

The politics of elegy: Henri IV of France by Villamediana, Quevedo, Góngora, and Rubens.

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## Abstract

This article examines Franco-Spanish political relations in the period from 1610 to 1625 as it is represented in Spanish poetry and in painting produced in Spain or in the Spanish theatre of influence. The early seventeenth century was a time of cautious rapprochement and powerful underlying tension between these nations. Two events of major significance are explored: the assassination of Henry IV of France in May 1610 and the reciprocal Bourbon-Habsburg marriages of 1615. The assassination of Henri IV is reflected in funeral sonnets by Góngora, Quevedo, Lope de Vega and the Conde de Villamediana while Henri himself and the marriages were portrayed by Rubens, envoy of the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia, governor of Flanders, in his series on the life of Henri's widow, Marie de Médicis (1625). This article considers the interplay of poetry and politics in these two complementary art forms and their effect on the legacy of Henri IV in Habsburg lands.

Keywords: Rubens, Quevedo, Góngora, Villamediana, Henri IV, funeral, painting, sonnet.

## **Funeral Exequies for Henri IV in Spain**

Since the time of the first Habsburg ruler of Spain, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, it had been the custom that all entities with royal patronage or public responsibility, on the peninsula and throughout the empire, should perform elaborate funeral rites for deceased members of the Madrid and Vienna royal families, even stillborn children. (Page 2009: 428; Allo Manero and Esteban Llorente 2004: 40) When politically expedient, this courtesy was extended to rulers of allied or neighbouring realms. Thus, on 24 May 1610 Felipe III, then resident at the estate of his *válido*/chief minister, Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, Duque de Lerma, ordered royal exequies for Henri IV of France. Lerma and Juan de Idiáquez, a career state secretary and the king's chief advisor on foreign affairs, had wisely not put it to Felipe that Henri IV's death should be marked out of deference to the king himself, since their own devout monarch had little time for the wily and, in his view, apostate first Bourbon on the throne of France. Instead, they argued that empire-wide ceremonies would serve to demonstrate appreciation of the friendship the French queen, Marie de Médicis had shown Spain since her marriage, friendship she was likely to foment as regent. She was, after all, a grand-niece of Charles V. Felipe was convinced and funeral ceremonies were celebrated in the Church of San Pedro in Lerma on 8 and 9 June with the court in attendance. (Williams 2006: 161)

There is a paucity of evidence relating to any ceremonies that may have taken place elsewhere in the empire, unsurprising since the death of a French king would hardly have been a priority, but some elegiac poetry has survived. Royal exequies were frequently accompanied by poetry *certámenes* or *justas*, and the resulting poems were exhibited in the churches where the funeral ceremonies were celebrated. (Andrews 2014) A handful of sonnets remain, in manuscripts and collected editions of the works of Góngora, Quevedo, Lope de Vega and Juan de Tassis y Peralta, Conde de Villamediana. (Jammes 1967: 285) Lope's single sonnet, written in 1610 and then substantially altered for inclusion in his epic poem on the life of Mary Stuart,

*Corona trágica* published in 1627, has been extensively analysed by Ignacio García Aguilar in an article in which he also refers to the work of the other three poets. (García Aguilar 2009) The funeral sonnets by Góngora, Quevedo and Villamediana will be examined in more detail here and contextualised by comparison with the representation of Henri IV undertaken by Pieter Pawel Rubens and his workshop between 1623 and 1625 for a cycle on the life of Marie de Médicis destined for the queen's new Palais du Luxembourg. This contextualisation is relevant as the series projects the reputation of Henri IV into the early years of the reign of Felipe IV, when both Lerma and Marie de Médicis, architects of Franco-Spanish cooperation in the previous decade, had lost their power and Spain and France were once again at loggerheads.

### **The Political Crisis of 1609–10**

The Treaty of Vervins, agreed in June 1598, put an end to open hostility between France and Spain. (Babelon 2001: 977–87; Pitts 2012: 320–27) The death of Felipe II in September 1599 effectively drew direct Spanish interference in French politics to a close. (Williams 2006: 32–33) This did not preclude Henri IV from continuing to work, sometimes in secret, sometimes overtly, to counter Habsburg power in central and western Europe. Occasionally, he even became involved directly in peninsular politics, most significantly through his support for the Morisco uprising of the early 1600s. (Feros 2001: 381–83; Williams 2006: 157; Hugon 2009: 131) However, the decade after the Treaty of Vervins was relatively peaceful and prosperous in France. Henri's marriage to Marie de Médicis proved fruitful and his succession was assured. Yet, by 1609, the year of the signing of the Twelve Years' Truce between Spain and the United Provinces of the Netherlands, three linked and rather vexed questions began to impinge on this settled state of affairs: Spanish power over the dukedom of Milan; the succession to the

dukedom of Cleves–Jülich in Germany; and Charlotte-Marguerite de Montmorency, Henri's last, presumed platonic, infatuation.

Carlo Emanuele of Savoy, widower since 1597 of the Infanta Catalina Micaela, daughter of Felipe II and Élisabeth de Valois, elder sister of Henri's first wife, Marguerite, was unhappy that his late wife's dowry had not been forthcoming. His wife's sister, the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia, had been given the governorship of Flanders as her wedding gift whereas Catalina Micaela had received no comparable honour. (Pitts 2012: 311) Indeed, Catalina Micaela had initially considered her marriage to a mere duke to be beneath her dignity but the alliance was of strategic military importance to Felipe, and she and the duke grew close. After her death, her widower came to the conclusion, with Henri's support, that Sabaudian annexation of the Spanish–ruled Duchy of Milan would constitute an appropriate recompense. (Sánchez 2013: 80–81) This did not come to pass, however, and the pursuit of Catalina Micaela's dowry by the Sabaudians would continue until the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. (Raviola 2013) Henri's interest in this dispute was simple. The duchy of Milan lay between lands controlled by Savoy to the west and those of the Republic of Venice to the east, both allies of France. In Spanish hands, it created a corridor through the Italian peninsula linking Spanish–governed Naples to the south with Austrian territory to the north. Blocking this channel would be of considerable strategic importance to the French king.

Further north, in March 1609, at the height of the Twelve Years' Truce negotiations, the dukedom of Cleves–Jülich, strategically close to the borders of the Dutch United Provinces, the Spanish Netherlands and France, became vacant. The joint duchy was a patchwork of territories some of which had majority Catholic populations and others Protestant. Crucially, all had enjoyed freedom of worship under the previous Catholic incumbency. As the Twelve Years' Truce negotiations were at a delicate stage, the parties agreed not to intervene in the succession to the duchy. The Habsburg Emperor Rudolf II, under whose jurisdiction the

territories fell, decreed that candidates for the succession should submit their case to him. He would declare the outcome in Vienna four months later. However, Henri would not wait for an outcome he believed would be settled in favour of Catholic Vienna. He brought about a coalition of German Protestant princes which took upon itself the authority to approve the joint succession of the two most credible successors to the dukedom: the Margrave of Brandenburg and Count Palatine of Neuberg, both Protestant. Rudolf's response was to send his brother, the archduke Leopold, archbishop of Salzburg, to occupy the town of Jülich, in June 1609. This move was greeted with outrage in France. (Babelon 2001: 954–73; Pitts 2012: 311–16)

As if high politics were not sufficient challenge, Henri's lifelong womanising added an almost quixotic layer to the mix, in the guise of Charlotte–Marguerite de Montmorency, Princesse de Condé, unenamoured, it appears, both of her husband and the king. Henri had expected the Prince de Condé, who was his nephew and also named Henri de Bourbon, to be tolerant of his infatuation. However, the young prince was mortally offended and fled France with his unwilling wife on 29 November 1609. (Babelon 2001: 961; Pitts 2012: 308) With the tacit consent of the Archdukes Albrecht and Isabel Clara Eugenia, governors of Flanders, Charlotte was offered asylum in Brussels in the house of the Prince of Orange and her husband was sent to Cologne. Later he moved, in more incendiary fashion, to Milan under the protection of the Conde de Fuentes, who had notoriously, in 1598, declared himself ashamed of the settlement of the Treaty of Vervins. (Williams 2006: 33) This placed the impetuous Condé under flagrant complement to the Spanish Habsburgs and must have appalled Albrecht and Isabel Clara Eugenia. Always politically attuned, they had studiously avoided being seen as abetting the flight of the Condés. Nevertheless, they began to fear, as 1610 advanced, that Henri might not be above launching an assault on Brussels on his way north-east in order to retrieve his lost love. In the end, he agreed to pass through Flanders peacefully. As the Catholic Seigneur de Villeroy, Henri's foreign affairs expert and second minister, cannily observed,

Henri had always been more likely to start a war with Spain in response to the Milanese attempt to take advantage of his irresponsible and disgruntled nephew. Retrieving his nephew's consort was insignificant in comparison. (Babelon 2001: 971)

The Cleves–Jülich offensive and the attack by the Piedmontese army on Milan were aborted by the king's death on 14 May 1610. (Pitts 2012: 316) The Piedmontese army was dissolved without firing a shot and Carlo Emanuele was obliged to beg pardon of Felipe III by dispatching his son Filiberto to the Spanish court. (Williams 2006: 166) Incidentally, later in life, Filiberto would become viceroy of Sicily under Felipe IV and his sister Margherita, briefly, viceroy of Portugal. Thus, two of Catalina Micaela's children attained a rank she would have deemed appropriate to her royal own status. (Raviola 2013: 69) In September 1610 the French, under Marie de Médicis, symbolically occupied the town of Jülich, honouring the king's last campaign. The duchies of Cleves and Jülich were ceded by agreement between all concerned parties to the Elector of Brandenburg (formerly the Margrave) and the Count Palatine of Neuberg on the understanding that freedom of worship would be safeguarded for all confessions. In Spain, there was much relief that the fragile balance of power in western and central Europe would not be put to the test. There was also increasing optimism regarding the peace-making of Marie de Médicis.

### **The Assassination of Henri IV**

14 May would be Henri's last full day devoted to affairs of state before his departure for Châlons-sur-Marne where he would take command of the army on 19 May. He had a meeting with his ambassador to Spain that morning and Villeroy had an audience with him to discuss relations with Savoy. The queen had been crowned and elevated to the status of regent the day before at the cathedral of St Denis and there were plans afoot for a joyous entry of the newly-crowned queen along the streets of Paris on Sunday 16 May.

The days and months leading up to the king's departure for Germany had been infused with prognostications of doom. Soothsayers and astrologers foretold the king's demise. There was some mention specifically of daggers and carriages and the bad omens for the month of May. Anticipation of his death spilled across France's borders with the Low Countries and Germany. Henri himself even suggested on various occasions, to the queen, to Sully, to his intimate, the soldier and courtier, François de Basompierre, that he would see neither Germany nor Italy but would meet his end shortly in Paris. (Babelon 2001: 979)

He set out to visit his ailing long-time friend and first minister, the Huguenot Maximilien de Béthune, Duc de Sully since 1608, some time after four that afternoon. He rejected offers of protection from two captains of guards. Once in his carriage, he asked for the leather covers on the unglazed windows to be lifted so that he could have a sense of being outdoors. Paris was more congested than usual because of preparations for Marie's *entrée joyeuse*/joyous entry as queen regent. The king made slow progress, escorted by a few gentlemen on horseback and manservants on foot. Gregarious and informal, he saluted friends as he passed by and chatted amicably with the gentlemen he had invited to accompany him in his large carriage. The route was impromptu and he decided to visit the cemetery of St Innocent on the way. To get there, his cortege had to pass along the Rue Ferronnérie. This street backed on to the cemetery and was impeded by market stalls, condemned over fifty years earlier but still in place, down one side. It was impossible for the escort to ride alongside the king's carriage as it passed through and the doors were left unprotected. François Ravailac, a poorly-educated, self-declared mystic who had tracked the king's movements across the city that morning, saw his opportunity. He opened the door on the king's side and plunged an antler-handled knife stolen from an eating-house on the Rue Saint Honoré into Henri's torso twice, mortally wounding him.



Under the most severe torture, Ravaillac insisted that he had acted alone, out of a belief that he must save the nation from a king who refused to convert the Huguenots, who was at war with the Pope and who wished to move the Holy See to Paris. These were common rumours at a time when the king was regarded with suspicion by many of his Catholic subjects. Rather than realpolitik, they considered certain of his actions to be evidence of apostasy: the Edict of Nantes of 1598 which allowed Huguenots freedom of worship and brought peace to the kingdom; his refusal to implement the strictures of the Council of Trent; his insistence on offering political support to the Protestant states of Northern Europe, Lutheran and Calvinist; the clandestine assistance he provided to the crypto-Muslim Moriscos in Andalusia in the years prior to their phased expulsion in 1609. (Babelon 2001: 935–36, 978) Though there was general recognition that he had brought peace and stability after the long years in which France had been a miserable land ‘of wars of religion, a battlefield open to foreign conquest’, by 1610 the people of France were almost universally indignant at the profligacy of the king’s and queen’s households. (Babelon 2001: 936, 977) They were scandalised by the king’s lavishness, his spending on his mistresses, on hunting and on grandiose building projects.

No definitive evidence of a conspiracy has been unearthed for the assassination of Henri by François Ravaillac. (Babelon 2001: 994; Pernot 2010: 154) This did not prevent immediate suggestions of a Hispano–Jesuit plot from taking hold. Copies of the Spanish Jesuit Juan de Mariana’s *De Rege et Regis Institutione* (1598) were burnt publicly. In his tract, Mariana defended the right of the people to kill tyrants and cited the assassination of the last Valois king of France, Henri III as a laudable example. (García Aguilar 2009: 75, 82) Henri III was stabbed by the Dominican Br Jacques Clément in his privy chamber on 1 August 1589, the assassin’s motivation being that the king was not serving the interests of Catholicism adequately. Indeed, Mariana’s tract did not spare monarchs of any nationality and across the English Channel, James I, himself the son of an executed queen, Mary I of Scotland, felt obliged to contest this

incendiary view. (Babelon 200: 977; Feros 2002: 400–04) Violent demonstrations outside the house of the Spanish ambassador, don Íñigo de Cárdenas immediately after the assassination prompted the bereaved Marie de Médicis to dispatch a guard to protect the ambassadorial residence. (Hugon 2009: 135) The swiftly–published finding that Ravailiac had acted alone coupled with his declaration in the midst of his final, public, judicial agony on 27 May that he had indeed done so was sufficient to keep anti–Spanish feeling from erupting further. The competence of the queen’s regency in managing the aftermath of the assassination prevailed.

### **The Funeral of Henri IV**

Instead of the joyous entry programmed for Sunday May 16, the people of Paris witnessed and took part in the king’s funeral on 29 and 30 June. By Spanish standards, the funeral of Henri IV was a rather modest affair, much as he and his court were informal and unpretentious when compared to the highly–regulated customs of the Madrid Habsburgs. After an autopsy that found the king to have been in excellent physical condition, Henri’s heart was taken to the Jesuit College of La Flèche to honour a promise made in 1603. His entrails were transported to the church of Saint Denis and his embalmed body exposed in a makeshift chapel in the parade room of the Louvre for eighteen days. One hundred low Masses and six high Masses were celebrated daily in the parade room for the repose of his soul while his remains were present. On 29 June, after an interval of regal pomp in the Salle des Cariatides in homage to his remains, the body was transported to the cathedral of Notre Dame from where, after a funeral ceremony, it was taken on 30 June in procession to the church of Saint Denis. A second funeral rite was celebrated there and Henri’s remains were buried privately the following day. (Babelon 2001: 699, 986–87)

The funeral is recorded in a relatively brief and rather cursory anonymous account, the *Ordre de la Pompe Funebre observée au convoy et aux funerailles de Henry le Grand, Roy de*

*France et de Navarre*/Order of the Ceremonies for the Cortège and the Funeral of Henry the Great, King of France and Navarre published in the year of his death. This ‘petit tableau racourcy/brief little picture’ provides list of all those in the funeral cortège which processed from the Louvre to the church of St Denis. (*L’Ordre* 1610: 6) After a brief and conventional excursus on the ancient Abyssinian custom of committing suicide in order to follow their dead kings into the afterlife, and the qualification that the French, however distraught, could not follow such an example because of their Christian faith, the account provides practical details.

The streets on the processional way from the Louvre to Notre Dame were draped in black with the arms of the city hanging at intervals. All along the route residents had torches burning in front of their houses. Particular mention is accorded the last surviving Valois crown princess, Marguerite, whose tempestuous marriage to Henri had to be annulled before he could marry Maria de’ Medici. Marguerite had latterly been on excellent terms with her former spouse and the account declares that she arranged for six torches to be lit on a richly-dressed ceremonial chapel erected in front of the Augustinian church. (*L’Ordre* 1610: 6–7) A procession of thousands, representing both church and state, is enumerated. The presence of a considerable number of soldiers wounded in the service of their king, ‘une grande partie de ceux qui on esté blessez au service du feu Roy durant ces dernieres guerres/a great number of those who were wounded in the service of the late king during these recent wars’, is significant. These mutilated war veterans were placed amongst a bloc of five hundred of the poor following in the wake of the various religious orders. They were dressed in gowns of black stuff, each carrying a torch weighing two pounds, and their presence marked Henri’s martial exploits and his consistent care for his men. (*L’Ordre* 1610: 7–8)

The chronicler recounts that the cortège left the Louvre at three on Tuesday afternoon. It was as if the walls of Paris wept, inanimate objects joined living beings in their weeping and Paris became submerged in tears as the procession passed by. He summarises the remainder of

the funeral ceremonies in a short paragraph and closes his account by excusing its brevity on the basis that he had every intention of providing a more extensive description of these events at a later date. As with many festival book plans, this one does not seem to have come to fruition.

The coffin, draped to the ground in black velvet, was carried on a chariot pulled by six horses with black velvet caparisons crossed with white satin and escorted by the Garde Écossaise. Almost immediately after the coffin, in a position of significance, came the ambassadors who the chronicler lists as follows:

The Ambassador of Savoy walking on his own and dressed in a long black cloak with train;

The Ambassador of Venice walking on the right of an archbishop and peer of France;

The Ambassador of Spain, on the right of another archbishop and peer of France;

The Papal Nuncio on the right of another;

The Papal Legate, recently arrived;

Cardinals de Joyeuse and de Sourdis. (*L'Ordre* 1610: 12–13)

The ambassadors and the cardinals are followed by the king's horse, riderless, with a fleur-de-lys caparison reaching to the ground and surrounded by twelve heralds. His ceremonial sword is carried by a nobleman, accompanied by a group of pages and valets, and a waxwork effigy of the king, dressed in the regal mantle, wearing a crown and holding a sceptre follows the sword.

Various other ambassadors may well have been in attendance but as they were not accorded formal roles in the procession they are not listed by the chronicler. Those who are mentioned were of immediate relevance to the politics of Henri's reign. The prominence of the

Ambassador of Savoy with the added attention given to his dress reflects the collaboration between Henri and Carlo Emanuele over the matter of Milan. The attendance of the Venetian ambassador is an acknowledgement of the long-term alliance between the Venetian Republic and Henri IV. This had most recently been put to the test in 1606 when Pope Paul VI was in dispute with the Republic over ecclesiastical privileges. Venice was supported by her allies in England, France and the United Provinces and peace eventually brokered by Henri. (Babelon 2001: 920) The presence of the Spanish ambassador is a clear sign of rapprochement on the part of Marie's regency. Perhaps it was also reciprocation of Felipe III's decision, with the encouragement of Lerma and Idiáquez, to order mourning rites for Henri throughout his realms on May 24.

### **Funeral Sonnets in Spain**

The tributes to Henri produced by Spain's Golden Age poets in 1610 in response to the royal decree reflect the respect in which he was held as a man, a soldier and a king. Not since Charles V had his like been seen in western Europe. The Spanish intelligentsia were painfully aware of the shortcomings of Felipe III in comparison.

#### *The Conde de Villamediana*

Juan de Tassis (Tarsis) y Peralta, Conde de Villamediana, was fatally stabbed in his carriage, like Henri IV, by an assassin in the service of a master or masters unknown who lay in wait for him at his own doorstep in the Calle Mayor in Madrid. The assassin was never apprehended. Villamediana met his end on the night of 21 August 1621 at the age of thirty-nine. The most persistent rumour then and now suggests that he had grown too close to the young queen, Isabel de Borbón, Henri's daughter, to whose household he had been attached since her husband ascended to the throne. Villamediana's nineteenth-century biographer, Emilio Cotarelo y Mori

gives full credence both to the alleged affair and involvement at the highest level in the liquidation of the mercurial Villamediana, but admits that ‘muchas anécdotas se cuentan relativas a estos amores, probablemente la mayor parte falsas/ many anecdotes are told about this love affair, probably most of them false’. (Cotarelo 1886: 204) Given Villamediana’s history as a gambler, womaniser, satirist and alleged homosexual, there were, of course, manifold other possibilities. (Oliván Santaliestra 2013: 233–34; Cotarelo y Mori 1886: 167–206; Rozas 1969: 15, 53–56) As Juan Manuel Rozas observes, both his legend and his poetry bear the mark of tragedy, Villamediana being one who soared very high in life but ultimately fell catastrophically low. (Rozas 1969: 7–8) He does however identify in Villamediana’s small output of personal religious poetry a voice which retreats from the world he sought to impress, a quieter voice which is both ‘vivencial y sincera/lived and sincere’. (Rozas 1969: 47) Elements of this tone are perhaps evident in the three sonnets he composed on the death of Henri IV. He also left a fourth in praise of the French king. (Costa 1990: 246; García González 2004)

In 1610, long before he had any inkling that Henri’s eldest daughter would become a significant figure in his life, Villamediana may well have been in France, indeed in Paris itself. He might, at the very least, have soaked up some of the mournful atmosphere described in *L’Ordre*, even if he did not witness the funeral, as he was probably in Paris between May and December 1610. (Pérez Cuenca and de la Campa 1996: 1218) Funeral sonnets by definition are topical responses to the events of the period. In the hands of a Villamediana, a well-off peer and art collector who had no need himself of noble patronage, these poems may be said to be the product of a desire to be taken seriously in the milieu of court politics. (Rozas 1969: 25–26) The invocation of the political context of the king’s death is therefore deliberate and relatively overt.

The first elegiac sonnet, titled ‘A la muerte del rey de Francia/On the death of the king of France’ paints an uncompromising picture of the war on Cleves–Jülich and on Milan which was stymied by Henri’s death:

Cuando el furor del iracundo Marte,  
al viento desplegaba las banderas,  
y levantaba al son de cajas fieras  
ira sangrienta Enrique en toda parte;

cuando empezaba a fabricar el arte  
artificiosas máquinas guerreras,  
y cuando, atento a las dudosas veras,  
el mundo estaba ya de parte a parte;

puesta la mano a la atrevida espada,  
ofreciendo fortuna fin sangriento  
de la dudosa guerra a la victoria,

cortó el hilo la Parca apresurada  
a la vida y al alto pensamiento,  
dejando eterna al mundo su memoria. ((García González 2004: XVIII)

[When the fury of the angered Mars unfurled flags in the wind and Henry raised to the sound of savage drums his bloody rage everywhere; when art began to fashion ingenious siege engines, and when the world was already, from one side to the other,

attentive to the doubtful truths; his hand placed on the daring sword, with Fortune offering to victory a bloody end to the dubious war, the thread of life and high thought was cut by hurried Death, leaving his eternal memory to the world.]

The octave sets the scene for war in pragmatic fashion. Banners to fight and die for are unfurled, the savage drums of war summon the bloody anger necessary for hostilities to commence. Siege engines are being made ready and the European powers ('el mundo/the world') are holding their breath given the dubious nature of Henry's enterprise. Then Henri's hand is stalled by the intervention of Fate in the guise of Ravailac and the only blood shed will be the king's, pre-empting mass loss of life in battle. While the sonnet finishes with the courteous recognition that Henri's death leaves his eternal memory to the world, there seems to be greater emphasis on the avoidance of war than on the loss of the bellicose monarch who sought it. In a single sentence, with two clear references to classical figures, Marte/Mars and La Parca/Death, this poem presents a succinct summary of the geo-political context surrounding the king's demise.

Respect for Henri's reputation, if not always his judgment, is proclaimed in Villamediana's single laudatory sonnet. This poem reinforces the projection of the king as *Henricus Magnus*, in emulation of Charlemagne, then prevalent at the French court. The conventional comparisons to Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great in the second quatrain provide an unequivocal statement of Henri's regal and martial qualities (Hugon 2009: 129):

Cesar renace y Alejandro envidia  
piadoso perdonar con mano armada,  
y en los peligros, la virtud osada  
despreciando el morir, vence la envidia. (García González XVII)



[Caesar is reborn and Alexander envious of [his] pious pardoning under arms, and in danger, [his] daring virtue, despising death, overcomes envy.]

Henri's actions are characterised as courage inspired by being in the right or virtuous, enabled by an indifference to death and a judicious deployment of clemency, hallmarks of a wise ruler. The second tercet repeats Henri's achievements in the more mundane context of seventeenth-century France and the rest of Europe:

El templo de la paz cierra, y bajando  
del cielo Astrea, su valor mantiene  
con freno a Francia y con la fama al mundo.

[He closes [brings to a conclusion] the temple of peace, and [with] Astrea descending from the heavens, he upholds his valour by controlling France and by means of his renown throughout the world.]

Astrea, associated with the dispensation of justice, foregrounds Henri's achievements as a lawmaker, the natural outcome of his bringing peace to a divided realm. 'El templo de la paz' or Tempio della Pace/Temple of Peace (one of the Roman imperial Fora) alludes to the *pax romana* imposed on Europe under the Roman emperors and reinforces the projection of the king as *Henricus Magnus*. From 1599, France had more or less been at peace and Henri is credited in the final line with imposing his rule ('freno/control') over the kingdom and thereby perpetuating his own good reputation throughout the world by the exercise of justice. In times

of baroque disillusionment, with an effete king on the Spanish throne, this eulogisation of a just and fearless monarch is nothing if not wistful and pointed.

In the same vein, the second funeral sonnet, the best known of the three, titled ‘A lo mismo/To the same’, presents the king in the octave as ambitious and successful in war but also as a good governor who understood how to control his people:

El roto arnés y la invencible espada  
que coronó la presumida frente  
del muerto rey que a la francesa gente  
obediente mantuvo y enfrenada,

pudiera ya en el templo estar colgada  
y en descansado honor resplandeciente,  
sin volver a tentar osadamente  
la varia rueda de la diosa airada.

Mas el discurso y el saber humano  
no alcanza aquella esencia sin medida  
que el poder de los ánimos limita,

dando fuerza y valor a flaca mano  
contra el heroico rey, en cuya vida  
altos designios y esperanzas quita. (García González XIX)

[The battered suit of armour and the invincible sword that crowned the confident brow of the deceased king who kept the French people obedient and under control might now be hung in the temple, and reposing radiant in honour, without having to tempt, daringly, the variable wheel of the irascible goddess. But discourse and human wisdom do not attain that essence without its degree being limited by the power of souls, granting force and valour to a weak hand against the heroic king, from whose life it strips high designs and hopes.]

Such a king might, at his stage in life, have withdrawn from bellicose adventures and seen his fame as a warrior celebrated without tempting fate, his undefeated sword and battle-dented plate armour hung in a place of honour. Yet the capacity of humanity and public discourse is constrained by human weakness and liable to break down, with the result in this case of the king's assassination. Though not overtly mentioned, the implication is that Henri showed his own limits by engaging in an unwise war when he should have given up military pursuits, allowing the ignoble and ignorant Ravailiac to raise his weak hand against a heroic king. Ironically, Ravailiac's instability was given impetus by dissatisfaction with the king's religious policies, though these very policies constitute a key element of the monarch's peace-making and his exercise of restraint over his people. While the first funeral sonnet attributes Henri's end to 'La Parca apresurada/hurried Death', this one identifies the mortal hand of Ravailiac, increasing the degree of topical immediacy in the poem.

The third funeral sonnet, 'Al rey de Francia Enrique IV/To the king of France, Henry IV', comes closest to the traditional elegy. The octave offers a list of the king's fine qualities. The opening quatrain establishes his prowess in battle, conventionally comparing his expert swordsmanship to that of Apollo, characterised as the sun's rays. It is careful to demonstrate that his warrior nature was balanced by a commensurate reluctance to shed blood in times of

peace. The second quatrain offers an evocative list of the king's virtues, a series of eight adjectives followed by a metaphor vindicating his devotion to the Church ('las artes sagradas/the sacred arts') and a statement that he won his kingship by the exercise of his sword in battle. The list of eight noble qualities and the metaphors juxtaposing religious devotion and martial art are all brought together in the final epithet in the quatrain, 'ilustre caballero/illustrious cavalier'. In this, the unorthodox Henri is defined for all the ages as a model of chivalry:

Este que con las manchas de su acero  
a los rayos del sol émulo es claro,  
de la sangre en la paz fue tan avaro,  
como pródigo de ella en guerra, y fiero.

Dulce, cortés, magnánimo, guerrero,  
intrépido, constante, invicto, raro,  
de las artes sagradas sacro amparo,  
rey por su espada, ilustre caballero.

Dénos hoy en sus lirios esperanza,  
planta, cuan bien nacida mal cortada,  
de Magno Carlos, de Bullones píos;

que bien parecerá su semejanza,  
si el agua en sangre bárbara trocada  
dieren tributo al mar los sacros ríos. (García González XX)

[He who with the stains produced by his steel is a bright emulator of the sun's rays, in peace so miserly of bloodshed, in war a prodigy of it, and fierce. Sweet, courtly, magnanimous, warrior-like, intrepid, constant, undefeated, rare, the anointed upholder of the sacred arts, a king by his sword, an illustrious cavalier. Give us hope now in his lilies [fleur-de-lys], the scion [plant], so well born and badly cut down, of Charlemagne and pious Bouillons; how well his likeness would appear, if the water, changed into barbaric blood, flowed [in] the sacred rivers as tributaries into the sea.]

The reference to genealogy in the sestina is typical of the elegiac form. Besides Charlemagne's victory over the Saracens, the poet invokes the 'Bullones píos/ pious Bouillons' in French regal history, after the Frankish knight Godefroy de Bouillon, first Christian ruler of Jerusalem after it was taken in the First Crusade. Henri was a direct descendant of St Louis (IX) of France who oversaw the seventh and eighth crusades, therefore the reference to defending Christianity against Islam is apposite, and of course relevant. However, the Treaty of Zsitvatorok, signed in 1606 between the Viennese Habsburgs and Sultan Ahmed I, laid the ground for half a century of peace between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers. While the question of threat from crypto-Muslim sources was still live in Spain, and had only just been dealt with via the Expulsion of the Moriscos the year before Henri's death in 1609, internal religious strife in France revolved around the Huguenot-Catholic axis. Thus, the characterisation of Henri as following in a line of staunch Christian warriors facing up to Muslim enemies may be seen as underlining Henri's reborn Catholic observance, if not genuine piety, after his ascent to the throne. The matter of the French king's doctrinal orthodoxy would not be of little significance in Spain, not least because the project of reciprocal princely marriages had been discussed at both courts since the births of the Infanta Ana and the dauphin Louis within days of each other in September 1601. Therefore, it is possible that the lilies providing hope in the first tercet may

allude to the future children of Isabel de Borbón and Felipe IV. A disenchanted Spanish perspective would suggest the hope that the excellent qualities of Henri would inject some vigour into the Madrid Habsburgs. The last two lines of the sonnet have clear echoes of Jorge Manrique's *Coplas* ('los ríos/ que van a dar en el mar/the rivers/which go to empty into the sea') and bring the sonnet to a conventional conclusion. (Beltrán: III) The barbaric blood of the penultimate line could, of course, refer both to blood shed by Henri on the field of battle and his own blood spilt in death. Taking the more benign interpretation, the king's blood superimposed on the water which the sacred rivers carry into the sea, all religious overtones apart, offers a projection of the post-mortem importance Henri, his brief reign and possibly his royal descendants might go on to assume.

Villamediana was not to know, at the time of writing these conventional and courtly elegiac sonnets, that the dynastic union of Henri IV's daughter and Felipe III's son would in all likelihood play some part his own doom.

### *Francisco de Quevedo*

Francisco de Quevedo wrote four sonnets and a *canción* on the death of Henri IV. His meditations on the assassination are utterly respectful of the king's achievements and legacy on the one hand, but rather ebullient on the subject of Spanish military power on the other. (García Aguilar 2009: 73)<sup>i</sup> Henri was, after all, a king immune to his barbs. Indeed, an anonymous contemporary commentary on Quevedo's satire, 'La toma de Ronces Valles/The taking of Roncevaux', which he may in fact have penned himself, happily refers to the French monarch as 'Enrique el Grande'. (Astrana Marín 1943: 1223-1239, 1226, note 10)<sup>ii</sup>

'La toma/The taking' was written in 1636 in the midst of the Franco-Spanish War of 1635 to 1636, which broke out after the Treaty of the Pyrenees expired, partly to lampoon Cardinal Richelieu. Then in the ascendant, the cardinal was a 'monster who obsessed

[Quevedo] from the declaration of war in 1635'. (Gutiérrez 1977: 334–35) Under Richelieu, France chose to enter the complex web of conflicts pitting the Protestant north against Catholic south which comprised the Thirty Years War, but on the side of the northern nations, alienating France from the Church and her former Catholic allies, including Spain. In 'La toma/The taking', Quevedo presents Louis XIII's chief minister and enemy of the queen as the 'Anticristo de la Corte/The Antichrist of the Court' and an 'hidra disforme/deformed hydra'. (Astrana Marín 1943: 138)<sup>iii</sup> His identification of malfeasance in the French king's chief minister is anticipated in two poems he wrote attacking the Conde-Duque de Olivares a decade earlier, in 1624/5. The 'Epistola de Don Francisco de Quevedo al Conde-Duque de San Lucar/The Epistle of Don Francisco de Quevedo to the Count-Duke of San Lucar', though written in 1624, was only published in 1639 when Olivares' power was very much on the wane. The sonnet 'Al mal gobierno de Felipe IV/On the bad government of Philip IV', from 1625, which describes Olivares' elevation to power, remained unpublished in his lifetime. (Astrana Marín 1943: 132–35). Curiously, Quevedo and the Conde-Duque were actually on good terms at the time of writing, the rupture in their relations apparently taking place some time between 1630 and 1633. (Gutiérrez 2001: 498) In these two poems there is a distrust, if not yet of the person, of the concept of omnipotent chief ministers, understandable in the wake of the fall of the Duque de Lerma. Decades before this disillusionment, in his four funeral sonnets for Henri, Quevedo seems straightforwardly outraged by the act of regicide and keen to project Spanish military superiority. Blecua notes that the sonnets were probably written very soon after news of the king's death reached the poet. (Blecua 1996: 283–84)

His 'Inscripción al túmulo del Rey de Francia Enrique IV/Inscription for the tomb of the King of France Henry IV' laments a ruler who 'nació rey por la sangre que tenía;/por la que derramó, fue rey famoso/was born a king by the blood he had/by that he shed, he was a famous king'. (Astrana Marín 1943: 452). The final tercet balances Henri's audacity in assuring

himself of a throne, which his right of succession alone could not have guaranteed him, against its nullification by a traitor, ‘un alevoso/a plotter’ who usurped the role of Fate:

A Fortuna quitó (por no deberla  
Solo a la sucesión) la monarquía,  
Y vengó a la Fortuna un alevoso.

[From Fortune he took (because he did not owe it only to the succession) the monarchy,  
and Fortune was avenged by a [treacherous] plotter.]

Henri defied Fortune by succeeding to power, replacing the hapless and seemingly cursed house of Valois with his own house of Bourbon, but the poet, perhaps mindful of the importance of maintaining the ruling dynasty in his own land, takes the opportunity in this sonnet to suggest that such audacity was in its turn punished by the unruly hand of Ravailac.

‘Otro [soneto] a la muerte del mismo Rey sobre la causa que le movió al matador/Another [sonnet] on the death of the same King relating to the cause that motivated the killer’ expands on the topic of the plotter Ravailac. (Astrana Marín 1943: 452; Blecua 1996: 284) The octave renders Henri as a briefly wayward but immensely powerful figure, capable of challenging and exasperating the gods:

No pudo haber estrella que inflamase  
Con tal inclinación sus rayos de oro,  
Ni a tanta majestad perdió el decoro  
Hora, por maliciosa que pasase.



Ni pudo haber deidad que se enojase  
Y diese tan vil causa a tanto lloro;  
Rayos vengan la ira al alto coro:  
No era bien que un traidor se la vengase.

[There could not have been a star which inflamed with so much willingness its golden rays, nor an Hour which lost decorum to such great majesty, however maliciously it passed. There could not have been a deity which grew angry and gave such vile cause to so much lamenting; let bolts of lightning avenge the anger of the high chorus: it was not right that a traitor should avenge it.]

While allowing that Henri had created political and military tensions for which he should be censured, there is an insistence that the reprimand should be meted out by the gods themselves, not by mortal hand, least of all the ‘vil/low class’ one of Ravailiac. The chief offence here is the abdication of decorum, that a common man should attack a king of near superhuman stature when he should only be corrected, if at all, by the gods themselves. This flies against the dictum of Mariana’s *De Rege* which licences anyone to rise up against a tyrannical ruler, but of course Henri was not a tyrant and the sonnet does not attribute to him any signs of bad governance. Even if it did, there is little chance that the poet, writing in Habsburg Madrid, would validate the deposition of regal tyrants.

Anger against perceived tyranny was nonetheless Ravailiac’s motivation and the first tercet attempts an exploration of the mindset of the ‘matador/killer’:

Gusto no pudo ser matar muriendo,  
Y menos interés, pues no respeta

La desesperación precio ni gloria.

[It could not have been a pleasure to kill dying, and [was] less of interest, because desperation respects neither price [paid] nor glory.]

The assassin kills knowing he will be captured and executed and will not live to enjoy either financial recompense, if there were any, or renown, had the assassination been popular. Yet these rather mundane motivations imputed to him by the tercet are not, in fact, those which drove him, and significantly there is no insinuation that Ravailac's act was undertaken in a spirit of religious fervour. Neither is there any suggestion that he might have expected a just reward in heaven, even though his fanaticism was surely common knowledge.

The concluding tercet pulls the focus back from the regicide to take in the geopolitical context:

Invidia del infierno fue, temiendo  
Que el ruido ronco de la guerra inquieta  
Despertara de España la memoria.

[The envy of Hell it was, fearing that the hoarse noise of restless war would awaken the memory of Spain].

Where in the first sonnet, Quevedo presents him as usurping the function of the goddess Fortune, here Ravailac is categorised as the unwitting instrument of those who did not wish to see the mighty Spanish military machine, the 'Infierno/Hell', awoken from its peaceful slumber, though, of course, Ravailac himself roundly denied any conspiracy. On the whole, it

seems Quevedo may not have been in full possession of the facts at the time of composition or he may simply have employed poetic licence to emphasise territorial politics over religion.

The third of his Henri sonnets, ‘Soneto a la muerte del cuarto Enrique, Rey de Francia/Sonnet on the death of the fourth Henry, King of France’ is the best known. (Astrana Marín 1943: 453; Blecua 1996: 285) It returns to a condemnation of the treachery of Ravailac against an exemplary king who, though he may have provoked criticism, did not merit such a heinous end. He is lauded as a soldier monarch who ‘ninguna/ diestra temió bajo la luna/ who feared no right [sword] hand under the moon’, who ‘armó con su pecho sus soldados/ armed his soldiers with his own breast [courage]’ and, who, poignantly as it would turn out, entered his later years in good physical health (Babelon 2001: 986):

La cana edad le perdonó piadosa;  
La flaca enfermedad le guardó vida  
Con que buscar pudiera honrosa muerte.

[Pious grey-haired age pardoned him; weak illness preserved his life so that he could seek an honourable death.]

However, this honourable death is the one thing that was to be denied him by a ‘mano alevosa/plotter’s hand’: ‘Quitando al mundo el miedo, en una herida/ Dismintiendo promesas a su suerte/Ridding the world of fear, in one wound/breaking promises on his destiny’.

The fourth sonnet, ‘A la muerte del rey de Francia/On the death of the king of France’ goes over the same ground. (Blecua 1996: 295–96) The second quatrain points out that Ravailac who ‘con vil usar sangrienta espada/tantos quitó a la muerte en una vida/with vile use of a bloody sword/snatched so many from death in a single life’ saved those who would

have fallen in the projected wars of the Summer of 1610. However, the sonnet does not condone the act of regicide. The final tercet insists that ‘viste el suelo un traidor de sus despojos;/de horror, su lis/a traitor dresses the ground in his remains; in horror, his fleur-de-lys’. Thus is the French Hercules brought to an unworthy end, a butchered cadaver like any other on the ground, his royal insignia covered in outrage.

Behind these eulogies of Henri’s independence, leadership, courage and martial prowess – as Quevedo’s *Canción* has it, this ‘mayor rey que vio jamás la Galia/greatest king that Gaul ever saw’, ‘por su amor querido,/ por su valor temido/loved for his love, feared for his valour’ – lies the ghostly presence of the ineffectual Felipe III, in residence at Lerma and in thrall to his *válido*/chief minister, prototype of Olivares, perhaps even of the detested Richelieu, when the news of Henri’s assassination reached the peripatetic court. (Blecua 1996: 301–02) This point is made persuasively by García Aguilar in relation to Lope de Vega’s sonnet on the death of Henri. The original 1610 version was heavily criticised for creating an unfavourable comparison, in a much more overt manner than Quevedo, between the glorious French king and the Spanish monarchy. The sonnet denigrates Felipe III and by implication his father, Felipe II and his court, for agreeing to the Treaty of Vervins which so shamed the governor of Milan, the Conde de Fuentes. (García Aguilar 2009: 64–65, 72–73) Almost two decades younger than Lope, Quevedo was yet to attempt such outspokenness. His laments for Henri laud a great king. They condemn the regicide but also acknowledge the long-term benefits for the Spanish empire, albeit without deigning to refer to its titular head, Felipe III.

### *Luis de Góngora*

Luis de Góngora’s sonnet on the assassination is, without question, the most accomplished and at the same time the most direct. (Ciplijauskaité 1985: 211) Like Lope, Góngora was in his middle years when Henri was assassinated. He was reasonably well-acquainted with the Duque

de Feria, to whom he dedicated a sonnet in 1609, and may have been more au fait than most with the events surrounding Henri's assassination. The duke arrived in Paris on 8 September as ambassador extraordinary to deliver the Spanish court's condolences to Marie de Médicis. (Jammes 1967: 285) The directness and comparative simplicity of Góngora's sonnet may indicate that it was composed for public display in the course of funeral ceremonies for Henri IV, the relatively unencumbered political references making it amenable to all and sundry.

In the first two lines he identifies the degree of outrage against the king's person:

El Cuarto Enrico yace mal herido

Y peor muerto de plebeya mano;

[The fourth Henry lies mortally wounded, and worse, killed by a plebeian hand;]

Apart from the use of the adjective 'vil/low class' applied to the cause of the immense sorrow at Henri's passing in Quevedo's second funereal sonnet, the other poets do not specifically emphasise Ravailiac's class, rather his treachery, his 'alevosía/plotting'. By using 'plebeian' here, Góngora could not be less equivocal. To emphasise Ravailiac's innate unworthiness and the squalor of his act, the remainder of the octave extols the king's leadership and warrior qualities:

El que rompió escuadrones y dio al llano

Más sangre que agua Orión humedecido:

Glorioso francés, esclarecido

Conductor de ejércitos, que en vano

De lilios de oro el ya cabello cano,  
Y de guarda real iba ceñido.

[He who broke squadrons and gave the plains more blood than rainy Orion water:  
glorious Frenchman, enlightened general of armies, in vain was his already grey hair  
crowned with golden lilies and he surrounded by a royal guard.]

Despite his advanced years, his kingship and the royal guard which should have been ever-present, Henri could not be protected from the unclean plebeian hand. As Quevedo pointed out in the first quatrain of his final sonnet, neither Fortune nor Fate would lift a finger against the king: ‘No llegó a tanto envidia de los hados/the envy of the fates did not amount to so much’, ‘temió quejas del mundo Fortuna/Fortune feared the complaints of the world’. (Astrana Marín 1943: 453; Blecua 1996: 285) It took an ignorant commoner and the king’s death is therefore reduced by Góngora to the act of one mortal man against another.

The first tercet underlines the sheer opportunism, the happenstance of the assassin’s act:

Una temeridad astas desprecia,  
Una traición cuidados mil engaña,  
Que muros romper en un caballo Grecia.

[A daring which despises lances, a betrayal which deceives a thousand precautions,  
Greece breaches walls in a horse.]

If anything, the comparison in the third line to the Greeks hidden in the Trojan horse does not clothe the assassination in the dignity of reference to antiquity. Yet, an interesting and possibly unintentional irony here is that Ravailiac's bursting into the king's carriage is the opposite of the Greek soldiers' clandestine entry into Troy. His act was rough, ready and overt but the poem characterises the assassination as underhand, largely because the use of 'traición/treachery or betrayal' in the second line negates any courage Ravailiac had in taking on the lances of the king's implied (but actually absent) bodyguard.

The first line of the second tercet reiterates this point, then the poem pulls back to offer, as Quevedo does in his second sonnet, a gloss on the political situation at the time of Henri's death:

Archas burló el fatal cuchillo; ¡oh España,  
Belona de dos mundos, fiel te precia  
Y armada tema la nación extraña!

[The fatal knife tricked the pikes; Oh Spain,  
Bellona of two worlds, loyal you are prized  
And armed, feared by foreign nations!]

'Fatal' is the nearest this sonnet gets to invoking any non-mortal entity, yet as the antler-handled knife was driven in by the hand of an itinerant lunatic supposedly able to trick his way past royal guard, the act remains grounded in the human reality of one man killing another.

The final address to Spain succinctly conveys the war footing onto which Henri had thrust his neighbour in May 1610. The Duc de La Force, governor of Navarre, a Huguenot friend and supporter of Henri, by the king's side since his marriage in 1572 to Marguerite de

Valois, had been ordered to the Pyrenees to take charge of an army ready to invade Spain either via San Sebastian or Perpignan if the conflict escalated. (Babelon 2001: 973) Poignantly, La Force was in Henri's carriage when Ravailac stabbed him and he was the first to realise the king was dying. (Babelon 2001: 984) In the sonnet, the land across the Pyrenees from France is a 'Belona de dos mundos/Bellona of two worlds', Bellona being the Roman goddess of war. The first quatrain of Lope's 1610 version associates Henri with Mars and Bellona in the most direct and laudatory way, 'Cuando el francés al carro de Belona/ Faetón de Marte, los caballos liga/when the Frenchman to the chariot of Bellona/ the Phaeton of Mars, hitches his horses'.<sup>iv</sup> (García Aguilar 2009: 67) Unique amongst the sonneteers, however, Góngora makes explicit reference to the Spanish empire, the two worlds of Belona being the old and the new. The immediate prospect of a French invasion across the Pyrenees is not one therefore, in the eyes of the poet, to strike panic into the bosom of imperial Spaniards, however accomplished a war leader their king might be, and however genuinely respected at his death.

More judiciously aware of his public then, Góngora's attribution of the goddess of war not just to Spain but to the empire immediately diminishes the realms of Henri to the status of mere kingdom. Thereby, temporarily at least, his eulogy for Henri while unmistakably generous-spirited acts to bolster the confidence of his audience in Spanish Habsburg hegemony, in Iberia, Flanders, Milan, Naples, and the New World.

### **Postscript: The Bourbon-Habsburg marriages**

After Henri's death, Marie decided that the only sensible approach was that of rapprochement with Spain and she determined to cement this new relationship by means of reciprocal marriages: Louis XIII would be married to the Infanta Ana, Felipe's eldest and most beloved child and the Infante Felipe would take Élizabeth, Marie de Médicis' eldest daughter. Such exchanges had been considered from the beginning of the century and had been close to the



hearts of both Lerma and Marie. (Hugon 2009: 132–34) Immediately after the death of Henri, Spain dispatched an ambassador extraordinary, the Duque de Feria to the French court and the treaty agreeing the double wedding was signed on 30 April 1611, nearly a year after Henri's assassination. (Babelon 2001: 992; Williams 2006: 165) The agreement was made public the following year and there followed a succession of court spectacles, amply recorded for posterity, celebrating the double union of Habsburg and Bourbon. (Hugon 2009: 140) After a postponement occasioned by political distractions on both sides, the ceremonial exchange of the princesses eventually took place on the River Bidassoa near Hendaye, on 9 November 1615, an event at which Spanish splendour greatly outshone the French effort. This was perhaps due in some part to the effective state of civil war in which France found itself, with Henri, Prince de Condé by then in open revolt against his king. (Williams 2009: 200; Millen and Wolf 1989: 162–63) In an event choreographed to the last degree, canopied barges carrying the princesses and their retinues departed from triumphal arches constructed on each bank. The barges moved at identical speeds and delivered their royal cargo onto a pavilion constructed on Pheasant Island in the middle of the river at precisely the same time. (Millen and Wolf 1989: 160–61, pl.48)

#### *The retrospective Rubens cycles*

This event is portrayed in the fifteenth painting of Rubens' cycle on the life of Marie de Médicis, now kept at the Louvre. The series was commissioned from Rubens and his workshop in 1622 and delivered to the Palais du Luxembourg three years later. At the same time, Marie commissioned an equally elaborate series on the life and glorious victories of her late husband. Though this project never came to fruition, Rubens did produce several oil sketches and three partly finished paintings for the series between 1627 and 1631. (Millen and Wolf 1989: 3–13; Sutton 2004a: 30; 2004b 194–95) The iconography of both series was tightly controlled by

Marie and her representatives, and Rubens appears to have carried out each and every alteration as requested. However, in the extensive extant correspondence regarding the project, there is little insight into his side of the various arguments and little to indicate the specific instructions he received. The original memorandum of agreement has not survived. (Carroll 2008: 105)

Coincidentally, Rubens may have been present at the proxy marriage of Maria de' Medici to Henri IV in Florence in the Summer of 1600, which is depicted in the eighth painting in his Marie de Médicis cycle (VIII, INV: 1773). After completing his apprenticeship in Antwerp in 1598, Rubens decided to further his career in Italy and entered the service of Vincenzo Gonzaga, Duca di Mantova. It may have been as a member of the duke's retinue that the young Rubens was present at, or had first-hand accounts of, the wedding on 5 October, at the church of Santa Maria dei Fiori. (Vergara 1999: 7; Millen and Wolf 1989: 55) In his rather complex composition depicting this event, the radiant beauty attributed to the regal, white-gowned bride stands out and the bull-necked, squat ugliness ascribed to her uncle, the Granduca Ferdinando, Henri's proxy at the ceremony, is exaggerated to emphasise the bride's elegance. Maria had long been renowned as a beauty, but at twenty-six she was considered dangerously old for an unwed princess. She had also become increasingly corpulent, a fact disguised in the image. Henri, ever practical, worried that her weight might affect her fertility. This led him to request additional portraits of the princess before he made up his mind to marry her. (Babelon 2001: 840) The most amusing painting of the series shows a rather sardonic Henri formally receiving a portrait of the future queen. (VII, INV 1772, Fig. 1)

Henri was increasingly cast during his reign as the heroic, imperial figure, *Henricus Magnus* and celebrated as such in literature, painting, sculpture and in the choice of mottos associated with the king on public monuments. (Babelon 2001: 940–41) As the funeral sonnets demonstrate, the projection of the king's martial success and quasi-imperial status was also widely accepted in Spain. However, some pictorial representations of Henri IV in the early

1600s still convey his sense of fun and ribaldry amid the newfound pomp. The anonymous *Henri IV as Hercules crushing the hydra* (c. 1600, Louvre) is a particularly amusing example, showing a quizzical king participating in the myth-making. (INV RF 1997713, Fig. 2) In his painting of Henri receiving Maria's portrait, Rubens reverts subtly to this playful Henri, investing him with the air of nonchalance and mischief for which he was famous. The balletic turn of his body onto his right foot as he looks almost behind him at the head-and-shoulders portrait of Maria which Cupid and Hymen present to him and the gesture of happy astonishment conveyed in the open fingers of his downturned left hand, convey a decorous and conventional response to the queen's beauty. The allegorical figure of France nudges the king towards the portrait and the fulfilment of his duty to produce legitimate heirs while Cupid and Hymen, more poetically, entice him through love into marriage with the image of the beautiful, and not remotely overweight, princess as lure. Yet, there is a sense, in the angle of his profile and the expression on his face, of Henri's having a hearty chuckle at the preposterousness of the situation into which he, a past master of the arts of seduction, has been manoeuvred by reasons of state. Happily, he and the queen would go on to have six children even though, in a late efflorescence of fecundity, he would also impregnate a succession of mistresses at the same time. (Babelon 2001: 872–75)

Though working in this instance for Marie, Rubens' association with the Spanish Habsburgs had been longstanding. In 1603, he was part of an embassy sent from Mantua to the court in Madrid, with the responsibility of overseeing the transport of a collection of paintings sent by the duke to Felipe III. He was also contracted to repair them, if necessary, on arrival and expected to undertake a series of portraits of ladies at the Spanish court, paid for by the duke, which is now lost. He did execute the famous equestrian portrait of the Duque de Lerma, now in the Prado, during this stay (INV: P03137). Though Rubens did not return to Spain until 1628 he became increasingly involved in Habsburg diplomatic affairs through his dealings with

the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia who began to rely on his services as confidant and emissary in a significant way after the death of the archduke Albrecht in 1621. (Vergara 1999: 38–39, 45, 57–59; Sutton 2004a: 30) Crucially, between 1631 and 1633 he supported Marie in a dispute between herself and her third son Gaston, Duc d’Orléans on the one hand, and the young Louis XIII on the other. The king’s chief advisor at the time was none other than Quevedo’s ‘deformed hydra’, Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu. Rubens believed that his espousal of the queen’s faction would serve to weaken France and therefore uphold the interests of Spain and the Habsburgs. However, when Isabel Clara Eugenia died in December 1633 he ceased all diplomatic activity and in his latter years his primary patron was Felipe IV of Spain. (Vergara 1999: 111–12; Sutton 2004a: 35–36) It is possible to argue that this lifelong allegiance to the Habsburgs is discernible in the depiction of the dynastic marriages of 1615 for the Médicis series. (XVII, INV: 1782, Fig. 3) In a large-scale, studio-produced series as tightly-controlled as this cycle, it may seem anachronistic or ahistorical to ascribe authorial comment to the choreography of a painting as one might to a poem, yet *The Exchange of the Princesses of France and Spain on the Bidassoa at Hendaye, 9 November 1615* contains several suggestive elements.

Each princess is welcomed to her new country in the marquee on Pheasant Island by an allegorical figure representing the receiving nation. Millen and Wolf point to the supremacy of Spain over France embodied in the iconography of the figure of Spain:

A prime instance of Rubens’ ingenious use of inconspicuous emblematic and symbolic motifs to enhance a larger meaning. Her fish-headed helmet connotes Spain’s control of the seas from which comes the wealth of pearls on the band encircling the headgear and on her garments; should we miss the point, the generous naiad below underscores it. The crest of the helmet with a lion backed by a palm frond signifies the far-flung

empire, as so the exotic birds' plumes rising proudly from a richly jewelled bezel shaped like the poop of a galley; the point is stressed again by the macaw perched on the balustrade.

In contrast, the figure of France is 'an old friend, in slightly refurbished clothing', seen already in the cycle encouraging Henri to look upon the portrait of Maria de' Medici (VII, Fig. 1), and having welcomed the bride to her new country at Marseilles (IX, INV: 1774). (Millen and Wolf 1989: 161) Of the two princesses, it is the Infanta Ana who dominates the exchange. As Millen and Wolf observe, Ana is dressed in a bridal gown very similar to that worn by Maria de' Medici in Santa Maria dei Fiori. She is also physically similar to her future mother-in-law, considerably taller than Madame Élisabeth, with the trademark Habsburg pale skin and blonde hair. In the exchange, the Infanta, facing the viewer, tilts her head towards Élisabeth and the figure of Spain and touches the princess's hand in farewell as the figure of France draws her away. For a brief while the two princesses are united, as the nations are. The French princess is shown in profile, in pastel silks that are less showy than Ana's gown, with her back to the figure of Spain. Spain appears to be anxious to usher the reluctant Infanta Ana into the arms of France and does this with her left hand, holding Madame Élisabeth fast with her right. Most of the agency is with the figure of Spain. France accepts the Infanta, her right hand on the future queen's left arm, but has already relinquished contact with Madame. Thus, though the argument holds that the Infanta, as future queen of France, must be given precedence over the future queen of Spain in a French-commissioned cycle, this precedence is not unequivocal. Indeed, Rubens' rendition of this symbolic culmination of the peace between Spain and France of which Marie de Médicis was so proud, considering it the crowning achievement of her reign, may be said to be a virtual celebration of Habsburg dominance. The unmistakable Habsburg appearance of the Infanta, echoing that of Marie, earlier in the series; the iconography of the

figure of Spain; and the dynamics of the exchange between the two allegorical figures underscores Habsburg supremacy. As the death of Henri IV unquestionably weakened France and strengthened the Habsburgs, it may be argued that this new balance of power is reflected in Rubens' retrospective rendition of the royal marriages of 1615; whether Marie and her advisers recognised it or not, whether Rubens and his workshop deliberately arranged it or not.

Nevertheless, Spain and France did remain on amicable terms, sealed by the marriages of 1615, for a quarter of a century after Henri's demise. The combined Habsburg instincts of Henri's Medici widow and Felipe III's pragmatic *válido*/chief minister made the symbolism of the *Exchange* into a hard reality and made sense of the high opinion of Henri IV expressed in the Spanish funeral sonnets of 1610.

## **Conclusion**

That a trio of eminent Spanish sonneteers, among many others whose work has been lost or overlooked, could so generously eulogise Henri de Bourbon, twice a Calvinist heretic, sometime arch-enemy of Spain, fomenter of Morisco disquiet and presumed beneficiary of the Treaty of Vervins, speaks to the 'fundamental schisms of the Spanish Baroque world view' identified by Isabel Torres. (Torres 2013: 172) In occasional poetry dealing directly with a momentous political event, Villamediana's work is more clearly concerned with the arts of statecraft and diplomacy, aptly in the case of a nobleman who aspired to greater prominence at court. Quevedo's sonnets, written early in his career, focus safely and conventionally on the unthinkable crime of regicide, while his dissatisfaction with the reigning Spanish monarch is conveyed through his failure to mention Felipe III at any juncture. Góngora places Ravillac's commoner status at the heart of his sonnet, rendering the king's death unspeakably sordid by virtue of the touch of a commoner's hand, and asserts at the very end the political and military supremacy of the Spanish Empire. In all these sonnets, two valid, honourable and opposing

political positions, regard for Henri, enemy of the state, disdain for Felipe, upholder of the state, pulsate together, in the same poetic space, without the need for the clear binaries so central to the post-Enlightenment world. In the same way, Rubens' choreography of the meeting between the two princesses on Pheasant Island in the *Exchange* betrays a bias towards Habsburg hegemony while, to all intents and purposes, presenting the pomp and protocol of the event with impeccable accuracy. Isabel Torres, writing about Quevedo, speaks of his love poetry as being disturbed by 'extra-textual realities'. (Torres 2013: 198) In the elegiac sonnets and the commemorative cycle dealt with here, the realities of contemporary politics are, on the contrary, very much embedded in the texts. However, the texts are as much works of art as love poetry or a cycle of mythological paintings, and as such, deliberately injected with ambiguity. They have a mission to provoke as well as to commemorate.

## Figures

Figure 1. Pieter Pawel Rubens, *Henri IV receiving the queen's portrait* (no. VII) 1625, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris, detail. (INV: 1772)

Figure 2. Anon. French School, *Henri IV of France as Hercules crushing the hydra*, c. 1600, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris. (INV: R.F. 1997-13)

Figure 3. Pieter Pawel Rubens, *The Exchange of the Princesses of France and Spain on the Bidassoa at Hendaye, 9 November 1615* (no. XVII), 1625, oil on canvas, Louvre, Paris, detail. (INV: 1782)



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Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

These figures are for info only. High-resolution images with permission have been requested and will be provided as soon as possible.

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<sup>i</sup> Three of these sonnets were collected in Juan López de Sedano, *El Parnaso español* (1768–78) and are included in Astrana Marín (1943: 452–53) with notes on manuscript variations. A fourth sonnet and a *canCIÓN*, published in Ignacio de Toledo y Godoy, *Cancionero antequerano* (1627–28) are included in Blecua (1996: 295–96, 301–02).

<sup>ii</sup> Astrana Marín includes the anonymous *Comento a la sátira de Ronces Valles* in his *Obras completas* on the strong likelihood that it was in fact written by Quevedo himself. (García Aguilar 2009: 81)

<sup>iii</sup> The *Comento* expands on this deformed hydra’s sins against the traduced queen, pointing out that it was with the aid of the king of Spain that she escaped to ‘Los Estados de Flandes/Flanders’ (a temporary stay under the protection of Isabel Clara Eugenia after her flight from the Chateau de Compiègne in 1631) during her second period of exile (Astrana Marín 1943: 1227).

<sup>iv</sup> This quatrain was altered for the 1627 publication in a manner which removed agency from Henri as warrior king and also tainted him by association with the fifteenth-century French Gallican move to reject the religious authority of Rome (García Aguilar 2009: 77–79). Rubens represents his widow, Marie de Médicis as Bellona in the final painting of his cycle (XXIV).