

Performance, Politics, and Queenship: Rhetorical Strategies of Tudor Mothers, Daughters, and

Sisters

by

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Abstract

This project explores how four Tudor queens utilized performance and written rhetoric to gain and maintain power, as well as how their efforts influenced their daughters and kingdoms. Chapter One centers around Catherine of Aragon and her performance as queen in comparison to Vives's prescriptive *Education of a Christian Woman*. Although Vives's text was meant to be an instructional manual for women (specifically noble women), Aragon's performance as queen, due to the social and political aspects of this role, often went against what Vives wrote. This resulted in a performative negotiation between how a noble woman and a queen consort should conduct herself within the socio-political sphere. In Chapter Two, I outline how Katherine Parr utilized her published works to gain and maintain her influence within the court and with the current reigning monarch. *Psalms and Prayers* aided in establishing Parr's positionality as a legitimate queen and capable partner to Henry during the beginning years of their marriage and her regency. Her later work, *Lamentation of a Sinner*, sought to maintain the influence that she had gained within a court that she no longer had a strong position over, during her step-son's reign. Chapter Three compares the rhetorical strategies of Mary I and Elizabeth I, as reflected in state papers and personal accounts, to read their queenly performances as potentially complementary, rather than competitive, and to explore how both women learned from their predecessors. This chapter discusses specific instances where Mary and Elizabeth pull on specific examples set by Aragon and Parr that help them to maintain and grow the influence that they each believe to be their divine right.

From a historical perspective, each of the Henrician queens have received an increase in attention throughout the last twenty years. Scholars such as Micheline White, Christy Beemer, Rebecca Quoss-Moore, and Janel Muller have worked in recent years to increase our collective

knowledge of how rhetoric was utilized by early modern queens, as well as how this usage influenced other writers and women of this period. Aragon and Parr were, as this thesis argues, incredibly influential for how Mary and Elizabeth crafted their queenly identities. Although both women certainly sought to establish governmental contiguity by invoking the image of their father, they more subtly and, I would argue even more effectively, were able to maintain their positionality and power through utilizing the rhetorical strategies of Aragon and Parr. The queenly education provided by their predecessors ensured that both Mary and Elizabeth would learn how to rule effectively in a male-dominated society.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Presence and Purity: Catherine of Aragon's Performance Negotiation	5
Positionality and Power: Katherine Parr's Use of Rhetoric.....	32
Performance and Politics: The Educational Influence on Queens Regnant	51
Conclusion	75

Introduction

In the early modern period, mothers were often the main educator of their daughters. Among the nobility, sons would have tutors or other forms of a more formalized education while daughters would learn from their mothers how to maintain a household, play music, do embroidery, or perform other “womanly” or “wifely” tasks. However, several English queens began to move away from this type of education and sought to instill a more socio-politically advantageous one. Throughout my thesis, I have sought to uncover how various Tudor queens utilized performance and written rhetoric to gain and maintain power, as well as how their efforts influenced their daughters and kingdoms. Specifically, I was drawn to Catherine of Aragon and Katherine Parr. Aside from their shared positionality as wives of Henry VIII, each woman utilized her own rhetorical strategies to influence the shape of direction of early modern England. In addition, their actions inspired the next generation of queens; particularly, Mary I and Elizabeth I of England utilized similar forms of rhetoric that, I posit, in part originated from Aragon’s and Parr’s examples.

Chapter One centers around Catherine of Aragon and her performance as queen in comparison to Vives’s prescriptive *Education of a Christian Woman*. Although Vives’s text was meant to be an instructional manual for women (specifically noble women), Aragon’s performance as queen, due to the social and political aspects of this role, often went against what Vives wrote. This resulted in a performative negotiation between how a noble woman and a queen consort should conduct herself within the socio-political sphere. Aragon’s influence often depended on how she was able to balance the roles she was assigned, as well as how she would maintain said influence throughout her husband’s tumultuous reign.

In Chapter Two, I outline how Parr utilized her published works to gain and maintain her influence within the court and with the current reigning monarch. I focused mainly on *Psalms and Prayers* and *Lamentations of a Sinner* because each was published during a vital period of time for Parr. *Psalms and Prayers* was written while she was the regent for Henry VIII; *Lamentation of a Sinner* was written as her step-son, Edward VI, took the throne. Both works served distinct purposes for Parr's courtly and political influence. *Psalms and Prayers* aided in establishing her positionality as a legitimate queen and capable partner to Henry during the beginning years of their marriage and her regency. In addition, this helped solidify her courtly influence as more conservative religious leaders began to seek ways to displace Parr. Her later work, *Lamentation of a Sinner*, sought to maintain the influence that she had gained within a court that she no longer had a strong position over. As Edward's counselors, including his maternal uncles, worked to establish their own power and influence, Parr chose to do the same thing, but in a more subtle manner. Parr's text clearly places her underneath the king's authority, while also implying that her religious beliefs and political experience could be useful in helping Edward establish his rule.

Chapter Three follows the ever-evolving comparative narrative surrounding the reigns of Mary I and Elizabeth I. More specifically, I have compared the rhetorical strategies of Mary I and Elizabeth I, as reflected in state papers and personal accounts, to read their queenly performances as potentially complementary, rather than competitive, and to explore how both women learned from their predecessors. As each woman chose to utilize performative and written rhetoric, a reasonable avenue for this study is the influence of Aragon's and Parr's earlier rhetorics on Mary's and Elizabeth's reigns. This chapter discusses specific instances where Mary

and Elizabeth pull on specific examples set by Aragon and Parr that help them to maintain and grow the influence that they each believe to be their divine right.

The relevance of this work to early modern studies lie in its expansion of analyzing rhetorical dialogues and strategies utilized by queens. From a historical perspective, each of the Henrician queens have received an increase in attention throughout the last twenty years. While this has greatly increased our historical knowledge of the lives of these women, it's also important to be sure that we, as scholars, are giving proper attention to their rhetorical strategies, as well, in order to create a more well-rounded picture of early modern queenship. Scholars such as Micheline White, Christy Beemer, Rebecca Quoss-Moore, and Janel Muller have worked in recent years to increase our collective knowledge of how rhetoric was utilized by early modern queens, as well as how this usage influenced other writers and women of this period. Specifically, their work also leads into the realm of educational studies. Aragon and Parr were, as this thesis argues, incredibly influential for how Mary and Elizabeth crafted their queenly identities. Their rhetorical examples provided the younger queens with an insight into what strategies worked well to increase and maintain their own influence as queens. Throughout my thesis, I argue that Mary and Elizabeth often make direct references to Aragon and Parr's rhetoric throughout their reigns, and especially during the early years.

While Mary and Elizabeth were queen regnants instead of queen consorts, the lessons they likely learned from Aragon and Parr are seen throughout their respective reigns. It's evident that they would have been aware of how fickle socio-political support was within their respective courts, especially after witnessing the machinations that occurred during their father's and half-brother's reigns. Although both women certainly sought to establish governmental contiguity by invoking the image of their father, they more subtly and, I would argue even more effectively,

were able to maintain their positionality and power through utilizing the rhetorical strategies of Aragon and Parr. The queenly education provided by their predecessors ensured that both Mary and Elizabeth would learn how to rule effectively in a male-dominated society. As Aragon and Parr had to negotiate their roles, so did Mary and Elizabeth; however, they had to establish their authority on a grander scale with greater risks.

Presence and Purity: Catherine of Aragon's Performance Negotiation

Catherine of Aragon was Queen of England for twenty-four years; however, through the efforts of her husband, Henry VIII, as well as her enemies, the mark that she made on the English court was minimalized. Theresa Earenfight recounts the savage nature of this erasure as an unknown person “cut Catherine’s pomegranate badge from the cover of a book owned by both Catherine and Henry”¹ after their divorce was finalized. This instance exemplifies the extraordinary measures that were taken to push her influence aside.² Despite this, Catherine’s story has never disappeared completely. We know that she was pious, a devoted wife and mother, and beloved by the English people...but this saintly image does not reveal the entire picture of this great queen. By comparing her life and her patronage, we can gain greater insight into her personality and beliefs. A particular example is Catherine’s commission of Juan Luis Vives to write *The Education of a Christian Woman* in 1523. This book was meant to provide instruction to her daughter, the future Mary I, as well as a wider range of Early Modern women. What is interesting about this text is the striking difference between Vives’s instructions and Catherine’s actions. Vives calls for meekness, but Catherine was bold. Vives forbids women to wield political power, but Catherine was a successful regent. Vives insists on wifely pliancy, but Catherine was defiant. These differences and more lead the reader to wonder why Catherine would commission a manual that directly contradicts her actions. The answer to this question is not simple; however, I argue that *The Education of a Christian Woman* is a negotiation between what regular women are expected to do and what a queen, appointed by God, is expected to do.

¹ Theresa Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon: Infanta of Spain, Queen of England*, (Penn State University Press, 2021), pg 6.

² The delegitimization of her daughter Mary, Henry’s break with Rome, and Catherine’s forced seclusion and isolation from her daughter are just a few examples of things that either resulted from or were in direct relation to her divorce.

In addition, this space displays Catherine's political prowess as well as her influence, which Vives may have viewed as dangerous.

Educating Queens

Catherine's education as a young infanta of Spain would later influence how she approached her role as Queen of England. Similar to her future sisters-in-law, Margaret and Mary Tudor, Catherine was schooled in the basics of Early Modern womanhood. She learned wifely tasks such as "needlework and dancing, lacemaking, and embroidery,"³ as well as reading, language, and religion. Despite these similarities, Catherine's education was more extensive. Her mother, Queen Isabella of Castile, ensured that Catherine and her sisters received an education as great as any European prince. Isabella recognized that her personal education was lacking as "she had been raised without any of the skills needed by a statesman—male or female—on the European stage,"⁴ and she sought to ensure her daughters would not share a similar fate. Her court was "a sort of intellectual and artistic salon."⁵ Various humanist scholars were hired to teach her daughters, including Antonio and Alessandro Geraldini, the latter of whom would eventually "accompany [Catherine] to England."⁶ Catherine was, unusually for a woman, fluent in Latin, as well as French, and her native Spanish.⁷ In addition, she was well-read and Biblically literate. Erasmus later praised her intelligence, stating that "the queen is well instructed—not merely in comparison to her own sex...and is no less to be respected for her piety than her erudition."⁸ This comment displays the remarkable and extensive nature of her education. Not only was she schooled in so-called 'womanly pursuits', but she also presented

³ Alison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, (Grove Press, 1991), pg. 20.

⁴ Antonia Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1993), pg. 11.

⁵ Theresa Earenfight, "Regarding Catherine of Aragon," in *Scholars and Poets Talk About Queens*, eds. Carole Levin and Christine Stewart-Núñez, (Palgrave Macmillan 2015), p.139.

⁶ Giles Tremlett, *Catherine of Aragon: Henry's Spanish Queen*, (Faber & Faber, 2011), pg. 47.

⁷ Mark Cartwright, "Catherine of Aragon," *World History Encyclopedia*.

⁸ Tremlett, *Catherine of Aragon*, 47.

that she was as intelligent as any man. I agree with Beer that Catherine's education was centered around the idea that she, and her sisters, would not be simple ornaments in a husband's court, but that they would "become influential, accomplished and powerful representative[s] of Spanish interests abroad as queens consort."⁹ However, it can't be ignored that Catherine's position, at least in part, would later rely on her positionality within her husband's court.

Catherine's formative years were spent on campaigns with her parents Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon, which further enhanced her education as a future queen. She watched them lead the "Inquisition, [defeat] the Muslim kingdom of Granada, ruthlessly expel the Jews from Spain, and [sponsor] the voyages of Christopher Columbus."¹⁰ Their leadership during the Spanish Inquisition resulted in the deaths of "as many as 2,000 people."¹¹ Catherine would inherit her parents' apparent belief that no cost was too high if they were fighting for their Catholic faith and to maintain order and unity within their kingdom. She grew up "listening to news reports of her mother at the head of armies"¹² and watching her father make calculated political decisions to consolidate his and Isabella's power. It's these examples that contributed to Catherine's considerable military and political knowledge. She took what she learned and utilized it during her marriage to Henry. Her husband believed she was so capable as a ruler that he made her regent and "captain general of his armies"¹³ during one of his campaigns to France. The lessons that she learned from her parents would contribute, not only to her personality, but to a devoted urge to educate the next generation.

The Rose's Future

⁹ Michelle Beer, *Queenship at the Renaissance Courts of Britain: Catherine of Aragon and Margaret Tudor, 1503-1533*, (Royal Historical Society, 2021) pg. 12.

¹⁰ Earenfight, *Regarding Catherine of Aragon*, 140.

¹¹ Fernando Forcén and Susan Friedman, "Physicians, the Spanish Inquisition, and Commonalities With Forensic Psychiatry," *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 49.1 (2021): 3.

¹² Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon*, 29.

¹³ Leanda De Lisle, *Tudor*, (Public Affairs, 2015) pg. 134.

Because Isabella was so involved with her daughter's upbringing, it's unsurprising that Catherine took a similar approach with her own daughter. Catherine sought to ensure that her daughter would learn how to become a pious, intelligent, and capable ruler. One text that was vital to her daughter's education was Vives's *The Education of a Christian Woman*. It's important that we address exactly what it was supposed to be. The title itself seems to be self-explanatory. Religion was obviously a vital aspect of everyday life during the Early Modern period, and it was expected that, specifically, women would be pious. Catherine commissioned this text to be a sort of instruction manual for her daughter Mary. At the time, Catherine and Henry had no surviving male heirs; therefore, Mary would be the expected future ruler of England. However, when arranging for her education, "proper training for a future female monarch had never taken place in England, and no one in England had any idea what to do."¹⁴ In addition, the idea of a female monarch was an issue for her father. Because of the events of the Wars of the Roses, it isn't entirely unreasonable for Henry VIII to harbor fear over the succession. He would have wanted a strong, capable ruler that his nobles would follow willingly. The issue with having a female as his sole heir, at the time, was that there was no precedent for a successful queen regnant in England;¹⁵ therefore, when we consider both the recent political instability and the view of women during the Early Modern period, Henry could not accept the uncertainty of obtaining and maintaining support from the nobles to secure his daughter's reign.

Despite her husband's fears, Catherine would have an entirely different viewpoint of female rulers. During her upbringing, the idea of a competent female ruler wouldn't have been unusual when considering the example Catherine had in her mother. Isabella held onto and

¹⁴ Timothy G. Elston, "Almost the Perfect Woman: Public and Private Expectations of Catherine of Aragon, 1501-1536," PhD diss., (University of Nebraska, 2004) pg. 8.

¹⁵ The most recent attempt at instilling a female ruler in England, Empress Matilda, resulted in the period known as the "Great Anarchy." For more information, see work by historians Chris Riley and Matthew Lewis.

fought for her country, as well as “[construct her queenship as a balance of pious femininity and virile rulership.”¹⁶ Catherine grew up watching her mother lead as an effective monarch, for better or worse, with the support of the nobility and army, and she had no reason to believe that Mary would be unable to do the same. I do not believe that it would be unreasonable to conclude that Catherine may have viewed any opposing thought to be ridiculous. As we have previously discussed, Catherine was raised watching her mother’s example. Isabella’s reign doesn’t necessarily lead one to believe she was incapable. While her reign and personal values contained flaws, she was still able to control and conquer parts of Spain. Catherine would have had no reason to doubt that a country could be ruled effectively by a woman. Because of this, it’s logical that Catherine would desire a guide for her daughter who, I believe, she expected to one day rule England. Because of Catherine’s strong belief in her daughter’s capabilities, we have to explore why Vives’s text was so conservative when Catherine seems, on the surface, to be incredibly progressive. Although I won’t argue against historical evidence that she did do things that were not typical for women, such as organizing armies and advocating for Spain as the first female ambassador, she did not aim to increase herself to an equal statue like her husband nor did she attempt to raise women’s place on the social hierarchy. She was not seeking women’s equality. Catherine embraced her roles as queen, wife, and mother and sought to secure them when necessary.

The Queen’s Role

Although Catherine’s roles do not negate the importance and strength of women, the status of one’s gender during the Early Modern period did indicate one’s place in the patriarchal hierarchy. In addition, despite the strong leadership of her mother, I do believe that Catherine

¹⁶ Earenfight, *Regarding Catherine of Aragon*, 140.

was aware of how different England was from Spain in connection with queenship. This conclusion is, in part, due to the two main examples of queenship that Catherine would have experienced during her youth. Isabella's queenship revolved around change and a perceived advancement of beliefs, ideals, and attitudes. Catherine's education was curated and encouraged by her mother. Her and her sisters "were known throughout Europe for their humanist education" and "many scholars agree that Catherine's learning went beyond that of a conventional princess,"¹⁷ She was educated in subjects such as Latin, music, literature, religion, and dancing.¹⁸ Catherine was raised to be the educated wife of a King. In contrast, her future mother-in-law, Elizabeth of York taught her daughters, Margaret and Mary Rose, and, later, Catherine, how a "conventional" English queen consort should conduct herself.¹⁹ Catherine's sister-in-law, Margaret Tudor, was never "celebrated for her learning"²⁰. Music was one of her main pursuits, as well as etiquette and dancing. Interestingly, the pursuit of Margaret's education did not seem to continue after her marriage to James IV of Scotland as "none of Margaret's chaplains were known to have tutored the young queen," whereas Catherine brought tutors with her as she arrived in England.²¹ The importance of this distinction is to point out that, although they had a somewhat similar education in courtly knowledge, Isabella ensured that her daughters would be able to actively rule their kingdoms alongside their husbands; whereas, in England, Elizabeth taught her daughters how to conform to courtly standards and serve their husbands. Because of this difference, Catherine would then have to relearn how to negotiate her influence through her agency in her husband's court as opposed to her mother's.

¹⁷ Beer, *Queenship*, 11.

¹⁸ Beer, *Queenship*, 11.

¹⁹ Beer, *Queenship*, 27.

²⁰ Beer, *Queenship*, 11.

²¹ Beer, *Queenship*, 12.

When we consider how she would accomplish this task, I think that Catherine knew that her mother's bold tactics would not be as helpful to her as her father's. Catherine utilized three specific elements of feminine positionality as a way to negotiate her and her daughter's role as Queens of England. Specifically, Catherine focused on visual rhetoric, courtly expectations, and religion in order to differentiate herself from the common woman while also displaying her royal blood. Although she often took actions outside of the patriarchal hierarchy, she never attempted to restructure it. Catherine exercised her positionality as the Queen of England, not necessarily of her gender. This aided in her efforts to educate her daughter as the future queen regnant. Vives's text provides a strong perspective on the positionality of women under that of men. Catherine, while certainly sharing many of the same beliefs, would have understood that she had to play on the delicate balance between womanhood and queenship.

Visual Rhetoric

As not many of Catherine's writings have survived, it's difficult to narrow down what distinct patterns her rhetoric took. However, this difficulty can be rectified by focusing on visual rhetoric. One aspect of her visual rhetoric lies within her clothing choice. Historian Theresa Earenflight has done extensive research on this topic, stating that "through the simple listing of [Catherine's] possessions, she begins to come to life through the power of imagination."²² While I would disagree with the thought that imagination is the only medium through which she should be viewed, it isn't unreasonable to see her actions as a text in order to analyze her rhetorical choices.

An interesting aspect of Catherine's rhetorical choices is reflected in the difference between her actions as queen and Vives's expectation of women. As the queen, she was expected

²² Earenflight, *Catherine of Aragon*, 17.

to uphold the standards of royalty. Catherine dressed finely, participated in jousting tournaments, was involved in politics, and had governesses for her daughter. This is in direct contrast to Vives's ideal of womanhood. While Vives's instructions focused on women in general, specifically noble women, Catherine was not a normal woman: she was a queen. She was above Vives on the social hierarchy and was granted more agency than the common woman by her husband. From her engagement to Arthur, Prince of Wales, at the age of four years old, Catherine knew that she would one day become Queen of England; therefore, her queenly education began early.

Tempering a Queen

As the first female ambassador in Europe, Catherine showed political prowess and devotion to contributing to the goodwill between England and Spain. She displayed many wonderful qualities that drew her to her husband. Although I don't believe that Henry VIII deserves the credit for Catherine's personal accomplishments and personality throughout their marriage, she was given a higher level of agency and influence than she would have had as an unmarried woman. Henry loved to have a jovial court, and I do not believe that he would have appreciated a wife who refused to match his lively spirit. Their twenty-four year marriage offers evidence Henry initially valued Catherine and her intelligence. Moreover, because of his young age when he became king, Henry would have been greatly influenced by his wife due to his admiration of her. She would have had to be aware of this reality, and Vives may have feared it. Therefore, their close relationship may offer insight into see how Catherine would have been able to negotiate her positionality to one of greater involvement than Vives intended.

Vives's wariness of female power was not based on a solely, to the modern mind, sexist viewpoint. He was born to Jewish parents in Spain in 1493 and lived in fear of the Inquisition.²³ Despite his parents' conversion to Christianity, both were eventually tried and convicted for their beliefs. His father was burnt at the stake in 1524 and his mother's remains were exhumed twenty years after her death and burned.²⁴ Although these events took place after he wrote *The Education of a Christian Woman*, he had still grown up living in fear of persecution for his descent and his parents' beliefs. Even though they had converted to Christianity, his parents were still viewed as dangerous outsiders. Therefore, Vives likely would have viewed any descendant of Isabella and Ferdinand with strong suspicion. As he wrote this text his father was actively being investigated and tried for past Jewish practicing,²⁵ so Vives's fear of persecution was likely at the forefront of his mind during this time. The care that he takes in establishing a woman's proper place in society is not only indicative of the time period but also seeks to temper Catherine's influence in what may be an attempt at preventing another Inquisition. My context, here, is intended to show that Catherine's and Vives's respective positions are more nuanced, in terms of power relationships, than might be understood if we frame the dynamic as primarily an early modern man seeking to limit the power of an early modern woman.

The Queen's Closet

One aspect of womanhood that Vives addressed was appearance. Catherine had to dress in fine clothes because it reflected her position as queen. Henry valued opulence in order to display his power as King of England; therefore, it's unsurprising that his wife would follow suit. Vives does make an allowance for this when he proposes that how a woman dresses "should

²³ Casini, *Stanford Encyclopedia*.

²⁴ Casini, *Stanford Encyclopedia*.

²⁵ Casini, *Stanford Encyclopedia*.

depend on the wishes and character of the husband.”²⁶ Despite this, he contradicts himself in his later statements. Speaking to wives, Vives states:

Every woman who has uncovered her head has shaken off the law of her husband.

If your head gleams with gold and precious stone, you set yourself against your husband.

If you are covered in silk and brocade, you are not subject to your husband’s authority.²⁷

In addition, a wife is also supposed to “dissuade” her husband from requiring her to wear such rich garments.²⁸ This argument is centered on the basis of modesty and outward expressions of faith. However, because Catherine is the wife of a divinely appointed monarch, Vives’s opinions on this matter have to be dismissed in her rhetoric. Theresa Earenfight explains that Catherine’s wardrobe contained “a dazzling array of colors and fabric, with intricate silk and gold thread embroidery, fur linings, and gemstones set in the trim”.²⁹ She would have generally worn these garments in public, while dressing more modestly in private. Therefore, she is following Vives’s instructions and following her husband’s instructions simultaneously. This is the fine line that she had to walk as queen. It would have looked poorly upon her husband if she was not dressed richly or pointedly did not attend the court entertainments. In addition, dressing in rich clothing helped to “emphasize [her] agency and superior social status compared to the men around [her] in order to maintain royal dignity and [her] own authority, which was especially crucial moments when [she] faced challenges at court”³⁰. In other words, clothing was a form of armor. Such associations could have led outsiders to believe that the royal marriage, and therefore the future of having heirs, could be in jeopardy if she lacked these physical representations of power.

²⁶ Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual (The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe)*, (Chicago: University of Chicago), p. 236.

²⁷ Vives, *Education*, 242.

²⁸ Vives, *Education*, 236.

²⁹ Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon*, 98.

³⁰ Beer, *Queenship at the Renaissance Courts*, 45-46.

Indeed, we see this very event take place when Henry abandons her. Therefore, not only do these actions display her agency, but it invokes the difference between a common woman and a Queen.

Chastity and Court Custom

Courtly functions had to be followed in order to maintain a monarch's presence and regality. One example of this was Catherine's participation in jousts, as it was an important aspect of entertainment in her husband's court. Vives states that "in certain places it is the custom for girls of noble birth to be avid spectators at tournaments of arms and to pass judgment on the bravery of the combatants"³¹. Although he does concede to the courtly aspect of female participation, he refutes it when he explains:

But a young woman cannot easily be of chaste mind if her thoughts are occupied with the sword and sinewy muscles and virile strength. What room do these thoughts leave for chastity, which is defenseless, unwarlike, and weak? A woman who contemplates these things drinks poison into her breast, of which such interest and such words ap'ire symptoms³².

Vives's explanation for why women should not participate in jousts centers around the idea of a "chaste mind". This passage in particular is addressing unmarried women, and, although it may seem that Catherine would then be exempt from Vives's instruction to avoid jousts after her marriage, he actually places a greater burden to guard one's chastity when bound to a husband. The Oxford English Dictionary defines chastity as "Purity from unlawful sexual intercourse; continence."³³ Therefore, I have to question why Vives is specifically utilizing this term. Does

³¹ Vives, *Education*, 73.

³² Vives, *Education*, 73.

³³ Oxford English Dictionary, *Chastity*.

he expect that the adrenaline and exhilaration will cause women to throw themselves into strong, passionate embraces with the jousters? Or is it more likely that he simply thought these activities in general could corrupt young women? I suppose that both are possibilities, but it's the latter half of the definition that I find to be more interesting as it implies that a woman must have a measure of self-control and mindfulness—qualities that Catherine perhaps embodied despite her inappropriate attendance at jousts.

Book One: Which Treats of Unmarried Young Women

Vives's book is organized into three main sections that focus on different stages of a woman's life: unmarried young women, married women, and widows. The first section of Vives' text focuses on unmarried women, including his advice, above, on the joust. However, before I begin to analyze his instruction towards this specific group, we need to spend some time addressing where Vives believed a woman's personal disposition originates. In the first paragraph of Book One, he states:

How much greater care should be expended in the case of the Christian young woman, not only in her early formation and development but beginning with her nurturing at the breast, which, if possible, should be with her mother's milk.³⁴

This opening portion of the beginning chapter provides an interesting contrast between advocating for the importance of women's education and telling women how they should nurture their children. The first portion of this statement lends itself to the older belief that Vives's text leaned towards profeminism; however, the way Vives has phrased the sentence in its entirety feels condescending. He's saying that girls should be educated, but that instruction should be conducted under specific limits. This generalized statement that a child should be solely nurtured

³⁴ Vives, *Education*, 53.

on its mother's milk does not take into account that not every woman is capable of breastfeeding. In addition, it wasn't uncommon for women of a higher nobility status, such as Catherine, to hire wetnurses. Royal babies were often set up with their own households after birth, so it wouldn't have been socially expected for her to have kept her children with her. Therefore, we have to wonder why he would use this specific wording and instruction.

Continuing our analysis, Vives later instructs women who do not breastfeed that they must "select wet nurses who are wise and of good character."³⁵ He directly correlates the quality of breastmilk an infant receives to that of their future disposition to virtue. However, he does differentiate the importance of this by gender, because boys learned more "outside the home more often than in the home."³⁶ Although he is advising mothers in general, the importance of a virtuous maternal figure for young women is prevalent throughout the text. These figures are supposed to "direct [girls] to goodness and virtue."³⁷ This line provides more insight into Vives' comments in the first paragraph. He is not only addressing the physical importance of a mother's milk, but he is stressing the importance of a mother's involvement in her daughter's education. In this context, breast milk equates to education and learning. Here, Vives has placed the guidance of a young, unmarried girl onto a righteous, pious, and virtuous maternal figure. It is a female caregiver's responsibility to embody the 'Christian values' of wisdom, virtue, and faith. If she does not display these characteristics, then the next generation will become corrupt. This, ironically, places the burden of raising righteous and virtuous children into the hands of a more 'easily corruptible' gender. In addition, Vives hails women as:

³⁵ Vives, *Education*, 54.

³⁶ Vives, *Education*, 54.

³⁷ Vives, *Education*, 55.

a weak creature and of uncertain judgment and is easily deceived...she should not teach, lest when she has convinced herself of some false opinion, she transmit it to her listeners in her role as teacher and easily drag others into her error, since pupils willingly follow their teacher.³⁸

These comments are not only insulting to a modern-day view of women, but it is also contrary to his original statement on the importance of women in teaching young girls.

While Vives's statement could also, then, seem to be an attack on Catherine's political influence over her husband, we have to remember how conservative she really was. Although she wouldn't have thought that a woman could not be influential, she also knew that it was not common throughout England to place much care on the education of daughters, thereby increasing the likelihood of opposition to one's influence. This direction could be interpreted as an encouragement to mothers to instruct their daughters in a manner that would allow them more agency due to their social conformity. Although I don't believe that it would have been approved of by Vives, Catherine would be able to accomplish this type of encouragement through her performative rhetoric. Catherine wielded influence, but did so in a way that would not upset her volatile husband, influencing the decisions of the king and direction of the kingdom. This relates to education by mothers towards their daughters by demonstrating that girls could be taught, but they had to allow the men to teach them what they would like of women. This creates a false sense of security for men, while also allowing young girls to emulate their mothers more covertly.

Furthermore, Vives later compares the relationship between a woman and her child to that of "wild beasts."³⁹ This comparison indicates that, although women may not necessarily be

³⁸ Vives, *Education*, 72.

³⁹ Vives, *Education*, 54.

akin to animals, they are so strong of feeling that they are reduced to a purely emotional state and must be guided by a man. This statement is directing women towards their proper place and influence in their society. Although their concern should be within the household, they are also easily led astray.⁴⁰ This doesn't negate the importance of women's involvement, but it does establish that the rightful leaders and teachers were men. Women are to nurture the next generation and provide an example for girls to live by, while men provide the actual educational aspect of learning.

Continuing through the text of Book One, we are exposed to several specific themes throughout the instruction for unmarried women. Two words that encapsulate this section are chastity and virginity. Throughout the text, Vives gives special attention to women's chastity. Vives states that "chastity was something sacred and venerable, especially virginity, even among thieves, men of impiety, criminals, and wicked men, and even among wild beasts it was safe and respected."⁴¹ Vives states that "in the education of a woman the principle and...only concern should be the preservation of chastity."⁴² Although chastity and virginity are often interchangeable terms, I would argue that Vives is focusing on more than just the simple physical attribute. In this instance, we can view the word 'chaste' as "continent" and "virtuous"⁴³. When we take away sexuality as the central focus, we can establish a broader baseline for a woman's education. Returning to and extending the engagement with the joust, I posit that this focus on chastity and virtue was not just an instruction for young women, but was also an indication of Catherine's character.

⁴⁰ This makes sense when we consider that Catherine commissioned Vives to write this text instead of writing it herself. I think that we can infer that she may have considered a man's overall instruction to be more sound and stable than a woman's.

⁴¹ Vives, *Education*, 82.

⁴² Vives, *Education*, 71.

⁴³ Oxford English Dictionary, *Chaste*.

The overall focus in this specific text makes more sense when we consider the moral aspect of this word when thinking of Catherine's focus on piety. Vives seems to correlate chastity with emotional control, which is something that Catherine displayed throughout her queenship. We can identify his specific qualifications for chasteness in his description of Catherine and her sisters when he says:

There were no women in human memory more chaste than these four sisters, none with a more unblemished name, and there have been no queens who were so loved and admired by their subjects. None loved their spouses more, none displayed more compliant obedience, none preserved themselves and their loved ones more blamelessly and more assiduously, none were so opposed to base behavior and lax morals, none fulfilled to such perfection the ideals expected of the virtuous woman.⁴⁴

This exhaustive list of actions and behaviors displays Vives's definition of chastity. These are all actions based on emotional control. When we keep in mind that Catherine commissioned this text for Mary, the first lines of this passage seem to align more clearly as an overall lesson. A queen must be chaste and have an unblemished nature. A queen must be loved and admired by her subjects. A queen must love and be obedient toward her husband. All of these are indicative of someone who exemplifies self and emotional control.

As we move on to the discussion of virginity, I want to provide some context that I think makes this focus especially interesting. When Catherine first came to England in 1501, she was the intended bride for Henry's brother Arthur. As we know, Arthur died soon after their wedding and Catherine became a young widow. Despite her formerly married status, it is uncertain whether they properly consummated the marriage or not. As Catherine maintained until her death

⁴⁴ Vives, *Education*, 70.

that she was a virgin when she married Henry, we could simply take her word for it. However, the primary focus of this debate should not be on the ‘did they or didn’t they’ aspect, but on the politically astute direction that Catherine took to protect her position. Through her insistence, she was able to negotiate her position in England and still fulfill, as she saw it, her duty to become its queen. Therefore, when we analyze Vives’s view on virginity, we should view it as a negotiation for influence as much as a requirement in order to be a good Christian woman.

On the subject of virginity, Vives states that it is “such a great and noble subject that any discussions of it neither can nor should be brief.”⁴⁵ The importance of virginity as a topic during this time period cannot be understated. Just as chastity equated to virtue, so did virginity. This balance of focusing on the mind and body was indicative of a culture that sought for its women to conform to a very specific ideology and self-identification. I believe that there is a distinction within the text between virginity of the mind and virginity of the body. Vives quotes Fulgentius saying, “the devil strives to snatch away the virginity of the flesh by the aid of man, but the virginity of the heart he tries to carry off by himself.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Vives elaborates in the next paragraph insisting that “the mind must be particularly fortified, lest it be defiled in a virgin body so that all treasures and beauty of integrity will endure there, firm and unassailable.”⁴⁷ Both of these quotes tie virginity through the body and mind—and, then, tie to points about the importance of education for an unmarried woman. Vives is very clear in the overall text that women must be taught the right things and not be exposed to anything that would lead them away from the ideal version of Christian womanhood. Therefore, the joining of body and mind in this pursuit reflects Catherine’s personal journey in maintaining her influence as an active

⁴⁵ Vives, *Education*, 80.

⁴⁶ Vives, *Education*, 81.

⁴⁷ Vives, *Education*, 81.

political player. She not only had a chaste mind due to her education, but she also held onto her virginity, in one sense or another, as an indication of her virtuous nature. This gained her influence in England and ensured her ability to continue on what she must have viewed as God's path for her. From this, women, especially Mary, would have learned how great commodities chastity and virginity were to maintain influence in a patriarchal society.

Book Two: Which Treats of Married Women

As we have now established that mothers and other maternal figures were responsible for instructing young girls and conveying the importance of chastity and virginity, we now must address who is supposed to teach the adult women and what their role is in society. In Book Two, Vives states that wives "must call to mind the origins of marriage and frequently review its laws in thought and meditation."⁴⁸ The "origins" revolve around the religious beliefs of the day. Within Christian theology lies the creation of marriage around the command of God. This occurred when "God brought woman to man, which means that God himself was the chief author and mediator of marriage."⁴⁹ Vives elaborates on how this knowledge should influence a young wife to live "in such a way as to be convinced that she and her husband are one in every respect fulfills to perfection all the duties of a holy wife."⁵⁰ These moments reflect Catherine's own devotion to her husband, but the situational aspect of each of their positions upon their marriage may have been a factor that Vives considered. It's evident that Vives believed that women should be molded to her husband's desires; however, Catherine was older and a widow when she married Henry. In this context, Vives's specific edict may be an attempt to remind her of her place in the royal court and in her marriage. Henry was the head of their household; therefore,

⁴⁸ Vives, *Education*, 175.

⁴⁹ Vives, *Education*, 175.

⁵⁰ Vives, *Education*, 178.

she should explicitly follow his direction. Insofar as Henry was unable to mold Catherine as he wished, Vives could be advising Catherine to take a step back and not be as bold in court life as she may have been. However, we know that that was not the case. She was very much at the center of court life and supported her husband politically. This is important because her actions may have made Vives wary. When we look back to the previous generation, we can observe how much influence Catherine's mother had over her father—not least, Isabella helped lead Spain into the Spanish Inquisition. This could have made Vives nervous when witnessing the influence that Catherine held and the lack of marital molding that Henry would have been able to accomplish. He could have worried that she would influence her husband to destroy English families in the same way her mother destroyed his and many others.

When Catherine was regent, she organized a military response to James IV of Scotland's invasion that resulted in his death.⁵¹ The status of Catherine as Queen of England influenced her ability to do things that other women would be required to avoid doing, according to Vives. Catherine's role itself provides a juxtaposition that would have been notable to his readers. Vives states that it is “not lawful for a Christian man to handle weapons save in dire and unavoidable necessity.”⁵² Vives extends this prohibition to his distaste, discussed earlier, for jousts, joining his critique of entertainment to a critique of war, and casting both as unvirtuous. Despite this assertion, it's evident that Catherine was a willing participant in both—she “was a key figure who kept the government running to support military action⁵³. In an even greater affront to Vives' words, she displayed great enthusiasm for the event in a letter she sent to Henry, saying:

⁵¹ Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon*, 44.

⁵² Vives, *Education*, 74.

⁵³ Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon*, 101.

My husband, for hastiness, with Rougecross I could not send your Grace the piece of the King of Scots coat with John Glynn now brings. In this your Grace shall see how I kept my promise, sending you for your banners a king's coat. I thought to send himself to you, but our Englishmen's hearts would not suffer it.⁵⁴

This letter displays how excited and proud she was of this accomplishment. The fact that she wanted to send James's body to Henry indicates how boldly and intensely she wanted to share the victory with him. Based on these two instances of Catherine's life, we can see the difference in her behavior versus Vives's text.

Because of her actions, we must ask why she would approve of this line, and others like it, in Vives' text. But Catherine was both personally conservative, in some senses, and playing a particular courtly role. As Queen of England, her personal dispositions on a proper woman's role were not the first issue to hand. Henry, as her husband, required her action and influence; paradoxically, then, this requirement allowed her greater levels of agency. In order to follow her husband's direction, she had to "obey [her] husband and accomplish everything to his liking" and "be thoroughly acquainted with his character and consider the circumstances of his nature and fortune."⁵⁵ To employ battle to protect England and participate in jousts were both actions that, evidently, pleased her husband. Through her letter, though, we can see the joy that she had through accomplishing something for the betterment of their shared kingdom.

Such an intersection allowed Catherine to frame her own actions as set apart from the restrictions Vives considers. Another difference between her actions and other women of a lesser status as a wife is that she was a Queen appointed by divine direction. God chose her to be the Queen of England, or she would have at least been convinced of this idea; therefore, although

⁵⁴ Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon*, 101.

⁵⁵ Vives, *Education*, 196.

she would have been required to follow and conform to her husband's desires as a wife, she has a greater responsibility to the role that God has placed her in. Catherine's negotiation between her position as wife and queen can be seen in her famous Blackfriars speech during her and Henry's divorce:

I have been to you a true, humble, and obedient wife, ever conformable to your will and pleasure, that never said or did anything to the contrary thereof, being always well pleased and contented with all things wherein you had any delight or dalliance, whether it were in little or much. I never grudged in words or countenance, or showed a visage or spark of discontent.⁵⁶

The first line's use of the words "true", "humble", and "obedient" hint at themes and lesson's throughout Vives's text. Vives instructs women that "by [their] chastity, modesty, and obedience, [they] can enjoy the pleasant companionship of [their] husband, and [they] will live happily together."⁵⁷ Obedience and adoration seem to go hand-in-hand, according to Vives. In order to maintain a "happy household" women must exhibit "virtues, modesty, and compliance" to "render [themselves] loveable to him."⁵⁸ This presents a conditionality to marriage that is unsurprising from a legalistic standpoint. If the wife is not obedient to her husband, then he may not love her. Therefore, it is better that she not be of her own mind, but that of her husband in order to preserve harmony in the marriage.

This obedience and humble nature are further indicated in the latter portion of this section where Catherine states that she "never grudged in words or countenance, or showed a visage or spark of discontent."⁵⁹ This reflects Catherine's efforts to maintain her husband's affections, as

⁵⁶ Tremlett, *Catherine of Aragon*, 309.

⁵⁷ Vives, *Education*, 176.

⁵⁸ Vives, *Education*, 177.

⁵⁹ Tremlett, *Catherine of Aragon*, 309.

well as place herself in a blameless position. Her efforts portray herself as humble and willing to submit to Henry's will are also shown when she emphasizes that she has been "ever conformable to [Henry's] will and pleasure,"⁶⁰ only pushing against him, in this context, when it threatened her daughter's legitimacy and her own position as a divinely-appointed queen.⁶¹

Catherine and Vives offer, then, similar visions of devotion. Her statement that she "never grudged in words or countenance, or showed a visage or spark of discontent" displays the teachings of Vives, while also maintaining her positionality as Henry's wife. It's evident that this aspect of marriage was important to Catherine, despite her husband's departure from his own vows. She continues this behavior, stating:

If there be any just cause by the law that ye can allege against me, either of dishonesty or any other impediment to banish and put me from you, I am well content to depart to my great shame and dishonor. And if there be none, then here, I most lowly beseech you, let I remain in my former estate.⁶²

In the first sentence of this passage, she is allowing herself and her marriage to become open to scrutiny. She invites Henry to dissect her actions, which, of course, he is unable to do. Catherine has not been unchaste. Catherine has not been unfaithful. Catherine has not been unloving. She has just been a faithful wife who is 'willing' to step aside if she is found to have committed a fault. Do I believe that she truly would ever step aside? The simple answer is: no. What I do think she does here is to exercise her position as a divinely appointed royal woman who knows very well that, following Catholic law, she cannot be set aside as she has done nothing wrong.

⁶⁰ Vives, *Education*, 178.

⁶¹ This thought isn't meant to imply that Catherine held no agency, just that she was wise enough to influence Henry in a more subtle nature.

⁶² Tremlett, *Catherine of Aragon*, 310.

Catherine's famous speech repeatedly invokes Vives's views of marital faithfulness. Vives explains that a woman should "give no sign of public arrogance or disdain or affected manners either by voice, word, gesture, or walk...married women should preserve their sense of dignity."⁶³ Catherine does this by humbling herself before Henry. Although she is well aware, however, that she is of no fault, the fact that she places herself in this position reveals her knowledge of how a noble woman should conduct herself. She holds on to her dignity by utilizing subtle and intelligent argumentation. The final sentence of this passage leads into a greater discussion of positionality and negotiation. I believe that this moment contributes to the overall negotiation for influence. Catherine knows that she is Henry's wife. She believes that it was dictated by God. She intends to remain in her position as queen. This is indicated in the final line of her speech where she says, "I most lowly beseech you, let I remain in my former estate."⁶⁴ Despite her word choice, she is not humbly asking Henry to allow her to remain queen. Catherine is concluding her argument that she has done nothing wrong by placing herself back into the position as a faithful wife and queen. She says "if there be [no just cause]" to remove her, then she should be returned to her rightful place at Henry's side. The tie to Vives's instruction is in her word choice. Performing the humility and obedience that Vives's text prescribes, she nonetheless asserts her position as queen.

Book Three: On Widows

Vives's final book reflects the ending of a marriage: widowhood. Ironically, this stage could allow or disallow greater agency. Women could be left with great fortunes or crushing debt. Mothers could have heirs to provide for the estate or their reputations could be blackened as the wives of executed traitors. Catherine's time as a widow was difficult. In a foreign country

⁶³ Vives, *Education*, 249.

⁶⁴ Tremlett, *Catherine of Aragon*, 310.

with few allies, she experienced a state of limbo until her appointment as the Aragonese ambassador in 1507. This time is often overlooked, though, in this analysis, Catherine's biography makes her an interesting model through which to juxtapose Vives's instructions, as she would have had a stronger relationship to this third book *before* the period where she most embodied the roles of his second.

Vives posits that a proper widow should express "honest tears, justifiable sorrow, and irreproachable grief."⁶⁵ He then contrasts this ideal by providing two types of mourning that are each in the extreme. The first group are those who "mourn too much."⁶⁶ These women:

"fill the air with unceasing laments over their recent bereavement and throw all into confusion, tearing their hair, beating their breast, lacerating their cheeks, striking their head against the wall, dashing themselves in the ground, and prolonging their grief to great lengths."⁶⁷

It seems that Vives disapproves of this behavior due to the theatrical element of it. If a woman is making too large of a show of her grief, is she truly grieving? The second type of woman "mourn too little."⁶⁸ These women "rejoice at their husband's death as if they had shaken off some cruel yoke, as if liberated from the fetters of a despot, almost exulting in a new found freedom."⁶⁹ He believes that women should move in a way that displays their true devotion to their husbands.

We know that Catherine mourned her first husband,⁷⁰ and sought comfort from her Spanish lady and friend, Maria de Rojas, "who slept with and consoled Catherine immediately after Arthur's

⁶⁵ Vives, *Education*, 299.

⁶⁶ Vives, *Education*, 299.

⁶⁷ Vives, *Education*, 303.

⁶⁸ Vives, *Education*, 299.

⁶⁹ Vives, *Education*, 301.

⁷⁰ Based on accounts from court ambassadors. For specific citation, see the footnotes section of Theresa Earenfight's book, *Catherine of Aragon: Infanta of Spain, Queen of England*.

death.”⁷¹ Vives’ idea of a proper expression of grief centers around the affection a wife bore her husband. Even the way women grieved was to be regulated by men and through first the lens of their relationships to men; women had to walk a fine line between what was and was not acceptable.

As women work through their sorrow, Vives reminds the widows that “death is not a parting and a physical separation of body and soul, but the soul, but the soul does migrate into another life in such a way that it completely renounces all earthly things.”⁷² Although contemplating the afterlife of one’s spouse can be comforting, Vives seems to have a different reason for writing this line. He instructs widows to return to the object of sole devotion that unmarried women must adhere to: God. He says that “when she no longer has a husband, she should turn to the holy spouse of all women, Jesus Christ.”⁷³ When married, women were supposed to look to their husband as the head of their home and the object to which all of their affections should be held. As a widow is no longer under the authority and expectations of their husband, they must continue to display and seek out devotion to God and of the importance of chastity. This instruction brings a woman’s journey back to the beginning—but may also offer an interesting lens to extend to Catherine’s own story. As a former widow, the educated daughter of an intensely Catholic queen, and a woman who understood her own role as peculiarly exempt from certain restrictions *because* of her other obligations, Catherine was uniquely positioned to engage a rhetorical performance that dramatized her own authority as subject to her husband—but also, as the divorce proceedings revealed, subject *first* to God’s will.

Conclusion

⁷¹ Earenfight, *Catherine of Aragon*, 74.

⁷² Vives, *Education*, 309.

⁷³ Vives, *Education*, 309.

Despite the misogynist reputation of the text, there are several instances where Vives expresses a picture of motherly devotion that, as a mother myself, feels strikingly honest and accurate. For example, in the first chapter of Book One, Vives states that:

A mother thinks the daughter to be more truly her own when she not only borne her in her womb and given birth to her, but carried her continually in her arms as an infant, nursed her, nourished her with her own blood, cradled her in her arms as she slept, listened lovingly to her first joyous laughter and kissed her, heard with joy her first stammerings and helped him attempt to speak, and pressed her to her bosom, praying for every blessing from heaven.⁷⁴

This moment feels intimate, raw, and real. Vives may have included this passage specifically to appeal to Catherine. It's known that she was a devoted and loving mother, and this moment is more indicative of a real-life experience than many other passages. This would have directly appealed to her love for her daughter.

A core question we have consider when we study this text as a whole is the context of its creation. We have discussed the practical and political reasons for why Catherine would commission this, but I think the primary reason lies in her deep love for her daughter. As a mother myself, I understand the burning desire to see my daughter grow and learn through experience. However, there is always a part of me that wonders if the lessons that I will impart to my daughter will be enough. Will she find joy in her life? How will she navigate difficult moments? What type of hardships will she face? The internal spiral of concerns doesn't abate, but I find comfort in the fact that she will always have my love. Catherine may have believed the same thing about her daughter. Her intelligence and cunning are shown by comparing her actions

⁷⁴ Vives, *Education*, 53.

to Vives's text. We can see how she was able to negotiate a space for herself in order to exert influence while also maintaining her agency as queen. Despite the themes of chastity, virtue, and submission throughout the text, it is clear, by combining history and literary analysis, that she was able to differentiate herself as a woman of extraordinary value and pious devotion. Through her efforts to educate her daughter, Catherine sought to ensure that Mary would be a strong, noble, and wise queen. In addition, she also offered Mary a model for how to negotiate within the patriarchal system in order to gain influence with male courtiers and other nobles. Not only did they have to be above reproach, but they also were required to find a balance between queenship and womanhood. Through her love and concern for her daughter, Catherine commissioned *The Education of a Christian Woman* and ensured that Mary would have the tools she would need to grow and learn to become the queen that she was destined to be.

Positionality and Power: Katherine Parr's Use of Rhetoric

As the wife famous for having “survived” her marriage to Henry VIII, Katherine Parr’s legacy has been somewhat misidentified since the Victorian era. Agnes Strickland, in her book *Queens of England*, identifies Parr as “the most patient and tender of nurses” to her ailing husband.¹ It is now widely accepted that Parr was much more than that. Beginning in the late 80s and early 90s, scholars such as Alison Weir, Antonia Fraser, and Dr. Linda Porter have provided a more accurate portrayal of Parr’s life as queen. As the first recorded woman in England to publish a print book under her own name, Parr established herself as a knowledgeable religious reformer. Her works, *Psalms or Prayers* (1444), *Prayers or Meditations* (1445), and *Lamentation of a Sinner* (1547), all display her religious devotion and her skills as a propagandist. She worked hand in hand with her husband to create religious works that not only centralized Henry’s power as a divinely appointed monarch, but also established Parr’s position. In particular, *Psalms or Prayers* solidified Parr’s position and power as regent while Henry was fighting in France. On the opposite spectrum, *Lamentation of a Sinner* was used to maintain the influence she had gained during her husband's reign when entering her stepson’s reign. By viewing her text as a performance, I intend to analyze how Parr’s actions as queen, the culture around her, and her tenuous political position influenced her legacy and lent to her position of power during her regency and her tenure as dowager queen.

Performance in Text

As a queen, Parr must always perform. This performance could be anything from her conduct with diplomats and courtiers, her style of dress, or even how she is stylized in portraits. However, what makes Parr’s performance as queen particularly interesting is that her writing

¹ Agnes Strickland, *Agnes Strickland's Queens of England*, ed. Rosalie Kaufman (Boston Estes and Lauriat, 1894), p. 436.

was often her chosen outlet. As opposed to Catherine of Aragon, whose performative elements were mainly through her actions, we have physical writings that provide an insight into how Parr chose to display her queenship. Micheline White has established that Parr heavily collaborated with her husband on her first two texts.² Both of them clearly present levels of propagandistic messaging, as well as clear references to the writings of John Fisher, an executed Catholic Bishop. Why then, does she shift so far into a focus on personal religious penitence in her final text? The answer lies in the roles she had to perform at different moments. From 1543 to early 1547, Parr had to be the dutiful wife. Henry was clearly not in favor of pure Protestantism. In addition, she could not be more open about her personal religious beliefs due to the aforementioned political opportunists she had to contend with. However, that changed after Henry's death. It's possible that she felt more stable now that her stepson was the new king, given the close relationships she worked to establish with all of Henry VIII's children. Edward was fully and passionately Protestant, with his own convictions as strong as those of his father. Under his reign, Parr was safe to express her religious convictions with a forthright mind.

When she first became queen, then, Parr could not reveal how radical her religious beliefs were—despite, or perhaps because of, her powerful position as spouse to the king. Don Matzat states that “her first two books—*Psalms or Prayers* and *Prayers or Meditations*— [were] traditionally Catholic in substance and consistent with the religious views of her husband.”³ It wasn't until *Lamentation of a Sinner* that her writing began to skew further into Protestantism.⁴

² Micheline White, “The Psalms, War, and Royal Iconography,” *Renaissance Studies*. 29.4 (2015): 555-557.

³ Don Matzat, *Katherine Parr: Opportunist, Queen, Reformer: A Theological Perspective*, (Amberly Publishing, 2023), p. 116.

⁴ The exact reason for Parr's conversion has not been solidly determined. Scholars Don Matzat and Derek Wilson believe that it occurred after she became queen, and that it must have been a “dramatic” event. Matzat cites the difference between her works as proof she shifted to Protestantism in early 1546. Despite this, he doesn't account for the political and social aspects of England at that time; under the circumstances, Parr could have adopted more Protestant views prior to her marriage, but been limited in their expression until Henry's death.

While I disagree with Matzat's analysis of the Catholic element to Parr's writing, I agree with the larger reading of her first writings' notable conservatism relative to her later work, and it is this difference that will be my focus, here. This argument focuses specifically on *Psalms or Prayers* and *Lamentations of a Sinner*, as they hold the most drastic difference in their religious leanings. *Psalms or Prayers* follows a Reformist methodology, while *Lamentations of a Sinner* skews more towards Protestantism. For *Psalms*, Henry was still king; therefore, the text had to follow his more 'reformed Catholic' mindset. Because Parr was Queen of England during this time, she had to either conceal or downplay her Protestant leanings to maintain her influence and position. On the other hand, Henry's son and successor, Edward, certainly leaned into Protestantism; which explains why Parr wrote *Lamentations* with a more personal, relationship-based theology. Where Parr personally lies in the religious spectrum during Henry and Edward's reigns is a source of speculation; however, her texts emphasize that, as a woman and a queen, she must follow the convictions of the monarch.

The shift in her writing can be further contextualized by the political and social positions Parr occupied during and after her queenship. In 1543, England went to war. Henry and Charles V of Spain had signed a peace treaty and vowed to go to war with France. Because of his alliance with a Catholic nation, Henry "had to project an image of himself as thoroughly orthodox in matters of religion."⁵ His more conservative advisors, like Stephan Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester, took advantage of this opportunity to root out Henry's more reformist-minded advisors and sabotage their influence. Parr became one of Gardiner's targets, and he sought to destabilize her considerable influence.⁶

⁵ Derek Wilson, *Brief History of the English Reformation*, (Robinson Publishing, 2012), p. 234.

⁶ Alison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, (Grove Press, 1991), p. 504.

Parr's influence over the king was widely known. In 1544, Charles V advised his ambassador, Eustence Chapuys, to “[keep] on good terms with the queen.”⁷ She also made good impressions on a number of ambassadors throughout Europe, such as Don Luis de Alvia, Van Der Delft, Edmond Harvel, and the aforementioned Eustence Chapuys. She was cordial, intelligent, pious, and a strongly-skilled diplomat.⁸ She actively participated in court events, and fell easily into her new role. She bought rich fabrics and jewelry, and composed herself with the grace and elegance needed for her new role. Parr was the picture of a devoted and intelligent queen. Indeed, Henry trusted her enough to make her regent while he was on campaign in France in 1544. She took this role seriously and sought to rule England well for her husband. Elizabeth Norton states that Parr:

...ensured that the king's troops in the north received the weapons and other provisions they required, as well as order[ed] that important strategic towns such as Berwick remained in good repair and fortified. She also issued passports for visitors to Scotland and she kept a firm eye on Scottish affairs, aware that, with the king absent in France, it was possible that England's traditional enemy might see the country as an easy target, as they had done in 1513 under Catherine of Aragon's regency.⁹

Her dedication and competency during her regency moved her even farther into the esteem of Henry, the court, and England at large.

Norton's analysis of Parr's regency can be extended by White's articulation of Parr's textual work to aid her husband's war efforts. Katharine specifically utilized works by Erasmus to achieve the level of support she sought; White states that Parr “rewrote and reframed

⁷ Elizabeth Norton, *Catherine Parr*, (Amberly Publishing, 2011), p. 90.

⁸ Norton, *Catherine Parr*, 90-93.

⁹ Norton, *Catherine Parr*, 109-110.

Erasmus's prayers in order to promote Henry's military agenda."¹⁰ Specifically, the final Psalm in *Psalms or Prayers*, "A Prayer For Men to Say on the Battle Field," is a translation of Erasmus's "Inituri Prælium." Her use of religious rhetoric to bolster the morale of the troops, as well as that of the English people, is indicative not only of her religious knowledge, but also of her awareness as to the effectiveness of religious works for propagandistic purposes. This wasn't unusual for the time period, but it was especially relevant to Henry. As the head of the Church of England, it was vital for him to show that he had God's favor. This particular poem of Erasmus beseeches God to "give...both courage and strength" to those entering a battle.¹¹ The poem also names the "cause...as just" and positions England as "enforced to enter into war and battle."¹² These specific lines indicate that Henry was not drawing England into war to gain glory and riches, but that it was necessary in order to seek and defend spiritual righteousness. In addition, White points out, "Erasmus was a famous anti-war humanist and...["Inituri Prælium"] express[ed] skepticism about human conceptions of warfare."¹³ Historical documentation reveals that the war in France was not as "just" as Parr's text might suggest. Neil Murphy explains that, during the siege of Boullonnias, it was recorded by "a range of English, French, and imperial sources...that the English were indiscriminately killing civilians" in addition to raping women and stealing goods.¹⁴ These actions were also corroborated by a range of English, French, and imperial sources, most of which were not intended for the public.¹⁵ Generally, this type of behavior would be seen as cruel and against the permissible acts during war; however, these

¹⁰ Micheline White, "Katherine Parr, Translation, and the Dissemination of Erasmus's Views on War and Peace," *Renaissance and Reformation*. 43.2 (2020): 70-71.

¹¹ Katherine Parr, *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press), p. 364.

¹² Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 364.

¹³ White, "Translation," 72.

¹⁴ Neil Murphy, "Violence, Colonization and Henry VIII's Conquest of France, 1544-1546," *Past and Present*. 233 (2016): 36-37.

¹⁵ Murphy, "Violence," 19.

drastic measures were deemed necessary by the English to punish those who actively worked against them.

Given the apparent brutality of English warfare, then, Erasmus's reputation as anti-war complicates Parr's use of his work. That complication can be illuminated, though, by the tonal shift during the middle of *Psalms and Prayers*. The first four Psalms focus primarily on the remittance of sins and having a penitent heart. Words such as "mercy," "deliver," "beseech," "confess," and "sin" are repeated throughout the Psalms.¹⁶ As the language suggests, the narrator is often begging God for mercy, guidance, and forgiveness of sins. This specific rhetoric clearly displays a narrator who is desperately looking for God's favor and who humbles themselves before God, confessing their sins. These Psalms set the narrator up as someone who is not only devoted to God, but someone who is seeking to please God with their actions. This relates to Parr's position as it places her in the role of a pious and penitent queen. She is not making herself more powerful than the male courtiers, or even the king, but she is indirectly highlighting her own devotion towards God. In addition, because of Henry's position as the Head of the Church of England, Parr shows that her allegiance is with Henry, as God's anointed.

The text shifts in the fifth Psalm, though. This psalm depicts the narrator begging God for wisdom as it is "to men a treasure that faileth not: which whoso use, they are joined to God in love and amity."¹⁷ The key phrase in this passage is "faileth not" as it is indicative of the direction for the rest of the text. Each of the succeeding Psalms discusses defeating enemies and praying for direction, confidence, and assistance from God. These themes relate to Henry's war as they shift the focus away from any unsavory actions his troops were committing in France and orient the concern of the conflict towards divine direction and consent from God. Parr's choice

¹⁶ See, for example, Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 227, 228, 231, 233.

¹⁷ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 283.

of themes reinforces Henry's role as one divinely appointed by God and the country as one who has His favor.¹⁸ Therefore, the English army can't simply be denounced as cruel; they are acting on God's orders and divine intervention. In addition, as this text was written by the Queen, who believed herself to be placed in the position by God, the messaging has a greater legitimacy than if it was written by a commoner or someone lower in status. When considering Parr's relation to the text, this messaging is even more important to her. As she was regent of England during Henry's absence, she also had to defend her own position. Parr was one of only seven women who had been regent at this point in English history; therefore, she had to establish her own powers while she held the throne for her husband. It was imperative for her to do this, not only due to her position, but also because of the aforementioned pushback from her enemies at court.

Psalms of War

Returning to Parr's use of Erasmus, then, we can further explore her uses of this text through the interpretive lens the structures of her psalms as established. Parr's translation is as follows:

O almighty King and Lord of hosts, which, by thy angels thereunto appointed, dost minister both war and peace; and which didst give unto David both courage and strength being but a little one, unarmed and unexpert in feats of war, with his sling to be set upon and overthrow the great, huge Goliath: Our cause now being just and being enforced to enter war and battle, we most humbly beseech Thee, O Lord of hosts, so to turn the hearts of our enemies to the desire of peace, that no Christian blood be spilt.

Or else grant, O Lord, with small effusion of blood, and to the little hurt or damage of innocents, we may, to Thy glory, to obtain victory. And that the wars being soon ended,

¹⁸ White, "Translation," 79.

we may all, with one heart and mind, knit together in concord and unity, laud and praise
Thee: which livest and reignest, world without end. Amen.¹⁹

White believes that “Parr set aside Erasmus’s skepticism and rewrote and reframed his prayers in order to advance Henry’s war.”²⁰ I agree with White’s assessment of the text; I want to add to this a sense of the translation as useful for Parr, specifically, as well. She has placed herself not only as Queen regent, but also as a war-time Queen. This position reflects the role one of her predecessors, Catherine of Aragon, took on. Under Catherine’s regency, James IV of Scotland was killed at the battle of Flodden while attempting to invade England. Catherine successfully defended her country while Henry was abroad in France. Although Parr does not necessarily make the reference overt, her text frames her situation similarly. Catherine of Aragon also utilized specific written and performance rhetoric to frame her victory as Henry’s.²¹ Parr, then, pursues a similar performance when she uses Erasmus. Her translation shapes Henry’s war as holy and justifiable—the type of war condoned by Erasmus. This, again, helps Parr’s position as a war-time queen, legitimizing her role. If Henry is fighting a holy and justifiable war, then he needs a holy and righteous regent; the work that legitimizes Henry’s choices also legitimizes Parr’s role as regent.

Divinity, David, and Difference

Micheline White provides an interesting analysis of Parr’s *Psalms or Prayers* in comparison to other texts that she was working on simultaneously. Specifically, she analyzes the role that Davidic literature had on Henry’s court along with Parr’s writings. White states that “David had various identities that could be used for different political purposes.”²² This leads,

¹⁹ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 364.

²⁰ White, “Translation,” 69.

²¹ As explored in the first chapter, here.

²² White, “The Psalms,” 554.

again, into the propagandistic nature of *Psalms or Prayers*. White states that Parr sets Henry up as a “Davidic monarch,”²³ an association that Henry was quite fond of. Throughout his reign he sought to liken himself to David as the association with him framed Henry as, in the later years of his reign, a “king who was anointed directly by God and who ruled over the secular and religious spheres;”²⁴ therefore, it was common for courtiers to utilize Davidic imagery and iconography within their poetry. Men such as Thomas Wyatt, Henry Parker, Lord Morley, and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, all used Davidic iconography to either exalt their monarch or to, dangerously, criticize him. Parr had a different challenge to these men. Her job as queen was not to necessarily critique the King, but to

[d]efine herself as a queen, and, for her own safety, ... to define what a queen *is*. As part of that definition, she turns very specifically to a core element: a queen is a king’s wife—*and* that position contains some special separation or access to divinity, even if only by proximity, which authorizes the Queen’s writing and actions.²⁵

By specifically taking this stance, Parr ensures that her position as regent is secure, as her text dramatizes her access to and positionality toward Henry and to God.

The references to Davidic iconography are found throughout *Psalms or Prayers*. The title itself is indicative of this. It’s well known that many of the Biblical Psalms are attributed to David, and those specific passages and themes within the Biblical text are continually referenced in *Psalms or Prayers*. As the early modern reader would be familiar with the passages, as well as the association between Henry and the Davidic iconography, White posits that, in Parr’s text, the “devotional ‘I’ was understood to be that of the individual, the community, and...the current

²³ White, “The Psalms,” 556.

²⁴ White, “The Psalms,” 554.

²⁵ Rebecca Quoss-Moore, *Gender and Position-Taking in Henrican Verse: Tradition, Translation, and Transcription* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2023), p. 138.

monarch.”²⁶ Therefore, “*Psalms or Prayers* may be read as the prayers *of the king*.”²⁷ Parr reflects this idea of prayer within the first four books. The Biblical Psalms often reference themes of repentance and supplication to God. Similarly, this theme runs throughout Parr’s text, through support of a reading that sees, in the text, Henry “imploring God for wisdom and instruction,”²⁸ as well as seeking God’s forgiveness. Words and phrases such as “mercy,” “provoked Thee to displeasure,” “penitent,” and “forgive” all lend to this idea.²⁹ These words create a parallel between Henry and David, as the latter is recorded as constantly seeking forgiveness and guidance from God throughout the Biblical Psalms. Parr’s use of Davidic themes would show, not just Henry’s loyalty to God, but her loyalty to Henry, as she is utilizing one of his favorite iconographic images to craft the image of a devoted king within the text.

White continues in her analysis of this parallel by turning her focus onto the next three books. In White’s reading, psalms five, six and seven shift the text’s focus from repentance to “a desire for internal transformation.”³⁰ The beginning of the fifth psalm asks God to:

Open my lips and my mouth, that I may speak and show forth the glory and praise
of Thy name.

Give me a new heart and a right spirit, and take from me all wicked and sinful desires.

O Lord, I am foolish, ignorant, and blind when I am destitute of Thy knowledge...

Give Thy servant, I beseech Thee, a heart apt to take learning: that I may know what
thing is acceptable in Thy sight at all times.³¹

²⁶ White, “The Psalms,” 562.

²⁷ White, “The Psalms,” 563. Italics in original.

²⁸ White, “The Psalms,” 562.

²⁹ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 220-222.

³⁰ White, “The Psalms,” 563.

³¹ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 281-282.

Books six and seven mirror this sentiment in their supplications to God. It's clear the speaker's desire is to be transformed in Christ. These books all feature "verses about obedience...that had featured in Henry's public and private monarchical self-representation."³² This transformation into an obedient follower of Christ further necessitates Henry's actions in France. Parr is pushing forward the idea that it is God's will that Henry should enter war. This belief is imperative to Henry's cause as it pushes back against any negative narrative surrounding his motivations for the campaign.

Parr's use of Davidic language benefited not only Henry's position, but hers as well. As Queen of England, Parr would be expected to be pious and knowledgeable about religious matters. Henry was clearly attracted to intelligent women and would have certainly seen that trait in Parr. She would have had to maintain a performance aligned with these images. Her intelligence and knowledge of the scriptures would have bolstered her reputation amongst the court as a strong religious scholar and a person of knowledge. However, this performance of pious knowledge had other functions, as well. The power of a queen in Henry's court was, of course, finite. He was the one that was appointed by God to rule. He was the sole head of the Church of England. He alone was the one with a direct link to God. Despite this, Parr believed she had been appointed, as well. In a letter to Thomas Seymour in 1547, she states "God withstood my will therein most vehemently for a time, and, through his grace and goodness, made that possible which seemed to me most impossible; that was, made me renounce utterly mine own will, and follow his will most willingly."³³ This framing shows that, though she didn't believe she had the same authority as her husband, she was convinced that her appointment as queen was God's will. Similar to Catherine of Aragon, Parr would have to work to maintain that

³² White, "The Psalms," 564.

³³ Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England* (Sutton Publishing, 1994), p. 222.

persona. She was no longer just another subject; she was held to a higher standard. The relation of her position to her use of Davidic verse is an essential example of this. While her writing work does contribute to her image as a well-educated religious scholar, her position as a pious queen was equally imperative to her security as regent, as well as to maintaining Henry's favor.

Lamentations of a Queen

When Henry died in 1547, Parr was placed in a unique position. No longer Queen of England, she would have to find some way to consolidate power and maintain her influence. As her stepson, Edward VI, was now on the throne, Parr would have to appeal to him. One way that she is able to curry favor and influence is through her writing. Just as she established her position as regent in 1544 with *Psalms and Prayers*, she would use her work in *Lamentation of a Sinner* to establish her position in this new court. Published nine months after her husband's death, Parr created a work that was quite different from what she had published previously. While her other two works, *Psalms and Prayers* and *Prayers or Meditations* (1545), were solidly Reformist in nature, *Lamentation* skewed heavily into Protestantism. This is made evident from the introductory portion of the text, which emphasizes her personal spiritual journey as it frames *Lamentation* as centered on "bewailing the ignorance of [Parr's] blind life."³⁴ As Protestantism as a whole focuses on a personal relationship with God, Parr's use of the phrase "blind life" suggests that, perhaps, her eyes had been opened to the 'right' way of viewing a relationship with God. This could be helpful to her as it not only distances her from Henry, as well as any Catholic factions at court, and pulls her toward Edward, but also allows her personal beliefs to shine through rather than solely the political propaganda she utilized in 1544.

³⁴ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 443.

Lamentation was just as propagandic as *Psalms* was; however, the major difference is that, while *Psalms* placed her as a powerful regent supporting Henry, *Lamentation* placed Parr as an influential political figure supporting herself. It's well known that powerful men, such as Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell, and Thomas Cranmer, utilized religion to gain influence and favor with Henry. We expect this behavior of early modern men; however, we don't often expect this from early modern women. *Lamentation* is a marvelous example of how a woman could establish her influence while also 'catering' to the wills of men. In this case, her stepson would certainly have found *Lamentation* to be spiritually and theologically sound from a Protestant perspective. This would help Parr as she sought to stay influential in a court she was used to playing in.

Throughout *Lamentation*, Parr uses approximately 265 instances of self-referencing language. As the text references her personal spiritual journey, this is unsurprising; however, what is surprising is the negative way she references herself through the text. Instead of exalting her devotion to God or her desire to seek God's favor, as in *Psalms*, she seems to embrace her faults and seeks to rectify her ignorance. Specifically, Parr uses negative words to describe her spiritual life thus far in the first two lines: "evil," "wretched," "obstinate," "stony," and "untractable."³⁵ These are not words one generally associates with a pious queen. Specifically, these are not words people want to be associated with at all; however, by using these specific words, Parr is invoking a prevalent theme throughout biblical scripture: self-reflection. The narrator of this text is clearly someone who is aware of their human failings and imperfections, or, in other words, their status as a "sinner." The Bible instructs readers to "Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce your detestable practices."³⁶ It's clear that Parr is repenting at the

³⁵ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 447.

³⁶ Ezekiel 14:6 (15xx Tyndale edition).

beginning of the text, because she is pointing out negative aspects of her spiritual life that could be deemed unholy and seeking God's forgiveness.

Following this trail of self-reflection, Parr blatantly demeans herself throughout the text. This is in direct opposition to her writings in *Psalms and Prayers*. In that text, she continually upholds the idea that monarchs are divinely appointed, and that they have God's blessings; however, she takes a completely different direction with *Lamentation* by naming her faults and wrongdoings, removing the mysticism away from her monarchical figure. Though this may seem odd at first glance, her positionality as dowager queen calls for it. Because she is no longer married to the man that was divinely appointed as king, and she is not regent, she has to find a way to maintain a level of influence in her step-son's court. One way she can accomplish this is to frame herself as a humble and pious counselor. English courts, and any court for that matter, contained ambitious and power-hungry men. Often these men would attempt to extend their reach farther than would comfortably be allowed by a monarch, such as Edward's uncles, Edward and Thomas Seymour. This is why it would be beneficial for Parr to appear as a humble woman: not to frame herself as weak, but to emphasize that she was below the king and that she recognized it.

Parr utilizes much of *Lamentations* to discuss her ignorance of the 'true way' to follow God. She states that she "called superstition godly meaning, and true holiness error."³⁷ As the Protestant religion often regarded some Catholic teachings and practices as superstition, this line clearly reflects the current religious position of the new king. From a political position, this viewpoint greatly aids Parr by outrightly displaying solidarity with Edward's beliefs and separating her from anything resembling Catholicism. Similar to her writings for Henry, she is

³⁷ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 448.

showing her support for the current king. Parr is also endorsing the religious reformatory actions of the new king. Although, admittedly, Edward doesn't technically need her endorsement to secure his position as the head of the Church of England, it is helpful as he seeks to bolster any religious changes he wants to make. With Parr's status as the dowager queen, she is therefore a face from the former regime, and having her support provides a smoother transition of religious power. If Henry's trusted and pious wife supports Edward, and if she was divinely appointed, then it would make sense that Edward would have God's support as well.

Edward's short reign was marked by significant religious and political strife. As she did with Henry, Parr would have observed this and acted in accordance with the current king's stance. This can be seen in the strong anti-Catholic sentiment that *Lamentation* displays. Her tactics are revealed in the opening lines of the first main section, "A Lamentation or Complaint of a Sinner", which state:

When I consider, in the bethinking of mine evil and wretched former life...to have so much exceeded in evilness that hath not only neglected, yea, contemned and despised God's holy precepts and commandments, but also embraced, received, and esteemed vain, foolish, and feigned trifles: I am...forced...to confess and declare to the world how ingrate, negligent, unkind, and stubborn I have been to God my Creator...being such a miserable and wretched sinner.³⁸

When Parr is referencing her "evil and wretched former life" and her neglect of "God's holy precepts and commandments," she is talking about her former 'devotion' to the Catholic faith. As has previously been stated in this paper, it's unknown when her exact conversion to

³⁸ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 447.

Protestantism occurred; however, her political, and personal, stance would reveal itself to align with Edward's throughout her writing.

The "vain, foolish, and feigned trifles" that Parr mentions can be interpreted as the opulent and idolatrous trappings of the closely Catholic reformist Church of England. As Edward clearly dismissed the necessity of the traditional elements of the Catholic religion, this reference to Parr's repentance of this way of worship would have endeared her to her stepson and distanced her from the reformist religion. This is further proven through her confession and her audience for it. When she declares "to the world" her sins, she is clearly taking it outside of the closed confines of a traditional confessional. She takes personal responsibility for her actions, rather than relying on a priest to forgive her. She is appealing and apologizing directly to God; thereby displaying the personal relationship between God and humans that Protestantism calls for. She continues this discussion of values and displays her misjudgment when she confesses that she "forsook the spiritual honoring of the true living God, and worshiped visible idols and images made of man's hands."³⁹ This is a direct reference to the reverent attitude the Catholic Church had towards visual representations of various spiritual leaders. In particular, some biblical characters, such as Peter, Paul, John, and Mary, were venerated to a status nearly equal with Christ.

Similarly, and perhaps more importantly, this passage can be read as potentially referencing the Pope, specifically. Parr dedicates multiple sections of *Lamentation* to degenerate the Pope and the power he had not only spiritually, but also politically. Her anti-Catholic rhetoric becomes even more pronounced when reviewing such references. She refers to him multiple times as the "Bishop of Rome,"⁴⁰ which was a common way to acknowledge his diminished

³⁹ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 449.

⁴⁰ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 450.

position in the Church of England during the latter half of Henry's reign.⁴¹ Parr calls the Pope "riffraff", and says that "his tyranny" and teachings led her into "blind ignorance."⁴² While this view is in line with Henry and Edward's stance on the leader of Rome, it's important to note what this denunciation does for Parr. Political and religious factions began to become more prominent in the early years of Edward's reign. Parr's strong position on the Pope would have placed her firmly in Edward's camp. Not only does this aid in her relationship with Edward, but it also establishes her as a potential political counselor. Protestant viewpoints were more than a religious position; they were also inherently political. Parr's text places her in a position to support Edward as the head of the Church of England, thereby going against any thoughts or efforts to return England back into the papal fold. This pushes forward the political position of monarchical authority over the nation and the spiritual well-being of the people that inhabit it. Parr's position is aided by this as it ensures that her influence over Edward can't be usurped by someone who is staunchly Catholic.

Parr's staunch view of Catholicism becomes even more interesting when her relationship to the Catholic Church's royal supporter in England is considered.⁴³ Her step-daughter Mary was devoutly Catholic and often clashed with her younger brother over religious policy. As Mary was the closest heir to the throne, why would Parr take such a strong positionality when there was every chance Mary could rule? Edward was young and unmarried and quite a distance from being old enough to have an heir. While it's possible that Parr fully expected Edward to live well into adulthood, her stance on Catholicism placed her in a, potentially, dangerous position. In hindsight, we know that Parr didn't live long enough to see Edward die or Mary become Queen

⁴¹ Mueller, *Works and Correspondence*, 450.

⁴² Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 450-451.

⁴³ A more detailed analysis of Parr and Mary's relationship, rhetorical influences, and shared motivations will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

of England; however, she wouldn't have known that. Had Parr lived long enough to experience Mary's reign, she would surely have had to contend with the anti-Catholic stance she had exhibited. In *Lamentation*, she seems to make a provision for this relational difficulty. Parr states that

The sincere and pure lovers of God do embrace Christ with such fervency of spirit, that they rejoice in hope, be bold in despair, suffer in adversity, continue in prayer, and bless their persecutors; further, they be not wise in their own opinion, neither high-minded in their prosperity, neither abashed in their adversity, but humble and gentle, always, to all men. For they know by their faith they are members all of one body, and that they possessed, all, one God, one faith, one baptism, one joy, and one salvation.⁴⁴

This passage is at once flattering and advisory. Parr refers to "sincere and pure lovers of God" as having a fervent "spirit".⁴⁵ While this would be flattering to Edward, as well as other Protestants, the following description of how a follower of Christ handles "hope," "despair," and "adversity"⁴⁶ would also appeal to Mary. Parr avoids any overt reference to these followers of Christ as exclusively Protestant or Catholic. In fact, the continual reference to sharing the same God and faith encourages an attitude of religious tolerance and a shared goal of serving Christ. This seems to be a way of accounting for a difference between the Catholic Church, as an institution, and the people that worship God as Catholics.

Simultaneously, though, this passage may also confer a warning. Parr states that followers of Christ should "be not wise in their own opinion, neither high-minded in their prosperity, neither abashed in their adversity, but humble and gentle, always, to all men."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 467.

⁴⁵ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 467.

⁴⁶ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 467.

⁴⁷ Parr, *Works and Correspondence*, 467.

While she is continuing her efforts to show that she is, and can be, a counselor who will support her stepson's religious position, her advice here also indicates that, at least politically, the best Christians should follow Edward's lead and express a humble nature. Such advice may have a dual function: indicating to her stepdaughters, and particularly the Catholic Mary, the wisdom of a deferent stance towards the monarch who now determines state religion and, in that indication of deference, simultaneously emphasizing her own willingness to be led. While the text as a whole seems largely Protestant in its alignments, such subtle ambiguities could allow Parr to maneuver politically if Mary were to take the throne: by not taking a fully anti-Catholic stance, while also allowing herself to remain within Edward's circle of Protestant influence.

Conclusion

Quoss-Moore neatly summarizes the effect of Parr's works by stating, "Through her published devotionals, Parr crafts a particular self-preserving image of self, but that self is both exceptional and communal, both self-authorizing and dependent on appeals to particular audience."⁴⁸ Parr not only established herself as a queen placed by God, but she also positioned herself as a serious religious scholar and courtier who could grapple with the pressures and dangers of Henry and Edward's courts. She consistently utilized her writing and rhetorical skills in order to preserve and establish her own sources of power and influence. With Henry, Parr created an image of a devoted queen who did everything she could to support his regime. During the beginning of Edward's reign, Parr established her relevance and importance as a vital political and religious counselor in a court where members constantly vied for position and power. Her carefully crafted images and positionality would become a part of the identities that her stepdaughters would claim during their own reigns, and so Parr's influence would continue.

⁴⁸ Quoss-Moore, *Gender and Position-Taking*, 138.

Performance and Politics: The Educational Influence on Queens Regnant

Buried in the same tomb within the halls of Westminster Abbey, Mary I and Elizabeth I of England have been divided by history. One Catholic and one Protestant. One ruled for five years and the other for forty-five. One whose reign is remembered as “Bloody” and one who is remembered as “Gloriana.” While Mary and Elizabeth were, indeed, incredibly different women who chose to govern their shared country in their own ways, I don’t think that it is entirely productive to focus scholarship solely on their differences. Both women were raised to become intelligent and influential courtiers throughout and after their father’s reign. It is impossible to properly ascertain whether Henry VIII intended this or not; however, I do believe that it can be argued that the queens who came before Mary and Elizabeth certainly took actions to that effect. Catherine of Aragon and Katherine Parr both utilized political performance and rhetoric to establish and maintain their own power. While each chose different venues and methods for their rhetoric, the examples set by both women would later influence the rhetoric utilized by the two queen regnants of the early modern period.

Historical Overview

Mary and Elizabeth would both be officially reinstated to the line of succession through the Third Act of Succession in 1543, but their formative years were spent in uncertainty. While each woman was born a princess, their status would be cruelly revoked. Mary was born on February 18, 1516, to King Henry VIII and his first wife Catherine of Aragon after a series of infant deaths and miscarriages.¹²³ Although Henry hoped for a son, he was rather optimistic at his daughter’s birth saying, “if it be a girl this time, by the grace of God, boys will follow.”¹²⁴

¹²³ Peter Ackroyd, *Tudors: History of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I*, (St. Martin’s Publishing Group, 2014), p. 18.

¹²⁴ Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 19.

Despite this optimism, unfortunately, Mary would be their only child to live to adulthood. After Aragon suffered several more miscarriages and stillbirths, Henry's hope for a healthy son began to wane. Although "blame for stillbirths and neonatal deaths was always apportioned to the woman," during this time period, Henry had concluded that he also had a part in their shared misfortune.¹²⁵ As Catherine had previously been married to Henry's brother, he "persuaded himself that their marriage was incestuous and that any sexual congress would be a sin;"¹²⁶ therefore, in order to rectify the situation he sought to gain an annulment from the Pope. Unfortunately for Henry, his request was not granted.¹²⁷ This ruling led to Henry breaking away from the Catholic Church and establishing himself as the head of the Church of England in 1534 with the Act of Supremacy.¹²⁸ Mary, now 18 years old, was declared a bastard, retitled 'Lady Mary,' and forced to serve in her infant half-sister's household.

Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn, seemed like an answer to his prayers. She was young, intelligent, and, hopefully, fertile. The exact moment their relationship began is unknown; however, Henry had become "infatuated" with Anne and the promise that she gave to deliver him a son.¹²⁹ He assured her that he would "cast off all others than [her] out of [his] mind and affection and [...] serve [her] only."¹³⁰ Henry's declaration of love to Anne would turn out to be an empty promise. On September 7, 1533, Anne gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth.¹³¹ She had not delivered the promised son and heir her husband craved. Three miscarriages followed

¹²⁵ Alison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, (Grove Press, 1991), p. 120.

¹²⁶ Weir, *Six Wives*, 138.

¹²⁷ There are several reasons why Henry was not granted an annulment. One, in my opinion, primary reason was the occupation of Rome by Charles V of Spain. As Catherine of Aragon's nephew, it was in his political interests to prevent the annulment. While this was not the only reason Charles took control of the Pope, the effect on Henry and Catherine's marriage is well documented and argued by scholars.

¹²⁸ Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 83.

¹²⁹ Anna Whitelock, *Mary Tudor: England's First Queen*, (Penguin Books, 2016), p. 36.

¹³⁰ Whitelock, *Mary Tudor*, 37.

¹³¹ "Elizabeth I (r.1558-1603)." *The Royal Family*, <https://www.royal.uk/elizabeth-i>.

over the course of Anne's tenure as Queen.¹³² English biographer Peter Ackroyd states that the "king believed, or chose to believe, that the hand of divine providence lay behind the event".¹³³ Henry told Thomas Cromwell on January 29 that "he had made this marriage seduced by her witchcraft, and for that reason considered it null and void, and that this was evident because God did not permit them to have male issue, and that he believed he might take another wife."¹³⁴ By this point, Henry had cast his eyes towards Jane Seymour, one of Anne's ladies in waiting. On May 2 1536, Anne was officially charged with adultery.¹³⁵ It's unlikely that Anne was truly unfaithful to her husband; however, that didn't matter. Factions had already been raised against her in court, and the king believed and took part in the charade. Anne was executed on May 19, 1536.¹³⁶ Elizabeth lost her mother and her legitimacy in one stroke. Now, she was on similar footing with her elder sister.

The importance of how Mary and Elizabeth's mothers were treated, for my arguments here, lies in the positionality that treatment bestowed upon each daughter. Aragon was undoubtedly the more prestigious figure due to her unquestioned royal status, her queenly education, and the longevity of her tenure as queen of England. Boleyn, while she was well educated, was not of royal blood; the legitimacy of her marriage was constantly in question, and her time as queen was ended through execution, not courtly exile like Aragon. While these differences matter, the similarities are also significant to their daughter's positionality. As each woman was cast aside and mistreated by Henry, their children also experienced his neglect. The legitimacy status of Mary and Elizabeth was also in a similar state. While Mary was declared

¹³² Weir, *Six Wives*, 304.

¹³³ Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 92.

¹³⁴ Weir, *Six Wives*, 304-305.

¹³⁵ Weir, *Six Wives*, 316.

¹³⁶ Weir, *Six Wives*, 335.

illegitimate by Henry's order, there were many who considered this an unjust and unfair ruling. For Elizabeth, the question of her legitimacy didn't seem to cease even well into her reign.

Educating Future Queens

Although they were both eventually declared illegitimate, Mary and Elizabeth both received an education fitting for an early modern royal. Both sisters were schooled in various languages, religion, reading, writing, and other courtly pursuits.¹³⁷ Despite these similarities, it is important to note that Mary and Elizabeth received vastly different levels of educations. Mary's education was certainly more comprehensive and extensive than Elizabeth's. The reason for this is that Mary, for much of her early life, was the defacto heir presumptive, and she needed to receive "practical advice on queenship."¹³⁸ Based on the currently available historical evidence, it seems that Catherine of Aragon took a particularly personal role in her daughter's education. A letter sent to Mary from Aragon in 1525 reveals that she was the one to begin teaching her daughter Latin. As Mary was being moved to Ludlow and separated from her mother, Aragon expressed satisfaction towards her daughter's new teacher, saying "As to your writing in Latin, I am glad that you shall change from me to Master Featherstone, for that shall do you much good, to learn by him to write."¹³⁹ Mary's mother commissioned Juan Luis Vives to write *The Education of a Christian Woman* in 1521, and she likely meant for the text to be an instruction manual for noble women as well as her daughter. In addition to Catherine's dedication to the literacy of her daughter, her performance as a princess of Spain, a young widow, and a queen of England provided Mary with a comprehensive education of how to navigate the political

¹³⁷ Anne Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), pg. 12-13.

¹³⁸ Teresa Earenfight, "'By Your Loving Mother': Lessons in Queenship from Catherine of Aragon to Her Daughter, Mary", in *Mary I in Writing: Letters, Literature, and Representation*, eds. Valerie Schutte and Jessica S. Hower, (Palgrave Macmillan 2022) p. 19.

¹³⁹ Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, (Sutton Publishing Limited 2002) p. 176.

landscape of 16th century politics. Catherine was “the only woman in Mary’s life who had direct experience with being a queen, an ambassador, an advisor to the king, and a regent during a period of warfare.”¹⁴⁰ Therefore, Catherine was an excellent source for Mary to learn the art of queenship, and it is evident that she utilized those lessons throughout her life and reign.

Although Elizabeth shared the status of illegitimacy with her elder sister, “her early education was not princely”¹⁴¹ and her care was fought for. Her devoted governess, Lady Margaret Bryant, ensured that she had proper clothes and food and sought to ensure Elizabeth was not neglected by her father and maintained his affection. Bryant “petitioned tirelessly for someone, anyone, to turn the king’s attention, even if only momentarily, to the plight of his little girl.”¹⁴² Several years later, Kat Ashley took over Elizabeth’s care. She would become Elizabeth’s “surrogate mother, best friend, and protector through her dangerous teen years and well into her happy reign.”¹⁴³ Before her formal education began, it was Ashley and John Picton that ensured that Elizabeth would not be entirely neglected. Together, they “introduced her to Italian and French, but not Latin or Greek.”¹⁴⁴ In 1548, Elizabeth’s new teacher, Robert Ascham, gave her, and her cousin Lady Jane Grey, a more pronounced and structured “humanist education.”¹⁴⁵ It was evident from a young age that Elizabeth was intelligent and eloquent. Elizabeth would become fluent in “Latin, French, and Italian, and competent in Greek and Spanish.”¹⁴⁶ Similarly to Mary, an aspect of Elizabeth’s education was translation work. At

¹⁴⁰ Earenfight, “Lessons in Queenship,” 23.

¹⁴¹ Aysha Pollnitz, “Christian Women or Sovereign Queens? The Schooling of Mary and Elizabeth,” in *Tudor Queenship: The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth*, eds. Alice Hunt and Anne Whitelock, (Palgrave Macmillian 2010) p.133.

¹⁴² Ashlie Jenson, “An Education: The Shaping of Elizabeth I, Through Childhood Events and Academic Pursuit,” *On the Tudor Trail*.

¹⁴³ Jenson, “An Education.”

¹⁴⁴ Pollnitz, “Christian Women or Sovereign Queen?”, 133.

¹⁴⁵ Agecroft Hall, “Queen Elizabeth’s Education,” (2013).

¹⁴⁶ Agecroft Hall, “Education.”

twelve years old, she translated Marguerite de Navarre's *The Mirror of the Sinful Soul* as a New Year's present for Katherine Parr.¹⁴⁷ Over the next few years, Elizabeth continued to thrive and grew into an intelligent and precocious young woman.

While Mary and Elizabeth received varying levels and attention regarding their educations, their father's intermittent neglect did not stop either of them from learning perhaps the most important lessons that they would carry into their respective reigns. Practically, both women would certainly have been privy to the political and religious machinations of powerful men within their father's court. Mary, staunchly Catholic and loyal to her mother, had to learn how to have divided loyalties to preserve her life. Elizabeth, the daughter of a falsely accused "adulterer," would have to learn how to overcome the men that sought use her body for personal gain. Both women would learn through their own experience as well as the examples left for them by their predecessors. Aragon and Parr were prominent among the examples that provided Mary and Elizabeth with the skills to rule their countries and manipulate the men who thought to rule through them.

Power and Positionality: Mary

At the time of Mary's ascension to the throne, there had not been an established precedent for how a queen regnant should govern England. While England had several female regents, such as the aforementioned Catherine of Aragon and Katherine Parr, Mary's status as the sole ruling monarch would require her to establish her rule in a patriarchal society in a way that was unfamiliar to her courtiers. Dr. Kim Hall's book *Things of Darkness* explains where women were placed in the social hierarchy during the early modern period. She builds off of Chela Sandoval's research, stating that "white women always inhabit secondary positions in

¹⁴⁷ Somerset, *Elizabeth I*, 13.

which they simultaneously experience oppression (in relation to white men) and a “will-to-power” (in relation to people of color).”¹⁴⁸ Because of the already established social structure, Mary would need to utilize the lessons on queenship that she learned from her mother and step-mother. In addition, despite her prestigious and well-known heritage, she would have to fight against courtiers that sought to displace her and her Catholic faith with someone who would be more easily manipulated—and, ideally, Protestant.

Upon Edward VI’s death in 1553, it could be assumed that Mary would easily have been accepted as his successor; however, this was not necessarily the case. As Edward knew that Mary was a devout Catholic, he took measures that would bar her from the throne in order to protect what he saw as the progress towards a truly reformed England that he had achieved during his reign. In June of 1553, Edward declared to his council that it was his “resolve...to disown and disinherit Mary together with her sister Elizabeth.”¹⁴⁹ Although Elizabeth was a Protestant, he could not disinherit one sister and not the other; therefore, he created his own “device for the succession”¹⁵⁰ which made his cousin, Lady Jane Grey, his successor. Despite this, Mary was able to successfully defeat this coup soon after Edward’s death. Ultimately, this would be the first of many accomplishments throughout her reign. Paulina Kewes specifies that Mary successfully “suppressed the Wyatt rebellion...married a foreign Catholic prince of her choice...brought England back into the papal fold...and [took] it to war.”¹⁵¹ Her accomplishments, though distinctly ignored and manipulated during her sister’s reign, display the political and rhetorical prowess that she held.

¹⁴⁸ Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economics of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, (Cornell University Press, 1995), p.179. There is more work worth considering around Mary’s relationship to Englishness, Catholicism, and whiteness.

¹⁴⁹ Linda Porter, *The Myth of “Bloody Mary”: A Biography of Mary / of England*, (St. Martin’s Press 2009), p. 184.

¹⁵⁰ Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 238.

¹⁵¹ Paulina Kewes, “Godly Queens: The Royal Iconographies of Mary and Elizabeth,” in *Tudor Queenship: The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth*, eds. Alice Hunt and Anna Whitelock, (Palgrave Mcmillan 2010), p.47.

As Elizabeth would later learn through her own experience, Mary had to walk a fine line between what was politically and socially acceptable for a woman to say and do, while also exemplifying the traits and role of a ruler regardless of gender. Mary was able to accomplish this by utilizing similar performance rhetoric as her mother. Catherine of Aragon was well versed in negotiating her position in the Tudor court.¹⁵² She would implicitly direct her daughter to do the same. Mary would need to acknowledge the society in which they lived and find strength outside of court pressures. Catherine “knew the power of men’s hostility to women and their belief that women by nature were unruly, unable to control themselves, and unfit to govern others.”¹⁵³ Therefore, Mary was encouraged to “trust in the higher powers of God and the Pope”¹⁵⁴ and to, safely, resist her father’s efforts to remove her from her position as legitimate heir. Unfortunately, Mary would eventually have to succumb to Henry’s wishes and acquiesce to his demands; however, she used this to her advantage to regain a measure of Henry’s goodwill. This lesson revealed to Mary the expectations that she was ‘supposed’ to live by. She had to be meek, to be obedient, and to prioritize the needs of a man above her own. In addition, she had the added pressure upon becoming queen to ensure that her power and authority were solidified and unquestionable despite the fact she was a woman.

Mary’s coronation was one of first official ways in which she would establish her royal authority. It was imperative that she was able to show that she was the undisputed reigning monarch. For her coronation, she fashioned herself as king and queen of England by creating a fascinating contrast between reigning monarch and consort. Although she was crowned with the traditional imperial crown and St. Edward’s crown, she also commissioned her own, glittering

¹⁵² As discussed in Chapter One.

¹⁵³ Earenfight, “Lessons in Queenship,” 35.

¹⁵⁴ Earenfight, “Lessons in Queenship,” 35.

diadem.¹⁵⁵ While she is not the first monarch to do so, the significance of her choosing to create her own coronation crown displayed a threefold image of where her authority derived. The imperial crown symbolized that her authority came from England, as it had since the 15th century. St. Edward's crown symbolized Mary's authority was given to her by God due to the crown being considered as a holy relic.¹⁵⁶ Finally, her personal crown displayed a combined element of imperial and holy authority. Mary was displaying that she was divinely appointed to rule England, and her crown emphasized that she “combined power and gender both as the monarch of England but also [...] her definition of her position[,] because it was the first official piece of coronation regalia for a crowned and anointed queen regent.”¹⁵⁷

In addition, Mary also wore a “gown of purple velvet and ermine” during her coronation; Elizabeth would wear this same gown a few years later.¹⁵⁸ It goes without saying that purple has traditionally been seen as a color of royalty. Henry VII and Henry VIII both wore the color during their coronations; more significantly, Catherine of Aragon wore this color as well.¹⁵⁹ While Mary wearing this color could be seen as an emulation of her father, I think that it is more likely tied to her mother when one considers her pre-coronation attire as well. Accounts from the time state that she wore “a Robe of white clothe of Gold Tisshewe”¹⁶⁰ which was similar to what her mother, as well as other consorts,¹⁶¹ wore at her pre-coronation. The combination of purple and white during different moments of her coronation display that she understood the balance

¹⁵⁵ Michaela Baca, “Negotiating Queenship: Ritual Practice, Material Evidence, and Mary I’s Narrative of Authority,” in *Mary I in Writing: Letters, Literature, and Representation*, eds. Valerie Shutte and Jessica S. Hower, (Palgrave Macmillan 2022), p.44.

¹⁵⁶ Baca, “Negotiating Queenship,” 44.

¹⁵⁷ Baca, “Negotiating Queenship,” 44.

¹⁵⁸ Baca, “Negotiating Queenship,” 44.

¹⁵⁹ Baca, “Negotiating Queenship,” 45.

¹⁶⁰ Baca, “Negotiating Queenship,” 45.

¹⁶¹ Baca cites research by Hilary Doda to refer to Elizabeth of York, Catherine of Aragon, and Anne Boleyn as wearing white to their coronations as queen consort.

she had to find as a reigning monarch and a woman. She would have to negotiate her positionality as a woman ruling England, while also exercising her authority as the God-appointed, sovereign monarch. Furthermore, by dressing similar to her mother, as well as other consorts, she began to establish one of her three strongest rhetorical positions: wife of England.

Along with this, she would place herself as the mother and religious authority in England through, once again, invoking her mother. Mary's use of St. Edward's crown reflects the Catholic iconography consistently associated with Aragon. While the crown's ties to Catholicism are relevant, the greater tie lies in how Mary chooses to utilize this specific type of iconography. Her choice to use St. Edward's crown displays her awareness of how she would be perceived both religiously and politically. From a religious standpoint, Mary would clearly declare her Catholic allegiance, while also making a political statement of solidarity with her mother. This would invoke, for the English people, memories of the devoted and loving monarch that was so callously removed from her throne. This then places Mary into a motherly position in the minds of her people.

Power and Positionality: Elizabeth

Mary's efforts to establish herself within these positions would contribute to Elizabeth's queenly education. While much more could be said about Mary's earliest performances of power, my primary goal here is to offer some manageable points of comparison between the two queens' early efforts to establish their authority, particularly in the context of their mothers' and stepmothers' rhetorical authorities. When looking at Elizabeth's ascendance to the throne we see that it was, in some ways, smoother than Mary's by comparison. Heady Delpak states that, by 1558, England "was divided by religion and isolated in European politics, and the last years of Mary's reign had seen failed military campaigns, food shortages, bitter winters, and the return of

the plague.”¹⁶² While Mary should not be blamed for weather changes or a plague resurgence, these issues provided Elizabeth with an opportunity to establish her reign as different than her elder sister’s, as well as to manipulate the image of the former monarch. Unlike Mary, Elizabeth already had an example of what a woman’s rule looked like, so she had a model of how to begin her reign. Mary had already demonstrated “that the office of crowned monarch fully outweighed whatever frailties might conventionally be attached to females;”¹⁶³ because of this, Elizabeth was aware of how to both establish control over the government, while also playing to her courtiers’ entitled sense of gendered superiority.

During her first speech as Queen at Hatfield on November 20, 1558, Elizabeth declares to her lords that she will “direct all [of her] actions by good advice and council” and that she requires of them “nothing more but faithful hearts in such service...towards the preservation of [her] and [the] commonwealth.”¹⁶⁴ This statement allowed Elizabeth to establish trust in her councilors and attempt to bring them to her side by reassuring them that she would seek and adhere to their advice; however, she quickly displayed that she was firmly in control of *her* government. Elizabeth soon reduced the number of councilors from thirty to twenty and required her councilors “to meet daily” to discuss issues within the country.¹⁶⁵ It’s evident that Elizabeth had the political foresight to establish her positionality as monarch within her government while also negotiating her positionality within a patriarchal structure.

Within this same speech, Elizabeth also exemplified a humble nature similar to Katherine Parr in *Lamentations of a Sinner*. In Chapter Two, I argue that Parr used her self-reflective and

¹⁶² Heady Delpak, *Social Life and Culture During the Reign of Elizabeth I in the UK*, (2018) p.102.

¹⁶³ Judith Richards, “Examples and Admonitions: What Mary Demonstrated for Elizabeth,” in *Tudor Queenship: The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth*, ed. Alice Hunt and Anne Whitelock, (Palgrave Macmillan 2010), p.37.

¹⁶⁴ Elizabeth I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press), p.52.

¹⁶⁵ Bertram Fields, *Gloriana: Exploring the Reign of Elizabeth I*, (Marmont Lane 2018).

demeaning language to place herself below the king while also establishing herself as a potentially influential counselor. Elizabeth does something similar when she states that she “will thereto yield, desiring from the bottom of [her] heart that [she] may have assistance of His grace to be the minister of His heavenly will in this office committed to [her].”¹⁶⁶ Although Elizabeth is not using language to diminish her position, she is creating an image of a humble leader that wishes to “yield” to God’s authority. What is interesting here is that, while she is yielding to God’s authority, she is not yielding to anyone else’s authority. While Parr placed herself below Edward VI, Elizabeth only places herself below God. This emphasizes her positionality, not only as a humble follower of God, but also in clearly claiming that she is the head of the nation and there is no one else for her to truly yield to. Yes, she will seek her counselor’s advice, but she is the one who is imbued with the power and authority from God—no one else. Therefore, she is invoking a sense of religious authority that other rulers, in particular her sister, relied on to maintain governmental authority despite her gender.

Her efforts to establish her sovereignty did not focus solely on her interactions with her counselors. As she entered London on the day before her coronation, Richard Mulcaster wrote that Elizabeth used “most tender and gentle language” when speaking to the subjects who greeted her and “ravished” them with “welcoming answers and gestures.”¹⁶⁷ These actions “implanted a wonderful hope in them”¹⁶⁸ that would last throughout her reign. Not only does Elizabeth establish herself as a benevolent ruler, but she also creates a foundation with her subjects that would frame her image as the caring wife and mother of England through her interactions with them. This reflects the attitude that the English people had toward Catherine of

¹⁶⁶ Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 52.

¹⁶⁷ Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 53.

¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 53,

Aragon. Similarly to Mary, Elizabeth realized how important having the support of the English people was. Catherine of Aragon was consistently praised by the people. She has been “regularly represented...as a pious, loyal, deferential consort and as a compassionate intercessor for the English people,”¹⁶⁹ whose reputation could not be besmirched even after her death and the ascension of Anne Boleyn. Therefore, Elizabeth’s seemingly benevolent behavior towards her people from the very beginning of her reign, while it cannot be directly linked to Catherine of Aragon, indicates that Elizabeth could have been well aware of how imperative it was to hold the hearts of the people to hold their loyalty. It is likely that she would have been aware of her mother’s reputation upon becoming queen as well as her legacy after her death, and Elizabeth would have needed to be sure that she was as beloved as Catherine of Aragon, not as hated or viewed with suspicion as her mother was. Although Elizabeth certainly invoked her mother’s image and spirit throughout her reign, at the beginning of her queenship it was important to have and maintain the loyalty of her people, especially because there were those who did not view her as a legitimate queen. However, because she was able to begin cultivating this image of a benevolent and loving ruler, she was able to simultaneously place herself in the position of a loving authoritative figure for the people as well as secure her positionality as ruler.

¹⁶⁹ Maria Teresa Micaela Prendergast, “Catherine of Aragon’s Letters, English Popular Memory, and Male Authorial Fantasies,” *Studies in Philology*, 118.2. (2021): 208,

Wives of England

As female rulers, both Mary and Elizabeth were forced to contend with their gender. They both needed to continue exercising their early established royal authority, while also not upsetting the social conventions of the day. Each queen was able to accomplish this by utilizing rhetorical strategies established by Aragon and Parr. Due to the current precedent, Mary was able to twist the traditional roles of men and women and reform them into a more balanced view of ruling. When attempting to identify her source of power, one of the three main ways that Mary chose to accomplish this was to “[establish] her identity as a spouse of England.”¹⁷⁰ This allowed Mary to place herself in a role that was familiar to her male subjects but was clearly meant to discourage opposition to her position. By tying herself to England in a sort of “marriage vow” during her coronation, Mary was able to identify what a Queen regnant was, as well as the solidifying implications of her position.¹⁷¹ This choice was possibly informed by Aragon and Parr’s own use of spousal rhetoric. In Chapter One, I outlined how Aragon, due to her position as queen, was able to bend the conventional feminine roles to fulfill her courtly duties. She did this in several ways; however, her participation in courtly activities that Vives was adamantly against, such as jousts and opulent clothing, would emphasize that Aragon’s primary duty as queen was to please her husband, thereby increasing the need for her to momentarily push back against Vives’ instruction. This example could have given Mary the confidence, and perhaps even the idea, to continually place England as her spouse to display the level of loyalty towards England that she held. This parallels Aragon’s devotion, as Mary clearly had to set aside social conventions of gender when assuming the throne. Similarly, Parr’s spousal devotion is made

¹⁷⁰ Cristy Beemer, “The Female Monarchy: A Rhetorical Strategy of Early Modern Rule,” *Rhetoric Review*. 30.3 (2011): 263.

¹⁷¹ Beemer, “The Female Monarchy”, 263.

clear throughout *Psalms and Prayers* as it reveals the propagandistic lengths that she would go to protect and support her spouse's endeavors. As Mary would order the execution of heretics throughout her reign,¹⁷² it's clear that she sought to do everything in her power to protect her nation from what she believed to be spiritually damning to the very soul of England. These instances show that Mary wanted her subjects to understand her as as devoted to the wellbeing of her nation as Aragon and Parr were to Henry.

Mary's position as wife of England was made more complicated by her marriage to Phillip II of Spain. Because Mary was a reigning queen, the issue of power dynamics was presented when she chose her spouse. There were those who vehemently opposed the match due to fears of England becoming a principality of Spain.¹⁷³ In addition, the social conventions of the day implied that Mary would have to submit to her husband, which could lead to Phillip gaining control of England over Mary. However, despite the fears of her people, Mary made it clear that it was *she* who was the sovereign of England, *not* her husband. The marriage contract between Mary and Phillip would make it explicitly clear that Philip had no claim to the English throne should Mary die before him. He was also "denied...regal power" and "limited his involvement to assisting the queen in the administration of her realm insofar as the 'rights, laws, privileges and customs' of both kingdoms permitted."¹⁷⁴ While on the surface this seems to be incredibly progressive for the time, Mary did balance this with social conventions that would settle any religious concerns with her example of marriage.

¹⁷² I feel that it is necessary to state that I do not follow the traditional viewpoint of Mary as a "bloody" monarch. While we can certainly condemn the violences of monarchy and of early English nationalism, Mary's nickname speaks more to misogynist historiographies than to her own actions as in any way "exceptional" instances of tyranny.

¹⁷³ The opposition to Mary's marriage would result in Wyatt's Rebellion in 1554. While there isn't room here to delve into this topic, it is important to note that the defeat of this rebellion helped to establish Mary's authority in England, as well as her ability to hold the throne.

¹⁷⁴ Anna Whitelock, *Mary Tudor: England's First Queen*, (Penguin Books 2009), p. 245.

After their marriage, any official documentation or proclamations that were released would place Phillip's name before Mary's.¹⁷⁵ In addition, her signature would invoke previous queen consorts as "Marye the quene"¹⁷⁶ instead of a more regal self-reference. Despite this, Mary is displaying an interesting use of performance and written rhetoric that invokes Aragon and Parr simultaneously. The relation to Aragon and Parr rests in Mary's deference to her husband. Mary's self-placement as submissive to her husband, but also acknowledging and establishing her authority, is reminiscent of Aragon's and Parr's tenures as regent. Both Aragon and Parr would attribute any successes that they accomplished to their husband. While Mary certainly does not do this in every instance, her choice in references that place herself as below her husband within her marriage displays a careful consideration of conventional gender practices. She is negotiating here. By placing herself in a slightly subordinate position, Mary is able to perform as a "good" Christian spouse, while also not sacrificing the political power that she was entitled to as queen.

Although there are other ways in which Mary drew lessons from Aragon and Parr, the specific instances I have discussed above were also similarly utilized by Elizabeth but in different ways. As other queens and noble women before her, Elizabeth was expected to marry and have heirs to continue the dynasty and prevent a succession crisis. She was fully aware of this expectation, especially as her councilors would officially petition for her marriage no fewer than three times.¹⁷⁷ However, she used this societal and political expectation to her advantage. The Queen addressed the issue of her marriage early on in her reign. During her first speech to Parliament on February 10, 1559, Elizabeth declared that she was "already bound unto a

¹⁷⁵ Baca, "Negotiating Queenship," 52.

¹⁷⁶ Baca, "Negotiating Queenship," 54.

¹⁷⁷ I drew this number from various sources within the British National Archives and Janelle Muller's work.

husband, which is the kingdom of England, and that may suffice you.”¹⁷⁸ This statement specifically places her within the societal confines of marriage *with* the collective identity of England. Similar to Mary, Elizabeth utilized this rhetoric to emphasize that it was *she* that would rule England, *not* a man through her. Although she often dangled the possibility of a marriage to aid in international politics throughout her reign, it is clear, based on her rhetoric, that she was ardently against the idea of a personal marriage. She had witnessed the difficulties in balancing marriage and politics that Mary had faced. Therefore, I think this speech was an early indication that she would not take the chance that she be ruled by a husband or any man—or even be perceived as such. Elizabeth was trying holding on to as much power as possible, as well as establish herself as the rightful ruler of England.

Elizabeth’s intention to never marry was emphasized when she stated “this for me shall be sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a queen... lived and [died] a virgin”¹⁷⁹ during the same speech. Although her tomb does not reflect this epitaph, this sentiment reflected a striking difference *and* similarity in how Elizabeth and Mary enacted what they had learned from Aragon and Parr’s rhetoric. While Mary took on a more physical role of wife in her marriage to Phillip, both women relied on the symbolic nature of marriage. As Elizabeth and Mary fully embraced this usage, their actions reflect the writings of Parr in *Lamentations of a Sinner*. In Chapter Two, I argued that Parr formed this text as a political tool to maintain her influential position within the court, and, I believe, this is also what Mary and Elizabeth were doing. Tradition dictated that a man, or a husband in the monarchical case, was the driving force behind political decision-making. Parr would have been well-aware of this and worked to place herself

¹⁷⁸ Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 59.

¹⁷⁹ Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 58.

below Edward by endorsing his Protestant viewpoints and placing herself under his authority; however, neither Elizabeth nor Mary could fully do this.

Both Mary and Elizabeth would utilize and reconfigure Parr's tactics. As we know, Elizabeth chose to never actually marry. If she did, there was a high risk that she would lose her influence as the main voice within the government and be pushed aside by a husband. Despite this, she still had to contend with her male counselors. Elizabeth negotiated this position by doing exactly and directly the opposite of Parr. Whereas Parr made herself and her authority smaller at the surface level, Elizabeth made herself bigger and more authoritative. Following this, then she is clearly not exactly utilizing the subtle nature of Parr's self-identification as a humble and wise counselor. Although she does state that she will "yield"¹⁸⁰ to God, she doesn't say that she will yield to her counselors. This implies that Elizabeth could have seen how effective Parr's political efforts worked to maintain her influence and sought to do the same thing while reflecting her different positionality.

Similarly, while Mary did marry Phillip, she also could not yield her power to her husband nor her counselors. She was required to negotiate her position as a wife and monarch through creating a legal balance between what Phillip was allowed to do as the king consort of England, while also submitting to what she believed to be required of her by society and religion. Because of this, Mary is utilizing lessons from Parr and Aragon when attempting to find a balance between wife and monarch. Following Aragon's example, Mary would defer to her husband. I argued earlier in this chapter that Mary did this through various performative elements. In addition to these, though, she would also enact Parr's subtleties. By placing Phillip's name first on documents and referring to herself in a manner similar to consorts, these actions

¹⁸⁰ Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 52.

display that Mary, while certainly within her rights to maintain all power for herself, was wise enough to realize that male courtiers might not take too kindly to a Queen who gave no deference to her spouse. Therefore, Mary is enacting the subtle negotiation exemplified by Parr by allowing her husband to take the lead in some areas, even as Mary's negotiation also demonstrates for Elizabeth that, as queen regnant, she cannot allow her husband's authority to truly overcome hers.

Mothers of England

Mary and Elizabeth also utilized rhetoric that established them as mothers of England. Mary's speech at Guildhall documents that she utilized motherly rhetoric to soothe the English people as she faced Wyatt's rebellion. She stated that "as the mother doth love the child, then assure yourselves, that I...do as earnestly and tenderly love and favor you."¹⁸¹ Here, she was able to center in on her role as mother of her subjects and attempt to assuage them that her first and foremost concern was the welfare of her people, not necessarily her marriage to Phillip. Similarly, this rhetoric invokes Catherine of Aragon's devotion to the English people throughout her tenure as queen. Catherine's performative rhetoric often provided the English people with a virtuous example of Christian womanhood that reflected well upon the country and her husband. Aragon was able to place herself jointly with Henry, but also distinguish herself as a capable ruler, as shown during her regency.¹⁸² Aragon's enthusiastic care for England was so evident that it is possible that Mary remembered this and decided to utilize a similar strategy to cast herself as England's mother. She states that she loves her subjects "as the mother doth love the child."¹⁸³ This move signified that Mary, despite not being a mother in the physical and traditional sense,

¹⁸¹ Beemer, "The Female Monarchy", 264.

¹⁸² See Chapter One for a more in-depth explanation of Aragon's regency.

¹⁸³ Beemer, "The Female Monarchy", 267.

was, due to her positionality, the caregiver for England. This allowed Mary to place herself in a position familiar to her counselors and subjects as it was ‘appropriate’ for her gender, especially while she was unmarried. Although it must be clarified that she did marry and attempt to produce an heir, the fact that she positioned herself in this way established a precedent of her role as Queen. Mary placed herself into a role that was expected of women but twisted it to serve her needs. She was queen, yes, but she was also like a mother to her beloved people. The requirement of a physical heir was not lost on her; however, she was able to place this expectation aside long enough to place herself firmly at the head of her nation. This is significant as it not only provided an example of rulership for Elizabeth, but also once again invoked performative elements informed by her mother’s earlier work.

Elizabeth would utilize a similar tactic as Mary; however, she would expand on it. Christy Beemer has provided a fascinating analysis of Elizabeth’s use of motherhood. She states that, instead of likening her love of England to motherhood, like Mary, Elizabeth “claims to *be* the mother of England.”¹⁸⁴ This is even more significant when one considers this move performatively. By positioning herself *as* England’s mother, Elizabeth is creating a rhetorical position that protects her decision to remain unmarried. As Beemer explains in her article, Elizabeth is resolving the marriage and heir issue.¹⁸⁵ If she is technically married to England, and her subjects are technically her children, then she cannot be made to perform the physical social counterparts. Her emphasis of rhetoric invokes the motherly role that Aragon held throughout her tenure as queen. Although Elizabeth would not have witnessed Aragon’s queenship, she would have been aware of it and of Aragon’s legacy. It is not too much of a logical leap to assume that Elizabeth would have been made aware of how beloved Aragon was compared to her own

¹⁸⁴ Beemer, “The Female Monarchy”, 267.

¹⁸⁵ Beemer, “The Female Monarchy”, 267.

mother. In addition, Elizabeth would have witnessed how politically advantageous this tactic was for Mary.

Religious Leaders of England

Both Mary and Elizabeth were able to recognize the importance of religious authority along with monarchical authority. They were both witness to their father's efforts to be seen as God's authority on Earth. Interestingly, both queens invoked this image; however, it must be noted that this influence is not just from Henry, but from Parr and Aragon as well. Throughout Parr's *Psalms and Prayers*, she consistently returns to this idea of God's blessing on Henry's war in France. This piece of propagandic rhetoric was essential to establishing Henry's justification for war, while also placing Parr on a more level playing field of religious authority with Henry. Although Elizabeth and Mary did not necessarily have to place themselves below any man, their efforts to place themselves directly, and humbly, below God allowed them to negotiate their positions as religious leaders despite their sex.

One glaring reason that Mary and Elizabeth had to establish themselves as religious leaders was due to their father. After Henry's break from Rome, he placed himself as the head of the Church of England. Because of this, Mary and Elizabeth were both obligated to assume this role. Interestingly, one would think that Mary would have attempted to dismantle all of Henry's work towards reform and reject her status in favor of returning England to full papal authority; however, this was not necessarily the case. Mary was "prepared to use the authority that title gave her to begin reshaping religious practice."¹⁸⁶ While it is important to acknowledge that she did begin to restore England to Catholicism, she did it on her own authority first. She issued instructions "for restoring the English church to her preferred practice"¹⁸⁷ before she invoked

¹⁸⁶ Richards, "Examples and Admonitions," 38.

¹⁸⁷ Richards, "Examples and Admonitions," 38.

papal authority. From here, I want to draw attention towards a parallel with Parr's work. As Parr was attempting to establish her religious authority during Henry's reign, it was clear that she believed she was placed into her position by God's divine direction.¹⁸⁸ Mary would have believed the same thing. Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed that Mary would have not only derived her belief that she was the rightful queen from her mother, but would have also recognized her new status as queen as God's divine decree, as Parr did. This would lend credence to Mary's efforts to grasp and maintain her queenly authority throughout her reign.

Similarly to Mary, Elizabeth would also seek to establish her religious authority as monarch. Judith Richards points out that Elizabeth "was always vulnerable to the charge of being evasive about her religious past,"¹⁸⁹ and that the nature of Elizabeth's personal religious beliefs has never been truly identified.¹⁹⁰ It has also been said that Elizabeth, aware of the danger that quick religious changes could bring, chose to be "tentative and tolerant" when addressing religion.¹⁹¹ While I will not be digging into Elizabeth's personal beliefs in this chapter, I do want to point out the significance of this 'back-and-forth' behavior. This echoes Parr's efforts to ensure that she would still have a place within Mary's regime if Elizabeth were to die before Edward. In Chapter Two, I discuss how Parr was careful to not slander the Catholic church too deeply in *Lamentations*, on the chance that Mary could become queen. It's possible that Elizabeth similarly recognized the dangers of hardline religion. While I certainly acknowledge that Elizabeth executed a significant number of Catholics, the point I want to make is that she was able to provide herself with a religious 'cushion' by utilizing tolerance when appropriate. Like Parr, Elizabeth would have recognized the importance of maintaining good relations on

¹⁸⁸ For a more in-depth explanation of this point, see Chapter Two.

¹⁸⁹ Richards, "Examples and Admonitions," 39.

¹⁹⁰ Richards, "Examples and Admonitions," 39.

¹⁹¹ Lewis W. Spitz, *The Renaissance and Reform Movements: Volume 1*, (Concordia Publishing House, 2005) p. 56.

either side of a dispute; therefore, I argue that Elizabeth utilized Parr's tactics when dealing with her own religious power balance. To help give herself the authority to do this, Elizabeth would refer to herself as "God's creature, ordained to obey his appointment."¹⁹² This declaration does two things: first, it establishes that she has been placed on the throne by God's direction. Second, and most importantly for this portion of the argument, it places her authority directly under God; thereby giving her the authority to make the decisions on what is fair treatment of opposing religious positions.

Queens in Life and Death

Mary and Elizabeth shared the same desire to better and care for England, and each woman took different measures to achieve the same ends; however, they both utilized lessons they learned from queens before them. They learned how to establish themselves as the mothers, wives, and religious leaders of England. Catherine of Aragon and Katherine Parr each provided Mary and Elizabeth a precedent on how to gain and maintain power and authority. This, in part, was due to the rhetorical education they received from the examples and encouragement of Aragon and Parr. Both Mary and Elizabeth were able to utilize the performance of Aragon through their self-representations. In addition, they imitated Parr through their usage of verbal and written negotiations of their positionality within a patriarchal social structure. In Westminster Abbey, the Queens were laid next to each other following Elizabeth's death. The plaque that rests on their grave states, "Partners both in throne and grave, here rest we, two sisters, Elizabeth and Mary, in the hope of resurrection" (Porter 410). What I find interesting about this is the beginning portion of the phrase: "partners both in throne and grave." As Queens both in life and in death, the lessons they have imparted upon the world live on; those lessons

¹⁹² Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 52.

should be understood through a framing of these two women's work as complementary and co-informed, rather than simply (or perhaps even primarily) competitive.

Conclusion

A woman's behavior and countenance are consistently under scrutiny. Whether it is by employers, partners, friends, or strangers, it would be fair to say that many women have experienced some form of judgement upon their actions. Queens of the Tudor Era felt this all the more acutely. As they were often representatives of their courts, their nations, and their sex, these women were required to take special care with their images and reputations. My thesis has explored the rhetorical negotiations that Catherine of Aragon and Katherine Parr utilized in order to gain and maintain influence throughout their husband's courts while not overtly upsetting the patriarchal conventions of the time. In turn, Mary and Elizabeth would pay great attention to how these women exercised their rhetoric performatively and through written texts. Through Aragon and Parr's examples, Mary and Elizabeth were able to enact this queenly education to establish their power and authority as queen regnants.

Chapters One and Two focused on how Aragon and Parr utilized performative and written rhetoric, respectively, to gain and maintain influence within Henry's court. Aragon negotiated her role as queen consort with her role as a woman. This was explored through my analysis of her performative actions as queen compared with Vives' textual instructions for how noble women, specifically, should conduct themselves. As the chapter shows, she was able to successfully balance each viewpoint of womanhood due to her social obligations as queen, in conjunction with her conservative practice of wifely devotion. This enabled her to gain influence within her husband's court. Similarly, Parr was able to gain influence in the same court through her written rhetoric. She did this on three separate occasions with the texts she wrote from 1544-1447. Her first text, written while she was regent and Henry was fighting in France, established Parr as a politically influential figure as her work aided her husband's war efforts, as well as

establishing her own positionality as appointed by God. Her final work created an avenue for her to maintain the influence that she had gained during her husband's reign as she entered her stepson's reign. The final chapter of my thesis centers the work that Aragon and Parr did within the establishment of Mary's and Elizabeth's performances as queen regnants of England. Aragon and Parr's actions allowed Mary and Elizabeth to witness how a queen can successfully establish and hold on to power through rhetorical negotiation.

One prevalent theme that continued to emerge throughout my research was positionality. While there is a misconception that early modern women had no agency, both Aragon and Parr imparted their own versions of how to navigate this male-dominated period through rhetorical negotiation. Their utilization of performance and written rhetoric, respectively, allowed them to exercise their influence, while also positioning themselves below their husband's, or other ruling men's, authority. In addition, they both established that their power derived from God's divine direction and instruction. Therefore, when Mary and Elizabeth needed to accomplish a similar task to ensure their own socio-political power, they utilized various rhetorical tactics that had worked for Aragon and Parr in order to create and maintain the influence that they gained through their positionality as queens regnant.

In future, an expansion of this specific work to include Isabella of Castile and Maud Green, the mothers of Aragon and Parr respectively, could provide an interesting multi-generation aspect to the work on how performative and written rhetorical education effects women across time, social class, and political positionalities. In addition, it would be interesting to expand this research to regnant queens after the Tudor Era to see if they followed similar rhetorical patterns established during this era.

As a mother to two girls, I find the influence of Aragon and Parr to be rather touching. Educating daughters on how to navigate a male-dominated society is a challenge that women across time have had to endure. The examples set by Aragon and Parr give an insight into how gaining and maintaining influence within said society can be done in a subtle, but incredibly effective, manner. Although they may not have meant every usage of performative and written rhetoric to be a direct lesson for Mary and Elizabeth, they were nevertheless able to provide them with the instruction that the younger queens would need. This is a lesson that mothers can take to heart. We can teach our daughters that a woman's power and influence can be performed, be written, and endure across time.