

“Your Protegee, Sacrificed to the Dispositions of Your Majesty and Those of Her Majesty the Queen of Spain.”¹

The Spanish Monarchy and the Negotiations for the Marriage Between Archduchess Claudia Felicitas of Austria-Tyrol and James, Duke of York (1671–1673).²

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In the work of Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland entitled *Lives of The Queens of England*, when covering the second marriage of King James II, who was only the Duke of York at the time, to Mary Beatrice of Modena, an archduchess is mentioned and described as ‘faithless,’³ even though her given name is not even acknowledged. A few decades later, in 1908, the renowned professor at the University of Vienna Alfred Francis Pribram, in his study about the unsuccessful marriage, which is examined in the following pages, described the intended bride as “surprisingly beautiful,” as well as intelligent.⁴ And, more than two hundred years before Pribram, in a letter that the archduchess’s mother sent to Leopold I, as can be seen in the title of this article, the same young woman was presented as someone ready to be ‘sacrificed’ to the interests of her relatives, the Emperor and the then regent of the Spanish Monarchy,

¹ Archduchess Anna to Emperor Leopold I, 30 March 1672. Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter, AGS), Estado, leg. 2389.

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³ Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England from the Norman Conquest*, vol. VI (London: George Bell and Sons, 1885), 16. Although the contribution of the author’s sister Elizabeth to this collection is well documented, in the edition consulted only Agnes is mentioned as the author.

⁴ Alfred Francis Pribram, “Ein Habsburg-Stuart’sches Heiratsprojekt”, *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 29, no. 3 (1908): 427 and 430, amongst other references.

Mariana of Austria,⁵ in a collection of letters in which her blood and lineage appear as some of her most important and valuable characteristics. These three testimonies describe the same person: Archduchess Claudia Felicitas of Austria-Tyrol. They are all linked to the negotiations for her marriage to James, Duke of York, brother and heir of the restored King of England and Scotland Charles II. This took place between the death of James's first wife in 1671 and the announcement of the Archduchess' engagement to her relative Leopold I, in the second half of 1673.

This marriage never took place, as was the case with many similar projects in the context of the dynastic Europe of the Early Modern period, it always being subject to the changing diplomatic and political landscape. What can these failed negotiations show us regarding the role royal women played in the context of dynastic and diplomatic politics and also about the perceived position they were expected to have once their marriage was finished? The following pages will explore the marriage negotiations between the heir of the English crown, James, Duke of York, and Archduchess Claudia Felicitas of Austria-Tyrol, specifically from the point of view of the Spanish Monarchy, setting aside the British historiography's perspective. This article focuses especially on two considerations: how vital were the international and diplomatic needs of the Spanish Monarchy for the negotiations of this marriage, and the principal role that women of the House of Habsburg played in them.

Introduction: A Tyrolean Archduchess in the complicated marriage market of the second half of the seventeenth century

Claudia Felicitas of Habsburg-Tyrol was born on 30 May 1653, as the eldest daughter of the sovereign of the so-called Further Austria and Count of Tyrol Ferdinand Charles of Habsburg, and his wife Anna of Médici. Just a few years earlier, in 1648, the conclusion of the Peace of Westphalia, with the signing of the treaties of Münster and Osnabrück, marked the beginning of yet another difficult phase in the relationship between the Spanish and Austrian branches of the Habsburg dynasty. Although these discrepancies never resulted in a complete break in their diplomatic relationship, the consequences of the separate peace signed by Ferdinand III while the Spanish Monarchy continued the war with France, the difficulties faced by the emperors within the Holy Roman Empire, and their different priorities in the

⁵ As seen in note 1, the letter written by Archduchess Anna to Leopold I, 30 March 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2389.

international sphere, amongst other reasons, drove the Spanish and Austrian branches of the dynasty increasingly apart and made them compete for the same resources and allies, with different purposes.⁶ Other subsequent events did not make this relationship better. The continuation of the war with France, with little to no help from their Austrian relatives until its temporary end with the Peace of the Pyrenees, was a constant point of contention between Philip IV, Ferdinand III and, after the latter's death, Leopold I in the years that followed the Peace of Westphalia. The marriage of Infanta Maria Teresa of Austria, eldest daughter of Philip IV and, between 1648 and 1657, the heiress of his vast monarchy, to Louis XIV, despite her previous engagement to her cousin Leopold I and his compromise to leave his territories behind and not present himself as a candidate for the Imperial Election during the time she was the heiress of her father, was also an important source of conflict between the powerful uncle and his nephew.⁷ Although Philip IV rushed to offer his relative the hand of his second-born daughter, Margarita, and she eventually became his first wife, the intra-dynastic problems continued during the last years of Philip IV's reign and the first part of the regency of Leopold I's sister, Mariana of Austria. In those years, the Viennese court maintained the peace with France at (almost) any cost until 1673–1674, a strategy that hurt the international interests of the Spanish branch during the War of Devolution (1667–1668) and other instances of political and diplomatic confrontations with Louis XIV during that time.

In the middle of this situation, one finds the sovereign Tyrolean branch of the dynasty presenting itself to the Spanish Monarchy as a potential ally separate from their shared Viennese family.⁸ In some cases, they even competed with their imperial relatives to strengthen their relationship with the head of the Spanish branch, trying to benefit from the strained relationship

⁶ In this regard, see especially the work of Luis Tercero Casado, "Infelix Austria: Relaciones entre Madrid y Viena desde la Paz de Westfalia hasta la Paz de los Pirineos (1648–1659)," Ph.D. diss (University of Vienna, 2017).

⁷ Concerning this attempted marriage, see Lothar Höbelt, "Madrid vaut bien une guerre? Marriage negotiations between the Habsburg Courts, 1653–1657," in *La dinastía de los Austria: las relaciones entre la Monarquía Católica y el Imperio*, vol. 3., ed. Jose Martínez Millán and Rubén González Cuerva (Madrid: Polifemo, 2011), 1421–1436, and, from the Spanish perspective, with special focus on the succession problem and the position of Maria Teresa of Austria as her father's heiress, see Rocío Martínez López "'The infanta will marry the person who provides the Peace or the one who gives us the means to continue the war.' The negotiations for the marriage between Infanta Maria Teresa of Austria and Emperor Leopold I (1654–1657)," *Royal Studies Journal* 3, no. 1 (2016): 6–27.

⁸ In this regard, see the work written by Luis Tercero Casado titled "Otros asuntos de familia. Relaciones entre España y el Tirol tras la paz de Westfalia," *Chronica Nova* 44 (2018): 55–83.

between Vienna and Madrid. An example of this was the offering made by Claudia of Médici, who had been regent of Further Austria and the county of Tyrol for her son Ferdinand Charles for more than ten years, of the hand of one of her two daughters to King Philip IV after the death of his only son and heir, Prince Balthasar Charles, in 1646. In this competition for a place at the widowed King's side, it was considered that young Archduchess Mariana, the eldest daughter of Emperor Ferdinand III and Empress María Anna of Austria, had the upper hand. Claudia of Medici's envoy to Madrid, the Jesuit Eustachio Pagano, did not hesitate, however, to use every trick to boost the possibilities of the young Archduchesses of Innsbruck. Amongst them, it is apparent that he tried to emphasise Archduchess Mariana's youth (she was just twelve years old when these negotiations began) and the impossibility of her giving heirs to her uncle on short notice. He also suggested that early pregnancies could be dangerous for mother and children, even trying to suggest that her health was not good overall. It was therefore preferable for the Spanish Monarchy that its King chose one of the older, healthy Innsbruck Archduchesses.⁹ Although Philip IV finally wed his young niece, Mariana, this is a clear instance of the Viennese and Tyrolean branches of the Habsburg House competing for the same kind of alliance with their Spanish relative.¹⁰

Similar clashes repeated over the following few years while a succession crisis unfolded in the three surviving branches of the dynasty. During the first half of the 1660s, the Habsburg family saw most of their male members die

⁹ Rocío Martínez López, "Con la esperanza de un sucesor. El uso político de la fertilidad en las negociaciones matrimoniales de los Habsburgo durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVII," *Hipogrifo* 9, no. 1 (2021): 799–808.

¹⁰ To mention another example, when the aforementioned marriage between *Infanta* Maria Teresa and Leopold I was being negotiated, the archdukes of Innsbruck presented the possibility of one of them being elected emperor instead of the then Archduke Leopold. They argued that this possibility would maintain the Imperial Crown in the House of Habsburg, while Archduke Leopold remained free to marry the heiress of the Spanish Monarchy and to go to Madrid to rule at her side if Philip IV finally did not have any surviving male heirs. This clashed, however, with the interests of the Austrian branch. Firstly, Ferdinand III was against the possibility of his heir renouncing the Imperial Election and leaving his patrimonial territories with a regent for the foreseeable future. After his death, even though Leopold agreed to his uncle's plan, he preferred to favour the Austrian line, with the possibility of his childless uncle Leopold Wilhelm and his young brother Charles Joseph being presented as candidates for the imperial election and the regency of his patrimonial lands, respectively. Leopold Wilhelm was especially considered a safe option by Leopold during these conversations, as it was expected for him to remain unmarried, so his line or himself could claim the Imperial Crown again for themselves if the inheritance of the Spanish Monarchy finally did not happen, or if he had several male children to divide his possible inheritance. See this development in the correspondence maintained by Philip IV and his ambassador in Vienna, the Marquis of La Fuente, in the year 1657, at the Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid (hereafter AHN), Estado, libro 125.

in quick succession. Philip Prosper, the heir of Philip IV of Spain, perished just a few days before his brother, the future Charles II, was born in 1661. In 1662, Archduke Leopold Wilhelm died and Charles Joseph, Emperor Ferdinand III's youngest son, experienced the same fate in 1664, a little more than a year before King Philip IV's demise in September 1665. In these years, the males of the Tyrolean branch did not fare any better: the sovereign, Ferdinand Charles, and his brother and heir, Sigismund Francis, died in 1662 and 1665, respectively, without any surviving sons. At the end of the year 1665, the male members of the House of Habsburg were reduced to only two: the young King of the Spanish Monarchy, Charles II, and the Holy Roman Emperor, Leopold I.

Both Ferdinand Charles and Sigismund Francis were married when death found them. The former wed his cousin, Anna of Medici, and together, they had two daughters who survived their father: Archduchesses Claudia Felicitas and Maria Magdalena.¹¹ Sigismund Francis married less than a month before his death to Hedwig of Sulzbach, and they had no issue. Following the succession laws and customs observed by the Central European branches of the dynasty¹² (and different from the ones followed by the Spanish one), all the masculine members of the dynasty, descendants by a male line, would precede all the women of the family to the succession of their territories, regardless of their degree of kinship with the last sovereign. Thus, when Ferdinand Charles died, his eldest daughter, Claudia Felicitas, did not inherit his territories; his closest male relative, his brother, Sigismund Francis, became his successor instead. After the latter's death without any issue, another male relative, in this case, Emperor Leopold I, as head of the Austrian line, inherited everything, despite the fact that the two Tyrolean Archduchesses were daughters and nieces, respectively, of the two previous monarchs. Only in the case that all the male members of the Habsburg House were to die, the women of the dynasty could have the chance to become sovereigns in their own right.¹³

¹¹ Archduchess Maria Magdalena, who was born in 1656, died when she was just twelve years old, in January 1669. Thus, up until that date, there will be references in the text to the two archduchesses of Innsbruck.

¹² With the exception, of course, of the short-lived independent sovereignty of *Infanta* Isabella Clara Eugenia of Austria and her husband, Archduke Albert, whose succession laws followed the Spanish tradition. Concerning this separation and the different legal arguments related to it, even after its cession and Philip II's death, see Alicia Esteban Estríngana, "El Flandes separado, de remedio pacificador a enfermedad de la Monarquía de Felipe III. Terapias sanadoras a comienzos del reinado (1598–1605)", *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia* 82, no. 271 (2022): 321–354.

¹³ Regarding the views of the position that women hold in the line of succession of the different branches of the House of Habsburg, see Rocío Martínez López, "Los derechos sucesorios femeninos en la dinastía Habsburgo: diferentes y enfrentamientos (1500–1740)", in *Mulheres*

The extinction by a male line of the Tyrolean branch of the family effectively left Anna and her daughters, Claudia Felicitas and Maria Magdalena, in a difficult position. In theory, they were under Leopold I's protection, and in the letters of that time, terms like 'protegee' and 'tutor' were often used to describe their relationship. They also were Habsburgs, with the weight, relevance, and dynastic power that entailed in the second half of the seventeenth century. In practice, however, and especially in certain matters, they were considered second-level relatives by the Emperor, and given a lesser position than his sisters or daughters. One of them was clearly on the marriage market. The young Tyrolean Archduchesses were conveniently kept away from potential wedding negotiations in that it was much more convenient for Leopold I to present his half-sisters (and, during a brief time, his eldest daughter Maria Antonia) as potential brides. They were also a possibility for what was viewed by the Emperor as less important, but still acceptable and convenient marriage alliances, for which he would not 'invest' Archduchesses of his direct family. This was especially important at a moment in which most of the sovereign European dynasties of the time were suffering serious succession crises. This not only meant that their succession on a male line was not secured, but also that many dynasties did not have direct female descendants with which to negotiate dynastic marriages. This reality pushed some of the most important royal families of the second half of the seventeenth century to resort to more distant female relatives to arrange international diplomatic alliances. This was the case, for example, of Louis XIV with his Orleans nieces or, later on, of Emperor Leopold I himself with his Pfalz-Neuburg sisters-in-law.¹⁴ It is true that the Austrian line of the Habsburgs fared better in this regard than their Spanish relatives in the 1660s and the early 1670s,¹⁵ as Emperor Leopold I had two adult half-sisters, Archduchesses Eleonora (married first to the

da realza ibérica: mediadoras políticas e culturais, ed. Gonzalo del Puerto, Mercedes Llorente and Renato Epifânio (Lisbon: Instituto Cervantes-MIL, 2019), 67–94.

¹⁴ Concerning the lack of princesses born into the most important royal dynasties of Europe during the second half of the seventeenth century and the influence it had on the rise of secondary sovereign dynasties in the context of international diplomacy, see Rocío Martínez López, "Consequences of the Dynastic Crisis of the Seventeenth Century in the Matrimonial Market and Their Influence in the European International Policy: the case of Maria Anna of Neuburg (1667–1740)," in *Gender and Diplomacy. Women and Men in European Embassies from the 15th to the 18th centuries*, ed. Roberta Anderson, Laura Oliván, and Suna Suner (Vienna: Hollitzer, 2021), 149–184.

¹⁵ After *Infanta* Margarita María was married to Emperor Leopold I and sent to Vienna in 1666, the sovereigns of the Spanish Monarchy did not have any other female descendants until the birth of Maria Ana Victoria of Bourbon, already after the dynastic change, in 1718, more than fifty years later.

Polish-Lithuanian King Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki in 1670, and after his death in 1673, to Charles V of Lorraine, in 1678) and Maria Anna Josepha (who married the Electoral Prince John William of the Palatinate also in 1678). In this context, however, the possibility of counting on the eldest Tyrolean Archduchess to forge an international marriage alliance was of interest not only to Emperor Leopold I but also to the rest of their shared dynasty, especially to their powerful Spanish relatives.

A Spanish project? The potential of a Habsburg bride to change the direction of English international policy

The interest of Mariana of Austria in arranging a dynastic marriage to the Spanish Monarchy's benefit through her Innsbruck relatives can be traced from the end of the 1660s onwards. Pribram, in his classic work focused on the marriage which is about to be explored, briefly describes the potential candidates for Archduchess Claudia Felicitas's hand before her marriage with the Duke of York came into play. These candidates were more linked to the Spanish Monarchy's interests than the Emperor's. He indicates that the possibility of her marrying the recently widowed Duke of Savoy, Charles Emmanuel II, after the death of his first wife Françoise Madeleine d'Orleans was a proposition made directly by the Spanish court.¹⁶ There were also rumours of a potential match with Alfonso and, later, his brother Pedro of Braganza, in the context of the end of the War of Independence of Portugal. If this kind of negotiation was really proposed, however, its life could not have been very long in the difficult context of the Treaty of Madrid of 1668, and the disinterest of the Emperor in having a new reason for friction with the Spanish government, which was very much opposed at that moment to a marriage alliance that could recognise the international position of the Portuguese dynasty, one they would not recognize as equals until they were forced to do so.¹⁷ Potential marriages

¹⁶ Pribram, "Ein Habsburg-Stuart'sches", 427.

¹⁷ Pribram, "Ein Habsburg-Stuart'sches", 427–428. Although Pribram indicates that it was a proposal made by Charles II of England and accepted enthusiastically by the emperor, it was not a convenient alliance for Leopold I, for whom a marriage treaty with the recently restored Portuguese royal family, without taking into consideration the interests of the Spanish branch of the Habsburgs, would not give him any benefits; on the contrary, it could have provoked even more diplomatic problems with their Spanish relatives. Thus, it is implausible that this option was more than a rumour. Pribram also indicates her potential marriage to Charles II of Spain's legitimized half-brother John (Joseph) of Austria, but the analysis of the documents of the time not only indicates that neither the regent Mariana of Austria nor Leopold I would have approved of that marriage, but that the Emperor absolutely forbade any sign that he could

with the Duke of Orleans Philippe,¹⁸ or even Charles II of Spain,¹⁹ did not go beyond the consideration of simple rumours. When one therefore arrives at the beginning of the decade of the 1670s, no marriage had been seriously considered or negotiated for the young Tyrolean Archduchess, although she was increasingly present in the diplomatic correspondence.

The opportunity for an English marriage opened in March 1671, when the then Duchess of York, Anne Hyde, died. She had been married to James, Duke of York, the brother and direct heir of Charles II of England, for more than ten years (1659–1671). They had eight children together but only two daughters, the future queens Mary II and Anne, survived childhood. Given that Charles II did not have any legitimate children from his marriage to Catherine of Braganza, and it was widely considered that they would never come, the need

ever be considered family. These rumours came from John (Joseph) of Austria's himself and his entourage, as he wanted to have a better diplomatic and dynastic position for himself through this marriage, which could also give him, in his opinion, the key to different relevant posts. He also asked the Count of Pötting, the Emperor's ambassador in Madrid, to request his master for his intercession to be elected king of Poland, to which he refused. Silvia Mitchell, *Queen, Mother and Stateswoman. Mariana of Austria and the Government of Spain* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2019), 112.

¹⁸ This possibility was discussed in some of the letters exchanged by the Queen regent Mariana of Austria and the Spanish ambassador in Vienna, the Marquis of Balbases, in 1671, after the death of the Duke's first wife, Henriette Anne of England. The queen warned him that a possible marriage between the Duke and the youngest half-sister of the emperor, Maria Anna Josepha, or with Claudia Felicitas, should be avoided at all costs, because of the great harm such an alliance with France could mean for the Spanish Monarchy. Letter of Mariana of Austria to the Marquis of Balbases, dated 18 March 1671. AGS, Estado, leg. 2484.

¹⁹ Although we will talk more later about her marriage to the emperor, as she would become his second wife and there were rumours about it even before *Infanta* Margarita Maria's death in March 1673, Claudia Felicitas was not a serious candidate while his first marriage was being negotiated. The option of Charles II of Spain, presented when he was still a child, can be seen in the letter sent by Leopold I to his ambassador in Madrid, Count of Potting, on 30 January 1670. In that letter, the Emperor talks about that possibility, suggested by the Archduchess's mother, but the emperor considered it *ein disparate* (nonsense), especially because the Archduchess was more than seven years older than the young king. However, in the *consultas* to the Council of State regarding the first marriage of the King, after the Emperor offered him the hand of his eldest daughter, Maria Antonia, the possibility of him marrying one of her half-sisters was widely discussed, and was supported by several councillors, even though the recently widowed Eleonora was born the same year as Claudia Felicitas, and Maria Anna Josepha only a year later. In those cases, their age was not considered a problem in presenting their candidacies. See, for example, the *Consulta* to the Council of State about the paper that the Count of Harrach presented in the name of the Holy Roman Emperor offering Our Lady the Archduchess as the wife of Our Lord the King, dated December 1674, AHN, Estado, 2799. Leopold I's letter can be read on Alfred Francis Pribram and Moriz, Landwehr von Pragenau, ed., *Privatbriefe Kaiser Leopold an den Grafen F. E. Pötting, 1662–1673*, vol. II (Vienna: Carl Gerold's sohn, 1903–1904), 61–62.

for the heir of the King to marry again was made known almost as soon as the death of the former Duchess was announced.

Amongst all the candidates, a marriage between the Duke of York and Archduchess Claudia Felicitas seemed especially convenient for the Spanish Monarchy under the regency of Mariana of Austria. The letters exchanged between the Queen and her ambassadors in Vienna and London provide great insight into the chronology and motivations regarding the negotiations for this eventually failed alliance, that will span from the second half of 1671 to March 1673, when the death of Empress Margarita María put an end to this project. The Queen Regent of Spain was a very interested party in this marriage negotiations and, from the beginning, both King Charles II of England and the Duke of York, very keen to marry into the powerful Habsburg dynasty, asked for her mediation to achieve it. The political context was undoubtedly complex. As has already been mentioned, the relationship between both branches of the House of Habsburg was not very good at that moment, although there was a Spanish empress, with an influential household, in Vienna, and she was currently the heiress of the Spanish Monarchy. Leopold I not only did not offer his sister open support against France after the beginning of the War of Devolution (1667–1668), but also upheld a strategy of maintaining peace with France to preserve his diplomatic relationship with different actors in the Holy Roman Empire and focus on his confrontations against the Ottoman Empire.²⁰ This situation forced Mariana of Austria to actively seek more allies to counteract the aggressive external policy of Louis XIV without the explicit collaboration of the Emperor, an endeavour in which she had notable success. The negotiations of the so-called Triple Alliance among Sweden, England, and the United Provinces, signed in 1668 to guarantee peace and put a stop to Louis XIV's expansion, and in whose negotiation and upkeep the Spanish Monarchy had a great role to play, was amongst the most important ones of this time. It was so important that Louis XIV soon after tried to break it up, and the Secret Treaty of Dover involving collaboration between England and France was signed in 1670.²¹ Afterwards, the perceived political closeness between Charles II, the Duke of York, and France, and its increasing threat for both the Spanish Monarchy and the United Provinces, prompted Mariana of Austria to put increasing energy into trying to lure England back

²⁰ John P. Spielman, *Leopold I of Austria*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 52–60; Jean Béranger, *Léopold Ier (1640–1705). Fondateur de la Puissance Autrichienne*, (Paris: PUF, 2004), 237–266 (although more than a rapprochement, as Béranger claims, we can see it as a tense peace).

²¹ Silvia Mitchell, *Queen, Mother and Stateswoman*, 98–105.

to an alliance and drive it away from her powerful enemy. In this diplomatic fight, the prospect of marrying a Habsburg Archduchess to the heir to the English throne was a great opportunity that the Spanish regent would not let pass without a fight.

Queen Mariana was therefore from the start much more interested in this marriage than Leopold I. This does not mean that the Emperor was opposed to it; on the contrary, he considered the alliance with the heir of the English and Scottish crowns as quite advantageous. He did not regard it as a priority, however, and was not willing to make any political, dynastic, or diplomatic sacrifices to engineer it. A very clear sign of his position was his refusal to present his youngest half-sister, Maria Anna Josepha, as an option for the Duke of York. Leopold wanted to reserve her for more important dynastic projects—to such a degree that he did not even offer her as a possible replacement for Claudia Felicitas to continue the negotiations with the English (when she became his second wife in 1673).²² In other marriage negotiations, even those that had little chances of success, if the Emperor was politically interested in them, he promoted the candidacy of his sister above the one of her Tyrolean protegee. In this case, however, Maria Anna Josepha, as a single Habsburg woman of a perceived higher rank than Claudia Felicitas, was viewed by the Emperor as too valuable for a match in which he was not especially interested, whereas his relative of another (Tyrolean) branch was acceptable. The alliance with the Duke of York was much more important for the Spanish Monarchy—a fact that all the involved parties understood perfectly well. Thus, the active role of

²² Although several British historians have pointed out that Charles II and the Duke of York did not want to consider the option of the latter marrying Leopold I's sister after the negotiations for the hand of Claudia Felicitas fell through, the analysed correspondence of Mariana of Austria with her ambassadors is clear regarding this point. Maria Anna Josepha's hand was never offered and the Emperor considered that his sister's marriage should be reserved for a better alliance for his territories. For example, in a letter written by the Marquis of Balbases to Mariana of Austria dated 29 June 1673, the ambassador indicated that it was widely assumed that the Emperor would marry archduchess Claudia Felicitas after the death of the *infanta* Margarita María, so the negotiations with the English envoy could be considered broken. He stated that the English envoy Gasconi had tried to suggest the possibility of replacing the bride for Archduchess Maria Anna Josepha, but both Emperor Leopold I and the widow Empress Eleonora made it clear that neither of them was interested in pursuing those conversations at all. In the *Consulta* to the Council of State in which this letter of Balbases was discussed, dated 2 August of the same year, the Council despaired about this question and explicitly indicated that its members would have preferred that the emperor would have not treated the suggestion of the Duke marrying archduchess Maria Anna Josepha with such 'contempt'. Thus, the possibility of a marriage with the half-sister of the Emperor was never on the table for the Stuart brothers to reject. Letter of the Marquis of Balbases to Queen Mariana of Austria, dated 29 June 1673, and *Consulta* to the Council of State dated 2 August 1673. AGS, Estado, leg. 2392.

Mariana of Austria and the Spanish Monarchy in promoting this marriage is key to understanding the development of these negotiations.²³

As has become evident, Mariana of Austria was the most important Habsburg woman involved in this marriage project, while Claudia Felicitas, the bride, was kept completely apart from these negotiations.²⁴ The bride's mother, the widow Archduchess Anna, a very close ally of the Queen Regent of Spain was also, however, very significant for them. Her political savvy was fundamental to promote the candidacy of her daughter, first to future Queen of England and, afterwards, to Holy Roman Empress.

The role expected of Claudia Felicitas at the Duke of York's side was a capital point of these negotiations, however, and the basis of the dynastic marriages in the Early Modern period. The match implied not only an alliance at the moment it was concluded, but it was expected that the constant presence of a consort (and her household) in a foreign realm would permanently influence its diplomacy and policy in benefit of her dynasty and territories of origin.²⁵

²³ In various documents during these negotiations, the role of Mariana of Austria was explicitly acknowledged. For example, in a letter the Duke of York wrote to Archduchess Anna on 19 February 1672, presenting his desire to marry Archduchess Claudia Felicitas, he began his message saying: "[...] Following the good offices that the Queen of Spain promises me, assuring me that, given the proximity of blood that exists between us, she will move you with great particularity to favour my intention [...]" Copy of a letter the Duke of York wrote to Archduchess Anna, dated 20 February 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2389. The Marquis of Balbases, in his letter to the Queen Regent, also describes a conversation he had with the emperor, in which he said that all the proposals that came from the Queen of Spain were very important for him, and that he would support that marriage because it was convenient for his Spanish relatives' interests. Letter written by the Marquis of Balbases to the Queen Regent Mariana of Austria, dated 10 March 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2389.

²⁴ In this regard, it is interesting to note that the diplomatic correspondence mentions that the Duke of York had written letters to his intended bride that were being stopped from reaching their intended target and they would not be given to her until the negotiations were very well on track. For example, Archduchess Anna writes to the Emperor on 4 April 1672, that the envoy of the King of England, Gasconi, went to see her with letters from both the King and the Duke of York, but she has decided to wait for the Emperor's instructions before answering them. She also indicates that the English envoy brought a letter for her daughter Claudia Felicitas from her intended groom, but that she has decided to withhold its delivery because she thought that "it was not time [for that] yet." In the answer Leopold I sent Archduchess Anne on 12 April 1672, he praises her for her decision not to give the Duke's letter to her daughter. Copy of the letter that the Serene Highness the Archduchess sent His Caesarean Majesty on 4 April 1672, and copy of the answer written by His Caesarean Majesty to Archduchess Anna on 12 April 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2389.

²⁵ For example, see Silvia Mitchell, "Marriage Plots. Royal Women, Marriage Diplomacy and International Politics at the Spanish, French, and Imperial Courts, 1665–1679," in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga, and Carolyn James (New York: Routledge, 2015), 86–8. It is the other side of the coin of the strategies to 'naturalise'

These were the expectations, the rules of the game that all the dynasties of the period expected and understood, as they aimed to negotiate dynastic marriages, or prevent interfering of foreign royal families, over the short and the long term. Powerful royal consorts were not the exception in Early Modern Europe; they were the rule, and the international and dynastic diplomacy of that period counted on exactly this to plan their political strategies.

Thus, when the formal petition of mediation for Mariana of Austria reached Madrid's government, roughly at the same time in which the first overtures for formal negotiations were initiated by England at the end of 1671 and the beginning of 1672, it was considered imperative that the new wife elected for the Duke of York would defend the interests of both the Catholic religion and of the House of Habsburg in that kingdom, as well as try to drive the Stuart brothers away from Louis XIV's interests. In the *Consulta* to the Council of State dated 2 February 1672, focused on the aforementioned petition, it was considered that the Duke of York was "the Head of the French party in England" and a marriage with a woman close to their interests would help them to drive him (and the general government of his realm) away from Louis XIV.²⁶ Afterward, in subsequent *Consultas* and correspondence with the Spanish ambassador in Vienna, apart from these two main lines of negotiation, several others were arranged. To achieve it, the King and his brother were supposed to help keep the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, not assist France in their attacks on the United Provinces, help to expel the "foreign people" from the territories of the elector of Cologne that harmed the entire Holy Roman Empire and the Emperor's authority, and, in general, to contribute to the solid understanding, friendship, and kinship that will unite the House of Habsburg and Stuart after said marriage was complete.²⁷ James, as the heir of his brother, and Claudia Felicitas, as a future Queen from the Habsburg House, close to the Spanish Monarchy and also a devout Catholic, would also strengthen their diplomatic closeness and serve as a helping hand to the Catholics under Charles II of England's government. Considering these potential benefits, both Mariana of Austria and the Council of State decided to pursue this potential marriage as something very convenient for the Spanish Monarchy, and that the Regent's resolve should be made known to the Archduchess Anna, King Charles II and the Duke of York, as well as to the Emperor's ambassador in

foreign consorts after their arrival at their courts of marriage, that have been the focus of several studies in recent years.

²⁶ *Consulta* to the Council of State, 2 February 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2389.

²⁷ Letter written by the Marquis of the Balbases to Queen Regent Mariana of Austria, dated 10 March 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2389.

Madrid. It was especially important to hasten the negotiations given the "accidents that we fear for next spring."²⁸

In this context, the fact that the marriage involved a second son was a hindrance; certainly not insurmountable, but without any doubt it would have been preferable to negotiate this alliance with a sovereign that was already on the throne or with an heir that could not be displaced from that position.²⁹ As indicated before, however, it was mostly assumed that Charles II of England would not have any legitimate descendants by Catherine of Braganza, they could not rule out that option completely, and a possible death, repudiation, or dissolution of the said marriage could have allowed the King to enter a new one that might have borne surviving children. The possibility of changing grooms, if the opportunity presented itself, was certainly discussed in the context of these marriage negotiations. In the diplomatic correspondence, as it happened with all the members of the royal dynasties of the time, and many of the most important members of their respective courts, the health of Queen Catherine of Braganza was usually discussed, as well as the suggestions constantly received by the King that he should try to dissolve his current marriage and seek a second one that could give heirs to the Crown. If any of these cases were to happen, Claudia Felicitas would be presented as a possible bride for the King, and not for his brother, who might never become a sovereign in his own right. In this regard, the Marquis of the Balbases, the Spanish ambassador in Leopold I's court, wrote to the Queen Regent that he had discovered that Gasconi, the English envoy sent to negotiate this marriage in Vienna, had a secret mission to assure that the Archduchess would become the King's bride in case Queen Catherine was to die from the illness

²⁸ Ibidem. The 'accidents' mentioned here were the rumours of the beginning of military actions against the United Provinces by France, to which England would probably join in accordance with the treaties of collaboration already signed by both. These fears would become reality that same year, with the declaration of war by England to the United Provinces and the beginning of the Franco-Dutch War.

²⁹ During these negotiations, both Mariana of Austria and Emperor Leopold I presented their concerns regarding the possibility that the legitimized son of Charles II, the Duke of Monmouth, could be named heir to his Crown. Although they mostly considered that the position of the Duke of York as his brother's successor was firm, it was a concern that they kept in mind during this time, and in several instances the members of the Council of State asked for more information about the Duke of Monmouth's position and for confirmation if he had been recognized by the King or not. See, for example, the letter written by the Marquis of Balbases to Mariana of Austria, dated 10 March 1672, and the *Consulta* to the Council of State dated 20 April 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2389.

of 'consumption',³⁰ which she supposedly suffered from at that time. Although it was an interesting prospect, the ambassador did not seem inclined to trust this option, as nobody could know if she would truly die soon, and it would be reckless to threaten a negotiation already on a good path just for such a fragile hope.³¹ This possibility was present, however, during the negotiations, ready to be employed if the circumstances were to change.

In the Spanish correspondence, it was paramount to prevent the Duke of York from marrying someone linked to France's interests, as such a match would be very difficult for the Spanish diplomacy.³² In said correspondence, it was also remarked that the Duke of York was considered a prince exceptionally prone to the influence of the women at his side. The Marquis of Fresno, Mariana of Austria's extraordinary ambassador in London, described Anne Hyde, the Duke's first wife, as an ugly woman, of low birth³³ who "gave the Duke so many enemies." Even taking these circumstances into account, she was able to exert so much influence over him that "as everybody says, she was in charge of him." Taking this background into consideration, the Marquis mused that the Spanish interests could reach new highs if he was to be married to "a princess of high bloodline, that would give him a better position amongst his own

³⁰ In the Early Modern period, the word 'consumption' could refer to several ailments, but it was commonly used to describe a pulmonary disease that often provoked the patient's death. See Michael Stolberg, *Experiencing Illness and the Sick Body in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke-New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 147–9.

³¹ Letter of the Marquis of Balbases to Mariana of Austria, 7 April 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2389. Catherine of Braganza, in fact, survived her husband for several decades, and Charles II never began any process to officially separate from her.

³² "[...] they might have thought about the persistent services that the French make to marry the Duke to their convenience, and the disadvantages we will experiment if that finally happens, because we do not need a very astute statesman to know that, if we add to the inclination to that nation the Duke already shows, a woman of the same disposition, our negotiations in this court will have very little success [...]" Marquis of Fresno to Mariana of Austria. 1 August 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2390.

³³ The question of the "low birth" of Anne Hyde was mentioned in the correspondence and the documents of the Council of State several times during the second half of the seventeenth century. For example, in the negotiations for the first marriage of Charles II from 1674 onwards, very close in time to this potential alliance, the possibility of trying to link the Spanish Monarchy to England through the wedding of the young king to either Princess Mary or Anne was contemplated. When the issue was discussed, amongst other things, the "low birth" of their mother was brought forward, and considered one of the disadvantages of this alliance. For more information, see Rocío Martínez López, "Tu, Feliz Austria, nube. La posibilidad del aumento territorial de la monarquía a través del primer matrimonio de Carlos II," in *II Encuentro de Jóvenes Investigadores en Historia Moderna. Líneas recientes de investigación en Historia Moderna*, ed. Félix Labrador Arroyo, (Madrid: Universidad Rey Juan Carlos-Fundación Española de Historia Moderna, 2015), 457–75.

countrymen".³⁴ It was also considered that this new bride could reaffirm the Duke in his Catholic faith, as it was understood that it was the previous one who took him through his current religious path, and influenced him to support France's interests. With such a precedent, it was the opinion of the Spanish court that they could take for granted that the Archduchess, as a person of higher bloodline than Anne Hyde, and her "having more qualities, and greater beauty and virtues" than the deceased, would be able to have an even greater influence over the English's Prince than his previous wife.³⁵

The idea of the high status of the Archduchess, and the prestige such an important marriage could give to the recently restored Stuart dynasty, were usually pointed out as the most important advantages presented to King Charles II and the Duke of York for this alliance, as neither the Spanish Monarchy nor the Emperor were ready to offer them anything but a dynastic alliance, with the very often vague promises of the political and diplomatic closeness that it entailed.³⁶ Given that the Habsburgs demanded the end of the political proximity to France, amongst other important political steps, it might seem like an unequal exchange. In Early Modern Europe, however, a dynastic match with the powerful Habsburg dynasty meant a great increase in status for the Stuarts who, not so long ago, were refugees under the protection of the same family they wanted to marry into now.

The high status of the bride was also remarked on when the topic of the Archduchess's dowry was mentioned. It was considered that it could be viewed as a little low for such an important match, and the Emperor was not willing to allocate more to his protegee. The Emperor suggested to the Stuart brothers that the Regent Queen of Spain, as a much more interested party in the match, could contribute additional funds to the dowry.³⁷ It was pointed out that the King and his brother were always looking for money and one possible reason why they were looking forward to this marriage so much was because

³⁴ Marquis of Fresno to Mariana of Austria, 1 August 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2390.

³⁵ *Consulta* to the Council of State, 2 September 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2390.

³⁶ Authors like Brikmann have argued that one of the potential interests of the Stuart brothers in this alliance with the Emperor was to get him closer to an Anglo-French coalition, given the Partition Treaty signed by the Emperor with France in 1668 and his political strategy of maintaining the peace with Louis XIV. The diplomatic correspondence of the time and the marriage negotiations, constantly focused on driving England apart from France, refute, however, this possibility. C. Brinkmann, "The Relations between England and Germany, 1660–1688," *The English Historical Review* 24, no. 94 (April 1909): 267–8.

³⁷ *Consulta* to the Council of State, 8 May 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2389.

they thought she was a rich heiress, something very far from the truth.³⁸ That conversation was shut down very quickly, however, by the Spanish government, saying that “[...] in marriages of such high people, nobody ignores what they have, and it is known that those who ask for them should be happy with what they are; and this consideration should be even stronger for the Duke of York, because he will much better off in terms of a wife if he finally marries Our Lady the Archduchess [...].”³⁹ From the 600,000 guilders requested by Gasconi, to the 150,000 that were usually given to Archduchesses, her mother was willing to add the pension she received from the Emperor, and her own patrimony, since Claudia Felicitas was her only heiress. The Spanish government considered it more than enough, refusing to assign her anything else and indicating that “[...] this conversation was against the decorum and for one of their relatives, as Princesses of her grade are asked and taken with the dowry they have [...].”⁴⁰

Despite the interest of the Queen Regent, however, the negotiations seemed to move more slowly than both Mariana of Austria and Archduchess Anne wanted them to be. The declaration of war by England on the United Provinces and the beginning of the Franco-Dutch War in May 1672, in which England actively participated, cooled off the negotiations. It seemed that the principal goal of this marriage, to drive that kingdom apart from Louis XIV and closer to the former Triple Alliance and the Spanish Monarchy, was not going to become a reality.

A death changes everything: Claudia Felicitas as the second wife of Emperor Leopold I

The second half of 1672 shows a delay in the marriage negotiations. Both the Stuart brothers and the Emperor's court blamed each other for this delay, accusing the other party of showing disinterest in finalising the marriage. A preliminary marriage contract was drafted and presented with a date of

³⁸ “[...] I think that they have thought, at the beginning of these negotiations, that the Archduchess was a very rich Princess [...] because [the Duke] craves money and [he is] commonly miserable I warn Her Majesty of the question of the dowry, so from that court attention could be paid to this instance [...].” Marquis of Fresno to Mariana of Austria, 1 August 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2390.

³⁹ *Consulta* to the Council of State, 2 September 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2390.

⁴⁰ Queen Mariana of Austria to the Marquis of Balbases, 12 October 1672. AGS, Estado, 2485.

12 October 1672.⁴¹ It was quite a long one, containing twenty-five clauses, and very soon sparked protests from the English court. It certainly was not a surprise, as Gasconi himself had already warned the King when the final draft was being completed. It was precisely the twenty-fifth clause that became the centre of the English King's objections. There were three specifications in it. According to the first one, if either the King of England or the Emperor were to be attacked in their territories, the other one would be required to help. The second one demanded the King of England, to the best of his ability, to include the Emperor as "a friend" in the peace treaty with the United Provinces. The third point, linked to the Spanish Monarchy, specified that Charles II of England should ratify the guarantee of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle.

Gasconi indicated that his sovereign opposed two of these three stipulations, each for different reasons. As for the first one, as Gasconi reported, it would be impossible to help each other in case of an attack, as their territories were very far away from each other, separated by the sea and the lands of other princes that they could not freely pass through, so it would be an empty promise. The second one, the inclusion of the Emperor in the future peace negotiations with the United Provinces, was acceptable to Charles II. The third was again seen as a problem. Although Gasconi related that the King already felt obliged to maintain that Peace for the pledge he had made before in this regard, it was also pointed out that he would maintain it only if he was given "no fair argument" to break it. Gasconi himself stated afterwards that he considered it 'inappropriate' to make such a clause on the occasion of this marriage, especially given the alliance the Spanish Monarchy and the Emperor had with the United Provinces, and it could be a motive of jealousy and doubt by the English King's allies, a direct reference to France. Thus, Charles II asked for the complete removal of this article from the marriage project.⁴²

This was not well received by either Queen Regent Mariana of Austria or Emperor Leopold I. If the negotiations were already lukewarm after the beginning of the Franco-Dutch War and the refusal of the English King to make any overture against Louis XIV and their common alliance, it now seemed clear that some of the principal goals that prompted the negotiation of this marriage would never be achieved. The Emperor indicated that he would not give a bride of his House without any advantage for him, something that seemed improbable to accomplish at this point. The Queen Regent Mariana

⁴¹ The marriage contract can be read in its original Latin in Pribram's "Ein Habsburg-Stuart'ches", 461–6.

⁴² Copy of the paper that the English envoy Bernardo Gasconi put into His Caesarean Majesty's hands, 10 December 1672. AGS, Estado, leg. 2391.

of Austria, her ambassadors, and the members of her Council of State still considered, however, that having an Archduchess at the Duke of York's side would be better than allowing Louis XIV to push forward a pro-French bride for him. They thought that the treaty could still be fixed, although they did not obtain the main political goals they wanted. The Emperor's ambassador in Madrid, the Count of Pötting, agreed with the Queen Regent's position and distrusted Louis XIV's desire to interfere with this marriage.⁴³

At this point, the negotiations were underway, with Gasconi still trying to convince the Emperor to finalise the marriage; when death changed everything once again. As is usual in the dynastic Europe of Early Modern Europe, the birth and disappearance of members of royal families could alter carefully constructed diplomatic strategies and put an abrupt end to negotiations that had lasted many years. This was one of such occasions. Leopold I had married his niece, Margarita María, daughter of Philip IV and Mariana of Austria, and heiress of the Spanish Monarchy, in 1666, when she was fifteen years old.⁴⁴ They had had four children together, of which only one, Archduchess Maria Antonia, survived the first year of age. The Empress also suffered several miscarriages. The succession crisis of the House of Habsburg and the political problems always linked to such a situation were exacerbated with each unsuccessful pregnancy and early infant death. Rumours of all kinds began to spread, some of them with Archduchess Claudia Felicitas as their centre. It was alleged that the Emperor planned to keep the Archduchess for himself, in case Margarita María was to die, which was the real reason why he had hesitated to finalise the marriage between his protégée and the Duke of York.⁴⁵ Although the delay in the negotiations had nothing to do with Margarita María, and

⁴³ Letter written by the Count of Pötting to the Queen Regent Mariana of Austria, 21 January 1673. AGS, Estado, leg. 2391.

⁴⁴ Concerning the negotiation of this marriage, as well as the journey of the young Empress to Vienna, the composition of her household, and the context of her arrival to the Imperial court, see Laura Oliván Santaliestra, "Giovane d'anni ma Vecchia di giudizio: La Imperatriz Margarita en la corte de Viena," in *La Dinastía de los Austria. Las relaciones entre la Monarquía Católica y el Imperio*, vol. 2, ed. José Martínez Millán, and Rubén González Cuerva (Madrid: Polifemo, 2011), 837–908.

⁴⁵ This rumour became some kind of self-fulfilling prophecy after Claudia Felicitas finally became Leopold I's second wife. For example, in a letter written by the Archbishop of Taranto to the Emperor's ambassador in Madrid, the count of Pötting, dated 24 April 1674, just a few weeks after Empress Margarita María's death, he indicated that it had reached his ears that Archduchess Claudia Felicitas was being reserved for the Emperor and the news of the death of Empress Margarita María had confirmed this to be true. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Spanien Varia, Karton 28, Fasz. 34e.

more candidates for the Emperor's hand were discussed after her early death,⁴⁶ these rumours even reached the Empress, who was so concerned by them that she asked for a Spanish midwife for her incoming labour, as she was afraid that an Austrian one could do something to her to promote the marriage of the Emperor with a 'German' Archduchess.⁴⁷

The twenty-two-year-old, pregnant Empress died on 12 March 1673, a little more than six years after she arrived in Vienna. From that point on, the negotiations for the marriage between Claudia Felicitas and the Duke of York completely froze. Although Gasconi tried to keep them alive, all the interested parties acknowledged how the Emperor's widowhood changed everything. Without any doubt, the members of the Viennese court, the ambassadors, and the Spanish government all knew that Claudia Felicitas had many possibilities of being chosen as the second wife of the Emperor. Following the same logic applied to the case of the Duke of York, the Archduchess was considered by Queen Regent Mariana of Austria a better option for her brother's hand than a potential bride who could come from a dynasty with close ties to France.⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that the negotiations were considered officially ended when it was rumoured that the Emperor would send Gasconi to the intended bride's mother's court to continue them; away from Vienna and the Emperor, it was clear that nothing could be achieved.⁴⁹ Mariana of Austria, who exhorted

⁴⁶ Especially interesting was the case of Eleonora Magdalena of Neuburg, who went on to become the Emperor's third wife. When the possibility of the Emperor marrying one of the daughters of the Duke of Neuburg was presented, it was considered a very risky option by the Spanish Monarchy, as he was viewed as an ally of Louis XIV, following the suit of the rest of the Palatinate House. Three years later, in 1676, when Claudia Felicitas died, the political context had changed once again and she was considered the best option as the third wife of Leopold I, and her father, an ally of the dynasty. See for example the letter of Mariana of Austria to the Marquis of Balbases, dated 21 June 1673. AGS, Estado, leg. 2486.

⁴⁷ Wolfram Aichinger, "Midwife Diplomacy. The Recruitment of a Midwife for Empress Margarita María Teresa de Austria (1666–1673)," *Memoria y civilización. Anuario de Historia*, 23 (2020): 596–7. The main idea behind this rumour was linked to the succession crisis, but also with the concerns, voiced by several councillors and members of the Viennese court at that time, that a rapprochement with the Spanish Monarchy might lead Louis XIV to attack the territories and interests of the Holy Roman Empire. In this regard, the presence of the heiress of the Spanish Monarchy at the Emperor's side as his wife was a risk, and the use of the political rumours of this nature was intended to hurt her political position and influence.

⁴⁸ Mariana of Austria to the Marquis of Balbases, 21 June 1673. AGS, Estado, leg. 2486.

⁴⁹ "[...] Guasani [Gasconi] will have an Audience in a few days, and he will be able to understand, by the answer he will be given there, that he will probably be sent to Our Lady the Archduchess Mother, something that they will consider as a clear disappointment, and the Duke will think that he does not have any Bride, and should search for one somewhere else [...]" Marquis of Fresno to Mariana of Austria, 8 May 1673. AGS, Estado, leg. 2391.

her brother to marry again as soon as possible to ensure his succession, advised her ambassador in Vienna to be discreet on their support of the Archduchess's candidacy to become the new Empress, to avoid, as much as possible, that the King of England and the Duke might be offended by her change of direction in that regard.⁵⁰ Just a few months after Margarita Maria's death, in October of that same year, the wedding between Leopold I and Claudia Felicitas of Tyrol was celebrated. Her former suitor, James, Duke of York, did not wait very long either. At the end of September of 1673, his wedding to young Mary Beatrice of Modena was already settled.⁵¹

Unfortunately, Archduchess Claudia Felicitas was not an Empress for long. Less than three years after her marriage, on 8 April 1676, she died at the age of twenty-two. The two daughters she had with Emperor Leopold I only survived for a few months after their births. In the funeral sermons, like the one given by the court preacher Christoph Traut, people praised her virtues,⁵² but the conversations around a possible new bride for the Emperor began even before her body was escorted to its final resting place.

Conclusions: the last great Stuart-Habsburg marriage project

When one thinks of failed Stuart-Habsburg marriage alliances, the first one that comes to mind is usually the story of the celebrated Spanish Match, in which the then Prince of Wales Charles and King James I's favourite, the Duke of Buckingham, travelled incognito to Madrid to ask officially for the hand of *Infanta* María Ana, Philip IV's sister.⁵³ With this gesture, the English royal

⁵⁰ The Queen herself indicated, in the resolution to the Consulta to the Council of State dated 19 June 1673, that her ambassador in Vienna should behave himself in public 'passively,' to avoid giving England cause of complaint. *Consulta* to the Council of State of 19 June 1673. AGS, Estado, leg. 2391.

⁵¹ Regarding Mary of Modena, it is interesting to note that many of the objections and attacks she received by several members of the English court and government who were pushing for a Protestant bride for the Duke of York, were directed to the candidacy of Claudia Felicitas of Tyrol beforehand. An analysis of these perspectives and her political influence can be seen in Elena Taddei, "An Intercultural Royal Marriage and Experiences of Difference at the English Court. Mary of Modena (1658–1718) as a Carrier of Culture and Political Influencer," in *The British and German Worlds in an Age of Divergence (1600–1850)*, ed. Niels Grüne, and Stefan Ehrenpreis (New York: Routledge, 2024), 227–47.

⁵² Rostislav Smíšek, "Claudia Felicitas of Austria through the Lens of Christoph Traut's Funeral Sermon of 1676," *Opera Historica*, 25 (2024): 57–82.

⁵³ Concerning this marriage, see the already classic book written by Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta. The Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003).

family hoped to put a favourable end to a marriage negotiation that spanned years at that point. Despite its unhappy (for the English crown) conclusion and the bitter memory it left behind, the Stuarts still tried to make marriage alliances with the prestigious and powerful Habsburg dynasty in the next decades. The failed arrangement between the future James II and Archduchess Claudia Felicitas of Habsburg-Tyrol was the last great attempt⁵⁴ to forge such an alliance during the Early Modern Period, before the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the enactment of the Act of Settlement of 1701 forbid any possible marriage with a Catholic of any member of the royal family who wanted to remain in the line of succession.

These complicated negotiations provide great insight into the complex international and dynastic European politics of the beginning of the second half of the seventeenth century. Beyond the interest of the Stuart dynasty or the Emperor, however, this article attempts to demonstrate the great weight the Spanish Monarchy had in the beginning, development, and end of these significant marriage negotiations. Through the documents linked to the Spanish court, it has been shown that the interests defended by Queen Regent Mariana of Austria were those pushing forward this marriage from the point of view of the Habsburg dynasty. She was especially interested in trying to separate England from its alliance with France and bring it back to their previous closeness, to protect the interests of the Spanish Monarchy against the aggressive international diplomacy of Luis XIV and try to avoid a new confrontation with the United Provinces, its ally. Leopold I was initially not especially interested in such a marriage, to which he was not willing to offer the hand of one of his sisters, but it was dynastically convenient for him both to support the Spanish regent's interests, especially when the relationship between both branches of the House of Habsburg was not at their best, and to potentially benefit from linking the destiny of a relative under his authority to the heir to the English throne. The Habsburgs were not going to consent to this marriage, however, without getting something in return, and England's firm alliance with France, their involvement in the war against the United Provinces, and King Charles II's refusal to comply with any agreements regarding mutual protections and guarantees held back its conclusion. Lastly, the early death of

⁵⁴ It should be noted that, when the first marriage of Charles II of Spain was discussed in the Council of State, the potential wedding between the young King and the then still unmarried Princesses Mary and Anne, the Duke of York's daughters, was mentioned, as stated in footnote 33. But it did not go beyond some discussion and was never seriously negotiated. Thus, we can still consider the failed negotiations for the marriage between Claudia Felicitas and James Stuart as the last serious attempt of marriage alliance between both royal dynasties, as further attempts did not go beyond the realm of mere discussion. See AHN, Estado, 2799.

Empress Margarita María in 1673 put a sudden end to marriage negotiations that were already lagging behind from the Emperor's end, despite the fact that Mariana of Austria still attempted to save them before her daughter's demise.

These negotiations also shed light regarding the role women not only had, but were expected to play, from the start in dynastic Europe of the time. Several women of the Habsburg family participated directly in the negotiation of this marriage, from the Queen Regent Mariana of Austria as one of its main supporters, to her close collaborator Archduchess Anna, including her daughter Empress Margarita María, whose help her mother required to convince Emperor Leopold I to bring the marriage to a successful conclusion. Moreover, many of the benefits that the Habsburg rulers expected to get from this marriage depended directly on the influence they considered the Duke's new wife would have upon his politics and behaviour. It is therefore clear and undeniable that royal women not only wielded a great amount of political, dynastic, and diplomatic power, but were expected to exercise it firmly. Powerful royal women were not the exception, but the rule, and should therefore be constantly considered in the analysis of the international and diplomatic development of Europe of the Early Modern period.

Abstract

Between 1671 and 1673, the possible marriage between the then Duke of York, James, heir of the English throne, and Archduchess Claudia Felicitas of Tyrol, was subjected to important and complex negotiations between the members of the Stuart and Habsburg dynasties. Queen Regent Mariana of Austria and the Spanish Monarchy played a central role in them as the most interested party in the Habsburg dynasty to see this alliance come to fruition. The development of these marriage negotiations, focusing especially on two considerations, is analysed in this article. First, the central role that Queen Regent Mariana of Austria and the interests of the Spanish Monarchy had in the negotiation of this marriage, which they hoped would help to break the alliance between France and England, and bring back Charles II of England to the former Triple Alliance with the threatened United Provinces. This article will also highlight the political role that women were expected to play after their wedding, this being one of the bases of the system of dynastic marriage alliances in the Ancien Régime.

"Your Protegee, Sacrificed to the Dispositions of Your Majesty and Those of Her Majesty the Queen of Spain." The Spanish Monarchy and the Negotiations for the Marriage Between...

Keywords: dynastic alliance; marriage; Habsburg dynasty; Claudia Felicitas of Austria-Tyrol; James II of England; Mariana of Austria; diplomacy

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