

Alexander Samson, ed. *The Spanish Match: Prince Charles' Journey to Madrid, 1623*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006. x + 243 pp. + 20 illus. \$99.95. Review by BRENNAN C. PURSELL, DESALES UNIVERSITY.

The sudden appearance of the Prince of Wales in Madrid was sensational in its own day and makes for one of the best stories of the early seventeenth century. Alexander Samson's delightful volume is the result of an interdisciplinary gathering of experts in the fields of early modern European art, clothing, public ceremonies, and literary studies, held in Stratford-on-Avon in April 2003.

In the first chapter, Jerry Brotton argues that Charles and Buckingham's art acquisition reflected the fluctuating fortunes of the match negotiations. The Prince's collecting actually began in the years before the journey and show preparation for it. Purchased tapestries and paintings from Italy and Spain, devoted to Catholic themes, attest to the Stuarts' public commitment to a limited ecumenism. The collection building process is described in detail, but Brotton's comments about motives concerning individual artworks are highly speculative. Nonetheless, looking at Charles' selections on the whole, one must conclude that he had a "preference for highly erotic classical scenes by sixteenth-century Italian masters" (24). Turning to dress, Lesley Miller argues that it was a "significant tool" in the negotiation process (48). Charles did his best to attire himself in accordance with Spanish style, British expectations, and Philip IV's intermittent sumptuary legislation. The impact of the Prince's clothing, Miller admits, remains anyone's guess. David Sánchez Cano provides a richly detailed description of the many festivals and processions held during the visit, which were meant to impress the Prince with "messages" about "political power and religious propaganda" (73). Henry Ettinghausen surveys Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza's vividly composed letters, adding that their ability to influence what Spaniards thought of it all "cannot have been negligible" (88).

Chapters five to eleven are devoted to contemporary literary developments in England, France, and Spain, all in response to Charles' romantic journey. Alexander Samson addresses Spanish texts that were translated into English in 1623. These were mainly grammar books and dictionaries but also some literary works and religious tracts meant for England's small Catholic minority, not to mention an array of pamphlets for London's literate, inter-

ested population. Jeremy Robbins examines the Spanish literary response to the Prince's visit. Amid reams of bad poetry, certain common characteristics emerge: general approbation of the Prince's chivalric, knightly daring in having come so far despite the vagaries of winter; light mockery of his periodic bouts of love-struck behavior, compounded by a general ignorance about Spanish courtly behavior; the usual comparisons and references to figures of classical mythology; emphasis on the friendship between Charles and Philip; the innate superiority of Roman Catholicism and the possibility of the Prince's conversion. Unlike in England, Robbins notes, there is no discernible sign of critique of the Spanish monarchy or revulsion for the other side after the match fell apart. The lasting impression is that the marriage simply could not have worked without bastardizing the Catholic faith. The next chapter, by Karen Britland, concerns the next romance in the story, that between Charles and Henrietta Maria of France, and how its literary supporters interpreted the debacle of 1623 in retrospect. These writers did their best to downplay the shows of affection that Charles had directed toward the Infanta. They also asserted that he was struck by her beauty when he passed through Paris in disguise, attended a rehearsal for a ballet at court, and laid eyes on the Princess herself. Other poems are flagrantly anti-Spanish and anti-Habsburg, their main characters becoming stock in the politicized tale of romance. Claire Jowitt continues in a similar vein, looking at the allegorical political content in two plays written and performed in the first few years after Charles' return, Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* and *The Unnatural Combat*. In these works, one can detect the great crises of the day, the fate of the Palatinate and the business of the Spanish Match, but the English and their values prevail in the end.

In chapter ten, Trudi Darby turns to the most famous English play concerning the match, Thomas Middleton's *A Game of Chess*, and tries to relieve the "critical unease" associated with the text (173). This anti-Spanish work was the theatrical hit of the year and in the last century has variously been regarded as a "simple moral allegory, political satire, ideological propaganda and history" (179). The best way to understand it, Darby argues, is as part of the spontaneous, authentic rejoicing at the Prince's failure, a kind of "prolonged English anti-festival, the negative aspect of the Spanish festival in Madrid which had welcomed Charles the year before" (184). While the White House (the Stuarts) triumphs at the end of the play, the best characters and finest part of the drama remain with the defeated Black House (the Spanish Habsburgs)

and the Black Knight (Count Gondomar) especially. The final chapter, by Clare Wikeley, concerns John Taylor the Water Poet, in particular his mocking praise of the court fool, Archy Armstrong, who attended Charles in Spain. Wikeley argues that in the publication of this work in a larger volume, in its literal positioning in relation to others, we can see that this writer made the obvious connection between the events of 1623 and the crisis in Bohemia and the Palatinate. Taylor's anti-Catholic, anti-Habsburg views almost demand an interpretation with regard to the Prince's visit in the wider context of European politics. Finally, at the end of the book is an appended set of information about Spanish and Imperial ambassadors in England, 1603-25. It must be said that the twenty colored and black and white plates make for a helpful and beautiful addition.

If there is a single, blanket criticism to be lobbed at this publication, it is that the articles seldom venture to transcend merely antiquarian interest. What was the significance of the journey? Why did Charles and Buckingham go in the first place? Why did they fail? Samson's introduction mentions my article in the *The Historical Journal* 45 (2002) on these matters, the argument of which he describes as "consecrated," yet at the same time "supplemented if not supplanted" by Glyn Redworth's book, *The Prince and the Infanta* (1). Because neither treatment is entirely satisfying, the significance of the escapade remains open to further research and debate. While it is certainly true that the chapters of Samson's book have much to tell readers about various aspects of what occurred and how it all was presented and represented in various cultural media, at least this perpetual student of history is left hungering for something more. But all this is to criticize the book that wasn't written. Therefore, for anyone drawn to these matters, this text remains a real contribution to the field, an essential work to read, ponder, and consult repeatedly as needed.