

AT: Welcome to the Infinite Women podcast. I'm your host, Allison Tyra, and today I'm joined by historian Dr. Johanna Strong to discuss Queen Mary I of England. And this is actually part two, so if you'd like to hear more about Mary's origin story, her childhood, and how she came to the throne, please be sure to check out part one. [Listen to Part 1](#) or [read the transcript](#). But in this episode, we'll be discussing Mary's actual reign. When she comes to the throne, we have gone from the very Protestant Edward to the very Catholic Mary. And obviously that leads to a lot of upheaval.

JS: Absolutely. It goes kind of from one religious context and environment to a very different one. And so there are a lot of similar issues in a sense that, obviously England since Henry VIII has broken with the Church has changed so much. And so as Mary comes to the throne, she - hopefully unsurprisingly to listeners - decides that she would like England to officially return to Catholicism. And so that's one of her first big moves and decisions. And how she frames this as she comes to the throne is that she doesn't necessarily want to make that massive decision right away. She wants to let people worship how their conscience dictates. And that kind of works for a little bit.

And then there's a shift. And that shift comes as Philip II arrives to England to marry Mary. And that shift happens. Some would say it is a correlation. Some would say Philip coming is a causation. But wherever historians stand, into her reign, Mary officially puts through Parliament some acts, laws that will put basically older heresy laws into place. And so heresy at kind of the most non-theological definition is basically that you're going against what the official church says. Or you're not believing something that the official church says is true. And in this case for Mary, that means that if you are not a practicing Catholic, following what the Catholic Church says from Rome, from the Pope, then you are a heretic. And so this applies essentially to all Protestants because they are by definition protesting what the Roman Catholic Church is doing. And so as these laws come into place defining what a heretic is, they also define how that's going to be punished. And the traditional punishment for heresy is by burning. And so this is as Mary is going into her reign and as she gets to 1554, 1555, these laws are put back into place. And this is where we start to see some of the massive executions, massive in the sense not of numbers executed at once, but massive in the sense of these are some big names. Thomas Cranmer, who has played a massive part in the annulment of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon is one of the people who falls victim to this. And he is executed. And I think that's one of the more questionable executions that Mary does. Again, obviously the caveat, please do not burn people. It's not how we do it in 2023. But at the time, this was the usual way of punishing heretics.

AT: Well, as you said, it sounds like she didn't write these laws. They were something that had existed, had fallen out of favor, and she brought them back. But I do agree, Cranmer sounds like a personal vendetta, not that I particularly blame her for that one. But these weren't something where she just out of the blue went from zero to 60 on the tolerance to burning people scale.

JS: No, completely. So these heresy laws, and again, I do have to say, I agree with you about

Cranmer. It's one of the ones where people go kind of, "how do you justify this?" And I go, "I really have no way to justify that."

AT: Well, okay, no, okay, to be fair, to be fair, if we are arguing that, you know, we are punishing heresy, we are punishing people who went against the Catholic church. If he was an architect of that whole situation, he's largely responsible for the whole schism that they've been dealing with for the past 20 years. So, I mean, that actually seems legit, apart from the personal side of it, that seems fair. He's largely responsible for this, if he's the one whispering in Henry's ear, "you know, we could just tell the pope to go screw himself and start our own church." That seems worse than like the people who wanted to say mass in English instead of Latin.

JS: Yes, there is kind of the spectrum of how much of a heretic are you? But yeah, I think Cranmer is such a tricky one, because by definition, he is a heretic. But it is, I do have to say this against Mary. It is somewhat suspicious timing that she waits until the heresy laws come into place for her to punish him. But yes, that's a whole debate.

AT: But that's what I'm saying is if she just wanted to have him executed, like her dad just executed people willy nilly, which is not a sentence that I ever thought I would say. But here we are. So if she was going to pull the whole "I'm queen, I can do whatever I want, cut off his head," I mean, she could have done that anytime. So I say it as more legit that she's waiting until these laws, because these laws did go through Parliament as well. She wasn't the only one unilaterally saying, "Oh, yeah, let's bring back burning people. That seems cool."

JS: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. And I guess that is a fair point that if she waits for it to be heresy, she does make this massive statement about, "this is my parents' marriage. This is how we deal with this." Absolutely. The other kind of big thing when we talk about Parliament, I think we often think - I am equally guilty of this - that we often assume, Oh, well, today, for better or for worse. Again, that caveat of 2023 - Parliament is technically the voice of the people because they are elected. That is definitely not as much the case in the early modern world.

AT: But don't you still have the House of Lords though?

JS: Yeah.

AT: Nobody's electing them and they're like half of your bicameral system, right?

JS: They are, though, apparently the house of lords has no veto power anymore. So basically, the House of Lords has very little power now, which I just thought, it's so different from how it works obviously from a Canadian system, it's a whole thing.

AT: So we've gone from what it would have been in Mary's time, which is all lords, to now the lords are pretty much just for show. But at this time, we've got all the lords running Parliament and they obviously had their own motivations.

JS: Yes, and heavily influenced by what the monarch wants because at this point, there isn't that separation that we have now of the monarch as a figurehead. At that point, there really is no prime minister. No one is acting in that position. And so Parliament is directly responsible to the monarch in the same way that technically it is today. But in Mary's day, it is very much, if the monarch is upset with you, they will let you know. And so, so technically these heresy laws do go through Parliament. So it is technically something that Mary and her regime don't just decide one day they're going to do. And I think what's really interesting about these decisions on what is the punishment for heresy is that they are working from an established precedent, both in England and on the continent. That the traditional punishment for heresy is burning. And there is some sense among historians who look at the religious changes in the Tudor era and look at how heresy is dealt with. That if Edward, and again, that is a big if, because he doesn't live longer. But if he had lived longer, there is a great potential that he would have brought in burning as the punishment for heresy as well. Though in his case, heresy would have been Catholicism, not Protestantism, but Mary very much is working within the "norms" of the day. And so, obviously, that's not to condone her actions from our modern point. That's that's not to diminish that these are 300, plus or minus, people who are executed for their beliefs. But it is very much in keeping with how the early modern Christian world functions. And I think what's really interesting is that as her reign goes on, we see kind of, if you put this on a chart of length of reign versus number of executions by burning, it does have a steady kind of downward trend towards the end of her reign. And I know this makes me sound so callous, "like oh, yeah, let's put it on a chart like it's fine. These aren't people." They are people. And that that's what makes the conversation tricky. But the beginning of her reign is very much about taking those decisive actions against some of the massive names. So, people like Cranmer, people like Hugh Latimer, people like Ridley, so these big theologians. And her concern really is on these very public-facing names, this public-facing heresy. And she's not as much concerned of what you're doing in the privacy of your home with just your family. Because her concern is, where publicly are you challenging the regime and its beliefs. And so, as her reign goes on, the number of executions for heresy does decrease, which then suggests that people were less outwardly proclaiming non-Catholic beliefs. And so, in a sense, if her intention is, "I will bring England publicly back to Catholicism," then it has worked in a sense if we look at the numbers.

AT: I'm just wondering, because of course, religious persecution is not a new thing. It's something that obviously we're still seeing today and was not a new thing at the time. And I can see, for example, Jewish people wanting to continue practicing their religion in secret, because that is their heritage, that is their culture, that is this deeply embedded lifestyle. Where I'm getting confused is this particular brand of Protestantism. Obviously, there were larger Reformation efforts going on elsewhere. But the Church of England had only existed for like 20 years. Why were people so devoted to it?

JS: I think part of it is, especially if we're looking at the aristocracy, if we're looking at people who have gained from the Reformation, it becomes, not to say that personal belief is no part of it, but it does come to have an economic value in a sense, because as Henry breaks from the Roman Catholic Church and starts dissolving monasteries, so that official taking church land and

property, buildings, religious orders, taking them away from the church and basically going, "you're no longer a nun, you're no longer a brother in an order, you're just an average person." And as those institutions move away from the church and into private hands, if you're a lord who owns a former monastery, you're not going to want to give that back because it's making you a ton of money. It is the strategy of rewarding people who are following Henry by giving them former church property. And so part of it is financial.

And I think part of it is, it's hard to say in the record how much the average person actually changes as religion changes, because for the most part, unless they do something horrifically wrong in the eyes of the law at the time, we often see very little of an individual's life. And so it is hard to say how many people in Edwards reign are just publicly conforming and are going like, "well, this isn't how it was yesterday." And so when Mary comes to the throne, how many of them go, "oh, I know this, like this, this is what I grew up with." So it is complicated.

AT: So two thoughts there. First, and we sort of touched on this when we're talking about Mary as a princess. And that was that most people in the country at the time were never going to see the king. They were very much, "my lord is the guy in charge. That's who I owe my allegiance to." And so if your Lord says this, then you as the average person, regardless of what the king or queen is saying, because you've never met that person, but Lord Such and Such says this is how we're doing things. And so you just believe him.

And the second thing that occurred to me as you were speaking, was that did Mary ever try to take back the monasteries and the nunneries and the riches? Because the Catholic Church is rich. Like today, back then, like that was the whole point. Like clearly, Henry was using the carrot where Mary went with the stick. But so was Mary actually trying to reclaim that? Or were they just paranoid that she was going to?

JS: So that that is one of the really interesting things about Mary and Catholicism in England is that officially it returns to Rome. It officially goes back to the pope as the head of the church instead of the monarch. But Mary never tries to take back that church land because to start with, it just logistically is an impossible task because a lot of it, some buildings are completely destroyed. Most buildings have been completely reconverted for private use. And so it just is an impossible task by the time she gets to the throne to take that land away from nobles who have it. And she needs them on her side.

AT: And also, you don't have the the monks and the nuns and the priests, like the people who were actually running those abbeys and often operating businesses, depending on where you were and what resources you had, a lot of them were self-supporting because they had their own side gig going on. But I mean, those people were all kicked out 20 years ago. So even if you said, "I'm taking back this abbey," you don't have the nuns. You have, you have none.

JS: Yeah. And that's that's one of the things is Mary, when she's queen, really encourages the re-establishing of religious borders. But again, is very hesitant to say, I'm going to recreate this order. And I'm going to put you in your traditional convent, because she'd have to anger whoever is currently holding that. And so it is this weird parallel, in a sense, of she's going back

to the religious orders traditionally associated with Catholicism in England, but is doing it in a very different way now. And it's interesting looking at that because Mary is very much on the forefront of what 20, 30 years down the road, they would acknowledge and recognize as the Council of Trent and as the Catholic Reformation, where the Catholic Church basically looks at itself and goes, "okay, the Protestants aren't right, but there are some things we should be working on." And so she's very much at the forefront in England of going, "okay, Catholicism looks different. We can't undo the Protestant Reformation, but how can we make it that there is a Catholic response to this?" And that the Catholic Church changes to stay relevant and current and something that the people want to be part of.

And I think that's again, another really interesting bit that I think, a lot less so in the academic world now, but very much so in TV representations and in a lot of the books aimed at more public audiences, it's really hard to create that nuance that the church, the Catholic Church that Mary wants, is not simply turning back the clock to 1520 when her parents are married and everything's fine. Everyone's Catholic and England is actively outlawing anything that's Protestant. She's not trying to turn it back to the day when Henry is named Defender of the Catholic Faith. She's just trying to kind of bring it back officially and to go, okay, there are some things we can't change, but what are the things that fundamentally a Catholic Church needs to have? And those are the things that she tries to re-implement.

AT: Probably because a lot of media has really depicted her as a villain, and often that is to heighten the drama when Elizabeth comes to the throne as this younger, prettier, not burning people option. And you know, "oh, she's been poorly done by as well in her life." So I think a lot of people when they're writing fictionalized versions like to present Mary as the negative counterpart so that they can really hype up how great Elizabeth was in turn.

JS: Absolutely, absolutely. And I think so much of the time in fiction, whether that's in books, in TV shows, in movies, you want to have that villain where they come on the scene and you go, "oh, they're back." But for any of us, that's not how we are. We do some things and we go, "why have I done that?" And you do other things and you go, "no, I stand by that. I'm really proud of that." And I think it, as you say, it becomes so easy when we're so used to this narrative that Elizabeth is so tolerant. And she just accepts everyone and, you know, "do what you want to do, but just don't challenge me." And in that case, Mary has to be the villain, in a sense, because someone has had to have put Elizabeth in the Tower. And so, who easier to put that on than Mary, even though she's making this decision for the continuity of her part of the dynasty. And it very much then becomes, in the dominant historical narrative, it very much becomes this idea that Elizabeth is the greatest, is the best. How are we going to top her? And so, by definition, because she is so different from Mary, if Elizabeth is everything that is good, then Mary must be everything that is wrong. And so, this is kind of where we see the historical narrative, especially. And then that influences this more public narrative. This is where we see the creation of Bloody Mary. And this is where we see this creation of, in a sense, a caricature of the historical person. And I think what I find the most intriguing is that during Mary's reign, when what we now come to see as very Protestant authors are writing about it. And after her reign, while Elizabeth is queen, when Protestant writers are writing about Mary, she is not referred to personally as Bloody. It's

her reign that is Bloody. It's the laws that are Bloody. It's basically everything but Mary as a person. And it's not until 1658, when Nicholas Billingsley writes a piece where he calls her Bloody Mary. And this is the first time we have this in writing or the first known time we have this in writing. But that Bloody Mary moniker really doesn't catch on until Charles II at the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. And then he, when he dies, he is succeeded by James VII of Scotland, II of England. And it's during those two reigns of Charles and James that really this Bloody Mary narrative grows. And a lot of that is because England in hindsight stays Protestant. And so it's easy to cast Mary as a villain because, "well, look, she's persecuting people because of religion. We don't do that." Well, no, because Elizabeth renamed it treason. But it's still the same thing. And so it's this easy comparison in a sense to make. And so she gets put down in history then as Bloody Mary, as someone who who comes to the throne, is just angry, bitter, lonely, old, and just wants revenge for everything that has happened to her. And that is very much kind of a hindsight point of view. If you use the knowledge that Mary had at the time and the knowledge that her counselors, her regime had at the time, that that is a very different story. But I think that that Bloody Mary persona really gets cast back onto her. And it's something that the academic world has very much moved away from. But it's something that still hangs on, especially until very recently, hangs on in especially television and in movies.

AT: It's more dramatic. I mean, as a dramatic element, that's a much more interesting, and it's an easier character to write when it's something as flat as essentially a hurt child grown up, wanting to punish the world that hurt her. That's a much easier and flatter character to write than this nuanced adult woman who's gone through all of this. But, this is gonna sound awful. She only burned about 300 people, which again, don't burn people. We're not, we're not saying that's okay. But you know, she's not ordering people who have just been praying privately in their homes sent to the stake. You know, she's specifically going after the people who are religious rabble-rousing, if you will. And it's not that high of a number in the context of other much more aggressive purges that you see in religious persecution throughout history. So again, don't burn even one person, but in the larger context, 300 is a relatively small number. And my sense from what we've been talking about is more that she wasn't she wasn't doing this to punish people, but her goal was more to actually heal the rift with the Catholic Church because that was so important to her. It was a deeply, her faith was a deeply embedded part of who she was and how she saw herself and what she saw as her responsibility as queen. And I mean, I wouldn't be surprised if she was the kind of person who believed that, you know, "all of you are going to hell. If I let you keep doing this, I am trying to save your souls. Damn it." Is that sort of the vibe?

JS: Yeah, absolutely. And that that's very much kind of the sense in the early modern Christian world. Any sort of persecution or punishment for heresy was basically done for the purpose of stopping someone from going to hell. And so this idea that the first option is never death, in any regime in the western Christian early modern world. Any regime that has persecutory policies, it's not "you've done this once, you're done." Because the whole goal is to move people back to the religion the regime wants them to be. And so really execution comes as this final straw that they've done everything they can to try to make you change, but you aren't. And it's this way of trying to bring people a sense back that if you're going to keep doing something that is "wrong,"

then we are going to stop you before you hurt your soul even more.

AT: So there was like a warning system in place and they were sort of coming at it from the perspective of, and again, I don't advocate for this whole "kill people who don't agree with you" vibe that we have going here, not okay. But from their perspective, this was almost like a civil defense situation where, "you are dead set on this and you're going to hell, but if we don't stop you, you're going to take others with you."

JS: Exactly, exactly. And so again, it is very much that. And again, don't burn people don't pursue people for their beliefs, but it's that sense of if you have one bad apple, it's going to spoil the rest of the apples. If you have kind of one piece of moldy bread, you know that that it's already gotten through the rest of your loaf, even if you can't see it. And so this idea that you have to deal with that immediately and effectively, if it's something that is going to continue to spread. And it is something that is absolutely abhorrent to, what should be to everyone, in 2023. And yet at the time, it's something that is just understood. It's just accepted. The fact that London Bridge would have had heads of traitors on it - just par for the course. You go "oh, yep, going to do my shopping, look, there's the latest traitor." That wasn't, I don't want to say it's normal, but it is normalized that that is just how society deals with it. And it is very different we do it now, but it does all fit in that context.

AT: A big part of why there was this shift into actually punishing heresy was Philip.

JS: So Philip is, when he is being proposed to Mary as a husband is a prince. And he is a prince of Spain, of the Holy Roman Empire. And the Holy Roman Empire, for anyone who's unfamiliar is essentially a group of different realms of countries, nations. We wouldn't use the term then, but it's basically a bunch of different countries who come together and they all acknowledge the same ruler, who is elected. And so it doesn't mean that those countries have any relationship with each other. They just all share the same ruler. So Philip, as he's being presented as a potential husband for Mary, is the most eligible bachelor in Europe at the time, because he is the son of the Holy Roman Emperor. He stands to inherit quite a lot from his mother, from his father. He stands to inherit basically half the world, because Spain has a massive empire at this point. And so, of course, Mary is going to look at him and go, "oh yeah, you know, that's family. I know them," not personally, but it's that tie again through her mother. And well, if you're getting married, why would you not pick the most eligible bachelor?

AT: And so just to clarify, anyone who doesn't have the Tudors memorized, Catherine of Aragon was a princess of Spain before she came to England and married. So when we say they're family, not in a creepy way. Certainly by European royal standards, there was way more closer inbreeding going on. So like a second cousin is pretty, you even need a papal dispensation for that? Like you're practically not even related.

JS: Yeah, exactly, exactly.

AT: So it's not close enough to necessarily be creepy by the standards that we're measuring by. But she does have that emotional connection because she was very close with her mother. I don't think she'd ever been to Spain, but she may have had this sort of idealized version of this lovely Mediterranean country where it's not raining and cold all the time and the beautiful palaces and everything. And so I wouldn't be surprised if she had some of that sort of second-hand nostalgia that she'd gotten from her mother.

JS: Yeah, yeah, completely. And Spain has also been, and Charles V, especially who is the nephew of Catherine of Aragon. And Charles V historically had, and his ambassadors had, really made it a point that they needed to protect Mary. And so there is in a sense that historical loyalty that basically they've looked out for her, they've protected her, they've wanted to keep her safe and in line for the throne. And so it then, in a sense, when she comes to the throne and is looking for a husband, it's natural that she would look to Spain as a country, as an empire, as a set of realms and family who had supported her. But the issue that we get, especially once Mary has died and can no longer defend herself. One of the big questions that comes up is, "but it's Spain. But Spain has an empire, but Spain's just going to take us over and England's just going to become another country in the Spanish empire. Why would we want that?" And so Mary and her counselors, her regime, are really careful when they come to put that marriage treaty together, because of course, as a royal, you can't just go, "hey, you want to get married? Yeah, cool." It's, "we need to have this written down of, this is who's bringing what to the marriage. This is what happens if they only have girls. This is what happens if they only have boys. This is what happens if Philip dies before Mary. This is what happens if Mary dies before Philip." So it's, they have to write all of this down. And in that marriage treaty, there are quite a few basically clauses that are written that restrain Philip's power in England, or at least theoretically are going to restrain his power. And part of these are that he's not allowed to claim the throne after Mary's death, that he's not allowed to take Mary or any future children out of the country without her permission and without the permission of the council, that he's not allowed to control any of the fortifications, defenses of England. He's not allowed to have, in a sense, that military power, that if Spain goes to war, England doesn't have to go with them. England can choose to as it does in France later on in Mary's reign. But there's all of these different pieces that are put in place so that in a sense, Mary isn't overpowered by Philip. And that is a really big fear at the time because the understanding of biological sex and of their understandings of gender was that because of what, biologically what sex you were, that defined the roles you had. And so women were, again, their beliefs, women were inferior to men. And so the wife always had to listen to the husband. The daughter always had to listen to the father. And in that case, it becomes tricky with Mary because she is a queen in her own right. But by definition, a queen, that time is going to be a woman. And a woman is always subject to a man. So if Mary has all this power and she gets married, does her husband automatically get that power? And in England, they say, no, absolutely not. But it is a very tricky situation that they're needing to handle to say, "okay, we know that Mary will listen to her husband because that's what a wife does. But a queen can't listen to a prince. A queen can't just do whatever some foreign king tells her to do. And so the treaty is so well written that when Elizabeth I is looking at getting married and is looking at foreign matches, they go back to



Mary's marriage treaty and go, "some good stuff in here. Let's just cross out Philip's name and put in whoever else's." And that is the basis of Elizabeth's negotiations, which I just think is so cool. But there is this concern that Philip is a man who's going to overpower Mary as a woman. Philip is coming from this massive empire. He's going to inherit so much. How do we make sure that England doesn't just become a piece in that puzzle? And so that's what they're needing to figure out as Mary looks to marriage and then to Philip as the husband.

AT: And I think this came up again centuries later when Victoria took the throne. And I believe it was very clear during her reign that Albert was not the king. He was the king consort. And so it sounds like there was a similar situation happening here.

JS: Yeah. And that is very much, very much the case that technically, and I say kind of technically, officially according to the marriage treaty, Philip had a very limited role. But in reality, and there's a really interesting book that is looking at Philip's role in England and basically is advocating for us seeing Philip and Mary as more of a joint monarchy in the way that Isabella and Ferdinand, Mary's grandparents, how they are ruling Spain together. And I think that's again, this ongoing historical discussion of how much power does Philip have technically, legally, and then how much power does Philip actually take on, and is he allowed to take on. And so again, that makes this narrative really complicated when we talk about it, because marriage in the early modern world is just so different from what we would kind of recognize and say, "yes, these are the parameters of what I would like in a marriage." And that that makes it tricky then to write about and to research in hindsight.

AT: And I think especially if we're starting off the marriage with implementing heresy laws, because he's also a Catholic monarch, and that's not the greatest tone to be setting. And one of the things that I feel like I've seen in popular narratives as well, when we're talking about, you know, Mary as this bitter, old, kind of pathetic character, I feel like I've seen multiple depictions where Philip is this like physically attractive, significantly younger than her, which of course was not the norm at the time. And I feel like part of how people emphasize that narrative of Mary as a non-heroic figure, whether we're talking about the villain, or the pathetic "old woman", even though she's like late 30s, but by the standards of the day, by the standards of someone who's wanting to bear children at that time, presenting her as someone who was just, finally, finally, had a man, and was just completely under his thrall. So how accurate is that? Because I'm guessing it's not 100% correct.

AT: No, so Mary very much in her private life does fulfill those gendered expectations that she'll listen to Philip, she will take his advice. But as a regime, she is still the queen, though they do sign things together. A friend of mine in his PhD is really looking at the iconography of Mary, and has been looking at depictions of Mary and Philip together, and the way that they really present their monarchy as something they're both doing. But Mary is often, not always, but is often, especially at the beginning of her reign, and by the time she's married to Philip, is often portrayed as being either in the more prominent, more respected position on coin or in a painting, or she's presented slightly higher than Philip, which is again that she's the queen. And I

mean, yes, by this point, you're a king, but you're not the king of England. And so it really, it is these subtle reminders that Philip is not King of England in his own right. He is King of England by marriage. And I think Mary straddles that line between the submissive wife and the queen of England, which is then extremely complicated. As you try to untangle that, you actually can't separate the wife from the queen.

AT: So he became King of Spain while he was married. So how did that work? Was he in England? Was he in Spain? What was happening there?

JS: As I guess that happens to everyone when they get married, Philip II needed a wedding present. And the wedding present from Dad was a kingdom, as one does, I guess. And basically, the wedding present from Charles V is the title of King to some of the smaller territories that is part of the empire that Charles has. And so when Mary and Philip get married, he is a king. She is a queen. But it's not until 1555 that Charles V decides, with the Holy Roman Empire, with Spain, he goes, "listen, I'm too old for this. I'm done. I'm exhausted. I don't want to do this anymore. Someone else can do this for me." And he abdicates. And it's at this point that Philip becomes the king of Spain. And Mary becomes his queen consort to all of these territories. And it's at this point that Philip kind of seeing that Charles is getting ready to abdicate. These are discussions that have been ongoing. It would not have been a shock to Philip that all of a sudden, "oh, like where did Dad go?" These would have been discussions they were having. And so Philip leaves England because he logistically has to be in Spain. He has to be in this empire that he is now needing to secure as its ruler.

And so that often or traditionally has been seen as, "oh, well, Philip was some young hot guy who just didn't want to be with his wife." And so he just goes off and he just abandons her. And actually, it's less a case of he doesn't like Mary and wants to abandon her. And more a case of logistically, he needs to secure his authority. And the best way of doing that is being there. And so it does change their relationship. I think because now all of a sudden, he has so much more that he needs to be doing. And that then, again, makes it complicated for Mary because one of her big jobs as a woman, as a wife, as a queen, is she has to give birth to an heir. And how do you do that legitimately, if your husband is not in the country. And so I think that also changes things. And I think especially the timing is often seen as convenient because Mary believes that she's pregnant by the end of 1554 into 1555 before Philip becomes King of Spain. And so by the time that they're realizing that there is not going to be a child from that pregnancy, Philip, now all of a sudden has so much more on his plate and goes, "actually, I need to go take care of this." And so it's often seen as kind of very convenient that "she doesn't give birth, then you just peace out. Okay." And so obviously there is just so much that's changing at that point when he becomes king of Spain, that their relationship does change. And how history looks back at their relationship, that changes because he now all of a sudden is needing to do so many more things.

AT: Well, and there's been some debate because obviously, pregnancy tests weren't quite so accurate back then. She had two that were aware of. And it's possible that one of them or even both of them, it's not likely, but it's possible that at least one of them was an actual miscarriage.

She was approaching 40 and during a time period when plenty of women didn't live to 40. And when we're talking about the importance of pregnancy, because this has come up before when talking about queens is, not only it was important for her to secure, especially if she's focused on securing a Catholic legacy, but he's also newly come to the Spanish throne. And he also needs an heir if he wants to solidify and secure his position, because you were saying he went back to Spain to make sure that that transition happened without any shenanigans, shall we say.

JS: Yeah, absolutely. And that's one of the tricky things with Mary again is because she is the first crowned queen in her own right, she has to define what that is, because traditionally, queens in England had been consorts, and their main job was to get pregnant and give birth and have healthy, preferably boys. And Mary then has to redefine that to say, well, yes, obviously, Mary still has to be the one to become pregnant and give birth, because Philip can't. But it then becomes that she has to do this while also running the country. And so, her pregnancies are often, traditionally rather, judged very harshly. So, she is very hesitant at first when those around her in late 1554, early 1555, are saying, listen, Mary, everything's pointing to the fact that you're pregnant. And she's very hesitant about that. She goes, "I don't know, is it?" Part of it is you don't want to get your hopes up. But she eventually is persuaded. And they kind of go, "look, here are all the facts, the facts point that you are pregnant." And the reason that I think the first one is probably a pregnancy, and again, we can't say with 100% certainty, because we don't know, is there come rumors by the summer of 1555 that Mary has given birth. And the bells all ring, that the country celebrates because the rumor is that she's had a boy and everyone is thrilled. Then it comes out actually, "just kidding, hasn't happened." And so obviously, if people are believing that rumor, and again, I know in 2023, people believe a lot of things that aren't true, but if people are, in a sense, believing that she's pregnant, there must be some outward reason to be believing that. And I think at a point there, if everyone around her is saying, "look, Mary, everything is pointing to the fact that you are pregnant." And the fact that people are commenting sometimes very creepily of this is how her body is changing. This is what she looks like. This is how she's acting. And then in addition to these rumors that she's had the baby, we have these rumors that she's given birth to what in the early modern world is called a mole. A mole in the early modern context is basically a growth that would be basically expelled as if by birth. And so this could very well be that she has been pregnant. There has been development, and then it's miscarried. And so there's kind of enough belief at that point that she is pregnant, that she goes into her lying-in. So she basically goes to Hampton Court and prepares herself that she's going to give birth. She gets her rooms already. She basically closes herself in with her ladies and says, "right, here we go." And then it doesn't happen. It doesn't happen. It doesn't happen. And eventually they just move palaces instead of making this official announcement. By the time we get to 1558, Mary again thinks that she's pregnant. And if we look at the effigy that is created to be on top of her casket as it's processed to Westminster Abbey, we can see on that effigy that she is bloated, she is carrying some extra weight around her stomach. And it does very much look like the early stages of pregnancy, kind of where it's at that weird stage where if you see someone that you aren't super close to and you kind of go, "do I ask if they're pregnant? Do I not ask? It's kind of that stage."

AT: Okay, and just to be clear, if you're ever not sure, don't ask. Just don't ask.

JS: Yes, just don't ask. But it's kind of with that stage where you go, yeah, like you could see why at the end of her life, she could have thought she was pregnant. But what happens with that one is towards the beginning of 1558, she writes a will that basically goes, "I think I'm pregnant." Pregnancy is dangerous in the early modern world. And so she basically sets out, "this is how I want things to happen if I die." And then, by the end of October 1558, she writes basically an amendment to her will that goes, "I realize I'm not pregnant, realize I'm dying. This is what I want to have happen." And I think that second "pregnancy" is probably not a pregnancy just because it acts very differently than the first one. A lot more people are unsure about whether she's actually pregnant. And the fact that in hindsight, we know that it's probably something internal that is causing ill health with a variety of other things that are going on at the time. That one probably isn't a pregnancy. But it is one of those things, when you look at it, and when you kind of look at the position Mary was in, that she she does need to have a baby. Because if she doesn't, then England goes to Elizabeth, who is the daughter of the woman who usurped Mary's mother's spot. She is a Protestant. She is the antithesis to Mary. And you can then kind of, if you understand that mindset of why Mary needs to have a child with Philip, it becomes so much more understandable why so many people cling to this idea that she's pregnant the first and the second time. And why if we frame that in these terms of a phantom pregnancy, where the body basically does everything as if it was pregnant, except doesn't grow the baby, you can understand there's so much pressure that her physical body is under. You can understand why it would react the way that it does. But often these pregnancies or miscarriage or non-pregnancy, however, people want to frame them, they're traditionally used to point to Mary and to go, "see, she doesn't know what's happening," or "well, what a failure. She's a woman and she can't even give birth," again, in the concepts of the day. And so it becomes this very personal issue for her that is also intensely political. And so it's, in a sense, weaponized against her and really leads to this creation of the idea that, "what good is a queen if she can't secure the dynasty, if she can't give birth."

AT: So there's no baby and instead she dies. And as you were saying, there were multiple drafts of her will. She didn't want Elizabeth to succeed her. So we've got our second succession crisis in less than 10 years, which is great, great job Tudors.

JS: Stability there. (laughter)

AT: And Philip did mourn her. So when we're talking about, their marriage and popular depictions versus what the evidence actually supports, he does mourn his dead wife. He's just also busy literally running a country.

JS: Yeah, and that's I think the biggest thing traditionally, the way that Mary's death is written about has been, "Philip wasn't even there." Well, no, he's off fighting a war. That Philip's not there, he doesn't miss her. And he goes, "well, I'm reasonably sad at her death." And new research, especially from Gonzalo Velasco Berenguer's new book has retranslated some of

Philip's letters that are just after Mary's death. And instead of the traditional translation that he has, I think it's "reasonable regret" at the death of his wife, he's retranslated it and gone, actually, that's not. Yes, that is technically, if you looked at the dictionary, that is what the word means. But words can have multiple meanings and nuances and interpretations. And that actually, Philip is probably just showing that he's genuinely sorry that she's dead. And it again is that tricky spot that Philip can't be there when she's dying. He can't make it back to St. James Palace, because he is in France fighting a war with Spanish and English troops. And so Mary is again, needing to face this with her ladies, with those who she trusts to have around her. And one of the things that in her last days, she basically asks Elizabeth, "please, can you make sure that England stays Catholic," which I mean, Mary has to know that Elizabeth wouldn't do. But that is one of the things that she hopes for. And the other big thing that is probably, and again, this is not written in the historical record, there's nowhere that goes, "this is why I want this." But I think it is a great comfort to her that in her will, she asks that when she dies, she would like to be buried with Catherine of Aragon. And she would like not to be buried at Peterborough, where Catherine of Aragon is currently, but she would like Catherine's body moved so that they can be buried together either at Westminster Abbey, or at Windsor Castle. And so basically, she tries to have a burial that is due the recognition to her and to Catherine. And of course, this doesn't happen. Though she never kind of explicitly gives that Elizabeth is going to be the heir, she never explicitly says, this is what's going to happen. But she does leave this set of wishes for Elizabeth to follow. And Elizabeth doesn't return the country to Catholicism. She doesn't move Catherine of Aragon to be buried with Mary. And she doesn't create the tomb that Mary would like. And so for that reason, we have Mary who's buried in Westminster Abbey. And she doesn't really have a marking for her grave until 1605, when Elizabeth is moved from elsewhere in Westminster Abbey, to be put into Mary's grave. And there is that, the modern massive tomb that commemorates Elizabeth and puts Elizabeth in effigy on the throne and really only remembers Mary in one line. So it is again, Mary comes to the throne at this height of popular support, this height of power and goes out basically realizing, you know, Philip's not there. They've had some ups and downs in the war, and the country's not going to be Catholic. And it's one of those, in like a lion, and out like a lamb, that her reign ends on a very different note than she probably would have wanted to, and certainly had asked for it to.

AT: And so I feel like we've mostly talked about the drama, because good Lord, there is so much drama. And the religious changes that she tried to implement that, of course, Elizabeth just reversed pretty much as soon as she came to the throne. So is there anything to Mary's legacy that she would be proud of, in terms of, is there anything that we can remember her for that isn't questionable religion and drama?

JS: Absolutely, absolutely. And I think it's in the 1998 *Elizabeth* film, where there's a scene that basically goes, "Mary's left you, navy, no money, no this, no that. And when I watch it, I just get so angry at it, because those are some of the things that Mary should be remembered for, because she does significant work on the English military, and really strengthens it so that when Elizabeth comes to throne, she has a great navy, she has a great military.

AT: So when we're talking about, oh, Elizabeth defeated the Spanish armada, that was actually largely thanks to her half-Spanish half sister who was married to the king of Spain?

JS: So Elizabeth obviously then grows on it. But Mary is one of the ones who goes “we need to fix this.” And Mary just, she never gets remembered for that. She gets remembered for, “oh, she doesn't have a kid.” Lots of people don't have kids! Why? And she doesn't get remembered for the way that she re-strengthens England. And part of that is the navy, the military, part of that is that she also really focuses on revaluing the money, the currency. Because at the time, if we picture a coin today, and we kind of look at the edge, at least on British coins, you see that the edges have little ridges in them. That didn't used to be the case. It used to be that money was basically smooth all the way around the edges. And so if you had a coin, we'll say if you had a 10 pence piece, which is not the money that used at the time, but just for ease of explanation, a 10 pence coin would have been made with 10 pence worth of material. So whether that's silver, copper, gold, whatever, it was actually worth what it said it was worth. And so a way for you to make a little bit of extra money is if you basically took scissors and clipped the edges off of the coin. The coin still on the surface says that it's 10 pence, but it isn't actually anymore. And so Mary, as part of what she does in power, is she looks at this and goes, listen, our currency is not worth what it says on the face of her coins, because people have been clipping the edges. And so she basically does a massive campaign going, “okay, bring your money to me. And I will give you different money” so that they can, in a sense, revalue currency that they can say, “yes, if it's 10 p, if it's 50 p, if it's a pound, that is actually what it's worth.” And this massively stabilizes the economy, massively stabilizes England as an economic force. And I don't think Mary gets enough credit for that. That this is something that Henry VIII struggles with. This is kind of a massive issue for the Tudors. And Mary effectively puts a solution in place, but then is never credited with it, because the religious persecution overshadows it. And again, not to condone it, but to say that there are parts of Mary that are negative. And there are parts of her reign that are very difficult for us in 2023 to understand. But there are also parts of her reign, where she was an absolute powerhouse. She looked at the issues and went, “here's how we're going to fix it.” And I think she deserves more credit for some of that than she gets.

AT: Join us next time on the Infinite Women podcast. And remember - well behaved women rarely make history.