

A ballad of treason for Queen Mary I's accession

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ABSTRACT

A ninuectyue agaynst Treason is a ballad that was printed upon Queen Mary I's accession. It is comprised of fourteen stanzas; the first ten each have seven lines, and the last four are only four lines each. The ballad is not so much celebratory of the new Queen Mary, but a lesson or warning about the dangers of acting against a Tudor monarch.

KEYWORDS: Queen Mary I; ballad; treason; accession; John Dudley; Duke of Northumberland.

Una balada de traición para la ascensión al trono de la reina María I *

RESUMEN: *A ninuectyue agaynst Treason* es una balada impresa con motivo de la ascensión al trono de la reina María I. Se compone de catorce estrofas; las diez primeras tienen siete versos y las cuatro últimas solamente cuatro líneas cada una. La balada no es tanto una celebración de la nueva reina María como una lección o advertencia acerca de los peligros de actuar contra una monarca Tudor.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Reina María I; balada; traición; ascensión al trono; John Dudley; Duque de Northumberland.

Uma balada sobre traição para a tomada de posse da Rainha Mary I**

RESUMO: Texto *A ninuectyue agaynst Treason* é uma balada impressa por ocasião da tomada de posse da Rainha Mary I. É composta por quatorze estrofes; as primeiras dez têm sete linhas cada uma e as últimas quatro têm cada uma apenas quatro linhas. A balada não é tanto uma celebração da nova Rainha Mary, mas uma lição ou um aviso sobre os perigos de agir contra uma monarca Tudor.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Rainha Mary I; balada; traição; tomada de posse; John Dudley; Duque de Northumberland.

A ninuectyue agaynst Treason is a ballad that was printed upon Queen Mary I's accession on July 19, 1553.¹ The only known copy of this ballad is currently held in the British Library.² It is a single sheet folio, printed in black letter in two columns. According to Joseph Ames and William Herbert it is the only known text printed by Roger Madeley

* Translation into Spanish by Tamara Pérez-Fernández.

** Translation into Portuguese by Miguel Ramalhete.

¹ Thomas Watertoune, *A ninuectyue agaynst treason* (London, 1553). STC 25105.

² London, British Library, MS C.18.e.1.(88.).

(1786, 827). Peter W. M. Blaney suggests that the ballad's type was owned by William Powell, so this was really printed by Powell for Madeley, possibly under Thomas Raynald, who operated at the sign of the star in Paul's Churchyard (2013, ii:752). Powell had a strong connection to texts related to Mary I, as he printed at least three books that were dedicated to her between 1549 and 1555, so it is not improbable that he could have printed this ballad as well.³ Yet, no matter who did the actual printing, the title of the ballad contains a typographical error, as it should read *An inuectyve* instead of *Aninuectyve*.

The ballad was reproduced in facsimile in 1892, when it was included in Richard Garnett's translation of Antonio de Guaras's chronicle of the accession of Queen Mary (Guaras 1892). The text of the ballad was reprinted by Hyder E. Rollins in 1920, in a collection of English ballads (1920, 2-7). Rollins offers a one-page introduction to the ballad, and he has some unusual opinions of Mary for the early twentieth century. He calls her a "too much reviled Queen," something which modern scholars are still grappling with, as her moniker, "Bloody Mary" simply will not go away in popular culture (Rollins 1920, 1).⁴ Yet, when Rollins introduces the ballad, he suggests that the author, probably Thomas Watertoune as the ballad is only signed by T.W., was not concerned with Mary's religious views even though he was probably a Protestant.⁵ He bases this conclusion on Watertoune's sympathy for Edward and the fact that he does not mention Lady Jane Grey as a rival queen, suggesting Watertoune was perhaps sympathetic to her cause. Yet, as I will show below, Rollins is likely incorrect on this point. Literature celebrating Mary's accession

³ The books printed by Powell are John Proctor's *The fal of the late Arrian* (1549); Leonard Goretii's *Oratio Leonhardi Goretii Equitis Poloni de matrimonio serenissimi ac potentissimi, serenissimae potentissimaeque Dei gratia Regis ac Reginae Angliae, Hispaniae & Ad populum principesque Angliae* (1554); and Peter Martyr d'Anghiera's *Decades of the newe worlde or west India* (1555).

⁴ Historic Royal Palaces and its curators, perhaps the most popular and influential Tudor historical institution and group of historians, refer to "Bloody Mary" both on its website and on location at the Tudor palaces. For a reassessment of Mary that fights against this reputation, see Doran and Freeman 2011; Hunt and Whitelock 2010; Edwards 2016; Duncan and Schutte 2016; Samson 2020; and Pérez Martín 2008.

⁵ The identification of Thomas Watertoune as the author of the ballad is generally accepted, yet Watertoune does not appear to have written any other printed ballads to support this suggestion.

was written by Protestants and Catholics alike, and the potential for Mary to lead England into religious unity (although what that would look like remained opaque) is a common theme among the popular literature written and published at Mary's accession (Schutte forthc.). Further, Rollins argues that Watertoune's "joy, like that of the people at large, arose from the knowledge that Mary's accession would put an end to the power and tyranny of the Duke of Northumberland" (1920, 1). His observation about the unpopularity of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland is substantiated in both primary accounts and popular literature produced at Mary's accession that blame him entirely for altering the succession in order to place his daughter-in-law Jane on the throne (Schutte forthc.). Accordingly, the people of England celebrated Mary's accession both because Northumberland was an overthrown tyrant and because Mary was the rightful heir.

Thomas Watertoune's ballad is frequently cited as a piece of accession literature that bolstered Queen Mary I's legitimacy. Alice Hunt notes that the ballad shows a "sense of the fragility of a divinely ordained legitimacy" (2008, 119). Jenni Hyde suggests that the ballad emphasizes Mary's dynastic right, which is true (2018, 160-162). But while this ballad was produced for Mary's accession and touts her lineage and legitimacy, it is not so much celebratory of the new queen, but a lesson or warning about the dangers of acting against a Tudor monarch. At the time of Mary's accession, she was a legal bastard, which is one of the justifications that Edward used to exclude her as his heir. Yet, according to King Henry VIII's 1544 Act of Succession, Mary was his acknowledged offspring and legal heir should Edward die without any children of his own. Therefore, in July 1553, Mary's legitimacy was directly related to her ability to inherit the throne, and literature, such as this ballad, had to grapple with her gender, religion, legitimacy, and lineage all at the same time. To do so, Watertoune focuses on treason and attempted usurpation of the throne against all of the Tudor monarchs to show that Mary's accession was as legitimate as her forebears.

Ninuettyue is comprised of fourteen stanzas; the first ten each have seven lines, and the last four are only four lines each, which probably explains why Garnett was not impressed with the ballad, noting that its author "was no nursling of Apollo or the Muses," and that it is "wretched as a poem" (Garnett 1892, 29). Above the first stanza is a two-line introduction: "Remember well, o mortall man, to whom god

geueth reason, | how he truly, most ryghtfully doth alwayes punyshe treason" (1-2). It is possible, though not stated within the ballad itself, that this was not so much of an introduction, but a refrain. If it was meant to serve as a refrain, this further substantiates that the entire premise of the ballad is a warning against committing treason, as Mary, like the three previous Tudor monarchs, had to contend with treasonous subjects immediately at her accession.

The first stanza explains how in recent memory several acts of treason have been committed against English monarchs. Watertoune writes, "I called to remembraunce the hateful war and stryfe | which hath ben don within this realme through gret iniquite" (5-6). Many traitors have tried to "achyue the crowne, 7 reyal dingnyte" (7). Again, the ballad is not entirely about Mary, but demonstrates how Mary's accession follows a pattern of unsuccessful usurpers who attempted to gain monarchical power. Watertoune presents Mary as in a line of rightful, divinely ordained Tudor monarchs who all overcame treason at the start of their reigns.

In stanza two, Watertoune turns to the example of Richard III. Watertoune wants to know "what moued the Duke of Glocester, Edwarde the fourthes brother" (10), to seek the destruction of his two nephews and also the queen. Richard, "styll workynge tyl he had brought to passe, his false and yll entent | by murtherynge the innocentes, that he him selfe myght raygne" (14-15). But, "lyke a noughty false traytour, at Boseworth was he slayne" (16). The second stanza is important for setting up the history and tradition that led to Mary's reign. Watertoune uses it to tell readers that treachery is not tolerated and will be punished by death; Richard acted treacherously, and was ultimately killed. It also invokes Bosworth, the battle in which Henry VII's army defeated and killed Richard. Here, Watertoune evokes Mary's grandfather, thereby establishing her lineage and legitimacy as Queen.

Continuing with Richard, Watertoune recalls how Richard convinced Edward IV to have their brother, George, Duke of Clarence, killed. Edward himself presided over George's trial and demanded that Parliament pass a bill of attainder against him for treason of dubious loyalty. However, according to Watertoune, Edward was immediately remorseful, "for which wycked fact sone afterward, the kynge was ryght sory" (20). But the final line of this third stanza

repeats how Richard was later punished for his actions: “Yet at the last this ranke traytour, as boseworth was he slayne” (23). Again, Watertoune goes back to Mary’s Tudor dynastic roots, emphasizing that traitors against the crown will be punished by a rightful Tudor monarch. This seems both celebratory and cautionary to anyone else considering plotting against the new queen.

Stanza four is still about Richard, whom Watertoune alleges also killed Henry VI with a short dagger. For three stanzas, Watertoune piles on all of Richard’s traitorous acts, such as killing his nephews, the rightful kings; instigating the killing of his brother; and killing an anointed king. Whether or not Richard actually did these things, what is important to Watertoune, which he stresses through repetition, is that “but at the last, for his desartes, at Boseworth was he slayne” (30). All of Richard’s terrible acts were vanquished when Richard was killed by the army of the rightful king, Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch. Richard was king only briefly because his attempted usurpation was righted by the true king, Henry VII, in a similar fashion to the short reign of Jane Grey being unseated by Mary.

Stanzas five and six turn to treason against Henry VIII. “Lyke treasone to our last Henry, was wrought by haynous spyght | By olde Hemson and by Dudley, as traytours most vntrue” (31–32). Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley were accused of exerting undue influence over the young king, yet were more likely condemned for their role in the financial activities of the previous reign (Gunn 2016, 8–9). Watertoune goes on to write, “yet many treasons mo were done, agaynst this noble kynge” (38). Though under Henry VIII several men and women were executed for committing treason, such as the organizers of the Pilgrimage of Grace, Edward Neville, Henry Pole, Thomas More, and Elizabeth Barton, the example of Empson and Dudley is perfect for Watertoune because Edmund Dudley was the father of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, who was executed in 1553 for plotting against Mary, and who the rest of this ballad vilifies. In these stanzas on Henry VIII, however, Watertoune notes that God revealed these traitors’ wickedness so that “no myscheuous trayatour could obtayne his owne entent” (42). Again, treason was discovered and punished, but this time not by a rightful king on the battlefield, but by a rightful king on the throne through the intervention of God. Although these two stanzas proclaim Mary’s lineage and legitimacy, they do so in the context of treason and coups,

suggesting that though the legitimacy of Mary, and by extension the Tudors, has been questioned, they always prevail. As a result, the message is clear that those who supported Northumberland, and perhaps the Dudley's more generally, were doomed from the start.

Stanza seven turns to the most recent English monarch, Edward VI. During his reign, "traytours hath increased | And spronge vp very hastely" (45-46). It is likely that this refers to Edward's uncle, Thomas Seymour, who was executed for treason at the instigation of his brother, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector. Thomas made a bid for power over Edward as early as summer 1547, only six months after his accession. Yet, Edward "sought and mynded goddes glory, entendyng vertuous wayes" (48). This is the sentence for which Rollins suspects that Watertoune must have been a Protestant. However, "entendyng" is problematic. Could Watertoune have used "entendyng" to mean that Edward was responsible for "increasing" virtuous Protestant activity in England? Or, as I suggest, did Watertoune think that Edward intended to be virtuous, but was not? Or, that Edward intended to be godly, but was led astray? If so, then perhaps Watertoune was not a staunch Protestant supporter of the young king. Even if Watertoune meant that Edward intended virtuous ways, as in he sought to increase his own virtue, this line can still be read that Edward fell short, and does not firmly identify Watertoune's religious position.

In the same stanza, Watertoune continues,

With him and his two vnclcs deare, they made dyuers assayes
Vntyll such tyme as they cought them, in theyr most crafty trayne
And so working most wyckedly the ryghteous haue they slayne. (49-51)

The slain righteous could be a reference to those executed for participating in the 1549 Prayer Book Rebellion, a revolt in Cornwall and Devon against new changes outlawing traditional religion in favor of the *Book of Common Prayer*, further cementing that Watertoune was not a Protestant. As for Edward's wicked uncles, this same crime, execution of a brother, was used against Richard III in an earlier stanza. Somerset, however, was overthrown in a coup by Northumberland, and later executed for felony. Therefore, Edward's uncles, once they tasted power, also plotted against the young Tudor monarch and were rightly punished. Ironically, the Lord Protector

was executed by the urging of Northumberland, who later committed treachery against Mary.

Stanza eight finally turns to Mary. Watertoune writes,

At last they dyd attempt agaynst, theyr lyege Lady and Queene:
Mary, by the grace of god of Englande and of Fraunce
And also ryght heyre of Irelande. (52-54)

Yet, God preserved Mary from “all hurt and myschaunce” (55). Watertoune continues, “Whom god at her great nede doth helpe, workynge nothyng in vayne | Subdueth to her, her enemies al, which wrought with dredful trayne” (57-58). Here, Watertoune is laudatory of Mary and mentions her favor by God. God has preserved her during all of her prior hardships, such as her separation from her mother and being declared a bastard, in order that she should one day become Queen. At the same time, however, Watertoune takes away Mary’s agency. While Mary herself credited divine intervention for her success, in Watertoune’s previous examples, those kings killed their enemies with God’s assistance (Hunt 2008, 119). For Watertoune, all credit for Mary’s victory goes to God, whereas the kings played a part in their own success. The level of divine intervention is different. With that point aside, what is most important is that Mary was a providential monarch with God on her side.

In stanza nine, Watertoune describes those traitors against Mary as “most fearfulle to beholde” (59), though he does not name them specifically. He continues that “if god wolde haue ben helper to such, as stryue in the wrong | But at the last he helped vs, though we thought it ryght longe” (62-63). Watertoune concedes that Mary’s enemies were strong, and if they had been favored by God, they would have been victorious. Yet, in the end, God helped “vs.” But who is “vs”? I suggest it is Mary and her supporters, but it leaves unclear if Watertoune was in the group of original Marian supporters in Norwich. Hyde suggests that Watertoune uses “vs” so as to place “the audience on the side of Queen Mary. It divided the audience by excluding those who did not support her, affiliating them with those traitors, who were, of course, always punished” (2018, 162). As Watertoune used “vs” to place himself in the group who always supported Mary, the next line then gives away that he was not a noble, as he does not use another inclusive term, such as “we”: “The Nobles here proclaymed her queene, in voydyng of all blame | Wherefore

prays we the lorde above, and magnyfie his name" (64-65). It is not clear if the "nobles here" were those in London or in Norwich. Mary was first proclaimed Queen in Norwich on July 13, 1553. But perhaps "voydyng of blame" indicates that "here" is London, where Jane was proclaimed Queen on July 10 and Mary was not proclaimed Queen until July 19, only after the Privy Council saw Northumberland's defeat as inevitable. Watertoune seems to acknowledge that some switched sides so that they could not be blamed as traitors as well. What Watertoune wants to make clear is that he supported Mary all along.

Further complicating Watertoune's location is the first line of stanza ten, in which Watertoune writes that Mary's proclamation as Queen was "done the .xix. day, of this moneth of July." "This moneth" seems to indicate that Watertoune wrote this ballad immediately upon Mary's accession, within the last twelve days of July. Watertoune tells of the joy in London when Mary was proclaimed Queen, which seems to align with all other accounts of the event.

In the Cytie of glad London, proclaymed most ioyfully
Where capes and syluer plenteously, about the stretes did flye
The greatest ioy and most gladnes, that in this realme myght be
The trumpettes blewe vp all on hye, our Marie's royall fame. (68-71)

There were immediate celebrations in London when Mary was proclaimed Queen on July 19, but she herself did not enter the city until August 3. It is not clear if Watertoune witnessed the events in London or if he heard about the London celebrations while in Norwich with Mary's retinue. It seems most likely that Watertoune was based in London, as his ballad was printed by either Madeley or Powell.

In stanza twelve, Watertoune continues to marvel at the celebrations for Mary's accession: "Such myrth was made in euyry place: as the lyke was neuer seene | That god had shewed on vs his grace: in geuyng a ryghtful queene" (79-80). Like so many other first-hand accounts and pieces of literature printed upon Mary's accession, Watertoune stressed jubilation as had never been seen in London for the proclamation of a new monarch. Mary was not just accepted, but *wanted* because she was the "ryghtful queene." She should have been queen based on both law and tradition.

In the final two stanzas, Watertoune returns to the theme of treachery. He still never mentions Northumberland by name, but he does relish his downfall. “And where as he went forth full glad, as prince both stout and bolde | He came a traytour in full sad, with hart that myght be colde” (81–82). Northumberland was taken to the Tower of London as a traitor on July 25, giving further clues as to when Watertoune wrote his ballad. It is likely that this was composed during the last week of July, after Northumberland’s imprisonment, but before Mary entered London, or he likely would have included that information. Northumberland was later executed on August 22.

Watertoune concludes his ballad: “We se therfore the ouerthrowe, of al theyr wicked wayes | Howe wicked might is brought furlowe, to gods great Laude 7 prayse” (87–88). He must have written it in the immediate aftermath of Mary’s proclamation and Northumberland’s downfall as a warning to those who did support the Catholic Queen. Like her grandfather, father, and brother, Mary discovered who was treasonous against her and will punish him. Yet again, God exposed traitors to the monarchy and the rightful Tudor monarch was victorious.

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