

In sum, a more dispassionate reading of Branch's secondary sources would turn up much more common ground than she allows, as well as a good deal that has long been accepted in modern scholarship. Save for the distinct and persistent implication that "Christian" ideals are somehow wholly distinct from what were considered secular and civic virtues, it is neither particularly controversial nor novel to conclude, for example, that "the livery companies were fundamentally secular organizations that were governed in line with civic concerns, but that drew upon shared Christian ideals. ... The rhetoric and binding power of Christian principles remained of significance in governing the companies" (42–43).

Along with its rich discussions of individuals and institutions, the greater value of Branch's study may well lie in the ways it motivates one to clarify concepts, "Christian" and "secularization" especially, and perhaps to make finer distinctions in their use.

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Edited by Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes, *Doubtful and Dangerous: The Question of Succession in Late Elizabethan England* is an expansive and important collection of essays offering a reexamination of the Elizabethan succession controversy that ultimately resulted in James VI/I's accession to the throne, with particular attention to the years between the execution of James's mother Mary Stuart in 1587 and Elizabeth's death in 1603. As a whole, the volume argues against the misapprehension that James was broadly, if unofficially, presumed to be Elizabeth's likely successor in the later years of her reign and proves that anxiety about her unknown heir remained ubiquitous, with James's accession in doubt almost until it happened. The book's contributors aim to complicate the religiopolitics of the succession, to extend its import beyond the borders of England to offer interdisciplinary perspectives that treat a wide range of texts and archival materials, and to stress continuity across periods of study. Indeed, this collection will also be of great interest to scholars of the seventeenth and long eighteenth centuries, given its impressive care to show how the controversies raised by the succession reach into Britain's future, from the Civil War through the emergence of party politics.

In two introductory chapters that constitute part one ("Contexts and Approaches"), Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes present the rationale and goals of the collection and a helpful review contextualizing the succession question in the earlier years of Elizabeth's reign. The essays in part two, "Religion and Politics," reconsider the succession as a struggle not just between Protestants and Catholics but also within those groups: Kewes reveals the expediency with which Puritans, Jesuits, and others changed their tack concerning their preferred successor and with which they borrowed their opponents' rationales when the winds of circumstance shifted. Peter Lake and Michael Questier show how an uneasy alliance between Elizabeth's regime and conservative Catholics against the Jesuits shifted the succession in James's direction. Patrick Collinson offers another angle on that story in his analysis of how Anglican bishop Richard Bancroft attacked first the Puritans and then the Jesuits, spurred by his fear that both radical groups threatened monarchical sovereignty. The essays in part three, "The Court," move inward to the roles of Elizabeth's inner circle: Alexandra Gajda offers a

defense of the sincerity of the Earl of Essex's belief that Robert Cecil was part of an evil "popish plot" to enthrone the Spanish infanta, and of the plausibility that James might have believed it, too. Alexander Courtney explains what came next, revealing how it happened that Cecil and James went from enemies to allies after Essex's doomed revolt. Circumstance and expediency, once again, prevailed over ideology and old grudges.

In part 4, "Imaginative Writings," the focus of the essays turns to literary criticism: Arnold Hunt explores how the forbidden topic of the succession was covertly addressed in sermons, news reports, and popular rumor; Richard Dutton argues for a new understanding of the second quarto of *Hamlet* as a version of the play tailored to the Jacobean succession; and Richard McCabe considers James's effort to construct a range of royal personas in his writing. In part 5, "Britain and Beyond," the contributors globalize the controversy: Doran shows how James often played into English prejudices against Scots, to his own detriment; Rory Rapple emphasizes the Irish role in the succession during the Nine Years' War; Thomas McCoog rebuts the idea that continental Europe was not especially interested in England's crisis; and Malcolm Smuts analyzes the works of John Hayward to argue that England, in turn, was responding to wider British and European succession politics. Blair Worden supplies an afterword that synthesizes the interdisciplinary contributions.

It is hard to reach an interdisciplinary audience evenhandedly, and the collection deserves credit for its sophisticated integration of history, literary studies, and political theory, both across and within individual chapters, even as it falls short in a few particulars. McCabe's essay stands out for its skillfully interwoven readings of James's letters to Elizabeth, his political treatises, and his and others' poetry. Still, the book is dominated by historians, and will be most easily read and understood by historians—especially those already versed enough in the period to be able to understand analyses of events without much introduction to them. The fact that Dutton's essay includes a brief plot summary of *Hamlet*, while the "Spanish blanks" scandal is referenced in many chapters but never fully explained, stands as an example of the disciplinary unevenness that lingers despite the editors' efforts. A notable exception is the short section that make up part three, "The Court": historians Gajda and Courtney both offer lucid factual background as well as strong analysis. While it is difficult, too, to decide on the best ordering for a collection of essays that must all refer to elements within each other, these two chapters should perhaps have been situated nearer the beginning of the book because of how well they introduce the major players in the succession controversy. For instance, Gajda's account of the Jesuit Robert Persons's successful textual manipulation of Essex would have contextualized Persons's far-reaching impact across confessional and international divides, a subject addressed by many contributors from beginning to end.

Worden, in his conclusion, is right to identify the great schemer Persons as "the presiding spirit of this book" (297–98). One of the great successes of *Doubtful and Dangerous* is how well it illuminates the vital role that Catholics played in the succession controversy, both Jesuits such as Persons and their coreligionist detractors, both within and beyond England. Given the legal marginalization of English Catholics and the fact that the throne ultimately passed from one Protestant monarch to another, it has been easy to overlook the magnitude of their political and cultural importance during these years; this collection will go a long way toward ensuring that future scholars make no such mistake. Amidst fascinating insights into the calculations and motivations of key players such as Persons, Cecil, Essex, and James himself, among a great many others, one perspective is strikingly effaced throughout—Elizabeth's. But her general absence from the volume is arguably also a positive quality: after all, her resolute silence (and silencing) on the great matter of her succession inspired countless other voices to find ingenious ways of being heard.

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