The Review of English Studies, 2022, Vol. **73**, No. 309, 264–288
doi: https://doi.org/10.1093/res/hgab062
Advance Access publication: 1 October 2021

OXFORD

Gondomar and the Stage: Diego Sarmiento de Acuña and the Lost Theatrical Connection

José A. Pérez Díez

ABSTRACT

Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, first Count of Gondomar (1567–1626), was twice appointed by the King of Spain to the delicate embassy in the court of James I in London, where he played a decisive role in Anglo-Spanish relations in the aftermath of the treaty of peace between the two monarchies signed in London in 1604. Beyond his uncontested political significance, Gondomar was also Spain's premier bibliophile. His famous library comprised over 6000 volumes in nine languages, including a surprisingly large collection of plays. His interests in drama as an art form and in the theatre as a profession are well attested in his vast correspondence and the sizeable body of documents that have survived. While these interests have been noted, this is the first study that has attempted to analyse this body of evidence in a systematic way to suggest a closer connection to drama and the professional theatre of England and Spain. In particular, this study aims to shed some light on the untraced connections between Gondomar and the English playwrights and actors active in London during his time as ambassador. Gondomar's library in London contained a number of recent and

I have presented some of this research at the early modern seminars of the School of English at the University of Leeds and the Department of English at the University of Sheffield; my thanks to colleagues at both institutions for their kind comments. I would also like to express my gratitude to the two anonymous readers at *RES* who made hugely useful comments, as well as Colin Burrow, Period Editor for the journal, for his characteristically helpful and generous feedback. My special thanks too to the staff of the Real Biblioteca in Madrid, and particularly to Pablo Andrés Escapa for his kind correspondence. Finally, my thanks to Matthew Blaiden for his last-minute trip to the British Library on my behalf to photograph the tiny octavo of Drury's *Aluredus* in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research for this essay was partly funded by the Leverhulme Trust, for which I am grateful. Calendar dates are indicated in New Style (NS, Gregorian calendar) for events that took place in Spain, and in Old Style (OS, Julian calendar, 10 days behind) for events in England, although years are assumed to begin on 1 January, rather than on the Feast of the Annunciation (25 March). In correspondence between the two countries, the calendar is indicated. Translations into English of Spanish primary and secondary sources are mine. I give the STC number for English printed books from the *English Short-Title Catalogue* (2nd edn), http://estc.bl.uk/. For other European books, I give their *Universal Short-Title Catalogue* number (USTC), as per https://www.ustc.ac.uk/. All dates and relevant information about English plays and entertainments are from Martin Wiggins, in association with Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue* (Oxford, 2012–); the numbers indicate the volume and catalogue entry. An exact date corresponds to the year of the first performance of the play. Dates preceded by *c.* are Wiggins's 'Best Guess'; for upper and lower limits for its premiere, see the individual entry.

© The Author(s) 2021. Published by Oxford University Press 2021 This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted reuse, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

relatively rare works whose presence in the English metropolis at the right time might help to explain some cases of early adaptation of Spanish contemporary literature to the English drama of the period.

The political significance of the two embassies to England that Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, first Count of Gondomar (1567–1626), carried out on behalf of the King of Spain, and his decisive role in the negotiations of a Spanish match for Charles, Prince of Wales, have been thoroughly documented. Two biographies of the diplomat and bibliophile have been published in the last decades by Fernando Bartolomé Benito and Juan Durán-Loriga.[1] The bulk of his personal correspondence has been comprehensively described in a series of catalogues published by the Real Biblioteca in Madrid under the supervision of María Luisa López-Vidriero.[2] Two major studies by Carmen Manso Porto and José García Oro traced his bibliographic and scholarly connections in Spain and England.[3] Glyn Redworth has produced the most accurate analysis of Prince Charles's unexpected journey to Madrid in 1623, the great political misunderstanding that led to the ultimate failure of the negotiations, and of Gondomar's key role in them.[4] The cultural significance of the months that the Prince stayed in Madrid with the Duke of Buckingham has also been studied in depth in a collection of essays edited by Alexander Samson.[5] As these studies attest, the Count of Gondomar was situated at the very centre of Anglo-Spanish political and cultural relations in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. As an editor and drama historian, however, my main interest here is to assess the cultural impact of the presence of Spain's premier bibliophile in Jacobean London, and particularly to trace his connections with the professional theatre of the time. The available documentation around Gondomar's two embassies, both the official and personal correspondence, as well as other pieces of primary evidence, give a distinct impression that Gondomar had a particular interest in drama as an art form and in the theatre as a practice. I am not alone in this impression. Gondomar's interests in drama as a collector of plays in print and manuscript, and as organizer of performances, have been studied by Stefano Arata, Pablo Andrés Escapa, and Josefa Badía Herrera,[6] but his

1 Fernando Bartolomé Benito, *Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, conde de Gondomar: El Maquiavelo español* (Gijón, 2005), and Juan Durán-Loriga, *El Embajador y el Rey: El conde de Gondomar y Jacobo I de Inglaterra* (Madrid, 2006). For details of his biography, see also Carmen Manso Porto, 'Diego Sarmiento de Acuña', *Diccionario biográfico español* (Madrid, 2018), <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/14582/diego-sarmiento-de-acuna>.

2 *Correspondencia del conde de Gondomar*, in *Catálogo de la Real Biblioteca*, XIII, 4 vols (Madrid, 1999–2003). I have also examined the uncatalogued part of the Count's correspondence in the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, including a collection of letters by his chaplain, Fray Diego de la Fuente, who shared with the Count a love for reading. There is a third collection of letters to Gondomar dated between 1592 and 1618 at the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid, partly studied by Stefano Arata.

3 Carmen Manso Porto, *Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, conde de Gondomar (1567–1626): erudito, mecenas y bibliófilo* (Santiago de Compostela, 1996) and José García Oro, *Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Conde de Gondomar y Embajador de España (1567–1626)* (Santiago de Compostela, 1997).

4 Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta: The Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match* (New Haven, CT, 2003).

5 Alexander Samson (ed.), *The Spanish Match: Prince Charles's Journey to Madrid, 1623* (Aldershot, 2006).

6 See Stefano Arata, 'Teatro y coleccionismo teatral a finales del siglo XVI (el conde de Gondomar y Lope de Vega)', *Anuario Lope de Vega*, 2 (1996), 7–24; Pablo Andrés Escapa, 'Ex Bibliotheca Gondomariensi: Gondomar y el teatro I', *Avisos: Noticias de la Real Biblioteca*, 29 (2002), 7–8; Pablo Andrés Escapa, 'Ex

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

connections with the theatre profession in Spain and in England had never been traced systematically. References to the performance of plays and entertainments, to plays in print and manuscript, and to legal matters connected with the theatre, are scattered in some of the surviving documents, especially in the correspondence that the Count collected with great care throughout his life and that survives in Madrid at the Real Biblioteca, the Biblioteca Nacional, and the Real Academia de la Historia. The Count's official diplomatic correspondence offers some other clues, as does the correspondence of other ambassadors of the period.[7] In addition, the inventory of his library compiled in 1623 affords the most reliable insight into Gondomar's reading preferences.[8] After his years in England, all of this collection was brought together at the Casa del Sol (the 'House of the Sun') in Valladolid, the Count's final residence. His library is reported to have been three times larger than the King of Spain's: more than 6000 volumes to the 2000 in the royal library.[9] It encompassed books in nine languages—Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, French, Catalan, Portuguese, Spanish, and English—and in every imaginable genre, including a surprising number of dramatic works. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to suggest a closer connection to drama and the professional theatre of England and Spain. It does so through the accumulation and juxtaposition of fragmentary pieces of evidence, sometimes anecdotal, the significance of which is made plain by systematically gathering them together. It also offers some informed speculation about the untraced connections between Gondomar and the English playwrights and actors active in London during his time as ambassador. In particular, Gondomar's library in London contained a number of recent and relatively rare works whose presence in the English metropolis at the right time might help to explain some cases of early adaptation of Spanish contemporary literature to the English drama of the age. These connections, as we will see, are so far difficult to trace with full confidence unless new and more conclusive evidence emerges in the future. However, the documents that have survived in archives in both countries provide a strong basis to make this claim. I will proceed chronologically, surveying the available evidence by examining some of the key episodes in Gondomar's biography, giving the briefest of sketches of the character at hand.

I. EARLY YEARS IN PUBLIC OFFICE

Diego Sarmiento was born in Astorga, in what is now the province of León, on All Hallows' Day, 1 November 1567. He was married twice; first at the age of 14 to his niece Beatriz Sarmiento, who died five years later, and then to his aunt four times

Bibliotheca Gondomariensi. Gondomar y el teatro II', *Avisos: Noticias de la Real Biblioteca*, 30 (2002), 7–8; and Josefa Badía Herrera, *Los primeros pasos en la comedia nueva: textos y géneros en la colección teatral del conde de Gondomar* (Madrid, 2014).

7 His official ambassadorial correspondence survives in the Archivo General de Simancas, and was transcribed and edited at the initiative of Jacobo Fitz-James Stuart y Falcó, 17th Duke of Alba, in three volumes: *Documentos inéditos para la historia de España: Correspondencia oficial de don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, conde de Gondomar*, i (Madrid, 1936), ii (Madrid, 1943), and iii (Madrid, 1944).

8 *Índiçe y inventario de los libros que ay en la librería de Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Conde de Gondomar* (Valladolid, 1623), Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, MS 13594. The document is digitized in the Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, <http://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000137643>.

9 José María Díez Borque, 'Bibliotecas y novela en el Siglo de Oro', *Hispanic Review*, 75 (2007), 185.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

removed Constanza de Acuña, with whom he had eight children over the next decades. It is frequently noticed by his biographers that, as a young soldier, he defended the towns of Bayona and Vigo, in the north-western coast of Spain, from two English attacks led by Sir Francis Drake. In 1597, at the age of 30, he was appointed *corregidor*, or governor, of the town of Toro, and then, in 1602, he occupied the same office in Valladolid, the capital of the Habsburg Monarchy between 1601 and 1606. It is during this period that the first references to the theatre emerge. One of the duties of the *corregidor* of a Castilian city was to regulate the public performance of plays in the city or town under his jurisdiction. This involved trying to balance the wishes of anti- and pro-theatrical factions represented respectively by the church authorities on the one hand, and the theatre impresarios on the other, the usual sticking point being the performance of sacred drama in public places.[10] In this respect, the first legal reference is a letter sent on 27 February 1598 by the Marquis of San Vicente del Barco to Don Diego sending him a manifesto in defence of the performance of plays in Toro.[11] This was followed the following year by an official prohibition of public performances in the town, issued by the King on 2 May 1598, which, as Andrés Escapa has suggested, the Count dutifully applied, though probably with the reluctance of a frequent theatre-goer.[12] This ban subsequently prompted a petition to lift it the following year, as it is referred to in the letter written by a certain Fray Rodrigo Peralta on 24 August 1599.[13]

The other theatrical duty associated with the office of *corregidor* was the organization of public festivities. As Fernando Bartolomé Benito has written, these included 'processions, official entries, the reception of ambassadors, bullfighting, bonfires, masques, contests of running at the ring, and theatre when it was permitted'.[14] Don Diego was, apparently, a keen organizer of these festivities, especially during his time in Valladolid, where he surely hoped to impress the King and notables of the realm. Sometimes he would even spend his own money.[15] In April 1605, two events of great historical significance called for a particularly large expenditure on public revels. On the one hand, the first male child of King Philip III, and therefore the heir to the throne, was born in the city on 8 April. On the other hand, the Earl of Nottingham with an entourage of, reportedly, 600 Englishmen arrived at La Coruña on 26 April, and proceeded to the court in Valladolid to seal the treaty of peace with Spain drafted at the Somerset House conference in London the previous year. The English were feasted there with a banquet of 400 different dishes and were offered a never-ending series of public entertainments.[16] The Earl of Nottingham, Charles Howard, had been the Lord High Admiral who commanded the English fleet at the defeat of the Spanish Armada back in 1588, and had now been appointed by James I to head

10 Andrés Escapa, 'Ex Bibliotheca Gondomariensi: Gondomar y el teatro I', 7.

11 Real Biblioteca, Madrid, II/2153, 30; see Andrés Escapa, 'Ex Bibliotheca Gondomariensi: Gondomar y el teatro I', 7.

12 Andrés Escapa, 'Ex Bibliotheca Gondomariensi: Gondomar y el teatro I', 7.

13 Real Biblioteca, Madrid, II/2163, 77; see Andrés Escapa, 'Ex Bibliotheca Gondomariensi: Gondomar y el teatro I', 7.

14 Bartolomé Benito, *El Maquiavelo español*, 65.

15 Bartolomé Benito, *El Maquiavelo español*, 65.

16 On these revels, see Marqués de Villa-Urrutia, *Ocios diplomáticos. La jornada del Condestable de Castilla a Inglaterra para las paces de 1604. La embajada de Lord Nottingham a España en 1605* (Madrid, 1927).

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

the English legation that travelled to Spain to complete the ratification of the 1604 Treaty of London. This was the first time Don Diego was face to face with the English courtiers that he would come to know so well.

During these early years there are also other references in Don Diego's correspondence to the performance of plays, including an intriguing autograph letter to the King's *privado*, or main minister, the Duke of Lerma, dated on 20 May 1603, in which Sarmiento recommends a certain theatre impresario (an *autor de comedias*) to assist the Duke with the organization of the Corpus Christi festivities in the Monastery of La Aguilera.[17] His connection with the playing companies is also attested by a legal letter sent by an unidentified person to him at some point before 1613, claiming that Don Diego must have been familiar with the legal controversy between a certain theatre impresario, Jerónimo Velázquez, and the Archbishop of Granada, who had forbidden public performances.[18] His public duties included having an intimate knowledge of the available companies of players and the dealings of their impresarios, not only in the towns under his jurisdiction, but also in the rest of the country. In fact, there is also evidence that he dealt with theatre people himself on occasion. Stefano Arata discovered a letter dated 14 January 1603 from the impresario Melchor de León with a request for permission to perform in the city,[19] as well as a letter dated in 1606 sent by a renowned dramatist from Valladolid, Miguel Sánchez Requejo, known as 'El Divino' ('The Divine'), in which he analyses a play written by another author, *Los Sarmientos* (*The Sarmientos*), which Gondomar had commissioned to celebrate his ancestors' deeds, and that had just been performed in the city; the letter is apparently a response to Gondomar's request to Sánchez Requejo for a critique of the piece.[20] As Arata concluded, these letters 'seem to suggest that Diego Sarmiento de Acuña had a much more intense and complex relationship with the theatre world than we could have initially supposed'.[21] As we will see, these direct contacts with theatre professionals, including the commission of a play to be written and performed, may be relevant in the study of his time in London.

Another fact that we must bear in mind is that during his years in Valladolid he purchased the Casa del Sol, and started furnishing it with the celebrated library that would soon become frequented by some of the most salient literary figures of the age: it is attested that both Miguel de Cervantes and Francisco de Quevedo were invited to use Don Diego's books during their time in Valladolid.[22] In fact, Quevedo,

17 Real Biblioteca, Madrid, II/2128, 156–7; see Andrés Escapa, 'Ex Bibliotheca Gondomariensi: Gondomar y el teatro I', 8.

18 Real Biblioteca, Madrid, XIV/2979 (2); see Andrés Escapa, 'Ex Bibliotheca Gondomariensi: Gondomar y el teatro I', 7.

19 Arata, 'Teatro y coleccionismo', 18; Real Academia de la Historia, MS 9/74, fol. 306. See also Andrés Escapa, 'Ex Bibliotheca Gondomariensi: Gondomar y el teatro I', 7. Andrés Escapa suggests that Melchor de León might be the impresario referred to in the letter about the Corpus Christi performances at La Aguilera four months later in 1603.

20 Arata, 'Teatro y coleccionismo', 19; Real Academia de la Historia, MS 9/79, fol. 55.

21 Arata, 'Teatro y coleccionismo', 19.

22 Bartolomé Benito, *El Maquiavelo español*, 65. In fact, the *corregidor* of Valladolid, probably inspired by Gondomar, is a minor character in Cervantes's *El coloquio de los perros* (*The Colloquy of the Dogs*), the last of his 1613 *Novelas ejemplares* (*Exemplary Novels*).

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

who was well acquainted with Gondomar,[23] wrote in his *España defendida* (*Spain Defended*, 1609):

> *¿En que materia del mundo no ai en España sola tantos libros como en todas las naziones en sola su lengua, en laqcual estan traduzidos todos los griegos i hebreos i latinos, i franzeses i italianos, como es de uer al que a uisto librerias en España, i entre todas la del señor don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, que es toda de libros en la propia lengua, donde estan de suerte que apenas los mas de ellos se uen mejores que sus orijinales?*
>
> 'In what subject in the world is there not in Spain alone so many books in her own language as in all other nations, to which every author in Greek and Hebrew and Latin, and French and Italian, have been translated, as it can be seen by anyone who has perused any of the libraries in Spain, and, above all others, that of my lord Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, made up entirely of books in our own language, in which most of them are better [in translation] than in the original?'[24]

Gondomar's library was renowned throughout the country and amongst the Spanish intelligentsia as the most comprehensive collection of books in Spanish ever to have been assembled. Quevedo's emphasis on the vernacular, no doubt guided by the strong nationalistic agenda of the treatise, does not do justice to the polyglot nature of the library in question. The enormous range of disciplines represented in the library also attracted numerous scholars who asked to use its holdings. In particular, Gondomar was keen on facilitating the scholarly work of chroniclers and historians, as García Oro informs:

> The royal chroniclers Bartolomé Cairasco de Figueroa, Fray Juan de la Puente [. . .], Fray Prudencio de Sandoval, friend and confidant in literary matters [. . .]; nobiliary authors like the *Licenciado* Diego de Orozco, Father Guardiola, the same Fray Prudencio de Sandoval and Alonso Pérez de Haro, all of whom were encouraged to include in their chronicles a chapter dedicated to the house of *Sarmiento*; writers working on topics related to Saint James, like Fray Hernando de Oxea, O.P., and Mauro Castellá Ferrer; other writers of various specialties, like the chronicler Antonio de Herrera, the monks Fray Luis Aríz and Fray Lorenzo de Vera, and the foreign authors with whom he may have had contact, as the Englishmen Francis Bacon and Toby Matthew.[25]

23 See Pablo Andrés Escapa, 'Ex Bibliotheca Gondomariensi: Menciones de Francisco de Quevedo y carta autógrafa', *Avisos: Noticias de la Real Biblioteca*, 22 (2000), 8.

24 Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas, *España defendida y los tiempos de ahora*, ed. R. Selden Rose (Madrid, 1916), 70. Rose transcribes the autograph manuscript: Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid, 12–5–4/4–76, fo. 98^{r-v}.

25 García Oro, *Don Diego Sarmiento de Acuña*, 64. García Oro uses the name that appears in Spanish correspondence, 'Tobia Mathei'. The acquaintance between Matthew and Gondomar is well attested: Chamberlain reported to Sir Dudley Carleton on 18 October 1617 (OS) that 'Master Matthew [. . .] is noted for certain night walkes to the Spanish ambassador'; John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure (Philadelphia, PA, 1939), ii, 104. The acquaintance with Bacon is also documented; see Albert J. Loomie, 'Bacon and Gondomar: An Unknown Link in 1618', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 21 (1968), 1–10.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

The fact that Don Diego was keen to open the doors of his library to eminent literati is immediately relevant to this study: if he was keen to do so at home in Spain, there is reason to think that he could have done the same in his London residence, given the right conditions.

Having been stripped of his office for an unknown reason, he left Valladolid with the court, and re-established himself in Madrid, where he would spend the following seven years in charge of several minor political offices. It is reported that he held regular *tertulias*, or informal meetings, at his home in Atocha Street, in what his predecessor in the Spanish embassy in London, don Alonso de Velasco, called 'el corredorcillo de la jaula' ('the small corridor of the cage', perhaps a windowed gallery where Gondomar kept his pet birds). The usual crowd included influential and cultivated friends such as the poet and diplomat Diego de Silva y Mendoza, Count of Salinas, as well as Gondomar's cousin Juan de Acuña, president of Castile, and churchmen such as the Dominican friars Luis de Aliaga and Antonio de Sotomayor. The gathering also included, from his arrival in Madrid in June 1611, the English ambassador, John Digby, later Earl of Bristol, who would become a lifelong friend.[26] Members of Digby's immediate circle might well have been present at these meetings, and in particular the translators and scholars James Mabbe and Leonard Digges, who spent several crucial years in Madrid. James Mabbe—translator into English of *Guzmán de Alfarache* by Mateo Alemán, *La Celestina*, and a selection of the *Exemplary Novels* by Miguel de Cervantes—served as secretary to Digby from April 1611 until 1613, with possible shorter visits thereafter.[27] In fact, the personal acquaintance between Mabbe and Gondomar is attested by the existence of a letter sent from Madrid in the summer of 1612, in which Mabbe informs his unnamed recipient of the replacement of Alonso de Velasco as ambassador to King James:

> Don Alonso de Valasco the Spa: Ambassr. in England is now for certaine recalled, and another declared in his place whome wee shall sent unto you in Septembr. next. His name is Don Diego de Sarmiento de Acuna a kinseman of the President of Castile, and one of the Consejo de Hazienda. Hee is reputed heere for a gentleman of suche worthe and sufficiency and of a noble and honeste disposition. And his behauiour promisethe no lesse. Hee is very plausible in his conversation and of a cheerefull contenance, and suche as I suppose will agree well wth. the Englishe disposition; as being neyther to lighte wth. the Frenche, nor to lowting wth. the Spaniard. Thei say his wife comes along wth. him, Shee is a good graue courteous Lady, and of the age of 40, *Poco mas o menos* [i.e. 'more or less']. She comes shorte of the other Ladyes beauty that is wth. you but on vertue is nothing behinde her.[28]

26 Durán-Loriga, *El Embajador y el Rey*, 46; and Luis Tobío Fernández, *Gondomar y su triunfo sobre Raleigh* (Santiago de Compostela, 1974), 223.

27 David Kathman, 'Mabbe, James (1571/2–1642?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2021) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/17319> accessed 16 May 2021.

28 The National Archives, Kew, SP 94/19, fols 201–11, transcribed in Pedro Guardia Massó, 'James Mabbe, eminente hispanista oxoniense del siglo XVII: personalidad literaria. Estudio de varios manuscritos inéditos y del *The Spanish Bawd*', PhD thesis, Universitat de Barcelona, 1971, 324. The letter is undated, but the opening paragraph states that it was responding to a letter from 28 May (presumably OS; 4 June NS), and it states that the Duke of Pastrana had left Madrid the previous Thursday. The Duke, Ruy

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

Mabbe comments first on Acuña's public reputation, but then goes on to commend his pleasant conversation and his affable disposition and appearance—his 'cheerfull countenance'—also lauding his temperament as being well suited to that of the English by eschewing the frivolity of the French and the proverbial affectation of the Spanish. In addition, he comments on the dignified demeanour of Doña Constanza de Acuña, his wife, giving her approximate age. These are comments that reveal a certain familiarity, as that of someone who has encountered the subject at close quarters in a private environment. This acquaintance is particularly intriguing in the context of Gondomar's potential connections with the English theatre business, as we will see.

At one time it was rumoured that he was about to be appointed *corregidor* of Madrid, but instead he was briefly given the equivalent office in Seville, that of the *Asistente*, only to be informed shortly thereafter that he had been entrusted with the delicate embassy at the court of James I. His international connections, as well as his fluency in several foreign languages—particularly French, Italian, and Latin, though not English—must have been determinant factors. In the summer of 1613, he left for London with part of his family.

II. FIRST EMBASSY TO LONDON (1613–1618)

The family arrived in Portsmouth on 21 July 1613.[29] The arrival of the Spanish Ambassador at the mouth of the river Thames almost caused a diplomatic crisis, as he refused to allow the Spanish banners to be lowered, as was the custom with foreign ships. After the King's intervention, he was allowed to continue the journey to the capital, and the party arrived in London eight days later.[30] During his first few years at the English court, Don Diego had to manage the delicate affairs of the embassy and the fragile political situation between the two countries, although he forged a good relationship with James I, with whom he communicated in his fluent Latin. He also had to learn to manoeuvre in a court of which he did not speak the language, and to fight for pre-eminence in the King's favour with other foreign legates, particularly in public occasions. Part of this struggle took place around performances and theatrical entertainments, as foreign ambassadors were regularly invited to attend plays and masques at court, and they would try to sit closer to the King than those of other countries.

Gómez de Silva, was Spain's ambassador to France during the negotiations for the double marriage alliance between Spain and France. The Duke waited in Madrid until news arrived that the Duke of Mayenne, France's ambassador, had crossed the border on 23 June (NS); he left Madrid on 4 July and met Mayenne in Burgos on 7 before travelling to Paris. Since 4 July (NS) was a Wednesday, we must assume that Mabbe was mistakenly referring to Thursday 5 (NS; 25 June OS); the letter would therefore date from the next few days before the following Thursday, 11 July 1612 (NS; 1 July OS). See *Jornada que el Duque de Pastrana hizo a Francia a las Capitulaciones de la Reina de Francia y Princessa de España*, Biblioteca de la Universidad de Valladolid, Fondo Antiguo, U/Bc Ms 511, fol. 99; and José María Perceval, 'Opinión pública y publicidad (siglo XVII). Nacimiento de los espacios de comunicación pública en torno a las bodas reales de 1615 entre Borbones y Habsburgo', PhD thesis, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2004, ii, 370.

29 Durán-Loriga, *El Embajador y el Rey*, 64.

30 Durán-Loriga, *El Embajador y el Rey*, 64.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

The first theatrical experience of the newly arrived ambassador in London was the Lord Mayor's show of that year, performed on 29 October 1613 to celebrate the installation of Sir Thomas Myddleton in the office, exactly three months after Gondomar's arrival in London on 29 July. The show, *The Triumphs of Truth*, was scripted by Thomas Middleton,[31] and Gondomar owned a copy of the printed text that he kept and carried with him to Spain, as the 1623 *Inventario* informs.[32] It is, as far as we know, the only English dramatic work in print that he owned during his time in England, perhaps because he enjoyed the pageant or perhaps because the copy was presented to him as a gift. The ambassador from Tsar Michael of Russia, Aleksei Ivanovich Ziuzin, who stayed in London from 26 October 1613 until the following summer, reported that he was actively encouraged by King James to attend the Lord Mayor's show, just three days after his arrival, as he presumably wanted to impress the foreign legate with the spectacle; it is possible, therefore, that Gondomar might have been directed as well to watch the pageant.[33] However, we have to observe that no member of the royal family attended the Lord Mayor's show during the years Gondomar was ambassador: it is to be understood that both he and the Russian ambassador, presumably among other foreign legates, attended the pageant for its local interest and its colourful sophistication, rather than in the expectation of meeting the King there, as was the case with masques and plays performed at court.

Later that year, Gondomar attended the festivities around the marriage of Frances Howard and Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, at Whitehall Palace. In the evening of the wedding day, 26 December 1613, Thomas Campion's *Masque of Squires and Knights* was performed at the Banqueting House.[34] The Spanish ambassador was accompanied on that occasion by Ferdinand de Boischot, the ambassador of the Spanish Netherlands. On 10 January 1614 (NS), Boischot wrote a long letter to Philip III with an account of the event, including a full and informed summary of the masque.[35] Don Diego sent another letter on 25 January (NS) to his sovereign mentioning the evening and the extraordinary pre-eminence that both Catholic ambassadors had been granted: they were seated on the main dais with the royal family, Gondomar at the Queen's left and Boischot at the King's right.[36] However, he did not mention the actual content of the masque, perhaps because he knew that Boischot had drafted a lengthy account.

31 *The Triumphs of Truth*, Wiggins, vi, 1727. The coincidence of the names of the playwright and the Lord Mayor is fortuitous.

32 *Inventario*, fol. 158[r]. The actual exemplar, unfortunately, seems to have been lost when the library of the Casa del Sol was dispersed, and it is not to be found in the Real Biblioteca or the Biblioteca Nacional. For a study of the dispersal of the library, see Ian Michael and José Antonio Ahijado Martínez, 'La casa del sol: la Biblioteca del Conde de Gondomar en 1619–23 y su dispersión en 1806', in María Luisa López-Vidriero y Pedro M. Cátedra (eds), *El libro antiguo español: III. El libro en Palacio y otros estudios bibliográficos* (Salamanca, 1996), 196–8.

33 See the account in Thomas Middleton, *The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, 2007), 977–9.

34 Wiggins, vi, 1731.

35 This letter is in the Municipal and Provincial Archives of Vienna, *Die Registratur Albert und Isabellas*, LA Belgien PC 48 K 47; a transcription of the Spanish text is in Willem Schrickx, *Foreign Envoys and Travelling Players in the Age of Shakespeare and Jonson* (Wetteren, 1986), Appendix IV, 324–8.

36 Transcribed in *Documentos inéditos*, iii, 228–32 (231).

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

During his two embassies, Gondomar was regularly invited to the Twelfth Night masque at court, which he almost invariably attended. The first that he may have been at, though only the invitation is recorded, was *The Masque of Flowers*, scripted by an unknown author or team of collaborators, and paid for by Francis Bacon; it was performed in the Banqueting House at Whitehall Palace on 6 January 1614 by gentlemen associated with Gray's Inn, using the same stage that had been erected for the *Masque of Squires and Knights* 11 days earlier.[37]

Less than a month later, on 2 or 3 February 1614, Gondomar apparently attended a masque in the newly refurbished Somerset House, *Hymen's Triumph* by Samuel Daniel, but he did so incognito, that is, not as the Spanish ambassador but as a private person. The performance, mooted by Tuesday 30 November 1613, took place in a courtyard of the house, reportedly 'covered with cloth', probably situated, as Martin Wiggins notes, 'above the acting area and auditorium to keep out the winter weather'.[38] John Finet, Deputy Master of Ceremonies, was commanded to issue invitations to several foreign legations: the French and Venetian ambassadors (Samuel Spifame and Antonio Foscarini, respectively), and the Savoy Agent (Giovanni Battista Gabaleone), all attended the performance, while Ferdinand de Boischot sent apologies as he was ill with a cold. We do not know why Gondomar was not invited in an official capacity, but he may have wanted to be present as the royal family—King James, Queen Anne, and Prince Charles—were also in attendance. Whether he was seeking royal favour, or whether his presence in an unofficial capacity was due to his interest in the actual performance, is impossible to determine, though the former seems probable.

The following year he was invited again to the Twelfth Night masque, *Mercury Vindicated from the Alchemists at Court*, scripted by Ben Jonson and performed on 6 January 1615 in the Banqueting House. However, it is reported that he protested at the presence of the ambassador of the Dutch Republic, Sir Noel Caron, and King James 'eventually ordered them both to go home before the performance had begun'.[39] It is also in 1615, however, that another connection with the performance of theatrical entertainments emerges. It is reported that Gondomar sponsored the performance of a masque, or several masques, between 19 and 21 February, given at his ambassadorial residence in the Barbican.[40] The Spanish embassy had been established in that neighbourhood since the times of Gondomar's immediate predecessor, Alonso de Velasco, from early May 1610, although the actual house within that area is difficult to determine.[41] The organization of this kind of entertainment would have entailed the collaboration of performers. If the masques were given in English, they might have been members of one of the professional companies, or perhaps an ad-hoc amateur group. It is plausible that the entertainment might have been acted in

37 Wiggins, vi, 1738.

38 Wiggins, vi, 1742.

39 Wiggins, vi, 1762.

40 John A. Astington, *English Court Theatre, 1558–1642* (Cambridge, 1999), 249.

41 See Roberta Anderson, '*Appendix*: Diplomatic Representatives from the Hapsburg Monarchy to the Court of James VI and I', in Alexander Samson (ed.), *The Spanish Match*, 217; and Henry Benjamin Wheatley, *London Past and Present: Its History, Associations, and Traditions* (Cambridge, 1891, 2011), 104. The house seems to have been located in Middlesex Street, and was demolished in 1844; see Henry A. Harben, 'Spanish Ambassador's House', in *A Dictionary of London* (London, 1918).

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

another language, either in Latin (as most English academic drama) or in Spanish. It is impossible, however, to determine which member of the embassy's retinue was in charge of finding the players, who scripted the text or texts, or where they were performed within the house. If the masque or masques were offered in English, then we might suppose that the ambassador or someone in his household was sufficiently connected with the theatre business, or at least knew where to go to find suitable performers.

Apart from other courtly masques, it is also likely that in this period Don Diego was invited to attend plays at court. We could assume that his English may have been insufficient to understand their plot fully, but any appearance at court would have been a useful political manoeuvre. Unfortunately, the plays that were performed at court during this time are not generally known. Apart from the masques, we have the dates for court performances of plays in the Christmas seasons from 1613 to 1618, but only the following titles are known: John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (Lady Elizabeth's Men, 12 December 1613), Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and Marston's *Eastward Ho!* (25 January 1614), Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (Lady Elizabeth's Men, 1 November 1614), *Susenbrotus* (performed by Cambridge students at Royston, 12 March 1616), John Fletcher's *The Mad Lover* (King's Men, 5 January 1617), Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (King's Men, 6 April 1618) and *The Winter's Tale* (King's Men, 7 April 1618), and *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (King's Men, 3 May 1618).[42]

In any case, there is some more anecdotal evidence connected with the theatre scattered in Don Diego's correspondence in these years. For example, a letter from the Dominican friar Diego de la Fuente, his confessor, written in Paris on 21 October 1616, retells the events of a day when Fray Diego had an audience with the Queen of France, Anne of Austria, daughter of Philip III of Spain, who knew Gondomar from previous visits to Paris. That evening the friar was invited by the Countess of La Torre and other ladies of the court to spend some time in conversation in their private apartments in the Palace, when the Queen made a sudden appearance. Fray Diego, who was accompanied by Gondomar's servant, Troncoso, reports the following:

> *en medio desta visita llego auiso a mi s^ra^ la Condesa de la Torre q' subia alla su Mag^d^ la Reyna doña Ana, yo temia q' nos habian de mandar esconder debajo de las Camas, q' no habia otra p^te^ adonde, como suele hazerse en los entremeses quando entra el marido de la dama, pero estubimonos quedos como unas piedras.*
>
> 'In the middle of this visit, message was brought to my lady the Countess of La Torre that Her Majesty Queen Anne was coming up the stairs; I was afraid we would be told to hide under the beds, because there was nowhere else to go,

42 Astington, *English Court Theatre*, 248–52. The Wiggins entries for these plays are as follows: *The Dutch Courtesan* (v, 1434), *Eastward Ho!* (v, 1473), *Bartholomew Fair* (vi, 1757), *Susenbrotus* (a version of the academic play *Fortunia*, first performed at Trinity College, Cambridge, the preceding Christmas; see *Fortunia*, vi, 1792), *The Mad Lover* (vi, 1809), *Twelfth Night* (iv, 1297) and *The Winter's Tale* (vi, 1631), and *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (v, 1392).

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

> as it is usually done in interludes when the lady's husband enters; but we remained still like stones.'[43]

Fray Diego was clearly familiar with the conventions of farcical interludes, or *entremeses* in the original, which were regularly performed as comic pieces between the three or four main acts or *jornadas* of any commercial play. What is relevant here is that he instinctively encoded the awkwardness of the situation—a priest and his servant caught in the middle of a conversation with a number of ladies in a private room full of beds—as a piece of farcical theatre, with which Gondomar would have been familiar.

In 1617, Don Diego was elevated to the ranks of the Spanish aristocracy with the creation of the title of Count of Gondomar, which ennobled his family's ancestral estate in Galicia to the category of earldom. At the beginning of the year, on Sunday 19 January, he probably attended the repeat performance of the Twelfth Night masque at court, *The Vision of Delight*, scripted by Ben Jonson, which King James attended.[44] Later in the year, we have evidence that he attended another civic pageant. On 29 October 1617, he was present again at the Lord Mayor's show performed to celebrate the appointment of Sir George Bolles, *The Triumphs of Honour and Industry*, written again by Thomas Middleton.[45] The printed text of this entertainment indicates that there was a 'pageant of several nations' celebrating 'the prosperity of Love'. Among these, two characters, a Frenchman and a Spaniard, 'not content with a silent joy like the rest of the other nations, have a thirst to utter their gladness, though understood of a small number'. After the 'short speech delivered by the Frenchman in French', the Spaniard gave his in Spanish.[46] A contemporary account of the performance by Orazio Busino, chaplain of the Venetian ambassador, Pietro Contarini, reports that among the spectators 'only the Spanish nation chose the prerogative of dressing in their own fashion, and are therefore easily recognized and mortally hated'. Among the characters in the pageant,

> a Spaniard was perfectly impersonated, the gestures of his nation expertly mimicked, with small black mustachios, hat and cape after the Spanish fashion, a ruff at the throat and little palm-length muffs on his hands. He was continually blowing kisses to the onlookers; but to the Spanish Ambassador, who was a short distance from us, he did it to such a superlative degree that the entire crowd roared with laughter.[47]

Gondomar and his train were immediately recognizable to the London crowds, and, more importantly perhaps, to the actors who performed the pageant. Busino adds in the same letter that 'a wretched woman enraged against a man thought to belong to the Catholic Ambassador's household [had] aroused the crowd to persecute

43 Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, MSS 9133, fol. 4^{v}.

44 *The Vision of Delight*, Wiggins, vii, 1814.

45 *The Triumphs of Honour and Industry*, Wiggins, vii, 1847.

46 See Thomas Middleton, *The Triumphs of Honour and Industry*, in *The Collected Works*, 1251–63 (1257–8). In the printed text a considerably shortened English translation is appended, omitting all references to God.

47 Middleton, *The Collected Works*, 1269.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

him, leading the way by striking him with a bunch of greens while calling him "Spanish rogue"'.[48] The animosity that Gondomar seems to have generated in London was unprecedented: neither his three immediate predecessors—Juan de Tassis, Pedro de Zúñiga, and Alonso de Velasco—nor his successor, Carlos Coloma, seem to have caused so much public hatred. Apart from a general post-Armada popular Hispanophobia, this visceral reaction may have been related to a negative public perception of his close acquaintance with King James, and perhaps his perceived poisonous influence over English political affairs. This phenomenon would increase in his second embassy with the publication of Thomas Scott's vitriolic and frequently reprinted polemic pamphlets *Vox populi* (1620) and its second part (1624), and *Vox coeli* (1624), supposedly translating Spanish texts revealing the treacherousness of the Spanish Ambassador.[49] In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the unpopular core of Gondomar's mission in England from the start was to fight the persecution of Catholics. His efforts are widely attested, and they touch on another theatrical connection. Before his departure for Spain in the summer of 1618, Gondomar successfully lobbied for the liberation of a large number of Catholic clerics. As the Acts of the Privy Council for 26 June 1618 record, a total of 26 'jesuittes, semynarie priestes or eccleasticall [*sic*] or religious persons made or ordayned, according to the order or rites of the Romish Church' were to be liberated from various prisons and delivered 'unto the Conde de Gondamar, Embassador with his Majestie from the Kinge of Spaine' for transportation to the continent.[50] This large contingent included Fr William Drury (*bap.* 1584–*d.* in or after 1643), the Latin dramatist. Following his education at the College of St Omers in the Spanish Netherlands and at the English College in Rome, where he was ordained as a secular priest, Drury returned to his native England as a missionary in April 1612, and was imprisoned soon after. When, six years later, Gondomar's efforts resulted in his liberation from the Gatehouse prison, he relocated to France and went on to teach at the English College in Douai, where he authored a number of Latin plays for performance in the school.[51] In fact, Drury dedicated the first printing of his play about Alfred the Great, *Aluredus, sive Alfredus*, in 1620 to Gondomar himself, his liberator.[52]

48 Middleton, *The Collected Works*, 1269.

49 Thomas Scott, *Vox populi, or Newes from Spayne* (London, 1620; STC 22098) and *The second part of Vox populi, or Gondomar appearing in the likenes of Matchiauell in a Spanish parliament* (London, 1624; STC 22103); both were reprinted multiple times in 1620 and 1624, respectively. See also Scott's *Vox coeli, or, Newes from heaven* (London, 1624; STC 20946.7). Ernesto Oyarbide Magaña has analysed the significance of these pamphlets in 'Between Love and Hate: Thomas Scott's Puritan Propaganda and His Interest in Spanish Culture', in Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez (ed.), *Literary Hispanophobia and Hispanophilia in Britain and the Low Countries (1550–1850)* (Amsterdam, 2020), 93–114.

50 *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, xxxvi (1618–1619), ed. J. V. Lyle (London, 1929), 197–8; consulted on *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/acts-privy-council/vol36/pp176-200> accessed 18 May 2021. See also Arthur Freeman, 'William Drury, Dramatist', *Recusant History*, 8 (1966), 293–7.

51 Thompson Cooper, revised by Ross Kennedy, 'Drury, William (bap. 1584, *d.* in or after 1643)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2021) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8103> accessed 16 May 2021.

52 *Aluredus sive Alfredus* (Douai, 1620; USTC 1117808); see Wiggins, vii, 1909. The dedication reads: 'ILLVSTRISSIMO HEROI/D. DIDACO SARMIEN-/TO DE ACUNNA,/*NOBILLISSIMO COMITI*/DE GONDAMAR/*POTENTISSIMI HI-/SPANIARUM REGIS*/IN MAGNA BRITANNIA LEGATIONEM/*SECVNDO*/IAM AVSPICANTI,/LIBERATORI/SVO/*FELICITATEM*/APPRECATUR/GUILIEL[MVS].

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

This and other instances of Godomar's work protecting Catholics seem to have been deeply unpopular among many Londoners.[53]

Before he left for Spain after his first embassy, the Count attended another court entertainment, when he was among the foreign ambassadors that Busino reported to have been present at the performance of *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* by Jonson at the Banqueting House on 6 January 1618;[54] this happened only 12 months before the old building burned down and was replaced by the stone structure that would only open in January 1622 with *The Masque of Augurs*, which Gondomar would also attend.[55]

III. GONDOMAR'S ABSENCE FROM LONDON (1618–1620)

The ambassador left London on 7 July 1618 (OS),[56] and spent the next 20 months in Spain. During his absence, Fray Diego de la Fuente fulfilled the ambassadorial duties in an unofficial capacity, constantly sending letters to his master.[57] In one letter, dated 1 November 1619 (NS; 22 October, OS), he wrote:

> *He sido valiente estos días, pues tengo en la cárçel çinco o seys hombres que se han allado culpados en una estanpa que salió aquí estos días contra su Santidad, y he hecho suspender con efecto el representarse aquí una comedia que llaman la Ramera de Babilonia, llena de mil blasfemias contra el Papa y contra España.*
>
> 'I have been brave these days, because I have sent to jail five or six men found guilty of recently printing a work against His Holiness, and I have successfully caused to suspend the performances here of a play called *The Whore of Babylon*, full of thousands of blasphemies against the Pope and Spain.'[58]

Thomas Dekker's play *The Whore of Babylon* had premiered in 1606 at the Fortune playhouse, performed by Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn's company, Prince Henry's Men (the Palgrave's Men from the Prince of Wales's death in late 1612). This revival is not recorded in any other document of the period, and it does have some interesting resonances in the context of the ongoing negotiations of the

DRVREVS.' (sig. A2^{r}) The dedication is followed by a letter (sig. A2^{r}–A3^{r}) and a brief poem playing on an anagram of the Count's name: 'DIDACUS SARMIENTO DE ACUÑA/EN ADAMAS ARDET INOCCIDVVS' (sig. A3^{v}).

53 Another instance of Gondomar's protection of Catholic missionaries is the notorious case of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza (1566–1614), who had arrived in England in early 1605 and who spent the rest of her life working in the English mission, often annoying the English authorities. See Glyn Redworth, *The She-Apostle: The Extraordinary Life of Luisa de Carvajal* (Oxford, 2008); for her dealings with Gondomar, see chapter 17, 214–25.

54 *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, Wiggins, vii, 1854; see also Astington, *English Court Theatre*, 114 and 251.

55 *The Masque of Augurs*, Wiggins, vii, 2004.

56 Bartolomé Benito, *El Maquiavelo español*, 117; The count wrote to Juan de Ciriza on 15 July (NS): 'Mi partida de aquí será pasado mañana, si place a Dios' ('My departure from here will be the day after tomorrow, God willing'); *Documentos inéditos*, ii, 70.

57 For a recent assessment of Fray Diego's efforts as diplomatic agent, see Ernesto Oyarbide Magaña, 'A most venerable provisional envoy: Friar Diego de la Fuente's diplomatic missions to Jacobean London, 1618–1620 and 1624', in Roberta Anderson and Charlotte Backerra (eds), *Confessional Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon, 2021), 100–19.

58 Real Biblioteca, Madrid, II/551, fol. 208^{v}; see Pablo Andrés Escapa, 'Fray Diego de la Fuente y don Diego Sarmiento, lectores del Quijote', *Avisos: Noticias de la Real Biblioteca*, 67 (2012), 4–8 (4).

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

Spanish Match, as by 1619 the matter was public knowledge.[59] Gondomar had begun discreet negotiations with King James about the marriage treaty shortly after the failure and dissolution of the Addled Parliament of 1614.[60] An initial draft of the treaty was sent to John Digby, English ambassador in Madrid, in March 1615,[61] still under diplomatic secrecy, although it was only on 2 March 1617 that the matter was taken to the Privy Council.[62] After this date, the negotiations seem to have become *vox populi*. John Chamberlain's correspondence, for example, records the gossip as early as 15 March 1617 in a letter to Sir Dudley Carleton: 'The Spanish match said to be half made'.[63] A performance of Dekker's play in the context of Gondomar's absence from London, partly for the purposes of reporting on the progress of the negotiations to the King of Spain, is a curious coincidence. Unless it was an external commission, it is plausible that the players—presumably still the Fortune playhouse company for whom it was written—intended to put on a provocatively anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish play in this dense political context in order to capitalize on English anxieties around the prospect of soon having a Catholic and Spanish queen consort. The fact that the acting Spanish ambassador managed to stop the performances by clever manoeuvring at court indicates that the players' critique was well-aimed. That this was presumably attempted by the Palgrave's Men is also significant, as the company's patron, Frederick, the Elector Palatine, King James I's son-in-law, had been elected King of Bohemia on 28 August, raising the hopes of a wider Protestant resistance against the Catholic Habsburgs, although his short-lived reign would end with the defeat of the Bohemian forces at the Battle of White Mountain on 8 November 1620.[64] As Jeri Smith-Cronin has observed, the Palgrave's Men 'no doubt saw the popular and symbolic appeal in reviving an apocalyptic allegory of Catholic intrigues against the True Church at a time when their patron was provocatively shifting the confessional balance of Germany', and it is also fascinating that this is a case 'of a play's revival becoming more topical than its original production'.[65] Fray Diego de la Fuente's intervention on behalf of Spain to supress these performances is also enormously resonant in the context of Gondomar's second embassy, as we will see.

Beyond the connections, acquaintances, and enmities that Gondomar and his household may have had with professional players through attending performances at court and elsewhere, there is another plausible avenue of influence. As I anticipated, the presence of a substantial portion of Gondomar's famed library in London could explain the availability of certain works in the city at the time. This is particularly relevant when we are trying to assess the powerful influence of Spanish imaginative literature on the work of some Jacobean dramatists. A case in point is John

59 Wiggins, whom I informed of Andrés Escapa's find, lists this revival in v, 1500, 'Early Stage History' (301).

60 Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta*, 15.

61 Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta*, 16.

62 Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta*, 17.

63 'James I—volume 90: March 1617', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James I, 1611–18*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London, 1858), 439–56.

64 For a good summary of the Palatinate crisis, see chapter 9, 'The Bohemian Revolt', in Peter H. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy: A New History of the Thirty Yeas War* (London, 2010).

65 Jeri Smith-Cronin, 'The Apocalyptic Chivalry of Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* and Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 50 (2020), 633–57 (653).

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

Fletcher, who based a substantial portion of his considerable canon of plays on recent Spanish works, some well known and some less so. He clearly possessed sufficient knowledge of Spanish to be able to understand the essence of untranslated sources that he would then use, often quite freely, in new plays. Since some of the works that he used had only been published in Spain quite recently, we have to assume that someone in his circle had access to an active influx of imported books. Gondomar's keenness to open his personal library to scholars and imaginative writers in Valladolid perhaps indicates that his London library might have functioned in a similar way.

The first and perhaps clearest example of this possibility is that of the *Conquista de las Islas Malucas* (*Conquest of the Maluku Islands*) by Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola. On 10 March 1619 (NS; 30 February, OS), Fray Diego de la Fuente wrote from London to his absent master the following:

> *Algo de esto he topado en Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola en su Conquista de las Malucas, en el libro primero y segundo, que por haber pocos días que vino a mis manos no he podido ver más. Y me contentara con aver visto menos, y menos curiosidad en sacar a las márgenes estas cosas para que se tope luego con ellas.*
>
> 'Some of this I have encountered in Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola's *Conquest of the Maluku Islands*, in the first and second books, because since I have only had the book in my hands for a few days, I haven't had the chance to see more.'[66]

As Pablo Andrés Escapa notes,[67] the edition that was at the Spanish embassy in London in March 1619 and that Fray Diego was reading, was the earliest available, published in Madrid in 1609, as it appears in the inventory of his library.[68] This work, not widely known or translated, provided the narrative source of a play that Fletcher wrote in 1621, and that was performed by the King's Men at court on 26 December 1621, perhaps even in Gondomar's presence: *The Island Princess*. In her edition of the play, Clare McManus has conclusively demonstrated that Fletcher must have accessed the Spanish original, rather than the French translation.[69] Given that, as we established, Gondomar had allowed the use of his library in Valladolid to Cervantes and Quevedo in his years as *corregidor*, among other notable scholars and writers, it is not unthinkable that he may have done the same in London with Fletcher or someone in his immediate circle of acquaintances. If James Mabbe knew Gondomar from his sojourn in Madrid in 1611–1613, he might have renewed the acquaintance during this period. Mabbe's acquaintance with Fletcher is well attested: for example, Fletcher contributed two pages of prefatory verses, signed 'I. F.', to

66 Real Biblioteca, ii/551, fo. 102^{r}.

67 Andrés Escapa, 'Fray Diego de la Fuente y don Diego Sarmiento, lectores del Quijote', 6.

68 Madrid, 1609; USTC 5024466; *Inventario*, ii, fo. 7^{r}. There were two later editions: Madrid, 1611 (USTC 5029794) and 1619 (USTC 5031672).

69 John Fletcher, *The Island Princess*, ed. Clare McManus, Arden Early Modern Drama (London, 2013), 49–57.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

Mabbe's 1622–1623 *The Rogue*, his translation of *Guzmán de Alfarache*.[70] Despite suggestions that 'I. F.' may have been the Italian scholar John Florio, with whom Mabbe was also acquainted,[71] Gordon McMullan has concluded that the initials refer 'almost certainly' to John Fletcher, 'who would presumably have known Mabbe through [Ben] Jonson'.[72] This acquaintance may have materialized in the fact that Fletcher based at least five of his plays in as many of Cervantes's *Exemplary Novels*,[73] four of which featured in Mabbe's selection of six published in 1640 but presumably translated much earlier.[74] Given the extraordinary success and wide international dissemination of the first part of *Don Quixote* after 1605, it is chronologically probable that Mabbe would have purchased the original edition of the *Novelas ejemplares* by the famous author when it came out in 1613 while he was in Madrid.[75] It is not unthinkable that Mabbe spotted the potential for dramatization of some of the *Novelas ejemplares* and brought it to Fletcher's attention. Be that as it may, Mabbe might be the most plausible link between Fletcher and the Count of Gondomar's celebrated London library. Fletcher's staunch Protestant background did not preclude his lifelong interest in Spanish literary models. Would his religious and political affiliations have prevented an acquaintance with the ambassador or someone in his household who may have granted direct access to his library? Fletcher, the principal dramatist of the King's Men since Shakespeare's death in 1616, surely visited the court when his plays were performed there, and he probably had the opportunity to see the conspicuous Spanish ambassador in multiple occasions. But is this enough to support this connection?

In the case of those works by Cervantes that Fletcher used in many of his plays, the connection seems relatively less important, as the popularity of these works and their rich early reception in England probably rendered it unnecessary, even if the Mabbe connection is so suggestive.[76] As far as we can tell from the *Inventario*, the Count did not possess copies of the 1613 first edition of Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares*. However, he did have a copy of the posthumously published *Los trabajos de*

70 A 45-line poem in Latin and one in English ('To the exact Translator of the famous *History of infamous* GVZMAN', 58 lines); see Mateo Alemán, *The Rogue, or The Life of Guzmán de Alfarache*, trans. James Mabbe (London, 1623; STC 289), sigs. A3^{v}–A4^{r}.

71 John Yamamoto-Wilson, 'Mabbe's Maybes: A Stuart Hispanist in Context', *Translation and Literature*, 21/3 (2012), 319–42 (325–6).

72 Gordon McMullan, *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher* (Amherst, 1994), 256.

73 In chronological order: *Love's Pilgrimage* (*c.*1616; Wiggins, vi, 1794) based on *Las dos doncellas*, *The Chances* (*c.*1617; Wiggins, vii, 1819) based on *La señora Cornelia*, *The Queen of Corinth* (*c.*1617; Wiggins, vii, 1829) based on *La fuerza de la sangre*, *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* (1624; Wiggins, viii, 2141) based on *El casamiento engañoso*, and, posthumously, *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (1626; Wiggins, viii, 2169) based on *La ilustre fregona*. In addition, it has been suggested that *Beggars' Bush* (*c.*1616; Wiggins, vi, 1799) may have resonances of *La fuerza de la sangre* and *La Gitanilla*; see Alexander Samson, 'Maybe Exemplary? James Mabbe's Translation of the *Exemplarie Novells* (1640)', *Republic of Letters*, 4 (2015), 1–16 (15). For further discussion of Cervantes's influence on Fletcher, see J. A. G. Ardila (ed.), *The Cervantean Heritage: Reception and Influence of Cervantes in Britain* (London, 2009), particularly chapters 19 (Trudi L. Darby and Alexander Samson, 'Cervantes on the Jacobean Stage', 206–22) and 20 (Alexander Samson, '"Last thought upon a windmill?": Cervantes and Fletcher', 223–33).

74 *Exemplarie novells* (London, 1640; STC 4914).

75 *Novelas exemplares* (Madrid, 1613; USTC 5038681).

76 See Dale B. J. Randall and Jackson Campbell Boswell, *Cervantes in Seventeenth-century England: The Tapestry Turned* (Oxford, 2009).

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

Persiles y Sigismunda (Madrid , 1617),[77] on which *The Custom of the Country* (*c.*1619) is partly based.[78] In addition, Gondomar purchased the edition of the Second Part of *Don Quixote* printed in Brussels in 1616, a year after its original publication in Madrid.[79] Fletcher based a scene of *The Double Marriage* (1622) on Sancho's governorship of Barataria, although, of course, he may have procured a copy by some other means.[80]

However, the case of Fletcher's *The Pilgrim* (*c.*1621) is more intriguing. The play was partly based on Lope de Vega's byzantine novel *El peregrino en su patria* (*The Pilgrim in His Homeland*), which was first printed in Seville in 1604. The *Inventario* informs that Gondomar possessed a copy in octavo of the Brussels edition of 1608.[81] Lope's original seems to have been quite popular and was printed no fewer than five times before 1621,[82] so the fact that Gondomar had a copy in his library is not reason enough in this case to justify the connection.[83] However, if Gondomar had read his copy of Lope's novel, he might have enjoyed the narrative parallels in Fletcher's play, as it was performed at court by the King's Men on 1 January 1622, towards the end of Gondomar's second embassy.[84] In addition, Gondomar also possessed a copy of Jerónimo de Carranza's *De la filosofía de las armas y de su destreza* (*On the Philosophy of Weapons and their Skills*),[85] which was a verbal source quoted insistently in *Love's Pilgrimage* by the invalid swordsman Don Sancho.

The case of the numerous dramatic works that Gondomar possessed in his library is also intriguing. The 1623 inventory includes one printed volume in English (Middleton's *The Triumphs of Truth*; STC 17903), 45 in Italian, five printed and one manuscript in Portuguese, and 19 printed and nine in manuscript in Spanish: a total of 80 volumes of drama comprising several hundred plays in four languages. We do not know how many of these volumes were actually present in London during either of Gondomar's embassies, but the potential presence of this important collection of plays may have enabled some other Fletcherian adaptations. In 1618, Fletcher made supplementary use of Lope de Vega's *El gran duque de Moscovia* and perhaps of *El gran duque de Viseo* as sources for *The Loyal Subject*;[86] these plays were plausibly available at Gondomar's library as printed books in one of the 12 volumes in quarto

77 USTC 5021442. The novel was translated into English by an anonymous translator in 1619 (STC 4918), via the French translation by Vital D'Audiguier (Paris, 1618; USTC 6011925). See Randall and Boswell, *Cervantes in Seventeenth-century England*, 35, no. 41.

78 *The Custom of the Country*, Wiggins, vii, 1911.

79 USTC 5039737. See Andrés Escapa, 'Fray Diego de la Fuente y don Diego Sarmiento, lectores del Quijote', 6.

80 *The Double Marriage*, Wiggins, vii, 2007.

81 USTC 5006050 and 1506436. See *Inventario*, ii, fo. 86^{v}.

82 The early editions of *El peregrino en su patria* appeared in Seville in 1604 (USTC 5011392), Barcelona in 1604 (USTC 5023191 and 5000653) and 1605 (USTC 5006049), Brussels in 1608, and Madrid in 1618 (USTC 5006051). See also Lope de Vega, *El peregrino en su patria*, ed. Julián González-Barera (Madrid, 2016), 63–4.

83 In addition, the book was published that year in England, in an uncredited and abridged translation, as *The pilgrime of Casteele* (London 1621; STC 24629).

84 Wiggins, vii, 1998; Astington, *English Court Theatre*, 254.

85 *Libro que trata de la philosophia de las armas y de su destreza* (Sanlúcar de Barrameda, 1582; USTC 335490); *Inventario*, ii, fo. 61^{v}.

86 *The Loyal Subject*, Wiggins, vii, 1874. See also Samson, 'Maybe Exemplary?', 15.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

of *comedias* by Lope and other authors that he owned[87] or in one of the eight volumes of collected Spanish plays in MS.[88] This might also be the lost link to explain the unusual story of the earliest adaptation of a Spanish Golden Age *comedia* to English drama. *Love's Cure, or The Martial Maid* was written by Fletcher and Philip Massinger in 1615, based on an original by Guillén de Castro, *La fuerza de la costumbre* (*The Force of Custom*), that remained unpublished in print until 1625, only a few months before Fletcher died. The relative abundance of extant manuscript copies—three in Madrid and one in Parma—seems to indicate that the play was particularly popular.[89] The eight volumes in quarto of collected Spanish plays in manuscript that are listed in the inventory were mostly disbound and scattered in the nineteenth century. Stefano Arata investigated this collection as far as it can be possible: only volume A survives as a single volume in its original binding, and the contents of volumes B and C can only be surmised from the available evidence; the other five, D to H, remain a mystery.[90] Could *La fuerza de la costumbre* have been one of the plays in those volumes? It seems impossible to prove, but the likely presence of a large number of plays in manuscript in London at the time of the composition of *Love's Cure* seems intriguing, and it opens up that possibility.[91]

Gondomar's potential acquaintance with other English intellectuals and dramatists in Mabbe's circle is also intriguing. As Gary Taylor has analysed, Mabbe was closely connected not only with his friend and travelling companion Leonard Digges, but also with the network of literati that formed around the publisher Edward Blount.[92] Blount had sponsored the publication of the first translation of *Don Quixote* into English (or any language),[93] and was, famously, one of the publishers of the 1623 First Folio of Shakespeare's plays.[94] He and Mabbe were also closely acquainted with Ben Jonson, who contributed a prefatory poem to Mabbe's

87 *Inventario*, ii, fo. 86^{v}.

88 *Inventario*, ii, fo. 183^{v}.

89 See José A. Pérez Díez, 'What the Quills Can Tell: The Case of John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *Love's Cure*', in *Shakespeare Survey 70* (2017), 93–102.

90 See *Inventario*, ii, fo. 183^{v}; and Arata, 'Teatro y coleccionismo', as well as Badía Herrera, *Los primeros pasos en la comedia nueva*.

91 See as well John Fletcher and Philip Massinger, *Love's Cure, or The Martial Maid*, ed. José A. Pérez Díez, Revels Plays (Manchester, 2022).

92 Gary Taylor, 'The Cultural Politics of Maybe', in Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay, and Richard Wilson (eds), *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare* (Manchester, 2003), 242–58.

93 Part I in 1612 (translated by Thomas Shelton; STC 4915) and Part II in 1620 (probably translated as well by Shelton; STC 4917).

94 *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* (London, 1623; STC 22273). There was a long tradition initiated by the Spanish bibliographer Pascual de Gayangos in the mid-nineteenth century that claimed that Gondomar had purchased a copy of Shakespeare's First Folio when it was published. However, this possibility has been convincingly dismissed by Anthony James West in *The Shakespeare First Folio: The History of the Book, Volume II: A New World Census of First Folios*, 9–12, as well as by Ángel-Luis Pujante in two essays: 'But Was There Ever a Spanish First Folio?', in José Manuel González and Holger Klein (eds), *Shakespeare and Spain* (Lewiston, NY, 2002), 17–29; and 'The Gondomar First Folio: Lost, Stolen or Invented?', *Critical Survey*, 29/2 (2017), 43–57. In any case, Gondomar left England for good in the spring of 1622, while the printing of the First Folio was not concluded until late November 1623; see B. D. R. Higgins, 'Printing the First Folio', in Emma Smith (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's First Folio* (Cambridge, 2016), 30–47 (42). Perhaps an agent might have sent a copy to him in Madrid, but this does not seem to have been the case.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

The Rogue, which Blount published.[95] In fact, Jonson, Digges, and Mabbe, alongside Hugh Holland, were the authors of the only five commendatory poems in Shakespeare's First Folio.[96] Could Gondomar have met Jonson himself? Jonson had abandoned his Catholicism in 1610, 12 years after his conversion, but, as Ian Donaldson has concluded, he 'seems to have retained certain Catholic sympathies and associations for the remainder of his life'.[97] In fact, Jonson mentioned the Ambassador in a poem in *The Underwood*,[98] in which he wrote of an 'ordnance too; so much as from the Tower | T'have waked, if sleeping, Spain's ambassador, Old Aesop Gondomar'.[99] Jonson cultivated too a long friendship with another prominent Catholic, Kenelm Digby (1603–1665), son to one of the Gunpowder Plot conspirators, Sir Everard Digby. A young Kenelm had visited Spain in 1617–1618 with his Anglican cousin Sir John Digby, the English ambassador in Madrid who had befriended Gondomar. Upon his return, he matriculated in Gloucester Hall, Oxford, where he studied under 'the care of a humanist don with Roman Catholic sympathies, Thomas Allen'.[100] As an undergraduate recently returned from Madrid where he had stayed with his cousin, he might have attracted the attention of James Mabbe, by then fellow and bursar of Magdalen.[101] In 1619, Kenelm embarked on a grand tour to France and Italy, and then returned to Spain in the spring of 1623 at Sir John's invitation, and assisted Prince Charles during his stay in the metropolis. At that time, as Michael Foster points out, Kenelm Digby made the acquaintance of Toby Matthew in Madrid, who, as I pointed out, was in Gondomar's circle.[102] Donaldson was not able to document how far back the friendship between Kenelm Digby and Ben Jonson went, and 'their friendship seems to have flourished from 1629', three years after Gondomar's death.[103] However, the possible connection between Jonson and the ambassador via John and Kenelm Digby, and perhaps Mabbe, is enormously suggestive, and resonates with the Hispanophile and philo-Catholic

95 Ben Jonson, '*On the Author, Worke, and Translator*', in Mateo Alemán, *The Rogue*, sig. A4^{v}.

96 Jonson's 'To the Reader' on the frontispiece, Jonson's 'To the memory of my beloued, The AVTHOR' (sig. A4$^{r–v}$), Holland's 'Vpon the Lines of the Famous Scenicke Poet, Master WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE' (sig. A5^{r}), and Digges's 'TO THE MEMORIE of the deceased Author Maister W. SHAKESPEARE' and Mabbe's (as 'I. M.') 'To the memorie of M. *W. Shake-speare*' (both on sig. A6^{r}).

97 Ian Donaldson, 'Jonson, Benjamin [Ben] (1572–1637)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2021) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15116> accessed 22 May 2021.

98 *The Underwood* was included in the Jonson's Second Folio, *The workes of Benjamin Jonson. The second volume* (London, 1640; STC 14754).

99 '*A speech according to Horace*', *The Underwood* 44.3–5, ed. Colin Burrow, in David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, gen. eds., *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson* (Cambridge, 2012), vii, 180. The distance between the Tower of London and Ely Place in Holborn, where the embassy had moved by 1620, is about 1.5 miles (2.5 km) in a straight line, a considerable distance for a peal of ordnance to be heard from. As Burrow annotates, 'He is called "Aesop" because of his fondness for beast fables (as evinced in Bacon, *Works*, ed. Spedding (1857–74), 7.170), and because he was widely thought to have kept King James out of the European war by means of promises and tales which retrospectively had proved to be worthless'.

100 These details of Digby's biography are from Michael Foster, 'Digby, Sir Kenelm (1603–1665)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2021) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7626> accessed 21 May 2021.

101 Mabbe was elected as one of the college's triumvirate of bursars in 1617, 1618, 1620, 1623, 1627, and 1630; see Guardia Massó, 'James Mabbe, eminente hispanista oxoniense del siglo XVII', 32.

102 Michael Foster, 'Digby, Sir Kenelm (1603–1665)'.

103 Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford, 2011), 411.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

circles of acquaintance, directly or indirectly connected with the theatre business, that I have been tracing. In fact, Jonson's scholarly aspirations and classical learning are remarkably germane to those of the bookish polyglot Gondomar: one cannot but feel that the two had rather a lot in common.

IV. SECOND EMBASSY TO LONDON (1620–1622)

Gondomar was back in London in March 1620. Shortly after his arrival, he was present at a tilt entertainment performed in the afternoon of Friday 24 March in the Tiltyard at Whitehall.[104] The audience included King James, who was watching his son Charles tilting in public for the first time, as well as a number of courtiers and diplomats. The actor Edward Alleyn recorded in his account book that he paid one shilling for admission in the audience.[105] The presence of the Spanish Ambassador and the leader of the Palgrave's Men at the same event some five months after Fray Diego de la Fuente derailed their revival of *The Whore of Babylon* is probably just an intriguing coincidence, but it does suggest that they moved in similar circles and that their paths were crossing. As we will see, it may not have been the last time.

The embassy had moved by this time to new headquarters in Ely Place, the former palace of the bishops of Ely in London. The estate had been partly requisitioned from the bishops by Queen Elizabeth, and the gatehouse, some of the gardens, and probably the hall, had been given to Sir Christopher Hatton. Bishop Lancelot Andrewes kept the rest, comprising a residential wing, a large extension of cultivable land, and the chapel; this was the sector allocated to house the Spanish legation in 1620, and that Gondomar occupied in his second embassy.[106] It was in this part of the house that a play of the Passion was presumably performed on Good Friday at some point over the next two years, the possible dates being 14 April 1620, 30 March 1621, or 19 April 1622. William Prynne, in his anti-theatrical libel *Histrio-mastix*, refers to this performance, in a footnote, as follows: 'Witnesse the acting of Christs Passion at *Elie* house in *Holborne* when *Gundemore* lay there, on *Good-Friday* at night, at which there were thousands present'.[107] Nothing else is known about it. The play was presumably in Latin, though we do not know who the actors were, or even the exact venue they used. 'Thousands' seems to be a typically Prynnian exaggeration, though it is reported that the chapel, where Mass was regularly said, attracted crowds of London Catholics to the point that the authorities had to intervene.[108] Judging from the 1783 ground plan, therefore, the chapel seems the only available space to have been capable of holding a large number of people within the sector of the Ely Place estate that was occupied by the embassy, and therefore the

104 'Tilt Entertainment: a Lady', Wiggins, vii, 1934.

105 'I rod to se y^{e} tyltyng pd for a standing—0 1 0'; *The Henslowe-Alleyn Digitisation Project*, ed. Grace Ioppolo, MSS 9, fo. 43^{v}, <https://henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/catalogue/mss-9/043-verso/> accessed 18 May 2021. The transcription of this record is also in William Young, *The History of Dulwich College* (London, 1889), ii, 171.

106 T. B. Murray, *A Notice of Ely Chapel, Holborn* (London, 1840).

107 William Prynne, *Histrio-mastix* (London, 1633; STC 20464), 117, sig. Q3^{r}.

108 See Albert J. Loomie, 'London's Spanish Chapel before and after the Civil War', *Recusant History*, 18 (1987), 402–17.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

most plausible room to have been used for theatrical purposes.[109] The chapel itself, now the church of St Etheldreda, is the only part of the estate to have survived, as the rest of the buildings were demolished in 1778.[110] We do not know if other theatrical entertainments, perhaps of a non-religious nature, were ever performed in the embassy during the three years of Gondomar's tenure at Ely Place, but the fact that at least one piece of religious drama was staged there, strengthens the theatrical connection on English soil. As with the masques that were performed in the ambassadorial residence in the Barbican, we do not know who performed the play.

As I have anticipated, in this period we also find what might be the most direct piece of evidence to link Gondomar with English professional players active in the city. On Monday 16 July 1621, the Count and his retinue attended the public performance of a play in the Fortune playhouse. Afterwards, the resident company, the Palgrave's Men, shared an unprecedented meal with the Count of Gondomar. The anecdote is reported in a letter sent by John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton on the following Saturday, 21 July:

> The Spanish ambassador [...] is growne so affable and familiar, that on Monday with his whole traine he went to a common play at the Fortune in Golding-lane, and the players (not to be overcome with curtesie) made him a banket when the play was don in the garden adjoining.[111]

Dining with the players after a play seems to have been regarded as a particularly fashionable honour, as some contemporary drama indicates. In Nathan Field's *Amends for Ladies* (*c.*1610), a drawer, with a bawdy double entendre, declares that 'I haue beene at *Besse Turnups*, and she sweares all the Gentlewomen went to see a Play at the Fortune, and are not come in yet, and she beleeues they sup with the Players'.[112] As far as I have been able to ascertain, no other foreign ambassadors of the period are reported to have dined with the players of a professional company after a play in one of London's public playhouses. Why was Gondomar invited to a meal? Who did he know among the actors? Did Gondomar maintain any continuous contact with Alleyn himself after the 1620 tilt at Whitehall? Did he meet any of the members of the company at a court performance? There is only one recorded appearance of the Palgrave's Men at court, on 3 January 1619 (the play is unknown),[113] so that was presumably not the case as it occurred during Gondomar's absence from London. At that time this same company staged the revival of *The Whore of Babylon* that so angered Fray Diego de la Fuente. What happened in the ensuing time, and how did Gondomar end up establishing what sounds like a close acquaintance with this company? The Fortune playhouse was only three quarters of a mile (1.2 km) away from Ely Place, which means that the ambassador could have reached the

109 The ground plan is in Francis Gose, *The Antiquities of England and Wales* (London, 1783, 1785), 136. The other available space was the hall, but it was in the sector controlled by the Hatton family.

110 Walter Thornbury, 'Ely Place', in *Old and New London* (London, 1878), 514–26. St Etheldreda was bought by the Rosminian fathers in the 1870s, and has been again a Roman Catholic place of worship ever since.

111 *Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. McClure, ii, 391.

112 Nathan Field, *Amends for ladies* (London, 1618; STC 10851), sig. E3^{v}. See *Amends for Ladies*, Wiggins, vi, 1615.

113 Astington, *English Court Theatre*, 252.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

playhouse in a comfortable 15-minute walk. Was this just his local theatre? Was he perhaps acquainted with Alleyn's company as a regular theatre goer? The existence of this acquaintance is tantalizing, but no further evidence seems to have come to light of Gondomar's dealings with Alleyn and his players. One thing seems clear: the Ambassador's command of the English language was by 1621 good enough to venture to attend a spoken play, as opposed to a courtly entertainment in which the plot and the dialogue are perhaps less important than the visual spectacle. It was to be expected, perhaps, that a proven polyglot who had already spent around seven years of his life in London would have acquired good knowledge of the language. His library also attests that by then he had already acquired a number of English books. It seems safe to claim that by 1621, only a year before he left England for good, the Count was able to pursue one of his favourite pastimes: playgoing.

Of course, public playhouses were not the only venue for theatrical entertainments to be available to him. At court Gondomar also kept attending the usual masques. We know that he was present with two of his sons at the repeat performance of *Pan's Anniversary* by Ben Jonson, probably on Shrove Tuesday, 13 February 1621, at Whitehall Palace.[114] A year later, he attended both the premiere and a repeat performance of *The Masque of Augurs*, also by Jonson, at the Banqueting House, Whitehall Palace, on Sunday 6 January and Sunday 5 May 1622, the latter with one of his sons.[115] These final Jonsonian masques are perhaps more resonant if we suspect that Gondomar was acquainted with the author. However, we do not have direct evidence that he was invited to attend any of the plays performed at court.

V. FINAL YEARS

Gondomar's return to Spain on 21 May 1622 put an end to his long years in London and the culturally fascinating period of his two embassies at the court of King James I. A few months after he returned to his native country, in the spring of 1623, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Buckingham appeared in Madrid by surprise after they had travelled incognito through France, the Pyrenees, and the difficult and dangerous roads through the northern half of the Iberian Peninsula. They would spend most of the year in the Spanish metropolis trying to bring about a more stable Anglo-Spanish alliance by securing the hand of the Infanta María for the Prince. Gondomar, who happened to be in the city at the time, was instrumental in the complicated negotiations that ultimately proved to be unsuccessful. As the person at court who knew the two strangers better, and perhaps also their companion Sir Kenelm Digby, Gondomar accompanied the Englishmen to a series of courtly entertainments prepared for them, including bullfighting and *juego de cañas* (fighting at barriers) at the Plaza Mayor. This last crucial episode in his career as a diplomat situates him at the centre of the European political stage.[116]

In the summer of 1624, for nine consecutive days, the King's Men had staged Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess*, a sharp and (quite transparent) satire *à clef* in

114 Wiggins, vii, 1971.

115 Wiggins, vii, 2004.

116 The two standard studies of the Spanish Match have been cited above: Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta*, and Samson (ed.), *The Spanish Match*.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

which the anxieties around the Spanish Match were re-enacted on a chessboard. Famously, the Count was satirized as the scheming Black Knight, for which Carlos Coloma, Gondomar's successor at the embassy, complained bitterly to the King and, very much like Fray Diego de la Fuente with *The Whore of Babylon* in 1619, managed to have the lucrative performances supressed. The King's Men are even said to have sourced a set of clothes smuggled from the Spanish embassy to compose a convincing and unequivocal impersonation of Gondomar on the stage of the Globe.[117] It is not precisely known which member of the company played the part—recent research points at John Lowin—but it is clear that the impersonation was successful.[118] Given the theatrical connections that I have traced, it seems only appropriate that this erudite, polyglot diplomat and bibliophile with such a long and distinguished career would be best remembered in the English-speaking world as a character in a play.

Gondomar was reluctantly appointed to a third embassy to London in November 1624, but he managed to delay the journey until April. He never made it to England, as his health deteriorated rapidly and he was forced to stay eight months in Brussels before being allowed to return to Spain. He died in Casalarreina (La Rioja), on his way home, on 2 October 1626. His body was taken to Valladolid where he was buried in the church of San Benito el Viejo, adjoining his palace and beloved library in the Casa del Sol.[119]

Arguably, like any ambassador or courtier in an official capacity, Gondomar had no choice but to attend most of the courtly entertainments in England and Spain that I have been surveying. But even if the evidence is sketchy, anecdotal, and incomplete, his interest in drama and the theatre is too well attested to be a mere coincidence: he attended civic pageants and common plays that would report him no courtly benefit; he befriended or was acquainted with people connected with the theatrical profession in both countries; his friends and collaborators drew on a common knowledge of dramatic conventions in their correspondence to him; and, finally, a sizeable portion of his library was devoted to drama in print and manuscript, and might have had a decisive impact on the reception of Spanish literature in Jacobean drama through the important canon of plays by John Fletcher. Given the enormous size of the archival evidence that Gondomar's life and work left behind, further

117 See Thomas Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, ed. T. H. Howard-Hill, The Revels Plays (Manchester, 1992), as well as Mark Hutchings, 'The Spectre of Gondomar in the Wake of *A Game at Chess*', *The Seventeenth Century*, 27/4 (2012), 435–53.

118 Martin Wiggins, Héloïse Sénéchal, and Jodie Smith have studied the casting patterns of the Lord Chamberlain's Men/King's Men between 1594 and 1630, and have concluded that Lowin is the most likely candidate to have created the role; private correspondence. For a biographical note, see Martin Butler, 'Lowin, John (*bap.* 1576, *d.*1653)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2021) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/17096> accessed 16 May 2021. The most recent study of Lowin is Barbara Wooding, *John Lowin and the English Theatre, 1603–1647: Acting and Cultural Politics on the Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (Abingdon, 2013).

119 For a brief, but comprehensive biographical account with a list of biographical primary sources, see Carmen Manso Porto, 'Sarmiento de Acuña, Diego. Conde de Gondomar (I)', in *Diccionario biográfico español* (Madrid, 2018) <http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/14582/diego-sarmiento-de-acuna> accessed 24 May 2021.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023

documents may emerge in the future that may support and illuminate these connections, but, even with our current knowledge of them, linking him to the extraordinary cultural transaction between the rich literary traditions of Golden Age Spain and the ever-inventive drama of the English Renaissance is only a short step.

University of Leeds, UK

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/res/article/73/309/264/6378767 by guest on 01 March 2023