at Dudley's new wife. He remained an influential counselor until his death in 1588. And she kept his last letter to her always near her on her bedside table. She never got over nor forgot her favorite.

Robert Dudley remained a faithful companion, until he realized that there was no longer any hope of securing her hand or the throne, and despite his deep affection for her, he moved on matrimonially. When the Queen decided not to marry Robert is debated, but she continued to consider him her favorite and treated him as such. He also was the likeliest hope for an English Protestant husband— and the only real English candidate. When his suit failed, so did the prospect for an English consort.

From April 1559 to the death of his wife and the subsequent scandal, Dudley was a constant presence in the ambassadorial correspondences. Ferial and Quadra, Hellfenstein and Breuner, and even the Venetian ambassadors took notice of Dudley as did all of Elizabeth's court. Dudley's life and assumed suit were discussed almost nonstop by all who mattered and even by those who didn't. The ambassadors' considered him a serious

candidate and therefore a serious threat to their European monarchs. They therefore kept a very watchful eye on him and a very open ear to any and all information that could illuminate his possibilities and his weaknesses, and they dutifully reported all home.

CHAPTER III

CATHOLIC SUITORS

Catholicism dominated Western Europe for nearly 1200 years prior to Martin Luther's Reformation. By the time Elizabeth took the throne in 1558, Catholicism remained dominant, but it was fiercely attacked by the rising acceptance of Protestantism. When Henry VIII broke with Rome in 1533 in order to get an annulment, he irrevocably changed the religious and economic dynamics within England. With the collapse of the Roman Catholic Church in England, came the economic ramifications of the Church losing revenue from the now Protestant nation. With an unmarried Elizabeth taking the throne, the Pope along with Catholic monarchs saw a chance to keep England Catholic, after Mary's endeavors, through a marriage contract.

From 1558 to 1560, the primary foreign Catholic contenders during the marriage negotiations with Elizabeth were Philip II of Spain and Charles, Archduke of Austria. Both were members of the Hapsburg line, which was a very powerful Catholic family who ruled throughout the Holy Roman Empire, Spain, the Netherlands, and Portugal during this time. Emperor Charles V united both the Spanish empire and the Holy Roman Empire under his rule. Before his death, he abdicated, once again splitting the empire. The Spanish empire was given to his son who became Philip II of Spain, the Netherlands, Naples, Milan, and the Spanish possessions in the Americas. His brother, Ferdinand, already in possession of the Austrian lands and King of Rome, became Holy Roman Emperor upon Charles V's abdication. Because of this familial link, the negotiations of these two suitors did not officially occur simultaneously. Philip II began his negotiations

immediately following the death of his wife Mary I of England and the accession of Elizabeth; however, because of the reluctance of both parties, this marriage prospect ended with Philip's betrothal to the princess of France. At which time, Emperor Ferdinand I offered one of his sons: Ferdinand or Charles. After much anticipation for Ferdinand, Charles was eventually chosen to pursue the negotiations. This negotiation continued off and on for nearly a decade. The primary obstacles for both of these men were their devout Catholicism and Elizabeth's desire to remain single.

The primary ambassadorial correspondences that this thesis looks at are those from the Spanish and Imperial ambassadors. These Catholic ambassadors were in England to push the suits of their sovereigns, Philip II and Archduke Charles. Therefore, it is with these suits that these ambassadors have the most interplay with the Queen and her court. And it is with these suits that their usefulness and resourcefulness is most seen. While in England, and most particularly during these negotiations, the Spanish and Imperial ambassadors not only represented their monarchs but were also the embodiment of their wishes and demands during this time. They still dutifully reported home and received instructions on how to act, but once they acted upon those instructions (or acted upon modifications of those instructions for a better course), they acted in their sovereigns' stead. Especially during these negotiations, these ambassadors were far more than just reporters, they were their sovereigns' by proxy.

Philip II of Spain

Philip II married Mary Tudor of England, in 1554, but the marriage settlement came with many restrictions on Philip's power including the fact that if she were to die

without an heir, Philip would not retain his status as King of England. This is exactly what occurred in November 1558. However, during his time as king, Mary afforded him many rights that were not set out in the original marriage settlement. This allowed him to take an English army against France and to actively work to restore Roman Catholicism in England. Philip also used his power and sway with the Queen to spare Elizabeth's freedom and life. As the daughter of Katherine of Aragon, Mary was fiercely antagonistic toward her half-sister, Elizabeth, the daughter of Anne Boleyn; she also feared, rightly, that her opponents would try to place Elizabeth on the throne which occurred during Wyatt's Rebellion in 1554. Philip understood that should Mary harm Elizabeth and then die without an heir, Mary Stuart would take the throne of England, and as the wife of the dauphin of France, Philip's enemy, this was not a suitable arrangement. He also understood that any action against Elizabeth would possibly incite rebellions against him and Mary.⁹² Therefore, he sought to preserve both Elizabeth's life and her placement in the line of succession.

When Mary died in 1558, Philip wasted no time in offering himself as a marriage partner to Elizabeth. He wished to retain his position so that he could have an ally against the French and to continue his work of bringing England back under the Roman Catholic Church, a task he was not able to fully accomplish during Mary's reign. Because of these goals, Philip resisted the idea of turning enemy against England and Elizabeth in support of the English Catholics who wished to place Mary Stuart on the English throne. Though

⁹² Glyn Redworth, "Philip (1527–1598)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman, 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22097> (accessed January 19, 2009).

Mary Stuart, the next likely heir to the English throne, was a Catholic monarch, she was still allied with the French through her marriage. And Philip was at war with the French who were also occupying Scotland. Philip and Elizabeth had a common enemy which would have made this marriage alliance very profitable for both parties. It also made it an urgent matter for the ambassadors to pursue. Here, Philip put politics above faith.

Philip II was considered to be the “most Catholic King”; however, he was a monarch of a powerful nation first and foremost. This practice often brought him into conflict with his Catholic servants, particularly the ambassadors sent to England. Martin Hume argues this point in his introduction to the Spanish Calendar of State Papers,

Over and over again in the course of the correspondence there are junctures arrived at when only a little boldness was wanting on his [Philip II] part to place England and all Europe in his hands. The blow was never struck. His faithful emissaries one after the other wore their hearts out in beseeching him to accept the offers of the English Catholics, to strike a deadly blow at the reformed religion by making common cause with the Guises, or by boldly marrying his son Carlos to the widowed Mary Stuart and favouring her claim to the English crown, to take up one of the other numerous claimants, to force the Archduke's marriage with Elizabeth, to help the Irish rebels, in fact to do anything which would have won him the game. The majority of the English nobles were in his pay and interest, the common people out of London and the southern counties would have welcomed any ruler who would ensure them the peaceful enjoyment of the Catholic religion and freedom from molestation in their daily lives. But whilst with the English Catholics their religion was their principal object and motive, Philip, for all his professed devotion, looked upon it mainly as a means to other ends. . . . The Ambassador in whose letters the feeling of impatience and disgust at the King's inaction are most plainly expressed is the Count de Feria.⁹³

Philip was a powerful king, of a powerful nation, with a powerful lineage behind him, yet he refused to take action against a country that was “weak, divided, and defenceless

⁹³ Martin A. S. Hume, “Introduction” in *CSP Spain*, via <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=86699> (accessed March 11, 2010).

[sic].”⁹⁴ He refused to take a stand for the English Catholics who wished to see him as their Catholic savior. Early on in the reign, Philip considered it more prudent to court and indulge the Queen of England than to rise up against her despite the recommendations of his ambassadors. According to Susan Doran, Philip would not support the English Catholics “for risk of stirring up political instability which could be exploited by the French.” And he opposed the Pope’s wish to have her excommunicated from the Church until all of his attempts to bring her back had been unsuccessful.⁹⁵ Geoffrey Parker argues, however, that in 1559, after the negotiations went south, Philip actually considered waging war against England. But he knew that after his war with France and his continuing struggle with the Turks, he did not have the resources for such an endeavor. Parker argues that Philip desired to put an end to Elizabeth’s new religious settlement early on, “And yet, unless he acted swiftly, Elizabeth’s new religious settlement might become entrenched and far more difficult to destroy at a later date.”⁹⁶ However, he just did not have the resources to act. And then Mary Stuart’s husband became the king of France and declared himself and Mary the rightful sovereigns of England.

According to Parker, in 1559, Philip desired to put an end to Protestantism in England, militarily if necessary, but he was unable to do so. In the 1560s when Mary Stuart became a real threat to Elizabeth’s throne, Philip no longer desired to have Elizabeth deposed because it would be far worse to have a queen with such a strong alliance with France on the throne of England. So, Parker argues, much like Hume, that

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 25.

⁹⁶ Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), 148.

Philip protected Elizabeth despite the supplications of the English Catholics and his own ambassadors.

He [Philip] . . . opposed any attempt to undermine or dethrone the queen. . . Philip seems not to have realized that his best chance of keeping Elizabeth dependent on him would be to make things harder for her – for example by covertly supporting her Catholic opponents in England and Ireland. Instead he did everything possible to protect her. . . . Philip therefore continued to protect Elizabeth without seeking anything in return.⁹⁷

Henry Kamen also argues that “For some time to come, Philip of Spain was to be the protector of the Elizabethan regime, even when the evidence for its Protestantism was plain for everyone to see.” He even goes so far as to say that during Philip’s brief suit “Philip was not put off by her Protestant tendencies.”⁹⁸ Now perhaps Kamen is arguing that he was not put off by her Protestant tendencies because he believed he could bring her back to Catholicism, or because he hoped that England would not submit to a Protestant settlement. Either way it is quite clear through the ambassadorial correspondences that Philip was quite put off by her Protestant tendencies and was opposed to the idea of making a Protestant queen his wife.

In 1568, Philip wrote a letter to the pope stating that he did not wish to offend God “whose service, and the observation of whose holy faith, I place far ahead of my own affairs and actions and above everything in this life, even my own.”⁹⁹ However, in 1559 his actions ran contradictory to these declarations for he once again put politics above his faith. France proposed an alliance in which they would both, Spain and France, attack England and then divvy up the spoils. Yet, Philip refused because he did not trust

⁹⁷ Ibid., 152-54.

⁹⁸ Henry Kamen, *Philip of Spain* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), 73.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Parker, *Philip II*, 155.

the French to hold true to such an alliance. Again, when Scotland was having its war with France, both England and France sought aid from Spain, and Philip gave it to England, a Protestant nation instead of France, a fellow Catholic nation.¹⁰⁰

In 1558, Philip II wished to ensure the safe and successful accession of Elizabeth I to the throne of England. Perhaps he did so because he felt certain that he could wed her, retaining the status as King of England, and continuing his work restoring Catholicism in England. It is evident from the early correspondences between the Count de Feria and Philip that both assumed Philip would be able to easily retake his former position as king all *he* needed to do was to consent to the match.¹⁰¹ From the moment Mary died and Elizabeth became queen, Philip considered his hand in the marriage negotiations. Within three days of Mary's death, Feria wrote to Philip, ". . . *it is very early yet to talk about marriage the confusion and ineptitude of these people in all their affairs make it necessary for us to be the more circumspect, so as not to miss the opportunities which are presented to us, and particularly in the matter of marriage.*" He continues by asking for a copy of the Marian marriage treaty and adds that, "a new [marriage] treaty would be different from the last."¹⁰² It may have been too early to talk about it, but it was not too early to contemplate and plan for it. Feria had a great distrust and hatred for the English whom he was forced to work with in order to serve his king. This is apparent in this very first letter where he claims that the progression of Spanish

¹⁰⁰ Parker, *Philip II*, 151-52.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 1-2, November 21, 1558, (italics in original; most likely indicating that it was written in cipher in the original document in order to keep the English from reading it).

interests in England must be put on hold because the people (those of Elizabeth's court) are confused and incompetent to handle the transition of one queen to another.

In this letter, Feria declares his intentions to push a marriage suit with Elizabeth for Philip. The matter of fact style of this announcement indicates that he is doing this with the permission of Philip. He does not ask if he may recommend it; he simply states the fact that it is too early to push it, indicating he already has the king's approval. He also states that a new marriage treaty will have to be created for the union of Elizabeth and Philip implying that there will be stricter restrictions or different restrictions for Philip in this marriage than there was in his marriage with Mary I. This statement shows the certainty that, early on, both Philip and Feria had that Elizabeth would accept his proposal. This certainty is further found in Philip's response to Feria, "As regards myself, if they should broach the subject to you, you should treat it in such a way as neither to accept nor reject the business altogether. It is a matter of such grave importance that it was necessary for me to take counsel and maturely consider it in all its bearings before I sent you my decision."¹⁰³ This statement indicates that Philip believes he can just sit back and wait until the English come to him in regards to marriage. In fact, as of yet, he does not even want Feria to broach the subject of a marriage to the English, and once they do come to him he does not yet have an answer ready. On the assumption that the English would be delighted to retain Philip as king once again, he feels that it is only his consent that is needed for such an occasion to happen. This assumption is probably based upon preservationist ideas that Elizabeth should readily accept him in order to protect her

¹⁰³ Ibid., 22, January 10, 1559.

kingdom and gain a very powerful ally, particularly against the French who were straining against her back door in a war with the Scots.

Philip goes on to express the many reasons why he is hesitant to marry Elizabeth: “Many great difficulties present . . . I am obliged to reside in my other dominions and consequently could not reside much in England . . .” This is something that Elizabeth’s council feared from a foreign suitor especially one who was a monarch, “. . . and also because the Queen has not been sound on religion, and it would not look well for me to marry her unless she were a Catholic. Besides this such a marriage would appear like entering upon a perpetual war with France.” Philip was not an ardent suitor who was willing to risk great time and money in the pursuit of Elizabeth. In fact, he was willing to risk very little. Then again, he did not think he needed to. As far as he was concerned, if the English and Elizabeth desired him as a husband (as he assumed they did) then they were going to have to make the necessary changes for him such as ensure a Catholic nation or at the very least a Catholic queen, this contradicts Kamen’s statement that Philip was not “put off by her Protestant tendencies.” To Philip, a marriage to the Queen of England was not a desire but a duty, and not just a political duty to his country in order to retain an alliance, but a Christian duty to God and to the Pope: “I have decided to place on one side all other considerations which might be urged against it and am resolved to render this service to God, and offer to marry the queen of England . . . if it can be done on the conditions explained to you [Feria].” His conditions were that she understood that he would not reside in England, and that she profess and practice the Catholic faith. Even

though this act of marriage would be against his desire he was willing to make the sacrifice, as he explains to Feria,

I nevertheless cannot lose sight of the enormous importance of such a match to Christianity and the preservation of religion which has been restored to England by the help of God. Seeing also the importance that the country should not fall back into its former errors which would cause to our own neighbouring dominions serious dangers and difficulties.¹⁰⁴

Just as Philip often put politics above faith, he was also willing to put faith above personal desire; however, certain changes would have to occur in England for that to happen, changes Elizabeth and her Council were not willing to make. Philip assumed that all he had to do was consent to be king, and England and her queen would readily agree to such an arrangement. Philip did not take into account the strength and personal wish to remain single of the queen nor the hatred of the people who suffered under the reign of Mary.

According to Hume, there were many who desired Philip as their Catholic king and Christian savior, but there were also many who blamed him for the loss of Calais, the death of Queen Mary, and the public persecutions of Protestants during her reign. There were many who did not want the Spanish Catholic king to return, for that matter he set a bad example for all foreign monarchs, and as a result, many in Elizabeth's court argued for an English king for the English throne. Feria's first letter to Philip after the accession of Elizabeth tells the Spanish king that "*the new Queen and her people hold themselves free from your Majesty . . .*"¹⁰⁵ The new Queen and her court did not view Philip the same way that Philip saw himself. Philip saw himself as the most suitable and most expected

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 1-2, November 21, 1559 (italics in original).

choice for a husband and king. Elizabeth saw him as just another suitor. Also, other than Christian duty, Philip was not keen on the match. As a result, Philip did not put much personal effort toward his marriage suit with Elizabeth. At the end of December 1558, Feria was wondering why Philip had yet to write to the new queen regarding his intentions and through this stalling appeared reluctant, to Feria, to push the marriage issue.

However, by mid-February, Philip either was more strongly against the match or more sure of his success because he started placing more stringent demands on the queen through his ambassador. He tells Feria to relate to the queen that he is disappointed in the religious settlement she is establishing within England, “you had better consider whether it will not be well to press the Queen by saying that if this change [religious change] is made all idea of my marriage with her must be broken off, and if she has any thoughts of the marriage this may be efficacious.”¹⁰⁶ Essentially, through Feria, his proxy, Philip issued an ultimatum to the queen: Return England to Catholicism or I will withdraw my marriage suit. Philip may have seen this as a very justified ultimatum. After all, he was participating in the peace negotiations of Cateau Cambresis on behalf of England as well as Spain. This ultimatum could very well have been a threat to Elizabeth that he would no longer look to her interests in the negotiations. This indeed was something Elizabeth and her court feared: that Philip would make a separate peace with France and leave England alone in a war with them. However, he vastly underestimated the determination of the queen and her advisors. According to Hume, Feria did not handle the ultimatum in the way the king advised,

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 26-27, February 12, 1559.

Feria saw how little his King realised the true state of affairs in England and did not venture to breath a word about religion to the Queen whilst the marriage question was pending. He does not indeed seem to have pressed the marriage question very eagerly, as it must have been evident to him on the spot that a match saddled with such conditions as those imposed by Philip would be impossible.¹⁰⁷

Perhaps Feria's handling of the instructions is why the ultimatum failed to produce the desired effect. Hume is arguing, as I have, that Feria was far more aware of the circumstances in England than his king, and he took what he could use of Philip's orders and disregarded what would be inappropriate for the circumstance. Even this early on, Feria understood better than Philip that the Queen of England would not give in to his demands just to have him rule her and her kingdom. Therefore, in order to prolong the negotiations, he downplayed the King's demands.

Elizabeth also had many things to relate to Feria regarding the marriage negotiation with Philip, and none of them included a wedding with Philip. In his memorandum to Philip in late February, Feria lists the many objections that Elizabeth had raised against a marriage with Philip starting with "that she had no desire to marry." He continued with the more specific excuses, "The impediment she discovered in the fact of your Majesty having married her sister . . ." Henry VIII used this same argument when trying to secure an annulment with his first wife Catherine of Aragon who had been previously married and widowed from Henry's elder brother, Arthur. This was a powerful argument because in the Old Testament book of Leviticus, God rules that no man may marry his brother's widow and vice versa. And finally, ". . . the people did not wish her to marry a foreigner. . . . And, finally, that several persons had told her that your

¹⁰⁷ Hume, "Introduction."

Majesty would come here and then go off to Spain directly.” Elizabeth also told him that she understood that a marriage to Philip would be “advantageous to her honour and the preservation of both States,” but she believed that relations could be attained through a close friendship with him instead of a marriage.¹⁰⁸

Elizabeth’s lists of reason for not wishing to marry Philip are as long as his for not wanting to marry her. Elizabeth had decided very early on that, if she had to consider a marriage partner, she was not interested in the pursuit of Philip. By March, she declared to Feria that she could not marry him because “she was a heretic . . . and that your Majesty wishes to marry her for religious objects alone, and so she kept repeating to me that she was heretical and consequently could not marry your Majesty.”¹⁰⁹ Elizabeth understood the ramifications of using the term heretic to describe herself. However, by March, it was becoming more and more apparent that Elizabeth and her parliament were abandoning the Catholic faith for a Protestant settlement. A heretic was a person firmly against the Catholic Church and its teachings. In legal terms of that age, Elizabeth was speaking nothing but the truth. She was indeed a heretic. However, for a woman who had previously tried to downplay the religious changes in England and who was so persistent in her negotiations in order to avoid a war, she chose a strong word. A word she hoped would force Feria and Philip to understand that she had no intention of returning to Catholicism, marrying Philip, or relinquishing her kingdom to him as Mary had done. Perhaps it was the force behind this letter or the listed reasons in Feria’s memorandum, but on March 23 Philip wrote to Feria with these thoughts,

¹⁰⁸ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 35, February 29, 1559.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 37, March 19, 1559.

I am informed of the Queen's decision about marriage, and, although I cannot help being sorry that the affair has not been arranged, as I greatly desired and the public will demanded, yet as the queen thinks it was not necessary and that with good friendship we shall attain the same object, I am content that it should be so.¹¹⁰

Philip had not earnestly desired the marriage as he declared; in fact, he did little to ensure its outcome: he remained personally uninvolved in the negotiations, and he made unreasonable demands he knew, or at least his ambassador knew, would not be met by Elizabeth.

By early April, Philip, as part of the peace negotiations with France, became betrothed to the daughter of the French King. Though Philip did not abandon England in the negotiations, Calais was still lost to them. France's presence in Scotland was a threat to England; England's greatest defense was her friendship with Spain. Therefore, Spain's matrimonial alliance with France was deeply upsetting to Elizabeth and her council. Though she still had no desire to marry him, even though that is the card she played, she greatly feared an alliance between the French and the Spanish. An alliance of such two strong Catholic nations who could turn against England, was a bleak thought. In response to the news that Philip was thus engaged, Feria dictates Elizabeth's declarations, "To this [she] retorted that it was your Majesty's fault it [the marriage negotiation] had fallen through and not hers, as she had given me no reply . . ." Elizabeth very often declared her dislike for marriage and specifically for the marriage between her and Philip, but she was always careful not to give an "official" answer. For that matter, Feria would not accept an official answer. Feria often halted the conversation when he knew that the queen was ready to give her well used excuses of disliking marriage and wishing to remain single.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 40, March 23, 1559.

Elizabeth did not wish to marry Philip, but she also did not wish to see two strong Catholic nations allied together. This same news reached the Venetian ambassador Paulo Tiepolo,

The Queen of England, being at length convinced how ill she provides for her security by never having come to any conclusion about her marriage with King Philip, now that the peace is made, and that his Majesty has given his word to take another wife, is so dissatisfied and alarmed lest some evil befall her through his peace and alliance, that at present she would on any terms gladly persuade his Majesty to break the promise made to France, and to take her for wife. Owing to this circumstance it is now confirmed to me from several quarters that whereas it was before in her power to dictate the conditions to his Catholic Majesty, so at present through the medium of Count de Feria she offers King Philip her acceptance of whatever conditions and compacts may please him, provided she becomes his wife.¹¹¹

Tiepolo's report seems quite contradictory to everything that had been reported by both the Spanish and Hapsburg ambassadors. Also, by April, when this report was written, Parliament had already decided on a Protestant religious settlement. Therefore, it is likely that Elizabeth and her Parliament knew that a marriage contract with Philip II would never work. At the same time, her fear for the security of her country at this juncture was very likely. This marriage alliance had to be very disconcerting. Just the same, it is unlikely that a woman who was so against a marriage alliance with Philip from the start would concede to "whatever conditions and compacts may please him". Elizabeth's declarations and her open dissatisfaction with the news of Philip's marriage match give further proof that Elizabeth used the marriage negotiations and, therefore, the ambassadors to maintain peace, regardless of her personal desires about marriage.

¹¹¹ *CSP Venice*, vol. VII, 71, April 23, 1559.

Philip II greatly underestimated the Queen of England and his own popularity with her people. Despite his immediate inclination to involve himself in these negotiations, he lacked the fervor, tact, and ability to compromise to secure the elusive Queen's hand; however, this was more to his satisfaction than dismay. The marriage negotiation between Elizabeth and Philip was short lived as both showed an aversion to it. According to Susan Doran, this marriage negotiation failed because "Philip II was unacceptable in England as the man held responsible (admittedly most unfairly) for the disastrous French War and the persecutions of Protestants during the previous reign; marriage to him, moreover, was clearly incompatible with the radical changes in religion favoured by the queen and her new Council."¹¹² In February 1559, Count Helffenstein, the Imperial ambassador, wrote home reporting on conversations he had with Thomas Chaloner, the Queen's ambassador to Emperor Ferdinand, and with the Earl of Sussex, regarding King Philip's suit and the unlikelihood of it succeeding. According to Helffenstein, Sussex bluntly stated, ". . . there were many reasons why both the Queen and the Estates would never, in the interests of the realm, consent to that marriage." And Helffenstein continues to list the reasons given by Sussex in his report.¹¹³ He goes on to report a conversation he had with Chaloner regarding the same

He now in confidence would not conceal from me that it would not come to a marriage with the King of Spain, the matter having been protracted merely that they might be able to see what the peace negotiations would promise. But whatever might be their outcome, he was certain that the

¹¹² Doran, *Monarch and Matrimony*, 211.

¹¹³ Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 43, February 26, 1559. Helffenstein continues to list reasons why England would not accept Philip II as king: 1) The Estates recognize that Philip would not be able to reside in England, and they wished to have a King remain within the Kingdom; he explains this as, "The result would be that they would have a King and yet not have a King." And 2) he states that the "Spanish customs are repugnant to this country."

King of Spain would be declined, or at least be given such hard conditions that he could not fail to see that feeling was against him.¹¹⁴

Chaloner claims that the negotiations took place for as long as they did because Philip was the primary peace negotiator for both Spain and England in the Cateau-Cambresis negotiations. Elizabeth's fear of losing Spain's alliance at that juncture was enough to protract the negotiations because the negotiations in themselves protected Elizabeth and England.

Despite these feelings against Philip and Philip's hesitations, Philip still wished to take a very active role in her marriage negotiations "as a good and true brother."¹¹⁵ He still wished to see her married to a man who would be favorable to Spain and who was a good Catholic. Philip continued to recommend and back suitors. He left the English Catholics to their own devices, much to their dismay, and refused to attack England in their defense. However, over the next twenty years he would come into conflict with Elizabeth over her aid to the Spanish Netherlands and spoke out against the Pope for excommunicating Elizabeth without consulting him. Philip lacked a focused stance when it came to the Queen of England and this kept him from taking decisive action against her until it was too late. It was not until 1588 that Philip finally attacked England and was defeated for his efforts. As Hume argues,

So he [Philip] delayed and procrastinated, doubted and temporised, whilst one opportunity after another was lost and the consolidation of England went on until after thirty years of sluggish hesitancy he took the plunge and found to his dismay that he had to face a united nation under a mature and popular sovereign instead of a broken and divided people under a new and doubtfully legitimate Queen.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44, February 26, 1559.

¹¹⁵ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 26-7, February 12, 1559.

¹¹⁶ Hume, "Introduction."

In the same stream of argument, Parker states,

Thanks to his decision to concentrate on Spain and the Mediterranean, Philip had lost his first and best chance to tame Tudor England and for the next few years, although Elizabeth remained vulnerable, the king neglected English affairs while he fought the Turks. . . . Instead he did everything possible to protect her.¹¹⁷

For the immediate future, Philip would continue his friendly relationship with England and her queen. His next step in April 1559 was to recommend either of the sons of the Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand or Charles—another Hapsburg and another devout Catholic.

The Archdukes of Austria: The Hapsburg Brothers

Archduke Ferdinand

The Hapsburgs were determined to return Elizabeth and England to the Catholic fold and to keep her as an ally. When the marriage negotiations with Philip II failed, Emperor Ferdinand eagerly offered his son. But which son would it be: Charles or Ferdinand? Rumor and informal discussion regarding matrimony to one of the sons of Emperor Ferdinand began almost as early as the suit of Philip II. Officially, Ferdinand did not wish to interfere with Philip's suit, but unofficially he was quite eager to let his intentions be known to the new queen. In January 1559, Emperor Ferdinand sent instructions to his ambassador in England, Count Helffenstein, "We then, in consideration of the above-mentioned marriage [marriage suit of Philip II], do not wish you to urge the marriage plan of our illustrious sons too zealously and eagerly . . ." ¹¹⁸

Ferdinand does not instruct Helffenstein to refrain from all talks about marriage with one

¹¹⁷ Parker, *Philip II*, 153.

¹¹⁸ Klarwill, *Queen Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 29, January 27, 1559.

of his sons; he simply instructs him to keep it informal and quiet. He also places “son” in the plural seeming to indicate that the Emperor himself is not certain which son will become the chosen suitor of Elizabeth.

This matter was also to be kept secret from Philip II,

Moreover we will not that you treat with the King of Spain regarding the plan of inducing one of our sons to enter into the said marriage and dominion, nor that you initiate His Majesty into our scruples and difficulties, but rather that, should His majesty spontaneously come to speak of this affair, you answer him, as though of your own inspiration, that we by no means wish to pursue this matter for our sons, until we have the certainty that His Majesty does not desire this marriage for himself or for His Royal Highness the Prince of Spain, and that we intend to abide by this resolution.¹¹⁹

Ferdinand did not want Philip to know that he was even contemplating an official suit to the Queen while the Spanish king’s negotiations were at their height. Ferdinand instructed his ambassadors to play coy with the King of Spain. And if Helffenstein was actively sought out by Philip or his councilors, he was to evade the issue or outright deny the Emperor’s interests. Again, we see the way in which the ambassador’s role is important and yet downplayed. It is unlikely that Helffenstein would have been directly approached by Philip II. In reality, he would have been approached by one of his ambassadors, the Count de Feria or Barron Breuner, who would then act in Philip’s stead to investigate the intentions of the Imperial ambassadors. Interestingly, Ferdinand instructs Helffenstein to respond “as though by your own inspiration.” However, the reply is not to be from his own volition, but from carefully constructed instructions given by the Emperor himself. Ferdinand offered his ambassadors far less freedom in their official duties and responses than the King of Spain. Philip often left his ambassadors to

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

their own devices to handle a particular situation, thus recognizing their unique and intimate situation as a member of Elizabeth's court. Ferdinand was very personally involved in structuring and also criticizing the responses of his ambassadors.

During the four months, January to April 1559, that Helffenstein was informally promoting the Emperor's interests, the son most strongly considered was Prince Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria. The initial reason for the Emperor's choice of Ferdinand over the younger son Charles was primarily religion,

We therefore believe that our illustrious son, Archduke Ferdinand, whose fidelity in all points of our Catholic and orthodox Religion stands unassailable and constant, will not be disposed to set his mind upon this marriage. And the Archduke Charles whose judgment is in consequence of his youthfulness, not yet so firmly based as his brother Ferdinand's and is therefore not immune against the danger of infection, we will not, *without weighty political reasons*, subject to the danger of forfeiting the eternal salvation of his soul.¹²⁰

Though the ultimate goal was to bring England back under Catholicism, the Emperor understood that it was shifting toward a Protestant religious settlement. He wanted to make sure to place a strong Catholic monarch in the seat of power who could facilitate the return and not one who would be easily swayed to the new English religion. Even though Ferdinand would have been the ideal choice because of his unassailable beliefs, it is because of these strong Catholic beliefs that the Emperor did not think Ferdinand would be willing to take a wife who had Protestant tendencies. And, the Emperor saw his son, Charles, as still young enough to be malleable in the ways of religion while Ferdinand was more firmly rooted and stable enough to effect change. Emperor Ferdinand goes on to say that "*without weighty political reasons*" will he risk his son's

¹²⁰Ibid., 29, January 27, 1559.

soul. The counterpoint to this statement would be that if the political reasons were weighty enough than he would risk his son's soul. This argument further justifies the point that often political issues went above faith. If the political issues were great enough, then religious issues (faith) would be laid aside. Just four months after this correspondence, Emperor Ferdinand did enter his younger son, Charles, into marriage negotiations with Elizabeth despite his earlier hesitations. However, until the official negotiations began, it was always Ferdinand who was being recommended.

While the unofficial Imperial talks were occurring, official Spanish negotiations were continuing. It was Count Helffenstein's job not only to secretly discuss with the Queen the possibility of a union with one of the Emperor's sons, but also to observe how the other negotiations were transpiring, especially the negotiations with the Spanish king, Philip II, since it was the failure or success of Philip's negotiations that would determine if official negotiations with one of the Archdukes would occur. So, while he was finding out if the Archduke Ferdinand would be welcomed, he was also finding out how welcome the Spanish king would be. Helffenstein recounts a conversation he had with the Admiral at Dover,¹²¹ "For without a doubt His Imperial Highness [Archduke Ferdinand] would receive a hearty welcome here . . . Above all they in this land will not have the Spaniard here any more." Helffenstein goes on to report a conversation with Thomas Chaloner, who at this point (1559) was Elizabeth's ambassador to Emperor Ferdinand, ". . . he says that he knows the Queen would rather take the Archduke's hose and doublet

¹²¹ The Admiral at Dover was most likely Admiral William Winter who was highly placed in Elizabeth's court which makes this comment more valuable than from a random sailor off the docks. Like Winter, Chaloner was highly placed in Elizabeth's court; he was also a part of these negotiations and Elizabeth's official mouthpiece which gives his comments far more credibility.

than the King of Spain, and were the latter Roman Emperor and Lord of all Europe.”¹²² These last two comments are not only rumor but hearsay; however, if they are true then they come from reputable sources who were high ranking in the Queen’s court and who would undoubtedly have inside information on which suitor would have a warmer welcome with the Queen and her court. These reputable sources may also be bolstering the Queen’s desire for one of the Archdukes as it may be more beneficial to them personally, thus using the ambassadors for their own gain much as Cecil and Dudley did.

In mid-March 1559, Helffenstein recorded a conversation he had with the Queen where he claims that Elizabeth was concerned about information she received that the Archduke Ferdinand was engaged in other marriage negotiations. By March, it was apparent to both Elizabeth and Philip that the negotiations between them would not succeed. Therefore, these concerns were very valid because, with the informal discussion about Archduke Ferdinand, Elizabeth was expectant of a suit from him and wished to know if there would be complications. Count Helffenstein assured the Queen that he had no knowledge of other negotiations regarding the Archduke, and as an ambassador he would most likely have such knowledge—though this did not thoroughly persuade the Queen. As late as April, it was being reported that, “it is the general talk of the town in London, that the Archduke Ferdinand will marry the Queen . . .”¹²³ In letters dated in both February and April, men in the service of the Emperor: Count Helffenstein, his secretary George Newmetzger, and Elizabeth’s ambassador, Sir Thomas Chaolner, all tried to persuade the Emperor to begin official negotiations on behalf of Ferdinand. They

¹²² Klarwill, *The Queen and some foreigners*, 41-44, February 26, 1559.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 48, March 16, 1559 and 51, April 25, 1559.

feared that support would wane if the Emperor did not appear to be eager about such a match. Perhaps they were looking back on Philip's delay. However, because of the delay and not infringing on Philip's suit, Emperor Ferdinand was able to gain the support of King Phillip II when official negotiations finally opened.

Ironically, when official negotiations did begin, it was not another suit or his strong religious beliefs that kept Archduke Ferdinand from being the chosen Hapsburg suitor to the Queen—Archduke Ferdinand already had a living wife. In 1557 Ferdinand had secretly married Philippine Welser, a woman from a much lower social stratum than the Archduke. Conceivably, the negotiations could have continued because the marriage was not recognized by the Emperor and could have been annulled; however, according to Doran, “Ferdinand could not be persuaded to put aside his morganatic wife . . .”¹²⁴ In 1559, Emperor Ferdinand finally gave sanction to the marriage as long as it remained a secret. This would cause problems when official marriage negotiations opened with the Queen of England because for the previous four months it had been Archduke Ferdinand who had been anticipated and it would be Archduke Charles, the younger son, who would be offered, and the real reason for the change could not be revealed.

Archduke Charles of Austria

On May 8, 1558, Emperor Ferdinand wrote instructions to Caspar Breuner, the Chamberlain to Archduke Charles, to begin official negotiations on behalf of Charles. When Philip's suit began, it had very little competition. There was some talk with Sweden and some concern about Dudley (though that even did not arise formidably until

¹²⁴ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 27.

around April 1559, by then Philip's suit was over), and some informal talks with the Imperial ambassadors. However, by May when the Emperor officially began the suit of Archduke Charles, and throughout his suit, there was much more competition. The Swedish ambassadors were heavily pushing for Eric, there was some talk with Scotland regarding the Earl of Arran, all three English suitors were pressing their hand, and there was much more concern and some scandal over Elizabeth's continued favoritism and affection for Robert Dudley. So the ambassador's handling of the Emperor's instructions and his pressing of the suit would be critical to its success or failure.

The opening of the official negotiations began with the Emperor giving instruction to his ambassador on how to handle the negotiations. In his first official report regarding official negotiations, the Emperor provided instructions on how to handle circumstances should the Queen or her Council appear offended that the Archduke Ferdinand is not offered as intended. Even though official negotiations had yet to begun, Emperor Ferdinand understood the implications of the unofficial talks and hoped to prevent any conflict with the future negotiations of Archduke Charles.

He continued by explaining his long desire to offer one of his sons, but that he was unable to do so because he did not wish to hinder the suit of Philip. He then officially declares his intentions and offers Charles, "Nor will we longer conceal from Her Royal Highness that we ardently desire to bring about a matrimonial alliance of Her Royal Highness with the illustrious Prince Charles, Archduke of Austria, our beloved younger son." The emperor then goes on to explain that, though Charles is the younger son, he will receive the same considerations that would have been offered with Ferdinand,

And this though we are in no doubt that Her Royal Highness as well as the notabilities of her realm were of the opinion that we had rather destined for this royal marriage our other much beloved son the illustrious Prince Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, as the first born. . . . If further it should seem to the said Queen that we were resorting to subterfuge because we propose our aforesaid son the Archduke Charles in preference to the elder, Archduke Ferdinand, we assure her that in the agreements to be concluded we shall not proceed otherwise than we should if they were being concluded on behalf of Archduke Ferdinand . . .¹²⁵

It would be important to Elizabeth and her Council to know that Charles would bring the same revenue and prestige into the marriage because often the younger son was not entitled to the same inheritances as the elder son. Emperor Ferdinand goes on to relay reasons that should be given as to why Charles is an equal or even better choice. First, the Emperor recognizes that the Queen and her Estates are interested in a king who could reside in England, and so he argues that Charles would be more able to stay in the kingdom whereas Ferdinand would often have to be away to govern his other provinces. The Emperor also suggests that because Charles is younger¹²⁶ he will be able to more quickly adapt to the language and customs of the English. He goes on to say that Charles has talent and zeal for the political role that he would assume, and he is no less than his brother because he came from the same heritage.¹²⁷ Emperor Ferdinand carefully uses what he knows about the wishes of Elizabeth and her Estates to make Charles the preferable choice. However, he very carefully leaves out the issue of religion, he neither comments that Charles is a strong and devout Catholic nor does he suggest that Charles would be amenable to the English changes in religion.

¹²⁵ Klarwill, *The Queen and some foreigners*, 67-69, May 8, 1559.

¹²⁶ Archduke Charles was nineteen years old at the start of these negotiations in 1559, seven years younger than Elizabeth.

¹²⁷ Klarwill, *Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 70, May 8, 1559.

This letter is simply to state his intentions and to get acceptance from the Queen in order to continue with the negotiations. The importance of the ambassador is shown through the fact that Emperor Ferdinand went through an emissary to begin official negotiations rather than writing the letter to the Queen herself. All of the above mentioned excuses, guidelines, and instructions were written in a letter to his ambassador, Baron Breuner, who would then relay them to the queen. He expected his ambassador, Baron Breuner, to be his eyes and ears at Elizabeth's court. Breuner was supposed to represent Emperor Ferdinand and his son the Archduke Charles, in essence to be the embodiment of Ferdinand's wishes and demands in this matter. Emperor Ferdinand also understood that his ambassador could more competently assess and handle any situation that might arise from any misunderstandings regarding the change in suitors.

Elizabeth's response to the Emperor was, as it was to many other suitors, that she had "no wish to give up solitude and our lonely life." However, once again, Elizabeth strategically replied in a way that did not "officially" decline the Emperor's offer, in fact she went on to say that there is a chance that God could change her thoughts and inclinations on this matter in the future. By the end of the letter she states, "We in nowise wish to appear to offend by an open refusal nor on the other hand to concede on this occasion what we in spirit and soul have denied."¹²⁸ This allowed for hope on the part of the Emperor and on the part of all potential suitors. And so negotiations continued despite her resistance. This was Elizabeth's official reply to the Emperor, not given through an intermediary. At one point, she openly declared to him that she had no intention to marry

¹²⁸ Ibid., 76, June 5, 1559.

but throughout the letter her comments remained evasive and allowed for a potential change of heart and mind. The Emperor, like others, hoped that he would be able to persuade the cryptic queen to give up her solitary existence for his son, Charles. And Elizabeth allowed this hope to exist in order to save her kingdom from war and to maintain peaceful relations with the Catholics. She remained very careful not to give any official answers that could tie her to a husband or end the negotiation.

The most significant factors that allowed Elizabeth to delay the negotiations were religion and dissention among her councilors. Elizabeth was in the midst of altering her kingdom's religious settlement. By June, when she gave her official reply to the Emperor, it was quite clear, by the mandates of Parliament, that Elizabeth, as a Protestant Queen, would be ruling a Protestant nation, and the Emperor and his sons were devout Catholics. However, the Imperial ambassadors tried to downplay the religious differences for both sides. When speaking to the Emperor, they made it appear that the new religious settlement was not all that different from Catholicism. This was something that Elizabeth herself also tried to do, at least in the beginning. When speaking to Elizabeth, they tried to downplay the strength of the Archduke's religious devotion. In February 1559, when Count Helffenstein was exploring the possibilities for marriage negotiations and the religious changes in England, he wrote this to the Emperor, "In regard to the question of religion there is nothing special to report. Throughout England the form of the Catholic religion is preserved, and nothing has so far been altered . . ." He then lists how close the religious settlement is to Catholicism: The supremacy was changed to Elizabeth, but that was only to keep Church revenue within England, and the Mass has not changed at all

except minor parts are spoken in the vulgar tongue.¹²⁹ Once again, this is a much different view than the one proclaimed by the Spanish ambassadors who were always eager to denounce all the religious changes as heretical. Perhaps Helffenstein is moderating the religious changes because he understands that if the Emperor understood the degree of religious change he would immediately halt all negotiations. Or perhaps as a resident of the Holy Roman Empire, where the Augsburg Confession was strongly in place, the changes in religion were not nearly as critical as they would have seemed to the Spanish.

At the same time, the Archduke's own religious devotion was downplayed because, once again, the ambassador understood, like Count de Feria, that if the Queen knew that the Archduke's religious practices were unassailable than the negotiations would be terminated from that side. In July 1559, Baron Breuner wrote to Ferdinand to tell him how he answered the Queen and her Council regarding Charles' religion, "To this I answered that I knew the Archduke Charles to be an obedient son of Your Imperial Majesty, but if ever His Highness should become cognizant of a better religion, God the Almighty would not exclude him . . . from His Grace." By July, England was clearly a Protestant nation. Without seeking the Emperor's advice or sanction, Breuner led the Queen and Council to believe that Charles would be willing to change his religion to that of the English settlement if he truly believed it was the one true religion. Breuner did this because he understood, through his dealings with the Queen and her Council, that this would be a major issue for many in England who did not wish to have a strong Catholic monarch—they had already experienced that kind of religious devotion through Philip II

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 38, February 26, 1559.

and Mary. But, because he did this of his own volition, he was promptly scolded by the Emperor, “Further we would not conceal from you that we do not approve of what you said concerning our son’s religion; it is neither in accordance with your instructions, nor does it redound much to our honour as Emperor and to our zeal for the Catholic religion.” However, Philip II offered his support of Breuner’s technique, “. . . the King of Spain . . . expressed his satisfaction and said that we could not have given a better answer.”

Breuner believed that he was in a better place to follow the instructions as he best thought fit the agenda, take and leave what was necessary, so he justified his response to Ferdinand by stating, “Had I expressly averred that my gracious master, the Archduke Charles, was still devoted to the Catholic religion and would ever remain so, the whole affair would have been abruptly terminated and all hopes cut off.”¹³⁰ Doran argues, “He had considered such tactics necessary and worthwhile as a means of promoting a marriage which would in time restore Elizabeth to the Catholic Church and preserve Habsburg interests in England.”¹³¹ These were the original goals of both Hapsburg suitors. In matters of religion, Breuner simply did what Count de Feria did on Philip’s behalf, either Philip allowed this kind of independence in his ambassadors, unlike Ferdinand, or he simply didn’t know.

There was also the dissention among the ranks of councilors that allowed for the failure of this suit. According to Susan Doran there were those councilors who supported William Pickering, and those who supported themselves, such as the Earl of Arundel and Robert Dudley, and then of course there were those who supported Charles. She argues

¹³⁰ Ibid., 102, July 13, 1559; 107-8, August 6, 1559; 119-20, August 31, 1559.

¹³¹ Doran, “Religion and Politics,” 912.

that the dissension got so great that it “threatened at times to lead to open violence.”¹³² And without a consensus, Elizabeth could not risk choosing one among the many. In the first two years of her reign, there were many suitors vying for the Queen’s hand, and so the marriage issue had not yet gotten so desperate that the councilors had to unite behind one man even if they could.

Another factor in these negotiations was Elizabeth’s stipulation that a suitor must come in person to meet her in England without any matrimonial guarantee. The Imperial ambassadors were anxious for Ferdinand to follow through with these demands, optimistic that once the stipulation was met, Elizabeth would cement the negotiations. Of course Ferdinand did not wish to put his son or his treasury through the peril or expense of such a journey without some guarantee which Elizabeth refused to give. Both the Imperial ambassador and the Spanish ambassador tried to persuade Ferdinand to send Charles to England. In October 1559, Baron Breuner wrote to the Emperor to argue that if he was not willing to send his son, it would be fruitless to continue negotiations, “I also cannot withhold from your Imperial Majesty my most humble opinion that if Your Imperial Majesty be not willing to send His Highness here, it would be better to abandon the matter altogether than to continue to entertain hopes.” It seems they understood that Elizabeth was unmovable in her demands to see a potential suitor prior to making any commitments. The ambassadors even suggested sending the prince “incognito” though Ferdinand would not hear of anything less than a full retinue.¹³³ In November, the ambassadors, both Imperial and Spanish, began to doubt the Queen’s intentions (or began

¹³² Ibid., 908.

¹³³ Klarwill, *Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 149, October 22, 1559.

to believe the Queen's earlier claims about her not desiring to marry). They, therefore, insisted on an unequivocal answer from Elizabeth, who simply stated that it would be better if the Emperor did not send his son to England.¹³⁴

In the months prior to Charles officially pulling out of the marriage negotiations, the Imperial ambassadors began to seriously doubt Elizabeth's true intentions regarding the negotiations. And they finally began to worry about Robert Dudley. In December, Breuner wrote to Maximilian for the first time regarding Robert Dudley. "I have a still more formidable enemy, who is very much in my way, it is Mylord Robert . . . It is generally stated that it is his fault that the Queen does not marry . . ." He goes on to say, "I really do believe that he will follow in the footsteps of his parents [follow a traitor's path] and may the Devil be his companion, for he causes me and all those who are active on behalf of His Princely Highness a world of trouble." He also wonders why Dudley has not been killed by his own countrymen as he is hated by the Knights and commoners. Some nine months after Count de Feria first mentioned Dudley's participation in the negotiations, Baron Breuner finally writes his frustrations of Dudley's interference with the Archduke's negotiations. He claims that it is the Queen's attachment to Dudley that keeps her from choosing Charles as her husband or any other suitor for that matter. Yet, in the same letter he claims that Robert has offered to help with the Archduke's negotiations and promises results, "but from others we learn that he will place as many impediments in our path as possible."¹³⁵ This statement was true, especially when the negotiations opened up again in 1563. Robert Dudley was actively against a match with

¹³⁴ Ibid., 153, November 22, 1559.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 156-61, December 5, 1559.

the Archduke Charles and this continually put him in opposition with William Cecil. Dudley was against a Catholic match, but he was primarily against a match that would remove him from Elizabeth's affection and his position as her favorite.

It was also at this time that the ambassadors began to question the seriousness of the negotiations and contemplate their end. In November 1559, Breuner wrote to Ferdinand stating, "Nor can I conceal from Your Imperial Majesty that all the time, my hopes that this marriage with the Queen would be contracted were but faint, for she does not fancy it . . ." And yet less than a month later, on December 5, he wrote to Maximilian that, "it is only on the question of religion that they raise difficulties; but these are not so great that the marriage would therefore have to be relinquished, and the longer I stay here the more I lean to this position."¹³⁶ Within a month's time, he goes from nearly giving up all hope to saying that the only issue preventing the marriage is really not that big of an issue at all. Susan Doran argues that it was not religion at all that prevented the marriage negotiations from succeeding, it was politics. It was the lack of a strong united front among Elizabeth's councilors for the match. There was also a great fear for a foreign monarch. Cecil argued that unlike an English suitor, a foreign prince could bring wealth, safety, and prestige to England. However, Thomas Smith argued that a foreign monarch could ruin the country by using England's wealth and people for his own agendas, "he replied that it could well weaken and impoverish her, as Mary's recent marriage to Philip amply demonstrated."¹³⁷ This fear and lack of unity as well as Elizabeth's refusal to give an answer and her demand to see a suitor eventually persuaded the Emperor to drop

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Doran, "Religion and Politics," 911-912. For further discussion on this look at Norm Jones, *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age*, 128-31.

negotiations and pull his ambassadors out of England in March 1560. Neale argues, “Elizabeth was prejudiced by the knowledge that Mary’s major blunder had been her marriage, and by the feeling that a foreign match would be unpopular. Her doubts might have disappeared if Court and Council had given a unanimous lead; but some were for one candidate, some for another.”¹³⁸

Doran argues that a marriage to Charles “offered prestige and political security. . . . A Habsburg marriage would open the way to an alliance with Spain which could provide protection from France and the Papacy.”¹³⁹ This is why the negotiations with the Archduke Charles would again continue in 1563. And in 1563 there would be stronger support from Elizabeth’s councilors after sustaining the last three years with a still unmarried queen and no hope for an heir. Especially since in 1562, Elizabeth suffered a serious bout of smallpox which threatened her life, and they feared the changed status of Mary Stuart after the death of her husband, King Francis, in 1560. But in March 1560, the negotiations had stalled and therefore ceased. The last letter written to Ferdinand from England regarding the negotiations was from the Spanish ambassador, Bishop Quadra,

The Count [Count Helffenstein] is also convinced that if the English do not at once openly and honestly account for their dealings, we should no longer treat with them, and this resolution we have formed. I, for my part, am certain that when they regard the political situation as a whole the entire Kingdom, and not only the Catholics, but also those who adhere to the other religion, would rather that the realm should come under the sway of any man than that it should be ruled as it is at present.¹⁴⁰

Bishop Quadra states explicitly that as the political situation with France worsens, those suffering the consequences will wish that the negotiations with Charles had not failed.

¹³⁸ Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I*, 75.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 914.

¹⁴⁰ Klarwill, *Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 171, March 11, 1560.

And insinuates that the Queen is an incapable ruler and when her people realize this, they will desire a man, a husband, a king to rule. As with many of his and Feria's other letters, he lets his distaste for a female ruler show. It also seems that the prolonged negotiations with the Hapsburgs may have actually provided security from the French. In December 1559, Breuner wrote to the Archduke Maximilian that the French actually refrained from a direct attack against England because they feared it would push Elizabeth into a marriage with Charles,

Scottish affairs now going so much in favour of the French . . . The French will, I believe, not content themselves with Scotland, but will also in a short time be picking a quarrel with England, for with the present state of affairs in England they would in all likelihood be successful in such an undertaking. The only obstacle in their path is, I take it, this marriage of the Queen with the Archduke; for they fear that so soon as they attack, the Queen will give her consent to this marriage, and that would entirely frustrate their scheme.¹⁴¹

Again, we see that the negotiations themselves were enough to protect England from threatening neighbors.

When the negotiations failed with both Philip II and Archduke Charles, Elizabeth gave up the chance for a strong permanent alliance which would have extended to all of the Hapsburgs and which would have helped defend her throne against the claims of Mary Stuart who was married to the new French king, Francis II. So, when Elizabeth finally had to deal with Mary's claims, she was chastised by Philip II for not marrying himself or Charles who could have helped with the situation.¹⁴² Religion was a major factor in the demise of these negotiations, but it was also the lack of unity among

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 156, December 5, 1559.

¹⁴² Ibid., 168, December 10, 1559.

Elizabeth's councilors.¹⁴³ It was still early in the reign, and there were many suitors clamoring to be King Consort of England. However, by September 1560 the hopes of all the early suitors of 1558-1560 had been greatly diminished. And so it was with a sense of urgency and need that prompted the re-opening of negotiations with the Hapsburgs in 1563 by Elizabeth's council.

The unmarried Protestant queen would never have been a compatible match for a Catholic foreign king. That, however, did not detour both the Spanish and the Imperial ambassadors from tirelessly trying to secure a match. They were willing to go so far as to displease their own sovereign in order to secure a match they knew the sovereign so desperately desired. They did this, altered or abandoned instructions, because they intimately knew what actions were required if a match was ever to be made. And they knew this because it was their duty as the eyes and ears of their sovereign in the English court.

¹⁴³ Susan Doran looks at this in her essay "Religion and Politics at the Court of Elizabeth I: the Habsburg marriage negotiations of 1559-1567," 912.

CHAPTER IV

PROTESTANT SUITORS

With his break from the Roman Catholic Church in the early 1530s, Henry VIII opened the way for the Protestant reformation in England. As Michael Best states, “Henry VIII did not seek Protestant reform, but the abolition of papal jurisdiction inevitably encouraged the emergence of Protestant sympathizers.”¹⁴⁴ Henry VIII was the catalyst, but during his reign, he remained primarily Catholic in practice. It was not until his minor son and his primarily Protestant regency took power that the Protestant reformation really began to flourish in England. Mary, however, returned England to Catholicism and Rome. When Elizabeth I came to the throne in 1558, she separated from Rome, became Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and enacted a moderate Protestant religious settlement. A settlement that followed the Protestant ideals of Edward VI’s reign. She also set herself up as a Protestant champion when she supported the Lords of the Congregation in their civil war against the Catholic French occupation of Scotland. Therefore, when her marriage negotiations began, Protestant powers sought her hand in order to have an ally in the religious conflicts which were taking place on the continent.

The two prominent Protestant suitors seeking an alliance through marriage were Eric XIV of Sweden and James Hamilton, 3rd Earl of Arran. However, for some reason, Elizabeth was not interested in either of her Protestant suitors; in fact, she did not even feign interest for long as she did with her Catholic suitors. Despite similarities in religion,

¹⁴⁴ *Shakespeare's Life and Times*. Internet Shakespeare Editions, (University of Victoria: Victoria, BC, 2001-2005), <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/SLT/ideas/henryviii.html> (accessed February 12, 2010).

both of these suits failed. Eric was thought to be brutish, while Hamilton was thought to be mentally unstable. But they were the Protestant suitors in the early part of her reign while many others were clamoring to be King consort of England, and they were discussed with the others in the ambassadorial correspondences.

Eric XIV of Sweden

Eric of Sweden actually began his suit of Elizabeth prior to her becoming Queen. Of course this Protestant match was most unacceptable to the Catholic Mary. He was also directly refused by the Princess Elizabeth who was too politic to accept a match that would put her in Mary's crosshairs. When she became queen, she, however, did remember that Eric "sought her the day of her simplicity."¹⁴⁵ After Elizabeth ascended the throne, Eric's ambassadors again attempted a match between the two, but the letter presented to her had not been updated with her elevated status. According to Count de Feria in an April 1559 letter to King Philip II, the Swedish ambassador sought a response to last year's letter, "The Queen replied that the letter was written when she was Madam Elizabeth, and now that she was queen of England he must write to her as Queen and she would give an answer. . . . at present she would not reply either yes or no."¹⁴⁶ This was a major political *faux pas* that not only offended the new Queen but greatly delayed her receiving him and her response to him, but of course when that response was given it was a refusal. It was also a politically appropriate way to prolong the negotiation without having to give an official answer. According to Doran, the rejection came from Elizabeth's council on May 6, 1559. However on May 30, 1559, Bishop Quadra wrote to

¹⁴⁵ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 71, May 30, 1559.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 51, April 11, 1559.

Philip that “The Swedish ambassador was summoned . . . by the queen . . . and [she] asked him to tell her whether his ambassadors were coming as she was being pressed with other marriages.”¹⁴⁷ So, not only did Eric push the match despite a rejection, but according to the Spanish ambassador, Elizabeth also expected the suit to continue, as much as she expected it from Philip II and Archduke Charles. Despite the early rejection, Doran argues that Eric was not only her most persistent suitor until 1562, but also the greatest challenge to the suit of Archduke Charles.¹⁴⁸

Eric did indeed continue the marriage negotiations. In June, the Hapsburg ambassador, Baron Breuner, wrote to the emperor that “the queen seems to show great favour” to the Swedish ambassador.¹⁴⁹ Now this is most likely the original Swedish ambassador, regardless this would have still been after the formal rejection had been given by Elizabeth’s council. If she was indeed showing him favor, it would suggest to the other ambassadors that she was still considering a match with Sweden. Thus making it of particular importance to Breuner and the Emperor as Breuner was currently working on negotiations for the Archduke Charles. However, just three days later on June 11, Baron Pollweiler wrote to Emperor Ferdinand a very different description of the Swedes, “for they are (so it is reported), savage, awkward and ill-bred.”¹⁵⁰ This is most likely the new embassy sent over by Eric to England to continue the marriage negotiations. Almost immediately upon arrival, this embassy was treated with contempt and derision, and not shown “great favour” most likely because their foreign ways were considered uncouth or

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 71, May 30, 1559.

¹⁴⁸ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 30.

¹⁴⁹ Klarwill, *Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 86, June 7, 1559. Most likely this ambassador was the same man there since Mary’s reign, Nils Gyllenstierna (Nicholas Guilderstern).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 93, June 11, 1559.

at the very least alien and misunderstood by the English. In July, Quadra wrote, “The king of Sweden’s ambassadors . . . are being treated by the queen in a manner that does away with any doubt about her marrying their master, for they are being made fun of in masques in their own presence.”¹⁵¹ (One can almost hear the snickering and contempt in the Spanish ambassador’s report of the Swedes). This treatment of the Swedes by the English was also commented on by the Imperial ambassador on August 6.¹⁵²

The treatment of the new embassy allowed the other ambassadors at Elizabeth’s court to conclude that the marriage negotiations with Sweden were indeed over on Elizabeth’s part. This was later reinforced in August when Bishop Quadra noticed that “the Swedish ambassadors are leaving much aggrieved and offended . . . I do not think it matters much whether they depart pleased or displeased.”¹⁵³ By August, the Spanish ambassador assumed that the marriage negotiations with Sweden were indeed over. On August 31, the Imperial ambassador wrote that “the ambassadors from Sweden continue strongly to urge their marriage project, but as I learn from Her Majesty’s Councillors themselves, all their labours are in vain.”¹⁵⁴ The continued reports of the inevitable failure of the Swedish match were very likely accepted with great relief in the Catholic courts because they did not want Elizabeth to marry any Protestant which is probably why the ambassadors wrote about it continually. It is also important to note that Quadra reportedly heard this news directly from the “Councillors themselves.” Many councilors preferred the Archduke Charles because his suit included great power, prestige, and

¹⁵¹ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 90, July 13, 1559.

¹⁵² Klarwill, *Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 112.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 93, August 18, 1559.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 119, August 31, 1559.

protection as well as a more recognizable Western European background. Despite how aggrieved Eric's ambassadors were or how much the negotiations may have been in vain, Eric was not ready to give up the chase; the next embassy sent included his brother John, Duke of Finland.

John's bearing was far more sophisticated than those of his predecessors; therefore, he was more readily accepted by the Queen and her councilors. According to Doran, "the duke's tactics were to win over the queen and courtiers by his courtesy, charm and largesse, so as to demonstrate that Sweden was not a poor and backward country." He succeeded. The court was impressed by his use of Latin, how easily he was able to adopt English ways, and his generosity and wealth.¹⁵⁵ He impressed the court and Elizabeth; however, this did not keep her from once again rejecting Eric's suit, and this, in turn, did not keep John from continuing to push the suit. In this instance John played the role of ambassador. He was representative of not only Eric and their father King Gustav but of the whole of Sweden; he was there to present the details of a very generous marriage alliance and to use his charm and diplomatic skills to persuade the Queen and her court to accept the match, and he, consequently, was also the one responsible of relaying the rejection back to Eric. According to Doran, the formal details of the suit were presented to Elizabeth in December 1559. However, the Imperial ambassador wrote to the Emperor in August some of these details such as the King would help support Eric's household in England while he was co-ruler; this was something that was very important to Elizabeth's council: both that he would remain in England and that he would be supported by an outside source and not by English money.

¹⁵⁵ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 30.

Doran lists the details of Eric's official negotiations, and they were the most advantageous of any of the suits yet:

Eric was a Protestant . . . so there appeared to be no major incompatibility over religion. . . . The terms offered by the Swedes, moreover, were very advantageous to the queen and answered the main English objections to a foreign match. The Swedes were prepared to pay to allow Eric to reside permanently in England even when crowned king of Sweden, and to accept that he would not interfere in English matters of state. To safeguard the independence of both realms, they agreed that the two countries should continue to operate as entirely separate states. Nor did there seem to be any danger that the union of the two crowns would be permanent. Since the Swedish throne was elective . . . Finally, the Swedes proposed an offensive and defensive alliance . . . if and when required.¹⁵⁶

The Swedes were willing to accept all of England's demands, something no other suitor was willing to do, yet Elizabeth still refused to consent to a marriage with Eric. Doran suggests that despite the advantages, Elizabeth preferred Archduke Charles if she were going to prefer a foreign match. In August 1559, Breuner said something similar, "If the Queen of England was ever to marry a foreigner they [the Councillors] knew of no one whom they would prefer to Your Imperial Majesty's son or to the said Scotchman . . ." ¹⁵⁷

Doran's reasonings for Elizabeth's preference for Charles were,

At a political level, a Habsburg match could provide protection against France and the friendship of Spain, while a Swedish marriage would upset the Catholic powers, isolate the queen in Western Europe and embroil England in Baltic politics, including a war with Sweden's historic enemy, Denmark. . . . Baltic trade was far less important to English merchants than commerce with the Netherlands . . . At the personal level, Elizabeth continued to think the Swedes alien in their habits; and in addition she considered that marriage to their king would be a form of disparagement . . . [since] his monarchy was elective rather than hereditary.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 31.

¹⁵⁷ Klarwill, *Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 112.

¹⁵⁸ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 31.

No matter how advantageous Sweden's matrimony suit was compared to the Archduke's, it was not enough to protect England against the Western European countries should the need come to that. Friendship and peace with Spain and the Holy Roman Empire were far more advantageous in the long term than a marriage alliance with Sweden.

Elizabeth continuously turned down Eric's suits with more finality than any of her other previous or current suitors, and yet Eric remained persistent. Eric listened to Elizabeth's demand that any serious suitor must sail to England to meet the Queen in person before she would decide on a match. And so, in June 1560, Eric made plans to sail to England, despite the many formal rejections he and his ambassadors had received from her and her council. In August, the Venetian ambassador Giovanni Michiel reported a rumor, he claims to have received from Nicholas Throckmorton, that Eric would delay his trip to England because "his father having determined to abdicate and renounce the kingdom to him, so that he might obtain (*habbi*) better conditions in his marriage with Queen Elizabeth."¹⁵⁹ Doran argues that when Eric proposed his prospective journey, his father was hesitant to invest more money into a seemingly fruitless endeavor.¹⁶⁰ If this is true, than it seems unlikely that Gustavus would willingly give up his throne for it. The Venetian ambassador is also the only ambassador to report such a rumor. However, in September, his father, Gustavus, died and Eric became Eric XIV, king of Sweden. As a result Eric remained in Sweden to secure his throne and consolidate his power. Also, he no longer saw fit to offer England such favorable terms.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 244, August 16, 1560.

¹⁶⁰ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 32.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

At the same time, in England, Robert Dudley's wife was found dead at the bottom of a staircase. Though her death caused scandal, it also freed Dudley to marry the Queen if she so consented. This caused great concern for the Elizabethan councilors who did not wish to see Dudley become king consort. They also feared that should Elizabeth continue to refuse Eric, he might turn his attentions to the newly widowed Mary Stuart. In 1561 Eric once again tried a trip to England to personally continue his suit, but bad weather kept him in Sweden and he "was treated to rumours of her scandalous relationship with Dudley."¹⁶² Despite this, Eric persisted, but with new conditions that were so unfavorable that the English could not accept. The Swedish ambassador was prepared to leave England in late 1561, but Elizabeth feared he would head straight to Mary Stuart. However, by April 1562, it was over and the Swedish ambassador departed England.¹⁶³ However, just a few months later in August members of Elizabeth's privy chamber (and possibly members of her Council), primarily her Chief Gentlewoman Catherine Ashley, wrote to the Swedish ambassador hoping to persuade him to continue Eric's suit as there was so much support for it in England. This again shows how members of the court would use the ambassadors for their own agenda. Apparently for this gentlewoman, and some councilors, a Swedish match was far more preferable to either the Archduke Charles or Robert Dudley. When Elizabeth found out, she was extremely angry and punished those who conspired to continue the Swedish match behind her back.¹⁶⁴ Once the suit ended with Elizabeth, Eric did indeed look to Mary Stuart for a matrimonial alliance just like many of Elizabeth's former suitors. Mary often received suits from those

¹⁶² Ibid., 33.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 33-34.

¹⁶⁴ Jones, *Elizabethan Age*, 124-25.

rejected by Elizabeth. Though she did not desire a Swedish match, Elizabeth was greatly disappointed at this because she did not favor a Swedish-Scottish alliance any more than the Scots wanted a Swedish-English alliance.

It is surprising that the Swedish suit continued for as long as it did, considering that Eric was rejected once before Elizabeth even became queen and again, formally, just six months after she became queen. So how and why did the suit continue longer than most, into 1562; why didn't it end when she formally rejected him in May 1559? To start, Eric was persistent. As Neale argues, "She [Elizabeth] was a great prize, and hope is tenacious. It was incredibly tenacious in Eric of Sweden."¹⁶⁵ Before her official rejection reached Eric in Sweden, he had already dispatched an envoy to England, and he sent another that fall which included his brother, John the Duke of Finland. Also, Elizabeth remained as contradictory as ever. She gave a formal rejection on May 6, 1559 but on May 30 of that year, the Spanish ambassador reported that she asked the current Swedish ambassador if Eric was sending over any more envoys for she had a number of negotiations to consider. Another major reason why Elizabeth, or at least her Council, may have continued the negotiation was because it was a potential Protestant match. They may have considered the possibility that the Swedes could have diplomatically influenced the German states because of the shared religion (at the same time the German States were a part of the Holy Roman Empire and could have been just as influenced by the Hapsburgs). Also, by conducting a Protestant negotiation, even if the actual negotiation was superfluous, she was able to keep the Protestants within England content, allowing them to think a Protestant king was a possibility (at the same time she kept the

¹⁶⁵ Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I*, 76.

English Catholics content by pursuing the negotiations with the Archduke Charles). Also, with the death of Dudley's wife, there were many in Elizabeth's court who feared that her affection for him would turn into a marriage, and they preferred Eric to Dudley.

During these negotiations, Elizabeth also had to consider her council's advice, and her council was divided. Many supported the Archduke Charles for the protection and prestige he could provide while others supported Eric for the Protestant alliance. Hence the protraction of negotiations even after "rejections" were given. Also, even if she completely decided against all marriage at the beginning of her reign or just decided against certain suits during her reign, Elizabeth was not afraid or opposed to use the negotiations and the foreign ambassadors in a way that would be most advantageous to her and her country. And that often meant wavering or withholding "official" answers in order to prolong negotiations she had no intention of following through with.

James Hamilton, 3rd Earl of Arran

James Hamilton, the Earl of Arran and Robert Dudley had much in common. Both men were suitors to Queen Elizabeth I, albeit Hamilton was a much more minor suitor than Dudley. And they both came from families of immense power. Both of their fathers held the reins of power for a minor king or queen, and both were willing to compromise their beliefs and switch sides without compunction in order to maintain power. Arran's father, the Duke of Chatelherault,¹⁶⁶ as well as Arran himself, had familial connections to James III and so they were closely connected with the royal

¹⁶⁶ James Hamilton, the duke of Chatelherault was the 2nd Earl of Arran and the father of James Hamilton, 3rd earl of Arran. When he became the duke of Chatelherault, the title of Earl of Arran fell to his eldest son. For clarity purposes, the father will be referred to as the duke of Chatelherault or just Chatelherault and the son will be referred to as the earl of Arran or Arran.

family. In 1542, Chatelherault was given the governorship of the infant Mary Stuart. At the same time, because of his familial connection to James III, he was the heir presumptive: should anything happen to the infant queen Mary, Chatelherault would be king. In essence, the governorship made Chatelherault very close to a king, for he had all the power of a king.

At the beginning of his governorship in 1543, Chatelherault made two dramatic changes in Scottish policy: first, he tried to secure an alliance between England and Scotland by securing a marriage treaty between the infant Queen Mary and Henry VIII's infant son, Edward. This failed. He also enacted religious changes and turned Scotland into a Protestant nation. This change would not last long either because when things got tough and his power became threatened by religious civil war, Chatelherault readily denounced Protestantism and returned to Catholicism, executing Protestant heretics. To ensure his future loyalty, he gave his eldest son, Arran, as a hostage to Cardinal Beaton, the man responsible for Chatelherault's conversion in 1543.¹⁶⁷ This would not be the first nor the last time that Arran was a hostage or even given by his father to be a hostage. When Beaton was murdered by radical Protestants in 1546, Arran remained at Beaton's castle now the hostage of the Protestants. He was subsequently cut off from the line of succession by his father who feared that these Protestants would give him over to the English. In 1547, in order to secure the help of the French in a war against the English, Chatelherault again gave his son as a hostage to the French. However, the French king

¹⁶⁷ Marcus Merriman, "Hamilton, James, second earl of Arran, and duke of Châtelherault in the French nobility (c.1519–1575)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12081> (accessed January 19, 2009).

did promise Arran a French bride, an education, and a military career.¹⁶⁸ However, by 1559 Arran had reason to fear the French king,

Arran's declared Protestantism had rendered him unacceptable. It is not known when Arran converted to the reformed church . . . The Venetian ambassador was of the opinion that Arran declared himself a protestant out of pique when Queen Mary married the dauphin in 1558, having 'persuaded himself that the queen of Scotland was to be no one else's wife' (Hannay, 263), but, be that as it may, [John] Knox for one never questioned the sincerity of Arran's convictions. In February 1559 Arran established a protestant congregation at Chatelherault . . . Henri II, increasingly concerned, urged him to come to court. When Queen Mary fell seriously ill in June 1559, Henri realized how close to the Scottish throne Arran was, and ordered him to be brought in, dead or alive, but by the time the royal messengers arrived, Arran had vanished.

Arran had vanished, and he eventually made his way to England where he, according to Rosalind Marshall, had “an ‘accidental’ meeting with Elizabeth . . . No one knows what passed between them, but Elizabeth may have hinted that she might be willing to consider him as a husband.” From there he went back to Scotland where he persuaded his father to once again join the Protestant cause, and he himself took up arms against the French occupiers.¹⁶⁹

Though Arran was only an Earl, he had many advantages as a suitor to Elizabeth. Arran was a devout Protestant, a religion that Elizabeth and many of her Councilors had adopted; he was also second in line to the Scottish throne should Mary Stuart die or be deposed without issue. If he were to succeed to the Scottish throne and marry Elizabeth,

¹⁶⁸ Rosalind K. Marshall, “Hamilton, James, third earl of Arran (1537/8?–1609),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online ed., edited by Lawrence Goldman. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12083> (accessed January 19, 2009).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

then the two kingdoms could be united under one rule. This was promising for these neighboring countries who had spent many years at war with each other.

In the summer of 1559 when Arran may have had his “accidental” meeting with the Queen, Baron Breuner wrote to the Emperor regarding the Scottish wars, Elizabeth’s participation, and especially the Earl of Arran’s participation in both the war and the marriage negotiations. Breuner’s letter regarding the Earl of Arran is rather confusing because he seems to be confusing the younger James Hamilton, 3rd Earl of Arran, with his father, the elder James Hamilton, the Duke of Chatelherault. In this August letter, Breuner wrote to Emperor Ferdinand regarding the Scottish civil war. He starts by saying that there is an heir “of the old Queen-Regent of Scotland who however has remained neutral as yet. His name is Earl Hamilton and he has a son, whom the late King Henry kept in France, created Duke of Chatellerault . . .” Breuner implies that it was the son who was created Duke by King Henri of France, according to secondary sources, however, it was the father who was created the Duke of Chatellerault for his support of the marriage treaty between Mary Stuart and the dauphin. He also stated that this man “has remained neutral as yet” however the younger James Hamilton was an active participant in the wars to rid Scotland of the French Catholics while his father was neutral until persuaded by his son to join the side of the Lords of the Congregation.

He goes on to describe the happenings of the younger James Hamilton, all the while referring to him as the Duke of Chatellerault. Then he states his suspicions that he believes the Queen along with Cecil are providing ships and therefore supporting the Lords of the Congregation through Hamilton who is in England. It was the younger

Hamilton who escaped to England from France while the elder remained in Scotland. He continues by stating that many of Elizabeth's councilors hoped that Hamilton would be successful in his attempts to rid Scotland of the French because then the Queen would be more likely to marry him in the hopes of uniting the two kingdoms, and "moreover the Scotchman is of her religion and this is of great consequence." The elder Hamilton was Catholic for a long time before joining the side of the Protestants, but the younger Hamilton was a devout Protestant, so here Breuner must be referring to the younger. He also argues that Elizabeth told him that her father, Henry VIII, had tried to persuade her to marry "the Duke of Chatelleraut" and would have forced the issue if he had lived. Since Henry died in 1547 this early marriage prospect had to have occurred before that, the younger James Hamilton would have been younger than ten; however, betrothals between children was not uncommon; the elder James Hamilton, Duke of Chatelherault would have only been Elizabeth's senior by fourteen years, again betrothals of this nature were not uncommon either. With the ambassador's confusion of characters it is unclear which James Hamilton was the chosen suitor of the child Elizabeth. It was most likely the younger Hamilton, however, because the elder Hamilton had married Lady Margaret Douglas in 1532, one year prior to Elizabeth's birth. Doran states that in April 1543, Henry VIII had "endeavored to arrange her [Elizabeth's] marriage to the eldest son of James Hamilton, second earl of Arran"¹⁷⁰ which would have been the 3rd earl the Arran who was currently courting Elizabeth in 1559-60. During this conversation Bruener states, "I was very sorry for her, that such a marriage was ever spoken of, or that the idea should still be entertained because I had heard (and it is most certainly true) that the said

¹⁷⁰ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 14.

Duke of Chatellerault was of illegitimate birth . . .” Now, if he is referring to the younger Hamilton as the Duke than this statement is false; however, if he is referring to the elder Hamilton as the Duke than this statement could be argued as true. The divorce between his father, James Hamilton, 1st Earl of Arran, and his father’s first wife was disputed for a time before it was considered valid. Some contemporaries, such as Baron Breuner, may have held this against the elder Hamilton because he was so close to the throne of Scotland. Baron Breuner concluded his confusing conversation about the Earl of Arran with this,

The Queen then asked me whether I could believe that she would marry a bastard and I answered that I deemed her to be too sensible and too proud to commit such an error, the more so as much more respectable marriages were and had been in prospect. This much I know for certain; and this much passed between Her Majesty and myself in regard to the Scotchman.

171

It appears that ambassador Breuner did not know “this much for certain” because his whole conversation regarding James Hamilton was a confusion of characters and events. It appears that Breuner took what he knew of the family and combined them into one man. That man was supposedly the younger Hamilton, 3rd Earl of Arran though burdening him with his father’s history as well. Whether consciously or unconsciously, by combining the two men into one, Breuner has made Arran appear to be a most

¹⁷¹ *Karwill, Elizabeth and some foreigners, 110-12, August 6, 1559*; Marcus Merriman, “Hamilton, James, second earl of Arran, and duke of Châtellerault in the French nobility (c.1519–1575),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12081> (accessed January 19, 2009). In another letter dated December 5, 1559, Breuner again confuses father and son by saying, “The Earl of Arran and his son the Duke of Chatellerault . . .” when in reality the Duke is the father and the Earl is the son. *Klarwill, Elizabeth and some foreigners, 165, December 5, 1559.*

disreputable and even dastardly suitor. And of course the ‘more respectable’ marriage that was in prospect was the negotiation with the Archduke Charles.

In July of this same summer, 1559, the Spanish ambassador, Bishop Quadra, wrote to Philip II regarding Arran’s prospects,

I am told that the matter has been discussed in the Council, and that they all agree that she should marry the Scotsman rather than the Archduke in the hope of the former becoming king of Scotland. Some of them are in favour of waiting until he is really King, and his country is tranquil, whilst others say that as the malady of the Queen of Scotland is mortal, there is no necessity to wait, but that the marriage should take place at once, and he be helped to take possession of the kingdom. It seems the latter opinion is held by the Queen, who they say has secretly sent money to Scotland . . .

¹⁷²

If Arran were to achieve the throne of Scotland, he definitely could have been considered the superior suitor. But he was only second in line to the throne, and five years older than the reigning monarch; to achieve the throne, he would have to outlive both Mary Stuart and his own father and hope that Mary did not have any children before her demise. Quadra claims that Elizabeth was of the opinion that she should wed Arran before he was assured of the throne; this opinion seems to be based on the fact that she sent money to Scotland to support their war; her intentions, however, were more likely political in order to secure her border against the French and had no direct bearing on the marriage negotiations.

In September 1559, Quadra also wrote to the Emperor with the news that the Queen was supporting Arran’s efforts in Scotland and that Arran “has been with her secretly here two or three times . . .”¹⁷³ With this conversation, Quadra is trying to relate

¹⁷² *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 90, July 13, 1559.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 97, September 12, 1559.

one of two things, either he is trying to scandalize the Queen and Arran by stating that they are having clandestine meetings (comments like he and Feria offered to scandalize her with Dudley) or simply that the meetings were political and she is meeting with him in order to support the Scottish war, or perhaps both. Neither of these would be considered good news to the recipient of these letters, Philip II or Emperor Ferdinand.

By December 1559 the Venetian ambassador, Paulo Tiepolo, wrote that the Queen's inclinations tended toward the Archduke Charles, but that "the general opinion is that if the affairs of the Earl of Arran prosper, he will prevail over all competitors."¹⁷⁴ Here he is indicating that Arran must first succeed in pushing out the French and most likely must first attain the throne of Scotland if he does this than he will prevail over all others. If he had achieved these, than perhaps he would have prevailed; however, even though he did succeed, with the help of Elizabeth, to drive the French out, he never achieved the throne. In January 1560 Bishop Quadra wrote to the Duchess of Parma that "the marriage of the Queen with the earl of Arran is more talked about than ever, no doubt because the Archduke's suit is looked upon as at an end."¹⁷⁵ And indeed, the suit of Archduke Charles was winding down; two months later Emperor Ferdinand would officially pull his son out of the negotiations. Again in July, Quadra wrote to Philip II, "With regard to the marriage they think here that if the Queen of France [meaning Mary Stuart] were to die this Queen would marry the earl of Arran."¹⁷⁶

Though the talks regarding Hamilton as a potential suitor began in 1559, Doran argues that it was the Spring of 1560 that the Scottish lords really began to push for his

¹⁷⁴ *CSP Venice*, vol. VII, 139, December 15, 1559.

¹⁷⁵ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 120, January 21, 1560.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 169, July 25, 1560.

marriage with Queen Elizabeth I. She also suggests that they had the support of the French court after the death of Henri II. The reason behind so much support was that both countries wanted to hamper the negotiations of Eric of Sweden, though, as observed by the ambassadors, there was little need of that as Elizabeth was never inclined to accept Eric. Why would the Scottish lords want to hinder these negotiations with another Protestant suitor? Well, Doran argues that they feared an encircling of these two Protestant powers, England on one end and Sweden on the other. According to Doran it was in November 1560 that the Scottish made a formal proposal. However, according to the ambassadorial correspondences, it was clear to them by August 1560 that Elizabeth had decided against Hamilton.

Two weeks after Quadra's July exclamation that Elizabeth would marry Arran if Mary Stuart were to die, he wrote again to Philip, "I understand the earl of Arran is excluded as being poor and of small advantage to this country, and also because he is not considered personally agreeable."¹⁷⁷ Doran relates another ambassador's views regarding the ending of this particular negotiation, "As the Spanish ambassador to the French court observed, marriage to Arran would bring Elizabeth only his person, for she would gain neither foreign allies nor any great prospect of securing the succession to Scotland." She goes on to argue, "There existed the danger, moreover, that once the earl was married to Elizabeth, the Scottish lords would seek to depose their rightful queen to put him on the throne, a move which would involve Elizabeth in an illegitimate and unwelcome attack on Mary's rights and lead to a renewed struggle against France."¹⁷⁸ Elizabeth was very

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 173, August 4, 1560.

¹⁷⁸Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 37.

much against the idea of “the people” rising up against their anointed sovereign and was very unhappy with the Scots when they succeeded in deposing Mary in 1567, and she would not want to share in that responsibility by marrying the Protestant hopeful.

At the same time that the marriage negotiations with Hamilton were occurring, Elizabeth was supporting the Scots in a war against the French, and so Scotland, through the efforts of the Lords of the Congregation, was already an ally of England; therefore the marriage was unnecessary to create this alliance. Except for a very small contingency, the French had been expelled from England. Mary was still alive and at a ripe marriageable and child bearing age, it was increasingly unlikely that Arran would ever achieve Scotland’s throne. A marriage with him became less and less appealing and profitable as time went on.

When Elizabeth declined Arran’s proposal in December 1560, he sought the hand of the recently widowed Mary Stuart, just as Eric would do in 1562; however, this match with Arran was one which Elizabeth herself favored. However, Mary refused him. Early in 1561 it was becoming apparent to many that James Hamilton, 3rd earl of Arran was increasingly erratic, seemingly unwell, and quite possibly insane. As Thomas Randolph said, he was “drowned in dreames [*sic*].”¹⁷⁹ In 1562, he was declared insane and imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle where he remained until 1566 when he was released to the care of his mother. He died in March 1609 after living the greater part of his life insane and in the care of others.¹⁸⁰ Ironically, Eric of Sweden was also declared to be mentally unstable, and his throne usurped by his brother in 1568.

¹⁷⁹ *Calendar of State Papers Scotland, Volume 1, 1547-63*, 609.

¹⁸⁰ Marshall, “Hamilton, James, third earl of Arran.”

Eric XIV of Sweden and James Hamilton, 3rd Earl of Arran were the two most promising foreign Protestant suitors. They could have offered Elizabeth protection, Eric more so than Arran, and religious compatibility. At the same time, a marriage to one of them would have threatened England politically and economically because the powerful Catholic nations, most notably Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, would not only have been offended but displeased with the Protestant alliance. She was also simply not interested in either and rarely feigned an interest as she did with her other suitors. These suits failed because of a lack of interest on Elizabeth's part and her commitment to singleness. It should be noted that both suitors gave "formal" intentions after the death of Amy Dudley: Eric in December 1560 and Arran in November 1560. This may be because they sensed more active support from Elizabeth's council, many who were adamantly against Dudley becoming King Consort.

The ambassadors rarely had advice or recommendations to go along with the comments; they probably realized that the suits were destined to fail on their own. The only real advice given by an ambassador was Baron Breuner's continued insistence that the Emperor should send his son to England—something that Eric was willing to do in order to win Elizabeth's hand. However, the ambassador's did keep their respective sovereigns apprised of the competition which was very important so that the sovereign could decide how to act as a result. They continually reported the "happy" news that Eric's suit was rejected time and again. And they kept their sovereigns apprised of all the details of both Arran's suit and the Scottish/French war as, at times, they were intertwined. Also, Arran, for a time, appeared to be a serious threat especially if he could

achieve the Scottish throne. Often, the ambassador's information regarding these Protestants suitors was inaccurate or misleading because they did not have intimate knowledge of these suitors as they did with the Catholic suitors. Nevertheless, their correspondences regarding these Protestant suitors was expected and considered invaluable.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The pursuit of Elizabeth Tudor was the greatest hunt in history. For more than half a century, kings, princes, nobles and knights, Frenchmen, Austrians, Spaniards, Swedes and 'mere English' joined the chase, lured by the magnificent quarry who pranced before them, leaping away, doubling back, sometimes halting and seeming to yield, but always at last disappearing over the horizon.¹⁸¹

Josephine Ross may be right when she states that the pursuit for Elizabeth was the greatest hunt in history, but it was not a hunt or a chase done solely by "kings, princes, nobles, and knights." In fact, the kings, princes, nobles, and knights did very little of the chasing or in political terms, the negotiating. It was the resident ambassadors they sent who oversaw every aspect and detail that went into the marriage negotiations. It was the resident ambassador who traveled the globe and crossed oceans only to live in a foreign country away from home for years on end to do their sovereigns' bidding. And in the case of Queen Elizabeth I of England, their bidding was to have a marriage alliance solidified.

Elizabeth took the throne in the last weeks of 1558 and was immediately bombarded with requests for marriage and demands to marry. Jones argues, "Elizabeth, could have had the pick of the royalty of Europe if she had been so inclined."¹⁸² She was often told that her safety and the safety of her kingdom depended on her marriage to a strong suitor, yet she continually resisted despite the constant pressure, and she resisted until the very end and maintained her throne throughout.

¹⁸¹ Josephine Ross, *The Men Who Would be King: Suitors to Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Phoenix, 2006), 1.

¹⁸² Jones, *Elizabethan Age*, 122.

In her book *Monarchy and Matrimony*, Susan Doran places all of the suitors discussed in this thesis under one chapter titled, “Early Suitors”. She is quite correct that these were all early suitors, but they were also much more than that and deserve more attention. These suitors competed relentlessly with two, three, four other suitors at a time. They pursued her when the religious settlement within England was unstable. And they pursued her despite her constant declarations to remain single, and despite the fact that her council was not yet ready or desperate enough to unite behind one man. Doran argues, “But why could no suitor ever command the overwhelming support of her councilors? As far as most of the matrimonial candidates were concerned, the answer is that there was little to recommend any of them. . . . without strong conciliar backing Elizabeth would not or could not marry a particular candidate.”¹⁸³ Between November 1558 and September 1560, Elizabeth was not only pursued by the seven suitors discussed in this thesis but by many other minor suitors. And by September 1560, most of these suits had been extinguished, and for those that remained the interest was waning quickly on both sides. In fact, the two primary suits after September 1560, James Hamilton and Eric XIV, probably would have ended sooner had Elizabeth’s councilors not been so desperate to find a man to prevent Dudley’s suit from succeeding or had they not been so afraid of Mary Stuart’s new widowhood and her emergence as a marriageable monarch.

Count Helffenstein wrote early on to Emperor Ferdinand, “in order to write everything as exhaustively as possible, I neither omit aught, nor have I omitted aught.”¹⁸⁴ The seven suits of the early part of Elizabeth’s reign were not just tirelessly recorded by

¹⁸³ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 210-11.

¹⁸⁴ Klarwill, *Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 39.

the resident ambassadors, but they were also the ones who tirelessly pursued the suits. Helffenstein also wrote that some members of Elizabeth's court were trying to persuade him that he "should woo the Queen as his [Archduke Ferdinand's] proxy."¹⁸⁵ The most active participants in the marriage negotiation were not the suitors themselves but their ambassadors, primarily the Spanish ambassadors, Count de Feria and Bishop Quadra and the Hapsburg ambassadors, Count Helffenstein and Baron Breuner. Their task was not only to observe and write every detail exhaustively and to omit nothing but to actively pursue the negotiations at the behest of their sovereigns. They wrote exhaustively of their progress, rumors that might affect the outcome of the negotiation, about other candidates who proved a threat, and, therefore, even the observed progress of other negotiations.

They also wrote of very personal and intimate details regarding Elizabeth. In April 1559, Count Feria wrote to Philip II regarding rumors he had received from his spies, "If my spies do not lie, which I believe they do not, for a certain reason which they have recently given me I understand she will not bear children . . ."¹⁸⁶ Bishop Quadra also reported that "It is the common opinion confirmed by certain physicians, that this woman is unhealthy and it is believed that she will not bear children."¹⁸⁷ Carol Levin lists many rumors about Elizabeth's inability to bear children or even to have sexual intercourse, "their [the ambassadors] reports home are filled with such details as Elizabeth's light and irregular periods." She also lists those who defied such rumors such as William Cecil and other physicians.¹⁸⁸ These extremely personal details were vital

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 38.

¹⁸⁶ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 63, April 29, 1559.

¹⁸⁷ Quoted in Levin, *Heart and Stomach of a King*, 86.

¹⁸⁸ Levin, *Heart and Stomach of a King*, 86-7.

information for both the ambassadors and their sovereigns as Elizabeth's ability or inability to have children would greatly affect the negotiations. However, despite the rumors, the negotiations feverishly continued.

The ambassadors detailed the Catholic suits more minutely and more accurately than those of the Protestant or even English suitors. The letters were very well detailed with the goings on of each individual suitor as well as the observed and rumored behavior of the English queen and her councilors. The correspondences were not only filled with details but with opinions, criticisms, and recommendations. Because of their proximity to the English court, the ambassadors were often more adept at handling situations in England than their sovereigns. So adept, in fact, that they often disregarded or altered a sovereign's instruction in order to best deal with a situation—in order to best promote the marriage negotiations. Both Count de Feria and Baron Breuner understood that should they follow explicitly their respective sovereigns' instructions regarding religious matters that the negotiations would have immediately ended. They understood the necessity of delicacy which was something their sovereigns often dismissed. The ambassadors, especially the Spanish ambassadors, were also quite opinionated and critical of Elizabeth and her court and quite vocal about it.

The ambassadors were on the front lines of the negotiations. Often, instead of writing directly to Elizabeth, the suitors would write instructions, intentions, demands, or wishes to their ambassadors and expected their ambassadors to interpret and relay said correspondences in a way that would best serve the end goal, a marriage alliance. And the same was true for the other side. Elizabeth would either have one of her own

ambassadors relay a message or she would speak directly to the foreign ambassador residing at court and expect him to relay the message, but rarely would she write directly to a sovereign regarding the marriage negotiations (though she did with Emperor Ferdinand when he first proposed a suit with his son Charles). During the first two years that this thesis looks at, Elizabeth was very contradictory with her answers: at times proclaiming she had no desire to marry and at others suggesting that should God change her heart she would consider a certain suitor, and she would even get angry if a suitor got frustrated and gave up and pursued a marriage alliance elsewhere, as Philip II did.

Often, accounts from one ambassador will differ from the accounts of another. One major reason for this was the interaction between ambassador and the Queen and councilors. Quite often, certain members of the court would approach an ambassador with information with the intent to sabotage or promote a suit for personal gain. Susan Doran suggests that Elizabeth took the negotiations seriously, but another reading of the ambassadorial correspondences suggests that Elizabeth was playing games with the ambassadors, particularly in the first couple years of her reign. Albeit they were political games used to ensure the safety of her country and security of her throne, but they were games nonetheless.

Many times, members of Elizabeth's Court would pass information along to the ambassadors, information that would support their own political agendas. The Admiral at Dover (most likely Admiral Winters) and Thomas Chaloner, Elizabeth's ambassador, insisted that Elizabeth was ready to accept the proposal of the Archduke Charles and that she had no interest in the suit of Philip. But the Emperor needed to consent to send

Charles to England to comply with Elizabeth's demands to see a foreign suitor. Cecil told Bishop Quadra, the Spanish ambassador, that he was threatening to resign because of the scandal surrounding Robert Dudley and Elizabeth. This was most likely not a real threat but an attempt to further tarnish Dudley's reputation and have that news spread to the continent. Dudley would promise help or sabotage certain suits for his own personal gain. The Bishop Quadra reported to Philip II, ". . . I noticed Lord Robert was slackening in our business and favouring the Swedish match . . ." ¹⁸⁹ Even the ladies of Elizabeth's bedchamber would interact with the ambassadors in an attempt to ensure a marriage alliance. Catherine Ashley beseeched the Queen to marry and put an end to all the disreputable rumors spreading about her and Dudley. In 1562, Ashley also contacted the Swedish ambassador insisting that if Eric of Sweden continued his suit and made the journey to England, Elizabeth was sure to accept him (in 1559 a very similar argument was made to the Imperial ambassador about the Archduke Charles). In August 1559, Bishop Quadra reported a conversation he had with Lady Sydney where she claimed that Elizabeth was ready to get married,

Lady Sydney said that at all events I ought to be there and must not mind what the Queen said, as it is the custom of ladies here not to give their consent in such matters until they are teased into it. She said it would only take a few days, and the Council would press her to marry. Lady Sydney said that if these were not true, I might be sure she would not say such a thing as it might cost her her life and she was acting now with the Queen's consent, but she (the Queen) would not speak to the ambassador about it."

Quadra continued to relate a similar conversation he had with Treasurer Parry,

He said when next I went to the palace he hoped to give me good news. I spoke to him about Lady Sydney, and he said the Queen had summoned

¹⁸⁹ *CSP Spanish*, vol. I, 111, November 13, 1559.

both of them the night before, and at the end of our conversation he said that the marriage had now become necessary.¹⁹⁰

Now, either these two individuals sought out the ambassadors on their own accord in order to keep the negotiations with the Archduke Charles going or Elizabeth really did speak with them, dropping hints of the nature that she was inclined to marry in order to prolong the negotiations but to have deniability if asked directly by the ambassadors.

Even if, at times the ambassadors knew that Elizabeth and members of her court were playing games with them and using them for their own advantage, the ambassadors still dutifully wrote home the news and rumors and at times even acted upon them. The Imperial ambassadors, on the advice of Thomas Chaloner and others, tried to persuade the Emperor to send his son to England; however, it was to no avail.

The ambassadors were relentless in their pursuit of a negotiation. They continued even after Elizabeth gave outright rejections or claimed to have no desire to marry. They, along with the suitors they represented, could not fathom a woman, a queen, who wished to remain single—there was no precedent for such a being. The idea that Elizabeth would have wanted to remain single for her entire reign was incomprehensible. The idea was so unique that all her contemporaries refused to believe that she actually meant to remain single, despite her many declarations. And yet, in the end, Elizabeth never married.

Because of the time and the social norms of the day, it was absurd to believe that Elizabeth actually meant what she said when she stated she enjoyed the single life and wished to remain so. The ambassador's constantly wrote home about Elizabeth's absurd declarations arguing that it was natural for her to marry and since her declarations of

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 95, September 7, 1559.

wishing to remain single could not possibly be true than there must be another reason behind her resistance,

For in the natural course of events the Queen is of an age where she should in reason and as is woman's way, be eager to marry and be provided for. It would also be best for her Kingdom, for then she could obtain and keep the coalition of Your Imperial Majesty and His Royal Majesty of Spain. The natural and necessary inference from all this is, either that she married secretly, or that she has already made up her mind to marry someone in England or out of it, and for the purpose of safeguarding herself against the King of Spain and the King of France is postponing matters under the cloak of Your Imperial Majesty's son, my gracious master. *For that she should wish to remain a maid and never marry is inconceivable.*¹⁹¹

Not only did they assume that she would marry and want to marry because that was the natural order of things, they also assumed, that as a female ruler, she would want and need the protection of a male ruler for her realm and his guidance in ruling. Elizabeth was unique. Perhaps one of a kind in her wish to remain single, pronounce that, and to follow through, and that is why the ambassador Baron Pollweiler said it was "inconceivable".

Ambassador Breuner also went on to remind Elizabeth that she was lucky to have so many great men who wished to marry her. And, that she should consider choosing one for herself and in order to protect her kingdom.

Upon this I told Her Majesty that she owed God the Almighty no little thanks, that she was desired in marriage by so many mighty potentates, and I also expressed my opinion that she should not be ungrateful, and should no longer walk alone through life, for she must know that both for her realm and for Christendom it was of great import that she married.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Klarwill, *Elizabeth and some foreigners*, 93, June 11, 1559 (emphasis added).

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 145, October 22, 1559.

It was inconceivable for Elizabeth to remain single and rule in her own right, and yet she did it. But it was the incomprehensibility of the idea that kept the suitors and their ambassadors actively pursuing her long after rejections were given.

Eventually, the early suits did cease. Ardent marriage negotiations with Elizabeth all but ended in the 1560s. However, they began again in 1563 with the Archduke Charles. But there was little overlap or feverish chasing at this time as there was during the first two years of her reign.

These resident ambassadors were the center of court politics and the center of Elizabeth's marriage negotiations. They were at the center of any dealings that escaped the boundaries of England. Foreign policy was often enacted because of the efforts of these men. They were the links that connected countries. They were far more than just mere reporters and fact finders. They were the pillars of international politics, confidants of their sovereigns, and tools to be used to further political agendas. Even the ladies of the bedchamber understood the importance of an ambassador and the influence he carried. Insinuating that the Spanish ambassador had great familiarity with the Queen of England and could be of great use should one find Elizabeth unapproachable, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton advised Sir James Melville of Halhill to: "use great familiarity with the ambassador of Spain, in case I found the queen his mistress [Elizabeth] over hard and difficult . . ." ¹⁹³ Without the role of the resident ambassadors, sovereigns in England and across the continent would have been blind to the goings on in other

¹⁹³ Gordon Donaldson, ed. *The Memoirs of Sir James Melville of Halhill* (London: Folio Society, 1969), 33-34.

countries, events such as matrimony would have been pursued with much more difficulty and ignorance.

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