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Mary Tudor and the Politics of Gender

By

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Introduction

Gender played a distinct role in Mary Tudor's accession and reign as England's first sole female monarch from 1553-1558. In order to understand how a female heir was molded for queenship and ultimately went forth to lead a nation, this study examines the following aspects of Mary Tudor's life: her early education, Tudor political culture, affinity connections formed during her brother Edward VI's reign, political training for queenship, and the fundamental issue of gender verses religion for Protestants during her reign. This thesis aims to examine how gender shaped Mary Tudor's political training and ultimate role as England's monarch. Along with looking at the role of gender, this thesis also serves to critique a single-minded analytical emphasis of gender among several contemporary historians as both anachronistic and overstated.

Regarding Mary's early preparation for her future stately responsibilities, she received a premier humanist education. Her tutor, Juan Luis Vives, believed that women must be educated as men are and that they have equal intellectual abilities, but he did not stray from the popular belief during the period that woman were not meant for social superiority. Initially, as the future heir to the throne, she was educated to fulfill her roles as a good wife, mother, and queen, presumed to rule with a husband who would exercise real sovereign authority. Mary's political education matched the one later given to her younger brother Edward, who took precedence in the succession, but was taught that she would never need to employ what she had learned as an active, sovereign ruler in her own right. While Mary may never have expected to use the political education provided for her, it nonetheless equipped her to rule and negotiate the world of politics. Her

scholarly education was also complimented by the less formal education in statecraft when she was charged with the duties of the Princess of Wales' court at Ludlow. Mary was educated for her future role as queen whether or not this was intended.

While Mary was the first woman to rule England in her own right, she was not the first woman to enter the world of English politics. Politics in Tudor England centered on the opportunity and ability to influence, even control political actors in both public and private settings. Tudor politics thus had formal and informal components. Formal politics centered on the institutions of government such as the Privy Council, Parliament, the King and those who held formal positions of power. Informal politics took in a broader notion of power that allowed women to assert their own authority without holding formal political positions. For example, in order to advance family interests, women often entered the political arena at court by becoming part of the Queen's household and males also entered the world of informal politics by attempting to gain access to the king's Privy Chamber. By understanding that politics cannot solely be confined to formal governing officials, a much broader definition of women as political actors can be studied.

This thesis makes the claim that women have been active political actors within this broader definition of politics, that both females and males in society had recognized the authority of women, and their 'political' role (while heavily circumscribed in rhetoric and reality) did not make female authority an alien concept except in respect to a female sovereign. Too many current studies of Mary (and her sister Elizabeth) fail to fully recognize this and therefore overstate and oversimplify the gendered dynamics of Tudor politics. Mary was a product of her political culture—she knew from an early age that

women were to be subservient to males but could still exert political influence in their own right. Mary was the first woman who was able to join together the world of informal and formal politics in England.

Mary's ultimate test as a political actor came at the end of her brother's reign when she utilized her affinity to win back the throne during the accession crisis of July 1553. Just as her household had been the first and primary means of mobilizing support for her legitimate claim to the throne, those members of her household were the ones who reached out to pull in more supporters among their own family members. Whether consciously or not, Mary had created an alternative regime that had gone virtually unnoticed by the Edwardian government. While her political pragmatism earned her the support of Catholic and Protestants during the crisis, further examination demonstrates that for Protestants, particularly during Edward's reign, her religion and not her gender was the more fundamental issue that provoked harsh criticisms of her sovereignty. When changing the succession that his father had put in place, Edward held fast to the belief that religious convictions were more important than gender or familiar ties. His views were largely reflective of popular sentiment. Dynastic consideration was more important than gender to a degree since Edward attempted to disinherit Mary in favor of a female cousin in the last months of his life. He did so because Jane Grey shared his religious beliefs. Only in later years among evangelical Protestants would both religion and gender be seen as equally fundamental issues of criticism for Mary's reign and queenship.

The prejudice that existed regarding female monarchy was the central issue that Mary strived to overcome during her queenship. This thesis examines secondary sources

on Mary's life and the politics of the early to mid 1500s, state papers including letters from Edward VI's and her own reign, as well as the writings of Protestant contemporaries, such as John Knox, who condemned her reign based on both her religious convictions and her gender. Through such sources, this thesis establishes the important role that gender played throughout Mary's lifetime.¹ By not viewing gender as the all-powerful determining factor of her reign, this thesis works to dissect the misrepresentations that plagued Mary's life and reign.

¹ Edwards, John. *Mary I: England's Catholic Queen*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2011. Print; 19; Loades, D. M. *Mary Tudor: A Life*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1989. Print; Porter, Linda. *The First Queen of England: The Myth of "Bloody Mary"*. New York: St. Martin's, 2008. Print; Richards, Judith M. *Mary Tudor*. London: Routledge, 2008. Print. Whitelock, Anna. *Mary Tudor: Princess, Bastard, Queen*. New York: Random House, 2009.

Chapter 1- Tudor Politics and Female Authority

In Tudor England, all involvement in politics and political culture was not simply confined to parliament, the King, and his Privy Council. While the study of such positions of power provides a degree of insight into the world of formal politics, neglecting the notion that politics existed beyond the formal realm would prove detrimental to gaining a comprehensive view of Tudor politics. One must note that, “the difference between politics and political culture is essentially the difference between political action and the codes of conduct, formal and informal, governing those actions.”² The concept of informal politics provides a larger scope for understanding the political culture of Tudor England during Mary Tudor’s adolescence and adulthood. In order to examine the common yet less pronounced roles that women played at the Tudor Court, one must first study the education that women received in the realm of politics. Then, it is important to recognize those women who moved beyond the confines of the domestic sphere into the world of politics, informal and in some instances formal.

I. Patriarchal Assumptions in Politics

Women were largely absent from the world of formal politics in England. However, accessing women’s involvement in the ever-present informal political culture of the day is significant in order to understand the function of elite women at court and Tudor

² Hoak, Dale, ed. *Tudor Political Culture*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1995. Print, 1.

political culture as a whole. Royal women were most closely associated with aristocratic women in terms of identity within their society: “as kinswomen of powerful male elites, royal women existed in close proximity to the sources of political power in the state, and often exerted considerable informal power within royal governments.”³ However, for the majority of women,

Such power was exercised through the auspices of legitimate male authority, in their positions as elite male appendages, which enabled them to represent their kinsmen in the public realm of government. The real difficult feat, then, was for a woman to obtain and hold onto recognition of wielding power in her own right, and in doing so, possessing the sovereignty of kingship. All of England’s regnant queens accomplished this goal...these women...for all of their other failings, were bold pioneers who ventured past the ideology and structural restraints of male dominance.⁴

Many women were able to assert power under the guise of male authority but determining the extent to which women wielded power in their own right is key to understanding women’s influence on politics. For women, informal politics became an increasingly prominent way to assert influence. As we will see in section three of this chapter, the groundwork for women’s informal involvement in the political realm had already been laid even before Mary I’s birth. While the ultimate place for women to assert formal authority was through queenship, women were not expected to rule alone. Informal politics allowed women to act as active political agents and achieve “their socioeconomic goals by various strategies that included both resistance and accommodation to patriarchal structures in society and government.”⁵ Even when women such as Mary I and her sister Elizabeth ruled as England’s queens, women still were not

³ Beem, Charles. *The Lioness Roared: The Problems of Female Rule in English History*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print, 5.

⁴ Ibid, 5.

⁵ Ibid, 6.

viewed as equal to men in the public or private spheres. Women were not allowed to hold formal government positions or be appointed to public office. For, “until the late nineteenth century, female rulers in England constituted the single exception to the socially and legally gendered subordination of women.”⁶

When looking at “traditional political narratives, women are marginal figures: their domain, the household or ‘domestic’ sphere, rather than the public, male world of business and politics; the roles they played often consigned to footnotes.”⁷ It is important to recognize that those women who fulfilled their expected roles as wife and mother were not necessarily absent from the political sphere. Instead, it can be seen that these household women were often “imbued with political significance.”⁸ Despite the inequalities between the sexes, political relationships with men still existed for women,

they were viewed as complementary in preindustrial European societies in a variety of socioeconomic contexts, such as the relationship between a king and a queen consort. The execution of the public role of king was not performed in any form of all male vacuum. King’s throughout English history possessed mothers, wives, and daughters who influenced and wielded power informally through them.⁹

Women had asserted their influence in the political realm for centuries before Mary I became the first woman to rule England in her own right. Yet there were still many who believed women did not have the authority or the ability to rule alone, viewing Mary’s accession to the throne with extreme distaste.¹⁰ However, such prejudice did not mean

⁶ Beem. *The Lioness Roared*, 7.

⁷ Daybell, James. *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2004. Print, 2.

⁸ Ibid, 2.

⁹ Beem. *The Lioness Roared*, 6.

¹⁰Ibid, 7-8.

that Mary had come to the throne without the understanding that women had been in positions of relative power well before her own time as queen.

The duties that women performed as heads of the domestic sphere were often strongly connected with politics. For, “in a patronage society where interpersonal relationships counted for so much, women were intimately involved in building and maintaining patronage and kinship networks through various social activities-marriage arranging, placing children in other households, gift-giving, hospitality and letter writing.”¹¹ Such roles for women clearly demonstrate that the political arena was not completely severed from the domestic sphere. In domestic life, “complex networks of kin, neighbors, and friends meant that few aristocratic women were isolated in their households or completely dependent on their spouses for resources.”¹² The family networks that were created through marriage provided women with a way to “function in regional institutional settings we tend to think of as male.”¹³ Through informal politics, women were able to maintain their domestic roles while also readily participating in the world of Tudor politics. As such, it becomes clear that the domestic spheres functioned similarly to the political spheres in Tudor society.

Those who lived in Tudor England focused a great deal on the importance of kinship connections in order to better one’s own situation. As such, domestic life played a key role in those connections. Marriages between elite families and educating one’s children to marry well or run estates were key components from the domestic sphere that relate directly to informal politics. Women’s informal yet fairly common roles as behind

¹¹ Daybell *Women and Politics*, 2.

¹² Harris, Barbara J. *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers*. New York: Oxford UP, 2002. Print, 205.

¹³ *Ibid*, 205.

the scenes political agents are often overlooked in favor of the conventional roles of daughters, wives, and mothers. However, such formal and informal roles provide the key to understanding of a woman's place in Tudor politics. Women were able to exercise political authority in a world that did not allow women to hold formal offices. Education was one domestic avenue from which women could learn to assert their own political authority.

II. Educational Training for Women

When looking at Tudor Court life more closely, it soon becomes clear that women influenced politics and were often encouraged to do so by their parents and husbands as it would improve the standing of their family at large. Starting at a young age, women were often sent to live among those in the royal household not only to receive an education, but also in the hopes of having better marriage prospects. Mothers attempted to have their daughters taught alongside Princess Mary as this was not only a way to ensure that one's daughter received a royal education, but it also provided families with hope of becoming closer to the crown by way of association. While most elite women who moved to court did so after they reached adolescence, "a tiny number lived at court or in the households of the king's relatives and favorites from a very young age."¹⁴ Having children leave the home before adolescence was not customary, but these parents "apparently could not resist the opportunity of securing royal patronage for them, especially assistance in arranging their marriages."¹⁵ While many parents decided to send their daughters to court for their own personal benefit, wardships, which allowed the king or queen to control a

¹⁴ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 31.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 31.

wealthy female's educational upbringing, were sometimes compulsory but ultimately proved beneficial for the ward's family. For, "the crown's right to the wardships of minor heiresses also led to their removal from their mothers' households. Wardships resulted from the fact that members of the aristocracy held virtually all their land as feudal tenants of the crown."¹⁶

Elite families who wished to wed their son to a wealthy heiress also purchased wardships, thus placing a wealthy female in the care of their family in the hopes of eventually marrying her off to one of their sons.¹⁷ Women's educations trained them for roles as political agents. Elite women during the late 1400s were expected to have a proper education which included both domestic skills and political knowledge, yet they were taught at the same time that an inherent prejudice existed that upheld the notion that women were intellectually inferior to men and therefore they were not accepted into the formal world of politics. Women were educated to be political but were expected to take up their duties as wives and mothers in order to better serve their families. This signaled the effects of humanist educational theory and practice. For,

In Yorkist and early Tudor England, the expectation that aristocratic women would marry shaped their lives from the moment of their birth. From their earliest years they were socialized to view themselves as future wives. The goal of their educations was to teach them the manners and religious values of their class and the skills they would need to manage their great households and serve their families. Parents also fostered their daughters' relationships with their kin and patrons in the hope they would promote the girls' marriages and careers as they approached adolescence.¹⁸

¹⁶ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 30-31.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 31.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 32.

Women were educated in order to increase their appeal as a future bride as well as to ensure that they would be able to promote the social standing of her kinsman.¹⁹ As such, elite women were not only educated “in domestic skills and genteel accomplishments”²⁰ for, “aristocratic daughters routinely learned to read and write English.”²¹ Such skills that allowed women to understand more than just household duties would inevitably contribute to a later role in informal court politics.

Margaret Beaufort (1443-1509) serves as an example of a woman who held a great deal of power and influence in both formal and informal politics, largely brought on by her accomplishments in the realm of academia.²² Margaret Beaufort was an English aristocrat who encouraged her son, Henry Tudor, to take action in order to replace King Richard. Although never ruling England in her own right, Margaret’s early education had provided her with the ability to not only understand, but also alter the political world. Margaret Beaufort took action in order to replace King Richard Plantagenet with her own son, Henry Tudor as king of England. Since Margaret was born “outside the direct royal line...her background taught her both to assert her right and to be circumspect in doing so.”²³ It is clear that Henry VII “owed his throne to her and ruled ‘in the opinion of no small party’ by her tactic appointment.”²⁴ In order to place her son on the throne, Margret Beauford used her knowledge and skills to encourage her son to fight for the crown. After

²⁰ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 34.

²¹ *Ibid*, 32.

²² Jansen, Sharon L. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women: Female Rulers in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2002. Print, 125.

²³ Jones, Michael K., and Malcolm G. Underwood. *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1992. Print, 16.

her son became King, Margaret Beauford “stepped widely...out of the usual sphere of her sex to encourage literature by her example and bounty, but she cautiously confined herself with it, to avoid any concern in the government of the state after Henry had mounted the throne.”²⁵

With her son on England’s throne, “Lady Margaret used her resources, both in land and personnel, in a determined way to uphold her own rights and those of both lines of her family...She worked in partnership with, and complement to, her son in the realms of justice and politics.”²⁶ While her son focused on matters of state, she focused her interests on expanding educational opportunities in the realm through the founding of Universities.²⁷ Beyond her work to bring her son to the throne of England and the creation of learning institutions, she worked “on behalf of devotional literature” which extended further than commissioning books for publication.²⁸ For, “She encouraged book purchase and production, undertook translations herself and bought many copies when they were printed.”²⁹ Her work “as a translator singles her out among English women aristocrats of the period.”³⁰ Margret not only served as an example of a woman who was a patron of the arts and of religious education, but she also demonstrated a women’s ability to alter the shape of the country for years to come.

Margaret Roper (1505-1544), the daughter of Thomas More, received a primer humanist education equal to the education that a male would have received during this

²⁴ Jones. *The King's Mother*, 8.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 8.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 171.

²⁷ *Ibid*,183.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 183.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 183.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 184.

period. Her education will be explored more fully in Chapter two. Margaret serves as a later example of a woman who displayed deep intellectual abilities in Tudor England, particularly in the realm of religious learning.³¹ While reading through the letters of St Cyprian, an ancient bishop that had been translated by Erasmus, she noticed an error in a section of the translation that needed to be corrected. In further examination of the letter, Margaret “discovered that this letter wasn’t by Cyprian as scholars believed, but by Novatian, a heretic and schismatic.”³² After making such observations, “Margaret sent word...to Erasmus, who—a trifle shamefaced but genuinely impressed—acknowledged her to be one of the of Europe’s leading women intellectuals.”³³

Mary Tudor’s own work with Catherine Parr on the translating the works of Erasmus demonstrates her own abilities in the realm of academia.³⁴ For, “it was under Catherine Parr’s tutelage that Mary translated some of Erasmus’s *Paraphrases* on the New Testament.”³⁵ Mary is also credited with helping “Queen Catherine Parr with her Latin.”³⁶ Mary’s language abilities would aid her later in life with matters of international diplomacy. Mary, like other women of her age, was not simply involved in politics, but also understood the power and importance of education, religious learning, and patronage of the arts.

³¹ Guy, J. A. *A Daughter's Love: Thomas More and His Dearest Meg*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009. Print, 142.

³² Ibid, 141-142.

³³ Ibid, 142.

³⁴ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 112.

³⁵ Edwards, John, and R. W. Truman, eds. *Reforming Catholicism in the England of Mary Tudor: The Achievement of Friar Bartolomé Carranza*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate Pub., 2005. Print, 52.

³⁶ Ibid, 52.

Women were often absent from the world of formal politics, yet they were indispensable England's political past, present, and future. Women like Margaret Beaufort, Margaret Roper, Catherine Parr and even Mary herself displayed the importance of an education that allowed them to transcend beyond the domestic sphere and interact with the political world. Women's work in the domestic sphere provided a primary place for women could assert their influence and make use of kinship connections for households were largely political areas. The status of one's household was indispensable to ensuring one's proper place in society.

II. How did women function in informal politics?

Both men and women alike thrived from the informal world of politics at court. In the hopes of gaining access to the king's person and therefore improving one's own situation, men worked hard to become part of the king's Privy Chamber for "politics become a struggle waged at court for possession of the king's body, 'with both sides scrambling to position themselves and their clients in the royal apartments...as close to the king himself.'"³⁷ In order to gain the king's favor to pursue political actions, one needed to maintain a monopoly over the king's private chamber. In Tudor politics, it was often believed that the Privy Council's authority was not as important as that of the Privy Chamber, "arguing that the privy chamber was the most significant organ of royal authority"³⁸ since "the appointment of Henry VIII's favorites to positions in the privy chamber...transformed the privy chamber structurally and politically. Its members assumed a range of financial, administrative, diplomatic, and military duties and, perhaps

³⁷ Guy, J. A. *The Tudor Monarchy*. London: Arnold, 1997. Print, 91.

³⁸ Hoak. *Tudor Political Culture*, 39.

most importantly, acted as a key point of access to the monarch.”³⁹ The Privy Council was a formal political body that was selected by the ruler in order to aid him in decision-making regarding foreign and domestic issues. The Privy Chamber was the ruler’s household. Those who were selected as members of the Privy Chamber had a role in informal politics and were situated in the private apartments of the king and queen.⁴⁰ The king or queen was bound to seek counsel from the formal government bodies but this did not prohibit the respective monarchs from consulting both men and women who were not formal political agents. Thus, it is important to note that although distinct private and public political offices surrounded the king, these two offices sometimes overlapped.⁴¹ For, “some members of the privy chamber were councillors and thus held both private and public offices. Henry could at his conveyance call upon private servants who were members of aristocratic families to perform public duties.”⁴² While the king of England was bound to rule by listening to the advice of his councilors, there was room for informal politicking. King Henry asserted to his councilors during a period of disagreement that, “the king was free to choose his own councillors and could not be bound by their advice.”⁴³

Kingship emphasized the “unchallenged authority of rulers in temporal and spiritual matters within their realms.”⁴⁴ Kings needed “the subordination of the nobility”

³⁹ Hoak. *Tudor Political Culture*, 39.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 39.

⁴¹ Guy. *The Tudor Monarchy*, 80.

⁴² *Ibid*, 80.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 80.

⁴⁴ Houlbrooke, Ralph A. *James VI and I: Ideas, Authority, and Government*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2006. Print, 44.

to accomplish this goal.⁴⁵ Henry VIII declared that all kings of England were answerable to God alone. Yet, without the existence and service of the elite at court, kingship would be more difficult to understand and acknowledge openly.⁴⁶ Since both men and women spent time at court with the hope of improving their family's position in society, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the public and private spheres for those who were not formal political officials could still enter the world of informal politics and thus possibly influence formal politics. A female monarch ruling alone would openly join the worlds of informal and formal politics into one.

Despite prevailing male attempts to assert that female queenship was a crime against the natural world, women had ruled in Europe for centuries, either in their own right or through their time spent as "regents."⁴⁷ From the time of their birth, it was the expected role of elite women to spend their lives managing great estates while doing their best to promote family interests. For, "Aristocratic women spent most of their lives in castles or manors that belonged to their marital families, promoting the interest of their husbands, children, and grandchildren."⁴⁸ In order to advance family interests, women often had to enter the political arena informally at court by becoming part of the Queen's household as ladies-in-waiting and Maids-of-Honor. While Anne Boleyn was queen,

Most people at court were male, a gender difference that also characterized the members of the queen's household, excepting her immediate attendants. This in fact did not... prevent the view women residing at court or others from attending court to seek favour for their kin or for themselves or, indeed, from joining or leading family networks. With possibly one or two exceptions, Tudor women did not hold public office, but they could influence public opinion indirectly by

⁴⁵ Houlbrooke. *James VI and I*, 44.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 44.

⁴⁷ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 15.

⁴⁸ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 175.

helping male relatives obtain public posts or by suing on behalf of private family concerns that might have public consequences.⁴⁹

Women were able to advance the position of their male relatives by their positions in the queen's Privy Chamber. While "English-born queens almost always brought their favorite female relatives to court with them," the queen's "second group of Ladies-in-waiting and Maids-of-honor came from families with long traditions or service to the crown or with connections to such families."⁵⁰ A third group of maids to the queen "obtained their positions through the patronage of her Ladies-in-waiting and the Gentlewomen of her Privy Chamber."⁵¹ When Elizabeth Tudor became queen, her accession was seen as the "Privy Chamber's eclipse as a political forum because it was numerically dominated by women. Contemporary attitudes towards gender prevented them from assuming key administrative roles such as Keeper of the Privy purse."⁵² Nonetheless, even without formal roles, women still functioned in the politics at court. When looked at in the context of general policy-making, women were not directly involved in the political debates of the day.⁵³ However, their common role as intermediaries between the queen and other members of court and foreign ambassadors cannot be overlooked. One of Elizabeth's Privy Chamber women, Lady Mary Sidney, was directly involved "in Elizabeth's marriage negotiations with the Spanish ambassador, Alvaro de Quadra" in 1559.⁵⁴ Other ladies, such as Katherine Ashley and Dorothy Broadbete's "support of Eric XIV of Sweden suit in 1562" demonstrated that her women

⁴⁹ Hoax. *Tudor Political Culture*, 41.

⁵⁰ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 218.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 219.

⁵² Daybell. *Women and Politics*, 67.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 68.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 69.

were often used “as a go-between” on political issues that were close to the Queen’s heart.⁵⁵

Once a woman had earned her place at the queen’s side, she received a means of monetary compensation. Lady Jane Guildford received a “substantial annuity” of sixty pounds from Henry VIII when she “retired in the mid-1510s.”⁵⁶ If a woman was extremely favored, she also had the ability to enter the political realm by advancing the position of males in her household. Lady Jane’s situation at court enabled her to have “her only son, Henry” become a “member of the king’s Privy Chamber and Master of the Revels.”⁵⁷ Another group existed in the queen’s household, and these women gained their positions at court through “their marriages to members of the king’s household.”⁵⁸ The final group of women among the queen’s ladies was “the daughters or gentlewomen of her ladies.”⁵⁹ Those women that came to court to be by their husband’s sides

Often developed their own identities and influence there since their spouses serviced in the king’s household for long periods. Katherine Willoughby, who married the duke of Suffolk as his fourth wife at the age of 14, almost certainly arrived at court as a result of her marriage. By the time the duke died in 1545, however, she had become one of Katherine Parr’s closest friends and had an independent position in Parr’s household, where she emerged as a forceful advocate for religious reform.⁶⁰

While not all women materialized into strong political figures, patrons of the community, the arts, or religious advocates, ladies who served the queen had a clear opportunity to advance not only the position of their families, but also their own position. As compensation for their service to the queen, “the queen’s ladies, gentlewomen, and maids

⁵⁵ Daybell. *Women and Politics*, 69.

⁵⁶ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 218.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 218.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 222.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 222.

received substantial economic and political rewards for their service.”⁶¹ Women in the queen’s household “benefited from the opportunities that regular contact with the king and his favorites gave them to secure royal patronage for themselves and their families, friends, and clients.”⁶² While women at court are often portrayed as more ornamental than important political players, “the court required the presence of accomplished, richly dressed, aristocratic women to participate in royal celebrations and rituals. Without them, the tournaments, processions, masques, and banquets essential to the conduct of diplomacy and the spectacle of kingship could not have taken place.”⁶³

Elite women not only ensured that the queen’s household ran smoothly and competently, but they were also in charge of acting “on behalf of themselves, their families, and their friends in the endless pursuit of the king’s favor and patronage.”⁶⁴ These women fulfilled a political function. Overlooking the backstage yet important role that women played at court would be to ignore their contributions to the “reestablishment and expansion of effective government” as these women “played an essential part in the most important political achievement of Yorkist and early Tudor periods”⁶⁵ by serving as an intermediary between the king and his court.⁶⁶ The queen’s household played a key role in both formal and informal politics by placing women in a position that would enable them to interact with and influence court politics. In addition to their positions in the queen’s household, women were also managers of their own household and large estates. Widows served as prime examples of women who “managed the real and

⁶¹ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 223.

⁶² *Ibid*, 227.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 240.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 240.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 240.

movable property in their possession profitably, whether they held it on their own behalf or on behalf of their heirs and other children.”⁶⁷ After their death, they ensured that their wealth and land would be passed on to future generations.⁶⁸ The role that elite women played in managed and controlling their own estates would later draw parallels from Mary’s own household management in East Anglia during her brother Edward’s reign.

IV. Women in formal politics

While women had an unmistakably influential role in informal politics, one must also examine the accepted views of women held during the period in order to properly determine whether or not Mary Tudor’s role as queen challenged the existing political culture. Being the first queen of England to rule in her own right, Mary is inherently and inevitably distinctive when compared to other women of her time. Since she was a female ruler, she was the first person to fully possess the ability to connect the world of informal networking with that of formal political life. Women were deemed intellectually and morally inferior to men in Tudor England. When women displayed any degree of “bravery or constancy, men invariably described them as virile, a formula that constructed virtue and femininity as incompatible.”⁶⁹ If women were labeled as being brave or constant, they were often seen as acting like a more like a man than a woman.

It is impossible to determine the degree to which women believed themselves inferior to men. However, “they certainly repeated them when it was to their advantage to

⁶⁷ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 127.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 128.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 25.

do so.”⁶⁸ Such negative views of a women’s nature “were believed to justify the subordination of women...Male domination functioned as a primary metaphor for the proper distribution of power.”⁷⁰ While women were not expected to hold formal positions of power, elite women were still educated in areas that went beyond necessary household duties. Some elite women also learned to speak French, “the language of diplomacy and the court.”⁷¹ These educated women were usually placed in high positions within the queen’s household as would fit their rank.

This emphasis on the importance of maintaining a patriarchal society makes it difficult to truly assess the role that women played in court politics. By looking at examples of queens who asserted their own authority beside their king, women’s roles in formal politics can be better understood. One needs to look no further than Isabel of Castile and her daughter Catherine of Aragon to understand how much political influence a queen could hold, even with the presence of a king by their side. Isabel I of Castile served as “Early modern Europe’s first powerful queen regnant.”⁷² Isabel was an outright queen who joined Aragon in a dual monarchy with Ferdinand of Aragon. Isabel was the lone ruler of Castile “for three decades” and “she oversaw its union with the kingdom of Aragon and created the legal and administrative foundation for the future transformation of the two rival kingdoms into a nation-state.”⁷³ Isabel’s marriage to Ferdinand made it difficult for both her contemporaries and modern historians to clearly differentiate between her and her husband’s roles as the “quintessentially Catholic monarchs” and her

⁶⁸ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 25.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 25.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 36.

⁷² Cruz, Anne J. *The Rule of Women in Early Modern Europe*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 2009. Print, 43.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 43.

own power as queen of Castile. Isabel I of Castile made a clear attempt to “overcome—or circumvent—the considerable resistance to female sovereignty both in Castile and Aragon.”⁷⁴

For Mary, her grandmother Isabel served as an example of how a woman could dominate the political sphere even with a husband at her side.⁷⁵ Isabel I of Castile also influenced her daughter Catherine of Aragon’s education and understanding of her role as Queen of England. From the start of her reign, Isabel

boldly asserted her monarchical power. Although she deferred to her brother Enrique during his lifetime, she moved smoothly to consolidate her power as sovereign monarch of Castile...Isabel held sole proprietorship of Castile and retained control of key appointments (treasurers, local judicial officials, and other officials). Even in instances where they both could make appointments, they could only come at her volition.⁷⁶

Isabel was quick to show the public of Spain that she would be a powerful ruler in spite of her gender. She “revived a much older medieval tradition by having her procession led by a member of the nobility carrying a sword (rather than the scepter which was a more traditional representation of kingly power).”⁷⁷ She did this in order to assert that she controlled Castile in her own right despite her marriage to Ferdinand. As queen, Isabel served as an example to her children since she was woman who willingly engaged in warfare to secure her kingdom. She “won a difficult civil war and then tenaciously fought a decade-long struggle against the Moors.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Cruz. *The Rule of Women*, 43.

⁷⁵ Lunefeld, M. "Isabella I of Castile and the Company of Women in Power." *Historical Reflections* 4.2 (1977): 57-79. *JSTOR*. Web. 1 Feb. 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41298700>, 58.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 58.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 34.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 58.

Following in the footsteps of her mother, even before becoming Henry VIII's wife, Catherine of Aragon "assumed a much more active role in private" than she did in public politics through her "function as her father's representative at the English court: although she had been replaced as Spanish ambassador early in 1508, she continued in her role as a strong, if unofficial, advocate for Spain and for Ferdinand's policies after her marriage."⁷⁹ However, it is important to note that while Catherine, like her mother, would lead her own war in England in order to defend it, she was not educated to be a queen who would govern a nation on her own. Isabel "made sure that her children would never be humiliated in the company of learned men" yet "the only thing these young ladies were not prepared to do was to rule."⁸⁰ For, "unlike their brother, they received an education that had not trained them in formal politics and since "the boy didn't die until he was twenty (...) there had seemed no need to train the girls, and then it was too late."⁸¹ It appeared that Isabel did not believe her own daughters would be able to "follow in her stern path" as queens.⁸² However, they were still provided with a worldly education and thus had the intellectual potential for success.

While Catherine's education had not prepared her for becoming a queen in her own right, the example of her mother served as guidance enough for Catherine of Aragon. For, once becoming Henry VIII's wife Catherine was described as "the young king's most trusted councilor."⁸³ While Catherine's mother might not have outwardly taught her daughter to assert her own queenly authority, it is clear that Catherine learned

⁷⁹ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 130.

⁸⁰ Lunenfeld. "Isabella I of Castile", 72.

⁸¹ Ibid, 72.

⁸² Ibid, 72.

⁸³ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women* .130.

from her mother's example that a woman need not shrink from the political sphere once she married. Instead, Catherine used her role as the beloved queen to benefit both her former home and family in Spain and her new home in England.

In 1513 when Henry VIII was abroad waging war with France in Calais, Catherine was "formally appointed queen governor of the realm," a post that enabled her to "raise armies, appoint sheriffs, approve most church appointments, and spend money exactly how she wished."⁸⁴ While her husband "captured two insignificant French towns, Therouanne and Tourani, Catherine enjoyed a much more significant military triumph at home."⁸⁵ With the king's departure, "English troops had been sent north to defend the border with Scotland. After Anne of Brittany appealed to James IV of Scotland to help France, the Scots king obliged, crossing into England in August, just as Henry was celebrating his victory at Therouanne."⁸⁶ Henry VIII remarked that, "he was leaving the English people in the care of a woman whose 'honour, excellence, prudence, forethought and faithfulness' could not be doubted."⁸⁷ Henry VIII provided Catherine with a small council of advisors during his absence.⁸⁸ When Catherine had to face her own war with Scotland, she did not waver under this new pressure but rather, already "so obviously enjoying the role as regent" she simply viewed this new war as an extra "'pastime."⁸⁹ She charged herself with the duty of "organizing England's defense" against Scotland who had rose up to support France.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Tremlett. *Catherine of Aragon*, 166.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 166.

⁸⁶ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 131.

⁸⁷ Tremlett. *Catherine of Aragon*, 166.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 166.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 169.

⁹⁰ *Ibid* , 170.

Rather than remain at court, Catherine decided to join those in battle by moving “north with a body of troops” and “she was, by all accounts, ‘the center and soul of the army.’”⁹¹ Catherine was able to govern England during her husband’s absence and lead a war effort that soon grew more tiresome than the one that her husband had left England to pursue.⁹² Catherine of Aragon’s ability to take charge of the nation when duty required it showed England that a woman could be fit to rule and be placed in such a position of extreme power when circumstances deemed it necessary. Mary’s mother served as an example of a woman who had successfully left her perceived and accepted societal role in order to step into the realm of formal politics. However, the joy that Catherine received from her victory over the Scots was “overshadowed by her failure as a wife. Shortly after Flodden, Catherine suffered yet another in what was becoming a long series of miscarriages. She had not provided the king of England with an heir. As queen regent, Catherine of Aragon had won a military battle; as queen consort, she was still losing the war.”⁹³

Even after a six year battle to divorce the queen in favor of Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII still acknowledged Catherine’s strength and abilities as a ruler by stating that “if she took it into her head to take her daughter’s part, she could quite easily take the field, muster a great array and wage war against me a war as fierce as any her mother Isabella ever waged in Spain.”⁹⁴ However, Catherine was not willing to take up arms against her husband. Despite her mother’s failure to secure her right to the throne during Catherine’s own lifetime, Mary “not only inherited the crown of England but...she came to the throne

⁹¹ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 131.

⁹² Ibid, 131-132.

⁹³ Ibid, 132.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 135.

as a queen regnant. It is an ironic that when Mary Tudor became queen, she seemed only too anxious to find a husband to rule in her place”⁹⁵

Unmistakably, even when women were allowed to penetrate the sphere of formal politics, they were not able to completely leave behind the expectations that society and their husbands had for them—primarily the bearing of a child to become heir to the throne. The belief of female inferiority shaped the attitudes and assumptions of the day. When looking back at Feudal English society, women held a great deal of power but it was a rare occurrence. In an age where women could not inherit property and were married off around the age of 11, “Eleanor of Aquitaine and her mother-in-law Empress Matilda were among the few notable exceptions, unique to their time.”⁹⁶ Even during her early years, “Eleanor...caused ripples in twelfth-century society because she was a spirited woman who was determined to do as she pleased”⁹⁷ Despite the presence of strong women rulers who wielded authority at the side of a king throughout English history, female authority was still deemed by many to be unacceptable. Even with Catherine of Aragon’s later example of the ability for women to rule successfully, Tudor England was a country that viewed male rule and a male heir as much more legitimate than any form of female rulership. Ironically, “while a number of male kings in English history failed in their roles and suffered deposition, all of England’s female sovereigns...died in their beds, wearing their crowns.”⁹⁸ When looking at those queens such as Mary I who ruled England in their own right, it can be seen that such women

⁹⁵ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 135-136.

⁹⁶ Weir, Alison. *Eleanor of Aquitaine: By the Wrath of God, Queen of England*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1999. Print, 4

⁹⁷ Ibid, 4.

⁹⁸ Beem. *The Lioness Roared*, 3.

were often viewed as “female kings” for “as women performing a male gendered public role, female kings had to face additional gendered burdens in order to maintain their position at the top of the social and political hierarchy.”⁹⁹

V. The Queenship of Mary Tudor

Understanding the role of both informal and formal politics in Tudor England is crucial in order to determine the extent to which Mary Tudor responded to and ultimately shaped the political culture of her time. While Mary entered the male-centered world of formal politics during her queenship, her adolescence and early adulthood were by no means void of examples of women who voiced their political opinions at court and women who provided access to political figures. However, it is important to determine the extent to which Mary was simply following women’s informal role in politics as Queen or whether she vastly altered the political culture of a land where a woman had never ruled as sole Queen.

While many women were sent away from their parents once they reached a certain age, Mary Tudor spent an uncommon amount of time with both her royal parents when she was in her infancy and adolescence when compared to other royal families of the day.¹⁰⁰ After her birth in 1516,

Mary would live close to, but separate from her parents. As a baby she seems to have stayed very near to them, and to have passed Christmas with them at Greenwich... There is evidence that Henry and Katherine, in particular, took more interest than other monarchs might have done in Mary’s development, but the notion that Katherine raised her daughter herself is at odds with the role of a

⁹⁹ Beem. *The Lioness Roared*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Porter. *The First Queen of England*, 14.

queen consort, and Katherine had been a very diligent practitioner of this role during the years of her childlessness.¹⁰¹

As a princess, Mary was not sent away from her parents in order to be educated in another royal household. Instead, her parents in no way oversaw all aspects of her education and upbringing on their own, but their influence in her upbringing cannot be overlooked.

Although Mary was not the male heir that he father deeply longed for, “Henry’s pride in his daughter Mary” was unmistakable.¹⁰² Her father made sure that “a separate court was established for the princess, and great care was taken with her education.”¹⁰³ Furthermore, although Henry deeply longed for a son, he understood the political advantages that could be obtained if Mary’s marriage was used to serve a political purpose. As his heir, “Mary’s potential on the European marriage market was scarcely diminished.”¹⁰⁴ Henry “was determined to use her as a diplomatic tool, early and often. This was not heartless, it was just good international relations.”¹⁰⁵ As such, Mary received a formal education that was suited to her position as England’s sole heir.

While still in her infancy around 1520, Mary’s father began his quest “to negotiate for a politically advantageous alliance for his daughter.”¹⁰⁶ A good marriage would not only secure Mary’s future, but it would also provide Henry with a means to strengthen England’s foreign alliances. While such marriage negotiations by Henry VIII were never solidified during his lifetime, he successfully taught Mary about her role as the daughter of a king. Unlike Mary’s mother, Henry had never viewed Mary as a

¹⁰¹ Porter. *Mary Tudor: The First Queen*. 14.

¹⁰² Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 132.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 132.

¹⁰⁴ Edwards. *Mary*, 19.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 19.

¹⁰⁶ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women* 132.

possible ruler in her own right. However, his placement of Mary as the political head of the Welsh Marches foreshadowed her later role as queen and provided her with a greater understanding of the duties of statehood. As Princess of Wales, Mary received a less formal education in statehood. In 1525, “the nine-year-old princess was sent to Ludlow Castle as nominal head of the council of the Welsh Marches.”¹⁰⁷ At Ludlow, she dealt with daily visitors to court. “The experience of ceremonial and the ability to behave appropriately, to begin to create an image” were all-important components for young Mary’s development into the woman who would become the future queen of England.¹⁰⁸ When first coming to Wales at the age of nine, it was unclear what Mary’s actual role would be even though it was clear that “Wales needed government” and the last Tudor to reside in Wales was Henry VIII’s late brother Arthur.¹⁰⁹ Since Henry was unsure of the future of his country since difficulties were always a possibility, “Henry decided to give both his children, the legitimate Mary and her half-brother, Henry Fitzroy, places in the administration of the realm.”¹¹⁰

Although Mary, being only nine years old, was “not expected to execute power” in Wales, she “represented the king” and served as a symbol of his power in Wales.¹¹¹ In Wales, Mary was able to receive a broader education for it was inevitable that she along with her half-brother, “though observation and the association of their names with the exercise of authority, would also benefit.”¹¹² While it is unclear “how much Mary knew of the council’s day-to-day activities” in Wales, “it is what she represented that

¹⁰⁷ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 133.

¹⁰⁸ Porter, *Mary Tudor: The First Queen of England*. 39.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 36.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 36.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 37.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 37-38.

mattered.”¹¹³ The only education in statehood that Mary received during her younger years that may have foreshadowed her later role as queen was acquired during her time spent in the Welsh Marshes. It was during this period where her “independent household that she had enjoyed in Wales continued and, although she spent quite a lot of time with her mother, the Countess of Salisbury continued her post, and Mary was, in theory at least, very much her own mistress.”¹¹⁴ Mary had experienced from a young age what being a queen might be like in practice—an area of learning, as the heir to the English throne, that was too harshly disregarded by her tutors. This early political education that Mary received illustrates that although women were not seen by many in society as fit rulers, Mary had still been given the ability to practice governing in her own right, at least to a minimal extent, from a very young age.

Although her mother’s strong personality as queen provided Mary with a firsthand example of female rulership, Mary’s tutor Juan Luis Vives preached, “that women ought to obey their husbands’ commandments as if they were divine law.”¹¹⁵ Vives also taught Mary that women were to be “steered clear of both lechery and politics.”¹¹⁶ Mary’s instruction for how to “read and write Latin, and training her in the proper deportment of a Christian woman were not exactly preparing her to rule England ... It is a mistake to believe Vives’s intention was for any purpose other than to prepare her for the inevitable marriage negotiations as she fulfilled her role as political pawn.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Porter. *Mary Tudor: The First Queen of England*, 39.

¹¹⁴ Loades. *Tudor Queens of England*, 189.

¹¹⁵ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 25.

¹¹⁶ Loades, D. M. *Tudor Queens of England*. London: Continuum, 2009. Print, 188

¹¹⁶ Levin, Carole, Jo Eldridge Carney, and Debra Barrett-Graves. *High and Mighty Queens" of Early Modern England: Realities and Representations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Print, 21.

Mary unmistakably belonged to a line of strong female rulers. Mary's education and her mother's encouragement to learn how to rule in her own right provided her with this early understanding of politics. However, her tutors taught her that women were not expected to rule without a man by their side. Like other royal and aristocratic women, Mary's education was intended to prepare her for the roles of wife and mother. Mary was taught that she would always be under the jurisdiction of one male or another during her lifetime. Although Vive's education perpetuated the stereotype that women were not fit to rule, he gave her a world-class political education in spite of this.¹¹⁷

It is quite obvious that many, including her own father during his lifetime, did not welcome the prospect Mary's accession to the throne. During her childhood, Mary was educated in a mode that was suited to England's heir, perhaps with her father's knowledge that Mary might be his own heir after all. After her mother was replaced with Anne Boleyn, Mary was removed from the succession and bastardized after the birth of Elizabeth in 1533, becoming known as "the Lady Mary" rather than her formal title as princess. Mary was "no longer acknowledged as the king's heir."¹¹⁸ After Anne Boleyn's execution in 1536, Mary was still forced to sign a document that declared "the illegitimacy of her mother's marriage, her own bastard status, and her father's Supreme Headship of the Church of England": an oath which Mary signed "under threat of death."¹¹⁹ In 1544, "Parliament passed a new and radical Act of Succession that, although still bastards, Mary and Elizabeth would follow "Edward and his heirs" in the

¹¹⁷ Loades. *Tudor Queens of England*, 187.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 53.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 89.

succession.¹²⁰ It is clear that Mary's road to the throne was not an easy or a sure road before the death of her younger brother since she only had a small hope of becoming queen.

During Mary Tudor's reign, "the theoretical debate about women's right to govern burned hot, the reality was that women had and could and did rule—and rule well—even as they were being told they could not and should not."¹²¹ In order to combat this notion that women were not fit to rule, when arranging her own Privy Chamber, Mary surrounded herself with women whom she had grown familiar with and women who would support her as queen. This was difficult at first since she had not had a "household of princely dimensions since 1533, and the establishment which she had run...could not have filled more than a corner of the royal chamber."¹²² As an infant, "Mary was cared for by a wet-nurse Katherine Pole...a team of four rockers, a laundress, and a governess."¹²³ When she served as head of the Welsh court at Ludlow, Mary's household was comprised of "three hundred people in her retinue."¹²⁴ When Mary's mother had fallen out of favor, her household had diminished considerably. But, in 1536, her household was restored to a degree, and "eventually numbered 42 people," still a substantial change from her Welsh household.¹²⁵ Yet, even this number did not match the household that was expected of a queen. Those males who had served under her brother Edward

¹²⁰ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 117.

¹²¹ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 21.

¹²² Loades. *Mary Tudor*, 191.

¹²³ *Ibid*, 191.

¹²⁴ Porter. *Mary Tudor: The First Queen*, 129.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 129.

were replaced by female attendants, many of them long-serving servants from her princely household, such as Jane Dormer, Mary Finch, Frances Waldegrave, Frances Jerningham, and Susan Clarencius, who become chief lady of the Privy Chamber. Their positions close to the queen gave these women a measure of influence, especially in the early months of the reign, a fact that was of concern to the emperor.¹²⁶

While Mary's household as queen was largely comprised of women like many queens before her, her councilors were distinctly male and "from the start, Mary had expressed her uncertainty as to how to 'make herself safe and arrange her affairs.'" ¹²⁷ By confessing that she was in need of assistance to secure her kingdom, Mary appeared to, at least at first, confirm the long held view that women were unfit to rule without a male by their side. Mary was playing a rhetorical game: she had to acknowledge the assumptions of the day but this did not mean that she agreed with them. Even after her marriage to Philip of Spain, Mary still asserted her own rule. Philip's "role in politics was unquestioned."¹²⁸ Beyond the Privy Council, a separate council existed that "was not co-extensive with the members or most regular attendees at Privy Council meetings. On the contrary, its political weight derived solely from the relationship of individuals to the king and queen."¹²⁹ Even after Philip departed from England, this council "kept him abreast of the affairs of state almost until the end of his reign."¹³⁰ Still, one must not discount the notion that although Mary had known that women could hold positions of power and be present in political life, she had also been taught that women were less desirable than men as political figureheads.

¹²⁶ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 194.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 194-195.

¹²⁸ Guy, J. *The Tudors: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. Print, 56.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 56.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 57.

When Mary was queen, she often had “to dictate to her Privy Council each of the three major policies of the reign: her marriage to King Philip, the reunion with Rome, and the declaration of war with France.”¹³¹ Although women had been involved in political life from the informal perspective, Mary’s rule as queen was faced with harsh criticism during her own life time because of her gender and her religious views. When Mary was crowned in 1553, “the succession of a woman to the throne horrified many, including Knox, who argued that any woman who presumed to ‘sit in the seat of God, that is, to teach, to judge, or to reign above a man’ was ‘a monster in nature.’”¹³² Women were undoubtedly viewed as “incapable of effective rule” since nature itself caused women “to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish.”¹³³ While Mary wished to have a husband to rule by her side, she was not willing to give up complete authority over England and place it in his hands. As Queen, Mary did not consult her political advisers regarding her marriage to Philip of Spain.¹³⁴ Parliament declared that despite her marriage, “she would continue to be as much and as solely the queen as she had before.”¹³⁵ Her marriage contract declared that although her husband’s new title would be higher than her own, it still limited his “role to that of assisting his wife, especially in military matters. It explicitly prevented him from exercising any authority in England independently of his wife.”¹³⁶ While such restrictions placed on the role that Philip would play in England were largely unwelcomed by him and Philip could even be seen as being “metaphorically emasculated” by Mary, similar contracts and guidelines had been created by her

¹³¹ Guy. *The Tudor Monarchy*, 92.

¹³² Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 14.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 14.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 33.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 34.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 34.

grandmother, Isabel of Castile, for her own husband.¹³⁷ Like Isabel, “Mary was careful to maintain an appearance of shared power, in many forms of royal representations and in more material forms.”¹³⁸ Even though Mary was a woman and deemed by many as unfit to rule the kingdom, others cried out for Mary to rule England without the influence of her foreign husband.

Accepting the marriage treaty had been a prime point of dissatisfaction for Philip and was the most noteworthy reason that led him to wait eight months after their engagement was finalized to make the journey to England. Philip II believed that his father, Charles V, “had gone too far in accommodating the wishes of the English” when he agreed to such marriage negotiations.¹³⁹ Although having to abide by the treaty if he wished to become King of England, “when he came, he wanted to be sure that he had the trapping of a king, even if the small print of his marriage arrangements said otherwise.”¹⁴⁰ After their wedding, Philip seemingly assumed the role of joint monarch, attending “privy council meetings regularly, at least twice a week. There, he could learn the detail of government business and his presence might do much to bring about unanimity. Mary duly gave orders that notes were to be translated into Spanish.”¹⁴¹ However, this joint monarchy was still restricted by their marriage contract and he was “preoccupied by the problem of the Netherlands” so he focused more “successfully

¹³⁷ Levine. *High and Mighty Queens*, 35.

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 36.

¹³⁹ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 308.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 208.

¹⁴¹ Porter. *The First Queen of England*, 328.

developing a public image of charm and affability” than directly interfering with the affairs of state.¹⁴² Philip,

at the end, was anxious to get away. He had done all he could in England and now his duty was to Charles V, who was in the process of abdicating. Philip had played the role of considerate consort to perfection, but there was never any guarantee he would stay, even if the queen had produced a healthy son. His presence was required in Brussels and his wife, though deeply unhappy, understood this.¹⁴³

Despite her “personal grief” after her husband left England, “the queen knew that matters of state always came first.”¹⁴⁴

The England of Mary Tudor’s childhood and adulthood placed women in a position that excluded them from formal politics. In a society in which women were deemed as inherently unequal to men and subject to the authority of fathers, brothers, husbands, and even sons, it is not surprising that women were not seen as legitimate political actors. Yet, it is also important to understand the vast power and influence that women enjoyed beyond the domestic sphere when they stepped into the world of informal politics. Mary’s own lineage provided her with examples of women who governed nations in their own right or took the place of their husband during times of war. Although Mary was the first queen of England to inherit the title in her own right, she was a product of the political culture in which she lived—she knew from an early age that women were to be subservient to the males in their family but could still yield a great deal of political influence in their own right. She was the first woman who was able to bridge the gap between women’s work in the realm of informal politics and formal politics of the day.

¹⁴² Porter. *The First Queen of England*, 328.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 342.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 347.

Chapter 2- Educated and Trained to rule?

In sixteenth century English society, a proper education, beginning at an early age, was vital for both elite men and elite women. In an era that favored patriarchal authority and viewed it as more legitimate than matriarchal rule, educating women in both the academia and the arts was still seen as a necessity for royal and noble families. Elite women were expected to possess the education that would be useful for someone would later run an independent household. Royal women were educated in both the responsibilities of the home and of the state. However, these royal women were not expected to employ such stately educational teachings later in life without the aid of a husband would serve as the true governing monarch in both act and deed. Women were taught the importance of the liturgy, history, language, music, and other womanly duties such as needlework and dancing. Mary Tudor, as the first queen of England in her own right, had a formal education based on humanist practices. However, even as a potential heir to the English throne, she was not expected to put aside womanly duties and was still taught the importance of being a good wife to her future husband rather than to concern herself with any potential future political duties.

I. Elite Female Education

Throughout Tudor England, female education took place within the home and it was the duty of the mother to educate her daughters.¹⁴⁵ This education included “instruction in religion, which is why many writers of the time argued for the education of women. How

¹⁴⁵ Sim, Alison. *The Tudor Housewife*. Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Pub., 1996. Print, 29.

could a woman instruct her family if she could not study improving books, especially the Bible, for herself?”¹⁴⁶ For many, “a general part of education for both sexes in Tudor times was general deportment and good behaviour. In the sixteenth century it was impossible to do well without the favour of those higher up the social ladder.”¹⁴⁷ Therefore, both boys and girls were taught the importance of presenting themselves properly in the company of others and learning how to appear useful in any area in hopes that they would later become a vital member of the king’s court.¹⁴⁸ For elite children, education “included not only a good knowledge of social etiquette but also how to make entertaining conversation.”¹⁴⁹ Girls were instructed in religion and morality. They were often educated in a way that would ensure that they would be able to carry themselves in conversation with those at court, as this would earn them favor with the sovereign. Even those who favored female education did not believe that a woman should be educated to contend with her male siblings or her male peers.¹⁵⁰ Etiquette books that were popular during the 1520s and 1530s outlined the proper behaviors for women and men during the Tudor period. Such books “gave the same message: a woman must be chaste, silent and obedient.”¹⁵¹ Those who were in favor of women having a strong education foundation did not wish to alter a woman’s place in society. They simply argued that women would become better wives and mothers to their future children if they were properly educated.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Sim. *The Tudor Housewife*, 29.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 30.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 30.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 30.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 31.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 33.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 34.

For women, “learning was simply to add erudition to those roles, to equip a noblewoman to rear her children more capably, to enhance her practice of charity and religion, and to make her more clever and interesting companion to her husband. Clearly, society provided no other respectable roles for women, well-born or common, outside of the church.”¹⁵³ Erasmus and other English humanist scholars believed that education had a purpose that revolved around one’s service to society.¹⁵⁴ However, since women were not seen as members who contributed to society as much as males did, “no purpose for it existed.”¹⁵⁵ Although women were not active public figures, they were still able to assert their authority in informal political roles such as through patronage or the governing of large estates. Even as Erasmus believed that girls should be “sufficiently well instructed ‘what whatever she does she will do with judgment and intelligence,’” he was unable to point out a specific “occupation” in society that would allow a woman to use this judgment and intellect outside the sphere of the home.¹⁵⁶

Humanist education was a popular classical mode of education for both sexes. Humanist education became popular in England during a period marked by significant change in economic and religious organization.¹⁵⁷ This education “became a prerequisite for advancement in this new society: the study of Latin language, history and law made professional civil servants out of landed gentry and those members of the old feudal

¹⁵³ Sowards, J. K. "Erasmus and the Education of Women." *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 13.4 (1982), 79.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 87.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 87.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 88.

¹⁵⁷ Friedman, Alice T. "The Influence of Humanism on the Education of Girls and Boys in Tudor England." *History of Education Quarterly* 25.1/2 (1985), 58.

aristocracy who kept pace with new trends.”¹⁵⁸ Women were also educated in order to improve their own position in society. To ensure a good marriage, noble women were often placed in the care of other elite women in order to finish off their formal and domestic education. Accordingly,

Women’s networks were also crucial when their daughters reached adolescence and needed to be placed in other aristocratic households to complete their educations, expand their social circles, and hopefully, secure the assistance of another well-connected family in arranging their marriages. The girls’ placement had considerable political importance because of its impact on the younger woman’s prospects of marrying advantageously and creating valuable patronage connections of their own.¹⁵⁹

Without being placed in the home of another wealthy English family, it became more difficult to secure a marriage and it could also be seen as an insult to the family as a whole if a young girl was not accepted into another household to complete her education. Such education became vital if one wished to reach “personal salvation” through reading religious works and interpreting the gospel without the assistance of clergymen.¹⁶⁰ This notion that a woman should be her own means of interpreting the bible was highlighted during the Protestant Reformation. However, even Catholic humanists emphasized this idea that women should be able to read and interpret the liturgy without outside guidance.¹⁶¹

It was not simply the break from the Roman Catholic Church that spurred women’s literary and education. The great Catholic humanist, Thomas More, “was the first Englishman to seriously experiment with the novel idea that women should be

¹⁵⁸ Friedman. “The Influence of Humanism”, 58.

¹⁵⁹ Daybell. *Women and Politics*, 24-25.

¹⁶⁰ Friedman. “The Influence of Humanism”, 58-59.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 58-59.

educated too.”¹⁶² His life and works touched upon the importance of self-discovery regarding religion and education as a whole. His belief in equal education for women was brought on by his utopian philosophies along with having three daughters, an additional adopted daughter, and yet only one son of his own.¹⁶³ Thomas More’s example of giving “his three daughters a full classical education alongside their brother” became the model for elite families across England.¹⁶⁴ Such education was proven advisable as his daughter, Margaret More, “developed into a considerable and widely respected scholar in her own right.”¹⁶⁵ In order to educate his daughters and son while away at court, More “employed William Gonnell as a full-time tutor for his children, already aware that Gonnell was an inspirational, experienced teacher whom he could depend on to propagate his vision of learning.”¹⁶⁶ Thomas More set a precedent for educating one’s daughters just as one would educate a son.

Thomas More’s daughter, Margaret More, serves as a prime example of the merits of female humanist education. Growing up in Tudor England, Margaret More received an education that would prepare her to be a future scholar and writer. Her father’s emphasis on the importance of self-improvement and diligence played a role in her educational pursuits. However, Thomas More still held true to the belief that women’s brains were inferior to that of men’s but he believed that the solution wasn’t to leave his daughter in a

¹⁶² Plowden, Alison. *Tudor Women: Queens & Commoners*. Thrupp, Stroud Gloucestershire: Sutton Pub., 1998. Print, 34.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 34.

¹⁶⁴ Edwards. *Mary I*, 8.

¹⁶⁵ Plowden. *Tudor Women: Queens & Commoners*, 34.

¹⁶⁶ Guy, J. A. *A Daughter's Love: Thomas More and His Dearest Meg*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009. Print, 59.

state of ignorance, as this would only make matters worse in dealings with men.¹⁶⁷ In More's *Utopia*, a work that was seen by many as revolutionary, the social order present still operated within the confines of a "patriarchal" society: "wives, for example, are required monthly to kneel and confess their faults to their husbands, who are not expected to reciprocate."¹⁶⁸ Even in this male dominated society of Utopia, education was "still available to all in Utopia – a remarkable idea given that at the time of *Utopia*'s publication the vast majority of the population in England could neither read nor write."¹⁶⁹ Since Thomas More believed that education would bring one closer to god since this would mean they could read the bible for themselves, it is not surprising that he wished to further a woman's ability to educate herself to further religiosity and ensure her personal salvation.

Thomas More believed that learning was more than just being able to reach personal salvation, for More asserted that learning languages such as Greek and Latin is not necessary for salvation but learning such languages will usually pre-dispose a person to living a more virtuous life and have a greater understanding of the importance of morality.¹⁷⁰ Learning was not simply employed to gain a better grasp of religious practices of the period; learning was the way that women learned the importance of chastity and morality. Those men who tutored young women were often overly anxious regarding the future chastity of their respective pupils. Since women were confined to being wives and mothers if they were not to enter into religious life, the "lack of any

¹⁶⁷ Marius, Richard. *Thomas More: A Biography*. New York: Knopf, 1984. Print, 7.

¹⁶⁸ Halpin, David. "Utopianism and Education: The Legacy of Thomas More." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 49.3 (2001), 304.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 304.

¹⁷⁰ Marius. *Thomas More*, 8.

perceived secular role for women beyond marriage and the home accounts for another obvious feature in his educational prescriptions for girls and women—his preoccupation with chastity.”¹⁷¹ For these men and the whole of English society during the 1500s, “virginity was, quite simply, the indispensable precondition for an honorable marriage. Erasmus like...such contemporaries as More and Vives, was convinced of ultimate moral purpose of education. For women, the additional moral requirement of chastity was a normal condition.”¹⁷² Although this Humanist education taught women the importance of virtue so that they could thrive in the domestic sphere, Humanism viewed virtuosity as the core of any proper public figure.

For More, the center of his education philosophy dealt with “the role it should play in promoting moral probity, without which...learning brings nothing but ‘notorious and noteworthy infamy.’”¹⁷³ In order to ensure that his children would be educated in a way that would teach them the importance of virtue and morality,

More’s children were compelled to master not only Latin and Greek literature, logic and philosophy and the works of the Church Fathers but also mathematics and astronomy. This education experience, in contradiction to the rest of English society at the time, was offered to both women and men. In this respect, More was an educational pioneer whose views about the importance of women’s education may be regarded...as ‘innovative, creative and well ahead of his time’, though his methods needed to be placed alongside an attitude of mind which led him ultimately to regard women in general as second class citizens. It is also clear that he partly viewed women’s education as one means of curbing what he saw as their innate tendency to be foolishly emotional and slothful. In this respect, while being an imaginative educator, More was very much a product of his time, class and society.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Sowards. "Erasmus and the Education of Women", 88.

¹⁷² Ibid, 88.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 305.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 305.

Thomas More was a fervent and early proponent for women's education but he did not support women ruling a nation and it is not surprising that when Mary was educated at an early age, she was taught that she would not rule England without a husband to guide her. Even so, the education that More had given his daughter Margaret was used as a basis for Mary's education.

Other humanists such as Desiderius Erasmus published works that elucidated how princes should be educated for positions of power. This guide was given to Henry VIII by its author in the year following Mary Tudor's birth. Erasmus's *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) "became quickly and enduringly influential in England."¹⁷⁵ The text itself focused on what aspiring kings should read in order to be morally sound rulers during their future role as king. No text existed regarding the education of princesses for their future role as queens. According to Erasmus, a prince's tutor "should first see that his pupil loves and honours virtue as the most beautiful thing of all."¹⁷⁶ These ideas were no different than those of Juan Luis Vives and other tutors who believed that women's education should ensure that they remain virtuous and chaste in order to be good wives and mothers. Erasmus' work also focused on how princes should learn to be virtuous. Erasmus explains that young princes should read "Aesop's fables" as these are entertaining stories with a moral lesson.¹⁷⁷ As they grow older, Erasmus believed that princes should be taught "the story of Phaethon" and "the teacher should show that he represents a prince who seized the reigns of government in the headstrong enthusiasm of

¹⁷⁵ Hunt, Alice, and Anna Whitelock. *Tudor Queenship: The Reigns of Mary and Elizabeth*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print, 128.

¹⁷⁶ Erasmus, Desiderius, and Lester K. Born. *The Education of a Christian Prince*. New York: Norton, 1968. Print, 13.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 12.

youth but with no supporting wisdom and brought ruin upon himself and the entire world.”¹⁷⁸ While this text along with its moral lessons could have easily transferred to Mary in order to teach her how to be a moral and just queen, “there is no sign, however, that Henry VIII interpreted Erasmus’ gift as pertaining to the education of his daughter.”¹⁷⁹ Both men and women were taught from a young age that they must be virtuous individuals. However, it was understood that common and unique virtues existed for each sex.

As both Thomas More and Erasmus had received an “English education” that was largely fueled by classical texts. Their understanding and views of humanism were similar in some respects. Similar to Thomas More, “Erasmus’s humanism was complicated by his attempts to marry it to Christian piety. Learning was not to be an end in itself, even for secular purposes...the pagan poets and philosophers were useful as a *preparation* for the Christian life.”¹⁸⁰ Erasmus believed that “the real importance of the new learning was to be in helping to guide men through ‘the labyrinth of this world into the pure light of the spiritual life.’”¹⁸¹ As women were not meant to be leaders of the church or have power over that of their husbands, Erasmus does not stray away from the notion that women should not hold higher positions in society than their male counterparts. He does believe that without education, one cannot live a holy life. Erasmus was a proponent of women’s education who cannot be overlooked. Unlike Vives and More, Erasmus does not outright state that women were inferior to men in his works on

¹⁷⁸ Erasmus. *The Education of a Christian Prince*, 12.

¹⁷⁹ Hunt. *Tudor Queenship*, 128.

¹⁸⁰ Fox, Alistair, and J. A. Guy. *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanism, Politics, and Reform, 1500-1550*. Oxford, Ox, UK: B. Blackwell, 1986. Print, 36.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 35-36.

education. However, he is unable to see women in a role other than the one that society had already created for her.¹⁸²

While many believed that women were too unstable and easily excited to learn Greek and Latin, other scholars argued that “the educated woman would inevitably become more serious-minded, a more rational companion for her husband, a better mother to her children.”¹⁸³ Women were being educated, but largely for the purpose of teaching them how to be obedient, chaste, and proper wives. While a humanist education favored women’s intellectual equality, it did not disrupt the ideals of the day that placed women in a subservient position to men. For,

As far as household duties were concerned, it is noticeable that not even the most advanced educational theorist ever dreamed of challenging society’s two basic assumptions – that a woman’s place was in the home and that the nice girl’s only ambition should be to make a honourable marriage and become a good wife and mother. Indeed, the educational theorists from Luis Vives downwards all attached great importance to the housewifely arts.¹⁸⁴

The men who would tutor women who would later hold great positions of power such as Mary and Elizabeth Tudor still believed that women had no place in politics. Rather than educating women for the possibility that they might become rulers, they provided these elite and royal women with the education a good ruler would need but believed they would never put such learning into practice.

II. Mary’s Education and Training to Rule

During Mary’s infancy, it was a widely held belief among noble families that “girls could and should be given the opportunity to benefit from the kind of academic training

¹⁸² Fox. *Reassessing the Henrician Age*, 35-36.

¹⁸³ Plowden. *Tudor Women: Queens & Commoners*, 36.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 37.

normally reserved for boys.”¹⁸⁵ As Mary was the only heir to the English throne during her childhood, Mary’s mother Catherine of Aragon began to devote a portion of her time to the upbringing and education of her daughter.¹⁸⁶ Mary’s mother and grandmother were both “exceptionally well educated in Spain.”¹⁸⁷ Although Mary’s tutors did not believe that she would become queen in her own right, the precedent for an educated female monarch had already been set by both Mary’s mother and her grandmother Isabella of Castile. Mary’s educational curriculum was influenced by the humanist educational beliefs of the day and her mother, Catherine of Aragon’s use of her own Spanish education as a foundation for Mary’s education. As the daughter of the king, Princess Mary was given an education that was “still a court lady’s education” rather than “the practical education in government that she would have had had she been a boy.”¹⁸⁸ It is not surprising that Mary Tudor would be educated to believe that she could not rule England without the guidance of a man. It was not simply her father Henry VIII who feared leaving England in the hands of a woman.

Mother and daughter were oftentimes separated, but Catherine “followed Mary’s progress keenly, and there was no doubt that her influence would have started as soon as Mary could talk and be socialized.”¹⁸⁹ Based on Catherine of Aragon’s own educational experience in Spain, “Catherine naturally expected that her daughter should receive the full formal education that princes were customarily given.”¹⁹⁰ Mary’s father, Henry VIII, “feared that leaving England in the hands of a woman, educated or not, was an open

¹⁸⁵ Plowden. *Tudor Women: Queens & Commoners*, 33.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 33.

¹⁸⁷ Edwards. *Mary I*, 7.

¹⁸⁸ Sim. *The Tudor Housewife*, 31.

¹⁸⁹ Porter, Linda. *The First Queen of England*, 28.

¹⁹⁰ Edwards. *Mary I*, 8.

invitation for foreign intervention or civil war” so it is quite possible that Henry VIII never gave any thought to educating his daughter for the possibility that she might one day become queen.¹⁹¹ However, Catherine of Aragon has witnessed her own mother in a position of political authority and knew “that a woman, properly motivated, could be a successful monarch.”¹⁹² It is clear that gender clouded the issue as to whether or not Mary would make a viable ruler after her father’s death, no matter what education she was given. Catherine was determined to use humanist educational practices to improve her daughter’s position and the positions of other young noble woman. For,

Once Catherine took up the theory of female education, she did not limit herself to its reference to her daughter. She began to form around Mary a school for the daughters of noblemen, on the pattern of that for noblemen’s sons once formed around her brother Juan, and she even persuaded a number of the older ladies of the court, notably her sister-in-law, the Duchess of Suffolk, to resume the study of Latin and take up a course of serious reading. She turned over a copy of Vives’ treatise to Thomas More, whose own daughters were probably the best educated young women of their class in England...It is almost as if she dreamed that this Christian Renaissance for which the humanists were working and which the men were bungling so badly might be saved by the intervention of a sex whose thoughts were not given over to senseless aggression and military pride.¹⁹³

Catherine’s insistence on providing Mary with the best education possible did not leave Henry with the belief that Mary would suffice as England’s next monarch if a male heir was not conceived. However, “her interest in the education of women was probably not wholly without results. In the society in which she lived royal example was particularly potent, and though her influence was cut short it had already begun to take effect.”¹⁹⁴

Without Catherine’s emphasis on education, Mary and other noblewomen who were

¹⁹¹ Levin. *High and Mighty Queens*, 11.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 11.

¹⁹³ Mattingly, Garrett. *Catherine of Aragon*,. London: J. Cape, 1942. Print, 187-189.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 190.

educated alongside Mary would not have received such an education that spanned beyond women's usual societal obligations.¹⁹⁵

According to Mary's half brother Edward she was "brought up by women."¹⁹⁶ By this, he asserts that, other females often surrounded Mary, thus inevitably influencing her own ideas of the world. It is believed that her mother Catherine taught Mary the basics of English language such as the alphabet, writing, reading, and some Latin.¹⁹⁷ However, since Mary spent long periods each year away from her mother, this observation may be false. Her Chaplain, Henry Rowle, is another contender for this role as Mary's earliest educator.¹⁹⁸ The Countess of Salisbury, Margret Pole, who served as Mary's governess from 1525 until 1533, illustrates Edward's claim that the females who comprised her household heavily influenced Mary.¹⁹⁹ Margret was an educated noble woman who not only looked after Mary, but also made sure that Mary was practicing her musical instruments as well as her Latin and French.²⁰⁰ While her mother played a clear role, either through direct educational instruction or through the commissioning of Mary's tutors, her father was only directly involved in her musical education.²⁰¹ It was apparent that Henry did not see Mary's education as vital for the continuation of the Tudor line for he hoped that she would not be his only heir.

To tutor the infant pupil, Mary's mother "chose a friend of her personal physician, Fernando Victoria" by the name of Thomas Lincarse who would look after Mary's education and

¹⁹⁵ Mattingly. *Catherine of Aragon*, 190.

¹⁹⁶ Loades. *Mary Tudor*, 31.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 31.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 31.

¹⁹⁹ Doran, Susan, and Thomas S. Freeman. *Mary Tudor: Old and New Perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Print, 106.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 106.

²⁰¹ Loades. *Mary Tudor*, 31.

physical health beginning with “basic grammar.”²⁰² Catherine later commissioned “a compatriot of her own, Juan Luis Vives” to replace to Licarce “as her daughter’s director of studies.”²⁰³ In 1523, Vives dedicated his education work “*Institutio foeminae christianae*” to Catherine of Aragon and this work “focused on the education of Princess Mary.”²⁰⁴ Despite this dedication to Mary’s mother, Catherine did not necessarily support everything written in this work, especially when it dealt with a women’s place in society. This educational work contained information for Mary that “would clearly influence an attentive and conscientious pupil.”²⁰⁵ The primary goal of Mary’s education according to Vives’ teaching was “to induce good living and not just good reading.”²⁰⁶ Mary read works by other humanists of the day such as Thomas More and Erasmus.²⁰⁷ Her tutors encouraged her to read histories involving “Christian doctrine and argument persuasive to belief.”²⁰⁸ Mary was restricted from reading works such as romantic fiction as her male tutors believed that these works could corrupt a female’s virtue.²⁰⁹ Vives’ teachings emphasize the notion that an ungodly woman would not exist “unless she be one who is ignorant of or at any rate gives no thought to the importance of the virtues of chastity.”²¹⁰

From a young age, it was apparent that Mary was an intelligent young girl: “even as a very small girl, she was able to acquit herself superbly in public demonstration of her skills, and there was regular occasions of state that kept up the pressure on her to show

²⁰² Edwards. *Mary I*, 8.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 8.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 9.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 10.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 10.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 10.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 10.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 10.

²¹⁰ Vives, Juan Luis, and Charles Fantazzi. *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-century Manual*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000. Print, 64.

what a king's daughter could do."²¹¹ Her early mastery of French impressed the French lords who were visiting court and she was able to use her French skills "for communication with the imperial ambassadors" when their support was crucial to England.²¹² In addition to language and reading instruction Vives' also wished to educate Mary and other young women of the duties that should occupy them within the home. Vives "was insistent that girls should learn to spin and weave, citing the example of numerous industrious classical and scriptural heroines."²¹³

According to Vives, "The woman is still the daughter of the man and weaker, and for that reason needs his protection. And when she is the bereft of her husband, she is alone, naked, exposed to harm. As the companion of her husband, wherever he is there she has a country, home, hearth, parents, close friends, and wealth."²¹⁴ Vives' teachings did not support Catherine of Aragon's view that Mary was able to rule England in her own right if given the proper education. His views, although viewed as revolutionary to some degree, did not propose a place for educated women outside the home. Vives focused on the need to protect women against "contaminating male company" and "a diet of scripture, the Fathers, and certain 'acceptable' pagan classics were consequently prescribed, to be consumed at home."²¹⁵ He cautioned against overindulgence of women, saying it would ruin them. Those who did not believe that women could appropriately govern a nation held such ideas; women were seen as to susceptible to their own frivolity.

²¹¹ Porter. *The First Queen of England*, 27.

²¹² *Ibid*, 26 -27.

²¹³ Plowden. *Tudor Women: Queens & Commoners*, 37.

²¹⁴ Vives.. *The Education of a Christian Woman*, 186-187.

²¹⁵ Loades. *Mary Tudor*, 32.

By 1525, Mary, at the age of nine, could read and write, both in English and simple Latin, had some command of French and could probably understand Spanish.²¹⁶ Mary was educated to be a queen, but it was naturally assumed that her husband would govern England. Just like her mother, Mary received a world-class education that would enable her to understand politics. She was simply not expected to use what she had learned to rule alone. Therefore, “piety, chastity, and humane letters were the objectives of those who guided her lessons...and the prospect of marriage dominated the classroom.”²¹⁷

Vives had never intended that Mary’s education would prepare her to be the sole ruler of England. Since Vives’ emphasized women’s place in the home rather than as heads of state, he can be seen as “a malign influence on Mary’s entire life” for it is believed that Vives overstatement of male authority and better male judgment “permanently damaged” Mary’s view of herself as a woman and as a ruler.²¹⁸ For, Mary is often depicted as a woman who saw “herself as inferior to men and not able to trust her own judgment.”²¹⁹ However, Vives’ view was perhaps no more polluting than the views of other humanist of his day. While Vives provided a curriculum that Mary would follow, she did not necessarily trust it completely nor did she believe that she was unable to rule. One must note that Mary did not follow all of Vives’ teachings for Vives believed that Mary should live a “solemn” life that did not provide any place for the music and dancing that were natural in English court life.²²⁰ It is clear that “Mary believed that she would

²¹⁶ Loades. *Mary Tudor*, 32.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 33.

²¹⁸ Porter. *Mary Tudor: The First Queen of England*, 30.

²¹⁹ Ibid, 30.

²²⁰ Edwards. *Mary I*, 14.

not be a proper princess unless she actively indulged in such things.”²²¹ With regard to her faith in her own abilities, she was able to rally troops to fight for her place in the succession after her brother Edward’s death. This weak and dependent role that Vives’ envisions for Mary does not necessarily come true. Vives was not the only humanist educator who subscribed to such notions for women: “the cheerful conviction that woman had been created for the benefit and domestic comfort of man and that the whole of a girl’s education, both formal and practical, should properly be directed to that end, lay not very far beneath the teachings of every sixteenth-century educationist.”²²² Vives and other humanists wished to educate women in order to “provide a way of changing women’s experience” while staying within the bounds of women’s specific and limited societal roles as defined by the state and the Catholic Church.²²³

While Vives believed that women must be educated as men are and that they have equal intellectual abilities, he did not stray from the popular belief during the period that woman were not meant for social superiority. This education provided Mary with the knowledge that she needed to employ if she was to become a great ruler but at the same time, taught her that politics was not in any woman’s future. Vives taught Mary that “nature herself has declared this by making the man more fit for governing than the woman. In great affairs and in moments of crisis, the woman is so shaken and confused by fear that she cannot use her reason or her judgment” yet “a man... is not so shaken by fear as not to perceive clearly what is fitting to be done in the immediate

²²¹ Edwards. *Mary I*, 14.

²²² Plowden. *Tudor Women: Queens & Commoners*, 37.

²²³ Levin. *High and Mighty Queens*, 16.

circumstances.”²²⁴ Vives, like many men and women of the period, believed that women were more likely to fall prey to their own emotions and therefore would prove to be less reliable rulers if placed into a difficult situation. Vives believed that the primary purpose of education was “always better behaviour and the avoidance of sin. Any learning beyond what was needed was redundant and educated wives should be as silent before their husbands as before their less learned sisters.”²²⁵ Women were expected to be intelligent but were also required to mask their intelligence from their husbands and other women in English society.

However, it soon became clear that Mary would never become a silent woman who wished to mask her intelligence when she found herself among less learned women or elite men. As early as age 11, Mary was concerned that the English common people have a broad education of the laity.²²⁶ Mary’s readings focused on the works “that encouraged piety and moral rectitude and she circulated translation exercises, apparently for the edification of her social inferiors.”²²⁷ This can be seen through Mary’s translations of works such as Thomas Aquinas’ prayer for the ordering of life.²²⁸ Mary was prepared for her future role as queen whether or not this was intended by her education. Her “literary education was supposed to stress morality in support of chastity and her potential future role as royal wife, the emphasis was on Christian devotional rather than ancient philosophical or historical work.”²²⁹ The religious texts that were meant to teach

²²⁴ Vives. *The Education of a Christian Woman*, 194.

²²⁵ Edwards. *Mary I*, 12.

²²⁶ Richards, Judith M. *Mary Tudor*. London: Routledge, 2008. Print, 47.

²²⁷ Hunt. *Tudor Queenship*, 132.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 112.

²²⁹ *Ibid*, 112.

her the importance of living a good and virtuous life also lead to Mary's later role as a religious leader to her people.²³⁰

Women in Tudor England were educated to fulfill the roles that were accepted as commonplace for a woman of the time: wife and mother. Since mothers were expected to educate their children, this would be impossible to do without a strong educational foundation provided for elite women beginning at a young age. Even those men who wished to promote equal education for women did not wish to disturb the occupational confines present for women in the 1500s. Royal women were not expected to venture outside of their predetermined roles as mother and wife. Mary Tudor, as the future heir to the throne, was educated to believe she was to serve as a good wife, mother, and queen to a husband who would have the true power of England at his disposal. In order to assert herself as a queen in both name and deed, Mary needed to go beyond the expectations that had been set for females during the period.

In order to fully understand how Mary went above and beyond the expectations that were standard of females during her lifetime, it is important to see what steps Mary took during her brother's reign in order to prepare for her future role as England's sole monarch. After viewing Mary as a product of the political culture in which she lived and assessing how her education allowed her to become a knowledgeable and active ruler, it is important to see how these ideas were put into practice during her adulthood. While her brother was king, Mary asserted her authority over her household and later the affinity connections that she had gained through this household in order to win back England's throne. Chapter one and two of this thesis display the groundwork that

²³⁰ Hunt. *Tudor Queenship*, 132.

provided Mary with an understanding of female rulership and the skills that she would employ as the sister of a king and later, as a queen in her own right. By taking the political culture of Tudor England and the humanist education that Mary received into account, Chapter three works to highlight how Mary exploited the possibilities of female authority during her brother Edward's reign and formed the basis for what would become her own court after his death. The days leading up to and directly following Edward's death would prove as the ultimate test of Mary's abilities as a political actor and as a queen.

Chapter 3: The First Test of Queenship: Mary Tudor and the English Succession 1553

In the years leading up to Mary Tudor's reign, both her gender and her religious convictions threatened to derail her position in the dynastic succession. During her brother Edward's reign, the succession crisis immediately after his death, and the beginning of her own reign, Mary demonstrated her abilities as a political actor and exploited the possibilities for female authority within Tudor political and political culture. Despite her father's will which declared Mary second in line to the throne, many wished to prevent Mary from becoming queen because of her gender and her religion. However, despite attempts to usurp her crown as her brother was dying and after her brother's death, Mary eventually prevailed. Her immediate success can largely be attributed to the affinity connections Mary established during her brother's reign, but reflected the potential for female authority examined in chapters one and two. Under Edward, Mary served as a religious leader who was not willing to set aside her own beliefs in order to appease those at court. By looking at Mary's household during her brother's kingship, her political education and training, as well as the importance gender and religion to her accession to the throne, one can gain a better understanding of Mary's abilities as a female ruler in an overwhelmingly misogynistic age. The potential for female authority as shown through her household management and the particular circumstantial advantages that Mary experiences in 1533 become the factors that will ultimately work to define the beginning of Mary's queenship.

I. Affinity connections during Edward's Reign and the Accession Crisis

By first looking at Mary's household in the years of her brother Edward's reign, one can understand the instrumental role that kinship and affinity connections played during the succession crisis in July of 1553. It was originally believed that Mary was successful at taking back the crown due to her "legitimist claim" along with support that "drawn almost exclusively from the Catholic and conservative."²³¹ However, it is now understood that it was Mary's affinity connections established through her household that ultimately led to her triumph. It can no longer be claimed that Mary became queen "as the result of a 'spontaneous rising' of the East Anglican gentry."²³² Although some people openly resented the interference to Henry's will, this was not the main issue that led to Mary's placement as queen.²³³ Instead, "Mary's supporters in 1553 had a prehistory of considerable depth and scope" for "the origins of Mary's success in July 1553 are located during her Edwardian years in 'opposition."²³⁴ Even before whisperings of a possible deviation from the succession that had been set forth by Henry VIII, Mary's supporters were rallying to her cause. As early as 1549, "attempts were made to involve the Lady Mary in plans to undermine the government of Lord Protector Somerset and make her regent for Edward in a conservative 'revolution."²³⁵ However, Mary rejected such proposed measures.²³⁶

²³¹ Whitelock, Anna, and Diarmaid MacCulloch. "Princess Mary's Household And The Succession Crisis, July 1553." *The Historical Journal* 50.02 (2007): 265-87. Print. 267.

²³² *Ibid*, 268.

²³³ *Ibid*, 267.

²³⁴ *Ibid*, 268.

²³⁵ Edwards. *Mary I*, 70-71.

²³⁶ *Ibid*, 70-71.

Those men and women who comprised Mary's household would prove to be instrumental supporters of her cause after her brother's death.²³⁷ After the formation of such connections, Mary and her household were forced "into a position of open Catholic defiance."²³⁸ As such, "her entourage assumed an increasingly politicized identity. In July 1553 this politicization reached its fullest expression."²³⁹ While her brother was king, his Privy Council attempted to persuade Mary to leave behind her Catholicism and see the true error of her religious ways. They wrote to "induce her to comply with the new regulations, and to make her servants aware of the danger of disobeying the law" but Mary would not sway with pressure.²⁴⁰ Instead, she "was determined to defend her servants' rights to the free practice of their religion, labeling her servants 'as her own kin' whom she would stand by."²⁴¹

Most important of all was "that Mary managed to elude capture in the days immediately following Edward's death proved to be crucial, and the warning to flee which she received suggests that her affinity network had penetrated the king's court."²⁴² Having such advance warning of "Northumberland's conspiracy" led to "Mary's successful flight to safety" which was undoubtedly "thanks to orchestration by her household."²⁴³ While the illness of one of Mary's household servants provided the excuse for Mary to leave her residence at Hunsdon in Hertfordshire, her flight path to East

²³⁷ Whitelock. "Princess Mary's Household", 268.

²³⁸ Ibid 268.

²³⁹ Ibid, 268.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 144.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 144.

²⁴² Ibid, 276.

²⁴³ Ibid, 276.

Anglia via a chain of sympathetic gentry households suggests a pre-arranged plan, with a wider ring of her affinity ready to mobilize.”²⁴⁴ Once her brother’s death was known,

Mary’s household at Kenninghall became a quasi-court with her most trusted attendants forming her ‘personal council’...All were of proven service and loyalty and had come into Mary’s Catholic household during her years in opposition under her brother Edward VI. Mary’s household officers became councillors, messengers, and crucially, mobilizers of further Marian support. Thomas Hungate was sent to London with signet letters commanding the privy council ‘to cause of right and title to the Crown and government of this Realm to be proclaimed’ throughout England. Considering the haste with which the letters must have been composed, it was a well-organized and prudent assertion of her rights.²⁴⁵

Whether consciously or not, Mary had created an alternative regime that had gone virtually unnoticed by the Edwardian government. Although Mary’s religion often placed her under the watchful eyes of Edward’s Privy Council, “the government had fundamentally ignored the existence of a Marian affinity” which “is attested by the fact that those on whom Mary called to rally to her cause included many of the same figures whose names appear on William Cecil’s nationwide list of local magnates and gentry who were expected to remain loyal to the crown.”²⁴⁶ Her initial supporters were largely “Mary’s regional neighbours.”²⁴⁷ Of these neighbors, “virtually all were Catholics, the obvious exception being the earl of Sussex,” a man who had agreed to support Mary as his son was a member of her own household.²⁴⁸ It is clear that “those who rallied to Mary in the first uncertain days of the succession crisis were almost exclusively East Anglian gentleman with estates near hers, and many from the same group of conservative East Anglian magnates as the men in Mary’s household. They represented an outer ring of

²⁴⁴ Whitelock. “Princess Mary's Household”, 276.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 277.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 278.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 280.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 278.

Mary's household affinity."²⁴⁹ Just as her household had been the first and primary means of mobilizing support for her legitimate claim to the throne, those members of her household were the ones who reached out to pull in more supporters among their own family members. For, Henry Bedingfeld who was "'the first gentleman to be mindful of his fealty and hasten to aid the Queen'" was also related to Henry Jerningham, "one of Mary's household officers."²⁵⁰ Those "who rallied to Framlingham were not members of Mary's East Anglia affinity but were mobilized by those who were."²⁵¹ Those who remained untouched by Mary's household affinity connections were drawn to mobilization largely by "Mary's legitimist claim."²⁵²

Many openly emphasized "Mary's status as Henry's legitimate daughter and hence the validity of her challenge to Jane."²⁵³ This was largely emphasized over the question of religion since religion was a factor that could deter potential supporters as much as it could rally them. Mary's support was not solely dependent upon religion, as "Mary's support base was not exclusively Catholic the more it developed."²⁵⁴ Similarly, Marian support was not confined to East Anglia and the Home Counties. For, Mary's "household advisors, with their strong local links, had been careful to maintain their contacts and boost their lady's image with the country gentlemen who formed her affinity. There was much genuine affection for Mary, and this goodwill was a powerful weapon when effectively exploited."²⁵⁵ Mary's popularity worked in her favor: it would

²⁴⁹ Whitelock. "Princess Mary's Household", 280.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 280.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 282.

²⁵² Ibid, 283.

²⁵³ Ibid, 283.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 283.

²⁵⁵ Porter. *The First Queen of England*, 202.

prompt those directly connected with her to rally their friends and families to join in her cause to win back the succession.²⁵⁶ Those men of East Anglia who had aided her cause became her counselors. For, “they were her household officers and the leading local men who answered her summons for assistance.”²⁵⁷ Although they had never before had the opportunity or “any experience in national government” she rewarded them for their service to her.²⁵⁸

It is clear that without the affinity networks that had been established during Edward’s reign, Mary’s success over Jane Grey during the succession crisis might not have proved so easily securable.²⁵⁹ As mentioned in chapter one, women were active political actors in the realm of informal politics and through her household, Mary was mimicking the establish pattern of women serving as both public and private figures. Mary’s control over the region in which she lived was not unheard of since other regional women owned land holdings and asserted authority over their respective estates. As domestic figures, elite women were expected to manage great estates and promote the interests of their families.²⁶⁰ For those who supported Mary’s regime, it is clear that women in positions of power were not unknown to them. Mary was able to act as a political actor in an area that other women had asserted their own informal political authority: the household. Her ability to enter the world of formal politics by using such household connections to promote her own cause and gain a substantial following that would help her win back the crown is what distinguishes her.

²⁵⁶ Porter. *The First Queen of England*, 202.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 232.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, 232.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 232.

²⁶⁰ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 15.

II. Mary's Claim to Female Authority?

Mary's ability to win the support of nobles and laymen alike displayed the political training that would equip Mary to be a successful leader during her time as England's queen. As laid out in the previous chapter, Mary's early education had provided her with the skills to be a firm and knowledgeable ruler. As such, she knew the importance of political pragmatism in order to achieve her desired results. Such pragmatism was crucial if she was to gain the support of Protestants during the succession crisis. During her brother's reign, Mary's role as a political actor cannot be overlooked. Mary openly asserted that maturity was the key component that was absent from her brother's regime. She knew that the men surrounding her brother at court were the one's asserting their authority under the guise of the king. She was intellectually equipped to understand the rules of the political game and actively brought to mind the question of when does a king truly become a king? She was only willing to follow the laws of religion that were set forth during her father's reign in so far as it did not disturb her own views of Catholicism.²⁶¹

It is evident that Mary's household did not follow the religion of the king and did not attempt to mask their faith. Thus, during her brother's reign, her household became a center that she used to "showcase her increasingly defiant Catholicism."²⁶² While her brother had created the Act of Uniformity in 1549, which forbid the hearing of Mass, Mary ignored this statute.²⁶³ For, "Mass continued to be celebrated at Kenninghall.

²⁶¹ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 143.

²⁶² Whitelock. "Princess Mary's Household", 270.

²⁶³ *Ibid*, 272.

Somerset claimed in July 1549 that ‘we have not forbidden the Lady Mary to hear Mass privately in her own apartment, but whereas she used to have two masses said before, she has three said now since the prohibitions and with greater show.’²⁶⁴ Edward’s open involvement in politics was fairly limited due to his minority. Yet,

Edward’s most high-profile intervention in 1550s politics was in the struggle to force his half-sister, the Lady Mary, into conformity with the reformed church. This was potentially the most important issue to face his government, involving as it did a coincidence of dynastic, diplomatic and religious policy. Mary’s closeness to her cousin the Holy Roman Emperor, the pious Catholic Charles V, meant that the issue could never simply be a domestic one; the English government’s refusal to let Mary’s religion alone became inextricably and contrarily entangled with their efforts to persuade the Emperor to give English diplomats free exercise of evangelical religion on embassies to the imperial court. In all this, the king was the most aggressive advocate of trying to pressure Mary into obedience.²⁶⁵

Despite being pressured by her brother to conform to the new faith, Mary did not yield.

When approached by her brother on the matter, she asserted that she would willingly face death before she gave up her Catholicism.²⁶⁶ Since Mary’s defiance is characterized as the most troubling issue faced in Edward’s reign, her influence in the political culture of the day cannot be overlooked. In order to avoid the watchful eye of the Lord Protector and the Privy Council, Mary used many excuses to avoid attending court. She feared that in Edward’s presence, she would be forced to worship as he did and give up her Mass.²⁶⁷ She treated the authority of those in the king’s household with contempt and avoided them as much as possible.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ Whitelock. "Princess Mary's Household", 272.

²⁶⁵ MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *The Boy King: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Print, 36

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 37.

²⁶⁷ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 158.

²⁶⁸ Ibid,167.

In a letter from the king to Mary, he expressed his disapproval of Mary's actions by stating that, "we have somewhat marveled, and cannot but still marvel very much, what groups or reasons have or do move you to dislike or refuse to follow and embrace that which, by all the learned men of our realm, hath been so set forth."²⁶⁹ In order to avoid attending court, Mary explains that she her health was too fragile at the present. However, the message was clear. Edward and his entourage were increasingly fearful that Mary's open household Masses would seduce others, displaying her expanding influence. As such, Edward declared that her services must now be held in private and could include no more than 20 people, all of which were to be reported directly to the Protector and the Privy Council.²⁷⁰

Mary's defiant stance became increasingly harmful to the Edwardian regime's attempts to reform England. For, "Mary increasingly became a Catholic figurehead nationwide, defiant in her allegiance to the Mass and determined to maintain a devoutly Catholic household. As she wrote to the council in December 1550, 'I would rather refuse the friendship of all the world (whereunto I trust I shall never be driven), than forsake any point of my faith.'"²⁷¹ Although her brother was only eleven years old, he still "rebuked Mary for hearing Mass in the chapel" at her home.²⁷² Mary "continued to argue that he was not old enough to make up his own mind about religion. He demanded her obedience, she resisted, and both were deduced to tears."²⁷³ Mary believed that her brother was not capable of asserting his authority over her at such a young age. Mary

²⁶⁹ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 146.

²⁷⁰ Knighton, C. S., ed. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series of the Reign of Edward VI 1547-1553*. London: Public Record Office, 1992. Print, 348.

²⁷¹ Whitelock. "Princess Mary's Household", 271.

²⁷² Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 158.

²⁷³ *Ibid*, 158.

“blamed the Privy Council for turning her brother against her” and asserted “that his age made it impossible for him to judge others in matters of religion.”²⁷⁴ In order to alter her religious views, Mary received

Corrective instruction. Such men would be chosen and sent to her, after which it was expected that her attitude would improve. Both the king and the lord protector clung to the hope that in time Mary would come to embrace the religious reforms. Mary’s conscience had driven her into a position of direct opposition to the government. The girl who had been broken down and forced to yield her soul and the honor of her mother in fear of her father was now a mature woman of thirty-three. She was a landed magnate with a following of her own and the support of Emperor Charles V. Her brother, the king, was a child. She would not succumb again.²⁷⁵

Mary had grown into an adult who had been forced to acknowledge her mother as the illegitimate wife of Henry VIII, thus declaring herself a bastard.³⁰⁵ Under Edward, she would not give in to the authority of the crown if it were not sanctioned by her own conscience.²⁷⁶ This demonstrates Mary’s political maturity for she had grown an independent woman who was not afraid to question the authority of those wielding formal power.

Even as a king and a king’s sister, Edward and Mary’s respective positions in Tudor society placed them outside the realm of typical authority figures. This was largely because “normal rules of behaviour were complicated by the anomalous relationships of power between them.”²⁷⁷ Mary was but an unwed female and her brother was not old enough to govern on his own. Unquestionably, “here were two people by definition marginal to Tudor hierarchies of command, a single woman and a male who was not an

²⁷⁴ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 167.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 147.

³⁰⁵ MacCulloch. *The Boy King*, 36.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 36.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 36.

adult, but they found themselves with no appropriate adult in a sufficiently authoritative position to spell out the rules, and with all the formal authority in the hands of a much younger boy.”²⁷⁸ However, even though her gender limited her ability to intervene directly in the Edwardian court, it is clear that her home life had its own impact on Edward’s policies. A letter written to Princess Mary from Edward’s council demonstrated the concern felt by Edward and his government over Mary’s household and her increasing disregard of government’s religious policies. The letter reads,

You have no doubt heard of seditious assemblies and doings in many places, for stay of which we have done and will do all we may. Certain of your servants are reported to be chief in these commotions... Although we think you have no certain knowledge of these servants’ doings, since your religion is known to be against that of the king and the whole country, encouraging (we fear) these men, we thought necessary to give this notice, praying you [to tell us by this bearer whether your said servants or others have received] to order the stay of your servants [to tell us your meaning in these matters] so they would have no occasion to judge that any of yours should so act against the king.²⁷⁹

While the letter is careful not to openly assert that Mary was intentionally disobeying the wishes of her brother, it is clear that her household has become a center of Catholic tolerance and it was Edward’s regime that feared Mary’s influence on the English people. Other correspondence that occurred between the Privy Council and Mary demonstrated her insistence on ignoring their mandates. In one report, Mary asserts that she is unwilling to give up her private religious services and conform to those established by Edward. She remarks that she will only follow her brother’s religious decrees when he is old enough to judge properly. She also declared that she was old enough to appoint her own officers, asserting that in this respect, age trumped gender.²⁸⁰ Mary had openly made

²⁷⁸ MacCulloch. *The Boy King*, 36.

²⁷⁹ Knighton. *Calendar of State Papers Edward VI*, 126.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 348.

it her duty “to protect and advance the Catholic religion. She saw her establishment as a refuge for Catholics.”²⁸¹

Near the end of her brother’s reign, Mary began to fear what would happen if her brother were to die since then she would be in the hands of the English Protestants who had ruled during the Edwardian years.²⁸² In 1550, she created a plan to flee England but soon realized that this would be politically unsound for, if she wanted to claim the crown, she had to remain in England.²⁸³ This demonstrates Mary’s ability to understand politics and take charge of her own fate when it became increasingly vital to do so if Mary wished to become queen. Perhaps the most notable period when Mary demonstrated the merits of the political education she had received was during the succession crisis. Her political pragmatism is apparent when she did not openly declare her religious stance until after reaching London as it would cost her a great deal of Protestant support. This pragmatism is a testament to Mary’s political good sense. Her increasing, open religious defiance during Edward’s reign sharply contrasts with the self-conscious silence on the subject of religion during the crisis. For, “Throughout the Edwardian years, Mary had defined herself and her household as defiantly Catholic. Yet one cannot emphasize too often that in the July crisis, her proclamation of her Catholicism was notable by its absence.”²⁸⁴

Mary understood “in the midst of crisis and doubtless on the advice of her household, the need for political pragmatism. This contrasts sharply with the strategy of

²⁸¹ Whitelock. “Princess Mary's Household”, 272.

²⁸² Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 152.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, 156.

²⁸⁴ Whitelock. “Princess Mary's Household”, 285.

Northumberland which emphasized Mary's Catholicism."²⁸⁵ Northumberland attempted to create "a Protestant crusade against Catholicism" but "Mary's household resolved to stress her legitimacy."²⁸⁶ Mary was soon triumphant and the religious policies of Edward that were highlighted by Jane Grey's brief regime did not gain the support of the English people. For, with no king to back up the policies that were created during the previous regime, everything that following it inevitably deteriorated.²⁸⁷ Mary's frequent assertions that Edward's youth prevented him from holding complete power during his reign were later shown to be accurate as Edward's policies were largely abandoned after his death. It was clear that the "minority fell short of the monarchical ideal of the king in his court, operating at the heart of the polity, capable of acting with full sovereign independence."²⁸⁸ Essentially, Edward's minority had placed him in a largely inactive position at court.²⁸⁹ During his reign, age becomes the central factor causing a clear delegation of power during his reign. Mary argued that the reforms undertaken by Edward's regime should progress slowly or not at all as he was not yet recognized as old enough to assert authority in his own right.

Although many viewed Queen Mary in a position that many viewed as less able to wield the power because of her gender, Mary did not allow others at her court to have control over her policies. During and directly following her brother's reign, Mary used the political education that had been provided to her as a princess and exerted her authority in both religious and secular matters. In August, a month after taking the throne,

²⁸⁵ Whitelock. "Princess Mary's Household", 285.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, 285.

²⁸⁷ Alford, Stephen. *Kingship and Politics in the Reign of Edward VI*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print, 173.

²⁸⁸ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 157.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 157.

“Mary issued her first proclamation, intended to avoid ‘the great inconvenience and dangers’ that had arisen in times past through the ‘diversities of opinions in the questions of religion.’”²⁹⁰ Many of her subjects began to fear potential persecution for their Protestant beliefs and “in the midst of popular unrest and fear of change, Mary had responded with moderation and pragmatism.”²⁹¹ However, this outward show of tolerance wouldn’t last for long for, “while Mary publicly temporized, she made secret steps towards restoring Catholicism.”²⁹² Mary had already received the support she needed and no longer had to mask what would be one of her major goals as queen: re-establish a Catholic England. Mary was immediately placed in the center of Tudor politics and before long, left her religious pragmatism behind in order to return England to what she believed was the true faith.

III. Protestant Opponents and The Limits of Gendered Politics

Throughout Mary reign, the importance of religion and gender were often highlighted and those Protestants such as John Knox who openly attacked her authority viewed her gender and Catholicism as equally distasteful. When Edward created his device for the Succession, he disinherited both his sisters under the pretense that they were both bastards. However, “women were, Edward determined, unfit to rule in their own right and through marriage might subject the realm to foreign domination. Edward was relying on a yet-unborn male heir. It was a last-ditch attempt to avert a female succession.”²⁹³ As Edward’s health began to dwindle more rapidly, it soon became clear that Jane Grey

²⁹⁰ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 199.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, 200

²⁹² *Ibid*, 200.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, 171.

would not have the time to produce an heir before Edward's foreseeable death. Thus, Edward was forced to put his misogyny aside in order to ensure that his religious policies would remain in place after his death. He altered the section of the device that read "lady Jane's male heirs into lady Jane and her heirs."²⁹⁴ When changing the succession that his father had put in place, Edward held fast to the belief that religious convictions were more important than gender or familiar ties. Similarly, Dynastic consideration is more important than gender to a degree since Edward, although quite reluctantly, passed his crown to a female who shared his religious beliefs.

For many Protestants, it was not Mary's gender that initially caused them concern so much as her religion. Gender and religion were both seen as attributes that impaired Mary's ability to rule. John Knox became a central Protestant figure who actively spoke out against Mary's regime. John Knox was a Scottish reformer who "entered the church, being ordained deacon and priest in the late 1530s by William Chisholm, bishop of Dunblane. Using his training in canon law, by 1540 he was practising as a notary in and around Haddington."²⁹⁵ He first became knowledgeable about the reform movement through "George Wishart, whose rousing sermons in 1544-5 had a revitalizing effect upon supporters of reform." During this period, Knox served as a tutor teaching "Latin grammar and literature, the Bible, and a catechism." After the arrest and execution of Wishart in 1546 "Knox went into hiding" and in St Andrews Castle he continued his tutoring. He would soon preach for the first time. This sermon "set the tone for the rest of his ministry. It was a hard-hitting attack striking at the roots of papal authority and brim

²⁹⁴ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 171.

²⁹⁵ Dawson, Jane E. A. "John Knox." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, Jan. 2008. Web. 10 Mar. 2013.

full of fire and thunder.” After being imprisoned after the fall of the castle, in 1549 “he travelled directly to England where he was awarded £5 by the privy council and sent to Berwick as a preacher.” As a preacher, “Knox introduced more radical liturgical practices than those prescribed in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer. He joined in a protestant campaign, led by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, attacking the Roman Catholic mass.” This campaign caused the Privy council to stop the printing of the prayer book “while the views of the royal chaplains were considered.” This displayed his far-reaching influence in England during Edward’s monarchy. As a result of this controversy, Northumberland wished to use Knox to “establish liturgical uniformity in the north. He also decided that, if the preacher were appointed bishop of Rochester, he could be used to propel his episcopal neighbour, the archbishop of Canterbury, in a more radical direction.” However, Knox was “anxious to avoid becoming a cat's paw of Northumberland” and therefore “declined a bishopric in the Edwardian church. Much later he gave the reason for his refusal as foreknowledge of the problems Mary's accession would bring.” Once Mary took her place on the throne, Knox “chose not to return to London to join his fellow royal chaplains at Edward's funeral.”²⁹⁶

Even in exile, Knox made it his duty to alert his English followers that he had not abandoned them.²⁹⁷ Through his writings, he meant to “comfort those who remained and to explain the dramatic reversal of protestant fortunes when political power and control over the English church had been lost.”²⁹⁸ Knox made it abundantly clear that it was not religion alone that fueled his hatred for Queen Mary. In his *Faithful Admonition*, “Knox

²⁹⁶ Dawson, Jane E. A. "John Knox." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, Jan. 2008. Web. 10 Mar. 2013.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

bemoaned the loss of English political independence through Mary Tudor's marriage to Philip of Spain.²⁹⁹ Understanding Knox's view of Mary Tudor provides a touchstone on Protestant attitudes throughout England during this period and implicitly challenges claims by contemporary scholars for the primacy of a gendered reading of Marian politics. John Knox possessed a great deal of influence over his former congregation in England even during this period of exile. As such, his works can be used to highlight the overall sentiments of Protestants during Mary's queenship.

In his *Faithful Admonition of the Professors of God's Truth in England (1554)*, Knox asserts that while so many men were willing to oppose Mary during Edward's regime and during the short reign of Lady Jane Grey, they have suddenly become fearful and have altered their views in order to prosper under Mary.³⁰⁰ He asserts,

who was moste bolde to crye, Bastarde, bastarde, incestuous bastarde, Mary shal never raigne over us? and who, I praye you, was moste busy to saye, Feare not to subscribe with my Lordes of the Kinges Majesties moste honourable Prevy Counseil? Agree to his Graces last wil and parfit testament, and let never that obstinate woman come to authoritie. She is an erraunt Papist: She will subvert the true religion, and will bring in straungers, to the destruction of this common wealth. Which of the Counsel, I saye, had these and greater persusions against Marye, to whom now he crouches and kneleth?³⁰¹

Some of the same men who comprised Jane Grey's Privy Council are now members of Mary's new Privy Council after declaring their allegiance to their new queen.³⁰²

Many Catholics praised Mary for allowing such men to be part of her new

²⁹⁹ Dawson, Jane E. A. "John Knox." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, Jan. 2008. Web. 10 Mar. 2013.

³⁰⁰ Knox, John, and David Laing. "A Faithful Admonition of the Professors of God's Truth in England." *Works of John Knox*. Vol. 3. New York: AMS, 1966. 251-331. Print, 281.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 283.

³⁰² Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 193.

Council as it displayed her ability to forgive even those who did not initially support her reign.³⁰³ However, Knox condemns those who were not willing to stand by their originally beliefs and marks them as religious traitors as they are willing to compromise their own beliefs to ensure their own safety and position on earth.

Knox then condemns all who comprise Mary's regime and labels them as tyrants.

He writes, "Albeit the thyrauntes of this earth have learned, by longe experience, that they are never able to prevaile against Goddess truth yet, because they are bounde slaves to their maister the Devil, they can not ceasse to persecute the membres of Christ."³⁰⁴ Knox asserts that as fellow tyrants working against God, Mary's regime will soon crumble just as though devlish regimes had before her. Knox urges members of his former congregations not to believe or "folowe the cruel counsels of suche disguised monsters."³⁰⁵ He asserts that such divisions which have only been further fueled by Mary's regime can be seen as "an assured signe of desolation to come" as a result of the growing conflicts that existed between Catholics and Protestants.³⁰⁶

Knox's writings from 1554 soon became more focused on Mary's gender as a source of bringing unneeded peril to England. He talks of "the dangers to be apprehended when the kingdom became subjected to the dominion of strangers" that would result from the projected alliance of Queen Mary and Philip of Spain.³⁰⁷ In this section of his writings, he makes clear his belief that Mary's gender has opened up the nation to the possibility of a foreign king. As a female, he makes the argument that she is more easily

³⁰³ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 193.

³⁰⁴ Knox. "A Faithful Admonition", 284.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 285.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 328.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 254.

susceptible to being influenced and controlled by a husband. He accuses Mary of breaching the public's faith upon her accession, since she had consciously chosen not to openly assert her Catholic views, as it would frighten away more liberal supporters.³⁰⁸ Knox declares that Mary "meaned graciously not to comel or strain other men's consciences otherwise than God should, as she trusted, put in their hearts a persuaion of the truth trough the opening of His World unto them."³⁰⁹ According to Knox, once Mary was placed on the throne, she quickly declared that those who did not follow the true faith would not be tolerated.³¹⁰ Knox explains that Mary had lied to her subjects and must not be trusted. For,

would any of you have confessed two yeres ago, that Mary, your mirrour, had bene false, dissembling, unconstant, proud, and a breaker of promyses, excepte suche promyses as she made to your god the Pope, to the great shame and dishonoure of her noble father? I am sure you would full lytle have thought it in her. And now, doth she not manifestye shewe her selfe to ben an open traitoresse to the Impreiall Crown of England, contrary to the juste lawes of the Realme, to brynge in a straunger, and make a proude Spaniarde kyng, to the shame, dishonoure, and destruction of the nobilitie.³¹¹

According to Knox, not only did Mary's religion cause her to falsely profess that she would allow religious tolerance during her reign, but her gender had caused her to overlook the wellbeing of her own nation in order to marry a foreign monarch. Knox asserts that Mary's faults as a ruler lie in both her gender and religion. For radical Protestants such as Knox, Mary's gender had prohibited her from seeing the error of her Catholic ways.

³⁰⁸ Knox. "A Faithful Admonition", 254.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 254--255.

³¹⁰ Ibid, 255.

³¹¹ Ibid, 255.

According to Knox, other Protestants, including her brother Edward and his advisors believed that the monarch's religion was more important than their gender. For men like John Knox, Mary's religion served as a sign that her gender prevented her from leading the English people properly and seeing the error of her ways.³¹² Knox asserted that women had no right to rule and for Knox, Mary's religion optimized this belief. Knox believed that as a female, her poor judgment had caused her to believe false religious convictions. *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558), Knox in no way attempts to mask his contempt of Europe's female monarchs. He asserts that females are "the porte and gate of the Devil."³¹³ In his aforementioned publication, Knox asserted that God was bound to destroy any and all "tyrantes" whether "bee they Kynges or Quenes, Princes or Prelates."³¹⁴ He believed that the epidemics present during Mary's reign, ones in which "many persons of all ranks died, and much distress prevailed" were brought on by God's wrath. Knox asserts that this sickness was a clear sign that the Queen's religion had cost her god's favor.³¹⁵ Knox also asserts that in nations with a sole governing female "either doth it lack a lafull heade (as in very dede it doth), or els there is an idol exalted in the place of the true head. An idol I call that which hath the forme and appearance, but lacketh the vertue and strength which the name and proportion do resemble and promise."³¹⁶

³¹² Knox. "A Faithful Admonition", 255.

³¹³ Knox, John, and David Laing. "The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women." *Works of John Knox*. Vol. 4. New York: AMS, 1966. 350-421. Print, 391-392.

³¹⁴ Knox. "A Faithful Admonition", 245.

³¹⁵ Knox. "The First Blast", 391.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, 391.

Knox believed that women who ruled were simply statues because God had not provided them with the means to control themselves and those around them. For,

God that hath deied power to the hand to speake, to the belly to heare, and to the feet to see, hath denied to woman power to commande man, and hath taken away widsome to consider, and providence to forsee, the thinges that be profitable to the common welth; yea, finallie, he hath denied to her in any case to be head to man, but plainly hath pronounced that ‘Man is head to woman, even as Christ is heade to all man.’³¹⁷

Woman have been ordered by god to “heare and obey” men and therefore, “he will not suffer that she speake, and with usurped authoritie command realmes and nations.”³¹⁸

Rather than simply asserting that God did not provide women with the same abilities as men in the realm of government, Knox also believes that women who govern are opposing the wishes of God. For, “the erecting of a Woman to that honor is not onely to invert the ordre which God hath established, but also it is to defile, pollute, and prophane (so farre as in man lieth) the throne and seat of God, whiche he hath sanctified and appointed for man onely.”³¹⁹ Not all Protestants during Mary’s reign criticized her authority and viewed both her religion and gender in opposition to the will of God. However, by looking at Knox’s works, one can grasp the opinions that were conveyed to Protestants during and directly following her reign. The focus on gender became more important as an additional argument against a Catholic monarch.

During the Edwardian years, Mary was able to assert her own political autonomy in the face of religious opposition. The affinity networks that had been established between her and her household during her brother’s reign emphasize the great deal of loyalty and support that they held for Mary. Mary’s ability to win back the crown during

³¹⁷ Knox. "The First Blast", 392.

³¹⁸ Ibid, 392.

³¹⁹ Ibid, 397.

the succession crisis demonstrated her abilities as a political pragmatist and the sheer scope of her supporters who were willing to risk all in order to see Mary as their queen. Mary's Catholic faith and her gender placed her on the margins of Tudor society. John Knox and others attempted to speak out against her regime by arguing that her religion was against God and her gender blinded her from seeing the light and accepting what he believed was the true faith.³²⁰ It is difficult to overlook the notion that Mary's gender was seen as a cause for concern as her "success" in restoring Catholicism advanced during her reign. For, many Protestants feared Mary's reign would be the end of the Protestant experiment in England.

Even her advisors believed that Mary's marriage to a Catholic foreign prince would hurt the state because she would not be able to assert her own authority for the sake of the kingdom. For Protestants, including her brother Edward, religion was a more divisive issue than gender was for a monarch's rule. While Mary undeniably worked to return England to the Catholic Church, religion was not the only matter that she dealt with during her reign. Mary successfully laid the foundation as the first female monarch England had ever seen. She established and utilized kinship bonds that were strong enough to win back the throne of England.³²¹ After serving as a deviant figure of Catholic tolerance during an evangelical monarchy, Mary demonstrated that her gender would not limit her abilities as the sole ruler of England. Defending her religious convictions during her brother's Protestant kingship and defending her own claim to the throne shortly thereafter highlight Mary's abilities as a ruler. Mary displayed the potential for asserting

³²⁰ Knox. "The First Blast", 397.

³²¹ Whitelock. "Princess Mary's Household", 268.

female authority through her household management and her ability to rally support during an uncertain period. Educational advantages allowed Mary to understand how to operate in the political sphere and she successfully used her training and education to rule England in her own right.

Conclusion

In Mary's funeral sermon, John White, the bishop of Winchester, proclaimed that Mary had been 'a King's daughter, she was a King's sister, she was a King's wife. She was a Queen, and by the same title a King also.'³²² He believed that Mary had asserted her authority over the land with the determination and strength of a king.³²³ England had also benefited from her womanly compassion and devotion to the realm.³²⁴ This positive view of Mary's life and reign would not last long. Immediately following Mary's death, "a forging and recasting of Mary's reputation began."³²⁵ The observation that England under Mary was bloody would shape the world's view of Mary for four hundred and fifty years.³²⁶

While Mary Tudor was the first woman to reign over England in her own right, it was clear that women were by no means absent from the political world. After gaining an in depth view of Mary's education, the political culture in which she operated, her preparation for queenship during the Edwardian years, and how she was viewed by her Protestant contemporaries, it becomes apparent that gender did not prevent Mary from exercising authority nor did it inhibit her from receiving the same political training that her brother had before he became king. By understanding that gender cannot be viewed as the single defining feature that Mary had to overcome as queen, one can more fully understand her lasting role in history.

³²² Quoted in Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 332.

³²³ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 332.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, 332.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, 335.

³²⁶ *Ibid*, 335.

Elite women throughout England were not limited by the educations they received nor were women entering the political arena an anomaly. Women had entered the world of informal politics even before Mary's birth. Women had an essential part to play in the most important political achievement of Yorkist and early Tudor periods by serving as intermediaries between the king and his court.³²⁷ Mary's great grandmother Margaret Beaufort had been instrumental in placing her son, Henry Tudor on England's throne during the War of the Roses.³²⁸ Her grandmother, Isabel of Castile had been "Early modern Europe's first powerful queen regnant" who served as Castile's sole ruler for thirty years.³²⁹ Mary's mother, Catherine of Aragon was "the young king's most trusted councilor" and was charged with fighting a war against Scotland while her husband was serving on the battlefield in France.³³⁰ With such vibrant examples of strong females who were involved in politics, it would be wrong to assert, as so many historians have, that Mary was essential in paving the way for female monarchy in England. Instead, if one views Mary's education and position in Tudor political culture as largely keeping with this norm, gender as an all-powerful problematic challenge, her reign can then be viewed in a different light.

The more nuanced biographies of Mary's life highlight gender as the main factor that was used against her by Elizabethan Era writers and others after Mary's lifetime. While Mary firmly established a basis for female queenship in England that served as a precedent for her half-sister Elizabeth, this does not necessarily mean that without her example, Elizabeth would not have been able to rule with equal authority and legitimacy.

³²⁷ Harris. *English Aristocratic Women*, 240.

³²⁸ Jones. *The King's Mother*, 16.

³²⁹ Cruz. *The Rule of Women*, 43.

³³⁰ Jansen. *The Monstrous Regiment of Women*, 130.

In his 1989 biography, *Mary Tudor: A Life*, Loades claims that Mary did not distance herself from matters of state and had a direct role in government.³³¹ Judith Richards' work largely corresponds with Loades. In *Mary Tudor* published in 2008, Richards claims that Mary was a queen who was highly involved in the world of policy making and, if she had lived longer and established a Catholic successor, the world's view of Mary would be vastly altered.³³² With a Catholic successor, Mary's reputation might have remained intact and the Protestant experiment in England would have been an inevitable failure.

In Linda Porter's *The First Queen of England* published in 2008, she concludes her work by attempting to grasp the reason that Mary's demonization has not calmed even in the modern context. She explains that, "the blackening of Mary's name began in Elizabeth's reign and gathered force at the end of the 17th century, when James II compounded the view that Catholic monarchs were a disaster for England."³³³ Those that have worked to alter this negative view of Mary often "dismiss her life as nothing more than a personal tragedy", a view that "is both patronizing and mistaken."³³⁴ According to Porter, "one of the main themes of Mary's existence is the triumph of determination over adversity."³³⁵

According to Anna Whitelock in her 2009 biography, Mary was a woman who had experienced a great deal of hardship and was closely involved in the politics of her

³³¹ Loades. *Mary Tudor*, 345.

³³² Richards. *Mary Tudor*, 11.

³³³ Porter. *The First Queen of England*, 418.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, 418.

³³⁵ *Ibid*, 418.

government.³³⁶ Whitelock also asserts that Mary “defined royal ritual and law, thereby establishing a female ruler, married or unmarried, would enjoy identical power and authority to male monarchs. She was a political pioneer whose reign redefined English policy.”³³⁷ According to Whitelock, Mary’s gender was viewed as a “handicap” that she triumphed over in order to assert her own authority as England’s ruler.³³⁸ However, it is just as important to understand how her gender did not hurt her practical political experience before becoming queen, a point of debate that this thesis contributes to. Her education and understanding of Tudor political culture were in no way impaired by her gender.

In his Mary biography, *Mary I: England’s First Catholic Queen*, published in 2011, John Edwards explains that modern day historians still believe historical accounts that categorize Mary as unintelligent, “devoid of political skill, unable to compromise” and still view her as a figure who was harmful to her nation.³³⁹ However false these claims may be, Edwards asserts that, “one of the major problems of her life was the unwillingness of many in the sixteenth century to accept a woman as their executive sovereign.”³⁴⁰ It is clear that gender was an issue that was raised against Mary during her sovereignty in attempting to discredit her authority. What is remarkable is the extent to which Mary flourished in spite of this.

Mary Tudor’s life and reign cannot simply be understood by viewing gender as the all-encompassing factor that defined her queenship. By determining that Mary’s

³³⁶ Whitelock. *Mary Tudor*, 336.

³³⁷ *Ibid*, 337.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, xvi.

³³⁹ Loades. *Mary Tudor*, 345.

³⁴⁰ Edwards. *Mary I*, 345.

education had provided her with the ability to rule, her alignment with Tudor political culture displayed that she was not unlike other women who were involved in public and private political spheres. However, she stood out through her ability to exploit the possibilities for female authority within Tudor political and political culture. Her time spent during her brother Edward's reign laid the groundwork for her ability to assert her authority and gain loyal followers. The prejudice that existed regarding female monarchy was the central issue that Mary strived to overcome during her queenship. By viewing her as a product of the culture in which she lived, one can then see Mary's life and sovereignty from a unique and unclouded lens. After dissecting the misrepresentations that plagued Mary's life and reign, one can begin to view her clearly. By no longer asserting that gender alone defined Mary's queenship, her reign can be fully understood. Mary was England's first ruling queen who utilized her education and practical skills to become a remarkable monarch.

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