

Niii Gondomar

Niii1 Why? what meanes this? England, & Spaine alike

Notes. “Heriot”, to whom the Spanish ambassador Count Gondomar is compared in this poem, is Thomas Hariot, the mathematician and associate of Sir Walter Raleigh, who was widely perceived as an atheist, and who died in June 1621. According to John Aubrey, Hariot “did not like (or valued not) the old storie of the Creation of the World. He could not beleeeve the old position; he would say *ex nihilo nihil fit* [nothing comes of nothing]. But a *nihilum* killed him at last: for in the top of his Nose came a little red speck (exceeding small) which grew bigger and bigger, and at last killed him” (207). Gondomar’s alleged affliction with an anal fistula was the butt of much satiric attack during this period; and his reputation for Machiavellian cunning—his ability “To seeme, & not to be”—was widely depicted, both in anti-Spanish pamphlets, like Thomas Scott’s *Vox Populi*, and, during the summer of 1624, in Thomas Middleton’s theatrical triumph, *A Game at Chess*.

“Upon Heriot the Philosopher, that had a fistula¹ in naso; & Seignior Gundomar, that had a fistula in ano”

Why? what meanes this? England, & Spaine alike

Diseased? or doth time both Æquall strike

With Fistula’s? Noe. difference is disclos’d;

Spaine sett’s a faire face on’t, & England’s nos’d.²

Spaines generall actions are like Pedro heere,

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Whose sting is in his taile; his forepart’s cleare;

For some thinke ’t hath bin purg’d by fire: & hee

Is sounder for’t as all the world may see.

Or else, when he had like t’ have gott the fall

At court, his carkase would have shattered all

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To peeces. yet ’tis a pittie one soe great

Should die, but dropping through his closestoole seate.³

His face is England, that’s without a scarre.

Spaine is his heart, treating of peace, for warre

Closely providing:⁴ but his heaviest chance

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(Poxe on it) is his taile, that Emblems France,
 Never without an issue.⁵ 'tis a wonder,
 Did not his litter⁶ helpe, hee'd drop asunder.
 This makes him brood thus in his litter'd Denne,
 Pray Heavens he hatch not 88⁷ agen, 20
 Or wesels treacherous winning:⁸ for some feare
 The match in Parlee's⁹ not the match in care.
 To seeme, & not to be is Spanish art,
 When England shewes at first her foulest part.
 Wittnesse our Heriot, in his nose that beares 25
 A sore, which noe where but behind appears
 In Spaines she statist.¹⁰ who the prize hath gott
 For some more manners, 'cause he hides his plott.
 Yett if these two ere meet, least in the close
 Spaines face infected bee with Heriots nose, 30
 Lett their two sound parts, & their infected kisse;
 Spaine may nose Heriots Podex,¹¹ Heriot his.

Source. Bodleian MS Tanner 465, fols. 81v-82r

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¹ *fistula*: a pipe-like, suppurating growth.

² *nos'd*: nosed; here means either “discovered”, “smelt out”, or “reproached”.

³ *closestoole seate*: the seat of his toilet; but also perhaps referring to the special seat made for Gondomar to allow him to sit comfortably without putting pressure on his fistula. A picture of the seat was included on the title page of Thomas Scott's pamphlet, *The Second Part of Vox Populi*.

⁴ *treating of peace...Closely providing*: the charge here is that the Spanish were using the negotiations for a Spanish Match with England—and their concomitant negotiations to bring a peaceful resolution to the Palatinate crisis—as a cover to further their military ambitions for Universal Monarchy.

⁵ *Emblems France...without an issue*: just as the French supply heirs (royal issue), Gondomar's fistula

constantly leaks a discharge (issue).

⁶ *litter*: Gondomar was carried through the streets of London in a litter to protect him from the jeers and assaults of the populace. The litter is also depicted on the title page of Scott's *Second Part of Vox Populi*.

⁷ 88: allusion to the Spanish Armada of 1588.

⁸ *wesels treacherous winning*: Wesel, a key strategic town on the Rhine, had been taken by the Spanish in 1614.

⁹ *The match in Parlee's*: i.e. the negotiations for the marriage alliance between England and Spain.

¹⁰ *Spaines she statist*: "she" is confusing here; the phrase presumably means "Spaines statist", i.e. the Spanish ambassador and politician (statist) Count Gondomar.

¹¹ *Podex*: anus.
