The Literary Side of the Armada

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TO MY FATHER

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

A 13th-century English prophecy predicted that "the lion's cubs will turn into fishes of the sea".[1] Animal metaphors were widely used in medieval literature and were welcomed by both the cultivated and the poor: being both literary and oral, such metaphors belonged to a tradition which would culturally supply the basis for identification with one's own nation. The foreteller of this prophecy knew what he was saying and what he was talking about – England and her future.

Since the time of Richard the Lion Heart, if not before, lions were used as a symbol for brave warrior rulers and were then frequently depicted in English heraldry. The Plantagenets' royal coat of arms had three lions symbolizing courage, nobility and royalty. Under the Tudors, lions were kept in the royal coat of arms, flanked by dragons as symbols of Wales. In Elizabeth I's personal coat of arms the English crown is surrounded by lions and dragons.

As a symbol of royal power, lions featured in the coats of arms of many European sovereigns – although typical of the English monarchy, lions are not its unique trait. On the other hand, fish were widely known as a Christian symbol of Jesus Christ and also of abundance. In the sentence quoted above, however, fish simply stand for the sea and the wealth deriving from the correct exploitation of its resources.

The foreteller predicted a great future for his country and, as time would show, his prophecy would turn out to be true. Yet, as Carl Schmitt explains,

> at the end of the Middle Ages, the lion's cubs were tending sheep in the main, and the fleece, sold in Flanders, was processed there into cloth. It was only in the 16th and 17th centuries that this nation of shepherds recast itself into a sea-roaming nations of privateers, into 'children of the sea'.[2]

Indeed, one merely has to open a history book to realize how England evolved from a country with an agriculture-based economy into a naval power. The evolution was slow and lengthy– it was only towards the end of

[1] Schmitt, *Land and Sea*, 26.
[2] Ibid.

the 15th century, with the first voyages of discovery, that the English crown felt the need to expand. The loss of the French possessions at the end of the Hundred Years' War encouraged the English kings to look for new lands on which to impose their rule. In fact, it was under the first Tudor kings that the English navy was reorganized and given a new impulse: England was an island and the sea had to be taken as her main resource. Thus, while Spain and Portugal competed for the dominion of the New World, in both the West and the East, England simply witnessed how the Mediterranean countries changed their foreign policies, weaving unexpected alliances and breaking those which were old and reliable.

Spain in particular grew stronger than ever and her power worried the other European monarchies which, so as not to remain excluded from the political scenario, financed voyages of discovery in the hope of achieving success and power. For most of the 16th century, England remained on the margins and, despite the serious problems caused by the succession of her sovereigns, continued to nurture the wish of evolving into an empire. The foundation of a British colonial empire was in fact part of the Tudor propaganda policy – a dream which became true only in the last decades of the century. As history shows, it was during Elizabeth Tudor's reign that the first colony in the New World was established and the foundation of the British Empire laid. This occurred in the same *annus mirabilis* of Elizabeth's reign which also saw the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

Before then the two countries had not been rivals and on more than one occasion Spain had supplied the English crown with a partner for her king or queen. Catherine had come from Aragon to marry Arthur and then Henry VIII, while Philip had set foot on English soil as husband to Mary I. It was there that he met Elizabeth and was struck by her charm and charismatic personality. However, after Mary's death and Elizabeth's succession to the throne in 1558, relations between the two countries began to deteriorate and Spain came to be seen as an enemy to be defeated. Mary Stuart's beheading and the pillaging of Spanish galleons by English privateers in the Atlantic were two of the reasons behind the gradual separation of the two countries. The situation deteriorated when Elizabeth was branded a heretic and her throne declared illegitimate. The war between England and Spain or, as we shall see, between Elizabeth and Philip, thus became unavoidable and Europe was the stage on which the war would be performed.

The Anglo-Spanish military engagement in the Channel in late July and early August 1588 changed the course of European history because it profoundly influenced the politics of the two countries in their passage to

the Modern Age. Yet, important as it was, much about the *Invincible Armada* still remains shrouded in mystery and still gives rise to discussion and debate. More than 400 years later, it is still one of the history's greatest 'what ifs' doomed to remain unsolved perhaps forever. What if the crew of Medina Sidonia had managed to join up with the troops of the Duke of Parma? What if the English had not been blessed by the change of wind in the Channel? What if Spain had invaded England? Nobody knows what might have happened if Philip II had succeeded in his *impresa*. What is certain is that the histories of both England and Spain would have been different.

However, the invasion, did not take place and history is the one we know from our books: even as the decline of Spain began, England became the rising star of Europe, respected by her enemies and dreaded by other countries.

From the English point of view, the events that took place in the late 1580s of the 16th century were decisive for the future of the country and, as it happened, for the evolution of its queen's image and role. As a result, the events which took place in the Channel in the summer of 1588 are essential to a full understanding of Elizabethan England and culture.

As Garrett Mattingly explains, to the men of 1588, "the clash of the English and Spanish fleets in the Channel was the beginning of Armageddon, of a final struggle to the death between the forces of light and the forces of darkness".[3] It is no exaggeration to say that the Anglo-Spanish conflict was religiously based, deeply rooted in the conflict between Catholics and Protestants, both of whom were convinced that they were in the right.

Although most nations took no active part in the conflict, no country was really neutral, and "all Europe watched the battle in the Channel with breathless suspense because upon its outcome was felt to hang not just the fates of England and Scotland, France and the Netherlands, but of all Christendom".[4] It was a holy war. And like all such wars this one was no exception since,

> Desde el punto de vista humano, se considera el episodio de la Armada Invencible o la Empresa de Inglaterra como un rotundo desastre, la hecatombe de una flota española invasora de Inglaterra durante el siglo XVI que, acosada por la primigenia Royal Navy de Isabel Tudor, fracasó en sus propósitos para resultar luego desmantelada por los elementos, con

[3] Mattingly, *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, xi.
[4] Ibid.

> una pérdita de nueve mil a diez mil personas y medio centenar de grandes embarcaciones de transporte.[5]

Indeed, the Armada turned out to be nothing but a total failure: thousands drowned in the Channel and hundreds of ships of different sizes were either lost or shipwrecked. For Spain, it was the beginning of the end – the *Siglo de Oro* began to fade and Spain's authority in Europe gradually diminished. For Philip, it was both a military and a personal failure. Fervent Catholic as he was, he had persuaded himself that God would save Spain from collapse and, above all, humiliation throughout Europe.

Apart from the victims of this military campaign, which are undeniable and have to be taken as a symbol of failure in themselves, this tragic view of the Armada was not shared by the English. The avoidance of invasion and the consequent triumph over the enemy encouraged the feeling that England was unconquerable and her queen was God's favourite maiden. Within the end of August, when the news of the Spanish *débâcle* had spread throughout Europe, estimates of Elizabeth's role in Europe had changed and she was seen for what she actually was: a strong and determined woman who had been able to transform her country from a small, marginal island in the northern seas into a powerful, much feared country. With the foundation of the empire well established, Elizabeth was now leading England into the Modern Age – her head held high, she became the banner under which her people gathered together to form one nation.

As the saying goes, history is written from the winner's point of view and often, we could add, a stubborn ignorance of what actually happened to those who were defeated prevents a complete and objective knowledge of the situation. Both points of view and perspectives are needed to achieve real knowledge of what actually happened. It is thus interesting to note how the same events were seen by the two countries directly involved in the conflict, and in particular how they were explained and commented on in literary texts. The main concern of this work is to focus on how both Spanish and English literature gave prominence to, or ignored, the Armada; how the protagonists of the war were described in the rival country; and, last but not least, what topics or features were most commented on in the texts of both countries.

This book has four chapters. The first, *Philip's Personal Obsession*, introduces the reader to relations between England and Spain before 1588 and focuses on Elizabeth I and Philip II as the protagonists of the conflict. The relationship between the two monarchs is analysed, from Philip's

[5] San Juan, *Breve historia de la Armada Invencible*, 349.

arrival in England as Mary Tudor's husband to his claim to the English throne. The situations of the two countries are also considered – their religious make-up and military assets; relations between the people and their queen or king, and the factors which gradually led to open conflict. Importance is also given to the role of the Pope and to how religious matters progressively influenced the organization of the war. Cardinal Allen and his writings are commented on as an example of texts which played a fundamental role in Catholic involvement in the war and ordinary people's participation. Space is also given to what less important people wrote about the Armada when it was just a plan in Philip's mind – English merchants, travellers and ordinary people sent messages to William Cecil and Francis Walsingham to inform them about the organization of the Spanish fleet. The huge size of Philip's Armada seized Elizabeth's attention and caused fear among the people. A prophecy written long before 1588 fuelled the fear of invasion and foresaw the tragic end of the world – fear and panic spread throughout the country and Elizabeth's Council was forced to authorize the publication of works which challenged the truthfulness of superstition.

The second chapter then focuses on the repercussions the Armada had on Spanish literature and culture. The first paragraph deals with the most famous Spanish ambassadors in England and how they became models for Shakespeare's Spanish characters in his plays. They proved the truthfulness of the *Leyenda Negra* and, because of their behaviour, fuelled prejudice against Spaniards as a disloyal, cruel and lascivious people. The other sections of the chapter focus on Spanish literature, both high culture and low, and on how the Armada was commented on in some of the most popular texts of the time. Cristóbal de Virués, Juan de Mesa and Cristóbal Bravo are some of the authors considered, followed by Francisco de Cuéllar, the captain of a galleon of the Levantine Squadron. As for the greatest authors of the time, Góngora, Lope de Vega and Cervantes are examined. It is interesting to note how their works relating to the Armada agree on the role that Queen Elizabeth had in this war: she was the real enemy – a heretic woman who had been excommunicated and was misleading her subjects with Protestant principles. She was an enemy of the true faith.

And yet, despite the hatred Spaniards felt for her, the English queen was not the only enemy to be destroyed. The other was Francis Drake. Shrewd as he was, he turned out to be a renowned seaman, the terror of the ocean and, consequently, of Spain. Lope de Vega wrote a passionate poem, *La Dragontea*, on *El Draque*, rejoicing for his death in a faraway land.

Chapter 3 is devoted to English literature and to the representation of the Armada in some famous and interesting texts. The first paragraph of the chapter deals with some of the great names of Elizabethan culture –

Marlowe, Spenser and Drayton, whose works all show how the Spanish Black Legend fuelled their prejudice towards Spain and its inhabitants. It is curious that these authors wrote nothing specifically about the Armada, supplying only posthumous hints as to what had happened. In 1588 they were all in London, making their ways in the literary milieu of the city and Court or as a spy at the service of Walsingham – the story of their memories is metaphorically present in their texts and is functional to the stories told and to the characters portrayed.

The other sections of the chapter deal with a variety of texts, including the letters written by Effingham and Drake to Cecil and Walsingham. In this particular case, the language is less literary and the content of the message is concise and goes straight to the heart of the matter – money, dangers, weapons and military strategies are the topics dealt with in the letters that the Englishmen on the Channel felt the need to communicate to Elizabeth's men and Council. Equally interesting is the part devoted to pamphlets and prayers. Minister Thomas Tymme's text, for example, is a true encouragement to believe in God's help and the innate resources of their country throughout the conflict.

As it happens, triumph and thanksgiving were two important aspects of the Armada in England. Popular texts, like those written by Deloney or celebratory ones like those by James Aske and Théodore Beza, helped Elizabeth's subjects to realize that the war was finished and that the risk of invasion had been avoided. Obviously, all these authors denigrate Philip II's military talent and celebrate his defeat: even God abandoned him and chose to be on the side of the true religion. Elizabeth is hailed as a heroine, a beautiful, chaste, brave woman who has defended her kingdom with God's help. The queen herself will thank Him in a famous poem.

Rejoicing over the defeat of the Spanish fleet continued throughout the rest of the year and would be impressed on the minds of Elizabeth's subjects for the rest of their lives. The turn of the year saw the publication of Robert Greene's *The Spanish Masquerado* and even the reports of foreigners living in England. Petruccio Ubaldini's *Commentario*, first published in 1589, was a case in point. Triumphant celebrations would follow even in later times when Elizabeth's iconic, eternal beauty was already known throughout the country. It was during one of her progresses in Herefordshire in 1591 that the queen was welcomed by her host with a pageant parodying the battle in the Channel and England's consequent victory.

The fourth and last chapter is about Elizabeth's speech at Tilbury. Known as one of the most famous speeches the queen ever made, the so-called Tilbury Speech is a good example of Elizabethan rhetoric and

communication skills. Mysterious as it is, the speech still appeals to modern readers as an example of her political acumen and exceptional ability to win her subjects' affection and love.

Fig. 1. Hendrick.C. Vroom, *The Seventh Day of the Battle of the Armada*, 1600-1601.[6]

[6] The image is from Rodríguez-Salgado, *Armada 1588-1988*, 253.

CHAPTER 1

PHILIP'S OBSESSION

The story of the Armada was told from two different points of view – one Spanish, the other English – both of which, in their different ways, were true and legitimate. For the Spaniards it was a matter of Faith and respect for the Holy See. For the English it was the consequence of a long period of fighting between Catholics and Protestants both in Europe, and in Britain where it had undermined foreign policy and diplomatic alliances in the Western world.

The result of all this marked a point of no return, not only for both the countries directly involved but also for the rest of Europe, whose reigning monarchs would witness one of the greatest military events ever seen in European history. In particular, Henri III of France had been part of the diplomatic games which had fuelled the enmity between England and Spain.[7] Because of its geography, bridging the two countries, France was directly involved in the consequences of the conflict on which the peace and prosperity of Europe depended. Since hostilities broke out, France had been a two-handed player, promising support to Spain on the one hand and denying it to England on the other.

When the war started, however, there were two powers on the battlefield, with no allies or supporting friends. This meant that when the war ended there was only one winner and one loser. The rest of Europe was excluded from the direct consequences of the conflict, which sanctioned an unexpected, though not entirely surprising, English victory. Philip's

[7] The son of Henry II and Catherine de Medici, Henry III of France began courting Queen Elizabeth as early as 1570, but, because of their differing religious views, the marriage negotiations came to nothing. Elizabeth had actually used him to arouse the Spanish concern and he once complained that "The Queen of England always thinks that everyone must be in love with her" (Hanson, *The Confident Hope of a Miracle. The True Story of the Spanish Armada*, 81). As King of France he had to deal with the Wars of Religion tearing apart his country throughout the second half of the 16th century. In 1572 he had signed the Treaty of Blois which reunited France and England against Spain. The Treaty had already been ignored by August, when on the 24th the French Huguenots were massacred.

humiliating defeat marked the beginning of Spain's decline as an imperial power, while Elizabeth's triumph turned England into a powerful and threatening country, led by a woman who did not fear her enemies.

As for Philip, the story goes that he was no warmonger at all. Michele Soriano, or Suriano as he was sometimes called, was a Venetian ambassador at Philip's court. Comparing him with his father, Emperor Charles V, he wrote:

> Ma benché sia simile al padre nel viso e nelle parole, nella osservanza della religione, e nella professione di bontà e di fede, è però dissimile in molte altre parti, in che sta la somma della grandezza de' principi. Perché il padre si dilettava nelle cose della guerra, e ne aveva gran cognizione, e questo re ne ha poca, e non se ne diletta. Quello tentava le imprese grandi, e questo le fugge.[8]

Charles V set a good example for Philip, schooling him since boyhood in the role he would play. Philip was only sixteen when he was made Regent of Spain. He acquired many more noble titles throughout the rest of his reign, which turned out to be long and tragic. Historians describe him as devout and pious, spending hours at his prayers and in his library of mainly religious books. The rest of the day was spent in his office, working ceaselessly on many papers and documents from all the Spanish possessions: "By far the most powerful ruler in Europe, he was a meticulous planner and skilled manipulator of events, using Spain's vast wealth to bribe or suborn others to his will".[9] He disliked personal contact, which he found difficult and repulsive. Perhaps for this reason he tended to "defer difficult or painful decisions, sometimes for years, only to reach an abrupt and often capricious and illogical solution".[10] He was stubborn, and his courtiers were expected to know that. As Cecil once reported to Walsingham, he "did not welcome initiative, even when it succeeded, and he never excused failure to carry out his orders, even when they were impossible".[11] His reflexive nature made him prefer his office and his chapel to the battlefield:

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[8] Soriano, *Relazione inedita della corte e del regno di Filippo II re di Spagna, scritta nell'anno 1559 da Michele Soriano Ambasciatore veneto, tratta dall'archivio dell'Eccell.mo Sig. Marchese Filippo Patrizj e pubblicata da Paolo Mazio con un proemio storico sopra la vita, il regno e le qualità dell'istesso Re Filippo II*, 68-69. The text is available online: https://books.google.it/ .

[9] Hanson, *The Confident Hope of a Miracle,* 49.

[10] Ibid., 49.

[11] Ibid., 50.

> I know very well that I should be in some other station in life, one not as exalted as the one God has given me, which for me alone is terrible. And many criticize me for this. Please God that in heaven we shall be better treated.[12]

These words, pronounced shortly after the death of his son Don Carlos, prove the deep depression he fell into. His situation was so desperate that to recover he gave himself to work and was soon prisoner to his papers – he became the Chief Clerk of the Spanish Empire and, as Fernand Braudel said:

> Ce n'est pas un homme à grandes idées, ajouterons-nous: sa tâche, il la voit dans une interminable succession de détails. Pas une de ses notes qui ne soit un petit fait précis, un ordre, une remarque, voire la correction d'une faute d'orthographe ou de géographie. Jamais sous sa plume d'idées générales ou de grands plans.[13]

Indeed, "where his father had flair, Philip seems to have lacked obvious talent".[14] Although warm and affectionate towards his own family, Philip was a cold man who preferred woods and animals to Courts. Even his residence, the Palace de San Lorenzo de Escorial,

> was conceived as a monastery and mausoleum for his family, and himself, as much as a royal residence, above all perhaps as a personal retreat. His suite of rooms was next the Chapel at the centre of the complex of buildings arranged around courtyards to form a pattern to commemorate the martyrdom of Saint Lorenzo, burned over a gridiron. From his bedchamber he could look through a window to the high altar, and hear Masses said for the souls of his parents, whose remains he had interred beneath. […] The extraordinary earthiness, the symbolism of eternal punishment awaiting earthly vice must have spoken to the same morbid humours which had caused him to build his palace as a refuge from the world and a tomb.[15]

And yet, despite his nature, Philip had to cope with many military engagements during his reign, as well as many an insurrection in his dominions. More than once he had had to come to terms with his quarrelsome subjects. His ambitious plans of conquest made him realize that

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[12] This is what Philip wrote in a letter to Cardinal Espinosa, in Parker, *Philip II*, 94.
[13] Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le Monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, 1087
[14] Padfield, *Armada. A celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the defeat of the Spanish Armada 1588-1988*, 12.
[15] Ibid., 13.

imposing Spanish law on foreign lands often required using armed force. In reality, Philip's arrogance and claim to be widening the borders of his kingdom were not well received by the other European monarchs, who tended to see him as a constant threat to the peace and unity of their own countries. Every European king feared him and his professional army, "an élite force in the social as well as martial sense",[16] a force which provided an honourable occupation for all the Spanish gentlemen sharing Philip's thirst for power.

In the second half of the 16th century, the increasing superiority of Spain, the most Catholic of the European countries, was also a constant threat to England, which was relatively small and powerless. Elizabeth was ruling her country alone – all her pretenders having been turned down, she now sat on the English throne as the Virgin Queen. As the true daughter of the English Reformation, she had been raised in the New Faith and was therefore determined to follow her father's footsteps and turn England into a Protestant country. Despite her conservative religious tastes, Elizabeth was determined to rebel against the corrupted Church of Rome and impose the true faith on her subjects.

Thanks to the help of her skilled and experienced councillors, she had managed to steer the country towards a complete Reformation which would keep it permanently separate from the Pope. Throughout her reign she had been clever enough to make known her profound love for her subjects who slowly learnt to become familiar with her dual nature as human being and divine creature. Good Queen Bess, as they called her, transformed England from a tiny, unthreatening island into a great and prosperous kingdom. For ages the peripheral position of England in the extreme North-West of Europe had naturally excluded it from the Mediterranean scene and made it difficult to play a decisive role in the events taking place there. With all this in her mind, Elizabeth reversed the situation and put her country at the very centre of the new European scenario. Her policy of single and independent ruler had taught England to grow strong and aware of its resources. Insularity, once its weakness, became its strength. The waters surrounding the English coasts were both a natural defence and the way to achieving dominion of the seas. A traditional topic in English literature, the metaphor of England as a garden would reappear in Shakespeare's now famous passage in *Richard II*.[17]

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[16] Fernandez-Armesto, *The Spanish Armada*, 27.

[17] The passage is in Act 4, scene 3. The kingdom is going through a sad period in its history and a servant complains bitterly about the forlorn state England is in. Although the king's deposition might have sounded to Shakespeare's contemporaries like a memento, Elizabeth was living through a different period of history: 16th-

When Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1558, her subjects could not help comparing her to their late Queen Mary and hope for the best. They expected her to wipe Mary's bloody reign from their hearts and minds and to build a new, flourishing, prosperous country. Despite their hopes, however, they knew Elizabeth was a woman and, as such a weak, hesitant creature who, moreover, had chosen to rule unwedded. Her subjects believed in her; her enemies felt sure that she would fail. When it became clear that she was going to realize her plans in full, the rest of Europe stopped watching her and turned to action. Philip of Spain dared most: he feared her, but knew she had no experience of war. Thanks to his fleet and his well-armed, well-trained men, he stood a good chance of rivalling Elizabeth. God's blessing would do the rest.

Philip's conviction was also fuelled by what some English catholic exiles were arguing about their home country. Robert Parsons, an English Jesuit who had been forced to leave England after Elizabeth's ascent to the throne, obliged Philip with a catalogue of all the invasions England had endured. Julius Caesar had been the first, in 55 BC. The Tudor era itself had begun with another invasion. "Sixteen times England has been invaded. Twice only the native race have repelled the attacking force. They have been defeated on every other occasion and with a cause so holy and just as ours, we need not fear to fail".[18] Parsons' enthusiasm might have been exaggerated. But England was far from being an impregnable island. Spain's military superiority was evident. Everybody felt certain that Philip would be victorious. This was why the outcome of the Armada enterprise astonished Europe. Evidently, Elizabeth's role as queen called for more attention. Instead of deposing a queen, Philip had both drawn attention to her qualities and surrendered his leading role to her.

The change of role between England and Spain on the European political scene influenced diplomatic and commercial choices in times to come. The great Spanish empire would soon collapse, making way for the rising star of England. Indomitable and uncontested, Elizabeth's reign saw the founding of the first English colony, Virginia, while her mythical, much-beloved iconic status would soon be decisive in the diplomatic game of alliances and commerce.

In the years before the Armada, however, England's Golden Age was still in the distant future. Elizabeth was forced to fight enemies plotting to undermine her throne. Her lack of a husband made her look weak and induced the other European monarchs to underestimate her determination.

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century England was seen as some kind of *hortus conclusus* enclosing all sorts of riches - a beautiful country under the protection of its good queen.

[18] Hanson, *The Confident Hope of a Miracle*, 60.

Once it was clear that Elizabeth would follow in her father's footsteps and maintain England's reformed status, she was dubbed a heretic and became the target of criticism from practising Catholics.

Despite this, no one in Europe dared deny what a skilled queen she was. Catherine de Medici had chosen her as a good match for her sons,[19] but unfortunately the negotiations led to nothing and the French king's mother saw her three sons die childless. Surprisingly, one of the first rulers to hail Elizabeth as a great woman was Pope Sixtus V, who appreciated her way of dealing with her enemies. In March 1588, when the Spanish invasion was more than a verbal threat, Elizabeth astutely bribed the Turks to send their fleet to the Mediterranean to divert Philip of Spain. This strategy amused the Pope so much that he was heard to say:

> Were she only Catholic she would be without her match and we would esteem her highly. She omits nothing in the government of her kingdom and is now endeavouring, by way of Constantinople, to divert the King of Spain from his enterprise.[20]

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[19] Queen Catherine suggested her three sons in turn as good matches for Elizabeth. She started the negotiations for her first son, King Charles IX, in 1565 when he was only fifteen and Elizabeth already thirty. Despite the difference of age, Charles did not despise the idea of marrying the English queen and agreed to do his royal duty responsibly. However, real difficulties soon appeared, presenting some insuperable obstacles: religion and inheritance were the two important points that neither England nor France would easily renounce. The negotiations proved fruitless, but five years later they were resumed with regard to Catherine's second son, Henry, Duke of Anjou and the future King Henry III. The political context was different now and Catherine was determined to favour the Huguenot party which was growing daily and proving strongly opposed to the leading Catholic faction. Once more, Catherine was persuaded to drop the negotiations, though they were resumed in 1572 when her third son's turn arrived. François, the Duke of Alençon (Duke of Anjou from 1578) courted Elizabeth for some ten years but then, after Elizabeth's umpteenth refusal, was persuaded to abandon the courtship in 1582. For further information see Vallaro, "Elizabeth I as Poet: Some Notes on "On Monsieur's Departure" and John Dowland's "Now O Now I Needs Must Part"", in Montini – Plescia (eds.), *Elizabeth I in Writing. Language, Power and Representation in Early Modern England*, 109-126; Vallaro, *Elisabetta I poetessa e regina*, 103-123; Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: the Courtships of Elizabeth I*, Routledge, London, 1996; Carole Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King. Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 1994; Josephine Ross, *The Men Who Would Be King. Suitors to Queen Elizabeth I*, 1975; A.M.F. Robinson, "Queen Elizabeth and the Valois Princes", in *The English Historical Review*, 1887, vol. 2 n. 5, 40-77.

[20] *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs Existing in the Archives of Venice*, vol. 8, 344, in Hutchinson, *The Spanish Armada*, 85.

Sixtus' sneaking admiration for the English queen went even further when he learned the way she challenged her adversaries:

> Just look how well she governs. She is only a woman – only mistress of half an island and yet she makes herself feared by Spain, by France, by the [Holy Roman] Empire, by all. She enriches her kingdom by Spanish booty, besides depriving Spain of Holland and Zeeland.[21]

Though only a woman, Elizabeth was proving brave and capable enough of outdoing her enemies who, despite being men and as such fitted for governing a country, still could not equal her in foreign policy. Skilled and shrewd as she was, however, Elizabeth remained a woman who had ignored the Pope's rebukes and refused to return to Catholicism. The Pope tried everything to persuade her. When Elizabeth's obstinacy became evident, his eulogies came to an end. She was excommunicated in 1570 and deprived of all her titles, which were given to Philip II. Thus, according to the Vatican, Philip was now the legitimate King of England and Ireland, and Protector of the Catholic faith in Elizabeth's own kingdom.[22] For the Pope, this was more than enough to justify the excommunication. On top of this, Philip was familiar with both England and Elizabeth, whom he had met at the English court more than once.[23]

Thus, the invasion Philip was planning was his chance to become the true king of England. Philip's "mortal hate"[24] for Elizabeth was intensified by his inability to understand why Elizabeth had injured him so many times and "with base ingratitude", despite his having "freed her from prison when he was in England".[25] Philip had done with her and his hatred became

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[21] Ibid., 85.

[22] Ibid., 85.

[23] Elizabeth was in fact Philip's wife's half-sister, and although she did not attend the Court regularly, she was much spoken of during Mary's reign. The two stepsisters were not on good terms and when Elizabeth was taken to the Tower charged with treason for plotting against the queen, Philip interceded on her behalf and convinced Mary to release her. When Mary died childless in 1558, Philip had tried to keep England under his control, but Parliament denied him any chance. It was then that he saw in Elizabeth the solution to his problem: she was young and fair, clever and powerful and, above all, future Queen of England. He wooed and courted her, but when all his proposals were turned down, Philip was left with no hope of adding England to his possessions.

[24] Robert Hutchinson, *The Spanish Armada*, p. 81.

[25]The quotation comes from Lippomano, the Venetian ambassador to Madrid (see Hutchinson, *The Spanish Armada*, 81). The story goes that it was Philip who persuaded his wife, Queen Mary, to set Elizabeth free from the Tower where she

incentive enough to carry out his plans against England. The idea of invading England and freeing it from Elizabeth's Protestant rule had started to take shape in Philip's mind in the early 1570s, when the economic and military consequences of Elizabeth's politics began to exacerbate Philip's already strained wealthy possessions. Philip spoke of the "Enterprise of England" for the first time in 1571,[26] while a second invasion attempt was planned in 1578, when Philip sought to establish a bridgehead in Ireland to aid the invasion of England. The preparations were noted by Thomas Cely, an English spy, who warned his queen of "great store of fireworks made, great store of scaling ladders, great provision of yokes to draw ordnance by mules and horses and terrible cannons and many, with all other provision for war".[27] The plan was abandoned and the invasion never took place. As time proceeded, the situation did not improve for Philip. Rather, it had slipped out of his control: Elizabeth had gone too far. He needed to teach her a lesson and refine the details of his enterprise in the shortest time possible. Philip began drawing up plans on 29 December 1585. On 2 April, he authorized his admiral, Santa Cruz, to assemble a fleet in Lisbon.[28] Dozens of Dutch, German, French, Venetian, Neapolitan galleons were impounded and assembled in Lisbon. The dice were cast. A Spanish armada would soon be ready to invade England.

In his rush to success, however, Philip had to face the serious problem of finances. The Pope's reluctance to lend him money delayed his enterprise.[29] Soon the Armada became Philip's obsession. He needed a

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had been taken under the charge of plotting against her half-sister the queen. There is no evidence that Philip knew the truth about Elizabeth plotting against Mary, but rather the feeling he was beginning to consider Elizabeth as his possible future bride after Mary's death. As for Elizabeth's imprisonment during Mary's reign, see Vallaro, *Elisabetta I poetessa e regina*, 53-63.

[26] Hanson, *The Confident Hope of a Miracle*, 56. Elizabeth was to be killed while on her summer progress and the Duke of Alba was expected to invade England and place Mary Stuart on the throne.

[27] Ibid., 57.

[28] Ibid., 64.

[29] The Pope had taken the succession to the English throne to heart and had been bitterly disappointed by Mary Stuart's death. The Scottish queen had been the Pope's first choice in replacing Elizabeth and now that she was dead the question of a legitimate succession remained unsolved: Sixtus V was not convinced about Philip's legitimate inheritance of the English throne and, despite prompting Philip to intervene against Elizabeth, he had given no concrete support to the Spanish plans. Despite resenting any papal intrusion into his own country's and people's affairs, Philip needed the support, both economical and spiritual, of Sixtus V. He then resolved himself to write a letter to the Pope explaining the reasons for his requests.

strategy to carry out his plan and attack England as soon as possible. His only certainty was that success depended on defeating the English navy. As Sir Walter Raleigh wrote in his *History of the World*, the only resource Elizabeth could rely on was her navy:

> But our question is, of an army to be transported over sea, and to be landed again in an enemy's country, and the place left top the choice of the invader. Hereunto I say, that such an army cannot be resisted on the coast of England without a fleet to impeach it.[30]

Raleigh's words echo what Sir Thomas Digges had stated in his *England's Defence*, before the Spanish threat became real and concrete:

> First, I say, one of the chiefest Forces of this famous Island of England, consisteth in this, That it is fortified naturally with such a Trench or Ditch, as the Sea is, whereby it is not so subject to Invasion, as other Countries lying on the Main: Which singular Benefit, and peculiar Advantage of this our Country is utterly lost, if we suffer the enemy quietly to land all his Forces, Munitions, etc. and to tale firm footing quietly on the Main.[31]

England's greatest strength lay in its being an island; to stop the enemy from landing was its greatest defence. In other words, destroying the English navy would enable Philip to rule England and to control the seas.[32] He was determined to invade England, arrest its queen and humble her as much as

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The Spanish ambassador in Rome was expected to solicit Sixtus and prove that Philip was the legitimate claimant to the English throne: his descent from John of Gaunt should prove sufficient to give support to his demands. An agreement was eventually reached and Sixtus promised he would send his money after the invasion of England had taken place: Sixtus' million ducats would pass to Philip's treasury once Elizabeth had been deposed and succeeded by someone who was not dependent on Philip's will. Somehow an agreement was reached and Philip insisted that every cardinal in the Vatican sign it (see Hanson, *The Confident Hope of a Miracle*, 72-77).

[30] Raleigh, *The History of the World*, in *The Works of Sir Walter Ralegh, Kt, Now first collected: to which are prefixed the lives of the authors*, 101.

[31] Diggs, *England's Defence. A Treatise Concerning Invasion, or a Brief Discourse of what Orders were best for repulsing of Foreign Forces, if at any time they should invade us by sea in Kent, or elsewhere. Exhibited in writing to the Right Honourable Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, a little before the Spanish Invasion, in the Year 1588. To which is now added, An Account of such Stores of War…*, 5.

[32] Ibid., 29. Philip's awareness of this was ironic as the English fleet had actually been empowered under his advice. He was still married to Mary Tudor when he urged his wife to strengthen her navy: "The kingdom of England is and must always remain strong at sea since on this the safety of the realm depends" (see ibid., 66).

she had ridiculed him since the beginning of her reign. He would isolate Elizabeth from diplomatic relations, thus making her more exposed and vulnerable.

In reality, the Spaniards were fighting against Elizabeth, not England or her people. Catholics who had fled England when Elizabeth ascended to the throne, especially when it became clear that Elizabeth would not maintain her half-sister's Catholic devotion to the Roman Church, shared this conviction. For all of them, Elizabeth was the true enemy.

This in mind, William Allen, a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church,[33] also wrote a pamphlet to his English fellows: *An Admonition to the Nobility and People of England and Ireland Concerning the Present Wars, by the High and Mighty King Catholic of Spain*. A long text written in 1588, it gives reasons supporting and justifying a Catholic insurrection in Allen's home country. The text "was written not merely to legitimate, but actually to accompany, the Spanish Armada to England".[34] From Allen's point of view, this Anglo-Spanish conflict was above all a religious one, but was also meant to permanently destroy Elizabeth's image as both woman and queen. Elizabeth's great offences were not restricted to religion; on more secular grounds, there was also her claim to the throne and her subsequent rule. As the daughter of an infamous courtesan, she was often referred to as a bastard who

[33] The second son of John, a Lancashire man, and Jane Lister, from Yorkshire, William Allen was educated at Oriel College, Oxford, where he took his B.A. in 1550. He became Canon of York in 1558, but, because of his Catholic faith, he was forced to leave England when Elizabeth became queen. He moved to the Low Countries and settled at Louvain University. In 1569 he became Regius Professor of Philosophy at Douai University. Throughout his life, he made four journeys to Rome where he was welcomed by the Pope. It was during one of his stays in Rome that he revealed his plans against the English infidels and the restoration of the Catholic religion in his home country. Before the Armada took place, he sent many seminary priests to England: they were to contact the Catholic families there, celebrate Masses for them and pave the way for the future invaders. Allen was made a Cardinal by Pope Sixtus V in 1587 and was intended to become Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England after Elizabeth I's deposition. He died in 1594 and was buried in Holy Trinity Church in Rome. During his life he wrote many works on topics relating to the Catholic religion and the *Bible*. In particular, he is remembered for *An Admonition to the Nobility and People of England and Ireland Concerning the Present Wars, by the High and Mighty King Catholic of Spain* (1588). (For further information see: Routh, *Who's who in Tudor England*, 298-302).

[34] Lake, *Bad Queen Bess? Libels, Secret Histories, and the Politics of Publicity in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I*, 302.

> vnlawfully intruded herself, as before I haue said, in to possession of the croune of England, and the annexed dominions not by any dissent of inheritannce or other lawfull title, but only by enforced vniust partly made by her supposed father beinge then an excommunicated person, and partely coacted by herself and her coplices in the beginninge of her pretended raigne.[35]

The situation is so desperate that Allen needs to address his fellow countrymen whom he sees as unwitting victims of "wicked Iesabell", the queen who

> vsurpeth by Luciferian pride, the title of supreme Ecclesiasticall gouernment, a thinge in a woman, in all mens memory vnheard of, nor tollerable to the mastres of her owne secte, and to Catholikes in the world most ridiculous, absurde, monstrous, detestable, and a verie fable to the posterite.[36]

He describes her as

> guilty of periury and highe impietie for that she did breake, violate, and deride, the sollemne othe and promise made in her corona|tion, for defence of the Ecclesiasticall liberties and priuileges graunted by the aunciēt Christian kinges of our realme, and for the contempte of the holy ceremony vsed in the annointinge and inuestinge of all faithfull princes.[37]

Elizabeth's conduct had antagonized England's great allies and had caused the rebellions in Scotland, France and Flanders, which was enough for Allen to "denounce the queen as the creator of a heretical regime, […] an amoral and entirely irreligious machiavel".[38] Allen portrays her as "a classic tyrant, bent on pursuing her own private ends and pleasures rather than the common good or public interest".[39] Elizabeth's soul is thus doomed to eternal damnation and her kingdom can be saved only through its return to the Old Faith. Allen's admonition sounds like a last, desperate, attempt to rescue England and her people from this terrible religious shipwreck. He clearly means to turn Elizabeth's subjects against their queen, who is repeatedly described as an unscrupulous woman who

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[35] Allen, *An admonition to the nobility and people of England and Ireland concerninge the present vvarres made for the execution of his Holines sentence, by the highe and mightie Kinge Catholike of Spaine*, 1588, 11.
[36] Ibid., 11.
[37] Ibid., 11-12.
[38] Lake, *Bad Queen Bess?*, 306.
[39] Ibid., 306.

> hathe in fine shewed herself incorrigible, and altogether impatiet of admonitiō, wherof she neuer had wāte, aswell by the writinges of sundrie her lerned subiectes, as sumtimes by the Imperiall Maiestie, and other temporall Princes, and namely by diuers holie Popes, whose Nuntioes she wold neuer admitt to tell her (as of deutie they thought themselues bōude) Gods threatninges for all her forsaid and many other intollerable disorders of beleife, lyfe, & gouernment.[40]

Allen's pompous though eloquent prose could be summed up in an important paragraph towards the end of his long text:

> Nowe therfore, My lordes and deere Cuntrymen, if yow liste followe this Gods ordinaunce, and happy prouision that he hath of his great mercie, made for your honors, libertie, and faluation; If yow without delaie ioine yourselues, as God, conscience, and nature bindethe yow; If yow take parte one with an other in so Godly and honorable a quarrell, you shall atteine your purpose without all bludshed: where otherwise if you should either sitt still, or refuse to helpe or seuer your selues one frō an other, or any of you seke to vphold (which God forbid) the vsurper or her complices, beinge thus cursed by the Churche, and forsaken of God and of all good men; yow that so doe, shall first incurr the Angels cursse and malediction vpon the inhabitantes of the land of Meros, who sat still, and wold not helpe God nor venture their liues in his quarrell; and secondly be as depely excomunicated as she is, and so yow shall be guiltie of your owne ruine and the bludd of the people, and yet shall not preuaile.[41]

Allen summarises the main ideas of his long *Admonition* in these lines which seem halfway between an invitation to act against heresy and a threat of eternal damnation. The paragraph is clearly divided into two sections, each of which examines an aspect of the matter. Allen chooses to address the lords and people of his country with a series of if-clauses touching the main points of his argument and culminating in the main clauses ending each section. Elizabeth's subjects are thus called upon to take action against her not only because their conscience commands it, but above all because God himself has ordered them to fight in His name. Otherwise, if they do not rebel, or even refuse to help their fellows in the fight, they will be excommunicated and will incur eternal damnation. Allen's choice of words shows how superstition and fear of damnation had the power to influence the minds of his contemporaries.

God and the damnation of one's soul were the main reasons for a man to enlist in the army, both in England and in Spain – "religion was the

[40] Ibid, 25-26.
[41] Ibid., 53-54.

most obvious source of an ideology of enmity".[42] Spaniards in particular saw their expedition as a crusade, "a sort of propitiatory sacrifice offered to God".[43]

Unfortunately for Philip and all his Catholic subjects, the conviction of being on God's side was counterbalanced by the same conviction in his enemies. In a letter to Walsingham in February 1587, Effingham wrote:

> In open and lawful wars God will help us, for we defend the chief cause, our religion. God's own cause: for if we would leave our profession and turn to serve Baal (as God forbid, and rather to die a thousand deaths), we might have peace, but not with God.[44]

The power of prayer was important to the two factions: Faith and the solace of God's support were their only reliable certainties.

The prayers of both countries seemed to be heard in the early spring of 1587, when English and Spanish delegates met in Ostend to discuss a peace treaty.[45] The intention was that the English commissioners would meet the Duke of Parma and arrange a cessation of the hostilities between Elizabeth and Philip. Discussions lasted several weeks. Not only did they come to nothing, they also confirmed that the Spanish king had no intention of ending hostilities. Indeed, it soon became clear that the peace negotiations were a diversion to turn Elizabeth's attention away from preparations for war.

Though Philip and his men relied on secrecy, they could not help boasting about the great enterprise they were working at. In a letter to Don Bernardino de Mendoza, his ambassador in Paris, on 22 April 1588, Philip wrote that the Armada he had assembled in Lisbon was "now ready to sail, and only awaiting a fair wind".[46] It was in the following month of May that the Duke of Medina Sidonia sent a written summary to King Philip which included a detailed list of the ships forming what he now called *La Felicissima Armada*. The text arrived in English hands two months later and was taken as a propaganda exercise. Medina Sidonia's summary was soon

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[42] Fernandez-Armesto, *The Spanish Armada*, 33.
[43] Ibid., 40.
[44] Ibid., 43.
[45] The location for the meeting was the first difficulty encountered by the commissioners of both countries. Ostend was the English choice, while the Spanish preferred Antwerp. After several weeks of fruitless discussion and wasted time, the commissioners decided to meet in a neutral place, which happened to be a tent camp outside Ostend (see Whitehead, *Brags and Boasts. Propaganda in the Year of the Armada*, 50-52).
[46] Ibid., 64.

followed by *An Address to the Captains and Men on the Armada*, a pamphlet intended for circulation among the Vice-Admirals of the fleet should the invasion succeed. The text was expected to incite the Spanish invaders to fight, and assure them that most of the English were Catholics and were looking forward to helping the invasion:

> With us go faith, justice and truth, the benediction of the Pope, who holds the place of God on earth, the sympathies of all good people, the prayers of all the Catholic Church; we have them all on our side. God is stronger than the devil, truth stronger than error, the Catholic faith stronger than heresy, the saints and angles of Heaven stronger than all the power of hell, the indomitable spirit and sturdy arm of the Spaniard stronger than the drooping hearts and lax and frozen bodies of the English… Courage! Steadfastness! And Spanish bravery! For with these the victory is ours, and we have naught to fear.[47]

These texts breached their initially small circulation and reached the English coast in time for Elizabeth to gauge the strength of her enemy and prepare to fight. Despite careful planning something had gone wrong for the Spaniards. They had not allowed for Elizabeth's efficient spy network which soon did away with their advantage of secrecy. The earliest leak on the Armada was in 1581, when Roger Bodeham wrote to Lord Burghley of the Spanish king's great preparations but believed that "the fame of it was much greater than the thing itself".[48] At that time, however, the information circulating on Philip's plans was disparate. Nobody could guess his real intentions – an uncertainty that lasted years. The English agent in Turkey, William Harborne, for example, wrote that Philip "pretends the invasion of England and the conquest of Ireland",[49] while Roger Howe reported from Seville that "the King will make ready a hundred sail of ships, but what to do [with them] the Lord knows".[50] Horatio Pallavicino, from Germany, believed instead that the King of Spain was not going to attack England but rather expel Drake from his American colonies.[51] In January 1585 the master of a German ship sailing from Lisbon reported to the English Council

[47] Hume (ed. by), *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs Preserved principally in the Archives of Simanca*, 295.
[48] In De Lamar, "The Spanish Armada: The Worst-Kept Secret in Europe", in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, XIX, 4, 1988, p. 623.
[49] Ibid., 624.
[50] Ibid., 624.
[51] Ibid., 624.